



# Body Worn Cameras and How They Create a Biased Perspective For Viewers



Ashley Allen & Tegan Siksta | Dr. Rachel Bailey : School of Communication

## INTRODUCTION

The use of body-worn cameras (BWC) in the past years has increased, and their use has been supported by many agencies and individuals. Earlier research revealed that the perspective from the BWC provokes a racial bias while evaluating the video; participants were shown videos filmed from a BWC and from an onlooker's device. This creates a problem because if one of these videos is shown in court, it already contains a bias against the citizen.

The current research is examining if certain interventions can prevent a viewer from adapting these biases. The research will help agencies across the country determine the best practice for BWCs. As of right now, there is no full understanding of how these videos contain perspectives that affect a viewer's evaluation. In order to have BWCs provide a purely objective account of the scenario, these biases must be eliminated.



## CONCLUSION

Currently, the results of this experiment are still being collected. Interestingly, the more common results that appear are comments that seek to know more information about the situation or about the behavior of either the police officer or citizen. Following those comments, were evaluations of the citizen and/or the officer.

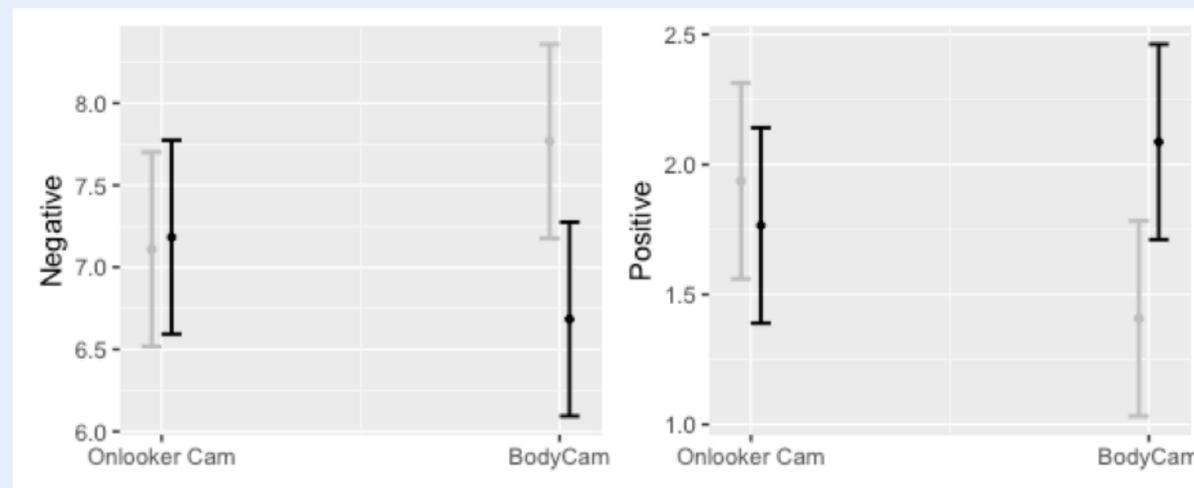
Since there are no solid results yet, the conclusion can only be hypothesized. With current data, it seems as though body-worn cameras do not provide enough information for someone to fully evaluate and analyze the situation. If the data holds true, then new research can be done to find a solution to provide more evidence to people who have to watch these videos.

## METHODS

- Consent-Interviews were completed with potential participants to explain the study and receive consent. This allowed for the participants to continue with the BWC study.
- Participants were asked to view a series of lethal police use of force videos that varied in camera perspective (body worn or onlooker) and skin color of the citizen killed.
- Participants were asked to self-report their emotional responses, feelings toward the officers and citizens, as well as make judgments about culpability. Participants also reported their likelihood to share and comment on each video in social media and provided the open-ended comments that they might post.
- These comments were coded for the presence of certain themes: normativity and evaluation of officer and citizen behaviors, emotionality, system issues being raised, and information seeking.
- Evaluation statements written by the participants include either negative statements or positive statements about the citizen, officer, or unspecified regarding their behavior.
- The BWC codebook is then used to draw conclusions based on the coded data collected, to view how and when participants will comment based on the videos being presented to them.

## ABSTRACT

Body-worn cameras (BWCs) have grown in popularity within the last few decades. BWCs are used to record police interactions with citizens in order to protect both parties. These videos are often used as evidence in the court system. Research has found that videos collected using body-worn cameras may create a biased perspective. Currently, experiments are being done to examine and potentially diminish this biased effect. To evaluate how BWC perspectives might create bias, the current study was performed. Potential participants took part in a consent-interview that allowed for informed consent, and a space for explanation of what the study entails. Participants were asked to view a series of lethal police use of force videos that varied in camera perspective (body worn or onlooker). Participants were then asked to answer several open-ended and pre-determined questions that relate to the video and allows for them to comment on their opinion, and likelihood to comment on and share these videos. The results of this data are still in the process of being gathered and evaluated. Further research will aim to create policies that eliminate bias based on this evidence.



skin — Light Skin — Dark Skin

The graphs above demonstrate that more negative emotions and less positive emotions were experienced by onlookers when viewing BWC videos where the citizen harmed had light skin compared to BWC videos where the citizen had dark skin.



## REFERENCES

A. (2020, May 18). A Deadly Force: Police violence in the USA. Retrieved March 2, 2022, from <https://www.amnesty.org.uk/deadly-force-police-violence-usa>

Bailey, R. L., Read, G. L., Yan, Y. H., Liu, J., Makin, D. A., & Willits, D. (2021). Camera point-of-view exacerbates racial bias in viewers of police use-of-force videos. *Journal of Communication*, 71(2), 246-275. <https://doi.org/10.1093/joc/jgab002>

Chapman, B. (2018, November 14). Body-worn cameras: What the evidence tells us. National Institute of Justice. Retrieved from <https://nij.ojp.gov/topics/articles/body-worn-cameras-what-evidence-tells-us>.

Russell, K. (2019, November 11). Research finds police body-worn cameras fall short of expectations. Retrieved March 2, 2022, from [https://www.thegazette.com/crime\\_courts/research-finds-police-body-worn-cameras-fall-short-of-expectations/](https://www.thegazette.com/crime_courts/research-finds-police-body-worn-cameras-fall-short-of-expectations/)