THE USE OF SOCIAL MEDIA BY POLICE DURING A CRISIS

A Capstone Project Presented in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements For

Master in Communication Management, Faculty of Humanities

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Problem Statement

During the January 2015 hostage taking in Paris at a kosher supermarket by a terrorist, people posted more than 20,000 tweets about the shootings in the Vincennes district within an hour, using the hash tag #vincennes. Among them was a Paris police tweet that was the most retweeted, more than 1,400 times: "Avoid the area of #Vincennes Thanks #AlerteAttentat" (Robb, Alexandra, Macfarlane, Lewis and Fowler, 2015).

That message reflects how social media reshaped the way people communicate with each other, and how organizations and its publics communicate with each other. It was a message meant specifically for residents and passersby of a particular area of Paris, but it was received around the world. This was a tragic crisis that gripped the world. It suggested social media messages sent to the public during a crisis are now part of the overall response by authorities to an incident, that the communication component is as important to authorities in keeping people safe as is the police's tactical response.

During normative situations, social media is used to develop meaningful and mutually beneficial relationships between people, organizations and its publics. In particular, police services in Canada have been developing social media policy to reach the people they serve, much of the effort apparently focused on building and maintaining relationships (Model Policy, 2010; MacNeil, 2014). Social media is also being used by services to apprehend suspects of criminal acts (Keenan, Diedrich and Martin, 2013). It is also used during crises and people rely on the speed of social media for information, direction and contact. Mersham (2010) noted the changing parameters of communications in his study of emergency management during the 2009 tsunami threat to New Zealand:

> Public attention paid to the traditional mass media and their largely unidirectional channels of delivery is falling and is being replaced by an inclusive mix of instant and ubiquitous two-way communication, dialogue and public discourse, reinvented in social media as "the conversation" (p. 141).

This qualitative study, which uses semi-structured research interviews with police service personnel, proposes to review how police use social media in times of crisis, how normative relationships are exploited during crises, and if relationships established during normative times are altered, weakened or strengthened during times of crisis. This study will try to determine if there are certain requirements for social media officers in providing information to citizens who need help or guidance from their police service during a crisis.

The development of Web 2.0 has allowed people to communicate with each other via social media using platforms such as Twitter, Facebook and YouTube, to send text, audio, pictures and video to various communities and individuals, all of this increasingly on mobile smart phones. This has shortened distances and has allowed people to communicate at any time. The use of social media also allows for government agencies to reach its publics, such as municipal governments communicating with its citizens about seemingly mundane issues such as garbage pickup schedules or more pressing matters such as a burst sewer. Veil, Buehner, and Palenchar (2011) note public relations is about building mutually beneficial relationships, and Rand and Rodriguez (2007) in Veil et al (2011), argue the purpose of social media is to also build mutually beneficial relationships. Making linkages during normal times allows for the building of relationships and connectedness, and those linkages become conduits of information in times of crises. Using social media accurately and in timely fashion during times of uncertainty can alleviate fear and concern (Wendling, Radisch and Jacobzone, 2013).

Social media provides linkages between authorities and citizens during times of crisis, such as natural disasters including tornadoes and heavy snows, and man-made issues and crises, such as a road closure due to a traffic collision or a rampaging gunman. In times of crises, authorities will want to reach as many people as possible as soon as possible, with instructions to ensure safety, whether it may include evacuation or staying indoors.

Research Questions

Social media has become a normal way for people to communicate in a relatively short period of modern history. Beyond normal conditions of communicating, that is, about daily events of a routine day in business, between family members, among friends, or even among strangers arguing the finer points of politics and religion, there must be a definitive role for social media when a crisis hits a community. This study hopes to add to the body of literature in the growing field of research into social media use by police during crises. Much of the literature appears generally focused on emergency management by authorities and NGOs in general, but this study focuses on the police. It asks if there are common guiding principles in the use of social media by police to manage risk and during a crisis; if experience drives change in policy objectives for crisis communication; and the kind of dialogue created and sustained by social media during a crisis and what benefits, if any does it provide to community and police after the crisis.

The objective is to create a possibly more extensive if not updated checklist for social media use in a crisis based on experience, or to determine if the checklist items are just suggestions considering the volatile and unique nature of each crisis.

The research questions are in this study include:

RQ 1: What are the characteristics of social media usage by police during a crisis? Among police services in Canada, can one identify common guiding principles to manage risk during a crisis, and if not, what they should be?

RQ 2: Do police services have established social media policy and separate policy around social media during a crisis? Are there best practices around "do's and don'ts" for communicators using social media during a crisis, and how if at all does it differ from everyday use policy? Are there any recommendations or discussions among police around the need for differentiation?

RQ 3: How is the reputation of police services considered and applied in its crisis policy?

RQ 4: What kind of dialog is created and sustained between police and their publics by social media during a crisis?

RQ 5: How does the occurrence of specific crises affect change to the police service's social media strategy? Is the goal to develop a social media strategy that can adapt to the elements of each unique crisis?

During the interviews, two more issues became apparent during discussions. They involved whether communications specialists have a seat at the police services' leadership table and if they are instrumental in developing communications strategy as social media becomes more pervasive; and whether communications strategies still require a role for the media in disseminating information as social media expands, matures and evolves.

Literature Review

Crisis

Crisis has undergone much study, both by scholars and practitioners of communications. The Institute for Crisis Management defines a crisis as "a significant disruption that stimulates extensive news media coverage and public scrutiny and disrupts the organization's normal business activities" (Irvine, 1997). Barton (1993) defines crisis as a significant and unpredictable event. The event and its aftermath can adversely affect an entity

“and its employees, products, services, financial condition, and reputation” (p. 2). Coombs (2007) outlines a crisis as involving sudden and unexpected events that threaten to disrupt an organization’s operations and also poses financial and reputational threats. Crises could harm stakeholders physically, emotionally or financially.

Coombs (2007) in his Situational Crisis Communication Theory (SCCT) argues the primary focus of crisis managers should be to get people out of harm’s way and not make protecting the organization’s reputation their primary goal: “The first priority in any crisis is to protect stakeholders from harm, not to protect the reputation. Instructing information tells stakeholders what they must do to protect themselves from the physical threat of a crisis” (p. 165). Coombs argues a crisis creates a need for information to alleviate the uncertainty created for those affected. Stakeholders, he argues, require three things from the crisis managers before anything thing else: information to cope with the psychological stress of the crisis, knowledge about what is being done to end the crisis and ensure a similar one will be averted in the future. Corrective measures will ease stress, and a “ final component of adjusting information is an expression of concern for the victims.” (p. 165). For Coombs, that is when organizational reputation becomes a priority.

Coombs (2007) further suggests SCCT requires crisis communications managers craft a response strategy, particularly in defending reputation, based on the understanding of the details of the crisis. “Three factors in the crisis situation shape the reputational threat: (1) initial crisis responsibility, (2) crisis history and (3) prior relational reputation" (Coombs, 2007, p. 166). See Appendix 1 for a complete outline and description of Coombs’ crisis clusters. He explains identifying crisis types allows for specific framing communication in words, pictures and other images; while framing suggests how stakeholders perceive

problems and solutions. Coombs (2007) identifies three crisis clusters: the victim cluster where organizations are victims of a crisis, such as natural disasters and product tampering; the accidental cluster where unintentional or uncontrollable crises arise from errors; and the intentional cluster where the crises are considered purposeful to the organization.

Police would play a role in all three of Coombs' crisis scenarios, either by investigating any potential wrongdoing or responding to alleviate an imminent threat, whether natural or man-made. The SCCT model in general would apply to police crisis response, in that their response to a crisis depends on the characteristics of the crisis. Whether the crisis is victim-based, accidental or intentional is only relevant in the immediate moment as to how police respond. Usually though the police function in a crisis relates to Coombs' primary focus of the SCCT model, i.e., the immediate safety and security of stakeholders and in this case the public quite broadly.

Chan (n.d.) notes crises are "complex in nature, have disproportionate effects and can move at varying speeds" (p. 5). Irving (1997) divides crisis into four categories: Sudden Crisis, Smoldering Crisis, Perceptional Crisis and Bizarre Crisis (pp. 2-3; p. 5). A Sudden Crisis is an event that occurs unexpectedly and can affect the safety and wellbeing of clients, employees, the environment, physical assets, reputations, and revenues and stock value (Irvine, 1997). A Smoldering Crisis is an issue — which includes illegal employee activity, whistleblowers, public protests — that may or may not be known by a corporation or NGO, which could negatively affect the entity — financial or reputational — in due time if not handled correctly.

Irvine (1997) includes two additional crisis categories, Bizarre and Perceptional. Bizarre involves incidents that can be dangerous but are so "off-the-wall" that media attention

is extreme and the negative affects can be disastrous for an entity. An example includes the 1982 Tylenol tampering case when the company's pain medication was criminally tampered with and laced with poison. Perceptional involves issues that appear inconsequential to the entity but public perception of the issue causes the issue to "snowball" to a significant crisis.

For Griffin (2014), issues and incidents are divided into four areas but are defined somewhat differently (pp. 33-34). External crises involve policy or political issues, or controversies that cause social outrage. These are sector wide rather than organization specific. Internal issues relate to a firm's performance. External incidents involve sudden or extreme incidents beyond the control of the firm or organization impacted, while internal incidents involve situations deemed within control of the firm or organization involved.

Rhee and Kim (2014) suggest crises are "highly salient and impactful" (p. 454) and can act as agents for change, forcing reviews of long-held assumptions and practices within organizations, and permitting opportunities to bring change or reform. Howell and Taylor (2011) suggest an outcome of crises may be the formation of trust-based relationships between communicators and stakeholders during times of future crisis or disaster.

It appears, based on a limited amount of publicly articulated police crisis communications, that some police services have similar definitions and approaches. However, limited evidence in the literature suggests that the definition is similar but distinctively narrower. For instance, it does not involve stock prices or corporate value in terms of currency. It may be that police reputation relates to their ability to respond properly, quickly and with transparency. The University of Toronto Campus Police, for instance, defines a crisis as an event as an urgent and temporary event that threatens or causes harm to people,

property, the environment or it disrupts critical operations (Crisis Policy, 2005).

Organizational reputation is also crucial during crisis communication. Sohn and Lariscy (2014) note a reputational crisis involves a "major event that has the potential to threaten collective perceptions and estimations held by all relevant stakeholders of an organization and its relevant attributes" (p. 24). The researchers argue a reputational crisis has "a causal episode or triggering event that enables an organization to trace back to the source of the trouble" (p. 24). Sohn and Lariscy (2014) suggest that this separates a reputational crisis from a reputational problem. While reputational crisis is a reflective of a specific critical incident, a reputational problem stems from an ongoing weakness or shortcoming.

Freberg, Saling, Vidoloff and Eosco (2012) argue reputational management is an important component of any organizational crisis communications strategy: "Reputation management in the private sector often focuses on consumer sales; the public sector focuses on credibility" (p. 186). They note reputations can be diminished if publics determine a crisis response strategy to be ineffective or incompetent. The public sector, as Freberg et al (2012) and Coombs (1995, 2007) note, focus on ensuring public safety of citizens during natural calamities. They do not mention man-made crises that are criminally oriented, such as armed persons on a rampage, bombings, or arsons. Workplace violence is listed by Coombs as a private sector issue, which also include human and technical errors, rumours and accidents (1995, 2007). Nevertheless, Freberg et al (2012) suggest that despite the type of crisis, emergency messages,

> ought to explain the event, explain who is in charge and what they are doing to mitigate harm, and what people can do to protect themselves (Sandman, 2006; Seeger, Sellnow, & Ulmer, 1998). Effective crisis communications

> occur when public relations professionals use their "efforts to strategically manage and frame public perceptions of an event so that harm is reduced for both the organization and stakeholders (Reynolds & Seeger, 2005, p. 46, in Freberg et al, p. 186).

This framework would work well in either public or private sectors, especially when the crisis is a dynamic one where events are unfolding rapidly. Examples include the Boston Marathon bombing (Davis III, Alves, and Sklansky, 2014) or the shooting rampage by a man at the campus of the University of Texas at Austin (Weldon, R., 2011). Ultimately, they argue reputation is threatened or damaged if a public determines or perceives "a crisis response strategy to be ineffective" (Freberg et al (2013); p. 186).

There is a body of literature that separates risk communication and crisis communication (Reynolds and Seeger, 2005). Risk communication involves a "mature area of research and practice" involving public health initiatives (p. 45), whereas crisis communication is part of the crisis management function which aims to eliminate or soften the negative outcomes of a critical event for the benefit of stakeholders, the organization and industry (Coombs, 1999; Reynolds and Seeger, 2005). In arguing the differences, Reynolds and Seeger suggest the separation of the two fields is historic and institutional. Crisis communication is associated with public relations and in the managing and framing of public perceptions of an event. Risk communication deals with identifying risks to public health and the adoption of behaviour that would reduce those risks (2005, pp. 46-47).

Those definitions remaining constant in the general discourse of current crisis communications seems unlikely. *Risk* communication management appears to be taking on the meaning of identifying possible crisis events before a critical event occurs, and *crisis* communication management deals with an upheaval occurring in real time. Indeed, Reynolds

(2005) cites efforts by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention to combine the two into Risk and Crisis Communication (Reynolds and Seeger, 2010). Reynolds (2004) argues the Crisis Communication Lifecycle consists of five stages, each with its own unique elements: Pre-crisis, Initial, Maintenance, Resolution and Evaluation. Appendix 2 contains a flow chart outlining Reynolds' full descriptions of the five stages.

Best Practices

Best practices are defined as the popular approach or benchmarking processes in improving organizational and professional practice in a given field (Seeger, 2006). Benchmarking is the way to identify industry standards by reviewing the results of industry leaders and experts, while process improvement revolves around "systematic overview, analysis and assessment of organizational processes in an effort to improve quality and efficiency" (p, 233). Generally, best practices become the models for others in similar fields to adopt and adapt. Seeger (2006) applies the theoretical groundwork for best practices to crisis communications. Coombs (1999) and Seeger, Sellnow and Ulmer (2003) note the strategy of the response is determined by the details of the crisis. Nevertheless Seeger (2006) suggests generalizations can be offered as the backbone to crisis communication. He notes the distinguishing details of a crisis or disaster are important because they will frame the type of response by emergency responders, and that framing will in turn affect the "requirements for effective communication" (p. 235). Blame for the critical event will always play a role in the crisis, but Seeger (2006) notes blame is secondary to the quality of information — accurate, timely and useful — and "the need to help victims and restore order" (p. 235).

Much of the Seeger's literature stems from research he helped devise into a 10-point best practices in risk and crisis management for the National Center for Food Protection and

Defense, an arm of the U.S. Department of Homeland Security. The NCFPD's list of best practices involves: making risk and crisis communication an ongoing process; pre-event planning and preparedness; foster partnerships with publics; collaborate with credible sources; connect with media and remain accessible; listen to public concerns and know the audience; communicate with compassion, concern and empathy; be honest and open; accept uncertainly and ambiguity; and give people meaningful things to do (Seeger, 2010, p. 457).

The World Health Organization in 2004 offered an outline focusing on basic principles of risk communication: build trust; announce early; and being transparent, respecting public concerns and preparatory planning (Jakubowski, 2004; pp. 27-28).

An ineffectual communications plan can be costly. American Red Cross President and CEO Dr. Bernadine Healy resigned about a month after the September 11, 2001, terror attacks on New York in part because of her inability to meet the communications requirements during that crisis. Messages internally, including to donors, volunteers and employees, and externally, including to media and other relief organizations, were unclear. In particular, the messages were unable to explain how donations would be distributed among victims' families (Schwartz, 2010). Recommendations provided by Schwartz suggest: quicker and more robust responses to media; specific and clearer information; learning from past errors in correcting or confronting rumours and misconceptions; and in preventing future issues, making education to external and internal publics about Red Cross disaster initiatives at the local, state and national level; initiating mandatory crisis communications training and that only those trained deal with media; setting one central source of information to avoid confusion; immediately responding to queries or to correct rumours and inaccuracies; and truthfully discussing donor funds (pp. 505-506).

A guide by Palenchar and Heath (2006) for responsible and ethical advocacy within strategic risk communications involves: working with the community; acknowledging that stakeholders want to control factors that can be negative; acknowledging uncertainty and using it to guide research; allowing community members to play a role in decision-making systems; building trust through community outreach and collaborative decision making; acknowledging the benefits and harms in communications; participating in communications reviews to understand publics' concerns; and recognizing personalized decision making process community members apply.

With transparency, Palenchar (2008) argued the publics' right to know is part of the strategic and ethical elements of risk and crisis communication, and that it demands community dialogue to assist formulating emergency policies and plans. Right-to-know initiatives, Palenchar argues, are part of "a free, open, accurate information flow among all stakeholders for better decision making" (p. 22). Ropeik (2006) in his critique of the NCFPD's best practices suggests risk and crisis communications differs from other types of communication because feelings of risk shape perceptions. "How we feel about a risk determines how we behave. Our perceptions of risk are a mixture of fact and feeling, data and gut instinct, intelligence and intuition" (p. 253). Emotion plays a strong role, Ropeik notes, because the brain responds to fear before it thinks. He says that is a key element in understanding the development and implementation of crisis communication. He notes communications experts

> identify the risk perception characteristics involved — trust, control, dread, future generations, uncertainty, familiarity, availability, natural or manmade, equity, availability, etc. — and use them to craft a combination of actions, words, and other messages responsive to the concerns and values of the information recipients in order to help people make more informed decisions about threats to their health and safety (Ropeik, 2006,

p. 255).

Reynolds (2005) argues for the most part, people under stress from a crisis do not act irrationally or in a panic. She argues information — what is known, what is not known, and how the information is being sought — helps empower people during a crisis.

Social Media and Social Networking

Web 2.0 expanded the ability and versatility of the Internet (Grunig, 2009; Smith, 2009). Nations (2014) suggests there is no clear definition of Web 2.0, but there are however, a marked characteristic in users' ability to communicate compared to earlier forms and Web 2.0 "is the process of putting us into the web" (Nations, 2014). He argues the Internet has transformed into a social web where people reach out, connect and converse with others. Smith (2009) adds Web 2.0 is about people "communicating, contributing and collaborating. Results come from the wisdom of crowds — for better or worse." (p. 1).

Fox and Madden (2006) define Web 2.0 by what it does or allows to be done rather than by what it is:

> When the term emerged in 2004 (coined by Dale Dougherty and popularized by O'Reilly Media and MediaLive International), it provided a useful, if imperfect, conceptual umbrella under which analysts, marketers and other stakeholders in the tech field could huddle the new generation of Internet applications and businesses that were emerging to form the "participatory Web" as we know it today: Think blogs, wikis, social networking, etc…
>
> Still, there has been little consensus about where 1.0 ends and 2.0 begins. (paras. 3 and 6).

Kaplan and Haenlein (2010) suggest Web 2.0 is the platform for the evolution of social media where software developers and users modify content and applications in a

participatory and collaborative fashion. Blank and Reisdorf (2012) suggest Web 2.0 is both substance and process where the platform provides a structure, and if people find the platform has value, a network develops. The platform and network allows people to create content, engage, communicate and gather information.

Safko (2012) defines social media as the media people use to be social. He expands this simple construct by suggesting people use various technologies and platforms available to them to "effectively reach out and connect with other humans" (pp. 4-5) allowing them to develop relationships and build trust.

Wendling, Radisch and Jacobzone (2013) identify five types of social media. Social networking includes sites as Facebook and MySpace where people share common interests; content sharing media such as YouTube and Flickr; collaborating knowledge sharing media including Wikis and podcasts; blogging social media where facts, values, emotions and expectations are shared; and volunteer technology communities, such as Ushahidi and Sahana, social media platforms made for risk and crisis communications.

The impact social media has had on communications is profound. Edosomwan, Prakasan, Kouame, Watson, and Seymour (2011) describe it as a phenomenon that transformed the way people interact and communicate on a global scale. Grunig (2009) suggested social media is a two-way conversational tool that is user generated and a common element is that communications professionals have lost control of the flow of messages. While social media can be a strategy for communicating (Edosomwan et al, 2011), social networking is the act of engaging on specific sites within its system. Boyd and Ellison (2008) go further by separating the definitions of social networking and social network sites. They

suggest social networking promotes relationship initiation and building, among friends and strangers. Social network sites are web-based services allowing people to

> "(1) construct a public or semi-public profile within a bounded system, (2) articulate a list of other users with whom they share a connection, and (3) view and traverse their list of connections and those made by others within the system. The nature and nomenclature of these connections may vary from site to site" (p. 211).

Chan (n.d.) suggests social media is defined as a "new form of media that facilitates social interaction and communication through the use of online Internet-based platforms" (p. 4). He argues social media tools are superior to traditional media because of five specific characteristics: collectivity of people sharing similar interests on a global stage; connectivity links people to resources available on the Internet; completeness allowing input to be available for others to view and share; highly visible content that keeps people appraised of the activities of others; and collaboration where people share and contribute, and provide feedback (p. 5).

Research into the use of hashtags during extreme weather crises by Lachlan, Spence, Lin, Najarian and Del Greco (2014) suggest the use of localized hashtags, terms created by people, media and entities in the affected area, carry more credibility among users of the information. When a government agency, such as a police service, promotes a hashtag, it "is taking ownership of the information distribution during the event" (p. 528). Likes on a Facebook page, however, reflects the extent of a page's network. Wasike (2013) notes Twitter's strength is that it is best suited for audience interaction in real time, is able to reach large audiences "with pithy outbursts of information" and is an adept news-breaking tool (p. 7). He notes Twitter works first as a tool for news coverage and then as a mobilization tool.

Social Media, Crisis and Police

Police in Canada are comprised of a series of organizations at various levels charged with preserving public order, peace, and detecting and prevent crime. Municipal, provincial and federal governments and their various agencies, such as the military, or as Special Constables for Crown corporations, employ police officers. Railway companies, such as CN and CP, are the only non-governmental entities allowed to employ police officers. Their duties as officers include arresting suspects of criminal acts, and providing "emergency assistance to victims of accidents, crimes and natural disasters" (Human Resources and Skills Development Canada, 2013).

The Police Act of Ontario (RSO 1990), which can be argued, is representative of the country's various police services acts, outlines the minimum core services to be provided by police to the public. In Section 4(2), it speaks to: crime prevention; law enforcement; and assistance to victims of crime; public order maintenance; and emergency response. In the opening declaration of principles, the Act states police services need to ensure: the safety and security of everyone and property; safeguarding the guaranteed rights in the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms and the Human Rights Code: cooperation between police and communities; respecting victims of crime and understanding their needs; sensitivity to the multicultural and pluralistic character of the province's society; and ensuring police are representative of the societies they serve (RSO, 1990).

There is a limited but growing body of scholarly work available with the specific blend of social media, crisis communications and police. There is however a sizeable body of research into the use of social media during a crisis, whether man-made or natural, stemming from earlier research on the nature of the Internet, the World Wide Web and its technological

abilities with the body of research literature in crisis management focusing on corporations, government agencies and NGOs. Much of the research into non-corporate crisis communications focuses on health related crises. There is a large body of work delving into crisis and risk communications, most however from a corporate viewpoint. Nevertheless, there is an overlap of work where the theoretical implications of crisis and risk communications research apply to any field.

In its study of the 2011 floods in Queensland, Australia, the Queensland Police Service determined that the benefits of using social media during a disaster allows for the ownership of information, which in turn ensures reputation, timeliness, accuracy and transparency. This was achieved with the movement of information to ensure there was no vacuum of official information; enhancing reputation by becoming the go-to source for information; using owned-media to provide information without media filtering; stemming the growth of rumours or false information; providing a platform for immediate feedback and response; use by media as a source of information and a source of information for QPS officers who may have temporarily cut from other forms of communications, such as two-way radio links (QPS, 2011).

Police in Devon, Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly (Partnership, n.d.) provide a "how-to" guide of its crisis plan in its Local Resilience Forum (LRF), linking emergency responders, medical organizations, maritime responders, the Ministry of Defense, environmental agencies, public and private stakeholders, community "resilience" leaders, transportation authorities, the British Red Cross and volunteer organizations with a single plan they all can refer to in the tactical response, but also in the messaging. Goals include using social media in reassuring the public, providing updates to the public and to the media.

Messaging is organized by the lead agency, which varies based on the crisis, which determines hashtags and key words and it transmits all messages. Hourly media updates are also provided (Partnership, n.d.).

The LRF offered templates to messaging, which in some ways mimic media styles. New messages on social media begin with the word "BREAKING" to emphasize importance, increasing chances it will be shared. Requests for help should begin with empathic wording, such as "We need your help…" (Partnership, n.d.)

Davis III, Alves and Sklansky (2014) in their study of police social media messaging during the Boston Marathon Bombing note social media allows for three characteristics important for law enforcement: scope, structure and tone. But the challenge identified by Davis III et al (2014) is for police communicators is in "shaping the tools" rather than having the tool shape them (p. 7). They argue the scope of social media has grown to staggering proportions, reflected by the Pew Institute (2014) which notes 74 per cent of adults use social media (Social Networking Fact Sheet, 2014). The largest group is the 18-to-29 year old group at 89 per cent, 82 per cent for the 30-to-49 age group, 65 per cent for the 50-to-64 age group and 49 per cent for the 65 and older age group. Pew (2014) statistics also show 79 per cent of those among who earn less than $30,000 a year use social media. Davis III et al (2014) add the function of speed to the scope category, making social media an integral tool for reaching the masses quickly (p. 8).

The structure outlined by Davis III et al (2014) builds on into Grunig's theories of communication models, in particular the two-way symmetrical model of public relations. While Grunig focused on the two-way symmetrical model as a public relations model, other

scholars in risk and crisis communications apparently view it as a communications model capable of releasing life saving and public-right-to-know information which will have residual benefits in reputational management (Freberg et al, 2012). Grunig and Hunt (1984) argue the model requires the development of the excellence model of public relations, where excellent collaboration is a key value in ethical decisions, as the process of dialogue with different people allows for listening, arguing and negotiating. Not everyone will get what he or she want, but dialogue will lead to the most ethical outcome. Grunig, Grunig, Sriramesh, Huang and Lyra (1995) note two-way models construct continuums ranging from "persuasion on one end (two-way asymmetrical) to conflict management (two-way symmetrical) on the other" (p. 164). Further, Murphy (1991) used game theory to suggest most public relations practitioners have mixed motives, by both serving as advocates for their organizations and as mediators between the organization and its strategic publics. This may be especially so for law enforcement officials who are, ultimately, public servants, and are potentially representative of everyone. Without acknowledging Grunig et al, Davis III et al (2014) determined the two-way conversation, as an important communications model to reach and engage desired publics as,

> … social media can give the police an opportunity to have a two-way conversation with the community. More than that, it means that when the police use social media, they join — for better or worse — an ongoing, multidirectional conversation that can have hundreds or thousands of participants at any given time (p. 8).

Davis III et al (2014) suggest police are possibly better capable in conducting and maintaining genuine conversations on social media — the tone — than many other professionals because of the experience they garner in their daily routines including face-to-face meetings with a myriad of publics of various cultures and sub-cultures, both in routine and hostile situations.

Weldon (2011) notes the phenomenon of serial social media transmission of messages spread among groups or organizations develops and maintains mutually beneficial relationships or reciprocal relationships. Messages have the chance of being spread farther through those connections, suggesting a wider dissemination of important messages. Further, Weldon (2011) argues the responsibility of maintaining social media among police should not be withheld to specific personnel to satisfy organizational hierarchies: "Instead, find someone who 'gets' social media, and will serve as a knowledgeable and responsible voice to your community" (p. 1). Her finding is similar to that of Queensland Police (QPS, 2011) where it recommends police streamline its clearance procedures to "trust your staff to release information" in procedures that are part of standard operating practice and that it must maintain its two-way communicating capabilities (p. vii).

Lukaszewski (1999) in his comprehensive study suggests the communication response to a crisis is the most difficult aspect of crisis management. He argues negative outcomes can be expected if communications fails to meet community standards and expectations. There are seven dimensions of crisis communication management in his research, including operations, victims, trust and credibility, behaviour, professional expectations, ethics and lessons learned.

Lukaszewski notes operations involve acknowledging a problem and easing a community's pain, restoring confidence in the entity or brand, rebuilding relationships while easing media coverage because the entity is doing what the community expects (p. 3). Complicating the process, Lukaszewski (1999) suggests victims designate themselves and decide when they no longer are victims. Communicators should acknowledge victim expectations and emotions — such as anger, disbelief, agony, and desire for help — and respond to them.

Trust and credibility fall into the realm of reputation and are based on past behaviours and if behaviours match expectations, and is enhanced by transparency. “Trust is the absence of fear” (Lukaszewski, 1999, p. 9). Behaviour of the entity, involving empathy, meeting victims’ needs, accepting responsibility, using appropriate language, consistency, preparation, being open to communicating, and dealing with victims will enhance trust. “Good crisis plans are structured to work directly against, anticipate, and eliminate negative behavior patterns” (Lukaszewski, 1999, p. 11). Professional expectations and best practices are increasingly used as a measure to judge the communications response to a crisis while Lukaszewski (1999) suggests using principles “will counter the negative impact of a situation the public, employees, and other audiences find morally troublesome. Moral issues require individuals to illustrate their personal belief systems through their behavior” (p. 14). The public also expects entities to publicly discuss lessons learned from a crisis, a step towards rebuilding or strengthening trust and, if necessary, being forgiven by the public and employees (Lukaszewski, 1999).

Lukaszewski (1999), in short, suggests organizations’ should “behave as though your mother was watching and you have to explain your decisions and actions to her over dinner tonight” (p. 20). Communicators must help quickly restore normalcy, especially for direct victims. Communications plans should deal with the problem that caused the crisis, assist victims, communicate with and get help from employees, communicate with the community that is indirectly affected and manage the media and interested parties.

Grunig (2009) explains the web changed public relations practice, and with it communicating, arguing it will continue to evolve if the web is used to its full potential. It would make public relations practice more “global, strategic, two-way and interactive,

symmetrical or dialogical, and socially responsible" (p. 1). Grunig (2009) notes the defining element in social media is the inability, or at least the constant struggle, by communications professionals to control the flow of messages, influence and information. "Anyone now can be a journalist, members of publics can talk freely to each other about organizations, and information is widely available to everyone with little cost and effort" (p. 4). Situational theory of publics suggests publics control the exposure of the messages sent they are exposed to, becoming active publics, passive publics or non-publics (Grunig, 1997; Kim, 2006; Kim and Grunig, 2011). Grunig (2009) notes issues that sprout publics are created by the actions of an organization, both internally and externally, or where publics seek assistance, guidance or a solution from an organization or organizations to problems or issues.

The explosion of the Internet and its technological capabilities, specifically the development of Web 2.0 and the interaction it allows through social media platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram among many others, allows for the maturation of Grunig's public relations model of two-way symmetrical communication (Grunig, 2001; Grunig and Huang, 2000; Hon and Grunig, 1999). This two-way conversational model establishes a foundation for the development of mutually beneficial relationships.

Bertot, Jaeger and Grimes (2010) argue governments and their agencies have attempted to increase openness and transparency, and in some cases reduce corruption, with the use of various information and communications technologies (ICTs). Their work focuses on ICTs as agents of political change, democracy building and anti-corruption efforts in specific countries where free communications interaction is not a norm. Bertot et al (2010) note, "The social media applications of the Internet…have the potential to enhance existing and foster new cultures of openness" (p. 267), which, in addition to Grunig's model that

fosters mutually beneficial relations, channels of conversation and discourse are opened and are maintained. Sutton, Spiro, Johnson, Fitzhugh, Gibson, and Butts (2014) studied the phenomenon of serial social media transmission, where information is transmitted from one person or source to another and is a focal point in their study of emergency communications.

A number of models of communication using social media during a crisis have been studied. One such model is the Socially-mediated Crisis Communication Model (SMCC), which studied the relationship between the effects of the crisis information format (How Audiences Respond, 2011), that is media, social media, and word-of mouth, and the source on the audiences' acceptance of crisis strategy (p. 1). The study of the model showed that social networking accounts for about one of every 4.5 minutes spent on the Internet, and during a crisis, users of social media increase their time spent on the platforms. Starkie (2012) noted that Montreal police's social media following grew five-fold to 55,000 from 10,000 followers during the 2012 protests. In a 2010 crisis situation at the University of Texas at Austin, Weldon (2011) noted the number of followers to the university's police Facebook site ballooned to more than 10,000 from 400, and the number of followers remained constant following the resolution of the crisis.

Freberg (2012) captures the issue of the use of social media use during a crisis succinctly in her research into responses to a product recall: She argues there is urgency in providing reliable information to as many people as possible during a crisis.

> The viral spread of information on social media could be viewed as an advantage to crisis professionals who must reach the public as quickly as possible. On the other hand, authoritative voices might have difficulty being heard against the noise of the many-to-many communication model made possible by social media. Crisis professionals need a solid, empirical

> foundation to maximize the advantages of social media while mitigating its disadvantages (p. 416).

Howell and Taylor (2011) call for the establishment of guidelines to use the Web and social media. They describe the tools and platforms as "sophisticated, evolved, and designed for social distribution and redistribution" (p. 417). They note that during a crisis, the response and management of reputation requires an understanding of the dynamics of the tools and how to manage information and how to respond to information, especially negative comments. Their research into 1,146 people who used a particular Facebook page during an earthquake in Japan found that more than half were between the age of 25 and 44. Other findings in their research are also salient in this study: in the event of a crisis, emergency or disaster, almost all the respondents (87%) reported that they would use social media to communicate with loved ones 'to let family/friends know they're safe'; more than three quarters of the respondents (76 per cent) would use Facebook to provide information to others, via postings, and 24 per cent would tweet; and the majority of respondents (89%) assert that social media is useful in these situations (p. 420).

Veil et al (2011) note digital mobile devices and computer devices are changing the way people communicate. They collated a best practices checklist for incorporating social media in crisis communication (pp. 111-112): establishing risk and crisis management policies where communications personnel were involved in the decision-making; planning pre-event logistics where the organization plans for crises and provides regular revisions to plans; developing partnerships with the public, which has the right to know about the risks they face; listening to the public's concerns and understanding the audience; communicating with honesty, candour, and openness; collaborating and coordinating with credible sources; meeting the needs of media; communicating with compassion, concern, and empathy;

accepting uncertainty and ambiguity; providing messages recommending actions clearly and consistently, and why; and accounting for accounting for cultural differences.

Gonzáles-Herrero and Smith (2008), focusing on corporate or private sector crises, devised a number of checklists, where for each phase of the crisis continuum they identified: planning-prevention, issues management, crisis and post-crisis. Within the planning-prevention stage, their suggestions include developing an online crisis manual which deal with a number of actions, including countering rumours and bad information; developing guidelines for use of the Internet and Intranet; identifying influencers; and developing dark sites which become active in times of need. Issues management requirements include assigning resources to identified issue management tasks; monitoring of online news sites; and preparing to deal with online world. The crisis itself, they suggest, require monitoring of online social media; offering information and seek feedback; considering creating chat sites and involving senior personnel of the firm. Post-crisis needs include continual monitoring of social media regarding the issue; thanking those who helped; evaluating what occurred and how the entity responded; and devising tactics and plans to restore any negative affects to reputation (p. 146).

Chan (n.d.), in his study for the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, suggests there are four primary functions for social media during a crisis: “(1) information dissemination, (2) disaster planning and training, (3) collaborative problem solving and decision making, and (4) information gathering, which are then mapped onto the three crisis management phases of preparedness, response and recovery to describe how a range of social media tools may be used to enhance crisis communications” (p. 1). While in the crisis preparedness stage, Chan (n.d.) argues the focus is on preventative measures geared

to reducing risk that could develop into a crisis. Crisis response requires speed and effectiveness in the initial response, while crisis recovery demands longer term planning and resources to return to normal.

Covello (2003) suggests the nature of crisis management changed with September 11, 2001. It and other subsequent events showed the need to enhance crisis and risk communication skills. He devised a checklist of best practices that he believes is required to be included in any risk or crisis communication plan. They involve: including stakeholders as legitimate partners; revealing risk information as soon as possible and having no information vacuums; releasing more information rather than too little information to avoid the public believing the organization is hiding something; offering to quickly get answers for unanswered questions; offering no speculation; never over- or under-estimating; correcting errors quickly; listening to the concerns, feelings and issues people have; be truthful, frank and honest; and openly discuss strengths and weaknesses, uncertain information, but avoid speculation, minimizing or exaggerating risk or numbers, and correct errors as soon as possible.

Mayfield (2006) in Veil et al (2011) describes social media in its purest sense as involving human communication that possess characteristics of participation, openness, conversation, community, and connectedness. Marken (2007) said new media technology allows private persons to be sources of online information by "sharing opinions, insights, experiences and perspectives with others."

Wendling et al (2013) focus on how social media can be a beneficial tool for crisis management but highlight how it can also cause problems for managers of crisis communications. They argue risk and crisis communication assists in emergency

preparedness and response, reducing the costs of disaster, improving the transparency of decisions, and increasing the potential of acceptance of outcomes. They cite examples of programs like the Australian website Alert SA, which funnels social media messages from Twitter, Facebook and RSS into one location, "so that all the users of the portal can have a comprehensive pictures of what is shared on social media" (p. 15). On the other hand, problems with social media in crisis communications include information overload, information coming from sources that are not authorities, and the fear of using technology or adapting new technology without any strategic planning.

Wendling et al (2013) offer a 12-point good practices list that includes: raising public awareness about risks and crises; surveillance, monitoring and situation awareness; improving preparedness; providing information and warning; improving crisis response through mobilizing volunteers; identifying survivors and victims; managing reputational effects; incentives to collect funding and support; learning from the crisis; improving partnerships and cooperation locally and globally; building trust; and enhancing recovery management (pp. 17-25).

Much of the research literature surrounds its application not specifically by police but by government, its agencies and NGOs during a large-scale crisis. These incidents can be long term, depending on conditions, such as an earthquake in Haiti. Communication during a crisis could vary between man-made incidents and natural incidents (Wendling et al, 2013). Government agencies (including police) and NGOs are often involved in a natural incident or a geo-political incident involving large swaths of territory and large populations (macro). A specific police incident almost always involve a man-made incident related to law and order in a community setting (micro), and can last, depending on its nature, from mere moments to

days, such as the deaths of three RCMP officers and the wounding of two others in Moncton, N.B., in June 2014. Nevertheless, there is expected to be much overlap in the macro and micro application of social media theory and practice. Nevertheless, social media offers transparent and potentially instantaneous two-way dialogue between authorities and its publics (Wendling et al, 2013).

The International Association of Chiefs of Police (IACP) has done extensive work on developing social media policy templates for police services, and has urged law enforcement agencies develop a crisis plan and be prepared to use it (Getting Started, n.d.; Keenan, Diedrich and Martin, 2013). Research by Palen, Vieweg, Sutton, Liu and Hughes (2007) shows crisis response on scene and online are becoming "simultaneous and intertwined" (p. 2). The community is always part of the response to crises, but social media has become its communications system as “in practice, during an emergency incident, individuals involved in the incident use the communities they are already engaged in as a means to express their concerns and provide or request information” (Scherp, Schwagereit, Ireson, Lanfranchi, Papadopoulos, Kritikos, Kopatsiaris, & Smrs, 2009, p. 3).

Scherp et al (2009) suggest with Web 2.0, people use social networks to exchange information or experiences during and after emergency incidents and that “professional (emergency response) organizations are realizing that closer interaction with such communities can become crucial as part of their knowledge management, decision making and operation process” (pp. 1-2). Mersham (2010) concurs, noting for many, social media is now the “first point of reference for emergency information” (p. 142) and there is a “widening asynchrony” between official information and what is available on social media. Merhsam (2010) suggests including the public, can be problematic: “The institution of disaster response

is built on a model of information control established to manage the spread of misinformation" (p. 142).

The development of social media forced how emergency information is distributed and has ushered the shift to two-way communication, where the community becomes part of the emergency response. This model diverges from Web 1.0 and its one-way communication, where information is gathered from specific trusted sources and then disseminated to the community. The problem for emergency responders then could be the lack of control of information, requiring a managing and cooperative platform allowing for the gathering and sharing of information. This loss of control poses a threat to "the trustworthiness of information and eventually the reputation of the organization" (Scherp et al, 2009, p. 4).

Atherton (2009) urged organizations to embrace social media as a *fait accompli* as it is often the only point of interaction between an organization and a person. She suggests organizations adopt the following principles: constant monitoring of traditional and new media; establishing an online footprint which allows for building good faith prior to a crisis; developing and applying online engagement rules or outlines for employees or responders; enhance and update training and further, enhance and update current crisis training; balance online and traditional exposure and activity; and acknowledge that social media is but a conveyor of content.

Veil et al (2011) suggested using social media is not in itself a best practice in crisis communication, but it is an essential tool for practitioners applying best practices in risk and crisis communications. They offer 10 recommendations for embracing and applying social media to crisis communications. They are: assume social media engagement as part of an entity's risk and crisis management plans; use social media in horizon scanning to identify and

listen to concerns before a crisis explodes; use social media to engage with people on a constant basis; join the conversations to stem rumours and to establish the best channels to reach specific audiences; check for accuracy and be honest in responses to community; follow and share with credible sources; know that media is also using social media; acknowledge social media is interpersonal communications allowing for emotional support and human interaction; social media is a primary tool for updating information; ask for help while providing leadership; and acknowledge that social media in not the solution to every problem (pp. 119-120).

Bernier (2013) notes Twitter and Facebook are two key platforms for crisis communication for the American Red Cross. Facebook is simple to update and acts as a main crossroad in crisis communications, and that 93 per cent of the 164 million U.S. Internet users also use Facebook. Twitter acts as a message transmitter much like a pager did, but it also allows for near instantaneous conversations among an unlimited number of people on a global basis. Using hashtags helps focus the message and allows for greater reach. Likes on a Facebook page works in a similar fashion.

Lindsay (2010) said there are two broad categories for the use of social media in a crisis. The first entails using social media passively to disseminate information and get feedback; the second entails using social media as an emergency management tool for emergency communications and issue warnings, receive and send pleas for help, establish awareness of the situation and send photographs.

The sheer volume of users and the pervasiveness of a mobile device demands organizations use social media. Bernier (2013) notes there are 6.8 billion people on earth with about 4 billion using mobile phones, which is greater than the 3.5 billion using a toothbrush.

The penetration of mobile devices into everyday modern life allowed for information in the 2011 Joplin, Missouri, tornado to be disseminated. The devastating natural disaster did not prevent the use of social media, in this case Facebook, acting as a way to link needs with resources, locating family and friends, dealing with volunteers, posting triage locations and shelters, and communicating with people where rumours were squashed while answering every post (Bernier, 2013). Hurricane Sandy, which struck along the eastern U.S. seaboard in 2012, saw in New York City regular Tweets from FEMA, the American Red Cross, the National Guard, the NYC Office of Emergency Management, the mayor's office and utility firms. The emergency response also used other social media platforms such as Instagram, Foursquare, Flickr and YouTube.

Bruning and Ledingham (1999) define organization-public relations (OPR) as the state that “exists between an organization and its key publics” (p. 62) and how the actions of one can affect the status of the other. Huang (1997) concluded relationship outcomes include trust, commitment, satisfaction and control mutuality, while Bruning and Ledingham (1998) developed their five-point outline for relationships that includes openness, trust, commitment, investment and involvement. Hon & Grunig (1999) developed six outcomes for their model: control mutuality, trust, commitment, satisfaction, communal relationships and exchange relationships.

Baym and Boyd (2012) note social media redefined publics as it democratized communication, allowing audiences to develop unique publics with the use of portable electronic equipment. They note it is the breath and width of the use of social media that is revolutionizing communications and it creates opportunities for a single message to be heard by the intended audience, bystanders and observers. Grunig (2009) argues social media is

changing the communications paradigm, making communications “more global, strategic, two-way and interactive, symmetrical or dialogical, and socially responsible”.

Bernier (2013) suggests there are three main periods for crisis communication: pre-event; response phase, which includes rumour control; and recovery phase. Pre-event calls for orders to either find a safe location or evacuate, updates about the situation, providing evacuation routes information, promoting personal preparedness and whatever other information deemed necessary to remain safe. Response demands the most input from emergency responders, with information about shelters, linking the lost with family, food and water supply information, locations for medical care, places and behaviour to avoid. Recovery involves rebuilding lost buildings and livelihoods, and marshaling community groups and government to meet the needs.

Reynolds (2005) suggests five steps to a successful communications plan during a crisis that is based on her experience at the CDC include: executing a solid communications plan; being the first source for information; express empathy early in the crisis; show competence; and be open and honest (p. 49). In particular, CDC’s experience with a 2001 anthrax attack and the 2003 SARS outbreak showed that perceptions by the media, stakeholders and partners were not influenced by the work of responders, but by the speed and consistency of the CDC’s communications. “CDC had a plan, the plan was executed, and the plan made a huge difference in the public’s perception of its ability to do the job” (Reynolds, 2005, p. 49).

Empathy is a key element in a successful communications. The ability shows understanding of the emotional suffering of others, talking from the heart and relating to people as individuals, rather than statistics, displaced or victims. Reynolds (2005) argues if

empathy is not expressed within the first 30 seconds of a message, the effort to reach publics is lost.

> If you don't articulate what they are feeling in the moment, your audience's minds will be consumed with the question of "Do they get it?" and not hear a thing you are saying. A sincere expression of empathy early in your communication will allow people to settle down the noise in their minds and actually hear what you have to say (Reynolds, 2005, p. 50).

She offers a point-by-point process in crafting messages during a crisis. The first messages include six components sent in specific order: a message of empathy; stating the confirmed facts; stating what is not known; what steps are being taken to answer unanswered questions; a statement of commitment; and where people can get more information (p. 53).

During the initial messaging, Reynolds (2005) argues the messages be short and focused, written at a Grade 6 level to ensure understanding. Messages should be written in a positive manner; repeating messages as repetition invokes credibility; describing steps to be taken to protect oneself should be offered in threes; and the organization should use personal pronouns such as "we" to describe itself (p. 54). Reynolds (2005) urges the avoidance of technical jargon, judgmental phrases, personal attacks, discussions about money and humour.

Organizations should be prepared to answer questions about what, who, how, why, when, and where; whether individuals and families are safe; how individuals and families should protect themselves if the source of the problem has been found and dealt with; who caused the problem; can it be fixed; who is in charge; has the issue been contained; are victims being helped; what can be expected now, and in future; what can people do to help; and were we warned or knew the problem was headed our way? (Reynolds, 2005, pp. 54-55). Reynolds (2005) said her research showed that while there are no guarantees an effective

communications plan can deal with all the challenges, it is certain an organization's problems and ability to function would be compounded without an effective communications plan.

Methodology

This research will rely on the case study method as suggest by Yin (2009), using semi-structured interviews of 10 police officers and/or civilians employees of six Canadian police services to achieve a theoretical sampling of the field to gather reflections on real life incidents involving how and why. The study will also review existing scholarly research, and if possible supporting documentation, such as internal studies, proposals, reports and policies of various services approached. The objective was to interview a small but selective sample of people from both municipal and federal police services. While semi-structured questions allow for greater details about the topic there is a high probability that it will be difficult to establish uniformity in the responses.

Thomas (2011) argues case studies can be analyses of people, of their decisions, and of the institutions that establish the policies. The study will also rely on Brunig and Ledingham's (1998) model of organization-public relationships levels of trust, openness, understanding, involvement and commitment in the analysis of the findings.

The primary form of gathering research information was the use of semi-structured interviews of police officers and civilian employees of police services who use social media or have formulated policy in the use of social media. The basic construct of the interview involved open-ended questions, avoiding the "yes" and "no" answers. Initially, the study intended to ask five basic research questions, with short follow-up questions used to expand on or clarify an answer. However, during the semi-structured interviews with the respondents, two other issues became clear. They involved whether communications specialists have a seat

at the services' leadership table and if they are instrumental in developing communications strategy as social media becomes more pervasive; and whether communications strategies still require a role for the media in disseminating information as social media expands, matures and evolves.

Ten interviews representing six Canadian police services were conducted between November 2014 and February 2015 either in person or by telephone. The people interviewed are:

- Mark Pugash, Director of Corporate Communications for Toronto Police Service (Pugash interview, December 19, 2014);
- Meaghan Gray, Information and Issues Management for Toronto Police Service (Gray interview, December 19, 2014);
- Kathleen Griffin, Manager of Corporate Communications with York Regional Police (Griffin interview, December 5, 2014);
- Stephanie Mackenzie-Smith, Supervisor of Corporate Communications with York Regional Police (Mackenzie-Smith interview, December 5, 2014);
- Digital Communications Unit Constable Mark Smith of the Calgary Police Service (Smith interview, January 13, 2015);
- Paul Greene, Director of Strategic Communications with the RCMP J Division in New Brunswick (Greene interview, January 5, 2015);
- Chief Glenn De Caire of the Hamilton Police Service (De Caire interview, February 6, 2015);
- Catherine Martin, Corporate Communicator, Hamilton Police Service (Martin interview, February 6, 2015);
- Constable Stephen Welton, Media Relations Officer, Hamilton Police Service (Welton, interview, February 6, 2015);
- Inspector Vince Wurfel, Field Operations, Owen Sound Police Service (Wurfel interview, February 17, 2015).

Wurfel, De Caire, Welton and Smith are sworn officers while the other respondents are civilian members within their various services. The rationale for sampling certain police services and personnel within is explained below.

The Toronto Police Service is the largest municipal police service in Canada, with about 5,500 officers and more than 2,000 civilian support staff (Toronto Police Operating Budget, 2014). There are about 2.8 million people in Toronto (Diversity, 2014).

The RCMP in New Brunswick provide police service in rural areas and in communities under contract. It does not provide general police services in cities and towns that have its own municipal police services. The RCMP divides the province into four districts — Northeast, West, Southeast and Codiac — with 45 detachments peppered throughout the province (Public Safety, 2015; RCMP, 2014). There are about 754,000 people in the province (Statistics Canada, 2014).

York Regional Police has 1,528 officers and 527 civilian employees and the region has more than 1.1 million people in 2012 (Annual Report, 2013).

Calgary Police Service has more than 1,900 officers and 700 civilian employees (Careers, 2014) and a population of almost 1.2 million people (2014 Civic Census, 2014).

Hamilton Police Service employs about 797 officers and 282 civilian employees (About Hamilton Police, 2015) in a city with about 520,000 people (2011 Census, 2013).

Owen Sound Police Service polices about 22,000 people with about 80 officers and civilian employees, both full-time and part-time (Wurfel interview, 2015; Annual Report, 2013).

Findings

RCMP J Division (New Brunswick)

Paul Greene, Director of Strategic Communications with the RCMP J Division in New Brunswick, says his introduction to social media crisis communications was a “baptism of fire” after three RCMP officers were shot dead and two others were wounded while

responding to a gun call on June 4, 2014, in Moncton, N.B. Greene suggests while each police service uses social media differently, the primary purpose for the RCMP involve community relations or public relations, to solve and prevent crime, "and that was always the goal." However, on that day, the RCMP mobilized to find a killer and social media was given another function. Greene said crisis communicators defined what they wanted to do with social media by asking a similar question: "What's the number one goal right now? It's to find the shooter."

Greene recalls the shooting spree began on a Wednesday evening after radio stations switched to automated programming, the newspaper The Times and Transcript was locked behind a pay wall and television news crews were preparing for the evening newscast. "So how do you communicate with the people and when we're a small unit getting calls literally from media outlets all over the world, how on earth do we keep up?" Greene asks.

Social media is the only way to satisfy the needs of a fearful public and demanding media, Greene argues. "We got a solid tool here, let's use it to the max. It worked well that June 4th," he says.

Greene notes two-way dialogue lagged during the manhunt, as there wasn't a steady flow of questions from the community, nor did communicators have the time. That may be in part because many questions were answered by the information being shared on social media — primarily on Facebook and Twitter — and in regularly scheduled press conferences. Monitoring of social media also allowed police to prepare information: "I guess from being able to monitor for those things, we know what people were wondering (and) answer questions ahead of time."

Messages should be reinforced every 30 minutes or so, even if it is the same message, argues Greene. (Appendix 3 has a number of samples of the Twitter messaging during the crisis). In Moncton, a part of the community was locked down. “Because there’s people locked in their basements, there’s kids, there’s parents who can’t make it home, we’re the only ones communicating with them,” Greene says. “It worked well. The media was sharing that as well.”

Greene says the event was the first time he was involved in where the information about incident was driven by social media, with the RCMP as the primary source of information, rather than the event being media driven. He describes it as a proactive strategy in a reactive situation, determining how to ensure the service was engaging the community, “which was huge because they’re (the public) scared to death.”

Greene says although sections of the community were locked down for 30 hours “we didn’t get one complaint. That says, ‘we’re letting people know what (we’re) up to, what (we’re) doing and why (we’re) doing it.’ That was the goal.”

Greene says there is no specific social media crisis strategy with the RCMP but there is an over-arching crisis communications strategy where social media plays a role (see Appendix 6 for an excerpt of Canada’s Communication Policy, in particular its crisis communication). He suggests the “to-do list” that emerged June 4, 2014, includes general principles of accuracy, timeliness, being prepared and being clear in messaging while focused on the goal. Greene says its essential to put the needs of the community first in exercising social media crisis communications. Working in a team environment allows the organization to own the news feed, thus maintaining control of the message. The resulting outcomes of that

simple and brief formula include calm in the community, a growing trust in the service, maintenance and enhancement of the service's reputation, and the arrest of the suspect.

Greene says the goal changes to meet the unique needs of the crisis. "Every situation is different but as long as you got the goal, that helps immensely" on achieving objectives, Greene says.

Greene notes social media is usually viewed as a media relations tool but in a crisis, he views social media as community relations tool. In the case of the manhunt in Moncton, Greene notes if the searching officers' goal was to find the shooter, then that was also the community's goal.

> How are we going to do that? We made sure all of the communications, what was going out, was to help our officers who were on the ground to locate (the suspect)… For me, locally, for crying out loud, get ahead of it and make sure it's timely, and, for crying out loud, you're putting it out, make sure it's accurate. Those are the main ones and it comes back to: what's your goal? (Greene interview, 2015)

In the Independent Review into the June 2014 shootings, Assistant Commissioner Alphonse MacNeil outlined the goal-oriented factors considered while using social media during the incident:

> What information did residents need so they could be safe? What information can be provided to keep police officers safe? What information can be provided to assist the RCMP catching the shooter? What information will prevent further deaths or injuries? … Communications were strategic to address issues observed in both the tone of posts on social media or traditional media reporting. This allowed the RCMP to control the message and become the preferred source for accurate information for media and the public. Many comments on social media acknowledged that people were waiting for information to come directly from the RCMP before they would believe/endorse information on social media (p. 43).

Greene notes it took about one hour and forty minutes before the first message was sent out on RCMP social media. He acknowledges "that's a long time in the social media realm," and although there were speculative social media messages from other individuals erroneously claiming the body count reached eight, Greene says he waited until he received accurate information, although it stated the obvious: There is a shooter in a specific area. Stay indoors. Lock your doors. This type of messaging was also retweeted extensively by the media. It was not until much later that he was able to confirm the casualties. About three hours after the shootings, a media photograph of the suspect led to the possible identity of the shooter because his father saw it and he called police. "We didn't say he did it. We said, 'We're looking for this guy.' You can put two and two together," Greene says.

Greene notes people generally wonder if they are safe and if the service knows what it is doing to end the crisis. He says it is important to include those points in messages being sent out to the community. The ability to respond to a crisis, and that response being visible in communications to the public, is key to reputation enhancement. This in turn was met with messages from the community that wanted to help in making the community safer, Greene says. Together, the messages reinforced ties with the community. "You knew you weren't alone in this, seeing that support from the community. They felt the hurt."

Greene suggests the RCMP New Brunswick is not the same service it was before the in-the-line-of-duty deaths and the wounding of two other officers. Deaths of officers leave an emotional scar on the organization.

> But the community, yeah, I think (it is) well engaged. I think (the crisis) advanced our community strategy three to five years in the matter of weeks because it grew such an audience. I really thought our audience would settle (after the shootings) but it continued to grow. I've got a massive audience. (Greene interview, 2015)

He says about 84,000 people follow him in French and English, compared to the 43,000 circulation of the Moncton Times and Transcript[1], and an estimated 40,000 viewers of the local CTV news broadcast. Nevertheless, Greene says while the media serves a purpose, social media tools offer the ability to "go around them and quite effectively, as well. It's our own outlet… Certainly June 4th advanced that exponentially." Greene notes RCMP NB has the eighth largest Twitter account among the about 120 police services on that platform and is third among the 70 services with a Facebook account.

Greene notes technology is mutable in nature and communicators have to be flexible and adopt new technology. As an example, Greene says WhatsApp is popular among European police services. "(We need) to go to where the people are and use social media platforms that reach them."

Greene acknowledges he now plays a larger role in developing and implementing communications strategy:

> In the last couple of years…I now report to the commanding officer. In the case of Moncton (shootings)…he said, 'you're the expert in communications, you do what you have to do.' Which is huge. It has not always been the case, and in a lot of police (services), that's still not the case. That's what helped make us effective. We were able to get that information out quickly, work directly with the incident commander to say what's confirmed, what's not… We got a pretty good system in place. I'm able to approve most things anyway. That makes you a heck of a lot more effective. (Greene interview, 2015)

In response to the MacNeil Report, the RCMP outlined objectives with specific time posts to meet the growing needs of social media communicators and to function optimally during a crisis. Paulson (2014) noted how the RCMP sites became the trusted source of

[1] In reality, the Times-Transcript has an average 2013 daily print and digital circulation of 14,863 (Newspapers Canada, 2014).

information for the events of June 4. The RCMP also intend on providing communicators with up-to-date hardware, real-time monitoring capabilities to find developing crises and deal with inaccurate information and "proactively reach out to our social media audiences to share key messages quickly as the authoritative source during critical incidents" (p. 5).

Calgary Police Service

Constable Mark Smith, a member of Calgary Police's four-person Digital Communications Unit, responded to a crisis that enveloped Calgary as torrential rains pelting Southern Alberta caused the Bow and Elbow Rivers to overflow in June 2013. Calgary suffered significant property damage and about 75,000 people were evacuated from various neighbourhoods. (Flood Recovery, 2014; Timeline, 2013).

Smith argues the two-way conversation function of social media is a key element in his crisis communication model. If information is released, he expects questions and prepares to answer them, as that maintains connections with the community. Smith says it was decided questions could not be ignored, and that people appreciated the responses and "we had the time to do it." (See Appendix 3 for examples of tweets sent during the Calgary floods.)

Smith says the service had been discussing developing crisis policy involving social media before the floods hit the region. The cliché "necessity is the mother of invention" applies to Calgary: "We've always talked about it (developing a crisis social media plan) but when it happened, it was kind of a case of, 'Okay, now, we have to deal with it.'"

Experience in using social media in normative times helped Smith and other officers in the Digital Communications Unit adapt to the crisis caused by the floods.

> We didn't necessarily have a plan ready to go for such an event, but certainly, in the office we work with our public affairs-media relations people, we always knew what the messages were that we had to get out to people in communities… When it actually came to doing it, we could use all the tricks in the toolbox to get the key messages out to people (Smith interview, 2015).

Smith recalls Calgary initially tweeted messages on behalf of High River RCMP because power was cut in that area. As the flood grew to include Calgary, Smith says there were few if any tweets from other city departments, and "we started sending messages out and then people took to our accounts."

For Smith, two key pieces of crisis policy include issuing accurate information and maintaining a two-way "information relay" so that people are not left in the dark. He said people feel safer knowing authorities are responding to the crisis.

> And by us being on social media and responding to the people, telling them that, "Yeah, we're investigating, we're looking into it," that does definitely reduce the fear. (Smith interview, 2015)

Rumour control became an important function during the floods. Smith recalls an incident where police squelched reports of looting by first finding the claim false and then promising to patrol the affected neighbourhoods. Social media was also used to convince people to leave. Some who did not want to leave their homes were shown aerial photos depicting the extent of the floods.

Following the floods, Calgary Police reviewed social media use but they didn't develop a written policy. Says Smith:

> We didn't necessarily put anything down in official writing as to what we would do in another disaster or something like that, because our unit is pretty small…we all have a pretty good understanding as what we can and can't send out in social media. Again, it completely depends on what type of disaster or crisis you deal with… Ultimately, when something big does

> happen, you kind of have to sit down and say, "Okay, what's the most important key message to get out to people? What is the situation and what do we need to do?" (Smith interview, 2015)

Smith says he believes a list can restrict communicators in reacting to the particular crisis, suggesting keeping to "a strict policy" could slow down response. He says it's important for the crisis communicators — as well as the organization — to be flexible to adapt to the needs of the crisis "send out information relevant to each kind of situation." The important take-away, Smith recalls, was to instantly get involved on social media, even it there no specific key message, just to make the service's presence known on social media about a developing situation to tell the public police are at least aware of it.

He notes people expect police to provide timely and accurate information, and that demands that it is done professionally. Hashtags can be a reflection of that reputation. While hashtag use allows for the easy categorizing of information, Smith also notes that when people see it is a message from the service, the service's reputation ensures its credibility. What also became apparent in the responses from the public is that a service's reputation was enhanced by its desire and ability to respond to the crisis.

Police linked themselves to #yycflood during the crisis, a hashtag it did not initiate but it became a key hashtag for people to get information. Smith says he discovered hashtags are "very important" in providing followers a place to turn to when they require information. "We didn't really fully understand the importance of a hashtag. We didn't start the hashtag #yycflood…but certainly now from reviewing the use of hashtags and just seeing what happens during other events" by organizing a vast amounts of unique information. Calgary Police in future will attempt to launch hashtags in its tweets based on the crisis.

Calgary Police issued 731 unique tweets during the crisis, the third most during the floods behind the City of Calgary and 660 News radio (Calgary Strong, 2013). More than 324,000 tweets were issued through the hashtag #yycflood, followed by more than 209,000 tweets on #ABflood.

Smith recalls the early stages of the service's social media response were hampered by equipment that "wasn't good enough" and had to be replaced. Along with proper equipment, Smith says social media requires knowledgeable people in the use of both applications and hardware otherwise there is a risk of not knowing what to, reacting slowly and incorrectly.

York Regional Police Service

York Region uses social media to engage people through dialogue, providing exposure of the service, educating the community on the service's programs and strategic objectives, be entertaining where possible, and evaluating the business value and impact of strategies using metrics, according to Stephanie Mackenzie-Smith, York Regional Police's Supervisor of Corporate Communications. While striving for that, York communicators should act professionally, fairly, compassionately, be informative, timely and educational, inspiring and occasionally "sarcastic, silly and humourous," she says. The objective is not to mock, ignore difficult or negative topics, degrade, blame victims, and promote politics or opinions. Instead, being authentic in the interactions police have with people and telling stories that reflect the service's mission, values and objectives builds links, she says.

In a crisis, social media becomes a tool to provide real-time conversations with media and citizens, but there a struggle in providing enough of what is known, which Kathleen Griffin, Manager of Corporate Communications, acknowledges is "never enough" for people involved in a crisis, and creates a potential reputational hazard for police:

> A big challenge is that vacuum. There's always going to be a vacuum because we can never give them what they want, so who's filling the void? Is it a citizen journalist? Or is it some random citizen with an axe to grind? (Griffin interview, 2014)

That offers Mackenzie-Smith a fundamental purpose for police communicators to be on social media. "Why we really have to have that strong social media presence is, like the Boston Marathon bombings and what happened with social media," is to offset journalism that is faltering and the spreading of rumours and conjecture on social media.

Griffin says York is planning a 24-hour, seven-day operations centre where police can monitor social media for trends that could become a crisis. Monitoring would also identify detractors and influencers. During a crisis, police can turn to influencers to share messages, and to detractors to, if necessary, counter negative messages or rumours.

> Absolutely, because communications is so instant and it is part of your day-to-day like it never has been. Things can blow up instantly. It's just a matter of being able to think on your feet more than anything else and being able to respond. But we respond in the same way, we respond within our templates. Keeping our reputation, being calm, being logical. (Griffin interview, 2014)

Mackenzie-Smith suggests key messaging during a crisis should be thought of in 140 characters or less and with a hashtag. Crisis websites, including dark sites that were specifically lit up for an incident, should be continuously updated. Mackenzie-Smith urges crisis communicators to respond to comments — both positive and negative — as best as possible, redirect people to the main crisis site, and cross-promote or share pertinent messages with other social media platforms and partners.

Mackenzie-Smith says the crisis tool box includes contact lists of persons in other industries or emergency services, the proper equipment prepared to launch at a moment's notice, a list of pre-approved key messages and identified off-site location alternatives.

Mackenzie-Smith stresses critical messages should be sent out quickly during a crisis. "If you're not there right away in social media responding in a crisis, you've lost track," Mackenzie-Smith says. Griffin agrees, saying the biggest single threat to reputation is not responding. If presence is not set in the early stages of a crisis, control of content could be lost. In a slideshow presentation, Mackenzie-Smith (n.d.) notes, "only you can be the trusted source of information about you. Don't let others be your voice!" Using social media during a crisis decreases demands from media, delivers direct messages to the organization's audience, creates a more credible two-way conversation, allows police to communicate in a human and empathic voice, and using real time communication which is critical in a crisis (Mackenzie-Smith, n.d.). Appendix 4 outlines individual responsibilities among the York Regional Police communications team. Mackenzie-Smith says the most difficult challenge is educating employees about the power of social media. "Your reputation can live or die in a crisis. And it's not in the forefront of their mind, because they are thinking operationally, not communications."

Mackenzie-Smith has a "crisis laptop" which she brings home. She has set her computer to be a social media workshop so she is able to launch messages to the community in moments. The messages are usually basic at the beginning of the event.

Mackenzie-Smith and Griffin note Twitter acts as a messaging board that provides little opportunity for conversations during the crisis. "But in a crisis, they're looking for information and we're pushing the information out as best we can," Mackenzie-Smith says.

"That's exactly what it is: What do I do? Where do I go? How can I help? Whatever it might be."

She says they are holding statements, which include messages, similar, but not limited to, because of the unpredictable nature of a crisis: we're aware of the incident; we're trying to get as much information as we can; please stand by and be patient with us; we're dealing with an operational issue right now and your safety is our primary concern; and we will get you more information as soon as possible. At the same time, communicators within police are linking with their counterparts who are in the related industries or government agencies that have a stake in the developing crisis.

Mackenzie-Smith and Griffin say a to-do list is key to ensuring crisis communicators are able to function. They say the list allows communicators, who may live in the same communities where the crisis is occurring, to focus on the issue. Mackenzie-Smith argues:

> A crisis is a time of chaos, there's a lot happening with a lot of people and there's usually emotion involved and you can't afford for that to get in the way, so relying on having those pre-canned messages, where, you know, I'm supposed to send a message now about this, and then I can move onto this and then I can move to, what information to I have now? So the first thing is, what information do I know right now? I can say this; I can say this; I can say this. Go; go; go. And I can say, "You, tweet that, that and that." And if you're looking at it from that perspective, going I know I have to get this out, this is my checklist, this is what I have to say, I know I don't have to go through those three layers (of hierarchy) now to get that message out (Mackenzie-Smith interview, 2014).

The role of the communicator has been increasing in recent years in York. Mackenzie-Smith notes there has been an acknowledgment among the institution's leaderships that it is crucial to include communications personnel at the outset of a crisis. She says the communications function in policing services was traditionally regarded as "fluff", focused on handling the media. "The difference now we're starting to see is the understanding that

communicators have to be brought in at the beginning," says Mackenzie-Smith. Griffin notes communicators have pre-arranged approval to send required messaging. Information is disseminated in what they describe as the "Scare the Chief Model" which requires trust by senior police staff of their crisis communicators to put out the proper messages.

Mackenzie-Smith says focus groups and analytics show communities in York Region indicated they wanted one point of contact to go to for the information they require in relation to a crisis. The crisis communicators have direct access to the information and can "push it out" to the community.

> It's really, really important that we are the official source of information and the only information coming from us is the correct information, the right information and the information that people need" (Mackenzie-Smith interview, 2014).

In doing so, Griffin says the service is increasingly relying on owned media. Communicators still hold the responsibility of media relations, but on social media, the focus is not necessarily the media, but developing relations with the community. "You know what a big difference is?" Griffin asks. "Communications used to be media relations. Now it's community relations, and media is slowly being eked out of the equation because we don't need the media to cover our stories."

Toronto Police Service

Director of Corporate Communications Mark Pugash and Meaghan Gray, Information and Issues Management, argue timeliness, accuracy and cooperation are the three key guiding principles for crisis communicators using social media. "Checklists are for people who have never done it before and want an artificial feeling of security," Pugash says. He believes guiding principles plus experience provides crisis communicators with "what you have to do."

Pugash and Gray argue lists are too constricting and can be used to discipline or criticize crisis communicators after the event by citing missed actions. Appendix 5 has the Toronto Police Service general guide to social media use, which is available to the public on the service's website. Gray argues guiding principles are more adaptive to the nature of a crisis than a detailed checklist. She says it seems impossible to develop a list to address the unique events of every crisis, especially those police have no history of experiencing.

> Every single one is going to be different…we had the hostage taking down at Union Station, we had the theatre collapse up on Bloor St., we've had Sunrise Propane, we've had multiple school shootings, we had the shooting at the Eaton Centre, we had the flooding. Not one of those had been exactly the same. Not even the school shootings… I don't know how you could possibly go down a checklist (Gray interview, 2014).

Gray says using social media during a crisis is "no different (communications function) than picking up the phone" to notify another organization, such as a school board or a media outlet, of an incident. Cooperation involves sharing and comparing what each organization will be saying to the public and the media. "Be timely, meaning, get out as soon as you can and be timely with your updates, but you need to be accurate in those updates."

Messages are now instantaneous and global, but Pugash notes the content in those messages may take time to uncover, develop and confirm. Accuracy determines how quickly information is disseminated, which could create a conflict in the functions of fulfilling right-to-know needs and reputational enhancement. Pugash suggests the challenge for crisis communicators is to fill in the gaps between updates with new information:

> These things show, having done (this) as long as I have, there is always period of at least an hour, in some cases maybe two, or maybe even three, we have no idea what's happened, we have no idea why it's happened, and the fact that social media is out there quicker doesn't mean the laws of the universe (are) going to change… The policy to me is about values and

> priorities. It's not that you do this, then you do that, and then you do this. Those priorities and concepts should be timeless. It's always about establishing an early, credible presence. That's never going to change… It's those timeless concepts with your skill and experience that enable you to do it (Pugash interview, 2014).

Pusgash suggests while the need for speed to respond is greater, "there are some things that obey the old laws of the universe and it's 'How do you build a bridge over the first two or three or four hours until you have some idea of what's happened?' That's what happens most often in a crisis." Thus it is important for crisis communicators to have packaged material that could keep the flow of information to the media constant.

Pugash argues no matter what the technology, the function of crisis communicators remains the same. "Twitter is just a tool. It's a megaphone," he says, although it allows for two-way conversation. "It doesn't change the message, it's just a tool to reach the audience."

Reputation is a significant factor in police use of social media pre-crisis, during a crisis and post-crisis. Gray says reputation, while it is earned, is a trait that is developed every day in normal relations with the public. "You don't wait for a crisis to say, 'Listen to us,'" she says. It is crucial police maintain decorum and uphold professionalism during non-crisis periods. Gray and Pugash notice, however, communities gravitate to officers who show some personality on social media. Gray says these officers worked on their reputations and relationship building every day, and when it comes time to state something important, "they're our go-to people." Pugash notes social media has a multiplier effect and these officers have sizable communities of people who follow them and are considered an asset.

At the same time, police are also linking with stakeholders who would mobilize during a crisis. "It's part of the reason we have these exercises, it's part of the reason I'll go and visit the Toronto District School Board every now and then… You just can't wait for the

emergency to happen to try and build that relationship, it should be ongoing, (and) it's something you work on every single day," says Gray.

Both Gray and Pugash argue there is a greater role for communications experts at the corporate table, exerting greater influence into strategic planning. Gray argues there is a greater awareness in the service to incorporate communications expertise into operations and business plans:

> Definitely the expertise of that strategic communications approach, that issues management approach, the reputation management that comes with that, the recognition that we need to incorporate our partners sometimes into that response, I think that's what we offer… Externally, we respect the public has the right to know, but we have the right to protect the integrity of (the) investigation and maintaining that balance between the public's right to know and protecting (the) investigation, we try to walk that line between both parties. That's what we bring to the table." (Gray interview, 2014).

Hamilton Police Service

Constable Stephen Welton, Media Relations Officer, offers a divergent view on social media's role in an organization. Other respondents noted social media is a tool used to disseminate information, much like a paper press release to traditional media. Welton views the application of social media through a Grunigian prism. Grunig (2009) argues new media technology was initially a victim of an information dump until practitioners understand how it works. Welton suggests the same may apply for the technology itself, that it is "dumped" onto an organization that does not fully understanding its capabilities and thus is not fully or properly incorporating the technology. Its true value and ability emerges once the technology and its abilities are integrated within and throughout the organization, implemented not by

decree from the top to the bottom down, but organically — like DNA in an organism — from the bottom to the top.

He sees two distinct groups in policing during a crisis: one that knows how to use social media and the other that is expert in operations.

> That's where teamwork within an organization, with these tools, the training, the situational awareness, the education inside the building are on board to understand the opportunities and the risks of social media…or it's just frivolous (Welton interview, 2015).

He suggests the number of followers is not important in itself, but whether the followers can become partners that police can work with and influence to achieve common goals in a crisis. Police focusing solely on the number followers would not be able to use the potential strength of the network if the individual followers could not work together. Much can be gained if followers can be mobilized for a specific function.

> You don't just have the logo on your website. You just don't have "we do social media." How have you built it to achieve the goals of your organization and how do you use it to accomplish your goals? How do you use it to keep people safe? Keep the main thing the main thing. What's the goal of our organization? Our goal is to keep citizens safe. Where? Everywhere. Online, offline, on the roads, in the malls, in the schools. The most important piece is the ability to communicate with the public at home and in the community at large. Technology fueled with people is our biggest opportunity (Welton interview, 2015).

Welton says communications should been viewed, in normative times and in crisis, on a continuum rather than being fitted into separate silos. During normative times, Welton argues social media should be used to build linkages and understanding within communities. He argues what was once a social function to connect and converse has now taken on media functions to inform, and suggest the function of social media communications

> would flow from one end to another because after a crisis, you have an opportunity to then inform and educate, and create allies … if this were to happen again. (Welton interview, 2015).

Welton says he is part of a team and his role is to follow the lead, and to consult with others to ensure the information is accurate, timely and meets the needs of the operation. He agrees timeliness, goals, accuracy, honesty, control and presence are important guidelines in crisis communications. He says, however, there is not much differentiation in social media communication in normative times, and in times of crisis. "It's the same thing. I'm talking to people." Honesty involves more than accuracy in that "sometimes you just got to tell it like is and people will respect that." Welton says a communicator who admits to not knowing something, but promises to return soon with an update, will go far in building trusting relationships. "Police presence in social media and managing the expectations of that presence is very much a guiding light," he says.

Chief Glenn De Caire says the most significant case Hamilton police used social media was the Tim Bosma missing persons incident on May 6, 2013. He recalls police mobilized quickly in the suspicious disappearance of the 32-year-old Ancaster, Ont., man. "People want to help, given the opportunity to help, but we didn't want them searching areas," says Corporate Communicator Catherine Martin. She says police wanted to people to retweet the missing person's flyer and provide information. Martin notes while crisis messaging varies depending on the nature of the incident, it is crucial to get involved in the conversation. De Caire says social media provided a double-edged sword in the investigation. It was ideal in releasing information — visual and words — to garner information from the general public, but he says police eventually requested people stop sending material on social media. The tremendous flow of information overwhelmed investigators, bound by major case

management requirements, which were required to follow up on every lead. Analytics of the service's Facebook page, the service's most popular social media platform, showed it received about 1.4 million views during the search.

De Caire says crisis communicators' presence not only allows for detection of errors and provides the ability to correct but can also set the tone. Martin cited a shooting at a Hamilton mall where Welton jumped into the Twitter conversation to wrest control and apply a calm tone to the messaging. De Caire notes the belief was that there was an active shooter in the mall, even though the suspect was in custody. "We were able to control it from that panic," he says.

Welton notes police — including crisis communicators — are constantly assessing situations and act on information at a fixed point in time. Situations change quickly, and with social media, it is becoming easier to deal with timeliness. However, there is risk during the periods between updates and messages, which provides opportunities for the development and circulation of rumours. This shows the need for constant monitoring of social media.

Hamilton uses Facebook, Twitter and YouTube as its social media platforms. On its Facebook page, the posted daily report offers a view of overnight crime events, along with crime prevention tips (Public Agenda, 2014). A report to the Hamilton Police Board noted on average, more than 25 tweets are sent weekly. That January 2014 report noted @Hamiltonpolice, its top of seven Twitter addresses, had 7,608 followers, but by February 2015, it more than doubled to 15,600 followers. Martin notes numbers increase following a significant event.

In terms of control, Welton is succinct: "If people don't trust me, then I don't really

have a job anymore." Welton says the public expects him to tell the truth, be accurate, be timely and be honest. If the truth changes, "tell them the truth about that, too." Welton says the goal in crisis communication is always focused on public safety, but if there is a concern about the case's integrity, he insists he will tell the public what it needs to know to be safe, but he will also tell his audience he can't reveal the minute details to protect the integrity of the case. This is where the public's trust of the communicator is essential, that the public will accept that some details of the case cannot be disseminated.

De Caire says police have established contacts with others in other emergency services and in the community, however, in "the crisis component, it gets a little grey in how to get people in… Cooperation for crises starts in non-crisis times."

Martin says reputation is reflected in every message sent by the service, emphasizing the need to be reliable, accurate, engaging, and timely "so that when there is an issue (crisis), we are considered the source." De Caire emphasizes that trust and reputation are fragile, that they would be shattered if the service were to deal with inaccurate statements or false information.

Martin notes during a crisis, communications changes from the two-way symmetrical conversation to predominately one-way, or as she describes it as push communications. When the crisis abates, the two-way symmetrical model reestablishes itself in part because the communicator or communicators have the time to respond.

She says policy does not change, but crises may reveal weaknesses in techniques used by communicators, leading communicators to learn how to engage the public better, create tone and tempo. She says communications personnel do have a seat at the table where the

dominant coalition strategizes. “Am I at the C-suite? Yes, I am,” she says. De Caire adds Welton, who performs much of the tactical application of the communications strategies, has open access to his office. The Chief says communications experts are involved in the communications component during the development of policing strategies.

Owen Sound Police Service

Owen Sound, on the south shore of Georgian Bay in Ontario, is the smallest service in the study. It has about 80 employees, both full-time and part-time officers and civilian employees. The service does not have a media relations officer, the duties falling between Field Operations Inspector Vince Wurfel, and the community service officer “but he’s wearing 40 other hats so he’s not sitting at his computer responding to social media” (Wurfel interview, 2015). The service has a Facebook page that as of February 2015 has 364 likes. Press releases, activity logs and other official messages are posted on the page with links to its website. Its Twitter site is dormant. The service joined Twitter in October 2010, and as of February 2015, it has 116 followers without issuing a tweet. Its profile picture is the Twitter standard purple-and-white egg.

Wurfel understands the issues of communications as a part of crisis management, but the service has no definitive social media policy. Wurfel says it is a combination of a number of reasons, but primarily due to a lack of resources available to manage the endeavour: “If you’re on Twitter, you need to feed the beast, so to speak.” He says social media comes under Computer Systems and Internet Use policy and discusses social media in a “general sense.” Then there is a media policy, which does not include social media. Social media is defined “generically” as having a role in assisting police in sharing information with the public and

soliciting tips from community members. There is no designation of who is assigned to using social media or an outline of officer conduct while in cyberspace:

> There's no real meat and potatoes direction and we really need to either adapt somebody else's policy to our own, or create our own… It's a resource issue, it's a training issue, it's a policy development issue. It's all those things that really haven't come to the forefront. (Wurfel interview, 2015).

He says the service's use of Facebook "is still soft." Wurfel acknowledges with Facebook, "you have to have somebody, especially in a crisis, either one or two go-to people quarterbacking it."

Nevertheless, while not in cyber-space with the same vigour as others, Wurfel says the guiding principles would include accuracy, timeliness, control and consistent messaging. His concern is the type of information released, where it may be difficult to determine if there will be a criminal case: "You have to be cognizant of what information you're giving out. You need to establish within your own service at what level you are going to interact and respond."

Wurfel believes managing information overlaps the concepts of managing risk, as they are focused at minimizing the scope of damage and diminishing publics' feelings of fear and uncertainty:

> It's the same principle of managing, whether you're managing information or if you're managing a scene, and it's about getting information out there, easing the mind of the public, all those things trying to reach your audience (Wurfel interview, 2015).

Wurfel cites a recent example where Owen Sound Police lost control of messaging during the investigation of a homicide. A message released by another police service caused people to speculate and gossip on social media, raising concerns of personal safety among residents.

> We threw out a tidbit and let the public run with it, and the stuff that was going on social media (about it) was ridiculous. It just got so far beyond accuracy, but when you don't give people the information, they'll make it up. And then it becomes fact in their mind. I think it's important to give people (the) information that you can without compromising the investigation (Wurfel interview, 2015).

Wurfel acknowledges Owen Sound Police has a "weak social media policy." He says while it has emergency management and crisis management policies, it does not mesh with social media use. How they would intertwine still needs to be developed, he says. The task of social media messaging in a crisis is "a whole other separate segment in itself than it used to be as far as managing that information." Wurfel argues the service does have an understanding of its role and importance to the development and maintenance of the service's reputation:

> Our messaging is all about integrity, really. Messaging should be accurate, it should be timely, and state what we're doing or what we're not doing, and if we can't tell you, say you can't, so the messaging certainly blends completely with what is being done with the boots on the ground. I mean, if your actions are doing one thing and your messages are saying another thing, which is about the confidence and the integrity of your organization. They have to be consistent (Wurfel interview, 2015).

Wurfel acknowledges the service's interaction with the public through social media is "not great in today's era." He agrees it is important to create that dialogue on social media no matter which platform is used because "if they're not there following us for the nicer things, they're not going to think of following us when we need them to or when we want them to." Nevertheless, if a crisis were to erupt he has no doubt the service would respond quickly to the social media needs of its public.

Wurfel says because it does not use social media extensively, the service remains reliant on local media. Communications is a function that is divided between Wurfel, as one of his multiple duties, who does have a seat at the executive table, and the community officer, who does not.

Analysis

The social media plans of five of the six services appear to mirror many of the findings in the research presented in existing literature. Coombs (2007) called for the supply of information to alleviate uncertainty, allowing people to cope with psychological stress, know what is occurring and what is being done to end the crisis. Five of the six services that responded say they craft key messages, and store templates for future consideration, providing information to enhance the public's safety. The suggestion by Freberg et al (2012) that emergency messages should be framed to reduce harm is reflected in the responses of all the respondents. Lukaszewski (1999) urged organizations dealing with a crisis should behave as if a parent were watching them, a similar response offered by Welton suggesting he measures his behaviour as if he were dealing with his grandmother.

Much appears to have been accomplished through experience and practice as opposed to applying the findings of scholarly research. The ability to use social media appears to be strongly related to the availability of personnel and whether communications function is integral to the daily routine used by the hierarchy of the service. Those using social media are sophisticated in their use of the tools, in that personnel understand the technology.

Diagram 1: Guiding principles supporting goal-oriented crisis communications

There were several themes that emerged with the goal being central. Diagram 1 highlights this. Requirements needed to achieve the goal include the principles of timeliness; accuracy; up-do-date technology; controlling messages and rumour control; cooperation including empathy; ensuring messages do not affect legal and case management needs; and reputation. Two other elements, overarching risk and crisis policy, and membership to the executive suite, which includes pre-approval for messaging, are part of the framework that makes social media crisis communications possible and function.

The RCMP's Paul Greene strongly emphasizes the goal of the operation as the focal point of the guiding principles used to determine how and what information is disseminated. He argues every message by crisis communicators must be done in achieving whatever the

goal may be, such as an arrest or an end to a dangerous situation, or the easing of a natural event. Hamilton's Stephen Welton agrees an identified goal plays a significant role, described broadly as public safety, which is considered Hamilton service's brand.

Hamilton's Catherine Martin pinpointed the focal point in the evolution of the use of social media in a crisis that is representative across the services: policy is not necessarily an issue, but technique can be.

The themes of accuracy and timeliness were recurrent in the research interviews, but the interviewees suggested while those two functions are crucial in crisis communications, most offered a third theme, control. Controlling messages allow services to position themselves as sources of accurate information, stemming rumours and enhancing reputation. Bar-Tur (2013) in his review of social media during the Boston Marathon Bombing notes the public should have a role in public safety and crime solving, but "an unguided mob will make unfortunate mistakes, which social media then amplifies" (3rd para.). This was evident in the experience of Owen Sound's Wurfel, but the so-called "mob" was stoked by another police service's message. This reveals that tone and language used in a message — even if from a stakeholder — is crucial, and must be aimed at evoking assistance and assurance rather than turmoil.

Toronto's Mark Pugash notes traditional media "has lost its monopoly" as the source of information and news, that social media allows police communicators to reach their audience directly without media filters and with a significant level of trust in the quality of the information. Communications personnel are implying that with owned media, the services are able to better control their message, frame the message, and also have the ability to control and frame the ensuing conversation. Further, police are able to rely on the public to assist in controlling messaging. Respondents say they are pleasantly surprised by the extent of public

self-policing on social media during a crisis. People often urge others to stop sending messages that may adversely affect an end to the crisis. Social media self-policing appeared during the hostage taking in Paris. An email message sent to the BBC during the Paris hostage situation read:

> Hélène from Paris emails to say: "I'm a bit disappointed by news programmes around the world who encourage people to record all the secret moving of the security men. I really don't understand why TV programs are showing all the movements of the police. Everyone, even bad people, can see those images." (Robb et al, 2015).

All of the respondents say social media use during pre-crisis periods builds an engaged audience prepared to at least pay attention during a crisis, which in turn could help in sharing "critical information" and rumour control (Mackenzie-Smith, 2014; Smith, 2015). The respondents also say while acting as the official source of information for their respective services during a crisis, they are able to influence their reputations by "using a customer-service approach" in the messaging (Mackenzie-Smith, 2014).

Paul Greene and Mark Smith acknowledge much of what they have learned came from delving headfirst into a crisis. It appears the understanding Greene and Smith had of the attributes and abilities of social media platforms allowed them to apply it with the success they did during a crisis, and the newfound experience appears to be a major influencer in defining how social media will be used as a crisis communications platform in the future.

Also gleaned from the interviews is that a high level of trust between the communicators and the hierarchy they serve within the organization is crucial for the operation of crisis communications on social media. York's Kathleen Griffin and Stephanie Mackenzie-Smith call it the "Scare The Chief" Model. This involves pre-approval for

communicators to send whatever message is required during a crisis that would help the community and investigators achieve their goals during a crisis: generally, the re-establishment of calm and peace. Routinely, messages go through layers of hierarchy for approval before being released to the public. A message could take hours before it is approved for release. In a crisis, that model would make communications irrelevant. To be effective in a crisis, all of the interviewed communicators argue timeliness is crucial to a community that is fearful and potentially endangered. While being able to respond quickly to the changing nature of a crisis, the expectation is the messages will reflect the services' brand, the limitations of the law, existing umbrella policy and reputation.

All the respondents say accuracy is crucial in building trust and maintaining and enhancing reputation. If accuracy were not ensured, the public would not consider police communicators as a source of information. Only two of interviewees specifically used the word "cooperation", but it nevertheless is a core element in all of the crisis communicators' descriptions of their functions during a crisis event. Smith created Twitter lists of organizations that offered affected residents and interested media direction in whom to monitor for official statements. York Region is developing Standard Operating Procedures linking various organizations — transportation, major manufacturers, government agencies and organizations, and places of worship — to collaborate crisis communications and response.

A concern that arose during a number of the interviews was the quality of the hardware police used. It is crucial, Hamilton's Stephen Welton argues, that hardware keeps pace with software. Calgary's Mark Smith, the RCMP's Paul Greene and Hamilton's Stephen Welton mentioned they had technology issues in that the equipment they were using could not handle

the requirements of the social media, especially in high-usage times like crises. Both Greene and Smith recall their equipment was upgraded as their specific crises were unfolding. The message, however, is that a crisis is not the time to discover there is a hardware problem.

What is interesting is that the plans or policies for a crisis — with the exception of York Regional Police — are not as elaborate or as highly defined as in the existing literature and research. Much seems to rely on experience and clarity of the communicator's role. Other than York's Mackenzie-Smith and Griffin, who have developed detailed procedural outlines, the others adhere to guiding principles, which they say allow them the freedom to act accordingly to the unique needs of the particular crisis. In a nutshell, currency in public agencies is comprised of trust, credibility and reputation, with the ability to respond quickly and effectively, while maintaining transparency.

Crisis communications via social media is in the forefront of communications strategy in the services that have separate communications functions and allow its communications executive access to the executive table. The lone service in this study that did not have separate communications functions, mostly for reasons of manpower, acknowledges it lags behind other services in developing a social media strategy.

The pre-crisis elements described by respondents help develop relationships useful during a crisis. They include engaging public in two-way conversation; a seat for communications in the corporate boardroom; acknowledging crisis communicator is first point of contact with community; ensuring pre-approval to issue key messages during a crisis; identifying detractors and supporters/influencers; preparing contact lists with stakeholders and partners; preparing dark sites that can be activated during a crisis or identify websites that can be utilized; identifying which platforms to utilize and advertise which will be used for crises;

outline expectations for all agencies to follow during a crisis, and if necessary, prepare a checklist of duties or suggestions; staff familiarization of procedures and expectations; use same or similar messaging internally and externally; and assess new technologies and platforms to access where the public is.

The elements as described by the respondents during the crisis are: identifying the goal of the crisis communication; sending messages to the public as soon as possible after a crisis is determined and maintain contact even with simple holding messages or messages to direct public to sites with more information; establishing or incorporating an appropriate and specific hashtag and use it consistently; ensuring information is accurate and positive, clear and concise; monitoring messages for rumours and correcting immediately; cooperating with private and public stakeholders involved in crisis and issue consistent concise information on a regular basis to minimize rumours and misinformation; claiming to be the only accurate source of police information, challenging inaccurate information with accurate information; ensuring all information released complies with legal and case management requirements; and preparing messages to signify the crisis is over with instructions where more information can be found.

The main elements as described by the respondents during the post-crisis period are: reviewing procedures to determine if they need refinement and determining if messages reached the intended audiences through analytics and surveys; assessing the benefits and negatives of each platform; and assessing new technologies and platforms.

Conclusion

All of the participants mentioned the elements that appear in Diagram 1, which differs somewhat from much of the literature. Diagram 1 brings together the respondents' common

elements in formulating messages during a crisis. At the core is the Goal, with the elements required to reach that goal. While ultimately the broad aim is to restore peace and order, the respondents who argue the Goal is central to the operation were specific in scope: the arrest of a particular person or persons; evacuation of people in a flood plain; directing people to where they will be safest. Dealing with the specific goal — a variable depending on the crisis — leads to the general goal.

While police employ the procedural and emotional elements outlined by Reynolds (2002; 2004; 2005; 2006), Coombs (2007) and Seeger (2010), police also appear to be very focused or goal oriented. The goal that leads to the restoration of order becomes the focal point of police operations in a crisis, and that includes communicating with the public.

In response to RQ 1, characteristics of the use of social media by police services show they share common social media platforms, primarily Twitter for its speed, and Facebook for its ability to provide pertinent information beyond 140 characters. While guiding principles may be described differently, all of the services share the similar guiding principles of accuracy, timeliness, and cooperation with community, stakeholders, and media, and internally with staff. While only one respondent enunciated the term “goal” as a guideline, discussing it with other respondents suggests the concept appears inherent, although not necessarily explicitly acknowledged.

Elements mentioned by all of the respondents make the goal possible during the crisis — such as controlling the messages related to the police response and to the physical and psychological needs of the community, and the ability to send messaging with minimal oversight. However, communicators must consider the future while the crisis is occurring, such as the rigours of case management, pending court proceedings and possible inquests.

There is one important point that appears to be underlining communicators' role: although the communicator should work with as much independence as possible to ensure timeliness in responding to the needs of the community, it does not suggest the communicator works in a vacuum. They are tied to all of the elements of the organization responding to the crisis and share the same responsibilities and reputation.

Responses to RQ 2 suggest all of the services employ social media policies. Most policies are a subset of an overarching communications and crisis management policy. Social media use during crisis and during pre-crisis periods differs mostly in the tone, frequency of messaging and in the curtailing of the two-way symmetrical communication model. Content changes from relationship building during pre-crisis to crisis management, in that recipients of the messages are being asked to help, listen and react to messages emphasizing public or personal safety. A checklist of functions does not seem to be important among the majority of respondents. What is crucial to most are guiding principles of timeliness, accuracy, cooperation and a goal, with respondents suggesting checklists could be restrictive in their ability to respond to the unique elements of a crisis. Most said they keep template messages from previous incidents for use in future messaging, which offers them the luxury of saving time in the messaging process.

In response to RQ 3, reputation is central — and crucial — to all of the messaging performed by police. While achieving the goal is the ultimate end to restore peace and order, the willingness of community to assist during the crisis and the police service's standing post-crisis — which in turn becomes the pre-crisis period for the next crisis — helps determine the reputation of the service. It is most clearly reflected in the ability to perform policing functions to identify and alleviate crises. Discussions suggest that without trust, emergency

communicators have no value to the community; without a positive reputation, it would be difficult for to defend a service's particular brand, usually revolving around public safety.

The body of literature suggests the reputation of public organizations is based on the organization's response to a crisis: speed and ability to alleviate the issue to restore order. Clear and concise communications to the community within that time period is also critical, as shown by the literature related to the American Red Cross (Schwartz, 2010). The respondents suggest, whether in a crisis or during normal times, communications is now about community management, creating links and enhancing the relationship between the service and the community it serves. This was reflected in the responses by the participants: It is no longer enough to have foot patrol officers to reach out to community; police require cyber community officers to engage people, develop advocators and identify those who may disrupt messaging during crucial times. The respondents agree reputation is reflected in what they do, and how well they do it. Reputation is managed through the guiding principles of timeliness, accuracy and cooperation, by engaging the community in a professional manner, which leads to the police as being the most reliable source of information pertinent to the crisis. Trust and reputation are fragile commodities in policing and one factual error could prove disastrous in relationship management. But a solid positive relationship ensures people will listen to police in times of crisis.

Responses to RQ 4 indicate those who use social media agree the structure of the conversation changes. During non-crisis times, two-way discussion is the norm; it is part of the relationship building and it is necessary to build engagement and mutual respect. Crisis communication, however, requires police to take control of the conversation and it does change to a primarily, although not exclusively, one-way model, or push communications.

Dialog changes are evident in structure of the conversation. The immediacy of a crisis demands people listen and discuss only for clarity sake. The majority of services in the study suggest answering questions from the community is not possible during a crisis, and hopefully constant messaging will be preemptive in offering the information required.

It is, however, not a hard rule. The responses from two of those involved in this study clearly demonstrate the changes in dialog. Their experiences suggest it is best described as: It depends. They suggest the potential threat to life appears to be the primary causation as to how severely or abruptly the structure of dialog changes.

Responses to RQ 5 suggest crisis does not affect policy but it may possibly affect the tactical use of social media. The respondents say they are governed in the use of social media by corporate policy and by limitations imposed by law or the courts to the amount of information they can release and how to behave online, elements not explored in much of the existing literature. Techniques in releasing and sharing information may be issues, reflecting the evolution of technology and the needs of the services and their communities.

All respondents acknowledge social media is crucial in communications plans and is now an inherent part of the communications requirements of the service. It was also suggested maintaining a social media presence is labour intensive. The gap in social media use is most acutely visible with the lone small police service in the study, which cannot afford to trade a front-line officer for one that fulfills social media functions. Whether the service can afford not to, is a question its leadership must determine. Social media in policing appears to require constant monitoring and quick responses to determine the development of a crisis, ensure engagement and to counter rumour or false information. In larger urban centres, it can be a

24/7 function. The quality of technology was at times an issue as respondents urged constant upgrading.

The responses suggest social media strategy is an element of overarching communications policy, most clearly evident with the RCMP, and of internal organizational guidelines to online behaviour by appointed spokespersons. Issues at improving social media communications in the MacNeil Report are not based on policy so much as it is about technology and tactical use of social media.

How social media is used is often determined by the nature of the unique crisis. The usage appears to be often based not on written internal policy but on the concepts of crisis communication, the unique nature of the crisis, experience (even if by learning on fly) and common sense. Transparency is reflected through acknowledgement and honesty, promises to find out information if unknown, immediacy, accuracy, having a spirit of cooperation and showing fairness and empathy. Reputation is reflected in responding to the incident quickly and effectively, and by demonstrating the ability to deal with the issue, both operationally and with a steady stream of messages to keep the community informed.

One element, a seat at the executive table, is the link communicators have to senior personnel pre-crisis, during the crisis and post-crisis. It ensures continuity in planning, organizational philosophy and response capability to the community and throughout the organization internally.

There are hints that meeting the needs the media, while crucial in the literature, appears to be diminishing. The role of the media during a crisis appears to be part of the process of disseminating information from the source, in this case the police. In all cases, the information would be the same that was directly released by police to the public.

The strongest arguments for media would be to assist police services that do not have an extensive social media presence, or for interpretative and contextual examination of an issue which police could not comment on.

Limitations and Areas of further research

The most significant limitation was the small sample size. It would be ideal to review social media use during crises of all police services. The size of the police service appears to determine the extent in the use of social media; therefore a larger sample of smaller services would have been preferred.

There are two other glaring shortcomings. It would have been helpful to be representative all of the country's provinces; and have included Aboriginal services.

Further research is required into the role of journalism, or at least traditional journalism, in the wake of two-way conversations and engagement between people and organizations using social media and the community. There is a growing reliance by the public in having police communicators provide information directly to them and it may require either a redefinition or a reaffirmation of the traits of community journalism.

It is suggested further research could focus on Welton's contention of how communications technology can intertwine within organizations organically.

Further research is also suggested into the application of social media in crisis communication as the World Wide Web evolves into Web 3.0 and beyond. Smith (2009) suggests Web 3.0 "derives its 'wisdom' from software that learns by looking at online

content, analyzes the popularity of that content and draws conclusions. Instead of people refining information and opinion, intelligent software would do the same thing" (p. 2). He suggests information will make sense of the technology, raising the question if that somehow affects communication plans. Much of the research into Web 3.0 appears to be in the fields of branding and marketing, rather than in crisis communication. Silver (2014) suggests Web 3.0 — or what he calls the Semantic Web — will have a bigger impact than Web 1.0 had on society, in that computers and its programming will anticipate and provide answers to questions that have not been considered.

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Appendix 1: "SCCT crisis types by crisis clusters"

Victim cluster: In these crisis types, the organization is also a victim of the crisis.

Weak attributions of crisis responsibility = Mild reputational threat.

• *Natural disaster:* Acts of nature damage an organization such as an earthquake.

• *Rumor:* False and damaging information about an organization is being circulated.

• *Workplace violence:* Current or former employee attacks current employees onsite.

• *Product tampering/Malevolence:* External agent causes damage to an organization.

Accidental cluster: In these crisis types, the organizational actions leading to the crisis were unintentional.

Minimal attributions of crisis responsibility = Moderate reputational threat.

• *Challenges:* Stakeholders claim an organization is operating in an inappropriate manner.

• *Technical-error accidents:* A technology or equipment failure causes an industrial accident.

• *Technical-error product harm:* A technological or equipment failure causes a product to be recalled.

Preventable cluster: In these crisis types, the organization knowingly placed people at risk, took inappropriate actions or violated a law/regulation.

Strong attributions of crisis responsibility = Severe reputational threat.

• *Human-error accidents:* Human error causes an industrial accident.

• *Human-error product harm:* Human error causes a product to be recalled.

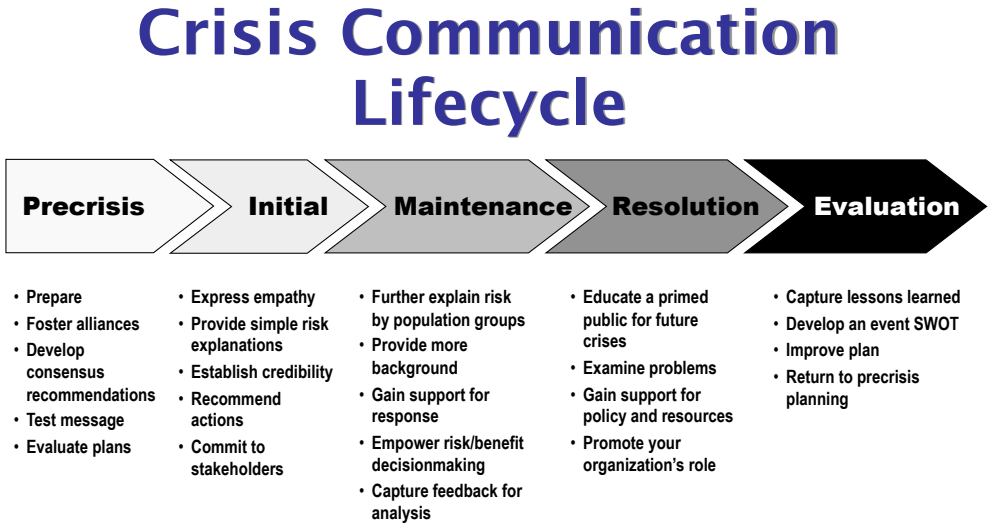
• *Organizational misdeed with no injuries:* Stakeholders are deceived without injury.

• *Organizational misdeed management misconduct:* Management violates Laws or regulations.

• *Organizational misdeed with injuries:* Stakeholders are placed at risk by management and injuries occur.

Source: Coombs, 2007, p. 168.

Appendix 2: "Crisis Communication Lifecycle"



Source: Reynolds, B. (2004). Retrieved December 31, 2014, from http-//sfba.acp-international.com/files_downloads/CERC_San_Francisco.

Appendix 3: Excerpts from Tweet Streams (Moncton 2014 and Calgary 2013)

A. Tweets during the June 4, 2014 Moncton shooting incident.

RCMP New Brunswick @rcmpnb
#RCMPNB #CODIAC is asking the public to turn on your exterior lights to assist police. #Moncton
9 months agoReplyRetweetFavorite2.4K more

Chris A. Cormier @chrisacormier
#RCMPNB #CODIAC is asking the public to turn on your exterior lights to assist police. #Moncton #monctonshooting

Elliotte Friedman @friedgehnic
RT @RCMPNB: #RCMPNB #CODIAC is asking the public to turn on your exterior lights to assist police. #Moncton
9 months agoReplyRetweetFavorite

RCMP New Brunswick @rcmpnb
#RCMPNB #Codiac still actively looking for shooter near Pinehurst SubDiv. in Moncton. Stay in. Lock doors. Avoid this area. Stay Safe!

GRC N.-B. @grcnb
Les recherches se poursuivent afin de retrouver l'homme armé. #RCMPNB #Codiac
9 months agoReplyRetweetFavorite16 more

RCMP New Brunswick @rcmpnb
Update: RCMP search continues for suspect in shooting, Moncton, N.B. bit.ly/1xdWZwI #RCMPNB #Codiac
9 months agoReplyRetweetFavorite213 more

RCMP New Brunswick @rcmpnb
#RCMPNB #Codiac Arrest Moncton Shooting Suspect Without Incident, Moncton, N.B. ow.ly/xHvAP
9 months agoReplyRetweetFavorite248 more

Hello Thunder Bay! @hellotbay
.@Scottish_Medium: #moncto Justin Bourque in custody! #RCMPNB #Codiac #TBay #CBCTBay j.mp/1kEQnlB
9 months agoReplyRetweetFavorite

B. Tweets during the Calgary floods in 2013.

Calgary Police @calgarypolice
Clarifying a rumour for #yyc. There are NO zoo animals being sheltered at the Courts. #yycflood
2 years agoReplyRetweetFavorite436 more

Rob Cooper @formerfatguy **Influential**
RT @CalgaryPolice: Clarifying a rumour for #yyc. There are NO zoo animals being sheltered at the Courts. #yycflood
2 years agoReplyRetweetFavorite

Calgary Police @calgarypolice
All #yyc schools are closed tomorrow and we are asking all people to avoid coming into the downtown core if possible. #yycflood
2 years agoReplyRetweetFavorite630 more

Michelle Rempel @michellerempel
Outstanding information being provided by @calgarypolice and @cityofcalgary on #yycflood. Please follow for evacuation and safety info.
2 years agoReplyRetweetFavorite21 more

Calgary Police @calgarypolice
Aerial photo of flooding around the Saddledome. #yycflood pic.twitter.com/kZlDekMfZK
2 years agoReplyRetweetFavorite239 more

Buzz Bishop @buzzbishop

Note to @twitter: don't have auto shut-off valves on the accounts of emergency services during emergencies. #yycflood @CalgaryPolice

2 years agoReplyRetweetFavorite114 more

Cst. Jeremy Shaw @cstshaw

@Support Please increase the tweet limit for @CalgaryPolice account so we can continue to share vital information during the #yycflood

2 years agoReplyRetweetFavorite306 more

Theo Fleury @theofleury14

RT @CalgaryPolice: List of current road closures #yycflood #yyc pic.twitter.com/2rlJcWZhie

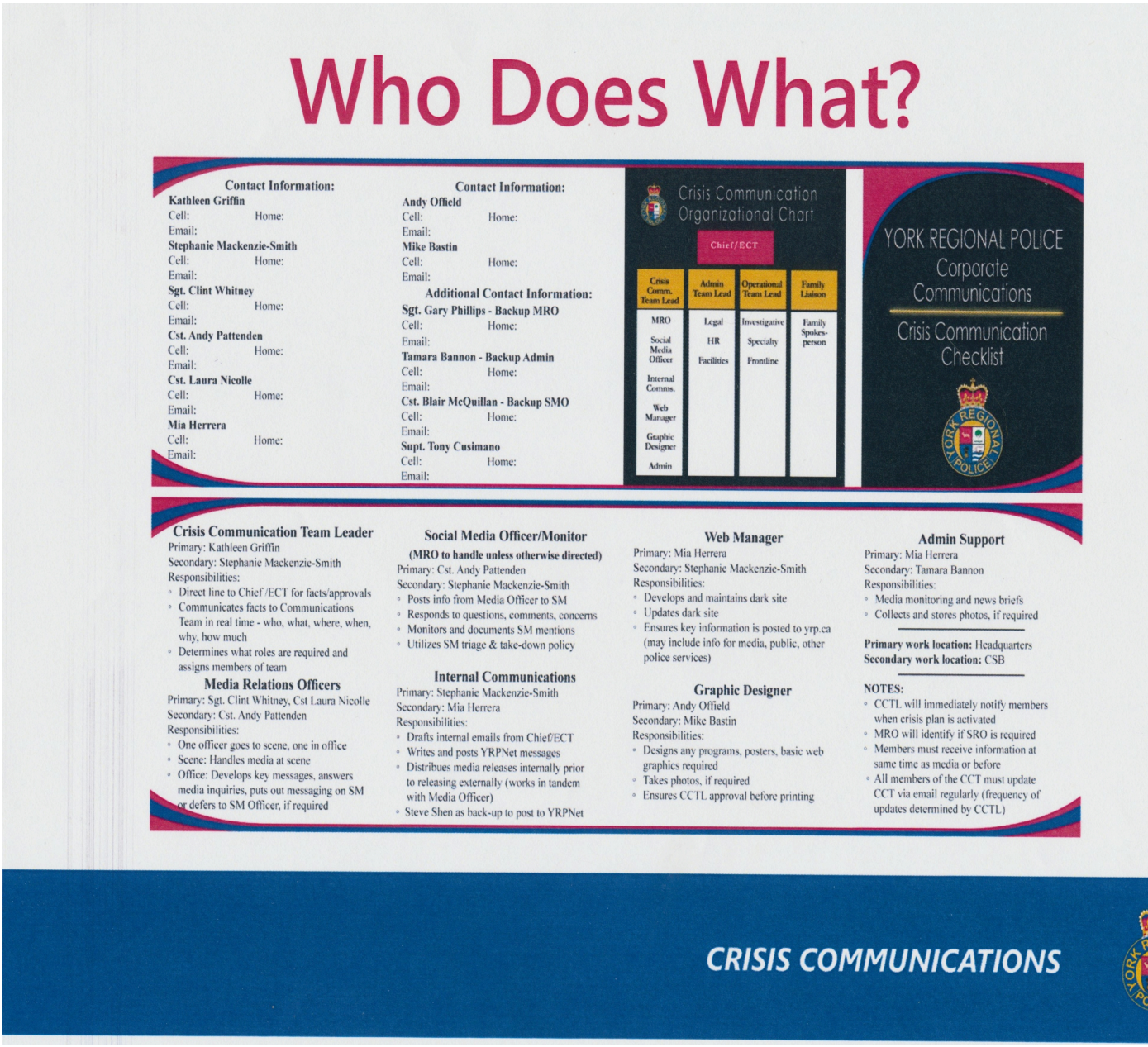
2 years agoReplyRetweetFavorite187 more

Naheed Nenshi @nenshi

.@CalgaryPolice win social media award for work during #yycflood! Congratulations! newsroom.calgary.ca/pr/calgary/cal…

a year agoReplyRetweetFavorite32 more

Appendix 4: PowerSlide's "Who Does What" Presentation



Source: PowerSlide by Mackenzie-Smith (n.d.).

Appendix 5: Toronto Police Service Social Media Engagement Policy

Toronto Police Service Social Engagement Guidelines

Members of the Toronto Police Service have been trained in the use of Social Media to represent our Service and to connect with the public. These are our public guidelines, but members are to refer to the more detailed information within Toronto Police Service Governance.

facebook twitter Google+ YouTube foursquare

You must remember who you are / who you represent
Any conversations that relate to our Service or our profession, you are first and foremost a member and what you say is governed by several pieces of legislation at all levels of government.

Your accounts are yours but they represent us
You are free to comment and speak on matters that you have an expertise or working knowledge of, but you are not official spokespersons of the Service and therefore, you can not comment on policy or procedures.

An official response may be required
In your capacity as a public entity of the Service, you may be asked questions or to comment on issues that are outside of your capacity. Redirecting people to Corporate Communications or subject matter experts is recommended to ensure the proper information is relayed in a timely and accurate manner.

The Internet is forever
Search engines, screen capturing, digital data codes and other technologies make it virtually impossible to take something back. Be sure what you mean to say, and say what you mean.

Guidelines

In short, our guidelines for engaging in the social space consist of the following core values:

1. Honesty
2. Respect
3. Teamwork
4. Integrity
5. Reliability
6. Fairness
7. Positive Attitude

Questions...ASK
If you are not sure about what to say, how to engage, what to post or any other questions / concerns you have, check with a member of Corporate Communications for guidance and assistance.

Always the Police
You are always first and foremost a police officer or employee of the police service. All interactions must be conducted as such.

Be sensitive to the privacy of others and the Service
Do not share any information of others including their photos without their permission and clear details what you intend to do with any information you are seeking to use. Naturally, this includes any information protected by law; or information that could cause an officer safety issue; or damage an investigation's integrity.

Treat others as you want to be treated
Always be respectful and patient with others. At all times, avoid being offensive, rude or intolerant of others' opinions or views except when they constitute a criminal offence.

The Internet is a public space
Consider everything you do on-line to be in the public realm. Assume that everything you do, no matter how inconsequential or obscure will be seen by the public, the media and the Chief.

Any questions regarding this document can be directed to Toronto Police Corporate Communications, 416-808-7100 / corporatecommunications@torontopolice.on.ca / April 2012

Source: http://www.torontopolice.on.ca/publications/files/social_media_guidelines.pdf

Appendix 6: Communications Policy of the Government of Canada (Excerpts)

Treasury Board of Canada Secretariat (http://www.tbs- sct.gc.ca/index-eng.asp)

Communications Policy of the Government of Canada Effective date

This policy takes effect on August 1, 2006. This version of the policy incorporates updates effective April 1, 2012.

Policy Objective

The purpose of this policy is to ensure that communications across the Government of Canada are well co-ordinated, effectively managed and responsive to the diverse information needs of the public.

Crisis and Emergency Communication

While the terms "crisis" and "emergency" are not synonymous, effective communication is an integral part of both crisis and emergency management.

A "crisis" is a situation that somehow challenges the public's sense of appropriateness, tradition, values, safety, security or the integrity of the government. A crisis need not pose a serious threat to human life or property. Effective communication management is imperative to help maintain or restore the public's confidence in the government during times of crisis.

An "emergency" is an abnormal situation that requires prompt action, beyond normal procedures, in order to limit damage to persons, property or the environment. Some emergencies may also be, or become, crises; if, for example, it is perceived that the government has no control over a situation. Effective communication management is imperative before, during and after an emergency to help prevent injury or loss of life, to help limit damage to assets and property, to help maintain public services, to assist in the process of recovery, and to help maintain or restore public confidence in the government.

Under the *Emergency Management Act*, institutions are required to prepare plans for dealing with emergencies. The *Policy on Government Security*, issued by the Treasury Board, also requires institutions to develop plans and procedures for handling emergencies.

Institutions must recognize that extraordinary and rapid efforts may be required in times of crisis or emergency. They must be prepared to adjust priorities and resources accordingly. The necessary plans, partnerships, tools and methods must be in place to allow government officials to communicate effectively and efficiently in both official languages during an emergency or a crisis.

Several government agencies at the national, provincial or local level may be involved in responding to an emergency or crisis. Co-operation with others, such as industry or community leaders and non-governmental organizations, may also be required.

Agreement among governments and their institutions regarding lead responsibility for communications during a crisis or an emergency is essential for the timely provision of accurate, relevant and consistent information. It is necessary to facilitate the delivery of services, to eliminate the potential for contradiction or confusion, and to demonstrate government leadership.

Lead institutions must undertake contingency planning and develop standard operating procedures. They must seek agreement with regional and local authorities on the co-ordination of government assistance and the designation of a single focus of responsibility for all communications with the public.

Lead responsibility must be identified as part of the planning process. Where it is unclear which government authority may have the lead in particular circumstances, institutions must seek guidance from the Privy Council Office.

Source: http://www.tbs-sct.gc.ca/pol/doc-eng.aspx?id=12316&section=HTML