

Has the Internet Killed the Crime Beat? The Influence of Social Media on Police
Communications and Relationships with the Press

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Abstract

This study examines the use of social media by police services to communicate directly to citizens and how this practice has had an impact on police relationships with the news media in Saskatchewan. Particular attention is paid to the role of the services' Public Information Officer (PIO) whose job is to manage communication between the police and the public. Nine interviews with officials from Saskatchewan's municipal police services were carried out, and the changing landscape for police communications since the introduction of social media is described. These officials served in a number of capacities, including police administrator, social media expert, public information officer, and investigator. The findings reveal that police services have embraced social media as a communications tool that increases their control over the messages being delivered to the public. Furthermore, social media is used to enhance police legitimacy through the portrayal of increased transparency and accountability. Police investigators report that using social media has, in some respects, improved their ability to cast a wider and more efficient net for receiving public information on criminal activities and non-criminal matters. However, respondents reported that soliciting information from the public has also made their work more challenging through the public's greater interest in police operations.

The study also describes how administrative oversight within police services is imperative to ensure that social media use is informed by policy and operational strategy. Suggestions for additional research and policy development for social media use are offered based on the findings of this research.

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Dedication

This study is dedicated to my family and friends whose encouragement never wavered.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

Introduction

Saskatchewan police services, like their counterparts nationally and internationally, are adopting social media tools such as Facebook, Twitter and YouTube to communicate directly with citizens in both seeking and providing information (Lieberman et al., 2013). This direct connection between police and the public has changed the way police services conduct their operations, particularly related to communication about investigations, crime prevention, strategic police activities and day-to-day police operations (Meijer & Thaens, 2013). One position distinctive to police services, known as the Public Information Officer (PIO) has played a pivotal role in ensuring the public receives information about crimes and criminals, while at the same time protecting the police's reputation (Surrette & Richard, 1995, p.326). A key goal of the PIO role is to ensure reporters representing the "crime beat" in newspapers, radio, television and on-line news sites such as *The Huffington Post*, are receiving accurate information in a timely manner so they can report stories based on information provided by police officials (Surrette & Richard, 1995).

This thesis examines how social media has changed the role of the Public Information Officer in police services, and whether this contemporary method for communicating by police has had an impact on police services' relationship with the news media.

Police-public communication

The history of police communication with the public reflects the changing social and political environments of the times (Johnston & McGovern, 2013; Motschall & Cao, 2002; Chermak & Weiss, 2005). As citizens called for more accountability and transparency by various governments and their agencies, and as the methods for communicating by public sector organizations changed over time, so has the nature of delivering information about police activities and operations to the public. This evolution in public sector communication is commented upon by Meijer and Thaens (2013), who observe that social media use by the police is very different from social media used by other public sector organizations.

Historically, police services relied almost entirely on the news media to report their activities to the public, with the emphasis on activities related to criminal investigations. From time to time, reports of police scandal, mistakes, and corruption also made the headlines (Garner, 1984). Regardless of the content of the story, it was important for the police to cultivate a reciprocal working relationship with journalists from the news media as their methods of dissemination evolved from newspapers to radio then television, and on-line reporting (Lee & McGovern, 2012; Lieberman, Koetzle & Sakiyama, 2013). There are two critical reasons for such a relationship. First, and most obvious is that crime is interesting news, and crime reporters need police information to fill in content about investigations and other aspects of crimes (Lee & McGovern, 2012; Mawby, 2002). Second, and more importantly, is the media's role as the public's watchdog (Chermak & Weiss, 2005; Mawby, 2010).

Police services in a democratic society are motivated to establish the legitimacy of their role in maintaining law and public order (Chermak & Weiss, 2005). Tyler (2006) explains that governments need citizens to obey the laws. If citizens believe in the legitimacy of the authorities, they are less inclined to break those laws (Tyler, 2006). To that end, the police must manage the public's expectations of their role, and these agencies promote notions of police competence, fairness and legitimacy, and do not necessarily focus on actual outcomes (Lee & McGovern, 2012; Lieberman, Koetzle & Sakiyama, 2013).

These ideas of the legitimacy of the police have long been debated. According to Weber the modern state is comprised of legal order, bureaucracy, and is the sole source of legitimate power over citizens (O'Neill, 1986, p.44). Foucault, by contrast, believed that power is dispersed throughout the population and Bevir (1999) explains how Foucault contended that, "We should examine how numerous techniques of discipline and technologies of the self operate throughout society to fix the ways in which people construct themselves, their conduct, and their relations to others" (p.353). These scholars posit that governments require public support for their activities, and that the power conferred to institutions such as police is limited by the degree of public acceptance. That acceptance is related to the way that their activities are portrayed to the public.

The news media has been called the "Fourth Estate" that acts in conjunction with the three estates of democratic countries (the executive, legislature and judiciary). Within this context the media can act as a public watchdog to provide citizens with a means to monitor the government's use of authority, and Felle (2016, p. 86) observes that:

In advanced democratic –societies, the differing branches of government – an

executive that is separated from the legislature and the judiciary – are set up to ensure checks and balances. The news media, in carrying out an investigating and reporting function, essentially keep an eye on the government and elected office holders. They thus have often been labelled ‘the Fourth Estate.’

Motschall and Cao 2001, p.156) provide a definition of the fourth estate:

The essential ingredients of the watchdog perspective include substantial autonomy for the media, their representation of the interest of the populace, rather than the dominant groups, and their independent power to directly and independently challenge those dominant groups.

Similarly, the media have an interest in reporting when the police overstep or misuse the powers given to them by the government in their efforts to ensure public safety (Chermak & Weiss, 2005; Surette & Richard, 1995). Citizens need to believe in the police’s use of their powers as legitimate so that the state maintains authority to govern (Tyler, 2006).

The news media can have a significant impact on the reputation of a police service, its officers and leaders, because one damning story could reduce the public’s trust in that organization’s legitimacy and authority, and consequently its effectiveness. It was believed that a single point of contact with the police through a media liaison position, the PIO, would create a mutually beneficial relationship with the news media. For example, the PIO would be more readily available than a senior officer or an officer investigating a case; and the PIO would be able to provide consistent information so the messaging was the same for any reporter who asked for it (Chermak & Weiss, 2005; Lee & McGovern, 2012). The PIO is also the channel through which the flow of information can be managed. Donahue et al. (1995, p.156) cite the reason for this role as, “Police are encouraged to exert more control over how their image is portrayed, because the level of citizen confidence, as well as budget decisions, presumably, are influenced by this image.”

Community policing was instituted, in part, to help bolster the image of the police to the public. According to Schaefer Morabito (2010), community policing was “designed to engage the community as an equal partner in solving local crime and disorder problems.” Schaefer Morabito cites a number common elements to the community policing philosophy and they include a) adopting a problem-solving orientation; b) working with stakeholders in the community, and; c) making changes to the police service’s organizational structure to facilitate communities participating in public safety (p.565). Since the 1980s, community policing has played a more prominent role in police work, with activities focused on crime prevention alongside attending to crimes once they occurred. This was largely due to the fact that in a number of nations including Canada, the United States, the United Kingdom and Australia, police were being criticized for their decreasing interest in public accountability, particularly as it related to police corruption or their actions after mistakes or mismanagement occurred (Johnston & McGovern, 2013). Community policing required establishing closer ties between the police service and the community through face-to-face interaction with residents, engaging community stakeholders in identifying crime control priorities, and working together in crime prevention efforts. From the aspect of police operations, such activities required communicating their strategic activities to the public to help manage public confidence. Increasing the public’s trust and confidence also had the benefit of making it easier for these police services to meet their organizational goals, such as obtaining community support to increase their budgets.

Fielding (2002, p. 155) reiterates the importance of public involvement in community policing and cites Kelling’s (1998, p. 155) observations about officer roles

and how they “are tasked with getting close to the community in order to pick up information and respond to community needs. Frontline officer discretion is enhanced” Kelling (1998, p. 4) provides an example of these discretionary powers and how officers were:

tolerating public alcohol consumption provided people are not approached and drinking is off main roads, tolerating begging, provided people are not approached who are standing still, and tolerating loitering provided the loiterer does not lie down. In other words, what police did was to develop a neighbourhood consensus among both the good citizens and the troublemakers about appropriate behavior that became self-enforcing over time.

To some extent there is a relationship between community policing and the efforts of public information officers in police services.

As a result, the PIO’s duties were expanded to include developing and implementing communication strategies (Chermak & Weiss, 2005; Koetzle & Sakiyama, 2013). However, as Motschall and Cao (2002) noted, in some larger police services, the specific community relations communication program might be delivered through a communications-oriented position other than the PIO. At the same time police communications personnel were developing and delivering the police service’s public relations platform by providing crime prevention tips, releasing strategic and operational information, and organizing events that enhanced police visibility. In order to achieve these goals, the need for new ways of liaising with the news media were also evolving, and this is where the PIO’s role became distinctive (Chermak & Weiss, 2005; Lee & McGovern, 2012; Mawby, 2010; Motschall & Cao, 2002).

It is posited that the PIO plays what is termed a “gatekeeper” role between the police service and the media. This individual is among those responsible for being

purveyors of the service's legitimacy, in the ways he or she chooses to execute its strategic messaging (McGovern & Lee, 2013; Surette & Richard, 1995). The underlying goal is that members of the public will feel more positive about the outcomes of any interactions they have with police (Tyler, 2006).

Police adoption of social media

Social media has become a pervasive means for individuals to communicate with one another in different settings, whether that be across the office or the globe. As DiStato et al. (2011, p.325) observe:

Social media changes the relationship between a company and its employees, customers, competitors, suppliers, investors, the media and essentially anyone who has an impact or who can be impacted by an organization [and] speaking a message in this environment can be easier, faster and more efficient.

An organization's public relations strategy is based on this reality and adapts social media to forge a connection with individuals. In simple terms, organizations adopt social media as a way to build and sustain relationships with its target audiences, who could be members of the general public, stakeholders, or consumers of their products. DiStato et al. (2011, p.326) conducted a survey of public and communications professionals on their challenges and opportunities in social media use and state that:

Most participants acknowledged the manner in which society consumes news and information and the driving force behind the popularity of social media. This in turn influences why and how participants are using social media in their organizations. To communicate effectively, organizations must go to where their stakeholders are. In fact, as one participant stated, the greatest risk is to "ignore social media and to allow conversations to happen without awareness or participation."

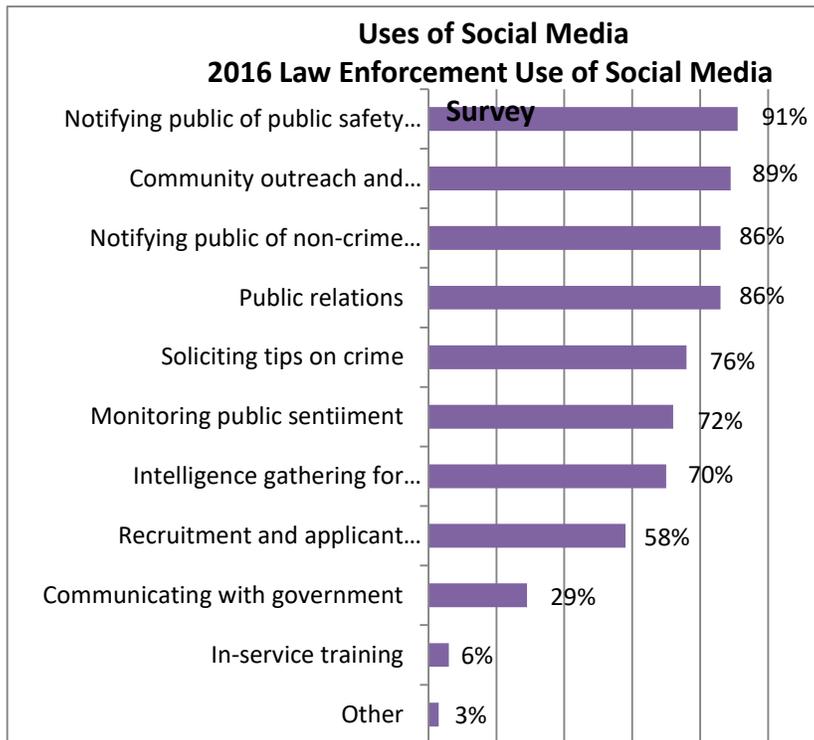
The use of social media theoretically empowers organizations to better control the impression individuals have about them. This control arises out of the ability to create a relationship with a single individual, who then has the ability to broadcast the same

message to others in their social circle, or to support or criticize the organization's product or service. At the same time, it provides the opportunity for the organization to have a dialogue with the individual (Men & Muralidharan, 2017). Public agencies engage social media communication with similar objectives in mind. As Olsson and Eriksson (2016, p.192) point out:

in contrast to traditional mass media communication, public agencies' social media communication is determined by their ability to engage and attract. When successful, their communication receives a boost from followers engaging with and spreading their message further.

Similar to its use by other government and non-government organizations, social media is becoming a key vehicle for police to deliver communication with the public and other organizations (Leishman & Mason, 2003). For example, annual surveys of U.S. police agencies conducted by the International Association of Chiefs of Police (IACP) since 2006 found the proportion of departments using social media has increased each year, and all large police services are now using these tools. The 2016 IACP survey, which was completed by 539 American law enforcement agencies, reported the prevalence and use of social media by the police. The survey revealed that 91% of agencies use these tools to notify the public of safety concerns. Other secondary uses are related to community outreach and engagement (89%) and public relations (86%). Surprisingly, only 70% of agencies reported that gathering intelligence for investigations was a key goal of their social media strategy. All uses of social media, as identified by these respondents, are presented in Figure 1.1.

Figure 1.1 Uses of Social Media, U.S. Police Services, 2016



Source: IACP (2017)

Similar research about the police use of Facebook conducted by Lieberman, Koetzel and Sakiyama (2013) produced findings inconsistent with the IACP survey results. Lieberman et al.’s research indicated that around one-half of the Facebook content was used as a crime-fighting tool, while one-third of the remaining postings contained public relations messages. These investigators indicated that large police organizations were “early adopters” of Facebook in their operations, while its use by smaller police organizations was less extensive or non-existent, generally for reasons of budget constraints (Lieberman et al., 2013, pp.452-456).

A study by Ruddell and Jones (2013) determined that police services use social media for two distinct purposes: to support criminal investigations by delivering public messages and to “manage public opinion” (p.3). They reported that in developed countries, social media was widely used by police services to disseminate information about investigations so that the public could provide them with information that would lead to an arrest. According to Lee and McGovern (2012), because social media is so accessible by the public, the police can be held to an even higher standard of accountability for their actions. This suggests that pressure exists for the PIO to deliver positive and consistent messages about the service’s effectiveness. However, because social media is substantially different from traditional methods of organizational communication, it raises the question of whether PIOs should also be the police service’s social media expert.

The changing role of the crime reporter in an environment in which social media is providing a direct link to audiences must also be considered. There is a desire for police to ensure positive relationships with the news media because crime reporters have the ability to influence public perceptions of police legitimacy through their presentation of the news (Mawby, 2010). This observation reinforces the notion that there is a reciprocal relationship between the media and the police, where each party can gain from their relationship.

Whether the influence of social media on police communications has been positive or negative depends on the perceptions of the participants and the goals of the respective organizations. If social media is viewed as simply another form of communications tool, rather than as an important method of connection with the public,

the effect of its introduction will be positive. However, if social media is viewed as a replacement for personal interaction because of its ability to directly communicate with the public, then we must evaluate the importance of that relationship in police-public relations. At the same time, it must be determined whether the journalist, acting as an intermediary between the public and the police, can remain a monitor of police legitimacy if their role can be circumvented by the police who now have a direct channel to the public through social media.

Research Question

This thesis answers the following research question:

How has the use of social media influenced the way police communicate with the public?

Purpose and Significance

With social media becoming a key communications vehicle for police services, it is important to examine the effects of its adoption on actors involved in police/public communications activities. More specifically, by examining how police now communicate to the public via social media, we can determine whether the traditional PIO role has changed. Furthermore, because social media provides a direct communication link between the police and the public, we can shed light on whether, from the police's perspective, the news media play as significant a role today as they did in the past.

A number of facets to the changing role of police-public communication need to be examined. First, the police are required to demonstrate to citizens that they are legitimately using the power given to them by the state. With the newfound ability of the

police to bypass the news media to communicate directly with their stakeholders, including the public, the relationship between police and press has undergone a significant transformation. Thus, if communication via social media were to take precedence over the news media, a journalist's objective to hold the government (including the police) accountable may be more difficult to achieve.

A second view takes into account the potential change in role and responsibilities of the police PIO, should social media become the police's principle communications tool. In the past, the PIO, as a gatekeeper of police information, had the power to limit the information provided to reporters. Increased use of social media may, however, reduce the influence of the PIO if they are not responsible for their agency's social media function, or if individual police officers are authorized to disseminate their own social media messages.

There is a need to better understand new communications technology strategies in a broader way than simply confirming that it is faster, easier, and cheaper than traditional communications methods. This research examines the fundamental issue of whether social media changes the organizational structure of police services so the communications function falls to additional players besides the communications professionals. Most importantly, we need to determine whether taking the shortcut to citizens that eliminates journalistic scrutiny of the police can alter public perceptions of their legitimacy. It could be argued that if there is no one to analyze or interpret the message, there is potential for the real story to remain hidden.

Summary

This chapter introduces the research question and provides an overview of the issue of social media and policing. This study informs our understanding about the consequences of using social media by police services on traditional organizational structures and external relationships, and determines whether such changes have led or will lead to a change in police accountability.

The literature review in Chapter 2 sets out a comprehensive description of the issue of police communication with the public. It is broken into the following topics: a) establishing police legitimacy through public communication; b) public perceptions of the police; c) the role of the Public Information Officer; d) crime reporting and the crime beat; e) risk communication and public confidence; f) police use of social media; and g) social media as a strategic engagement tool.

The strategies outlined in Chapter 3 detail the methodological approaches used to conduct this study. The investigator examined the content of interviews from nine participants from Saskatchewan's municipal police services which included chiefs of police, police administrators, investigators, Public Information Officers and social media specialists. These officials responded to questions related to agency operations, budget and communications strategies. Nonsworn communications personnel were included in the study because of their distinctive role in police and emergency communications. Sworn officers using social media were also interviewed to learn how these tools can be used to support crime investigations and about how sworn officers dedicated to media relations interacted with the media. The chapter also describes how the data was

managed and kept secure, and discusses the strengths and limitations of a qualitative approach.

Chapter 4 presents the findings from the thematic network analysis.

Subsequently, the review in Chapter 5 presents how the findings can inform police operations, as well as communication policies and strategies. The discussion ends with suggestions for future research on police use of social media.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Introduction

While social media tools such as Facebook and Twitter are relatively new innovations, they have gained wide acceptance by police services in a short period of time (IACP, 2017). The largest agencies were the earliest adopters of social media strategies and over time their use has become more sophisticated. The literature review presented in this chapter presents the extant literature on social media and policing. The issue of how police services use social media to establish legitimacy is reviewed, followed by an examination of public perceptions of the police, especially as it relates to Saskatchewan. Both of those issues are related to the changing role of the Public Information Officer and how crime reporting is also evolving. The extant literature on the issue of risk communication and public confidence is also described, and the chapter ends with an examination of social media as a strategic management tool.

Establishing police legitimacy through public communication

Sunshine and Tyler (2003, p.514) define legitimacy as it relates to a public institution as:

a property of an authority or institution that leads people to feel that that authority or institution is entitled to be deferred to and obeyed. It is in the interest of the police in a democratic society to be seen by citizens as a legitimate mechanism for formal social control (Chermak & Weiss, 2005; Mawby, 2002; Surette & Richard, 1995).

According to Chermak and Weiss (2005), who take what could be described as a narrow, utilitarian view of police legitimacy, police are the actors in the criminal justice system most visible to the public, and thus require their endorsement for their activities. They

observed, “Police organizations interact daily with the public in many different ways. They are generally an accessible bureaucracy through technology and the means in which they deliver services to the community” (Chermak & Weiss, 2005, p.503). Any evaluation of the police that suggests they are not doing an adequate enough job of crime reduction reflects badly not only on the police service, but as well as the politicians of the day who may be perceived as having limited investment in peace and public order. At the same time, a research report on police performance from Public Safety Canada (2015, p.23) points out that, “When the police lose legitimacy in the eyes of the public, non-compliance with the law and opposition to police authority, and even hostility are likely to occur.”

In Mawby’s (2002) broader and more philosophically-based discussion, the legitimacy issue relates more to the police having power over citizens as part of the criminal justice system (p.59). In Canada, governments have given to police the power to uphold the rule of law by determining who has violated the laws and they are given the discretion to act in a number of ways, including the use of force. Mawby affirms that whatever kind of legitimacy police require from the public, there is still a need for justifying police activities so that legitimacy can be maintained. Tyler (2006, p.152) shares this perspective and contends that:

Legal authorities have legitimacy because people feel that they ought to obey them, and this is due to the social role the authorities occupy. In addition, particularly police officers and judges can gain support by communicating to those they deal with that they are trying to treat them fairly.

Procedural justice is a term that identifies the relationship between the public’s perceptions of their treatment by police to their willingness to accept police authority.

Weber theorized that, “laws are legitimate if procedurally correct and any correct

procedure is legal” (O’Neill, 1986, p.44). That is, if individuals perceive police to be fair in their interactions with the public, and citizens are treated in a just manner, then the police will be granted legitimate power over citizens.

Tyler (2006) points out there are two approaches to measuring procedural justice. First, the instrumental approach suggests that people, “focus on the degree to which they are able to exert influence over third-party decisions. People recognize that to the extent they have it, control over decisions leads to favorable outcomes” (Tyler, 2006, pp. 6-7). Thus, people believe that a procedure is fair if the outcome is favorable to them, and vice versa. On the other hand, the normative approach includes, “aspects of experience including neutrality, lack of bias, honesty, efforts to be fair, politeness, and respect for citizens’ right (Tyler, 2006, p.7). Here, personal values, not outcomes are the key to the individual’s belief that they have been treated fairly. Tyler (2006) asserts that it is the latter – normative influence – that shapes how citizens view being treated justly by police, thus creating acceptance, or the legitimacy of the police’s power over them. While the notion of procedural justice has become popular in the policing literature, Worden and McLean (2017) have found that the relationship between procedural justice and law abiding behavior is not as clear and direct as some scholars maintain.

Scholars such as Mawby (2002) and Tyler (2006) agree that justification of police activities is both needed and appropriate, with the most effective means for presenting this justification through delivering public messages about how those activities are undertaken and how they support safe communities (Chermak & Weiss, 2005; Copitch & Fox, 2010; Leishman & Mason, 2003). In the view of the police service and its political masters, the public’s need for legitimacy is fed by information delivering specific

messages: that police are doing a good job in fighting crime and maintaining order; and that police, like other public servants, are doing that job in a cost-effective manner (Mawby, 2010); and, as Tyler (2006) describes, that police are trying to be fair, and consider their opinions.

Chermak and Weiss (2005) studied the historical analyses of image-building as a means for creating legitimacy: the first foray into professional policing in the 19th century resulted in the public depiction of the police officer as “patient, wise, morally good, and effective crime fighters” (p.502). Similarly, Leichman and Mason (2003) quote Sir Robert Mark, Commissioner of the British Metropolitan Police in the 1970s, as stating that police are “a bastion to which people at every level looks for reassurance and comfort” (p.27). Many consider this mythology to be a critical component in developing and fostering police legitimacy, and all consider this reputation to be challenging to uphold without the support of a conscious effort to sustain it through deliberate management (Chermak & Weiss, 2005; Leichman & Mason, 2003).

Reiner (2000, p.28) contends this combination of “soft services and hard law enforcement” is the platform from which the public develops its attitudes toward the police. In fact, it has been argued that public perception is believed to be a more accurate guidepost for police legitimacy than the actual crime rate (Grogger & Weatherford, 1995). Thus, one organizational objective of police services is the creation of positive perceptions through whatever means are appropriate for government organizations to employ (Lee & McGovern, 2012). Copitch and Fox (2010) refer to these means as, “the confidence agenda”, based on the British Home Office’s external communiqué

recognizing that the public is actively seeking information on how their police are fighting crime (p.42).

Chermak and Weiss (2005) list a number of different ways that police “manufacture symbolic legitimacy” (p.502). They cite changing organizational structures, such as community policing, and efforts at issues management, or “public relations”, as they call it. These scholars state that, “Police efforts to strategically work with the news media provide perhaps the best example of the proactive efforts adopted by police organizations to be more effectively engaged with their external environment” (Chermak & Weiss, 2005, p.502).

Yet, the tension created in the relationship between the police and the news media creates another challenge for defining police legitimacy. Leishman and Mason (2003) speak to the police organization’s ability to exert power over the news media so that accounts of crime are portrayed in a way that reflects positively on them (pp.42-43). Mawby (2010) agrees this power construct exists and asserts that because the news media landscape changes quickly, in terms of how journalism is practiced, the police are adept at managing messages, while journalists adapt to new newsgathering processes such as Internet-based technology. Chermak and Weiss (2005) argue that police are at the top of the power structure in their relationship with the news media because they need to advance positive images of themselves to the public; as does the news media. In their view, the news media in a democratic state cannot afford to be perceived as the propaganda machine of the government; rather, “News organizations must protect the image that they are the great watchdogs – the fourth estate – of American democracy” (Chermak & Weiss, 2005, p.503).

Police communication activities are comprised of a number of different components, and risk communication, where police are disseminating to and receiving information from the public about criminal investigations, potentially dangerous situations and prevention messages have become an integral part of their day-to-day business. Erickson and Haggerty (2007) were the first to formally describe the role of communicating risk and policing communications about risk, noting that, “Policing is a matter of responding not only to individual demands for service, but also to institutional demands for knowledge about risk” (p.18). Proctor et al. (2013) confirm this observation and note that communication is an inherent part of policing, and the two cannot be separated. This public communication is fundamental to the practice of policing, because it raises awareness of various risks in the environment, it encourages citizen involvement in crime prevention, creates positive relationships between the public and the police, and builds community support of the police and other community members as well (Lieberman et al., 2013; Meijer & Thaens, 2013).

O’Connor (2015) advances the police/public communication relationship by suggesting that police organizations deliberately create the environment for communication so that they become “an invaluable resource for knowledge about risk [and] individuals and institutions become invaluable to the police as a source of risk knowledge” (p.3). Crump (2011, p.8) also acknowledges the importance of this shared obligation related to social media and observes that:

The police services’ interest in the use of social media as a tool for engagement is to be understood in this wider context of a political imperative to engage with the public in order to increase confidence.

Thus, inherent in delivery of policing services is the requirement for a communication channel between the police and citizens. It is the responsibility of the police to determine how this communication channel should operate and what kinds of communication need to be delivered. This mandate reflects the imperative of government to enable citizens' understanding that the police have the authority to dispatch legal power over them, but in the same fashion, citizens also need to accept they have their own role in supporting the police's powers.

From this review of the literature, it is apparent that the goal of police organizations in establishing and maintaining legitimacy hinges on their ability to convince citizens, through the news media, that their activities are justified and publicly accountable. Although strategic communication through image-building and relationships with reporters are seen as a primary way to create legitimacy, police must use caution that their communication strategies involving reporters are not at odds with the news media's own agenda for legitimacy.

Public perceptions of the police

This section examines the existing literature describing how the public views the police. This issue is important to the discussion about police communication because it reveals a general predisposition by the public to perceive the police in a favorable manner, whether or not those beliefs are substantiated by facts or statistics. In order to shed light on these public perceptions, a number of Saskatchewan and Canadian studies are reviewed.

As early as 1935, the public has been asked about their perceptions of the police and police efficacy (Brown & Reed-Benedict, 2002, p.543). Brown and Reed-Benedict

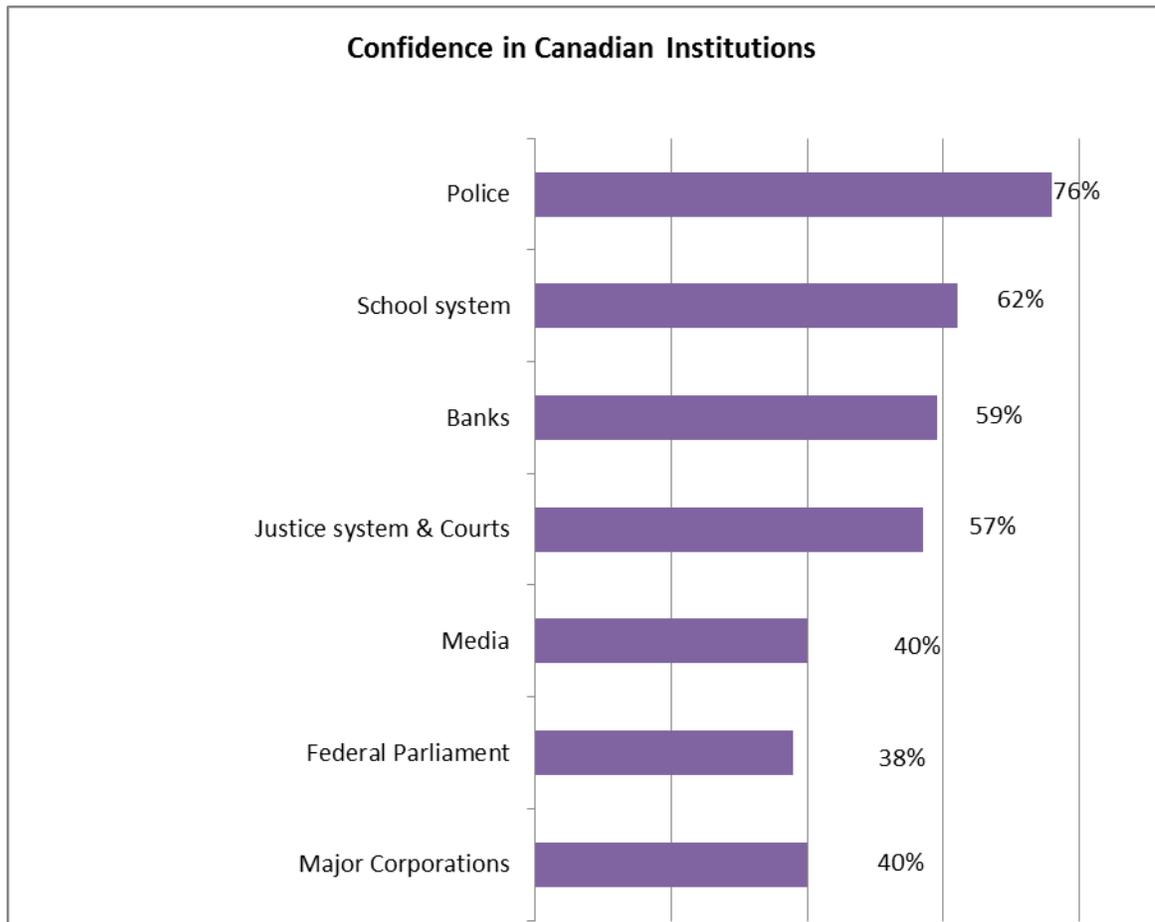
(2002, p.545) describe the reasons for the police to be concerned about the public's perception of them and their activities, stating that:

it is conceivable that negative perceptions of the police contribute to a cycle of reduced police effectiveness, increased crime, and further distrust of the police. Finally, the police need to be concerned about how they are viewed by the public because they are public servants.

These researchers determined that attitudes toward the police are driven by four key factors: respondent age and race, respondent contact with the police and where the respondents lived (Brown & Reed Benedict, 2002, pp.567- 68). They demonstrate how public trust in the police and perceptions of their effectiveness declined in the United States after a number of violent citizen conflicts with the police in cities such as Los Angeles and New York in the mid-20th century.

As part of the Canadian federal government's measurement of indicators of citizens' well-being, perceptions of local police are formally measured every five years in the General Social Survey (GSS). The Statistics Canada (2015) GSS on victimization reported on public perceptions of the police and the justice system. The report indicated that three in four Canadians (76%) have either a great deal or some confidence in the police. According to the researchers, this statistic makes policing the Canadian institution with the highest reported confidence, ranking above the Federal parliament, banks and major corporations and the media. These results are presented in Figure 2.1.

Figure 2.1 Confidence in Canadian Institutions, 2013



Source: Statistics Canada (2015)

Additional results from the 2013 GSS indicate that:

the majority of Canadians believe police were doing a good job at being approachable and easy to talk to (73%), ensuring the safety of citizens (70%), promptly responding to calls (68%), treating people fairly (68%), enforcing the laws (65%) and providing information on crime prevention (62%) (Statistics Canada, 2015, p.3).

It should be noted that citizens' perception of crime is measured using a variety of research methods and researchers have reported different findings (Brown & Reed-Benedict, 2005; Duffy et al., 2005; Hipp, 2013; Sacco, 1982). The results of these

studies may be shaped by when they were conducted, the populations surveyed, and the types of questions asked by researchers.

Perceptions about the police change over time and the Angus Reid (2014) organization reported that, “Canadian confidence in this country’s police forces and court systems have rebounded from dismal confidence levels in 2012” For example, when asked about their confidence in the internal operations and leadership of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP), 67% of respondents in 2014 expressed some or a great deal of confidence in that organization, which was up from 38% in 2012. When the same question was asked of municipal police services, 63% of respondents reported some or a great deal of confidence, which was up from 40% in 2012 (Statistics Canada, 2015, p.1).

In addition to the GSS results reported above, a number of other researchers have also examined public perceptions of the police since 2008. Table 2.1 summarizes four studies and the key findings were that in general, participants’ specific demographic features led them to view the police more or less favorably. Of note is that education, membership in a visible or non-visible minority group, living in a high crime neighbourhood, feelings about one’s own personal safety, age and gender were the variables influencing positive or less positive perceptions of police. Individuals of Indigenous ancestry and those categorized as visible minorities had less confidence in the police than other non-visible minorities, and although a higher level of education usually predicted a greater level of confidence in the police, it was reported that lower levels of education in Indigenous respondents predisposed them to having greater confidence in the police.

Table 2.1 Canadian Studies of Perceptions of the Police, 2008 to 2015

Researchers (Year)	Main Findings
Cotter (2015)	Analyzed census data and found female, older respondents (75 years and older), and recent immigrants viewed the police more positively than the national average. The following groups viewed the police less favorably than the national average: Not married or in a common law relationship, had less than a university degree, household income less than \$80,000, members of a non-visible minority, and those who only speak a non-official language.
Cao (2014)	Analyzed GSS data from Indigenous respondents. These respondents viewed police significantly less favorably than non-Indigenous respondents. Indigenous respondents had a lower overall level of confidence in police. Age, education, gender and marital status also influenced confidence in the police.
Cao (2011)	Analyzed GSS data and found that visible minority group members reported being treated less fairly by police. Non-members of visible minority groups viewed the police more favorably. Determinants of confidence in the police were age, education, gender and marriage, as well as membership in a visible minority and feelings of safety. Older, more educated and female respondents were more likely to view more police favorably.
O'Connor (2008)	Analyzed GSS data and found that perceptions of crime at the neighbourhood level influenced one's perceptions of the police. Young people, visible minorities, males, crime victims, individuals unhappy about their safety and residents of neighbourhoods they perceived as having high levels of crime view the police less favorably.

A number of studies have been carried out in Saskatchewan that have solicited responses about the police. Table 2.2 summarizes the key findings from studies of four different populations from high school students (Chow, 2011) to the general public (Insightrix, 2012; Jones & Ruddell, 2016). Altogether, these studies find high levels of support for the police, although some demographic groups have expressed less trust and confidence including Indigenous persons and young males. The main findings of this research shows that Saskatchewan results are fairly consistent with results from the rest

of Canada. Here, again, favorable attitudes toward the police depend on a respondent's age, perceptions of their safety, income, their ancestry, education and whether they were married. Chow's (2012) research focused on perceptions of police by youth, with the added variable of attitudes toward school among high school students being a factor in perception (p.649), while the perceptions of university students were influenced by whether they lived on or off campus (Chow, 2011, p.514).

Table 2.2 Saskatchewan Studies of Perceptions of the Police, 2011-2016

Jones & Ruddell (2016)	Analyzed data from 450 Regina respondents about the RPS, When asked about overall safety, an aggregate response of 3.46 on the five-point Likert scale indicated most Reginans believed the city was a safe place to live. Disaggregated to the neighbourhood level, reports of perception of safety were not dissimilar: Central patrol district residents' belief in Regina's safety was marginally lower (3.32) than that of the North patrol district (3.44) and the South patrol district (3.59) (p.34).
Insightrix (2012)	Analyzed data from 533 Saskatoon residents and found: Overall satisfaction with the Police Service was 91.8% in 2011, which was up from 90.3% in 2008, 85% in 2005, and 89% in 2002. Overall satisfaction expressed by Indigenous respondents rose to 89% in 2011, compared to 80% in 2008, 59% in 2005 and 76% in 2002. Perceptions of safety increased slightly in 2011 at 74.1% feeling safe, compared with 73.5% in 2008, 76% in 2005, and 77% in 2002.
Chow (2012)	Analyzed data from University of Regina students and found: students with a higher socio-economic background, and students who lived off-campus were more satisfied with the police while victims of crime and those who had previous negative experiences with the police demonstrated lower levels of satisfaction.
Chow (2011)	Analyzed data from 262 Regina high school students and found they viewed police less favorably with those having had been involved in unlawful activity most negatively viewing police. Senior students and those with a positive attitude toward school viewed police more favorably and older high school students viewed police more favorably than younger students.

The fact that the public's perceptions about the police are so consistently positive suggests they have been successful in managing the public's perceptions. While these activities had historically been managed through the media and now by social media, the police also rely upon a number of other formal strategies to work with the public and make their activities appear to be more transparent and accountable. The introduction of civilian oversight bodies, allowing citizens to complain about police misconduct or raise issues of concern to the community through an arms-length channel, became a source of

scrutiny intended to increase police accountability for their actions. According to Ferdik et al. (2013), “The philosophical justification for civilian oversight is two-fold: 1) compensate for governmental failures to combat police deviance and 2) equalize the balance of power between officials and citizens” (p.104).

Similarly, Boards of Police Commissioners were established to oversee policy development and provide some administrative governance of police services. These boards are comprised of elected municipal officials and citizens, with powers granted under the laws of the local jurisdiction and are required for any Saskatchewan community larger than 5,000 residents (and Indigenous communities receiving contract policing services by the RCMP and the File Hills police service: the one self-administered Indigenous police agency). For example, in Saskatchewan, *The Police Act*, 1990, confers powers to “develop and maintain programs to i) create a public understanding of police functions; and ii) promote the improvement of police relationships with, and crime prevention within communities in Saskatchewan” (Section 2(a) 1990). This example illustrates the obligations prescribed by law for jurisdictions to have a mechanism for police to be responsive to citizens.

This overview of public perceptions of the police lends itself to the larger discussion about the importance of police communicating their activities to the public and the ways of communicating that will be the most successful in achieving their goals. Historically, managing the information flow to the media was the role undertaken by the Public Information Officer, but that role is evolving along with social media, and those changes are described below.

The role of the public information officer

Canadian police services mirror the internal communications functions of most other first-world police services by designating one or more special positions charged with liaising between the police service and the media. Depending on the police service, or even the country, this position could be called the “Public Information Officer” (PIO), the “Press Officer”, the “Public Affairs Director”, or the “Public Relations Officer”, among others (Chermak & Weiss, 2005; Kingshott, 2011; Lee & McGovern, 2012; Mawby, 2002; Motschall & Cao, 2012).

The PIO may be a civilian employee or a sworn officer, again depending on the police service. Typically, the civilian employee has had some background in communications, specifically in the news media as a reporter. The sworn officer, on the other hand, often has no prior communications experience, but has received training in their spokesperson role on the job (Lee & McGovern, 2012; Motschall & Cao, 2002; Surette & Richard, 1995). This position may, or may not be part of a larger communications operation within the police service, but generally most mid-sized and larger police services (e.g., with more than 250 officers) have an individual on staff who takes on the role of police spokesperson (Mawby, 2010; Motschall & Cao, 2002).

A 1992 survey of police services in the 50 largest American cities conducted by Guffey found that all of them employed full-time PIOs (Motschall & Cao, 2012). Surette and Richard (1995) found that, “the typical PIO is 40 years old and college educated, with the majority schooled in criminal justice or communications. Principle tasks cited were media-relations oriented, including fielding media inquiries, arranging news interviews, holding press conferences, and disseminating press releases ” (p.328).

Writing about their findings, Surette and Richard (1995) labeled PIOs as gatekeepers between the police and the news media. Their view of the role is “to coordinate the flow of information to the news media while promoting a positive image of the organization” (Surette & Richard, 1995; p.326). This description appears to give the PIO a more strategic role than the task orientation described by Motschall and Cao (2012).

Keeping in mind that one important goal of a police service is to be viewed positively by the media in conjunction with providing factual, timely information to reporters about investigations or police operations, the PIO job requires communication skills, as well as negotiation and collaboration skills; and good judgment combined with political awareness. As Chermak and Weiss (2005, p.504) noted:

Public information officers are expected to navigate this unpredictable terrain, maximizing the positive and minimizing the negative images depicted about police organizations in the news.

Examining the genesis of the PIO in police services internationally, it appears that creation of the position has coincided with significant social or political events in each country. According to Lee and McGovern (2012, p.104):

Where once (the relationship between the media and the police) operated on quite an informal level, increasing levels of police executive oversight have led to a number of reforms that have transformed the police-media relationship.

For example, in the United States, the civil unrest of the 1960s led to calls for greater police accountability (Motschall & Cao, 2002). In the 1990s, a movement toward police reform in the United Kingdom brought up the fundamental question of the role of the police, and in response, police officials sought formal communications means to strengthen the relationship between the police and the public (Mawby, 2002). Similarly,

in Australia, a great deal of political attention has focused on crime control and policing. Thus, the response to crises of faith in policing led officials to do what many other large organizations would: improve the image of police services by creating a formal, strategic communications function as part of their organizational structure (Lee & McGovern, 2012).

As a number of scholars have pointed out, before political or social crises led to the establishment of formal communication strategies and dedicated personnel to carry them out, police services were often silent about their activities (Kingshott, 2011; Lee & McGovern, 2012; Mawby, 2002). They explained that in response, news media relied on informal connections to the police for their information, leaving police without formal outlets for correcting misinformation or for telling their side of the story. To remedy this shortcoming, police leaders chose specific reporters to be their correspondents, but there was no unchecked provision of information; police sources told the reporter only what was in the police service's best interests. As a result, news accounts were often inaccurate, because of the correspondent's need to fill in the blanks left by the omissions made by the police. These inaccurate accounts may have contributed to the public's fear of crime and loss of confidence or mistrust in the police (Mawby, 2010).

In dedicating resources specific to communications, Kingshott (2011) observed that the police have three objectives: "(1) to get the facts to the public; (2) to appeal for witnesses; and (3) to reassure the public by giving road traffic safety or crime prevention advice, and reduce the fear associated with the incident" (p.244). He added that any incident should be seen as the opportunity to build the relationship between the police service and the media. Statements such as these provide insight into the motivations of

police services, and this need to manage the information flowing to the public determines their need for full-time specialists in communications dedicated to advancing the police service's information dissemination and relationship-building agenda. Those observations are confirmed by research into the key goals of disseminating police information. For example, Lee and McGovern (2012) conducted interviews with Public Affairs Directors from Australian police services, and they concluded these individuals believed their most significant function was to ensure public confidence.

This review of the literature suggests the role of the Public Information Officer is professional, complex and critical in managing the flow of information to the public about police operations. Communications personnel in this role accomplish more than providing the facts. More crucially, through their portrayals of police activities, they are engaged in shaping the public's perceptions about the police and the legitimacy of their police services.

Crime reporting and the crime beat

Crime reporters have been part of the policing world since the first modern police services were established in the 1800s, albeit their role was not as formalized as it is today (Mawby, 2002). According to Kingshott (2011), the crime reporter, more formally known as an investigative reporter, originated as the result of police services' unwillingness to provide much information to the public. In the absence of factual information from the police about an incident, reporters would go to public sources, who may not have known the entire story, or who may have simply fabricated aspects of the story. That led to inaccurate and misrepresented reports of police activities, which may have heightened the public's fear of crime and decreased perceptions of police efficacy

and legitimacy. To resolve this issue, the police made agreements with specific reporters to provide as much factual information as they could, without jeopardizing confidential activities or the integrity of investigations. Surette and Richard (1995, p.326) observed:

Within criminal justice agencies, interaction with the media was often an ad hoc, case specific, idiosyncratic process and crime news information flow was more likely to be based on personal relationships than on formal organizational linkages.

Mawby (2010) shared Chibnall's (1975) perspective that the period of the 1950s and earlier was "the golden age of crime reporting" (p.127) and he noted:

Chibnall portrayed a textured world of seasoned crime reporters, meeting detectives in smoky pubs, building relationships and exchanging information for hospitality. But as the media's use of technology increased, for example, television in the 1950s, the role of the crime reporter took on decreasing prominence.

Much has changed since the 1950s in terms of the dissemination of information about policing. First, the police today have the ability to circumvent the traditional media by using social media to directly send messages to the public. Second, Mawby (2010) observes that the public's use of mobile phone camera photos and 144-character tweets allows them to collect and disseminate information about the police, and "media now face competition from not only 'organizational', but also 'citizen' journalism" (p. 101). With cameras mounted in mobile telephones, it is easier for members of the public to monitor police activity, with this tool being used to actively record citizen-police interactions. The National Public Radio (2016) reported that those involved in police communications have become specialists in the broader communications sciences. Today, police communications experts add skills from marketing, advertising, public relations and other communications-related disciplines to their portfolios. Taken together, these changes suggests that police communications in general has taken on a

larger role than only news media liaison, further diminishing the crime reporter's claim on police news (Mawby, 2010).

Mawby (2010) cited the results of a survey administered to professional communications managers in British police services, which was supplemented with interviews with newspaper reporters. His findings indicated that because local newspapers were cutting positions due to financial constraints, the specialist crime reporter was becoming a thing of the past. Because of this change, the generalists assigned to solicit information from the police knew little about policing issues and often contacted police communications staff by telephone, instead of interviewing them face to face, which is a more effective way of drawing out information from a reluctant informant (Mawby, 2010, p.132). Mawby (2010) also observed that despite this trend, many newspaper crime reporters maintained their professional standing by asserting that they continued to have "influence as independent shapers of the news". These reporters argued that the best source of information continued to be regular police contacts and that they would continue to work to build and maintain relationships with them, particularly with the service's detectives.

Police use of social media

Van de Velde et al. (2015, pp.4-5) indicate that of all government agencies and organizations, police services are the most prominent users of social media for communicating with the public and contend that:

The basic premise is that better-informed citizens can contribute to public safety by taking proper preventative measures, avoiding hazardous locations or providing relevant information to the police. Reaching citizens with police communications is essential to obtaining these objectives.

Grimmelikhukjsen and Meijer (2015) further describe social media as an appropriate communications vehicle for the police because it is inexpensive, easy to use, and has immediate results. They also point out that social media lends itself well to enhancing the public's perception of police legitimacy because, "social media strengthens transparency and participation" (Grimmelikhukjsen & Meijer, 2015, p.5). Where the opportunity for participation with police and perceived effectiveness of police exist, citizens more readily provide input, thus enhancing the service's effectiveness. Thus, social media enables a two-way communication with members of the public who might not otherwise provide input to the police.

Lieberman et al. (2013) confirm that police services have adopted social networking sites and use of social media to carry out investigations, to conduct background checks for potential employees, and to communicate with the public. In fact, the International Association of Chiefs of Police (IACP) administers a website dedicated exclusively to social media use by police (see www.iacpsocialmedia.org). Their website enables visitors to access publications, information about training opportunities, news updates and other information of interest to police officials at a variety of levels, all related to the use of social media in their daily operations (IACP, 2016).

Social media offers many benefits to users in any formal or informal organization, including policing. It is immediate, because messages can be crafted and delivered quickly; it is direct, and messages can be targeted to specific audiences or individuals without intermediaries, and this eliminates a reporter's commentary or misinterpreting police messages. Social media also facilitates a two-way communication and audiences have the capability to respond directly to the message sender. Here again, that response

can be virtually instantaneous (Lieberman et al., 2013). Most importantly, the technology is inexpensive at a time when governments at all levels are seeking ways to reduce costs. “Given the relatively low direct costs of development, these communications tools are an appealing method of managing an agency’s public messages in tough economic times” (Ruddell & Jones, 2013, p.4).

The three most popular forms of social media used by police are Facebook, YouTube and Twitter (IACP, 2017; Meijer & Thaens, 2013). With respect to Twitter, for example, its messages can be directed to any individual with an email address, but the recipient does not have to respond to or “follow” the sender. At the same time, users can “retweet” or send the original message to numerous recipients, and so on, which can create an entire network or networks of people who receive it (Procter et al., 2013).

By contrast, Facebook relies on creation of user pages, to which announcements can be posted. The originating user can encourage followers to post to their page or the original user can send messages directly to followers, who are able to respond (Lieberman et al., 2013). The third most popular social media tool, YouTube, is used by police organizations for a variety of applications. These include posting videos of incidents or meetings, recruiting new members, and for police service promotions (Crump, 2011).

Lieberman et al. (2013) conducted a survey of the 20 largest U.S. police services about their Facebook use. Their findings indicated that one-half of these Facebook posts were crime-related, such as informing the public that a crime had either occurred or had been solved. These researchers also determined that agencies employing Facebook most

frequently used it for criminal investigation/apprehension messages, while those who used it less often were posting crime prevention and safety tips.

With respect to investigations, Duplantier (2016) explains that social media is used as a two-way communication channel between the public and the police.

Investigators have used Twitter to ask citizens for information about specific cases, and, in turn, individuals who believe they have useful information are able to tweet back.

Police also use social media to release photos of suspects, and in many cases, study the Facebook and Twitter entries of suspects to gather information that may lead to an arrest.

Ruddell and Jones (2013) cite examples of Scotland Yard detectives posting photos of suspects involved in the 2011 United Kingdom riots protesting a police shooting to assist in their apprehension, and of the Vancouver Police Department using their website to identify suspects involved in the 2011 hockey riots.

Social media as a strategic engagement tool

Crump (2011) describes the introduction of a social media strategy for British police after the August, 2011 British riots drew considerable criticism from the public. He explained that in the strategy's guidance document, "The emphasis is on openness, accountability, and a kind of engagement that envisages a dialogue between citizens and their local police" (p.3). Researchers examining this strategy sought answers to three questions: 1) How are police using social media in their engagement strategy? 2) What success has been achieved in using social media for public engagement? and; 3) Does social media disrupt existing police culture, or does it reflect or reinforce it? (Crump, 2011, pp.3-4). Schneider (2013, p.18) concluded that:

police use of social media is an interactive platform to encourage symbolic support. Officer tweets and interactions with both the public and other officers,

provide opportunities to further develop and facilitate existent police presentational strategies.

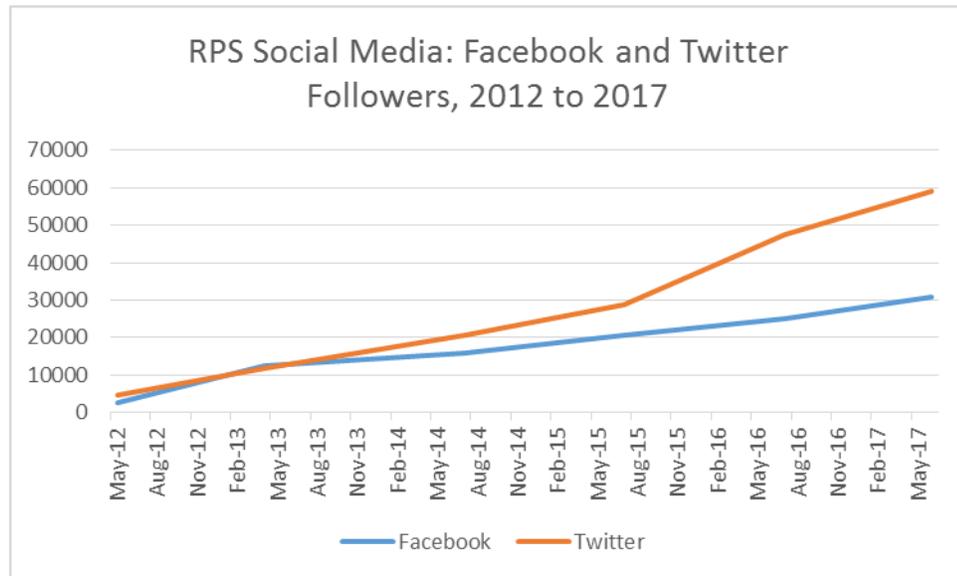
Social media can be strategically used to put a human face on the police service. As Norwood and Waugh (2012) noted in an editorial in *Police Chief Magazine*, “Through social media, agencies can make that connection with people while they tell the story of their particular department,” [and] “The Public Affairs Unit sought out officers from different units who rode motorcycles; took a picture of these officers with their bikes; and posted the photos on Facebook” (p.33).

In Saskatchewan, the Regina Police Service (RPS) has a Twitter account for Merlot, a Canine Assisted Intervention Trauma dog and as of October 16, 2017, the dog had 1,302 followers. The RPS also authorizes a number of officers to disseminate information on Twitter. Constable Warner from the traffic unit, for example, posts about traffic enforcement and safety, and had 3,679 followers on October 16, 2017. Similar to what was reported by Norwood and Waugh (2012), these efforts enable a police service to put a human face on policing.

Altogether, a review of the literature reveals the public is receptive to the police’s increased use of social media to communicate with them, and statistics demonstrating rising rates of citizen engagement with the police through Facebook, Twitter and police websites support that proposition. For example, Ruddell and Jones (2015) examined use of social media by the Regina Police Service using perceptions of the public. They report that “since the first RPS community survey was carried out in 2011, the proportion of respondents accessing these web-based sources of information has more than doubled and users report that these services are of value to them” (p.16). Figure 2.2 shows the growth in the number of RPS Facebook and Twitter followers from 2012 to 2017.

During those five years the number of Facebook followers increased by 1,065% and Twitter followers grew by 1,180%.

Figure 2.2 Growth in Police Social Media: Regina Police Service: 2012-2017



Source: Regina Police Service (2017)

Schneider (2013, p.2) describes presentational strategies as the way police represent their image, credibility and autonomy to the public and points to the importance of using Twitter to meet this objective. He contends that it makes sense for police, and other emergency responders to use Twitter for public communication and provides three reasons for this assertion. First, Twitter use can support community policing where “face to face” interactions are used as means for garnering public support” (Schneider, 2013, p.4). Second, he says that “evidence suggests that members of the public, to some degree, now expect an online police presence,” [and] third, “Twitter follows the way dispatch technology has been set up” (Schneider, 2013, pp.4-5).

O'Connor's (2015) study of the content and distribution of police tweets from police services across Canada revealed that, "The use of Twitter by the police in Canada is best explained as a combination of image management and community building," (p.16) [and] "There appears to be an effort by the police to demonstrate their effectiveness, but at the same time also show responsiveness to citizens" (p.17). Moreover, O'Connor (2015, p.17) points out that "tweeting involved more than simply maintaining appearances in that there seemed to be a genuine attempt to engage with the public addition to image management," [and] "Twitter was utilized by the police to encourage police-community partnerships and to pass on to the public some responsibility for managing their own risks."

With respect to the content of police tweets, Van de Velde et al. (2015, p.9) found that 25 per cent of the tweets they analyzed were related to crime and incident reporting. Because part of the critical success of Twitter is having tweets passed on to others, the researchers suggest that in order for the message to be retweeted, the "user and the message matter [and] the type of information provided is important to the audience" (Van deVelde et al., 2015, p.11). To illustrate that observation, Gray (2015, p.2) provides examples of how Twitter is used by the Toronto Police Service and observes that:

Social media started at the Toronto Police Service because a traffic officer asked the public via Twitter, for contributions to a "Top Ten Traffic Pet Peeves" list. This request went viral throughout the city and caught the attention of the mainstream media in a way that had never happened before [and] the officer with the most followers of the more than 300 Twitter accounts related to units associated with the Toronto Police Service garners most of his attention for sending tweets about lost teddy bears and school cafeteria bullies [and] creating a virtual environment in which the public feels connected to us (TPS) and to each other on an emotional and intellectual level.

Although it could be said that social media is proclaimed as a significant opportunity for police to expand their communications and investigations activities, some scholars hold a reasonably negative view based on their research and observations. For example, Grimmelikhuijsen and Meijer (2015) argue that, “transparency, not participation, is the dominant effect of Twitter [and] our research provides no support for the value of online participation in strengthening perceived legitimacy” (p.6). They posit that Twitter and other social media applications can have a detrimental effect on police legitimacy as citizens can distribute negative messages about the police based on personal encounters gone wrong, stereotyped depictions of officers or police operations, and simply by repeating hearsay that may have little truth. “For instance, when police tweet negative messages about their performance or make appeals for help with unsolved cases, the public may view the police as being less effective” (Grimmelikhuijsen & Meijer, 2015, p.6).

Moreover, not all web-based investigations are seen as benign. According to Johnston and McGovern (2013, p.168), many members of the public took exception to the police publicly identifying individuals through social media as having participated in the 2011 British riots. Lieberman et al. (2013) concluded that because social media is still reasonably new, the evidence base for determining its abilities and shortcomings is yet to be established. Crump (2011, p.24) cautions that “any strategy for communicating with the public must be balanced between “openness and engagement and more conservative approaches”. It is unlikely that critics of police use of social media will inhibit the enthusiasm for its use or its expansion into additional public communication

applications. Whether these concerns are valid remains to be seen and this may be a fruitful endeavor for researchers interested in carrying out additional studies.

Nonetheless, police use of social media coincides with this communication vehicle's contemporary public appeal. It is certain that police services are finding value in this form of communication, and for the most part, the public readily accepts it. Brainard and Edlins (2014) analyzed the content of posts to Facebook, Twitter and YouTube for 90 days to determine how successful this activity was in garnering public support and participation in the activities of 10 large U.S. police services. Here, it is important to note that the researchers view social media as an extension of community policing, where police visibility in the community through direct public interaction is seen as an important crime reduction mechanism.

Brainard and Edlins (2014) determined that collaboration was a key goal of police/public engagement via social media. This is opposed to two-way conversations where the communication is simply a back and forth discussion. Through content analysis of the social media posts, they determined that interaction was crucial to achieving collaboration, and observed that police services who disabled their social media response mechanisms because of spam, attack posts or because they did not have resources to adequately monitor their social media tools did not achieve the same depth of engagement as agencies that actively responded to citizens via social media. These researchers describe the nature of a discussion via social media: typically, the police service will initiate the discussion, regardless of the topic. The resulting thread is determined to be a discussion if a member of the public responds: the police service could respond to that post, which in turn might generate another post, and so on.

However, their study showed that although the public will readily respond to police service posts, by not continuing the response for a variety of reasons, they have shut down a conversation that police say they most desperately need to have citizen engagement.

Summary

This review of the literature reveals that although the bulk of police services use social media to engage with the public, the extent to which it is applied to various messages is varied. Some police departments report a majority of their social media messaging is related to solving crimes, while others use it primarily as a tool to enhance or support the legitimacy of their activities. The enhanced use of social media raises the question of whether the police still need the media to communicate with the public. Crump (2011) contends that police did not necessarily want a conversation, and that it was sufficient for police to deliver messages without expectation of a public response.

Grimmelikhuijsen and Meijer (2015, p.16) posit that the media is no longer necessary for police communication, and “social media generally seems to offer the police an opportunity to disintermediate relations with citizens.” That is, the media does not need to transmit and interpret police messaging; the police can go directly to the public via social media, and they observe:

The news media tend to focus on mistakes and failures, whereas social media offers the opportunity to highlight successes. Open government increases the opportunity for public scrutiny, but also at the same time, strengthens its capacity to shape public relations. Possibly journalists remain the main followers of twitter accounts of local police departments and use information from twitter to report on crimes and police behavior.

Yet, there may remain unanticipated costs to avoiding the media in favour of social media. The extant literature does not conclusively identify a need for the wholesale

replacement of the Public Information Officer by social media, but offers issues for consideration of how the PIO might continue alongside social media to broaden the reach and depth of police communication with the public. The current research sheds light on this issue. O'Connor (2015, p.19) concludes that:

there is recognition by the police that community members need opportunities to discuss how they are policed. However, the question remains as to whether online attempts at community building/empowerment move beyond rhetoric and also help to shape face-to-face policing. Nevertheless, if citizens continue to demand authenticity from their police forces, it is likely that the police will be expected to have what they say online to be reflected in their on- the- ground police work.

Chapter 3: Methodology

Introduction

The research question guiding this research is: How has the use of social media influenced the way police communicate with the public? In order to answer that question, the investigator examined the extent to which the introduction of social media as a communications method used by police to deliver messages to the public has changed the nature of police communication, as well as whether any operational structures had changed. At the same time, this research also examines the requirement for the media as an intermediate messenger and whether any new status has an impact on police transparency and accountability. The research was carried out by interviewing nine Saskatchewan police service employees who are responsible for the delivery of information to the public. These respondents, who represented five municipal police services, were asked about their attitudes toward social media as a communications tool used by police leaders, investigators and the service's communications professionals. The semi-structured interview guide enabled the researcher to classify the types of communications activities either replaced or delivered differently by social media. In addition, the investigator solicited information about the relationships between the police and the news media through information acquired from the respondents.

Methodological strategy

A qualitative approach was selected for collecting the data. One of the most commonly used and effective qualitative approaches is interviews (DiCicco-Bloom & Crabtree, 2006). In determining the type of research that would be the most appropriate, consideration was given to the potential content of responses. That is, interviews that

solicit personal opinions and observations can produce richer content than those obtained in a written survey as this approach allows participants to elaborate on key issues and themes. The perceptions of these respondents are critical to the results and DiCicco-Bloom and Crabtree (2006, p.314) point out, “The purpose of the qualitative research interview is to contribute to a body of knowledge that is conceptual and theoretical and is based on the meanings that life experiences hold for the interviewees”. As such, the interviews were semi-structured to offer the opportunity for the researcher to pose additional questions when the participant’s response required elaboration, or if the respondent chose to provide information in another, equally informative direction. Using this approach for the interviews enabled respondents a wide latitude in their responses, providing a rich source of information about social media use by the police.

The nine interviews were based on a series of pre-determined open-ended questions that emerged after the literature review was conducted. A common core of questions was asked of all participant groups; although some secondary questions varied somewhat based on the occupational role of the respondents (e.g., questions for a Public Information Officer differed slightly from those asked of an investigator or a police administrator). In addition to the questions regarding social media use, a number of demographic questions were also asked and copies of the three interview guides are attached as Appendix B. It should be noted that the same interview guide was used to conduct interviews with the PIO and the social media expert, because these are formal communications/public relations positions requiring credentials in communications.

The survey instruments received ethics approval from the University of Regina's Research Ethics Board before any field work commenced, and the approval was re-issued after one year. A copy of the two ethics certificates are included as Appendix A.

Sample characteristics

Representatives from Saskatchewan's six largest municipal police services were asked to participate in the interviews, although only representatives from Regina, Saskatoon, Prince Albert, Moose Jaw, and Weyburn participated. These services employ 1,008 sworn officers; altogether, these police services serve 560,302 Saskatchewan residents (Statistics Canada, 2017). According to Saskatchewan's Bureau of Statistics, Saskatchewan's population as of April 1, 2017 was 1,161,365 persons. Thus, the municipal police from the communities listed above serve approximately one-half of Saskatchewan citizens. Several smaller police services (e.g., those with less than 10 sworn officers) were excluded from the sample as they did not have social media presence except for a website. The Estevan municipal police service declined to participate, as did the RCMP's Saskatchewan "F" Division.

The sample was purposive in that interviews were solicited from representatives of a variety of jobs within the five municipal police services. It was hypothesized that the most valuable source for information on social media may not necessarily be the most senior-ranking official. For example, an officer who has practical experience in the use of social media to investigate cases might have more insight into that issue than the police chief. Thus, the first step for setting up the interviews was to solicit participation from each municipal service. With respect to gender, all of the sworn officers were male and all of the civilian public information officers and social media specialists were

female. This gender-based breakdown was not undertaken deliberately, but rather reflects the composition of Saskatchewan police services' workforces.

Whenever possible, interviews were conducted with the Public Information Officers from those police services, or with their social media specialist. In some agencies, there was no formal PIO position. In those cases, the interview was completed with the sworn officer responsible for communication with the public. Finally, several investigators who use social media to communicate directly to the public participated in the interviews.

Data collection

Before scheduling the interviews, an email introducing the project was sent to potential participants. Consistent with Research Ethics Board requirements, letters of consent were completed by the participants prior to the interviews taking place. All interviews were conducted by telephone between August, 2015 and September, 2017. Each interview lasted between 15 and 25 minutes. Respondents were not compensated for their participation.

The interviews were tape recorded and transcribed by the researcher. In order to preserve the confidentiality of the subjects, no names were used on any of the transcripts and each participant was assigned a number. After the interviews were concluded, participants were encouraged to provide additional follow-up information that they may not have remembered in the interview. Of the nine participants, two provided additional information via email to the researcher within one week.

Methodology

The transcribed data were analyzed using Attride-Stirling's (2001) Thematic Network Analysis. This approach has become a preferred method for analyzing qualitative data in the social sciences because it provides a framework for determining how segments of information can be organized into larger themes, and subsequently connected to one another, thus creating what Attride-Stirling (2001, p.386) describes as a "web-like illustration that summarizes the main themes constituting a piece of text." Since Attride-Sterling's work was originally published, it has been cited over 2,600 times, which indicates its widespread acceptance. Braun and Clarke (2006, p.97) highlight the following strengths of using this approach, and they are as follows:

- Flexibility.
- Relatively easy and quick method to learn, and do.
- Accessible to researchers with little or no experience of qualitative research.
- Results are generally accessible to educated general public.
- Useful method for working within participatory research paradigm, with participants as collaborators.
- Can usefully summarize key features of a large body of data, and/or offer a 'thick description' of the data set.
- Can highlight similarities *and* differences across the data set.
- Can generate unanticipated insights.
- Allows for social as well as psychological interpretation of data.
- Can be useful for producing qualitative analyses suited to informing policy development.

The Attride-Sterling (2001) approach is based on the identification of themes, which are built on a structure that networks all of the information into a web; no one theme necessarily stands alone. First, a coding framework is built that enables text from the interviews to be sorted through seeking commonalities in either single words or word segments. From these codes, the basic themes are culled, then the basic themes are examined for their fit into a broader category, the organizing themes. Finally, the global theme, which aggregates the entire structure into an interdependent network is created through analyzing the basic and organizing themes. According to Attride-Sterling (2001), the global theme is “the core, principal metaphor that encapsulates the main point in the text” (p.393). The global theme is the central depiction of how all of the analyzed data comes together, and creates a visual picture that enables broader and deeper analysis.

Table 3.1 shows the steps involved in the analysis of qualitative data using Attride-Sterling’s (2001) approach.

Table 3.1. Using Thematic Network Analysis to Analyze the Interview Data

Analysis Stage A: Reduction or Breakdown of Text
Step 1: Code Material (a) Devise a coding framework (b) Dissect text into text segments using the coding framework
Step 2: Identify Themes (a) Abstract themes from coded text segments (b) Refine themes
Step 3: Construct Thematic Networks (a) Arrange themes (b) Select Basic Themes (c) Rearrange into Organizing Themes (d) Deduce Global Theme(s) (e) Illustrate as thematic network(s) (f) Verify and refine the network(s)
Analysis Stage B: Exploration of Text

<p>Step 4: Describe and Explore Thematic Networks (a) Describe the network (b) Explore the network</p>
<p>Step 5: Summarize Thematic Network Analysis</p>
<p>Analysis Stage C: Integration or Exploration</p>
<p>Step 6: Interpret Patterns</p>

Source: Attride-Sterling (2001)

For this study, four organizing themes were identified. The discussion of each theme in the analyses presented in Chapter 4 includes quotations from the interview participants as a way to achieve greater understanding of the information solicited from the respondents. Once the network analysis was explored and patterns of data emerged, the findings were analyzed and conclusions drawn based on the analysis. It should be noted that after nine interviews were completed, no new themes became evident, thus there was no new insight that would be achieved by conducting additional interviews. According to Fuchs and Ness (2015), although the data may be both “thick” and “rich”, it is not necessary to have a large sample size.

The final network of themes is depicted in Chapter 4 as Figure 4.2, which demonstrates the relationship between the three categories of themes, which all lead to the global theme of “police communication changes with use of social media.” It is important to note that the basic and the organizing themes arising out of the examination are not limited in quantity. However, to expedite the analysis, as well as to keep the data within manageable groupings, the organizing themes were limited to the ones that best encompassed the basic themes.

Limitations

A number of potential limitations related to the research were identified prior to the start of the study. Whenever possible these limitations were addressed in order to limit their effect on the research findings. First, the investigator has worked with several of the respondents at some time in the past, within the context of her past role as the communications liaison and primary media s

okesperson for the Saskatchewan Ministry of Corrections and Policing from 2006 to 2013. In particular, the investigator had previous contact with the Public Information Officers from the Regina and Saskatoon police services. However, this contact was limited to exchanging information on incidents related to offenders being at large from provincial custody. It is believed that the limited and informal nature of these exchanges did not unduly influence the interviews, nor did they influence the content of the interviews. Moreover, the researcher has not been involved in any interactions with any of the respondents since 2013. As a result, it is unlikely these relationships affected the validity of the research.

Although identified as a potential limitation in the research proposal, participants did not hesitate to speak to any of the job-related questions. Any potential concerns of the respondents were mediated by advising them their responses were confidential, and confirming that specific questions do not create concern. A third potential limitation was that the sample of respondents was not the result of an invitation to a larger group of police social media experts. By contrast, the study utilizes a sampling strategy whereby potential participants were selected for their specific characteristics related to their occupational roles (i.e., police administrator, PIO, social media expert) which is a

purposive sample. The limitation here is that the sample is not a representative sample of the entire population of police social media experts, thus the study's external validity is limited and the results cannot be generalized to a larger population.

Summary

Nine respondents from five municipal police departments that serve over one-half of Saskatchewan's population participated in semi-structured interviews carried out between August 2015 and September 2017. These interviews were transcribed and the results analyzed using Attride-Sterling's (2001) thematic network analysis. This methodology was selected because it has become a standard approach in analyzing interview data in the social sciences (Braun & Clarke, 2006). The interviews comprised a purposive sample, in that participants were recruited based on their employment with a Saskatchewan municipal police service, and their work involved use of one or more social media platforms. Additionally, the sample was somewhat limited as it was relatively small and geographically restricted to municipal police services in Saskatchewan and the results might not be able to be generalized to a larger population. Nonetheless, the nine interviews was sufficient to lend itself to a robust analysis.

Chapter 4: Data and Analysis

Introduction

This chapter presents the findings of the qualitative analyses of the transcribed interviews using the methods described in Chapter 3. Altogether, 14 basic themes emerged from the analysis, these were distilled into four organizing themes, and this in turn led to the identification of a single global theme. This research progressed in the six phases described by Braun and Clarke (2006, p.87), and include becoming familiar with the data, generating the initial codes, searching for themes, reviewing those themes, defining those themes, and presenting the results.

These themes were then visually portrayed using two illustrations. The first is presented in a table format (Table 4.1) that describes how the basic themes and the organizing themes emerged from the analysis and how they fed into the global theme. Here, the basic themes are expanded into short, but complete sentences so that their meanings are clear. The organizing themes are simple word segments, and the global theme, as with the basic themes is depicted through a complete sentence reflecting the topics organized under the organizing themes. Figure 4.1 shows the interconnection between the themes, and they are all displayed around the global theme in the center. This represents graphically how the themes can be networked with one another, and changing complete sentences to word segments for the three levels of themes simply provides a quick representation of the written themes so as not to overpower the network illustration.

Data preparation

Each category of participant (i.e., police administrator, public information officer, social media expert and investigator) loaned itself to a stand-alone analysis, as well as an aggregate analysis, because some of the interview questions were unique to a single participant category, applicable to more than one occupational group, for example, the PIO and the social media expert. As a result, the analysis was conducted across both respondent groups and within respondent groups.

Coding of the data involved reviewing the interviews and reducing the data into “manageable and meaningful text segments” (Attride-Sterling, 2001, p.390). For this study, the data from the interviews were reviewed and coded according to the issues that emerged from the analysis of the transcripts. The codes themselves needed to stand alone, in that they were specific and their meaning was not repeated in any other code. As well, as prescribed by Attride-Sterling (2001), the coding framework was structured so that previously established codes identified in the literature review and from the questions asked in the interview guides specific to changes in communication with the public and the media arising out of the police’s use of social media were also considered.

In order to build the analytical network, common words and phrases that emerged after the coding of the data was completed were sorted into basic themes. The basic themes were gathered into larger organizing themes, which allowed for collecting like data into a small number of groupings. Finally, the organizing themes were further gathered into one global theme that connected all of the data. Attride-Sterling (2001, p.393) observes that this network of data serves, “not only [as] a tool for the researcher,

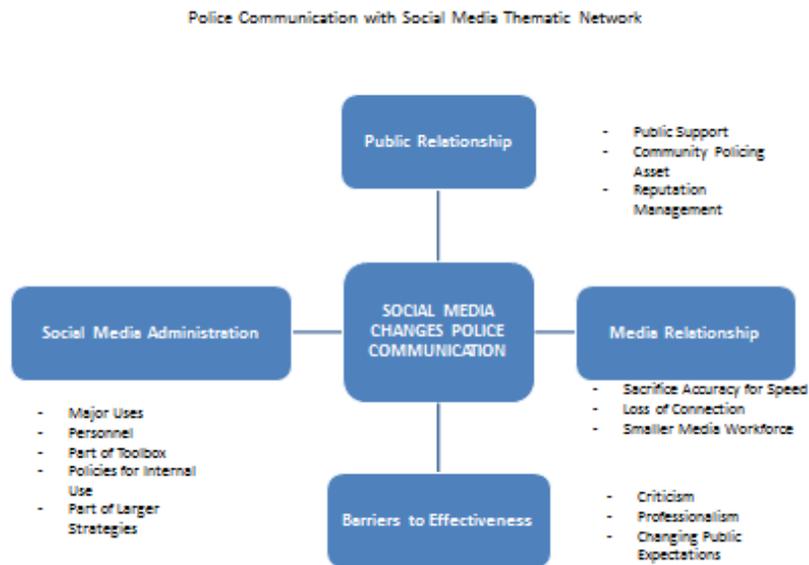
but also for the reader, who is able to anchor the researcher's interpretation on the summary provided by the network.”

Table 4.1 identifies the themes that emerged from the analysis of the data in this study and the following illustration (Figure 4.1) presents the themes in a graphic display. In the narrative, the basic themes are discussed under their specific “host” organizing themes.

Table 4.1 Identification of Themes

Basic Themes	Organizing Themes	Global Theme
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Social media primarily used by police communications/media relations personnel and investigators. • Social media personnel are a variety of sworn officers and civilian staff. • Social media is one tool in a larger communications toolbox. • Social media use policies limit number of internal users. • Social media platforms are part of larger operational and communication strategies. 	Administration	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Social media increases the public’s engagement with police activities and events. • Community policing’s reach is extended through use of social media in addition to events and face to face public appearances by police officials. • A critical aspect of police public relations is reputation management, with social media well-supporting these messages. 	Public Relationship	Social media has influenced how the police communicate with the public
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Because Twitter is an immediate communications delivery system, accuracy of media stories has been sacrificed for speed. • Social media has led to police’s ability to bypass the media to get their story out, as the media has chosen to bypass police to get information on a story. • Staff reductions in media outlets have led to quantity, not necessarily quality, being the driving force behind newsgathering. 	Media Relationship	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Police have opened themselves up to criticism by expanding their communication with the public. • Officers have used social media to “have fun”, and to express their views on their organizations. • The public’s expectations of police communication will change as technology changes. 	Barriers to effectiveness	

Figure 4.1 Thematic Network Map: Social Media and Police Communication



Basic themes

According to Attride-Sterling (2001, p.392), the basic themes arising out of the data analysis must be viewed in relation to the organizing and global theme as setting the scene for determining “larger, shared issues.” The 14 basic themes were gleaned from the transcripts of the interviews with nine Saskatchewan municipal police participants from five municipal police services. Basic themes spoke to a number of aspects, which are discussed below and they were created from the data characterized by specific repeated words or similar word segments. They provided a solid foundation for determining and aggregating the organizing themes, and took into account the broad variety of participant roles – police administrators, investigators, media relations personnel, social media professionals and public information officers. The basic themes related to both

organizational and environmental issues affecting police communication through social media, either directly or through the news media.

The collection of basic themes was not exhaustive, but was generous in the information they divulged. Additionally, the themes demonstrated that the responses to the interview guides reproduced in Appendix B were consistent with one another, and that no one Saskatchewan municipal police service's experience with social media differed vastly from another. Yet, the data differed enough so that it could be easily collated into stand-alone basic themes. An additional observation is that the basic data could be sorted into themes that were simple to understand. This is an important quality of Thematic Network Analysis of qualitative data, in that Braun and Clark (2006, p.97) speak to the network acting as a means for accessibility and ease of understanding.

The three specific interview guides played a significant and specific role in informing the basic themes, in that the questions attempted to cover issues related to the wide range of police professional positions involved in social media use. Consequently, the basic themes emerged from the responses garnered from those specific questions. As such, this method for analyzing the data made identifying the basic themes reasonably straight-forward, because the responses were related to question content.

Organizing themes

The organizing themes are the umbrella under which the basic themes are compiled, and illustrate the key features of those themes. Four organizing themes were apparent from the basic themes; these were (a) administration of the police service's social media program; (b) changes in the relationship between media and police arising out of use of social media; (c) changes in the relationship between the public and police

arising out of social media use; and (d) a compilation of barriers to more effective use of social media by the police. Each of these organizing themes are described in more detail below. At the same time that the themes are discrete, they can all be aggregated into a global theme, acting as an intermediary collection point between the global theme and the basic themes. Although the organizing themes were not exhaustive, they spoke effectively to the basic themes to which they were attached.

Each basic theme was examined for its relationship to an organizing theme, so the analysis was completed from the bottom up. Doing so limited the potential for attempting to squeeze basic data into an already-expressed larger theme, so that in this way, the data forming the basic themes becomes a richer source of insight and the global theme is based on actual data analysis, not so much on intuition. There were no basic themes that were so random that they were left unallocated; each could be attached to one of the four organizing themes, which demonstrates the ease with which the Thematic Network Analysis can be used to compile data into common classifications.

At the level of the organizing theme, the data segments used to create the basic themes are further shortened into a few key words. Here, again, this makes the more complex basic themes much easier to understand, particularly as they ultimately relate to the global theme. In two of the organizing themes, “Relationship to Media”, and “Relationship to the Public”, relative to one another, the contents could be aggregated into a single “External Relationships” theme. However, it was determined that because each relationship *vis a vis* social media is significantly different, for example, the media can be viewed as a delivery mechanism of police information to the public, the most accurate portrayal of the organizing themes kept the public and the media separate.

Organizing theme: Administration of the social media program

One of the four organizing themes that emerged from the analysis provides insight into how police services administer their social media programs. This is an important consideration, given that the research indicates that no two Saskatchewan police services organizes administration of their social media tools and expertise in exactly the same way. Administration of social media includes factors as budgeting, reporting structures, operational procedures, whether the program is considered part of the service's overall operational or strategic strategies, and whether policies and procedures are used to guide delivery of social media. In the literature review it was determined that social media is used for two significant purposes: investigations and media/public relations. It will be useful to, where possible, discuss each as they relate to program administration. The basic themes relating to this organizing theme are: use of social media; social media personnel; social media as a communications tool; and social media policies and strategies.

Use of social media

All of the respondents working within the five police services represented in this study indicated they had been using social media in some form, for both communications/public relations activities and for investigations. The period of time these services were engaged in social media was at least two to three years, starting in 2013, with one larger service using social media for communication starting in 2010. The larger services were earlier adopters of social media than the small agencies, largely because the small services based their decision on the volume of work required to deliver a social media program to a small population. Each respondent indicated that Facebook

and Twitter are the most commonly used social media tools. Participant #1 foresaw decreasing Instagram use and increasing use of Twitter while two respondents indicated they used Instagram occasionally (Participants #2 and #7). In no case did any respondent indicate that social media was adopted as a cost-saving measure, either in staff reductions or infrastructure. Instead, all of the respondents indicated it was a way for police to improve their connection to the public. As Participant #7 explained:

The biggest factor in adoption of social media for us was public openness and transparency. There were activities going on (in our operating environment) that it was important to receive public input about.

Social media personnel

Whether a police service uses a dedicated individual to support its social media functions related to public relations/media contact depends on the size of the organization. Larger agencies employ a social media expert who works in conjunction with the PIO, who may be the manager or director or administrator of the entire public communication function. Participant #5 explained that their social media officer manages the service's suite of social media tools, providing both communications expertise and knowledge of the technical aspects of social media. This individual has responsibility for sending and monitoring pre-packaged messages to the media and the public, under the direction of the PIO, who will have received their own direction from senior officials or investigators, in most cases.

Civilians with communications backgrounds are regularly hired by larger services to provide social media expertise. "Public relations is not a task that you need a police officer doing," says Participant #1, who added:

Lots of young officers are interested in social media, but it isn't necessary to have a police officer doing it. At the same time, we are considering whether we continue to use the police officer in a traditional policing role and bring in a civilian to do our media and social media.

The practice of employing civilians to coordinate police public relations and communications efforts has become more prominent since the financial downturn in 2008 in consideration of the escalating costs of providing police services (Kiedrowski, Ruddell, & Petrunik, 2017). It is understood that civilians, despite their extensive knowledge of the specialized communications industry, are still less costly to hire and retain than sworn officers. According to the *Economics of Policing* report from the Standing Committee on National Security (2014, p.37):

In Canada, there are approximately 69,539 sworn police officers and approximately 28,220 civilian staff working in police services directly with them. 165 Police services have used civilianization effectively, employing civilian personnel to perform activities ranging from fairly routine basic administrative functions, such as data entry, to much more specialized functions, such as crime analysis and forensics. There are savings that flow from hiring civilian staff, who receive less training and require less equipment than police officers and whose salaries are generally lower than those of police officers.

On the other hand, smaller services will add media relations and social media management to existing sworn officers' duties, according to Participants #1 and #4.

The exception to having a dedicated civilian or sworn officer position managing the agency's social media operation was a single Saskatchewan service where the supervisory responsibility rotated through selected sworn personnel (Participant #8). Typically, as part of their training, sworn police officers studied some aspects of social media while training at the Saskatchewan Police College, explained Participant #4. That knowledge is translated on-the-job to a rotation among sworn officers, who then become responsible for whatever social media program the small service is delivering. Although

this structure may appear burdensome, it benefits the service in that social media expands the reach of the officers, particularly when it comes to carrying out investigations. At the same time, two participants noted that smaller services will not have the same demands on them from media outlets (e.g., there is often only the weekly newspaper or local radio station in their cities) or from the public, given the smaller community populations (Participants #2 and #8).

Regardless of the size of the agency, all investigators are sworn police officers trained to conduct investigations. Although these officers use the same social media tools as the PIO, their motivations differ, and Participant #2 observed that:

Social media has been used very successfully to distribute surveillance photos of suspects. In many situations, this led to apprehension, arrest, and charges being laid.

The technical expertise required to use social media is the same for both investigations and media relations, but the application is different, insofar as investigators are employing these tools to solicit information about criminal cases. Notwithstanding that distinction, the investigating officers and social media personnel do not work in isolation; for example, if the investigator requires a broadly-transmitted public message regarding a case, the social media expert might assist with this task. According to Participant #1:

These days, people exist in social media – people who are high-risk young people, [and] If they don't have anything else in the world, they have social media. Whether it's missing persons or gang suspects, social media is a really good investigative tool.

Although all of the interview participants agreed that social media increased the breadth of communicating with the public, all police services elected to approach staffing for social media functions differently, depending on the size of the service. For example,

large services administer their own communications function separate from operations. The PIO might be classified as a manager or director and supervises staff who implement the social media practices. Job responsibilities for these social media managers include monitoring and updating the service's website, Twitter and Facebook accounts, and responding to inquiries and comments from the public and stakeholders using these functions.

Many of the civilian communications personnel in large police services are women. This is consistent with communications functions in most public and private organizations, where females represent the majority of the professional communicator workforce and "women hold anywhere from 61% to 85% of all [public relations] PR jobs, and 59% of all PR managers are female," reports Risi (2016, n.p.).

The small police services represented in this study rely on sworn officers to staff their communications function, which may be limited to liaison with the local press. These sworn officers indicate that other priorities may emerge so communications work may have a low priority compared to their other duties. "In a small service like ours, you need to be a jack of all trades, and I do the communications part of my social media responsibilities off the side of my desk," explained Participant #4. Despite the lower priority placed on these communications functions, the sworn officers assigned to manage the agency's social media presence agreed that it made the communications part of their jobs easier (Participants #4 and #8).

A tool in the communications toolbox

For the respondents from the Saskatchewan police services participating in this study, social media is one approach among others in the communications strategy; it is not the entire strategy. According to Participant #7:

Social media is not the tool box, it's just another tool, [and] it has its place and its usefulness. We're able to use it and maximize its benefits, but there's still a place for the traditional forms of communication.

This distinction applies to both investigations and public/media relations. For the most part, Twitter and Facebook, which are the dominant forms of social media

communication tools, are channels for delivering and distributing information.

According to the respondents, these platforms are not the prime source of messages, nor are they equipped to interpret responses. Their sole purpose is to create a broader, faster method of distribution to more audiences, and to provide police with the means for collecting public responses in a shorter time.

More than one participant stated this efficiency makes social media a valuable tool for police and Participant #5 noted that:

Social media is used to get information directly to the public, instead of relying on mainstream media to publish news stories asking for the public's help, or publicizing an arrest and charges.

Participant #2 said that in their small municipal service, investigators who are using social media have not totally replaced their other investigative procedures and processes with social media, and "It's become an add-on to our other investigative tools. It's used when the investigator thinks it might be helpful in a case."

Investigators may also resort to traditional tools used by communications specialists in their own services, such as news releases to get information to the media,

who in turn disseminate the information to the public, possibly through “re-tweets” or through the agencies’ own websites. This strategy might be considered if an individual needs to be identified, in the event of public safety warnings, Amber Alerts on missing children or where more details than Facebook or Twitter may allow are required. Here, social media becomes part of a package of communications tools to ensure, as much as possible, that critical messages are made widely available to the public.

Social media policies and strategies

Participants #1, #2 and #6 indicated that not all sworn officers are authorized to use social media. For example, late adopters of the technology may permit one or two officers to employ social media in their work, until administrators achieve a higher level of understanding, and hence, comfort with, how the tool can support agency operations, and Participant #6 observed that:

Our service has authorized seven members to post to our Twitter account. There was no magic or science to picking that number; that was just the officers who wanted to use it.

Information related to investigations gathered through social media must still be sorted and analyzed and applied intelligently to the investigation, which Facebook and Twitter are unable to accomplish. This is not to say that other technologies used by police analysts could not support investigative functions, but this study was limited to a discussion of social media *vis a vis* its ability to support police communications efforts.

Overall, the social media platform in Saskatchewan’s municipal police services is driven by a communication strategy that connects the organization’s larger mandate and strategic priorities to the tools and tactics for delivering these messages. “Our service has a specific communications strategy that plugs into our overall operational strategy,”

explains Participant #7. Generally, the architects of an agency's communication strategy will consider messages related to public safety and solving crimes. More importantly, however, the strategy is also the foundation for positioning the service as a positive influence in the community. In this case, social media is an important tool because of its ability to circumvent a third party, such as a reporter, and go straight to the community's citizens, arguably faster and more effectively.

Police communications personnel indicated that social media has not replaced traditional communication tools and these tools represent an equal partner in the service's larger communication strategy (Participants #5 and #7). It is a best practice in communications to develop an entire strategy around a certain issue. As Potter (2012, p.1) explains:

The communicator must consider an overall strategy that will effectively reach the target audience, such as using a mix of tactics, including interpersonal communication (face-to-face) and/or the various media that an organization uses to communicate with internal audiences.

This array of communication tools, such as attending public events, engaging in speaking events, or handing out media releases or annual reports ensures to the greatest extent possible that as many citizens as possible receive the agency's messages at the same time.

However, one of the downsides of using these traditional communication channels, without the addition of social media, is that the communication has traditionally been one-way and these tools may inhibit the ability of citizens to respond to the police. So while social media is a delivery mechanism for communications output, it can also be an effective method for receiving citizen input. Talpau (2014, p.45) maintains:

Social media puts the person, the information and the message in the center because the individual is given the opportunity to communicate freely in the online public open space.

According to Participant #7, this can be both an asset and a detriment, because:

Social media gives members of the public a voice and a presence where they wouldn't have had one before; it changes the day to day operations of what we do, just to put out a lot of fires. [and] We're responding to more situations; there's a dramatic rise in the number of people tweeting, reporters pick all these messages up, and want more details from us, whether the original information was accurate or not.

With respect to organizational strategies, police services will have similar strategies related to operational activities and how social media might be applied. For example, one police service is using social media to reach out to youth, as part of its overall strategy to form better relationships with this population given they are at greater risk for engaging in criminal activity (Crutchfield, 2017), or who may already be involved in criminal activity through gang membership (Participant #1).

In the case of investigators charged with acting on crime reduction strategies, or on assignments such as seeking information on missing persons, the officers gave high praise to social media for its benefit in extending the reach of their own or their team's leg work. "Electronic communication with online reporting is taking the place of some of the legwork involved in investigations", said Participant #6. Participant #1 believed that their agency's social media presence enabled investigators to appear to have more resources in the community than actually existed. This perception of increased presence, according to the participant, helps their agency play a larger part in the community, making the service more acceptable and approachable to individual citizens. It was noted by Participant #3 that one outcome of their agency's focus on approachability meant citizens were not as hesitant to report crimes, mostly because social media made it easier,

and it also enabled a better relationship between the citizen and police, through a perceived closer connection.

In fact, Participant #3 noted that members of the public who access their Facebook and Twitter can learn more about day-to-day interactions with police than they could before, and:

People are offered the chance to interact with police when they might not otherwise. If you've received a speeding ticket, you're not apt to take the opportunity to ask the officer another question about a law or an incident.

Finally, investigators agreed that social media has helped in their efforts to apprehend, arrest and charge offenders, providing proof of its value as part of an overall crime reduction strategy.

Organizing theme: Relationship with the public

The second organizing theme that emerged from the analyses shows how social media used in both communication and investigative work is an effective mechanism for creating and sustaining public support. Sir Robert Peel, who founded the contemporary police service in England in 1829 observed:

The police are the public and the public are the police; the police being the only members of the public who are paid to give full time attention to duties which are incumbent on every citizen in the interests of community welfare and existence (n.p.).

Police services need to seek public support so that the public, in turn, can support their activities; either by simply obeying the law, or by reporting crimes, and aiding in investigations. Thus, it is critical for police to deliberately pursue a public relations strategy that creates a positive bond between citizens and the police. Because social media allows two-way communications, police services have the ability to create a conversation with citizens, rather than simply directing those messages in a one-way

manner. A one-sided communication strategy can be construed as bureaucratic and signify that the organization does not really want to engage the public in a meaningful way by being directive and not responsive. Gilpin et al (2010, p.259) contend that:

The Internet, and particularly forms of social media that allow interpersonal dialogue between and among users, has offered new opportunities for both institutions and individuals to connect with stakeholders and each other. 'Ordinary people' are generally perceived as representing greater authenticity, particularly in public discourse, since most audience members find them more accessible than faceless institutions or elite political actors.

The organizing theme of relationship with the public includes three basic themes: public engagement activities; community policing communication channels; and reputation management.

Public engagement activities

Participant #1 noted that the public expects the police to use social media as a communications tool. Few large organizations today have absolutely no Internet presence, and public sector organizations in particular use these tools as a way to demonstrate their public accountability and responsiveness. To the public, social media has become the new form of communication similar to a telephone, but in this case, messages are delivered instantly. Moreover, public organizations recognize they need to communicate to citizens on the same platforms they use, to ensure that the communications are being received. In the case of social media, "the medium is the message", according to Marshall McLuhan (1964, p.1), whose foundational work on media theory was created around the effects that a new mass medium technology – television – would have on individuals. McLuhan states (1964, p.1):

the personal and social consequences of any medium—that is, of any extension of ourselves—result from the new scale that is introduced into our affairs by each extension of ourselves, or by any new technology.

Thus, in the case of social media, the public perceives the police service as having an interest in its issues at the individual level because it is using a medium (social media) that is popular, is directed to the individual, as opposed to other forms of mass media such as the press, and social media enables two-way communication with the public which no other contemporary communication vehicle can currently accomplish.

Not only does the communications function of a police service support investigators in seeking information on crimes, Participant #4 suggested that it also ensures that the police are a presence in the community, whether sworn officers are patrolling the streets or not:

Many people in the community call social media a ‘digital scanner’ for communities when it comes to policing. Many people turn to it when they notice something is going on.

Participant #3 added that social media as a delivery system for public relations activities might include alerts about upcoming community events, excerpts from their Chief’s messages to the public, or statistics from the latest public satisfaction survey. Here, the social media tools used for communications activities are similar to those used in investigations, making social media a comprehensive tool for disseminating information related to both operational requirements and public relations strategies.

Community policing communication channel

Community policing’s focus on communication is a strong example of how police endeavor to achieve public acceptance through social media. Clancy (2016, p.36) says, “Social media is one of the most effective ways to spotlight community policing stories and promote transparency and trust within the community”. Inherent in community

policing are the communications tools and tactics the police service uses to disseminate its messages about community involvement.

Well-planned and executed social media strategies are able to bring the police and people together in an efficient and effective way that creates an opportunity for both parties to interact. According to Participant #4, Twitter and Facebook can advertise community events coordinated by the police, and arguably of more importance to community policing efforts, the service's participation with other stakeholders in public safety events.. In addition, social media can provide traffic updates to motorists looking to avoid collision sites or traffic hazards. These communications activities were used in the past, but the respondents contend that social media has become the enabler for enhanced public presence. "Social media has been a good public relations vehicle for us, for what we've been able to do with it so far," added Participant #4.

Police investigators are also encouraged by how social media has enabled them to make a stronger connection with the public. Participant #9 observed that:

People want to be connected – that's what social media and our society is all about... and a certain segment of the population are drawn to emergency services ... it's almost like entertainment – you're connected to what's going on in your community, so being a part of that and being able to contribute provides a sense of satisfaction. Win-win-win!

Whether citizens are more apt to report crimes because it is easier to do so is a topic for additional study. However, the current research has made it apparent that officers believe their investigative work has been made more productive through increased public participation in providing information that aids in investigations. Having acknowledged that changing public role, however, Participant #9 believed that while an increased flow

of information to the police is useful, the volume of information can become overwhelming:

Before social media, our funnel was so much narrower, that we kept missing information, but at least we could focus. Our funnel is so much larger now with hundreds of times more information that we have to look at carefully.

In some cases, public participation may be inadvertent. For example, Participant #4 explained that missing persons and gang activity investigations are, indeed, facilitated through social media. But in these instances, citizens may not be directly providing information to the police in a conscious way. For example, investigators may be viewing Facebook pages or social media messages boasting about a suspect's crime or sharing information about an offence that leads to an arrest. Additionally, social media used by a missing person has the potential for leaving a trail of "information crumbs" as to the individual's whereabouts and associations around the time they went missing, so investigators can build an investigation based on that information.

Reputation management

Aula (2011, p.30) defines reputation management as, "the way an organization behaves in relation to stakeholders [and] a good reputation is thus the consequence of relationships between organizations and stakeholders and their success". Although the police participants interviewed did not specifically use the term reputation management through the course of the interviews it became clear that a large part of the communications and public relations activities on social media was intended to instill positive perceptions of the police. For example, Participant #1 pointed out that the public expects the Chief to be open and to engage in public discourse through speeches posted to the Internet, although Participant #6 noted that, "the Chief says the same thing in

speeches all time, but the public still wants to hear from him.” Conversely, Participant #7 indicated that the Chief did not use social media for personal messages because of time and interest.

Managing the reputation of the police service is critical to public acceptance, or legitimacy of police activities, particularly when it comes to criminal activity and civil disorder. Mawby (2014, p.245) observes:

How police forces seek to [maintain the appearance of being in control] do this in their communications functions has been explored through the study of police ‘image work’, namely the activities that police force engage in to project means of policing and which, in varying circumstances, work for and against legitimate policing.

Openness and transparency in communicating about non-criminal matters is recognized as an effective way to engage the public. These communications activities range from participation in community events to publicly disclosing the results of hearings related to officer discipline. The latter is the responsibility of the Saskatchewan Police Commission pursuant to Section 19 of *Saskatchewan’s Provincial Police Act, 1990*.

Participant #1 pointed out that:

The experts say to develop our reputation in advance. People who follow you will back you up. In my view, it’s a global community, so there’s no way to go out there with your reputation – you need to go out there with your community.

This comment suggests that openness to public scrutiny ultimately makes the police more effective and managing the police’s reputation among the public may be considered a community policing activity, with increasing civilians support as a critical part of reputation management at the practical level. Participant #6 commented that, “We have our groupies, who love everything we do... but we also have our haters, and the majority of our citizens are still in the middle.”

Considering social media as a communications tool accessible by virtually everyone with Internet access puts an interesting perspective on police use of this platform as an image definer and a critical tool for officers working at the community level. Community and charity events, observation of police interacting with citizens in a non-threatening way on the street and participation in public forums on police strategies and operations help to model a reputation of approachability and understanding of individual and community concerns.

Social media adds another dimension to these activities, particularly as it relates to engaging with individual citizens. For example, two police services feature Facebook pages for their canine officers with specialized roles among the canine unit members. These and similar Facebook content put a human – or at least a canine – face to police work, in support of creating a positive public image.

Organizing theme: Relationship with the media

The third organizing theme is how using social media for both public relations/communications and investigative work has changed the police's relationship with the media. Prior to the widespread use of social media platforms by individuals and large organizations, police services established formal relationships with reporters from radio, television and newspaper media outlets who had their own crime beat. That way, both organizations could have some assurance that their respective agendas were being met: the police could rely on a consistent message delivered through all media outlets reporting the story, and the media outlets were offered details about crimes that sold subscriptions and enhanced advertising revenue. The downside of this relationship was, and still is, that media outlets are not obliged to print or air every news item sent by an

organization. Thus, depending on the era and the media outlet, stories about police officers doing commendable work were inconsistently reported, while at the same time some media outlets with a specific pro-police agenda could suppress stories about police mistakes or misconduct. All of the participants in the research agreed that the fundamental changes to how police services use social media has both positive and negative elements.

According to Participant #3, “Social media assists in telling positive stories that wouldn’t otherwise get into the news.” This comment is indicative of the news media’s contemporary approach to reporting stories about police work. The popular term used to describe how editorial staff select news stories is “If it bleeds, it leads.” As Thompson (2011, p.776), describes,

The catch phrase "if it bleeds, it leads" continues to embody and animate the sentiment that guides much of the editorial judgment about the stories that newspapers should report on their front pages or that local and national television news should feature. Indeed, the media's fascination—and even obsession—with crime has garnered considerable scholarly attention and commentary.

Expressed another way, the sensational, dramatic and lurid accounts of crime are of interest to the public but they are less interested in human interest stories. News editors would argue that they are giving the public what it wants. One problem with relying upon news accounts featuring sensationalized reporting about violent crimes that rarely occur is that it can increase the public’s fear of crime (Weitzer & Kubrin, 2004).

Large organizations, such as police services, by contrast, would argue there is more to police activity than crime, punishment and officers who make mistakes or engage in misconduct. Thus, as Participant #5 explained, “large organizations need to have a vehicle for telling their own stories.” For example, police services will engage the public

with social media promotions of community events making police officers accessible to community residents in face-to-face positive contact. Additionally, police may choose to tweet out significant statistics such as the number of individuals pulled over for distracted driving infractions during a traffic initiative. In this case, the promotion has good potential for being picked up by newspaper, television or radio media outlets, but it may also be moved off the news lineup if critical breaking news occurs. Using social media guarantees that the traffic safety promotion will find its way into the public realm.

None of the participants indicated that they completely circumvented media when delivering public messages; in fact, they emphasized that reporters were still valued for their importance in delivering information to the public, particularly when the information needs to be detailed, such as in a newspaper story, or when the news watcher or listener relies on a specific time of day to receive their news, such as the evening news at 6 pm on both radio and television. According to Participant #4, “Right now, there’s still a large demographic of people that don’t have or want a social media presence. They still watch the news and read the papers.” This suggests that although the news media is a less important contact with police media relations staff today, a relationship with media is still critical to police communication efforts.

Information accuracy sacrificed for speed

Participants whose jobs require interaction with the media report that their current relationship with reporters is quite different from the days before social media.

Participants #2 and #8 observed that, “Reporters are calling us for details about an investigation before investigators can get back to their desks.” As a consequence, the nature of the incident and its accompanying virtually instant social media stories may put

pressure on the police related to release of various kinds of information, in particular, the names of victims. Police need to carefully verify the identity of a victim and to inform relatives before releasing the name, as a matter of both procedure and compassion.

Today, tweets and Facebook posts from witnesses or other individuals often name the alleged victim, thus creating a difficult situation for police, who still cannot release the name publicly until they have completed their formal procedures and advised the family.

Participant #3 observed:

Social media has increased the demand not only for information, but how quickly reporters want it. Reporters now want information immediately, not necessarily for their stories but for their social feeds. I find the stories that many reporters write after an incident concludes are essentially the tweets that they've put out over the course of an incident.

Prior to the proliferation of social media, crime reporters often acted on tips received through a telephone call from a regular informant; these calls from such sources would prompt the reporter to verify the information in pursuit of a story. Given that the informant and the reporter had an existing relationship, it was likely no other media outlets were contacted, so that that the reporter had time to gather information and to write a detailed story with minimal fear of another news outlet beating them to publication. Today, Twitter and Facebook have created a new era of informant, whereby everyone who is on Facebook with information about a crime could be a potential news source. The problem is, as Participant #8 asked, "Once something's gone viral, the question is "What's real?" Police media relations personnel contend that there is no way to control for the authenticity of citizens' crime reports broadcast by social media simply because the story has the potential to become more embellished each time it is retold.

Information related to crime reported on social media is often inaccurate or incomplete, said Participant #3. “The first pieces of information are what captivate the public’s attention, and it’s not necessarily correct information.” Reporters, however, are interested in this information and immediately want the entire story from a police source. Here again, the police must spend time verifying and correcting citizen social media users’ information against what they know about an incident. Several participants noted that a considerable amount of time was spent checking the public information about an occurrence against the police’s information, which often amounted to a frustrating and time-consuming task. Thus, speed of access to information does not necessarily mean an extra measure of convenience for police using social media tools.

Loss of connection with reporters

Participant #3 lamented the loss of strong working relationships with reporters when police officials could be reasonably confident that the news they wanted the public to receive was factual, and that news that could damage reputation, deter an investigation or create a public safety danger would not be reported. As Participant #3 observed:

New reporters get sucked into believing their first informant, often a disgruntled member of the public, and, as a result, lots of the news stories that come out start with the premise that police are oppressors, not protectors.

Participants #3 and #7 observed how the emergence of Twitter-generated news stories has shaped their current relationship with reporters. Participant #3 noted that, “reporters no longer fact check with the same diligence as in the past, nor do they investigate the issue in any great depth.” This has resulted in the breakdown of the police/media connection that earlier police services had so carefully cultivated, particularly where it involved a degree of trust between the two parties.

As explained above, the connection between reporters and police media relations personnel could, if used effectively, be of mutual benefit to both parties. The reporter often had information about specific criminals or criminal activities provided by their informant to pass on to the police. Police investigators, in turn, would offer the reporter information that could be part of a news story. This ability to readily exchange information was often by tacit agreement, so that each party needed to demonstrate some amount of trust in the other. Today, with the loss of reporters permanently assigned to the crime beat, and redirection to the instant news that social media relies upon, reporters and police are no longer collaborators on important stories, and the police have become simply a mechanism for verifying citizens' posts and tweets.

Nonetheless, Participant #4 explained that despite the slow erosion of the police/media relationship since the use of social media has exploded, it remains incumbent for the police to continue to operate as if the old relationship still exists. To mitigate against a complete loss of relationship with the media, Participant #8 offered:

Part of our success is based on the ground rules we've established. Any new reporter in our community, we take time to have a brief but professional conversation about our thoughts and expectations.

As an example of a formal application of that process, on October 26, 2017, the Regina Police Service hosted a Police Media Academy, where reporters attended a number of demonstrations about specialized units, such as SWAT, police dogs and traffic safety (Mills, 2017). Thus, police services maintain a procedural, if not a trust connection with reporters to ensure, if nothing else, that the police/reporter relationship follows specific guidelines.

Smaller media workforce

Participant #7 agreed that the relationship with media has changed, but believed it is because the introduction of social media “has resulted in a reduction in traditional positions in the newsroom.” As a consequence, news organizations are looking for more quantity with less cost to their reporting endeavors. As Mawby (2010, p.126) points out:

Consolidation of ownership, combined with the choice provided by digital technologies, has been accompanied by increased competition for audiences and advertising revenues, and declining circulations of purchased newspapers. At the level of working practices, the process of convergence has implications not only for staff numbers and the training of journalists, but also for their reliance on outside news sources.

Consistent with that observation, Participant #7 said that:

I would have thought that traditional reporters would resent us because we can beat them to the punch on emerging stories. But they see our use of social media as helping to speed their machine and it gives them something they didn't have to work that hard for.

The smaller media workforce has had an impact on the depth with which reporters are able to report their stories. For example, many media outlets no longer have specialized reporters who immerse themselves in a single topic such as crime. Not only would these reporters be knowledgeable about the topic, they would also have an inventory of information at their fingertips, and be well-known to the police media relations personnel.

The introduction of web-enabled communication has seen more media outlets reproducing their stories on their own Internet sites, providing audiences with quick updates on emerging stories, thus reducing the need for jobs specific to print journalism. For example, Kelley (2017, n.p.) writes about the downsizing of the *New York Times* that took place in June, 2017:

As part of the NYT's ongoing restructuring of its editing ranks, 109 copy editors have had their jobs eliminated. There are estimated to be about 50 new jobs available in the restructured editing operation that the Times envisions for its

digital- and video-oriented future [and] in a mid-June meeting with department heads, [Executive Editor Dean] Baquet admitted that journalists could be targeted in a new round of layoffs once the editing ranks are culled.

According to Best (2017, n.p.) not even television sports networks have withstood the emergence of Internet news, with ESPN laying off television journalists who had become media celebrities:

In case after case, ESPN let go people whose main purpose is reporting — not debate, commentary and/or ritual yelling. At least former ESPN executive Jamie Horowitz, now the dark knight of Fox Sports 1, is honest about his priorities, which go something like this: Information is expensive to gather and has been commoditized in an era when scoops last 10 seconds before becoming fodder for the next Twitter reply or TV chat, and when people rely on their smartphones for highlights. Sports talk radio caught on to this trick decades ago, with hosts perusing newspaper sports sections, then fashioning careers on discussing what they read. But it all happens much, much faster now.

Combined with increasing production, staffing and contract costs for traditional media outlets, the presence of social media has led to downsizing in newsrooms, the consequence being that the reporters who remain no longer have the luxury of in-depth research into specific stories. Today, instead of pursuing a limited number of stories, they may have a whole lineup of stories they need to write to a deadline on a diverse range of topics. According to Participant #3, “Reporters get half a dozen mini-assignments in a day instead of one good story to follow and develop”. Thus, a smaller media workforce means less understanding of the technical side of policing, and a very superficial knowledge of the issues related to police activities, which appears to minimize the ability for police media relations personnel to have a deep relationship with reporters.

Organizing theme: Barriers to social media effectiveness

The final organizing theme is a discussion about barriers to social media effectiveness. Despite social media becoming the communications tool of choice for

police services in Saskatchewan, the study participants did not wholly endorse these strategies as a flawless tool. In fact, participants identified a number of the disadvantages of social media that they or others in their service had experienced.

Criticism

Participants #1, #3 and #6 agreed that although the ability for citizens to comment on virtually any topic in wide open fora such as Twitter or Facebook encourages police to be transparent and accountable in their activities in a positive way, social media also opens up channels to criticize that were not previously available to the public. “We have created our own platform for criticism through social media,” maintained Participant #1. This reality requires police to be vigilant in other ways as well as in their on-duty behavior. Participant #6 confirmed this sentiment by speaking to how some officers, in the spirit of “fun” will tweet or post questionable content to Twitter or Facebook. “No harm was intended, but [one] post created a public outcry, just the same.” According to Goldsmith (2013 p.264):

The ‘contextual integrity’ of police officers is not simply about keeping personal aspects concealed; it is also about the right to make mistakes in some quarters of one’s life and not for them to overflow unnecessarily into other quarters.

With respect to on-duty police conduct, a 2013 story of a Saskatchewan citizen’s dog being shot by a Regina Police Service (RPS) police officer spread virally across the Internet, leading to wide comment from within Canada and from other nations, some of which included threats. These threats resulted in the temporary shut-down of the police service’s Facebook page, and prompted *The National Post* (2013) to headline its story, “*The only good cop is a dead cop. Regina police shut Facebook page over dog-shooting backlash.*” The story explained the details of the situation, but this also resulted in a

number of disturbing public comments sent to the police service via their Facebook account. The highly negative comments from around the globe led the police service to rethink its position on accepting any and all public responses or comments on news stories. After the incident, the RPS posted a message on its Facebook page that asked posters to be respectful when expressing their opinions. Participant #3 noted about these kinds of situations that:

social media can catapult a small event into a national or international spotlight. It can have the effect of pouring accelerant on a small flame.

Officers can also make inappropriate use of social media in their on-duty communication. One such example arose out of a Moose Jaw police officer's tweet about a female prisoner, who he described as wanting to collect money from the officers to make bail. Outrage over the story was described in *The Huffington Post* on November 4, 2015, as the police service received complaints via Twitter about the officer's conduct on social media being inappropriate. One response to inappropriate comments made by officers is that police services have formalized the nature of their communications.

Maintaining professionalism

Police social media users agreed that the tools create an enormous amount of pressure on police services to remain appropriate, topical, responsive, and time sensitive. This is true regardless of whether the service employs communications professionals or whether a police officer is managing the service's social media portfolio when they are available. "Police presence on social media must be maintained and kept interesting, or else we're in danger of losing our audience," said Participant #3. Social media can be labour intensive to ensure stories are changed on Facebook regularly, stories are kept current, information is timely and responses are provided within an acceptable time

frame. As an example of the latter criterion, one Saskatchewan police service that does not have a full-time social media expert working on its website displays a message on the site's home page indicating that the site is not regularly monitored, so responses to questions may be delayed. Participant #5 noted:

Having the ability to respond quickly and appropriately is only going to continue to be a demand on law enforcement. Members of the public are going to look to social media to evolve into a reporting tool. Police services need to be prepared from a resource standpoint to handle this type of outreach.

Despite this sentiment, the police administrators interviewed for this study did not feel they needed to act quickly to hire communications professionals to administer their existing or potentially new social media platforms. In fact, one service (Participant #1) was considering eliminating Instagram, to which photos and videos can be posted, because after a trial period with this tool, they were satisfied that their needs could be met with only Facebook and Twitter. "If we go all out with social media, we need to have it monitored and evaluated all the time, so that we're not missing anything that could help with our investigations, for example."

Participant #6 explained that the youthful crop of new police officers all have experience with social media and are interested in using it more on the job. The participant suggests that this situation cannot be ignored, and believes that police services as an employer needs to be responsive to this need. By extending social media availability to more officers, comes the hazard that:

someone sends out information that they shouldn't be sending out. The risk is that we'd have more people involved who may not exactly think things through before they send the message, and 'That isn't what I meant to say', is not an excuse; we still need to be held accountable for our mistakes.

Police services take risks related to their obligation to keep the peace every day; but the type of risk that is described here relates more to organizational risk related to the need for formal guidelines regarding the use of social media. By their nature, police services tend not to embrace organizational risk, but to maintain a social media presence that meets the public relations objective of closer relationship to citizens, inappropriate behavior being called out by social media users may be the price the police must pay.

Changing public expectations

All of the participants noted that citizens are expecting more information, at a faster pace than ever before, and they are using the information they receive in a different way. As Participant #1 explained:

The weight of traditional media has changed; people will have the story, then the comments carry just as much weight in online newspapers. If there's one negative story about policing, then 30 of the comments are positive.

This observation suggests that social media has created a communications environment in which the public relies on the sentiments of observers of the news as much as or more than those who were actual participants in creating the news. For communications personnel, monitoring reader comments adds another layer of attention to a role they already consider burdensome. "Giving members of the public a voice and a presence where they wouldn't have had one before changes the day to day operations of what we do just to put out a lot of the fires," observed Participant #7. Participant #5 cautioned:

Police can't force our social media platforms on citizens, and we can't force our information out. The public drives what we send out, we can only influence how that information is used internally and by the media.

Thus, to continue to be accountable to the public, police communications must replicate not only the contemporary communication tools now universally available, but also the

depth and kind of information wanted by the public. The question about to what extent police services should go to meet the public's communications expectations appears to demonstrate what might be considered a grim reality. Participant #7 remarked on how changing technology adopted by the public might create an unmanageable communications environment for the police:

Today, kids are using Snap Chat, where messages are eliminated in a certain amount of time. What kinds of complications and challenges will that bring when these teenagers become adults and begin to have political ideas? We're not as fast as the tech industry, bureaucracies move very slowly – including police. Until generations who have grown up with social media become the new workforce, we're always going to have to catch up.

Considering that social media is a relatively new communications tool, there were no aspects to its use that participants considered too onerous to overcome. Participants acknowledged that the responsibility for making social media more responsive to their needs belonged to them, and they were encouraged by how its use by police has become universally accepted. Overall, it appears that issues are related generally to lack of experience with social media, including how to mitigate against inappropriate use both internally and externally.

Global theme

The four organizing themes that emerged from the analyses were integrated into a single global theme labelled "Social media changes police communication." This global theme describes the single key concept that emerged from the data analysis (Attride-Sterling, 2001). This theme also provides an answer to the research question that asked: How has social media influenced the way the police communicate with the public? The global theme acts as a hub of a central network, from around which the basic and organizing themes can be organized and this relationship is portrayed in Figure 4.1. This

diagram enables us to observe the relationships between these different themes and is consistent with an approach that does not rely upon a hierarchical relationship between these indicators.

It is apparent that the response to the research question as reflected in the global theme is both clear and is supported by the data collected in the nine interviews. Thus, the response to the research question would be, according to the nine police personnel interviewed for this study, social media has substantially changed several aspects of police communication, although other aspects remain the same. First, adoption of a social media platform has led larger Saskatchewan police services to hire civilian communications personnel with expertise in social media platforms and message distribution. Yet, the social media and communications experts reported that an increased reliance upon social media did not mean that other communication tools such as news releases had been abandoned; to them, it was one more method for communicating that took its place beside a host of others. Investigators reported similar experiences and they held that although social media is a profoundly effective way to gather information on crimes and criminals, they had not given up other investigative practices and “used social media where it appeared it might be helpful” (Participant #3). Alongside such positive changes to external communication came a negative dimension, with participants reporting that their work was made more complex in that both communications experts and investigators were required to sort through more information due to the volume of responses to public requests for information that social media produces.

Many police services reported that they have created policies for sworn officers' use of social media, and that they limited use of this tool to a small number of members. Administrators acknowledged however, that as police services rely more and more on social media that personal and professional use policies will have to change and be driven by formal policies rather than the informal strategies used when these social media platforms were initially introduced.

In terms of changed relationships with the public and the media, the participants verified that social media has enabled significantly more efficiency in message distribution so that the police can effectively circumvent the media. This was not reported as a purposeful decision regarding media access, but rather became a positive outcome of using social media to communicate with the public. The media remain a significant presence in police communication, and police services continue to underscore the importance of developing relationships with reporters. However, the downside of adoption of social media is that reporters do not write their stories with the depth of care and understanding of the topic they displayed in the past. Police service participants argued that that this was the result of a technology-enabled media environment in which news needs to be produced faster, and in which news outlets have become increasingly smaller.

The discussion of how social media has changed police communication with the public and the media inherent in the global theme is also expressed through comments related to some of the negative aspects of social media adoption. The larger theme is that social media is analogous to a frontier that expands as new uses are found and various new applications are created. Police services need to be able to quickly adapt to a

changing external environment, and that one of those adaptations requires that police officials enable more risk-taking, so that mistakes can become learning opportunities.

Summary

The research question posed in this thesis is “How has the use of social media influenced the way police communicate with the public?” An analysis of the data collected through nine interviews with respondents from five Saskatchewan municipal police services reveals that social media has had a significant influence over the way that police organizations communicate with the public with respect to formal communications and public relations applications. Moreover, social media also aides in investigations. The global theme that emerged from the analyses, which was, “Social media changes police communication” validates the observations made by other scholars that were presented in the literature review and the findings from this research adds to the extant literature on the police use of social media.

The findings presented in this chapter demonstrate the success of municipal police services in Saskatchewan use of social media is tied to two factors: its ability to support their organizational agendas and its coherence with the public’s expectations in terms of receiving communication via web-based technology. The respondents consistently maintained that their use of social media will continue to play a prominent role in their strategic plans and that police organizations can continue to participate in this environment, so long as they can respond both internally and externally to a dynamic communications environment.

Chapter 5: Conclusions

Introduction

Social media has become a commonly used communication tool for publicly-funded organizations and Saskatchewan police services have been using Twitter, Facebook and organizational websites to support their operations. The current study solicited the perceptions of respondents working within Saskatchewan's five largest municipal police services, and the results of the semi-structured interviews reveal there was a change in the relationships between the police and media since these law enforcement agencies introduced their social media platforms. Although this study set out to determine if and how Saskatchewan municipal police services' use of social media had changed the relationships between the police and news reporters to deliver traditional communications messages to public audiences, the research provides an opportunity to explore how police investigators also rely on the news media to assist them with collecting information about criminal cases, and non-criminal matters, such as missing persons.

One general finding is that the use of social media has made the traditional police/media contact less critical, in that investigators can go straight to the public to deliver and solicit information through applications such as Twitter. Prior research has described several aspects of police use of social media from a variety of different perspectives (Cantijoch et al., 2013; Crump, 2011; Grimmelikhuijsen & Meijer, 2015; Lieberman et al., 2013; Meijer & Thaens, 2013; O'Connor, 2015; Procter, et al., 2013; Ruddell & Jones, 2013; Schneider, 2013; Van de Velde et al., 2013). The current study extends those findings by taking a closer look at police-media relationships and how

investigators interacted with the news media in the past and how they interact with representatives from the news media through social media today. Collecting and reporting the perspectives of Saskatchewan police service personnel on how news reporting has changed in the policing industry is an additional aspect of the study that has not been reviewed in depth by other researchers.

This study was well suited to qualitative analysis because of the ability to capture the participants' perceptions about their professional experiences before social media became widely used, as well as their current involvement in media practices. Thematic Network Analysis created a structure for the data collected in the interviews to be classified into three levels of themes; providing a roadmap that led to a single global theme. The four organizing themes all relate to Saskatchewan municipal police services' use of social media: (a) Administration of social media; (b) Social media's influence on the police's relationship with the public; (c) Social media's influence on the police's relationships with the news media, and; (d) What kinds of barriers need to be overcome to improve social media's effectiveness for police services. These themes led to the global theme of how police use of social media has dramatically changed their ability to communicate with the public. This chapter provides a final interpretation of the theoretical and policy implications in light of the research findings and identifies a number of potential topics worthy of future study.

Theoretical implications

Supporters of the structural contingency approach posit that an organization's operations are the end result of their leader's attempts to manage and minimize various internal and external threats in order to protect the organization (King, 2009). In the case

of policing, these internal threats could be the need to provide training for officers to build or enhance their community policing skills, whereas external threats could be the possibility of budget reductions from their funding agencies. The results of the nine interviews reveal that police service personnel use social media as a purposeful way to reduce threats to their organizations. In this section, two issues are examined: (a) social media as a purposeful strategy, and; (b) social media as a new paradigm for police-media relations.

Social media driven by strategy

The findings revealed in this study suggest that Saskatchewan municipal police services introduced their social media presence in a conscious attempt to achieve their organizational goals. Participant #1 noted, for example, that, “We did a business case around it, which was one of the reasons we got involved in social media.” Saskatchewan police services did not introduce social media as a cost- or employee-reduction measure; rather their purpose for adopting these communication vehicles is to fulfill their organizational goals.

The respondents interviewed in this study indicated that social media is part of their organization’s operational strategies that have a number of goals. The strategies range from how a specific service communicates information about public relations and criminal activities to the public, to strategies for using social media to support criminal investigations. A respondent from one of the larger municipal police services noted they create social media strategies to attract younger audiences as a way to reduce youth crime through deterrence and promoting pro-social values. By incorporating social media as a

communications vehicle into operational strategies, police services are using these platforms as a practical means to establish a greater connection to the public.

Social media's value to police services is also demonstrated by its use in promoting and facilitating community policing strategies. Where community policing's focus is ensuring a close and connected relationship to various neighbourhoods or public groups, the use of social media supports these activities in a number of ways. First, it is used to deliver messages about upcoming events, or police activities and presentations at community events. Second, and more importantly, social media is posited to reduce the perceived social distance between community residents and police. Officers who are adept with using social media may have more credibility with younger community residents, essentially talking their language. According to Clancy (2016, p.36):

The number of officers who feel comfortable using social media has ...risen sharply with the rapid advancement of technology...One of the most impactful applications of social media is its use to connect with the community directly, by communicating news and showcasing the day-to-day activities of officers.

Of course, this perspective must take into account that many individuals do not have access to the Internet, and many persons with Internet access may not be interested in the messaging disseminated by the police service. As a result, not all members of the public will receive a police service's messages. Yet, it is meaningful that the Regina Police Service, for example, has 61,100 followers on October 18, 2017 in a metropolitan area of approximately 250,000 residents. We know, however, that some of these followers could be from other cities, provinces or nations.

The findings reported in this study also reveal that a strategy-driven social media program is largely determined by the size of the police service. In Saskatchewan, there is a marked difference between how large municipal services organize their social media

operations for media relations and public communication, compared to their smaller counterparts. In both cases, investigators are solely responsible for their own social media tasks, such as tweeting requests for information about criminal cases.

However, the composition of communications and media relations units demonstrates a significant difference between agencies. Small police services depend on sworn officers to administer their media relations function on a part-time basis in addition to their regular duties, and social media expertise is gained as a matter of course. Some of these officers admit that tweeting about stakeholder events and good news items is a secondary job function to their other duties, but acknowledge that maintaining a social media presence is a critical task. Large Saskatchewan municipal police services, on the other hand, employ civilian communications staff that may be credentialed as professional communicators or have some formalized educational background in interactive communication. For these employees, their sole focus is the social media platform and its applications to that service's communication strategy.

These observations suggest there are significant differences in terms of the formality of an agency's communication strategy, and while these may be clearly articulated in a large agency, smaller police services lacking an actual communications and public relations unit could likely achieve results important to their operations, but in a different manner. Whatever the size of the service, media and public relations require a thoughtful, consistent, and purposeful approach, and communication channels must echo those being used by the community served by the police and professional stakeholders.

New paradigm for media relations

According to research conducted by Mawby (2010, p.132) to determine the changing dynamics of the police-media relationship since the widespread use of social media:

Police interviewees found that they had less face-to-face contact with journalists whom, it appeared, tend to spend more time working from their offices than out on the 'crime beat'; and second, the journalists they deal with often had limited knowledge of policing and crime issues.

This situation has occurred as the result of downsizing of newsrooms; a trend occurring world-wide. Mawby contends this situation provides police with an opportunity to disseminate pro-police messaging, because reporters working in a downsized environment would be eager to report carefully crafted news stories from the police that required no initiative on their part. Respondents from the Saskatchewan police services participating in this study agreed their agencies can now distribute news stories that are free of editorial review and they attribute this to the ability given to them by social media.

A key finding in this study is that the police-media relationship has changed dramatically, particularly in how news is gathered. Instead of going to the police as a legitimate source of news, reporters screen citizen Facebook messages and tweets about issues related to crime or the justice system, and then contact police to verify the information. The consequence of this substitute for journalistic legwork falls upon police, who are burdened with additional work and with the responsibility for reviewing a greater volume of requests for their legitimacy and accuracy. Yet, they also have a self-serving interest in managing information about crime and their operations. This has, however, come with some operational costs and Participant #3 reported that, "My job is

busier and more complex since our service introduced social media. There is always a question that needs answering.”

Equally compelling is the dilemma of balancing speed of response with accuracy when disseminating information about serious offences or incidents involving the police. In particular, several participants in this study noted that reporters want their information immediately; this makes sense in the context of social media, where the public expects timely information about crime and other incidents. This can, however, be a challenge given that thorough investigations about serious crimes can often take weeks, and it is inappropriate for any police organization to disclose confidential information about investigations when the initial findings are unconfirmed, or an accident or crime victim’s family has not been formally notified of their injury or victimization. This may be a critical point at which police and media relations can be strained. It is inappropriate for the police to sacrifice the veracity of information simply to disseminate it faster.

Participant #3 observed:

Reporters now want information immediately, not necessarily for their stories but for their social feeds. I find that the stories that many reporters write after an incident concludes are essentially the tweets that they’ve put out over the course of an incident.

From this and the other participants’ comments made in the interviews, these kinds of shortcuts hamstring the police from providing the complete and accurate story to the public, and there is no redress if such practices are unaddressed by news consumers or the police themselves.

Policy implications

Public organizations claim to be transparent and accountable to the public and their stakeholders as a means for showing their willingness to provide a good public

service. This is also a guiding principle for police organizations, whose need for public accountability ensures that citizens accept their power over them as legitimate. Social media used as a communications tool creates the stage on which police can play out their accountability through direct and personal contact with individual citizens. Mawby (2002) cites Thompson (1995, p. 308) who:

has argued persuasively that the development of communications media shape the evolution of society and its institutions. The implication ... is that organizations and institutions, particularly those such as police which experience high visibility, have little option but to address how they communicate, how they project their public image and manage their visibility.

The respondents interviewed in this study indicated they follow policies related to the number of officers allowed to use social media as part of their job activities besides those formally engaged in investigations and media relations.

The respondents also mentioned having to develop human resource policies that describe how the inappropriate use of social media tools by agency personnel might be considered as misconduct and the employee could be subject to some form of discipline. In both cases, social media use is limited because of concerns over inappropriate messages or messages that break the law if deliberately or inadvertently delivered to the public. For example, Participant #6 feared that without strict guidelines on who can use social media in their work, "There's a risk that we could mistakenly send information out that we shouldn't, for example the name of a young offender, who can't be identified under the federal *Youth Criminal Justice Act*." Other than these two policies, there is a dearth of broader policy to direct social media use by police officers. Interestingly, Participant #6 also suggested that the police's general aversion to risk should be reconsidered in light of the power of social media to connect police services with the

community. This participant pointed out those services should open up their policies on use of social media so that more officers are able to use it, and added that, “Criticism isn’t a risk. When we’ve done something wrong, we’re held to account.”

Further research

One shortcoming of this research is that our ability to generalize the results from this study to other jurisdictions is limited somewhat by the purposive sampling strategy used in this study. However, it may be beneficial to consider the themes that emerged from the analysis in subsequent studies of social media and policing. It may also be helpful for the results of these studies to be provided to organizations such as the Saskatchewan or Canadian Associations of Chiefs of Police to include in their examination of issues affecting contemporary policing. The study of police use of social media for public relations, development of community support, information sharing, and investigations is a fertile field for future research, from technological, human resources and communications aspects. The following section provides some avenues for future study.

Internal applications for social media

Many scholars have described how social media can be used by the police for external communication. By contrast, it appears that the potential for social media to act as an internal communication tool has received only limited scholarly attention. Hesketh and Williams (2017, p.350) suggest that officers might use applications such as Twitter and Facebook as an Internet-enabled police canteen, where they can informally network. The canteen, in British police services, was the place where police officers of all ranks informally exchanged information and expressed their opinions about policing and the

justice system. Hesketh and Williams (2017) observe that “These opportunities to socialize in a relatively safe internal environment have consequently been removed by austerity measures.” They add, “Social media provides a virtual environment for officers to have open public facing debate on policing” [and] “it offers a private, anonymous forum for police to use as a form of informal social support” (p.350). These scholars refer to a survey sent to police Twitter followers who indicated that the social media platform was:

a virtual space for officers to discuss their experiences openly and supportively, and a more open environment in which to garner evidence that is useful for police research. Twitter offered respondents a supportive, anonymous arena where they could disclose their concerns away from an environment they considered as unsupportive.

On its face it would appear that such a mechanism for police to informally share information between each other has value. As a result, research into the personal uses of social media platforms such as Twitter in a police workplace would make for a potentially fruitful research topic. Nonetheless, we are reminded of Participant #6’s caution about police services not willing to take on risk when dealing with the consequences of using social media. This is a consideration that needs to be included in any further examination of officers using social media as a substitute for informal peer-to-peer communication.

Formal program evaluation

None of the police services represented in this study appeared to have formally evaluated their social media programs, although the Saskatoon, Regina and Moose Jaw police have measured public satisfaction with their services using a number of criteria. The RPS, for example, asks respondents about their social media usage in their biannual

survey, and Jones and Ruddell (2015) report how the number of people accessing these websites has grown and the number of older residents accessing these social media platforms has been increasing over time.

In general, current surveys indicate Saskatchewan police services enjoy high rates of public satisfaction; nonetheless, changed public perception may be only a crisis away. For example, the Saskatoon Police Service's troubled relationship with its Indigenous residents in the 1990s led to a judicial inquiry and the subsequent creation of the Commission on First Nations and Metis Peoples and Justice Reform. That agency's report, *A Legacy of Hope* (2004), called for significant changes in how the entire Saskatchewan justice system treated Indigenous persons.

Ideally, program evaluations should start before a new technology or strategy is introduced so researchers can compare the impacts pre- and post-implementation, but it is possible to use existing information, such as statistics on social media followers, public opinion surveys about the police, and interviews with agency stakeholders as evidence to evaluate whether the benefits of introducing social media outweigh the implementation costs. It may also be possible to evaluate whether social media has changed the public's perceptions of the police. Both process and impact evaluations would shed light on the efficacy of social media interventions and whether these activities could be increased, remain at current levels, or discontinued.

Opportunities for civilianization

In their examination of police service civilianization, Kiedrowski et al. (2017) note the proportion of civilian employees in police services has been increasing since the 1980s, while the ratio of police to residents in the population has remained fairly stable.

They found the largest police agencies have the highest proportion of civilian personnel, and they are engaged in a number of specialized occupational roles. That finding is in keeping with the results of the current study, as the largest Saskatchewan agencies were more likely to deploy civilians in their social media efforts. In the smaller police services, by contrast, the social media activities were added to sworn officers' workloads. This raises the question of whether police services should attempt to contain costs by hiring civilians to do non-investigative work. In their interviews with police executives, Kiedrowski et al. (2017) found that cost-savings were not a high priority for most agencies as any money saved by increasing the proportion of civilians was generally spent for other purposes.

Although sworn officers are well-trained in techniques that help them investigate and solve cases, the time commitment of sorting through all of the information they receive via social media may result in additional costs, rather than cost savings; an issue that was described by several respondents. Given those challenges, there may be the potential for further study into whether civilians could be trained to analyze information received from the public about crimes received through social media. Similarly, there may be a call for new technology to take investigations one step further, with algorithms that detect patterns in the information received from social media sources. Both of these options, however, may be opposed by the professional associations representing sworn officers as they may be perceived as infringing upon core policing duties.

Conclusion and final remarks

Police services are highly visible public organizations, and citizens expect the public servants employed by these agencies to act responsibly and with the public's

interest in mind. This expectation is more critical when applied to police services that must convince citizens that their ability to exercise power and control over individuals is consistent with the principles of a democratic society, including abiding by the rule of law. In some respects, social media has been used by police services as a way of building rapport and trust. The ability to establish and maintain two-way communication with the public meets both parties' obligation for mutual support, with social media acting as the conduit for that exchange.

Saskatchewan police services have taken a deliberate approach to formalizing their social media activities by using social media as part of their larger communications strategies and these agencies have purposefully chosen Twitter and Facebook as their primary means of communication via social media. In the rapidly evolving world of technology-enabled communication, this focus will no doubt need to be expanded as the public discovers the latest social media trend.

There is no doubt that social media is a fast and efficient way to communicate outward. However, it is disturbing that this mode has sacrificed accuracy for speed on the part of the media and the public. In particular, police are compelled to present factual information and errors can be costly to their reputation, investigations may be compromised, and officers might inadvertently violate laws protecting the public's privacy. The media certainly need to be called to task if, indeed, as the research participants noted, reporters are taking the first citizen tweet as accurate information. We have seen how this phenomenon has led to police being required to spend additional time reviewing a greater number of tips from citizens for accuracy, or needing to respond quickly to reporters' requests for information before they know all the facts about a case.

Such a situation is contrary to today's police services seeking solutions to the increasing costs of providing public safety.

Although social media can be used to extend the reach of police messages to the public, it is simply one of many communication tools. We cannot minimize the principle of face-to-face communication being the most effective way of doing business, and this should be considered in policing as well. For example, according to Goman (2011, p.38):

A recent study by the *Harvard Business Review* confirms that most leaders put great importance on doing business in person—and link it directly to the bottom line. The study shows that 87 percent of professionals think that face-to-face meetings are essential for sealing a business deal, while 95 percent said they are the key to successful, longlasting business relationships.

If we accept that the business of policing is, in large part, relationship-building, social media should remain a communication tool that does not overshadow the importance of true person-to-person connection.

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Appendix A: Research Ethics Approval and Research Ethics Renewal



Research Ethics Board Certificate of Approval

PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR Judith Anne Orthner 30 McSherry Cr. Regina, SK S4T 7B7	DEPARTMENT Justice Studies	REB# 2015-108
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SUPERVISOR
Dr. Rick Ruddell – Justice Studies

FUNDER(S)
Unfunded

TITLE
The Influence of Social Media on Police Communications and Relationships with the Press

APPROVAL OF Application for Behavioural Research Ethics Review Letter to prospective participants Initial Email Contact with Research Participants Consent Form Interview Guide	APPROVED ON August 27, 2015	RENEWAL DATE August 27, 2016
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Full Board Meeting
Delegated Review

CERTIFICATION

The University of Regina Research Ethics Board has reviewed the above-named research project. The proposal was found to be acceptable on ethical grounds. The principal investigator has the responsibility for any other administrative or regulatory approvals that may pertain to this research project, and for ensuring that the authorized research is carried out according to the conditions outlined in the original protocol submitted for ethics review. This Certificate of Approval is valid for the above time period provided there is no change in experimental protocol, consent process or documents.

Any significant changes to your proposed method, or your consent and recruitment procedures should be reported to the Chair for Research Ethics Board consideration in advance of its implementation.

ONGOING REVIEW REQUIREMENTS

In order to receive annual renewal, a renewal report must be submitted to the REB Chair for Board consideration within one month of the current expiry date each year the study remains open, and upon study completion.

Please refer to the following website for further instructions: <http://www.uregina.ca/research/for-faculty-staff/ethics-compliance/human/forms1/ethics-forms.html>

University of Regina
Research Ethics Board

Please send all correspondence to:

Research Office
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Research and Innovation Centre 109
Regina, SK S4S 0A2
Telephone: (306) 585-4775 Fax: (306) 585-4893 research.ethics@uregina.ca

PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR
Judith Anne Orthner

DEPARTMENT
Justice Studies

REB#
2015-108

SUPERVISOR
Dr. Rick Ruddell

TITLE
The Influence of Social Media on Police Communications and Relationships with the Press

ORIGINAL DATE of APPROVAL
August 27, 2015

NEW EXPIRY DATE WITH THIS RENEWAL
August 27, 2017

TODAY'S DATE
August 26, 2016

Full Board Meeting

Delegated Review

RENEWAL CERTIFICATION

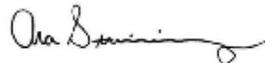
The University of Regina Research Ethics Board has renewed the above-named research project for an additional 12 months beginning August 27, 2016.

Any significant changes to your proposed method, or your consent and recruitment procedures should be reported to the Chair of the Research Ethics Board for consideration in advance of implementation.

ONGOING REVIEW REQUIREMENTS

In order to receive annual renewal, a status report must be submitted to the REB Chair for Board consideration within one month of the current expiry date each year the study remains open, and upon study completion. Please refer to the following website for further instructions:

<http://www.uregina.ca/research/for-faculty-staff/ethics-compliance/human/forms1/ethics-forms.html>



Ara Steininger
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Appendix B: Interview Guides

INTERVIEW GUIDE: POLICE ADMINISTRATOR

QUESTIONS:

1. Approximately how long has your service been using social media?
2. What kinds of social media do you use predominantly?

Facebook
Twitter
YouTube
Blogging
Other

Of the ones you've mentioned, can you explain if they're used for investigations or for public relations or for both?

3. What is your connection to your service's social media function?
4. Do you see your social media function as:
 - a. Part of operations
 - b. Part of public relations/communications
 - c. Part of both operations and public relations/communications

Please explain your response.

5. What were the biggest factors in your service's decision to adopt social media?
6. Were cost savings part of the decision?
Yes Why? No If No, go to Question 7.
7. Do you have a formal social media strategy or policy in place?
8. What have been the biggest advantages of using social media?
8a) Disadvantages?
9. Have you done any formal analysis on how social media has been a benefit or a hindrance to your police work? Can you list the major findings for me?
10. Besides costs, how has using social media changed the way you:

- a. Conduct investigations?
- b. Deliver “public relations” programs and strategies?
- c. Other changes

11. Who can use social media and for what purpose?

- a. Police officers to _____
- b. Communications personnel to _____
- c. Other _____

12. Are there changes in the number of staff involved in public relations as a result of introducing social media to your operations?

- a. Fewer public relations staff
- b. More public relations staff
- c. Changes in job duties of existing staff

13. What do you believe the future for social media in your police service looks like?

14. Would you like to add anything that we might have missed?

Thank you for your time.

- END -

INTERVIEW GUIDE: INVESTIGATOR

QUESTIONS:

1. Could you explain your role as an investigator?
2. How long have you been in this role?
3. How is social media being used for investigations in your service?
4. Has your job changed since the service introduced social media?
Yes How? No Go to #6.
5. With the introduction of social media, are you now able to appeal to the public directly for information on a crime?
Yes Please explain No Please explain
6. Before the introduction of social media, would you have contacted the media directly to help you in your investigations? Yes Go to #6
No
7. How would you have contacted the media?
Directly
Through the Public Information Officer
Through pre-arranged news conferences or events
Other (Please explain)
8. Has social media taken the place of any of the tactics used previously to help you investigate a crime?
9. Has social media changed your relationship with the public or other stakeholders? If “Yes”, how?
10. Have you had to learn /develop new skills to apply social media to your investigations?
11. Do you think greater use of social media by police services is reducing reliance on other investigative means?
12. What do you think the future holds for social media use by police investigators?

13. Is there anything else you'd like to add that we may have missed?

Thank you for your time.

- End -

INTERVIEW GUIDE: PUBLIC INFORMATION OFFICER/SOCIAL MEDIA PROFESSIONAL

QUESTIONS:

1. What is your role in communications and public relations for the police service?
2. How long have you been in this role?
3. How is social media being used for communications and public relations?
4. Has your job changed since the service introduced social media?
Yes How? No Go to #6.
5. What situations would lead you to contact crime reporters to help you deliver specific messages?
6. How do you deliver these messages?
In person
Recorded phone messages updated frequently
News releases
News conferences
7. Has social media taken the place of any of these tactics or others?
Why or why not?
8. Has social media changed your relationship with crime reporters? Has it been made better or worse? How?
9. Do you think greater use of social media by police services is reducing reliance on crime reporters in general?
10. What do you think the future holds for social media use by police services?
11. How do you see your role changing to match that future for social media?
12. Is there anything else you'd like to add that we may have missed?

Thank you for your time.

- END -