

Impossible or Inevitable?: Suggestions for Future Youth — Police Communication Online

Major Research Paper

Prepared by: Zoe Zettel

Supervised by: Dr. Wendy Freeman

Ryerson University

AUTHOR'S DECLARATION FOR ELECTRONIC SUBMISSION OF A MRP

I hereby declare that I am the sole author of this MRP. This is a true copy of the MRP, including any required final revisions.

I authorize Ryerson University to lend this MRP to other institutions or individuals for the purpose of scholarly research.

I further authorize Ryerson University to reproduce this MRP by photocopying or by other means, in total or in part, at the request of other institutions or individuals for the purpose of scholarly research.

I understand that my MRP may be made electronically available to the public.

Abstract

A lack of provincial standardization for social media use by Ontario police officers has limited the progression and success of community policing among young populations. The abundant success of police-youth communications in-person is evident in studies from studies by Anderson et al. (2007), Hinds (2007), and Leroux & McShane (2017); these results suggests that increased social media communications between youth and officers would prove beneficial. However, the barrier between the community policing principles outlined in Ontario's Mobilization and Engagement Model (MEM) and actual police practice echo structural issues that have plagued Ontario policing for decades. Recent literature from Hawkes (2016) and earlier literature from Leighton (1991) demonstrate the ongoing struggle to translate theory into practice. Combining a qualitative content analysis of Twitter data alongside semi-structured interviews with police officers, this study identified MEM strategies used by officers on social media, as well as additional strategies introduced by officers on an individual basis. Findings indicate that there are inconsistencies between officer perceptions of their communications with youth and that of their actual practice. The discovery of four additional strategies used to accomplish community policing on social media suggests that the MEM should be restructured to accommodate for technological advances. Officer social media use varied but a strong commonality included the fear of damaged reputation or job loss-- indicating a greater need for standardization to instill confidence in officer social media use. While provincial standardization would benefit officers, it should not be restrictive as humanistic elements such as information dissemination and personalization derived from officer freedom on social media were most often noted as beneficial to both officers and youth.

Introduction

At present, there is no provincial standardization guiding police officers in their interactions with Ontario youth on social media. This is problematic as current values held in police practice demand that officers engage in this exact type of interaction to uphold principles in community policing (CP) (Leighton, 1991; Omanga, 2015; Thacher, 2001). Social media provides an environment for CP to thrive; however, whether and how this type of police practice is being maintained online has yet to be established. This research project seeks to analyze current efforts in police practice when they engage with youth on social media. Specifically, it explores whether and to what extent these interactions fulfill Ontario CP principles as they are outlined in the 2018 Mobilization and Engagement Model (MEM) of CP. This analysis has allowed the researcher to identify gaps in current practice and will provide Ontario police officers with the information necessary to better inform their future social media communications with youth. For the purposes of this major research paper, youth will be defined as any individual between the ages of 12 and 18 (Government of Canada, 2017). Youth at risk will be defined as those who have been or might be exposed to some inimical factors that “negatively impact their psycho-social development” (“Public Safety Canada”, 2012).

Recent literature supports the view that in-person relationships between police and youth have had positive effects for both parties, particularly the latter (Anderson, Sabatelli, & Trachtenberg, 2007; Hinds, 2007; Leroux & McShane, 2017). These successes can largely be attributed to practices of outreach and engagement present in CP (Ministry of the Solicitor General, 2000).

The rise of social media has created a new platform in which some officers are attempting to fulfill CP practices. The researcher analyzed a collection of tweets to determine if CP principles are present in content posted by officers. This is of particular interest as officers have access to few social media guidelines— instead, they rely on values held in CP. To support this data, the researcher has completed 5 semi-structured interviews to discover what methods police officers believe they are employing and how those beliefs align with CP principles.

Literature Review

The following literature review examines three major themes relevant to this research project: community engagement in policing, police and youth relationships, and social media use. Each of these themes helps inform the research questions and supports the validity of findings from the following research analysis.

Community Engagement in Policing

The principles that currently encompass community policing were founded in 1892 by Sir Robert Peel. As the 1st chief of the London Metropolitan Police, Peel set standards that shape the way police are trained today (Patterson, 1995). His most influential act on current police practice set the foundation for community policing and intended to accomplish policing acts beyond relationship building. Peel assigned recruits to specific geographic locations which they would frequently and repetitively visit in hopes that they would become familiar with the communities, people, and places in which they worked (Patterson, 1995). The intent, at this time, was to utilize police and citizen relationship to deter crimes and encourage crime reporting (Patterson, 1995). Today, Ontario's current Mobilization and Engagement Model (MEM) of CP describes CP as a process in which "police and other community members partner to improve community

wellbeing, safety, and security” (Ontario, 2018, p. 1). More specifically, it describes the practice of Community Engagement (CE) as being one of four subsets of CP in Ontario. The current model lists the following items as recommended tactics that police officers should practice in community engagement efforts:

- Liaising with neighbourhoods and groups;
- Public education on risks and prevention;
- Monitoring special, at-risk groups and;
- Partnering in early intervention

(Ontario, 2018, p. 2).

Hawkes (2016), the commissioner of the Ontario Provincial Police (OPP) Service, analyzed the implementation of the MEM into the professional lives of the OPP. More specifically, the author describes the recommended tactics in the MEM and discusses what utilizing them in the field looks like. The definitions used by the author have enabled the researcher to operationalize the definitions according to OPP standards for this study. This is extremely important as it ensures that the definitions used to code data are formed according to current use of the model in its intended field. Definitions provided by Hawkes (2016) have been included below in table 1.0.

Table 1.0 *Definitions— MEM Framework*

MEM Category	Definition
<i>Liaising with neighbourhoods and groups</i>	The act of communicating with or “assisting” in actions with neighborhoods or groups in their youth community by providing methods to contact or connect with them (Hawkes, 2016, p. 23)
<i>Public education on risks and prevention</i>	The act of providing education to the community and its young members through the creation or support of “programs and initiatives” (Hawkes, 2016, p.21)
<i>Monitoring special, at-risk groups</i>	The act of “assessing” areas in which there is “elevated risk to individuals, families, groups, or locations” (Hawkes, 2016, p.23)
<i>Partnering in early intervention</i>	The act of working “collaboratively” with community members to “positively affect the future of Ontario’s youth” (Hawkes, 2016, p.23)

Hawkes (2016) speaks to the progressive and empowering nature of the MEM with enthusiasm, but also notes that the OPP faced many challenges when adopting it— further highlighting the difficulties practicing CP mentioned in the following literature.

Myhill (2003) defines community engagement in policing as “the process of enabling the participation of citizens and communities in policing” while placing the “responsibility to engage” on the police service (p. 4). This definition highlights that the burden for change when seeking to attain CP practice falls on the police services themselves. Innes, Abbot, Lowe, & Roberts (2009) identify the close relationship of CE to CP when they define it as a “core ingredient of any approach seeking to self-define as CP” (p. 100). Consequently, this means that if officers were to utilize the recommendations outlined in the Mobilization and Engagement Model, that they would be fulfilling CP principles to an extent.

Efforts to fulfill CP standards have resulted in increased police efforts to form mutually beneficial relations with members of their surrounding community (Leighton, 1991; Omanga, 2015). The concept of relationship building is also outlined in Ontario's Mobilization and Engagement Model of CP. Specifically, it explains that the current vision of CP "requires that police become better partners with community members" (Ontario, 2018, p.2). While these efforts are often viewed as standard practice, Leighton explores CP as being a progressive but underdeveloped model that leaves police officers vulnerable (1991). While Leighton's 1991 study is dated and may not be reflective of current police practice, it introduces an interesting perspective to the challenges that Ontario police officers continue to face when upholding CP principles today. For example, the study identifies the term 'community' as problematic in itself as it has no concrete or overarching definition— therefore, it cannot be operationalized (Leighton, 1991). Additionally, the author identifies that the lack of a concrete definition has created an imbalance between what CP means in theory versus practice. Baym (2015) discusses a similar issue when she highlights the difficulties in individual recognition of an online space as a community due to the disagreement in what the term 'community' means. Much like Leighton (1991), she identified that there is a disconnection when applying the term to real practices. Baym (2015) attempted to explain how 'community' functions both online and offline by identifying characteristics representative of its practice: (1) shared sense of space, (2) shared practices, (3) shared resources and support, (4) shared identities, and (5) interpersonal support. Some of these characteristics, namely 1 and 4, were identified by participants in this study and can be found in the Findings and Discussion section of this paper.

While the tactics recommended to officers in practicing CP are largely positive, Leighton's (1991) research focuses on the difficulties in putting them into practice—highlighting that issues associated with this type of policing have persisted over years. This study highlights the ongoing struggle to standardize police practice across all types of communities and at various points in time. Thacher (2001) provides a more recent analysis of CP with strikingly similar concerns to Leighton (1991), arguing that there are significant complexities in putting ideas inherent in CP into practice. Thacher identifies liberty and order as an example of two conflicting values between police and the community (Thacher, 2001). More specifically, in the author's distinction, he identifies two characters that represent different types of mindsets present among humankind: a fox and a hedgehog. Unlike the simple minded hedgehog who sees the world with tunnel vision, the fox is able to adapt his understanding of the world based on multiple experiences and viewpoints (Berlin, Hardy, & Ignatieff, 2014). This makes the fox an effective idealization of future police practice— particularly because Thacher (2001) stated that conflicting values were the largest complication in police-community relationships. Thacher (2001) argues that if police officers were to adopt both sets of values, those of the police and the public, the resulting temperament could act as a solution to current CP struggles (2001). Due to variation in values among communities, Thacher (2001) suggests that for significant improvement, a focus must be placed on the values that the “police subscribe to” (p. 791). This study is particularly important in identifying that changes in CP are not only necessary but can be implemented by instilling changes in police practice.

Police and Youth Relationships

Extensive literature supports police and youth interactions as having positive effects on youth development (Anderson et al., 2007; Hinds, 2007; Leroux & McShane, 2017). These interactions are most often initiated by police through in-person mentorship-based programs to fulfill CP initiatives in Ontario (Government of Ontario, 2018). A study by Anderson et al. (2007) sought to evaluate the effects of a particular youth-police program called *Police Working With Youth in Non-Enforcement Roles* and the long-term effects it had on youth after the program had concluded. The program lasted approximately one year and was a combination of information sessions, outdoor adventures, and other activities that encouraged interactions with police officers. A sample of 704 youth were recruited via random selection— all youth were between the ages of 12 and 18 and were provided with a self-report survey before and after the program (Anderson et al., 2007). Results indicated that youth who were less motivated to join the programs had the biggest increase in positive development (Anderson et al., 2007). Additionally, Anderson et al. found that over 90% of youth “reported feeling safe, accepted, a sense of belonging, and part of a community” (p. 36). This study highlights the importance in police initiating contact with youth to attain the positive results that CP principles intend to uphold, such as liaising with neighbourhoods and groups (Ontario, 2018, p. 2). The preceding findings indicate that police-youth communications result in positive outcomes for youth when they occur in person and are initiated by police; this is consistent with a number of separate studies (Hinds, 2007; Leroux & McShane, 2017). The findings in this study exemplify the positive impact that CP efforts can or may have in the lives of young people. While this study

highlights success in programming, it is important to note that it is focused on in-person interactions.

Leroux and McShane (2017) took a similar approach to Anderson et al. (2007)—however, they included a third evaluation four months after youth completed the program. This additional evaluation is important in determining if positive effects on youth found in other literature are sustained after some time out of the program (Anderson et al., 2007; Hinds, 2007; Leroux & McShane, 2017). In addition, this study was completed in 2017 in Toronto, Ontario—ensuring that data is representative of current police practice in an Ontario community. Leroux and McShane (2017) examined outcomes of the program on four categories: “global attitudes toward the police, perception of the police, distributive justice of the police, and perception of police discrimination” (p. 813). These categories were developed based on CP standards in Canada with the goal of promoting success in future youth programming. Results of this study were largely in favor of police and youth programs as being beneficial to relationship formation, a key element of CP. What differentiates this study is that these relationships were able to form as a result of increased positive perceptions of police. The findings indicate that the program resulted in improved youth attitudes towards police overall, particularly for those who had negative perspectives prior to the program (Leroux & McShane, 2017). This finding is of particular interest as it closely aligns with information provided in Ontario’s Mobilization & Engagement model of CP that encourages police to use tactics that result in “stimulating and supporting community members to [make partnerships]” (Ontario, 2018, p. 2). In the context of youth-police programs, this stimulation and support often involves breaking barriers and improving attitudes toward the police as a starting point for engagement. Once these barriers are

broken, preceding literature suggests that police efforts in communicating with youth in-person are successful (Anderson et. al., 2007; Hinds, 2007; Leroux & McShane, 2017).

These findings indicate that the primary issues between police-youth communications can be solved by changes in police practice. It is evident that Leroux and McShane (2017) support this view as they recommended that future research should focus on training community-based police officers to understand “what factors promote and/or dissuade youth from engaging with police” prior to program involvement (p. 820). Similarly, Anderson et al. (2007) conclude that their findings align with extensive research by “highlighting the value of police-youth programs” on positive youth development (p. 37). These conclusions suggest that yet again, when police officers uphold CP values, their actions can result in positive outcomes for youth that satisfy current CP standards. By analyzing and comparing data on current police efforts in communicating with youth online, the researcher identified which efforts aligned with CP principles as outlined in Ontario’s current Mobilization and Engagement Model (MEM), and to what extent. This can provide officers with information to inform their future communications in various settings.

Social Media Use

Social media communication has been increasingly popular in both the personal and professional lives of individuals over the last decade and police services are no exception (Denef et al., 2013). With opportunity to connect to individuals across the world in real time, social media presents a unique opportunity for purposes varying from long distance relationship maintenance, relationship building, and even consumer marketing (Briones et al., 2011; Orben & Dunbar, 2017; Yadav & Rahman, 2017). Social networking sites such as Facebook and Twitter

have been growing rapidly with Facebook at approximately 2.19 billion active users worldwide and Twitter at 336 million (Twitter, 2018; Facebook, 2018). With the ability to connect to thousands of organizations in real time, individuals are more often than ever using social media to obtain information themselves (Kent, 2013). While there are clearly benefits to social media use, there are also risks. Social media presents an opportunity to reach larger audiences in real time, but there is the possibility that that reach be negative. Deneff et al. (2013) compared the effects of two police service's Twitter activity on a community during and after a crisis. They found that while social media, Twitter specifically, allowed one of the services to increase engagement with their community members, the other service was not successful and lost followers and developed a looser relation with the community. The effect that social media has on an organization can be substantial but the outcome cannot easily be predicted.

While the use of social media is not specifically included in the current MEM model, it presents a unique opportunity for police officers as a large-scale communication platform. Baym (2015) explains that online communications have the ability to “blur social boundaries between groups” allowing relationships to form as a result (p.117). This is supported by Briones et al. (2011) and Orben & Dunbar (2017) who describe social media as being a tool to enhance and develop relationships. While relationship formation with every community member is not required of police officers, the current Mobilization and Engagement Model “requires that police become better partners with community members” to better fulfill CP values (Ontario, 2018, p. 2). This requirement and literature supporting online platforms as an environment to develop and enhance relationships suggest that social media can be used to practice CP.

Baym (2015) identifies that mediated communication (MC) often poses itself as a risk to authentic social interaction due to the absence of one element: geographic location. She acknowledges that MC is quite different than in-person interaction but maintains that it presents a “wonderful opportunity” if one is able to challenge the traditional ideas of human interaction and relationship building (p. 116). Schneider (2014) conducted a study which analyzed efforts of police services when given freedom on Twitter, testing the opportunity that Baym (2015) identifies. Schneider’s (2014) study found that having some freedom in content posted on Twitter resulted in officer’s posting less formal, and more personalized content. This was shown to be more successful in engaging the public, as well as allowing the public to perceive police officers as their equals (Schneider, 2014). This concept of personalization on social media is similar to that of a finding in a study performed on two UK police service’s Twitter activity in response to a crisis. Deneff et al. (2013) identify that while two police services utilized the same platform (Twitter) to address the public during a crisis, each service practiced utilizing it differently. Deneff et al. (2013) stated that the first service, MET, participated in Instrumental practice online, which was largely “depersonalized and formal” (p. 3479). This was compared to the second service, GMP, who engaged in “highly personalized” and “direct interactions” (p. 3479). Findings from this study indicated that GMP’s approach resulted in closer relationships with the public and an increased social media reach (Deneff et al., 2013). These findings, along with those of Schneider (2014) and Baym (2015), indicate that the implementation of CP principles on Twitter, specifically, has potential in attaining the desired goals of community engagement.

To adapt with advances in technology, police practices must adapt their communication strategies to accommodate features in mediated communication. A study by Quan-Haase (2013) shows that online relationships are increasingly being used in place of those developed in-person, suggesting that social media presents an opportunity for police to implement the engagement aspects of CP. More specifically, Haythornthwaite (2005) discusses the concept of latent ties when she explained that connecting with someone on social media may not immediately result in a meaningful friendship but it “lays the groundwork for connectivity between formerly unconnected others” (p. 136). This is particularly important for police officers when attempting to connect with communities as a whole. Haythornthwaite (2005) identifies that media can result in both weak and strong ties. While the current Mobilization and Engagement Model does not specify to what extent or how often officers should be “liaising with neighbourhoods and groups”, it does imply that communication must occur (“Ontario”, 2008, p. 2). Following Haythornthwaite’s (2005) strength of ties model, for police to develop the strongest ties with community members, they must use multiple means of communication— highlighting the need for in-person and mediated interaction with youth. Additionally, the author identifies the importance in being proactive rather than opportunistic with mediated communication to strengthen ties by “seeking out means of contact [and] adapting media to joint use” (Haythornthwaite, 2005, p.135). The author’s identification of proactive measures further implies that for mediated communication to be successful in police-youth contact, effort must be made consistently, rather than when convenient.

Despite the preceding benefits of mediated communication, it is important to identify that difficulty in regulating it presents a high risk for many organizations, particularly police services

(Lee & McGovern, 2015; Goldsmith, 2013). To increase benefits of social media use in CP, this research will identify what types of effort are currently being used and determine what, if any, CP values they uphold. Goldsmith (2013) argues that social media use by police officers presents a risk to their reputation and integrity. Specifically, the author says that police indiscretion is particularly likely to occur through social media as it is largely unregulated. Goldsmith (2013) identifies that for officer's to act discreetly, they must "exercise judicious self-restraint in speech and behaviour" (p. 252). This study not only focuses on police use of social media on the job, but also the inability to control social media posts from activities or occurrences prior to their employment, heightening the risk of reputational damage. Despite the many risks identified by Goldsmith (2013), he concludes his study by highlighting a need to find "regulatory responses that draw together SM providers, users, and current and future employers in being responsible for limiting the harms" (p. 265). This conclusion echoes preceding studies that identify the complexities of defining and practicing CP without clear guidelines; however, it also highlights the importance of this study in identifying gaps in current practice and providing Ontario police officers with the information necessary to better inform their future social media communications with youth (Lee & McGovern, 2016; Leighton, 1991).

Similar to this research project, O'Connor (2017) focused on examining police intent on social media rather than analyzing the results of their efforts in his study. This study differs from O'Connor's (2017) in that it uses exploratory content analysis to examine both tweets and qualitative interviews. O'Connor's exploration of police Twitter use has helped inform this study in many ways. Specifically, the author explored how police in Canada are using Twitter; however, O'Connor (2017) noted that one of the largest limitations of his research was the

inability to “show how [the police] perceive the use of social networking sites by the police” (p. 910). This study intends to utilize a similar analyses to that of O’Connor (2017) and to enhance its results by accommodating for that exact limitation. The researcher chose to pursue an analysis of police Twitter data for multiple reasons; it is one of the most commonly used social media platforms by police services in Canada yet, there is limited research on officer use (O’Connor, 2017; Schneider, 2016). This could be due to the ease of real-time information sharing it provides. While Twitter does allow for two-way communication, the platform itself promotes its services as “what’s happening in the world and what people are talking about right now” (Twitter, 2018). The emphasis on real time sharing was important to founders, Dorsey and Stone. The co-founders are quoted as saying they created the platform based on dispatch technologies that have been used by emergency personnel far prior to the introduction of social media (Schneider, 2016). Biz Stone, co-founder of Twitter, stated:

The idea came from my colleague, [Twitter co-founder and CEO] Jack Dorsey, who had long been fascinated with the idea of dispatch. He used to write software for taxicabs and ambulances... he wondered if the simple concept of ‘status’ that is so prevalent in dispatch could be applied in a social way (Hartley, 2008, p. 36).

The significance of police and emergency personnel use of Twitter has been prominent prior to its creation, highlighting the potential benefits it serves policing in Canada. The inclusion of qualitative interviews alongside the analysis of Twitter data allowed the researcher to determine what police officers are actually intending to accomplish in their communications with

youth online. After coding interviews with the following framework, the researcher explored whether or not the identified efforts align with the tactics outlined in the MEM.

Research Questions

Based on the preceding literature, it can be proposed that CP is a frequently practiced form of policing in Canada, yet there are significant gaps when translating its values into practice (Leighton, 1991; Thacher, 2001). Despite proven success in programs targeting youth with CP principles, there is little evidence demonstrating whether these efforts are also implemented on social media (Anderson et al., 2007; Leroux & McShane, 2017; Schneider, 2014). To determine what social media methods are currently being utilized by Ontario police officers that also align with the 2018 Mobilization and Engagement Model of CP, RQ1 will be explored: *How do social media strategies used by Ontario police officers to communicate with youth align with strategies outlined in the 2018 Mobilization and Engagement model of CP?* The researcher will also explore what, if any, other strategies police officers in Ontario are using on social media aside from the MEM. To do this, RQ2 will be explored. *RQ2: What strategies do police officers employ when reaching out to youth on social media?* Lastly, to explore whether or not current police social media use aligns with what they perceive themselves to be doing, the researcher will explore RQ3: *How do police officer perceptions of their social media use compare to strategies being used on Twitter?*

Methods

This study uses a combination of Twitter data and semi-structured interviews to identify current trends in CP practice on social media. The qualitative content analysis of tweets will supply the researcher with information regarding what strategies police services are employing

while semi-structured interviews inform whether or not those strategies were used intentionally. Methods used in this study included an exploratory content analysis of 180 tweets from the Twitter accounts of two Ontario police officers and five semi-structured interviews with Ontario police officers. This exploratory approach allows the researcher to begin with a broad framework and identify patterns qualitatively. Additionally, it allows the researcher to account for unexpected or unforeseen interpretations and ensure that they are included. This type of exploratory content analysis was similarly executed by O'Connor (2017) in his analysis of Twitter use by Canadian police services-- highlighting its validity in this type of research. Twitter data was collected with the analytic software, Netlytic, and interview participants were recruited by email. Common patterns have been analyzed across both data sets and are coded based on the aforementioned tactics listed in Ontario's current Mobilization and Engagement Model, as well as a secondary framework developed from strategies identified by participants.

Data Collection

Twitter

A total of 180 tweets were collected over a period of two weeks from the public Twitter accounts of two Ontario police officers. The researcher selected these particular accounts as they were both publicly available and were regularly being used with content geared towards youth. These elements are particularly important in selecting Twitter accounts as the data reflects current police practice. Five other Twitter accounts were reviewed by the researcher and later eliminated due to inactivity or a lack of content geared toward youth. For the purposes of this study, it was important to analyze accounts that were active weekly to gather data representative of current strategies. Additionally, it was important that at least some of the content be geared

towards youth to accurately identify differences in strategies used to target them versus other populations. The Twitter accounts used in this study were from two different cities in Ontario. While accounts will not be directly identified, there are some distinguishing features. Service A is primarily identified on Twitter by the police service's organizational name without mentioning an officer at all, while service B is primarily identified by the officer's name with the police service name in the bio section. In addition, Service A is located in a small town of approximately 20, 000 while service B is upwards of 2.8 million.

The Table 2.0 represents the categories of tweets on each account.

Table 2.0 *Tweet Types*

Account	Original Tweets	Mentions	Re-tweets	Total Tweets
<i>Service A</i>	22	21	59	102
<i>Service B</i>	61	12	6	78
Total	83	33	65	180

Tweets were collected from May 24th, 2018 to June 7th, 2018. This length of time was chosen to account for sudden changes in activity that may have been caused by local events, holidays, or other abnormalities. Additionally, this period of time allowed the researcher to collect an amount of data that was both representative of the officer's daily social media use and was also feasible for the purposes of this study. All tweets created and/or distributed by the chosen Twitter account in the selected time frame were included in this study. All tweets were collected and downloaded using the Netlytic software and were then manually coded to ensure accuracy. Each tweet was coded on a maximum of one category per framework and a minimum of zero.

Retweets and Mentions

Original tweets, mentions, and re-tweets have all been collected from the chosen Twitter accounts and have been included in the analysis. While the primary focus of the Twitter portion of this analysis was to focus on strategies used in tweets that were created by police officers, the researcher also explored how many of the collected tweets were retweets or mentions, rather than originals. Original tweets are those that were created and posted by the user; they appear on the user's feed and that of their followers (Twitter, 2018). Retweets occur when a user shares a tweet that was posted by another user that they did not write themselves (Twitter, 2018). When a Twitter user retweets something, it is immediately shared on their feed despite them not having written it, while noting in the tweet the username of the original author. Similarly, mentions are any tweets posted by a Twitter user that are directly addressed to another user. While they can be viewed by the public, they address the other user by beginning the tweet with the '@' symbol, followed by the message (Twitter, 2018). As such, it can be inferred that when a user retweets or mentions something, willingly adding it to their personal feed, the content must represent something that they support or agree with in some capacity. Original tweets are the main focus of this study and have allowed the researcher to identify strategies implemented by police officers. However, retweets and mentions have been analyzed as if they are regular tweets to discover to what extent, if any, they align with the MEM.

Cross-Posting

Cross-posting is the act of posting the same content on a minimum of two social networking platforms (Farahbakhsh, Cuevas, & Crespi, 2016). For service B, this most often occurred with Twitter and Instagram. For the purposes of this MRP, all tweets that were cross

posted from Instagram were coded as regular tweets. Much like retweets, while the content was sourced from another location, the officer is still actively choosing to include it on their feed. In the case of cross-posting, the officer still created the content. As such, it can be considered as reflective of their strategies and outreach efforts on social media, specifically Twitter.

Cross-posts were coded as original tweets as they still contain content created by the user.

Interviews

A total of five semi-structured interviews were conducted with Ontario police officers. This style of interview was selected as it allows the researcher to explore specific responses further. Additionally, Barriball and While (1994) identify semi-structured interviews as being ideal when understanding the perceptions and opinions of individuals-- particularly on complex issues. This makes semi-structured interviews an ideal interview style as this interview seeks to determine what police officers are currently practicing, not what their practice results in. The researcher received REB approval for this project on April 3rd, 2018.

Recruitment

Initially, participants were only being recruited via email and were asked to join the study without any prior connections with the researcher. The researcher began with a search of all police services in Ontario and began examining contact pages. Officer's chosen to email were selected based on the availability of their contact information on service websites and their public record of working alongside youth or with social media. This method yielded two participants. After being referred to potential candidates by an Ontario police officer, the researcher was easily and quickly able to reach the target number of five participants.

Demographic data were not collected from participants to maintain confidentiality, given their field of work. Additionally, it was not necessary in determining what CP strategies were being used online. As such, participant identities, geographic locations, and services will not be revealed; however, all participants in the study were actively working as police officers in Ontario at the time of the study and had had some prior professional contact with youth. Participants were from five different cities in Ontario. While the list of services included in the study is not exhaustive, it represents some provincial diversity. All interviews were conducted through video software or by the telephone and each took approximately 30 minutes. Interviews were recorded and transcribed and the text was manually coded to ensure accuracy. Populations and service types for the services of each participant have been included below.

Table 3.0 *Participant Locations*

Participant Location	Population	Service Type
Participant C	2.8 m	Municipal
Participant D	548, 453	Municipal
Participant E	129, 079	Municipal
Participant F	2, 499	Provincial
Participant G	2,583,544	Provincial

While demographic data was not collected on participants, there were significant differences in influences for social media use, or lack thereof. Each participant was in a different situation. All five situations are as follows:

Table 4.0 *Social Media Situation*

Participant C	Participant D	Participant E	Participant F	Participant G
Chose to use social media for engagement by personal choice	Chose not to use social media for engagement by personal choice	Required to use social media engagement due to service regulation	Had limited access to social media for engagement due to service regulation	Could not use social media for engagement due to service regulation up until 1 week prior to interview

Data Analysis

By analyzing primarily online interactions, the researcher can distinguish between the two types of communication that police officers reported themselves as having engaged in through the interview process. They have been briefly defined for the purposes of this study:

- In-person: any interaction between youth and a police officer that occurs in-person and is not of a criminal nature.
- Online: any interaction between youth and a police officer that occurs over social media and is not of a criminal nature.

Twitter

Ontario's current Mobilization and Engagement Model (MEM) of Community Policing (CP) suggests four tactics to practice community engagement in policing: (1) liaising with

neighbourhoods and groups, (2) public education on risks and prevention, (3) monitoring special, at-risk groups, and (4) partnering in early intervention (Ontario, 2018, p. 1). Each of these tactics requires some aspect of communication. As previously noted, a study conducted by Hawkes (2016) has helped operationalize the definitions within the MEM to align directly with current police practice using the MEM and to provide a realistic definition. However, due to the lack of supporting information provided in the MEM, there is little information distinguishing between similar tactics. As such, to better distinguish between an act of public education or liaising, the researcher consulted studies by Waters, Burnett, Lamm, & Lucas (2009) and Kassens-Noor (2012) who established context to better inform definitions of strategies within the MEM. More specifically, Waters et al (2009) define information dissemination on social media as a post which contains information with links to additional information such as “news items, photographs, press releases, audio files, etc” (p. 103). This distinction is separate from that of liaising which involves assisting another organization and providing a connection to them and that of public education which simply provides small segments of a larger educational piece without support materials (Hawkes, 2016; Kassens-Noor, 2012). Liaising may involve similar information as information posts but is different in that its primary intent is to benefit a secondary organization. Kassens-Noor (2012) explains that Twitter can be used to provide public education. Specifically, she explains that it allows users to provide informal education outside the classroom that encourages connections to larger educational topics (Kassens-Noor, 2012). These definitions better explain how the current MEM model leaves officers with many avenues to pursue on social media.

All 180 tweets collected were coded on two frameworks. First, the researcher read through the tweets on their own. Secondly, they were read thoroughly and coded on their alignment with the MEM framework whose definitions were developed from a 2016 study by Hawkes. Each tweet was coded on a maximum of one category and a minimum of zero. 90 tweets were marked as N/A as they did not fit within the MEM framework. These tweets were then free coded by the researcher. To supplement the MEM framework and to determine what additional strategies officers may be utilizing, the researcher developed a secondary framework from data collected in the interviews. This framework included new strategies that were not outlined in the MEM. The researcher narrowed the free codes into four categories and created the secondary framework which accounted for all tweets marked as NA by the MEM framework.

Interviews

All five semi-structured interviews were first coded alongside the MEM framework. Much like the Twitter data, there were some strategies that did not align with the MEM framework. The researcher first reviewed all of the interview transcripts, coding freely to identify any significant findings or strategies. After reading through the transcripts an additional two times, the researcher refined the codes to four major categories. The remaining categories represented the most commonly used strategies among participants— highlighting their presence in Ontario policing. The researcher revised these categories alongside results from the free coding of N/A twitter data and found that all tweets that were unable to be categorized under the MEM aligned with the new framework.

Coding

MEM Framework

The four tactics outlined in the MEM were defined to help better identify the strategies that police officers are purposely or inadvertently using in their social media communications with youth and whether or not those strategies reflect the most recent elements of CP in Ontario. In operationalizing these tactics, definitions of the MEM tactics by Hawkes (2016) were utilized. Hawkes' (2016) analysis on the 2018 MEM has informed the following definitions to better code all data resulting from this study.

A set of a priori codes were used to create a coding scheme that aligns with the current MEM. The following framework includes an operationalized definition, an example from data, and rationale for each code.

Table 5.0 *A Priori Codes—MEM Strategies*

Number	Code	Definition	Example from Interview	Rationale from Interview	Example from Twitter	Rationale from Twitter
1	Liaising	The act of assisting in actions with neighborhoods or other secondary organizations in their youth community by providing methods to contact or connect with them (Waters et al, 2009)	“Last night there was a torch run event so I got that on our Twitter feed.”	The officer is noting his willingness and choice to promote an event from a secondary organization.	Re-tweet: RT @EngageAndChange: #ProjectWater is almost here! Please consider donating or fundraising for Project Water by June 27th to make a positive impact on the lives of thousands of #homeless individuals	By re-tweeting this community event, the officer is assisting in connecting followers with a community event to benefit the secondary organization . They are not directly involved with the program so it is not classified as a partnership. Rather, they are assisting in connecting those with an aspect of it.
2	Public Education	The act of providing informal education to the	“We talk about changes to statutes or if we are seeing an elevation in crashes from distracted	The officer notes that they briefly discuss an education	Tweet: Know the signs of an opioid overdose. Saving a life is the number one priority	This tweet is an original that was created by the officer. It is

		community and its young members in real time by encouraging connections with educational topics (Kassens-Noor, 2012)	driving, that has to be out there. It is a crime and this is a result.”	topic on social media when it is prominent in their community	during an overdose. If you suspect an overdose call 911 and stay with the person.	providing followers with brief and informal education on the broad topic of drug use
3	Monitoring	The act of assessing areas in which there is elevated risk to individuals, families, groups, or locations	“So everytime we put something out there, we ask-- could it be subject to a keyboard cowboy’s input? Could it paint our service in a bad way? Sure. But at the same time, should one of these cowboys interact and maybe had a bad experience and are anti-police. Whatever their reasoning is, their conduct is one thing and ours is another. Are we going to engage that person if they are posting negative things? We need to understand and be polite and respectful and respect their comments-- but we do not want to add credibility to these guys because we want our followers to understand.”	The officer is noting that when high risk individuals post or comment negatively on their feed, they observe and monitor the interactions but do not necessarily engage.	There were no examples of monitoring found in the Twitter data. More information on this can be found in the discussion section.	NA
4	Partnering	The act of working collaboratively with community members or youth to positively affect the future of Ontario’s youth	“Understand a hashtag and how it works. Understand how to tag an agency. For example, @specialolympicsontario-- you can partner with that agency for the law enforcement torch run.”	The officer notes how important it is to understand the ways that Twitter can allow you to work with a secondary organization in the community.	Tweet: Thanks [name]. What is the best tool to rip a YouTube video these days?	The officer is engaging directly with another user on Twitter asking for aid which could result in a collaborative effort in creating the video.

Each tweet was analyzed alongside the MEM framework a total of three times. However, 90 tweets were unable to be categorized according to the framework as they did not fit in any category. As such, an N/A category was included in the MEM framework. Following this, the researcher analyzed the interview data alongside the MEM framework and noted similar gaps. It was clear that there were strategies being used that were not identified in the MEM framework.

Secondary Framework

Following this discovery, a secondary framework was created based on interview data provided by police officers on their perception of their own social media use. This framework provided insight for RQ3 and accounted for all tweets that were categorized as NA as they did not align with the MEM model. The researcher read through the interview transcripts a total of three times, each time free coding to identify any patterns or strategies noted by the officers that did not align with the MEM. A total of 21 codes were identified by the third analysis and are listed in table 6.0. These codes were categorized and a subset of strategies were identified as being the most influential categories to participants in this study. Definitions for each of the final strategies were developed based on their influence on participant use of social media rather than their recurrence in the data. Definitions can be found in table 7.0.

Table 6.0 *Categories—Framework Development*

Enhance in-person interactions	Extend in-person interactions	Personalization	Information dissemination
Support events in real time	Maintain contact	Build trust	Target audiences
Support presentations	Increase recognition in person	Build relationships	Promote programs
Influence future behavior	Maintain engagement	Appear as equals	Sharing real time information
Mimic in-person interactions	Create virtual meeting place	Provide mental health support	Highlight community events

Celebrate relationships online		Show another side of policing	Reach hard to contact audiences
Showcase CP efforts			Support investigations

Table 7.0 *Secondary Framework— Strategies*

Strategy	Definition	Example	Rationale
Enhance in person interactions	In these instances, the officer uses social media to enhance or better pre-existing interactions that occur in person	Tweet: The #NoHotPets campaign is back! Starting this week, drop by 43 Division and pick up your awareness sticker, I got a bunch from the Ontario SPCA. It's a shame this campaign needs to happen at all. @TorontoPolice #Toronto #Ontario @TPS43Div @OntarioSPCA https://t.co/OeUg6ubz2V	The officer is using social media (Twitter) to promote an interaction that will occur in person. Rather than replacing the in-person interaction, it is supporting it
Extend in person interactions	In these instances, the officer intends to use social media to prolong or maintain interactions developed in person	Tweet: Nice to meet you too Charissa! BTW it was [user] who suggested to go watch you . #Fun	The officer is using their social media platforms to continue a conversation with the user that began in person
Use elements of personalization	In these instances, the officer refers to elements about themselves that are separate from their position as a police officer	Tweet: Listening to the birds sing and flirt this morning, makes me happy. As I get older I understand more how people can feel isolated or depressed during a cold, hard winter. It's nice to be surrounded by so much life and new growth. Have a great day, be safe. https://t.co/YcfREGIQOy	The officer is posting content about something that makes him feel a specific way and is not directly related to his profession. One would not likely equate listening to birds sing with policing
Information dissemination	In these instances, the officer is providing information to their followers while including additional support material such as original press releases, video clips, public service announcements, or other articles (Waters et al, 2009)	Re-tweet: RT @TPSHomicide: Toronto Police Homicide Det/Sgt Kevin Leahy seeks the public's assistance on who murdered 21yr old Abbegail Elliott at 70...	The information provided tells users information about a murder with a direct connection back to @TPSHomicide where the event originated

The secondary framework, table 7.0, allowed the researcher to classify and explore the tweets previously marked as NA under the MEM framework. This was particularly important in establishing findings for RQ2. These findings, along with those answering RQ1 and RQ3 are explained in detail in the following section.

Findings and Discussion

The preceding methods allowed the researcher to explore all three research questions while accommodating different police services and officer perspectives. The following findings have been organized by research question and were written in collaboration with research discussion.

RQ1- How do social media strategies used by Ontario police officers to communicate with youth align with strategies outlined in the 2018 Mobilization and Engagement model of CP?

The first layer of analysis consisted of coding all Twitter data on its' alignment with each of the tactics in the community engagement portion of Ontario's Mobilization and Engagement Model. As previously indicated, the four tactics (liaising with neighbourhoods and groups, public education on risks and prevention, monitoring special, at-risk groups, and partnering in early intervention) were operationalized to support coding of data in this research project. This layer also allowed the researcher to partially answer RQ2 which seeks to determine what additional strategies are being used by police officers on social media. Each tweet was coded on a maximum of one and a minimum of zero categories.

An analysis of tweets from Service A and Service B alongside the MEM framework are summarized below in table 8.0. Overall, a total of 49.6% of tweets were categorized under the MEM framework, leaving the remaining 50% unidentified. Within the MEM categorized codes, 0% were coded as monitoring while 22% were liaising and 20.5% were partnering. Public education scored the second lowest at 6.6%. When comparing service A to service B, 25.4% of service A's tweets were liaising while 17.9% of service B's were. 9.8% of service A's tweets were reflective of public education with only 2.6% of service B's. 22.5% of service A's tweets were reflective of partnering in contrast to 17.9% of service B. Both services had 0% of their tweets demonstrating monitoring and both scored high in uncategorized NA tweets with service A at 41% and service B at 60.7%.

Table 8.0 *MEM Framework— Tweets*

Strategy	% of Tweets in Service A (n=102)	% of Tweets in Service B (n=78)	% of all tweets (n=180)
<i>Liaising</i>	25.4%	17.9%	22%
<i>Public Education</i>	9.8%	2.6%	6.6%
<i>Monitoring</i>	0%	0%	0%
<i>Partnering</i>	22.5%	17.9%	20.5%
<i>N/A</i>	41%	60.7%	50%

Definitions and examples for the preceding strategies can be found in table 5.0.

Based on the preceding findings, it can be inferred that the Twitter accounts being examined align with the current MEM to some extent. Both accounts utilize some element of the MEM in more than half of the tweets collected. In addition, there are commonalities across both Twitter accounts. Both accounts utilized the strategy of liaising and partnering more than any other identified in the MEM. This could be attributed to the retweet and mention functions which

allow direct contact with users and a simple way to share community events. As seen in table 2.0, which distinguishes tweets by type, service A utilizes the re-tweet function far more than service B with 59 re-tweets in the sample whereas service B only has 6. However, service B creates far more original tweets than service A which could explain why almost 61% of their tweets were marked as NA. Original tweets require far more effort to tag an organization and include information necessary for liaising or public education. This idea was introduced by participant #4 who identified learning how to tag an agency online an important but difficult thing to learn. Additionally, both accounts have zero frequencies for monitoring, suggesting that there are few individual conversations being initiated by police accounts with other Twitter users for the purposes of monitoring their risk. The lack of monitoring could also be explained by officer strategies that were unaccounted for in this study. For example, officers may not be practicing monitoring through the creation of or re-tweeting of messages but by observing accounts privately and discreetly. Strategies such as this did not appear in the interviews but should not be entirely eliminated as possibilities. While the MEM framework was useful in categorizing many tweets posted by officers, there is an additional 50% of tweets that were unaccounted for in the MEM framework. This subsection of tweets led to a secondary analysis to answer RQ2.

RQ2- What strategies do police officers employ when reaching out to youth on social media?

The researcher utilized the secondary framework, as seen in table 7.0, developed from participant interviews, to code the remaining 90 tweets that did not fit within the MEM categories. As summarized in Table 9.0 below, 78% of service A's tweets utilized information

dissemination compared to 16.5% for service B. The majority (75%) of service B's tweets coded as NA utilized personalization compared to Service A who utilized it 14% of the time. Neither service utilized their tweets to enhance or extend in-person interactions very often with service B utilizing the latter in just over 8% of tweets and service A using it to enhance in 7% of tweets. When looking at overall tweets, personalization and information dissemination were used far more than any other strategy, including those in the MEM framework. All tweets previously categorized as NA in the MEM framework fit within one of the strategies in the secondary framework.

Table 9.0, seen below, depicts a summary of the 50% of tweets that were categorized as NA under the MEM category.

Table 9.0 *Secondary Framework— NA Tweets*

Strategy	% of Tweets in Service A (n=42)	% of Tweets in Service B (n=48)	% of all tweets (n=180)
<i>To enhance in-person interactions</i>	7%	0%	3.3%
<i>To extend in-person interactions</i>	0%	8.3%	4.4%
<i>Personalization</i>	14%	75%	46.6%
<i>Information Dissemination</i>	78%	16.6%	45.5%

Definitions and examples for the preceding strategies can be found in table 7.0.

Based on the preceding findings, it is clear that personalization and information dissemination are the most commonly used strategies in the secondary framework. However, there are distinct differences across each service. Service A uses information dissemination almost 80% of the time, while service B only uses it in 16.6% of NA tweets. Service B's limited

use of information dissemination is likely because they utilize personalization in 75% of tweets. Service A utilized elements of personalization in 14% of tweets. It can be inferred that each service chooses to utilize one strategy over the other. Service B has a large amount of original tweets which would explain their high use of personalization. Retweets often fit the category of information dissemination which could explain why they are so prevalent among service A who rarely created their own tweets. As previously mentioned, service A's Twitter account depicts the service as a whole while service B's Twitter account identified the officer by name and the service they work for. As they are representing an entire police service, it is likely that service A faces greater reputational risk than service B whose content can be tied to one individual. This would explain the lack of personalized tweets for service A. As indicated by an interview participant:

“On the street, we don't want to get shot, stabbed or run over. On the online world, we don't want to do anything to damage our credibility or leave our company open to unnecessary scrutiny.”

Neither service utilizes their tweets to enhance or extend in-person interactions very often. Service A uses tweets to enhance their in-person interactions 7% of the time and Service B does not use it at all. In comparison, service B uses tweets to extend in-person interactions 8.3% of the time while service A does not use it at all. The services' limited use of these strategies contrasts findings from the interviews that indicated an intent to do so, as summarized in table 12.0. This contrast could be because the methods used to extend or enhance in-person interactions on social media may not involve the creation or sharing of tweets themselves. It is possible that officers are utilizing these elements in different ways. For example, they could

simply be following accounts. Regardless of the cause, the contrast was evident and indicated a difference in officer perception of social media use and their actual practice, which led the researcher to explore RQ3.

RQ3- How do police officer perceptions of their social media use compare to strategies being used on Twitter?

The 2018 MEM model of CP outlines the strategies that officers should be utilizing to fulfill CP principles, but it does not specify how to use those strategies on social media. In table 8.0, the researcher was able to identify that 50% of the tweets collected were not representative of the tactics outlined in the MEM, highlighting the use of additional strategies. By conducting semi-structured qualitative interviews, the researcher was able to gather insight as to what strategies Ontario police officers thought they were utilizing. The strategies in the secondary framework were those that participants perceived to be the most prominent or important in their social media use. While they were not always the most used strategies, they were those that most shaped their practice as police officers.

After conducting five semi-structured interviews with officers in Ontario, the researcher came to various conclusions. As seen in table 2.0, there were many strategies mentioned by officers throughout the interviews. After narrowing these strategies, the researcher identified four that make up the secondary framework. These strategies and participant data have been summarized below:

Table 10.0 *Interview Data— Secondary Framework*

Codes	Participant C	Participant D	Participant E	Participant F	Participant G
Enhance in-person interactions	x	x		x	x
Extend in-person interactions	x	x			x
Elements of personalization		x			x
Information Dissemination			x	x	x

As seen in the preceding table, all but one officer in the study identified enhancing in-person interactions as a strategy used on social media which contrasts twitter findings that indicate it being used less than 5% of the time. Three of the five officers used social media to extend in-person interactions which is consistent with studies that identify prolonged relationships as being benefits of social media (Briones et al., 2011; Orben & Dunbar, 2017). Only two officers noted using elements of personalization and three noted using social media for information dissemination purposes. Two of the three officers that used social media for information dissemination also used it to enhance in-person interactions. The majority of officers that used elements of personalization on social media also used it to extend in-person interaction.

To better frame how officer perception compares to the Twitter data, table 12.0 summarizes the findings below:

Table 12.0 *Perception vs. Twitter— Secondary framework*

Strategy	% of officers (n=5)	% of all NA tweets, service A & B (n= 90)
<i>To enhance in-person interactions</i>	80%	3.3%
<i>To extend in-person interactions</i>	80%	4.4%
<i>Personalization</i>	40%	46.6%
<i>Information Dissemination</i>	60%	45.5%

Interestingly, four of the five officers in the semi-structured interviews noted using or wanting to use social media to enhance or extend in-person interactions, despite them being recognized the least in Twitter analysis. Neither service visibly utilizes their tweets to enhance or extend in-person interactions very often which contrasts findings in interviews which indicated them as being intended strategies in table 12.0. In addition, three of the officers noted using or wanting to use information dissemination in some capacity and two noted using elements of personalization. It appears that officers recognize when they are using elements of personalization more than any other strategy with information dissemination as the second most recognized by officers. While four of the officers claim that they use or want to use social media to enhance or extend in-person interactions, it only occurs in Twitter in under 10% of tweets.

Both officers that recognized their use of personalization mentioned that they thought it helped their engagement efforts to appear more *human* to the public. This suggests that they believe appearing human is important in engaging with youth on social media. This finding, which alludes to using strategies to humanize police officers, is indicative of Baym’s (2015) study that identifies having ‘shared practices’ and ‘shared identities’ as being functions of online community. All officers that recognized their use of social media for educational purposes noted using social media to educate as a necessity rather than a choice. This suggests that most officers in the study believe that to educate young populations, you have to be present in the spaces they already occupy, rather than expecting them to come to you. This coincides with the fact that four officers stated they used social media to target specific populations based on the content they wanted posted.

The strategies in the secondary framework were those that officers intended to use on social media. However, the interview transcripts were also coded against the MEM framework to see if officers were inadvertently mentioning strategies that it recommends. Table 13.0 shows the percentage of officers that identified using or intending to use each of the MEM strategies and compares that percentage to the data collected from tweets.

Table 13.0 *Perception vs. Twitter— MEM framework*

Strategy	% of officer mentions	% of all tweets, service A & B (n=180)
<i>Liaising</i>	40%	22%
<i>Public Education</i>	80%	6.6%
<i>Monitoring</i>	40%	0%
<i>Partnering</i>	80%	20.5%

In all circumstances, officer's believed that they were utilizing or should be utilizing strategies that are outlined in the MEM more than what is shown in the Twitter data. However, none of the officers cited or mentioned the MEM directly, rather— they mentioned strategies that aligned with it. This is particularly true for public education. 80% of participants noted that it was something they did or should be doing but the data collected from Twitter does not reflect that perception. Based on this data, it can be inferred that while officers are cognisant of strategies in the MEM, there is some difficulty or barrier when practicing it on social media. Additionally, because they did not directly reference the MEM itself, it is not possible to conclude that they are cognisant of the fact that they are aligning with it to any extent. Every participant, with the exception of Participant D who chose not to use social media as a policing tool, noted that social media practice should mimic or mirror their everyday practice in-person. This finding could explain their difficulties in applying in-person strategies to the digital world; it also highlights the necessity for updated regulations that accommodate social media use in CP. In the words of one participant,

“any police officer that is not using social media for engagement is losing a huge resource and a huge tool to do their job more effectively and to build trust with the community.”

As seen in tables 3.0 and 4.0, each participant worked for a different police service in Ontario and used social media for a different reason. The differences across reason for participant social media use are of particular interest as they highlight the differences among social media use across police services in Ontario. With a lack of provincial regulation, individual services determine their own social media policies. Despite differences in reason for

use, most officers still utilized similar strategies in their everyday practice, they also shared one common uncertainty which is best described by a participant:

“You want to reach the public, you want to engage with people but.. you also don’t want to get fired.”

The fear of being misinterpreted, fired, or receiving some other type of reputational damage was mentioned by every participant in the study, regardless of their social media use status. The participant that had never used social media before mentioned that they never would due to said fears. Participants in full support of social media at work noted that the benefits outweighed the risks but that the fear continued to exist.

Ontario’s current Mobilization and Engagement Model of Community Policing does not account for social media use (Ontario, 2018); four out of five participants stated that social media was related to or a substantial part of community policing. The gap in translating the values of CP into police practice has been widely discussed in the both reports and research with the commissioner of the Ontario Provincial Police admitting its shortfalls (Hawkes, 2016; Leighton, 1991; Thacher, 2001). The interpersonal aspects of social media have been widely discussed in literature and may explain why the secondary framework accounts for strategies such as personalization which speak to more interpersonal elements than those in the MEM (Denef et al., 2013; Orben & Dunbar, 2017; Schneider, 2014).

With a lack of provincial regulations, this research study sought to discover what the current unguided police practice on social media was resulting in and how that compared to the standards set by the MEM. With over 50% of tweets left uncategorized by the MEM framework

and five officers with different reasons for using social media, it was clear that individual strategies were being implemented. The importance of standardizing this practice is founded in literature that supports relationship building on social media and the positive effects of police-youth relationships when initiated by police (Baym, 2015; Briones et al., 2011; Hinds, 2007; Leroux & McShane, 2017; Orben & Dunbar, 2017).

While 50% of tweets did not align with the MEM model, another 50% did. The majority of which fell under liaising or partnering. Both of these strategies require some form of assistance or collaboration with a secondary organization, highlighting police success in attaining their vision of becoming “better partners with community members” on Twitter (Ontario, 2018, p.2). In interviews, participants noted the importance of utilizing partnering and public education above all else. The small (6.6%) amount of public education use on Twitter is interesting as 4 out of 5 of participants noted it as being relevant. The one participant that did not note public education as being relevant to social media expressed their opinion:

Q: So, you haven't had any interactions with youth online before?

A: Online, no.

Q: Is that something you would like to start doing in your community outreach efforts?

A: At this stage, no. My role is more education based.

This participant does not believe that school-level education can be conveyed through Twitter. This opinion conflicts with literature by Kassens-Noor (2012) who argues the exact opposite and identifies its potential to inspire broader education through presenting informal and smaller

pieces of the whole subject. The officer's choice to not use social media at work due to an apparent lack of merit for education contrasts with another officer who stated:

“You hear the term, it is the way of the future. Well, it is the way of now. That is how people communicate now, how they are getting their news. It is how young people are using the web. All these young people have Instagram so that is how you have to reach them. Making posts on the radio, like advertisements on the radio or newspapers won't reach young people. If you want them to see something, it has to be on Instagram.”

The differences in social media use across services and even officers has resulted in a multitude of approaches, four of which have been categorized in the secondary framework of this study. The secondary framework has identified four additional strategies utilized by officers in addition to those outlined in the MEM. The first two strategies, enhancing and extending in-person interactions, were not practiced on Twitter but were noted by the majority of participants as being something they felt was important or a part of their daily practice. These elements speak to the concept of relationship building that is outlined in the MEM but is not listed in tactics. Specifically, it states that the current vision of CP “requires that police become better partners with community members” (Ontario, 2018). It is clear that participants in the study recognized this vision but did not implement it on their Twitter practice. It is possible that the two strategies were utilized on other social media platforms. The third strategy identified in Twitter, personalization, was used much more by service B. A 2013 study by Deneff et al. (2013) identified elements of personalization on a UK police service's Twitter as being more successful in engaging the public. While this study was limited and could not measure the results of social

media strategies, Deneff et al's (2013) study states that personalized content resulted in closer relationships with the public while formal and non-personal posts did not. This echoes thoughts mentioned in participant interviews that identified their determination to appear more human when attempting to engage with the public. One participant described it below:

“I think that people see me more and more, they get to know me and they see me more as a human being now and are a little more willing to follow and add.”

Service B primarily utilized the strategy of information dissemination which may speak to a separate prong on the MEM model, community safety. This portion of the model recommends that officer's “point out potential risks to community security and encourage community people to deal with them” (“Ontario”, 2018, p. 2). This portion of the MEM is not listed under community engagement but is identified as a portion of CP. This observation further highlights the need to standardize social media use across police services in Ontario.

Conclusion

The Ontario Mobilization and Engagement Model of Community Policing outlines tactics that intend to increase police engagement with their communities (“Ontario”, 2018). However, the lack of social media use in the current model has created a gap in guidance of police practice, leaving officers with little support in its use, accompanied by a heightened fear of misinterpretation or reputational damage. While the majority of the MEM strategies are sometimes being utilized through officer social media use, officers did not identify that they were following the MEM purposefully. Rather, they identified a variety of strategies, most of

which did not directly align with the MEM. There was a significant difference in officer perception of strategies being used in comparison to those identified in the Twitter data. This was particularly true for the enhancement or extension of in-person interactions which officers intended to use unsuccessfully. It is recommended that future community policing models address the prominence of social media to better supply officers with the tools required to confidently engage with their communities. Additionally, future research should explore the effects that the various strategies used by officers on social media have on the public, youth specifically.

The findings in this study indicate that while police and youth connections are beneficial for positive youth development, they require that interactions be initiated by police officers. The widespread use of social media by youth allows officers to do so in a more frequent and larger capacity. This study found that while all officers felt that social media use was quite risky, the majority felt it was beneficial and worthwhile for youth. While there is no provincial regulation guiding police use of social media, individual services have created their own policies, guidelines, and cultures around mediated communication, most of which resulted in freedom in posting.

To ensure that community policing (CP) principles are being upheld online, individual services should instill confidence and provide support to their officers by encouraging social media tactics that echo CP values. While three of the four strategies in the MEM were often used by officers, it was done inadvertently and without confidence. Elements of personalization and information dissemination which came from officer freedom appeared to come naturally to officers, who identify the strategies as being reflective of standard police practice and human

nature. Policing in Ontario could benefit from the standardization of social media practice to ensure that CP values are being implemented in the lives of youth to their fullest extent.

Standardization of officer use of social media is highly recommended but it should be noted that this standardization must not be restrictive to allow true human connections. This recommendation was echoed by participant C who expressed their vision of standardizing social media use as follows:

“...if it was not a restrictive piece of social media and actually empowered police officers to build trust, transparency, and to have positive relationships for the safety of our community. If that were the policy, I'd be all over it, but the political aspect of it is complicated so no, I wouldn't be in favour of a blanket social media policy...unless leadership were to be able to wrap their heads around what needs to be done.”

References

- Anderson, S. A., Sabatelli, R. M., & Trachtenberg, J. (2007). Community police and youth programs as a context for positive youth development. *Police Quarterly*, 10(1), 23-40. doi:10.1177/1098611106291372
- Barriball, K., & While, A. (1994). Collecting data using a semi-structured interview: A discussion paper. *Journal of Advanced Nursing*, 19(2), 328-335. doi:10.1111/j.1365-2648.1994.tb01088.x
- Baym, N. (2015). *Personal Connections in the Digital Age*. Polity Press.
- Berlin, I., Hardy, H., & Ignatieff, M. (2014). *The hedgehog and the fox: an essay on Tolstoy's view of history*. London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson.
- boyd, D. (2015). *It's Complicated: The Social Lives of Networked Teens*. New Haven: Yale University Press.
- Briones, R. L., Kuch, B., Liu, B. F., & Jin, Y. (2011). Keeping up with the digital age: How the American Red Cross uses social media to build relationships. *Public Relations Review*, 37(1), 37-43. 10.1016/j.pubrev.2010.12.006
- Denef, S., Bayerl, P., & Kaptein, N. (2013). *Social media and the police: tweeting practices of British police forces during the August 2011*. In Proceedings of the SIGCHI Conference on Human Factors in Computing Systems (CHI '13) (pp. 3471-3480). New York, NY: ACM. doi:10.1145/2470654.2466477

Facebook users worldwide 2018. (n.d.). Retrieved from

<https://www.statista.com/statistics/264810/number-of-monthly-active-facebook-users-worldwide>

Farahbakhsh, R., Cuevas, Á., & Crespi, N. (2016). Characterization of cross-posting activity for professional users across Facebook, Twitter and Google+. *Social Network Analysis and Mining*, 6, 1-14.

Goldsmith, A. (2013). Disgracebook policing: Social media and the rise of police indiscretion.

Policing and Society, 25(3), 249-267. doi:10.1080/10439463.2013.864653

Government of Canada, Department of Justice, Electronic Communications. (2017, August 08).

The Youth Criminal Justice Act Summary and Background. Retrieved February 02, 2018, from <http://www.justice.gc.ca/eng/cj-jp/yj-jj/tools-outils/back-hist.html>

Government of Ontario, Ministry of Children and Youth Services,

Communications and Marketing Branch. (n.d.). Ministry of Children and Youth Services.

Retrieved February 03, 2018, from

http://www.children.gov.on.ca/htdocs/English/professionals/oyap/roots/volume5/preventing03_community_polcing.aspx

Hartley, M., 2008. Before we built the prototype for Twitter, people didn't seem that interested in

It. It was real shock when people gravitated toward it very quickly. *Globe and Mail*, 23 July, *TQ Magazine*, p. 36.

Hawkes, V. (2016) "Mobilizing and Engaging Your Community to Reduce Victimization and

- Reinvest Police Resources.” *Journal of Community Safety & Well-Being*, 1(2), 21–25.
- Haythornthwaite, C. (2005). Social networks and Internet connectivity effects. *Information, Communication & Society*, 8(2), 125-147. doi:10.1080/13691180500146185
- Hinds, L. (2007). Building police youth relationships: The importance of procedural justice. *Youth Justice*, 7(3), 195-209.
- Innes, M., Abbott, L., Lowe, T., & Roberts, C. (2009). Seeing like a citizen: Field experiments in ‘community intelligence-led policing’. *Police Practice and Research*, 10(2), 99-114. doi:10.1080/15614260802264545
- Kassens-Noor, E. (2012). Twitter as a teaching practice to enhance active and informal learning in higher education: The case of sustainable tweets. *Active Learning in Higher Education*, 13(1), 9-21. doi:10.1177/1469787411429190
- Kent, M. L. (2013). Using social media dialogically: Public relations role in reviving democracy. *Public Relations Review*, 39(4), 337-345. doi:10.1016/j.pubrev.2013.07.024
- Lee, M., & MCGovern, A. (2015). Logics of risk: police communications in an age of uncertainty. *Journal of Risk Research*, 19(10), 1291-1302. doi:10.1080/13669877.2015.1115423
- Leroux, E. J., & Mcshane, K. (2017). Changing youth attitudes toward the police through community policing programming. *Journal of Community Psychology*, 45(6), 810-822. doi:10.1002/jcop.21894.
- Leighton, B. (1991). Visions of community policing: Rhetoric and reality in Canada. *Canadian Journal of Criminology*
- Ministry of the Solicitor General. (2000). *Policing Standards Manual* (pp. 1-226,

- Rep. No. 1). Toronto, ON: Policing Services Division
- Myhill, A. (2007). Community engagement in policing. *Canadian Policing Research Catalogue*, *1*(2), 173-183. doi:10.1093/police/pam027
- NCPC. *A STATISTICAL SNAPSHOT OF YOUTH AT RISK AND YOUTH OFFENDING IN CANADA*. Public Safety Canada, 2012, pp. 5–20.
- O'Connor, C. D. (2017;2015). The police on twitter: Image management, community building, and implications for policing in canada. *Policing and Society*, *27*(8), 899-14. 10.1080/10439463.2015.1120731
- Omanga, D. (2015). ‘Chieftaincy’ in the social media Space: Community policing in a twitter convened baraza. *Stability: International Journal of Security & Development*, *4*(1). doi:10.5334/sta.eq
- Ontario's Mobilization and Engagement Model of Community Policing [Digital image]. Retrieved April 1, 2018, from [http://www.oacp.on.ca/Userfiles/Files/NewAndEvents/CrimePreventionCampaign/COMMUNITY POLICING WHEEL-2.pdf](http://www.oacp.on.ca/Userfiles/Files/NewAndEvents/CrimePreventionCampaign/COMMUNITY%20POLICING%20WHEEL-2.pdf)
- Orben, A. C., & Dunbar, R. I. M. (2017). Social media and relationship development: The effect of valence and intimacy of posts. *Computers in Human Behavior*, *73*(Complete), 489-498. 10.1016/j.chb.2017.04.006
- Patterson, J. (1995). *Community policing: Learning the lessons of history*. Washington: Federal Bureau of Investigation.
- Schneider, C. J. (2014). Police presentational strategies on Twitter in Canada.

- Policing and Society*, 26(2), 129-147. doi:10.1080/10439463.2014.922085
- Thacher, D. (2001). Conflicting values in community policing. *Law & Society Review*, 35(4), 765. doi:10.2307/3185416
- Twitter: Number of active users 2010-2018. (n.d.). Retrieved from <https://www.statista.com/statistics/282087/number-of-monthly-active-twitter-users/>
- Twitter: What's happening. (2018) Retrieved from <https://about.twitter.com/>
- Quan-Haase, A. (2016). *Technology & Society: Social Networks, Power, and Inequality*. Don Mills, Ontario, Canada: Oxford University Press.
- Waters, R. D., Burnett, E., Lamm, A., & Lucas, J. (2009). Engaging stakeholders through social networking: How nonprofit organizations are using Facebook. *Public Relations Review*, 35(2), 102-106. doi:10.1016/j.pubrev.2009.01.006
- Yadav, M., & Rahman, Z. (2017). Measuring consumer perception of social media marketing activities in e-commerce industry: Scale development & validation. *Telematics and Informatics*, 34(7), 1294-1307. doi:10.1016/j.tele.2017.06.001