ON THE CRIME BEAT 2.0: CITIZEN JOURNALISM, CROWD-SOURCED POLICING AND THE POLICE NARRATIVE IN CANADIAN NEWS

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November 14th 2017
STATEMENT OF AUTHORSHIP

This dissertation is submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Policing and Security by course work. I hereby declare that this submission is my own work and that, to the best of my knowledge and belief, it contains no material previously published or written by another person nor material which to a substantial extent has been accepted for the award of any other degree or diploma at Charles Sturt University or any other educational institution, except where due acknowledgment is made in the dissertation. Any contribution made to the research by colleagues with whom I have worked at Charles Sturt University or elsewhere during my candidature is fully acknowledged.

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VERONICA S.E. FOX
I would like to thank my academic supervisor, Dr. Henry Prunckun, for his ongoing support from the very beginning of this process. I have valued his consistent insight and guidance as I progressed through the stages of topic identification, literature review, data gathering, analysis and documentation.

I also thank those who participated in the research as my anonymous panel of experts. Your input contributed to the objectivity of my study.

Thanks to my colleagues and, in particular, the library staff at Kwantlen Polytechnic University, who provided me with much of the access to the materials needed to complete my literature review.

Also thanks to Pamela Burns and Marc Ramos who conducted a final review of my work for context. I appreciate you taking the time to help make sure my final copy is an engaging read. And to Erin Seatter, my editor: I appreciate your eye for detail and contribution to the quality of my final written work.

During my studies, I have been fortunate to have the support of friends as well as a number of academic and policing colleagues and supervisors. Thank you all for your encouragement as I progressed through some extremely busy seasons. Thanks in particular to those friends who stocked my freezer, understood my often-sporadic communication, and made the extra effort to get me away from the books periodically, too.

I owe a special thank you to Dr. Sara Fretheim who stepped in to assist on the final line-by-line read when my day job suddenly required some significant extra attention.

Finally, but most importantly, I thank my parents, who have always believed in me and have expressed no surprise as I’ve embarked on each successive academic endeavour, despite my constant assertions each time that it was to be “the last one.”
ABSTRACT

In Western society, the professions of policing and journalism are closely entwined within a nexus of social control. While one of the key roles of policing organisations is to enforce the norms and legal values of society, journalists can be seen as a mechanism of police or government overwatch, ensuring that society’s agents of control do not overstep their bounds. Historically, the relationship between the police and the mass media has been characterised by an ongoing negotiation for dominance, and over time, this struggle and the balance of power has been impacted by the rise of technology. Traditionally, journalists were reliant on a police narrative for news production, but advances over time in technology such as the television news camera facilitated the ability of journalists to obtain a counternarrative to crime, justice and policing stories. More recently, new internet platforms such as Facebook and Twitter (Web 2.0), along with associated technologies such as camera phones, have enhanced the public narrative in news discourse.

According to the theory of social constructionism, knowledge is created by individuals, groups or organisations in society and is impacted by social, economic and political influences. The mass media play a unique role in the production of meaning and values as they become forums for narratives where competing constructions are framed and compete for dominance. Within this theoretical framework, this dissertation explores the police–media relationship in light of the rise of Web 2.0 technologies by considering who holds narrative dominance within crime, justice and policing stories.

The four-month study included daily quantitative analyses of three evening television newscasts, one online news publication, and four police-operated Web 2.0 platforms. A total of 1,537 broadcasted television news stories, 155 text-based online news stories, and 1,694 police-generated social media posts were considered in order to determine who holds narrative dominance and how Web 2.0 technologies employed by the police and public might influence such narratives.

The study findings suggest that police and media roles vis-à-vis social control, and accordingly their professional association, have been impacted by civilian use of Web 2.0 technologies. As members of the public use new technology to engage in citizen journalism to produce first-hand news stories and crowd-sourced policing to define and enforce social norms within the media forum, police and media organisations will need to adapt their operations in both theory and practice in order to maintain relevance and a balance of power.
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<tr>
<td>BBC</td>
<td>British Broadcasting Corporation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BC</td>
<td>British Columbia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BCE</td>
<td>Bell Canada Enterprises</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CBC</td>
<td>Canadian Broadcasting Corporation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CBS</td>
<td>Columbia Broadcasting System</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CTV</td>
<td>Canadian Television Network</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NBC</td>
<td>National Broadcasting Company</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NYPD</td>
<td>New York Police Department</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RCMP</td>
<td>Royal Canadian Mounted Police</td>
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<tr>
<td>VPD</td>
<td>Vancouver Police Department</td>
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CHAPTER 1 — INTRODUCTION

BACKGROUND

Generally, theorists agree that the police–media relationship is characterised by an ongoing negotiation for dominance (Brown, 2013; Jiggins, 2007; Lawrence, 2000; Leishman & Mason, 2003; Lovell, 2003; McGovern, 2008; McGovern & Lee, 2010; Porter, 1995; Shepherdson, 2014; Toch, 2012). Historically, the police–media relationship included close interaction between members of the police and media and, in some cases, involved the embedding of journalists within police practice (Jiggins, 2007; Leishman & Mason, 2003; Lovell, 2003). Theorists have argued that this arrangement was one-sided, with police occupying a position of power over journalists, who were dependent upon source information for crime-related stories (Brown, 2013; Jiggins, 2007; Lawrence, 2000; McGovern, 2008; McGovern & Lee, 2010; Porter, 1995). The result was often biased reporting with a heavy emphasis on a police narrative in discourse on matters related to crime (Brown, 2013; Jiggins, 2007; Lawrence, 2000; McGovern, 2008; McGovern & Lee, 2010; Porter, 1995). But more recently, theorists have begun to question the view that the policing establishment holds the power in the police–media relationship. Over time, journalists and police have begun working more and more at arm’s-length (Jiggins, 2007; Leishman & Mason, 2003; Lovell, 2003), and journalists have increasingly demonstrated the power and willingness to publish disparaging stories about police agencies (Brown, 2013; Leishman & Mason, 2003; Lovell, 2003; Toch, 2012). The mass media also increasingly impact police behaviour on matters related to use of force, professional conduct, and business practice (Brown, 2013; Leishman & Mason, 2003; Lovell, 2003; Toch, 2012).

The balance of power in the police–media relationship has been impacted over time, in part by the rise of technology (Brown, 2013; Jewkes, 2004; Lawrence, 2000; Leishman & Mason, 2003; Lovell, 2003; Toch, 2012). Since the introduction of the mass-produced newspaper, new technological advances have continually strengthened the media’s ability to serve as a mechanism of overwatch by providing journalists (and increasingly the public) with methods to surveil the police (Brown, 2013; Jewkes, 2004; Lawrence, 2000; Leishman & Mason, 2003; Lovell, 2003; Toch, 2012). Each new advance in media technology, including the mass-produced newspaper, the news camera, and, more recently, publicly accessible video recording devices, has limited the traditional power of the police in the police–media relationship by allowing for the development of a progressively more accessible counternarrative to that offered by police (Goldsmith, 2010; Leishman & Mason, 2003; Lovell, 2003).

The twenty-first century has seen the rise of new media technology in the form of interactive internet platforms such as Twitter and Facebook, commonly referred to as social media, social networking sites, or Web 2.0 technologies (Fuchs, 2014; Fuchs & Trottier, 2015; Reddick & Norris, 2013; Schneider, 2016; Schneider & Trottier, 2012). In this study, the term Web 2.0 was derived from Reddick and Norris (2013) who used it to differentiate social media platforms from basic websites which they referred to as Web 1.0. Web 1.0 technologies allow for one-way communication while Web 2.0 technologies allow for cocreated information.
One key feature of Web 2.0 technologies is their capacity for communication and content development within the public sphere (Fuchs, 2014; Fuchs & Trottier, 2015; Hermida, 2016; Roddick & Norris, 2013; Schneider, 2016; Schneider & Trottier, 2012). Using such technologies, individuals, community groups, and social movements are more able to contribute to the media narrative (Brown, 2013; Hermida, 2016; Leishman & Mason, 2003; Schneider, 2016). As Schneider (2016) explained, “Users do not simply read a website as they did with Web 1.0; in Web 2.0, they are also able to modify the content of the site. In other words, users contribute to and interact with the website” (p. 34). This democratising feature of Web 2.0 technologies allows for a departure from traditional media practice, and some theorists have argued that emphasis of the police narrative is lessened as technologically enhanced competing voices contribute to the media narrative on crime and policing (Brown, 2013; Leishman & Mason, 2003). Overall, Web 2.0 technologies represent the next technological advancement in both the media and policing realms and may, along with associated technologies such as camera phones, play a role in impacting the balance of power in the police–media relationship (Brown, 2013; Schneider, 2016).

As will be detailed in the literature review, there are a limited number of studies related to the impact of Web 2.0 technologies on police–media interactions and Canadian studies in this area are particularly underrepresented. In this regard, this dissertation examines how the police and public are utilising Web 2.0 and associated technologies as a media strategy and how this may have impacted the police–media relationship in Canada as exemplified by the nature of narratives within crime, justice and policing stories in Canadian news media.

**RATIONALE**

Fuchs (2014) defined power as “the disposition of actors over means that allow them to control structures, [and] influence processes and decisions in their own interests” (p. 61). Similarly, Quinney (2000) described it as “the ability of persons and groups to determine the conduct of other persons and groups” (p. 73) and linked the concept to conflict, which he argued occurs with the differential distribution of power between competing groups.

A consideration of power is intrinsic to a study of police–media relations, as both sides of the relationship hold a considerable amount of inherent and competing influence in modern society. The police serve as a measure of social control, making efforts to prevent crime and enforce the laws of the government under whose jurisdiction they report (de Jourdan, 2013; Griffiths, 2015). Ross (2007) described the powers of the police even within a democratised society as “extensive” (p. 151). Police, he argued, have the capacity to negatively impact citizens through the use of unique powers to arrest, search and seize, each of which may “damage the reputations of citizens and deprive them of their freedom” (Ross, 2007, p. 151). Of course, within modern industrialised nations, certain limitations are placed on the powers of police. These include legislated principles and rules such as the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms, legislated bodies of police oversight such as the Independent Investigations Office in British Columbia, and unofficial limitations such as media oversight. As Quinney (1970) observed, the police officer “is charged with the enforcement of a multitude of criminal laws and is at the same time expected to observe the rights of the individual. . . . [T]he policeman’s function of control is itself regulated to ensure that the suspect receives his legal rights once his freedom has been restricted” (p. 106).
In developed industrial nations, where the police serve as one of society’s measures of social control, the media fill a vital counter-role as a mechanism of overwatch (Brown, 2013; Gies, 2008; Jiggins, 2007; Lawrence, 2000; Toch, 2012). Jiggins (2007) stated, “The role of the media in western society has been conceptualised for over 160 years as that of a watchdog, monitoring arms of governance such as the police for the public good” (p. 203). Intrinsic to this conceptualised role is “substantial autonomy for the media, their representation of the interests of the populace rather than dominant groups and their independent power to challenge [emphasis added] these dominant groups” (Jiggins, 2007, p. 204). Yet the media hold a considerable amount of power in other regards. This is primarily because the news media play a key role in defining issues of crime and justice (Fuchs 2014; Jiggins, 2007; McCormick, 1995; Surette, 2011). For the majority of the public, the news media replace firsthand experience on matters related to crime and justice with secondhand media-filtered accounts of events (McCormick, 1995; Surette, 2011). This can be problematic. Historically, an overemphasis on violent crime among marginalised groups coupled with a sensationalised depiction of police and their duties resulted in an imbalanced depiction of the criminal justice system and, in some cases, gave rise to what theorist Cohen (1972) first referred to as moral panics (see also Leishman & Mason, 2003; Lovell, 2003; McCormick, 1995; Surette, 2011). McCormick (1995) observed that “crime is more than simply reported by the news; it is constructed, distorted and manipulated as well” (p. 1). Similarly, media depictions of police have traditionally been polarised, emphasising a good cop/bad cop narrative at the expense of coverage addressing the realities of day-to-day policing (Leishman & Mason, 2003; Lovell, 2003; McCormick, 1995).

But just as there are limitations on the power of the police within modern industrialised nations, certain limitations are also placed on the powers of the media. For example, laws related to criminal libel, counsel of a criminal offence, and obscenity impact journalistic practices in Canada (Bruser & Rogers, 1985). Perhaps paradoxically, it is the state that administers sanctions to media agencies and journalists who step beyond the watchdog role they hold over the state’s actors. Fuchs (2014) provided the example of a phone hacking scandal in the United Kingdom, in which the News of the World newspaper monitored and published the communications of public figures for profit (p. 83). An inquiry recommended sanctions in response to this privacy violation, although this was opposed by some government officials. Similarly, Bruser and Rogers (1985) described a Canadian case where the judiciary upheld a police officer’s decision to arrest a journalist at a crime scene, stating that the rights of a free press are not superior to the responsibilities of police officers acting in accordance to their duties (p. 15).

By virtue of the nature of their roles in society, police and news agencies are sometimes at odds with one another. Yet police officers and journalists often also have closely aligned challenges and goals which often results in a symbiotic relationship. In fact, the societal roles of the police and media are arguably both competing and complementary in nature. For example, the media rely heavily on police-generated content in order to produce a palatable product for the public. Surette (2011) described a “forced marriage” (p. 2) between the criminal justice and media systems borne out of the fact that crime and justice stories are popular with the public and tend to dominate news media content. Meanwhile, the police rely on the media to legitimise their role in society. As Jiggins (2007) observed, “At its most fundamental, police require the support of the communities they serve in order to be
effective, and the news media can have a major impact on perceptions about police performance” (p. 207). At the same time, both the police and media are subject to societal, economic, and political pressures. News media turn a profit from the production of news (Fuchs, 2014; Gies, 2008; Hall et al., 1978; Jiggins, 2007; McCormick, 1995; Surette, 2011), and this can impact what and how news is covered. Fuchs (2014) described a shift over time from a historically radical press involved in advocacy for the marginalised, radical politics and social overwatch to a for-profit industry focused on advertising and entertainment. Similarly, McGovern (2011) has described the media agencies of the twenty-first century as being impacted by “dwindling budgets, decreases in advertising revenue, and an increased focus on cost effectiveness” (p. 1), and Gies (2008) explained that in such a reality it is possible that “economic imperatives direct editorial content” (p. 98). Meanwhile, the police, and their activities within society, are directly impacted by dominant constructions presented in the media that direct criminal justice policy (Surette, 2011). By way of example, Surette (2011) explained how narratives in the media about school violence during the last decade have led to “new laws and policies directed against the ‘culture of school violence’” (p. 37).

Such societal, economic, and political factors contribute to a police–media relationship characterised by an ongoing negotiation for dominance (Brown, 2013; Ellis & McGovern, 2015; Hall et al., 1978; Jiggins, 2007; Lawrence, 2000; Leishman & Mason, 2003; Lovell, 2003; McGovern, 2008; McGovern & Lee, 2010; Porter, 1995; Shepherdson, 2014; Toch, 2012). Media agencies seeking to fulfil their watchdog role are curtailed by their reliance on police for crime-related content (Gies, 2008; Jewkes, 2004; Jiggins, 2007; Lovell, 2003; Surette, 2011), while police agencies attempt to encourage police-legitimising media narratives in the face of emergent counternarratives, such as those involving scandal or organisational failure (Goldsmith, 2010; Jiggins, 2007; Leishman & Mason, 2003; Lovell, 2003; Schneider, 2016).

The police and the media are also both impacted by the rise of new technology. Over the course of several decades, the negotiation for dominance in the police–media relationship has taken the form of a technologically fuelled game of one-upmanship (Lovell, 2003). Each new advance in technology that bolsters the power of the media by better equipping it to fulfil its watchdog role through increased powers of surveillance or access to counternarratives, stimulates a response from police agencies seeking to mitigate the loss of their influence (Brown, 2013; Goldsmith, 2010; Leishman & Mason, 2003; Lovell, 2003). Police responded to the rise of the newspaper with the development of media relations practices (Lovell, 2003), and more recently, the increasing prevalence of publicly available camera phones has resulted in discourse around police body-worn cameras (Ariel, 2014; Brown, 2013; Crow & Snyder, 2017; Schneider, 2016; Smykla et al., 2015). Similarly, the rise of the internet has fostered the development of police-managed websites (Kelly, 2013; McGovern, 2011). Media and police use of internet technology has again changed as a result of arguably the most influential technological advancement thus far in the twenty-first century: Web 2.0.

In the twenty-first century, journalists have begun to utilise internet technologies to research and disseminate their stories (Hermida, 2016; Stassen, 2010) and, with the rise of Web 2.0 technologies, they have garnered unprecedented access to counternarratives in discourse related to crime, justice and policing (Brown, 2013; Jewkes, 2004; Lawrence,
Schneider (2016) explained that with the advent of social media, journalists are “no longer forced to rely strictly upon police officials as primary information sources” (p. 102), which means that “compared to the era before social media, police now have much less control over how some crime materials are obtained, presented, and framed” (p. 102). During the same time, police agencies have also begun harnessing Web 2.0 technologies as investigative and community policing tools (Brainard & Edlins, 2015; Brunty & Helenek, 2013; Kelly, 2013; Lieberman, Koetzle, & Sakiyama, 2013; Meijer & Thaens, 2013; Meijer & Torenvlied, 2014; Schneider, 2014) and as communication platforms during critical incidents (MacNeil, 2014; Trottier, 2012). But some police agencies have also started using Web 2.0 technologies as a media strategy, allowing them to disseminate their own news content directly to the public (Ellis & McGovern, 2015). This represents the latest development in the ongoing negotiation for dominance in the police–media relationship.

How police choose to respond to Web 2.0 technologies from a media perspective could have an impact on the future direction of police–media negotiations for influence. Web 2.0 technologies provide access to competing voices and allow for a counternarrative to that of the police on matters related to the criminal justice system (Brown, 2013; Jewkes, 2004; Lawrence, 2000; Leishman & Mason, 2013; Toch, 2012). Such technology could arguably enhance a journalist’s ability to produce stories in line with their watchdog role. As Lovell (2003) explained, “New media, and especially the electronic media, penetrate the shield of police secrecy, potentially threatening the legitimacy of the persona that the police have so carefully constructed” (p. 32). Yet police also have access to Web 2.0 technologies and some organisations employ the technologies as a part of their media relations strategy (Ellis & McGovern, 2015). It is interesting to consider how police use of Web 2.0 technologies in this area might counter the media’s access to counternarratives in criminal justice discourse and perhaps enhance police legitimacy. There appears to be a paucity of research in this area. Therefore, this dissertation aims to provide some insight into how police are, or could be, effectively using Web 2.0 technologies as a media strategy and consider the likely impact of Web 2.0 on influence within the police–media relationship. It is hoped that the study will make a contribution to knowledge in this area that might be of value to police agencies seeking to ethically enhance their influence in the police–media relationship through training and practice.

**THEORETICAL BASE**

Social constructionism provides a theoretical framework for a study of media, crime and justice and is applicable to a study of the police–media relationship. The theory holds that knowledge is created by individuals, groups, or organisations in society (Berger & Luckmann, 1966; O’Leary, 2014; Quinney, 1970; Ryan, Carragee, & Meinhofer, 2001; Surette, 2011). Reality and knowledge are intrinsically tied to human relationships and processes and are impacted by political and social trends. They are formed, in part, through human discourse and are alterable through competing narratives (Surette, 2011). Social actors frame problems and thereby “define what is and what is not relevant to [an] issue” (Ryan et al., 2001, p. 176). As Quinney (1970) explained:

> Man contracts his own reality. And with the help of others, he creates a social world. The construction of this world is related to the knowledge man develops, the ideas to
which he is exposed, and the manner in which he selects and interprets information to fit the world he is shaping. Man behaves, then, in reference to his conceptions of reality. (p. 277)

Berger and Luckmann (1966) offered an expanded argument, noting that individuals not only frame reality but integrate their framed meaning to define, legitimise and validate organisations in which they operate. In this way, both individuals and organisations become involved in the framing of reality (Berger & Luckmann, 1966, p. 54).

According to social constructionist theory, the news media play a unique role in the production of meaning and values as they “help filter out competing constructions” (Surette, 2011, p. 33). This is not always considered a positive thing. There are political, social, and economic aspects to the media’s role in issue framing and meaning production (Hall et al., 1978; Ryan et al., 2001; Surette, 2011). Ryan et al. (2001) explained that “journalistic frames do not develop in a political or cultural vacuum . . . [but rather] are influenced by frames sponsored by multiple social actors, including corporate and political elites, advocates and social moments” (p. 176). According to the theorists, news stories become a “forum for framing contests” (Ryan et al., 2001, p. 176) in which various actors with their own social, political and economic motivators compete for dominance. However, the contest for media attention is imbalanced and certain social actors are at a disadvantage. As Surette (2011) argued, “The media tend to favor positions that are dramatic, are sponsored by powerful groups, and are related to pre-established cultural themes” (p. 33). Quite often, “framing contests favor political and economic elites” (Ryan et al., 2001, p. 176). According to social constructionist theory, those who offer a counternarrative to that favoured by the media are frequently filtered out of the discourse, whereas those deemed to be legitimate or dominant are emphasised (Ryan et al., 2001; Surette, 2011). This is particularly evident around matters related to crime and justice.

As several theorists have noted, the majority of the public, having little personal experience with the criminal justice system, are reliant on the media to frame their knowledge in that area (Boyd & Carter, 2014; Gies, 2008; Jewkes, 2004; Lawrence, 2000; Leishman & Mason, 2003; Lovell, 2003; Surette, 2011; Toch, 2012). Quinney (1970) described the mass media as being “among the most important agents in the diffusion of criminal conceptions” (p. 281). But often, crime narratives in the news do not reflect reality. Rather, they follow the interests of the elite, rely heavily on the legitimised voices of the police, and exclude the needs and voices of nondominate groups (Hermida, 2016; Jewkes, 2004; Hermida, 2016; Ryan et al., 2001; Surette, 2011). Part of the issue is as follows:

Access to news as a political resource and the dynamics of framing contests are influenced significantly by the economic and cultural resources available to groups or organizations that sponsor frames. . . . The considerable resources available to those who hold institutional power contribute to their sponsorship of frames and to their ability to have these frames influence public discourse. (Ryan et al., 2001, p. 179)

“Credentialed experts” (Ryan et al., 2001, p. 180) possessing institutional power, such as the police, are often relied upon not only to provide news content but also to frame meaning through analysis (Hermida, 2016; Leishman & Mason, 2003; Lovell, 2003). Surette (2011) explained some potential problems with such a socially constructed reality:
The most important result of the social reality construction competition is that the winning dominant construction directs public policy. . . . For crime and justice, this socially constructed reality will define the conditions, trends and factors accepted as causes of crime; the behaviours that are seen as criminal; and the criminal justice policies accepted as reasonable and likely to be successful. (p. 34)

Surette’s argument outlines the political and social implications of message framing. The media’s handling of a criminal justice issue, backed by a police-generated narrative, can directly impact aspects of the criminal justice system, including future policing practice. Still, it should be noted that notwithstanding the larger economic, political and social factors at play, in relation to the prevalence of the police narrative in news media coverage, it has been generally accepted among some theorists that the journalistic reliance on the police narrative occurs largely out of necessity, as information-dependent journalists seek access to same from knowledge-holding police (Leishman & Mason, 2003; Lovell, 2003).

Lippert and Stenson (2010) argued that “constructionist studies focus upon not only problems’ social construction but also ‘official’ planned reaction [to such problems]” (p. 479). Considering this, if one were to argue that the police narrative in crime discourse was overrepresented, social constructionist theory might suggest that certain other social actors could take planned action to respond to the problem. For example, Ryan et al. (2001) argued that certain social movements and community groups can influence news coverage and shape public debate through tactics such as message framing. Similarly, other theorists have argued that democratising Web 2.0 and associated technologies may allow for competing narratives within the news media (Brown, 2013; Hermida, 2016; Leishman & Mason, 2003). As Hermida (2016) articulated, “Governments, businesses and advocacy have always tried to influence public discussion, largely through newspapers, radio and television. . . . [and] the exponential advance in our capacity to share and connect allows for nascent movements to flower, take shape and multiply much more easily and rapidly than before” (pp. 186–187). Continuing in this vein, with regard to the focus of this study, if one were to acknowledge the generally accepted theoretical view that the police–media relationship is characterised by an ongoing negotiation for dominance wherein the news media rely on the police narrative primarily out of necessity (Leishman & Mason, 2003; Lovell, 2003), social constructionism would allow that the advent of democratising Web 2.0 and associated technologies provide journalists with access to a readily available counternarrative which they might use to alter the balance of influence between the media and police (Brown, 2013; Jewkes, 2004; Lawrence, 2000; Leishman & Mason, 2003; Toch 2012). However, social constructionism would also allow for the potentiality for a police reaction (in policy or practice) in response to this shift. All things considered, police agencies are just as capable of employing message framing and Web 2.0 technologies as social movements and community groups.

In their study of social media and state surveillance, Fuchs and Trottier (2015) examined Fuchs’s (2014) model of society (Figure 1) of which certain aspects are applicable to a study of the police–media relationship. The model holds that there are three aspects of social life including cognition, communication and cooperation (Fuchs, 2014; Fuchs & Trottier, 2015). Similar to knowledge creation and value formation in social constructionist theory, in Fuchs and Trottier’s “dialectical approach, information is conceived as a dynamic threefold process, in which, based on subjective cognitive processes, social relations emerge (communication) in which new systems and qualities can be formed (co-operation)” (2015, p.
Grounded in social theory, Fuchs and Trottier’s approach holds that individuals create meaning through communication and social relations. Fuchs and Trottier noted that Web 2.0 and associated technologies have impacted the process of meaning creation by collapsing the aspects of the information conception process into one fluid process where “individual cognition almost automatically becomes a matter of social relations, and a cooperative endeavour” (2015, p. 115). Therefore, a personal reflection posted on an individual’s social media profile becomes not just a reflection but a statement towards others and an invitation for response (Fuchs & Trottier, 2015). But Web 2.0 technologies serve not only to collapse the information conception process but also the very roles of those engaging in the process.

Fuchs (2014) argued,

Modern society can be conceived as consisting of distinct and connected spheres: the economy is the sphere of the production of use-values, politics the sphere where collective decisions are taken, and culture the sphere where social meaning and moral values are created. (p. 60)

Fuchs and Trottier (2015) expanded on this, describing modern society as being based on the differentiation of social roles, with individuals acting in different capacities within a reality made up of different spheres or systems (p. 115). As an example, they noted that an individual such as a modern middle-class office worker might have multiple roles within society including spouse, parent, child, neighbour, association member, and so on. Within the economic sphere, an individual might fill the role of capital owner or worker, while in the political sphere, an individual could serve as a politician or citizen. Meanwhile, the cultural sphere allows for roles such as friends, family members and consumers (Fuchs, 2014, p. 61). Each role requires the adherence to a “specific set of rules that govern the various spheres of which modern society is composed” (Fuchs & Trottier, 2015, p. 116). In line with the theory of social constructionism, Fuchs’s (2014) model of society acknowledges the media’s role in this process: “Confronted with content provided by the media, humans create, re-create and differentiate meanings of the world in various social roles” (p. 66).

Fuchs and Trottier (2015) suggested that although modern society's various spheres are largely differentiated, there are certain areas of overlap that are caused by individuals occupying multiple roles within the various spheres:

The different social roles and activities [of individuals within each sphere] tend to converge, for instance, in the situation where the workplace is also a playground, where friendships and intimate relations are formed and dissolved and where spare time activities are conducted. (p. 125)

Thus gives rise to the sociopolitical, socioeconomic and sociocultural spheres (Fuchs, 2014, p. 61), which, as Fuchs and Trottier argued, are further converged by social media:

The emergence of social media has intensified the historical trend of the break-down of the boundaries between play and labor, work time and leisure time, production and consumption, the factory and the household, public and private life. Concepts such as digital labor, online prosumption, consumption work, produsage, crowdsourcing, freecconomy or playbor (play labor) have been used to describe transformations in the media, culture and society associated with social media. (2015, p. 125)

Within each convergent realm in Fuchs’s (2014) model, individuals and groups engage in conflict over the control of property, collective decisions, and meanings (p. 61). At the heart
of the conflict is the struggle for power, which Fuchs defined as “the disposition of actors over means that allow them to control structures, [and] influence processes and decisions in their own interests” (2014, p. 61). Such a reality is aligned with social constructionist theory, which holds that individuals compete for dominance in the process of issue framing and meaning production (Ryan et al., 2001; Surette, 2011).

![Figure 1: Fuchs’s (2014) Model of Society. Reproduced with permission from “Social Media and the Public Sphere,” by C. Fuchs, 2014, Triple C: Communication, Capitalism & Critique, 12, p. 61, Copyright 2014 by Unified Theory of Information Research Group.](image)

Related to the study of the police–media relationship, Fuchs’s (2014) model of society allows for police to occupy a position within the sphere of state (p. 78), while the commercial news media occupy a position within the sphere of economy (Fuchs & Trottier, 2015, p. 123). In keeping with social constructionist theory, Fuchs’s model demonstrates areas of interaction between the state (police) and the civil (public) spheres, as well as between the economy (news media) and the civil (public) spheres. It also demonstrates, but does not label or particularly address, an area of interaction between the state (police) and economy (news media), and the associated convergence of those two spheres within the civil (public) sphere (see Figure 1). This dissertation examines this area specific to the negotiation for influence in the police–media relationship and the role of the public in same.
Fuchs’s (2014) model of modern society also aligns in some regards with systems thinking theory, which holds that aspects of society influence one another and that individuals can be active participants in shaping reality (Martin, 2005; Senge, 2006; Short, 1998; Weisbord, 2004). According to systems thinking, society is made up of interconnected realms or systems. Within each system are individuals who possess deeply entrenched mental models that direct their beliefs and actions (Martin, 2005; Senge, 2006; Short, 1998; Weisbord, 2004). As with social constructionist theory, systems thinking holds that there can be conflict between individuals with differing mental models, with the most powerful or dominant ultimately directing human and organisational behaviour (Senge, 2006). However, where social constructionism focuses on the impact of conflict and power on knowledge creation, systems thinking highlights an opportunity within a socially constructed reality for collaborative practice among individuals and groups. Systems thinking allows that individuals can actively engage in the cocreation of shared mental models though dialogue and discourse rather than conflict (Senge, 2006; Short, 1998). Further, organisations comprised of individuals aware of the interplay between systems and actively engaged in practices aimed at enhancing their ability to cocreate mental models (what Senge [2006] called learning organizations) can be successful in driving positive political, economic and social change. In his study of crime and social justice, Quinney (2000) suggested that “conflict is not always a disruptive agent in a society” (p. 72) and may be seen as a “cohesive force” (p. 72) that “can promote cooperation, establish group boundaries, and unite social factions” (p. 72). Therefore, where social constructionism and Fuchs and Trottier’s (2015) study of modern society demonstrate conflict between social actors within reality, systems thinking offers an insight into the ability of individuals within groups or organisations to illuminate and solve problems and thereby generate positive change within such a reality (Martin, 2005; Senge, 2006; Short, 1998; Weisbord, 2004). Senge (2006) stated,

> At the heart of a learning organization is a shift of mind — from seeing ourselves as separate from the world to connected to the world, from seeing problems as caused by someone or something ‘out there’ to seeing how our own actions create the problems we experience. A learning organization is a place where people are continually discovering how they create their reality. And how they can change it. (p. 12)

As explored in this dissertation, in line with systems thinking theory, there may be opportunities for the police to further enhance their influence in the police–media relationship, but also, more importantly, to encourage a balanced, fair and consistent police contribution to the news media narrative.

Fuchs (2014) argued that in studies of the internet and society, value can be gained by incorporating several social theory concepts such as power, capitalism, participation, and control (p. 60). Considering this, the research conducted in relation to this dissertation was grounded in social constructionist and systems thinking theories as well as Fuchs’s model of modern society. The study was designed to consider, within the realm of a Web 2.0-enhanced convergent sphere reality, which narratives related to crime, justice and policing dominate news media, which narratives put forth by police generate media coverage, and, in consideration of this, who holds the most influence in the police–media relationship.
RESEARCH QUESTION

In light of the dominant and more recent theories related to the police–media relationship, and considering the gap in the literature related to new internet technologies as a media strategy for police, this study considered, from a Canadian perspective, how police are, or could be, effectively using Web 2.0 technologies as a media strategy and the likely impact on influence within the police–media relationship.

The study used the following hypothesis to test the research question:

Despite the mass media’s access to a wide variety of information and differing views available as a result of the broad scope and democratic nature of social media and associated technologies, a police narrative remains dominant in news discourse related to crime, justice and policing.

APPROACH OF THE STUDY

This study of the police–media relationship includes a quantitative and qualitative analysis of police-operated Web 2.0 platforms, including Twitter and Facebook as well televised news broadcasts and the website of one online media agency. Data was collected over the course of a four-month period using a case study approach involving the two largest police agencies in British Columbia (the Vancouver Police Department and the Surrey Royal Canadian Mounted Police [RCMP] Detachment), along with an analysis of news content from British Columbia’s two largest privately owned television news broadcasters (Global BC and CTV Vancouver), one publicly funded television news broadcaster (CBC Vancouver), and a recently emerged online news media publication (*Daily Hive Vancouver*). As will be further addressed in the methodology section of this dissertation, the two police and four media agencies were strategically selected for study based on their size and scope of service. These agencies yielded reasonably fulsome data that was triangulated for more reliable findings.

The data gathering occurred over the course of four months in order to capture ongoing practices of both police and media agencies. This allowed for analysis of long-term police initiatives and news stories as well as one-off incidents and incidental news coverage.

OUTLINE OF THE STUDY

The study was informed by a consideration of theory and literature relevant to a discussion of crime, justice and policing; police use of Web 2.0 technologies; and the interplay of power structures between the police and the mass media. Literature on such topics, as will be explored in Chapter 2 of this dissertation, was broad in scope and primarily relevant to the United Kingdom, Australia and the United States. There was a marked lack of Canadian-based research in the area. Literature addressing the historical rise of westernised journalism, the interplay over time between the journalism and policing fields, and various political, economic and social strains on both groups was considered. Police media and public relations practices were also reviewed, as was the limited available research examining police use of Web 2.0 technologies for investigation, operational tactics or community policing practice.

The research plan was developed through a consideration of prior research in the field and informed by a consideration of research theory. As will be described in more depth in Chapter 3, a primarily quantitative methodology was applied to a case study approach in
order to address a gap in prior research. The three television and one online news agencies were selected as case studies for the media side of the research to stand in contrast to the majority of existing research, which has mostly addressed traditional print-based news media. The four social media platforms operated by two police departments were chosen as case studies on the police side to address the limited prior study specific to the police and their use of social media platforms.

As will be detailed in Chapter 4, the majority of data gathered during the four-month data gathering period was quantitative, though a brief qualitative examination of the case studies was also included. Information obtained from the news organisation case studies included amount of crime, justice and policing stories (both by story count, and percentage of broadcast time if applicable). Also, individual stories produced by each media agency were analysed for origin, neutrality, and police versus civilian narrative. There was special consideration of Web 2.0-enhanced narratives appearing in news stories. The Web 2.0 platforms of the case study police agencies were analysed for content. The amount of information produced on police-operated Web 2.0 platforms that appeared in mass media output was specifically considered.

The results of the data analysis were tested for significance through the application of chi-square analysis. Statistically significant findings related to content coverage, theme and narrative are discussed in Chapters 5 and 6 of this dissertation. The study found evidence that the output of media agencies related to crime, justice and policing is largely neutral and, in terms of traditional news agencies, a civilian narrative outstrips a police narrative. However, the online news agency was found to rely more heavily on a police narrative. The study also found that police underuse Web 2.0 as a media method, emphasizing it instead as a community policing initiative. In contrast, civilian use of Web 2.0 results in more media coverage than it does for police and this can impact the social construction of crime, justice and policing issues.

The dissertation concludes with a consideration of dominance within the police–media relationship. Evidence supporting the dominance of the traditional mass media as a forum for social construction is presented and discussed against indications of police or civilian influence in narratives contributing to stories of crime, justice and policing issues. It is argued that civilian use of Web 2.0 technologies, as evidenced in the practices of citizen journalism and crowd-sourced policing, have impacted the police–media relationship which will cause both policing and media institutions to legitimise their traditional and previously exclusive roles related to social control and overwatch.
CHAPTER 2 — LITERATURE REVIEW

BACKGROUND

As introduced in the previous chapter, policing and journalism are distinctive professions that have been inexorably linked throughout history. Although numerous varied and nuanced criminological theories abound, it can be generally argued that one of the key roles of the policing profession is to impartially and fairly uphold the norms and legal values of society, applying force and employing power only when and in the amount necessary to maintain social control (Brown, 2013; Jiggins, 2007; Lawrence, 2000; Quinney, 1970; Ross, 2007; Toch, 2012). Meanwhile, just as police are a mechanism for social control, journalists can be seen as a mechanism of police or government overwatch, ensuring that society’s agents of control do not overstep their bounds or abuse their powers (Brown, 2013; Eterno & Silverman, 2012; Gies, 2008; Jiggins, 2007; Lawrence, 2000; Toch, 2012). As Jiggins (2007) summarised, “The role of the media in advanced industrial nations has been conceptualised for over 160 years as that of a watchdog, monitoring arms of governance such as the police for the public good” (p. 203).

Eterno and Silverman (2012) explained the value of such a role as journalistic overwatch of policing activities allows police departments to not only uncover potential weaknesses but also generate positive change (p. 207). However, as several theorists have explored, this arrangement between police and media has not been universally achievable even in modern industrialised societies. As will be further explored in this chapter, both media and police agencies are subject to societal, economic, and political pressures that impact their ability to perform their respective roles in society. Further complicating matters, the professions of policing and journalism are closely entwined in a symbiotic relationship with individuals from both sides often working towards common goals while at the same time competing for a prevailing media narrative. This all contributes to a police–media relationship characterised by an ongoing negotiation for dominance (Brown, 2013; Ellis & McGovern, 2015; Grabosky & Wilson, 1989; Jiggins, 2007; Lawrence, 2000; Leishman & Mason, 2003; Lovell, 2003; McGovern, 2008; McGovern & Lee, 2010; Porter, 1995; Shepherdson, 2014; Toch, 2012).

There appears to be a paucity of Canadian studies examining the police and media (Schneider, 2016). Despite this, a reasonable international body of literature exists related to several overarching categories of study including media effects on police conduct, the internal workings of police media units, historical and modern interactions between police officers and journalists, and the value of newly emerged media technologies as police investigative or community policing methods. For example, Reddick and Norris (2013) examined the adoption of Web 2.0 technologies by government agencies in the United States, and Brown (2013) examined the impact of social media on police conduct. Kelly (2014) and Waters (2012) considered the potential risks of social media to policing practice, and other researchers have examined the practicalities of employing Web 2.0 technologies in routine police work (Brunty & Helenek, 2013; Lieberman et al., 2013; Meijer & Thaens, 2013; Meijer & Torenvlied, 2014; Schneider, 2014) or during critical incidents (MacNeil, 2014; Trottier, 2012). Some research has also been done that considers the value of social media as a community policing method (Brainard & Edlins, 2015; Kelly, 2013; Schneider, 2014). But even with this, a gap exists in the literature in the area of how newly emerged media
technologies may be employed by police as part of a media strategy and how such technologies may impact the ongoing negotiation for dominance in the police–media relationship.

Before examining to what extent newly emerged media technologies may have impacted the balance of power in the police–media relationship, it is important to provide some context to the issue by considering the existing broader body of knowledge in the overarching area of media and police.

ECONOMIC AND POLITICAL PRESSURES AND MOTIVES IMPACT MASS MEDIA COVERAGE OF CRIME AND POLICING

Several theorists and researchers have examined the economic and political pressures that impact media coverage on matters of crime, justice and policing. Habermas (1991), examining the rise of the mass media in the industrialised societies of the nineteenth century, provided some historical context in this area:

Developed out of the system of private correspondences and for a long time overshadowed by them[,] the newspaper trade was initially organized in the form of small handicraft business. In this beginning phase its calculations were made in accord with the principle of a modest maximization of profit that did not overstep the bounds of early capitalism. The publisher was interested in his enterprise purely as a business. (p. 181)

Over time, the media industry in modern industrialised nations expanded. Advertising was introduced to allow for a reduction in price per copy, which guaranteed a larger readership, and some newspapers became organised as stock companies (Habermas, 1991, p. 184). As this occurred, news agencies became more vulnerable to an increase in financial risks borne of the necessity to expand commercially, and journalistic and editorial independence became further subordinate to business efficiency. As Habermas (1991) observed:

The history of the big daily papers in the second half of the nineteenth century proves that the press itself became manipulable to the extent that it became commercialized. Ever since the marketing of the editorial section became interdependent with that of the advertising section, the press (until then an institution of private people insofar as they constituted a public) became an institution of certain participants in the public sphere in their capacity as private individuals; that is, it became the gate through which privileged private interests invaded the public sphere. (p. 185)

Moving the study of economic pressures on the media into the twentieth century, Nichols-Pethick (2012) explained that, during the 1980s and 1990s in the United States, advancements in technology and the proliferation of regional cable networks and satellite distribution systems allowed for increased market competition among media agencies. Smaller independent media stations could now receive programming directly from the producer and distribute it to a broad audience. This increased the commercialism of the industry. As the researcher stated, “The story of commercial television at the end of the twentieth century is often framed as one of crisis: the major broadcast networks struggling to remain vital and solvent in the face of increasing competition” (Nichols-Pethick, 2012, pp. 26–27).

As Nichols-Pethick (2012) explained, the economic pressures on the American media agencies of the twentieth century led to the careful marketing of programming, primarily
police, legal and medical dramas. Focusing on police dramas, media agencies began to frame their offerings to appeal to a specific target audience. As a case in point, Nichols-Pethick examined the 1980s police drama *Hill Street Blues*, which was “potentially the lowest rated series ever to be renewed for the next season by its network [National Broadcasting Company (NBC)]” (2012, p. 31). Network executives made this decision based, in part, on the nature of the program’s known small regular audience. These individuals were described as “typically younger and more affluent than the majority of viewers; they were the part of the population most interested in new technology and able to pay for the expanded choices in programming that it offers” (Nichols-Pethick, 2012, p. 32). In other words, the perceived economic quality of the audience as opposed to its representative size vis-à-vis the larger population directed the content of the media. The story of *Hill Street Blues* stands as an example of an aspect of social constructionist theory, which holds that the mass media tend to emphasise a particular narrative related to crime, justice and policing that is in keeping with the elite’s perspective. In regard to *Hill Street Blues*, some might suggest, economics drove media behaviour.

In line with the tenets of social constructionist theory, the arguments and findings of several other modern theorists and researchers have suggested that the economic pressures applied to mass media agencies operating within industrialised nations during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, as outlined by Habermas (1991) and Nichols-Pethick (2012), are equally applicable to the millennium era (Gies, 2008; Hiltzik, 2016; Jewkes, 2004; Jiggins, 2007; Lovell, 2003; McGovern, 2011; McGovern & Lee, 2010). These pressures have undermined the overwatch role of the mass media and contributed to the emphasis of a skewed narrative related to crime and justice issues in modern industrialised nations.

McGovern (2011) brought a twenty-first century perspective to a study of the economic pressures on media agencies in Australia, reporting that commercial issues including “dwindling budgets, decreases in advertising revenue, and an increased focus on cost effectiveness within media outlets” (p. 1) continue to impact the business of journalism. Couldry (2010) demonstrated similar issues in the United Kingdom, detailing the closing of well-established newspapers and mergers between television companies in an effort to stave off bankruptcy (p. 87). As McGovern and Lee (2010), examining Australian mass media practice, explained, financial pressures have negatively impacted staffing levels within a number of media organisations. This reduction in staffing, along with the rise of internet technology, has contributed to the disappearance of the specialist reporter and the simultaneous rise of the generalist journalist (p. 445). Jiggins (2007) touched on this issue as well, reporting that, in Australia, “increasingly junior reporters move from one round to another with limited understanding of the work of police or the fundamentals of the criminal justice system” (p. 206). As the theorist continued, “Journalists are frequently interviewing police they have never met about cases and issues about which they know little” (Jiggins, 2007, p. 206). The issue here, as Jiggins framed it, is that newsrooms staffed by limited numbers of inexperienced journalists do not allow for the mass media to fulfil their overwatch role within society. Instead, financial pressures have limited the journalistic field in Australia to the point that by 2001, investigative journalism accounted for only 0.1% of journalistic output in the entire country (p. 204). As Jiggins summarised,

*The reality is it is simply not cost effective to dedicate resources to long-term investigations that may, or may not, end up as a viable story. . . . Many commentators*
believe there is a crisis in western journalism and the basic tenets of the traditional role of the media have all but gone. (2007, p. 206)

As McGovern and Lee (2010) argued, journalistic stories are limited to what media agencies deem to be attractive to the consumer base. Generally, these include stories that are dramatic, simple, and conventional, and contain an aspect of excitement (p. 447). Hermida (2016) also touched on this, highlighting how media agencies use emotions to sell their product. As explained, disasters, complete with compelling visuals and first-hand accounts make for “good stories for journalists” (p.130). Further, when covering crime news specifically, journalists will emphasize unusual or violent crime in an attempt to garner a fear response from the audience:

Crime reporting has long been a media staple: bad news sells. . . . A newspaper headline warning of ‘stranger danger’ is designed to lure more people to buy the paper. TV anchors going on about a gangland shooting are trying to stop viewers from switching channels. (Hermida, 2016, pp. 64–65)

Lovell (2003) examined the American police–media relationship in depth, arguing that despite the modern industrialised world’s ideals regarding journalistic overwatch, the underlying motive of the media remains ratings-driven financial success. Television programs, including news broadcasts, he argued, “are not designed to educate, inform, or produce a critical populace, but to ensure profits and to entertain” (Lovell, 2003, p. v). In February 2016, Leslie Mooneves, the chairman and chief executive of the Columbia Broadcasting System (CBS), provided a case in point. Speaking at a media conference sponsored by Morgan Stanley (a financial services company), Moonves (as cited in Hiltzik, 2016) was recorded stating, in regard to the Trump candidacy:

Man, this is pretty amazing. Who would have thought this circus would come to town? It may not be good for America, but it’s damn good for CBS. [Laughs] The money’s rolling in. . . . This is fun. . . . They’re not even talking about the issues – they’re just throwing bombs at each other. . . . I’ve never seen anything like this and this is going to be a very good year for us. [Laughter] Sorry, it’s a terrible thing to say, but bring it on, Donald, go ahead. Keep going. (paras. 3–4)

Moonves’s statement validated Lovell’s argument that the media frames the news to be entertaining rather than informative and focuses on stories that will sell well to the public (p. 40). In regard to crime and justice specifically, despite the reality of policing, which includes mundane work, low solve rates, and a service-oriented emphasis of practice, as Lovell argued, the media often sell a false reality in which police are characterised as heroic, highly industrious, and successful crime-fighting “good cops” or, less often, overly incompetent or corrupt “bad cops” (p. 41).

“In Hollywood,” Lovell (2003) argued, “big budgets and explosive special effects drape law enforcement in a blanket of fantasy where car chases, gun slinging and violent confrontations are essential to bringing about justice” (p. 40). Some individuals might suggest that this should be of limited concern, as fictional policing stories are stylised caricatures of reality. Can mature audiences not differentiate fictional programming from current events? However, as Moonves’s (as cited in Hiltzik, 2016) statement about politics demonstrates, the media’s scope for profit-driven entertainment extends well beyond the fictional realm of Hollywood and into the real world of current events. Further, as a number
of other theorists have explained, the false reality of crime, justice and policing emphasised by the media is not simply limited to Hollywood’s works of fiction (Gies, 2008; Jewkes, 2004; Lovell, 2003), and even fictional characters have an impact on reality (Nichols-Pethick, 2012; Perlmutter, 2000; Quinney, 1970). Quinney’s (1970) argued:

From the perspective of the individual, responses to crime are influenced by knowledge about crime and perceptions about the meaning of crime. The attitudes of persons toward such matters as criminal behaviour, law enforcement and the handling of offenders are affected by the kinds and amounts of knowledge they have about these matters. (p. 279)

Continuing from this point, Lovell (2003) argued, in keeping with social constructionist theory, that one of the key roles that the media fulfil in modern industrialised nations is to fill gaps of knowledge among the public on issues related to crime, justice and policing. As he explained, most individuals in society have no or limited contact with the criminal justice system, and in such cases, dramatic and engaging stories produced by for-profit media can be easily adopted as reasonable versions of reality (p. v). McGovern (2011) supported such an argument, stating, “There is little doubt that media coverage plays a significant role in the ways in which the community frame and views issues of crime, law and order, and social control” (p. 445). In line with this, Perlmutter (2000) explained:

Mass media’s most important success in its infiltration of everyday life has been its ability to create standards for its own realism. For example . . . the cop show that presents hard-bitten, cynical, disillusioned cops fighting the system is purported . . . to be authentic. Thus, the fantastic defines the vicarious; what we believe to be real is actually what we think could or should be real. (p. 6)

In keeping with Perlmutter’s (2000) statement, Nichols-Pethick (2012) argued that fictional police dramas invoke a sense of balance between reality’s issues and fantasy’s drama, engaging the audience with dramatic versions of real-world “discourses of crime, community and citizenship” (p. 152). Within such a reality, as suggested by Lovell (2003), McGovern (2011), Perlmutter, and Nichols-Pethick, exists a dichotomy between how the police are portrayed in the media and what they can, and are actually doing, in society.

Lovell’s (2003) argument was that the tendency of mass media to offer a skewed version of reality related to crime, justice and policing based on an underlying economic motive or goal, undermines their socially assigned idealistic overwatch role (p. 35). In keeping with this, Lawrence (2000), examining news media in the United States, observed that “while media professionalism encourages journalists to convey information in a neutral and responsible manner, media commercialism encourages journalists to structure that information to hold audience attention” (p. 89). Accordingly, during his speech at the 2016 White House Correspondents’ dinner, United States President Barack Obama (as cited in Washington Post Staff, 2016) acknowledged that the media’s “enormous responsibility” of holding governments accountable is also an “enormous challenge at a time when the economics of the business sometimes incentivize speed over depth, and when controversy and conflict are what most immediately attract readers and viewers” (para. 47).

Gies (2008), examining the Canadian judiciary–news media relationship, explained that although the mass media have been socially assigned an idealistic overwatch role, their real motive is ultimately to produce entertainment, not to educate. In reality, as Gies argued,
“media selection processes . . . tend to favour stock characters, failsafe familiar narratives and other systematic patterns or frames” (2008, p. 99) that are popular with audiences. As with the overarching theme in the arguments of many theorists already examined, here the idea is that the media’s reliance on ratings means that their coverage cannot be considered impartial. Questions are raised as to the media’s ability to serve as an entity of overwatch under such circumstances.

Jewkes (2004) also addressed the media’s emphasis on entertainment. Similar to the observations of Lovell (2003) and Gies (2008), Jewkes noted that the media emphasise “fragmentary, ephemeral and ambiguous” (p. 26) stories that are heavy in “pleasure, spectacle, pastiche, parody and irony” (2004, p. 26). The overarching goal is generally the entertainment and gratification of the audience. Taking the argument further, Jewkes suggested that there are not just economic but also political pressures at play. Such an argument is not new. Indeed, Habermas (1991) addressed the melding of political and economic motives in the early emergent literary journalism and editorial traditions. He argued that, over time, journalism evolved from the business of “pure news reporting to one involving ideologies and viewpoints” (Habermas, 1991, p. 182), wherein the publisher became directly involved in the development of public opinion. Theorists Hall et al. (1978) also addressed this issue, arguing that, for political and economic reasons, crime stories in the news media were often crafted in keeping with the narrative of a dominant social class. Specifically examined was the British mass media’s 1970s re-framing of the armed robbery to that of the “mugging” portrayed as a new and rising crime committed by young black males who reflected “the fears and anxieties” of the dominant class (p. 161). As the theorists argued, the motive behind this re-framing was to create a political rallying point within a weakened post-imperial economy.

Bringing the argument back to the study of mass media in the twentieth century, Jewkes similarly noted that political pressures are often intertwined with economic issues, and the interaction of both impact how the media portray reality. Examining American journalism, Jewkes expressed the view that as “a key capitalist industry” (2004, p. 16), the mass media employ their “power to widely disseminate messages which affirm the validity and legitimacy of a stratified society” (2004, p. 16). Rather than serving as a mechanism of overwatch, the theorist explained, the mass media serve the will of corporations and the wealthy. The result is an overemphasis on the crimes of the minority and marginalised, and an overall homogenised version of reality designed to avoid controversy and preserve the status quo (p. 23). In his study of media in the United States, Lawrence (2000) similarly noted the tendency of the news media to emphasise stories reflective of the dominant and larger political culture. At the same time, in an increasingly competitive commercial marketplace, the news is consistently reduced to “soundbite journalism” (Jewkes, 2004, p. 22), which presents the audience with limited background information, little context, and involving almost no critical thought. The media, as described by Jewkes, have no vested interest in holding the elite accountable. Rather, they inject the values of the influential into society through the stories they choose to tell and those they choose to exclude (pp. 9–10). Hermida (2016) touched on this, noting that “journalists tend to turn to people in positions of power as sources of information, be they politicians, business leaders or police. . . . [while] marginaliz[ing] voices considered deviant . . .” (p. 112). Meanwhile, in their research, Grabosky and Wilson (1989) similarly highlighted a tendency for Australian journalists to ignore corporate crime. These arguments are in line with social constructionist theory, which holds that the narratives of the elite and privileged on matters pertaining to crime and justice are emphasised in the media narrative. If this is indeed the case, the question that then arises is how can the media reason-
ably be expected to fulfill their overwatch role if they are deferential to the narrative of corporations and society’s privileged, powerful, and wealthy?

Finn, McFadyen, and Hoskins (2003) explained that publicly funded news organisations, like their privately funded counterparts, are also susceptible to political and economic pressures. Although such agencies should be arguably less reliant on public approval ratings, direct government funding brings with it a unique set of challenges (Finn et al., 2003; Toogood, 1972). Finn et al., studying Canada’s publicly funded Canadian Broadcasting Corporation (CBC), noted how government cuts to the organisation’s budget impacted programming and generated consideration of alternate financing through advertising revenue. Decades earlier, Toogood (1972) raised concerns that the CBC’s reliance on government funding undercuts its independence: “Just because a government does not directly control broadcasting operations does not mean that it divorces itself from an interest in the media” (p. 185). Although, as demonstrated by several theorists, both publicly funded and privately funded news agencies are impacted by political and economic pressures, the results of such pressure might vary. For example, where a privately funded news agency seeks to produce a product palatable to a public seeking excitement and entertainment (Jiggins, 2007; McGovern, 2011; Nichols-Pethick, 2012), a publicly funded one might be more inclined to produce content in line with a government narrative (Toogood, 1972).

Studying police–media relations in the United Kingdom, Leishman and Mason (2003) found that police have a tendency to view the media as a source of consistently unfair or unwarranted criticism (p. 29). Indeed, Lovell (2003) also touched on cases where the media have specifically portrayed the stereotypically incompetent or corrupt police officer, especially in fiction genres, and Perlmutter (2000) recounted interacting, as a researcher, with police officers who “have always expressed suspicion of the motives of editors and reporters” (p. 40). On the surface, such observations might support an argument that the media do actually serve as a mechanism of overwatch, in contrast to the arguments already outlined. However, as theorists have explained, irrespective of the self-reported feelings of police and the presence of some negative stereotyping, the reality is that policing is generally presented by the media in a positive light (Leishman & Mason, 2003; Lovell, 2003). As Lovell noted, although the media may be quick to cover a police scandal or case of misconduct, historically, the majority of stories have been positive, portraying police as successful crime-fighters (p. 135). Echoing this argument, Leishman and Mason (2003) argued:

Despite the view deeply held by many police that they are the repeat victims of mass media malevolence and manipulation, the broad thrust of news coverage of crime and policing does appear ultimately to be supportive of the police as an institution and to depict them as successful and dynamic crime fighters. (p. 17)

Underlying this emphasis of the dramatic, simple, and novel crime-fighting story is the ever-present economic motive for ratings (Jewkes, 2004; Leishman & Mason, 2003; Lovell, 2003).

Nichols-Pethick (2012) offered somewhat of a counterargument to the discourse on politics, economics and the media relative to fictional portrayals of crime, justice and policing as examined thus far. In conducting case studies of a number of televised police dramas, he found that some offered a critical analysis of various political issues and raised perspectives that sometimes ran counter to the mainstream. As a case in point, Nichols-Pethick examined Law & Order, which was a police drama that first aired on the National
Broadcasting Company (NBC) in 1990 and ran for more than two decades (p. 127). As he argued, what made Law & Order unique and popular was that the drama was not focused on character development, and little emphasis was placed on the apprehension or conviction of a suspect. Instead, central to each episode was conflict between characters espousing their “discursive struggles about what constitutes crime in the first place” (Nichols-Pethick, 2012, p. 139). Using the example of an episode featuring the bombing of an abortion clinic, Nichols-Pethick demonstrated how the narrative plot did not take a political stand but, through the dialogue of characters, offered argument and counterargument. In so doing, he argued, the narrative of the episode “open[ed] up questions about the distinction between actions and responsibility and also open[ed] up the possibility that larger social and political structures may, in fact, have some culpability in individual crimes” (Nichols-Pethick, 2012, p. 141). Such a style was persistent through the series’ 21-year run (p. 141).

Nichols-Pethick’s (2012) analysis of Law & Order stands in contrast to the tenets of social constructionist theory. The series did not promote an elitist narrative but rather presented several arguments on crime and justice, encouraging critical thought amongst its audience members. As Nichols-Pethick stated, the style of some police dramas, such as Law & Order, “run counter to much of the criticism that has been made of the police genre” (2012, p. 184). They are not “hopelessly conservative” (Nichols-Pethick, 2012, p. 184) and do not offer “overly simplistic solutions to the complex problem of justice” (Nichols-Pethick, 2012, p. 184). Further, in regard to Law & Order specifically, although the series was fictional, many episodes featured plots “ripped from the headlines” (Nichols-Pethick, 2012, p. 128), loosely based on current, and sometimes controversial, events related to crime and justice. In this sense, the series arguably encouraged critical thought not only in regard to crime and justice in general terms but also in regard to actual, real-world issues. Nichols-Pethick’s assessment has suggested the possibility that, at least as far as Law & Order is concerned, art can imitate life and perhaps, as well, encourage balanced critical dialogue about it instead of directing it. However, based on the fact that fictional television series are ultimately for-profit enterprises, other theorists might question this altruistic view. For example, Couldry (2010) argued that media organisations run on financial principles are fundamentally unable to effectively offer a counternarrative (p. 88). Similarly, as Habermas (1991) noted, the more commercialised the media become, the more susceptible they are to private interests (p. 188). Ultimately, these commercial interests alter how the media shape a “rational-critical debate” (Habermas, 1991, p. 188). Even Nichols-Pethick, after having examined in depth the commercial success of several police dramas, acknowledged this, stating that “cultural institutions such as commercial television interpret social ideas and circulate notions about them” (2012, p. 184) and “the commercial demands of network television circumscribe the range of ‘acceptable’ ideas that are allowed to circulate” (2012, p. 187). Theorists and researchers appear to agree that regardless of whether widely held ideas about crime, justice and policing are ultimately rooted in critical analysis or are, instead, the subversive narratives of the elite, the mass media have a hand in shaping them and do so with primarily economic motives.

As a review of the literature has revealed, the media and their portrayal of issues related to crime, justice and policing are impacted by political and economic pressures. Journalists and their agencies have consistently been motivated or pressured by the desire or need to produce an exciting and consumable product that is easily digested by the audience.
Oftentimes this has resulted in a final news product that overemphasises violent crime and glorifies the crime-fighting police officer while failing in the areas of critical thought and impartial reporting (Gies, 2008; Jewkes, 2004; Lawrence, 2000; Leishman & Mason, 2003; Lovell, 2003). As will be explored, this has impacted the nature of the police–media relationship over time.

ECONOMIC AND POLITICAL PRESSURES AND MOTIVES IMPACT POLICING

In his study of the emergence and rise of crime and social justice issues in industrialised societies, Quinney (2000) linked the criminal justice system to capitalist society. He described the United States from the 1860s to 1900s as one where production grew to the benefit of the capitalist class and the detriment of the working class. As the theorist explained, early on, poor living, health and working conditions for the working class and the mistreatment of immigrants and minorities, including newly freed slaves, widened the gap between classes. Then, as technology advanced following the First World War, workers became increasingly alienated and marginalised. Ensuing class struggles intensified, and the state stepped in to protect the capitalist system.

Quinney (2000) explained that the state maintains control within society through criminal law and its associated mechanisms of regulation and control, which include police agencies. As the theorist stated:

> The coercive force of the state, embodied in law and legal repression, is the traditional mean of maintaining the social and economic order. Contrary to conventional wisdom, law, instead of representing the community custom, is an instrument of the state that serves the interests of the developing capitalist class. Law emerged with the rise of capitalism. . . . And criminal law developed as the most appropriate form of control for capitalist society. Criminal law and legal repression continue to serve the interests of the capitalist class and the perpetuation of the capitalist system. (pp. 159–160)

Quinney (2000) argued that such circumstances are not limited to previous eras and have been persistent through time. Speaking of the United States at the turn of the twenty-first century, the theorist observed, “Certainly we are today in a stage of late, advanced capitalism. . . . The current meaning of crime in America can be understood only in relation to the social and moral character of capitalism in the present era” (Quinney, 2000, p. 158).

On the microscale, economics and politics also impact the structure and operations of organisations operating within the capitalized criminal justice system described by Quinney (2000). Such circumstances are exemplified in Canada’s national police force. Over the course of the past two decades, the RCMP has had its funding reduced on numerous occasions while it has continued to take on additional national and international responsibilities such as the National DNA Databank and various national security and antiterrorism initiatives (Auditor General of Canada, 2011; Kenny, 2013; Leblanc, 2016). During the 2009–2010 fiscal year, the RCMP was directed to reduce its overall budget by 5% (Auditor General of Canada, 2011, p. 16). By the 2014–2015 fiscal year, after years of cutbacks, the force’s budgetary shortfall was estimated to be $32.5 million (Stone, 2014), and as of March 2016, there was “a shortage [in personnel] of about 500 Mounties” (Leblanc, 2016, para. 3) across the country.
The RCMP’s dwindling budget and funding pressures have been linked in the media to equipment and staffing shortfalls, training problems, poor performance, and even the deaths of a number of police officers (Jarvis, 2015; Jarvis & Russell, 2015; Kapelos, 2015; MacNeil, 2014). Some in the media have suggested that economic and political pressures have also set the stage for the ultimate unionisation of the rank-and-file members of the RCMP (Kenny, 2013). In 2015, the Supreme Court of Canada struck down a law in place since the 1960s that forbade members of the force from unionising (Fiz-Morris, 2015). An editorialist opined that such a move was necessary to address persistent vacancies, recruitment cutbacks, and resultant systemic stress among what he described as the overworked lower ranks (Kenny, 2013). But economic and political pressures affecting policing practice are not unique to the RCMP.

In a Canadian study of provincial and municipal police associations, Drennan (2003) addressed the impact of economics and politics on modern policing practice. Police agencies are “publicly funded and must rely on government money for their continued existence” (Drennan, 2003, p. 3). They are therefore pressured to “deliver an acceptable level of services within a restrictive public services budget” (Drennan, 2003, p. 5). This funding circumstance melds politics and economics and thus applies unique pressures to police agencies. As an example, Drennan described Canadian police agencies of the 1990s as being vulnerable to “sweeping legislative funding and administrative changes initiated by the Conservative government” (2003, p. 3). In light of this, he argued for police to “embrace the time-tested culture and principles that prevail in the business world” (Drennan, 2003, p. 4) in order to support organisational success. But such a recommendation could be counterintuitive for a police organisation. One of the key issues is that business practices inherently have political and economic implications (O’Regan & Reid, 2013).

O’Regan and Reid (2013) explained that the perceived success of a modern police organisation is related to two specific sets of data: the local crime rate and a demonstrated ability to solve crime. Police and public administrators compile crime statistics each year, which police chiefs employ to justify funding for their organisations. Statistics related to reported incidents of crime, clearance or solve rates of certain types of crime, and number of arrests leading to prosecutions may be used as measures of police effectiveness or legitimacy (Goff, 2004; O’Regan & Reid, 2013). However, the interpretation of crime statistics and application to measures of police effectiveness is no simple task. Is the absence or presence of crime really directly relatable to police success? Quinney (1975) addressed this very issue, arguing that “crime rates have to be understood as political devices” (p. 23). As the theorist argued, it is impossible to determine a true rate of crime, as statistics are often manipulated for political, and ultimately, economic ends:

Crime rates . . . are used to justify or instigate a multitude of political (including social and economic) interests. High crime rates are used by the police to rationalize the need for more personnel and equipment. But they cannot drastically reduce the rates without jeopardizing further appropriations. The police have an interest in maintaining both a high and low rate of crime. (Quinney, 1975, p. 23)

In keeping with the argument of Quinney (1975), O’Regan and Reid (2013) explained that funding a police organisation from year to year becomes an economised and politicalised process, as “police chiefs are quick to take credit for a reduction in crime within their
jurisdiction” (p. 50) but “will not likely ask for less money because of a marked reduction in criminal activity” (p. 51). Rather, as the theorists explained, police chiefs tend to argue for an increase in funding due to increased crime rates, or, in the absence of such an increase, “attribute the reduced level of crime to an increase in resources, and argue that any reduction in resources, in turn, could result in a return to a higher rate of crime, putting citizens at increased risk” (O’Regan & Reid, 2013, p. 51).

Quinney (1975) went on to explain that police organisations are capable of and may indeed actively manipulate crime rates through policy. As a simple example, he explained how traffic offences can vary greatly between communities based not on the characteristics of a particular community, but rather on police enforcement priorities within each community (pp. 177–178). As a more concerning example, in their study of the New York Police Department (NYPD), Eterno and Silverman (2012) found evidence of an organisational push occurring during the 1990s and 2000s to manipulate crime statistics in order to lower the crime severity index. The researchers found that the organisation arbitrarily reclassified statistics related to violent offences as pertaining to less serious offences (p. 53). As they explained, “Criminal trespass, for example, went up 70.7 percent from 2001 to 2009, while the NYPD claims that burglary went down 40.6 percent during the same period” (Eterno & Silverman, 2012, p. 53). The researchers further described cases of rapes being reclassified to criminal trespass and observed that “emergency department visits and other hospital data [were] completely at variance with NYPD data” (Eterno & Silverman, 2012, p. 53). Interviews and surveys of retired members of the police agency revealed a culture of manipulation related to crime reporting, which many felt was “highly unethical” (Eterno & Silverman, 2012, p. 53).

Economics and politics impact not simply the structure of police organisations, but also the function they fill in society. Quinney (2000) described the responsibility of the police within modern industrialised nations as one of power and dominion borne of the capitalist underpinnings of society. Similarly, several other theorists and researchers have underlined the traditional role of the police officer as a mechanism for social control (Brown, 2013; de Jourdan, 2013; Griffiths, 2015; Ross, 2007). As Brown (2013) noted, “The position of the police officer in relation to the civilian is one of power and control” (p. 32). However, not all theorists take such a critical stance regarding the role of the police officer in society. O’Regan and Reid (2013) argued that the policing profession in the twenty-first century involves balancing the traditional control function with modern concepts of community policing including crime prevention and civilian oversight.

This modern concept of policing is rooted in the principles of Sir Robert Peel, a nineteenth-century British parliamentarian and later prime minister, who has become known as “the father of modern-day policing” (O’Regan & Reid, 2013, p. 48). A pivotal concept to Peel’s community policing model is the necessity of public buy-in and involvement in dealing with crime. According to Peel, the general public, not the government, should direct policing practice within society, and the overarching goal should be the prevention of crime rather than the responsive and coercive application of force described by Quinney (see O’Regan & Reid, 2013, p. 49). Dixon (2007) described how Peel’s perspective on policing filtered into mid-nineteenth-century Australia: “The ideas of the police officer as a ‘citizen in uniform’ and as the holder of the ancient office of constable were crucial. . . . Taken together,
these distanced the police from the rest of the State and emphasised their connection with the community” (p. 26).

Although Quinney (1970) did acknowledge the dual role of the police officer as both enforcer of the law and keeper of the peace (p. 114), he still linked the practice of community policing back to capitalist roots:

As the contradictions of capitalism increase, the criminal justice system becomes a preventative institution as well as a control and corrective agency. State expenditures on criminal justice occupy a larger share of the state’s budgetary expenses. Criminal justice as a social expense of the state necessarily expands with the further development of capitalism. (Quinney, 1977, p. 109)

Capitalist underpinnings or not, modern community policing comes with its own set of economic challenges. As O’Regan and Reid (2013) stated, “When allocating resources, police administrators constantly struggle to find the right balance between the competing interests of crime prevention and law enforcement, or, in the jargon of police administration, between ‘proactive’ and ‘reactive’ policing” (p. 50). Although the underlying goal of community policing is to encourage the general public to “shape police priorities” (Casey & Mitchell, 2007, p. 223), as this section has demonstrated, police agencies are economically tied to the state, which ultimately administers their funding (Drennan, 2003; O’Regan & Reid, 2013; Quinney, 1975).

THE PURSUIT OF LEGITIMACY IN A COMMUNITY POLICING–DRIVEN ENVIRONMENT

In light of the challenges to gauging police effectiveness using traditional means, Goff (2004) outlined a newly emerged measure of police legitimacy: trust. As Goff explained, “Trust gives the police much-needed community support when it comes to reducing criminal activity or behaviours that can lead to criminal incidents” (2004, p. 110). Regardless of any political and economic pressures at play as examined previously, modern, westernised policing organisations aim to build a certain level of public trust in their ability to serve as effective peacekeepers within the community (Casey & Mitchell, 2007; Cherney & Murphy, 2013; Goff, 2004; Griffiths, 2015; Jackson et al., 2011; Madon et al. 2017; O’Regan and Reid, 2013; Tyler, 2004). Peel (as cited in O’Regan & Reid, 2013) stated, “The ability of the police to perform their duties is dependent upon the public approval of police actions” (p. 49). Also, as Tyler (2004) noted, the police often rely on help from the public in order to solve and prevent crime. As explained:

The public supports the police by helping to identify criminals and by reporting crimes. In addition, members of the public help the police by joining together in informal efforts to combat crime and address community problems, whether it is by working in “neighborhood watch” organizations or by attending community-police meetings. (p. 85)

As Tyler (2004) noted such activities are voluntary. Therefore, it is imperative that modern police agencies take an active role in “building mutual trust in the community and gaining the respect of the citizens they serve” (O’Regan & Reid, 2013, p. 52). Returning to the example of the NYPD, Eterno and Silverman (2012) explained that “when performance management is preoccupied with managing numbers rather than results, not only is crime downgraded or ignored, but also victims suffer” (p. 71). As the researchers suggested, traditional methods
employed by police to measure success are flawed, and the police must therefore seek other means to build community trust (pp. 69–71).

Trust between the community and the police can be enhanced through the engagement of social interest groups in police decision making and civilian overwatch related to issues of police conduct and transparency in police operations (Cherney & Murphy, 2013; Goff, 2004; Griffiths, 2015; Madon et al. 2017; O’Regan & Reid, 2013). But another key way in which modern police organisations go about building public trust is through media-facilitated image work (Eterno & Silverman, 2012; Habermas, 1991; Jiggins, 2007; Mawby, 2002). As Jiggins (2007) argued:

At its most fundamental, police require the support of the communities they serve in order to be effective, and the news media can have a major impact on perceptions about police performance. . . . As organisational entities, the police need to compete with other bureaucracies for public funding, and the media are an essential tool in generating positive publicity about successful operations and policies. The media are, therefore, critical to the maintenance of positive relationships with the two most important stakeholders in the policing function: the community and the government. (p. 207)

As McGovern and Lee (2010) observed, “The public must be made aware of the ‘successes’ of policing to reduce fear and foster customer trust and legitimacy” (p. 457). Engaging the media facilitates this. Continuing from this point, as several theorists have suggested, the need of the police to legitimise their role as peacekeepers within communities has led to the rise of police-generated public relations or image work, often in the form of media relations practice (Ellis & McGovern, 2015; Jewkes, 2004; Jiggins, 2007; Habermas, 1991; Lawrence, 2000; Leishman & Mason, 2003; Lovell, 2003; Mawby, 2002; McGovern, 2008; McGovern & Lee, 2010). The overarching goal of the police media relations unit is to collaborate with the mass media with the goal of “generat[ing] positive publicity where possible” (Jiggins, 2007, p. 203) and addressing crises as they occur (Jiggins, 2007; McGovern, 2008; McGovern & Lee, 2010).

The rise of police media relations units ties into social constructionist theory, which holds that the mass media have the power to frame social conceptions of crime, justice and policing (Fuchs, 2014; Fuchs & Trottier, 2015; Ryan et al., 2001; Surette, 2011). It follows that police organisations seeking to overcome some of the political and economic pressures to which they are subject, would attempt to harness the mass media as a vehicle for legitimisation (McGovern, 2008; McGovern & Lee, 2010). Indeed, as McGovern and Lee (2010) argued, “a common feature of modern-day state institutions such as the police . . . [is the reliance on] public relations professionals and opportunities to ensure that the media carry forward their preferred messages to the public” (p. 453). But, as Habermas (1991) explained, the very practice employed by police organisations in an attempt to delimit the political and economic pressures affecting their legitimacy actually places them in direct competition with commercial entities within society:

The kind of integration of mass entertainment with advertising, which in the form of public relations already assume a ‘political’ character, subjects even the state itself to its code. Because private enterprises evoke in their customers the idea that in their consumption decisions they act in their capacity as citizens, the state has to ‘address’
its citizens like consumers. As a result, public authority too competes for publicity.”
(p. 195)

And herein lies the crux of the issue: Policing, like journalism becomes a commercial enterprise.

As examined prior, the mass media respond to economic and political pressures by framing their message in a manner designed to generate audience interest and financial return through advertising (Gies, 2008; Jewkes, 2004; Lawrence, 2000; Leishman & Mason, 2003; Lovell, 2003). In matters related to crime, justice and policing specifically, this often equates to an imbalanced and unrealistic version of reality which impacts real-world police agencies engaging in operational practice. As O'Regan and Reid (2013) observed, “Hollywood’s portrayal of the policing profession has no doubt influenced the perceived thrill associated to the job. But this same portrayal contributes to the public’s misconception about police activities” (p. 50). As Lovell (2003) continued,

Today, both the positive and negative media images of police work compete for the public’s attention and serve as a backdrop against which everyday police practices are evaluated and assessed. The result in [sic] the creation of a good cop/bad cop dichotomy of media imagery in whose shadow the police must operate. (p. 41)

But such message framing is not unique to the media.

In his ethnographic study of on-duty police officers, Perlmutter (2000) demonstrated that police, like the media, actively engage in the process of message framing. For police, this is often exemplified in the practice of image management. Pearlmutter found that the police in his study were hyperaware and uncomfortable about the amount of their time that was occupied by routine duties. As the researcher explained, “If action seemed to be the common currency of cops and their audience, then the opposite, dull and ordinary incidents or time, was self-consciously viewed as somewhat of an embarrassment” (2000, p. 15). The findings of the ethnographic study suggested that police officers, although quite aware and often disdainful of the misleading and unrealistic representations of their profession in the media, felt

the need somewhat to play their own role in accordance with audience expectations. .
. . In private, they seem[ed] to wish that their own lives were more like those of the cops on TV: more action, less paperwork, greater respect from the public, cases that are resolved more easily and quickly. . . [and they preferred photographic depictions] in heroic poses [suggesting] action-packed behaviours. (Perlmutter, 2000, pp. 121–122)

The findings of Mawby (2002) in his study of police media relations units supported Pearlmutter’s (2000) examination of police image work. According to Mawby, the primary goal of police media relations officers is to positively portray their organisation to the public by actively engaging journalists, supporting investigative efforts, and feeding positive news and information to the media (pp. 98–99).

In their study of the NYPD, Eterno and Silverman (2012) suggested a potential dark side of police image work, describing the police organisation as having “disproportionate influence on the media” (p. 151). They detailed, in depth, a defensive media campaign launched by police managers condemning the researchers’ findings that suggested the NYPD
had been manipulating crime statistics (pp. 141–146). Overall, the police organisation’s media strategy was described as serving to promote favourable stories through gatekeeping (pp. 153–155), suppressing dissent by shutting out journalists deemed unfavourable (pp. 155–162), and marginalising criticism through obstruction and obfuscation (pp. 162–174). As Eterno and Silverman observed:

In [an] effort to sway the media and the public, the police employ numerous levels of influence. This includes classifying what constitutes crime, crime rates, and clearances of cases. The police provide crime news information and critique the media’s depiction of crime and crime stories. . . . Police recognize that in all their communications, knowledge is power. In relation to the news media, power entails offensive and defensive strategies that maximize helpful news and minimize hurtful news. Viewed as a strategic commodity, news as knowledge is not considered for its truth value but rather for its value in promoting the police mandate. (2012, pp. 149–150)

Although Mawby (2002) acknowledged that police image work can be used as “a means of coping with illegitimacy, legitimacy deficit and delegitimation” (p. 194), he appeared more optimistic than Eterno and Silverman (2012) about police motives, stating that the practice can also “enhance police legitimacy by contributing to police accountability through transparency and open communications” (p. 194). In contrast to Eterno and Silverman’s description of police image work, Mawby suggested police media relations could be employed to “communicate key messages, to refute what [the police agency] perceives as misguided media coverage, [and] to correct inaccurate reportage” (2002, p. 54). Where Eterno and Silverman outlined examples of police image work employed as a reactionary and defensive response to sometimes valid criticism, Mawby explained that police “image work will continue to be prominent both as a means of acquiring and transferring information about policing and also as one means by which the police are scrutinised and held accountable” (2002, p. 194). He also explained that the key is linking image work with aspects of community policing including police accountability and open dialogue and consultation with the public being served: “Properly integrated with systems of democratic accountability, image work can be engaged in the service of legitimate policing. It does not have to serve narrow organisational interests” (Mawby, 2002, pp. 196–197).

In light of the literature, one question that arises and is considered further in this dissertation is this: Are police agencies inclined to, and have they been successful in, emphasising a false reality and overly favourable version of themselves as a way to compete with the media for public attention, or do they endeavour to portray the reality of crime and policing? How much of either type of police-produced content makes its way into the mass media? And considering this, who ultimately holds the power in framing issues related to crime and justice and the identity of police in the public realm?

Both the mass media and policing organisations are subject to social, economic and political pressures. These pressures impede the capability of the mass media to fulfil their socially constructed idealistic role as a mechanism for overwatch. Meanwhile, police agencies seek to employ the media as a way to respond to social, economic and political pressures impacting their legitimacy as peacekeepers. Having thus set the groundwork for understanding the relationship between media and policing, it is now important to narrow the
scope and consider how mass media and police agencies interact and how police–media relations may have evolved over time.

HISTORICAL FRAME: POLICE–MEDIA RELATIONSHIP CHARACTERISED BY JOURNALISTIC RELIANCE ON POLICE FOR CRIME-RELATED CONTENT

Journalism, in its varying forms, has been an aspect of most societies since the turn of the eighteenth century. With the rise of democracy, industrialisation, capitalism and technology, it has evolved markedly in the past four centuries (Habermas, 1991). Early journalism involved independent “private men of letters” (Habermas, 1991, p. 181), who published material in individual journals. From these early beginnings, as journalists began interacting more with the state and economy, their behaviour and product changed (Habermas, 2012). They began collaborating with police officers in the course of business, and this relationship has evolved over time as well (Jiggins, 2007; Leishman & Mason, 2003; Lovell, 2003; Mawby, 2002). In order to frame the modern police–media relationship, it is important to first consider the literature addressing the origins of that association.

Examining the early beginnings of police–media relations in the United Kingdom, Mawby (2002) explained that as professional competition among journalists during the 1920s increased, police organisations came to be seen as “a crucial, if uncooperative news source” (p. 12). In order to get the information they needed for crime stories, journalists began forming relationships with lower ranking police officers. Such relationships were not sanctioned by policing organisations and, as Mawby explained, “consequently, informal arrangements for the acquiring of information often consisted of police officers selling information in pubs to reporters” (2002, p. 12). In an effort to limit the risk associated with information leaks, police organisations began to formalise police–media relations practices which initiated the rise of police media units. Mawby described an early case of police–media cooperation in which Sir Harold Scott, the Metropolitan Police commissioner from 1945 to 1953, hired a journalist to work in the police agency’s press bureau. The commissioner’s openness to information sharing and willingness to work directly with the media was a precursor for police–media relations moving forward (p. 15).

Jiggins (2007) also briefly explored the historical police–media relationship, but within the Australian experience up to and including the 1980s. In that time, professional realities facing journalists seeking information for crime-related stories meant that police and journalists regularly engaged in “extraordinary levels of contact” (Jiggins, 2007, p. 205). Traditionally, police have held the keys of knowledge related to crime and policing, and journalists, seeking to access this knowledge in order to produce the exciting and novel stories so palatable to their public, have been encouraged to foster relations with and seek out leads from the police. Historically, as Jiggins described, the journalist’s pursuit of police-held knowledge often meant that efforts were made to share meals and drinks as well as “common work routines and practices” (2007, p. 206). Similarly, Leishman and Mason (2003) also touched on the historical relationship between police and media, recounting early interactions during the interwar years in the United Kingdom. The theorists described “cordial relations” (Leishman & Mason, 2003, p. 36), primarily between police commissioners and newspaper editors, which even included journalists staying at the same hotel as visiting Scotland Yard investigators working a case (p. 36). In such circumstances,
journalists would often receive “evening briefings over a beer in the bar” (Leishman & Mason, 2003, p. 36).

Jiggins (2007) and Leishman and Mason (2003) described the historical relationship between police and the media in largely similar terms. However, Jiggins branched beyond a simple historical recounting to actually label the traditional police–media relationship as inappropriate. Citing the 1987–1989 Fitzgerald Inquiry into corruption in Australia’s Queensland Police Service, Jiggins noted that, in that case, a journalist’s “hunger for ‘leaks’ and ‘scoops’” (2007, p. 206) and an “unhealthy dynamic between police and media . . . potentially compromised the media’s independence” (2007, p. 206). As the theorist continued, historical police–media relationships, characterised by journalists reliant on police sources for information, hampered the media’s ability to produce critical and unbiased content (p. 206). Fitzgerald (1989) summarised the issue with such an arrangement:

> Government reports and information are invariably “leaked” to selected journalists who are able to delude themselves that they are not being used, but on the contrary are establishing and maintaining contacts which help them in their appointed task of discovering information and communicating it to the public. Should these journalists ever “bite the hand that feeds them”, the flow of information would presumably dry up, or be diverted to a rival media outlet or colleague. (p. 142)

Fitzgerald portrayed the historical journalist as deferential to a manipulative superior; that is, police held the power of information and journalists in need of such information could not be truly independent. However, other theorists have suggested that journalistic independence may be threatened not only by such power imbalances but also as a matter of course in interpersonal relations. Studying a field parallel to that of historical police–media relations, Tuosto (2008) examined journalists embedded in units within the United States military. As the theorist noted, embedded journalists tend to form necessarily strong affiliations with the members of their assigned military unit. The issue with such bonds is the documented reality that embedded journalists have a tendency to self-censor, sanitise their accountings of events in favour of their cohorts, and ultimately publish pro-military pieces that are narrow in scope (p. 22). Similarly, Linden (2008) found that journalists embedded with the United States and coalition armies during the Iraq War were more likely to produce stories covering the war from the soldiers’ points of view with minimal consideration of the human toll of the war from the Iraqi perspective (p. 37). As Tuosto’s and Linden’s research demonstrated, close ties between journalists and their sources or story subjects can result in imbalanced reporting as journalists come to identify with and relate to the experiences of those with whom they spend time.

It is important to consider that there are two players in the police–media relationship. Indeed, several theorists have suggested that the media’s role as a mechanism of overwatch is constrained not only by the actions of story-seeking journalists, but those of opportunistic police agencies as well (Fitzgerald, 1989; Grabosky & Wilson, 1989; Jiggins, 2007; Leishman & Mason, 2003; Lovell, 2003; Tuosto, 2008). As the literature reveals, historically, police have taken an active role in influencing journalists and the news they produce.

Examining police–media relations in the early to mid-1900s, Leishman and Mason (2003) noted that of primary concern among the police executive in the United Kingdom was
preserving the reputation of the police force and suppressing negative news (p. 36). Police executives willingly obliged what could be described as “hang around” journalists, feeding them with information for their crime stories, “promoting public confidence in the police” (Leishman & Mason, 2003, p. 36), and enjoying “superstar status” (Leishman & Mason, 2003, p. 36) as media-spun successful crime-fighting cops. Further, even when early cases of misconduct were highlighted, police retained a notable amount of power as the holders of official information. Using this power, police agencies were more capable of quashing negative stories, dispelling inconvenient assertions of wrongdoing, and, when met with challenges in this area, promoting a single bad apple narrative while still upholding the legitimacy of policing in general (Brown, 2013; Leishman & Mason, 2003; Lovell, 2003; Toch, 2012). Jiggins (2007) indicated some of the potential issues with this arrangement, asserting that opportunistic politicians and police may see the media as a propaganda machine to be manipulated, and be all too willing to help journalists spin the news (p. 206).

In this vein, Lovell (2003) provided an American example, describing J. Edgar Hoover’s early media relations policies at the Federal Bureau of Investigation. As Lovell explained, Hoover deliberately manipulated media and public relations in order to garner public support. He controlled every story released by the Bureau, edited each public speech delivered by agents, and was selectively preferential to certain journalists who published favourable stories (p. 89). Similarly, returning to the parallel study of media-military relations, Tuosto (2008) outlined the United States military’s active pursuit of journalists to embed in military units in order to “propagate a pro-war sentiment” (p. 22), describing such activity as “fundamentally incestuous” (p. 22) and “an illicit transgression of the principle of freedom of the press” (p. 22).

As a review of the literature has revealed, historically, the media-police relationship was arguably one-sided, with police occupying a position of power over journalists who were dependent upon source information for crime-related stories. As theorists have argued, opportunistic police forces partnering with eager journalists ultimately results in biased reporting and a heavy emphasis on the police narrative in discourse on matters related to crime and justice. Such a situation undermines the role of the media as a mechanism of overwatch (Jiggins, 2007; Leishman & Mason, 2003; Lovell, 2003; Tuosto, 2008).

MODERN FRAME: FROM HEGEMONY TO PLURALISM

The historical police–media relationship in which police wielded the power of information over dependent journalists has given way, over time, to a more contentious association. Several theorists have noted that today’s media-police relationship is not one in which police hold ultimate power, but rather one that is characterised by an ongoing negotiation between both parties for dominance in the relationship (Brown, 2013; Ellis & McGovern, 2015; Jiggins, 2007; Lawrence, 2000; Leishman & Mason, 2003; Lovell, 2003; McGovern, 2008; McGovern & Lee, 2010; Porter, 1995; Shepherdson, 2014; Toch, 2012). Several theorists and researchers have attributed this shift to the rise of technology over the course of the past five decades (Brown, 2013; Habermas, 1991; Jiggins, 2007; Lovell, 2003).

Habermas (1991) explained that the development of the Gutenberg printing press and the telegraph revolutionised the news industry (p. 185), while Lovell (2003) outlined that the media landscape has changed systematically since that time with new advances such as the radio, television broadcasting, and, more recently, publicly available camcorders and camera
phones (p. vi). Such modern technological advances related to the mass media have provided more power to journalists, thereby bolstering their ability to serve as a mechanism of overwatch, while simultaneously democratising the public, who can increasingly generate and disseminate news (Brown, 2013; Goldsmith, 2010; Hermida, 2016; Jewkes, 2004; Lawrence, 2000; Leishman & Mason, 2003; Lovell, 2003; Toch, 2012). With each advancement has come increased surveillance and scrutiny of the police, which limits their traditional power. Modern publicly available recording devices especially create an environment where cases of police misconduct are more likely to be caught (Brown, 2013; Goldsmith, 2010; Toch, 2012). As Toch (2012) explained, “In the wake of technological changes that have resulted in the widespread availability of inexpensive videotaping equipment, it has eventually become commonplace for police officers to discover that their involvements are being recorded and disseminated” (p. 84). Similarly, Goldsmith (2010) noted that citizen-wielded technologies make the practice of policing more visible and thus available for public scrutiny and discussion (p. 915). Recently, there has been a push for police agencies to enhance accountability by utilising body-worn cameras to produce video footage of police interactions with the public (Ariel, 2014; Brown, 2013; Crow & Snyder, 2017; Smykla et al., 2015). Cases such as these allow for the traditional police narrative previously prevalent in the media to be refuted (Brown, 2013; Jewkes, 2004; Lawrence, 2000; Leishman & Mason, 2003; Lovell, 2003; Toch, 2012).

Leishman and Mason (2003) studied the evolution of police–media relations in the United Kingdom through the historical and modern frames, demonstrating a pattern wherein each advance in media technology foreshadowed a police organisational failure. Historically, the media industry served as a cover for the policing profession more often than it did a mechanism of overwatch (Gies, 2008; Jewkes, 2004; Lawrence, 2000; Leishman & Mason, 2003; Lovell, 2003), but, as Leishman and Mason argued, this began to change with the rise of technology. By way of example, the theorists noted the widespread publication of a number of police scandals in newspapers during the 1940s and 1950s, which resulted in not only organisational restructuring, but also “a change in the status and tone of the elite police voice” (Leishman & Mason, 2003, p. 37). Following this came the rise of the television in the 1960s, which heralded the “decline of the automatic deference to authority that had been the hallmark of ‘golden age’ postwar society” (Leishman & Mason, 2003, p. 37). As the theorists argued, these occurrences represented a departure from the media handling of police matters of the past.

Toch (2012) also touched on the impact of technology on the police–media relationship in the United States, focusing primarily on the emergence of publicly available videorecording equipment in the 1990s. As the theorist argued, the historical power of the police became constrained by the observing eye and associated voice of the public, which, with the advent of new technology, had become more prevalent. As modern journalists, and now increasingly members of the public, moved from the historical frame to that of the modern frame, where cameras could be used to surveil the police, they were able to provide a more legitimised and official counternarrative to police discourse. Lawrence (2000) referred to this as a “competing account” (p. 147), and Leishman and Mason (2003) suggested that the prevalence of such alternative narratives in today’s tech-savvy society explains the increasing number of news stories now covering police as ineffective or deviant (p. 16). One of the first key incidents exemplifying this occurred in Los Angeles in 1991 when a citizen journalist
captured several white police officers beating a young black male who had been initially stopped for a traffic infraction. The video footage, which had been captured on camcorder, was sold to a local television station and broadcasted widely by the mass media. The incident, which has become commonly known as “the Rodney King beating.” . . . [became a] “defining instance of police brutality” and race issues in the United States (Jacobs, 2000, p. 81).

Brown (2013) provided a Canadian perspective, finding that the presence of new technology and even simply the knowledge that such technology is in the hands of the wider public, impacts police decision making. As Brown argued, within the past ten years,

the remarkable proliferation of mobile telephone video recording devices (cameraphones) among residents of Canadian cities. . . . have impacted both on individual front-line police officers as they go about their duties in our urban communities and on the broader social institutions of policing. (2013, p. 12)

Like Leishman and Mason (2003), Brown detailed the evolution of media coverage of the police as moving away from a reliance on official police sources to a modern reality where technologically enhanced competing voices garner increased, legitimised attention (pp. 36–37). The historical hegemonic construction of policing narrative in the media has made way for increased media-facilitated critical scrutiny of the police (p. 40).

Brown’s (2013) views were supported by Jewkes (2004), who argued that new technologies (specifically the internet) encourage the public to enter into dialogue based on their own views rather than blindly accept and adopt those presented by the media. As Fuchs (2014) argued, Web 2.0 technologies are transformative in that they allow all citizens to become creators of content and potential dissenters of the public agenda (p. 57). Jewkes described this as a departure from media hegemony and a step towards pluralism (pp. 23–24). However, whereas Brown argued that new technologies allow the public to limit the power of a traditionally hegemonic police force, Jewkes suggested that the negotiation for power and dominance is actually between the public and the media. Further, although Brown’s argument suggests that the power pendulum has swung firmly into the public domain, Jewkes argued that the struggle for power is ongoing, with the media often maintaining an upper hand. As Jewkes explained, although the public’s voice may now be heard in the media via call-in radio and television appearances, the discourse remains mediated by media agencies, resulting in shallow content and brief coverage (p. 22).

Jewkes’s (2004) argument was supported by Shepherdson (2014), who observed that although new technologies have allowed the public to be more involved in the journalistic process, power still rests with the media, which remains the primary “context setters of the news” (p. 7). In line with this, theorist Karppinen (2013) notes the argument that new media can cause fragmentation, oversaturation and “too much diversity” of messaging (p. 105). Accordingly, as Jewkes (2004) summarised, ultimately, the media pick the topic, set the tone, and direct the discussion within a legitimized forum; therefore, “media pluralism – that is, many channels [or many voices] – does not necessarily result in message pluralism” (p. 22).

In a consideration of social media and politics, Montpetit (2016), a journalist, similarly acknowledged the power of the media as a legitimiser of narrative, arguing that although politicians now have the ability to “go viral” via their Twitter and Facebook feeds, they still need the mass media to lend credibility to their declarations. As explained,
“essential political capital [comes from] *generating coverage* [emphasis added] not simply of the event, but also secondary coverage that reinforces the [politician’s] brand” (para. 5).

During his speech at the 2016 White House Correspondents’ Dinner, United States President Barack Obama (as cited in Washington Post Staff, 2016) not only recognised the context-setting power of the media but also suggested that it could be used positively to champion causes and emphasise the voices of the marginalised: “It’s not enough just to give people a megaphone. And that’s why [journalistic] power, and [journalistic] responsibility to dig and to question and to counter distortions and untruths is more important than ever” (para. 49). Along these lines, Hermida (2016) provided several examples of bloggers and social activists who gained notoriety once their social media-based message was picked up and legitimised by the mass media (pp. 113–115). Belair-Gagnon (2015) examined the issue from a slightly different perspective, highlighting cases where journalists sought out content from members of the public that they were unable to access themselves. Providing the example of the 2005 bombings of the London Underground, the researcher described how BBC journalists came to rely on images and videos produced by civilian witnesses, featuring this narrative in news output for several weeks following the incident.

But sometimes it is the police who legitimise the media’s message. In his examination of the October 2014 terrorist attack on Canada’s Parliament Hill, Stewart (2016) considered social media use by the public, media, and police during the critical incident. Stewart did not directly comment on who held the power in such a case, but rather described a more cooperative process between three players. As explained, during the unfolding incident, Twitter allowed for three-way communication between members of the public and media, who were locked down inside Parliament’s Centre Block, and police officers outside. Individuals within Centre Block tweeted updates and police outside tweeted directives related to safety. Stewart specifically noted that police content was retweeted by a number of media-operated Twitter feeds, which could suggest the dominance of the police-generated narrative in at least critical incident news reporting. Similarly, in his study of the 2014 shooting deaths of three members the RCMP occurring in Moncton, New Brunswick, MacNeil (2014) noted that during the critical incident, members of the public and media relied on police-run social media sites to validate information and dispel rumours.

Perhaps due to the fluid nature of social media–driven communication during critical incidents which makes statistical analysis difficult, neither Stewart (2016) nor MacNeil (2014) presented quantitative data pertaining to their area of inquiry. This therefore, leaves room for a primarily quantitative study of activity on police-operated social media sites vis-à-vis crime, justice and policing stories in media newscasts.

As a review of the literature has revealed, over time, technology has allowed for competing narratives to enter the media discourse on crime, justice and policing. Social media, especially, has enhanced a civilian narrative. However, as some theorists suggest, ultimate power still rests with the mass media who serve as context setters and legitimisers.

**MODERN FRAME: POLICE–MEDIA RELATIONSHIP CHARACTERISED BY TECHNOLOGICALLY FUELLED STRUGGLE FOR DOMINANCE**

Where some theorists have focused on technologies and a democratised media landscape as limiting police power (Brown, 2013; Jewkes, 2004), others consider the potentiality that
technology can be harnessed by the police in an effort to retain or enhance influence in the police–media relationship (Leishman & Mason, 2003; Lovell, 2003). Lovell (2003) described a sort of technologically fuelled police–media game of one-upmanship that has occurred over the past several decades: “In response to new media technology, time and again the police have had to restructure their performance according to the requirements of legitimacy” (p. 35). Providing practical examples, Lovell described early forms of police media relations as a response to the emergence of early mass-produced newspapers. Similarly, he linked police collaborative efforts with television producers in the production of police-themed entertainment as a response to the rise of the radio and television. Finally, as he suggested, the more recent rise of the internet has resulted in police establishing an online presence.

Lovell’s (2003) in-depth study of the evolution of the police–media relationship since the early establishment of newspapers was arguably limited, primarily in its consideration of internet technology, by one major factor: timing. At the date of publication, internet-based technology was largely limited to organisationally run websites, information depositories, and search engines. This technology, commonly referred to as Web 1.0, offered one-way information filtered from agencies to the public (Reddick & Norris, 2013, p. 498). In fact, Facebook and Twitter, two leading Web 2.0 technologies as of 2016, were not launched until February 2004 and July 2006 respectively (Reddick & Norris, 2013, p. 498) and thus could not factor into Lovell’s argument. However, more recently, other researchers have considered this area of inquiry, producing evidence that Web 2.0 technologies can be of value to police agencies in a number of ways.

Liu, An, Gao, Li, and Hao (2016) examined the diffusion of breaking news across government and commercial media websites in China. They found that commercial news agencies were heavily reliant on government websites for information and that government sites generally produced a high level of original content when compared with commercial websites, which tended instead to gather and redistribute a diverse selection of information from various sources. However, the researchers also highlighted findings that indicated that government agencies tended to produce less content overall than commercial media, and argued that as “news media outlets have [a] larger influence on the public because of their broader audience” (Liu et al., 2016, p. 45), government agencies should consider how to engage them in order to dispel rumours and ensure the inclusion of their narrative in public discourse. One thing not specifically addressed by the researchers was how a government agency might go about engaging the news media or what aspects of an original story might capture attention and ensure commercial redistribution.

Reddick and Norris (2013) examined the adoption of Web 2.0 technologies versus Web 1.0 technologies by government agencies in the United States. Web 1.0 technologies, they stated, are one-way, whereas Web 2.0 allows for citizens to cocreate and share governance over information and services. As explained: “Instead of content on a website being controlled by organizations as is true in Web 1.0, in Web 2.0 users are producers or generators of content” (Reddick & Norris, 2013, p. 498). Reddick and Norris surveyed over 4,000 American government agencies for information about their use of Web 2.0 technologies, finding that the majority utilised Facebook (92.4%) and Twitter (69.8%) to interact with the public (pp. 502 & 504). The researchers found it interesting that the
majority (64%) of surveyed agencies reported that their predominant use for Web 2.0 technologies was to deliver content in a one-way fashion from government to citizen (p. 504). Reddick and Norris thus concluded that government agencies tended to use Web 2.0 technologies much in the same way they used Web 1.0 technologies: to direct information in a one-way stream to the public. This demonstrated that government use of Web 2.0 technologies runs counter to how other theorists have suggested the technologies are used by the general public. As Fuchs and Trottier (2015) argued, Web 2.0 technologies are designed and intended for cocreation among users: “An individual creates a multimedia content like a video on the cognitive level, publishes it so that others can comment (the communicative level), and allows others to manipulate and remix the content, so that new content with multiple authorship can emerge” (p. 124). As the findings of Roddick and Norris demonstrate, this is not the manner in which government agencies employ Web 2.0 technologies.

Likely due to the large scope of their study, Reddick and Norris (2013) did not provide an analysis of how organisations with varying mandates might choose to use internet technology differently. In light of this, their work leaves room for a consideration of how a police agency might employ Web 2.0 technologies in the area of media relations and how that might impact the police–media relationship. Such consideration, which could dovetail with Lovell’s (2003) examination of the technologically fuelled evolution of the police–media relationship, is addressed in this research study.

MODERN FRAME: NEW MEDIA AND POLICING

Although numerous theorists have studied the police–media relationship, few have ventured further along the path laid by Lovell (2003), which stopped short of considering Web 2.0 as a media method for police. Of course, some research has been done on the impact of social media on police conduct (Brown, 2013) and the potential risks to policing practice (Goldsmith, 2015; Kelly, 2014; Waters, 2012). Other work has examined the practicalities of employing social media in routine police work (Brunty & Helenek, 2013; Lieberman et al., 2013; Meijer & Thaens, 2013; Meijer & Torenvlied, 2014; Schneider, 2014) or during critical incidents (MacNeil, 2014; Stewart, 2016; Trottier, 2012). There is also some notable work considering the value of social media as a community policing method (Brainard & Edlins, 2015; Kelly, 2013; Schneider, 2014). However, although numerous researchers have examined the police–media relationship in general (Brown, 2013; Jiggins, 2007; Lawrence, 2000; Leishman & Mason, 2003; Lovell, 2003; McGovern, 2008; McGovern & Lee, 2010; Porter, 1995; Shepherdson, 2014; Toch, 2012), such work does not consider in any depth how Web 2.0 technologies might enhance police media practice.

In general terms, related to the study of the police and the media, Mawby (2002) commented that despite periodic discussion and debate, inside and outside policing circles, concerning the police service’s increased image work activities . . . little empirical evidence has been generated to judge the extent to police media and public relations, how this is organised and how individual force activities compare. (p. 91)

A decade and a half after Mawby’s observation, a literature review has indicated the persistency of this gap in knowledge. Studies of police media practice in general are scarce, and in the research found relative to this dissertation, there do not appear to be many direct
links drawn between Web 2.0 technologies and police media practice. Indeed, a literature review has uncovered only one article touching on Web 2.0’s potential value as part of a police media strategy (see Ellis & McGovern, 2015).

Kelly (2013) considered the New South Wales Police Force’s use of Facebook specific to the organisation’s community policing strategy. The researcher conducted a quantitative content analysis of information posted to the agency’s Facebook page over the course of several days in 2013, revealing that police were using Facebook in a traditional manner to broadcast information to the public with “only minimal evidence of interactivity or the use of public feedback by police to inform decisions, policy and operations” (Kelly, 2013, p. 40). These findings complement Reddick and Norris’s (2013) broad study of government agency use of Web 2.0 technologies. However, Kelly’s (2013) focus was limited to the value of social media as a venue for community policing and, in keeping with this, the impact of police use of Web 2.0 technologies on the police–media relationship was not considered in any depth.

Alyce McGovern is a prolific researcher in the area of police and media, having conducted a number of studies specific to the Australian experience. Her work is varied; she has conducted an in-depth examination of a specific police media unit (McGovern, 2008), covered overarching media theory (Ellis & McGovern, 2015; McGovern, 2008; McGovern & Lee, 2010), examined police–media interactions (Ellis & McGovern, 2015; McGovern, 2008; McGovern & Lee, 2010), and, more recently, considered an aspect of the impact of digital technologies on the police–media relationship (Ellis & McGovern, 2015). Her abundant work in the area of police–media interaction in Australia provides opportunities for further related research specific to police media practice.

McGovern (2008) explored the police–media relationship specific to the New South Wales Police Force in Australia, conducting several qualitative interviews with journalists and members of the police media unit. Providing an in-depth examination of how the New South Wales Police Media Unit came into formation and its ongoing role in “mediating the police–media relationship” (McGovern, 2008, p. viii), she concluded that police media units are a formalised mechanism for influence, whose purpose is to “control, regulate and mediate the ways in which the media interact with police” (McGovern, 2008, p. 331). Specific to the New South Wales Police Media Unit, McGovern found an emphasis on production of stories in line with “‘law and order’ and crime control imperatives championed by the state government” (2008, p. 328), suppression of negative news, and impression or image management (p. 330). These findings are in line with the earlier noted literature, specifically the work of Lovell (2003). However, McGovern (2008) did not include a consideration of the New South Wales Police Media Unit’s use of Web 2.0 technologies and, as such, left room for further study vis-à-vis Lovell’s study of the technologically driven evolution of the police–media relationship.

McGovern and Lee (2010) conducted a second study of the police–media relationship specific to the New South Wales Police Force, once again interviewing journalists and members of the police media unit, but also conducting a quantitative content analysis of police-produced news releases and related published news articles. Their study produced some interesting findings. Specifically, they uncovered a tendency for journalists to cut and paste entire paragraphs of narrative from police-prepared media releases for publication in
local newspapers. As McGovern and Lee highlighted, this finding raised concerns “about the impartiality of reportage and the power of police organisations to influence and frame crime news” (2010, pp. 450–451).

McGovern and Lee (2010) acknowledged some limitations related to their findings. They conducted the quantitative content analysis portion of their study over the course of only one month in 2006 and focused only on print material (p. 449). It could also be added that the scope of the study did not include a consideration of police employment of Web 2.0 technologies as part of a media strategy. Also, McGovern and Lee noted that their aim “was not to specifically look at what was reported but to consider just how closely the media — in this case the daily newspapers — reproduced information provided by the NSW PMU [New South Wales Police Media Unit]” (2010, p. 449). By revealing evidence of the willingness of some journalists to plagiarise from police-produced content, McGovern and Lee did support existing theories arguing that the media are reliant on content-defining police sources. On the other hand, it could also be suggested that although the revelation that the media will cut and paste content from police sources is noteworthy, further value could be added by considering what sort of police content the media might be more likely to reproduce, and whether information (including multimedia police content) published to Web 2.0 sites makes its way into various media venues to the same extent as the print-based materials studied by McGovern and Lee. Such findings would arguably be of value to police media units seeking to produce content more likely to gain traction in the media realm.

In “The end of symbiosis? Australia police–media relations in the digital age” Ellis and McGovern (2015) conducted a number of qualitative interviews with Australian journalists, examining how they employed Web 2.0 technologies when researching and preparing crime-related stories and their perceptions related to the technologies’ impact on their working relationships with police. Similar to the arguments of other researchers already examined, Ellis and McGovern found that mobile technology among the public has “diminished the role of media outlets and journalists as ‘newsbreakers’” (2015, p. 5). Taking the argument a step further, they introduced the interesting concept of the police agency as a media content producer, as exemplified in the relatively recent practices of police-run media units complete with ex-journalist staff members (p. 2), multimedia production capabilities (p. 5), and mandates for self-produced and self-published crime-related content (p. 8). However, as Ellis and McGovern suggested, despite the police’s newfound ability to produce and deliver content directly to the public via Web 2.0 technologies, police agencies continue to need “the legacy news outlets [who] still do the majority of the news gathering” (2015, p. 9). As the researchers explained, “While police ‘content’ is increasingly produced by ex-journalists, it is not necessarily always defined by the newsworthy criteria applied by newsmedia outlets” (Ellis & McGovern, 2015, p. 14). In actuality, the media continue to define what is newsworthy in the realm of crime reporting “and the police, to be truly legitimate within the broader media distribution network of television, radio and online, continue to need them to” (Ellis & McGovern, 2015, p. 14). Still, as the researchers noted, within the Australian experience, despite the rise of democratising Web 2.0 technologies, police continue to hold a notable amount of power in the police–media relationship, having maintained their status as the primary source for crime-related information (p. 15). As the title of their articles suggests, a once arguably symbiotic relationship between police and media is now increasingly characterised by a struggle for dominance.
The work of Ellis and McGovern (2015) picked up where many others, as already examined, left off by providing one perspective of how Web 2.0 technologies contribute to Lovell’s (2003) described evolution of the police–media relationship over time. However, Ellis and McGovern acknowledged some limitations related to their study. They described their sample size as modest and noted that their qualitative methodology, though rigorous, brought a subjective element to their findings (p. 3). It could also be added that although Ellis and McGovern provided a reasonable overview of how Web 2.0 technologies might impact the police–media relationship, they relied entirely on journalist perceptions in this area. Arguably, there is room for other perspectives and, perhaps, quantifiable observed data sets. Accordingly, this dissertation sought to go a step further and include a study of primarily quantitative data related to what police agencies are posting online via Web 2.0 technologies, and how much of such content ends up in news media broadcasts and websites.

Ellis and McGovern (2015) remarked that they hoped their Australian-based study might serve as a “point of comparison for further research into digital media, and more specifically social media, and the police–media-public nexus in other jurisdictions” (p. 3). It could be suggested that a future study could consider not only the nature of today’s technologically fuelled police–media negotiation for dominance, but also ways in which a police agency might employ Web 2.0 technologies to leverage influence within that relationship. There is room for a study of how police may be using Web 2.0 technologies to attract journalistic attention and whether such efforts are even successful. Value could be obtained by adding such a consideration to the overarching theoretical narrative related to the police–media relationship as explored by numerous researchers including Ellis and McGovern. Finally, Canadian studies in this area could address Ellis and McGovern’s call for research from other jurisdictions and, in so doing, offer a unique and new perspective on the issue. This dissertation aims to address these gaps.

Schneider (2016) observed the paucity of Canadian-based studies pertaining to new media and policing (p. 2), and, in response to this gap, applied a qualitative media analysis to three case studies. The researcher studied the role of Facebook in the 2011 Stanley Cup Riot in Vancouver (Schneider, 2016; Schneider & Trottier, 2012), the Toronto Police Service’s use of Twitter as a policing method (Schneider, 2014, 2016) and the impact of YouTube on how the public and media framed the death of a male shot by Toronto police in 2013 (Schneider, 2016).

Schneider (2014, 2016) conducted a qualitative study from 2011 to 2013 of the Toronto Police Service’s use of Twitter as a community policing and image management method. The researcher found that members of the Toronto Police Service tweeted on official police Twitter accounts while on and off duty and, in some cases, the tweets had little or nothing to do with policing, even covering matters related to the police officers’ personal lives. Schneider (2016) suggested that the police officers’ willingness to tweet about nonpolicing-related and personal matters while on and off duty served to personalise the police to the public, which could help bolster the benefits of community policing practice by eroding the public perception of the impersonal authority of the police. In keeping with theory on the interplay between policing and politics, the researcher also found that although police projected an apolitical or nonpartisan image by not overtly endorsing a political party or view, they strategically retweeted material from outside agencies on matters related to
tough-on-crime legislation or mental health issues (pp. 89–90). Schneider’s (2014, 2016) studies of police use of Twitter were qualitative and focused primarily on online interactions between the public and the police. Although some tweets noted by the researcher likely originated from a media source, he did not specifically address implications for the police–media relationship. Further, his qualitative approach left room for a quantitative or mixed methods consideration of police use of Twitter. For example, the value of Twitter as a platform for two-way communication between police and citizens was noted, but not considered in quantifiable terms (Schneider, 2016, p. 91). This gap in the research is addressed in this dissertation.

Schneider (2016) considered the role of YouTube in framing discourse around matters of criminal justice in a study focused on a 2013 police shooting in Toronto, Ontario, in which a male armed with a knife died on a streetcar. Like Brown (2013) and Leishman and Mason (2003), Schneider (2016) found that social media and associated technologies can limit the ability of police to control discourse related to use of force and other aspects of the criminal justice system:

Traditionally, only minimal information about crimes was available, and journalists typically relied almost exclusively on police to provide data and facts. Communication and information technologies, coupled with social media, have irrevocably altered this process. Crime events can be happened upon or discovered in progress and documented by civilian bystanders who in turn may circulate these materials online... These materials can become an early and primary source for news media in advance of police accounts. (p. 120)

Specific to the police shooting case study, Schneider (2016) found that the original YouTube video of the incident was viewed approximately 612,825 times and generated 8,586 user comments within one week of posting (p. 106). The theorist argued that the video footage, as well as the publicly posted comments it generated, framed discussions of police use of force in the mass media. Schneider (2016) argued that as online “materials displace police information as the primary sources of news media accounts” (p. 120) police may attempt to reexert control through the use of new technologies such as body-worn cameras and the development of an online strategy. However, his study stopped short of examining, quantitatively, the online activities of police agencies in this area and the interplay with broadcasted content of news agencies. This dissertation attempts to address the gap in research in this area.

In their studies of Facebook posts related to the 2011 Stanley Cup Riot in Vancouver, Schneider and Trottier (2012) and Schneider (2016) considered the impact of mobile technology on the practice of policing. But where other theorists have argued that citizen-controlled surveillance technology can be employed to surveil and curtail the power of police (Brown, 2013; Leishman & Mason, 2003), these researchers also considered that mobile recording technologies and social media can be turned towards fellow citizens and used to define, shame, and sanction. Schneider and Trottier found that following the 2011 Stanley Cup Riot, members of the public utilised Facebook to identify suspected rioters: “This identification was almost entirely organized, framed, and presented by people not affiliated with law enforcement agencies [and]...[t]his ‘search for justice’ occurred alongside standard police efforts” (2012, p 1). The researchers referred to this online behaviour as crowd-sourced policing, which they argued was “a direct product of both social media
technologies, and social media cultures” (Schneider & Trottier, 2012, p. 3) in which citizens armed with mobile and digital photographic and videorecording technologies are able to employ social media platforms such as Facebook and Twitter to “document and disseminate information about criminal events . . . with unprecedented speed” (Schneider & Trottier, 2012, p. 3). As Schneider (2016) argued, such power in the hands of the citizenry impacts the police, as they no longer hold control over the social construction of criminal justice matters (p. 101). Yet neither do the mass media, as social media have also impacted practices in that realm. As Schneider (2016) explained, “Social media have added a participatory dimension to media coverage that gives rise to the emergence of ‘citizen journalism’” (p. 69), and this means that “storytelling is no longer reserved for news media journalists” (p. 23).

Hermida (2016) also touched on some implications, from a criminal justice perspective, related to civilian-on-civilian wielded social media technologies. As the former journalist explained, where “[t]raditionally, the journalist has been the professional who filters raw information, checking it for accuracy and veracity before making it available to the public[,]” social media allows civilians to publish their own news freely (pp. 160–161). This has serious ethical implications as erroneous and socially damaging information about individuals can be released to the public on a large scale. Hermida used the example of online vigilantism occurring after the 2013 Boston Marathon bombings. False reports were posted on various social media sites and the names of innocent persons were published alongside speculation of their involvement as suspects in the bombings (pp. 11–12).

The work of Schneider (2016) and Hermida (2016) brings together those of Brown (2013), Leishman and Mason (2003), and Ellis and McGovern (2015); that is, social media and associated technologies have an impact on both policing and media practice.

Schneider and Trottier’s (2012) and Schneider’s (2016) studies of the 2011 Stanley Cup Riot considered the impact of social media on policing practice through the emergence of crowd-sourced policing and on the media via the rise of citizen journalism. But as qualitative studies specific to a single event, their work did not address the frequency with which each phenomenon occurs on a daily basis. Also not considered was how much police-generated, citizen-generated, and journalist-generated content on matters of criminal justice received coverage in the mass media and the implications of such in regard to the police–media relationship. In other words, could narrative on matters pertaining to crime, justice and policing be quantified in the news media and, if so, who holds the power of dominance? This dissertation seeks to address this gap in the research.
CHAPTER 3 — METHODOLOGY

BACKGROUND

The study involved a consideration of how the balance of power in the police–media relationship was reflected in the content of evening newscasts and the website of an online news agency, as well as how police and public use of Web 2.0 and associated technologies might influence that relationship. It was based on case studies of four news media and two police agencies with an overarching unobtrusive mixed methods approach emphasising the collection of primarily quantitative data.

DESIGN CONSIDERATIONS

Whereas qualitative research techniques are generally used to explore aspects of human experience and seek to produce new theory, quantitative research techniques are used to measure observations in an attempt to test a hypothesis built on existing theory (Hoe & Hoare, 2012; Johnson, 2010; O’Leary, 2014; Prunckun, 2015; Van Den Hoonoarda, 2012). Qualitative and quantitative methodologies contribute differently to the practice of knowledge production and possess unique strengths and weaknesses (Bryman, Teevan, & Bell, 2009; Johnson, 2010; Prunckun, 2015). Johnson (2010) suggested that although qualitative and quantitative methodologies are neither inherently better nor worse than the other, “all research approaches have strengths and limitations within the particular situation [in which they may be used]” (p. 12). Continuing from this point, O’Leary (2014) cautioned that when conducting research, it is important that researchers select the best methodology for their area of inquiry.

In regard to this study, there were two key issues related to the area of inquiry that were considered to be best addressed through a primarily quantitative content analysis of newscasts and websites. The first issue was related to the study’s focus on power balance within the police–media relationship. Although a qualitative approach, such as gathering data through face-to-face interviews of individuals on one or both sides of the police–media relationship, might produce a quality examination of certain perceptions of the nature of that relationship, it could also be limited by social and political variables affecting interactions as already outlined in the literature review (see Gies, 2008; Jewkes, 2004; Lawrence, 2000; Leishman & Mason, 2003; Lovell, 2003). This issue could be exacerbated due to the researcher’s status as a member of one side of the police–media relationship (police officer). For ethical reasons, the researcher’s role within the policing profession would need to be disclosed to research participants. Neuman, Wiegand, and Winterdyk (2004) noted, “The relationship between a researcher and subjects . . . involves power and trust” (p. 117). Yet the purpose of the study was to examine a power relationship shared by the researcher and participants by virtue of the researcher’s primary employment. Despite any possible steps taken to enhance objectivity on the part of the researcher, there would still be an impact on prospective research participants on both sides of the police–media relationship.

Bryman et al. (2009) acknowledged the impact of politics in the research process especially when dealing with public institutions, noting that “police departments, schools and hospitals, and most commercial firms, are concerned with how they are going to be represented in publications” (p. 16), which often turns the research process into a negotiation or political process. The perceived risk in regard to the research undertaken for this study
was that such a reality could contribute to participants being inclined to exaggerate or
downplay their perceptions related to the area of inquiry. For example, it could be that police
officers or journalists might not wish to admit to a police officer conducting research that
they felt their side was losing a perceived upper hand in the police–media relationship. As
Johnson (2010) explained, “how people say they would [or do] behave and how they actually
behave is often inconsistent” (p. 100).

During the research design process, there were concerns that the potentiality of
skewed perceptions related to the power relationship between the media and police
(conscious or not) could enter the research through a primarily qualitative methodology and
have a negative impact on the overall research. O’Leary (2014) explained that although
valuable for certain types of research, qualitative methodologies can also be, at times,
“accused of being subjective, value-laden, biased, and sometimes ad hoc” (Chapter 8, Section
1, para. 4), whereas a quantitative approach can provide some protection from “personal
biases, political agendas . . . and/or flawed logic” (Chapter 8, Section 2, para. 4). In keeping
with this, the quantitative methodology employed in the research was selected in order to
enhance objectivity through the collection of reliable truths, as opposed to possibly skewed
perceptions about the police–media relationship.

A second issue related to the area of inquiry that was considered best addressed by a
quantitative methodology was related to scope. The study explored how police are, or could
be, effectively using Web 2.0 and associated technologies as a media strategy and the likely
impact on influence within the police–media relationship. Most previous studies considering
police use of social media have employed a primarily qualitative methodology (Ellis &
McGovern, 2015; McGovern, 2008; Schneider, 2014, 2016; Schneider & Trottier, 2012). As
Schneider (2016) noted, “Much of the scholarship in the area of police and social media
consists mostly of officers merely reflecting on their own perception of the implications of
social media on policing and police work” (p. 100). Meanwhile, an examination of what
police agencies are doing online and how news media agencies might respond is well suited
to a quantitative method that allows for the examination of causal relationships between
variables (Hoe & Hoare, 2012; O’Leary, 2014; Prunckun, 2015). Although there have been a
few previous studies related to police use of social media with a quantitative element, they
have included limited data collection periods ranging from several days to a month (Kelly,
2013; McGovern & Lee, 2010). This study therefore included a more extensive data
gathering period.

As demonstrated in the literature review, studies related to police use of Web 2.0
technologies as a media strategy are relatively scarce, and there is a paucity of Canadian
content in this area in particular. This was considered during the research design period for
this dissertation. The use of a primarily quantitative approach was chosen as it was
determined that it was the best option to first consider what police are doing online and how
that might impact the news media before in the future considering why either party might
employ or respond to the use of Web 2.0 technologies in a certain way. It is suggested that a
qualitative method such as interviews or surveys of police and media personnel would be of
more value for researchers conducting follow-up studies considering potential motives or
objectives behind police use of Web 2.0 technologies.
CASE STUDY APPROACH

The research comprised of case studies of two police agencies and four media agencies. Primarily quantitative data was gathered through unobtrusive, nonparticipant observation from publicly available sources, including police-operated Web 2.0 platforms (Facebook and Twitter) and broadcasted or published news from the media agencies. Case studies can be of benefit to researchers who wish to gain an in-depth understanding about a situation, organisation or process. Johnson (2010) described their value to those wishing to “answer descriptive and normative questions that focus on one or more people, groups, organisations, communities, programs, processes, geographic areas, cities, or countries” (p. 77). Accordingly, the case study method was applied to this study.

Although the case study process is generally held to be a qualitative methodology (Johnson, 2010; Prunckun, 2015), as Prunckun (2015) noted, case studies do not necessarily have to involve qualitative methods for data collection and may include what he called a “quantitative paradigm” (p. 82). Similarly, Johnson (2010) argued that although case studies are largely held to be qualitative, “it is not unusual for quantitative and qualitative data collection methods to be part of a case study” (p. 79). Accordingly, in regard to the data collected through the case study process for this research, the focus was primarily quantitative in nature. That said, the study also included a qualitative element in the overview of the police-operated Web 2.0 platforms.

This study put emphasis on media content analysis. Van Den Hoonoaard (2012) argued for the value of content analysis of news coverage that “frame[s] our understanding of our social world and can communicate the importance, or lack of importance, of issues, people, and events” (p. 103). According to a review of the literature, both theoretical and experimental, and as social constructionist theory suggests, news media content shapes public consciousness on matters pertaining to crime and justice. It follows, then, that those with the dominant narrative in news content hold the power in defining frames related to crime and justice (Fuchs, 2014; Fuchs & Trottier, 2015; Quinney, 1970, 2000; Ryan et al., 2001; Surette, 2011). Considering this, the study undertook to determine what narratives, if any, could be considered dominant in news media through a content analysis of television and internet news media.

The research also undertook, through a study of police-operated Web 2.0 platforms, to specifically consider which police narratives, if any, were the most successful in gaining traction in the news media. Bryman et al. (2009) discussed the opportunities and challenges of conducting content analysis of internet-based data. The researchers identified websites and web pages as a new and “fairly underused” (Bryman et al., 2009, p. 115) source for social researchers seeking both qualitative and quantitative data. There are, however, unique challenges associated to conducting research via the internet. Specific to this study was the constant state of flux of the internet-based social media sites (Bryman et al., 2009), which meant that data was continually being added, deleted and refreshed. In light of this limitation, the research design was such that, over the course of the period of study, data was gathered on a daily basis from the case study Web 2.0 platforms and one media website. Data from the evening newscasts was saved on a short-term basis on a personal video recorder, which allowed for somewhat more leeway as to when the data could be collated.
SAMPLING

Sampling involves selecting a small group from a larger population so that the results of data gathered from that small group may be considered representative of the larger population from which the sample was drawn (Bryman et al., 2009; O’Leary, 2014; Prunckun, 2015; Salkind, 2012). O’Leary (2014) addressed the issue of population sampling in research and noted, “Depending on the nature of [a researcher’s] question, ‘elements’ of [the] population might be households, workplaces, or even events” (Chapter 10, Section 2, para. 13). Johnson (2010) also spoke to this, describing the process of sampling as setting boundaries for the scope of a research project that could be used to define “specific topics, the number and characteristics of participants, geographic locations, and time periods” (pp. 46–47). In the case of the research undertaken, the elements of the population to be sampled in regard to the police–media relationship were defined as police agencies based in British Columbia’s Lower Mainland, as observed through their online presence, and Canadian media organisations, as observed via their news broadcasts or online publication.

One of the overall goals of a good study is to obtain data from a sample size that is representative of a larger group (Bryman et al., 2009; O’Leary, 2014; Prunckun, 2015; Salkind, 2012). In regard to the research undertaken, the scope allowed for a sample of two police agencies and four media agencies, and this is acknowledged to be a relatively small sample size considering the large number of both police and media agencies operating within British Columbia. However, as O’Leary (2014) explained, sometimes “the nature of the research question may make representativeness impossible to assess or [even] inappropriate” (Chapter 10, Section 2, para. 7). Indeed, Johnson (2010) specifically covered this issue in regard to research involving case studies, advising that there is no official rule for sample size. Still, it was noted that studies involving more than one case do allow for comparisons to be made and data to be triangulated (p. 78). Ultimately, as Johnson argued, the choice as to how many case studies to include is dependent on the situation and resources available.

The scope of the research allowed for a limited amount of data to be collected from each case study agency. In regard to data from media agencies, not only was data gathered daily from three evening newscasts and one media website, but also, where possible, the origins of specific stories were traced to their source. The scope of the project and the volume of data involved required that data collection be limited in some way. The Glasgow University Media Group (2009) studied television news content on several channels operated by the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC), finding that weekend newscasts tended to offer less local content and less content overall (p. 106). The theorists attributed this to a weekend reduction in human resources in the newsroom. Based on this, for this study, data collection was limited to weekdays.

RATIONALE

How a case or cases are selected for study can depend on convenience, aspects of a particular case that the researcher deems to be best for study, typical or worst case examples of a larger population, the need for diversity, or the decision to choose randomly (Johnson, 2010, p. 78). Based on these considerations, in the current study, two police agencies and four media organisations were chosen based on several factors discussed further in this section.
British Columbia is divided into numerous municipalities. The largest and most populated are situated near the United States-Canada border in an area commonly referred to as the Lower Mainland. The remaining communities, which vary in size, are spread north and east and, onto Vancouver Island towards the west. In British Columbia, some municipalities receive contract policing service from Canada’s national police force, the RCMP, while others operate their own police departments. There are 12 municipalities policed by 11 municipal police agencies, and 63 municipalities that contract policing service from the RCMP. There are also several provincial and integrated policing groups, made up of police officers from various forces, that operate across the province (Government of British Columbia, n.d., para. 3-4).

Each police agency in British Columbia is unique in operational practices due in part to mandate, operational requirements, and the needs of the community being policed. In regard to the research, it would be inappropriate to argue that data gathered from a large city-based police agency, complete with its own media relations unit, could be representative of a detachment in northern British Columbia where six RCMP officers provide service to a population of 5,000. Similar issues arise when attempting to sample from locally based media agencies within the province. O’Leary (2014) explained that in cases where researchers deem representativeness to be inappropriate for a study, it is acceptable for them to “strategically select their samples, but in ways that best serve their stated research goals” (Chapter 10, Section 2, para. 7). This was the approach adopted for this study.

On the policing side of the study, the Surrey RCMP Detachment and the Vancouver Police Department were chosen as case studies for a number of reasons. Policies and organisational practices can vary greatly between RCMP contract detachments and municipal police forces, and so, one of each type of policing agency was selected in an attempt to add greater breadth to the data and triangulate the study findings. The Surrey RCMP Detachment and the Vancouver Police Department were selected as the focus of inquiry because of their size and scope of service. The Surrey RCMP Detachment is the largest RCMP detachment in Canada, providing policing services to a population of around 450,000 (Statistics Canada, 2012, p. 45). Meanwhile, the Vancouver Police Department is the largest municipal police force in British Columbia, providing policing services to a population of around 700,000 (Statistics Canada 2012, p. 45). Both police agencies have dedicated media relations officers and operate Facebook and Twitter feeds.

On the media side of the study, the evening broadcasts of British Columbia’s two primary privately owned television news broadcasters—Global BC and CTV Vancouver—were chosen as case studies. CTV Vancouver’s parent company, Bell Canada Enterprises Incorporated (BCE Inc.), holds the highest television revenue share (31%) among Canadian media agencies, while Shaw Media and Corus Entertainment (owners of Global) hold the second-largest revenue share at 20% (Canadian Radio-television and Communications Commission, 2016, p. 130). The evening broadcast of British Columbia’s publicly funded television news broadcaster, CBC Vancouver, was also chosen as a case study. The Canadian Broadcasting Corporation (CBC), Canada’s national publicly funded broadcaster, offers a variety of programming across the country in both Canadian English and French (Canadian Radio-television and Communications Commission, 2012, Section 4.3, para. 2). Nationally, the CBC holds 18% of Canada’s television revenue share (Canadian Radio-
television and Communications Commission, 2016, p. 87). It receives funding from the
government and produces content within guidelines set out by the Canadian Radio-television
and Communications Commission (Finn et al., 2003). The study considered content of
evening news broadcasts produced by this organisation for comparison with those of the two
privately owned broadcasters.

In reviewing the literature, it was found that media studies examining televised news
broadcasts are rare, with most content analysis studies focusing on print news media such as
newspapers. However, Canadians consistently consume notably more minutes of television
than newspaper content per week (Young, 2015). Hermida (2016) noted that television is a
primary source of news for most individuals in westernised society (p. 78). Further, as
Young (2015) found, Canadian adults over the age of 18 spend approximately 1,740 minutes
per week consuming traditional television content, but only 184 minutes reading the
newspaper (p. 10). In Canada, television has a far larger reach than newspaper and was thus
chosen as the focus of the study. Yet, as Young argued, even television has recently been
surpassed in terms of growth by newly emerging internet media.

Of late, a primarily younger consumer base is spending less time watching television
and reading newspapers and more time consuming “online extensions to legacy media
channels . . . [or] Internet content that is off-line media-like but available only online”
(Young, 2015, p. 10). In line with this, Ha and Fang (2012) found that as experience with the
internet increases, time spent with traditional media decreases to the extent that “overall, the
Internet has a significant competitive displacement effect on traditional media . . . [and] has
the greatest niche for the gratification opportunities dimension [labelled] ‘providing’ news’”
(p. 180). Based on these factors, the online-based Daily Hive Vancouver (previously named
Vancity Buzz), a recently emerged Canadian online media publication, was included as the
fourth media agency in the study. Daily Hive Vancouver was created in Vancouver in July of
2008 by two childhood friends. The emphasis of the entirely online publication was
Vancouver-based news “tailored for a Facebook audience” (Jackson, 2016b, para. 12). By
2016, Daily Hive Vancouver was claiming to be “the largest digital-only publication in
Western Canada. . . . with over 2 million monthly unique visitors” (VeloMetro Mobility,
2016, para. 1).

Jackson (2016a) explained the uniqueness of Daily Hive Vancouver. Western Cana-
da’s largest online-only publication has a unique approach to journalism that differs from its
traditional television counterparts. In an attempt to “grab a younger, lucrative audience,” sto-
ries focus on “what’s trending in real time” (para. 1). As suggested, this has translated into
financial success allowing the organisation to “expand nationally at a time when traditional
news outlets struggle with shrinking revenue and layoffs” (para. 2).

The literature review did not produce any academic studies of Daily Hive Vancouver. An
analysis of the online news agency was included in the study for this reason and, based on
the generalised research of Young (2015), which demonstrated the overall value of
considering internet-based media agencies due to their rising influence. The study
specifically considered how Daily Hive Vancouver’s unique approach to journalism, in light
of its intended audience, might impact its portrayal of crime, justice and policing stories.
DATA COLLECTION

The data collection stage of the study occurred over four months and involved four Web 2.0 sources—the Facebook and Twitter feeds of the Vancouver Police Department and the Surrey RCMP Detachment—as well as the website of Daily Hive Vancouver and the evening newscasts of Global BC, CTV Vancouver, and CBC Vancouver. Data collection was conducted on a daily basis to minimise the risk of lost or missed data due to the fluid nature of internet-based sources.

A nominal scale includes data that is assigned to categories with no numerical properties (Bryman et al., 2009; Jackson, 2006; O’Leary, 2014; Prunckun, 2015; Salkind, 2012). In the case of the research undertaken, nominal data was gathered from the police-operated Web 2.0 platforms. Once each day, posted content was collated into categories and tallied. The specific variables that were measured included the number of types of posted content, including, but not limited to, media releases, community policing content and public relations content. Posted content was also considered in terms of number of associated videos, photographs and documents.

Nominal data was also gathered from the Daily Hive Vancouver website. The specific variables that were measured included the number of occurrences of police narrative including images and quotes and the number of occurrences of police-generated stories. The overall theme of the news stories was also considered, specifically if they cast the police in a positive or negative light. In order to determine the origins of content, attempts were made to trace all Canadian policing-related stories back to an originating source. It is important to note that the data gathered in this area inevitably included news stories about American and international police agencies or broader scope issues such as international and American-based domestic terrorism. The amount and type of content related to such police agencies was noted but it was not feasible to trace the origins of such stories.

An interval scale includes data categorised in equal units of measurement (Bryman et al., 2009; Jackson, 2006; O’Leary, 2014; Prunckun, 2015; Salkind, 2012). In the case of the research undertaken, a small amount of interval data was collected from the 30-minute or 60-minute 5:00 p.m. evening newscasts of the three traditional media agencies. Specifically, each news broadcast was observed in its entirety, and with the aid of a timer, the amount of time dedicated to crime, justice and policing stories was noted.

For the purposes of this study, particularly when considering police narrative in media content, police were defined in keeping with the British Columbia Police Act and the Criminal Code of Canada as members of the RCMP or other designated federal, provincial, or municipal employees granted peace officer status. This included members of the Canada Border Services Agency and correctional services operating within the province but not municipal bylaw officers, government officials, or members of the Coroner Service of British Columbia.

DATA COLLATION AND ANALYSIS

A checklist, which Jackson (2006) described as a “structured and objective method of collecting data” (p. 73), was created in order to record the data for the study. One of the benefits of using a checklist was that it allowed for a focus on a number of predetermined variables. It was determined that based on the type of data to be gathered, an action checklist
would be used, as this would allow for the recording of “whether specific behaviours were present or absent during the observational time period” (Jackson, 2006, p. 73).

Using the checklist, data was drawn from the eight sources in the research study over the course of a four-month data-gathering stage. Three checklists were developed: (a) the television newscast checklist was utilised for study of the Global BC, CTV Vancouver, and CBC Vancouver evening newscasts; (b) the police Web 2.0 checklist was used for the Facebook and Twitter feeds of the Vancouver Police Department and the Surrey RCMP Detachment; and (c) the media website checklist was used for the Daily Hive Vancouver website.

The television newscast checklist allowed data from the three newscasts to be collated into the following categories: (a) topic of news story, (b) theme of news story, (c) length of news story, (d) source of news story, (e) police narrative within the news story, and (f) public narrative within the news story.

The police Web 2.0 checklist allowed data from the four police-managed social media sites to be collated into the following categories: (a) topic of post, (b) theme of post, (c) associated media or attachments to post, and (d) source of post.

The media website checklist allowed data from the one online news agency to be collated into the following categories: (a) topic of story, (b) theme of story, (c) source of story, (d) police narrative within the story, and (e) public narrative within the story.

The frequency of the variables was collated through sorting which, as Prunckun (2015) noted, is a “low-level analytical process [that] can yield high-grade results” (p. 98). The data from the checklists was coded and transferred into computer format via the direct-entry method, which Neuman et al. (2004) recommended if data was “already in a similar format, as with content analysis recording sheets” (p. 332).

Each case study source in the study was also briefly considered from a qualitative perspective in terms of overall broadcast program or website design and mode of operation.

Following the coding stage, the data was “cleaned” (Neuman et al., 2004). Neuman et al. (2004) recommended that a random sample of between 10% and 15% be recoded in an effort to find coding errors (p. 333). For this study, a random sample of 10% per source was recoded to ensure the accuracy of the data coding.

The data gathered over the course of the four-month study was analysed with the end goal of providing evidence to support or refute the hypothesis that despite the mass media’s access to a wide variety of information and differing views, due to the broad scope and democratic nature of social media and associated technologies, a police narrative remains dominant in news discourse related to crime, justice and policing. Ultimately, determining the veracity of this hypothesis came down to measuring the ratio of police narrative and police-generated content to other narratives in the news. As Prunckun (2015) explained, ratios allow researchers to compare two variables (p. 261). Therefore, the ratio of police narrative or police-generated content to other narrative and content in evening newscasts and on the online media agency website was calculated. Similarly, in considering the case study police Web 2.0 platforms, the ratio of posted content stimulating coverage on evening newscasts and on the online media agency website was determined and evaluated.
As discussed in subsequent chapters, the data analysis addressed the study’s hypothesis and provided some insight into the impact of Web 2.0 technologies on the police–media relationship. Further, the analysis of police-generated content in media newscasts and the online publication revealed some potential best practices for media relations officers within police agencies administering Web 2.0 platforms.

In conducting the analysis, it was important to determine whether the findings were a result of random chance or could be considered statistically significant (Bryman et al., 2009; Johnson, 2010; Prunckun, 2015; Salkind, 2012). In keeping with this, the study included the use of a bivariate (chi-square) analysis in order to test the statistical significance of the data. The chi-square analysis was specifically selected because this method is useful for testing the statistical significance of findings based on any level of data (Johnson, 2010, p. 249; Prunckun, 2015, p. 262). Johnson (2010) explained that tests of statistical significance such as the chi-square analysis “are based on the concept of the null hypothesis—that there really is no difference in the population” (p. 239). In the case of the research undertaken, the chi-square analysis was applied to the findings in order to demonstrate that the four-month sample was representative of a year of news coverage pertaining to crime, justice and policing stories produced by the four news agencies studied and also of the annual production of content on the police-operated Web 2.0 sites.

**ETHICAL ISSUES**

The study collected secondary data from open sources in an online environment. O’Leary (2014) raised ethical issues associated to such studies. As the theorist asked, “Is something public just because it is blogged or on Facebook?” (O’Leary, 2014, Chapter 12, Section 4, para. 18). Similarly, Fuchs (2014) observed that one of the key concerns in regard to social media as expressed by privacy advocates is that users are given free access in trade for privacy, and their personal data is at risk for commercial targeting and commodification. The issue of privacy is even more complex when studying vulnerable individuals or groups. However, in regard to this study, emphasis was placed not on individuals, vulnerable or otherwise, but on public organisations and their practices. The information posted to police and media Web 2.0 platforms is open to the public and, arguably, intended for mass distribution. Both journalists and police officers freely post news stories or media releases expecting that they will be seen by the public. Despite this, in the spirit of ethical research, the study did omit the names of authors of various content from both field notes and the final dissertation.

**LIMITATIONS**

The study involved a form of unobtrusive data collection and a case study model. Prunckun (2015) suggested the benefits of such a study design. Specifically, as the research was nondisruptive and did not rely on direct contact with participants, ethical issues were limited, bias was reduced and reliability increased (p. 103). Nevertheless, a number of limitations to the study should be considered.

One limitation to the study involved the scope of data analysis. As would be expected in a world of globalised policing and security, the study of the online media agency website and evening newscasts generated data related to American and international police agencies. Although it was possible to collate and analyse such data in a consideration of the percentage
it represented in overall news content, it was well beyond the scope of the study to trace the source of international police-related content appearing in local media.

Another limitation related to comparing different organisations as units of analysis. Policing and media organisations, are, by their very nature, different in mandate and scope of societal influence. Considering this, the study identified, examined and compared primarily nominal data that was consistent between both types of agency. For example, both the police and media agencies studied produced data (a media output) that could be considered by type, theme and narrative.

Another limitation to the study came as a result of the nature of the study of online activity itself. O’Leary (2014) addressed some potential limitations specific to data gathered from online sources, pointing out that a key interest of the organisations behind online platforms such as Facebook and Twitter is financial gain. She explained, “Facebook likes and YouTube hits . . . can all be bought. Fake traffic is a reality. If there is a financial initiative to falsify such data, it will happen” (O’Leary, 2014, Chapter 12, Section 4, para. 20). In consideration of this, data collected for the study related primarily to police and media behaviours rather than audience reaction to those behaviours.

Although there are several benefits to the case study model as addressed earlier in this chapter, Jackson (2006) noted some potential limitations specific to this method. One of the chief concerns is that the cases chosen for study could be atypical of a larger norm, which would preclude a researcher’s ability to make generalisations. Another challenge for this model of research, according to Jackson, is that it allows for a researcher’s bias to enter the study through interpretations of observations. It is therefore important for a researcher to ensure that data supporting the theory under consideration receive equal attention as data that refutes the theory. Overall, Jackson recommended caution when engaging in case study research and suggested that “data should be interpreted for what they are—observations on one or a few possibly unrepresentative individuals” (2006, p. 75).

In their examination of the impact of Web 2.0 technologies on the Australian police–media relationship, Ellis and McGovern (2015) suggested that their study should serve as a “point of comparison for further research into digital media, and more specifically social media, and the police–media-public nexus in other jurisdictions” (p. 3). Although the current study provides some context in the area of inquiry suggested by Ellis and McGovern, it is important to note that any findings are limited in terms of jurisdiction. The conclusions drawn from the study are related to the Canadian experience in both the journalism and policing realms. As such, although they might be considered a reasonable “point of comparison for . . . other jurisdictions,” (Ellis & McGovern, 2015, p. 3), they should not be considered as indicative of police–media relations on a global scale. And even within Canada, policing and media agencies vary in policy and practice. As such, it would be inappropriate to suggest that the findings of the study are directly indicative of the experiences of police and media agencies across the province of British Columbia or within Canada.

The research involved media content analysis, which Johnson (2010) noted has some inherent limitations. Content analysis allows for the conversion of qualitative data into quantitative analysis (Johnson, 2010, p. 74), but challenges can arise in the definition of terms. In the case of this study, the concepts of positive, negative and neutral coverage of
police in the media had to be predefined and, despite the reliance on theoretically based definitions, the nature of the study required the use of a certain amount of judgement in making such determinations during the coding process. In order to address this potential limitation, the coding scheme applied to the data in the study was tested. To perform this test, a survey was developed and administered to members of the public who were associated to neither the policing nor journalism fields.

The nonpolice, nonjournalist media coding survey consisted of five randomly selected news stories drawn from CTV Vancouver and Global BC newscasts, broadcasted during the first three weeks of the study. CBC Vancouver stories were excluded as they tended to run for several minutes and were thus deemed too long for the purposes of the survey. Each story was reviewed and assigned a value indicating it to be positive towards policing, negative towards policing, or neutral. These values were predetermined based on academic literature in the area of media coverage on matters pertaining to crime, justice and policing, which were examined in the literature review. A news story that cast police or policing in a negative light by focusing on failed investigations, organisational dysfunction, or abuse of force, for example, was labelled as negative. Conversely, a story that cast police or policing in a more positive light by focusing on heroism, professionalism, or investigative success was labelled as positive. A neutral story was one that appeared routine, perhaps involving police conducting regular duties or seeking witnesses for an ongoing investigation. Of the stories selected, one was coded as positive, two as negative, and two as neutral.

In order to garner participants, professional contacts at several postsecondary institutions and nonprofit organisations were solicited and they were asked, in turn, to solicit their professional contacts. This helped ensure both the anonymity of the participants and the voluntariness of their participation. Police officers and journalists, along with family members of either group, were excluded from participation in the survey. This helped minimise any potential bias from either group’s perceptions of the power balance between the police and media. Survey participants were fully advised of their rights and the voluntariness of the survey. The survey was designed and administered in keeping with the requirements of the Human Research Ethics Committee at Charles Sturt University.

Survey Monkey, an online platform, was utilised to administer the survey. The five selected news stories were recorded directly from television, uploaded to YouTube, and inserted directly into the online survey. Survey participants were provided with the study’s academically based rationale for coding and asked to code the five selected news stories. There was no mention made in the survey that the clips had been precoded for the study. For each news clip, participants were first asked to categorise the story as positive, negative or neutral in regard to how police or the practice of policing were portrayed, and then provide some rationale for their interpretation. They were provided with a list of concepts from which to select, such as professional, corruption, heroism and successful investigation. They were also given the option to include other concepts or words that had informed their decision making. The survey responses were then analysed and compared with the study’s original coding of the news clips.

A total of 33 individuals participated in the survey. The use of Survey Monkey and the simplicity of questions streamlined the analysis of the results. Survey Monkey automatically generated data results for each question on the nominal scale and these were
checked manually. The survey validated the study’s coding method in that, for all five news stories, the majority of participants coded the clip the same as in the study.

News Clip 1 was a 50-second story that aired on Global BC on June 15, 2016. It covered the successful conclusion to a six-year homicide investigation, which had culminated in the arrest and charging of two suspects. In the clip, a police officer and spokesperson for the Integrated Homicide Investigation Team of British Columbia delivered comment, describing the investigators as having demonstrated unprecedented perseverance.

News Clip 1 was coded in the study as firmly positive. In keeping with literature in the area of police representations in the media, this news story focused on the positive outcome of an investigation and included key messaging from the spokesperson suggesting that police investigators had gone above and beyond the call of duty to solve a serious crime. In line with this, 82% of respondents coded the clip as positive, attributing their decision to the top three categories of successful investigation \( (n = 30) \), organisational success \( (n = 22) \), and crime-fighting \( (n = 21) \). Additionally, some respondents described the conduct of police as determined and dedicated. One respondent coded this story as negative, saying that the investigation seemed to take too long, whereas the remaining 15% of respondents coded the story as neutral.

News Clip 2 was a 2 minute and 24 second story, which aired on CTV Vancouver on June 8, 2016. It covered the investigation into the conduct of the Victoria Police Department’s chief of police, who had been accused of dishonourable conduct and suspended after utilising Twitter to send sex tweets to a subordinate’s wife. It was noted that the police chief had called the BC Police Act, which allowed for the warrantless seizure of his electronic devices, unconstitutional. The police union spokesperson and acting chief both commented, distancing themselves from the police chief and citing the necessity for professionalism and integrity in a police department. A brief, previously produced clip of the police chief apologising for his “lapse in judgment” related to the tweets was included in the story.

News Clip 2 was coded in the study as negative, although it was noted that some positive aspects pulled the story towards, but not entirely into, neutrality. Though this news story focused on the negative and unprofessional behaviours of a leader in a policing organisation, it also included aspects of policing professionalism through the highlighting of comments from police officials denouncing the behaviour of the police leader. However, as the central theme of the story was about police misconduct, as suggested by the literature on police representations in the media, it was coded as a negative overall. Similar to the study’s coding, the majority (52%) of respondents coded the clip as negative with a large second group (42%) coding it as neutral. The top three cited reasons for coding included unprofessional \( (n = 27) \), disciplinary action \( (n = 23) \), and corruption \( (n = 15) \). A small minority of respondents (6%) coded the clip as positive, noting that the news story demonstrated to them that the policing organisation as a whole had appropriate structures in place to deal with misconduct even in the upper ranks.

News Clip 3 was a 1 minute and 7 second story, which aired on CTV Vancouver on June 10, 2016. It covered police attendance at a residence after pit bull terriers attacked two women. The story featured images of police officers attending the scene. Additionally, the
RCMP were quoted by the journalist and credited for the conduct of the investigation, which was described as ongoing.

News Clip 3 was coded in the study as neutral. Although the activity of policing was a central theme of the story, as articulated by literature in the area of police representations in the media, this news story featured neither overt success nor failure on the part of police officers and their organisations. In keeping with this, 77% of respondents coded the clip as neutral. The top cited reason for this coding included professional \( (n = 13) \). The second largest category was successful investigation \( (n = 5) \). Meanwhile, 14 respondents provided their own comments highlighting the news clip as demonstrative of general policing duties and officers who were simply doing their jobs. One respondent noted that they had rewatched the clip, as they initially had not even realised police were involved.

News Clip 4 was a 1 minute and 11 second story, which aired on Global BC on June 6, 2016. It covered the poor driving of a police officer on a highway. The story featured dash-cam footage produced by a citizen demonstrating behaviour from the police officer consistent with distracted driving. Footage included the police officer’s marked police vehicle drifting between lanes and travelling at varying speeds. The dash-cam citizen operator was interviewed. The news anchor noted that in British Columbia, police officers are permitted to utilise electronic devices while operating a police vehicle but asked if, perhaps, they could be doing a better job of paying attention while driving.

News Clip 4 was coded in the study as firmly negative. In keeping with literature in the area of police representations in the media, this news story focused on the unprofessional conduct of a police officer as demonstrated by perceived impartial video footage of the incident. The story also included eye-witness evidence from a citizen, with no counternarrative from any policing agencies or spokespersons. As with this coding, 81% of respondents coded the clip as negative, attributing their decision to the top category of unprofessional \( (n = 28) \). Additionally, some respondents described the police officer’s actions as above the law and demonstrative of a sense of entitlement or abuse of position.

News Clip 5 was a 1 minute and 25 second story, which aired on Global BC on June 15, 2016. It covered an ongoing investigation into a drive-by shooting in a residential neighbourhood on Vancouver Island. A witness to the incident was interviewed and police were noted to have identified a suspect and vehicle. The public were asked to notify police if they had any information on the incident or suspects.

News Clip 5 was coded in the study as neutral. In keeping with literature in the area of police representations in the media, this news story featured neither overt success nor failure on the part of police officers or their organisations. In line with this, 68% of respondents coded the clip as neutral. The top selected categories included crime-fighting \( (n = 25) \) and professional \( (n = 10) \). Respondents also made mention of the investigation being straightforward or simple and noted that it was still in progress.

Based on the results of the nonpolice, nonjournalist media coding survey, the study’s coding process for determining neutrality was validated and accordingly applied to the entire dataset.
CHAPTER 4 — RESULTS

DAILY HIVE VANCOUVER

Daily Hive Vancouver is a digital publication covering daily Vancouver-based news, entertainment and public events (VeloMetro Mobility, 2016). The website is designed in a weblog style, where stories appear in a linear or chronological data feed. Each story in the Daily Hive Vancouver feed features a thumbnail image, a story title, an author credit, and a one-line lead. Clicking on the title or the thumbnail image opens the story, which generally includes narrative text and images but sometimes also video and social media links. Links at the end of each story are provided as suggested further reading in related areas. Stories on the Daily Hive Vancouver website are cross-referenced by topic and content and are sorted into one or more categories including (a) food, (b) things to do, (c) news, (d) life, (e) sports, (f) business, (g) real estate, (h) arts, (i) patios, (j) contests, (k) photos, and (l) videos.

During the four-month study, a total of 2,404 stories were published on the Daily Hive Vancouver website. A total of 155 of these stories addressed crime, justice and policing issues, equating to an overall average of 6.4% of all content (Figure 2).

![Pie chart showing 6.4% Crime, Justice and Policing News Stories and 93.6% Other Content]

Figure 2: Daily Hive Vancouver – News story count

Broken down by week, the percentage of stories related to crime, justice and policing published on Daily Hive Vancouver varied somewhat, with a low of 1.8% of the total stories published during Week 6 and a high of 11.0% of the total stories published during Week 14. The highest number of policing stories published per day was six, which occurred on the second day of Week 13. There were several days when no crime, justice or policing content was posted at all (Figure 3).
The 155 stories related to crime, justice and policing were categorised into groups by topic. Only one topic was assigned per story. Generally, the majority of stories had a clear topic, but some included different aspects that could arguably allow for the story to be categorised into more than one group. For example, one story occurring during Week 7 discussed an increase of sudden deaths in British Columbia, which were attributed to illicit drug use, specifically, fentanyl. Another story occurring during the same week examined statistics related to impaired driving and death. In cases such as these, where more than one topic was apparent, the stories were assigned to the topic that best described the overall emphasis of the story content or an overarching issue related to a larger underlying theme. In the case of the two stories from Week 7, although both stories involved one or more sudden deaths, the larger underlying issues causing the deaths were considered the primary topic. Therefore, these stories were categorised topically as fentanyl drug crisis and impaired operation of a motor vehicle, respectively.

During the study, a total of 31 topics related to crime, justice and policing news stories were identified. Twenty-four of these topics were covered in news stories on the Daily Hive Vancouver website (Figure 4). The top category was sexual assault (8.4%, $n = 13$). Three other categories were a close second, with 7.1% ($n = 11$) coverage for each category of story: drug possession and trafficking, missing person, and police action related to general public safety. The remaining topics were widely dispersed, ranging from 0.6% to 6.5% coverage. The topic of police action related to general public safety involved police activities directed towards enhancing the physical safety of the larger public in areas other than terrorism or sexual assault. An example might include closing the border during a critical incident or holding a town hall meeting on gang violence.
The crime, justice and policing stories posted to the *Daily Hive Vancouver* website were also examined by theme. Themes differed from topics in that they addressed different aspects of individual stories. A story assigned to only one topic might have more than one theme and would thus be sorted into more than one thematic category. For example, a story featured during Week 8 wherein police sought information from the public related to an ongoing...
investigation into a stabbing where one suspect had been arrested, was coded topically as assault with a weapon but collated thematically into three groups: public appeal for assistance, investigation ongoing and arrest, charges laid or terrorist neutralised.

During the study, a total of 15 themes related to crime, justice and policing news stories were identified (Figure 5). In regard to news stories published to the Daily Hive Vancouver website specifically, 14 thematic categories emerged during the analysis of the data. The top three thematic categories in crime, justice and policing stories included investigation ongoing (45.2%, n = 70), public safety general (18.1%, n = 28), and public appeal for assistance (17.4%, n = 27). The theme of public safety general included stories topically covering direct, safety-oriented, noninvestigative police actions such as closing the border during a critical incident, but also focused on physical safety issues or occurrences affecting a broad public such as multiple and random dog attacks, high risk offenders (other than sexual offenders, which were categorised separately) or gang violence. The remaining themes identified in the data from Daily Hive Vancouver were widely dispersed, ranging from 1.3% to 13.5% coverage.

Figure 5: Daily Hive Vancouver – Themes appearing in stories by percentage

The crime, justice and policing stories posted to the Daily Hive Vancouver website were also examined for neutrality. Using the survey-tested, literature-based method of determining neutrality in news stories as described in the methodology section of this dissertation, each story from the Daily Hive Vancouver website included in the study was assigned a value of positive, negative or neutral in regard to its overall portrayal of police and policing. Overall,
43 stories (27.7%) were categorised as positive, five stories (3.2%) were categorised as negative, and 107 stories (69.0%) were categorised as neutral (Figure 6).

![Pie chart showing the distribution of stories as positive, negative, or neutral](image)

**Figure 6: Daily Hive Vancouver – Overall neutrality of crime, justice and policing stories towards police and policing practice**

Next, the impact of story sourcing on the neutrality of stories published to the Daily Hive Vancouver website was considered. To make this determination, stories were first categorised according to source. Eight source categories were identified during the analysis process: (a) police agency, (b) government (including federal, provincial and municipal), (c) journalist, (d) civilian, (e) private corporate or nonprofit agency, (f) United States of America and international, (g) Canadian courts, and (h) unknown (Figure 7). Each Canadian-based story was traced to its source when possible. Sometimes, the source was apparent within the story or credited by a journalist. Where possible, such story origins were confirmed through an open source internet search. In cases where the source was not clear, a broader open source internet search was conducted in order to determine a likely initiating source for the story. When such linkages were not obtained, the source was coded as unknown. Stories related to the United States or countries other than Canada were not traced to a specific source but simply coded as United States of America and international. A small number of stories had more than one possible coded source. For example, a story about a police agency working proactively with social activists, which was featured during Week 9, was traced to both a Canadian affiliate of the Black Lives Matter movement and the Vancouver Police Department. As it would be impossible to determine which agency initiated or drove the publication of the story, such stories were coded as unknown.
Figure 7: Daily Hive Vancouver – Crime, justice and policing story origins

Once categorised by source, stories within each category were then considered for overall neutrality towards police and policing practice (Figure 8).

Figure 8: Daily Hive Vancouver – Neutrality towards police and policing practice in news stories by origin

Canadian police agencies contributed as known and confirmed sources to the most crime, justice and policing news content on the Daily Hive Vancouver website. In total, news stories
were traced back to police-produced content in 82 instances (52.9% of all crime, justice and policing content). Of these 82 police-attributed stories, 30 (36.6%) were coded as positive, one (1.2%) was coded as negative, and 51 (62.2%) were coded as neutral.

When combined, federal, provincial and municipal government agencies contributed as known and confirmed sources to the second-largest group of crime, justice and policing news content on the *Daily Hive Vancouver* website (9.7%, *n* = 15). Of the 15 stories traced to government sources, all (100%) were coded as neutral.

Journalists and their news agencies contributed as known and confirmed sources to the third-largest group of crime, justice and policing news content on the *Daily Hive Vancouver* website (7.7%, *n* = 12). Of the 12 stories found to have originated from journalists, three (25.0%) were coded as positive, one (8.3%) was coded as negative, and eight (66.7%) were coded as neutral.

Civilians contributed as known and confirmed sources to the fourth-largest group of crime, justice and policing news content on the *Daily Hive Vancouver* website (7.1%, *n* = 11). Of the 11 stories traced to civilians, two (18.2%) were coded as positive, two (18.2%) were coded as negative, and seven (63.6%) were coded as neutral.

Private corporate or nonprofit agencies contributed as known and confirmed sources to a fifth group of crime, justice and policing news content on the *Daily Hive Vancouver* website (2.6%, *n* = 4). Of the four stories traced to this group, none were found to be positive in relation to policing practice. One (25.0%) was coded as negative, and three (75.0%) were coded as neutral.

News content drawn from the United States and other international communities contributed to 3.9% (*n* = 6) of crime, justice and policing news content published to the *Daily Hive Vancouver* website. All but one story deemed positive (16.7%), were coded as neutral.

News content originating from Canadian-based courts totalled 0.6% (*n* = 1) of all crime, justice and policing content and was coded as neutral.

Finally, the news stories for which no source could be absolutely determined were tallied, which resulted in 24 stories being placed into the unknown category (15.5%). Of the stories in this category, seven (29.2%) were coded as positive and 17 (70.8%) were coded as neutral. There were no negative policing news stories in this category.

The study also considered the occurrence of narrative in crime, justice and policing stories (Figure 9). For each story, cases of police and civilian narrative were tallied. Narrative was broken down into four categories: (a) indirect, which included journalists paraphrasing police or public comments; (b) direct, which included direct quotes or camera clips of police or civilians; (c) social media tweet or post having originated from the police or public; and (d) video or photograph attributed to the police or public. The video or photograph category included content drawn from images posted to Facebook or Twitter, videos posted to YouTube, surveillance footage of incidents, and recordings from police body-worn cameras. Coding surveillance footage for police or civilian narrative required careful consideration of not just the content of the footage, but the way it was employed in the story. In some cases, surveillance footage was used to further a police narrative, as exemplified in a Week 5 story on the *Daily Hive Vancouver* where police released video in
an attempt to identify suspects in a stabbing. In other cases, surveillance footage was more attributable to a public narrative, as with a Week 13 story released on Global BC, which involved home surveillance of a young child breaking into a vehicle, where there was no mention of police involvement and no request for public help in solving the crime.

Some stories contained only police or public narrative, and some contained narrative from both or neither. Some stories included more than one type of narrative from the public or police. All stories received a maximum of one tally per type of narrative in either the police or public categories. So, for example, if a story featured a social media post from a member of the public and an interview with a university professor, it would receive one tally for direct and one for social media tweet or post under the public category of narrative. Moreover, a story that featured two clips from a police spokesperson, commentary from a university professor, a statement from a politician, and six social media posts from members of the public, would receive one tally for direct under the police category, one tally for direct under the public category and one tally for social media tweet or post under the public category.

Figure 9: Daily Hive Vancouver – Narrative within crime, justice and policing news stories

The analysis of narrative in stories related to crime, justice and policing revealed that police agencies contributed the most narrative to stories published on the Daily Hive Vancouver. Overall, there were 58 occurrences of civilian narrative and 86 occurrences of police narrative in the 155 policing stories published during the four-month period of data gathering. This equated to a civilian narrative to police narrative ratio of 1 to 1.5 within crime, justice and policing stories.

Direct quoting made up the majority of narrative for both the police (69.8%, \( n = 60 \)) and the public (55.2%, \( n = 32 \)). For police, indirect quoting or paraphrasing made up the second-largest narrative (15.1%, \( n = 13 \)), whereas for civilians, video and photographs made up their second-largest narrative (31.0%, \( n = 18 \)).
Having determined the amount of police and civilian narrative in stories published to the *Daily Hive Vancouver* website, the next consideration was whether narrative had any impact on the neutrality of stories (Figure 10). Stories were divided into four categories according to narrative: (a) police only, (b) public only, (c) both police and public, and (d) neither police nor public. The test for presence of police or public narrative was considered met as long as at least one form of the previously mentioned four types of narratives was present in the story. That is, a story needed to have received a tally for at least one of direct narrative, indirect narrative, social media tweet or post, and/or video or photograph under the police or the public categories. Stories that featured more than one type of narrative for the police or public were given no more weight than those that included only one type of narrative for either group. It was found that a majority of stories (44.5%, *n* = 69) featured police narrative alone, while only 23.2% (*n* = 36) featured a civilian-only narrative.

Once stories were categorised for narrative presence, they were then considered for neutrality.

![Figure 10: Daily Hive Vancouver – Impact of narrative on overall story neutrality related to police and policing practice](image)

The majority of stories in three of four categories were coded as neutral. More specifically, 40 stories (58.0%) containing only police narrative were neutral, whereas 29 stories (80.6%) containing only public narrative were neutral. Stories containing neither police nor public narrative were also primarily neutral (88.9%, *n* = 32).

Police narrative-only stories totalling 69 were found to be positive at a rate of 40.6% (*n* = 28) and negative at a rate of 1.4% (*n* = 1). As previously noted, stories in this category were neutral at the rate of 58.0% (*n* = 40).

Public narrative-only stories totalling 36 were positive at a rate of 8.3% (*n* = 3) and negative at a rate of 11.1% (*n* = 4). As previously noted, stories in this category were neutral at a rate of 80.6% (*n* = 29).
Stories containing narrative from both police and public totalled 14. They were found to be positive at a rate of 57.1% \((n = 8)\) and neutral at a rate of 42.9% \((n = 6)\), with no noted negative stories.

Finally, stories containing neither police nor public narrative totalled 36. They were found to be positive at a rate of 11.1% \((n = 4)\), with no noted negative stories. As previously noted, stories in this category were neutral at a rate of 88.9% \((n = 32)\).

A key aspect of the study was the consideration of police and civilian use of social media and related technologies as portrayed in crime, justice and policing news stories. Therefore, the social media tweet or post, and video or photograph categories for narrative were considered in greater detail for neutrality. A total 22.6% \((n = 35)\) of crime, justice and policing news stories published to the *Daily Hive Vancouver* website included aspects of police or civilian use of social media or related technologies in the production of narrative. Civilians used social media and related technology to contribute narrative to 22 of these stories, while police used the same technology to contribute to 13 of these stories. Overall, the ratio of civilian to police use of the technologies was calculated to be 1 to 0.6.

The study then considered to what extent police and civilian narratives involving the use of social media and related technologies might impact the neutrality of news stories in regard to policing (Figure 11). The data analysis included coding each occurrence of police or civilian use of social media or related technology within the 35 stories as having a positive, negative or neutral impact on the portrayal of policing. This is not to say that the use of social media alone caused the overall coding of a story to be positive, negative or neutral, as each story had several factors that impacted overall neutrality. Rather, the analysis considered how the technology was used so as to portray police or policing in a positive, negative or neutral manner within each story.

![Figure 11: *Daily Hive Vancouver* – Police and public use of social media and related technologies and the impact on the portrayal of police and policing practice in crime, justice and policing news stories](image)

The analysis revealed that of the 13 cases where police employed social media or related technology to contribute to a news story, 69.2% \((n = 9)\) portrayed policing positively and
30.8% \((n = 4)\) portrayed policing in a neutral manner. There were no occurrences of police-generated content in this category that portrayed policing in a negative light. Meanwhile, of the 22 cases where members of the public contributed to news stories through the use of social media or similar technology, 13.6% \((n = 3)\) portrayed policing in a positive light, while 9.1% \((n = 2)\) portrayed policing negatively. The remaining 77.3% \((n = 17)\) of the occurrences of citizen-generated or -used social media and related coverage were neutral towards policing.

As the data gathering and analysis progressed it became apparent that citizen journalism and crowd-sourced policing, as evidenced in public use of social media and related technologies, had the potentiality to reflect not only the police in a positive or negative way, but also civilians. As such, how police or public content generated through the use of social media or related technology impacted the portrayal of civilians in crime, justice and policing stories was also considered. This involved coding each occurrence of police or public use of social media or related technology within the 35 stories that included such content as having a positive, negative or neutral impact on the portrayal of civilians.

Stories where use of social media or related technologies were employed to highlight a criminal act or arrest of a suspect were coded as negative for civilians, whereas instances that emphasised civilians engaging in prosocial behaviour relative to issues of crime and justice were coded as positive (Figure 12). An example of a positive portrayal occurred during Week 3 in an article published to the Daily Hive Vancouver website. It featured pictures posted to social media highlighting Vancouver-area civilian agencies that had lowered their flags to half-mast in a sign of solidarity with the victims of the Orlando Nightclub Massacre in the United States. An example of a negative civilian portrayal was a Week 14 story published on the website which included a video of a civilian causing a disturbance while racially harassing an ethnic minority. Neutral portrayals included videos or photos of motor vehicle collisions in which no party was identified as being at fault, or crowds of people in the aftermath of a terrorist attack.

![Figure 12: Daily Hive Vancouver – Police and public use of social media and related technologies and the impact on the portrayal of civilians in crime, justice and policing news stories](image-url)
The analysis revealed that of the 13 cases where police employed social media or related technology to contribute to a news story, 53.8% \((n = 7)\) portrayed civilians negatively and 46.2% \((n = 6)\) portrayed civilians in a neutral manner. There were no occurrences of police-generated content in this category that portrayed civilians in a positive light. Of the 22 cases where the public contributed to news stories through the use of social media or similar technology, 9.1% \((n = 2)\) portrayed civilians in a positive light, whereas 50.0% \((n = 11)\) portrayed civilians negatively. The two positive representations included the earlier described lowering of flags to half-mast at public establishments in a showing of solidarity with terror victims in Week 3 and a peaceful demonstration protesting police use of force in Week 7. The remaining 40.9% \((n = 9)\) of occurrences of public-generated or -used social media and related coverage were neutral towards civilians.

**GLOBAL BC EVENING NEWS BROADCAST**

Global BC is one of British Columbia’s largest privately owned television news broadcasters. Nationally, Global BC’s parent companies (Shaw Media and Corus Entertainment) hold 20% of the revenue share among Canadian media agencies (Canadian Radio-television and Communications Commission, 2016, p. 130). Global BC produces several newscasts throughout the day and evening, including a 30-minute evening newscast commencing at 5:00 p.m. Pacific Standard Time, which was examined over the four-month course of the study. Content of each newscast included politics, entertainment, sports, and weather, as well as crime, justice and policing issues. Each Global BC 5:00 p.m. newscast was broken up by commercial breaks. A random sampling of 20 of the 80 total newscasts was examined to determine the news–advertisement ratio. All 20 newscasts included three commercial breaks, the totals of which were found to range in length from 6 minutes to 8 minutes and 30 seconds per newscast. The overall average amount of time spent on commercials was found to be 7 minutes and 35 seconds. Total programming was therefore calculated to be an average of 22 minutes and 25 seconds per broadcast.

During the four-month study, a total of 1,128 stories were broadcasted during the Global BC 5:00 p.m. news broadcast. Of these stories, 363 were categorized as being related to crime, justice and policing, which translated into an overall average of 32.2% (Figure 13). The remainder included stories that could be categorised as politics, entertainment, economics, weather, traffic, and health. For the purposes of the study, they were categorised as other content. When examined by amount of time (as opposed to story count), stories related to crime, justice and policing accounted for 6 hours, 34 minutes, and 21 seconds out of a total 29 hours and 52 minutes of news content. This equated to an overall average of 22.0% of all content (Figure 14).
When considering story count broken down by week, the percentage of crime, justice and policing content varied somewhat, with a low of 24.7% coverage during Week 14 and a high of 41.4% coverage during Week 12. All of the 80 newscasts in the study included some policing coverage. The highest number of crime, justice and policing stories produced in one day was nine, which occurred on the first day of Week 4 and accounted for 45.0% of the content for that day. As with the results for story count, when considering amount of time spent on policing stories broken down by week, the percentage of policing content varied, with a low of 17.1% during Week 14 and a high of 29.9% during Week 12. The longest amount of time dedicated to policing stories occurred on the fourth day of Week 16: 9 minutes or 40.1% of overall news coverage for the day (Figure 15).
The amount of time dedicated to specific types of stories or the length of crime, justice and policing stories that included specific variables was not specifically examined for this study. Rather, focusing on story frequency percentages allowed for a more consistent comparison between television news agencies (for which the newscast times were found to vary) and the Daily Hive Vancouver website (for which time was not a factor).

The policing stories broadcasted by Global BC were categorised into groups by topic, with only one topic assigned to each story. All 31 topics related to crime, justice and policing stories identified in the study emerged during the analysis of the data from Global BC (Figure 16). The top three categories for crime, justice and policing content by topic included homicide (12.1%, \( n = 44 \)), terrorism incident or issues (8.3%, \( n = 30 \)), and police actions related to general public safety (7.4%, \( n = 27 \)). Public safety initiatives included a crackdown on youth gang violence highlighted in Week 2, a gun amnesty program announced in Week 3, and the shutdown of a secondary school after a student posted online threats regarding an upcoming graduation event which was covered during Week 5. The remaining topics were widely dispersed and ranged from 0.6% to 6.1% coverage.

**Figure 15: Global BC – Crime, justice and policing story count and time by week**
Figure 16: Global BC – Percentage of crime, justice and policing stories by topic

The policing stories broadcasted by Global BC were also examined by theme (Figure 17). As with the analysis of the Daily Hive Vancouver website, for each story, any and all underlying themes relevant to issues of crime, justice or policing were tabulated, and this meant that some stories were sorted into more than one theme. In all, 15 thematic categories specific to the news media agencies in the study emerged during the analysis of the data from Global
BC. The top three categories for crime, justice and policing news content included investigation ongoing (38.3%, \( n = 139 \)), arrest, charges laid or terrorist neutralised (18.2%, \( n = 66 \)), and investigation successful (14.0%, \( n = 51 \)). The remaining themes ranged from 1.4% to 11.6% coverage.

![Bar chart showing the percentage of stories for different themes.](image)

**Figure 17: Global BC – Themes appearing in stories by percentage**

Next, the crime, justice and policing stories broadcasted on the Global BC 5:00 p.m. newscast were examined for neutrality. Using the survey-tested, literature-based method of determining neutrality in news stories as described in the methodology section of this dissertation, each story was assigned a value of positive, negative or neutral. A total of 115 stories (31.7%) were categorised as positive, 19 stories (5.2%) were categorised as negative, and 229 stories (63.1%) were categorised as neutral (Figure 18).
The impact of sourcing on the neutrality of stories broadcasted on the Global BC 5:00 p.m. newscast was then considered. Stories were categorised into the eight source categories previously identified during the analysis of the Daily Hive Vancouver website: (a) Canadian police agency, (b) government (including federal, provincial and municipal), (c) journalist, (d) civilian (e) private corporate or nonprofit agency, (f) United States of America and international, (g) Canadian courts and (h) unknown (Figure 19). Stories determined to have more than one possible source were designated as unknown.

As with the data from the Daily Hive Vancouver website, in regard to the Global BC 5:00 p.m. newscast, Canadian police agencies were found to have contributed as known and confirmed sources to the most crime, justice and policing content (34.4%, \( n = 125 \)).

Figure 18: Global BC – Overall neutrality of crime, justice and policing stories towards police and policing practice

Figure 19: Global BC – Crime, justice and policing story origins
Once categorised by source, stories within each category were then considered for overall neutrality towards police and policing practice (Figure 20).

![Figure 20: Global BC – Neutrality towards police and policing practice in news stories by origin](chart)

Of the 125 Canadian police–attributed stories produced by Global BC, 56 (44.8%) were coded as positive, three (2.4%) were coded as negative, and 66 (52.8%) were coded as neutral.

News content drawn from the United States and other international communities made up the second-largest category of all crime, justice and policing content broadcasted during the study (15.2%, \( n = 55 \)). A total of 17 stories (30.9%) were determined to be positive, three stories (5.5%) were negative, and 35 (63.6%) were deemed neutral.

Canadian-based courts were noted to be the source of the third-largest category (9.4%, \( n = 34 \)). Four (11.8%) of these stories were coded as positive, six (17.6%) were coded as negative, and 24 (70.6%) were coded as neutral.

Journalists and their organisations were found to be responsible for the fourth-largest category, which included a total of 26 stories (7.2%). Of these stories, seven (26.9%) were found to be positive and two (7.7%) were negative. The remaining 17 stories (65.4%) were neutral towards policing.

Private corporate or nonprofit agencies contributed as known and confirmed sources to a fifth group of crime, justice and policing news content broadcasted on the Global BC 5:00 p.m. news (4.4%, \( n = 16 \)). Of the stories traced to this group, two stories (12.5%) were
found to be positive and 14 (87.5%) were found to be neutral towards policing practice. There were no noted negative stories in this category.

Civilians contributed as known and confirmed sources to crime, justice and policing stories on the Global BC 5:00 p.m. newscast at a percentage comparable to that of private corporate or non-profit agencies (4.1%, \( n = 15 \)). Of the stories attributable to civilian origins, one story (6.7%) was considered positive, four stories (26.7%) were considered negative, and the remaining ten stories (66.7%) were neutral towards policing.

Government agencies (municipal, provincial and federal) were found to contribute to the smallest category of known contributors for crime, justice and policing content (3.0%, \( n = 11 \)). One story (9.1%) in this category was deemed positive, none were deemed negative, and ten (90.9%) were deemed neutral.

Finally, the news stories for which no source could be absolutely determined were tallied. There were 81 stories (22.3%) placed into the unknown category. Of the stories in this category, 27 (33.3%) were coded as positive, one (1.2%) was coded as negative, and 53 (65.4%) were coded as neutral.

The study also considered the occurrence of narrative in crime, justice and policing stories (Figure 21). For each story, cases of police and public narrative were tallied into the four previously identified categories: (a) indirect, (b) direct, (c) social media tweet or post, and (d) video or photograph. Stories received a maximum of one tally per type of narrative in either the police or public categories. Overall, there were 212 occurrences of public narrative and 135 occurrences of police narrative within the 363 policing stories broadcasted on the Global BC 5:00 p.m. newscast during the four-month period of data gathering. This equated to a civilian narrative to police narrative ratio of 1 to 0.6 within crime, justice and policing stories.

As with the data from the *Daily Hive Vancouver* website, for police and civilians alike, direct quoting made up the majority of narrative for both the police (60.0%, \( n = 81 \)) and the public (69.8%, \( n = 148 \)). Also in line with *Daily Hive Vancouver* findings, for police, indirect quoting or paraphrasing made up the second-largest form of narrative (20.7%, \( n = 28 \)), while for civilians, video and photographs made up the second-largest form of narrative (25.9%, \( n = 55 \)).
Next, the impact of narrative on the neutrality of stories was considered (Figure 22). Stories were divided into four groups according to narrative presence: (a) police only, (b) public only, (c) both police and public, and (d) neither police nor public. The same test for presence of police or public narrative was applied as before: The test was considered met as long as one form of the four types of narratives (indirect, direct, social media tweet or post, and/or video or photograph) was present in the story.

In contrast to the Daily Hive Vancouver website, on Global BC, the majority of crime, justice and policing stories featured civilian narrative alone (36.9%, \( n = 134 \)). Meanwhile, such stories featuring a police narrative alone totalled only 16.8% \( (n = 61) \).
The majority of stories in two of four categories were coded as neutral. Of stories containing only public narrative, 108 (80.6%) were neutral, while of stories containing neither police nor civilian narrative, 83 (72.8%) were neutral.

Police narrative-only stories totalling 61 were found to be primarily positive (73.8%, \( n = 45 \)). Only two stories (3.2%) featuring police narrative alone were coded as negative, and 14 stories (23.0%) were coded as neutral.

Public narrative-only stories totalling 134 were found to be positive at a rate of 11.9% \( (n = 16) \) and negative at a rate of 7.5% \( (n = 10) \). As previously noted, stories in this category were neutral at the rate of 80.6% \( (n = 108) \).

Stories containing both police and public narrative totalled 54. They were found to be positive at a rate of 46.3% \( (n = 25) \), negative at a rate of 5.5% \( (n = 3) \), and neutral at a rate of 48.1% \( (n = 26) \).

Finally, stories containing neither police nor public narrative totalled 114. They were found to be positive at a rate of 22.8% \( (n = 26) \) and negative at a rate of 4.4% \( (n = 5) \). As previously noted, stories in this category were neutral at the rate of 72.8% \( (n = 83) \).

The stories attributed to the social media tweet or post, and video or photograph categories for narrative were considered in greater detail for neutrality. A total of 67 or 18.5% of crime, justice and policing news stories on the Global BC 5:00 p.m. newscast included aspects of police or civilian use of social media or related technologies in the production of narrative. Members of the public used social media and related technology to contribute narrative to 57 of these stories, while police used the same technology to contribute to 26 stories. There was some overlap where police and public contributed via technology to the same stories. Overall, the civilian use to police use of social media and technology ratio was 1 to 0.5.
Next, the extent to which police and public narratives, involving the use of social media and related technologies, might impact the neutrality of news stories in regard to policing was considered (Figure 23). The data analysis included coding each occurrence of police or public use of social media or related technology within the 67 stories as having a positive, negative or neutral impact on the portrayal of policing. As with the data analysis of content from the Daily Hive Vancouver website, this coding was independent of the process wherein stories were coded overall as positive, negative or neutral. Here, the emphasis was on how social media and related technology was used so as to portray police or policing in a positive, negative or neutral manner within each story.

Figure 23: Global BC – Police and public use of social media and related technologies and the impact on the portrayal of police and policing practice in crime, justice and policing news stories

The analysis revealed that of the 26 cases where police employed social media or related technology to contribute to a news story, 46.2% \((n = 12)\) portrayed policing positively and 53.8% \((n = 14)\) portrayed policing in a neutral manner. There were no occurrences of police-generated content in this category that portrayed policing in a negative light. Of the 57 cases where members of the public contributed to news stories through the use of social media or similar technology, 19.3% \((n = 11)\) portrayed policing in a positive light, 14.0% \((n = 8)\) portrayed policing negatively, and 66.7% \((n = 38)\) were neutral towards policing.

As with data from the Daily Hive Vancouver, how police or public content generated through the use of social media or related technology impacted the portrayal of civilians in crime, justice and policing stories was also considered. Occurrences of police- or civilian-employed social media and related technology found within the 67 stories that included such technologies were thus coded as positive, negative or neutral in terms of how they portrayed civilians (Figure 24).
The analysis revealed that of the 26 cases where police employed social media or related technology to contribute to a news story, 53.8% \((n = 14)\) portrayed civilians negatively and 46.2% \((n = 12)\) portrayed civilians in a neutral manner. There were no occurrences of police-generated content in this category that portrayed civilians in a positive light. Meanwhile, of the 57 cases where civilians contributed to news stories through the use of social media or similar technology, 71.9% \((n = 41)\) portrayed civilians in a negative light and 28.1% \((n = 16)\) were neutral towards civilians. There were no noted cases where civilian use of technology portrayed members of the public positively.

**Figure 24: Global BC – Police and public use of social media and related technologies and the impact on the portrayal of civilians in crime, justice and policing news stories**

CTV Vancouver is one of British Columbia’s largest privately owned television news broadcasters. Nationally, the broadcaster’s parent company BCE Inc. holds the highest television revenue share (31%) among Canadian media agencies (Canadian Radio-television and Communications Commission, 2016, p. 130). CTV Vancouver produces several newscasts throughout the day and evening, including a 60-minute evening newscast commencing at 5:00 p.m. Pacific Standard Time, which was examined over the four-month course of the study. Content of each newscast included politics, entertainment, sports, and weather, as well as crime, justice and policing issues. Each CTV Vancouver 5:00 p.m. newscast was broken up by commercial breaks. A random sampling of 20 of the 80 total newscasts was examined to determine the news–advertisement ratio. All 20 newscasts included six commercial breaks, which were found to range in total length from 16 minutes to 18 minutes and 30 seconds per newscast. The overall average amount of time spent on commercials was found to be 17 minutes. Total programming was therefore calculated to be an average of 43 minutes per newscast.

During the four-month study, a total of 2,663 stories were broadcasted during the CTV Vancouver 5:00 p.m. news broadcast. Of these stories, 961 were categorized as being
related to crime, justice and policing, for an overall average of 36.1% (Figure 25). The remainder included stories that could be categorised as politics, entertainment, economics, weather, traffic and health and, for the purposes of the study, were noted as other content. When examined by amount of time (as opposed to story count), stories related to crime, justice and policing accounted for 15 hours, 42 minutes, and 4 seconds out of a total 57 hours and 20 minutes of news content. This translated into an overall average of 27.4% of all content (Figure 26).

![Figure 25: CTV Vancouver – News story count](image1)

![Figure 26: CTV Vancouver – Percentage of news story content when measured in time](image2)

When considering story count broken down by week, the percentage of crime, justice and policing content varied somewhat, with a low of 31.2% during Week 10 and a high of 43.3% the following week. All of the 80 newscasts in the study included some policing coverage, with the highest number of crime, justice and policing stories produced per day being 18 and the lowest being four. As with the results for story count, when considering amount of time spent on policing stories broken down by week, the percentage of policing content varied, with a low of 21.5% during Week 10 and a high of 31.2% the following week (Figure 27).
Figure 27: CTV Vancouver – Crime, justice and policing story count and time by week

As with the data from the Global BC 5:00 p.m. newscast, analysis beyond an overview of coverage focused on story frequency rather than amounts of time dedicated to specific types of stories or the lengths of crime, justice and policing stories that included specific variables.

The policing stories broadcasted by CTV Vancouver were categorised into groups by topic. As the data collection progressed, it became apparent that the broadcaster tended to recycle stories within each broadcast. That is, some crime, justice and policing stories were covered two or three times within the space of one broadcast. Often, a story that occurred within the first period of news would be readdressed following a commercial break. Each subsequent version of the story would vary from the first. Second and third versions provided new information, included different interview clips, or fleshed out the details of the first version of the story. As such, multiple versions of the same story were coded as individual stories for this study.

All 31 topics identified during the study emerged during the analysis of the data from CTV Vancouver (Figure 28). The top category for crime, justice and policing content by topic was homicide (11.4%, \( n = 110 \)). Terrorism incident or issues, and collision nonfatal and traffic made up the next-largest categories with 73 stories (7.6%) each. The remaining topics were dispersed and ranged from 0.2% to 5.6% coverage.
The policing stories broadcasted by CTV Vancouver were also examined by theme (Figure 29). As any and all underlying themes relevant to issues of crime, justice or policing were tabulated, some stories were sorted into more than one theme. All 15 previously noted
thematic categories specific to the media agencies in the study emerged from the data analysis of CTV Vancouver coverage. The top three categories for crime, justice and policing content included investigation ongoing (35.6%, $n = 342$), investigation successful (21.6%, $n = 208$), and arrest, charges laid or terrorist neutralised (17.4%, $n = 167$). The remaining themes were dispersed and ranged from 1.4% to 8.8% coverage.

Figure 29: CTV Vancouver – Themes appearing in stories by percentage

The crime, justice and policing stories broadcasted on the CTV Vancouver 5:00 p.m. newscast were examined for overall neutrality towards police and policing practice (Figure 30). As with the other media sources examined, each story was assigned a value of positive, negative, or neutral. A total of 297 stories (30.9%) were categorised as positive, 72 stories (7.5%) were categorised as negative, and 592 stories (61.6%) were categorised as neutral.
The impact of sourcing on the neutrality of stories broadcasted on the CTV Vancouver 5:00 p.m. newscast was also considered. Stories were categorised into the eight source categories previously identified during the analysis of other media sources (Figure 31). Again, stories for which a source was not identified or which had more than one potential source were designated as unknown.

In contrast to the data drawn from the Daily Hive Vancouver website and Global BC 5:00 p.m. newscast, where police agencies contributed the most content, in regard to the CTV Vancouver 5:00 p.m. newscast, the category of United States of America and international was comparable in size to that of Canadian policing agencies.

Once categorised by source, stories within each category were then considered for overall neutrality towards police and policing practice (Figure 32).
Of all crime, justice and policing content, 267 stories (27.8%) were attributed to the United States or various international sources. Of these, 88 (33.0%) were determined to be positive, 32 (12.0%) were negative, and 147 (55.1%) were deemed neutral.

Canadian police agencies contributed as known and confirmed sources to the second-largest group of crime, justice and policing news content (27.3%, \( n = 262 \)). Of the 262 police-attributed stories, 119 (45.4%) were coded as positive, two (0.8%) were coded as negative, and 141 (53.8%) were coded as neutral. The figures related to neutrality were similar to those of the Global BC broadcast.

Canadian-based courts were noted to be the source of a third category of crime, justice and policing stories (8.7%, \( n = 84 \)). Of these stories, 15 (17.9%) were coded as positive, 13 (15.5%) were coded as negative, and 56 (66.7%) were coded as neutral.

Canadian journalists and their organisations were found to be responsible for a fourth category which included 48 stories (5.0% of all crime, justice and policing content). Of these stories, five (10.4%) were found to be positive, five (10.4%) were found to be negative, and 38 (79.2%) were neutral.

Private corporate or nonprofit agencies contributed as known and confirmed sources to a fifth group of crime, justice and policing news content (2.4%, \( n = 23 \)). Of these stories, six (26.1%) were found to be positive, four (17.4%) were found to be negative, and 13 (56.5%) were found to be neutral towards policing.

**Figure 32: CTV Vancouver – Neutrality towards police and policing practice in news stories by origin**

Of all crime, justice and policing content, 267 stories (27.8%) were attributed to the United States or various international sources. Of these, 88 (33.0%) were determined to be positive, 32 (12.0%) were negative, and 147 (55.1%) were deemed neutral.

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Private corporate or nonprofit agencies contributed as known and confirmed sources to a fifth group of crime, justice and policing news content (2.4%, \( n = 23 \)). Of these stories, six (26.1%) were found to be positive, four (17.4%) were found to be negative, and 13 (56.5%) were found to be neutral towards policing.
Government agencies (municipal, provincial and federal) contributed to a sixth group of crime, justice and policing content. Out of 19 stories (2.0% of all crime, justice and policing content), two (10.5%) were deemed positive, one (5.3%) was deemed negative, and the remaining 16 (84.2%) were deemed neutral towards policing.

 Civilians were found to contribute to the smallest category of known contributors for crime, justice and policing content broadcast on the CTV Vancouver 5:00 p.m. newscast (1.5%, \( n = 14 \)). Four stories (28.6%) were found to be positive, and another four stories (28.6%) were considered negative. The remaining six stories (42.8%) were neutral towards policing.

 Finally, the news stories for which no source could be absolutely determined were tallied. There were 244 stories placed into the unknown category (25.4% of all crime, justice and policing content). Of the stories in this category, 58 (23.8%) were coded as positive, 11 (4.5%) were coded as negative, and 175 (71.7%) were coded as neutral.

 The study also considered the occurrence of narrative in crime, justice and policing stories (Figure 33). For each story, cases of police and public narrative were tallied into the four previously identified categories: (a) indirect, (b) direct, (c) social media tweet or post, and (d) video or photograph. Stories received a maximum of one tally per type of narrative observed in the police or public categories. Overall, there were 552 occurrences of public narrative and 328 occurrences of police narrative in the 961 policing stories broadcasted on the CTV Vancouver 5:00 p.m. newscast during the four-month period of data gathering. This equated to a civilian to police narrative ratio of 1 to 0.6 within crime, justice and policing stories. This finding was in line with that from the Global BC 5:00 p.m. newscast.

![Figure 33: CTV Vancouver – Narrative within crime, justice and policing news stories](image)

As with the data from the *Daily Hive Vancouver* website and the Global BC 5:00 p.m. newscast, for the police and public alike, direct quoting made up the majority of the narrative.
For police, direct narrative tallied to 167 (50.9%), while for the public, direct narrative tallied to 372 (67.4%). For police, indirect quoting or paraphrasing made up the second-largest narrative (32.0%, $n = 105$) whereas for members of the public, video and photographs made up their second-largest narrative (26.8%, $n = 148$). These findings aligned with those from the other two media sources already studied.

Next, the impact of narrative on the neutrality of stories was considered (Figure 34). Stories were divided into four groups according to the presence of narrative. As before, the categories included (a) police only, (b) public only, (c) both police and public, and (d) neither police nor public. The test for narrative presence for either public or police was considered met as long as one form of the previously mentioned four types of narratives (direct, indirect, social media tweet or post, and/or video or photograph) was present at least once in a story.

As with Global BC, there were more justice and policing stories broadcasted on CTV Vancouver including civilian-only narrative (35.6%, $n = 342$) than there were with a police-only narrative (17.3%, $n = 166$).

Figure 34: CTV Vancouver – Impact of narrative on overall story neutrality related to police and policing practice

A large majority of stories in two of four categories were coded as neutral. Of stories containing only public narrative, 267 (78.1%) were neutral, while of stories containing neither police nor civilian narrative, 215 (71.4%) were neutral. These findings were in line with those from the Daily Hive Vancouver website and the Global BC 5:00 p.m. newscast.

Police narrative-only stories totalling 166 were found to be primarily positive at a rate of 48.8% ($n = 81$), negative at a rate of 1.8% ($n = 3$), and neutral at a rate of 49.4% ($n = 82$).

Public narrative-only stories totalling 342 were found to be positive at a rate of 12.6% ($n = 43$) and negative at a rate of 9.4% ($n = 32$). As previously noted, stories in this category were neutral at a rate of 78.1% ($n = 267$).
Stories containing both police and public narrative totalled 152. They were found to be positive at a rate of 48.7% \((n = 74)\), negative at a rate of 7.9% \((n = 12)\), and neutral at a rate of 43.4% \((n = 66)\).

Finally, stories containing neither police nor public narrative totalled 301. They were found to be positive at a rate of 22.6% \((n = 68)\) and negative at a rate of 6.0% \((n = 18)\). As previously noted, stories in this category were neutral at a rate of 71.4% \((n = 215)\).

The categories of social media tweet or post and, video or photograph were considered in greater detail for neutrality. A total of 217 (22.6%) of crime, justice and policing news stories on the CTV Vancouver 5:00 p.m. newscast included aspects of police or civilian use of social media or related technologies in the production of narrative. Members of the public used social media and related technology to contribute narrative to 164 of these stories, while police used the same technology to contribute to 56 stories. A few stories included the technologically enhanced narrative of both police and public. Overall, the civilian to police use of social media and related technology ratio was 1 to 0.3.

The extent to which police and public narratives involving the use of social media and related technologies might impact the neutrality of news stories in regard to policing was considered (Figure 35). The data analysis included coding each occurrence of police or civilian use of social media or related technology within the 217 stories as having a positive, negative or neutral impact on the portrayal of policing. As with the data analysis conducted in regard to the Daily Hive Vancouver website and the Global BC 5:00 p.m. newscast, this coding was independent of the process wherein stories were coded as being positive, negative or neutral overall, and instead focused on how the technologies were employed within each story to portray police actions.

![Figure 35: CTV Vancouver – Police and public use of social media and related technologies and the impact on the portrayal of police and policing practice in crime, justice and policing news stories](image-url)
The analysis revealed that of the 56 cases where police employed social media or related technology to contribute narrative to a news story, 25 (44.6%) portrayed policing positively and 25 (44.6%) portrayed policing in a neutral manner. Another six cases (10.7%) portrayed police or policing practice in a negative light. Such occurrences included a Canadian chief of police sending sexually explicit private messages to a subordinate via Twitter (Week 2), police radio audio from an incident occurring in the United States where a suspect disarmed a police officer, causing a shooting in a courtroom (Week 7), police radio audio suggesting that American police had racially profiled a black male they later shot dead (Week 7), police dashboard camera footage showing an American police officer allegedly using excessive force (Week 10), body-worn camera footage of police shooting a black male in the United States (Week 10), and anti–Black Lives Matter tweets from an American police agency (Week 14). The presence of such police-generated social media or related technology-based negative content was not observed in data from the Daily Hive Vancouver website or the Global BC 5:00 p.m. newscast.

Of the 164 cases where civilians contributed to news stories through the use of social media or similar technology, 25 (15.2%) portrayed policing in a positive light, 24 (14.6%) portrayed policing negatively, and 115 (70.1%) were neutral towards policing.

How police or civilian content, generated through the use of social media or related technology, impacted the portrayal of civilians in crime, justice and policing stories was also considered. Occurrences of police- or civilian-employed social media and related technology found within the 217 stories that included such technologies were thus coded as positive, negative or neutral in terms of how they portrayed civilians (Figure 36).

![Figure 36](image-url)

**Figure 36: CTV Vancouver – Police and public use of social media and related technologies and the impact on the portrayal of civilians in crime, justice and policing news stories**

The analysis revealed that of the 56 cases where police employed social media or related technology to contribute to a news story, 35 (62.5%) portrayed civilians negatively and 21
(37.5%) portrayed civilians in a neutral manner. There were no occurrences of police-generated narrative in this category that portrayed civilians in a positive light. Of the 164 cases where civilians had contributed to news stories through the use of social media or similar technology, four (2.4%) portrayals of civilians were positive and 115 (70.1%) were negative. The four positive portrayals included a victim of a sexual assault using social media to speak out against perceived flaws in the criminal justice system during Week 2, a Muslim group using social media to condemn terrorism in Week 3, a female confronting and obtaining an on-camera apology from a male who had harassed her in Week 5, and a successful citizen arrest and prevention of a potential kidnapping in Week 6. The remaining 45 (27.4%) occurrences were neutral towards civilians.

**CBC VANCOUVER EVENING NEWSCAST**

CBC Vancouver is British Columbia’s publicly funded television news broadcaster. Nationally, CBC News (CBC Vancouver’s parent company) holds 8.2% of Canada’s television viewing audience (Canadian Radio-television and Communications Commission, 2012, Table 4.3.9). CBC Vancouver produces several newscasts throughout the day and evening including a 60-minute evening newscast commencing at 6:00 p.m. Pacific Standard Time. During the study, the time slot for this news program varied somewhat, and programming was sometimes preempted for coverage of the 2016 Olympic Games or political events. When this occurred, a 30-minute evening newscast that consistently aired at 11:00 p.m. was examined. In all, during the four-month course of the study, a total of 58 60-minute evening newscasts and 23 30-minute evening newscasts were reviewed.

The content of both the 30- and 60-minute newscasts was similar. Both broadcasts included coverage of politics and weather, as well as crime, justice and policing issues. Entertainment and sports were covered to a lesser extent than they were by the other media agencies examined in this study. Both the 30- and 60-minute newscasts were broken up by commercial breaks. All 23 of the 30-minute evening newscasts were reviewed for commercial length. They included three commercial breaks, the totals of which were found to range from 7 minutes to 7 minutes and 45 seconds. The overall average amount of time spent on commercials for the 30-minute newscasts was determined to be 7 minutes and 30 seconds. Total programming was therefore calculated to be an average of 22 minutes and 30 seconds per newscast. A random sampling of 20 of the 57 60-minute newscasts was also examined to determine the news—advertisement ratio. All 20 newscasts included four commercial breaks, the totals of which were found to range in length from 10 minutes and 45 seconds to 12 minutes and 15 seconds per newscast. The overall average amount of time spent on commercials was found to be 11 minutes and 30 seconds, and total programming was thus calculated to be an average of 48 minutes and 30 seconds per newscast.

During the four-month study, a total of 947 stories were broadcasted during the news programs that were reviewed. Of these stories, 213 (22.5%) were categorized as being related to crime, justice and policing (Figure 37). When examined by amount of time (as opposed to story count), stories related to crime, justice and policing accounted for a total 11 hours, 28 minutes, and 56 seconds out of a total 54 hours and 42 minutes of news content. This translated into an overall average of 21.2% of all content (Figure 38).
When considering story count broken down by week, the percentage of crime, justice and policing content varied somewhat, with a low of 11.7% during Week 6 and a high of 35.1% during Week 16. Of the 80 newscasts examined in the study, seven included no coverage of policing issues. For the remaining newscasts, the number of crime, justice and policing stories varied between one and eight. As with the results for story count, when considering amount of time spent on policing stories broken down by week, the percentage of policing content varied, with a low of 12.8% during Week 6 and a high of 38.9% during Week 16 (Figure 39).

Figure 37: CBC Vancouver – News story count

Figure 38: CBC Vancouver – Percentage of news story content when measured in time
As with the data from the other media sources in this study, further analysis beyond a broad overview of content focused primarily on story frequency rather than amounts of time dedicated to specific types of stories or the lengths of stories that included specific variables. This allowed for a more consistent comparison between television news agencies (for which the newscast times were found to vary) and the Daily Hive Vancouver website (for which time was not a factor).

The policing stories broadcasted by CBC Vancouver were categorised into groups by topic. Twenty-nine of the 31 crime, justice and policing topics specific to the media agencies identified in the study emerged during the analysis of the data from this news agency (Figure 40). The top two categories for crime, justice, and policing content by topic were fentanyl drug crisis (18.8%, \( n = 40 \)) and terrorism incident or issues (8.5%, \( n = 18 \)). The two categories of public activism and homicide were tied for the next-largest category (6.1%, \( n = 13 \)). The remaining topics ranged from 0.5% to 5.2% coverage.
Figure 40: CBC Vancouver – Percentage of crime, justice and policing stories by topic

The policing stories broadcasted by CBC Vancouver were also examined by theme (Figure 41). As any and all underlying themes relevant to issues of crime, justice or policing were tabulated, some stories were sorted into more than one theme. All 15 thematic categories specific to the media agencies identified in the study emerged during the analysis of the data from this source. The top two categories included public safety related to drugs (22.1%, n =
The categories of arrest, charges laid or terrorist neutralised and, organisational failings were tied for a fourth-largest group (9.4%, \( n = 20 \)). The remaining themes were dispersed and ranged from 0.9% to 8.5% coverage.

![Bar Chart: Themes appearing in stories by percentage]

**Figure 41: CBC Vancouver – Themes appearing in stories by percentage**

The crime, justice and policing stories broadcasted on the CBC Vancouver newscasts were next examined for neutrality (Figure 42). As with the other media sources examined, each story was assigned a value of positive, negative or neutral. A total of 61 stories (28.6%) were categorised as positive, 18 stories (8.5%) were categorised as negative, and 134 stories (62.9%) were categorised as neutral. These findings were comparable to those from the other media agencies examined in the study.
Figure 42: CBC Vancouver – Overall neutrality of crime, justice and policing stories towards police and policing practice

The impact of sourcing on the neutrality of stories broadcasted by CBC Vancouver was also considered. Stories were categorised into the eight source categories previously identified during the analysis of other media sources in the study (Figure 43). As before, stories for which a source was not identified or which had more than one potential source were designated as unknown.

Figure 43: CBC Vancouver – Crime, justice and policing story origins

Comparable to the data drawn from the Daily Hive Vancouver website and Global BC 5:00 p.m. newscast, it was found that Canadian police agencies contributed the most crime, justice and policing content broadcasted.

Once categorised by source, stories within each category were then considered for overall neutrality towards police and policing practice (Figure 44).
Figure 44: CBC Vancouver – Neutrality towards police and policing practice in news stories by origin

Stories that were traced back to Canadian police-based sources totalled 56 (26.3%). Of these stories, 28 (50.0%) were deemed positive and 28 (50.0%) were deemed neutral. There were no negative stories noted in this category.

In contrast to the other media sources examined in the study, in regard to crime, justice and policing news content broadcasted by CBC Vancouver, journalists and their agencies were found to have contributed as known and confirmed sources to the second-largest group of stories. News stories were clearly attributed thusly 40 times (18.8% of all crime, justice and policing content). Of these stories, ten (25.0%) were coded as positive, five (12.5%) were coded as negative, and 25 (62.5%) were coded as neutral.

Stories from American and other international sources were found to have contributed to the third-largest group of news content on CBC Vancouver. In all, 27 stories (12.7% of all crime, justice and policing content) were attributed to this group with ten (37.0%) coded as positive, one (3.7%) coded as negative, and 16 (59.3%) coded as neutral.

Canadian-based courts were the source of a fourth category, which totalled 20 stories (9.4% of all crime, justice and policing content). Of these stories, three (15.0%) were coded as positive, three (15.0%) were coded as negative, and 14 (70.0%) were coded as neutral.

Canadian government agencies (municipal, provincial and federal) contributed to a sixth group of crime, justice and policing content (5.6%, n = 12). Within this category, one story (8.3%) was deemed positive, three (25.0%) were deemed negative, and the remaining eight (66.7%) were deemed neutral towards policing.
Civilians were found to have contributed the same amount of content as Canadian government agencies (5.6%, $n = 12$). Of these stories, one (8.3%) was found to be positive, one (8.3%) was found to be negative, and ten (83.3%) were found to be neutral.

Private corporate or nonprofit agencies contributed as known and confirmed sources to the sixth and smallest group (4.7%, $n = 10$) of crime, justice and policing stories broadcasted by CBC Vancouver. Two stories (20.0%) in this category were found to be negative and eight (80.0%) were found to be neutral. There were no positive news stories noted in this category.

Finally, the news stories for which no source could be absolutely determined were tallied. There were 36 stories placed into the unknown category (16.9% of all crime, justice and policing content). Of the stories in this category, eight (22.2%) were coded as positive, three (8.3%) were coded as negative, and 25 (69.4%) were coded as neutral.

The occurrence of narrative in crime, justice and policing stories was also considered (Figure 45). For each story, cases of police and public narrative were tallied into the four previously identified categories: (a) indirect, (b) direct, (c) social media tweet or post, and (d) video or photograph. Again, stories received a maximum of one tally per type of narrative observed for either police or public. Overall, there were 169 occurrences of public narrative and 68 occurrences of police narrative in the 213 crime, justice and policing stories in the CBC Vancouver newscasts that were examined during the four-month period of data gathering. This translated to a civilian narrative to police narrative ratio of 1 to 0.4.

![Figure 45: CBC Vancouver – Narrative within crime, justice and policing news stories](image)

As with the data from the other media sources examined during the study, direct quoting made up the majority of the narrative for both the police (70.6%, $n = 48$) and public (81.7%, $n = 138$). For police, indirect quoting or paraphrasing made up the second-largest narrative (22.1%, $n = 15$), whereas for civilians, video and photographs made up the second-largest
narrative (15.4%, \( n = 26 \)). These findings aligned with those from the other three media sources previously examined.

Next the impact of narrative on the neutrality of stories was considered (Figure 46). As with the other media sources examined, stories broadcasted by CBC Vancouver were divided into four groups according to the presence of narrative. As before, the categories included (a) police only, (b) public only, (c) both police and public, and (d) neither police nor public. The test for presence of police or public narrative was considered met as long as at least one form of the previously mentioned four types of narrative (direct, indirect, social media tweet or post, and/or video or photograph) was present in a story.

Similar to Global BC and CTV Vancouver, it was found that, on CBC Vancouver, a majority of crime, justice and policing stories featured a civilian-only narrative (54.5%, \( n = 116 \)) while a minority featured police-only narrative (7.5%, \( n = 16 \)).

The majority of stories in two of four categories were coded as neutral. Of stories containing only public narrative, 84 (72.4%) were neutral, while of stories containing neither police nor public narrative, 26 (78.8%) were neutral. These findings were in line with those from the other three news agencies examined during the study.

Police narrative-only stories totalling 16 were found to be primarily positive (75.0%, \( n = 12 \)). Only four stories (25.0%) featuring just police narrative were coded as neutral. None were coded as negative.

Public narrative-only stories totalling 116 were found to be positive at a rate of 18.1% (\( n = 21 \)) and negative at a rate of 9.5% (\( n = 11 \)). As previously noted, stories in this category were neutral at a rate of 72.4% (\( n = 84 \)).

**Figure 46: CBC Vancouver – Impact of narrative on overall story neutrality related to police and policing practice**

The majority of stories in two of four categories were coded as neutral. Of stories containing only public narrative, 84 (72.4%) were neutral, while of stories containing neither police nor public narrative, 26 (78.8%) were neutral. These findings were in line with those from the other three news agencies examined during the study.

Police narrative-only stories totalling 16 were found to be primarily positive (75.0%, \( n = 12 \)). Only four stories (25.0%) featuring just police narrative were coded as neutral. None were coded as negative.

Public narrative-only stories totalling 116 were found to be positive at a rate of 18.1% (\( n = 21 \)) and negative at a rate of 9.5% (\( n = 11 \)). As previously noted, stories in this category were neutral at a rate of 72.4% (\( n = 84 \)).
Stories containing both police and public narrative totalled 48. They were found to be positive at a rate of 45.8% \((n = 22)\), negative at a rate of 8.3% \((n = 4)\), and neutral at a rate of 45.8% \((n = 22)\).

Finally, stories containing neither police nor civilian narrative totalled 33. They were found to be positive at a rate of 15.2% \((n = 5)\) and negative at a rate of 6.1% \((n = 2)\). As previously noted, stories in this category were neutral at a rate of 78.8% \((n = 26)\).

Next, the categories addressing data related to social media tweet or post and, video or photograph were considered in greater detail for neutrality. A total of 32 (15.0%) of crime, justice and policing news stories broadcasted by CBC Vancouver included aspects of police or public use of social media or related technologies in the production of narrative. Members of the public used social media and related technology to contribute narrative in 30 of these stories, while police used the same technology to contribute to five stories. Police and public contributed a technologically enhanced narrative to a few of the same stories. Overall, the ratio for civilian to police use of social media and related technologies was 1 to 0.2.

The extent to which police and public narratives involving the use of social media and related technologies might impact the neutrality of news stories in regard to policing was then considered (Figure 47). The data analysis included coding each occurrence of police or public use of social media or related technology within the 32 stories as having a positive, negative, or neutral impact on the portrayal of policing. As with the data analysis conducted in regard to the other three media agencies studied, this coding was independent of the process wherein stories were coded as being positive, negative or neutral overall, and focused rather on how the technologies were employed within each story.

\[\text{Figure 47: CBC Vancouver – Police and public use of social media and related technologies and the impact on the portrayal of police and policing practice in crime, justice and policing news stories}\]
The analysis revealed that of the five cases where police employed social media or related technology to contribute narrative to a news story, two (40.0%) portrayed policing positively, one (20.0%) portrayed policing negatively, and two (40.0%) portrayed policing in a neutral manner. The negative story occurred during Week 3 and featured a high-ranking member of a Canadian police agency who allegedly harassed a subordinate via social media. The positive stories included a police agency tweeting a successful outcome to a terrorism incident during Week 8 and dramatic surveillance footage of a police-involved shooting deemed justified in court during Week 16.

Of the 30 cases where civilians contributed to news stories through the use of social media or similar technology, five (16.7%) portrayed policing in a positive light, seven (23.3%) portrayed policing negatively, and 18 (60.0%) were neutral towards policing.

How technologically enhanced police or civilian narrative impacted the portrayal of civilians in crime, justice and policing stories was also considered. Occurrences of police or public use of social media and related technology found within the 32 stories that included such technologies were thus coded as positive, negative or neutral in terms of how they portrayed civilians (Figure 48).

![Figure 48](image_url)

**Figure 48: CBC Vancouver – Police and public use of social media and related technologies and the impact on the portrayal of civilians in crime, justice and policing news stories**

The analysis revealed that of the five cases where police employed social media or related technology to contribute to a news story, four (80.0%) portrayed civilians negatively and one (20.0%) was neutral towards civilians. There were no occurrences of police narrative in this category that portrayed civilians in a positive light.

Of the 30 cases where civilians contributed to news stories through the use of social media or similar technology, two (6.7%) portrayals of civilians were positive and 19 (63.3%) were negative. The remaining nine (30.0%) occurrences were neutral towards civilians. The
two positive portrayals included cellular phone footage of a peaceful protest related to police use of force during Week 6 and cellular phone footage of a civilian successfully rescuing several teenagers who had become trapped while cliff jumping during Week 7.

SURREY RCMP FACEBOOK

The study included an examination of the official Surrey RCMP Facebook account. As noted in the “About” section of the social media site, the Facebook page was monitored and moderated. Posts and comments from the public were welcomed but were subject to editing and vetting by the moderator based on, but not limited to, Canadian laws on obscenity, hate speech, and violence as well as the provisions of the Official Languages Act and the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms.

During the four-month study, a total of 166 posts were published to the Surrey RCMP Facebook page (Figure 49). Broken down by week, content posted to the social media page varied, with an average ranging from 0.8 posts per day during Week 10 to 3.4 posts per day during Week 4.

![Figure 49: Surrey RCMP – Average Facebook posts by week](image)

The content from the Surrey RCMP Facebook site was analysed for topic and theme. Each post was sorted into one topical category and one or more thematic categories. For example, a post where police announced a sexual assault in an effort to identify a suspect was coded topically as sexual assault and thematically as both investigation ongoing and public appeal for assistance. As another example, a post where police advertised an upcoming community event and requested that the public bring sensitive personal documents to be shredded by donation was coded topically as community event and thematically as both community policing and crime prevention.

In the study, the analysis of data from police agency social media sources produced a total of 31 topics. There was some crossover with topics from analysis of the media
agencies, but ten topics covered by media sources were not addressed by the police agencies studied. These topics included (a) animals, (b) bullying and harassment, (c) kidnapping, (d) mischief including arson, (e) missing and murdered aboriginal women, (f) police death or assault police, (g) police use of force or conduct, (h) public activism, (i) public official investigated, and (j) terrorism incident or issues. Conversely, another nine topics emerged from examination of police sources that were not covered in the media during the study. These included (a) #VPDCaptures (a hashtag employed by the Vancouver Police Department to post promotional material to social media), (b) community events, (c) direct communications with journalists, (d) direct communications with other police agencies, (e) direct communications with public agencies, (f) direct communications with members of the public, (g) highlight community teams and initiatives, (h) highlight enforcement teams and initiatives, and (i) promotions, appointments and postings.

A total of 25 topics emerged from the analysis of data on the Surrey RCMP Facebook page (Figures 50 & 51). During the period of study, the most-covered topics included crime tips and education (16.9%, n = 28), community events (15.7%, n = 26) and highlight community teams and initiatives (12.0%, n = 20). Content by topic that was considered to be related to investigative processes totalled 75 posts (45.2%), with all individual topical categories falling below the 10 mark with the exception being 15 posts (9.0%) covering missing persons and 12 posts (7.2%) covering robberies.

Figure 50: Surrey RCMP – Average topics posted to Facebook considered by overarching purpose
Figure 51: Surrey RCMP – Average Facebook posts by topic

A total 16 themes emerged from an analysis of the data of police agency sources, and again, there was some crossover with the themes revealed in the analysis of the media agencies. Only the theme of investigation failed was covered by media sources but not addressed by
any of the police agencies studied. Another two themes emerged from examination of police sources that were not covered in the media during the study: (a) human resources and (b) public thanks.

Data from the Surrey RCMP Facebook account was categorised into a total of 14 thematic categories (Figure 52). Some posts were sorted into more than one theme. When considered for theme, the 166 posts to the Surrey RCMP Facebook page during the study were predominately sorted into community policing (33.7%, \( n = 56 \)), investigation ongoing (27.1%, \( n = 45 \)), crime prevention (22.3%, \( n = 37 \)), and public appeal for assistance (21.1%, \( n = 35 \)).

![Figure 52: Surrey RCMP – Themes appearing in Facebook posts by percentage](image)

The data from the Surrey RCMP Facebook page was also analysed for attributable source of each post (Figure 53). The majority of content posted to the social media site was found to have originated from the host agency. In all, 141 posts (84.9%) on the social media site were attributed to the Surrey RCMP. Additionally, 12 posts (7.2%) were found to originate from other police agencies (both municipal and RCMP) and six posts (3.6%) came from any of the three branches of Canadian government (federal, provincial or municipal). Of the 166 posts
to the Surrey RCMP Facebook page during the period of study, five posts (3.0%) originated from journalists, while civilians and nonprofit agencies accounted for one post (0.6%) each.

![Figure 53: Surrey RCMP – Facebook content origins](image)

The sort of documents or other sources of information posted to the Surrey RCMP Facebook site were also considered (Figure 54). Some posts included one or more attachments including, but not limited to, links to other websites, official police-produced media releases, and photographs or videos. During the period of study, a total of 49 media releases were posted to the Surrey RCMP Facebook site. Additionally, 27 investigative photographs were uploaded. These included surveillance stills, mugshots, and photographs of missing persons. Further, 42 community policing-related photographs were included on the site. These showed police officers or volunteers actively engaged in community events. Fifteen other images included stock photographs of historical subjects or events, or featured uniform and police patches. Nineteen images included memes or staged photographs depicting crimes for educational purposes. A total of four videos were uploaded, all of which were related to community policing initiatives. Thirteen links to outside agency websites, but none directing to RCMP sites, were included as content in posts. Also, five news stories produced by journalists were published to the site.
The study also considered the official Vancouver Police Department Facebook account. A description of the police department along with a listing of its vision and values was provided in the “About” section of the social media site. It was noted that the account was monitored and moderated.

During the four-month study, a total of 258 posts were published on the Vancouver Police Department Facebook page (Figure 55). This represented a posting rate that was 62.3% higher than that of the Surrey RCMP. Broken down by week, content posted to the Vancouver Police Department Facebook page varied, with an average number of posts per day ranging from 0.8 during Week 7 to 5.6 during Weeks 1 and 2.
The content from the Vancouver Police Department Facebook site was analysed for topic and theme. As with the analysis of the Surrey RCMP Facebook page, each post was sorted into only one topical category but one or more thematic category.

A total 22 topics emerged from the analysis of data from the Vancouver Police Department Facebook page (Figures 56 & 57). The most-covered topical category included a collection of photographs labelled as #VPDCaptures. These photographs, which were submitted by individual Vancouver Police Department officers, civilian employees, or members of the public, were posted almost daily to the social media site and depicted a variety of subject matter including the Vancouver Police Department rooftop vegetable garden, sunset scenes of the city of Vancouver, and various police paraphernalia. In all, 59 posts (22.9%) on the Vancouver Police Department Facebook site were sorted into the #VPDCaptures category. Beyond this, community events made up the second-largest category with a total of 47 posts (18.2%). Crime tips and education was the third-largest category (10.5%, n = 27). Content by topic that could be considered related to traditional police investigations or announcements of crimes totalled 95 (36.8%). The largest categories in this total included missing persons (8.5%, n = 22) and police actions related to general public safety, such as notices for wanted individuals (6.6%, n = 17).
Data from the Vancouver Police Department Facebook page was sorted into a total of 14 themes (Figure 58). The posts on the site were found to fit predominately in community policing (26.0%, \( n = 67 \)), as well as heroism, symbolism and public relations (25.6%, \( n = 66 \)). Investigation ongoing made up a third, sizeable category (17.1%, \( n = 44 \)), followed by crime
prevention (12.8 %, \( n = 33 \)), and public appeal for assistance (12.4%, \( n = 32 \)). These findings were similar to those from the analysis of data originating from the Surrey RCMP Facebook page.

**Figure 58: Vancouver Police Department – Themes appearing in Facebook posts by percentage**

Similar to the findings from the Surrey RCMP Facebook page, the majority of content posted to the Vancouver Police Department Facebook page was found to have originated from the police department itself (Figure 59). Out of the total 258 posts during the period of study, 232 (89.9%) were attributed to the Vancouver Police Department. Beyond this, 13 posts (5.0%) were found to originate from nonprofit agencies, and five posts (1.9%) were attributed to other police agencies (both municipal and RCMP). Civilians and journalists accounted for three posts each (1.2%), and two of three branches of Canadian government (provincial and municipal) contributed a total of two posts (0.8%).
Figure 59: Vancouver Police Department – Facebook content origins

Also considered were the types of documents or other sources of information that were included in posts on the Vancouver Police Department Facebook page (Figure 60). During the period of study, a total of 76 news releases were posted to the social media site. There were also 26 investigative photographs, including surveillance stills, mugshots and photographs of missing persons. Additionally, 45 community policing-related photographs were included on the social media site. Event posters, memes, and stock or staged photographs totalled 82. Twenty-nine videos related to community policing initiatives were uploaded, and four videos were posted for investigative purposes. In regard to website links, 20 directed to the websites of outside agencies and 19 to the official Vancouver Police Department website. Finally, two news stories related to members of the Vancouver Police Department produced by journalists were published to the site.
Figure 60: Vancouver Police Department – Documents and information attached to Facebook posts

SURREY RCMP TWITTER

The Surrey RCMP operates an official Twitter account which is monitored and moderated by the organisation. During the period of data collection (as of November 1, 2016), the Surrey RCMP was being followed on Twitter by approximately 14,500 accounts and was itself following 1,099. A link on the Twitter feed directed visitors to an RCMP website, which provided links to all RCMP-operated social media accounts including Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube as well as the RCMP’s social media “Terms of Use.” As with the Facebook account, visitors to the site were advised that posts and comments from the public were welcomed but subject to editing and vetting by the moderator based on, but not limited to, Canadian laws on obscenity, hate speech, and violence as well as the provisions of the Official Languages Act and the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms. Further, visitors were advised that links to external websites and the decision to like, share, or retweet a post should not be taken as an endorsement of another account or channel, or the content of another party (Royal Canadian Mounted Police, 2016).

During the four-month study, a total of 601 tweets were published on the Surrey RCMP Twitter account. This was markedly higher than the 166 posts to the organisation’s Facebook page which occurred during the same period. Overall, the posting rate ratio between the Surrey RCMP Twitter and Facebook pages was 4 to 1.
Broken down by week, activity on the Surrey RCMP Twitter page varied, with the average number of tweets per day ranging from 5.4 during Week 11 to 10.4 during Week 7 (Figure 61).

Figure 61: Surrey RCMP – Average Tweets on Twitter by week

Content on the Surrey RCMP Twitter site was analysed by topic and theme. Similar to the analyses of police-operated Facebook pages, each tweet or retweet was sorted into only one topical category but one or more of the thematic categories.

A total of 29 topics emerged from the analysis of data on the Surrey RCMP Twitter page (Figures 62 & 63). During the period of study, the majority of content on the social media site fit into the topics of crime tips and education (19.5%, \( n = 117 \)), community events (18.6%, \( n = 112 \)), and direct communications with the public (17.3%, \( n = 104 \)). Content by topic that could be considered related to traditional police investigations or announcements of crimes totalled 159 tweets (26.5%). Tweets about missing persons made up the largest group specific to investigations, totalling 28 (4.7%), while the next-largest group was related to the fentanyl drug crisis with 26 tweets (4.3%).

Figure 62: Surrey RCMP – Average topics tweeted on Twitter considered by overarching goal
Figure 63: Surrey RCMP – Average tweets on Twitter by topic

Fifteen themes were identified in the examination of the Surrey RCMP Twitter account. Of the tweets on the site, the largest groups were sorted into community policing (24.3%, $n =$
146) and crime prevention (22.3%, \( n = 134 \)). Investigation ongoing and public appeal for assistance were the next-largest categories, with 68 tweets (11.3%) and 56 tweets (9.3%) respectively. Tweets related to heroism, symbolism and public relations accounted for 50 posts (8.3%), while those related to successful investigations came in with a close 49 tweets (8.2%).

**Figure 64: Surrey RCMP – Themes appearing in tweets on Twitter by percentage**

The tweets on the Surrey RCMP Twitter account were also analysed for attributable source (Figure 65). As with the findings related to the Surrey RCMP Facebook page, the majority of content posted to the Twitter account were found to have originated from the host agency. In all, 457 tweets (76.0%) on the social media site were attributed to the Surrey RCMP, with five of those being specifically attributed to individual members or specialty units of the police force. The remaining tweets on the site were attributed to other municipal or RCMP police agencies (7.7%, \( n = 46 \)), the three branches of Canadian government (6.5%, \( n = 39 \)), private corporate or nonprofit agencies (4.3%, \( n = 26 \)), journalists (4.0%, \( n = 24 \)), and civilians (1.5%, \( n = 9 \)).
Also considered was what type of documents or other sources of information were attached to each tweet on the Surrey RCMP Twitter feed (Figure 66). During the period of study, a total of 94 media releases were posted to the Surrey RCMP Twitter site. This was noted to be much higher than the 49 posted to their Facebook page. Also, 45 investigative photographs, which included surveillance stills, mugshots, and photographs of missing persons, were uploaded to the site. Further, 73 community policing-related photographs were included. Memes or staged photographs and other images such as stock photographs or pictures of uniforms and patches, totalled 123. A total of nine community policing-related videos were uploaded, but only one investigative video was included on the site. As for websites, 78 links led to outside agency websites, and 27 directed to RCMP websites. Finally, 21 news stories produced by journalists were published to the site.

Figure 65: Surrey RCMP – Twitter content origins

Figure 66: Surrey RCMP – Documents and information attached to tweets on Twitter
VANCOUVER POLICE DEPARTMENT TWITTER

The official Vancouver Police Department Twitter account was also examined for the study. The account header indicated that the site was monitored and moderated and a link directed visitors to the title page of the Vancouver Police Department website. During the period of study (as of November 1, 2016), the organisation was followed by approximately 129,000 accounts but was following only 952. Although the Vancouver Police Department was following a list of individuals, agencies and organisations in reasonably equivalent size to that of the Surrey RCMP, it commanded a Twitter following approximately 11 times larger.

During the four-month study, a total of 669 tweets were published on the Vancouver Police Department Twitter account. This figure was reasonably similar to the 601 tweets on the Surrey RCMP Twitter account during the same period. Also similar to findings related to the Surrey RCMP, it was noted that the Vancouver Police Department utilized its Twitter account more so than its Facebook page, but at a ratio of 3 to 1 as opposed to 4 to 1.

Broken down by week, content posted to the social media page varied, with an average number of tweets per day ranging from 5.0 during Week 14 to 11.6 during Week 1 (Figure 67).

![Figure 67: Vancouver Police Department – Average tweets on Twitter by week](image)

Content on the Vancouver Police Department Twitter site was analysed for topic and theme. As with the analysis of the previously examined police-operated social media pages, each tweet or retweet was sorted into only one topical category but one or more of the thematic categories.

A total 28 topics emerged from the analysis of data on the Vancouver Police Department Twitter page (Figures 68 & 69). During the period of study, the majority of content posted to the social media site by topic fit into community events (23.2% n = 155).
and direct communications with the public (20.3%, \( n = 136 \)). There were also 59 tweets falling into the category of #VPDCaptures (8.8%). Content by topic that could be considered related to traditional police investigations or announcements of crimes totalled 135 tweets (20.2%). The largest groups in this category included tweets about police actions related to general public safety (25 tweets or 3.7%) and missing persons (21 tweets or 3.1%).

Figure 68: Vancouver Police Department – Average topics tweeted on Twitter considered by overarching goal
Analysis of the data from the Vancouver Police Department Facebook page revealed 15 thematic categories (Figure 70). When considered for theme, the tweets were found to fit predominately into community policing (28.6%, $n = 191$) and heroism, symbolism and public
relations (24.8%, \( n = 166 \)). There were 82 tweets in the crime prevention category, accounting for 12.3% of content.

The Vancouver Police Department Twitter account was the only police-operated social media platform on which the theme of terrorism appeared. The police agency tweeted a total of four times (0.6%) about providing security at a peaceful Vancouver-based public vigil held following the Orlando Nightclub Massacre in the United States.

![Figure 70: Vancouver Police Department – Themes appearing in tweets on Twitter by percentage](image)

Tweets on the Vancouver Police Department Twitter page were also analysed for attributable source (Figure 71). As with the findings related to the Vancouver Police Department Facebook page, the majority of content posted to the Twitter account was found to have originated from the host agency. In total, 598 tweets (89.4%) on the social media site were attributed to the Vancouver Police Department. Of those 598 tweets, 65 were attributed specifically to the Vancouver Police Department chief of police, and 107 were attributed to individual members or specialty units of the police force. The remaining non Vancouver Police Department tweets on the site were attributed to private corporate or nonprofit agencies (4.2%, \( n = 28 \)), civilians (2.7%, \( n = 18 \)), other municipal or RCMP police agencies...
(2.1%, \( n = 14 \)), journalists (0.9%, \( n = 6 \)) and one of the three levels of the Canadian government (0.7 %, \( n = 5 \)).

![Figure 71: Vancouver Police Department – Twitter content origins](image)

Also considered were the documents and other sources of information associated to tweets on the Vancouver Police Department Twitter feed (Figure 72). During the period of study, a total of 77 media releases were posted to the Vancouver Police Department Twitter site. This was one release more than published to their Facebook page. Additionally, 35 investigative photographs, which included surveillance stills, mugshots and photographs of missing persons, were uploaded to the site. In contrast, 204 community policing-related photographs were included on the feed. There were also a total of 96 memes or staged photographs and other images including stock photographs of uniforms and patches. In regard to video content, 33 were attributed to community policing-related themes, and five were deemed investigative. As for websites, 27 links led to outside agency websites, and 28 directed to websites maintained by the Vancouver Police Department. Only one journalist-produced news story was published to the site during the period of study.
The study included consideration of the extent to which content produced by the two case study police agencies was reflected in the output of the case study media agencies. During the study, a total of 199 stories appearing in television news broadcasts or published to the Daily Hive Vancouver website were found to have been drawn from content produced by the Surrey RCMP Department or the Vancouver Police Department (Table 1).
Table 1: Crime, justice and policing news stories originating from case study police agencies

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Positive</th>
<th>Negative</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Surrey RCMP</strong></td>
<td>3 (37.5%)</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>5 (62.5%)</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Vancouver Police</strong></td>
<td>13 (39.4%)</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>20 (60.6%)</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Positive</th>
<th>Negative</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Surrey RCMP</strong></td>
<td>4 (26.7%)</td>
<td>1 (6.7%)</td>
<td>10 (66.7%)</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Vancouver Police</strong></td>
<td>16 (43.2%)</td>
<td>1 (2.7%)</td>
<td>20 (54.1%)</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Positive</th>
<th>Negative</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Surrey RCMP</strong></td>
<td>10 (45.5%)</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>12 (54.5%)</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Vancouver Police</strong></td>
<td>31 (47.0%)</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>35 (53.0%)</td>
<td>66</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Positive</th>
<th>Negative</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Surrey RCMP</strong></td>
<td>2 (50.0%)</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>2 (50.0%)</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Vancouver Police</strong></td>
<td>7 (50.0%)</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>7 (50.0%)</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
All four media agencies studied produced more content originating from the Vancouver Police Department than from the Surrey RCMP. Also, the three privately owned media sources offered coverage of the Vancouver Police Department that was slightly more positive than that offered of the Surrey RCMP (which was still generally neutral).

The *Daily Hive Vancouver* produced a total of 41 stories drawn from case study police content (Figure 73). Eight of those stories (19.5%) originated from the Surrey RCMP and 33 stories (80.5%) originated from the Vancouver Police Department. Stories originating from the Surrey RCMP were found to be positive at a rate of 37.5% (n = 3) and neutral at a rate of 62.5% (n = 5). Similarly, stories originating from the Vancouver Police Department were found to be positive at a rate of 39.4% (n = 13) and neutral at a rate of 60.6% (n = 20).

![Figure 73: Daily Hive Vancouver – Overall neutrality of crime, justice and policing news stories originating from case study police agencies](image)

For content on the Global BC 5:00 p.m. newscast, 15 stories (28.8%) out of a total 52 originating from the case study police agencies were produced by the Surrey RCMP, while 37 (71.2%) were generated by the Vancouver Police Department (Figure 74). Stories originating from the Surrey RCMP were found to be positive at a rate of 26.7% (n = 4), negative at a rate of 6.7% (n = 1), and neutral at a rate of 66.7% (n = 10). Stories originating from the Vancouver Police Department were found to be positive at a rate of 43.2% (n = 16), negative at a rate of 2.7% (n = 1), and neutral at a rate of 54.1% (n = 20).
CTV Vancouver broadcasted a total of 88 stories originating from the case study police agencies, with 22 (25.0%) originating from the Surrey RCMP and the remaining 66 (75.0%) originating from the Vancouver Police Department (Figure 75). Stories originating from the Surrey RCMP were found to be positive at a rate of 45.5% ($n = 10$) and neutral at a rate of 54.5% ($n = 12$). Stories originating from the Vancouver Police Department were found to be positive at a rate of 47.0% ($n = 31$) and neutral at a rate of 53.0% ($n = 35$).
Finally, of 18 stories from the case study police agencies broadcasted by CBC Vancouver, four stories (22.2%) were generated from the Surrey RCMP and 14 (77.8%) were generated from the Vancouver Police Department (Figure 76). Stories originating from the Surrey RCMP were split evenly between positive and neutral coverage (50.0%, $n = 2$ in each category). Stories originating from the Vancouver Police Department were also found to be split evenly between positive and neutral coverage (50.0%), with seven stories in each category.

![Figure 76: CBC Vancouver – Overall neutrality of crime, justice and policing news stories originating from case study police agencies](image)

In regards to content related to the two police agency case studies, all four news agencies were found to focus on investigative content rather than community policing initiatives (Table 2).
Of the stories produced by the *Daily Hive Vancouver*, all eight stories (100%) originating from the Surrey RCMP were deemed investigative, whereas 25 out of 33 (75.8%) from the Vancouver Police Department were investigative, with the remaining eight out of 33 (24.2%) being community policing oriented.  

For content on the Global BC 5:00 p.m. newscast, 13 of 15 stories (86.7%) from the Surrey RCMP were investigative, with the remaining two (13.3%) being community policing oriented. For the Vancouver Police Department, 28 of 37 stories (75.7%) were investigative, with the remaining nine (24.3%) being related to community policing.  

CTV Vancouver broadcasted 18 of 22 stories (81.8%) from the Surrey RCMP that were investigative, with the remaining four (18.2%) being related to community policing. In regard to stories from the Vancouver Police Department, 45 of 66 (68.2%) were found to be related to investigations, while the remaining 21 (31.8%) were found to address community policing initiatives.  

Finally, in regard to the CBC Vancouver broadcasts, all four (100%) of the Surrey RCMP–originated stories involved investigations. For the Vancouver Police Department, ten of 14 stories (71.4%) were investigative, with the remaining four (28.6%) being related to community policing.  

The study found that of the majority of stories output by the media agencies originating from the case study police agencies came from formal news releases. However, a small number of stories were found to have been generated by police-originated social media activity alone such as a tweet on Twitter or a post on Facebook (Table 3).
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Surrey RCMP</th>
<th>Vancouver Police Department</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>DAILY HIVE</strong></td>
<td>6 News Release Generated</td>
<td>31 News Release Generated</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>VANCOUVER</strong></td>
<td>2 Social Media Generated</td>
<td>2 Social Media Generated</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Total: 8</strong></td>
<td><strong>Total: 33</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>GLOBAL BC</strong></td>
<td>10 News Release Generated</td>
<td>36 News Release Generated</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>5 Social Media Generated</td>
<td>1 Social Media Generated</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Total: 15</strong></td>
<td><strong>Total: 37</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>CTV VANCOUVER</strong></td>
<td>16 News Release Generated</td>
<td>60 News Release Generated</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>6 Social Media Generated</td>
<td>6 Social Media Generated</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Total: 22</strong></td>
<td><strong>Total: 66</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>CBC VANCOUVER</strong></td>
<td>3 News Release Generated</td>
<td>13 News Release Generated</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1 Social Media Generated</td>
<td>1 Social Media Generated</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Total: 4</strong></td>
<td><strong>Total: 14</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL</strong></td>
<td><strong>49 Stories</strong></td>
<td><strong>150 Stories</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Table 3: Crime, justice and policing news content originating from traditional and social media content produced by case study police agencies*

Of the total 199 stories that originated from content produced by the two case study police agencies, 24 (12.1%) were found to have been generated from social media activity alone.

The study also found that, in regard to the two case study police agencies, the value of traditional content outstripped that of social media content when considering how much of such content generated coverage in the media (Figure 77).
Figure 77: Output source material and return media coverage of case study police agencies

The Surrey RCMP, which tweeted 601 times on Twitter, posted to Facebook 166 times, and produced a maximum of 94 media releases during the period of study, generated 49 news stories, 35 of which were produced through traditional media releases and 14 of which were attributed to social media alone. This translated into a publication or broadcasting rate of 37.2% for traditional news releases but only 1.8% for social media when accounting for use of both Facebook and Twitter.

The Vancouver Police Department, which tweeted 669 times on Twitter, posted to Facebook 258 times, and produced a maximum of 77 news releases, generated 150 news stories, 140 of which were attributed to traditional news releases and ten of which were produced through social media alone. This translated into a publication or broadcasting rate of 181.8% for traditional news releases but only 1.1% for social media when accounting for use of both Facebook and Twitter.
CHAPTER 5 — DISCUSSION

OVERALL COVERAGE OF CRIME, JUSTICE AND POLICING STORIES

When considering the overall content broadcasted or published by mainstream media included in the study, it was found that crime, justice and policing news stories made up a minority of overall content. Of the content published by *Daily Hive Vancouver*, only 6.4% (n = 155) addressed crime, justice and policing issues. Meanwhile, in regard to the percentage of stories addressing crime, justice and policing issues on the television broadcasts studied, Global BC had 32.2% coverage (n = 363), CTV Vancouver had 36.1% coverage (n = 961), and CBC Vancouver had 22.5% coverage (n = 213). Additionally, all three television broadcasters were found to have produced an even smaller percentage of content when stories were considered by length of time.

The finding that crime, justice and policing content made up a reasonably small (or at least not overly large) percentage of overall content produced by the studied media agencies was compelling as it offered somewhat of a counternarrative to literature on policing and the mass media. Several theorists have explored the idea that, due to various political and economic pressures, the mass media are overly reliant on crime, justice and policing news and are inclined to emphasise a policing narrative in such content (Brown, 2013; Jiggins, 2007; Lawrence, 2000; McGovern, 2008; McGovern & Lee, 2010; Porter, 1995). However, the results of the study, arguably, indicate less of a reliance overall on police-related content then expected having considered the literature. Still, it should be noted that the study considered crime, justice and policing content only in relation to the overall coverage provided by news agencies. It is possible that a consideration of overall news content broken down by category (which was well beyond the scope of this study) might provide evidence suggestive that, categorically, policing-related content is overrepresented in comparison to other specific individual types of news content. Of course, such a study would need to consider the argument for legitimate weighting of content. For example, should coverage of weather reasonably be expected to receive the same amount of coverage on a daily basis as policing or politics? This area of inquiry may be explored in a future study.

It is noteworthy that the publicly funded television news agency (CBC Vancouver) produced a smaller amount of crime, justice and policing content by story count than the two privately funded television news agencies (Global BC and CTV Vancouver). That said, although CBC Vancouver produced fewer stories in this category per broadcast, the ones it did produce were found to be generally longer in length and more in-depth than those of Global BC and CTV Vancouver. There was consistency between CBC Vancouver’s crime, justice and policing content in that coverage by story count (22.5%, n = 213) was comparable with that by amount of broadcast time (21.2%, n = 688.9 minutes). Meanwhile, the two privately funded television news agencies tended to produce a higher percentage of stories that were shorter in overall length. So, where Global BC produced 32.2% (n = 363) content by story count, it produced only 22.0% (n = 394.4 minutes) content by time. Similarly, where CTV Vancouver produced 36.1% (n = 961) content by story count, it produced only 27.4% (n = 942.1 minutes) by time. Considering the literature examining the political and economic pressures applied to both private and public news organisations (Jiggins, 2007; McGovern, 2011; Nichols-Pethick, 2012, Toogood, 1972), the findings in this area support an argument that traditional, privately funded news agencies are more inclined to rely on a
policing-related narrative, perhaps for economic or political reasons, than traditional, publicly funded news agencies and, that such stories are framed for entertainment purposes as opposed to critical thought and analysis. This finding should not allow one to ignore the argument that although publicly funded media agencies may be less reliant on public approval ratings, they may be more inclined to produce content in line with a government narrative (Toogood, 1972).

Daily Hive Vancouver produced the smallest percentage of crime, justice and policing stories of all the news agencies studied. This finding can be applied to the literature on the development of a modern pluralistic media industry and various pressures impacting modern journalism.

As explained in the literature review, the rise of technology in the journalism field has political, social and economic ramifications. It has been suggested that modern advances such as internet-based technologies enhance the power of a traditionally economically and politically constrained mass media by allowing a counternarrative to that offered by police to enter media dialogue on matters related to crime, justice and policing (Brown, 2013; Fuchs, 2014; Goldsmith, 2010; Jewkes, 2004; Lawrence, 2000; Leishman & Mason, 2003; Lovell, 2003; Toch, 2012). This may be exemplified in isolated polarising cases, but the study findings with regard to overall news content suggest an alternate argument: Modern technologies minimise (rather than refute) a police narrative in the news by allowing for alternate narratives to be brought to the forefront. This would be in line with the work of a number of theorists who have linked pluralism to the rise of modern technologies (see Brown, 2013; Jewkes, 2004; Shepherdson, 2014). Related to content published to the Daily Hive Vancouver website, policing stories made up a small minority of varied and diverse published content overall, and thusly could not be argued to be a mechanism of political or economic reliance for the media organisation.

If the study’s findings related to overall crime, justice and policing coverage by the mainstream media are considered representative, they could suggest that news agencies (at least in British Columbia) are not, in general terms, overly reliant on policing content. Further, if the study’s findings in this area are considered representative, they could also suggest that publicly funded as well as new internet-based media organisations are more independent of police narrative than their privately funded traditional counterparts.

Daily Hive Vancouver categorised its content into 12 general topics including (a) food, (b) things to do, (c) news, (d) life, (e) sports, (f) business, (g) real estate, (h) arts, (i) patios, (j) contests, (k) photos, and (l) videos. Crime, justice and policing stories were found to total 155 out of 2,404 stories published to the website during the study. This accounted for 6.4% of all content. A chi-square analysis was applied to this finding with the expectation that content produced by the online news agency would be equally divided between the 12 categories. The study’s finding in this area was found to be significant at $p \leq 0.05$ ($p < 0.001$).

Relative to Global BC, the study found broadcasts included varying content from seven general topics, which included politics, entertainment, economics, weather, traffic, and health, as well as crime, justice and policing. Crime, justice and policing stories accounted for 363 of a total 1,128 stories broadcasted during the study which was 32.2% of all content. A chi-square analysis was applied to this finding with the expectation that content produced
by the television news agency would be equally divided between the seven categories of content. The study’s finding in this area was found to be significant at \( p \leq 0.05 \) \((p < 0.001)\).

Considering CTV Vancouver, the study found broadcasts included varying content that could be categorised into the same seven general topics identified in the Global BC broadcasts. On CTV Vancouver, crime, justice and policing stories accounted for 961 stories out of a total 2,663 stories broadcasted during the study which equated to 36.1% of all content. Chi-square analysis was applied to this finding with the expectation that content produced by the television news agency would be equally divided between the seven categories of content. The study’s finding in this area was found to be significant at \( p \leq 0.05 \) \((p < 0.001)\).

Examining CBC Vancouver, the study found broadcasts included varying content from the same seven general topics identified in the Global BC and CTV Vancouver broadcasts. There were 213 crime, justice and policing stories out of a total 947 stories broadcasted by CBC Vancouver during the study. This accounted for 22.5% of all content. Chi-square analysis was applied to this finding with the expectation that content produced by the television news agency would be equally divided between the seven categories of content. The study’s finding in this area was found to be significant at \( p \leq 0.05 \) \((p < 0.001)\).

The study presented literature arguing that the mass media rely on policing stories for economic and political reasons. However, the validity of these arguments are diminished by the study findings related to overall news coverage. The study found that Daily Hive Vancouver produced crime, justice and policing content below an expected categorical average. Meanwhile, the remaining traditional news agencies, while covering such stories above average categorically, produced arguably low percentages when considering overall content. On the broad scope, the evidence suggests that, overall, crime, justice and policing stories are not overly disproportionate to the total content produced by television news organisations. Furthermore, the evidence suggests that both publicly funded television and privately funded online news agencies provide less coverage of policing-related issues than their privately funded television-based counterparts.

### COVERAGE BY TOPIC

Treatment of crime, justice and policing stories varied between media agencies when coverage was considered by topic. Content published to the Daily Hive Vancouver website was reasonably equally dispersed among 24 topics identified in the data from the source. The percentage of coverage by topic on the website ranged from 0.6% to 8.4%, with no substantial spike of coverage in any one category. The top category was sexual assaults, with 8.4% \((n = 13)\) coverage. However, this category was only slightly higher than the calculated mean of \( n = 6.5 \) and received only 1.3% more coverage than drug possession and trafficking, missing persons, and police action related to public safety, all of which received 7.1% \((n = 11)\) coverage. In contrast, stories broadcasted by the two private television news agencies were found to have included more emphasis or weight placed on homicide or terrorism. Global BC coverage by story count included 12.1% \((n = 44)\) homicide stories and 8.3% \((n = 30)\) terrorism issues, with an overall calculated mean of \( n = 11.7 \). Similarly, CTV Vancouver coverage included 11.4% \((n = 110)\) of stories reporting on homicides and 7.6% \((n = 73)\) addressing terrorism incidents or issues, with an overall mean of \( n = 31 \), (although it should be noted that stories about nonfatal collisions were also weighted at 7.6%, \( n = 73 \)). CBC
Vancouver coverage also included an emphasis on reporting, but in one category. Although the mean was \( n = 7.3 \), stories related to the fentanyl drug crisis accounted for 18.8\% \( (n = 40) \) of coverage.

The tendency of the two privately funded traditional media agencies to emphasise homicide and terrorism stories is in line with literature examining economic pressures on media agencies. Private media organisations exist within a for-profit industry focused on entertainment and driven by advertising revenue, and this can influence what and how news is covered (Fuchs, 2014; Gies, 2008; Jiggins, 2007; McCormick, 1995; Surette, 2011). Some theorists have suggested that an emphasis on exciting or intriguing crime and justice stories may be a response to dwindling budgets and revenue loss (Gies, 2008; Jiggins, 2007; Lovell, 2003; McGovern, 2011; Nichols-Pethick, 2012). The study findings in this area support this, showing disproportionate coverage of such stories by the private traditional media agencies, inconsistent with the coverage offered by the publicly funded television news agency.

CBC Vancouver also offered disproportionate coverage of crime, justice and policing issues, but in a different category than that of Global BC and CTV Vancouver. During the study, a disparate number of stories addressing the fentanyl drug crisis were broadcasted by the publicly funded media organisation. As addressed in literature on the issue, publicly funded news agencies, although less reliant on public approval ratings, still face political and economic pressures (Finn et al., 2003; Toogood, 1972). Some have suggested that reliance on government funding may undercut media independence, as journalists are more inclined to produce content in line with a government narrative (Toogood, 1972).

In April 2016, a public health emergency was declared in British Columbia due to a sudden increase in drug overdoses related to fentanyl use (Judd, 2016). Between January and June 2016, the province experienced a 74.0\% increase \( (n = 371) \) in fentanyl deaths, and that summer (during the study), the premier of British Columbia announced new measures to address the issue including a joint task force involving peace officers and health officials (Judd, 2016). During the study, fentanyl became a political issue as the provincial government became heavily involved in prevention and response. Coverage of the issue on CBC Vancouver was reflective of this and included extensive reporting of government policies and initiatives, in-depth studies of police response to drug trafficking, lengthy interviews with health officials, and humanising profiles of people with drug dependencies. At 18.8\% \( (n = 40) \), CBC Vancouver’s coverage of the fentanyl drug crisis was much higher than that of the other media organisations studied. Indeed, *Daily Hive Vancouver* produced 6.5\% \( (n = 10) \) coverage on this topic and Global BC and CTV Vancouver produced 5.8\% \( (n = 21) \) and 2.7\% \( (n = 26) \) respectively. This finding supports the suggestion that where a privately funded news agency might seek to produce a product palatable to a public seeking excitement and entertainment (Jiggins, 2007; McGovern, 2011; Nichols-Pethick, 2012), a publicly funded agency might be more inclined to produce content in line with a government narrative (Toogood, 1972).

*Daily Hive Vancouver*’s coverage differed from that of the other media organisations studied in that the content offered was more broadly and equitably dispersed among topics. This supports what some theorists have suggested: The rise of Web 2.0 media represents a move away from hegemony towards pluralism wherein multiple voices contribute to the overall narrative of the media (Brown, 2013; Jewkes, 2004; Shepherdson, 2014). Still, some
have argued that although new technologies allow for a more pluralistic journalistic process, power still rests with the media, which remain the primary context setters of the news (Hermida, 2016; Montpetit, 2016; Obama, as cited in Washington Post Staff, 2016; Shepherdson, 2014). If this is indeed the case, considering the findings related to content published by the *Daily Hive Vancouver*, it may be arguable that new media agencies are less inclined to produce content in response to the economic or political pressures faced by their traditional counterparts, and instead are choosing to produce a broad base of content to appeal to a broad or varied consumer base.

If the study’s findings related to the mainstream media’s coverage of crime, justice and policing stories are considered representative, they could support an argument that privately funded traditional television news organisations are more inclined to produce content weighted towards high-profile, intriguing crime and justice stories involving violence, whereas publicly funded traditional news agencies lean towards coverage of stories in keeping with a government narrative. Similarly, they might suggest that Web 2.0–based media agencies are broader and more pluralistic in their content delivery and thus, arguably, less impacted by political and economic pressures when compared to traditional media agencies.

Examining *Daily Hive Vancouver*, the study found content to be varied and not overly weighted by topic. There were 155 crime, justice and policing stories out of the total 2,404 published to the website during the study, and the highest rated topic (sexual assaults) accounted for 8.4% (*n* = 13) of coverage. The mean for the 24 categories identified from this source was calculated to be *n* = 6.5, and this figure, rounded up to the nearest whole number, was applied as an expected amount in the chi-square test. Chi-square analysis was applied to this finding, and it was deemed significant at *p* ≤ 0.05 (*p* = 0.02). The chi-square analysis was also applied using the calculated mean of *n* = 5 when accounting for all 31 topical categories identified in the study (some of which were not observed in the data from the *Daily Hive Vancouver*). This finding was also deemed significant at *p* ≤ 0.05 (*p* < 0.001).

Considering Global BC, the study found content was weighted towards homicide (12.1%, *n* = 44) and terrorism (8.3%, *n* = 30). The mean for all 31 categories identified in the study which were attributed to this source was calculated to be *n* = 11.7, and this figure, rounded up to the nearest whole number, was applied as an expected amount in the chi-square test. Chi-square analysis was applied to these findings, and they were deemed significant at *p* ≤ 0.05 (*p* < 0.001).

Like findings related to Global BC content, in considering CTV Vancouver, the study found content was weighted towards homicide (11.4%, *n* = 110) and terrorism (7.6%, *n* = 73). The mean for all 31 categories identified in the study which were attributed to this source was calculated to be *n* = 31, and this figure was applied as an expected amount in the chi-square test. A chi-square analysis was applied to these findings, and they were deemed significant at *p* ≤ 0.05 (*p* < 0.001).

The study found that content broadcasted by CBC Vancouver placed an emphasis on the fentanyl drug crisis (18.8%, *n* = 40). The mean for the 29 categories identified from this source was calculated to be *n* = 7.3 and the mean when accounting for all 31 topical categories identified in the study was *n* = 6.9. These figures both rounded to *n* = 7 and this
was applied as an expected amount in the chi-square test. The findings were deemed significant at $p \leq 0.05$ ($p < 0.001$).

The literature review presented theory suggesting that mainstream media are reliant on high-profile, intriguing crime, justice and policing stories as content drivers. This was supported by the study findings showing evidence of such concerning the two privately funded traditional news agencies. Yet the study also revealed that the online news agency was less likely to rely on such stories, instead offering crime, justice and policing stories that were equitably distributed by topic.

**COVERAGE BY THEME**

When stories included in the study were examined by theme, it was found that those from privately funded news organisations were weighted towards new occurrences of crimes resulting in new or ongoing police investigations. Of content published to the *Daily Hive Vancouver* website, 45.2% ($n = 70$) covered such stories but only 9.0% ($n = 14$) covered investigations that had been successfully completed and none covered unsuccessful investigations. Further, coverage of ongoing investigations vastly outstripped that of community policing or crime prevention content, totalling 5.2% ($n = 8$) and 2.6% ($n = 4$) of coverage respectively. In similar fashion, Global BC featured 38.3% ($n = 139$) coverage of ongoing police investigations but only 14.0% ($n = 51$) for successfully completed investigations and 1.4% ($n = 5$) for failed investigations. On Global BC, community policing stories accounted for 4.1% ($n = 15$) of coverage, and crime prevention was included in just 8.5% ($n = 31$) of stories. The findings from CTV Vancouver were similar. Stories about ongoing investigations (35.6%, $n = 342$) outweighed those deemed successfully concluded (21.6%, $n = 208$) and those considered failed (1.4%, $n = 13$). This news agency also broadcasted a small number of community policing-related stories (4.7%, $n = 45$), and few crime prevention components (7.1%, $n = 68$) were noted in the content.

Content from CBC Vancouver was divergent from that of the two privately funded television broadcasters and the online news website in that the theme of public safety related to drugs received the most coverage during the period of study, totalling 22.1% ($n = 47$) of coverage. News about ongoing police investigations totalled 17.8% ($n = 38$) of coverage, successful investigations were addressed in 15.0% ($n = 32$) of coverage, and failed investigations were examined in 0.9% ($n = 2$) of coverage. At the same time, community policing topics totalled 7.0% ($n = 15$) of coverage, while crime prevention considerations amounted to 6.1% ($n = 13$) of coverage.

The privately funded news organisations’ emphasis on the ongoing investigation theme has several implications when considered alongside the other thematic categories. An emphasis on new or active police investigations over and above that of community policing initiatives and educational pieces is consistent with the literature suggesting that crime, justice and policing stories are not intended to educate or inform the public, but rather to entertain (Gies, 2008; Jiggins, 2007; Lovell, 2003; McGovern, 2011; Nichols-Pethick, 2012).

The intention to entertain is also arguably evident in an emphasis on new or recently opened investigations over and above those that are concluded (successfully or otherwise). The latter would likely be old stories, months or years in the making and requiring a reasonable amount of time to cover adequately. The reality of policing includes mundane
processes and lengthy investigations (Lovell, 2003) but stories reflective of this were largely absent from the offerings of the privately funded news organisations. The lack of emphasis on concluded investigations was notable and could be viewed as evidence of an entertainment-driven media agency’s disinterest in or inability to follow cases through to conclusion in the long term. In contrast, CBC Vancouver’s coverage, which differed from that of the privately funded news agencies in that it focused on drug-related public safety (22.1%, \( n = 47 \)) over ongoing investigations (17.8%, \( n = 38 \)), might be linked to the news organisation’s status as a publicly funded media body. Some have argued that as such agencies are less reliant on chasing funding they can focus less on entertainment and more on providing in-depth coverage of larger issues (Finn et al., 2003; Toogood, 1972).

It might be argued that the emphasis placed on recently opened investigations and new crimes is due not to a desire to entertain, but rather as a means to seek assistance from the public as an investigative measure. Indeed, in some cases, stories produced by each agency included an overt public appeal for assistance. This ranged from asking the public to be on the lookout for a missing vulnerable person or warning the public to call authorities if they saw a high-risk offender breaching court conditions. However, in regard to traditional television media, such public appeals were rare, applying to only 7.4% (\( n = 27 \)) of coverage on Global BC, 6.9% (\( n = 66 \)) on CTV Vancouver, and 5.2% (\( n = 11 \)) on CBC Vancouver. Although the subtext of a recently released crime story could suggest that police might accept information from the public to assist in their investigations, overt statements for assistance were rarely included in media output observed during the study. In such cases, it could not be argued that the media’s goal was to solve crime, but only to talk about it. That said, *Daily Hive Vancouver* was noted to have offered a higher percentage of public appeals than the other news agencies at 17.4% (\( n = 27 \)). The reason for this was not fully determined from the data collected. Still, based on the work of McGovern and Lee (2010), it could be possible that the online, primarily print-based medium allows for the easy cut-and-paste inclusion of quotes pulled from police-produced media releases. Such quotes could reasonably be expected to include a call to action or public appeal for assistance from the police producing the originating release.

Some theorists have argued that although police officers may view the mass media as having malevolent intentions, and despite swift and extensive coverage of cases of police misconduct, most media organisations tend to be generally supportive of police and policing institutions (Leishman & Mason, 2003; Lovell, 2003; McCormick, 1995). The study findings appear to support such an argument. All four media agencies studied covered successful investigations more so than those that were deemed to have failed. Of stories produced by *Daily Hive Vancouver*, 9.0% (\( n = 14 \)) related to successful investigations but none to failed investigations. Similarly, of stories produced by Global BC, 14.0% (\( n = 51 \)) addressed successful investigations but just 1.4% (\( n = 5 \)) addressed failed investigations. CTV Vancouver covered successful investigations in 21.6% (\( n = 208 \)) of stories but failed ones in only in 1.4% (\( n = 13 \)) of stories. Finally, CBC Vancouver covered successful investigations in 15.0% (\( n = 32 \)) of stories but failed ones in just 0.9% (\( n = 2 \)) of stories. Considering the literature, these findings could be indicative of a media emphasis on successful policing stories borne of political or economic constraint. The reality is that most information about police investigations is held in the control of police agencies and is not easily accessible to the public or the media (Leishman & Mason, 2003; Lovell, 2003). Although a failed
investigation may be considered newsworthy by a journalist due to its potential intrigue, it is unlikely that a police agency would freely make such information readily available for publication. In Canada, although journalists may be able to obtain information on police investigations through freedom of information requests, such processes can be complicated by financial and technical constraints and require some knowledge and resources to complete (Vallance-Jones & Kitagawa, 2016). In a modern era in which small newsrooms staffed with inexperienced journalists are the norm, such investigative work may be beyond the scope of possibility (Jiggins, 2007; McGovern, 2011; McGovern & Lee, 2010).

In comparison to the findings related to successful and failed investigations, the study found that privately funded news agencies offered reasonably balanced coverage of policing organisational successes and failings. Of stories produced by *Daily Hive Vancouver*, 1.3% \( (n = 2) \) were about larger organisational successes versus 3.9% \( (n = 6) \) about organisational failings, for a difference of 2.6%. Of stories produced by Global BC, 6.3% \( (n = 23) \) dealt with organisational successes compared with 4.4% \( (n = 16) \) that dealt with organisational failings, for a difference of 1.9%. CTV Vancouver covered organisational successes in 6.0% \( (n = 58) \) of cases compared with 6.1% \( (n = 59) \) for organisational failings, for a difference of 0.1%. CBC Vancouver differed from its privately funded counterparts. Its coverage of organisational failures (9.4%, \( n = 20 \)), outweighed its coverage of organisational successes (2.8%, \( n = 6 \)) by 6.6%. This finding could arguably support the literature that suggests publicly funded media agencies may be better able to perform a watchdog role, being more inclined to tackle larger political issues with less concern for the potential impact on funding (Finn et al., 2003; Toogood, 1972).

If the study’s findings related to the mainstream media’s thematic coverage of crime, justice and policing stories are considered representative, they could support an argument that privately funded traditional television and new media news organisations are more inclined to produce content weighted towards new crime and resultant investigations occurring in the present, whereas publicly funded traditional news agencies lean towards more in-depth coverage of criminal justice stories addressing larger social or political issues. Further, the study’s findings, if considered representative, could support the argument that media agencies tend to emphasise investigative success over failure, which could demonstrate the enhanced power of police in influencing news narrative through control of source information.

Examining *Daily Hive Vancouver*, a total of 14 themes related to crime, justice and policing stories were identified. Each of the 155 crime, justice and policing stories published by the online news agency was assigned to one or more thematic category as applicable. In all, there were 245 incidences of theme counted in the data, which were applied as the sample for the significance tests. The mean of the sample was calculated to be \( n = 17.5 \) when accounting for the 14 themes identified in the source and \( n = 16.3 \) when including the 15\(^{th}\) thematic category identified in the study but not this source. These figures, rounded to the nearest whole number, were applied as the expected amounts for the chi-square tests applied to data from this source.

Stories addressing the theme of newly emerged police investigations accounted for 45.2% \( (n = 70) \) of coverage on the *Daily Hive Vancouver* website, which appeared high when compared with cases of successful investigations (9.0%, \( n = 14 \)) and failed investigations (0%, \( n = 0 \)). These statistics were applied to chi-square analysis, with the assumed means \( n = \).
17.5 and \( n = 16.3 \) rounded to their nearest respective whole numbers, and found to be significant at \( p \leq 0.05 \) \( (p < 0.001) \). The statistics related to successful, failed and ongoing investigations were retested using the chi-square goodness of fit test, excluding all other thematic data and assuming that the total 84 occurrences should be equally dispersed between the three categories, and the result was again found to be significant at \( p \leq 0.05 \) \( (p < 0.001) \).

Community policing stories \((5.2\%, n = 8)\) and crime prevention content \((2.6\%, n = 4)\) posted to the *Daily Hive Vancouver* website were found to be below the calculated mean for themes appearing in the data from this source. These statistics were applied to the chi-square analysis with the assumption that they should equal the calculated mean of \( n = 17.5 \) or \( n = 16.3 \) rounded to the nearest whole number. The findings run with both mean values were found to be significant at \( p \leq 0.05 \) \( (p < 0.001) \).

Public appeals, calls to action, and warnings occurred in 17.4\% \( (n = 27) \) of the stories published to the *Daily Hive Vancouver* website. This was noted to be above the calculated mean for themes appearing in the data from this source. Chi-square calculations for goodness of fit assuming the value should equal the calculated mean of \( n = 17.5 \) or \( n = 16.3 \) rounded to the nearest whole number found significance at \( p \leq 0.05 \) \( (p = 0.03; p = 0.004) \).

Of stories produced by *Daily Hive Vancouver*, 1.3\% \( (n = 2) \) were about larger organisational successes versus 3.9\% \( (n = 6) \) about organisational failings. A chi-square analysis was applied to this finding with the expectation that each observed theme should be equal to the mean of \( n = 17.5 \) or \( n = 16.3 \) rounded to the nearest whole number. The findings run with both mean values were found to be significant at \( p \leq 0.05 \) \( (p < 0.001) \).

Considering the data from Global BC, all 15 themes related to crime, justice and policing stories were identified. Each of the 363 crime, justice and policing stories broadcasted by the news agency was assigned to one or more thematic category as applicable. In all, there were 554 incidences of theme counted in the data which were applied as the sample for the significance tests. The mean of the sample was calculated to be \( n = 36.9 \). This figure, rounded up to the nearest whole number, was used as the expected amount for the chi-square tests applied to data from this source.

On Global BC, stories addressing the theme of newly emerged police investigations accounted for 38.3\% \( (n = 139) \) of coverage. Coverage of successfully completed investigations totalled 14.0\% \( (n = 51) \) and stories about failed investigations totalled only 1.4\% \( (n = 5) \). These statistics were applied to the chi-square analysis with the assumed mean \( n = 36.9 \) rounded to the nearest whole number. This finding was deemed to be significant at \( p \leq 0.05 \) \( (p < 0.001) \). The statistics related to successful, failed and ongoing investigations were retested using the chi-square goodness of fit test, excluding all other thematic data and assuming that the total 195 occurrences should be equally dispersed between the three categories. The findings were again found to be significant at \( p \leq 0.05 \) \( (p < 0.001) \).

Community policing stories \((4.1\%, n = 15)\) and crime prevention content \((8.5\%, n = 31)\) broadcasted by Global BC were found to occur at a much lower rate than stories featuring an investigative theme. These statistics were applied to the chi-square analysis with the assumption that they should equal the calculated mean of \( n = 36.9 \) rounded to the nearest whole number. This finding was found to be significant at \( p \leq 0.05 \) \( (p < 0.001) \).
Public appeals occurred in 7.4% \((n = 27)\) of the stories produced by Global BC. This was noted to be below the calculated mean for themes appearing in the data from this source. However, chi-square calculations for goodness of fit assuming the value should equal the calculated mean of \(n = 36.9\) rounded to the nearest whole number found that this result was not significant at \(p \leq 0.05\) \((p = 0.09)\).

Of stories produced by Global BC, 6.3% \((n = 23)\) were about larger organisational successes versus 4.4% \((n = 16)\) about organisational failings. A chi-square analysis was applied to this finding with the expectation that each observed theme should be equal to the mean of \(n = 36.9\) rounded up to the nearest whole number. This finding was found to be significant at \(p \leq 0.05\) \((p < 0.001)\).

Regarding CTV Vancouver, 15 themes related to crime, justice and policing stories were identified. Each of the 961 crime, justice and policing stories broadcasted by the news agency was assigned to one or more thematic category as applicable. In all, there were 1,435 incidences of theme counted in the data that were applied as the sample for the significance tests. The mean of the sample was calculated to be \(n = 95.7\). This figure, rounded up to the nearest whole number, was used as the expected amount for the chi-square tests applied to data from this source.

On CTV Vancouver, stories about ongoing investigations \((35.6\%, n = 342)\) outweighed those about investigations deemed successfully concluded \((21.6\%, n = 208)\) and those about investigations considered failed \((1.4\%, n = 13)\). These statistics were applied to the chi-square analysis with the assumed mean of \(n = 95.7\) rounded to the nearest whole number. This finding was deemed to be significant at \(p \leq 0.05\) \((p < 0.001)\). The statistics related to successful, failed and ongoing investigations were retested using the chi-square goodness of fit test, excluding all other thematic data and assuming that the total 563 occurrences should be equally dispersed between the three categories. The findings were also found to be significant at \(p \leq 0.05\) \((p < 0.001)\).

CTV Vancouver broadcasted a small number of community policing-related stories \((4.7\%, n = 45)\) and few stories with crime prevention themes \((7.1\%, n = 68)\). These statistics were applied to the chi-square analysis with the assumption that they should equal the calculated mean of \(n = 95.7\) rounded to the nearest whole number. This finding was found to be significant at \(p \leq 0.05\) \((p < 0.001)\).

Public appeals occurred in 6.9% \((n = 66)\) of the stories produced by CTV Vancouver. This was noted to be below the calculated mean for themes appearing in the data from this source. A chi-square analysis was applied assuming the value should equal the calculated mean average of \(n = 95.7\) rounded to the nearest whole number. This finding was deemed significant at \(p \leq 0.05\) \((p = 0.002)\).

Of stories produced by CTV Vancouver, 6.0% \((n = 58)\) were about larger organisational successes versus 6.1% \((n = 59)\) about organisational failings. A chi-square analysis was applied to this finding with the expectation that each observed theme should be equal to the mean of \(n = 95.7\) rounded up to the nearest whole number. This finding was found to be significant at \(p \leq 0.05\) \((p < 0.001)\).

Examining CBC Vancouver, 15 themes related to crime, justice and policing stories were identified. Each of the 213 crime, justice and policing stories broadcasted by the news
agency was assigned to one or more thematic category as applicable. In all, there were 280 incidences of theme counted in the data, which were applied as the sample for the significance tests. The mean of the sample was calculated to be $n = 18.7$. This figure, rounded up to the nearest whole number, was used as the expected amount for the chi-square tests applied to data from this source.

On CBC Vancouver, stories addressing the theme of newly emerged police investigations accounted for 17.8% ($n = 38$) of coverage. Meanwhile, stories of successfully completed investigations totalled 15.0% ($n = 32$) and stories about failed investigations totalled only 0.9% ($n = 2$). These statistics were applied to the chi-square analysis with the assumed mean of $n = 18.7$ rounded to the nearest whole number. This finding was deemed to be significant at $p \leq 0.05$ ($p < 0.001$). The statistics related to successful, failed and ongoing investigations were retested using the chi-square goodness of fit test, excluding all other thematic data and assuming that the total 72 occurrences should be equally dispersed between the three categories. The findings were again found to be significant at $p \leq 0.05$ ($p < 0.001$).

On CBC Vancouver, community policing stories (7.0%, $n = 15$) and crime prevention content (6.1%, $n = 13$) were found to occur at a rate marginally below the calculated mean. These statistics were applied to the chi-square analysis with the assumption that they should equal the calculated mean of $n = 18.7$ rounded to the nearest whole number. This finding was found to be not significant at $p \leq 0.05$ ($p = 0.21$).

Content from CBC Vancouver included extensive coverage of the theme of public safety related to drugs, totalling 22.1% ($n = 47$) of stories. This statistic was applied to the chi-square analysis with the assumption that it should equal the calculated mean of $n = 18.7$ rounded to the nearest whole number. The finding was deemed significant at $p \leq 0.05$ ($p < 0.001$).

Public appeals occurred in 5.2% ($n = 11$) of the stories produced by CBC Vancouver. This was noted to be below the calculated mean for themes appearing in the data. However, chi-square calculations for goodness of fit assuming the value should equal the calculated mean of $n = 18.7$ rounded to the nearest whole number found that this result was not significant at $p \leq 0.05$ ($p = 0.06$).

Of stories produced by CBC Vancouver, 2.8% ($n = 6$) were about larger organisational successes compared with 9.4% ($n = 20$) about organisational failings. A chi-square analysis was applied to this finding with the expectation that each observed theme should be equal to the mean of $n = 18.7$ rounded to the nearest whole number. This finding was found to be significant at $p \leq 0.05$ ($p = 0.008$). Even when organisational successes and failings were considered in exclusion of other thematic data, the findings in this area were found to be significant at $p \leq 0.05$ ($p < 0.001$).

The study presented theory suggesting that where privately funded news media organisations are more inclined to produce content weighted towards new crime and resultant investigations occurring in the present, publicly funded traditional news agencies tend to lean more towards in-depth coverage of criminal justice stories addressing larger social or political issues. This was supported by the study findings. Although the results related to CBC Vancouver’s coverage of community policing and crime prevention themes specifically were not deemed significant, the tendency of the news agency to emphasise public safety issues
over traditional investigative themes, and policing organisational failures over successes, were confirmed as significant. Further, the tendency of all three privately funded news organisations to emphasise themes related to new crimes and short-term investigations over longer-term stories addressing concluded investigations or community policing and crime prevention themes were deemed statistically significant. Also, for two out of three privately funded news agencies, the findings of low instances of public appeals were found to be statistically significant. This supports theory suggesting such news agencies are more involved in entertainment production than crime solving.

The study hypothesis proposed that police may be dominant in the production of a media narrative on matters related to crime, justice and policing. This was supported somewhat by the study findings which demonstrated that media agencies tend to emphasise investigative success stories over those of failure. However, specific to a publicly funded news agency such as CBC Vancouver, the results suggested less potential reliance when considering larger political issues such as organisational success and failure.

OVERALL NEUTRALITY IN COVERAGE OF STORIES

When examined for overall neutrality, crime, justice and policing news stories were noted to be primarily neutral towards policing matters. Indeed, of such stories published by Daily Hive Vancouver, 69.0% \((n = 107)\) were deemed neutral. Similarly, 63.1% \((n = 229)\) of stories on Global BC were neutral, while 61.6% \((n = 592)\) and 62.9% \((n = 134)\) of stories on CTV Vancouver and CBC Vancouver, respectively, were neutral.

The study noted further parity across all four news agencies in their coverage of positive and negative stories related to policing. Negative news stories accounted for under 10.0% of crime, justice and policing stories, while approximately one third of coverage was deemed positive towards policing. Specifically, 27.7% \((n = 43)\) of stories on Daily Hive Vancouver were positive, but only 3.2% \((n = 5)\) were negative, while 31.7% \((n = 115)\) of stories on Global BC were positive, with only 5.2% \((n = 19)\) negative. Of stories produced by CTV Vancouver, 30.9% \((n = 297)\) were positive and 7.5% \((n = 72)\) were negative, and of stories produced by CBC Vancouver, 28.6% \((n = 61)\) were positive and 8.5% \((n = 18)\) were negative.

The finding of minimal negative coverage of police and policing actions in mainstream media content was in line with literature on policing and the mass media. As theorists have suggested, most media organisations produce content that is broadly supportive of police and policing institutions (Leishman & Mason, 2003; Lovell, 2003; McCormick, 1995). This argument appeared to be supported to some extent in the study findings. Reports of police misconduct or improper behaviour were few when compared to the number of stories highlighting police successes. That said, the fact that all four news agencies studied produced a majority of content that was neutral towards policing was compelling in that it offered a possible counternarrative to some literature on policing and the mass media. Where some have suggested an overall leaning towards support of police (Leishman & Mason, 2003; Lovell, 2003; McCormick, 1995), the study results leave room for the possibility that news media, at least in British Columbia, tend instead towards neutrality. There is also a possibility that the positive, negative and neutral statistics obtained in the study are simply representative of the realities of policing as a profession and practice in Canada. This, which
could be further tested through a consideration of formal records of misconduct compared with media coverage of the same, was beyond the scope of the study at hand.

If the study findings related to overall neutrality of crime, justice and policing stories in mainstream media are considered representative, it could further an argument that media agencies are marginally (as opposed to broadly) supportive of police and their institutions, but generally tend towards neutral coverage of police and policing practice.

Content from *Daily Hive Vancouver* was weighted towards neutrality. Stories deemed neutral made up 69.0% (n = 107) of coverage, while those noted as positive and negative totalled 27.7% (n = 43) and 3.2% (n = 5) respectively. These statistics were applied to the chi-square analysis with the assumption that they should be equally represented among the 155 stories published to the website. The findings were deemed significant at \( p \leq 0.05 (p < 0.001) \).

On Global BC, content was weighted towards neutrality. Stories deemed neutral made up 63.1% (n = 229) of coverage. Stories deemed positive totalled 31.7% (n = 115) and those deemed negative totalled 5.2% (n = 19). These statistics were applied to the chi-square analysis with the assumption that they should be equally represented among the 363 stories broadcasted by the media agency. The findings were deemed significant at \( p \leq 0.05 (p < 0.001) \).

The stories broadcasted by CTV Vancouver were found to be neutral at a rate of 61.6% (n = 592), positive at rate of 30.9% (n = 297), and negative at a rate of 7.5% (n = 72). These statistics were applied to the chi-square analysis with the assumption that they should be equally represented among the 961 stories broadcasted by the media agency. The findings were deemed significant at \( p \leq 0.05 (p < 0.001) \).

The study found that content broadcasted by CBC Vancouver was weighted towards neutrality. Neutral stories made up 62.9% (n = 134) of content. Positive stories accounted for 28.6% (n = 61) of content and negative stories made up 8.5% (n = 18) of content. These statistics were applied to the chi-square analysis with the assumption that they should be equally represented among the 213 stories broadcasted by the media agency. The findings were deemed significant at \( p \leq 0.05 (p < 0.001) \).

The study presented theory and argument suggesting that mass media agencies are broadly supportive of police, due in part to a police narrative that remains dominant in news discourse related to crime, justice and policing. The findings somewhat supported this. However, although positive stories related to police and policing outweighed negative stories, they were not overly representative in the overall data. Rather, news agencies—be they publicly or privately funded, online or traditional—tended towards neutral content on matters relating to crime, justice and policing.

**ORIGINS OF CONTENT IN STORIES**

The three privately funded news agencies produced more content confirmed to have originated from police sources than did the publicly funded one.

Stories were traced back to Canadian police agencies in 26.3% (n = 56) of the content broadcasted by CBC Vancouver. In contrast, 34.4% (n = 125) of content by Global BC fit in this category. Further, of content produced by CTV Vancouver, 27.3% (n = 262) was
confirmed to have originated from Canadian police sources. At first glance this figure appears similar to that of CBC Vancouver; however, this news agency also produced the largest amount of content that was ambiguous in origin or not traceable (25.4%, n = 244), and it is possible some of that content was from Canadian police sources. Of note was that the online news agency included in the study produced the highest percentage of confirmed police-originated content out of all the news agencies. On Daily Hive Vancouver, 52.9% (n = 82) of stories were traced back to Canadian police media releases or websites. This figure was markedly high when compared with those of the other news agencies.

Daily Hive Vancouver also published more government-originated stories than the other news agencies studied. Where 9.7% (n = 15) of the online publication’s stories used confirmed Canadian government sources, only 3.0% (n = 11) and 2.0% (n = 19) of Global BC and CTV Vancouver stories, respectively, did. Even the publicly funded news agency CBC Vancouver produced just 5.6% (n = 12) of content in this category.

Of all the news agencies, CBC Vancouver produced the most crime, justice and policing content that was found to have been developed by journalists. Of the content produced by the broadcaster, 18.8% (n = 40) fit in this category, whereas less than 8.0% of content was initiated by journalists at the privately funded news agencies. Global BC’s content included 7.2% (n = 26) generated by journalists, while at CTV Vancouver, journalists were found to have generated content in 5.0% (n = 48) of cases. Of content produced by Daily Hive Vancouver, 7.7% (n = 12) was originated by journalists.

Of all four news agencies examined, Daily Hive Vancouver was found to have produced the highest percentage of civilian-generated stories, although the percentage (7.1%, n = 11) was quite low considering the content on the website overall. Meanwhile, Global BC and CTV Vancouver produced 4.1% (n = 15) and 1.5% (n = 14) coverage in this area, respectively. CBC Vancouver produced the second highest amount of percentage of civilian-generated content (5.6%, n = 12).

The findings related to CBC Vancouver address some of the concerns raised by theorists about the journalistic freedom of publicly funded news agencies. The potential political and economic pressures faced by such news agencies have been addressed in the literature (Finn et al., 2003; Toogood, 1972), and some have suggested reliance on government funding may actually weaken the overwatch role of journalists (Toogood, 1972). But, the findings of the study suggest a counterargument. With reference to crime, justice and policing stories, when compared with privately funded news agencies, CBC Vancouver offered the lowest percentage of Canadian police-generated content (26.3%, n = 56) and the highest percentage of journalist-originated content (18.8%, n = 40). In fact, journalist-originated content on CBC Vancouver outstripped that of the other news agencies by approximately two to three times. Also, the news agency’s offerings related to government-originated content were reasonably low at 5.6% (n = 12), which was equally matched with the agency’s civilian-originated content.

When compared with CBC Vancouver, the content from the two privately funded traditional television media agencies were less diverse when categorised by source. Content from Canadian police agencies greatly outweighed that from journalists and civilians. Daily Hive Vancouver offerings suggested more of a civilian and journalist involvement in content origin but was also notably police heavy at 52.9% (n = 82). The study findings in this area
are particularly noteworthy when considered vis-à-vis social constructionist theory which holds that within the forum of the media, individuals compete for dominance in the process of issue framing and meaning production (Ryan et al., 2001; Surette, 2011). Here, the study findings seemingly suggest that publicly funded news agencies may offer a more democratic and equitable forum for meaning production than their privately funded counterparts. However, when considering the results from Daily Hive Vancouver, the findings also apparently reveal that despite the reportedly democratising nature of the internet (Brown, 2013; Hermida, 2016; Leishman & Mason, 2003), the power of journalists and civilians as content framers is diminished when compared to that of the police and government. The study findings suggest that, arguably, CBC Vancouver offers more of a democratic forum as a traditional news agency than a media agency born of the online world. Considering the work of McGovern and Lee (2010), a plausible explanation for the findings in this area is that an online news agency is more easily able and likely to access and reproduce available and immediately compatible online content from government and police sources out of convenience than a traditional television news agency. Another explanation might rest with the online news agency’s private funding sources. Either way, further study of the online presence of traditional and online media agencies in comparison with content developed by police and other sources could provide credence to or dispel such possibilities.

If the study findings related to origins of crime, justice and policing stories in mainstream media are considered representative, they could further an argument that police maintain a position of dominance in content framing, which is diminished to some extent in regard to publicly funded traditional news organisations but enhanced greatly concerning online news agencies.

Stories from Daily Hive Vancouver were weighted towards police content at 52.9% (n = 82) when compared with content from government (9.7%, n = 15), journalists (7.7%, n = 12), and civilians (7.1%, n = 11). There were a total eight categories of story source including an unknown category where source could not be confirmed. Of the total 155 stories published by Daily Hive Vancouver, a mean of n = 19.4 was calculated that included all eight categories. A mean of n = 22.1 was calculated when excluding the unknown category. These statistics were applied to the chi-square analysis with the assumption that stories by source should be in line with the calculated means rounded down to the nearest whole number. The findings with both applied means were found to be significant at p ≤ 0.05 (p < 0.001).

Stories from Global BC were weighted towards police content at 34.4% (n = 125) when compared with content from government (3.0%, n = 11), journalists (7.2%, n = 26), and civilians (4.1%, n = 15). There were a total eight categories of story source including an unknown category where source could not be confirmed. Of the total 363 stories broadcasted by Global BC, a mean of n = 45.4 was calculated that included all eight categories. A mean of n = 51.9 was calculated when excluding the unknown category. These statistics were applied to the chi-square analysis with the assumption that stories by source should be in line with the calculated means rounded to the nearest whole number. The findings with both applied means were found to be significant at p ≤ 0.05 (p < 0.001).

Stories from CTV Vancouver were weighted towards police content at 27.3% (n = 262) when compared with content from government (2.0%, n = 19), journalists (5.0%, n =
48), and civilians (1.5%, n = 14). There were a total eight categories of story source including an unknown category where source could not be confirmed. Of the total 961 stories produced by CTV Vancouver, a mean of n = 120.1 was calculated that included all eight categories. A mean of n = 137.3 was calculated when excluding the unknown category. These statistics were applied to the chi-square analysis with the assumption that stories by source should be in line with the calculated means rounded down to the nearest whole number. The findings with both applied means were found to be significant at p ≤ 0.05 (p < 0.001).

Stories from CBC Vancouver were weighted towards police content at 26.3% (n = 56) when compared with content from government (5.6%, n = 12), journalists (18.8, n = 40), and civilians (5.6%, n = 12). There were a total eight categories of story source including an unknown category where source could not be confirmed. Of the total 213 stories produced by CBC Vancouver, a mean of n = 26.6 was calculated that included all eight categories. A mean of n = 30.4 was calculated when excluding the unknown category. These statistics were applied to the chi-square analysis with the assumption that stories by source should be in line with the calculated means rounded to the nearest whole number. The findings with both applied means were found to be significant at p ≤ 0.05 (p < 0.001).

It was hypothesised that despite the mass media’s access to a wide variety of information and differing views available as a result of the broad scope and democratic nature of social media and associated technologies, a police narrative remains dominant in news discourse related to crime and policing. This hypothesis was very much supported by the study findings related to origins of crime, justice and policing stories in mainstream media. The evidence suggests that, generally, police-originated stories dominate coverage of crime, justice and policing in the mass media. This dominance was diminished to some extent in the content of the publicly funded traditional news organisation studied but, perhaps disconcertingly, enhanced in the offerings of the news agency operating entirely within the purportedly democratised online realm.

### NEUTRALITY BY ORIGIN IN STORIES

All four news agencies in the study produced crime, justice and policing stories that were generally neutral towards policing, regardless of content origin. Even Canadian police agencies, which were perhaps unsurprisingly found to originate the majority of the positive policing stories in mass media offerings, were primarily neutral in terms of the content they produced overall.

In terms of *Daily Hive Vancouver* content, although Canadian police agencies produced the majority of the positive policing stories in the media narrative (69.8%, n = 30), they were found to have also produced a large amount of the total neutral content published (47.7%, n = 51). Overall, Canadian police-originated content was primarily neutral at 62.2% (n = 51), positive at 36.6% (n = 30), and negative at 1.2% (n = 1).

Similarly, when considering Global BC content, despite having generated a sizeable amount of the positive policing stories broadcasted (48.7%, n = 56), Canadian police agencies were also found to have initiated a reasonable amount of the neutral policing stories as well (28.8%, n = 66). Overall, on Global BC, Canadian police-generated content was primarily neutral at 52.8% (n = 66), positive at 44.8% (n = 56), and negative at 2.4% (n = 3).
Examination of data from CTV Vancouver produced results in line with the other privately funded news agencies. Although Canadian police agencies contributed a large percentage of the pro-policing stories broadcasted (40.0%, \( n = 119 \)), they were also responsible for the development of a reasonable amount of the neutral coverage (23.8%, \( n = 141 \)). Overall, Canadian police-originated content on CTV Vancouver was primarily neutral at 53.8% \( (n = 141) \), positive at 45.4% \( (n = 119) \), and negative at 0.8% \( (n = 2) \).

The findings in this area from Canada’s publicly funded news broadcaster were in line with those of the privately funded broadcasters. On CBC Vancouver, Canadian police agencies contributed to a large portion of the positive policing stories (45.9%, \( n = 28 \)) broadcasted during the study. Yet Canadian policing agencies were also found to have been the originators of 20.9% \( (n = 28) \) of the neutral content broadcasted by the news agency. Overall, Canadian police-originated content on CBC Vancouver was found to be balanced between positive and neutral (50.0%, \( n = 28 \)).

The study findings related to the neutrality of police-generated content appearing in mass media offerings are important in that they offer comment on the overall tone of the majority of content related to crime, justice and policing stories in mass media offerings. As previously outlined in the study findings and supporting theory, the majority of crime, justice and policing stories in the mass media are generated from policing sources (Leishman & Mason, 2003; Lovell, 2003; McCormick, 1995; McGovern & Lee, 2010; Ryan et al., 2001). Nonetheless, the study findings in this area suggest that despite such a dominance in story origination, final mass media output remains reasonably neutral. Although the lack of negative stories might demonstrate that police are not overly critical of themselves (at least in public forum), neither are they overly positive. Rather, the majority of stories confirmed to have originated from Canadian police sources are neutral, describing investigations in progress or announcing routine police response to potential risks to the public.

Consideration was also made of the neutrality of journalist- and civilian-originated content produced by the four studied news agencies. Across the board, civilian- and journalist-generated content was found to be primarily neutral towards police and policing practice.

On Daily Hive Vancouver, both civilians and journalists produced primarily neutral content related to police and policing action. Specifically, 66.7% \( (n = 8) \) of journalist-generated coverage was primarily neutral towards policing, 25.0% \( (n = 3) \) was positive, and 8.3% \( (n = 1) \) was negative. Civilian-generated content was found to be neutral at 63.6% \( (n = 7) \), positive at 18.2% \( (n = 2) \), and negative at 18.2% \( (n = 2) \).

Similar to the Daily Hive Vancouver findings, in terms of stories broadcasted by Global BC, both civilians and journalists produced primarily neutral content related to police and policing action. Specifically, 65.4% \( (n = 17) \) of journalist-generated coverage was neutral towards policing, 26.9% \( (n = 7) \) was positive, and 7.7% \( (n = 2) \) was negative. Civilian-generated content was found to be neutral at 66.7% \( (n = 10) \), positive at 6.7% \( (n = 1) \), and negative at 26.7% \( (n = 4) \).

On CTV Vancouver, journalists produced overwhelmingly neutral content related to police and policing action. Specifically, 79.2% \( (n = 38) \) of journalist-originated stories were deemed primarily neutral, with an equal number of positive and negative stories at just 10.4%
Civilian-generated content was deemed neutral at 42.8% \((n = 6)\), with the remainder of coverage equally split between positive and negative at 28.6% \((n = 4)\) each.

Finally, On CBC Vancouver, journalists produced primarily neutral content related to police and policing action. Specifically, 62.5% \((n = 25)\) of journalist-generated stories were deemed neutral, 25.0% \((n = 10)\) were positive, and 12.5% \((n = 5)\) were negative. Civilian-generated content was deemed neutral at 83.3% \((n = 10)\), with the remainder evenly split between positive and negative at 8.3% \((n = 1)\) each.

The study findings related to the neutrality of journalist- and civilian-generated content appearing in crime, justice and policing stories are important in that they offer comment on the overall tone of such stories in mass media offerings. Literature has discussed the value of the mainstream media’s function as an element of social overwatch (Brown, 2013; Fuchs, 2014; Jewkes, 2004; Lawrence, 2000; Leishman & Mason, 2003; Lovell, 2003; Toch, 2012) and drawn attention to certain political and economic challenges to such a role (Finn et al., 2003; Toogood, 1972). Considering this, the study findings, which suggest that neither civilian- nor journalist-generated content is overly critical of policing practice, could be seen as the result of a breakdown in journalistic overwatch, or, alternatively, interpreted as demonstrative of a realistic depiction of average criminal justice issues and the resultant largely routine policing response in modern Canadian society.

If the study findings related to neutrality of crime, justice and policing stories by origin in the mainstream media are considered representative, they could further an argument that the police, although holding dominance in news narrative, are generally neutral (or perhaps neutralised by media agencies) in their self-representation. Further, the study findings could suggest that Canadian journalists and members of the public are more positive than negative, but generally neutral towards police and police action in their communities.

On Daily Hive Vancouver, 62.2% \((n = 51)\) of Canadian police-originated content was neutral, 36.6% \((n = 30)\) was positive, and 1.2% \((n = 1)\) was negative. Journalist-originated content was neutral at 66.7% \((n = 8)\), positive at 25.0% \((n = 3)\), and negative at 8.3% \((n = 1)\). Civilian-generated content was found to be neutral at 63.6% \((n = 7)\), positive at 18.2% \((n = 2)\), and negative at 18.2% \((n = 2)\). When applied to the chi-square analysis with the assumption that positive, negative and neutral content should be equally represented in each of these categories, the findings in every source category returned as significant at \(p \leq 0.05\) (police originated: \(p < 0.001\); journalist originated: \(p = 0.04\); civilian originated: \(p = 0.03\)).

On Global BC, 52.8% \((n = 66)\) of Canadian police-originated content was neutral, 44.8% \((n = 56)\) was positive, and 2.4% \((n = 3)\) was negative. Journalist-originated content was neutral at 65.4% \((n = 17)\), positive at 26.9% \((n = 7)\), and negative at 7.7% \((n = 2)\). Civilian-generated content was found to be neutral at 66.7% \((n = 10)\), positive at 6.7% \((n = 1)\), and negative at 26.7% \((n = 4)\). When applied to the chi-square analysis with the assumption that positive, negative and neutral content should be equally represented in each of these categories, the findings in every source category returned as significant at \(p \leq 0.05\) (police originated: \(p < 0.001\); journalist originated \(p = 0.002\); civilian originated: \(p = 0.02\)).

On CTV Vancouver, 53.8% \((n = 141)\) of Canadian police-originated content was neutral, 45.4% \((n = 119)\) was positive, and 0.8% \((n = 2)\) was negative. Journalist-originated content was neutral at 79.2% \((n = 38)\), positive at 10.4% \((n = 5)\), and negative at 10.4% \((n =
Civilian-generated content was found to be neutral at 42.8% \((n = 6)\), positive at 28.6% \((n = 4)\), and negative at 28.6% \((n = 4)\). When applied to the chi-square analysis with the assumption that positive, negative and neutral content should be equally represented in each of these categories, the findings in the police and journalist categories returned as significant at \(p \leq 0.05\) \((p < 0.001)\). However, the findings for civilian content were deemed not significant at \(p \leq 0.05\) \((p = 0.7)\).

Finally, on CBC Vancouver, Canadian police-originated content was balanced between neutral and positive (50.0%, \(n = 28\)). Journalist-originated content was neutral at 62.5% \((n = 25)\), positive at 25.0% \((n = 10)\), and negative at 12.5% \((n = 5)\). Civilian-generated content was found to be neutral at 83.3% \((n = 10)\), positive at 8.3% \((n = 1)\), and negative at 8.3% \((n = 1)\). When applied to the chi-square analysis with the assumption that positive, negative and neutral content should be equally represented in each of these categories, the findings for all categories returned as significant at \(p \leq 0.05\) (police and journalist originated: \(p < 0.001\); civilian originated: \(p = 0.001\)).

The study hypothesis proposed that police maintain a dominant narrative in crime, justice and policing stories. This was supported by the study findings. In general, police sources contributed the most narrative, albeit generally neutral in tone, to the media narrative. Further, in cases where journalists or civilians generated content, such stories were generally neutral or positive, rather than critical, of police and policing practice.

**NARRATIVE ORIGINS WITHIN STORIES**

The study findings related to narrative within crime, justice and policing stories ran counter to some literature in the area. Where several theorists have suggested a media reliance on police narrative for any number of reasons (Leishman & Mason, 2003; Lovell, 2003; McCormick, 1995; McGovern & Lee, 2010; Ryan et al., 2001), the study results actually demonstrated a civilian dominance in overall narrative among traditional media agencies. On Global BC, there were 212 occurrences of public narrative and 135 occurrences of police narrative for a ratio of 1 to 0.6. The results from CTV Vancouver produced the same ratio with 552 occurrences of public narrative and 328 occurrences of police narrative. On CBC Vancouver, 169 occurrences of public narrative outstripped the 68 from police for a ratio of 1 to 0.4.

Some theorists have explored the idea that the democratizing nature of Web 2.0 and associated technologies may allow for an enhanced civilian narrative within news media stories (Brown, 2013; Leishman & Mason, 2003; Lovell, 2003). If this were indeed the case, it might be expected that the study findings would demonstrate a higher percentage of civilian narrative in Daily Hive Vancouver stories compared with those from the traditional mass media agencies. In fact, the opposite was true. The study found that civilian narrative was diminished in stories published by the online news agency. In all, there were 58 occurrences of civilian narrative and 86 cases of police narrative for a ratio of 1 to 1.5.

Existing theory on the impact of Web 2.0 and associated technologies on civilian narrative was further challenged by the study findings related to type of narrative appearing in crime, justice and policing stories. Where is has been previously suggested that civilian-held cameras and advances in the internet may allow for a technologically enhanced counternarrative to that of police in the media (Brown, 2013; Leishman & Mason, 2003;
Lovell, 2003), the study found that such technologies were underrepresented in the offerings of all four media agencies. Video clips, photographs and social media posts entered the news narrative infrequently, and emphasis was instead placed on traditional direct quoting. These findings held true across the board. On *Daily Hive Vancouver*, police were directly quoted in 38.7% (*n* = 60) of stories and contributed a technologically enhanced narrative in only 8.4% (*n* = 13) stories. Similarly, civilians were directly quoted in 20.6% (*n* = 32) of stories and employed new technologies in narrative production in only 14.2% (*n* = 22) stories. On *Global BC*, police were directly quoted in 22.3% (*n* = 81) of stories, which vastly outweighed cases where they contributed a technologically enhanced narrative (7.2%, *n* = 26). Civilians were directly quoted (40.8%, *n* = 148) more often than they were found to have employed new technologies in narrative production (15.7%, *n* = 57). The trend continued with *CTV Vancouver*, where direct quoting for the police (17.4%, *n* = 167) and civilians (38.7%, *n* = 372) greatly exceeded use of technology for narrative (5.8%, *n* = 56, for police and 17.1%, *n* = 164, for civilians). Finally, in line with the privately funded news agencies, *CBC Vancouver* produced more stories involving direct quoting from the police (22.5%, *n* = 48) and civilians (64.8%, *n* = 138) than it did stories that included a technologically enhanced police narrative (2.3%, *n* = 5) or civilian narrative (14.1%, *n* = 30).

If the study findings related to civilian and police narrative within crime, justice and policing stories in the mainstream media are considered representative, they could further an argument that civilians, within the framework set by traditional media agencies, are the dominant voice in narrative and context setting; but that in the case of new online media agencies, it is the police who hold this dominance. Further, the study findings could suggest that Web 2.0 and associated technologies are not as democratising as previously suggested, as they do not contribute appreciably to narrative production in crime, justice and policing stories.

On *Daily Hive Vancouver*, police narrative included indirect coverage (*n* = 13), direct quoting (*n* = 60), use of social media (*n* = 5), and production or use of videos and photographs (*n* = 8). The mean was calculated as *n* = 21.5. Civilian narrative also included indirect coverage (*n* = 4), direct quoting (*n* = 32), use of social media (*n* = 4), and production or use of videos and photographs (*n* = 18). The mean was calculated as *n* = 14.5. These statistics were applied to the chi-square analysis with the assumption that the narrative count in each category should be in line with the mean calculated for each group rounded to the nearest whole number. The findings for both groups were deemed significant at *p* ≤ 0.05 (*p* < 0.001).

On *Global BC*, police narrative included indirect coverage (*n* = 28), direct quoting (*n* = 81), and production or use of videos and photographs (*n* = 26). The mean for this group, assuming all four narrative categories should have been represented, was calculated as *n* = 33.8. Civilian narrative included indirect coverage (*n* = 7), direct quoting (*n* = 148), use of social media (*n* = 2), and production or use of videos and photographs (*n* = 55). The mean for this group was calculated as *n* = 53. These statistics were applied to the chi-square analysis with the assumption that the narrative count in each category should be in line with the mean calculated for each group rounded to the nearest whole number. The findings for both groups were deemed significant at *p* ≤ 0.05 (*p* < 0.001).
On CTV Vancouver, police narrative included indirect coverage \((n = 105)\), direct quoting \((n = 167)\), use of social media \((n = 7)\), and production or use of videos and photographs \((n = 49)\). The mean for this group was calculated to be \(n = 82\). Civilian narrative included indirect coverage \((n = 16)\), direct quoting \((n = 372)\), use of social media \((n = 16)\), and production or use of videos and photographs \((n = 148)\). The mean was calculated to be \(n = 138\). These statistics were applied to the chi-square analysis with the assumption that the narrative count in each category should be in line with the mean calculated for each group. The findings for both groups were deemed significant at \(p \leq 0.05\) \((p < 0.001)\).

On CBC Vancouver, police narrative included indirect coverage \((n = 15)\), direct quoting \((n = 48)\), and production or use of videos and photographs \((n = 5)\). The mean, assuming all four narrative categories should have been represented, was calculated to be \(n = 17\). Civilian narrative included indirect coverage \((n = 1)\), direct quoting \((n = 138)\), use of social media \((n = 4)\), and production or use of videos and photographs \((n = 26)\). The mean was calculated to be \(n = 42.3\). These statistics were applied to the chi-square analysis with the assumption that the narrative count in each category should be in line with the mean calculated for each group rounded to the nearest whole number. The findings for both groups were deemed significant at \(p \leq 0.05\) \((p < 0.001)\).

It was hypothesized that despite the mass media’s access to a wide variety of information and differing views available because of the broad scope and democratic nature of social media and associated technologies, a police narrative remains dominant in news discourse related to crime, justice and policing. In regard to traditional media agencies, this hypothesis was unequivocally unsupported by the study findings related to narrative within crime, justice and policing stories. Findings demonstrated a lack of Web 2.0 technologies in narrative production and a civilian narrative remained dominant through an emphasis on traditional direct quoting. However, when considering new online media agencies, the study hypothesis was supported. Ironically, not only were Web 2.0 technologies underutilised in narrative production in the online news media forum, traditional police narratives were emphasised through direct quoting.

NARRATIVE AND NEUTRALITY WITHIN STORIES

Considering that the study’s findings demonstrate the dominance of a public narrative in traditional media agencies and a police narrative in an online media agency, it is important to examine the potential impact of narrative origins on neutrality. In this area the study found, perhaps unsurprisingly, that crime, justice and policing stories tended to become more positive towards police and policing as more police narrative was infused into the conversation. Still, the study also found that more civilian narrative did not equate to considerably more negative or critical treatment of police and policing issues in the media.

On Daily Hive Vancouver, 80.6% \((n = 29)\) of stories that featured public narrative alone were neutral towards policing and only 11.1% \((n = 4)\) were negative. Similarly, 80.6% \((n = 108)\) of Global BC stories featuring public narrative alone were neutral and only 7.5% \((n = 10)\) were negative. On CTV Vancouver, 78.1% \((n = 267)\) of stories with public narrative alone were neutral and only 9.4% \((n = 32)\) were negative. Finally, 72.4% \((n = 84)\) of CBC Vancouver stories featuring only public narrative were neutral and only 9.5% \((n = 11)\) were negative. Of note, all news agencies offered stories with civilian-only narrative that were positive towards policing in percentages ranging from 8.3% to 18.1% and such stories were
consistently more prevalent than those in the same category that were negative. Also, when considering stories from all four news agencies that featured both public and police narrative, tone towards policing was reasonably balanced between positive and neutral, and negative policing stories were represented in reasonably low percentages ranging from 0% to 8.3%.

The study findings regarding the impact of narrative on neutrality is applicable to a discussion about how news may be framed by media agencies. Social constructionist theory suggests that journalists and their agencies play a unique role in the production of meaning and values by filtering competing social constructions from narrative (Ryan et al., 2001; Surette, 2011). However, this process is sensitive to political, social and economic pressures, and journalists can be influenced by the frames of prominent social actors, political and social elites, vocal advocates, and aggressive social movements (Hall et al., 1978; Ryan et al., 2001). Considering the largely accepted idea that news media tend to produce content that is broadly supportive of police and policing organisations (Leishman & Mason, 2003; Lovell, 2003; McCormick, 1995), a valid question might be this: Is what is appearing in the news narrative as found by the study simply reflective of reality in British Columbia specifically and Canada generally, or are journalists purposely selecting civilian narratives in line with predetermined political, social and economic frames? The study findings suggested a leaning towards neutrality as opposed to positivity. Nonetheless, is it possible that negative civilian narratives (legitimate or otherwise) are being filtered out of the overall discourse on matters relating to crime, justice and policing in mainstream media? Further study to elucidate this could include comparison of civilian blogs with news content appearing in various media.

If the study findings related to neutrality of narrative within crime, justice and policing stories are considered representative, they could further an argument that media agencies are generally supportive of police and their organisations as evidenced in a propensity to produce neutral and positive content even in absence of a police narrative.

On Daily Hive Vancouver, stories with only police narrative were found to be positive towards policing at 40.6% \( (n = 28) \), marginally negative at 1.4% \( (n = 1) \), and neutral at 58.0% \( (n = 40) \) with a mean of \( n = 23 \). Stories with only public narrative were primarily neutral at 80.6% \( (n = 29) \), marginally positive at 8.3% \( (n = 3) \), and marginally negative at 11.1% \( (n = 4) \) with a mean of \( n = 12 \). Stories that featured the narratives of both the police and the public were found to be neutral at 42.9% \( (n = 6) \) and positive at 57.1% \( (n = 8) \) with a mean of \( n = 4.7 \) when accounting for the negative category. Finally, stories that included neither police nor public narrative were found to be primarily neutral at 88.9% \( (n = 32) \) and marginally positive at 11.1% \( (n = 4) \) with a mean of \( n = 12 \) when accounting for the negative category. These statistics were applied to the chi-square analysis with the assumption that totals in each category should be in line with the mean (rounded to the nearest whole number) calculated for each group. For crime justice and policing stories featuring narrative from police only, public only, or neither police nor public, the findings were deemed significant at \( p \leq 0.05 \) \( (p < 0.001) \). For stories including narrative from both the police and the public, the findings were deemed significant at \( p \leq 0.05 \) \( (p = 0.03) \).

On Global BC, stories with only police narrative were found to be primarily positive towards policing at 73.8% \( (n = 45) \), negative at 3.2% \( (n = 2) \), and neutral at 23.0% \( (n = 14) \) with a calculated mean of \( n = 20.3 \). Stories with only public narrative were primarily neutral at 80.6% \( (n = 108) \), marginally positive at 11.9% \( (n = 16) \), and marginally negative at 7.5%
(n = 10) with a mean of n = 44.7. Stories that featured the narratives of both the police and public were found to be neutral at 48.1% (n = 26), positive at 46.3% (n = 25), and marginally negative at 5.5% (n = 3) with a mean of n = 18. Finally, stories that included neither police nor public narrative were found to be primarily neutral at 72.8% (n = 83), positive at 22.8% (n = 26), and marginally negative at 4.4% (n = 5) with a calculated mean of n = 38. These statistics were applied to the chi-square analysis with the assumption that totals in each category should be in line with the mean (rounded to the nearest whole number) calculated for each group. The findings in all categories were deemed significant at p ≤ 0.05 (p < 0.001).

On CTV Vancouver, stories with only police narrative were found to be positive towards policing at 48.8% (n = 81), marginally negative at 1.8% (n = 3), and neutral at 49.4% (n = 82) with a mean for the group of n = 55.3. Stories with only public narrative were primarily neutral at 78.1% (n = 267), marginally positive at 12.6% (n = 43), and negative at 9.4% (n = 32) with a calculated mean of n = 114. Stories that featured the narratives of both the police and public were found to be neutral at 43.4% (n = 66), positive at 48.7% (n = 74), and negative at 7.9% (n = 12) with a mean of n = 50.7. Finally, stories that included neither police nor public narrative were found to be primarily neutral at 71.4% (n = 215), positive at 22.6% (n = 68), and negative at 6.0% (n = 18) with a mean of n = 100.3. These statistics were applied to the chi-square analysis with the assumption that totals in each category should be in line with the mean (rounded to the nearest whole number) calculated for each group. The findings in all categories were deemed significant at p ≤ 0.05 (p < 0.001).

On CBC Vancouver, stories with only police narrative were found to be primarily positive towards policing at 75.0% (n = 12) and neutral at 25.0% (n = 4) with a mean for the group of n = 5.3 when including the negative category. Stories with only public narrative were primarily neutral at 72.4% (n = 84), marginally positive at 18.1% (n = 21), and marginally negative at 9.5% (n = 11) with a group mean of n = 38.7. Stories that featured the narratives of both the police and public were found to be neutral at 45.8% (n = 22), positive at 45.8% (n = 22), and negative at 8.3% (n = 4) with a mean of n = 16. Finally, stories that included neither police nor public narrative were found to be primarily neutral at 78.8% (n = 26), positive at 15.2% (n = 5), and negative at 6.1% (n = 2) with a mean of n = 11. These statistics were applied to the chi-square analysis with the assumption that totals in each category should be in line with the mean (rounded to the nearest whole number) calculated for each group. The findings in all categories were deemed significant at p ≤ 0.05 (police only; public only; neither police nor public: p < 0.001; both police and public: p = 0.001).

The study hypothesized that a police narrative remains dominant in news discourse related to crime, justice and policing. This was supported somewhat by the study findings related to neutrality of narrative within crime, justice and policing stories. Narrative in news media was generally neutral but also more positive than negative towards police and policing action. Ironically, a critical or negative narrative was notably absent from the offerings of the Web 2.0–based news agency.

WEB 2.0 AND RELATED TECHNOLOGY ENHANCED NARRATIVE WITHIN STORIES

Acknowledging the fact that both public and police use of Web 2.0 and associated technologies were found to be underutilized in narrative production for all news media
agencies examined, how such technologies were employed in framing crime, justice and policing stories was considered. In keeping with the limited theory on the subject (Brown, 2013; Leishman & Mason, 2003), the study found that content from civilian-wielded technologies made it into the news narrative consistently in amounts almost double that of police-wielded technology. In terms of content from *Daily Hive Vancouver*, police-employed Web 2.0 or related technologies contributed to narrative 13 times while technologically enhanced civilian narrative occurred 22 times. Similarly, on Global BC, police were found to have employed technology in 26 cases of narrative, while civilians did so in 57 cases. CTV Vancouver broadcasted 56 stories involving a technologically enhanced police narrative and 164 stories involving the same for civilians. Finally, CBC Vancouver featured only five stories that included police use of Web 2.0 and related technologies in narrative production but 30 that involved technologically enhanced civilian narrative.

The study findings related to police and civilian use of Web 2.0 and associated technologies were arguably unsurprising until they were considered further for neutrality towards policing. Civilian-generated news content using Web 2.0 and associated technologies was primarily neutral towards policing with a reasonable balance between positive and negative coverage. That is, as captured in the media narrative, civilians utilized technology including camera phones, social media platforms and home surveillance to capture content related to crime, justice and policing that was mostly neutral towards policing practice. Further, in terms of polarizing examples, civilians employed technology to capture footage of police that was equally balanced between positive and negative. On *Daily Hive Vancouver*, civilian Web 2.0-generated or technologically-enhanced narrative was primarily neutral at 77.3% (n = 17), marginally negative at 9.1% (n = 2), and positive at 13.6% (n = 3). Similarly, on Global BC, civilian Web 2.0 and related technology-generated content portrayed police in a generally neutral manner at 66.7% (n = 38), with some examples of positive (19.3%, n = 11) and negative (14.0%, n = 8) content. On CTV Vancouver, technologically enhanced civilian narrative made up 70.1% (n = 115) of the neutral coverage, with 15.2% (n = 25) positive and 14.6% (n = 24) negative. Finally, on CBC Vancouver, civilian Web 2.0 or related technologically-enhanced content was primarily neutral at 60.0% (n = 18), negative at 23.3% (n = 7), and positive at 16.7% (n = 5).

The findings related to police and civilian use of Web 2.0 and associated technologies should be considered in conjunction with theory in the area. Some theorists have assumed that the dominant narrative in media discourse is that of the police (Leishman & Mason, 2003; Lovell, 2003; McCormick, 1995; McGovern & Lee, 2010; Ryan et al., 2001) and argued that civilian use of technology might be a means to infuse competing narratives into the offerings of mass media (Brown, 2013; Jewkes, 2004; Lawrence, 2000; Leishman & Mason, 2003; Lovell, 2003; Toch, 2012). Yet the study results suggest that civilian-employed Web 2.0 technologies (at least those entering the media narrative) are reasonably neutral and actually more likely to be positive towards than critical of policing. Again, the question arises: Is this a reflection of a policing reality in British Columbia specifically and Canada generally, or is it possible that negative civilian voices (legitimate or otherwise) are being filtered out of the overall discourse in mainstream media? Further study to explore this could include comparison of civilian blogs with news content appearing in various media.
Predictably, police were found to employ Web 2.0 and related technologies to further a narrative that was reasonably balanced between positive and neutral coverage of policing. Still, it is notable that data from both CTV Vancouver and CBC Vancouver demonstrated that police use of technologies can sometimes contribute a negative narrative to the discourse on crime, justice and policing issues. Indeed, police use of such technologies resulted in six negative stories on CTV Vancouver and one on CBC Vancouver. Generally, though, police employed Web 2.0 and related technologies not to showcase themselves, but to draw attention to the behaviours of the public. Technologically-enhanced narrative from American police agencies often included body-worn camera footage depicting police heroics. Meanwhile, when considering Canadian sources, police use of technology in narrative production included primarily evidence obtained from social media and surveillance footage, which was typically shared in order to obtain public assistance in furthering open investigations and solving criminal offences. That is, police employed Web 2.0 and associated technologies to encourage civilian input into police practice through crowdsourced policing. As most technologically enhanced police narratives in this area included footage of civilians committing criminal offences or vulnerable members of the public being victimized, the majority of content was deemed negative towards civilians. The remainder of Web 2.0 narrative produced by the police was generally neutral towards civilians and might include footage of wildlife in the city or social media-related safety tips. Still, a key finding of the study was not in how police used Web 2.0 and associated technologies to portray civilians, but rather how the public was reflected in civilian-produced content.

The study examined cases of technologically enhanced civilian narrative appearing in the media, noting an obvious emphasis towards the negative when the subject of such scrutiny was a fellow civilian. During the study, all four news agencies featured stories where members of the public were captured on cellular phone cameras assaulting others, damaging property, or harassing wildlife. Sometimes, footage captured by members of the public and subsequently picked up by the mass media led to police action. In some cases, civilians brought legal action upon themselves by posting online their own illegal activities. Others garnered social repercussions for broadcasting their involvement in technically legal, but what some might describe as ethically or morally questionable activities such as spear hunting a bear in the Canadian wilderness. There were almost no cases where a Web 2.0-enhanced civilian narrative highlighted positive civilian behaviours.

On Daily Hive Vancouver, civilian Web 2.0-generated content was primarily negative towards the public at 50.0% (n = 11), neutral at 40.9% (n = 9), and marginally positive at 9.1% (n = 2). Similarly, on Global BC, civilian Web 2.0-generated content portrayed other civilians primarily negatively (71.9%, n = 41) and marginally neutrally (28.1%, n = 16). On CTV Vancouver, narrative from technologically enhanced civilian sources was primarily negative at 70.1% (n = 115), neutral at 27.4% (n = 45), and marginally positive at 2.4% (n = 4). Finally, on CBC Vancouver, civilian Web 2.0-generated content was primarily negative at 63.3% (n = 19), neutral at 30.0% (n = 9), and marginally positive at 6.7% (n = 2).

It has been argued that as more members of the public gain access to democratising Web 2.0 technologies, they will increasingly contribute to the media narrative on crime, justice and policing through citizen journalism, and also influence the social construction of criminal justice matters through crowdsourced policing (Schneider, 2016; Schneider &
Trottier, 2012). Schneider (2016) and Schneider and Trottier (2012) noted the power of Web 2.0 technologies to empower the voice of the public in a media narrative but cautioned that advanced technologies, which can be turned towards fellow citizenry, will likely be used by the public to define, shame and sanction. Hermida (2016), offered several examples of such activity including online vigilantism that occurred following the 2013 Boston Marathon bombings (pp. 11–12). This theme was clearly evident in the study data overall, but most specifically exemplified near the end of the research with the introduction of narrative from Creep Catchers, a civilian vigilante group whose members are known for posing as underage children online, engaging in sexually explicit communications with adults, and then publicly exposing the adults in videos posted to social media. By the conclusion of the study, the then newly formed Surrey, British Columbia, chapter of Creep Catchers had made the news several times for exposing several individuals including a local university employee, an elementary school principal and a police officer. Raw footage of civilian-run sting operations downloaded directly from the Creep Catchers website was featured prominently in the official news narrative, and the president of the chapter (a civilian) was interviewed as an expert a number of times. Police spokespersons were also interviewed and spoke out against the vigilantism. However, the police also made arrests based on evidence obtained by the group’s actions. Citizen journalism and crowd-sourced policing thus both framed the media narrative and influenced police response.

If the study findings related to Web 2.0 and related technology-enhanced narrative in crime, justice and policing stories are considered representative, they could further an argument that although new technologies might have the potential to assist journalists in police overwatch and infuse competing narratives to those of police into the media, they will most often be employed by civilians to surveil and monitor fellow members of the public.

On Daily Hive Vancouver, cases of technologically enhanced police narrative were positive and neutral towards policing at 69.2% (n = 9) and 30.8% (n = 4) respectively, they were negative and neutral towards civilians at rates of 53.8% (n = 7) and 46.2% (n = 6) respectively. Meanwhile, cases of technologically enhanced civilian narrative were positive towards policing at 13.6% (n = 3), negative at 9.1% (n = 2), and neutral at 77.3% (n = 17), they were positive towards the public at 9.1% (n = 2), negative at 50.0% (n = 11), and neutral at 40.9% (n = 9). These statistics were applied to the chi-square analysis with the assumption that the narrative count in each category should be in line with the mean calculated for each group (n = 4.3 for police and n = 7.3 for public), rounded to the nearest whole number. The findings in all categories were deemed significant at p ≤ 0.05 (police use impacting police portrayal: p = 0.006; civilian use impacting police portrayal: p < 0.001; police use impacting public portrayal: p = 0.03; civilian use impacting public portrayal: p = 0.04).

On Global BC, where cases of technologically enhanced police narrative were positive and neutral towards policing at 46.2% (n = 12) and 53.8% (n = 14) respectively, they were negative and neutral towards civilians at rates of 53.8% (n = 14) and 46.2% (n = 12) respectively. Meanwhile, where cases of technologically enhanced civilian narrative were positive towards policing at 19.3% (n = 11), negative at 14.0% (n = 8), and neutral at 66.7% (n = 38), they were negative towards the public at 71.9% (n = 41) and neutral at 28.1% (n = 16). These statistics were applied to the chi-square analysis with the assumption that the narrative count in each category should be in line with the mean calculated for each group (n
= 8.7 for police and \( n = 19 \) for public), rounded to the nearest whole number. The findings in all categories were deemed significant at \( p \leq 0.05 \) (police use impacting police portrayal and police use impacting public portrayal: \( p = 0.002 \); civilian use impacting police portrayal and civilian use impacting public portrayal: \( p < 0.001 \)).

On CTV Vancouver, cases of technologically enhanced police narrative were positive towards policing at 44.6\% \( (n = 25) \), negative at 10.7\% \( (n = 6) \), and neutral at 44.6\% \( (n = 25) \), but negative and neutral towards civilians at rates of 62.5\% \( (n = 35) \) and 37.5\% \( (n = 21) \) respectively. Meanwhile, cases of a technologically enhanced civilian narrative were positive towards policing at 15.2\% \( (n = 25) \), negative at 14.6\% \( (n = 24) \), and neutral at 70.1\% \( (n = 115) \), they were positive towards the public at 2.4\% \( (n = 4) \), negative at 70.1\% \( (n = 115) \), and neutral at 27.4\% \( (n = 45) \). These statistics were applied to the chi-square analysis with the assumption that the narrative count in each category should be in line with the mean calculated for each group \( (n = 18.7 \) for police and \( n = 54.7 \) for public), rounded to the nearest whole number. The findings in all categories were deemed significant at \( p \leq 0.05 \) (police use impacting police portrayal: \( p = 0.001 \); civilian use impacting police portrayal, police use impacting public portrayal and civilian use impacting public portrayal: \( p < 0.001 \)).

On CBC Vancouver, cases of technologically enhanced police narrative were positive towards policing at 40.0\% \( (n = 2) \), negative at 20.0\% \( (n = 1) \), and neutral at 40.0\% \( (n = 2) \), but negative and neutral towards civilians at rates of 80.0\% \( (n = 4) \) and 20.0\% \( (n = 1) \) respectively. Meanwhile, where cases of technologically enhanced civilian narrative were positive towards policing at 16.7\% \( (n = 5) \), negative at 23.3\% \( (n = 7) \), and neutral at 60.0\% \( (n = 18) \), they were positive towards the public at 6.7\% \( (n = 2) \), negative at 63.3\% \( (n = 19) \), and neutral at 30.0\% \( (n = 9) \). These statistics were applied to the chi-square analysis with the assumption that the narrative count in each category should be in line with the mean calculated for each group \( (n = 1.7 \) for police and \( n = 10 \) for public), rounded to the nearest whole number. In the police use of technology portraying police category, the findings concerning police use of the technology were not deemed significant (police use impacting police portrayal: \( p = 0.78 \); police use impacting civilian portrayal: \( p = 0.11 \)). But the findings concerning civilian use of the technology were deemed significant at \( p \leq 0.05 \) (civilian use impacting police portrayal: \( p = 0.007 \); civilian use impacting public portrayal: \( p < 0.001 \)).

It was hypothesised that despite the mass media’s access to a wide variety of information and differing views available as a result of the broad scope and democratic nature of social media and associated technologies, a police narrative remains dominant in news discourse related to crime, justice and policing. If the data is considered by quantity, this hypothesis is not supported by the study findings related to technologically enhanced narrative. By the numbers, civilians contribute a higher volume of narrative via social media, camera phone, or similar technology to the media than police do. But when considered in terms of purpose and overall message of such content, it is notable that civilians employ Web 2.0 technologies almost exclusively to generate content related to crime, justice and policing that is not counternarrative to, but rather in line with, the messages and frames of the police. Taking this view, the study hypothesis is supported.

POLICE USE OF WEB 2.0 AND THE RESULTANT NARRATIVE IN STORIES

The two police agencies included in the study produced a large amount of data in the form of posts to Facebook and tweets on Twitter. However, most of this data did not make it into the
media discourse. In fact, despite having produced 669 tweets, 258 Facebook posts and 77 news releases posted online, the Vancouver Police Department was responsible for generating only 150 stories among the four news agencies studied. Similarly, the Surrey RCMP generated only 49 news stories despite tweeting 601 times, posting to Facebook 166 times, and producing 94 media releases. Still, perhaps most compelling was not so much a consideration of how much, but what type of police-produced content that made it into the media discourse.

Both police agencies examined in the study produced content on Facebook and Twitter that was weighted towards community policing over investigation. The Surrey RCMP produced 54.8% ($n = 91$) noninvestigative Facebook posts versus 45.2% ($n = 75$) investigative posts and 73.5% ($n = 442$) noninvestigative tweets on Twitter versus 26.5% ($n = 159$) that were investigative. Similarly, the Vancouver Police Department produced 63.2% ($n = 163$) noninvestigative Facebook posts versus 36.8% ($n = 95$) investigative posts and 79.8% ($n = 534$) noninvestigative tweets on Twitter versus 20.2% ($n = 135$) that were investigative.

The emphasis on community policing was further evident in a consideration of police offerings by topic. For the Surrey RCMP, postings on Facebook were dramatically weighted towards offering crime tips and education (16.9%, $n = 28$), announcing community events (15.7%, $n = 26$), and highlighting a community team or initiative (12.0%, $n = 20$). Other types of posts on the page, primarily investigative in nature, ranged from only 0.6% to 9.0%. Similarly, on Twitter, the majority of tweets were related to crime tips and education (19.5%, $n = 117$), community events (18.6%, $n = 112$), and direct engagement with the public (17.3%, $n = 104$), while the other types of content, primarily investigative, ranged from 0.2% to 5.8%. For the Vancouver Police Department, Facebook posts were weighted towards showcasing photographs marked #VPDCaptures (22.9%, $n = 59$), announcing community events (18.2%, $n = 47$), and offering crime tips or education (10.5%, $n = 27$), while the remainder types of content, mostly investigative, ranged from 0.4% to 8.5%. Similarly, on Twitter, emphasis was placed on announcing community events (23.2%, $n = 155$), engaging in direct communications with the public (20.3%, $n = 136$), and posting photographs linked to #VPDCaptures (8.8%, $n = 59$), while other content, primarily investigative, ranged from 0.1% to 5.4%.

Despite having produced a majority of content related to community policing, only a small portion of the same appeared in the offerings of the mass media. *Daily Hive Vancouver* and CBC Vancouver produced no community policing news originating from the Surrey RCMP and only eight and four stories respectively from the Vancouver Police Department. Similarly, Global BC broadcasted only two community policing stories from the Surrey RCMP and nine from the Vancouver Police Department, while CTV Vancouver produced four from the Surrey RCMP and 21 from the Vancouver Police Department. All four news agencies emphasised investigative over community policing stories from the police agencies in the study with investigative coverage ranging from 68.2% to 100%. These findings confirmed the available literature on police use of Web 2.0 technologies, which suggest the medium’s value as a communication platform and community policing strategy as opposed to a method for media influence (Brainard & Edlins, 2015; Kelly, 2013; MacNeil, 2014; Reddick & Norris, 2013; Schneider, 2016; Schneider & Trottier, 2012; Stewart, 2016; Trottier, 2012).
Where some have suggested police agencies sometimes miss the opportunity to fully engage with the public in the manner most Web 2.0 platforms allow by using social media simply as a one-way conduit for information (Kelly, 2013; Reddick & Norris, 2013), the study found a reasonable amount of interactivity, primarily in the police use of Twitter. Both the Surrey RCMP and the Vancouver Police Department utilised this platform to respond to questions or concerns posted by the public, dispel misinformation from various sources, and initiate dialogue about crime issues. Although none of this content made it into the mass media narrative, there was value for the police as they could engage directly with the public to frame the conversation related to crime, justice and policing issues. Notably, the police even conversed directly with journalists in the public forum, which some might suggest indicates at least a small amount of influence in the development of mass media frames.

If the study findings related to police use of Web 2.0 and related technology and the resultant narrative in crime, justice and policing stories in the media are considered representative, they could further an argument that although police-wielded Web 2.0 technologies may not influence the framing of a media message directly, they are at least of value in community policing practice.

The Surrey RCMP produced 54.8% (n = 91) noninvestigative Facebook posts versus 45.2% (n = 75) investigative posts and 73.5% (n = 442) noninvestigative tweets on Twitter versus 26.5% (n = 159) that were investigative. These statistics were applied to chi-square analysis with the assumption that content should be divided equally between the two categories. Although the findings pertaining to Facebook were deemed not significant (p = 0.2), those in relation to Twitter were deemed significant at p ≤ 0.05 (p < 0.001).

The Vancouver Police Department produced 63.2% (n = 163) noninvestigative Facebook posts versus 36.8% (n = 95) investigative posts and 79.8% (n = 534) noninvestigative tweets on Twitter versus 20.2% (n = 135) that were investigative. These statistics were applied to chi-square analysis with the assumption that content should be divided equally between the two categories. The findings concerning both Facebook and Twitter were deemed significant at p ≤ 0.05 (p < 0.001).

Examining the Surrey RCMP Facebook feed specifically, top post categories by topic included crime tips and education (16.9%, n = 28), community events (15.7%, n = 26), and highlight a community team or initiative (12.0%, n = 20). The mean for the 25 topics identified from this source was calculated to be n = 6.6. The mean for all 31 topics identified in the study was 5.4. These figures, rounded to their nearest respective whole numbers, were applied as expected amounts in the chi-square test. The findings were deemed significant at p ≤ 0.05 (p < 0.001).

Considering the Surrey RCMP Twitter feed, top post categories by topic included crime tips and education (19.5%, n = 117), community events (18.6%, n = 112), and direct communications with the public (17.3%, n = 104). The mean for the 29 topics identified from this source was calculated to be n = 20.7. The mean for all 31 topics identified in the study was 19.4. These figures, rounded to their nearest respective whole numbers, were applied as expected amounts in the chi-square test. The findings were deemed significant at p ≤ 0.05 (p < 0.001).
The top post categories by topic to the Vancouver Police Department Facebook feed included #VPDCaptures (22.9%, n = 59), community events (18.2%, n = 47), and crime tips and education (10.5%, n = 27). The mean for the 22 topics identified from this source was calculated to be n = 11.7. The mean for all 31 topics identified in the study was 8.3. These figures, rounded to their nearest respective whole numbers, were applied as expected amounts in the chi-square test. The findings were deemed significant at $p \leq 0.05$ ($p < 0.001$).

Finally, examining the Vancouver Police Department Twitter feed, top post categories by topic included community events (23.2%, n = 155) and direct communications with the public (20.3%, n = 136). The mean for the 28 topics identified from this source was calculated to be n = 23.9. The mean for all 31 topics identified in the study was 21.5. These figures, rounded to their nearest respective whole numbers, were applied as expected amounts in the chi-square test. The findings were deemed significant at $p \leq 0.05$ ($p < 0.001$).

The study considered police use of Web 2.0 and associated technologies, suggesting that it might support or enhance a police narrative in news discourse related to crime, justice and policing. This was not supported by the study findings related to police use of Web 2.0 and related technology and the resultant narrative in crime, justice and policing stories in the media. In fact, as the study found, very little police-produced content available via Web 2.0 technologies made it into the final product put forth by news media agencies. Thus, although there was apparent value in employing social media as a community policing method, such platforms could not be argued to have efficient application as a police media strategy.
CHAPTER 6 — CONCLUSIONS

It was hypothesized that despite the mass media’s access to a wide variety of information and differing views available as a result of the broad scope and democratic nature of social media and associated technologies, a police narrative remains dominant in news discourse related to crime, justice and policing. The study provided the opportunity to consider the power dynamic between police and the mass media in light of the advancement of Web 2.0 technologies.

ARGUMENT FOR MEDIA DOMINANCE

In line with theory (see Fuchs 2014; Jiggins, 2007; McCormick, 1995; Surette, 2011), the study’s results provided evidence that Canadian mass media agencies hold the power in the police–media relationship. That is, journalists and their agencies were demonstrated to set the tone and filter the frames in the social construction of knowledge pertaining to crime, justice and policing. The study found that police generated a substantial amount of potential media narrative via Web 2.0 technologies on a daily basis, with the vast majority of posts and tweets being related to community policing. But beyond traditional investigative-based news releases, very little of this police-produced content made it into the mass media. Further, within the stories produced by traditional publicly and privately funded media agencies, public narrative was emphasised over that of the police. Although stories produced by the online news agency in the study featured a dominant police narrative, it produced the least amount of crime, justice and policing content overall. Interestingly, despite the mass media’s demonstrated power in content filtering and knowledge framing, the news agencies studied produced content related to crime, justice and policing that was largely balanced and neutral. Indeed, all four media agencies were found to produce a majority of content in this area that was neutral and only minimally positive or negative towards police and policing practices.

Some might argue against the study findings, raising theory that suggests economic, political and social factors influence the media and cause the framing of narrative in line with society’s elite and powerful (Ryan et al., 2001; Surette, 2011). From this perspective, mass media agencies wield their power in a partial and unfair manner, as they frame the message related to crime, justice and policing issues. Along these lines, the study did provide some indication of various political or social pressures impacting the media’s message. The most obvious case in point was news coverage of the fentanyl drug crisis. This issue, which has been noted to have political underpinnings, was covered to a much lesser extent by the privately funded news agencies than it was by the publicly funded news agency. Yet emphasis on a serious social and health issue may not necessarily be a negative thing even if it is politically motivated. Although the fentanyl drug crisis dominated content on CBC Vancouver during the study, the issue was addressed in depth from several perspectives and included narrative from police, health practitioners, educators, social activists, politicians, and even those directly impacted by the issue including individuals with drug dependencies and families who had lost loved ones to overdose. Here, the media agency served as a forum for the construction of knowledge by allowing multiple frames to interact, and the resultant content produced was largely neutral in tone.

An example of economic strain impacting the media message was demonstrated in the tendency of privately funded news agencies to produce light coverage of crime and justice
issues with an apparent emphasis on entertainment over and above crime solving. The study found that coverage from *Daily Hive Vancouver*, Global BC, and CTV Vancouver was focused on new crimes and their resultant short-term investigations. Further, the privately funded news agencies did not cover issues in as much depth or include as many frames when compared with CBC Vancouver. However, although coverage of crime, justice and policing issues was superficial, it was also generally neutral in overall tone towards police and policing practice.

Scholars have argued that, due to various pressures, journalists frame the narrative around crime and justice by offering polarised depictions of police and minimising coverage addressing the realities of routine policing (Hermida, 2016; Leishman & Mason, 2003; Lovell, 2003; McCormick, 1995). But this was not the case when considering the overall neutrality of tone in content produced by all four news agencies studied. Rather, despite the economic, social and political strains known to impact mass media agencies, content produced by those studied was largely balanced and neutral. Further, the presence of both positive and negative stories demonstrated the ability of media to fulfil their oversight role without being overly misanthropic towards police. Of course, some might suggest the low coverage of negative stories indicates a media affinity for or dependence on police. Such an argument might be furthered through a comparison of publicly available police misconduct statistics with news media content. Disproportionate coverage in this area might indicate a power imbalance. Further study in this area is recommended.

**ARGUMENT FOR POLICE DOMINANCE**

The study found that most of the police-produced content distributed via Web 2.0 technologies was not picked up by the mass media, and there was evidence that news agencies played a dominant role in the construction of knowledge pertaining to crime, justice and policing by filtering content by topic and theme. Although community policing–based content made up the majority of police output, it was primarily investigative stories that were selected by the media for distribution to the public. This was in keeping with theory arguing for the media’s role in defining issues of crime and justice (Fuchs 2014; Hermida, 2016; Jiggins, 2007; McCormick, 1995; Surette, 2011). Although such findings are suggestive of the power of the media, some of the study results could be interpreted to advance an argument that it is actually the police who hold dominance in the police–media relationship. This might be evidenced by the findings demonstrating that police sources *initiated* a sizeable portion of crime, justice and policing stories in the media. All four news agencies produced stories originating from Canadian police sources in amounts far greater than stories originating from other known sources, with *Daily Hive Vancouver*, the online news agency, relying on police-originated content more so than the traditional news agencies. However, when considering narrative within stories produced by the traditional media agencies, the argument for police dominance was limited. Global BC, CTV Vancouver, and CBC Vancouver all emphasised a civilian narrative over that of a police narrative in crime, justice and policing stories. This suggests a limitation of police power in the police–media relationship. Yet the reverse was true of content from *Daily Hive Vancouver*. Stories from this news agency were heavy in police narrative, which surpassed that from civilians and could be interpreted as police dominance in the police–media relationship.
The study’s findings specific to *Daily Hive Vancouver* have some interesting implications in a consideration of power within the police–media relationship vis-à-vis new technology. Here, a news agency operating exclusively within an online environment, which is widely accepted as a democratic and inclusive space, has been found to emphasise police-originated content to a greater extent than that of traditional media agencies, and favour police narrative over that from civilians. Traditional news agencies are in decline (Jiggins, 2007; McGovern, 2011; McGovern & Lee, 2010) while online news agencies continue to proliferate and gain traction (Ha & Fang, 2012; Young, 2015). If the trends related to emphasis of police-originated content and narrative as exemplified by *Daily Hive Vancouver* continue, police may gain further dominance in the police–media relationship. However, this might be offset by the low overall online coverage of crime, justice and policing stories. After all, *Daily Hive Vancouver* produced only 6.4% of overall content in this category as compared with 22.5% to 36.1% from the traditional news agencies. Further study in these areas would be beneficial.

The study findings allow for another argument related to police dominance. As noted in the literature, police organisations have generally accepted the value of Web 2.0 technologies as a means of direct communication with the public (Brainard & Edlins, 2015; Kelly, 2013; MacNeil, 2014; Reddick & Norris, 2013; Schneider, 2016; Schneider & Trottier, 2012; Stewart, 2016; Trottier, 2012). Further, some police organisations have begun to utilise social media as a vehicle for their own journalistic work product (Ellis & McGovern, 2015). This was supported in the research findings which demonstrated police tendencies to communicate directly with individuals, emphasise organisational success and espouse key messaging related to crime prevention and community policing. Policing news stories in the form of media releases were posted for direct public consumption, effectively cutting the mass media out of the equation entirely. Such circumstances could, arguably, be demonstrative of police dominance.

**ARGUMENT FOR PUBLIC DOMINANCE**

The study’s findings allow for another argument. When specifically examining Web 2.0 associated technologies in mass media output, the study produced evidence suggestive of civilian dominance in narrative production. Civilian-produced content, primarily in the form of cellular phone footage, was included in a number of mass media stories related to crime, justice and policing. Meanwhile, police-produced Web 2.0-related content was included to a considerably lesser extent.

Numerous theorists have posited that the balance of power in the police–media relationship is impacted by technology (Brown, 2013; Jewkes, 2004; Lawrence, 2000; Leishman & Mason, 2003; Lovell, 2003; Toch, 2012). Previously, advances in technology primarily benefited the media. New advances such as the printing press, radio broadcasting and television cameras enhanced the capabilities of mass media agencies to surveil the police and economically produce and distribute narrative. However, over time, newer technologies have made narrative production and dissemination also possible for average citizens.

Publicly accessible video recording devices and access to Web 2.0 technologies have allowed for the development in the mass media of a progressively more accessible civilian-based counternarrative to that offered by police (Brown, 2013; Goldsmith, 2010; Leishman & Mason, 2003; Lovell, 2003). Such power of the civilian narrative in knowledge production related to crime, justice and policing issues is notable in the study results. Nevertheless,
while civilian Web 2.0-enhanced narrative was found to be included more in mass media output than its police equivalent, generally, technologically enhanced narrative was noted to be underused. Further, what technologically enhanced narrative that did make it into the mainstream news was reasonably neutral and sometimes positive towards police but particularly negative towards the public. Based on the content produced by the mass media, citizen journalists were more likely to capture the poor or criminal conduct of their civilian peers than they were misconduct or abuse of power by police. The study also found that content produced by citizen journalists was often employed in crowd-sourced policing. There were a number of cases during the study where civilian use of Web 2.0 and associated technologies initiated police investigations or led to enforcement action.

Sir Robert Peel, the widely accepted father of modern-day policing, established a model of policing in nineteenth-century Britain that included “the historic tradition that the police are the public and the public are the police” (de Jourdan, 2013, p. 49) and that citizens, as much as police, have an interest in community welfare. The study’s results demonstrate that this concept has application as a foundation not simply for police-instigated community policing initiatives but now also for civilian-initiated policing practice.

The apparent tendency of citizen journalists to use Web 2.0 technologies for crowd-sourced policing has some serious potential ethical consequences. In modern, Western society, police serve as one of society’s measures of social control (de Jourdan, 2013; Griffiths, 2015; Ross, 2007; Quinney, 1970) while journalists fill an important counter-role as a mechanism of overwatch (Brown, 2013; Gies, 2008; Jiggins, 2007; Lawrence, 2000; Toch, 2012). Both journalists and police are bound by specially applied legal rules and obligations and professional guidelines and policies (Bruser & Rogers, 1985; Fuchs, 2014; Quinney, 1970); civilians, however, are not. Wielding the power of Web 2.0 technologies, civilians are able to define the acceptability of behaviour and social norms, identify those deemed to be offenders of same, and advocate for or mete out punishments for perceived breaches of conduct. Thus, it is arguable that placing the power of both journalism and policing directly into the hands of an unregulated civilian could result in the erosion of the fundamental freedoms both institutions are supposed to afford in modern Western society.

CITIZEN JOURNALISM, CROWD-SOURCED POLICING AND THE POLICE–MEDIA POWER DYNAMIC

Ultimately, journalists and their organisations hold the power to filter the frames included in mass media output and, as evidenced in the study, this has extended to content produced by the police and the public. The power to filter narrative allows the mass media to function as an ethical mechanism in the production of knowledge related to crime, justice and policing. Media agencies seek or receive information from both police and civilians and serve as a forum for the discussion of competing narratives. In theory, social injustices may be addressed and the powerful held to account while certain other information such as the identities of vulnerable persons can be justifiably filtered from the narrative. Nevertheless, this power is now limited, as civilians are able to self-publish their narrative directly via the internet. At this point, as the study showed, Web 2.0-enhanced narrative for the police and public is limited in the coverage it receives in the mass media. However, if this were to change, it could further impact the power structures at play between police, the mass media, and the public.
In the past, police have relied on the mass media to legitimise their role in society (Ellis & McGovern, 2015; Jiggins, 2007; Leishman & Mason, 2003; Lovell, 2003; Schneider, 2016). However, as civilians exercise their Web 2.0-enhanced powers in the social construction of crime, justice and policing issues, this practice of legitimisation is becoming more of a mutual process between police and news agencies which arguably strengthens a historically symbiotic relationship. This was demonstrated near the end of the study. On September 9, 2016, Assistant Commissioner Brenda Butterworth-Carr (then acting and later the substantive commanding officer of the RCMP in British Columbia) provided a formal statement to the media announcing a case of alleged police misconduct. As the assistant commissioner explained, investigators had recently arrested a fellow RCMP member with respect to an incident which had been captured live on social media. In this case, members of the Creep Catchers had identified and confronted an off-duty police officer, accusing him of child luring and sexual exploitation. Assistant Commissioner Butterworth-Carr appeared live on local news networks to update the public on pending criminal charges and provide an accounting of the steps being taken by police management to rectify the issue organisationally.

During her statement, Assistant Commissioner Butterworth-Carr (2016) specifically addressed the impact of Web 2.0 technologies on the case, noting that some individuals on social media had identified the subject officer by an incorrect name and, thus, attached “misinformation and unfair assumptions” (para. 11) to an uninvolved police officer. She described this “as an example of why [police] ask for an investigation, due process and formal charges to be considered before any name is discussed publicly including on social media” (Butterworth-Carr, 2016, para. 11) and continued by emphasising the legitimacy of policing and mass media processes in the responsible application of social control. She stated, “These are serious allegations that are subject to judicial processes and it should not be about shaming. I really appreciate that the media were responsible in [their] reporting and did not perpetuate this misinformation” (Butterworth-Carr, 2016, para. 11). The assistant commissioner’s statement was posted in its entirety to the BC RCMP website and shared on social media.

The value of Web 2.0 technologies as a media strategy for police was considered in the study. Although there is arguably a potential value to such application, the study findings suggest that, at least in Canada, police are employing Web 2.0 technologies largely as a community policing strategy. Police post information and tweet directly to the public daily using social media. They provide direction related to in-progress incidents and they share news, positive stories and promotional videos. However, beyond traditional investigative-based news releases, very little of this police-produced content makes it into the mass media. Meanwhile, in the traditional news media realm, journalists continue to set the tone and filter the frames in the social construction of knowledge pertaining to crime, justice and policing. But where police use of Web 2.0 technologies does not appear to impact the power of the media, a social media-enhanced civilian narrative affects both the media and the police. In regards to crime, justice and policing issues, civilians armed with social media and related technologies have the ability to both bypass the media in context framing and influence policing practice. It seems that in addition to being the police, (as according to Sir Robert Peel’s theory), the public is now also the media. As exemplified in the BC RCMP/Creep Catcher matter, the rise of citizen journalism and crowd-sourced policing may ultimately
strengthen the “forced marriage” (Surette, 2011, p. 2) between police and mass media agencies seeking the mutual and symbiotic maintenance of their power dynamic in the social construction of crime, justice and policing issues.

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