

Development of new police technology

[Psychology](#), [Child Development](#)



In the past years, police departments have upgraded and improved their technology. Previously, departments relied on hand written notes and inputting data manually while on-the-go. In recent years, technology has changed drastically from manual to automatic. There are many reasons for this upgrade, a main one being the constantly changing world around us. As our world is becoming more dependent on technology, so are police officers. Everyday some new or upgraded technology is released to the public, which then possess more challenges to officers in regards of how to monitor it. Another reason for this change is based on the views of the public. There has been an ongoing issue of distrust from the public, causing the police to wear body cameras. These presented not only a way to show all events that take place, but also created more transparency among police officers. New technology that has been developed not only has the potential to improve public trust, but also can have an impact on their safety. On the other side of these upgrades, the police officers and departments have been impacted as well by making their job significantly more efficient and safe. The job of a police officer is difficult to begin with and only gets more complicated with the public's use of new technology. By adapting and increasing the use of tech within departments there is an impact on the officer, civilians, and courts. However, it does not go without saying that there are some flaws with upgrading and adding new technology.

The public is constantly on the search for answers and police conduct is no exception. In recent years there have been multiple highly publicized cases of police misconduct; Michael Brown, Eric Garner, and Philando Castile. These cases caused an uproar in the public which then focused their

attention on the police. This switch of focus also emphasized the interactions between white officers and minority citizens. The phone videos and media coverage has caused the public to see police officers as biased towards minorities and therefore increased the use of force against those citizens. This perception has decreased the trust of police officers and has created a question of police reliability. The public then began to wonder how can we stop this or what can be done by government to take preventive measures? This is where body cameras came into play.

Ever since the cameras were used by departments, the media jumped on the chance to cover the new and upcoming technology. Ideally, when body cameras were first introduced they would do several things to tackle the troubled relationship between the public and police. These devices were believed to help reduce police misconduct/use of force, complaints against officers, increase police transparency, and assist the prosecution by providing video evidence that is captured by the police. This positive view of cameras led most to believe that they could overall change the "flawed" system of policing. The use of body cameras seems to influence a variety of aspects within law enforcement. The clear one being on police officers themselves and how they go about their daily routine. Another impact is on civilians, innocent or guilty. The cameras also play a role in the court system as well, changing methods and providing a more reliable form of evidence.

First, I believe it is important to look at both police who have killed civilians and civilians who have killed police officers. Currently as I am writing this, there are 599 people who have been shot and killed by the police this year

as of July 9th. This number is 12 more than it was at that time last year (Tate, J., Jenkins, J., Rich, S., 2015). Overall, the number of people shot by police has remained relatively unchanged over the past 2 years. However, researchers have noted that even though this number is consistent, or unchanged, the number of fatally shot unarmed minorities has declined. While the black population makes up only around 13% of the overall population, 36% of fatally shot unarmed civilians were black (Sullivan, J., Tate, J., Jenkins, J., 2018). Over the past years this percentage has gone down slowly, but, in my opinion, any change is an improvement. Some speculate that this change is due to the use of body cameras. However, is that really the cause of this?

The decrease in unarmed shootings may come from the idea that police are now aware that they are constantly under surveillance and scrutiny by the public. They are more aware of the racial bias, and therefore have more consideration when approaching black or Hispanic civilians. According to Ariel, B., Farrar, W., and Sutherland, A. (2015), “ self-awareness and socially-desirable-responding—proposes that people adhere to social norms and change their conduct because of the cognizance that someone else is watching” (p. 511). Self-awareness is a large component of policing, especially in recent years. There is a need for police to improve their interactions to benefit both the general public and the department. When there is a realization of what society sees as morally correct, there is a possibility that actions deemed inappropriate or excessive will decrease.

On the other side, there are civilians killing police officers as well. Over the duration of this year, around 92 police officers have died in the line of duty. Some of the most recent cases are Police Officer Adam Edward Jobbers-Miller, Police Officer Michael J. Michalski, and Trooper Tyler Edenhofer. All these officers were killed due to gunfire from a suspect on the scene. In cases such as these, body cameras are proven to assist in the prosecution of those suspects. Body cameras overall provide a story about what happened and show that anything can go wrong while an officer is on duty.

The use of body cameras can also impact the courts. They have been able to prove and disprove certain claims of actions whether that was made against an officer or a suspect. In cases where a suspect disputes the officer's actions and reasons behind them, footage from a body camera could help to show the truth. Police have much discretion and must explain their actions persistently and carefully. To express why they frisked someone or why they took more aggressive actions, they must be able to articulate the events leading up to the final action. With the use of body cameras, officers do not have to try and convince a judge or jury that their actions were (or in some cases were not) justified. Many criminal cases come down to credibility between prosecution and defense. Who is being truthful and who is in the wrong? There is no denying that officers can sometimes lie or exaggerate the truth. There is also no denying that those on the other said do the exact same thing at times. Furthermore, the increased use of cameras has been able to eliminate expert testimony in some cases. There are many cases where witnesses are not present, and a homicide has taken place. When a police officer shoots and kills a suspect, there may be some questions

regarding the justification. An expert testimony may be needed to prove that there were self defense wounds or that a bullet was shot from a specific angle or direction. With the use of cameras, there is direct proof of what occurred. This takes away the sometimes-subjective opinions and adds factual evidence without a doubt.

I do believe that these cameras are a great idea and have the potential to have an impact of police officers and the public. However, I have some minor concerns. On many instances police officers has been seen turning their cameras off when things go badly. A video I recently watched (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=h-afCjxIsJU>) showed a body camera that captured the outcome of a 15-year-old being tased while on an ATV. The young man eventually passed away, and police officers knew he was in bad shape. However, when several officers reported to the scene, they turned their cameras off. One officer was brave enough to keep hers rolling, which gave the public an insight to what really happened. The biggest lesson from this is that police have discretion of whether they turn on their cameras.

While I was in Washington D. C. doing a summer internship, I spoke with detectives about the use of body cameras. During that time the cameras were new to the department, and not yet worn by the detectives. I spoke with police officers who had to wear them, and they proceeded to tell me about the requirements. When they encounter any civilian, they are supposed to turn them on. This is especially enforced when they are called onto a scene. They noted that if they fail to turn the cameras on, the sergeant would question why they did not. Another thing I found interesting

is when they first turn them on it picks up a couple seconds before the button is hit. They also stated that sometimes the cameras can impede on investigations due to the need to be extremely careful with what is said while they are on. These videos could be submitted to court and the officers do not want anything said in the background that could hinder the investigation.

The following years after body cameras were implemented brought even more technology use within departments. Not only did the public need more proof or information, but the officers needed a better way to be able to provide answers to both the public and the courts. One new form of technology that helped to balance this was drones. The police use of drones has changed the way investigations are done and how police can handle specific cases. Drones are much like body cameras in the sense that they provide more coverage and footage of events. They can provide a larger picture of the scene and give more evidence in court. They are also able to survey areas in a much easier fashion by sending a drone up to look at large surrounding areas. This can help with possibly finding a fleeing suspect or identifying areas of high crime and keeping them under watch.

Another recent innovation are police robots which can be used for a variety of reasons. One of these being surveillance of possibly dangerous areas. A situation can be assessed without the need to send in an officer. Another reason is to confront situations where there is a dangerous suspect.

Previously, police officers had to enter dangerous situations such as a shoot-out or a violent offender in person with hopes that there enough

reinforcements to get the job done. With the creation and use of drones and robots, police officers now have the option to take themselves out of the direct situation by sending in a robotic invention. For example, the case of the sniper targeting police officers in Dallas. In 2016, the Dallas police officers were faced with the daunting task of confronting a sniper who had already taken down several of their own. After much time had passed and words were exchanged with the suspect for hours, the decision was made to send in a police drone with explosives attached. This drone was sent down the hallway towards the suspect and was then set off when it was close enough. The robot allowed for the officers to leave the scene with enough time to get clear from the explosive. The suspect was taken down by the force of the explosion, and the killing ended. This was done without having to send any officers down the hallway whether it was to attempt to apprehend the suspect or end it right then and there.

There are some concerns when it comes to using technology in police departments. The first issue is public complaints of a violation of privacy. Some of the public have addressed departments with their discomfort of having their lives recorded and constantly being watched when an officer comes around. These concerns are then increased when the officer must come onto private property such as their home, violating someone's expectation of privacy. This brings up the question of should there be some limits set to outline when these cameras can and cannot be used?

Personally, I do not think someone has the right to privacy whether they are welcoming the police into their home, or there is a search warrant against

them. Either way there is a sense of safety that must be established, and the camera is there to enforce that.

Another concern about technology is the cost. Some cameras can exceed \$1,000 per unit and drones can cost thousands of dollars. Many departments are not large enough to receive enough state funding to even upgrade their current computers. Some departments are still using decade old technology due to their inability to afford new equipment. This then brings into question who should and should not be provided with cameras or drones? Is there a specific criterion such as amount of crimes committed in that given area? If police departments nationwide are supplied with new technology, policing all over the country can be more consistent.

A third issue with the new technology is the potential for these advancements to be hacked. With new technology comes more risk for interference. As more and more crimes are committed over the web or through technology, perpetrators become more aware of how to gain access to these through their computers at home. This issue presents problems to both the public and police officers. If a drone is hacked, who is to say what can be done. The footage could be used for other purposes or the drone could be used to do damage to others. The effect this can have on police is the interference on their investigation. It could ruin video feed, or the drone could be completely shut down.

Overall, the use of technology has an impact on civilians, officers, and criminal courts. Civilians must fight with their sense of privacy in exchange for a safer environment. The use of cameras can also provide the public with

a sense of increased trust among officers. Technology can help officers to do their jobs more efficiently and quickly while also providing more transparency. They can avoid some dangerous situations, but also protect the public while doing so. The courts also benefit from cameras due to the evidentiary value of the videos recorded. They add credibility to cases and remove the need for expert testimony when it applies. Technology has its pros and cons but I believe that it can have the potential to create a safer environment for everyone involved.