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Police Officer Perception of Body Cameras in East Tennessee

A thesis

presented to

the faculty of the Department of Criminal Justice

East Tennessee State University

In partial fulfillment

of the requirements for the degree

Master of Arts in Criminal Justice

by

Sadie Marie Murr

August 2022

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Dr. Dustin Osborne, Ph.D

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Keywords: body cameras, legitimacy, perception, use of force

ABSTRACT

Police Officer Perception of Body Cameras in East Tennessee

by

Sadie Marie Murr

The purpose of this study was to explore police officer perception of body cameras. There had been little previous research done on the police officer perception of body cameras in rural areas. Several research questions were pursued, including the impact of body cameras on citizens, the impact of body cameras on police officers, use of force and body cameras, body cameras effects on calls, and the officers' support of body cameras. The study gathered data through qualitative interviews with 16 police officers in East Tennessee to address these questions. Results obtained provided interesting and useful information regarding the police perception of body cameras, which are discussed in detail. Implication of the research as well as ways to further the research are discussed as well.

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Chapter 1. Introduction

The law enforcement field has experienced a legitimacy crisis over the past decade. Legitimacy within the law enforcement field has long been an issue with policing, but the more recent issues have occurred, in part, due to increased media attention to police officers who have been accused of using excessive force. Body cameras within law enforcement agencies could be seen to help improve the perception of law enforcement. As of 2016, there were 15,322 law enforcement agencies in the United States with about 701,000 full-time police officers (Hyland & Davis, 2019). Most of these police agencies in the United States are made up of local departments, with most of them being relatively small (Hyland & Davis, 2019). These police officers are tasked with duties that often put them in harm's way. With most of these departments being smaller it can be difficult for them to have the funds for the equipment they may need. By 2016, almost half (47%) of the police departments in the United States had begun to use body cameras (Hyland, 2018). The larger local departments were more likely to have implemented body cameras (53%) than the smaller local departments (44%) (Hyland, 2018). There are multiple agencies, including the state police agencies, who still do not have body cameras for all officers. Within the state agencies that do not have body cameras, 94% have dashboard cameras (Hyland, 2018).

Police officers in the United States work hard to maintain social order in society. Overall, the public's perception of police officers is much better when the police are seen as legitimate (Tyler, 1989) Police departments who are viewed as legitimate often see higher levels of public cooperation and compliance with officers (Antrobus et al., 2015). Police legitimacy is often portrayed to the officers as they have discretion over how they feel necessary to exercise their authority (POST, 2020). The public's trust and confidence in their police department helps

demonstrate that the officers are honest and do their jobs well. Police legitimacy also can reflect the willingness of the citizens to call their police departments when they need assistance or see a crime being committed (POST, 2020).

It is important to for the police to be seen as legitimate by the public especially when they are maintaining social order over the community. Mistrust in the police can result in higher level of crimes and disorder in the community (Hinds & Murphy, 2007). Tyler and Huo (2002) found that there are two main factors that influence citizens willingness to accept the decisions of the police: (1) if the decisions made by the police are fair and (2) if the police are regarded as legitimate (Tyler & Huo, 2002). Police legitimacy usually results in the public's consent (Hinds & Murphy, 2007). A lot of police legitimacy as well as police professionalism is maintaining control over the public's image of them (Schneider, 2018). Police legitimacy has become a focal point of law enforcement agencies as they struggle to maintain trust with the community. The police can make an impact on their police legitimacy and the way the community perceives them if they will give full transparency, allowing the people to have a voice, explaining their decisions, being neutral, being respectful to their citizens, and overall being trustworthy (POST, 2020). If a police department leans more towards being fair and respectful towards all the citizens they interact with, they are considered to be a part of the normative model of legitimacy (Antrobus et al., 2015). Overall, the normative factors seem to make the citizens more likely to be compliant and willing to listen to the officers.

The public's perception of police officers begins when the police officers interact with the public. Therefore, for police officers to make a positive impact on the public they need to have personal contact with the community in which they work in (Antrobus et al., 2015). In the year 2018, nearly 61.5 million (23.7%) United States citizens had at least one interaction with the

police (Harrell & Davis, 2020). Among the citizens that had contact with the police, only 3% had experienced threats or use of force from police officers (Harrell & Davis, 2020).

No matter what police officers do there will always be those who distrust them. There are many factors that play a role in the public's perception of the police. These factors include demographics, race, prior encounters with police, and stories from family and friends who encounter the police (Ariel et al., 2015; Crow et al., 2017; Kerrison et al., 2018; Lum et al., 2015; Ready & Young, 2015). Overall, it is shown that most people have a good perception of the police in their towns (Miller et al., 2004). Research has long found that race plays a role in the perception of police (Crow et al., 2017; Kerrison et al., 2018; Lum et al., 2015; Miller et al., 2004). Among the most consistent findings is that race can play a factor in the perceptions of police officers. Regarding age, young people also tend to have a more negative perception of police than older people. It also seems that males have a more negative perception of police than women do (Crow et al., 2017; Kerrison et al., 2018; Lum et al., 2015; Miller et al., 2004). Police officer's behavior can play a huge role in the perception that the public has of them. If one person has a bad experience with the police, it can determine the how the family and friends of that individual perceive the police as well (Miller et al., 2004).

Citizen's perception of the police tends to be measured on how safe they find their neighborhood and how concerned they are with crime (Brick et al., 2021). In 1982, just under half (48%) of Americans had a fear of walking alone in their own neighborhood (Newport, 2017). From 1972 to 1993 Americans expressed more concern when walking alone at night; 40% of Americans said they were constantly worried when walking alone at night. The worry of began to deteriorate in the mid 1990s and has not risen above 40% since 1993 (Newport, 2017). The citizen's perception of the police often relates back to their own personal factors (Brick, et

al., 2021). If the citizen has had contact with the police in an informal way, they are more likely to have a positive perception of the police, rather than someone who has had a negative interaction with the police (Ashcroft et al., 2020).

Citizen perception can also be shaped by the media attention to police/community interactions (Miller et al., 2004). Beginning in 2015 the FBI advisory policy board recommended that the FBI should develop a new data collection of the officer involved shootings in the United States, this also included officer use of force (Federal Bureau of Investigations, 2020). Between the years 2011 and 2015, police officers in the United States were contacted around 62.9 million times (Brocklin, 2020). Thus, the police are by far the most visible component of the criminal justice system. In 2018, police officers in the United States made approximately ten-million arrests. While most of these arrests occur without incident, this is an inherently dangerous action that police must engage in. Each year police are involved in approximately 1,000 police involved shootings (Washington Post, 2022). Specific to federal law enforcement, there have been dozens of deaths reported during each year (68 in 2019), and several hundred offenders typically die each year while in police custody (Brooks & Scott, 2021). While these unfortunate deaths are not a new phenomenon, they have received increased public attention in the recent years. In some situations, force is required by officers to mitigate an immediate threat to the officer's or community's lives. However, in other situations the amount of force used by officers is excessive (Wittie, 2011).

There have been many incidents in which police use of force ended badly and the media coverage can portray in a way that makes the police officers look bad. A few of the more recent issues of use of force have been with the deaths of David McAtee, George Floyd, Breonna Taylor as well as many more (Gonzaga University, 2020). The media coverage of these

individuals' deaths has sparked an outrage from the citizens all over the world. The citizens of the United States see the use of force that has been used against these individuals that is shown on the media outlets and assume that all police officers are always using that type of force (Headley et al., 2017; White et al., 2017; Young & Ready, 2018).

There have been recent efforts among police departments across the United States to help improve the perception of the police officers. In 2016, almost half of the police departments had acquired body cameras. A few of the main reasons that police departments have begun acquiring body cameras is to help ensure the safety of their officers, increase the evidence quality that is needed for court, help reduce the complaints of citizens in the community, as well as reduce the departments liability when use of force is used (Hyland, 2018). Police officers who have body cameras could also be seen as more legitimate to citizens in the way that their actions are being recorded. It could seem possible to the citizens of the community that the police are less likely to do things that they should not do when being recorded.

Current Study

The current study will be looking at the effectiveness of body cameras in local police departments in Tennessee. The researcher will be interviewing police officers from three different agencies looking at the officers' perceptions of body cameras. The perception of the citizens in the community will also be taken into consideration during this study, but it will be looked at through how the police officers believe the citizens portray them. This study will analyze the effectiveness of body cameras, the impact of body cameras on police officers, how police officers feel about body cameras, and much more. The focus of the interviews will be to get a better understanding of how police officers feel about body cameras and determine if they are useful to the officers. Most of the research that has been done examining body cameras has

been done in urban areas. The current study is examining police officer perception of body cameras in rural areas.

Research Questions

This study will focus on (5) research questions:

- (1) What impact do body cameras have on citizen interaction?
- (2) What impact do body cameras have on police officers?
- (3) What impact do body cameras have on use of force?
- (4) Do body cameras affect how police officers respond to certain calls?
- (5) Do officers in East Tennessee support body cameras?

Chapter Summary

This chapter discusses law enforcement personnel and how body cameras could be useful to help improve legitimacy of police officers. This chapter also serves the purpose of providing the basic understandings of what police officers do and roughly how many police officers there are in the United States. Police officers need to be seen as legitimate to the citizens of their community for the citizens to have trust and a good perception of the officers. Therefore, it is very important that the police officers make it part of their routine to interact with the citizens. Use of force from police officers is being shown in the media outlets which overall deters the citizens from having a good perception of the police officers. The media portrays the use of force as something the officer wanted to do; not always showing the whole story. The issue

surrounding use of force from police officers can decay the trust of police officers within the community.

The following chapter will discuss the relevant research that is related to body cameras. This will include the acceptance of body cameras among police officers as well as citizens, as well as if wearing body cameras make a difference in the daily activities of the police officers. Chapter three will discuss the methodology that is being used in the current study, including the research question that will be looked at, the total number of officers that will be interviewed, the data collection, the data analysis, and the limitations of the study. Chapter four will discuss the main findings of the study. The final chapter will discuss the findings, limitations, and the implications of the study as well as what could potentially be looked at in the future research of body cameras.

Chapter 2. Literature Review

History

In 1829, Sir Robert Peel developed the Nine Principles of Law Enforcement. These Nine Principles of Law Enforcement began in Britain, where they were given to the British police officers as overall instructions on how to do their daily duties. Peel's second principle stated that the police officer's ability to do their daily duties was dependent on the public's perception and approval of police officers, as well as the officers' actions, behaviors, and the ability of the officers to maintain a good relationship with the citizens (Chapman, 2018). Today Sir Robert Peel's principle is still valid. The legitimacy and ability of the police officers still depends on the perception the citizens have of the police officers (Chapman, 2018).

The trust of the public is often tested when referring to police shootings. From 2015-2022 the Washington Post has logged more than 5,000 shootings involving police officers (Washington Post, 2022). In 2021 alone there have approximately 1,000 police involved shootings. Although there are so many police involved shootings; many of them are justified it still causes an eroded trust within the community (Washington Post, 2022). President Obama proposed that the federal government reimburse the police departments half of the money they would have to spend on implementing body cameras. There have been multiple officer involved shootings that made national headlines; in some cases, these have led to the arrest and conviction of the officer involved (Lum et al., 2019). A number of these shootings have been captured on citizen cell phones; leading to the idea that greater accountability of police officers could be achieved with body cameras (Lum et al., 2019).

In 2015, it was announced that 23.2 million dollars in grants would be given to help expand the use of body cameras as well as look at the impact of body cameras (Ariel et al., 2017;

Ness, 2020). At that time, at least 37 states had considered legislation related to body cameras. Of those 37 states, only 15 would have the statute to require audio and visual recordings on the body camera (U.S. Department of Justice, 2020). By 2016, almost half (47%) of the general law enforcement departments had acquired body cameras (Hyland, 2018).

Use of Body Cameras

With increased usage, body cameras are now considered a best practice (American Civil Liberties Union, 2014). The many possible benefits that have been attributed to body cameras include capturing the interactions between police officers and citizens; as well as having the potential to decrease the number of complaints against police officers. They can also help increase police legitimacy, as they allow for better transparency and accountability for police officers (Ariel et al., 2017; White, 2014). Transparency defined is the availability of information about a person that allows others to monitor the performance of the other person (Bromberg et al., 2018). The public having trust in their police departments, as well as police transparency, and legitimacy are three concepts that can improve the social conditions in the community (Bauhr & Grimes, 2014; Cucciniello & Nasi, 2014; Cucciniello et al., 2017). While body cameras are not the only way to improve trust legitimacy, many police departments, politicians, and activists have pushed for their use as a key to improve legitimacy (Alpert & McLean, 2018).

Body cameras are very versatile; they can be worn on the chest area as well as be mounted on the glasses of an officer (Chapman, 2018; Fouche, 2014; Goetschel & Peha, 2017; McLean et al., 2015; Owens & Finn, 2018; Pelfrey & Keener, 2016). The video footage that is captured via the body cameras can provide better documentation of the events and overall support the accounts that the officer and citizens gave (Chapman, 2018). The increase of civility can also come from the use of body cameras, and civility is an important aspect to society.

Civility lies between public and private issues, social norms as well as morals and laws (Boyd, 2006). There are two distinct differences in civility. The first looks at civility as manners, politeness, or other face-to-face interactions. When viewing civility as personal interactions it is civil to speak and interact with other individuals (Boyd, 2006). Body cameras can potentially reduce the number of citizen complaints on officers. Because the officers have the body cameras on, citizens who might have said something out of line to get a reaction from the officer to file a complaint, or just made up something to file a complaint would be less likely to do so due to their actions being recorded. Therefore, body cameras could overall help the civility in the community.

Data Storage

The documentation of body cameras is very important, and with many departments having body cameras there is little insight into how the footage is stored and kept (Barbour, 2017). Only a few states have direct control over storage of body camera footage. With the growing rates of body cameras there are a few issues arising, such as: logistical and budget concerns (Barbour, 2017). Without policies surrounding uploading body camera footage it is difficult to upload, label, and store the footage correctly without the chance of potentially losing it (Barbour, 2017).

There are a few concerns surrounding body cameras and their storage. There can be the issue of data storage and the deletion of data as well as the limited use of footage for evaluation and discipline (Fan, 2018). There is concern throughout police departments over the accumulating footage that is needed to be stored, the storage costs, potential privacy issues, security of the footage, officers being penalized for minor infractions, and the potential for law enforcement to search for criminality on the footage (Fan, 2018; Sanburn, 2014; Stanley, 2015).

There are two main obstacles regarding policies of body cameras. These are data deletion and monitoring and evaluation (Fan, 2018). The policies main focuses are on preserving evidence to use during a criminal prosecution (Fan, 2018).

The data that is collected by body cameras can offer police oversight for court proceedings, civilian boards, and police departments (Fan, 2018). When police officers have body cameras, they have a much wider window showing them what is happening during daily encounters (Fan, 2017). It was found that the benefits of having body cameras outweighs the cost (Sutherland et al., 2017).

Implementation

As the usage of body cameras rises, there are several technical, political, and administrative challenges that also increase (Sousa et al., 2016). Looking at the technological side of body cameras, the cameras themselves are only a small portion of the cost that comes with implementing them. Each department needs docking stations for the cameras, and they must upload the videos into a system as well as store the videos. These requirements that come with the cameras are often very expensive and some departments are not able to afford all that is needed to properly use the cameras (Sousa et al., 2016; Smykla et al., 2016).

There are both internal and external political issues that arise with body cameras. Some police unions do not like the idea of body cameras because they believe that body cameras can jeopardize the officer's safety, or that the administration will use them to spy on the officers (Sousa et al., 2016). The external factors are pressuring police department to begin to use body cameras before they have had the proper training (Sousa et al., 2016). In the world today many police departments have been pressured to use body cameras specifically to help improve

transparency as well as enhance the trust between police officers and citizens (Sousa et al., 2016). This leaves many departments in a difficult situation trying to manage the rights of their officers as well as please the community.

Police agencies also face a few administrative issues when implementing body cameras. There are training protocols that must be met to properly utilize the cameras (Sousa et al., 2016). Each department must specifically design a policy that will meet the needs and guidelines of the community, protect the citizens and officers' rights, as well as meet the appropriate state standards required. The departments also must decide how and when the body cameras will be implemented, as well as decide what policies will be implemented surrounding body cameras (Sousa et al., 2016).

Each citizen acts differently towards police officers and some citizens may view the body camera as a violation of their rights. Therefore, this could overall cause an increase in complaints against officers. On the other hand, some citizens may feel at ease knowing that what is going on is being recorded, and if there was an issue it could just be looked at. Body cameras could also stop false acquisition complaints; since the officer has their body camera on it would be proof that what they were accused of did not happen therefore, the citizen would not make a false accusation against the officer.

Perceptions of Body Cameras

Police Perception

Body cameras do come with some concern from police officers as well as citizens. Some of the concerns are that the body cameras can damage officer morale, making it seem as if the officers are constantly being monitored. The officers can feel as if they are not trusted; or feel as if their supervisors are tracking them (U.S. Department of Justice, 2014). Officer perception of

body cameras can change over time. Many factors have been shown to influence the officer's perceptions of body cameras. In a study of 444 police officers, Crow and Smykla (2019) found that police officers support body cameras prior to implementation, but there were some differences in the department postimplementation. Police officers reported that body cameras were more helpful at times when they were giving warnings or citations were given, during a stop-and-frisk, or when making an arrest. In another study Ready and Young (2015) found that police officers also reported that having body cameras made them more cautious as well as more self-aware.

Having organizational transparency as well as accountability for police officers can overall lead to better relationships between the community and police officers. This can also lead to the community having an increased amount of trust within the police department (Gaub et al., 2016). There are several officers that report that they behave more professionally while having the body cameras on (Jennings et al., 2014). Many officers seem to believe that body cameras reduce the number of malicious complaints because citizens realize that they are being recorded (Lum et al., 2019).

Most officers are open to the thought of body cameras (Lum et al., 2019). Many police officers who have used body cameras report feeling positive about having them (Fouche, 2014; Gaub et al., 2018; Grossmith et al., 2015; Jennings et al., 2015). There is the potential that some police officer's receptivity to body cameras may be influenced by being involved in events where other police officers have body cameras (Ready & Young, 2015). It seems that the main reason that police officers have a positive view on body cameras is because they see the body cameras as a protector. The police officers who are wearing body cameras are protecting themselves from

the public, specifically malicious complaints (Fouche, 2014; Goetschel & Peha, 2017; Jennings et al., 2014; McLean et al., 2015; Owens & Finn, 2018; Pelfrey & Keener, 2016).

Police officers also have a positive view of body cameras since the evidence is readily available in case they need it to charge an individual for a crime, as well as have that footage to help write reports when needed (Gaub et al., 2018; Jennings et al., 2014; McLean et al., 2015). Some officers may not perceive body cameras to increase their accountability or cause a behavioral change, they look at it in the way of the accountability of citizens to change regarding complaints (Lum et al., 2019). Most of the body camera footage that is used in police misconduct cases is used to prosecute the citizen rather than the officer which provides the officers with a little more security (Lum et al., 2019).

Other factors that can help influence officer perceptions of body cameras are positive views of organizational justice and if they are committed to their department (Kyle & White, 2017). Overall, officer perceptions of body cameras are positive. Most resistance that officers seem to have towards body cameras is due to specific concerns such as, technical difficulties (Katz et al., 2014). There have been a few officers have stressed that they are concerned that body camera footage may be used against them which in return may make officers more hesitant about performing their daily duties (Katz et al., 2014).

Citizen Perception

Researchers in Las Vegas sent out an online study to a national sample of 635 United State adult residents. Over 80% of respondents believed that when police officers had on body cameras, they were more respectful towards the citizens, and the officers were less likely to use excessive force (Gaub et al., 2016). Transparency is a big part of how citizens view police

officers. The citizens want complete transparency from the police to have full faith in them and what they are doing. Alpert and McLean (2018) discuss how many advocates for body cameras point to the fact that they can provide the citizens with a better sense of transparency from the police (Alpert & McLean, 2018). The issue with transparency cannot be fixed just by releasing the body camera footage. Body cameras can be a good source of transparency, but they can also not capture everything that is going on. For example, cameras can be pointed in the opposite direction of something that is happening (Alpert & McLean, 2018).

Body cameras can make an impact on the behavior of citizens whether it being that the citizen is less likely to file a complaint due to the officer having a body camera, or to influence a citizen's decision to call the police due to them having body cameras (Lum et al., 2019). Another factor could be the citizens behavior towards officers. While looking at the compliance of citizens related to body cameras it was found that a citizen was more likely to assault an officer, if the officer had a body camera (Ariel, 2016).

Further looking at the willingness to cooperate, several citizens stated that they did not think that body cameras would affect their willingness to cooperate or talk to the police as a victim to a crime, but they would be less likely to cooperate willingly if they were being investigated (Lum et al., 2019). Aside the fact that there are not many studies done on the impact of body cameras on citizens; one concern was raised about body cameras was that the citizens may be less likely to call the police due to being worried about privacy and being recorded (Lum et al., 2019). It does seem that citizens who live in low crime areas are more likely to call police officers even if they have body cameras (Lum et al., 2019). Grossmith et al. (2015) investigated the willingness of citizens to cooperate with police officers during a criminal investigation while the officer had a body camera on. It was also found that many citizens would be willing to

provide information needed about a crime or accident to an officer who has a body camera, but less likely to just have a chat with them (Lum et al., 2019).

The overall general support for body cameras from the public show that the citizens have supported the police departments while implementing body cameras, but the departments are being held at a higher expectation because of the body cameras (Lum et al., 2019). Most of the citizens believe that body cameras will hold the police officers at a higher standard for accountability as well as increase the confidence of the citizens in the community (Lum et al., 2019). The same support for body cameras is seen from detained criminals, stakeholders, and anyone else who might be affected by body cameras (Taylor et al., 2016; Todak et al., 2018).

The community support of body cameras can vary due to the community members encounters, background, and concerns about the police (Crow et al., 2017). It was found that non-white as well as younger citizens found body cameras to be less beneficial. Many black residents that were interviewed in Baltimore City were skeptical about body cameras and the footage captured by police (Kerrison et al., 2018). It was found that those who perceive the police to be fair, honest, and reliable had a more positive perception of the police and body cameras compared to those citizens who had a greater fear of crime (Crow et al., 2017).

When looking at specific encounters with police officers, citizen satisfaction could be measured on the officer's behavior, or if the citizen noticed the body camera (Lum et al., 2019). However, studies so far have not shown these to be significant predictors of citizen satisfaction. For example, Goodison and Wilson (2017) found that there was no significant difference between the citizens perception of police legitimacy and the satisfaction with their interaction with the police. There was also no significant difference found between the citizens perception of the police and if the officer was wearing a body camera or not. Instead, Goodison and Wilson's

results suggested that citizen satisfaction is much more influenced by how officers act and treat people (Goodison & Wilson, 2017). Many citizens who have interacted with the police cannot remember if they were being recorded or if the officer even had a body camera on (McClure et al., 2017).

There is an issue with some citizens regarding fear of being recorded. Although most of the citizens state that they are unconcerned with being recorded there are still a few that were concerned with their privacy (Crow et al., 2017; Grossmith et al., 2015). There were a few concerns about the police officers recording video footage of citizens due to the fact the citizens did not know what the officers would be doing with the footage (Taylor et al., 2017). A few citizens reported that when they knew they were being recorded they felt safer as well as more confident in the police (White et al., 2017). Goodall (2007) discovered that many victims felt much safer when police officers had body cameras. All the perceptions of police officers and body cameras can be influenced by multiple things, such as: race, gender, age, and ethnicity (Lum et al., 2019).

Impact of Body Cameras

The research presented thus far has focused on the perception of officers and citizens. While these perceptions are important, they might not reflect the reality of the impact that body cameras have had on law enforcement practice. Prior studies have also explored whether the police use of body cameras do, in fact, have an impact on certain outcomes. For example, a study that was done at the Rialto Police Department discovered that there are multiple advantages to having body cameras (Sutherland et al., 2017). It was found that body cameras reduced use of force by 50%, and the overall use of force will diminish over time. Sutherland et al., (2017) and Ariel et al., (2017) both found that during the Rialto study there was a massive reduction in

citizen complaints due to body cameras. Body cameras can create a civilizing effect behavior on both citizen and police officers (Gaub et al., 2016). With citizens and officers both having better behavior, situations can be de-escalated easier as help reduce use of force (Gaub et al., 2016).

Police use of force happens less often when an officer is wearing a body camera (Ariel et al., 2015; Braga et al., 2018; Henstock & Ariel, 2017; Jennings et al., 2015; Jennings et al., 2017). When police officers have the discretion to decide when they need to turn their body cameras on and off can lead to an increase of use of force with those officers (Ariel, 2016). Other studies looked at the effects of body cameras on police officers' willingness to give a citation or arrest the person, and there has not been a clear finding to show if body cameras will change the officer's decision on giving a citation or arresting the person (Ariel et al., 2017; Rowe et al., 2018). Officers who wore body cameras made fewer arrests, but gave out more citations (Ariel, 2016; Ready & Young, 2015). In a different study it was found that arrest rates were higher with police officers who had body cameras (Braga et al., 2018; Katz et al., 2014). Contrary to those findings Grossmith et al. (2015) and Wallace et al. (2018) both found no significant increase of arrest rate for those officers with body cameras.

Chapter Summary

This chapter discusses the history of body cameras providing information about how the body cameras came about and how prevalent they are in today's society. The previous studies that have been done regarding body cameras have been looked at and reviewed providing information needed so that the researcher will be able to interpret and determine what research questions should be asked in the present study. This chapter also looks at the use of body cameras expanding on the proper use. The documentation of the video footage that is captured on body cameras is examined, as well as implementation throughout many police departments.

This chapter also discusses the perceptions of body cameras from both police officers as well as citizens. Finally this chapter looks at the impact of body cameras on police use of force, citizen complaints, and the officer's response to calls. The following chapter will outline the methodological approach that is going to be used in the present study to determine the effectiveness of body cameras in East Tennessee.

Chapter 3. Methodology

Introduction

Chapter two provided an overview of the available literature regarding body cameras. The research established that there is little qualitative research done about body cameras. While several studies found that both citizens and police officers have a positive view of body cameras, they did so by looking at the amount of citizen complaints before and after the implementation of body cameras and surveying police officers, thus limiting the possible information that was gathered. It is possible that by conducting a qualitative study that more information on how police officers view body cameras could be found. Additionally, the data collected in rural areas can help understand police perspective of body cameras in these regions, whereas most prior research has focused on urban areas. The current chapter will discuss the methodological approach, sampling size, research questions, how the data will be collected and analyzed, as well as the limitations of this study.

Research Questions

This study will focus on (5) research questions:

- (1) What impact do body cameras have on citizen interaction?
- (2) What impact do body cameras have on police officers?
- (3) What impact do body cameras have on use of force?
- (4) Do body cameras affect how police officers respond to certain calls?
- (5) Do officers in East Tennessee support body cameras?

Population/Sample Size

The researcher sent out emails with recruitment flyers to two departments in the area. Both departments responded and were willing to participate in the current study. Between the two departments, a total of seventeen police officers agreed to be interviewed. Each of these officers either currently wear a body camera or have previously worn body cameras but currently do not due to their current role within the department. Most of the officers (n=13) were patrol officers, but there were also a few (n=3) who worked in administration. One officer that was interviewed did not provide answers to all the questions on the interview guide. Therefore, he is not included in data analysis.

Interview Guide

Based on the research questions, several open-ended questions were created to ask each officer during the interviews. An interview guide was created (Appendix 1) for the interview process. The interviews were conducted in a semi-structured casual setting which allowed the officers to be open and freely answer the interview questions, as well as discuss their knowledge and concerns surrounding the topic of the study. The interviews were conducted at the police department allowing convenience for the officers.

Introductory Section

The initial section of the interview guide focused on the age of the police officer, how long they have been an officer, the different departments that officers might have worked for, if the officer currently wears a body camera, how long the officer has had the body camera if they currently wear one, if they started at their current department before they had body cameras, and what their overall thoughts about the body cameras are. This information provided the researcher

with more knowledge surrounding body cameras within the specific department, as well as gave the researcher a bit of insight into how long the officer has worked with body cameras.

Research Question #1

There were several open-ended questions that addressed the first research question (*What impact do body cameras have on citizens?*). This research question was answered through three questions. Each officer was asked if *they think that body cameras provide transparency to citizens*. Once the officer answered they were then asked to explain their answer, *why do you believe that or why not*. The officers were then asked if *they think that citizens even notice that they have body cameras on*. If the respondent answered yes to this question, they were then asked a follow up question: *Do you think that the citizens are concerned about privacy?* The final question was, *do you think that citizens are more likely to cooperate due to body cameras?* Once the officer gave an answer, they were asked to explain their answer. The responses to these questions allowed the researcher to have a better insight on what kind of impact body cameras have on citizens.

Research Question #2

There have been numerous quantitative studies that have looked at the impact of body cameras on police officers, but the second research question in this study (*What impact do body cameras have on police officers?*) used a qualitative method to look at the impact of body cameras on police officers. There were four questions asked to help answer this research question. The officers were able to answer these questions freely and was asked to elaborate on their answer. The first question was *Do you know what your department's policy is related to when and who can look at an officer's body camera footage?* A follow-up question was then

asked *Is the footage randomly looked at?* If the officer answered yes, they were then asked *their thoughts about the footage being looked at, and if no, what would your thoughts be if the department began randomly looking at the footage.* The following question was, *do you know if the departments got feedback from other officers prior to implementing the body cameras?* If the officer answered yes, they were then asked *were you consulted personally?* The next question asked was, *can you describe the officer's level of discretion related to when you can turn the camera on and off?* They were then asked *What are your thoughts about this?* Lastly, *could you comment on if you feel safer with a body camera?* The information that was gathered from this section of question provided the information that was needed to fully understand the impact of body cameras on police officer in qualitative form.

Research Questions #3 & #4

To improve the flow of the interview, research question 3 and 4 were answered during the same section of the interview. These questions were asked in order to understand the impact body cameras have on use of force (*What impact do body cameras have on use of force?*) and to help determine if body cameras affect how police officers respond to certain calls (*Do body cameras affect how police officers respond to certain calls?*). There were four questions asked in order to better understand the research questions. The first question asked was, *what are your thoughts about body cameras having the possibility to impact use of force?* This question was asked to determine if the officers had witnessed body cameras make an impact on use of force. The next question, *what about use of force against officers? Do you think that citizens would be less likely to use force/or resistance against officers if the officer wore a body camera?* This question was asked to determine if the officers had witnessed an increase or decrease in use of force against them or in resistance from citizens. The third question was, *can you discuss any*

way that body cameras have changed your behavior? With a follow up question, *do you handle calls differently?* The last question, *any types of calls that you do not like recording? If yes, explain.* The final question was asked in hopes to determine if there could possibly be any calls that the officer was more hesitant to respond to because they have the body camera on. The questions in this section were asked to determine if body cameras had an impact on use of force as well as if body cameras had an impact of the officers responding to calls.

Research Question #5

The final research question was measured by one question: *Do officers in East Tennessee support body cameras?* The police officers were asked, *Overall, could you comment on if you support body cameras or not?* This allowed for the police officer to have an open conversation about body cameras, as well as allowing the officer to speak on any criticisms they have about body cameras as well as any specific things that they may like about body cameras. These questions were asked to allow the researcher to understand how the officers perceive body cameras in general.

Method of Analysis

The researcher asked each officer for permission to audio-record during the interview. The interviews were recorded, and transcribed. The data was used to find common factors between each police officer and determine the answers to the research questions. Transcribing the interviews allowed for the researcher to include specific quotations that were relevant to the questions asked. Commonalities as well as differences in the answers to the questions were explored to determine if certain themes developed. The findings from the data are written in detail in the analysis section.

Chapter Summary

This chapter discusses the research questions for the current study, as well as looking at the population/sample size that will be used in the study. Two departments were asked to participate, with a total of seventeen officers interviewed. This allowed for a range of answers for the interview questions allowing for themes, commonalities, and differences to be found. This chapter discussed the interview guide that was used to answer the research questions, as well as discusses the initial questions that will be asked to begin the interview. Following are the research questions along with the questions that will be asked to determine the answer to the research questions. This chapter also includes the method of analysis which covers the how the data will be collected and used for the current study. Finally, this chapter covers the possible limitations that could affect this study. The following chapter will discuss the analysis of the data that is collected from the interviews that will be conducted.

Chapter 4: Research Findings

Introduction

The purpose of the current study was to get police perception of body cameras. Chapter two reviewed the available literature regarding body cameras. Chapter three provided an overview of the current study's methodology. The research questions along with the interview guide, the population/sample size, the data collection, method of analysis, and the limitations of the current study were all discussed in chapter three. The current chapter will discuss the research findings. Specifically, this chapter analyzes the police officer's interview responses using a content analysis to address the research questions (see Table 1). Results of the findings are discussed in relation to each research question in the following sections.

Table 1

Research Questions

-
- (1) What impact do body cameras have on citizen interaction?
 - (2) What impact do body cameras have on police officers?
 - (3) What impact do body cameras have on use of force?
 - (4) Do body cameras affect how police officers respond to certain calls?
 - (5) Do officers in East Tennessee support body cameras?
-

Introductory Questions

As described in Chapter 3, the interview first asked each respondent some basic demographic questions. This included *age, years being an officer, if they have worked for other departments, if they currently wear a body camera, and how long they have had it*. One officer

that was interviewed did not provide answers to all the questions on the interview guide. Therefore, he is not included in data analysis. The sample included all male officers (n=16), with an average age of the officers being approximately 45 years old. Overall, the officers in this study had quite a bit of professional experience. The average amount of police experience was over 20 years, ranging from 9 years to 35 years. Half (n=8) of the police officers had started their officer career at the current department, and half (n=8) had previously worked at a different department.

The majority of the officers included in this study (n=10) wore a body camera every day. Of those who did not wear a body camera daily, most (n=4) wore a body camera sometimes and two officers did not currently wear a body camera. These two officers worked in administration at the time of the study. The police officers that currently wore body cameras had worn them for a range of 2 to 10 years, with the average officer wearing the body camera for approximately 5 years.

Research Question #1

What impact do body cameras have on citizen interactions?

Research question one was asked to better understand the impact of body cameras from a police officer perspective. This included exploring the transparency that body cameras may provide to citizens, if the officers think that the citizens they interact with notice they have on body cameras, privacy concerns, and if the citizens are more likely to cooperate with officers due to body cameras. Almost all of the officers (n=15) do in fact think that body cameras provide transparency to the citizens, Officer One answered the question by saying, “Absolutely, it gives them a little more trust knowing that we are recording it and knowing that the recordings are

available, unless there is an active investigation.” Officer Five answered, “I think it should, but people always say, ‘oh they edited it’, so that’s always out there.”

When taking a look at if police officers think that citizens notice body cameras, most of the officers (n=9) do think that citizens notice the body cameras. When asking Officer Three about if he thinks the citizens notice the body cameras he said, “They do ours, they are about the size of a cell phone, and they have a big red light that blinks on them so you cannot miss them”. A few (n=4) officers think that citizens do not notice the body camera, and three officers think that citizens sometimes notice the body cameras. It is possible that the answers to this response could vary based on how long a department has had the cameras. For example, Officer Four said, “A lot of times when we first got them, they did not. I believe they were so indiscriminate they really did not know what some of the equipment was, but now I think with everything going on in the media and everything that pretty much everybody knows if an officer shows up, he is probably wearing a body camera.”

When discussing with the officers if they think the citizens notice body cameras, the researcher also asked if they believed that the citizens were concerned about privacy. There were some officers (n=8) that did not give an answer to that question. Five out of the eight officers that did not give an answer, were simply not asked the question due to the officers answering no to the citizens notice the body camera. A few (n=2) believed that the citizens were concerned about privacy when being recorded on the body camera, while the majority of officers who answered the question (n=5) believed the citizens were not concerned with privacy. There were a few (n=2) officers that said the citizens may be concerned with privacy, but they did not give a definite yes or no. Officer One answered maybe said, “Maybe, it just depends in the call you are on. If you are working a coroner, call for instance and somebody passed away... you have to do

an investigation... I can see that they would think there was an issue with privacy for stuff like that”.

The last part of this research question discussed if police officers think that citizens are more likely to cooperate due to body cameras. While interviewing the police officers the researcher found that only two officers did believe that body cameras make a difference when it comes to citizen cooperation. Some of the officers (n=6) did not believe that body cameras made any difference when it came to citizen cooperation, with Officer Five saying, “No, the guys that are going to not cooperate are going to be the bad guys. The real bad guys, they do not care if you are wearing a body camera or not.” The response the previous officer gave was the most common response to the question. There were also a few (n=5) officers that said body cameras sometimes make a difference when it comes to citizen cooperation, Officer One said, “As long as they know we got them on they are. Sometimes we have to tell them, like hey just so you know you need to quit, and simmer down a little bit because you are on camera, and this will be used in court. It can sometimes calm them down.” With Officer Thirteen answering, “I think so, I have actually had people in certain circumstances where you can tell the situation is getting heated, and they will look down and notice that you are wearing a body camera, or sometimes I will even point it out to them that I am wearing a body camera and sometimes it will calm things down; because they know that everything they do is being recorded, in addition to everything I do and say is being recorded. So, it works both ways.”

Research Question #2

What impact do body cameras have on police officers?

Research question two was asked in order to better understand the policies that surround body cameras as well as if the body cameras have impacted police officers in any way. The first question that was asked to the officers to help the researcher better understand the impact of body cameras was: Do you know what your department's policy is related to when and who can look at an officer's body camera footage? Almost all (n=15) officers knew the policies related to when and who can look at their body camera footage. Many of the officers knew the policies good enough to explain them to the researcher when that question was asked. One officer (one working in administration) said that they knew the policies related to who and when the footage was looked at, but they were under new administration, so it was subject to change. The officers were then asked if their body camera footage was randomly looked at. Almost every officer (n=14) that the researcher interviewed knew that their body camera footage was randomly viewed by supervisors.

The officers were also asked if their department got feedback prior to implementing body cameras within the department. Half the officers (n=8) said yes that the departments got feedback prior to implementing body cameras, while the other half of the officers (n=8) either said no, or they did not know if the department had gotten feedback prior to implementing. Officer Four said, "I think we got feedback from other departments on it, maybe officers in other departments. We were just told we were getting them." The officers that answered yes to this question were asked if they were consulted personally regarding implementation of body cameras. There were just a few (n=3) officers that said they were consulted personally.

The officers were also asked about their level of discretion to turning their body cameras on and off. The majority of the officers (n=6) said that any time they go on calls, turn their lights on, or have a 'serious' call their body camera must be on. A few other officers (n=3) said that any time they are interacting with the public they need to have their body camera on. There were three officers who said that they had full discretion to turn their body camera off and on when they wanted to. There were just a few (n=2) officers that said they have no discretion to whether they can turn their cameras on and off, they have to be on anytime they are dealing with the public or going on a call. It was interesting to see the officers within the same department have different views on the level of discretion to turning body cameras on and off.

The last question that was asked in this section was if the officers feel safer with body cameras. There were 6 officers that said they do not feel safer with a body camera on. Officer Eight answered no and said, "I mean it is an eyewitness. That is all that it is... Do I feel safer with it no." The majority (n=9) of the officers stated that they did feel safer with a body camera. Officer Three answered yes and said, "Absolutely, it provides a true account of what actually happened, and nobody can come back and say that somebody did something wrong, and if you have to take action you can see exactly what happened in the heat of the moment." The officers that answered yes to body cameras making them feel safer expressed that the cameras did not necessarily make them feel physically safer, but safer knowing that what they are doing is being recorded, and if there is a complaint or a question about something they can go back and show what went on. There was one officer that did not answer if he felt safer with a body camera or not.

Research Question 3

What impact do body cameras have on use of force?

The first question that was asked to the officers in hopes to better understand if body cameras impact the use of force was: What are your thoughts about body cameras having the possibility to impact use of force? For this question the answers were varied, but two categories emerged. Many of the officers (n=7) believe that body cameras can hold officers more accountable when it comes to use of force. Body cameras can help diffuse the situation in some cases. Officer Nine answered, “Most of the officers are going to take care of the situation, when you get into a stressful situation you go right back to your training, and everybody is trained the right way to do stuff.” The rest of the officers (n=5) do not think that the body cameras make a difference in regard to the use of force.

The officers were next asked if they believed that body cameras had an impact on use of force against officers. While doing research the researcher found that body cameras can cause the use of force against officers to increase (Lum et al., 2019). This question was asked to determine if that was true in a rural area. Interestingly, all of the officers (n=16) said that it did not matter. The officers made it very clear that if the citizen is willing to use force against an officer, they were going to do it either way. The officer’s clear perception was that it did not matter if the officer had on a body camera or not.

Research Question #4

Do body cameras affect how police officers respond to certain calls?

The officers that were interviewed were asked if they had noticed a change in their behavior since wearing a body camera. A majority of the officers (n=10) said that their behavior had not changed at all, while only a few (n=4) believed that the body cameras had changed their behavior in some way. These changes largely involved changes to the officer's demeanor, such as just being more aware of what they say, how much they curse, or just being more professional. Officer Five said, "The only thing that it changed that I noticed is cursing. Nobody likes to have their body cam footage played out and hear them cursing, and you usually get called out all at once when you have first started to do it. You stop after a while; you realize that makes you look unprofessional."

It was then asked if the officers thought that they handled calls differently due to body cameras. A few (n=3) officers said that they did handle calls differently due to them wearing body cameras. While (n=11) officers said that they did not handle any calls differently due to body cameras. One officer did not give a yes or no answer to the question, and the other officer that did not answer did not wear a body camera. The officers were then asked if there were any calls that they did not like recording. Multiple officers (n=7) said there were certain calls that they did not like to record such as: coroner calls, bad accidents, child abuse cases, death investigations, and any other type of sensitive information. Officer Twelve said, "Yeah, death investigations. Death investigations that are not suspicious. It is just hard for the family, very traumatic, and somethings you do not need to see recorded." There were (n=8) officers that responded saying they did not have any certain calls that they did not like recording.

Research Question #5

Do officers in East Tennessee support body cameras?

The final research question was answered by asking the officers who participated one question: Overall, could you comment on if you support body cameras or not. Every officer (n=16) answered yes, they did support body cameras. Officer Fifteen said, “Yes, it protects us. They are there for our safety and our protection.” Some of the officers (n=6) had criticisms about body cameras. Every criticism stated had to do with the technical side of the cameras, with Officer Nine saying, “if there is any criticism it is over on the technical side. The storage and the battery life; if you are working a 12-hour shift and you begin recording at the beginning of your shift they probably would not make it six hours.” All of the officers who were interviewed supported body cameras fully. One officer spoke about the previous department that he had worked for, he said, “when I worked at the previous department that I was employed for, the department did not have the funds for body cameras. The officers would buy their own body cameras to use. The only issue with that was that there were no policies surrounding the body cameras because they were owned by the officers.”

Chapter Summary

This chapter discussed the content of the interviews with police officers to get their perceptions of body cameras and to answer the research questions. Each interview question was analyzed to help answer the research questions and understand the perceptions of body cameras among the sample. The support of the body cameras was discussed along with criticisms as well as specific things that the officers liked about body cameras. The final chapter will provide a

discussion of these findings and highlight the themes and the differences in opinions of body cameras between the officers.

Chapter 5. Discussion

Police perception of body cameras was a widely studied topic. Most of the research previously done has come from quantitative studies that looked at larger police departments in urban areas. The current study specifically looked at rural areas in order to determine the perception of body cameras in those rural areas. This study sought to fill this gap in the research by using qualitative research to better understand police officer perception of body cameras. The research questions were answered through interviews that were conducted with current police officers. This chapter serves to discuss the results of these interviews and how they related to the existing knowledge. This chapter will also cover the limitations, policy implications, and future research.

Findings

Citizen Interaction

To better understand the impact body cameras have on citizen interaction with police officers, it was important to get input from current officers. Prior research on body cameras has found that when the public has trust in their police department as well as police transparency it allows for better social conditions in the community (Bauhr & Grimes, 2014; Cucciniello & Nasi, 2014; Cucciniello et al., 2017). The results of this study showed that the vast majority of police officers believe that body cameras provide some level of transparency to citizens.

The research study discovered that the majority of officers believe that the citizens notice they have a body camera. This finding was consistent with the previous research that found, almost all the citizens knew they were being recorded but were not concerned (Crow et al., 2017; Grossmith et al., 2015). It was also noted that a few officers did not think citizens notice when they have body cameras. This was interesting to hear, because when it was described to the

researcher the body cameras have a flashing red light on it. This could possibly be because the officer may not pay that much attention to the body camera themselves. This could also be due to the situation that the officer may be in with the citizens. If the situation is heated the citizen would probably be less likely to notice the body camera rather than if the officer and citizen were just having a conversation. There are a variety of reason to why the officers may not think that citizens notice the cameras.

When it comes to privacy the previous research suggested that there could be an issue with some citizens not wanting to be recorded or being concerned about their privacy. Many citizens stated that they could not remember if they were being recorded or not (McClure et al., 2017). There were also only a few citizens that were concerned with privacy (Crow et al., 2017; Grossmith et al., 2015). The current research discussed citizen privacy from an officer's perception. Only a couple officers believed that there were citizens concerned with privacy, and that was because they had previously had interaction with citizens and the citizens had told them they did not want to be recorded. It was also mentioned by an officer that when recording an individual who had passed away that could be a privacy concern for the family. In the previous research there had not been anything mentioned about certain calls that officer did not like to record. This finding was a significant contribution to the previous literature, as the types of calls that officers do not want to video has been previously unexplored in the prior research.

One would think that if someone is being recorded, they would be more likely to cooperate and not resist. The previous research that was done looking at citizen cooperation suggested that the citizens were less likely to cooperate if they were being investigated but would be more likely to cooperate if they were a victim (Lum et al., 2019). The current research had similar findings. The majority of the officers stated from experience body cameras have no effect

on citizen cooperation. If the individual is going to fight, they are going to do it whether the officer has a body camera or not.

Impact on Police Officers

Body cameras can impact police officers in many ways, and the current research looked at a few of those. When discussing the policies surrounding body cameras all of the officers knew the departments policies about body cameras and the body camera footage. All of the officers understood the policies that their department had and were able to explain them to the researcher. The majority of the officers were also aware that their body camera footage was randomly looked at by their supervisors. All of the officers were fine with their footage being looked at, which was not surprising. When it came to the implementation of body cameras some of the officers that were interviewed did not get asked for feedback about body cameras before they were implemented, while others did. There were only a few that were actually consulted personally about the implementation of body cameras.

One area where officers seemed to not understand the policies surrounding body cameras was in relation to discretion of their use. The previous research suggested that when officers have the discretion to turn their body cameras off that is when the use of force increases (Ariel, 2016). For example, the majority of the officers who were interviewed said they have to have their cameras on anytime they go in calls. There were a few officers that said they had the full discretion to turn them off when they wanted to, as well as a few officers said they had no discretion to when they could turn the cameras off. It is very interesting to see the different responses from officers who are working within the same department. More training as well as the officers better understanding the policies could help improve their knowledge of the policies

as well as clarify this issue to potentially keep the officers from violating the policies surrounding body cameras.

There is the possibility that body cameras can make officers feel safer due to the fact that everything is being recorded. The previous research had taken a look at this and found that some officers looked at body cameras as a way of protection, 18.7% of officers said that they would feel safer with a body camera (Jennings et al., 2014). In the current study this concept was also examined. Out of the total number of officers (n=16) interviewed approximately half indicated that they felt safer with a body camera. The only difference between the current research and the previous research is when the officers discussed feeling safer it was not that they felt physically safer. The officers expressed that they felt safer knowing they had the camera, knowing that they were doing their job properly and that if there was a complaint, they had proof of what really happened.

Use of Force

The current research examined the concept of use of force, changes in behavior, and calls. When discussing the use of force with the officers that were interviewed many believed that body cameras did not make a difference with the use of force. It was noted that the many of the officers would do what they needed to do regardless of if they had a body camera or not. The results of this study differ from the previous research which found that use of force was reduced by 50% (Sutherland et al., 2017, and Ariel et al., 2017). It was also shown in the previous research that because of body cameras the citizens as well as the officers had better behavior which overall resulted in less use of force situations (Gaub et al., 2016). It was also noted in the previous research that when an officer is wearing a body camera, they are more likely to be assaulted by a citizen (Ariel., 2016). The results of the current study did not find that to be true.

When the officers were asked about use of force against them, many of the officers said there was no drastic change. It was noted that if a citizen is going to fight with an officer, they are going to do it no matter what, the body camera is not going to make a difference.

The current study discussed changes in behavior due to body cameras. The results found were similar to the previous research which stated that police officers reported that having a body camera made them more self-aware and more cautious (Ready and Young, 2015). As well as Jennings et al. (2014) found that the officers behaved more professional. Both of these findings were very similar to the current study's findings. Most of the officers did not believe that the body cameras had changed their behavior, but the ones who did believed their behavior had changed for the better. They believed that they were more self-aware, in the way that they needed to be more professional and curse less.

When interviewing the police officers, the researcher asked if the body cameras had affected how they handle calls and if there were any calls that they did not like recording. Many of the officers said that the body cameras did not affect the way that they handled calls, and that they responded to them the same way they would if they did not have body cameras. This was asked to determine if they went into each call the same way. When discussing calls that the officers did not like recording, many of the officers said that there were no calls that they did not like recording. Some of the officers said that they did not enjoy recording such as, coroner calls, bad accidents, sexual abuse cases, and other sensitive information. The results to this question were not surprising.

Support of Body Cameras

The previous research had suggested that most officers support body cameras (Kyle & White, 2017), which was true in the current study as well. Every officer that was interviewed in the current study fully supported body cameras. Although, the officers supported body cameras, they did have some criticisms of them. The criticisms of the body cameras were on the technical side of things. The battery life was an issue to the majority of the officers, as well as the storage and the placement of the cameras on the vests.

Implications

The results of this study increase our understanding of police perception of body cameras in three ways. First, it establishes how police officers in rural areas perceive body cameras. The current study suggests that rural officers are similar to the previously studied urban officers when it comes to perceptions of citizen interaction, the impact on police officers, and the support of body cameras, while differences could be observed in the officers perceptions as well as use of force.

The research provided some basic knowledge surrounding how officers in rural areas perceive body cameras. There was no previous qualitative research done in rural areas to determine how officers in rural areas perceive body cameras. Next, the research addressed the issue of use of force within the law enforcement field. With use of force being a big issue in the world it was important to find out how body cameras affected that in rural areas. It was found that the officers in the East Tennessee area did not feel that there was a difference in the amount of force that was used while wearing body cameras. Due to the area being rural, it seems that there was not the same amount of use of force situations as in urban areas. Finally, it is important

to note that some of the previous research had suggested that body cameras can increase the use of force against police officers. That may be true in urban areas, but in rural areas there was no difference found between the use of force against officers while wearing a body camera and not having one on.

In addition, the results of the study allowed for the extension of our knowledge surrounding police perception of body cameras. As discussed in the literature review there were several studies that had been done looking at police officer perception of body cameras. While the majority of the previous research was quantitative it also looked at urban areas which did not allow for rural areas to be factored into the research. Interview data indicated that many of the concepts that apply in urban areas also apply in rural areas too. This should provide evidence that there is a need to greater understand police officer perception of body cameras in rural areas.

Limitations

While the current study offered insight to police officer perception of body cameras in rural areas, there were some important limitations. First, the study was conducted within a relatively rural area of Tennessee. This allowed for an examination of the body camera perceptions within an understudied group of police officers. However, this sample cannot be used to represent a larger population. This could be a limitation if there are a high number of officers employed at each department. This limitation could affect the results of the study through data saturation occurred within the sample that was taken. As well as there were only two departments represented in this study, these two departments may not represent the entirety of the rural area. To add, there was only one researcher conducting the interviews, transcribing the recordings, and analyzing the themes that were found. Another possible limitation is that

there were only male officers interviewed. This could be a limitation because if there were more than one researcher there could be the possibility of finding different themes within the data.

Future Research

This study looked at police officer perception of body cameras in rural areas. This study created a foundation of the information needed to build for further research. There were several interview questions that were asked, and the answers led to more questions that could not be addressed in the time allotted to the study. One of the questions that could be further explored is the criticisms of body cameras. The research that was done was only done in two rural departments in East Tennessee. The criticisms that are in those two departments may be completely different than other rural areas. More research can be done to determine if all rural areas have the same concerns about technical issues as the rural departments in this study.

Future research could also explore the concept of rural departments not having the funding to provide body cameras for their officers but allowing the officers to purchase their own cameras. This was brought to the attention of the researcher by an officer who was interviewed. It would be beneficial to do research surrounding body cameras that are owned by officers rather than the department. It would also be beneficial to determine if there are any policies surrounding the body cameras if the officer owns the camera.

Finally, for future research it would be interesting to explore how individuals who work in the court room such as DAs and others and administration in law enforcement view body cameras. Since these individuals are seeing the body camera footage as well as having to use it in court and determine what to do with the footage. It would be beneficial to get the perspective of those as well.

Conclusion

The trust of the public can often be tested when it comes to use of force situations in the United States. It can be hard for the citizens to understand everything that is going on as well as determine if it should have happened. With body cameras becoming more popular among police departments, it is allowing for the citizens to have better transparency of what actually happens. The current study sought to fill the gap by investigating the police officer perception of body cameras in rural areas. The results from these interviews provided knowledge of police officer perception of body cameras that can be used to further research and better adjust the cameras. This study allowed for new qualitative research to be done providing information on rural police officers and their views of body cameras.

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APPENDIX: Interview Guide

- There will be basic introductory questions
 - How old are you?
 - How long have you been an officer?
 - Has it always been for this police department, or did you work at another before this?
 - If another- how long did you work there?
 - Did they have body cameras?
 - Do you currently wear a body camera?
 - If yes, how long have you had it?
 - Did you start at the department before they had body cameras?
 - Overall, what are your thoughts about body cameras?
- Research question #1 -What impact do body cameras have on citizen interactions?
 - Do you think that body cameras provide transparency to citizens?
 - Why or why not?
 - Do you think citizens even notice that you have a body camera on?
 - If so, do you think they are concerned about privacy?
 - Do you think that citizens are more likely to cooperate due to body cameras?
 - Why or why not?
- Research question #2 - What impact do body cameras have on police officers
 - Do you know what your department's policy is related to when and who can look at an officer's body camera footage?
 - Randomly look at footage
 - If yes- what are your thoughts about this?
 - If no- what would your thoughts be if your department stated that they are going to be randomly looking at the footage?
 - Do you know if the department got feedback from other officers prior to implementing the body cameras?
 - If yes, were you consulted personally?
 - Can you describe the officer's level of discretion related to when you can turn the camera on and off?
 - Thoughts?
 - Could you comment on if you feel safer with a body camera?
- Research question #3 & 4 - What impact do body cameras have on use of force/ Do body cameras affect how police officers respond to certain calls?
 - What are your thoughts about body cameras having the possibility to impact use of force?
 - Follow up- have you witnessed such a phenomenon in the department?
 - What about use of force against officers? Do you think that citizens would be less likely to use force and/or resistance against officers if the officers wore the body camera?

- Could you discuss any way/any other way that body cameras have changed your behavior?
 - Handle calls differently?
 - Any types of calls that you do not like recording?
 - If yes, explain
- Research Question # 5 - Do officers in Northeast Tennessee support body cameras?
 - Overall, could you comment on if you support body cameras or not?
 - Criticisms
 - Specific things that the officers may like

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