

BJA Body Worn Camera Training & Technical Assistance
Miami Beach Police Department BWC Study Podcast (Part 1)

Todd Maxwell: Hello, listeners. This is Todd Maxwell, part of the Bureau of Justice Assistance Body-Worn Camera team, and today I'm speaking with Deputy Chief Loretta Hill of the Miami Beach Police Department; Alejandro Mouro, Police Officer and Project Manager with Miami Beach Police Department; and hopefully joining us shortly will be Dr. Barak Ariel, Jerry Lee Fellow in Experimental Criminology and Lecturer in Experimental Criminology at the University of Cambridge as part of BJA's Body-Worn Camera Podcast Series.

Chief Hill's dedication to law enforcement professionalism spans more than 20 years. The majority of her service was with Arlington, Texas Police Department where she ascended to the rank of assistant police chief. The Arlington Police Department is known for its commitment to community policing and being at the forefront of developing best practices in law enforcement. Chief Hill oversaw staff of 300 employees in the support services and technical services division.

Chief Hill holds a Bachelor of Arts degree in Criminology and Criminal Justice from the University of Texas at Arlington and a Masters of Liberal Arts degree from Texas Christian University. She is a graduate of FBI's National Academy in Police Executive Research Forum, Senior Management Institute for Police. She is a member of the International Association of Police, the National Association for Black Law Enforcement Executive, (and first), Chief Hill has received a number of awards for her distinguished service, and commitment and dedication to law enforcement professionals.

And joining us today is also Alejandro, and I will let him introduce himself.

Alejandro Mouro: Hello, my name is Alejandro Mouro. I have served 10 years at the Miami Beach Police Department, where I have served five years in the traffic homicide unit. I have a Bachelor's degree from Florida International University in Criminal Justice where I obtained, where I graduated magna cum laude. I have currently just started the new position as project manager of this experiment.

Todd Maxwell: Thank you. And Dr. Ariel, who should be doing this shortly, hopefully, is a lecturer in the Police Executive Program. Among the other topics, he provides seminars on research methods, systematic reviews and statistical analysis. He holds a PhD in Criminology in the Institute of Criminology, Faculty of Law at the Hebrew University, and an LLM from the Hebrew University.

As the Chief Analyst of the Jerry Lee Center of Experimental Criminology, he's involved in several field experiments on Police Tactics in partnership with forces in the U.K. and abroad including hot spots policing, restorative justice, use of cameras in police operations, (informal car patrol), and tax compliance.

Chief Hill and Officer Mouro and hopefully Dr. Ariel, thank you for speaking with me today. To start, from the Miami Beach Police Department perspective, can you explain the study that you are participating in with Dr. Ariel and his team?

Loretta Hill: Sure. One of the reasons we chose to get involved with a research partner and to bring about the study was the need for a more complex data collection, analysis, and dissemination of our findings to our fellow law enforcement community. The reason we wanted to partner with Dr. Ariel was to have an independent aspects of the project, an independent eye and a review of all the information, and a documentation of the findings. And also he's a subject matter expert in the field.

Todd Maxwell: OK. Can you give us and our listeners an overview of the study and what it's about along with what you hope to learn?

Loretta Hill: Well, the study will examine the impact of body-worn cameras across all aspects of the criminal justice system. We'll go beyond his former study and go beyond that, doing that analysis of body cams on complaints against police officers and use of force issues. But in addition to that, we hope to examine the broader impacts such as the financial impact of body-worn cameras as it relates to conviction rates. Are there more pleas entered by defendants

because of the presence of video evidence whether the costs associated to produce the volume of video evidence for pre-trial or trial? So a lot of the study will focus on what our conviction rates are compared to group of – I lost myself but really the focus on the conviction rate that goes beyond just the use of force, the complaints against us, some of the routine things that we can find out about body cam, this study will seek to gather more information on the financial impacts of the broader impact of how it relates to conviction rates.

Todd Maxwell: OK, thank you. And for our listeners the other study that Chief Hill was referring to was Dr. Ariel was the research partner behind the Rialto study, just so you have some background.

What is Miami Beach PD hoping to learn and get of, of this partnership? And what do you guys actually plan to do with the outcomes? And since you have your project manager there maybe guys you can explain how you're going to attract some of those outcomes.

Alejandro Mouro: The way we plan to track the outcomes is we plan to have – we plan to use a randomized controlled trial in which we'll have an experimental group and a controlled group in our department. We'll have those with cameras and those without. Now when the study officially begins, we'll follow them and all their cases and the results of those cases, and track whether there is an actual positive outcome from wearing the cameras as opposed to not wearing the cameras. So we'll not only see whether defense attorney's plea bargain quicker but also the impact it has to conviction rates as well.

Now, through that since there's going to be more, there's going to be different types of court appearances, we're also going to see the financial costs and whether the early pleas have a positive outcome for the cameras, and we are able to save some money in the long run.

Loretta Hill: And also something we're hoping to learn from the partnership is validation, clear and positive evidence to support the use of body cameras combined with the challenges of modern-day policing. And our business (as this is vibrant), it's multi-cultural city that we work in and having this unique academic

expertise, using the experiences and lessons learned to develop and adapt the body-worn camera policies and practices for the greater good and being able to share what we'd learned across all police agencies in the country. So the ultimate goal for this study really is to validate the positive evidence and support, the use of body cameras but also to increase public confidence in law enforcement.

Todd Maxwell: Great. So one of the big things at BJA is we emphasize the benefits of partnerships especially with research partners, are there any other benefits to your partnership with Dr. Ariel and his team besides the ones that are sort of spelled out in the abstract of this experiment sort of like have they (stated in) policy or even review for you guys or provide, you know, the feedback that was beneficial?

Loretta Hill: Well, I think one of the biggest benefits is to the members of the public. Law enforcement encourages and invites the openness in this activity and the use of body-worn cameras, we're promoting the transparency into our business and giving people an insight on what we do every day and how it impacts the justice system, the overall criminal justice system and it promotes transparency. So I think one of the key things and benefits with the partnership is to have this obviously independent review but also the broader benefit that replaces some of the public confidence issues that we are seeing today in modern policing.

Todd Maxwell: Great. I appreciate that. It sort of goes along with some of the things we've been trying to promote.

Next question we're sort of focusing on Dr. Ariel, but since he hasn't been able to join us yet and I apologize for the listeners he is international and it is during the holidays, although most of you probably listen to this after the holidays. So hopefully we'll be able to catch up with him a little bit later. But one of the questions we had was without revealing potential outcomes; can you tell us what surprised you about this evaluation process? And I don't know if you two have any initial information that sort of surprised you or not?

Loretta Hill: No, I mean we're early on. We're – this project will take two and a half, three years to get the evidence to support whatever that outcome is. We have approximately 60 to 75 cameras on the streets now that – so we're currently have people out there with cameras. So official outcomes, the actual meat of getting started in the study, we're in very early stages. So we don't have any outcomes or predictions yet but stay tuned. We will.

Todd Maxwell: We will. We'll do a follow-up podcast with you once we learn a little bit more. And hopefully, we'll get Dr. Ariel in on that one. So to close out our question, would you recommend other agencies partner with a research partner? And if so, why?

Loretta Hill: Absolutely. It is clear that the expertise of someone like Barak area or anybody in the academia, the independence is key into the success of the project. It gives us an independent person outside of our business to study our business to see if what we believe is true is validated. And lessons learned during that time we are able to share with other law enforcement agencies throughout the country. So I think the partnership with academia and the police in profession is absolute, a must and it's the wave of the future.

Todd Maxwell: Officer Mouro, do you have anything to add on that?

Alejandro Mouro: No, I think – and I agree with what Deputy Chief Hill has stated. The partnership is one of the best parts about this experiment. With his expertise, not only has he run other projects, his knowledge of the camera system is a great benefit to us in this recent project.

Todd Maxwell: Thank you both. Thank you, Chief Hill and Officer Mouro. We are grateful to speak with us today and share your knowledge on this topic. We encourage the law enforcement, justice, and public safety leaders, whose agencies that are interested in learning more about the implementation of body-worn camera programs, to visit the body-worn camera toolkit at www.bja.gov/bwc. This toolkit offers a variety of resources that agencies can use to help the adoption and use of community engagement, policy development, data

collection, officer training and educational purposes. We also encourage our listeners to share and promote these resources with your colleagues and staff.

Lastly, all of these resources especially the body-worn camera toolkit have been designed as a national resource, your resource. Please submit your ideas for a new content through the BWC support link at the bottom of the homepage. And just as a reminder, the podcasts are available there at bja.gov and on iTunes.

This is Todd Maxwell from the Bureau of Justice Systems Body-Worn Camera Team signing off. Thank you to our listeners for joining us today.

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