



Body-Worn Video for the Madison Police Department

Community Engagement Sessions

Introduction

Law enforcement professionals have recently focused increased attention on body-worn cameras (BWC) for police officers. Currently, police departments use them in ways they believe will promote officer safety, improve police/community relations, provide evidence, and improve training. Perhaps, because of the current social climate created by video evidence of the killing of unarmed citizens by police officers, more cities and agencies are considering BWC. Many advocates insist that the video will provide strong (if not incontrovertible) evidence in future incidents. However, body-worn cameras may present novel policy and practice concerns for agencies and their communities.

The City of Madison contracted with the YWCA-Madison and The Center for Family Policy and Practice (CFFPP) to engage individuals from marginalized and vulnerable communities in discussions about police body-worn video (BWV) cameras for Madison police officers. The objective was to record community members' input as to the potential effectiveness of this policy for the Madison (MPD). City officials also asked us to engage participants in a broader discussion of the state of police/community relationship in Madison. All stakeholders agreed, this relationship is the foundation of successful police enforcement policy, and participants were eager to discuss this topic. We asked these Madison residents about the impact of enforcement policy on communities, and how a body camera policy might affect their lives.

To supplement the feedback from the engagement sessions, we include two additional pieces of information for context and foundation: (1) interviews and focus groups with city employees whose work is pertinent to the question of body-worn video (BWV), and (2) investigation of other municipalities and government jurisdictions using or considering equipping officers with the cameras.

We spoke with people from Madison's Latino, African American, LGBTQ and Hmong communities, and though they were not strongly in favor of or against the use of BWV, they were eager to talk about current police policy and practice in Madison. City-employee interviewees and focus groups seemed to think that these communities would advocate for BWV. However, as it turns out, there was broad agreement and a strong feeling that a BWV policy would not respond to concerns and fears about Madison policing. On the topic of body cameras, participants expressed two major concerns, (1) police officer/agency manipulation of the camera device or of the video; and (2) unwarranted reliance on the video as incontrovertible evidence of police incidents. Another important point of concern in the discussions of BWV was the impact of the cameras on citizens' privacy. Each of these points is outlined below.

Focus group participants clearly understand the need for police protection and civic order, and they had numerous positive examples of individual officers and incidents. Generally, however, across groups, participants articulated an overriding fear and distrust of police, and a strong belief that policing in Madison’s vulnerable communities is driven by racial discrimination and profiling. Brief highlights of those conversations—and pertinent issues raised in individual groups—are also included here.

Madison Community Engagement Sessions

The session included focus group conversations convened by the following local agencies and organizations.

- 100 Black Men
- BROTHER, Nehemiah
- Centro Hispano, Latino Youth Group
- Freedom Inc.
- LGBTQ Group, Coordinated with the LGBTQ Campus Center including outreach to Alianza Latina & GSAFE
- Man Up, Nehemiah
- Madison-area Urban Ministry
- Operation Fresh Start
- Third St., YWCA Madison
- UNIDOS
- Union de Trabajadores Inmigrantes (UTI)
- Urban League of Greater Madison

Most of our participants had not studied the issue of officer body-worn cameras, and many were unaware that the city and the Madison Police Department (MPD) and city officials were considering the use of these devices for officers. However, everyone we talked with in vulnerable communities—including the youngest participants—were familiar with the popular national conversations about body-worn video and about excessive use of force by police officers. Not surprisingly, in every group, the participants mentioned Tony Robinson, a teenager who was shot and killed by a police officer in Madison. In most of the groups, someone said that a body camera would have allowed us to see exactly what happened in that incident and determine the issue of excessive force. However, someone usually reminded the group that video has been insufficient for prosecution (or any other decision making) in other cases, and that, in any case, disposition of the legal issues would not bring Tony back.

The shocking blow of that incident in Madison created a citywide desire for understanding and answers. So, we began this work expecting a collective answer—either affirmative or negative—with regard to BWV. On the contrary, individuals in our groups had many answers and many responses to our questions. The discussion was nuanced and complex. In fact, their analysis was very much in line with that of the police and city employees (and national experts). Participants did not believe that video evidence could be used successfully to determine innocence or guilt. They said that video evidence is not a panacea for the problems in the relationship between police and the communities they serve.

Individuals in our community engagement sessions were also eager to weigh in on the practical, technical, and privacy questions of BWV. Yet, they tended to talk most about an issue of urgent concern to their families and communities; the mutual fear between people in their neighborhoods and Madison police officers. Some residents in vulnerable communities are afraid of police, in large part, because they believe police officers are afraid of them—and police carry weapons. The issue of fear will be explored in more detail below. However, the pertinent point here is that participants spoke most about issues, policies and practices in current effect with obvious consequences for them. This was the case in every group, regardless of the question or how it was worded. So, ultimately, we got feedback on the question of BWV, plus a more broad-based analysis of the impact of police activity on the lives of people in Madison.

Community Participants General perspective on BWV

In general, across and within the groups, there was no strong feeling or detailed argument in favor of police officers wearing body cameras. However, it is clear that, in each group, participants recognized the potential benefits of BWV. One individual suggested that BWV could provide pre and post incident protection for both officers and citizens. Another said that video would be useful in capturing interactions and incidents because “people can be belligerent,” and “police do need protection sometimes.” Others suggested that cameras could be used to “show citizens what they are doing wrong to get themselves in trouble with the police.”

One person considered the possibility of using the video evidence to protect the citizen accused of a crime. “There are obviously some positives; I mean your word could stand up against a police officer if it is on camera. It would no longer just be your word against his.” Also, some participants suggested that awareness of the camera might cause both officer and citizen to de-escalate the danger in an incident. This type of affirmative comment was evident in every group—put forth from time to time throughout the conversation.

Progress of the discussion was similar in every group. At least one (often, more than one) participant began the discussion with an assertion that a BWV policy is good common sense, and say something like “I think police officers should be required to wear body cameras.” Generally, the speaker would follow that statement with another assertion—that video could potentially reveal the rights and wrongs and truths and lies of incidents. One person even said, “maybe it [the camera] will stop criminals from attacking us,” and in another group, participants thought the cameras could be used to track incidences of profiling. In that manner, one person after another highlighted the positive possibilities. In one group, when the question of city budget limitations arose during the discussion, someone asked, “How much is Tony Robinson’s life worth?”

Generally, however, these statements in favor of BWV naturally combined with the other thoughts, opinions, themes and narrative elements from the discussion and from people’s everyday lives. In each group, the original positive perspective on BWV, naturally blended into a larger, more complex group analysis of life in Madison for African Americans, Latinos, Hmong, other immigrants, other people of color, and LGBT individuals— especially those who have few social or economic resources. Thus, the conversation inevitably moved to the interactions and incidents between those vulnerable people and the police. As each discussion progressed, participants made assertions about the past ineffectiveness of videos in proving criminal intent or excessive force, and the inevitability of police shootings, and the inequity and injustice of government systems. By that point, fewer people supported the idea of BWV,

and almost no one suggested that video data could respond to their most pressing concerns. In one group, this line of reasoning ended with a participant saying:

- “ You see in court that would mean you have something that would stand up against the police...but, at the same time... you never know if they are just going to take off the camera and break it and blame it on the victim.”

Between the initial statement in favor of BWV for Madison police and the ultimate questioning of police trustworthiness, participants exchanged and compared stories and recollections of negative incidents with officers. And, about halfway through each discussion, someone would suggest that the video would not keep people alive or lead to the conviction of an officer for murder for excessive force.

Officer manipulation of the camera device.

Many participants were suspicious about a BWV policy for many reasons, but the concern first and most often expressed was officer manipulation of the device. Many of them believed that officers would turn off or otherwise manipulate the camera for their own benefit or perspective. Therefore, most participants thought that, if the policy is instituted here, the cameras should be constantly running, and definitely outside of the control of the individual officer wearing the device. So that, most of comments that were supportive, neutral, or even resigned to the cameras, seemed to assume that the officer would have no control of the camera. In fact, one group agreed that the officer should be unaware of the location of the camera on her own person. Participants said:

- “I was for body cameras after I heard that they were talking about them after the Michael Brown case, and I thought that this could be an opportunity to correct errors in interactions with citizens...now, I’m pretty skeptical, because we do live in a pretty technologically inclined era...but, it can be easily manipulated. They can definitely get away with something or brush something under the rug, and I feel like our phones are sufficient, because then we can control what’s happening.”
- “Can police alter the image? Can they turn it off and on at will? What are police bringing into situations when they arrive?”
- “Can this footage be manipulated?”
- “Who is making sure that this (manipulation of the video or the camera) is not happening or that the community remains in control of these situations?”

Compare this to the feedback from information technology (IT) personnel and other city employee respondents. According to their professional and informed deduction, these concerns would not be assuaged in the event. These agency representatives deal with video evidence every day, and much of it is redacted for legal, policy and privacy reasons. City employees said:

- what the public wants are often things that would have to be redacted. I know for a fact that we would redact a shooting. What the community wants. That type of thing, would not be released anyway.
- There is just so much information out there now that is available that would need to be reviewed and would need to be redacted. That reviewing the records...my concern would be that it would be very suspicious because large portions probably would be redacted.

If the city of Madison decides to institute a BWV policy, the administrative reality of redaction (and the likelihood that officers would have some control of the device on their person) will be serious point of concern for people in the community most affected. Again, generally, in community engagement sessions, participants were not calling for BWV. However, our community feedback suggests that if Madison officials decide to institute this policy, people will expect (or insist) that officers have little to no control over the device on their own person.

False sense of security

In addition to their concerns about officer manipulation of the camera device, participants expressed their concerns that this policy might lead to unreasonable expectations. They suggested that body-worn cameras might give everyone involved—officers, victims, citizens, and MPD—a false sense of security. In every one of our community groups, individuals said that video could not provide all of the necessary evidence to help decision makers understand or judge an incident between residents and police. They said simply and directly,

- “Body cams are not a panacea.”
- “Body cams, a case of false security.”

Regardless of their BWV policy position, many participants also warned against any assumption that the policy would solve or even address the problems that repeatedly arise in the Madison police/community relationship. They did not believe that the urgent problems of profiling, discrimination, and inequity would be solved by police officers wearing cameras. **No one suggested that video evidence would dispose of the question of criminal guilt or innocence (of police officers or accused residents). And, no one believed that the camera devices would stop police officers’ use of excessive force.**

It is interesting to consider this response from engagement sessions in light of our conversations with city employees who were concerned that the cameras would cause potentially unrealistic community expectations. On the contrary, in every community group we spoke to participants insisted on the limitations of this technology. Everyone reiterated the fact that the video cannot tell the whole story of an incident—cannot provide all the necessary facts of the case.

Privacy

A significant number of community engagement participants also agreed with city employee concerns that vulnerable people might choose not to call the police because of the cameras. Many individuals in the Latino community sessions expressed concern that the videos could be used by the Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) agency. Some people thought that most incidents that required police support or protection would be an inappropriate place for body-worn video cameras. In every group, open records and privacy were two important concerns, though they did not rise to the top of any individual or group priority list for vulnerable and marginalized communities.

Participants were worried about video evidence in the context of the regulations of other government institutions and agencies such as probation, parole or child welfare might be interested in their movements or activities. In this regard, some respondents suggested that videos should be destroyed or deleted after a reasonable amount of time. People asked, “Are we creating another CCAP [now WCCA – Wisconsin Circuit Court Access] with this?” “How would cameras impact the many people of color on probation or parole?” and “do police tell/remind citizens they are on camera?”

Ultimately, the concern about other systems intersected with the suspicion about manipulation and misuse of the video. Participants’ priority was to make sure that the police did not have control of the video. A person in one of the groups conducted in Spanish said,

- “Privacy is going to be violated. Now that police are going to have cameras, people are going to be even more scared to fight for their rights to get their papers.”

When asked who (if not the police) should hold and control the video, participants had many suggestions including, the “media,” the Federal Department of Justice, and “an independent party.”

Living in Madison

In every focus group, participants were most interested in discussing incidents and interactions with the police in their communities now—under current police policy and practice. In each session, much of the time was consumed in conversation about their perspective on the scope of that topic. The themes of the many conversation were mistrust, fear and discrimination.

Mistrust

When we talked to police officers, they said that trust is the most important aspect of their relationship with residents. They were especially concerned that trust of their agency and officers was lacking in the most vulnerable and marginalized communities in Madison.

In general, participants in our community groups did not consider the question of BWV a priority, and most people said they did not trust police. They also said, that body-worn video cameras would not change that fact in any way. However, they stressed the importance of a positive police/community relationship to law enforcement and community safety. And, they agreed that the relationship must be built on trust and accountability. Still, generally, and across groups, no one believed that either of those elements was evident in the relationship between Madison police, and the vulnerable, marginalized

communities they serve. And, again, they said body-worn video cameras would not respond to the sources of distrust and suspicion (and their most urgent concerns)—racial profiling, aggression, and use of excessive force. Most of the ongoing conversation in community sessions was on this point. The comments were many and varied:

- “I don’t see how [BWV] would help at all, because I feel like police officers already have way too much power, and so I feel like it would just add to their power dynamic and would add to the list of things that they can wield against you, so I just don’t see how it can help”
- “Now, we are the enemy for them. We are worried and can’t have a relationship with them when they make us feel like we are dangerous. Both, the community and police officers have a defensive attitude towards each other.”
- “The less interaction with the police, the better for our community.”
- “I don’t know if they are simply going to enter my house and kill someone.”

One participant said that, even under community policing policies, officer activity will not engender trust if mutually respectful interaction is not consistent across incidents, officers and situations. According to some others, residents perceive differences between the objectives and practices of the friendly community officer on the one hand, and the officer who is called in an emergency or a dangerous situation, on the other. They suggest that this is a serious challenge to building a positive relationship.

Some participants spoke to this issue with examples:

- “...[at] Madison East High School, there was a resident officer, and he was always there...so, I imagine how much of a betrayal that it was in the Tony Robinson situation, where his friends call the police thinking that they are going to get officer Jesse, and then it turned out like it did.”
- “We did a forum, and they [police] spoke on their daily work and when you go home and they treat you a different way, in a bad way, you keep thinking what about the things that were said in the forum. Why are they lying?”
- “Camera will not stop police brutality and illegality.”
- “They should treat you like you are human. Talking and caring in the community. Asking if their presence is required and welcomed. Asking for our opinions. They should work on building trust.”

Fear

The most striking point to be made about the feedback from the community engagement sessions is that many people in marginalized and vulnerable communities fear police presence, generally. According to most people of color in our groups, the fear is mutual—police are afraid of them too. Participants consider this a particularly threatening problem because police bring weapons (and therefore danger) into any situation they attend.

All of our participants knew the national media narratives about police and low-income communities of color. Of course, they knew about the stories of young men and women dying at the hands of police officers around the country. What many people have gleaned from the national conversation is that the public, and the legal system will exonerate a police officer who may have been afraid for his or her own life. Many participants further suggested that implicit bias supports a fear of all people of color (perhaps, especially black men). And, they have seen evidence that any aspect of the clothes or demeanor of a person of color might be perceived as threatening. This information and understanding—in addition to personal experiences in Madison that mirror the national stories—reinforces this fear.

- “I feel that police officers are paranoid of our reactions...They use extreme force when unnecessary. They don’t know how to treat people.”
- “For the charges police officers faced on young black kids deaths, they had no cameras, but a few phone video recordings. What difference does the camera make if the kid is still going to be dead?”
- “It makes the people who are being watched feel like they are bad people. It makes you feel like something bad is going to happen.”
- “You start out not feeling afraid, but when the police show up, you start feeling afraid. Like something is going to happen.”
- “When I see police, I get scared. I feel like there will be a shooting.”
- “A camera won’t protect us from being shot though. There is more going on. We also need to change as a whole the system and the community.”
- “What makes them feel threatened? Because sometimes it is just the color of our skins that makes them assume we are bad people.”
- “I live by a lot of crime, but I would be more afraid to call the police. I see drug dealers, but I don’t call because I don’t want the police in my neighborhood because I’m also brown and with everything going on I wouldn’t want them to hurt me.”
- “Now we are the enemy for them. We are worried and can’t have a relationship with them when they make us feel like we are dangerous. Both, the community and police officers have a defensive attitude towards each other.”

Racial Profiling and Discrimination

In each of the groups, the people of color made it very clear that they believed that racial bias and discrimination were an important factor in the way that the Madison police department operates.

- “The current atmosphere that says we can’t hire new people of color because they all have arrest records—is that implicit bias?”

Also people believed that racial discrimination is an element of police harassment, excessive use of force and surveillance.

- “It feels like ghosts. You never know when they are going to pop up. [I see their car lights] in the dark. It makes me feel creepy.
- “I feel worried for my son and husband because minorities are being targeted.”
- “If you are not white then you are bad, that’s the message that is being sent by the police.”
- “In the same way they are targeting the black community they will eventually target the Latino community.”
- “There is a difference in the treatment of emergencies between Latino and white communities.”
- “What neighborhoods are they going to be using these cameras in? Will it just be in neighborhoods with marginalized people?”
- “Like if they are stand around in your neighborhood, taping everything that’s happening, they are taping you! And that can be used against you, I just don’t see how this can benefit communities of color at all. “

Other Issues in marginalized communities

The issues outlined above were common themes in each of the groups, from the middle school children to the young mothers, to the men past retirement age—Latino, Hmong, African American and LGBTQ participants of many races and identities. They all talked about racial bias, discrimination and injustice, and the overwhelming majority of these individuals in the groups did not consider BWV a solution to the problem between their community and the police. However, individual communities raised specific issues and concerns about policing in their own communities.

African American

Interestingly, each of the groups expressed some sense that Black people in Madison were in particular danger from police. Certainly, most participants believed that, in general, people of color should be

wary of the police. But, the sense that Black people were particularly vulnerable to harm by the police was universal across community engagement groups. For example, in two of the Latino groups (which were conducted in Spanish), participants said that they were particularly concerned for the lives of Black people.

- “I am always concerned if they are going to stop people, who are they going to stop? I’m especially afraid for African Americans.

Another participant in a Latino group said,

- “After what happened with Tony Robinson and what happened to the black community, I don’t trust the police coming to my door.”

And, a person in an LGBTQ group said

- “Like, it doesn’t matter if you get killed on camera, police can manipulate the camera. And even if you get caught killing a Black person, on camera, you will not go to jail, like we have seen this happen. Like it is weird that we need an incentive to not kill Black people or abuse people...

And in predominantly African American groups, participants took for granted that, among their fellow participants, there was a universal understanding about racial discrimination against African Americans in Madison in all systems and institutions. With regard to the police force, they clearly believed that the discrimination is threatening to the life and liberty of black people in particular.

African American participants said, “The law is meant for them,” and that “black people are routinely judged stereotyped and discriminated against.” They also suggested that African American people have no power to protect themselves, their families or communities. Finally, over and over, in their own words they echoed the sentiment of one participant who said that clearly:

- “The incidents of excessive use of force by police without sanction is proof that ‘black lives don’t matter’ to most people in society.”

In these discussions, the themes were strong and much repeated. Two other comments represent ideas expressed by many:

- “The whole idea around police and Black people is just part of the culture and our history post-Civil War, and part of the Black codes [Jim Crow]. And, so we are saying that we need to give these people cameras, but we aren’t talking about how these actions are ingrained in our culture, or in police culture, it is anti-Blackness, and it’s just part of American culture.”
- “The most important point is that the conversation about body cams, danger, guns, and policing must be discussed in the broader context of the American history of racial injustice and the current racialized system.”

Hmong

The feedback from the young people we spoke to from this community was very similar to that of the rest of the groups. They begin the conversation by highlighting some possible positive aspects of a camera constantly recording police/resident interactions. However, ultimately most of the participants in this group clearly stated their vote against a BWV policy in Madison

One story stood out among the students we talked to in this group. When the facilitator asked a question about police presence in the neighborhoods and communities, one girl spoke up immediately to say that as she was returning home from school, walking down the street—alone—a police officer stopped her. She said that he asked her to open her backpack to reveal the contents. When asked why she thought the officer stopped her she said,

- “There was no one else around. I was not walking with friends, and I wasn’t doing anything wrong. I don’t know why he stopped me. He just believed we are always guilty.”

Latino

In addition to the general discrimination and bias some people in their communities are subject to because of their race, or ethnicity, or the color of their skin, Latino participants also voiced two other specific and important concerns. First, we heard many stories and experiences about enforcement in situations where police believed a person might not have documents to support their residence in the U.S. (whether or not they are correct in this assumption). Also, there are still communications issues with police officers and people who speak Spanish, and not English.

- “We are worried about how police respond to emergencies when it comes to our children. “We are culturally different, not bad people”
- “I feel like I cannot be a straight forward with police officers because they can take me away.
- “When we had a license, we used to work together with the police...We wanted to support them so that we could overcome those issues in our community. But now it is very difficult because first they ask you for an ID.”
- “Police are making money off of us because they know we don’t have licenses.”
- The police are like “the friend that is never there.”
- “My [relative] had several parking tickets and had either 10 days in jail or a \$300 fine. He didn’t have enough money so he decided to go to jail. It was the worse decision. That had him locked down for six days, on the seventh day they reported him as missing and he got deported. We cannot trust the police...”

- “I feel like there are cases where police officers and even city officials get frustrated when they are talking to people who don’t speak English...In one situation I was trying to translate for my friend...I kept trying to tell him [the police officer] what he was saying because I speak English, and he kept saying ‘it needs to come from her not from you.’ [The officer] was saying, ‘I learned Spanish in high school.’”

Overall, members of the three Latino focus groups expressed a common fear about deportation either for themselves or family members. Specifically, they cited a general sense that law enforcement know them to be a particularly vulnerable population, and therefore a more easy target for citations. In multiple Latino groups, participants commented that they plan their transportation to and from work around their fear of law enforcement and moving traffic violations: this takes the form of taking certain routes to work where they feel there is less likelihood of seeing a police vehicle, not driving to work certain weeks of the month when they believe quotas are due, and having their teenage children do all of the family driving.

Survivors of Domestic Violence

Some participants in the community engagement sessions identified themselves as victims of domestic violence. They voiced two particular concerns in that regard. First, that victims who have concerns about immigration and deportation may not call the police, and that they would be less likely to do so if the police are wearing cameras.

- “I had a friend that was a victim of domestic abuse and the man is looking for her but she doesn’t want to report him because she knows that she has no papers and could get locked and take her kids away. My friend could end up dead because there is no trust to talk to the police on these issues.”

Survivors also expressed another important concern. They spoke about incidents where they were afraid for themselves and their children’s safety, but hesitated to call the police because they were also afraid for their partner’s safety in a confrontation with the police. The fear of possible escalation between the police and the partner resulted in victims of domestic violence not calling the police even when their lives were in danger.

- “When you call the police...have a domestic, your guy, husband...is just getting ‘out of his body’ and trying to fight the police. They are going to shoot that man!”
- “I don’t want you to come kill him, I want you to remove him.”

LGBTQ

Participants in this group talked police presence during incidents of intimate partner violence, medical emergency, and peaceful group assembly (which officers suspected criminal activity). And, of course, marginalization and discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity is a cross-cutting issue in all of the vulnerable communities. This group, however, highlighted the intersectionality of these issues with regard to the people of color and others in the LGBT community. Participants also

highlighted their privacy concerns with the BWV policy and concerns specific to their community about the harassment, disregard and disrespect many of them experience in their interactions with police.

- “Now, when I see sirens, or see a police vehicle, I tend to just look away. It just isn’t a very positive [experience]...it’s almost like I just get immediately intimidated. Nowadays, I am a bit worried, because I identify the way that I do, that they would mistreat me or misgender me or something else like that.”
- “I grew up really white, but I still had all of these unspoken rules that I knew, like that I had to be quiet, and that I had to be polite. So when they [police officers] come to my job, I have to serve them so it’s like a weird interaction each time, and they don’t look me in the eye, or they won’t give me money, they put it on the counter...”
- “...are there any concerns about the video being available to the public?”
- “If the video concerns incidents with minors, I feel like that has to be a problem.”
- “I just think it is an invasion of privacy all together. I also think that it is traumatic, like it would suck to know that my traumatic experiences with police officers are floating around on tape.”

Community Safety and Good Policing

The individuals quoted above and throughout this report express a generally negative perception of police in vulnerable and marginalized communities. Fear and mistrust are current, general, and genuine responses to police activities and practices in those Madison communities. However, some participants (from those same communities) also gave positive assessments of police officers and their work. Those participants spoke of their regard for individual police officers, and for the police department mission and goals. Some people expressed recognition of the difficulty and importance of the job of a police officer. And, some participants had both positive and negative things to say about the police.

- “Police feel like they cannot do their job because everyone has cameras.”
- “The police help me keep an eye on and control my student mentees (they are resource officers at school).”
- “Maybe it [body-worn video device] will stop criminals from attacking us.”
- “...go into the community and improve relationships...the majority of cops are probably good people, but that doesn’t translate when they can’t even communicate with the community.”
- “Police do their job, and overdo their job.”

- “I just feel like with everything that is going on we are so quick to put labels on police officers. Like I understand why but I feel like our generation is especially quick to judge police officers as all bad. They aren’t all like that.”
- “...I work pretty closely with the police...we have two police officers who are kinda like assigned to our neighborhood, so it’s a semi-nice interaction. It’s nice to like watch them play pool with the kids, we work by [a] middle school, so we have the high-risk students of color, and they know their names, and I really appreciate that, but, at the same time, there is a surveillance quality to it, but they also appear friendly.”

Some people did not express fear of the police as their sole reaction to police presence. In fact, some felt reassurance and safety in their presence.

- “I see them almost all the time...makes me feel safe.”
- “I feel safe when I see them and I am at home.”
- “It is also about their (police officer) safety. We all want to be safe.”
- [responding to a point made by a fellow participant] “Police officers cannot identify if you are a person of color or not from a phone call. I imagine that there was a lack of communication from parents with the police department. Parents might not know that police officers are actually here to help them.”

Recommendations and Suggestions from Community Sessions

While some people highlighted the good practices and people in the current system. Most were also happy to talk about improving the police/community relationship in Madison. The great majority of the people who spoke to that issue made the suggestions that any available revenue should be used for police training rather than body cameras. People spoke specifically about cultural competence training, community relationship training and officer assessment. Many also called for more services for the community. For example:

- “The money that they are using for body cameras should actually go to [police] trainings that better inform them how to work with the community.”
- “We need more cultural competence in the police department. “
- “Another way to spend that money would be in rehab centers instead of building more jails...”
- “There should be a pre-assessment of police officers with regard to their tendency toward this kind of violence. This should be a pre-assessment of the candidate before training and on-going assessment

- “Have the kids get to know police officers so that they aren’t afraid of them and vice versa.”
- “And train community members ‘What things are legal what is not? And, what is the process when police come? What is appropriate police behavior? What are things we should know? What are our rights?’”
- “I always wonder about police training, and does it accurately depict how they will be dealing with situations in their job. Does it include sensitivity training, trainings for working with people of color?”
- “The most important thing is training and ongoing assessment of police. “
- “There are many ways that money can be used, like education for the youth, police officers and parents. Most of the parents haven’t even finished school. I have helped a lot of people because they don’t understand the language. I have always asked myself where are those organizations meant to help these folks?”

Finally, along that same line, there were some suggestions that Madison should work harder to recruit more people of color onto the police force.

- “Madison needs more police officers who are people of color.”
- “Are people of color being kept out of the police profession in Madison?”
- “And, why exactly is it that it is “hard to find” people of color without an arrest record?” [apparently, a reference to the high arrest rate of people of color in Madison]

Most of participants from Madison’s most vulnerable communities did not have the technical or professional expertise of City officials or other professionals. They were not well versed in enforcement agency policy and procedure. And, most of them were not lawyers (though a few were). Generally, like most other Madison residents, they didn’t understand all of the legal issues and requirements of the criminal justice system. However, in our engagement sessions, they provided a critical analysis and insight that was enlightening and informative. These recommendations and the previous statements about their experiences with MPD should be very helpful to city and agency officials considering a body-worn video policy for police officers.

City Employees Focus Groups and Interviews

The central objective of this report is to outline the feedback on BWV from participants in community engagement sessions commissioned by the city of Madison. To supplement and provide agency context for this information, we also conducted focus groups and interviews with 87 city of Madison employees, including employees of the Madison Police Department, the Madison Fire Department, the Department of Civil Rights and the MPD Public Records Unit.

Feedback made it clear that participants in the community engagement sessions believed their lives and liberty depend on a change in the police enforcement system in Madison. Police officers believed that their lives and reputations are also at stake—day. City employee feedback was not so visceral or personal. Their discussion about body-worn video focused on three areas of concern:

- *Safe and Effective policing*
- *Police Reputation* as trustworthy protectors of the peace and safety;
- *Costs* in city resources and citizens' loss of privacy

Generally, they thought BWV would be a negative addition to Madison Police Department policy and procedure. As a group, they thought that both the cameras and the video are too expensive to purchase, house, maintain, and store, and that the process of creating and distributing the video could prove to be an overwhelming task for designated staff.

While police were understandably most concerned with police reputation and effective policing, other city employees talked most about how this practice would insert additional considerations, processes, tasks, and expenses into the current system, they were not supportive of this new technology. Moreover, they argued that advocates in favor of the technology consider BWC “a solution” to the problematic relationship between Madison police and marginalized communities. They spoke of a “public” that believes body worn cameras will “bring accountability, and change officers behavior.” According to one participant:

- “The public is going to have an expectation of the third person overview shot of everything, and that is not what they are going to get. There are going to be tremendous gaps of information in the video. If the idea of this is to reduce the public mistrust of police actions, I don’t think this is going to do it. It is going to give the public a better idea of how police respond, but for what I think their expectations are going to be, it won’t satisfy that.”

Still, not all city workers were flatly against the use of BWV. Some of those participants said that the cameras and video might be useful in some cases. Others believed that, as a practical matter, the use of BWV is inevitable here in Madison, and in other cities like Madison across the country.

The focus group discussion and interviews with administrative city employees focused on the practical impact of BWV policy on the city budget and on agency process and procedure. Police officers on the other hand were, understandably, more concerned with the physical aspects of wearing the camera, and interacting with people while wearing it. Some police officers said that their colleagues might welcome the cameras. The video would show them “doing their duties” and the “bad apples” would be caught in their transgressions or criminal behavior.

City employees were also concerned about residents’ privacy:

- “Random people are videotaped. Addresses can be redacted from a report, but when you have video when officers are on site at the address, canvassing the neighborhood, we go up to the big red house, it doesn’t matter that we redacted [the address]. They are going to know the big red house and who is talking.”

- “The law does say that we need to redact the identity of an individual; we have to redact all the possible identifiers of that person in all the records. It’s called a Mosaic. So, if I were not to redact you and you say, ‘I am the brother-in-law of the victim,’ and I leave that in. And you only have one brother-in-law, you, essentially, have identified the victim.”

Police officers said that body cameras would work to “tear down trust.” Specifically, they said that the camera requirement would create a general assumption that they are not trustworthy.

- “I think the majority of officers wouldn’t mind wearing it...the way policing is going nation-wide—it almost feels inevitable. But when you think about the impact it is going to have on a community like Madison, where we want to build trust. I can see the negative impact on that. ‘Talk to me, what’s going on?’, and now you have a camera in their face. They didn’t want to even talk to you in the first place. ‘Let’s just talk. Man to man. What’s the deal?’”
- “The first answer that folks give about BWCs is that it will increase trust. The irony is that once you start asking these questions, and you think about, maybe the reverse is actually true. There are more potential ways that it undermines trust than cultivates trust.”
- “Demand for body cameras is founded up mistrust. “
- “Already, there is mistrust that hinders people speaking with MPD, especially MPD in uniform.”
- “One of the biggest problems with the BWC’ used to establish trust in police is that the underlying assumption is that trust is established through monitoring of police actions.”

It is interesting to juxtapose this concern with the feedback from our community sessions during which most participants clearly expressed mistrust and fear of the police and frustration with what they perceive as discrimination and disregard.

So, this feedback suggests that city employees and Madison residents probably hold conflicting opinions of the current levels of trust between them, and they probably disagree about how to cultivate trust and mutual respect in their relationship. However, they all appear to be agreement on the nature and effectiveness of police body-worn video. Though each of these two groups seems to think that the other does not “get it,” city employees’ concerns about BWV sound very similar to those of their community resident counterparts. They said:

- “Cameras only allow view from a particular angle.”
- “Might the cameras lead to a devaluing of officer (or citizen’s) statements?”
- “[We would have to be very careful to redact] video that may endanger victims and witnesses or violate HIPPA laws connected privacy/health.”

- “All the camera is going to do is document that use of force happened, right or wrong...it will be only a little slice (video/audio) of what occurred. This will not prevent good or bad shooting incidents.”
- “Most of the public wants video to be released when it is all about the police, but when it is all about a citizen, ‘no. I want it to be redacted.’”
- “There will always be one person making that bad decision. The belief that the camera will change our behavior? No, it won’t change how officers act.”
- “Camera and audio provide limited content and does not, cannot, provide the context.”
- “MPD should not be the beta test of BWV. There is no case law.”

Employees in the MPD Public Records Unit had some of the same concerns as both police officers and administrative personnel with regard to a BWV policy in Madison.

- “I am not convinced that what some of the public believe they will gain will actually be gained. Somehow they think that they get accountability, changing officers behavior or whatever, but under stress an officer will revert back to what they have been trained to do in the critical moments.”
- “There is a perception out there that this is a solution. BWCs are seen as part of a cure or a fix. The camera is seen as ‘truly unbiased.’”

They also predicted that the program would consume an unreasonable amount of agency resources.

- “Storage is a huge issue...megabytes of video. How do we provide and store it for records requests. How much do we have to have on hand? How much do we keep on as evidence...that a lot of video. And we keep on adding to that. Can the City Network handle all of that?”
- “And, then the general upkeep. They are being worn on their bodies. They are going to get damaged. They are going to need repairs, and there is a replacement cycle. And they are going to get lost!”
- “If it means less funds for other materials for services [there is some concern]. We are looking for other staff just to manage our current records, and we don't even have that at this point in time.”
- “Will this lead to lots of open records requests?”
- “Officer report time of incidents increases and change [in other ways]”
- “...uncharted...technical issues [will]add levels of complexity”

- “[There will be a significant] financial impact. [The] cost of the technology, training, [and the] creation of new policies and procedures, ...upkeep and repair, staff time...

Conclusion

All discussion participants had an idea of something that is urgently at stake for themselves, their families, and communities, and for the city of Madison. For the individuals who participated in our sessions the question is about their lives, livelihood, safety and dignity, and their rights as citizens. Similarly, many police officers are concerned for their lives, livelihood, safety and professional reputation.

Through this process, we have unearthed valuable information from community members who often are not consulted when decisions are being made that will disproportionately impact them. While much of the feedback is troubling, it can be used to identify and implement productive solutions that could go further towards advancing trust, safety, and community relationships than the implementation of Body-Worn Video cameras. Essentially, we heard from people that they would like to be policed similarly to how white neighborhoods are policed: the police come when called to respond to emergencies; when they are called, they assume the people who called them are the victims and they do not attempt to criminalize the people who called on them.

While participants did not use this language, they are essentially looking for equity in policing policies and relationships. To that end, some of the systemic policy changes that could address the concerns detailed in this report could include:

- Ban racial profiling and establish enforceable protections against it.
- Establish teams that include mental health professionals as primary responders or co-responders to crisis situations.
- End police department quotas for tickets and arrests.
- Ban failure to appear fines or warrants, cap court fine revenue, and allow judges discretion to waive or initiate payment plans for fines and fees for low-income people.
- Revise police department use of force policies to: require officers use minimal force and de-escalation tactics, carry a non-lethal weapon, and intervene when another officer uses excessive force.
- Require police officers to undergo consistent racial bias training and bias testing, and use findings to determine hiring, performance evaluations and decisions about where to deploy officers.
- Develop a community communication strategy. This could include a community advisory board or community ambassadors. If any action is taken or policy is changed based on the feedback in this report, how will it be disseminated to marginalized and vulnerable communities to begin to rebuild trust?

Unlike the city staff we met with, participants in our community engagement sessions were not invested in the current municipal system. To them, the municipal policies and systems provided multiple barriers to being contributing members of their family and community. On the other hand, most city employees who have some control over these systems and policies, had little experience of life in poor and marginalized communities where people have few resources, no power, and little hope. While BWV cameras were not strongly supported as a solution to this problem, this report uncovered the perceived root causes of police and community mistrust, and explored some possible strategies to address them.