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police body cams reducing police brutality

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There are a lot of problems in today's world that people wish could be solved overnight, unfortunately that is not the case. Some examples of this are global warming, hunger, poverty etc. the problem with those is all though they are major crisis's, they are not as relatable to most people as other problems may be. One problem that does hit close to home for most people is police brutality. This is a on going issue in the US that needs to be solved as soon as possible. With any major problem, there are solutions, but the real problem is getting them in place and functioning sooner than later, but unfortunately this is not possible. There are many solutions that have been brought up in the case of police brutality, some of these options include defunding certain parts of a department and putting the money elsewhere,0 others include limiting the number of police a department has in general, while these may be viable options my solution however would require some possible additional funding. The solution is body cameras. This is a system that is already in place but unfortunately there is a large flaw, not every officer has access to this equipment, including officers in major cities where they need it most due to the number of interactions, they make daily compared to officers in a small town. A police officer worn body camera is a device about the size of a cell phone that is secured in a officer's duty vest and records all the officers interactions, the footage is then turned in to the department afterwards. The problem with as I stated before is there are a lot of officers in the US that are not equipped with this technology. This leaves a huge margin for possible police brutality issues. This is where the problem lies for the most part. The wicked problem in today's world regarding our country's police officers, when we look deeper into the problem of police brutality, we can see that there are multiple viable solutions to the issue, one being equipping all police officers with body worn cameras. This being said there are lots of benefits that come along with every police officer.

Some of these include educational benefits, safety benefits and benefiting cases inside the court room. All of these benefits include helping drastically reduce police brutality issues.

The first way a police officer worn body camera can help eliminate police brutality is the fact that the body cameras are always recording during any interaction a police officer has. This helps the cause in a few different ways. The first major way it helps is the safety factor. When a police officer is wearing a body camera this helps ensure the fact that he or she is acting in the most professional way possible, this helps to make sure the suspect is treated fairly and the police officer does not act out of line during the interaction. This reason this helps to ensure safety is because the body camera is recording the officer knows that any misconduct by them is on video and can not be denied, if they do act out of line they know that this behavior will be met with disciplinary action and anyone police officer or not, does not want that in the workplace. The second reason that a recording body camera helps with the overall safety is on the suspect's end. If a suspect interacting with the police knows that there is a body camera in play, they will know that no matter how they act, nothing can be said or done about how they act on video, the same goes for the officer's end on this point. A suspect will know that if their interaction is being recorded their best bet is to comply with the officer thus eliminating the possibility of doing something that can provoke an officer into a possible misconduct issue. This is backed by research done by a criminal law and criminology journal written by Ariel Barak that states "Body Worn Cameras are spreading worldwide, under the assumption that police performance, conduct, accountability, and legitimacy, in the eyes of the public, are enhanced as a result of using these devices. In addition, suspects' demeanor during police-public engagements is hypothesized to change as a result of the videorecording of the encounter. For both parties--officers and suspects--the theoretical mechanism that underpins these behavioral changes is

deterrence theory, self-awareness theory, or both.” Along with is lies the community at wholes safety, with a community’s officers equipped with body cameras they understand the safety aspect of this, and it gives a community confidence in its police department, leading to better community relations with the police and in terms lowering the crime rate which flows to reducing the amount of police brutality issues in a community as a whole. A police officer worn body camera has many benefits in the aspect of safety, helping the officers, the suspects they encounter and the community all live safer lives with a reduced risk of wrongdoing inside the threshold of the said department. As an example of this a small portion from a study done in California will be displayed in order to display how this aspect of the paper is true.

“In 2014, the first study was completed in the United States, which analyzed whether body-worn cameras reduced the prevalence of use-of-force and/or citizen’s complaints against police officers.³⁵ This California study, randomly assigned one police department’s officers into two categories: requiring the officers to wear body cameras during their shift, or not requiring the officers to do so.³⁶ Use-of-force and citizen complaints for each officer were then compared between the two categories. The researchers discovered that the officers without cameras engaged in twice as many use-of-force acts than those with the cameras.³⁷ Additionally, the number of citizen complaints against officers wearing cameras were only ten percent of the number of complaints filed against officers who were not wearing cameras.³⁸” this study was displayed my Mindy Lawrence of the north Dakota law review in her paper called Lights Camera Action: The Age of Body Cameras in Law Enforcement and The Effects of Implement Body Camera Programs in Rural Communities.

There are many studies out there that reinforce this agenda of police worn body cameras being beneficial to not only the officer and suspect but also to the community. Another study

done by the journal of criminal law and criminology states that “Many have suggested that placing body-worn cameras (BWCs) on police officers improves the civility of police-citizen encounters and enhances citizen perceptions of police transparency and legitimacy. In response, many police departments have adopted this technology to address public concerns over the quality of policing in their communities. The existing program evaluation evidence on the intended and unintended consequences of outfitting police officers with BWCs is still developing, however. This study reports the findings of a randomized controlled trial involving more than 400 police officers in Las Vegas, Nevada. We find that officers equipped with body-worn cameras generated fewer complaints and use of force reports relative to officers without cameras. BWC officers also made more arrests and issued more citations than their non-BWC counterparts. The findings of this randomized controlled trial raise the possibility that planning for the placement of BWCs on officers should consider the competing effects of improvement in civilian perceptions of police generated by reductions in complaints and use of force incidents and of public concerns about increased enforcement activity.” This study shows that when police officers are wearing body cameras not only is their job done more professionally and more efficiently it also makes the community feel safer because of the officers work. This is very important in having a good police-community relationship which in turn will greatly reduce brutality issues.

Another great benefit to all police officers being equipped with body cameras is the education value that the recordings hold. It is common knowledge that it is rare that 2 police interactions will be exactly similar, so training for something like that is not practical, this being said there is however a huge opportunity to learn from different encounters and use the knowledge gained from it to the officer’s own stops. For example, a Washington state academy

uses this for classes “which would address the situations in which officers might be video recorded, or might themselves record use-of-force. These included Patrol Procedure, Traffic Stops, Criminal Procedure, Crisis Intervention, Criminal Law, and Tactical Thinking.” This is said in Meg Stalcup and Charles Hahn’s “Cops, Cameras and the policing ethics With every officer in America being equipped with a body worn camera there will be tons of interacts recorded on file. The benefit of this is huge. With all these encounters on camera of police interactions in every shape and size there are plenty of options that can be hand picked from and used to teach officers with. Weather this being already employed officers being taught how to treat a situation on top of their prior training or, using the footage in police academies and other training facilities like the police academy the opportunities that the previously recorded interacts are limitless, with all this being put to use it will help officers treat every situation the best way possible, thus decreasing the amounts of police brutality we see today. Not only is the footage good for educating officers and other law enforcement professionals, but it can also be used to educate citizens. It is possible the body camera footage could be used for civilians to study in order to see examples of good and bad police interactions and helping them in order to stay safe if they are ever placed in a situation where the police are involved. These are some of the beneficial ways that the footage off of a police officer worn body camera can used and implemented in the fight to reduce the dark issue of police brutality we know today.

There are many benefits of every police officer in the country being equipped with a fully functional body camera. Besides the tremendous amount of benefits it has in the safety of the parties involved in a interaction with law enforcement, and the huge opportunities it has for officer and civilian education it also serves a huge purpose in Americas courtrooms. “By examining 139 U.S. police departments using event history analyses, I find that the police

departments with a higher severity of police-involved deaths of minority residents and a higher strength of social movements protesting police brutality are more likely to implement BWCs” this was said by Sunyoung Pyo who after extensive research found this conclusion, this reinforces the fact that departments use this tool in order to help court procedures because of their past issues. Like anything when something is on video it is hard to deny anything but what the video shows, this is exactly why police officers wearing body cameras is beneficial in the US court system. With the courts today being flooded anything that can help clear cases quicker and more efficiently is a huge help. Court battles can go on for days with the defendant or prosecution just constantly wanting more and more chances no matter what is happening in the case. With police officers wearing body cameras this will record the entire interaction before and arrest or anything is made. While this wont help in murder cases or bank robberies where the crime is previously committed it does help for a certain number of cases. The kind of cases where someone is trying to have charges reduced or the whole case dropped because they claim that the officer did not follow proper procedure. While this is a real thing it is not as common as someone who is facing jail time may make it seem. It is possible for an officer to slip up and miss a crucial step in someone’s arrest which can lead the entire case being thrown out as a whole. However, this is where the recordings from a officer’s body camera come in to play. Despite what either party may have to say about the encounter whether the officer made and error and is trying to cover it while the suspect is trying to expose it or, the suspect is trying to show an officer slipped up when he did not the video will show the truth. This will quickly dismiss any on going legal battles that can go on for days when something like this happens simply by referring to the video, dissecting it and seeing who is telling the truth and who isn’t. This will help dismiss cases quicker and help prevent the court rooms from being jammed up all

the time. this is another great example of why police officer worn body cameras being equipped on every officer is beneficial and this reason can again be traced back and related to reducing police brutality as a whole.

Abstract

This paper shows 3 main reasons of how police worn body cameras being equipped on every single police officer in the country will be effective in reducing police brutality issues. The research is based of 3 sub points being officer, suspect and community safety, the educational value that can be gained from police worn body cameras, and how police worn body cameras can benefit the US court system. Each subpoint is broken down with how and why police worn body cameras would benefit each area.

Keywords

Police, Body Cameras, Police Misconduct, Police Brutality, Police Training, US courts, Court room function.