



Transforming Research into
Practice:
Holding Police Accountable by
Examining Officer's Attitudes
Regarding Body Worn Cameras
in a Border Community

Journal of Crime and Criminal
Behavior, 3(1), 2023, 81-99
Heather Alaniz-Salas, Kimberly D.
Dodson, and Fei Lu



INNOVATING

FACULTY DEVELOPMENT

The purpose of this study was to evaluate police officers' attitudes about body-worn camera (BWCs) while policing along the U.S.-Mexico border.



INNOVATING FACULTY DEVELOPMENT

Method

- We gathered qualitative data by conducting 30-minute semi-structured interviews.
- The interviews were conducted over a 19-month period between June 2019 to January 2021.
- COVID impacted our ability to gain access to the agency to schedule interviews.

INNOVATING FACULTY DEVELOPMENT

Sample

Table 1: Descriptive Statistics

<i>Variables</i>	<i>%/Mean</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>Min</i>	<i>Max</i>
Age	42.55		9.05	25.00	55.00
Gender					
Male	72.73%	8			
Female	27.27%	3			
Race					
Hispanic	100.00%	11			
Rank					
Patrol Officer	72.73%	8			
Sergeant	18.18%	2			
Lieutenant	9.09%	1			
Negative Experiences with BWCs					
Yes	81.82%	9			
No	18.18%	2			
Total Years of Experience	19.23		12.25	3.50	45.0
Total Years at Current Agency	15.14		8.19	3.50	30.00
Years Using BWCs	2.95		1.60	0.50	5.00
Length of Residency in Texas	34.91		15.84	5.00	55.00



Analysis

- We used NVivo software to transcribe the interviews.
- We conducted a line contextual analyses of each participant's interview transcript to identify recurring develop codes and emerging themes.
- We identified four major themes: accountability, control, conflict, and power.



INNOVATING

FACULTY DEVELOPMENT

Results

Accountability

[I]f I must go and use force...at least my body camera is showing everything that's going on. So, any type of excessive force complaints, I can rely on my body camera to help me back up that there was no excessive force.

[B]ack in the day, [police] would have allegations from traffic stops and people start complaining that [police] are being rude or not talking to [the individual] correctly. with the body cameras, it shows our actions when we do our traffic stops or make arrests. It pretty much works in our favor.



INNOVATING

FACULTY DEVELOPMENT

Control

Community Control

I think the community appreciates that we are using the body cameras too. In, their mind, it's to police us. I think they feel that if we are in front of a camera, we are, going to act accordingly.

Crime Control

I know that they've been able to either identify perpetrators, or some footage has even been used as evidence of an actual wrongdoing.



INNOVATING

FACULTY DEVELOPMENT

Conflict

...a lot of civilians who are just...anti-police on this side of town and there's times that we deal with civilians that just don't like us. And they speak to us in a certain way, and they expect us to always remain professional.

Our community is the border bridge to Mexico, and we deal with immigration stuff. It's hard because sometimes you come across people in a traffic stop and you are asking them for identification. Then they try to turn it around and say, "Oh, you are being racist [or you] called border patrol on them."



INNOVATING FACULTY DEVELOPMENT

Power

[BWCs] are going to help us out in the long run. [They are] going to make the department more transparent so the people can see what happens at calls, how calls escalate, and what the officer does to try to de-escalate.

It's like a double benefit. From the officer's standpoint, it can help refute, disprove any wrongful allegations, right? And at the same time,...we've seen it where it just happened, but it kind of keeps us honest, right?



INNOVATING

FACULTY DEVELOPMENT

Conclusions

This study concluded that BWCs enhance perceptions of transparency, improving police-community relations.

BWCs contribute to police accountability and reduce unfounded complaints.

BWCs narrow the power divide and foster more positive interactions between law enforcement and the community.