Use of Online Social Media Networking Sites:

An Exploration of the Impact on a Major Law Enforcement Agency

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Submitted to the Faculty of Extension

University of Alberta

In partial fulfillment of the requirements for the

Degree of Master of Arts in Communication and Technology

June 19, 2014

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THE IMPACT ON A MAJOR LAW ENFORCEMENT AGENCY

Acknowledgements

I would like to thank my husband Darren, for his understanding, patience, and continual encouragement during this endeavour. You will never truly know the value of your support – from proofreading endless papers, sitting through practice-presentations, to providing your constructive comments and feedback.

To my parents and my heroes, who instilled in me the desire to keep challenging myself, ability to tackle any obstacle, and understanding the importance of lifelong learning. To my nephews, Matthew, Andrew, Jaxon, and Tyler, who inadvertently directed me towards the MACT Program. I learnt from them that *if one does not learn, one will fall behind.*

I thank my family, who accepted my numerous absences, understood my desire to succeed, and offered their continual support of my education. To my dear friend, Mary Golab, who continually believed in me, encouraged me, and convinced me to challenge myself every day. To Tim Chander, who planted the seed of this adventure, I will be forever grateful.

I thank my Grad Advisor, Dr. Ann Curry, for her endless enthusiasm, tireless dedication, and encouraging me to reach my full potential. I thank my fellow cohorts for their guidance, direction, and constant inspiration.

I thank all the Edmonton Police Officers who participated in my research project. I thank you for your time, consideration, and willingness to share your personal opinions and thoughts with me. The information you provided was invaluable to my research.

I offer special thanks to the first Edmonton Police Officer I interviewed. I thank you for your enthusiasm, cooperation, as well as your encouragement to others to become participants. Thank you.

USE OF ONLINE SOCIAL MEDIA NETWORKING SITES: AN EXPLORATION OF
THE IMPACT ON A MAJOR LAW ENFORCEMENT AGENCY

Table of Contents

USE OF ONLINE SOCIAL MEDIA NETWORKING SITES: AN EXPLORATION OF
THE IMPACT ON A MAJOR LAW ENFORCEMENT AGENCY

USE OF ONLINE SOCIAL MEDIA NETWORKING SITES: AN EXPLORATION OF
THE IMPACT ON A MAJOR LAW ENFORCEMENT AGENCY

List of Figures

USE OF ONLINE SOCIAL MEDIA NETWORKING SITES: AN EXPLORATION OF
THE IMPACT ON A MAJOR LAW ENFORCEMENT AGENCY

Abstract

The popularity of social media sites has grown exponentially over the past few years. However there is limited research regarding the impact that online social media networking sites have on a major law enforcement agency. This study investigates whether the use of online social media networking sites impact the actions and behaviors of police officers within the Edmonton Police Service (EPS). Six participants from the EPS were interviewed for this research project using a semi-structured, in-person interview methodology. Findings were analyzed under an exploratory approach in order to determine the connection between social media sites and the impacts on the individual participants interviewed. The results of this study find that online social media networking sites do have a direct impact on the actions and behaviours of police officers. The study identified three distinct themes; 1 – the police value social media as an investigative tool and communication channel, 2 – the general public's use of social media sites are predominately used negatively toward the police, and 3 – some police officers intentionally alter their actions or behaviours due to the high probability of being captured on video. An awareness and understanding of the use of online social media networking sites, by the police and the general public, highlight the impacts on the behaviours and actions of police officers within the EPS.

Key words: social media, online social media networking sites, police, police officers, law
enforcement agency, Edmonton Police Service, Facebook, Twitter, Blogs, Wikis,
LinkedIn, YouTube, Pinterest, Flickr, Instagram, MySpace, surveillance, altering
actions or behaviours, socio-cultural tradition theory

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(MACT).

USE OF ONLINE SOCIAL MEDIA NETWORKING SITES: AN EXPLORATION OF THE IMPACT ON A MAJOR LAW ENFORCEMENT AGENCY

A. Introduction and Purpose of the Research

Historically, law enforcement agencies relied on mainstream media, newsletters, town hall meetings, press conferences, etc. to connect with the public and disseminate information. More sophisticated communication tools have surfaced since the arrival of the Internet. Social media sites enhance the flow of information at a higher speed and to a wider population. In the article, "The Social Media Buzz – What's it All About?" the authors define social media as, "People gathering in and around websites to connect with their friends & family, to interact with new people and to share interests, activities and other personal content such as videos or photos. Companies traditionally use this social media to interact with their customers via company profile pages and to advertise to target market segments" (Forte Consultancy Group, 2010, p.1). The authors of the article further report that social networking is "a phenomenon that has taken over the world. Time spent on social networks is growing at three times a faster rate than the overall time spent on the Internet" (Forte Consultancy Group, 2010, p.1). These statistics demonstrate just how powerful online social media networking sites have become to the world.

On a daily basis, millions of people access social media sites to create and build relationships, connect with others, and share personal stories. Some of the types of information shared include photos, opinions, sensitive and personal information referring to one's friends, current location or frequent hangouts. Law enforcement agencies have taken notice and dived into this "pool of information".

Over the past few years social media sites have evolved into an accepted and formal communication medium. Both the police and the general public use social media sites for a

variety of reasons. Yet there is limited research on the impacts that online social media
networking sites have on the actions and behaviours of individuals, in particular the direct impact
on the actions and behaviours of police officers.

The purpose of this study is to establish whether the use of online social media
networking sites impacts the actions and behaviors of police officers within the Edmonton Police
Service (EPS), a municipal police service for the City of Edmonton, Alberta, Canada. This study
will further analyze how the general public's use of social media sites impacts the actions or
behaviors of police officers. Research questions to be considered include (a) Which online
social media networking sites are used and for what purposes?, (b) What are the advantages and
disadvantages for using social media sites?, (c) How does the general public's use of social
media sites affect police officers?, and (d) Do police officers alter or change their behaviour
because of social media?

To answer these questions, the research examines the perceptions and opinions of six
police officers from the EPS. The participants were guaranteed anonymity during the study to
ensure open and transparent discussions, as well as gain the participant's trust.   The participants
were interviewed using a semi-structured, in-person interview methodology.   The socio-cultural
tradition theory was chosen to assist in the evaluation of the participant's use of online social
media networking sites and the correlated impact of the general public's use of social media on
the actions and behaviours of the police officers. Findings were analyzed under an exploratory
approach in order to determine the connection between the use of social media sites and the
impacts on the individual participants interviewed.

B. Literature Review

1. Introduction

The literature review reveals limited research regarding how social media sites influence the actions of police officers in conducting their daily duties. The review begins with a historical analysis of formal surveillance conducted by the police, then shifts to explore how surveillance is controlled by third-parties on behalf of the police.   The pros and cons of the police relying on social media as a communication and investigative tool are also considered.

Researchers Benjamin J. Goold, Jeremy Crump, and Sinan Ulkemen, to name only a few, provided some of the most recent and applicable research on this topic. Their research focuses strictly on American and UK police departments. Researchers Rick Ruddell & Nicholas Jones, Edward M. Marsico Jr., Kathryn Schellenberg, and Dr. Carlo Morselli & David Décary-Hétu, provide a Canadian perspective on the subject. The literature review concludes with a focus on how the general public uses social media to influence the actions of police officers.

The results of the literature review identified five distinct areas for consideration: formal police surveillance; third-party video; social media as a police communication tool; intelligence gathering; and citizen journalism.

2. Formal Police Surveillance

Historically, video recordings were limited to closed circuit television (CCTV) cameras. Early research regarding police surveillance focused on the use and impact of CCTV. In 2003 Goold released his study which focused on six towns with CCTV in the south of England from 1997 to 2000.   Goold asked the question "Does the presence of cameras affect the way in which police officers work in public?" (Goold, 2003, p.2). Goold hoped to determine "whether CCTV

makes the police more accountable or more cautious in the exercise of their discretion in public spaces" (Goold, 2003, p.1). The data was gathered from informal conversations and interviews with 95 police officers. Initially the majority of police officers reported that the presence of CCTV cameras did not impact the way they conducted themselves. However upon further examination, Goold reported that police officers admitted that they tended to be 'more cautious' when they considered the possibility of being recorded by a CCTV camera.

A study conducted more recently in 2009 concluded very similar results. In his American-based research, Ulkeman argued that "surveillance technology can monitor and control the behavior of officers, ensuring that police officers provide high quality policing services that meet the needs of citizens" (Ulkeman, 2009, p. 10). This study focused on the surveillance technology of in-car cameras and CCTV cameras. Ulkeman's research "examined the effect of surveillance technology on the behavior of municipal police departments that is operationalized as the number of citizen complaints that were filed against municipal police departments (Ulkeman, 2009, Abstract)." The Researcher relied on secondary data collected by the U.S. government — the Law Enforcement Management and Administrative Statistics (LEMAS) survey that gathers "data nationally, every three years, from a representative sample of state and local law enforcement agencies" (Ulkeman, 2009, p. 92). The results concluded that the use of surveillance technology by the police is essential and is a required resource to ensure that police officers behave appropriately when dealing with the public. However it was further noted that the technology itself is deficient in reducing the number of public complaints. No evidence was found to confirm that police surveillance technology had a positive impact on reducing the number of complaints filed.

From a Canadian perspective, Schellenberg stated that "by raising the visibility of

frontline police work, emerging technologies such as mobile audiovisual systems offer the

potential to alter officers' discretionary behaviour" (Schellenberg, 2000, p. 667). In her study,

she surveyed five major police departments across Canada. The premise of the survey was to

determine if during a hypothetical situation of a potential traffic violation police officers would

act differently if they thought they were being recorded by an in-car camera. The Researcher

concluded that "surveillance can encourage, as well as inhibit, the police predilection for

lenience" (Schellenberg, 2000, p. 667). In contrast to Ulkeman's research, Schellenberg reported

that in the majority of the departments she surveyed, the simple presence of an in-car camera did

not directly impact the actions or behaviors of a police officer during a hypothetical traffic stop.

Johnson's research focused on the surveillance conducted by police in the United States.

Her objective "was to better document the scope and nature of police use of public surveillance

technology and the resulting data, as well as public attitudes toward such use" (Johnson, 2012, p.

1). Johnson concluded that the public's attitude toward police surveillance was generally

positive, resulting in the wide acceptance of Public Overt Surveillance Technology (POST).

However "the uses of POST and resulting data are small compared to the amount of data being

collected and police activities, overall, raising questions about benefits relative to costs"

(Johnson, 2012, p. 1). The research relied on several data sources. The majority of the data was

collected from two surveys and publicly available information pertaining to the use of POST in

the U.S. Although the data revealed evidence that supported the public's general acceptance of

POST, the study further uncovered questions regarding the benefits to public safety and the

financial and social costs of police surveillance programs.   Due to the financial costs of

surveillance, some police departments have contracted out the service to a third party.

3. Third-party Video

Private companies such as telecommunications carriers and service providers receive

approximately 1.5 million surveillance requests from U.S. law enforcement agencies per year

(Soghoian, 2012, p.2). Soghoian explained that "the police merely select the individuals to be

monitored, while the actual surveillance is performed by third parties: often the same email

providers, search engines and telephone companies to whom consumers have entrusted their

private data. Assisting Big Brother has become a routine part of the business" (Soghoian, 2012,

p.1). The goal of Soghoian's research was to bring to light the lack of evidence and public

knowledge that the public's very own service providers may be their worst enemy – meaning

that service providers play a key role in the facilitation of law enforcement surveillance. The

research relied on a select number of service providers that officially released reports on their

involvement with law enforcement surveillance.   Soghoian's research exposed that without

third-party communication service providers, surveillance conducted by the police would be

limited. This dissertation was intended to expose the rampant use of police surveillance, done by

third parties, a practice not widely known by the general public.

In a comparable Canadian study, Lippert and Wilkinson explored the use of CCTV

images for the television program "Crime Stoppers." Crimes committed and captured on

surveillance in private and public spaces are released by the police in order to gain assistance in

solving the crimes. Lippert and Wilkinson relied on qualitative methods for this study. Various

episodes of the Crime Stoppers program were viewed from Canada (Ontario) and Australia over

the time period of 2004 – 2008. Through their efforts, the aim was "to lay bare CCTV images'

role in constructing crime featured in advertisements that serve as one means of fusing Crime

Stoppers and CCTV surveillance arrangements in the assemblage" (Lippert & Wilkinson, 2010,

p. 133). The results demonstrated that there was a significant increase in crime control with the

aid of visual images through the use of CCTV cameras. Yet the "analysis reveals the visual can

heavily depend upon the textual due to the media logic that demands authentic access to 'the

real' that CCTV images promise but cannot deliver" (Lippert & Wilkinson, 2010, p. 147).

Caution must be exercised regarding the reliance on visual images that fuel the belief that the

'camera never lies'.

4. Social Media as a Police Communication Tool

Rosenbaum, Graziano, Stephens, and Schuck reported on the first systematic look at the

frequency that municipal police departments use websites in the U.S. Their goals were to

examine the role that social media sites play in efforts to enhance the legitimacy of police and

how police use social media sites for policing purposes.   Their analysis "revealed that police

agencies with websites were more inclined to use websites to "push out" information rather than

"pull in" information from the community" (Rosenbaum et al., 2011, p.1). This conclusion was

drawn from collecting data from the 1999 Law Enforcement Management and Administrative

Statistics survey. The results support the researchers' hypothesis that "departments with a

greater emphasis on community policing (defined by data) would be more likely to have a

website, exhibit greater transparency in the display of data and provide more opportunities for

citizen input" (Rosenbaum et al., 2011, p.39). This study further concluded that police tend to

underutilize social media sites as both an intelligence gathering tool and way for relaying

messages to the community.

Facebook has significantly grown over the past few years. Facebook has been reported

as being the most popular form for online communication, as it quickly approaches almost one

billion worldwide users (Lieberman, Koetzle & Sakiyama, 2013, p. 458). This has not gone

unnoticed by law enforcement agencies. Police may use Facebook as a crime prevention tool but

some agencies are using Facebook as an innovative way to interact and communicate with the

general public. Mirmajlessi's research explored "whether or not the use of Facebook is a helpful

tool in the improvement of police community relations, or, whether it is causing more harms to

specific communities and/or groups of people" (Lieberman, et al., 2013, p.1). The Researcher

selected an unidentified U.S. police agency in which in-depth interviews were conducted with

police officers to determine how they used Facebook for police work as well the social media

impact on community-police interactions. The research concluded that this police department's

use of the technology was minimal. The Researcher argued that while the adoption of Facebook

was intended to build a stronger connection between the police and the community, it was

ineffective.

In 2013, Canadian researchers Ruddell and Jones studied the usefulness of social media -

Facebook or Twitter - in policing. This was an important study as it was "one of the first to

examine the recipients of social media and their perceptions of the usefulness of computer-based

communication for law enforcement" (Ruddell & Jones, 2013, p.1). The data was gathered

through random telephone surveys in a medium-sized Canadian city.   Their findings concluded

that more individuals accessed the police service's Facebook page, while fewer people accessed

their Twitter account. It was further reported that younger and more techno-educated residents were the higher users of the police's online social media networking sites.

Similarly in the U.S. it has been reported that police departments are relying more and more on social media sites to communicate with the general public, according to Lieberman, Koetzle and Sakiyaman. Their study proposed "to systematically examine a police department's use of social media sites as an external communication tool in order to better understand the nature and content of messages communicated by departments through this technology" (Lieberman, et al., 2013, p.439). They also revealed that very little is known about how and why the police are actually using these sites. The Researchers analyzed the content and frequency of Facebook posts by large police departments in the U.S., as well as the responses of the general public to those posts. The study determined that Facebook is the social media site predominately used to convey crime-related messages to the public.

With the adoption of Twitter by UK police forces in 2008, Crump asked "what" are the police doing on Twitter? Crump "examined the growing interest of UK police forces in the use of social media as a basis for engagement with the public" (Crump, 2011, p.1). Crump's research investigated how successful police services have been exploiting social media to their benefit. Crump solely focused on one form of social media, Twitter, including the targeted audience and message content. Data was gathered through the National Policing Improvement Agency in which police Twitter accounts were identified and then managed. The study concluded that the use of Twitter was strongly but cautiously used as an enhanced way for the police to reach a wider audience.

Crump conducted a second study with Procter, Karstedt, Voss, and Cantijoch (2013). They studied how the police use social media to inform and act quickly to ensure public order and safety. Their research focused on riots that occurred in England. The Researchers explored how the police and general public used Twitter to respond to such events. Tweets were studied within the time frame of August 6 to August 17, 2011. This period included days in which riots erupted over an individual who was shot and killed by police. The reaction to this isolated incident gave rise to levels of looting, destruction, and violence not seen in England for over 30 years. This study allowed the Researchers to conduct a detailed analysis of a large corpus of data. However the Researchers stated that the "findings provide evidence that the police (and emergency services and government agencies generally) face difficult problems in making effective use of social media services such as Twitter during crisis situations" (Procter et al., 2013, p. 433). It was further concluded that there is a dire need for police to rely on social media for public safety reasons, simply to reach a large audience within a timely manner.

It has been reported more recently that "policing organisations have become increasingly savvy at producing positive images of police work through both the old and new media via the growth in professionalised police public relations (PR) infrastructure", according to Lee and McGovern (2013, p.1). They explored how Australian police departments used social media to foster their "positive image" to the general public. The study consisted of original qualitative data from interviews with police officers, and the public relations units of various police departments. The study concluded that police departments that used such sites as YouTube and Facebook to communicate with the general public were considered as more "legitimate" than those departments that did not utilize social media sites.

The use of social media as a communication tool by the police is only one side of the coin. The police further rely on various social media sites in their everyday investigative work.

5. Intelligence Gathering

In addition to using social media as a communication tool, law enforcement officials have recognized that the Internet is a good shopping outlet to find lawbreakers.   Marsico reports that "police officers are using social networking sites to investigate about criminal gangs while gang members are also using social networking sites to ask for help in identifying undercover police officers" (Marsico, 2010, p. 1). Social media networking sites have become an evidence gathering gold mine for law enforcement agencies. Marsico concluded that police investigative work has evolved beyond DNA and fingerprints, rather "in the twenty-first century, the computer and the Internet have become fertile fields for police to plow in the search for evidence" (Marsico, 2010, p.6). However it is important to state that police cannot solely rely on the information posted on the Internet because authentication still must be considered under the law.

Since 2009, media and law enforcement agencies have reported an increase in street gangs and criminal organizations using social media to showcase their images, exploit their crimes, and recruit members. Morselli and Décary-Hétu investigated the legitimacy of claims regarding these activities, referred to as *cyberbanging*. Their research was restricted to keyword searches of various known street gangs that were active users of Twitter, Facebook, and MySpace. The Researchers concluded that there was "some anecdotal evidence suggesting that gangs are turning to social networking sites", however evidence was lacking on exactly "how" street gangs are using social media sites to their benefit (Morselli & Décary-Hétu, 2010, p.1).

With the continual growth of social media, Bartlett, Miller, Crump, and Middleton recognized that the "police will now certainly need to use social media to engage with the public, collect intelligence, and investigate crime, both on- and offline" (Bartlett et al.,2013, p. 4). Their study was based on direct interviews, and a limited review of a United Kingdom police department's social media following. The researchers concluded that the data revealed both opportunities and risks that social media may exhibit regarding communication, intelligence gathering, and law enforcement. "The advent of social media has not only created new offences with which the police have to contend and new spaces for the police to visibly enforce the law, but the nature of social media has also increased the number of offences, posing issues of discretion, workload and resources" (Bartlett et al., 2013, p. 28). Just as social media may be seen as a means to an end for investigative work, it may also have negative implications on police work.

In contrast, Kearon's article explored how "technology plays an increasing role in policing and other aspects of the criminal justice process" (Kearon, 2012, p.414). Kearon coined the term *techno-fix* "as a potential attempt by criminal justice agencies to use technology as a source of legitimacy" (Kearon, 2012, p.415). Speed traps are typical examples of a techno-fix. Kearon considered the possibility that by increasing the use and frequency of surveillance technologies, both formally by surveillance conducted by the police and informally, in which surveillance falls into the hands of the general public, that surveillance may threaten the legitimacy of criminal justice agencies, "in part because of deeply embedded but unrealistic cultural assumptions about the capabilities of technology" (Kearon, 2012, p. 415).

Kearon argues that "one of the unintended consequences of the expansion of formal systems of surveillance such as CCTV has been the increasing incidence of 'official' surveillance footage used to publicize and prosecute cases of alleged malpractice by police officers" (Kearon, 2012, p. 416). Kearon refers to a case from 2010 in which a Greater Manchester Police officer was accused and charged of using excessive force against a suspect. CCTV footage captured the officer throwing the suspect to the ground and then repeatedly punching the suspect. The case received extensive coverage by local and national TV media programs. The officer was exonerated once the video exposed that the suspect resisted arrest and that the arresting officer conducted himself appropriately and took the necessary measures to subdue the suspect.

Surveillance may be used in an attempt to discredit the actions of police. However simultaneously, video footage may be used as an intelligence gathering tool to acquit accused officers. Kearon reasonably argued that an increase in the general public conducting surveillance on the police with the goal of capturing police misconduct strongly impacts the public's perception of law enforcement agencies. This shifts the roles of surveillance so that rather than the police conducting surveillance, the police are now the targets.

6. Citizen Journalism

In their investigation of surveillance beyond police control, Jones and Raymond described "the potential benefits of third-party video – videos that people who are not social scientists have recorded and preserved – to social science research" (Jones & Raymond, 2012, p.1). The authors' two research questions were: "How might the presence of a video camera affect the unfolding of interactions that are recorded in third-party videos? And how might the

perspective of the videographer influence the production and preservation of these records and, in turn, what influence might this standpoint have on our analysis of the data?" (Jones & Raymond, 2012, p.1) Jones and Raymond's research solely relied on the video footage captured by a third-party, an individual known simply as "Ray." Ray was living in Washington, D.C., and used his own handheld digital video camera to record interactions between the police and the local residents in his neighborhood. Through examination of Ray's recordings, the Researchers deduced that the everyday recordings captured by the general public with their own recording devices have a greater advantage than the most skilled field researchers. The roles were reversed in that the general public was now conducting daily surveillance on the police. As such, the individually owned data recorder holds a significant role in society today.

Frank, Smith and Novak (2005) reported that over the past 20 years extensive research has concentrated on the attitudes of the general public towards the police. There seems to be a correlation between negative attitudes towards police and the desire to record police actions. However, research was lacking regarding the causes of these attitudes. These Researchers chose to address "the reasons why citizens hold certain attitudes" (Frank et al., 2005, p. 1). The study relied on the survey responses of 613 residents of a mid-western American city to examine the information provided by the citizens when responding to the questions regarding their general and specific attitudes towards police. The findings suggested three outcomes – first, that citizens focused on attributes of police officers and encounters; second, some focused on the behavior of officers during interactions; and third, others based their attitudes on general perceptions of the police. Overall most people suggested that the police could influence the attitudes against them through positive interaction.

Mawby described the police service as "one of the most watched institutions in our

contemporary society" (Mawby, 2002, p. 36-37), resulting in the police being in a virtual "fish

bowl" due to the advancements of modern technology and the increased use of social media.   To

investigate this phenomenon, Toch, a long-time observer of police-citizen interactions, "used a

series of events to document confrontations between police officers, citizens, and the media in

three American cities in order to explore how these confrontations have led to various reactions

and police reforms" (Toch, 2012, p.1). He is particularly concerned with the actions and

responses of the spectators of these confrontations, which he calls "the chorus" (Toch, 2012, p.1)

Toch interviewed police officers to explore firsthand the combative relationship between the

police and the community.   Toch restricted his study to events that occurred in Seattle from

2010 to 2011. He sought "to explain how technological advancements, like cell-phone video

cameras and internet blogging, have expanded the chorus of spectators beyond those

immediately present at the time of the altercations between officers and the citizens" (Toch,

2012, p.1). Toch states that "spectators not only exerted a significant impact on the encounters

that they had been witnessing but also elevated their importance by endowing them with political

significance" (Toch, 2012, p. xvii). In the end, Toch concludes that the scope or the visibility of

an event has a direct impact on the final outcome; meaning that it is ultimately the "view" of an

event that attracts the attention of an audience. When an individual with a camera captures an

altercation involving a police officer, "the question…tends to be refocused from the incident that

is being filmed to the arrest of the spectator because newly attentive publics bring their own

concerns about police abuse of force, freedom of speech, etc., changing the conversation over

how to evaluate police and citizen behavior, public policy, social change, and police leadership"

(Toch, 2012, p.84). Toch's study examines the importance of watching the chorus, as they watch
the police.

In a study by Häyhtiö and Rinne, they investigated the recent phenomenon of
individualized civic watch. Individualized civic watch refers to the general public monitoring
organizations, such as the police, in an attempt to record their actions and hold them accountable
by posting the recordings on the Internet. The Researchers combined data using methodological
triangulation from different cases across Europe and the U.S. during the period 2004 - 2007. The
study was conducted using an Internet search in which individual incidents were chosen. It was
found that the Internet provided a cheap and easily accessible tool that "empowers an individual
and offers an opportunity to create personal news deliverance that influences mainstream news
providers and the media" (Häyhtiö & Rinne, 2009, p.1). This power allows social media to be a
venue for 'official truth challenging' perspectives on a global stage.

During the same time period of Toch's research, social media took center stage when it
was used to share information during a violent riot in the United Kingdom. On April 21, 2011,
riots erupted following a police raid against the protestors of the opening of a Tesco supermarket
in their area. "Footage later emerged on YouTube, which appeared to support claims by local
residents that the violence was caused by heavy-handed police tactics rather than the anti-Tesco
campaign" (Reilly, 2013, p.1). This study relied on a "critical thematic analysis to explore the
comments left by those who viewed these acts of 'inverse surveillance', or sousveillance"
(Reilly, 2013, p.1). The study concluded that YouTube was the primary outlet to showcase
alternative views of the riots, in which the majority of the negative comments were directed
towards the protestors and not the actions of the police.

Antony and Thomas tackled the emerging trend of individuals who are not members of the professional media who record, document, and post their Smartphone recordings on the video-sharing website, YouTube. This study "employed a critical thematic analysis to examine audience responses to this act of citizen journalism on YouTube" (Antony & Thomas, 2010, p.1). The research project analyzed the viewer responses to the documented shooting of an individual by police in California in 2009. There was a difference of opinion between those who supported citizen journalism as a window to everyday events and those who opposed this type of inexperienced reporting. The supporters viewed the video as way to challenge aggressive law enforcement, while those who criticized the recording stated that the video lacked the "whole picture."

Alternative journalism was further examined by Canadian researchers Poell and Borra. They examined the use of social media as unconventional journalism pertaining to the events of the G20 summit in Toronto, Canada in 2010. The researchers critically examined the public's use of Twitter, YouTube, and Flickr during the G20 protests. The researchers further investigated the effects of so many recordings of a single event as well as whether these contributions are valued by the general public. The research project showed that most of the observations were posted by a select group of users. It was further documented that "the use of activist social media appears much less of a success from the perspective of alternative journalism" (Poell & Borra, 2012, p.709). This study concluded that although social media provides an alternate form of journalism it has yet to replace main stream reporting of situations in which criminal acts occur.

7. Literature Review Summary

The purpose of this literature review was to examine the research conducted to date and identify the knowledge gaps in the literature pertaining to police, surveillance, and the impact of social media on behaviours. A search through the literature pertaining to law, sociology, psychology, criminal law, and communications revealed research on this topic tackled by researchers spanned across Europe and North America. Lacking was a significant amount of information about police use of social media by Canadian police services, and nothing was found regarding police services in Alberta. In summary, the literature review concluded that there is limited research regarding whether the use of online social media networking sites impacts the actions and behaviours of police officers. The literature review further revealed the limited research conducted on how the general public's use of social media impacts the actions or behaviours of police officers. Within the context of the high probability that most individuals carry a Smartphone today, this study will provide insight into the observations, opinions, and views those police officers hold pertaining to social media.

C. Methodology

1. Research Design

This study encompassed an exploratory inductive approach to the research, as there were no definite hypotheses determined beforehand. Data collection relied on the methodology of semi-structured in-depth interviews.   A cross-sectional analysis was applied to this research project. Data was collected from a population, or a representative subset, *at one specific point in time*. This approach was adopted to investigate police officers' use of online social media

networking sites and the direct impacts of social media on the actions of those officers. To study

an individual's relationship as a whole to a culture, rather than focusing on individual

differences, the relevant theory of socio-cultural tradition was applied. "Reality is the sum of all

the parts when viewing people as components and the influence the sum has on the individual"

(Littlejohn & Foss, 2011, p. 43). In laymen terms, police officers are a product of how the public

views them and how they represent themselves accordingly, via social media.

2. Data Sources/Collection

The sole source of data collection was face-to-face semi-structured interviews, recorded

with a digital audio recording device. The recordings were transcribed by the Researcher herself,

at which time each participant was assigned a pseudonym. Individually identifiable information

of a participant was scrubbed from the data as soon as transcription was complete. Data

collection occurred over a three-month period, from January to March 2014.

3. Recruitment Techniques

The "snowball sampling" (or referral sampling) technique was adopted to recruit

participants for this study. The technique consisted of "starting with one or two people and then

using their connections, and their connections' connections, to generate a large sample" (Palys,

2008, p. 139). The participants were limited to a specific group: police officers either currently

employed or previously employed with the EPS. A sample population of six to eight police

officers was determined adequate to illustrate an accurate reflection of the data in this

exploratory study.

For this study the Researcher directly chose and approached the first qualified participant.

The first participant was known to the Researcher. The first participant was then tasked with the

responsibility of recommending or recruiting other potential participants. The first participant

forwarded the contact information of potential participants interested in the study to the

Researcher and/or the Researcher's contact information was distributed to a group of eligible

participants. Those additional participants then recommended additional participants, and so on,

thus building up like a snowball rolling down a hill.

The snowball technique was chosen for this project because of its convenient sampling

technique; it would have been difficult for the Researcher to recruit or randomly select eligible

participants that met the required criteria. Snowballing allowed for recruitment of a sample of

EPS police officers, not known to the Researcher.

A challenge of this particular technique is the possibility of not successfully recruiting the

required sample needed for the study. There were concerns that it would be difficult to reach the

desired population due to the potentially sensitive topic of the study. The Researcher

experienced this difficulty, when recruitment stalled after three interviews. It was necessary to

contact the first three participants and appeal to them again in recruiting or identifying additional

police officers who would be enthusiastic about the topic and be willing to share their opinions.

This approach was necessary to get the "snowball rolling again." After the second call for

participants, an overabundance of police officers came forward to accommodate the parameters

of the research project.

4. Selection Method

The Researcher approached the first participant (known to the Researcher) who was

eligible to participate in the research project. Beyond the first directly-solicited participant, the

Researcher did not know or have any direct interaction with the other participants prior to the

interviews. The Researcher requested that the first participant inform other police officers about

the research project. Volunteers directly contacted the Researcher if they wished to contribute to

the study.

5. Interview Format

To gather in-depth responses from the participants, semi-structured personal interview

questions were drafted (Merrigan, Huston, & Johnston, 2012). A semi-structured interview

approach ressembled more of a formal discussion, rather than a format of dictated questions in

the same sequence for each participant. Refer to Appendix C for copy of the Interview Schedule.

Although a semi-structured interview was adopted, leniency was granted to each participant for

further elaboration on subtopics. The interview model or discussion was predominately led by

the participant. The interview questions focused on the participant's personal thoughts, opinions,

and experiences pertaining to social media. The time frame of each interview ranged from 45

minutes to 1 hour. The interview consisted of a total of 16 questions and sub-topics.

In August 2013, Police Scotland posted a web survey requesting the general public to

take part in their online social media survey (*Police Scotland*, 2013). Police Scotland wanted to

know what their citizens thought of their use of social media, and whether it could be improved

and in what ways. The interview questions for this research project were loosely based on the

Police Scotland survey questions and other relevant research articles and projects. The interview

questions created for this project focused on the opinions of the police, rather than those of the

general public.

The interview locations were chosen by the participants, in order to create an atmosphere

of comfort and build a level of trust. It was considered that if participants chose not only the

location, but also the time and date that were most convenient for them, they would be more

inclined to be honest, forthcoming, and open in responding to the Researcher. The locations

chosen by the participants ranged from meeting in coffee shops, to meeting rooms, to the

Researcher's personal residence and to the personal residences of participants.   Face-to-face

interviews permitted more probing and further investigative strategies deployed by the

Researcher.

Participants were not permitted to gain access to the interview questions before the

interview. This was to prevent participants from researching answers or rehearsing responses,

rather than offering their more spontaneous opinions.

6. Data Analysis and Interpretation

The data analysis relied on the content of the interview transcripts created by the

Researcher. An adaption of the grounded theory by Glaser and Strauss was further applied to the

interpretation of the data. Grounded Theory is based on the concept of direct observation versus

testing a hypothesis rooted in theory (Singleton & Straits, 2010). The analysis of the data

gathered was formulated on the following qualifiers as outlined by Singleton and Straits (2010):

organizing data, identifying patterns, developing ideas and drawing conclusions. The focus of

the analysis was based on the narrative produced while documenting the responses of the

participants. The constructivist or interpretive approach was further applied to analyze the data.

The constructivist or interpretivist paradigm was founded on the philosophy of Edmund

Husserl's phenomenology and Wilhelm Dilthey's study of interpretive understanding called

"hermeneutics" (Mertens, 2005, p.12 citing Eichelberger, 1989). The intention of

interpretivist/constructivist approaches is to gain an understanding of "the world of human

experience" (Cohen & Manion, 1994, p.36). The researcher relies on the "participants' views of

the situation being studied" (Creswell, 2003, p.8). From the data gathered the researcher will

deduct themes or patterns of meaning/understanding. Under this approach, there is a heavy

reliance on qualitative data collection methods and analysis. A combination of both qualitative

and quantitative methods may be used. Quantitative data will be utilised to support the

qualitative data in order to deepen the understanding of emerging themes or patterns.

7. Deconstruction

The data was dissected and categorized into smaller meanings or values. The values

were then further scrutinized to reveal themes. This analysis facilitated a deeper understanding

of the various subjects discussed during the interview process. The deconstruction of the data

allowed for inductive qualitative research, beginning with the assessment of specifics and

broadening the perspective of findings to reflect that of the sample population. Themes were

revealed from within the answers of individual responses based on "repetition."

"Repetition is one of the easiest ways to identify themes. Some of the most obvious

themes in a corpus of data are those "topics that occur and occur or are *recurring regularities*"

(Ryan and Bernard, 2003, p. 89). Repetition varied from single words, to phrases, to opinions or

thoughts. The Researcher relied on these repetitions to constitute a theme or pattern within the

six participants' responses.

8. Issues of Reliability and Validity

Before the interviews were conducted, the interview schedule was pilot tested on

volunteers. Three "practice" interviews were conducted by the Researcher. The Researcher

solicited non-police officer participants for these pilot test interviews. Comments for

improvement were requested of the volunteers and the Researcher's academic supervisor. From

the feedback gathered, interview questions were revised, the interview sequence was

reformatted, and the Researcher's interview techniques were further developed.

9. Researcher Credibility

The Researcher worked independently on this study. All data collected, transcribed, and

interpreted were handled only by the Researcher. It was imperative that the Researcher

possessed interview training, experience, and held a strong commitment to the research subject

(Merrigan, et al., 2012). The Researcher held extensive experience in drafting interview

questions and conducting independent interviews due to past employment opportunities and

various research projects. However the Researcher still relied on the feedback of her academic

supervisor and the pilot volunteers who offered recommendations for improvement to develop

the required interview skills.

The Researcher's acknowledgement of the potential sensitivity of this topic and her

respect for the study participants was demonstrated through her continual assurance to

participants that their identity would remain confidential. All research material is held in a safe

and secure manner in which only the Researcher has access. Due to the Researcher's dedication

to the research subject and collected data, she hopes that the final outcome will lead to a

beneficial understanding of the topic.

10. Limitations

The principal limitation of this study was the size of the population. A limited size was

required to conduct this exploratory research, which relied solely on face-to-face interviews.

The research was also limited by time and resource constraints. As such, the findings cannot be

extrapolated to the larger population of EPS officers nor to officers in other jurisdictions.

Although a larger population would have expanded the data collection, the Researcher believes

the themes that emerged from the data would have remained consistent regardless of the

population size. Common findings were quickly identified amongst those in the limited

population interviewed.

11. Ethical Considerations

11.1 Risks

Subject participation was strictly voluntary, with informed consent. An outline of the

research project and process were provided in an Information Letter (Appendix A) and Consent

Form (Appendix B). Participation was deemed to be at minimal risk. The probability and

magnitude of possible harm was considerably less than those experienced by participants in their

daily duties. During the interview process there was a possibility that participants felt

psychologically or emotionally stressed, and some participants may have experienced some

anxiety in expressing their opinions and thoughts about possibly stressful situations involving

their personal use or experience with online social media networking sites. If a subject

demonstrated signs of becoming upset, distressed, or disturbed during the interview process, the

Researcher planned to assist the subject by immediately discontinuing the interview. It was

explained to the participants that they were not obligated to answer all or specific interview

questions. None of the participants demonstrated any distress or refused to answer any specific

interview question during the interview process.

11.2 Confidentiality and Consent

Participants were informed upfront that the intended use of the data gathered would be strictly limited to this research study. Participants would not be personally identified during, or after their participation in the research project. To the best of her ability, the Researcher would keep their anonymity. The Researcher drafted and presented a detailed Consent Form (Appendix B) for each participant to complete prior to the interview.

D. Findings

The findings reflect the data collected from the interviews of the six participants. The interview schedule consisted of sixteen questions to elicit insights and attitudes around three major categories: 1 – Social Media, 2 – Opinions, and 3 – Public use of Social Media. The responses to each question were analyzed in order to reveal themes or patterns across the six interviews as well as uncover differences. The following section consists of an examination of the 16 interview questions and the corresponding responses. The data analysis of each response facilitated a deeper understanding of the police officers' opinions and attitudes toward social media.

In the first section titled, *Social Media*, the questions focused on the different types of online social media networking sites and how they might be used for work related purposes.

1. Social Media

> **The first few questions that I will be asking you are about different types of online social media networking sites. The questions focus on the online sites that might be used for work related purposes; how you use it and the reasons why.**
>
> a.   **Question #1 - Of the online social media networking sites that might be used for work related purposes, which of following do you use?**

FaceBook	**Pinterest**
Blogs	**Flickr**
Wikis	**Instagram**
LinkedIn	**MySpace**
Twitter	**Other**
YouTube	

The six participants identified Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube as the sites they most often used. These sites are predominately used as investigative tools by the EPS. It was explained by the officers that Facebook may be utilized in creating a fictitious account. A "ghost" Facebook page coupled with a fake identity, fake name, fake photos, etc., would be established with the intent of targeting a particular individual of interest. By using a fictitious account, the EPS can "friend" a target on Facebook in order to gather useful intelligence information. The type of intelligence information gathered could be known associates, locations, interests, possible unlawful crimes, etc.

Facebook is not only used as a tool by the police for investigative purposes but the general public uses the site in the same manner. A few participants reported that incoming calls to the EPS have increased since the introduction of online social media networking sites. For example, members of the general public will read a message posted by a family member or a friend and if there is a need for concern, these concerns are reported to the police to investigate. A participant summarized the increase in calls by stating:

> *Social media has become more work. Facebook and Twitter have replaced the traditional suicide note.*

The issue with reporting a crime instigated on Facebook or Twitter, is that one does not know who actually typed and/or posted the message and from which computer it originated. In

some cases, these calls tend to be reduced to simple misunderstandings or jokes. However these
calls take up a tremendous amount of time of a police officer's shift.

The EPS relies on YouTube in a similar manner. YouTube is used to watch the videos
posted by potential targets. The participants reported watching videos of targets rapping, singing,
cooking crack, selling dope, etc. The videos are scrutinized by the police to identify known
associates, locations, buildings, house numbers, addresses, any details that a police officer would
consider valuable to an investigation. Flickr and Instagram are used in the same manner, to
identity targets, associates, crime locations, etc.   YouTube is also used by the EPS and other
police services to post training or safety videos. In this manner, YouTube is used as a
communication tool for police services to share information with other services. The EPS has
also posted recruiting videos on YouTube in order to reach the general public about opportunities
within the department.

Blogs, Wikis, Pinterest, and Myspace were identified as not being used by the participants
for work related purposes. The participants did not identify any other online social media
networking sites.

Of the online social media networking sites noted by the researcher in question #1, Figure
1 shows the level of use by the six respondents.

Types of Online Social Media Networking Sites Used
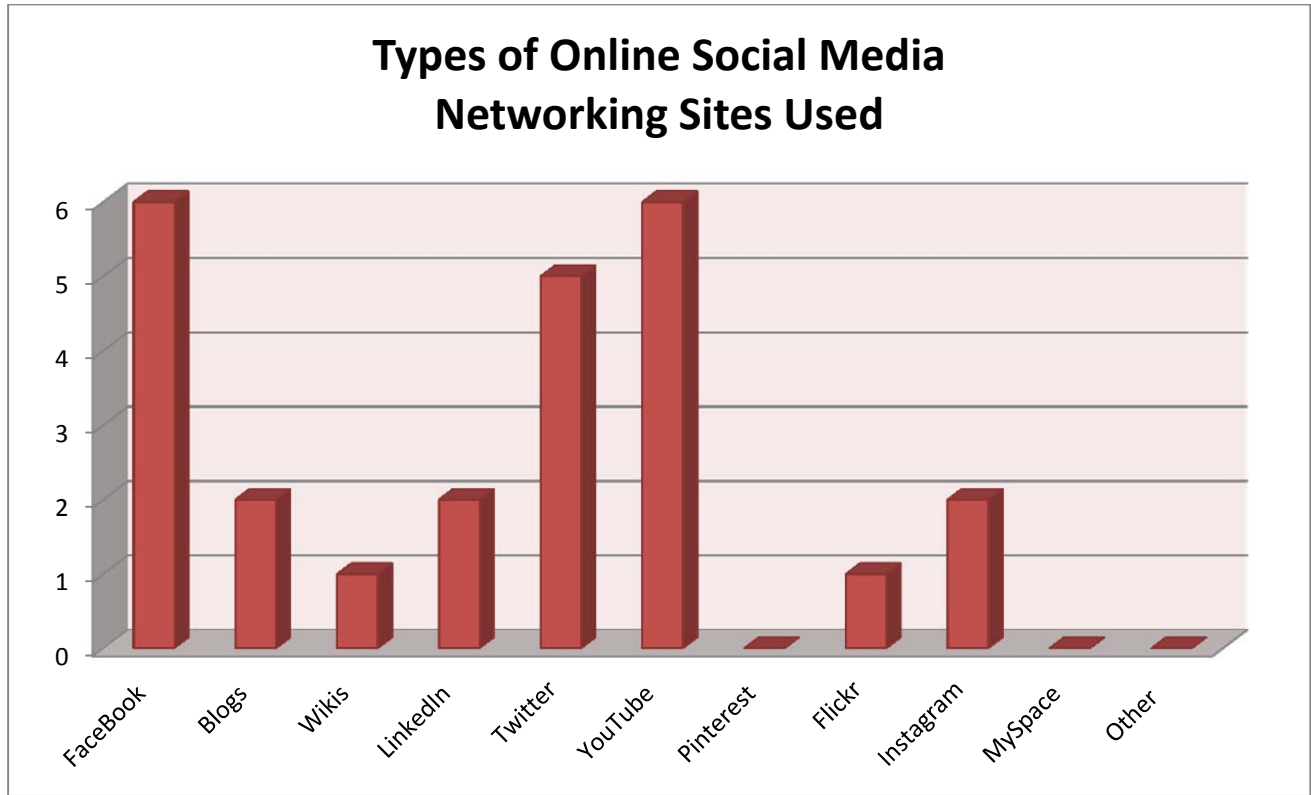
Figure 1: Number of Respondents Who Used Various Social Media Networking Sites

    b. Question #2 - How long have you been using online social media networking sites for work related purposes/activities?

The respondents have been using social media sites for an average of five years. Although

social media sites have been around for much longer, a few respondents stated that the EPS did

not "jump on the bandwagon right away" because the EPS explored with caution the value of

using social media as a communication tool to inform and educate the public. A few participants

expressed the view that social media permits the EPS to move away from traditional policing and

into the modern world of communication. One participant stated:

> _A police officers line-of-work still heavily relies on face-to-face interaction. However social media allows us to communicate with the population of the public who are socially connected. It is an understanding that connection; we can use social media in a positive way, to get our message out._

     c. **Question #3 - There are many reasons why someone might use social media. I'm going to read some of these reasons, and ask you to tell me whether you ever use social media for that reason and please explain a little bit more about that activity?**

Communication – internal or external

The respondents all reported that their work email addresses are publicly available on the EPS website. The most common reason given by officers for the EPS to communicate externally was to educate or inform the general public. This may take the form of advertising for an upcoming recruiting event, Town Hall Meeting, BBQ, or advising a particular neighborhood about recent crimes committed in the area.

While most respondents confirmed that social media is not used for internal communication, a few respondents recognized that:

> *[Social media] is a great way to get the message across to the junior membership or even the future membership of EPS.*

Conduct research/information seeking

As previously reported, social media is used for intelligence gathering. A few respondents reported that conducting research via social media sites has assisted in locating missing persons, stolen property, etc.

Collect information

There were some discrepancies in respondents' answers regarding the current EPS policy for collecting information via social media, likely reflective of the changing legislation in this area. Some respondents stated that a warrant is now required to gain access to a target's IP address, while others reported that they still heavily relied on social media sites without the use of a warrant. The confusion may be a result of a new policy recently introduced by the EPS

regarding the use of social media during investigations. It is important to note that all six

respondents agreed that:

> *[Social media] is just an investigative tool. It cannot be relied upon as gospel. We do not rely on it 100%. It is just a tool.*

The information gathered is used to add to an existing file; all information gathered is

required to be corroborated to ensure accuracy and credibility.

Share information

A common theme that emerged from the participants' responses was that social media is

used to share information with the general public, such as reporting a rash of crimes in an area or

reporting that certain geographical areas are blocked off due to barricades or a traffic accident.

A few respondents affirmed that Twitter is used to share "positive" information about the

EPS:

> *I found, the positive you can take from this, is how many people support us. The good for you, hi-fives, the actual thank you for what you do, just that Tweet from people makes your day.*

Networking

Three of the six participants, based on their positions within the EPS, rely on social media

to network within the areas they patrol. The purpose is to build relationships with those in the

communities. This networking aspect of their work is founded on building public relations.

Networking efforts are also made to communicate and foster relations with other Canadian,

American, and/or international police services.

The responses reflected that although social media is a great tool for intelligence

gathering and communicating, it does not replace "traditional policing." Traditional policing was

explained as the reliance on face-to-face interactions. For example, police questioning,

interviews, investigations, etc. are still conducted face-to-face. One participant explained that:

> *Personal contact is where trust is built. Face-to-face is where trust is built,*
> *once that trust is built, I see social media as being a great tool for that*
> *ongoing conversation.*

Social Interaction

The social interaction part of social media occurs both internally and externally.

Internally, social media is used to simply connect with fellow officers, contribute to team

building, and maintain connections. Social interaction may take the form of sharing work stories,

jokes, hobbies, fitness training techniques, etc.   The external social interactions are based on

building relationships and trust with assigned patrolled areas.

News

Social media is used as a resource to evaluate current situations reported by the media.

Most of the participants related examples of their using social media to read current news stories

from media outlets, check the weather, etc.

Recruiting

In response to the question about using social media for recruiting, the respondents all

reported that EPS relies on Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube as tools for advertising upcoming

recruiting events. It was conveyed that social media is capable of reaching a larger demographic

than the "historic newsletter."

Entertainment

The majority of participants reported that social media is used for entertainment purposes.

However it was clearly stated that their profession was not different than any other in which

social media is used for a "break in the day." During down-time on a shift, the police officers in

this study may turn to social media to pass the time, clear one's head, or watch a funny video to

lighten the mood.

Passing Time

All but one of the participants responded with a resounding "yes" to this question.

Similar responses were provided as to the question about "entertainment": social media simply

provides a break in the day.

Expressing opinions

All six participants maintained that they have not and will not use social media to express

a personal opinion or to act as a representative of the EPS. One participant stated that he/she

knew of an individual who was reprimanded because of the comments/opinions expressed

through social media. The participant stated that:

> *I understand how an opinion in a social media environment could go viral and you cannot*
> *control it.*

The second section of the interview schedule, entitled *Opinions*, concentrates on the

participants' personal opinions surrounding the use of social media sites as it relates to their

profession.

2. Participants' Personal Opinions

**The following questions will focus on your thoughts and opinions of social media
pertaining to your current profession.**

a. **Question #4 - In your opinion, does your employer encourage or discourage the
use of online social media for work purposes?**

The responses to this question were consistent, in that the EPS encourages the use of

social media for intelligence gathering or relaying messages to the general public. However,

there was further agreement that the EPS discourages the "personal" use of social media. A

participant confirmed that in the revised policy and guidelines implemented by the EPS, the new

policy and guidelines stipulate that it is now against policy to post personal opinions or photos in

which an officer is posed in uniform or standing beside a police vehicle. The EPS wants to

control and protect its image, and at the same time ensure the safety of its members. In the

opinions of the police officers interviewed, the EPS strongly discourages:

> *.....disclosing information that would bring the organization into public disrepute.*

Another participant elaborated further on the EPS' discouragement of using social media

for personal reasons:

> *During recruiting we were told it would be a good idea to deactivate our
> personal Facebook page. The reason was because we are expected to be held to
> a higher level and a lot of scrutiny can come from posting stuff.*

Not only is the concern that police officers may post unflattering photos that could

damage the reputation of the EPS but the other reason is for their own personal safety. For those

officers who work undercover or conduct surveillance there is a legitimate fear that lawbreakers

could use the sites to their advantage. This concern was summarized by one of the participants:

> *You do not want bad guys to print off all the pictures of you and then just stare at them
> forever, and then when you are passing them on the road in a covert capacity, they will
> recognize you.*

b. **Question #5 - Does your employer provide you with the tools (i.e. iPhone,
BlackBerry, etc.) to access online social media networking sites or do you use
your own personal equipment?**

All six respondents reported that the EPS provides police officers with BlackBerries. It

was explained that Blackberries are the chosen device due to the high levels of encryption. Most

of the respondents further clarified that they carry the EPS issued BlackBerry as well as their own

personal device, such as a Smartphone. The reason for carrying both devices is the intention to

separate their work duties from their personal lives.

    c. Question #6 - Are you aware if your employer has a policy about using/accessing online social media networking sites during work hours or for work purposes? If yes, just in general terms, what is that policy and what do you think of it?

        All six participants confirmed that the EPS currently has a policy on the use of social

media for work related purposes. The participants thought the policy was adequate and balanced,

neither too strong nor too weak. The policy is ever evolving to keep up with the quick

advancements in technology, for example the last revisions were introduced within the previous

twelve months. The common theme amongst the six participants was to use common sense when

posting anything work related to a social media site, a caution reflected in the following

statement:

        I agree with the policy, social media is not the place to air your dirty laundry.

    d. Question #7 - How frequently do you use online social media for work reasons?

        Daily
        A few times a week
        A few times a month
        Once a month
        Less than once a month
        Never

        There were varying responses to this question. Of the six participants, two reported using

social media on a daily basis, two others reported using social media a few times a week, and the

last two reported using social media on a monthly basis. One of the reasons for the different

degrees of usage is the type of work of each officer. Police officers who "work the streets" on

patrol are more likely to keep in touch with the citizens of their communities, while the remaining

police officers will use social media for intelligence gathering.   The frequency of the

participants' use of online social media networking sites is reflected in Figure 2.
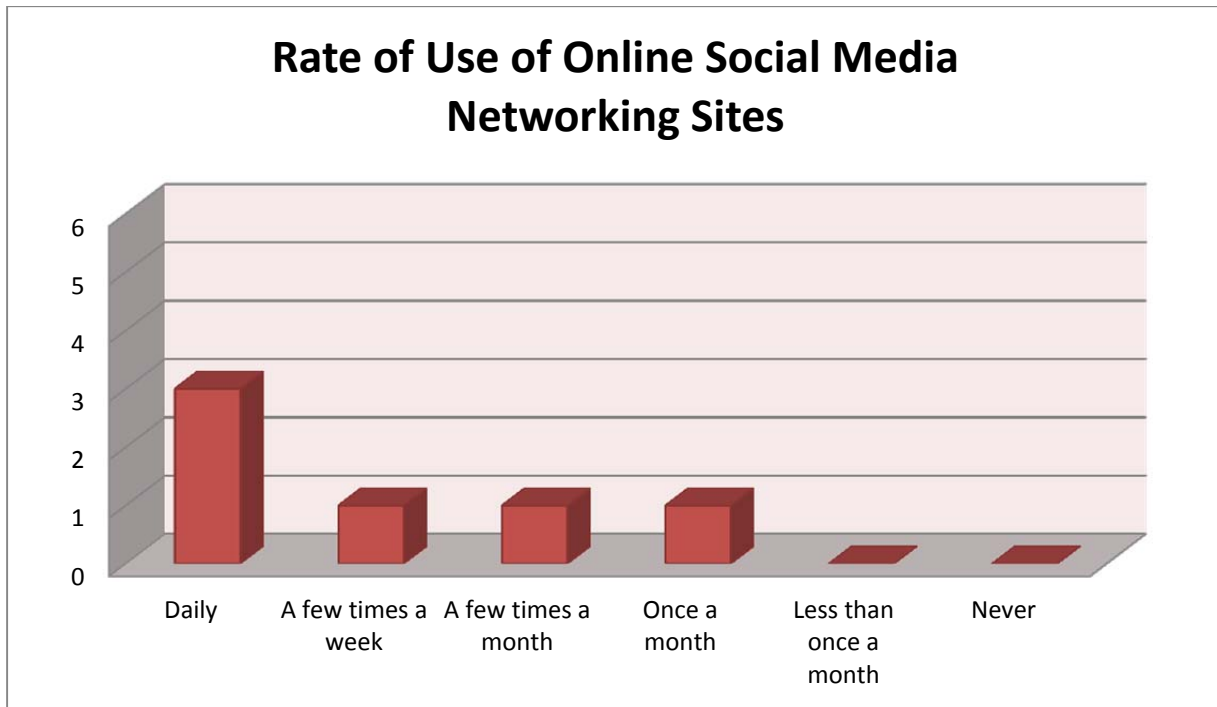
Figure 2: Rate of Participants' Use of Online Social Media Networking Sites

e. Question #8 - How important is social media for you to conduct your daily work responsibilities?

Very important
Somewhat important
No opinion
Somewhat unimportant
Not important at all

The responses varied based on the type of work within the various sections or units in the

EPS. Listed on the official EPS website are some of the following units or sections: Tactical

Unit, Canine Unit, Flight Operations Unit, Recruiting and Selection Unit, Child Protection Unit,

Traffic Section, Patrol Squad, Drug and Gang Enforcement Unit, Homicide Section, and Missing

Persons Unit. Participants from the Patrol Squad and the Drug and Gang Enforcement Unit

chose the response that social media was "very important" to their daily duties. One participant

stated that it is only "somewhat important" and the final participant, confessed that the use of

social media to his/her daily work responsibilities was "not important at all." One participant

shared that social media:

> … *allows us to create a connection with the general public.*

Another participant responded by stating:

> *Social media has just become such a huge part of becoming a police officer. The increase
> in calls for service where social media is concerned is becoming a bigger and bigger part
> of the job. It just keeps going up. We and people are getting more and more connected.
> Instantly everyone shares everything.*

The following "question" was not part of the formal Interview Schedule, but all six

participants answered the question during the interview, so their views are reported here. The

findings were relevant to the research as most of the participants offered their views regarding the

impact that the loss of social media would have on their daily duties.

f.   Question #8a - If social media sites vanished tomorrow, how would it affect you?

The responses were equally spilt. Three of the participants stated that if social media

vanished tomorrow it would have a tremendous negative effect on their work. The participants

reported that they would lose the connections previously built with their communities as well as

lose the communication channels that already exist. One participant stressed that the loss of

social media would have a:

> *Huge. Huge impact.*

The other three participants maintained that the loss of social media would not impact or affect

them at all. The responses were dependent on the position, role, and responsibilities of the officer

within EPS.

g. **Question #9 - Social media is about both sending or posting information and receiving information. Which of these – sending or receiving – do you think you spend more time doing? Which - sending or receiving – is more valuable to you in your work?**

Sending Information
Receiving Information
Value both equally

Participants shared their opinions regarding the time spent sending and/or receiving

messages via social media sites, as well as the value added to their work. There was a division

between sending and/or receiving between the participants as to which they spent more of their

time doing. One participant reported he/she did not spend their time doing either. One

participant summarized the issue as:

> *Sending is more valuable to the community. It is about getting the message out to the community.*

Similarly the participants were spilt in their responses regarding the value to their work of

sending or receiving messages. However there was an overall consensus that both, sending and

receiving messages via email added value to their daily work duties.

h. **Question #10 - There are advantages and disadvantages for people using social media in the workplace. In police work in general, what do you see as the advantages to using social media? And the disadvantages?**

It was explained by the participants that everyone learns differently –different

communication channels are required in order to reach a wide audience. When answering this

question, one participant provided the example of a missing persons report. The EPS would

release valuable information to assist with the investigation, for example, the physical description

of the individual, last known location, date, time, etc. The information would be disseminated

through traditional media outlets (i.e. news reporting stations, newspapers, radio, etc.), social

media sites, door-to-door campaigns, flyers, etc. The more forms of communication used, the

wider the demographic distribution.

At the same time, using numerous communication channels simultaneously could result in

an over saturation of the message, meaning that too much information becomes overwhelming

and vital information may be missed simply due to the volume.

A disadvantage of the general public using social media is that it may be used as a

surveillance mechanism against the police. There was consensus among the participants that the

general public uses social media to shine a negative light on the police more often than they use it

to show the police in a positive light. A negative message will travel faster and further than a

positive message. However, one participant recognized the need to listen and learn from the

criticism:

> *We need the criticism to learn from it and learn of other solutions. We need to listen to*
> *that. Whether or not they support us, we are there for a purpose. We are to have thicker*
> *skin and be the first ones on the scene.*

Another disadvantage noted by all the participants are the situations in which police

officers themselves post inappropriate messages:

> *We are held to a higher standard as a police officer. The general public cannot*
> *differentiate between a personal opinion of an officer versus an official opinion issued by*
> *the EPS. We have to be very conscious of what we say or post, as it will always be*
> *misinterpreted by the public.*

The following table summarizes the advantages and disadvantages of police officers using social media in the workplace, as discussed by the six participants.

Advantages	Disadvantages
➢ Increases the lines of communication ➢ A tool used for intelligence gathering ➢ Provides regular updates ➢ Instant messaging with a wider audience ➢ Connection with our communities	➢ Overload of communication ➢ Heavy criticism of police by the public ➢ Members who post stuff that they shouldn't ➢ False information disseminated to embarrass the EPS ➢ Increased call volume

Figure 3: Summary of Participants' Advantages and Disadvantages of Using Online Social Media Networking Sites

The final section of the interview schedule, entitled *Public Use of Social Media,* focuses on the general public's use of social media and the participants' opinions of its impact on their daily duties.

3. Public Use of Social Media

The following questions will focus on what you think about the public's use of social media.

a. **Question #11 - Now that incidents such as at the Vancouver Airport and on the Toronto streetcar can be recorded and broadcast on social media by the public, police work may have an entirely different dimension and interpretation.**

Could you comment on any impacts, both positive and negative, that you see happening to police work due to almost everyone having a cell phone camera in their hands these days?

There was consensus regarding participants' responses to this question. The participants

stated that a video seldom provides the background or the related details to the entire incident.

The responses were summarized by one participant:

> *Well, unfortunately a picture does not tell the entire story – that is the problem with social media.*

Consequently, this partial story leads to misrepresentation, misunderstandings, and

misinterpretations of police intentions and actions. A few of the participants delved deeper into

this issue, discussing why someone would choose to record police actions. The theme of "police-

haters" was revealed. There was consensus among the participants that those who recorded and

posted police actions did so out of their dislike or lack of respect for law enforcement:

> *Most of the time, the people who are recording us do not like us.*

Another participant explained that:

> *People are not going to record the good stuff. For example, a police officer did a wonderful job today because he helped me with my dog. Are they going to record that? Well that does not happen, right? You do not often see receive a pat on the back when you are doing your job, when you are doing a good job. But if you do something wrong, oh boy you are going to hear about it, right? When they pull out a cell phone on us, it is not for a good reason, ever!*

This theme appears throughout all the interviews – the belief by participants that the

ulterior motive of those recording them is to make the police look unprofessional, foolish, or

unfavourable. In addition, participants further emphasized that the intention of recording officers

is for intimidation purposes:

> *The reason people record us is for intimidation.*

One participant responded to this question by relating details of a situation where he/she

was directly involved in a situation that was captured on video and then posted to YouTube.

He/she felt it necessary to explain or justify their actions:

> *A person from the outside looking at what we do, and that guy walking up to me with a
> knife, what I am seeing and what somebody else is seeing are two different things. They
> are watching it like they are watching a movie.*

The participant's view of the incident was very different from that of the individual

recording the scene from twenty feet away.

Although the participants primarily focused on the negative impacts of social media in

addressing this question, the one comment made about the positive impact was that video

recordings assist in police investigations to identify a person-of-interest. The participant

explained that members of the general public have offered their personal recordings to assist the

police with such cases as vandalism, road rage, and drunk drivers.

**b. Question #12 - Video footage of a crime scene caught on a cell phone by a
passerby can be misinterpreted or altered. Do you have any concerns about this
or is it considered one of the "hazards" of police work?**

Five of the six participants stated that they consider the recordings of their actions to be a

hazard or risk. A few participants identified the hazard as a simple distraction or obstruction to

prevent them from doing their job. One participant stated that:

> *It is funny to say that we do not like to be watched, but we are watched all the time.*

In contrast to the other responses provided, one participant reported that they do not view it as a

hazard. The simple response was:

> *If I thought that, then I would be afraid of it.*

c. **Question #13 - Do you think police officers in general or you yourself have adjusted your behavior because of the social media public phenomenon?**

Four of the participants admitted to altering their own behaviour or knowing of a fellow

police officer who altered his/her behaviour due to the social media public phenomenon. The

common response given as to why officers may alter their behaviour was summarized as:

> *They may tone down the use of force; that is usually where it will come into play.*
> *Smartphones are everywhere nowadays; you are going to be recorded.*

One participant explained that:

> *Yes, I do think is does affect our behaviour, we are simply more aware. It really does*
> *affect your confidence as an officer.*

The participant who made this comment further elaborated that the police are much more

aware today that the chance of being recorded is higher than ever before. They must act as if

they are being recorded at all times. The participants agreed that this has a direct impact on the

confidence and actions of a police officer. They explained that being recorded gives rise to a fear

of doing something wrong, possibly facing a reprimand, or damaging the reputation of the EPS.

Some participants reported that behaviours have been adjusted by police officers being

less aggressive, while others reported that being recorded was irrelevant. An example provided

by a participant was that when you are acting in the heat of the moment, attempting to restrain

someone or trying to conduct crowd control over an unruly mob, you do not have time to think

about being captured on camera and then posted on YouTube. The job needs to get done and you

need to focus on what you are doing for the safety of the public, the safety of your partner, and

your own safety. One participant admitted to being overly cautious by conducting

himself/herself "by the book" while being recorded. These overly cautious actions would make it

harder for the lawbreaker to challenge his/her arrest in court. A few participants recalled a time

when it was to their advantage to have an incident recorded by a member of the general public, a recording that was then released by the media or posted on a social media site. In these cases, the recordings were beneficial and had a positive outcome because they vindicated police officers' actions.

The fear of being recorded and the video being used against them has caused some police officers to change their level of policing:

> *We have some guys who will not raise their voice because they are afraid of getting in trouble for coming across in an aggressive manner. They do not want to be splashed in the paper or on the media or posted on the Internet for just doing their job.*

A participant further explained that it is not necessarily individual police officers who have altered their behaviour as a result of social media, but the police in general. It was explained that this adjustment is necessary because police tactics have been recorded and exposed on the Internet to the masses via YouTube.

Examples of tactics being recorded are those used for interacting with a crowd, conducting a basic traffic stop or the tactics used to surround a private residence or apartment building. Because most of the general population carries a Smartphone with video and audio capabilities, police tactics and strategies are continually captured and posted to sites such as YouTube. Now that police training and tactics may be known to the general public, the officers are at greater risk as they conduct their daily duties because their own strategies may be used against them. The participant explaining this danger noted that the police are now forced to continually alter their tactics for their own personal safety and security:

> *You really have to be mindful of the fact they always say Big Brother is watching, well everybody is watching. That is the reality of it. Everybody is watching at all times.*

In contrast, one participant who has not felt pressured to adjust his/her behaviour explained that being on camera should be second nature to any police officer. Surveillance cameras are located in the police station, prison cells, police cruisers, on their uniforms, and on the public streets. Officers should be very comfortable and fully aware that they are on camera at all times.

One participant further elaborated that the sole reason why police officers are targets of public surveillance is because:

> *It's simple. People do not like police. People record to exploit police officers.*

In the opinion of the officer, video footage is intended to make the police look overly aggressive, foolish, or somehow tarnish their reputation.

A common theme emerged from the responses regarding the risks or hazards of cameras: that they can be distracting to officers in conducting their daily duties. This could occur in a situation when an individual comes in close proximity to an officer in an attempt to block his/her view or to divert attention away from a current tense situation:

> *Being recorded is something that I accept, but not something that I like.*

4. General Information

The following information I will be collecting for general data purposes.

    a. **Question #14 - What is your age?**

        20-29   **30-39**   **40-49**   **50-59**   **60+**

Of the participants, two fell within the age range of 20-29; one within the age range of 30-39; two within the age range of 40-49; and one within the age range of 50-59.

b. Question #15 - How many years of service do you have with the EPS?

0-5   6-10   11-15   16-20   21+

Between the six participants there was a total of 75 years of service with the EPS; three

fell within the range of 0-5 years if service; one fell within the range of 6-10 years if service; one

fell within the range of 11-15 years if service; and one fell within the range of 21+ years of

service.

**c. Question #16 - Are there other issues of relevance to social media and police
work or the public's use of social media that I have not covered that you
would like to add?**

This question was asked to provide the participants with the opportunity to elaborate or

place emphasis on their important points. Five of the participants stated there were no other

issues of relevance to social media and police work or the public's use of social media that they

wished to discuss further. However one participant wanted to express how positive he/she

thought social media has been for the EPS and police in general:

> *It is so cool. It is so neat how we can interact with the public. I am sure our use of social
> media has changed the perspective of the police. I am sure we have taken a huge leap and
> we are not just "those guys" anymore, we are "somebody." The biggest advantage of
> social media for the police, is that it is has humanized us.*

Of the six interviews conducted, the following "Word Cloud" illustrates the most

commonly used words in response to the interview questions; not including the interview

questions.

*Figure 4: Representation of the most commonly used words from the six participants in response
to the interview questions.*

The second word cloud represents the words most often used by the EPS Twitter account

in its communications to the general public. This caption was taken on April 6, 2014. The most

commonly used expression was "@joineps." This reference is consistent with the six

respondents reporting that the EPS uses social media for EPS recruitment purposes.

Figure 5: Word cloud of EPS Twitter account from April 6, 2014.

5. Summary of Findings

The findings of the interviews conducted of the six participants revealed some consistent

themes. The responses also exposed distinct variances among the participants' answers. The

following section of this paper will further examine those themes and variances.

E. Discussion

The motto of the EPS is "Dedicated to Protect, Proud to Serve." In their dedication to protect and serve, the EPS recognizes the important role that social media plays in modern society today. The results of this study indicate that the use of online social media networking sites impacts the actions and behaviours of police officers. The general public's use of social media sites further influences the actions and behaviours of police officers. These findings are supported by the literature review, in particular the research of Goold. He reported that police officers tend to be more cautious when they consider the possibility of their actions being captured on video (Goold, 2003). The participants report varying degrees of the impact regarding the influence that social media sites have on their actions or behaviours while protecting and serving the city of Edmonton.

The intention of this research study is to determine whether the use of social media, by a law enforcement agency or the general public, directly impacts the behaviours of police officers. The various uses of social media are discussed to highlight the impacts that online social media networking sites have on the six participants as revealed in their responses to the interview questions.

1. Social Media: Advantages and Disadvantages

The participants all report that the use of social media has its advantages. One advantage is using social media as a tool to assist with police investigations. This includes freely collecting information via the Internet, information that is accessible without the requirement of a warrant, court order, or subpoena. This finding was often mentioned in the literature, notably in the research results of Marsico (2010), which report that social media networking sites are a field of

evidence for law enforcement agencies. Similar to the findings within the research conducted by

Morselli and Décary-Hétu (2010), this research revealed that offenders, gangs, and criminal

organizations turn to social media sites to promote their associations, crimes, reputations, etc.

However there was an expression of caution from the participants in using social media as an

investigative tool. The information may be collected quickly and easily but the same amount of

time is still required to corroborate the accuracy and the source of the information.

Another advantage highlighted by the majority of the participants is the police use of

social media as a communication medium. Social media sites, such as Facebook, Twitter, and

YouTube provide an effective method of communication, in particular for EPS recruitment. This

theory is supported by the studies of Procter, Karstedt, Voss, Crump and Cantijochy (2013) as

well as Ruddell and Jones (2013), in which law enforcement agencies turn to social media in an

effort to communicate effectively and efficiently with their "modern techno-educated citizens."

The findings further support the work of Lieberman, Koetzle, and Sakiyaman (2013), in which

Facebook is the chosen site of law enforcement agencies to communicate with its citizens. The

EPS also relies on social media to foster a positive image to the general public, a finding noted by

Lee and McGovern (2013). However social media as a chosen form of communication also has

its downsides.

Due to accessibility of online social media networking sites by the general public, several

of the participants report an influx of incoming calls to the EPS. The general public reports more

issues, concerns, and crimes to the police due to the availability of information posted on social

media sites. Some of the participants consider these types of calls as often frivolous and

vexatious. These calls are almost impossible to investigate, as the police need to confirm which computer was used to post the message as well as who was seated at the keyboard.

Another disadvantage reported was that some EPS members do not use "common sense" when posting comments or photos to social media sites. In the past, these actions have brought heavy criticism by the media and the public, which resulted in the EPS reviewing and revising their current policies regarding the use of social media.

There was a consensus amongst the participants that although social media provides some advantages to police work, the increase in use of social media is not to be considered as a replacement for traditional police work. The participants clearly communicate the need to have a physical presence in the community, be visible to the general public, and continue to conduct face-to-face interviews.

2. Attitudes towards Police

The participants unanimously agree that the main disadvantage of the general public using social media is to tarnish or exploit the image of the EPS. A few respondents state that social media is used as a surveillance mechanism against the police. When a video is posted that captures an altercation with a police officer, the participants all agree that the entire story is not portrayed. This leads to misunderstandings and misrepresentations of the role of the police service. This finding is supported by the work of Lippert and Wilkinson, who caution that the reliance on visual images captured by CCTV or any surveillance technology is not recommended because these images do not truthfully reflect the entire event. Thus challenging the thought that the 'camera never lies' (Lippert & Wilkinson, 2010).

There was further consensus between the participants that the motivation to record a

police officer and post the altercation is dislike or lack of respect for law enforcement. These

results are supported by findings of Frank, Smith, and Novak (2005), whose study reports a

strong correlation between negative attitudes towards police and the public's desire to record

police and post police encounters.

3. Behaviour Modification

The majority of the participants consider the recordings of their actions to be a hazard or

risk that they must endure as police officers. The hazard is predominately identified as a

distraction or possible obstruction to fulfilling their police duties. However the majority of the

participants admit to acting in a more cautious manner if they believe they are being recorded.

The participants further admit to either personally altering their behaviour or knowing of a fellow

police officer who has in the past or is currently altering his/her behaviour due to the risk of being

captured on camera. The most common adjustment in behaviour is acting in a less aggressive

manner. The reasons given are the fear of negatively impacting the image of the EPS and the

possibility of facing a reprimand if caught conducting themselves in violation of EPS policies or

processes.

In 2002 Mawby described law enforcement as one of the most watched institutions. This

phenomenon is still relevant today and supported in the study by Häyhtiö and Rinne (2009), in

which the public's monitoring of the police holds them accountable for their actions by posting

the recordings.

F. Conclusion and Recommendations for Future Research

The findings of this study contribute to a deeper understanding of the body of research
that maintains that the use of online social media networking sites directly impacts the actions
and behaviours of police officers. This study found that police officers make use of social media
sites, in particular Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube, for intelligence gathering and
communication purposes. Although the majority of the participants support the use of social
media sites for police work, they also expressed caution. Sherlock Holmes stated that, "The
temptation to form premature theories upon insufficient data is the bane of our profession"
(Marsico, 2010, p. 3). This statement still rings true today for law enforcement's use of evidence
gathered via social networking sites. Access to information posted to social media sites may
assist with an investigation, however, there is still a requirement to ensure the accuracy of the
information collected.

The participants reported on the advantages of EPS' use of social media. The biggest
advantage is that the EPS can easily communicate to a wider demographic and at a much faster
rate. The example provided was a missing persons report. The EPS may disseminate the
information through traditional media outlets, such as newspapers, radio, news reporting
agencies, however they now also rely on Facebook, Twitter, etc. The more communication
channels utilized, the more likely the message will reach the biggest population.   The
disadvantages of police officers using social media sites were also articulated.

The participants have concerns regarding those police officers who post personal
information or opinions to online social media networking sites.   This concern stems from the

possibility of the general public or the media misinterpreting their comments as well as the fear

of damaging or embarrassing the image or reputation of the EPS.

The majority of the participants agree that the general public's use of social media is

directed negatively against the police, that social media is being used by the general public as a

surveillance mechanism to discredit police work. The police images recorded and posted on the

Internet rarely expose the whole story and leave room for the misrepresentation of the events.

It is further reported that the public's use of social media is considered a hazard or risk to

police officers. The process of recording a police officer in action may be seen as a deliberate

attempt to distract or obstruct justice. The participants confirm that a common reaction to being

recorded is to alter behaviour.   This adjustment in behaviour is responding in a less forceful and

assertive approach. Collectively the motive in altering behaviour is to avoid reproach.

This study adopted an exploratory research approach which involved a small study

sample of six participants. Future research may wish to replicate the intent of the study by

involving a larger sample population of police officers, as well as including representation from

various police units and sections. Supplementary considerations may include written surveys or

anonymous questionnaires in order to gather additional data from a larger population.   Since one

can only assume that interest in social media will continue to grow and expand its user base,

future research may also focus on new online social media networking sites and advanced

technologies that will continue to emerge in the following years.

In light of this research project, research scholars must continue to pursue an

understanding of the new and innovative ways that law enforcement agencies use online social

media networking sites to assist with criminal investigations and improve communications, as

well as how social media sites contribute to the improvement or discredit of the image and

reputation of law enforcement agencies. This is an interesting and possibly rewarding area for

future research.

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H. Appendices

Appendix A

INFORMATION LETTER

Study Title: Use of Online Social Media Networking Sites: An Exploration of the Impact on a
Major Law Enforcement Agency

Invitation to Participate: If you are interested in participating in this study after reading the
information below, please contact the Research Investigator, Shantel MacKenzie-McDonald, or
the Supervisor, Dr. Ann Curry, by email or phone as listed below.

Research Investigator:	**Supervisor:**
Shantel MacKenzie-McDonald	Dr. Ann Curry
Room 2-365 Enterprise Square	Room 2-365 Enterprise Square
10230 Jasper Ave	10230 Jasper Ave
University of Alberta	University of Alberta
Edmonton, AB, T5J 4P6	Edmonton, AB, T5J 4P6
smackenzie11@hotmail.com	ann.curry@ualberta.ca
Cell: 780 902 0088	Work: 780 248 1110

Background

You are being asked to participate in this study because you are currently or were previously a
police officer with the Edmonton Police Service (EPS).

The information gathered will assist in determining the impact that online social media
networking sites have on police officers with the EPS. Both police officer use and general
public use of social media sites such as Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, etc. will be considered to
explore the impact on the actions and behaviors of police officers in their daily work.

The results of this study will be used for my major project towards my M.A. Communications
and Technology degree.

Purpose

The purpose of this research project is to determine whether the use of online social media
networking sites impact, either positively or negatively, the actions and behaviors of police
officers.

Due to the increased use of online social media networking sites by the general public, this study will also investigate how the general public's use of social media impacts the actions or behaviors of police officers.

This study will hopefully identify some of the current uses and problems that social media brings to police work, and will examine police officers' perceptions of social media and the impacts it has on their work and daily responsibilities. This study may also identify the consequences that impact or change the role, responsibilities, and image of police officers with the EPS, and will explore whether police officers are supportive or unsupportive of the use of social media in police work.

Study Procedures

For this project, I will be collecting my information through one-on-one interviews. The approximate time to complete the interview will be 45 minutes to 1 hour. Your responsibilities as a participant will be strictly to answer the questions to the best of your ability. The interviews will be recorded by an audio recorder to assist me in the analysis of the data.

Benefits

You will not personally or financially benefit from being part of this study. You will not receive any compensation or reimbursements for your participation. I hope that the information gathered from doing this study will help to better understand the impact that social media has on the actions and/or behaviors of police officers with the EPS.

Risk

Participants may experience some anxiety in expressing their opinions and thoughts about possibly stressful situations involving online social media networking sites. I will make every effort to keep the interview as objective as possible. If I learn anything during the research that may affect your willingness to continue being in the study, I will tell you right away.

Voluntary Participation

You are under no obligation to participate in this study. Your participation is completely voluntary. You are not obliged to answer any specific questions that make you uncomfortable.

You may opt out before or during the scheduled interview session. You can ask to have your collected data withdrawn up to February 28, 2014. To accommodate your request to withdraw, please tell me as soon as possible.

Confidentiality

The intended uses of the research will strictly be used for my final project. You will not be personally identified during, or after your participation in this research project. To the best of my ability I will keep your anonymity but your anonymity can not be totally guaranteed. Due to the limited sample, there is a small possibility that from reading the final report, someone familiar with the potential participants might be able to guess the identity of a participant.

All data collected will be kept confidential and I will be the only person who has access to the data.

The data collected will be kept in a secure place, in a locked filing cabinet accessible only to me. The data will be kept for a minimum of 5 years following completion of the research project. All electronic data will be password protected. The data will be destroyed by a bonded company which will be responsible for the destruction of all paper copies, electronic copies and audio recordings.

If you wish to receive a final copy of the research findings, please tell me and will forward you a copy.

Further Information

If you have any further questions about this study, please do not hesitate to contact either myself or my supervisor through the contact information given above.

The plan for this study has been reviewed for its adherence to ethical guidelines by a Research Ethics Board at the University of Alberta. For questions regarding participant rights and ethical conduct of research, contact the Research Ethics Office at 780 492 2615.

Appendix B

CONSENT FORM

**Use of Online Social Media Networking Sites:
An Exploration of the Impact on a Major Law Enforcement Agency**

Researcher:	**Project Supervisor:**
Shantel MacKenzie-McDonald	Dr. Ann Curry
Graduate Program in Communications	Graduate Program in Communications
& Technology	& Technology
Faculty of Extension	Faculty of Extension
University of Alberta	University of Alberta
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Cell: 780 902 0088	Work: 780 248 1110
smackenzie11@hotmail.com	ann.curry@ualberta.ca

I have read and received the Information Sheet.

I have had an opportunity to ask questions and discuss this study to my satisfaction.

I understand the benefits and risks involved in taking part in this study.

I understand that I can withdraw at any time during the data collection part of the study and that any comments that I have provided up to that point will not be used.

Confidentiality has been explained to me and I am aware that although the Researcher will endeavor to keep the anonymity of participants, anonymity cannot be totally guaranteed. Due to the limited sample, there is a small possibility that from reading the final report, someone familiar with the potential participants might be able to guess the identity of a participant.

I understand who will have access to the data collected.

I understand that the interviews will be audio-recorded and transcribed by the Researcher.

If you have further questions regarding the research, please contact the individuals listed above.

This study was explained to me by: <u>Shantel MacKenzie-McDonald</u> and I agree to take part in
this interview.

_____
Signature of Research Participant

_____
Printed name

_____
Date (dd/mm/yyyy)

The plan for this study has been reviewed for its adherence to ethical guidelines and approved by
Research Ethics Board (REB) at the University of Alberta. For questions regarding participant
rights and ethical conduct of research, contact the Research Ethics Office at 780 492 2615.

Appendix C

Interview Schedule

<u>Introduction</u>

My name is Shantel MacKenzie-McDonald I am a graduate student with the University of
Alberta, under a program at the Faculty of Extension. I am working towards a Master of Arts in
Communications and Technology. My research today focuses on the attitudes, perceptions, and
behaviours that police officers have towards online social media networking sites pertaining to
police work.

The questions asked will focus on both your professional and personal attitudes and opinions
about online social media networking sites. I would like to stress that this interview is strictly
private and confidential and that no participants will be identified in any way in the final report.
To the best of my ability I will keep your anonymity but your anonymity can not be totally
guaranteed.

I would like your permission to record our interview as it will assist me with my analysis.

I would like to thank you again for agreeing to this interview. The interview should take about
45 minutes to 1 hour to complete.   Shall we begin...

<u>I - Social Media</u>

The first few questions that I will be asking you are about different types of online social media
networking sites. The questions focus on the online sites that might be used for work related
purposes; how you use it and the reasons why.

1.   Of the online social media networking sites that might be used for work related purposes,
        which of following do you use? (read off)

                FaceBook   Yes or no

                Blogs   Yes or no

                Wikis   Yes or no

                LinkedIn   Yes or no

                Twitter   Yes or no

                YouTube   Yes or no

Pinterest	Yes or no
Flickr	Yes or no
Instagram	Yes or no
MySpace	Yes or no
Other	

2. How long have you been using online social media networking sites for work related purposes/activities?

3. There are many reasons why someone might use social media. I'm going to read some of these reasons, and ask you to tell me whether you ever use social media for that reason and if you could please explain a little bit more about that activity?:

Communication – internal or external	Yes or No
Conduct research/information seeking	Yes or No
Collect information	Yes or No
Share information	Yes or No
Networking	Yes or No
Social Interaction	Yes or No
News	Yes or No
Recruiting	Yes or No
Entertainment	Yes or No
Passing Time	Yes or No
Expressing opinions	Yes or No

II Opinions

The following questions will focus on your thoughts and opinions of social media pertaining to your current profession.

4.   In your opinion, does your employer encourage or discourage the use of online social media for work purposes?

5.   Does your employer provide you with the tools (i.e. iPhone, Blackberry, etc.) to access online social media networking sites or do you use your own personal equipment?

6.   Are you aware if your employer has a policy about using/accessing online social media networking sites during work hours or for work purposes? If yes, just in general terms, what is that policy and what do you think of it?

7.   How frequently do you use online social media for work reasons?

                Daily
                A few times per week
                A few times per month
                Once a month
                Less than once a month
                Never

8.   How important is social media for you to conduct your daily work responsibilities?

                Very important
                Somewhat important
                No opinion
                Somewhat unimportant
                Not important at all

9.   Social media is about both sending or posting information and receiving information. Which of these – sending or receiving – do you think you spend more time doing? Which - sending or receiving – is more valuable to you in your work?

                Sending Information
                Receiving Information
                Value both equally

10.   There are advantages and disadvantages for people using social media in the workplace. In police work in general, what do you see as the advantages to using social media? And the disadvantages?

III - Public Use of Social Media

The following questions will focus on what you think about the public's use of social media.

11.   Now that incidents such as at the Vancouver Airport and on the Toronto streetcar can be recorded and broadcast on social media by the public, police work may have an entirely different dimension and interpretation. Could you comment on any impacts, both positive and negative, that you see happening to police work due to almost everyone having a cell phone camera in their hands these days?

12.   Video footage of a crime scene caught on a cell phone by a passerby can be misinterpreted or altered. Do you have any concerns about this or is it considered one of the "hazards" of police work?

13.   Do you think police officers in general or you yourself have adjusted your behavior because of the social media public phenomenon?

IV General Information

The following information I will be collecting for general data purposes.

14.   What is your age?

| | 20-29 | 30-39 | 40-49 | 50-59 | 60+ |

15.   How many years of service do you have with the EPS?

| | 0-5 | 6-10 | 11-15 | 16-20 | 21+ |

16.   Are there other issues of relevance to social media and police work or the public's use of social media that I have not covered that you would like to add?

Conclusion

Those are all the questions I have for you. I would like to thank you again for taking the time to meet with me. I greatly appreciate your participation and contribution to my final project. Thank you.