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Social Media and the Voice of the Department

Brittany N. Rios

SOCIAL MEDIA AND THE VOICE OF THE DEPARTMENT

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A Thesis

Presented to the

Faculty of

California State University,

San Bernardino

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In Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree

Master of Arts

in

Criminal Justice

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by

Brittany Noel Rios

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ABSTRACT

More law enforcement agencies are adopting social media as a progressive policing strategy each year. They utilize it for several reasons including, community outreach and engagement, public relations, notifying the public of safety concerns, recruitment, intelligence gathering for investigations, among other uses (IACP, 2017). This study explores Southern California Law Enforcements' use of social media through a survey and content analysis. First, the survey results suggest that more than 93% of departments surveyed concentrate on community outreach through their social media channels. Second, the content analysis results suggest that when media (pictures/video), links, and hashtags (#), are included in posts the more engagement will take place. The more engagement a department receives online the more their voice and message are heard. The results of this study contribute to the sparse literature dedicated to law enforcement and effective use of social media.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

I would first like to thank my thesis chair Dr. Gisela Bichler, for making my goal her own with this thesis. She kept me together throughout this process when I felt like I was falling apart. I would not have made it this far without her encouragement and invaluable help. She went above and beyond to see me through. My committee members Dr. Nerea Marteache and Dr. Alexis Norris for supporting me throughout this journey and available to help at a moment's notice, not only with thesis help, but encouraging words and to remind me that being on the verge of a meltdown is all part of the process.

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

Widespread use of social media is changing the way law enforcement agencies communicate with the public. Social media channels are proving to be the fastest, most efficient way to disseminate timely information to the public, correct misinformation, and ask the public to refrain from posting traffic from police scanners (Davis et. al, 2014). Yet, without well-crafted policy and dedicated resources, law enforcement use of social media may backfire, generating criticism, souring public relations, and damaging public trust. Two situations illustrate the importance of establishing effective social media communications strategy.

Minutes following the Boston Marathon Bombings on April 15, 2013, Boston Police Commissioner Edward Davis called to his Media Relations Unit to prepare to use all media channels available to them. This proved to be an important decision. On April 17th, two days following the bombing CNN tweeted that the Boston Police Department (BPD) had made an arrest in the case (Twitter, 2013). Within seconds, news outlets across the world reported on the capture of a suspect. Due to the reputation of CNN as a global leader in news, this information was "retweeted"—or posted again— 5,000 times. The information was false, no one was in custody, and the investigation was ongoing. BPD took to Twitter to correct the misinformation released by CNN, "Despite reports to the

contrary there has not been an arrest in the Marathon attack" (BPD Twitter, 2013). Receiving nearly 11,000 retweets, it is argued that this correcting tweet established and solidified BPD as the official source of information for the Boston Marathon Bombings investigation and forced CNN to retract their tweet (Davis et. al, 2014). The Huffington *Post* praised BPD's use of social media following the bombings by saying the agency should be"…applauded for leading an honest conversation with the public during a time of crisis in a way that no police department has done before (Bindley 2013)." The successful use of social media during the crisis was attributed to the online "trust building" with the community prior to the bombings (Davis et. al, 2014).

On the contrary, in February of 2013, a manhunt ensued after former LAPD officer Christopher Dorner killed three people, including a Riverside Police Department officer, and fled to hideout in the mountains of San Bernardino; creating one of the most televised manhunts in history (LA Times, 2013). The San Bernardino County Sheriff's Department has jurisdiction over and is responsible for the law enforcement services in Big Bear—where Dorner was found to be hiding. As law enforcement officers from across Southern California joined the manhunt, news stations from across the country watched the events unfolding in San Bernardino.

Law enforcement officials updated the media with information leading up to, and as the manhunt continued, through traditional media channels (i.e. press conferences, news interviews, and news releases). They did not however, utilize

any type of social media during the manhunt and this became a problem when deputies located the cabin in which Dorner was hiding out. News helicopters swarmed over the area where the cabin was and began broadcasting and tweeting images/videos of the deputies' locations. Others began tweeting the radio traffic from police scanners as the incident unfolded. Since the San Bernardino Sheriff's Department did not have social media, the Department called on the District Attorney of San Bernardino to ask those releasing information of deputies' locations to refrain from doing so via Twitter from their account (Bui, 2013).

The DA tweeted "The sheriff has asked all members of the press to stop tweeting immediately. It is hindering officer safety. #Dorner" (Twitter, 2013). Whether or not this was the exact message the department intended to convey, it sparked outrage online, and some took it as an infringement upon their First Amendment rights (Bui, 2013; Police Foundation, 2014b).
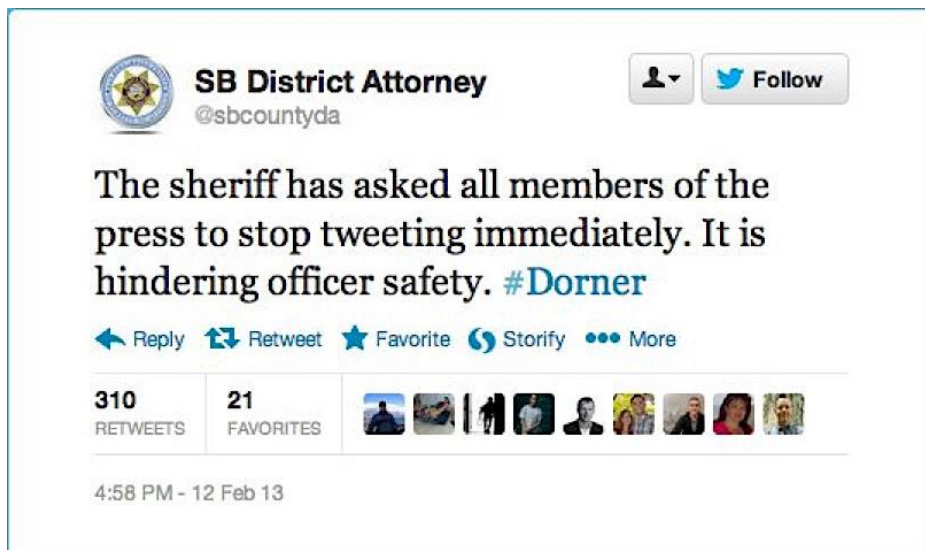
In an after-action report of the manhunt conducted by the Police Foundation (2014b), the implications of the report recommend that the sheriff's department, "increase departmental social media presence." The need for the presence was explained by the dependence of social media by the public and press. It concluded by noting that social media was necessary, "…to ensure that the correct and official information is reaching a press and public increasingly dependent on social media for breaking news and commentary."

Law Enforcement and Social Media

Advancements in communications technology and the widespread adoption of social media by segments of the population are forcing law enforcement agencies to modify operational policies and practices. The magnitude of these shifts is best exemplified by a recent survey conducted by the International Association of Chiefs of Police (IACP). The IACP (2015) survey revealed of the 553 responding law enforcement agencies, 96.4% employ the use of social media in some capacity (IACP, 2015). While limited in scope, this survey is the first of its kind to collect information regarding law enforcements' use of social media as an organization on a national scale. While some agencies may use social media strictly for investigative purposes, others also use it as a public relations/community outreach tool. It is critical to note that having a social media account does not mean that agencies are using it effectively to get information out to the public in a timely fashion. Departments must be on the same platforms and speak the same language as their community in order to dispel rumors,

misinformation, and have a voice during a storm of negative public opinion.

Since the inception of Web 2.0 and social media, businesses and marketing companies have capitalized on the use of it to brand, sell, and market their products (Kumar & Mirchandani, 2012; Whiting & Deshpande, 2014; Schulze et al., 2015; Carlson & Lee, 2015; Alharbie, 2015). Business marketing strategy now includes capitalizing on the functionality of user-generated, technology driven platforms. This shift in marketing tactics is not surprising given that a recent study by the Pew Research Center found that over 65% of American adults surveyed use social media in some capacity and that among individuals aged 18-29, 90% use social media (Pew Research Center, 2016). Marketing strategies must use different platforms as every social media platform has a different demographic and can serve a different purpose. With its accessibility and affordability, businesses are executing marketing initiatives that are reaching a greater number of people and having a larger branding impact. Notably, many of the objectives of private industry are at odds with law enforcement. This begs the question, how would social media work for law enforcement if it is not built on the same foundation as a business?

This study aims to contribute to the literature on the effective use of social media by law enforcement by examining the three most prevalent uses of social media: (1) public relations and reputation management, (2) communication during critical incidents, and (3) recruiting. In addition to documenting the use of social media, the study will be one of the first to investigate whether agencies in

Southern California are leveraging two social media channels correctly—Twitter and Facebook —to use them effectively for the aforementioned purposes. By evaluating randomly selected agencies development of policies and use of social media platforms, this research will provide law enforcement agencies with guidelines and procedures on how to create an effective social media presence.

Outline of the Study

In the chapters that follow, the discussion turns to what is currently known about several related topics: effective communication through social media, marketing, and branding of an agency, the importance of policy creation, and law enforcement's use of social media. Significantly, more law enforcement agencies are integrating social media as a part of their progressive policing strategies. Law enforcement training conventions have increasingly made social media a part of their curriculum, even developing law enforcement specific training conventions (see Government Social Media Conference & Expo, and IACP Social Media). Social media has facilitated communication with the public during critical incidents such as The Boston Marathon Bombing and the San Bernardino Terrorist Attack. It has become a platform to reach out to the community in an official capacity and directly relay a message. Social media has also been leveraged to appeal to potential police recruits during a time when agencies are facing a severe shortage of interested applicants.

Chapter three describes the mixed method design. The first research

component involves a survey of 79 law enforcement agencies with jurisdictions in Orange, Los Angeles, Riverside, and San Bernardino Counties. This survey will establish which agencies have social media policies while documenting whether agencies have dedicated resources to support use of social media. The second research component consists of a content analysis of 20 randomly selected agencies (10 coded for Facebook and 10 coded for Twitter). Capturing two weeks of social media content for each agency, this portion of the study will test whether agencies are effectively using social media as measured by the amount of engagement their content receives and the quality of material posted.

The results are divided into two categories, the findings from the online survey and the results from the social media coding. In addition to describing the results of each research component, some bivariate analysis is presented that explores covariation and generate direction for future research; however, the focus of Chapter Four remains on describing how local law enforcement agencies are using social media for purposes of public relations and reputation management, public information during critical incidents, and recruitment.

The final chapter of this thesis discusses policy implications and how the results can impact law enforcement communications strategy. Limitations of the study are also discussion in this chapter. The conclusion of the study summarizes the findings and how they can be useful for law enforcement organizations.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

According to a 2015 survey conducted by the International Association of Chiefs of Police, 96.4% of the 553 law enforcement agencies surveyed, reported using social media in some capacity (2015). Of those agencies using social media, 77.8% have an established social media policy, while 11.7% reported are in the process of creating a policy. The integrated technology that social media provides has caused the numbers of agencies who report using at least one platform to increase year-after-year.

The timeliness in the delivery of information is crucial in law enforcement, no matter if they are dealing with a subject at large or a critical incident. Social media provides that autonomy for departments. Agencies can release timely information without relying on traditional media channels, such as news broadcasting, to deliver their message. Interaction with the public is also very important for any law enforcement organization, and social media facilitates that conversation. Online collaboration with the public has been known to help agencies solve crimes as well (IACP, 2015; Lexis Nexis, 2014).

Boston Bombing

During the 2013 Boston Marathon bombings, social media played a critical role in the successful response by the Boston Police Department (BPD). Police Commissioner Davis of the Boston Police Department recognized the important role social media would play in this very public incident and instructed his Media Relations Officer to prepare to use all of their social media channels (Davis et al., 2014; Police Foundation, 2014a). Throughout the course of the incident, BPD used their official Twitter account to confirm the bombings, ask for the public's assistance, inform of road closures, news conferences, and police activity. Most notably, BPD leveraged social media to correct misinformation that was given to the public by a prominent news outlet (CNN), who confirmed the capture of a suspect. BPD corrected the misinformation and established their role as the official news source (Davis et al., 2014). The key to their success was already having established social media platforms, and not trying to create them the day of the incident, and actively releasing up to date information (Police Foundation, 2014a).

CNN Breaking News ✓
@cnnbrk

Law enforcement sources: Arrest made in the Boston bombings investigation. on.cnn.com/15fOGEd

RETWEETS 3,258

LIKES 341

10:56 AM - 17 Apr 2013

233   3.3K   341

Boston Police Dept. ✓
@Boston_Police
Tweeting BPD News and real time emergency notifications.
Boston, MA · bpdnews.com

6,906 TWEETS   156 FOLLOWING   276,711 FOLLOWERS   Follow

Boston Police Dept. @Boston_Police   15 Ap
250pm two explosions at Marathon finish line. Multiple casualties #tweetfromthebeat via @CherylFiandaca
Expand

Boston Police Dept. ✓
@Boston_Police

Follow

Despite reports to the contrary there has not been an arrest in the Marathon attack.

← Reply ⇄ Retweet ★ Favorite ••• More

10,938
RETWEETS

343
FAVORITES

2:33 PM - 17 Apr 13

Boston Police Dept. ✓
@Boston_Police

Follow

CAPTURED!!! The hunt is over. The search is done. The terror is over. And justice has won. Suspect in custody.

← Reply ⇄ Retweet ★ Favorite ••• More

65,327
RETWEETS

18,722
FAVORITES

7:58 PM - 19 Apr 13

The Dorner Manhunt

Conversely, earlier that year, the Nation witnessed a critical incident in San Bernardino, California where social media was not used by the agency in charge. On February 12, 2013, following a week's long search for a rogue ex-LAPD officer, the San Bernardino County Sheriff's Department found themselves bringing the manhunt to an end. This incident, as with many critical incidents did not come without lessons learned. In an after-action report conducted by The Police Foundation, researchers highly suggested the implementation of social media to the sheriff's department (Police Foundation, 2014b). Lack of social media on the agency's part disabled them from providing the public with correct, timely, and sensitive information; instead they had to rely on the news media to convey their message to the public. Many rumors were generated online and the department had no independent way of dispelling them since they were not on the same communication channels.

These critical incidents highlight how communication with the public can be improved with the use of social media, but communications during critical incidents is not the only law enforcement use for social media. These communication channels can also be used for other purposes, such as marketing and branding, community outreach and citizen engagement, and recruiting; however, to foster effective communications through social media requires a clear strategy supported by formal policy, something the business community has already ascertained.

Effective Communication, Marketing and Branding

Social media is defined as a web-based service that serves the functions of creating a public/semi-public profile where content is shared, gathering a list of "followers", and maintaining relationships (Boyd & Ellison, 2007; Nadkarni & Hofmann, 2012; Vogel et al., 2014). Marketing efforts for private business is focused on not only having a "social media presence", but also executing a successful social media strategy (Schulze et al., 2015; Mills & Plangger, 2015). It is more than simply creating a Facebook, Twitter, and/or Instagram page. In today's business-to-consumer world, those social media accounts must be maintained with relevant, timely, and dependable information. In an age that you can do virtually almost anything online, people have a certain technological expectation of businesses, companies and organizations to be up to par. No matter the business, company, or organization, a successful social media marketing strategy will be tailored to fit the "product" and/or "service" (Kavanaugh, 2012; Schulze et al., 2015).

Whether companies and business use established social media platforms to their full advantage is dependent on the broadcasted media; 84% of Fortune 100 firms use one of the four most used social media sites (Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, blogs), however, many of them use the platforms as a one-way communication channel where they just push information out (Mortleman, 2011; Burson-Marsteller, 2011; Wilson et al., 2013; Chandy, 2014). Social media was created to be just that, "social." It encourages a two-way communication,

listening, responding, and creating a dialogue amongst people who would have otherwise not known each other.

In a study conducted at the Center for Marketing Research at the University of Massachusetts Dartmouth, researchers determined that 22% of Fortune 500 companies had a public-facing Twitter—a microblogging account— that was maintained and utilized as a representation/branding tool (Barnes & Mattson, 2009). In the same study, researchers analyzed the level of interaction between the company and their online consumers. They found that 69% of the companies consistently replied to their followers. Those same accounts also kept relevant and timely news information on their sites.

A popular airline company is also very effective at leveraging social media as a way of connecting with and communicating with their customers, and fast. Southwest Airlines currently has 1.98 million followers and a scroll through their "Tweets and replies" on their Twitter account will show just how responsive they are, even when met with tweets from unhappy customers (Southwest Airlines, 2016). Companies must have a clear and concise vision of what they want to accomplish by using social media and how they are going to go about it. Short and long term goals, staffing, training, and measurements of success are important to effectively communicate, market, and brand any company/business/ organization (Mortleman, 2011).

Returning to the law enforcement focus of this study, according to various studies and after action reports of law enforcement incidents, agencies across

the United States can and should adopt social media as a progressive policing strategy (Davis et al., 2014; Police Foundation, 2014a; Police Foundation, 2014b). A new communication strategy meshed with the traditional goals and concerns of police agencies can significantly benefit the organization as a whole. In order to be progressive, law enforcement agencies need to open the door of communication that social media provides (Stuart; 2013; Davis et al., 2014; Goldberg et al., 2014). Posting and giving the community unlimited access to information they would normally get on traditional channels (i.e. television news channels) encourages participation and transparency. Social media for law enforcement should be tailored to the respective agency's vision, mission, and values, while focusing on community policing. Social media and law enforcement both have their own culture; each must be strategically integrated to be effective. This requires the development of social media policy.

Developing an Effective Social Media Policy

A policy is a guideline outlining protocol for specific operational tasks. An effective one will convey to the employee what is expected and in essence what is tolerated. It is also a way for an organization to protect itself legally (Hoffman, 2000; Blanchard, 2011). As per law enforcement agencies with social media policies, the IACP reported that 77.8% of the 553 agencies in the U.S. that were surveyed currently have a policy, 10.4% don't currently have a policy established, and 11.7% are in the process of developing one (IACP, 2015).

As a government organization, law enforcement agencies may run into a plethora of issues regarding the misuse and mismanagement of social media if a policy is not set in place. Employees must understand the policies and procedures set forth by the department. Moreover, a social media policy must address several operational uses: public relations and reputation management, public information during critical incidents, and recruitment.

Public Relations and Reputation Management

Public relations are an important and vital piece to any law enforcement agency, as seen by the divisions/units established to solely deal with public interest (i.e. Public Affairs Division, Public Relations Unit, etc.). The unit is the liaison between the community and the department. A public relations unit of an agency is responsible for being the voice of the department to the people, explain procedures and protocols more clearly, and coordinate the interaction between officers and the communities in a setting other than a traffic stop or a call for service. They are responsible for community outreach in terms of law enforcement, which aims to build relationships and partnerships with different communities (IACP, n.d). In order to build relationships, departments must establish a degree of transparency and their communities must know that they will keep them abreast of incidents of public interest. Communication and accessibility are very important components in outreach and engagement with citizens, all falling under the umbrella of public relations.

The ease and accessibility provided by social media facilitates the flow of

information and creates a dialogue between the agency and the community. In turn, this helps establish the agency as an official source of information in the eyes of the public. The agency's public relations division, through constant accessibility and response, must maintain the relationships that are built through online outreach and engagement. The public relations division is also the link between the media and the department. Because on-duty and off-duty contacts with officers has the potential to go awry and either not look good for the department or require additional explanation, they are also responsible for the reputation management of the department. Officers may be required to speak to the public on behalf of the department—on camera and online— as to what transpired.

Policy must reflect the secure use of social media for every member of the organization (IACP, see Appendix A). For example, for the individual managing their social media accounts, first amendment issues have the potential to arise on a daily basis. San Diego Sheriff's Department was met with a lawsuit following the censorship of one of their followers (Davis, 2015; Culver, 2015; The Washington Times, 2015). The reporting party of the lawsuit claimed at the sheriff's department violated his right of free speech when they removed one of his comments from their Facebook page. Although the lawsuit settled for $20, the San Diego Sheriff's Department paid approximately $23,000 in attorney fees and decided to delete their Facebook page. Similarly, the City and County of Honolulu and Honolulu Police Department were sued for banning users and

removing comments that the police department felt were deemed "unfavorable" to the agency. They were accused of violating American citizen's right to free speech and ordered to pay the plaintiffs of the lawsuit $31,000 (Hawaii Defense Foundation, 2012).

It is important for a policy to outline how to handle social media complaints and ensure that people's opinions are heard. A policy must also cover how to counter negative reactions. It is up to the agency to foster better community relations with the public by showing the human side of their agency. This is accomplished by face-to-face contacts (calls for service) and online through social media.

Policy should also establish an expectation of response and training. Meaning, if a citizen contacts the agency via social media, they should receive a response in a timely manner. Engagement and dialogue on social media should be an aspect of training that is mandated for everyone officially representing the agency.

Critical Incidents and Public Information

In law enforcement, the question is not if a critical incident will happen in any given city, but when. A critical incident can be defined as an event that differs from the normal range of everyday policing and human experience (Digliani, 2012), as seen in the Boston bombings, the Ferguson protests, the Baltimore riots, and the San Bernardino terrorist attack (Davis et al., 2014; Taylor 2015; Balko, 2015; Schmidt & Perez-Pena, 2015). All of these incidents have one thing

in common in terms of social media, they were highly covered, rumors were generated online, and the public had real-time information readily available. Again, agencies were expected to be the official source of information dissemination. With such time sensitive information and crucial communication, policy must clearly define the parameters of the release of information and the person(s) responsible for doing so.

Recruitment

Recruitment is an integral piece in any successful company and/or organization. It secures that the next group of people who will be in charge will adhere to the organizations' mission, goals, and values. The individuals responsible for recruiting the next generation of officers must understand organizational culture and the personal characteristics needed to do the job. Professionally trained recruiters, like those in the military, are actively targeting viable candidates who will fit the mold and carry their organization to the next level.

In law enforcement, departments are looking for candidates who are academically proficient, physically fit, and have a desire to be involved in the community. With law enforcement agencies today facing extreme challenges recruiting individuals, and the prime social media age being 18-29, law enforcement agencies should be using social media as a vessel to deliver their message to their potential recruits. In this capacity, recruiting individuals is a branding and marketing game to reach "Millennials"— a term coined to describe

a generation of Americans who were born between 1981-1997 (Keeter & Taylor, 2009; Fry, 2016). Millennials rely more heavily on social media as a source of news and information than prior generations. This means that when law enforcement agencies are aiming to recruit eligible men and women to fill their ranks they must seek them on the channels they use. Leveraging social media platforms to "market" themselves is very likely to catch the attention of their intended targets (Kumar & Mirchandani, 2012; Whiting & Deshpande, 2014; Pew Research Center, 2016).

Policy should stress the importance of social media usage in terms of recruitment. It should cover the tone, type, and message that the department aims to deliver. It is important for the message to be uniform across the board, and should be clear as to what is expected. Policy should state that every employee managing social media on behalf of the department should be trained and understand the message and how it should be delivered.

Law Enforcement Use of Social Media Platforms

Facebook

It is estimated that more than 1 billion people around the world use Facebook on a daily basis (Statista, 2016a). In America, 71% of adults with access to the internet use Facebook (Duggan, 2015). As of today, the demographics have slightly changed since the inception of Facebook in 2004 (Saul, 2014; Neal, 2016). A once adolescent driven platform has seen a 25.3%

20

decrease in teen users and a dramatic 80.4% increase in users over the age of 55. The functionalities of Facebook include, creating profiles (for both individuals and business/organizations) photo and video sharing, direct messaging between users ("friends"), a new live video chat component, and the sharing of links and other information.

In a survey of 553 law enforcement agencies in the United States conducted by the International Association of Chiefs of Police (2015), it was reported that 94.2% of the surveyed agencies used Facebook as a department in some capacity. Also reported, 82.5% of the agencies indicated they use social media in general for "public relations/reputation management" and 83.4% indicated that they use social media for "community outreach/citizen engagement."

Images that show interaction between officers and the community working together depict that engagement. If someone in the community can identify with what is being portrayed in the image, the likelihood of their perception towards law enforcement may be different from what negative images can portray on television. When citizens help officers solve crime that is the epitome of a community working together to keep each other safe, and if they can see that being recognized on social media, that is engagement.

Twitter

Twitter is a micro-blogging social media site with an estimated 310 million active monthly users (Smith & Rainie, 2010; Statista 2016). Twitter users can

publish pictures, videos, and short phrases in 140-characters or less. It is most

commonly recognized as a news-driven, fast information sharing and products

and services platform (Smith & Rainie, 2010; Davis et al., 2014; Barthel et. al;

2015). According to the survey conducted by the IACP, 71.2% of the U.S. law

enforcement agencies surveyed use Twitter as an organization (2015).

Of consumers who use Twitter as a news source, 59% percent of them

reported that they keep up with events on Twitter as they unfold. In terms of

breaking news, if a law enforcement agency is putting out up to date, relevant

and timely information, according to research, a vast majority of their community

will be following them throughout the ongoing critical incident. It is crucial for law

enforcement to be the voice of the incident; after all, they are in charge of it. It is

even more important for an agency to be able to speak directly to the

communities and convey exactly what they need without the concern of

information being misconstrued. Calls to action, be on the lookout, at large

suspects, road closures, areas to avoid, are all critical pieces of an investigation

that the public has the right to be made aware of. However, this comes with trust

and expectation. The public must trust that the agency will put out truthful and

timely information. If a situation is unfolding and the agency remains silent on

social media, the chances of the public relying on them for information will

significantly diminish. Instead, the public will turn to sources they perceive to be

filling the information gaps. Not only does this situation have the potential to

escalate panic and facilitate miscommunication, but also police/public relations

will be significantly harmed.

Objectives of the Current Study

If an agency is aiming at effectiveness and accessibility to all demographics, it must utilize a number of social media platforms. The functionality of each social media platform lends itself to different operational objectives: Facebook provides a mechanism for strengthening police/community relationships through community outreach and citizen engagement; and Twitter offers real-time information dissemination that can be used during critical incidents to communicate with the public. The use of multiple platforms increases the dissemination of information to a larger number of community members, constituents, and stakeholders. However, the effective use of social media requires the implementation of appropriate policy.

As discussed previously, a recent IACP (2015) survey of 553 agencies found that only 3% of survey agencies did not use social media. Perhaps one of the most interesting findings, 83.5% of agencies reported that social media has improved police-community relations in their respective jurisdictions. The survey did not, however, examine the content of what agencies were posting to verify whether general communications principles were being applied. It also did not specify how many agencies from each respective state participated. This study will focus on Southern California law enforcement agencies.

To advance research in this area the current study proposes a mixed

methodology. First, by surveying agencies about their policies and allocation of resources to social media operations this study aims to answer two questions

Q1: To what extent are law enforcement agencies implementing formal policies for social media use when engaging in (1) public relations and reputation management (2) dissemination of information during critical incidents, and (3) recruitment?

Q2: To what extent are agencies allocating resources for the development and maintenance of social media capabilities?

Second, through a content analysis of the social media accounts for 10 agencies located in Southern California, this study will investigate

Q3: To what extent does the content posted, adhere to recommended design and policy/guidelines set forth by the IACP (see Appendix A)?

Q4: Is their use of social media effective as measured by conventional social media metrics including engagement, retweets, favorites or likes, and comments?

In answering these questions, this research stands to contribute to the limited literature on the effectiveness of social media as a law enforcement tool. It also aims to provide a reference point for agencies that are considering social media and/or reevaluating their current strategy.

CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

This chapter describes the research design. It is a mixed method design, involving a survey of public information officers for Police and Sheriff's Departments with jurisdictions in Los Angeles, Orange, Riverside and San Bernardino County; and, content analysis of social media posted by a subsample of 20 agencies(10 Facebook, 10 Twitter) for a randomly selected two-week interval. In addition to describing the sampling process and data collection protocol, the discussion will also cover data coding procedures and explain how this information was analyzed.

Sample Selection

The first research component consisted of a survey aimed to capture how local law enforcement agencies are communicating with the public, specifically, their use of social media. A list was compiled of city and county law enforcement agencies (i.e. Sheriff's Departments and Police Departments) from Los Angeles County, Orange County, Riverside County, and San Bernardino County through a search of California law enforcement agencies on the Peace Officer Standards and Training website (2016). In total, there are 92 different agencies within the four counties, of those 92, only 79 (85.9%) utilize social media as a communication tool.

Then, each agency was then searched for on both Facebook and Twitter to code whether or not the respective agency had a primary account and had posted content within the last 6 months. If the agency had one of the social media accounts, it was coded "1", and "0" for lack of one of the mentioned accounts. In addition, the agency's website was visited to see if there was a connection between their primary agency's website and their social media. That was coded a "1" if there was a hyperlinked connection from their website to their social media accounts, and "0" if there was no hyperlink. Agencies that did not have any social media accounts were coded as "0". Of the 92 agencies within the Los Angeles County, Orange County, Riverside County, and San Bernardino County, 13 did not utilized any of the mentioned social media platforms. For the purposes of this study, the 13 agencies without social media were removed from the list, leaving 79 agencies (85.9% of agencies in the region use social media). Although sheriff's departments are comprised of multiple stations/divisions which a few have social media, their main headquarters account was used, as it is the hub of the organization.

Description of County Representativeness

Los Angeles County law enforcement serves a population of 10.1 million people with a land area of 4,084 sq. miles (U.S. Census, 2016). Los Angeles County is comprised of 46 different law enforcement agencies, one sheriff's department and 45 municipal police departments. Of the 46 agencies, 39 (84.8

%) use social media

Orange County covers a land area of 785 sq. miles and has a population of 3.1 million people (U.S. Census, 2016). There are 22 law enforcement agencies within Orange County. Those law enforcement agencies consist of one sheriff's department and 21 municipal police departments. Of the 22 agencies, three agencies do not use social media to communicate with their community: 86.4% of Orange County agencies use social media.

Riverside County spans 7,243 sq. miles and serves a population of 2.38 million people (U.S. Census, 2016). In Riverside County, there are 12 law enforcement agencies; one sheriff's department and 11 municipal police departments. Of the 12 law enforcement agencies, 11 are using social media as a tool for release of information: 91.7% of Riverside County agencies use social media.

San Bernardino County is the largest county in the United States, spanning 20,164 sq. miles, and serving a population of 2.1 million residents (U.S. Census, 2016). It is comprised of 10 municipal police departments and one sheriff's department. Of those 11 law enforcement agencies, the sheriff's department and eight municipal police departments use social media in some capacity: 81.8% of San Bernardino County agencies use social media.

Survey

Data Collection and Analytic Strategy

One Public Information Officer (PIO) from each agency was selected
(highest-ranking officer) for inclusion in the study. Email addresses and contact
numbers of those individuals were obtained by calling each agency.

Surveys were administered through Survey Monkey. An email was sent to
each agency personnel to include the survey disclaimer, IRB waiver and a link to
complete the survey. The email was sent to 79 different agency personnel, three
of those email addresses returned the email and were unable to be delivered.
Multiple attempts of contacting the appropriate employee at those agencies
failed. To solicit greater response, a reminder message was emailed one week
after the initial email. The response rate was 59% percent: Forty-five individuals
responded to the survey and one failed to complete the survey.

The survey consisted of following 21 questions:

1. Which of the follow best describes your agency?
   Sheriff's Department
   City Police Department

2. Please indicate the number of full-time sworn personnel in your agency
   1-25
   26-49
   50-99
   100-249
   250-499
   500-999
   1000+

3. What social media sites does your department use? (please check all that
   apply)
   Facebook

Twitter
Instagram
Periscope
Snap Chat
Other (please specify)

4. How often does your department post on social media?
Everyday
4-5 times a week
2-3 times a week
once a week
Less than once a week

5. In general, how frequently does your department post on social media?
(Facebook Twitter Instagram, Periscope, Snapchat, Other social media channels)
Hourly
Daily
Several times a week
About once a week
Less than once a week

6. Can the public access your social media sites from your department's website?
Yes
No

7. Is there a two-way communication on your social media sites (i.e. responding to messages, replying to comments and/or tweets)?
Yes
No
Somewhat

8. Do you have a social media policy/ disclaimer posted on your social sites that tells the public you will remove comments?
Yes
No

9. Does your agency post press releases on your social media sites?
Yes
No

10. If your agency posts press releases, which sites are typically used?
    (please check all that apply)
    Facebook
    Twitter (with a link)
    Instagram
    We don't post press releases...
    Other (please specify)

11. If your agency uses Twitter, how many followers does your main account
    have (i.e HQ account, PD account)
    1-1,000
    1,001-5,000
    5,001-10,000
    10,001-20,000
    20,001-30,000
    30,001+
    Not Applicable

12. If your agency uses Facebook, how many followers does your main
    account have?
    1-5,000
    5,001-10,000
    10,001-20,000
    20,001-40,000
    40,001-60,000
    60,001+
    Not Applicable

13. Who manages your department social media accounts?

14. How many people have access to post on behalf of your department?

15. Do those persons who have access to post on behalf of your department
    go through training?
    Yes
    No
    Other

16. What kind of training do they receive?
    Social Media Training
    PIO Training
    Webinar or tutorial for technical training

17. Does your department currently have a formal policy regarding social media usage on duty?
    Yes
    No
    In the process of creating
    Other (please specify)

18. Does your department have a formal policy regarding social media usage off duty?
    Yes
    No
    In the process of creating
    Other (please specify)

19. Please indicate what your agency regularly uses social media for (check all that apply).
    Public relations and reputation management
    Community outreach and citizen engagement
    Information dissemination during critical incidents

20. How is your agency using social media effectively for each of the uses checked above?
    Not using social media for this purpose
    Somewhat effective
    Fairly effective
    Effective use of this platform
    Exemplary use (model for other agencies)

21. How effective have you found your social media policy to be?
    Not effective
    Somewhat effective
    Effective
    Very Effective

The analytic strategy for this portion of the thesis is descriptive. The results from each question are reported and some bivariate analysis explores covariates of usage patterns.

Content Analysis

Irrespective of the continued, rapid development of communications and social media technology, researchers have identified a core group of platforms that are key to an effective social media strategy (IACP, 2015; Fontein, 2016; eBizMBA Rank, 2016). For this study, the top utilized social media sites by marketers, according to a list of consumers, were examined—Facebook and Twitter. For the purposes of this study and identifying effective communication and dissemination of information from a law enforcement agency, platforms that encourage a two-way communication are the focus.

The media content of 20 (10 coded for Facebook and 10 coded for Twitter) randomly selected agencies with social media accounts were investigated in the second research component. A 2-week observation period of January 8th to 21st. This period avoids major holidays when media personnel may take personal time off. During this time, all public relations and reputation management, information involving potential critical incidents, and recruiting content were examined (see Kavanaugh et al., 2012). It is expected that agencies with formal training and dedicated social media personnel will have greater effectiveness in the use of social media as measured by outcome (dependent) variables.

The outcomes (dependent variables) differ by platform. For example, on Facebook, users have the ability to "like" a post, "share" it with their friends, and comment on the post. All of these functionalities contribute to a number of people that each post has reached (Facebook, n.d.). For the two-week period, each

Facebook post was analyzed by the number of likes, shares, and comments (three outcome variables). The statistical information available on Twitter that was analyzed included, the number of posts retweeted (or shared), and the number of posts that were "favorited".

<u>Agencies</u>

Twenty agencies were randomly selected from the list of agencies invited to participate in the survey. Only agencies that had posted on their social media platform within the two-week designated study period were utilized. A two-week period coded for each agency on either platform; this gave ample time for each of the categories of efficient use to be posted by the agencies (public relations and reputation management, public information during critical incidents, and recruitment). An online random integer generator was used to randomly select the agencies. An excel spread sheet was created naming each agency with a numeric value next to it, the generator then randomly selected numbers and those numbers were used to identify the agencies to use in the analysis. When the agency did not have information (posts) to code within the two-week timeframe, a new list of numbers was then generated and a new randomly selected agency replaced the agency lacking information. Three agencies were replaced for this reason.

The randomly selected agencies chosen for analysis on Twitter comprised

of nine municipal police departments and one sheriff's department[1]. The selected

agencies for Facebook also included nine municipal police departments and one

sheriff's department[2].

Coding

Each social media site for the randomly selected agencies were analyzed

by individual post. For Facebook, the information that was coded from each post

were, the amount of "likes/reactions," the number of comments on the post,

number of shares, whether it contained a link, picture, or videos. The nature of

the message, image and/or photo, was classified as community outreach or

engagement, information during critical incidents[3], or recruitment: The message

classification protocol was modeled after the IACP Social Media Policy (IACP,

n.d.). The policy indicates the most effective potential uses of social media for a

law enforcement agency.

For Twitter, the information coded for each post included the number of

replies, retweets, and likes; whether the post contained a link and/or hashtag;

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[1] Downey Police Department, Glendora Police Department, West Covina Police Department, Inglewood Police Department, Murrieta Police Department, Monrovia Police Department, Pomona Police Department, Riverside Police Department, Beaumont Police Department, Los Angeles County Sheriff.
[2] Redlands Police Department, Arcadia Police Department, Santa Ana Police Department, Alhambra Police Department, Gardena Police Department, Santa Monica Police Department, Torrance Police Department, Whittier Police Department, Banning Police Department, San Bernardino County Sheriff's Department.
[3] Critical incidents include: Homicides, missing persons, wanted and dangerous suspects, human trafficking.

and whether the post contained a picture or video and the nature of them. The nature of the video and picture were also documented. For purposes of this study, also coded were the type of messaging contained in the post, whether public relations and reputation management, public information during critical incidents, and recruitment.

CHAPTER FOUR

RESULTS

Survey

Of the 45 agencies responding to the survey, a total of 37 responding agencies listed themselves as city police departments, while four departments listed as sheriff's (see Figure 1); four of the respondents skipped the 'type of agency' question for unknown reasons.
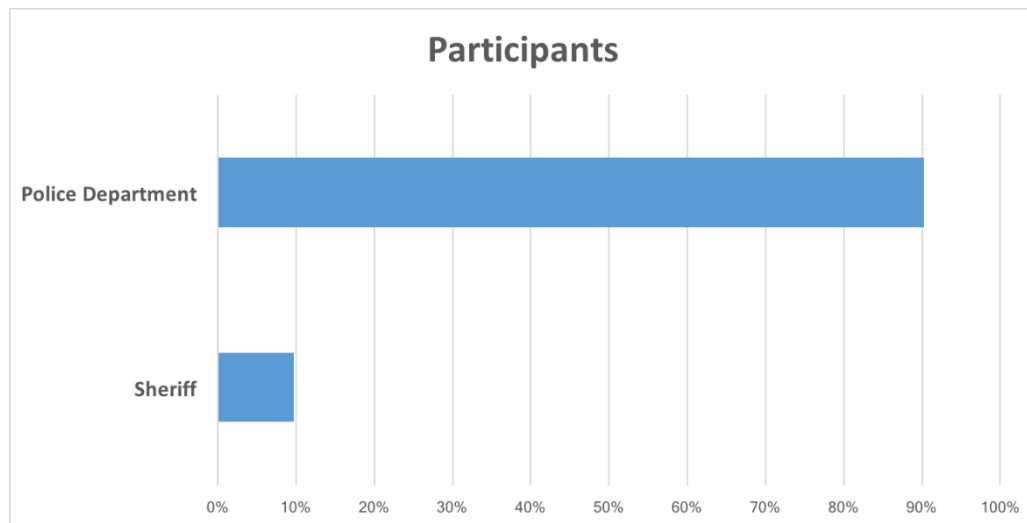

Figure 1. Survey Participants

Most agencies were small, with fewer than 100 sworn officers in their department (see Figure 2).
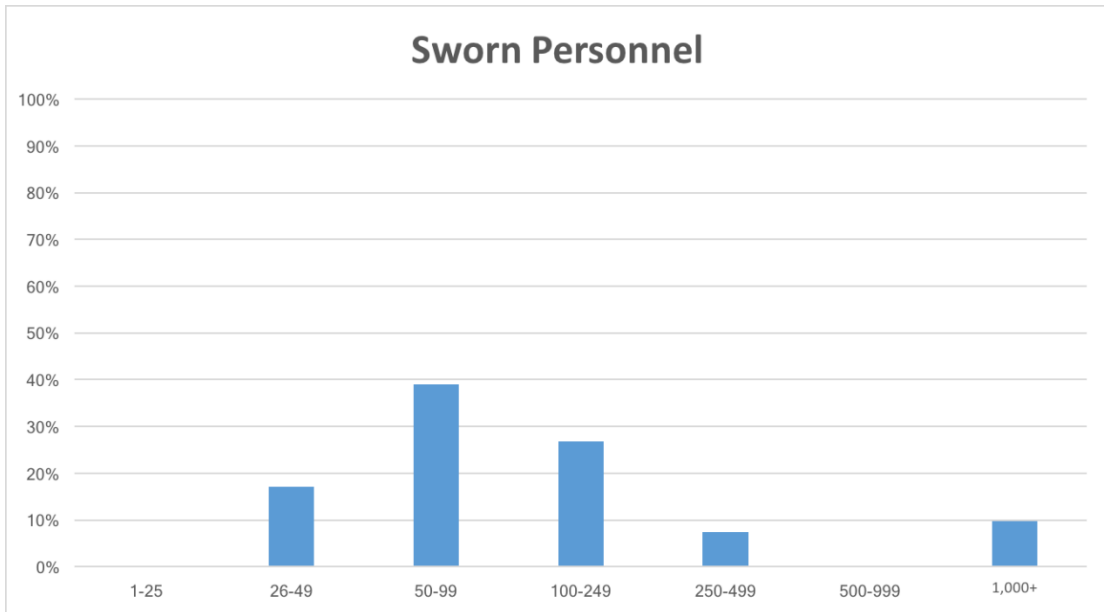
Sworn Personnel

Figure 2. Number of Sworn Personnel

A reported 87% stated that their agency used both Facebook and Twitter for official dissemination of department information. Forty percent of the responding agencies reported that they post on social media everyday, while 4% reported that their department posts less than once a week. The survey also asked about social media integration on their department website, in order to make social media access available to all who visit their website; 73% reported that they do have their social media linked to their department website. Of the areas explored in this study—public relations and reputation management, community outreach

and citizen engagement, information dissemination during critical incidents, and recruitment— 82% reported that they used social media for public relations and community outreach, with a reported effectiveness—somewhat effective, fairly effective, effective, and exemplary—of 57.8%. Also reported, 2% were not using social media for public relations, and 11% stated they were getting and exemplary use out of social media in terms of public relations.

Table 1. Message Type

Message Type	%	N
Social Media Usage		
Public Relations and Reputation Management	82.2%	45
Community Outreach	93.2%	45
Critical Incidents	84.4%	45
Recruitment	79.1%	45

Of the agencies who reported leveraging social media for community outreach (see table 2), 51% indicated that they felt their agency was using social media effectively for said community outreach. Approximately 9% (8.9%) reported that they were not using social media effectively for these purposes. As for providing information to the public during critical incidents, 42% reported they felt their department was using it effectively for those purposes. On the other

hand, 6.7% felt that they were only somewhat using social media the effectively communicate with their public during critical incidents.

Using social media as a recruitment tool can be very beneficial to a law enforcement agency; 42% of the agencies felt they were leveraging social media effectively in terms of recruitment. Policy effectiveness, was also measured, 44% indicated that their policy was effective, while 4% felt it was not, and 22% said it was only somewhat effective.

The survey asked participants to indicate which social media platforms their department used. The majority of the participants indicated that they used Facebook and Twitter (both 86.7%) (see Table 1 below). The least used social media platform among law enforcement agencies in Southern California is Snapchat (8.9%). Of the responding agencies, 87.8% had a formal On-Duty Policy to address social media usage, and 65.9% indicated an established Off-Duty Policy regarding social media.

Table 2. Social media Usage and Policy

Variable	%	N
Social Media Usage		
Facebook	86.7%	45
Twitter	86.7%	45
Instagram	60.0%	45
Periscope	13.3%	45

Snapchat	8.9%	45
Policy		
On Duty Policy	87.8%	41
Off Duty Policy	65.9%	41

The International Association of Chiefs of Police created a Social Media Model Policy to which the most effective use of social media by law enforcement is outlined (IACP, 2016). In the policy, there are four categories of potential usage that are the recommended design/guidelines to a successful social media presence—public relations and reputation management, community outreach, critical incidents, and recruitment. Of the responding agencies (45), 93.2% reported that they use social media for purposes of community outreach. Information dissemination during critical incidents was reported at an 84.4% of usage, public relations and reputation management at 82.2%, and recruitment at 79.1%.

Of the employees in charge of social media the majority reported that the duty is assigned to the Public Information Officer (PIO). A 25% reported that a sworn personnel (officer/deputy) is responsible for social media, while 15% were ran by other employees.

Table 3. Personnel in Charge of Social Media

In Charge of Social Media	%	N
Position		
PIO	58.9%	39
Sworn	25.6%	39
Other	15.5%	39

Social Media Coding

<u>Facebook</u>

Facebook allows their users a variety of functions to interact with posts from other users. "Likes" or "reactions (emojis)" allow users to express how they feel about a post without having to comment on it. Users can also comment on a post and share their thoughts. The last functionality that Facebook offers are shares. Sharing a post allows the user to share and given post on their account page.

Between the 10 agencies and the 2-week coding period, 133 posts were coded for Facebook. Information dissemination during critical incidents were reported as 62% of the entire coded posts. Public relations and reputation management was reported for 30.8% of coded cases. Recruitment post made up 2.3% of overall posts.

Table 4. Type of Facebook Message

Type of Message (N = 133)	Frequency	Valid Percent
Critical incidents/Public info	83	62.4
Public Relations/Rep Management	41	30.8
Recruitment	3	2.3
Other	6	4.5

Table 5. Facebook Engagement & Type of Message

	Means (SD)	F	Sig	Eta
	Shares (N=128)	5.14	.002**	.33
Type of Message				
Recruitment	206 (330.2)			
Critical Incidents	29.3 (63.1)			
Public Relations/ Reputation Management	33.1 (78.2)			
	Likes/Reactions (N=133)	6.27	.001***	.35
Type of Message				
Recruitment	481 (759.86)			
Critical Incidents	75.94 (104.95)			
Public Relations/ Reputation Management	198.98 (298.22)			
	Comments (N=133)	5.14	.002**	.32

Type of Message

Recruitment	53.3 (83.81)
Critical Incidents	9.73 (14.95)
Public Relations/ Reputation Management	11.37 (18.53)

*p < .05; **p <.01; ***p < .001

Of the likes/reactions, comments, and shares, each department varied in terms of engagement. On average, there were about 128 likes and reactions per post, 11 comments per post, and 33 shares. Table 5 reports that departments varied widely on these metrics and the variance among posts was high. For example, San Bernardino County Sheriff Department had the most posts, with 25 over the two-week period, they averaged 105 shares per post; however, the standard deviation of 156, suggests that certain post(s) did extremely well, while others were average. The department with the least amount of posts was Banning Police Department with 2 posts during the 2-week period. However, during that period, they averaged 98 shares, 16 likes, and 23 comments. Likewise, with San Bernardino, one of their two posts did very well in terms of engagement. In terms of relationship of the type of message (recruitment, critical incidents, and public relations/reputation management) and the engagement on Facebook, all messages showed a significant positive relationship. When posts contained these type of themes, they received higher likes, comments/reactions, and shares. When a post is shared many times, a department can drastically

increase their public reach and assure that more people see their message. This

is very crucial when a critical incident is unfolding and a department needs to get

information out to the masses.

Table 6. Facebook Agency Engagement

Agency		Shares	Like/Reactions	Comments
Alhambra Police Department	Mean	23.41	166.91	16.41
	Std. Deviation	32.32	259.09	20.85
	N	22	22	22
Arcadia Police Department	Mean	1.78	31.89	2.00
	Std. Deviation	1.56	27.69	1.94
	N	9	9	9
Banning Police Department	Mean	98.50	16.00	23.00
	Std. Deviation	137.89	21.21	32.53
	N	2	2	2
Gardena Police Department	Mean	.56	46.78	4.22
	Std. Deviation	.53	38.20	4.15
	N	9	9	9
Redlands Police Department	Mean	8.10	34.00	5.19
	Std. Deviation	11.25	53.30	8.68
	N	21	26	26
San Bernardino Sheriff	Mean	105.80	338.36	25.08
	Std. Deviation	156.47	359.27	34.43
	N	25	25	25
	Mean	27.14	68.57	7.86

Santa Ana Police Department	Std. Deviation	39.73	39.64	13.06
	N	7	7	7
Santa Monica Police Department	Mean	1.00	20.86	1.71
	Std. Deviation	.58	18.31	2.22
	N	7	7	7
Torrance Police Department	Mean	5.67	106.17	6.92
	Std. Deviation	11.93	107.66	6.69
	N	12	12	12
Whittier Police Department	Mean	33.86	97.36	7.79
	Std. Deviation	50.57	79.73	7.84
	N	14	14	14
Total	Mean	33.49	127.95	11.16
	Std. Deviation	82.58	221.55	19.84
	N	128	133	133

The content analysis also coded if there were media attached to the posts—pictures, video, and links to other sites/content. The most common practice was including photos in the posts, 78.2% of the coded posts (N=133) contained a photo (see Table 6). Videos were observed in only 7.5% of posts, and links to additional information and/or websites were seen in 47.4% of posts.

Table 7. Media in Posts

Media in Posts	%	N
Type of Media		
Photo	78.2%	133
Video	7.5%	133
Link	47.4%	133

Engagement on the Facebook posts were also coded by Like/reactions, Shares, and Comments. The table below (Table 7: Engagement Statistics) provides an average of the 10 participating agencies. An agency can be considered above average if their post is getting more than 32 shares for a single post, compared to other agencies. The number of comments per post, which can contribute to a two-way communication of the agency responds and keeps the dialogue going, is about 11 comments. The high standard deviation values are indicative of a single post that is engaging with a higher than usual number of people—i.e. more likes/reactions, shares, comments.

Table 8. Facebook Engagement Statistics

		Shares	Like/Reactions	Comments
N	Valid	133	133	133
	Missing	0	0	0
Mean		32.23	127.95	11.16
Median		2.00	53.00	4.00
Std. Deviation		81.253	221.550	19.838
Minimum		0	0	0

Maximum	587	1358	150

Twitter

Twitter is categorized as a news platform with fast information sharing, less opportunities and words—each "Tweet" or post is restricted to 140 characters—for engagement (Smith & Rainie, 2010; Davis et al., 2014; Barthel et. al; 2015). In total, 110 Twitter posts were coded for the agencies observed.

Of Twitter posts coded, Los Angeles Sheriff's Department had the most number of posts (N= 31). Their average number of retweets were 23 and their average number of likes were 42. Inglewood Police Department had only 6 posts during the two-week coding period, and their average retweets were 27, and 49 likes per tweet. Here there are two agencies within the same county, one large and the other smaller, with comparable numbers, even when there are fewer posts.

Table 9. Twitter Agency Engagement

Twitter Agency Engagement				
Agency		Replies	Retweets	Likes
Beaumont Police Department	Mean	.00	.44	.33
	Std. Deviation	.00	.52	.50
	N	9	9	9
Downey Police Department	Mean	.00	3.50	11.00
	Std. Deviation	.00	3.10	7.61
	N	4	4	4
Glendora Police Department	Mean	.15	2.08	7.00
	Std. Deviation	.37	1.75	7.07

	N	13	13	13
Inglewood Police Department	Mean	4.83	27.83	49.83
	Std. Deviation	7.49	45.75	75.80
	N	6	6	6
LA Sheriff	Mean	1.77	23.84	42.29
	Std. Deviation	2.06	27.32	58.14
	N	31	31	31
Monrovia Police Department	Mean	.25	2.25	3.75
	Std. Deviation	.50	1.50	5.56
	N	4	4	4
Murrieta Police Department	Mean	.50	.25	2.00
	Std. Deviation	.57	.50	.816
	N	4	4	4
Pomona Police Department	Mean	.50	5.21	4.71
	Std. Deviation	1.16	4.82	4.15
	N	14	14	14
Riverside Police Department	Mean	.38	4.06	8.13
	Std. Deviation	.80	3.08	7.79
	N	16	16	16
West Covina Police Department	Mean	.11	7.11	19.22
	Std. Deviation	.33	4.54	13.45
	N	9	9	9
Total	Mean	.94	10.57	19.45
	Std. Deviation	2.32	20.26	39.28
	N	110	110	110

Table 10. Type of Twitter Message

Type of Message (N = 110)	Frequency	Valid Percent
Critical incidents/Public info	72	65.5
Public Relations/Rep Management	24	21.8
Recruitment	4	3.6
Other	10	9.1

Type of message was also coded for Twitter using 10 different agencies. The vast majority (65.5%) use Twitter for critical incidents/public information. This finding is consistent with Twitter being a news-driven platform, as seen in the Boston Marathon Bombings (Boston Police Department Twitter, 2013; Smith & Rainie, 2010; Davis et al., 2014; Barthel et. al; 2015). The lowest use for Twitter was observed for recruitment purposes (3.6% of posts). This number is a fairly low average for purposes of advertisement and recruiting candidates.

Bivariate analysis found significant relationships between engagement— replies, retweets, and likes—and use of photos. The total number of posts coded for Twitter was 110, 68 of those posts contained photos. When the photos were attached, analysis showed a significant relationship between retweets and likes, and photos (retweets: P=.006; likes: P=.000). Meaning, when a post included a photo it was retweeted an average of 14 times and like 27 times (Table 11: Media and Engagement on Twitter). Likewise, the use of hashtags showed a positive relationship; when hashtags are used the engagement is higher (see Table 11: Hashtags and Engagement). An average of 38 likes and 19 retweets were seen on posts that contained a hashtag.

Through the analysis of the engagement, media, and usage of hashtags, results showed that media and using hashtags equals more engagement. When agencies included pictures, they experienced a higher number of replies, retweets and likes on their tweets. Due to the fact that Twitter is such a fast-paced platform, including an image is more likely to make the consumer stop and

interact with the tweet when there is something that catches their attention.

Visuals are increasing agency's engagement and exposure on Twitter. A

significant relationship was found between each function—replies, retweets, and

likes—and including a photo.

Table 11. Media and Engagement on Twitter

	Means (SD.)	t	Sig	Eta
	Picture (N=68)			
Engagement				
Replies	1.26 (2.83)	-1.90	.059	.18
Retweets	14.72 (24.62)	-2.81	.006**	.26
Likes	27.82 (47.86)	-2.94	.004**	.27
	Video (N=2)			
Engagement				
Replies	1 (.00)	.00	.969	.00
Retweets	12 (4.24)	.01	.920	.01
Likes	21.5 (6.36)	.00	.941	.00
	Link (N=79)			
Engagement				
Replies	.85 (2.05)	.63	.527	.06
Retweets	8.28 (16.41)	1.91	.058	.18
Likes	12.04 (19.09)	3.30	.001***	.30
	Hashtag (N=110)			
Engagement				

Replies	1.64 (2.92)	-2.40	.018	.22
Retweets	19.56 (26.05)	-3.63	.000***	.33
Likes	38.18 (59.39)	-3.94	.000***	.35

*p < .05; **p <.01; ***p < .001

Another significant finding, were the use of hashtags and engagement. When a tweet included a hashtag(s) the replies, retweets, and likes, increased. Hashtags are a way to categorize tweets—or posts—into one webpage, it is a way to unite a message through a common word or set of words (i.e. #SocialMedia). If an agency joins in on a message by using a hashtag, they are then increasing their chances of engagement and exposure. Thus, making the use of hashtags an integral part of an engagement strategy.

CHAPTER FIVE

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

Implications

Social media has become part of everyday life for the consumer and business/organization; it provides a platform to come together, share information, and voice an opinion (Choi & Lin, 2009; Stephens & Malone, 2009). Crisis situations only intensify the use of social media, so integrating the effective use of social media into a marketing and crisis management strategy is critical. Communications research discovered that only 29% of U.S. companies have a formal social media policy in place (eMarketer, 2010). This study focuses on the use of formal policies and the use of social media as a law enforcement agency.

The findings of critical incidents and use of social media was found to be consistent with the Social Media Policy of the IACP (2015). Using social media to share information about critical incidents was reported at a high percentage for both the survey and content analysis (survey = 84%; content analysis- Facebook= 62%, Twitter= 65%). As seen in the Boston Marathon Bombings, this component is critical for law enforcement (Davis et al., 2014; Police Foundation, 2014a). Had it not been for the excellent use of social media during and after the bombs the community would have relied solely on the news outlets to gather information, and as was seen, that information is not always correct. Law enforcement agencies have the most correct and up to date information, it is their

duty to share that with the public as quickly and correctly as possible given the situation. There will always be speculation on the part of the media and information that law enforcement official must conserve because of an ongoing investigation, but, providing critical information to the public is mandatory. Social media has made this duty much more accessible with less risk of speculation.

Of the participating agencies, only 65% stated their department had a social media policy (85% reported having on in place) regarding off-duty use of social media for personnel. The IACP (2015) recommends that departments have an off-duty policy which covers personal use of social media. It should state that personnel have the right to express themselves as private citizens on social media, to the extent that what is being posted does not damage working relations with the public. The IACP cautions departments to include verbiage that states that what is said even off-duty by a department employee is a direct reflection of the department. It is crucial for a department to establish this portion of a policy because what an officer/deputy/employee says online can very well become department business and affect the organization. Although departments cannot prohibit their employees from using social media, they can caution and prohibit material related to the image and department code of conduct, as specified in the IACP Policy.

A major finding of this study was the use of imagery and hashtag in posts. Results showed that when agencies use both pictures and hashtags their chances for engagement are much higher. This finding is consistent with

previous studies of strategy and engagement (Bourgeois, 2015; Doctor, 2014; Schulze et al., 2015; Mills & Plangger, 2015). If an agency is attempting to revamp or create a marketing/social media strategy it should focus on the use of photos and hashtags to get as much exposure and solicit reaction and engagement from the public. This reaction and engagement is what will "spread the word" online and help solidify the department as an official voice and news source. Becoming an official department news source is crucial for when a critical incident unfolds. The department will need to get information to the public as quickly and efficiently as possible. Establishing an online presence with these strategies is the foreground work any department must do before a critical incident happens.

Recruitment content found on social media was relatively low (Content analysis- Facebook= 2.3%; Twitter= 3.6%). In a time where recruiting has become more difficult for law enforcement agencies and their intended target being millennials, this number should have been much higher (Kumar & Mirchandani, 2012; Whiting & Deshpande, 2014; Pew Research Center, 2016). Departments should make social media an integral part of their recruitment strategy to appeal to their desired audience.

Departments should also continue to focus on imagery (picture and video) as part of their communications strategy. Communication during critical incidents, public relations and community outreach, and recruitment should be the most important goals in terms of social media and a progressive law enforcement

communications strategy. Recommendations by the International Association of

Chiefs of Police (IACP) stress the usage of social media for these purposes.

Limitations

As with all research, the current study is limited in some aspects, which

proposes future research to contribute to the limited literature. First, the survey

focuses on only Southern California law enforcement agencies, and cannot be

generalized across all agencies. Also, since crises are unpredictable, the time

period of the evaluation cannot be adequately applied to the use of social media

in a crisis; as research has shown that traffic on social media peaks in a crisis

(Jin et al., 2014). Categories had to be condensed during the analysis portion

due to multiple categories and 0 values while running the data. Another limitation

of the present study was that it failed to evaluate the quality and content of the

message and images contained in the social media posts. Evaluating message

sensation value can help law enforcement agencies target specific audiences for

their desired goals—public relations and reputation management, public

information during critical incidents, and recruitment—more effectively (Kang et

al., 2006; Morgan et al., 2003). Further research is encouraged to evaluate the

quality and content of images and video to measure the impact they have on

consumers.

A longer observation period would have been optimal in order to gather

more content to analyze and generalize the results. This study used only two

weeks, further research is encouraged to use a longer collection period. Lastly, further research should link the information gathered in the survey portion to the content analysis. This will help build stronger and more applicable results.

Conclusion

The purpose of using social media is to interact and engage. The more engagement a post has the more social a department is being. By being social and having more engagement a department virtually multiples their message. Results proved that attaching images and hashtags to posts creates more engagement. This should be the goal for any social media presence, more engagement. Social media is here to stay and integrating it into a comprehensive communication strategy is what any forward-thinking law enforcement agency should do. However, a law enforcement agency's decision to integrate social media as part of their communications strategy does not guarantee that the agency will be able to leverage it effectively. To get their message across they must share appropriate content designed for their communities—their intended audience.

As the results of this study proved, the messaging does matter. When posts shared content that followers wanted to interact with, the more engagement the post got; therefore, the more exposure the agency receive. More exposure and engagement equals the message being echoed, solidifying the agency as a credible, dependable source. Attaching photos to post also

creates more engagement. Providing a visual for the audience increase the chances of making them stop as they are scrolling through their newsfeed trying to decipher what is interesting.

Social media can be crucial to a department's recruitment efforts. If a department concentrated on reaching out to potential recruits through social media marketing, their chances are much higher at getting those candidates, seeing as the number of millennials who use social media are high. The objective is to go where they will receive and interact with your message. Lastly, consistency is key. Through the content analysis the number of posts both on Twitter and Facebook varied significantly. While some departments had over 30 posts in the two-week collection period, others had only two. Be consistent, capitalize on the content, and capture those 'behind the scene' photos/videos. You are only as good as your last post, make it count.

APPENDIX A

INTERNATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF CHIEFS OF POLICE SOCIAL MEDIA

POLICY

SOCIAL MEDIA

Model Policy

Subject

Social Media

Effective Date

August 2010

Number

Reference

Special Instructions

Distribution

Reevaluation Date

August 2011

No. Pages

4

I. PURPOSE

The department endorses the secure use of social media to enhance communication, collaboration, and information exchange; streamline processes; and foster productivity. This policy establishes this department's position on the utility and management of social media and provides guidance on its management, administration, and oversight. This policy is not meant to address one particular form of social media, rather social media in general, as advances in technology will occur and new tools will emerge.

II. POLICY

Social media provides a new and potentially valuable means of assisting the department and its personnel in meeting community outreach, problem-solving, investigative, crime prevention, and related objectives. This policy identifies potential uses that may be explored or expanded upon as deemed reasonable by administrative and supervisory personnel. The department also recognizes the role that these tools play in the personal lives of some department personnel. The personal use of social media can have bearing on departmental personnel in their official capacity. As such, this policy provides information of a precautionary nature as well as prohibitions on the use of social media by department personnel.

III. DEFINITIONS

Blog: A self-published diary or commentary on a particular topic that may allow visitors to post responses, reactions, or comments. The term is short for "Web log."

Page: The specific portion of a social media website where content is displayed, and managed by an individual or individuals with administrator rights. *Post:* Content an individual shares on a social media site or the act of publishing content on a site. *Profile:* Information that a user provides about himself or herself on a social networking site. *Social Media:* A category of Internet-based resources that integrate user-generated content and user participation. This includes, but is not limited to, social networking sites (Facebook, MySpace), microblogging sites (Twitter, Nixle), photo- and video- sharing sites (Flickr, YouTube), wikis (Wikipedia), blogs, and news sites (Digg, Reddit). *Social*

Networks: Online platforms where users can create profiles, share information, and socialize with others using a range of technologies.

Speech: Expression or communication of thoughts or opinions in spoken words, in writing, by expressive conduct, symbolism, photographs, videotape, or related forms of communication.

Web 2.0: The second generation of the World Wide Web focused on shareable, user-generated content, rather than static web pages. Some use this term inter- changeably with social media.

Wiki: Web page(s) that can be edited collaboratively.

IV. ON-THE-JOB USE

A. Department-Sanctioned Presence 1. Determine strategy

Where possible, each social media page shall include an introductory statement that clearly specifies the purpose and scope of the agency's presence on the website.

Where possible, the page(s) should link to the department's official website.

Social media page(s) shall be designed for

the target audience(s) such as youth or

potential police recruits. 2. Procedures

a. All department social media sites or pages shall be approved by the chief executive or his or her designee and shall be administered by the departmental information services section or as otherwise determined.

b. Where possible, social media pages shall clearly indicate they are maintained by the department and shall have department contact information prominently displayed.

c. Social media content shall adhere to applicable laws, regulations, and policies, including all information technology and records management policies. (1) Content is subject to public records laws. Relevant records retention schedules apply to social media content. (2) Content must be managed, stored, and retrieved to comply with open records laws and e-discovery laws and policies.

d. Where possible, social media pages should state that the opinions expressed by visitors to the page(s) do not reflect the opinions of the department. (1)Pages shall clearly indicate that posted comments will be monitored and that the department reserves the right to remove obscenities, off-topic comments, and personal attacks. (2)Pages shall clearly indicate that any con- tent posted or submitted for posting is subject to public disclosure.

3. Department-Sanctioned Use a. Department personnel representing the

department via social media outlets shall do the following:

(1) Conduct themselves at all times as representatives of the department and, accordingly, shall adhere to all department standards of conduct and observe conventionally accepted protocols and proper decorum.

(2) Identify themselves as a member of the department.

(3) Not make statements about the guilt or innocence of any suspect or arrestee, or comments concerning pending prosecutions, nor post, transmit, or otherwise disseminate confidential information, including photographs or videos, related to department training, activities, or work-related assignments without express written permission.

(4) Not conduct political activities or private business.

B.

b. The use of department computers by department personnel to access social media is prohibited without authorization.

c. Department personnel use of personally owned devices to manage the department's social media activities or in the course of official duties is prohibited without express written permission.

d. Employees shall observe and abide by all copyright, trademark, and service mark restrictions in posting materials to electronic media.

Potential Uses 1. Social media is a valuable investigative tool

when seeking evidence or information about a. missing persons; b. wanted persons; c. gang participation;

d. crimes perpetrated online (i.e., cyberbullying, cyberstalking); and

e. photos or videos of a crime posted by a participant or observer.

2. Social media can be used for community out- reach and engagement by a. providing crime prevention tips; b. offering online-reporting opportunities;   c. sharing crime maps and data; and d. soliciting tips about unsolved crimes (i.e., Crimestoppers, text-a-tip).

3. Social media can be used to make time-sensitive notifications related to a. road closures, b. special events, c. weather emergencies, and d. missing or endangered persons.

4. Persons seeking employment and volunteer positions use the Internet to search for opportunities, and social media can be a valuable recruitment mechanism.

5. This department has an obligation to include Internet-based content when conducting

back- ground investigations of job candidates.

6. Searches should be conducted by a nondecision maker. Information pertaining to protected classes shall be filtered out prior to sharing any information found online with decision makers.

7. Persons authorized to search Internet-based content should be deemed as holding a sensitive position.

8. Search methods shall not involve techniques that are a violation of existing law.

9. Vetting techniques shall be applied uniformly to all candidates.

10. Every effort must be made to validate Internet- based information considered during the hiring process.

V. PERSONAL USE

A. Precautions and Prohibitions Barring state law or binding employment contracts to the contrary, department personnel shall abide by the following when using social media.

1. Department personnel are free to express them-   selves as private citizens on social media sites to the degree that their speech does not impair working relationships of this department for which loyalty and confidentiality are important, impede the performance of duties, impair discipline and harmony among coworkers, or negatively affect the public perception of the department.

2. As public employees, department personnel are cautioned that speech on- or off-duty, made pursuant to their official duties—that is, that owes its existence to the employee's professional duties and responsibilities—is not protected speech under the First Amendment and may form the basis for discipline if deemed detrimental to the department. Department personnel should assume that their speech and related activity on social media sites will reflect upon their office and this department.

3. Department personnel shall not post, transmit, or otherwise disseminate any information to which they have access as a result of their employment without written permission from the chief executive or his or her designee.

4. For safety and security reasons, department personnel are cautioned not to disclose their employment with this department nor shall they post information pertaining to any other member of the department without their per- mission. As such,

department personnel are cautioned not to do the following: a. Display department logos, uniforms, or similar identifying items on personal web pages.

b. Post personal photographs or provide similar means of personal recognition that may cause them to be identified as a police officer of this department. Officers who are, or who may reasonably be expected to work in undercover operations, shall not post any form of visual or personal identification.

5. When using social media, department personnel should be mindful that their speech becomes part of the worldwide electronic domain. Therefore, adherence to the department's code of conduct is required in the personal use of social media. In particular, department personnel are prohibited from the following:

a. Speech containing obscene or sexually

explicit language, images, or acts and statements or other forms of speech that ridicule, malign, disparage, or otherwise express bias against any race, any religion, or any protected class of individuals.

b. Speech involving themselves or other department personnel reflecting behavior that would reasonably be considered reckless or irresponsible.

6. Engaging in prohibited speech noted herein, may provide grounds for undermining or impeaching an officer's testimony in criminal proceedings. Department personnel thus sanctioned are subject to discipline up to and including termination of office.

7. Department personnel may not divulge information gained by reason of their authority; make any statements, speeches, appearances, and endorsements; or publish materials that could reasonably be considered to represent the views or positions of this department without express authorization.

8. Department personnel should be aware that they may be subject to civil litigation for

a.   publishing or posting false information that   harms the reputation of another person,   group, or organization (defamation);

b.   publishing or posting private facts and personal information about someone without their permission that has not been previously revealed to the public, is not of legitimate public concern, and would be offensive to a reasonable person;

c.   using someone else's name, likeness, or   other personal attributes without that

per- son's permission for an exploitative purpose; or

d.　　　publishing the creative work of another, trademarks, or certain confidential business information without the permission of the owner.

9. Department personnel should be aware that privacy settings and social media sites are constantly in flux, and they should never assume that personal information posted on such sites is protected.

10.　　Department personnel should expect that any information created, transmitted, downloaded, exchanged, or discussed in a public online forum may be accessed by the department at any time without prior notice.

11.　　Reporting violations—Any employee becoming aware of or having knowledge of a posting or of any website or web page in violation of the provision of this policy shall notify his or her supervisor immediately for follow-up action.

APPENDIX B

INTERNAL REVIEW BOARD APPROVAL

December 14, 2016

CSUSB INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD
Expedited Review
IRB# FY2017-58
Status **: Approved**

Ms. Brittany Rios and Prof. Gisela Bichler
Department of Criminal Justice
California State University, San Bernardino
5500 University Parkway
San Bernardino, California 92407

Dear Ms. Rios and Prof. Bichler:

Your application to use human subjects, titled " Social Media and the Voice of the Department " has been reviewed and approved by the Institutional Review Board (IRB). The attached informed consent document has been stamped and signed by the IRB chairperson. All subsequent copies used must be this officially approved version. A change in your informed consent (no matter how minor the change) requires resubmission of your protocol as amended.

Your application is approved for one year from <u>12-12-16</u> through <u>12-11-17</u>. Please note the Cayuse IRB system will notify you when your protocol is up for renewal and ensure you file it before your protocol study's end date. Your responsibilities as the researcher/investigator reporting to the IRB Committee include the following 4 requirements as mandated by the Code of Federal Regulations 45 CFR 46 listed below. Please note that the protocol change form and renewal form are located on the IRB website under the forms menu. Failure to notify the IRB of the above may result in disciplinary action. You are required to keep copies of the informed consent forms and data for at least three years. Please notify the IRB Research Compliance Officer for any of the following:

1) Submit a protocol change form if any changes (no matter how minor) are proposed in your research protocol for review and approval of the IRB before implemented in your research,
2) If any unanticipated/adverse events are experienced by subjects during your research,
3) To apply for renewal and continuing review of your protocol one month prior to the protocols end date,
4) When your project has ended by emailing the IRB Research Compliance Officer.

The CSUSB IRB has not evaluated your proposal for scientific merit, except to weigh the risk to the human participants and the aspects of the proposal related to potential risk and benefit. This approval notice does not replace any departmental or additional approvals which may be required. If you have any questions regarding the IRB decision, please contact Michael Gillespie, the IRB Compliance Officer. Mr. Michael Gillespie can be reached by phone at (909) 537-7588, by fax at (909) 537-7028, or by email at mgillesp@csusb.edu. Please include your application approval identification number (listed at the top) in all correspondence.

Best of luck with your research.

Sincerely,

Caroline Vickers

Caroline Vickers, Ph.D., IRB Chair
CSUSB Institutional Review Board

CV/MG

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