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Building Bridges and Solving Crimes? A critical examination of how police use the new
aged technology of social media—specifically Facebook

by

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Thesis

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Abstract

The social media conglomerate Facebook has dramatically grown over the past few years. As a result, many law enforcement officials--specifically police--have taken notice. Recently, this has translated into police departments nationwide adopting Facebook in their daily efforts to improve police performance. Extensive reports from news media outlets have documented the assortment of uses Facebook provides police personnel. It has been reported that police are not only using the tool to prevent crime, but also as an innovative way to engage and interact with the community. In an era of community policing, it is vital to explore whether or not the use of Facebook is a helpful tool in the improvement of, police community relations, or, whether it is causing more harms to specific communities and/or groups of people. This research using theories of critical race, feminist, and left realism will critically assess how one unidentified U.S. police department has utilized Facebook through an examination of both the gains and harms that are created.

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Chapter 1. Technology in Law Enforcement – the gateway to the public?

Police and Technology

The historical devices of the past—telephone, mobile, vehicle, PDA, and the web—have made police connections with the public stronger than ever before. With the advent of the web, more sophisticated tools have surfaced to help spread police information. The social media conglomerate Facebook is just one technological tool that has made an exponential impact on police-public communication patterns.

Developed originally for Ivy League universities, Facebook was dedicated to a select social network of students who communicated and exchanged information between one another. One of a kind, Facebook allowed its members to provide personal contact information, along with the option to post a personal picture of themselves to represent their identity. As the word was spread of the network's popularity, more and more people began to create accounts to connect with their peers. With an influx of created accounts, the inventor Mark Zuckerberg and his team quickly began to expand their services to its users. With the implementation of the "friend option," members could find their buddies and friend them; once the friendship became confirmed, the user would have instant access to that friend's page. The site really began to blossom once it provided the option for its members to communicate in real time via chat systems and e-mail messaging. Revolutionary in nature, Facebook has become one prime force of communication information systems. Its impact is so powerful that it has allowed for the communication of people to reach outside of country lines, as members can find, friend, and chat with family members and friends who live outside the country.

Every day, millions of people across the world log on to Facebook to build relationships and connect with others to share their personal thoughts and stories. Some of the information shared can include pictures, political statements, music, details from last night's events, and even sensitive information such as one's phone number(s), current location, and frequented whereabouts. Police departments nationwide have taken notice and have begun to adopt this information tank in a variety of ways to help improve performance and mesh better relationships with the public.

From a variety of news articles and journals speaking about this phenomenon, it has been learned that police are using Facebook for an assortment of reasons. Notifying the community of missing children and wanted suspects are just a couple examples. Other reports indicate the technology has been used to display departmental history and accomplishments, as well as work as an informative system to keep the community aware of local events and festivities happening in the area. The reports on police use of social media in news and journal articles are extensive; however, there is seldom research available on this hot trending topic in academia. From this writer's knowledge, there has been no academic based ethnographic study of even one police department who is using Facebook in their daily operations to measure its effectiveness. Due to this impediment, we as criminologists have no idea whether the use of Facebook is providing a beneficial service to the police and the public it serves.

With the amount of public information available on social media sites like Facebook, the possibilities of its use by police are endless. Questions to be considered include (a) What types of information do police see as necessary to post on their police page? (b) Why was Facebook implemented into the department in the first place? (c) Do police allow Facebook

fans to comment and or post on their page? (d) How are police working to make the community aware of their Facebook page? (e) What are some of their expectations (if any) in using this technology? (f) Has the implementation of Facebook proven to be beneficial to the department, or has it fallen to be another poor example of police rhetoric?

To answer these specific questions and more, an ethnographic study of one large unidentified police department in the Midwest was chosen. The department was guaranteed anonymity during the study to ensure access and to gain officer's trust. To gauge the questions, a combination of survey questionnaires and face-to-face direct interviews were used. A quick glimpse at the results of this study found that officers utilized Facebook in a variety of ways. However, its overall impact to the department was minimal at best. Barriers identified were a lack of departmental resources, discouragement of having a personal Facebook by management, lack of familiarity and police discomfort with ongoing changes of Facebook interface system, and inability to appropriately staff, monitor, observe, and respond to demands of the site. Critical race theory, along with feminist and left-realist theory, were chosen to assist in evaluating the risks and benefits of this phenomenon.

To outline what to expect in this study, a brief description of each chapter shall be provided now. Chapter 1 highlights the historical origins of technology in policing, with a specific focus on technology that has impacted police community relations. Chapter 1 also discusses research literature that evaluates and discusses the implementation process of past technologies—that were at one point considered new—in policing. Evaluation based studies for the literature review section was more appropriate since the current study is looking to investigate in a similar manner.

Chapter 2 is designated to theory. Three theories of critical criminological thought were chosen to help guide this research and explain the social processes occurring with police use of social media. Critical race theory, Feminist, and Left-Realism were chosen. First, a brief general understanding of each theory is provided. This includes but is not limited to the theory's founder, beliefs, and limitations. Second, a discussion of how each theory relates to the topic at hand and other similar departments nationwide is provided to help give context to the benefits and risks associated with police use of social media. Third, since the theories chosen tend to focus on social factors such as gender, race, and class, a discussion on the intersection of these social factors is discussed to provide a more clear picture of the potential negative side effects.

Chapter 3 is the methods and measures section, which will describe how and when the research was collected. One will also find out how the research was collected, stored, and analyzed. It will also explain in more detail why the department will remain anonymous.

Chapter 4 is the findings section. This chapter elaborates on the array of ways this specific department found Facebook to be useful. It also goes into detail on the limitations found with the implementation of Facebook. This chapter also explains why Facebook was brought on board in the department, who was responsible, what functions of the site worked for police, and what functions that did not.

The section entitled "Conclusion and Discussion" is a brief discussion of the study's findings with directions for future research based on what was found. It also points out the limitations within this study and creative recommendations to remedy the hurdles identified. The overall product of this piece attempts to engage the reader in a new, trendy, understudied topic in the field of criminological research. This researcher hopes that the knowledge to be

gained is taken and expanded upon for future research. To get started, let us begin by looking at technology of the past that has contributed to growing relations between the community and police.

Chandek's 1999 study on police use of aged and newer technologies provides us with a sequential synthesis on how technology has assisted officers to handle community complaints with faster response times and to provide better quality customer service to its citizenry. This chapter is an overview of those technologies and serves as a discussion of the electronic devices that have provided great assistance to police officers. The technology to be reviewed includes the telephone, patrol vehicles, computers, and crime-mapping software, as well as a few case-specific evaluative reports on how technology has impacted selected police departments.

Telephone

Before its creation in the 1870s, citizens in emergency situations were delayed police help because they often would have to seek out an officer walking their local street beat. With the invention of the new nine-digit dialer, police became accessible to the public 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. The emergency number 911 allowed the public to deploy and mobilize officers to their specific location. No longer did citizens have to rely on hope that an officer would be in their area of need. Instead, they could simply use their fingers to get speedy assistance. While this new addition made officers more accessible to the public, it also created valuable intelligence for police departments nationwide. For example, it was learned that a majority of citizen calls are not deemed a true emergency in police standards. In fact, as citizens began to flood police stations with their calls of concern, officers quickly became aware that the calls they received were just that—"calls of concern." With this new

information in hand, officers created a non-emergency line known in some cities as 311. 311 has helped handle community problems tremendously by reducing the volume of calls received in police stations, leaving more emergency lines opened for calls that require immediate assistance. Not only has 311 freed up more officers, it also has been a smart budget choice, as the equipment needed to operate 311 does not cost nearly as much as 911 operated systems (Chandek 1999).

The influx of 911 calls forced police to find a more efficient way to respond to citizen complaints. The invention of the patrol vehicle allowed officers to cut response times literally in half. Before wheels were able to roll on gravel, police became aware of citizen concerns in only one of three ways: walking the beat, viewing a report placed at the station by the complainant, or referring to what was called a call box. Established first in the U.K. in 1891, call boxes, also known as signal boxes, were erected on nine-foot high poles with a red light atop in major cities and towns as an access point for citizens to get ahold of police, fire squad, and ambulances in emergency situations. When citizens were in need of help, they would run to the nearest call box and call the police using the speakerphone. Citizens would then wait for assistance from the local police officer in charge of the beat to respond to the red illuminated light on top of the box (Stewart, 1997). This invention was a tremendous success for both the public and police as it helped them improve communication between one another.

Patrol Vehicles

By the 1980s, patrol vehicles entered the evolution of police technology and assisted officers in more ways than one. First, they allowed officers to patrol a terrain of space, rather than only the few blocks that foot patrol afforded. Second, features that accompany the

patrol vehicle, such as the police siren, allowed officers to halt moving vehicles and legally pass traffic lights in order to reach the emergency situation(s) at hand. Third, with the introduction of radio and computer technology, police vehicles became even better equipped. The invention of computer-based MDTs, also known as Mobilized Data Terminals, gave officers the ability to unobtrusively check drivers for warrants or violations right from the comfort of their patrol vehicle without any probable cause needed. Before MDTs existed, officers had to rely upon visible indicators of probable cause (i.e. questionable driving skills or traffic infractions) to pull drivers over and perform a check (Maguire and King, 2004). The patrol vehicle and the technological advances that followed improved officer performance by allowing them to complete a multitude of tasks in half the time.

On top of cutting response times in half, the patrol vehicle also assisted in enforcing the law. The mere presence of the patrol vehicle causes citizens to pay close attention to their actions to ensure they are not accused of violating the law. Drivers who tend to speed are quick to hit their brakes when a police vehicle is spotted. Drivers who consistently break traffic laws by rolling and stopping at a stop sign are more likely to stop completely if a police car is visible. If one were to be pulled over by a patrol vehicle, citizens can expect officers in the rear view to gather an assortment of information about them with the MDT system discussed earlier (Chandek 1999). With the simple entry of the driver's license plate number, officers can assemble a laundry list of information from the driver's name, phone number, place of stay, and whether the car stopped has been stolen (Chandek 1999 and Northrop 1993).

Computers

The establishment of national and international computer-based information systems in law enforcement has created tremendous growth. Northrop's (1993) study on police use of computers found that computer technology has significantly impacted the police work of both patrol officers and detectives in positive ways. Precisely, patrol officers found the real-time speed of computer technology to help them work more efficiently and save time when out in the field. The up-to-date information that computer databases provide allow officers to quickly be aware if the person they are pulling over is a potential threat and or is wanted by authorities. While patrol officers' use of computer technology is typically limited to routine traffic stops and search warrants, police detectives' use of the technology tends to be much more analytical and reaches boundaries that surpass the national level. During criminal investigations, detectives must piece together a string of facts from evidence of the crime to witnesses and victims (if available) to establish suspects. These investigations can be cumbersome and require a lot of scarce resources that most departments do not have to establish a successful arrest and conviction. The introduction of sophisticated national and international criminal databases have enabled detectives to quickly gather a plethora of information about an individual they are investigating. Information to be found could include but is not limited to their criminal history; past field interrogation reports, which provide the time, day, location, and reason the suspect was interrogated by an officer; known aliases; and even known associates. While the availability of these interconnected databases has improved police work and communication, Northrop noted that many of the systems are scattered and unorganized, causing many officers to do more groundwork to piece together the information they find. Moreover, Northrop found that the systems are not as user-

friendly as they present themselves to be and require some level of skill to operate successfully. Northrop further noted that without proper instruction and an investment on behalf of the police agencies nationwide to learn these computer databases, the improvements that these technologies are intended to bring would be minimal (Northrop, 1993).

Crime-Mapping Software

Shortly after patrol vehicles came the popular crime mapping software system. Operated by geographic information systems technology, police were now able to spatially mark and pinpoint all crimes reported. This technology permits police to collate, manipulate, store, and display crime information in an orderly fashion. For example, a map may be generated to exhibit the location of violent crimes affecting a particular neighborhood. Crimes such as robberies, rapes, or murders are then displayed through a publicly accessible website for citizens to check and see which crimes are more prevalent in their surroundings. These maps have brought forth a great deal of intelligence information springing from dates crimes were reported to presenting the top common crime trends.

From a community-policing standpoint, this technology has helped by building a stronger connection between officers and the community members, keeping them both alert of what areas to be cautious in. Community policing in its simplest terms is a police program where officers are encouraged to work closely with the citizens of communities and neighborhoods to fight crime. It is a team effort approach where the police and the public communicate with one another to help create a safer community for all. Efforts by the police to do this can include walking door-to-door to find out what crimes are affecting a citizen's

neighborhood, passing out crime prevention material, and setting up community meetings for people to voice their concerns about crime (McLaughlin, 2007).

This publicly accessible crime-fighting tool allows citizens to do just that by keeping them informed about problem areas affecting their community. If citizens must enter an area that is known to have a high crime rate, they will be more likely to proceed with caution and call for help in the event they need it (Chandek 1999). Despite this clever technological advancement, critical criminologists such as Leighton and Reiman (2010) would argue that police tools like crime-mapping software tend to mislead and deceive the public from white collar crimes that substantially affect their lives on a daily basis. It is their argument that police representation of the crime problem often boast crimes of the street (i.e., robbers and looters) rather than crimes committed in disguise of the suite (i.e. fraud, unsafe workplaces, and other corporate crimes), which causes far more social harm to the public than all street crime combined (Leighton & Reiman, 2010). The end result places the crime problem at the hands of street level offenders who are often times individuals from the poorer and impoverished classes of society.

Furthermore, Chandek's (1999) succinct analysis on police use of technology provides us with a good background on why and how technology has impacted policing. However, Chandek's study fails to provide any specific case examples or evaluation of how the technology discussed has impacted a particular police department. To give even more insight, a research literature review that provides case study examples of how the past technology of computers, cellular digit packet data (CDPD), and closed circuit television (CCTV) has impacted policing is provided.

The first literature review by Northrop (1995) was a formative evaluation of a meta-analysis field study conducted in 1976 and 1988 on the uses and effects of computers by police in the fight against crime. The evaluation was performed to see how effective computers are to police detectives and patrol officers and if they are utilizing the technology to its full potential. The primary stakeholders of this evaluation are police personnel, specifically detectives and patrol officers. The implementation of computers was designed to increase police performance to better serve and protect the citizenry; therefore, community members were also identified as stakeholders.

The data evaluated were collected by the Urban Information Systems project (URBIS). URBIS used two methods: survey administration and interviews. The data were drawn in 1976 from 42 cities with populations in excess of 50,000. Most of the same cities were revisited in 1988 with the same interviews and surveys administered to the same role holders (not usually the same individuals). The cities were chosen based on the city's profile in use of various policies for the management of computing. An average of 100 participants responded to the surveys and/or interviews for a total feedback of 4,940, with an 80% response rate from the self-administered survey portion. Although the meta-analysis study surveyed a range of authority figures (e.g., policy makers, department managers, staff professionals,) this formative evaluation focuses on police detectives' and patrol officers' use of computers. Response to questionnaires from patrol officers was 468 in 1976 and 420 in 1988; response from detectives was 435 in 1976 and 385 in 1988. The field study measured a variety of uses carried out by computerized information systems (e.g. calculating and printing, record searching, record structuring, analysis); however, the current evaluation focuses solely on the record searching function. Record searching was chosen due to the

evident popularity of its use that was identified through the self-reports and interviews conducted.

The evaluator found that both detectives and patrol officers were enthusiastic about using computers and found them to be beneficial in their daily police routines of accessing information on individuals or a piece of property. Due to the “real time” capabilities of computer technology, officers were able to collect information needed quickly from a computer, rather than rummaging through a cluttered file cabinet. However, the evaluator found that an inadequate implementation process of computers and lack of proper training prohibited officers from using the technology’s full capabilities. Budget cuts were a primary factor that made it difficult for most departments to hire someone to train the staff. Most departments only had one officer who was “tech savvy” and could not designate that person to train the rest of the staff because he or she was often tied-up with requests from detectives handling top-priority cases. Moreover, computer accessibility, reliability, and stability were identified as key components for officers to effectively use computers. Therefore, the evaluator recommended an increase in user-friendly systems and formal training to better the program.

CDPD

In the second literature review, Nunn and Quinet (2002) conducted an outcome evaluation to find out if the implementation of cellular digit packet data (CDPD) technologies—laptop, software and modem placed in police cruisers—in a State Police Agency (SPA) would improve the job performance of Problem-Oriented-Police (POP, also know as community-policing) officers, specifically with officer inquiry process. The CDPD technology was ascertained through an Advancing Community Policing (ACP) grant from

the Community-Oriented Policing Services (COPS) Office of the U.S. Department of Justice. In order to keep the grant, the SPA was required to perform an evaluation on the effects of CDPD technology in POP operations. Thus, the stakeholders of this evaluation were the SPA, the POP officers, and the community they were entrusted to protect.

Researchers were given a period of 3 months (Sep.-Dec. 1998) to evaluate whether or not CDPD technology improved the operations of POP officers in the inquiry process. With a group of 20 POP officers, the evaluators separated them into two groups of ten. The first group, labeled the “pilot group,” would receive the CDPD technology, while the second group, the “control group,” did not receive the technology. To evaluate if the CDPD technology improved POP operations, the evaluators created four analytic components of criteria to measure: qualitative ride-alongs, differences in types and rates of electronic inquiry, general officer productivity, and officer performance evaluation. Data on these four criteria were gathered through observations and interviews conducted by the evaluators with the assistance of dispatchers, officers (both POP and non POP personnel), technical staff, and supervisory personnel of the SPA.

Similar to the findings in the first literature review, POP personnel were enthusiastic about acquiring new technology. They were also similar theoretically, in that SPA claimed that the induction of technology could increase the overall efficiency of agencies without having to expend departmental funds. Contrary to the findings of Northrop (1995), POP officers in the pilot group received effective training on the new technology. Although officers were able to efficiently operate the CDPD, evaluators found that the benefits it provided in POP operations were minimal at best. In fact, the benefits received by the POP officers in the pilot group were no different from those in the control group. The technology

was found to be more helpful in traditional police activities of looking up an individual or checking one's license plate number than POP initiatives. For example, POP officers' participation in after-school programs and language gap barrier programs did not necessarily require the use of rapid response inquiry capabilities of CDPD. In addition, evaluators found that the implementation of CDPD actually ran counterproductive to the goal of POP. It was discovered that CDPD allowed officers to cover more terrain in a small amount of time. This was counterproductive to POP, in that officers should be spending time with community members discussing problems, rather than actively policing them. Finally, due to a tight budget, evaluators postulated that the SPA could have had the evaluation performed only to receive the grant money necessary to install the new CDPD technology in their police cruisers.

CCTV

The third and final literature review by Keval and Sasse (2008) evaluated the impact and effectiveness of CCTV technology used in police departments and security control rooms to fight and reduce crime. The evaluation was performed to understand how CCTV technology has been designed, deployed, and operated to support specific security goals and to discover what activities human operators who work with CCTV have to carry out to attain the goals. The study examined specifically how security organizations/operators adopted the CCTV system in their efforts to improve security and the subsequent citizens to be observed by its use. Control room managers, control room team leaders and operators, police personnel, and local authority employees were identified as potential stakeholders of CCTV evaluations.

During a seven-month period (Sept. 2005-Apr. 2006), the evaluators evaluated 13 CCTV control rooms, three of which were police control rooms. To evaluate the impact and effectiveness of CCTV technology, evaluators used what they called “contextual inquiry”—a process in which structured observations and interviews were used to learn how users work and interact with their workplace. Visits and observations lasted between four and five hours. To understand the process of how and why CCTV technology was implemented in the organization, evaluators asked a set of open-ended questions during the interview process of control room managers. Questions included: “What are your goals for CCTV at your control room?” and “How many operators work per shift?” Evaluators also used the method of unobtrusive direct observation by employing an observation checklist to measure the effectiveness of CCTV technology during work task operations. Items on the checklist were designed based upon the specific study aims noted above. After each visit the evaluators combined their notes in what they called an “affinity diagram” to identify and categorize the main objectives and issues of CCTV.

Working from the interviews, observations and the subsequent affinity diagram created, evaluators certified that the main use of CCTV was to detect and reduce crime. Evaluators were able to discover the main tasks operators performed. The tasks included proactive surveillance, reactive surveillance, and CCTV video review and tape administration. In addition, evaluators were able to measure the amount of time operators spent conducting these tasks, as well as any extra artifacts, such as pen or paper, used to assist them. The affinity diagram also identified usability issues regarding operator shifts, tasks, workstation set-up, artifact usage, situation awareness and the processing of CCTV video footage. The camera-operator ratio imbalance, i.e., too many cameras and not enough operators, as well as

inadequate communication amongst the multitude of stakeholders, were just some issues identified.

As illustrated above, technology has a unique way of impacting police departments and the communities they serve in either a positive, negative, or bilateral way. From the few evaluations discussed, new technology is most likely to have the best impact when implemented properly with a capable enforcer. Each specific department incorporated technology for their individual purposes and came out with different outcomes.

The New Police Tool: Social Media

More recent and sophisticated technologies have been developed and have broadened the artillery belt of police combat tools. The most recent are the social networking sites such as MySpace, Facebook, and Twitter. While the popularity of MySpace has died down a bit, Facebook and Twitter continue to be a hit sensation. At first glance, the two may seem similar but the two are very different. Twitter is a social medium where users can post an assortment of random thoughts that come to mind nonstop called tweets. It also allows its members to post pictures. Members can follow other tweeters, which may vary from celebrities to talk show hosts. The friendship patterns developed through this medium are often vague and not well established since anyone can follow you, unless your privacy setting is turned on.

Facebook, on the other hand, was a social site first created as a social networking tool to connect university level students. Through its growth, it became a medium primarily to keep close friends, family members, and/or business partners connected. The number of user functions provided by Facebook is endless. Users can post thoughts along with images, albums, or video. Users can also chat in real time with their established friends—an

extended perk different from Twitter. Facebook also permits members to set up pages that represent a company rather than a specific person. Most importantly, Facebook offers a wider variety of communication because it does not have a set limit on the amount of characters per post, whereas Twitter does—140 to be exact.

With over 500,000,000 active users, Facebook dominates the social media world in connecting and bridging the gaps between long-lost friends and newly established relationships. Police have noticed this trend and have quickly latched on to this new form of technology.

The “Social Network” is a relatively new concept to many police departments. In fact, it is so new that the implementation process is very informal. From numerous reports gathered, it seems as though adaptation of the social network by police is based upon the discretion of the police officers within the department. Officers who have personal experience with social networking sites may create a profile representing the department without any approval from their supervisors. For example, in the police department of Fairfax County, Virginia, officer Corrine Geller created a profile of their department in the attempts to capture a fugitive who had escaped from a neighboring county. The officer had posted information about the individual on their newly created Facebook page, and within minutes she received intelligence from fans of the page of the fugitive’s whereabouts. The information provided a lead to the fugitive’s apprehension in less than a few hours. Her sergeant was so oblivious as to how she received so much information that he asked what she did to get such a response from the community (MacDonald, 2010). Moreover, officers in charge of creating and managing a department’s profile can vary from the sergeant, lieutenant, or front line officer (see MacDonald, 2010; Portland News, 2010; Eiseman, 2010).

There are many advantageous methods that the police utilize the social network for. One advantage the social network provides to police is the ability to quickly disseminate crime information to the public. The electronic technological functions of social networks allow for information to flow at lightning speeds through up-to-the-minute posts (Cohen, 2010). Officers can use the posting function to distribute information instantly, to warn its citizenry of current crime problems affecting their community. Traditional methods of policing allowed officers to air crime information only through limited time slots on televised news programs. These limited time slots (usually lasting a minimal number of seconds) increases the chances for certain information sent by the police to be missed, especially if the report is small in nature or is considered insignificant from media producing agencies. The advanced technology of the social network, however, allows officers to post information that can stay glued to their profile's wall until they decide to remove it, allowing more time for many users to view (Jacksonville News, 2010). In addition, it is important to note that police being able to submit crime information directly helps reduce the chances of third parties (such as media outlets) altering or misreporting the data. And from a journalist perspective, it acts as another source that reporting agencies may refer to when seeking information from the police (Cohen, 2010; Calderón, 2010).

The types of crime information posted on police department profiles are endless. One example is the emergence of the electronic wanted poster. The most salient feature utilized on social networking sites to achieve this end is the picture uploading function. It is here where officers have the ability to upload multiple images of criminals, fugitives, and suspects who have warrants for their arrest. This strategy is done in hopes that the general public will view and provide tips, such as location information. As former police officer Jim Hudson

put it, “It’s the digital equivalent of the old-fashioned Western sheriffs nailing a wanted poster to a tree” (Stone, 2009, p.1).

However, it should be noted that the effectiveness of this approach is mixed and unclear. For example, the Scottsdale Police Department of Arizona posted an image of a wanted bank robber. The report states that the robber was caught within two weeks of the posting but does not state whether tips from the community assisted in the capture (Jackson, 2009). Massillon Police Department of Ohio, on the other hand, has found it very effective as they have had suspects quickly turn themselves in after seeing a warrant out for their arrest on the sites (Calderón, 2010). Unfortunately, due to the lack of research available in this field, no systematic data are available to check and see how often this strategy actually works towards the department’s benefit. Other reports do not provide any further information, except for the fact that some departments are beginning to employ the digital wanted poster as a new tactic (Cohen, 2010).

Another way police use the social network to counteract crime is by providing its citizens with crime prevention information. Officers are now able to notify the community about current crimes affecting their neighborhood and provide them with helpful tips that they can use in order to protect themselves. For instance, if a certain neighborhood has become the target of property crimes such as burglary, the police can remind its members to make sure their doors and windows are locked before departing their residence. In addition, police departments who use the social network have found that many people become targets of burglary because they inform the community through their own posts that they are leaving the home. This was a common phenomenon in the city of Nashua, New Hampshire, in August of 2009. In this one-month period, over fifty homes were burglarized. As a result,

the Nashua, New Hampshire, police department encouraged its citizens (through its social network profile) to be cautious about what information they post when on social networking sites (Siciliano, 2010).

The police are also using the social network as an open forum of communication between them and the citizens to combat crime together. This has especially been the case for offenses like robbery. If officers need assistance in identifying a suspect(s) from a recent corner store robbery, they can upload the video or electronic image(s) onto their social network profile and ask citizens to help provide tips (Calderón, 2010). For example, one report indicated the police department of Auburn, Maine, posted on its Facebook page images from a video surveillance involving three teenagers who vandalized a spa at a local hotel. Within minutes, its Facebook members provided enough tips to result in the suspects being arrested and charged for the crime (Stone, 2009). Despite their achievements from employing this method, there are minimal data available on how effective and common this specific practice is for police departments.

However, it should be noted that something remarkable is happening with police using social networking sites to communicate with the public. It could be argued that this new police tool (the social network) is a form of community policing. As the evidence presented above exhibits, police departments who use the social network are actively engaging the public, through their social network profile, in their attempts to reduce crime. In addition, many reports highlight the fact that police want help from the public to reduce crime (see Norris 2010; Cohen 2010; Calderón, 2010). Whether police view this tool as a community-policing model is unknown because there is minimal academic research

evaluating police perception of this form of technology in their daily initiative to inform the public about crime.

Law enforcement officers are not only using social networking sites just to post crime information. They also are using this technology to perform service-based functions like alerting and notifying the public about traffic safety information. As mentioned before, mainstream media such as news outlets are not able to provide certain information right when it occurs because of editing time lines. With the use of social networking sites like Twitter, police can inform the public about areas to avoid and explain why certain intersections are closed off. For example, Sergeant Tim Burrows, (an advisor for Toronto's traffic services unit) has used the "tweet function" of Twitter to communicate ongoing traffic situations to the public. He described the tool as "a valuable public service" to the community (Cohen, 2010).

Other service-based functions that some police departments use social networking sites like Twitter for is to notify the community of school closures and weather alerts (Calderón, 2010). They also use the service to inform the public why police officers may be concentrated in a specific area. This has proven to be very beneficial in instances where people think there is a dangerous situation occurring, when that may not be the case (MacDonald, 2010; Antlfinger, 2009). It is interesting to note here that by some police departments using the social network as a tool to perform service-based functions (inform citizens about crime, traffic alerts, provide prevention info, public info such as school closures and weather alerts), it challenges the stereotypical view of police as everyday crime fighters. Instead it produces the image of a communication agent, rather than a crime fighting macho hero. Many critical criminologists in the field of policing have presented

powerful arguments that question the traditional image of the police. They postulate that even before the technological age (and still today), police were information workers performing social functions rather than the idealized physically demanding manly occupation that it's promoted to be (Corsianos 2009; McLaughlin 2007; Erricson and Haggerty, 1997). Yet again, whether police see it this way is unknown because the tactic is relatively new. Nevertheless, as illustrated above, the social network is changing the traditional ways police get information out to the public. From crime to public information services, the police are now able to carry out these functions in the online realm of the social network that were once usually geared towards the streets.

In addition, it could be argued that the police are using the social network as an early warning system. Before the social network was established, officers received a majority of crime information and public safety issues by citizens calling in. Nowadays, people who witness crime are posting these incidents on their social networking sites. Recall that social networks allow for people to share what's on their mind. Depending on the privacy settings of one's account, an individual's post may be visible for anyone to see. Police departments who are using the social network as another tool in their day-to-day operations have realized this truth. According to officer Brian Muntean of the Massillon police department in Ohio, "A lot of people just feel more comfortable posting on the Wall than talking on the phone" (Calderón, 2010, p. 1). Besides this online article published by Calderón (2010), there are a few other reports that imply officers are resorting to the social network to gain crime intelligence because more and more people are using these text-based technologies as opposed to the traditional phone (see Cohen, 2010; MacDonald 2010; Antlfinger, 2009).

In relation to the social network acting as an early warning system, police can gaze across social network news feeds to find posts that relate to potential crime problems. For instance, if someone posts that there is a crowd of people yelling in a specific area of the city, police can spot this and dispatch an officer to that location to ensure there is not a potential public safety issue at hand. Additionally, some social networks have created location-based categories that members can view and comment on, which has further helped police.

Location-based categories include the option to post where one is currently located while making a post. With Facebook, members can type the location along with the status for location details to become available, whereas with Twitter, one can tweet about a specific place and all tweets associated with that place can be bunched into a separate newsfeed for officers to scan. For example, Twitter provides its users with real time information that interest them. By doing so, officers can view Tweets in specific communities that they are required to protect. Boston's Police Department, for example, has recently incorporated Twitter's social network in their day-to-day operations of public safety. To avoid responding to misleading messages, Superintendent John Daly has instructed his officers to pay attention to reoccurring tweets of specific incidents in the Boston area, not specific users.

Superintendent Daly explained, "If two or three things come in we look at patterns, trends, something maybe we should be paying attention to" (Cohen, 2010).

Scanning tweets that constantly refer to a specific incident can warn officers about potential crimes or public safety issues before they escalate into a bigger issue. Despite this proactive approach to preempt crime, there is no transparency on how common this phenomenon is. There is also little indication of who is being placed in charge to monitor or scan the newsfeeds of the social networking sites. In the instant case of Boston, we know

that it is the duty of the police officer but we do not know how many or what division of officers are assigned to this duty. This is yet another interesting tactic that needs further attention from scholars in the criminological field of policing. This attention will help provide further analysis as to whether this tactic is an effective postmodern early warning system for police agencies to employ.

Another major contribution of the social network to police is the ability to communicate with younger populations. Today, more and more teens are more apt at texting than using the technology of telephones. According to Tip 411, "Text messaging has become the communication medium of choice for many people because of its cost effectiveness, simplicity, and reliability-especially among a younger demographic" (Citizen Observer, 2010). Former Detroit Police Chief Warren C. Evans validated this in a press release when he stated that most calls their department receives come from older people, not those who are in the text generation (Detroit Department Unveils Tip 411, 2010).

Citizens may not report crime for a variety of reasons. One factor that contributes to a lack of crime reporting is police intimidation. Goldsmith (2005) pointed out that intimidation is one key element that fosters distrust of the police. This distrust undermines public expectations that the police will actually listen to their concerns. Thus, many citizens refrain from reporting crime because they do not believe their concerns will be taken care of responsively. A major reason why young populations deter from reporting crime is because they do not want to be labeled as a snitch. The risk of being identified as a snitch can lead to severe social repercussions. One can be ostracized from their social group or physically threatened if ever identified as the culprit of snitching (Woldoff and Weiss 2010). To combat this, police agencies such as Detroit's Police Department (DPD) has employed the services of

Tip 411, which is a text based crime-fighting tool that allows anyone with a cell phone to text crime information anonymously to police. Here is how the process works. First, the text is sent to an independent third party where it will be encrypted to ensure anonymity. The text is then transferred to DPD's computer account, which is monitored by an officer 24/7/365. Once received, the officer immediately refers the tip to the proper unit. What makes this system efficient is that if officers need more information, they can still communicate with the tipster through the third party (Henderson, 2010).

This new technologically driven system has proven to be very effective, especially in the narcotics unit of DPD. As of January 2010, citizens' participation in Tip 411 has assisted with the confiscation of illegal drugs estimated at \$89 million. According to current DPD Police Chief Ralph L. Godbee, Jr., the successful persistence of their data-driven approach has helped clear massive amounts of illegal narcotics from the neighborhoods. As the accounts detail above, by protecting identity through anonymity, police departments can expect to receive an increase of crime reporting from youth populations in the near future (Detroit Police Drug Raids Netted \$89 Million for 2010, 2010).

Furthermore, police departments are using social networking sites to help solve cold case files and missing person cases. In the past, citizens were informed of these types of cases only through newspapers, milk cartons, and news media outlets. With the far-reaching capability of social networks and the millions of people who use them on a day-to-day basis, police have begun to broaden their methods with the use of this technology. Police personnel in the county of San Joaquin in French Camp, California, have created a Facebook page committed to seeking justice for the cases that have gone unsolved. San Joaquin's County Sheriff Steve Moore explains, "By embracing today's technology, social networking gives

our citizens an opportunity to help us with our continuing pursuit of solving cases and bringing justice to the citizens of this county” (Kazmi, 2010). Their Facebook page provides detailed information about unsolved murder victims, including but not limited to their race, sex, date of birth, weight, location of the body, cause of death, and frontal face image. Some of the victims have cash rewards for any information that leads to solving their case. Additionally, their Facebook page provides links to its fans on how to anonymously provide information regarding missing persons and unsolved cases. As mentioned earlier, people are less likely to report crime if they believe others will find out. The success rate of this agenda, however, is too new for adequate evaluation. Considering it was just implemented in October 2010 (Kazmi, 2010), the department has not had enough time to publish any substantial evidence that it is effective. In spite of that, it should be noted that the trend is catching on in other police departments nationally. More reports indicate that the reopening of cold case files by police who use social networks is growing (see Cergol, 2010; 12 Fox Mankato-A CBS/FOX Affiliate, 2010).

Moreover, in their attempts to deter crime, reports indicate that police are shaming or at least planning to shame law violators on the social network. The main targets for police have been drunk drivers or non-custodial parents who owe outstanding arrearages for the care of their child. To shame them, the police will post a picture of the individual along with information that describes what they are guilty of for community members to comment on. For example, the police department of Fairfax County Virginia “regularly posts photos of parents who are accused of failing to pay court-ordered child support” (MacDonald, 2010, p. 1). On the other hand, Huntington Beach Police Department of California are considering posting drunk drivers on their Facebook page in order to decrease the significantly high DUI

rates in their city. According to a report in July of 2009, the police cited, “274 alcohol-related collisions and 1,687 drunk-driving arrests last year--one of the highest rates statewide for a city its size” (Barboza, 2010, p. 1). The rationale behind this tactic is that people will be less likely to violate the law if they know their potential misdeed(s) will be plastered across the newsfeed of the social network for members to condemn. The effectiveness of this tactic, yet again remains unknown because it’s relatively new. However, one could argue that it may very well be a promising tool. Prior research on shaming drunk drivers has proven to be a more effective deterrent than legal sanctions (Grasmick, Bursik Jr., & Arneklev, 1993).

Finally, police have also used the social network as an investigation tool to combat crime. An increasing number of officers are beginning to go undercover in the online world, creating fake profiles to communicate with known suspects and targets of their investigations. The use of social networking sites in assisting undercover investigations has proven to be very productive for law enforcement officials. The information that can be obtained has provided great victories for the police when establishing their reports before they reach the courts. As mentioned earlier, people use the social network as another means to present, communicate, and represent themselves to the online world. The evidence that can be ascertained from social networks can reveal personal communications and relationships, establish motives, provide location information, prove and disprove alibis, and establish crime or a criminal enterprise (Kim, 2010). As journalist Lardner explained, “Online photos from a suspicious spending spree – people posing with jewelry, guns or fancy cars – can link suspects or their friends to robberies or burglaries” (Lardner, 2010).

A major reason why police are creating fake profiles in the social network is to

investigate criminal gang activity. A variety of reports have verified this fact (see Baldas 2010; Eiseman, 2010; Weichselbaum 2009). In the state of Florida, gang members have used social networking sites such as Facebook and MySpace to brag about their involvement in criminal gang activity. Members of these gangs may post photos of themselves in gang colors along with gang-related hand gestures. Some even use these sites as a way to make threats about future criminal activity against other rival gangs. Florida police have recognized these shenanigans and have used the fist of law to combat such unruly behavior. As of October 2008, Florida passed a law that makes it a third degree felony for anyone who posts electronic communications that “furthers the interest of a criminal gang” (874.11 Fla. Stat, 2008).

Before proceeding any further, it should be recognized that this new tactic is altering the general investigative methods of gangs. Traditionally, police studies of gang culture violence were restricted to the streets. Officers relied on street graffiti and the like to distinguish between the various violent groups. With the establishment of social networks, police have had to extend their investigative knowledge base operations to the online world. As George W. Knox, director of the National Gang Crime Research Center, explained, “Just as time on the streets has given gang investigators the ability to read the hieroglyphics of wall graffiti, time on the Web helps them understand arcane Web Clues. Gang identifiers, such as tattoos, graffiti tags, colors and clothing often are embedded in each site” (Glazer, 2006).

These online undercover investigations are happening not only at the local level. State and federal law enforcement officers are taking part in the technology as well. In order to avoid getting involved in one another’s investigation, police coordinate their online activities with federal agencies such as the Secret Service and FBI in a strategy known as

“deconfliction.” According to Detective Frank Dannahey of the Rocky Hill, Connecticut, Police Department, “You could really mess up someone’s investigation because you’re investigating the same person and maybe doing things that are counterproductive to what another agency is doing” (Lardner, 2010).

As that may be, this is yet another gap in the research presented because there is minimal information available on the commonality of local and federal police agencies coordinating their investigations when it comes to using the social network. In fact, Richard Lardner seems to be the only reporter in the field who has mentioned it. Despite the lack of empirical research in this domain, it should be recognized that another traditional police practice is changing. The conventional use of “deconfliction” amongst police has usually applied in street raids, sweeps, and drug busts (RISS, 2008). With the movement of modern technology, police are now being forced to apply these practices to the online world. One can argue that this phenomenon opens up another door for researchers to explore.

From the research literature it appears that social media technology has proven to be very resourceful in the field of law enforcement. This specific study focuses on the impact of Facebook with one unidentified police department’s community policing initiative. Given the relative scarcity of scholarly literature available on police use of social media, I approached this research on an exploratory level, therefore limiting my analysis to one major police local. Although I acknowledge that the effectiveness of Facebook technology in this study would not likely generalize to other police departments using it nationwide, it should be noted that this begins a foot in the right direction by bringing much needed attention to a neglected field of research in criminology. It is the hopes of this researcher that the results

discovered in this study will push other criminology practitioners to fill in the missing gaps and to provide more knowledge and insight in such an important popular field of criminology.

Chapter 2 - Theory

This chapter is devoted to theory. There are two fundamental missions in theoretical criminology: to help understand criminal behavior and help us understand why we have the crime we have. In the expansive field of criminology lies an arsenal of theories to help explain new and old phenomenon. From policing to correction to the courts and criminal behavior, the theories of criminology have provided us tools to not only help us understand societal happenings but also recommendations to change them for the better. Of the theories available, it was the decision of this researcher that critical race theory, feminist theory, and left-realism would be the best theories to help evaluate this study. A discussion of each theory will be provided detailing the pioneers, their beliefs, their goals, and how it applies to this work of social media and the police.

Critical Race Theory

The first theory of choice is critical race theory. Developed in the 1980s, critical race theory is concerned with the relationships between, race, racism, and power. The theory caused a collective uproar on behalf of academic scholars and law students who witnessed a foreseeable downturn in the Civil Rights Movement. Different from civil right initiatives, which focus on gradual reform and systematic progress in the justice system, critical race theory questions the very core of our country's legal order. The known pioneers of this theory include Derrick Bell, Richard Delgado, and Alan Freeman (McLaughlin & Newburn, 2011).

For the purposes of this research, critical race scholar Katheryn Russell's book *The Color of Crime* (1998) will be the reference point to help examine how police use of Facebook could contribute to the continuous mass media demonization of people of color.

Russell contends that both media distortions of crime and America's historical past of atrocious racism have placed the crime problem at the hands of the African-American and Latino communities. As a result of this reality, she asserts that different types of crimes have become categorized by the color of one's skin, whereby street crime is displayed to be a type of crime committed by only those of color, whereas corporate crime is viewed as a crime committed by elite whites—hence the book's title "*The Color of Crime.*"

Despite this vivid inseparable image of crime, Russell argues that even though the research clearly indicates that white collar and corporate crime (a predominant white class of crime) contribute to more social damage, street crimes continue to be the lead focus by not only news media outlets but law enforcement officials as well. This undeniable reality that continues to be heralded by enforcers of the legal order leads most Americans to believe that the person (or better yet the group) they should fear is the young, black male. This demonic attack against the black race, Russell argues, is rooted in this country's history of race hate laws. To illustrate this point, Russell systematically analyzes the racial discriminatory laws of this country's past such as slave codes, to Black codes, to the infamous Jim Crow laws to even the horrendous spectacles of lynchings, which she denoted as the "the ultimate form of vigilante justice" (p.13).

To provide more insight on these pivotal points, Russell describes how certain legislation was passed that appeared to assist the black community yet in reality placed them into a position of further oppression and hopelessness. Specifically, with the passing of the Black codes, Blacks were granted rights to marry and enter into contracts. However, while these laws were drafted to grant them the rights that their white counterparts already had, new laws had already begun to be set in motion to curtail their newfound freedoms. With the

opportunity to work for pay, blacks who could not find a place of employment were subjected to a fine no less than \$15 and jail sentence of no more than ten days, as being unemployed became a crime (Russell, 1998; West, 1993). Even when blacks tried to obtain employment, Russell explains how roadblocks were strategically put in place to deny them employment. For example, many businesses began to impose strict licensing requirements for the most mundane jobs. What is more, even if blacks were lucky enough to obtain a license, they could easily lose their golden ticket with a simple complaint (Russell, 1998; West 1993).

If these new established rights were not backwards enough, the retaliation that many blacks faced from vigilante groups—which sometimes included police officials—was just the icing on the cake. Heckled and harassed, many blacks found themselves victims of treacherous lynching by the hands of the Ku Klux Klan (KKK), a white supremacist group who believed that blacks were subordinate and inhuman to the white class race. Russell goes into gruesome details of how lynchings were glorified events, whereby white families (including children) would gather to watch those captured be hanged, burned, and shot. Black men and women would be stripped naked and their bodies used as desecrated souvenirs after the murder. Blacks who were simply accused—not found guilty—for disrespecting or rebutting anyone of the white race would often be the trigger to start these grotesque forms of racist justice.

Although time has progressed and our country has banished these barbaric practices, scholars contend that white racism still persists in subtle and covert ways. West (1993) argued that many barriers have been set in place to block people of color from the social institutions of education and employment. Many are meshed into impoverished, violent, and

heavily policed neighborhoods. Viciously monitored and harassed, many Blacks are slapped with criminal records from an early age. The consequences of these charges are overwhelmingly damaging. Criminal records block them from obtaining admission into universities, and lack of education blocks them from positions of employment. These factors further lead to unemployment or underemployment, which forces some people of color to resort to alternative routes of success, that are, sometimes illegal. Many end up in jail or prison and subsequently lose their right to vote, which strips away the political power/voice of many Black communities (West, 1993). These pressing realities are an undying burden for this population, causing some, if not most, to lose hope and faith. Even though progress has been made within our society to give Blacks more fair and equal rights, there still seems to be no light at the end of the tunnel to stop the crusade against the black population.

In sync with the current study, Russell (1998) argued that white racism persists in this day and age, especially in mainstream media. When most Americans think of crime, a young black male comes to mind. Russell argues that media very seldom focus on successful Black people. And even when an attempt is made to focus on well-to-do Blacks, it is the Black's past that often times becomes the center of attention, which is drawn out to be one of deviance and mischievousness before their big break occurred.

Russell goes on to assert that covert racism is further promulgated by mass media distortions of the crime problem. Russell contends that the media's focus on street crimes like robbery and burglary—which tend to highlight people of color as the primary culprits—places a face of color to be the image that pops into one's mind when they think of crime. This overrepresentation of connecting street crime with people of color produces a terror amongst the general public to be fearful of them. These reports also reinforce stereotypes

about people of color. This unfair and tragic reality has “exacted a burdensome toll on the majority of law-abiding citizens of color,” argues Russell (p. 11). Many law-abiding citizens of color find themselves living in a constant state of cautiousness and fear, as they are aware that any of their actions could be considered deviant and quickly place them under some form of correctional control. Race scholar Cornell West declared these processes as “nihilism.” Nihilism, according to West, is an awareness and sense of worthlessness, hopelessness, and lovelessness experienced by people of color, specifically Blacks (West, 1993). In a world full of scrutiny against its people, Blacks live a life in which they must always fight for respect and an appreciated stance in society.

Finally, Russell explains that the power of media’s distorted image of crime has helped rationalize racism. While its form is not as brutal and heartrending as the days of slavery, the media’s persistent attack on blacks and people of color is subtle enough to warrant it as such. For example, when someone of the white race falsely accuses someone Black of a crime, the media’s attention becomes maximized. However, when the role is reversed (black accusing white of a crime) their attention wanes; the story drops from the radar. In fact, crimes by people of color continue to be glorified and idolized by blacks and whites alike. The research discovered in the current study is further proof of this reality. To provide a snapshot image of this unfortunate phenomenon, a brief analysis of another police department’s use of Facebook, along with the department of this study, will be provided to help illustrate how the claims of critical race theory are still relevant and a central component in understanding how race and crime are inseparable in the field of criminological research.

A quick peek at Colorado’s Jefferson County Police Department’s Facebook page is a perfect example. Like many police Facebook pages, Jefferson utilizes their page to inform

the public about local community events, provide crime prevention information, and alert the community of suspects to watch out for. Other features of the page that separate it from most is the option to search sex offenders and its posts regarding the department's history.

With a fan base of over 10,000 and a sheriff who actively monitors, oversees, and updates the page, this department's Facebook receives a lot of attention from the community on a daily basis. A content analysis of the page has shown that an average of at least 20 likes and 5 comments are made from the community for each post made. Here recently, one posting contained an odd mixture of relationship advice along with a small note to call if police assistance was required. The posting read, "Good morning. Some relationship advice; if they can be taken, they aren't worth having. Call us if you need us." The post received over 200 plus likes and 24 comments. Some fans agreed with the comment, while others questioned its relevance to the purposes of law enforcement. What is interesting to note here is the way in which Facebook was used as a shaming/stigmatizing mechanism on behalf of the police department. In this message, stigma and shaming are applied to those who cheat on their significant others, while words of encouragement are fostered towards those who have been faithful. Although this is not a common function of the department's use with Facebook, these small innuendos provide an insight in the creative ways Facebook has been utilized by police forces. For the purposes of this research a focus on how they have used Facebook to alert the community of potential suspects and how it relates to critical race theory will be discussed.

Since its creation in May of 2010, the department has created an album entitled "Creep of the Week," which is dedicated to displaying suspects who have not been found guilty of the crimes for which they have been alleged. Each week the department selects one

creep to display on their Facebook page and describes them as someone the community should be aware of. Accompanied with the image is a small bio of the suspects, name, date of birth, race, height, last known address, and the crime for which they have been accused. What is most startling here is when one proceeds to click on the link of “Creep of the Week,” it takes the user to a collage of color that represents nothing more than young men of color as the primary “creeps” in the community. It is not until the ninth image that the user is introduced to a white class of criminal (12/10/12). However, as indicated by Russell, most of these crimes that have been posted are focused solely on street level crime.

Most of the crimes presented deal with either robbery or burglary. The end result leaves most community members to wrongfully believe that people of color and the crimes associated with them (i.e. black crime) should be what they fear. This narrowed focus on the crime problem is an exact replication of media representation or better yet, distortion of what should be considered dangerous crimes. Moreover, and what is truly disturbing, is the photographic image of handcuffs and jail bars that is located in the Creep of the Week album. From a critical lens, one could argue that this image is a symbolic representation that means the people in this album—people of color—belong nowhere else but behind bars and should be feared by the community. When one looks at the amount of commentary provided by the community regarding this album, statements of affirmation and sarcasm can be found. For example, some fans have commented, “Creep of the Week, I love it!!” whereas others have commented, “They just keep coming....AND ANOTHER ONE BITES THE DUST!!!!!!!!!!”

A small glance of the current study would showcase a similar image. To provide you with a slice of what is in store, it was found that most posts regarding crime centered on individuals of color. A rash of phone and in-house scams (to be discussed in further detail)

were the main posts about crime. In almost every post, the alleged perpetrators were said to be someone of color, whether it be African American, Latino, or even Middle Eastern. Out of all posts regarding crime, not one centered on, nor did one allege a crime committed by, one of white descent. These are posts analyzed from the start date of the department's page. These specific postings can be found during the summer months of May 2012. From just the small observations of this department and others, the overrepresentation regarding people of color's involvement in crime looks to be a continuous cycle, regardless of whether it is being circulated through news media or social media.

The effects of police use of social media in this light are profound. In congruence with Russell's arguments regarding media representations of crime, people of color continue to be targeted and attacked as the primary crime problem. These new hip ways to reinforce stereotypes of black criminality (i.e. Creep of the Week) exacerbate the stress and fear that many people of color have to live with on a day-to-day basis in our country. Not only do they have to deal with stigma from media in news reports, journals, and the infamous weekly crime newspapers, but they now also have to add another layer of criticism with the inclusion of social media.

What is ironic is recently the Creep of the Week recently updated its album with a caption above stating, "The people featured here, should be considered innocent until proven guilty. They may be dangerous. If you see them or know where they are let us know. Please do not attempt to take any action on your own. Call us at ***-***-****." Despite this sign of positive change, it does not change the fact that people of color continue to be overrepresented on their page. Instead of using this new cutting edge technology to illustrate a more fair and accurate account of this country's crime problem, social media is being used

to perpetuate the same harm that mass media outlets have produced for decades. The unfortunate reality then becomes the color of one's skin and crime becoming an inseparable, interconnected phenomenon that rules our criminal justice system.

Feminist Theory

The next theory to provide more understanding to this topic is feminist theory. Established in the 1970s, feminist theory began as one of the first theories to make a fundamental distinction between the concept of sex and gender. Sex is distinguished as the bio-physiological differences between men and women. Gender refers to the differences that are socially constructed and or ascribed by society. Feminist theory also was a critical movement to address all traditional mainstream criminological paradigms that neglected woman and young girls from the academic research. Discussed early on by academics and university students alike, the feminist perspective argued that women had been dismissed from criminological theory, whether it was as victims, offenders, or even workers of the criminal justice system (Belknap; 2001, Lanier & Henry, 1998). While class, race, and age were all common themes addressed in most theories of crime, gender in the sense of women and their differences from male criminality was completely absent (Franklin 2004; Miller 2004; Belknap, 2001; Steffensmeier, 1996). This omission, according to feminist scholar Carol Smart, left the field of criminology gender blind (Lanier & Henry, 1998).

Attempts were made to include and explain women's and young girls' participation in crime using mainstream criminology. However, feminist scholar Meda Chesney-Lind, along with others, argued that attempting to explain female criminality through mainstream criminology created a two-fold problem. First, Chesney-Lind explained it would be problematic to generalize criminal behavior for both male and females with traditional

criminological theories primarily because these theories were drafted from a male-constructed point of view. Trying to mesh masculine-constructed theories of crime with women criminality would essentially make the results limited and unreliable (Franklin 2004; Miller 2004; Belknap, 2001; Lanier & Henry, 1998, Steffensmeier, 1996). For example, when mainstream criminology was applied, women's crime was analyzed and interpreted under a stereotypical lens, whereby their criminality was reduced to property crimes such as shoplifting, poisoning, and minor status offenses. Yet, later research found it was women involved in an array of criminal activity spanning from robbery to drug abuse to child abuse to drug dealing and even white-collar crime (Miller, 2004, Belknap, 2001, Lanier & Henry, 1998). The second issue dealt with the gender-ratio problem, which was a challenge by academic scholars to explain why men are more criminally inclined than women. Yet again, the ability to do such a task with mainstream theory was impossible because it lacked a framework of the woman mind, her social circumstances, role, position, and the power she held (or lack there of) within society (Franklin, 2004; Miller, 2004; Belknap, 2001; Lanier & Henry, 1998).

To account for these differences, Chesney-Lind argued that feminist work needed to construct a balanced and more accurate account of women's experiences and involvement in the criminal justice system. In the beginning, two dominant paradigms of feminist thought—liberal and Marxist—were used to help explain why women would resort to criminal activity (Burgess-Proctor, 2006). These two perspectives, in large part, placed blame at the hands of capitalist-patriarchal systems, which were said to place women in a subservient position because they live in a male-dominated society whereby opportunities for their success are further blocked or limited because the means of production are

predominantly controlled and structured by the male sex (Vold, Bernard, & Snipes 1998). The limited access to opportunity structures was just one of many reasons which helped explain why some women would resort to crime.

Feminist criminology focuses not only on why both sexes resort to crime, but also on how gender dictates which types of crimes women and men are more inclined to commit. To understand this concept, it is important to understand what is meant by gender. To understand gender, one must study and look at the practices of “doing gender”—the process of performing in masculine or feminine ways in relation to one’s sex identity (Corsianos, 2012). Masculine characteristics have been described as being strong, powerful, assertive, and dominant, whereas feminine characteristics have been described as being respectful, nurturing, vulnerable, or passive (Corsianos, 2012, Messerschmidt, 1997, Messerschmidt, 1998). It is the argument that engaging in these characteristic behaviors (rather masculine or feminine) is doing and engaging in the person’s socially constructed identified gender.

By centralizing the focus on the concept of gender, feminist scholars have been able to pinpoint why men and women commit different types of crimes. According to Messerschmidt (1997 and 1998), it is the characteristics of male masculinity that explain why men are more likely to partake in crimes that center on greed and power since they are socialized on principles of dominance and independence. It has also been found that men are more likely to be involved with crime more frequently than woman, especially when it comes to defending the gender identity of masculinity. This reality stands overwhelmingly true for young, poor minority men. With doubt that legitimate routes of success are available to them, many engage in a variety of aggressive masculine behaviors to attain status and respect within their communities. Activities may include robbing, selling contraband, street brawls,

and gang violence. Women, on the other hand, despite their social position, have always been socialized and programmed to take on the role of caretaker and to practice less harmful non-violent social behaviors. This is not to say that women are not capable of engaging in similar aggressive behaviors like men. In fact, woman can be just as violent. However, even when research examines similar crimes committed by both men and women (i.e. financial crime), the research reveals that women's level of involvement and violent behaviors tend to be less threatening and occur at a much smaller frequency than men's (Corsianos, 2012, Messerchmidt, 1997, Messerchmidt, 1998).

More importantly, feminist perspectives on gender help us understand why men are geared towards crime of greed and power, whereas women crimes are typically low level offenses that involve crimes of minute monetary gain, such as check fraud or shoplifting. Now although women are less likely to engage in more criminal activity than men, it does not mean they are dismissed from similar behaviors. To help better explain female criminality, Messerchmidt (1997, 1998) examined what he called gender difference, a process by where a female sex would adopt masculine characteristics. Instead of being caring and passive, the female would adopt an aggressive take-charge attitude. These socialized crime-driven traits better help explain why it is gender and not the biophysical traits of sex that assist in indicating criminal activity more accurately. This gender-based approach is a fundamental gift from the Feminist paradigm, as it opened a door of understanding as to how the social role of gender shapes our understanding of crime (Messerchmidt, 1997, 1998; Corsianos, 2012).

Despite the progressive movements made by feminist criminologists, there are a few limitations. For starters, the primary pioneers of feminist theory have been criticized for their

failure to address the varying experiences of different women, especially women of color (i.e. Blacks and Latinos). The beginning strands of feminist theory were predominantly shaped under the viewpoint of white women whose race afforded them more privileges than their colorful counterparts. The discrimination faced by white woman in the criminal justice system clearly differed from women of color, not only because of their race but also because of the social position race placed them in society.

Moreover, with the many differing perspectives of feminist thought circulating—Radical, Social, Liberal, Marxist, Cultural, Women of color—it makes it difficult for both academics and students alike to distinguish the many different viewpoints of their arguments (McLaughlin & Newburn, 2010). However, what should be understood is that although these feminist thoughts are different, they all share common parallels in their call to empower women, obtain equality for all, and its examination of how the powerful social construct of gender affects the context of crime.

In addition, despite the limitations within feminist theory, Kathleen Daly (2010) has pointed towards new directions and alternatives for future thinkers of feminist thought. Before discussing those new directions, it is important to understand a few key principles of feminist thought. First, although feminist theory is not restricted to woman scholars, many scholars of feminist theory are women. Second, feminist theory focuses on other complex social factors rather than solely sex and gender issues. The reasons behind this fall in the line with the third key principle, which is that feminist criminology is a branch of critical criminology, a school of thought, which focuses on oppressed populations and neglected social phenomena that deserve and/or need academic attention. Anyone with a hunger to

discuss such topics should be considered to be apart of what is called the feminist movement (McLaughlin & Newburn, 2010).

Future feminist directions, according to Chesney-Lind, should focus on a variety of new concepts. The recommendations Chesney-Lind provides are enlightening and certain to bring new knowledge to this discipline; however, only a couple will be reviewed for the purposes of the present study. Daly (2010) argues that upcoming feminist researchers should focus on the context and qualities of boy's/men's and girl's/women's illegal acts, which she labeled "gendered crime." Daly (2010) further argues that it is important to understand the social organization of specific offences to see why it would draw more attention to either the female or male sex.

To relate feminist perspective to the current study, an ethnography of police posts regarding male and female crime was performed to understand which crimes were often associated with either sex. The Facebook police department chosen to examine this phenomenon was Jefferson County, specifically their "Creep of the Week" album discussed earlier. An analysis of male crime in relation to female crime would reveal an array of alleged violent and non-violent crime posted about both sexes. Crimes spanned anywhere from murder to attempted murder, robbery, burglary, illegally carrying concealed weapon(s), intimidating witnesses, to trafficking in illegal drugs such as cocaine and sexual abuse. Operating within the contours of the feminist perspective, crimes associated with males tended to be more aggressive crimes of power and control, such as robbery, murder, and drug trafficking, whereas crimes associated with women were violent but not as violent as the male crimes presented.

However, to attempt to explain differences presented in male and female criminality in this light would be the wrong way to approach. In the present instance, instead of focusing on differences in female and male criminality, the attention should be focused elsewhere. It was already made clear that poor people of color crowded the images within the “Creep of the Week” album. Therefore, the focus from a feminist perspective should shed light on differences in gender offences presented with the inclusion of race.

When the information is analyzed in this light, one can find that alleged offences committed by women of color are often times presented to be more serious and heinous than alleged offences committed by white women. For example, a woman suspect of white race was posted to the album for assault in the first degree, whereas a black woman was posted for an attempt of murder. Another cross comparison posting displays a black woman who has been said to be involved with an attempted murder, whereas the next female who is of white race, is alleged to have committed robbery in the third degree. A closer look would reveal that most crimes associated with white woman are less threatening than those associated with women of color. There are many property crimes such as robbery or burglary connected to woman of color, while there are less serious crimes associated with white women such as a charge for failure to appear in court. Moreover, a quick skim of the collage would reveal that women of color are presented as “creeps” more so than woman of white descent.

The power of choice in which crimes to associate by race and gender is ultimately that of the police. The question becomes: why are street crimes the selection of crime to present by police in social media, and why are the most violent offences targeted towards people of color? For example, when one looks at the male-race criminality connection on the

“Creep of the Week” album, they will find that alleged crimes committed by black male offenders are presented to be more offensive and volatile than those alleged crimes said to be committed by white offenders.

With a quick glance, the first male “creep” of white race is not visible until you reach the sixteenth image. Before revealing his alleged crime, fans of the page are bombarded with a laundry list of crimes by people of color (a majority of them men) who have been accused of very violent offenses such as murder, drug trafficking, robbery, and serious assault. Yet when they finally reach the image of a white male offender, the alleged charge is associated to animal cruelty—a crime less threatening to the human race. After a few more clicks we are presented with another white male offender who has been accused of intimidating a witness. It was rare to find any severe violent crime being connected to a white male.

What should be highlighted here is that police use of social media—whether they are aware of it or not—is constructing an image of crime that continues to promote stereotypes about race and crime, gender and crime, and the crime problem. While this chapter focuses primarily on Jefferson County’s police Facebook page presentation of crime, it should not be inferred that they are the only police department displaying crime in a similar light. There are many other police departments on Facebook that present the crime problem in a replicated fashion of Jefferson County, just under a more appropriate name or different style. A quick search of other police departments on Facebook would reveal that fact.

Despite this unfortunate reality, it should also be noted that this researcher is not making generalizations based off of just Jefferson’s County presentation of the crime problem. In fact, generalizing the claim that all police departments’ use of Facebook commits to detrimental stereotypes about gender and crime and crime and race and the crime

problem would be invalid. There are many other police departments who use Facebook just to provide weather information, alerts on missing children and historical artifacts/information about the department. However, from a feminist point of view, if police remain unaware of how their actions in relation to how they represent the crime problem in the realm of social media; it will possibly contribute and cause more damage than media outlets that relentlessly oppress poor and disadvantaged people of our society, especially people of color. Moreover, failing to utilize Facebook to inform the public about more sophisticated and inconspicuous crimes, such as white collar and corporate crime, will further instill false beliefs that street crime should be on the fearful radar of citizen's concern.

Left Realism

While the use of Facebook by police can be a great way to connect with the public—especially younger generations—critical race theory, as well as feminist theory, have illustrated the ways this technology can be abused. Most theories, in general, examine social phenomenon and its problems with a few recommendation attached detailing direction for future research. However, very few theories provide ways in which we can turn knowledge gained into active research. Active research is a powerful form of writing that produces awareness of how to solve key social problems discovered. Thus far, feminist and critical race theory have provided a helpful groundwork to identify the problems with police use of social media. The next and final theory to help guide this research into action is Left realism.

Developed in 1984 by scholars Jock Young and John Lea, Left realism was a one of a kind critical analysis of crime, in that it attacked core social institutions of our society to be the root of crime. The institutions of gender, class, the economic structure, and praised values such as competitive individualism were pointed out to be the primary components to

produce crime. What sparked this fiery light of thought was an overly penal criminal justice system of the 1960s that sought to punish those who could not succeed to the economic creed of success. Crime control policies, along with rough law enforcement strategies were enacted during this time to put forth an image of zero-tolerance. Those mainly affected and targeted by these overzealous crime control policies were minorities. Angry and upset over their lack of political power, many minorities engaged in criminal activities to obtain what was considered pleasurable necessities of life (Lanier & Henry, 1998).

Shocked by the amount of injustices practiced against minorities, left realist began to challenge these policies by taking a close analysis of how these policies affected the crime problem and the people involved. While acknowledging that crime committed against victims was a serious matter that deserved serious attention, left realist also believed that these same crime control policies turned these said offenders into actual victims. Living in a society that prides on individualism and competitive edge can place stress on those who do not have access to necessary opportunities to achieve success. Necessary opportunities can include, but is not limited to, a healthy family structure, safe neighborhoods, and quality education. Many minorities are often located in unsafe neighborhoods with unstable families. The education systems in these neighborhoods are poor and seldom provide students with the tools necessary to prepare them for college. Most schools in these areas do not even have up-to-date textbooks enough for every student.

These unfortunate structural events are just one reason why Left realism argues that most criminal justice policies work to marginalize poorer class citizens and disadvantaged youth. To understand crime, Left realism argues that is important to consider how victims, offenders, the criminal justice system, and the general public at large shape what we consider

to be the crime problem. They called this four base examination the square of crime (Lanier & Henry, 1998). In consideration of crime control policies, Left realism, has come to the conclusion that instead of protecting people from crime, they actually reinforce inequalities. Different from right realist who believe crime is a choice committed by its actors, left realist believe that the primary pillars of society shape an environment that creates the need for the disadvantaged to resort to criminal activity.

Rather than resorting to zero-tolerance policies, such as mandatory minimums and lengthier prison sentences, Left realism believes in alternative solutions that provide positive outcomes. For instance, instead of locking people away for years on end, they recommend sanctions such as re-integrative shaming and community service to bring offenders back into the community. These methods, they argue, work better as it prevents offenders from being viewed as uncorrectable unworthy citizens (Lanier & Henry, 1998).

In relation to the topic at hand, Left realism should be used as a tool to create solutions to the many concerns that have arisen from police use of social media. One of the primary concerns regarding the use of Facebook by police is promoting the distorted image of the crime problem. As discussed earlier, many police departments who use Facebook in reference to crime primarily post street level based crimes. Not many have used this technology to illustrate how the malicious actions of white collar and corporate criminals have caused harm to our society. The question becomes: how can police use new advanced technologies such as Facebook to represent what really threatens us in our daily lives? Better yet, the question should be: how can this technology be used more responsibly by police officials to move away from this marginalized image of the crime problem?

Referencing back to Russel's (1998) critical race theory, she argued that our criminal justice system is nothing more than a "sinking ship" (p. 6). By this, she means that despite knowing certain criminal justice policies and strategies do not work, officials and legislators of our justice system continue to enact and promote policy that produce the same failing results. The end result leaves our society in a condition that continues to prey on the poorer class peoples of our society with no positive outlook of change in sight.

As exemplified by Jefferson County's "Creep of the Week" Facebook album, police are using social media technology to represent a crime problem. However, that crime problem continues to be one that not only oppresses people of color, but also produces a distorted image of what we all should really concern ourselves with when it comes to crime. In line with Left realism, it is the argument of this author that police use Facebook to inform the public of how certain flaws within our society can produce the crime problems we have. If citizens are informed of certain social issues that are affecting their community, it will hopefully provide understanding and force change on behalf of community members to fix these issues that create crime. Moreover, if social media sites are going to be used to promote street crime, at the least, police should represent street crime in all of its colors. In other words, white offenders should be seen as violators of crime, as opposed to a mass collage of people of color being presented as the primary problem. Failure to do so, will inevitably drive our society's sinking ship deeper into an ocean that carries with it nothing more than the marginalized citizens of our society—people of color and disadvantaged populations.

While most theories of crime tend to focus on scientific observations of criminality, the theories of critical race, feminist and Left realism have taken a different stance. Looking

at crime from a realistic approach, these theories have taken a more in depth analysis at the contextual issues that shape and construct the represented and unrepresented crime we have today. The power of these critical theories of crime is two-fold. First, it brings awareness to issues that often go neglected in mass media. Secondly, it reveals how policy and mass media coincide with one another to oppress marginalized people of society. While the present study here is not focused solely on how police use of social media can oppress the underprivileged poor, it does work to provide ways in which police use of social media can be used more responsibly. The following chapter will detail the findings of the current study, followed by a discussion of those findings and what they mean for the current state of police and technology.

Chapter 3 - Method and Procedure

An unidentified police department in the state of Ohio was selected to evaluate how the technology of Facebook has impacted community-police relations in their department. Because this area of study is relatively new in the field of criminology, it was decided that an in-depth case study, rather than a simple survey instrument would be a more suitable approach. Case studies tend to bring in more insightful knowledge, as well as personal opinions of the respondents involved. The in depth interviews that accompany this type of approach also provides us with direction for future research, which is an invaluable gem in any produced research (Posavac, 2011). This approach also gives the “opportunity to tailor questions to the respondent.” (Posavac, 2011:154). It would be unreasonable to only use a survey instrument, especially when it only allows for respondents to choose select answers, rather than expand on their frame of thought. In addition, research instruments specific to this topic would rely primarily on news and magazine articles understanding of its use, rather than academic research.

Currently, researchers are not absolutely certain why police have chosen to incorporate Facebook into their departments. Administering a survey instrument without building groundwork to fully know and understand the roots of Facebook’s implementation would bring in decontextualized data that may not be reliable or beneficial.

For those reasons, it was determined that a mixed method approach of qualitative, open-ended, one-on-one interviews, and a survey instrument were best to probe the effect of Facebook on the department. According to Posavac (2011), the purpose of gathering responses to open-ended questions is to enable the researcher to understand and capture the point of view of other people without pre-determining through prior selection of

questionnaire categories. The use of one-on-one interviews with supervisor(s) and staff operator(s), will help gain a detailed account of exactly why Facebook was implemented and how the program works. All interviews were recorded with a portable tape recorder. Due to the sensitivity of studying public figures, confidentiality of the department was promised to gain officer trust and to ensure honest ethical responses. Before any interview began, the designated officer was given a pseudonym that was either chosen for them by the researcher or themselves. To ensure confidentiality was maintained, officers were referred to by their pseudonym during the entire interview process. During the interviews the officer or civilian was referred to by their pseudonym [altered name]. A time frame of at least one hour for interviews and thirty minutes for the survey portion were requested, and if requirements of the job interrupted, interviews and survey data was continued and finished upon the next availability of the Facebook operator. Once data from both the interviews and surveys were completed, they were each stored securely in their own separate file in a lock box that only I, the researcher, had access to. The data was then later taken out for thorough analysis.

Originally, time was set aside for direct observations of the department using Facebook. However, this method was quickly abandoned when it was learned that the police only accessed the site on a sporadic basis. In fact, there was no set time, day, or team designated to monitor the department's Facebook page. If the department wished for a message to be communicated to the public, it was done so with the complete discretion of the officer posting. All postings communicated were done without any approval needed from the police chief.

The data gathered in this study primarily hails from two different sources. The first set of data was collected from the two officers responsible for the department's Facebook

page with in depth interviews. The second set of data consisted of an in-depth content analysis of the department's Facebook by the researcher. Both sources of information brought forth an insightful understanding of how the department uses Facebook, as well as how they interpret its effectiveness in relation to the community.

The first officer interviewed was Maleke. Maleke, a thirty-year police veteran and Sergeant, is the department's public information officer and is one out of two officers in charge of utilizing and monitoring the department's Facebook page. As the public information officer, Maleke is responsible of handling citizen complaints and news press concerns. The city of this specific department has over three different news media outlets that call everyday to get information on new developing stories and to follow up on leads from yesterdays old, yet still relevant news. Aside from addressing news media concerns, Maleke also tends to community concerns, by attending local neighborhood watch group meetings where citizens discuss problems occurring in their surrounding area. On top of that, Maleke's position also requires him to be an on call patrol officer, demanding him to work inconsistent shifts that teeter between morning, midday, and graveyard shifts.

A new user to Facebook, Maleke quickly expressed a lack of sophistication with operating this technology. The primary reason behind Maleke's inexperience with Facebook had to do with the department's high disapproval of officers having their own personal Facebook account. According to Maleke, "police officers who have a Facebook page not only put themselves at risk, but their entire department." As it was explained, anything an officer posts—whether if it is on the clock or off the clock—can open the door to a swarm of problems.

Police officers are seen as official public figures who must display and act in an honest and ethical manner at all times. Any evidence displaying a diversion from such a standard (such as an officer downgrading a community they are responsible to protect) can put both the department and that particular officer at risk. With the mass quantity of horror stories out in new press media regarding officer's use—or better yet misuse—of social media, the mere thought of creating a personal Facebook account by an officer is understandably discouraged.

To provide closer insight on the issue, in 2009, U.S. Capitol police officials began an internal investigation of its own department after receiving an anonymous complaint that nine of its members belonged to a public group on Facebook called the “Make it Rain Foundation for Underprivileged Hoes.” The phrase “Make it Rain” was coined in 2009, by former NFL Dallas Cowboy and Tennessee Titan football player, Adam “Pacman” Jones, who reportedly approached an exotic dancer on stage one night and began to “make it rain” by throwing \$1 bills in the air. The officers who participated in this public online forum made slanderous remarks towards women and bragged about engaging in socially deemed immoral behavior, such as attending strip clubs and excessive drinking. According to the report, the “about” section of the page stated, “Please join our foundation’s mission by spreading the knowledge and pledging to help make it rain on the hoes in your life and the underprivileged hoes throughout the world.” The inappropriate remarks continue on the page stating, “if you are a hoe that is in need of rain, please look no further than the generous men here to donate rain to your lives.” It was reported that the Facebook page had a fan base of up to 1,750 members. At least three of the nine officers reported were verified to be Capitol Police officials. Investigators established verification by simply clicking on the member’s

Facebook account of the fan page, which took them to the officer's personal Facebook page dressed in full police uniform. Capitol Police Spokeswoman, Sergeant Schneider, was completely unaware of the officer's actions. The Sergeant made it clear that it is the policy and responsibility of all officers to conduct themselves in a professional and ethical manner in both their private and official capacities to protect the integrity of the department. The report went on to explain that the accused officers were placed under an internal investigation. The investigation is currently ongoing. The consequences of these officer's actions most certainly placed the department's reputation in a negative light (The Washington Times, 2009).

Despite department disapproval of officers having their own personal Facebook page, Maleke was very receptive of using the technology in their department as a tool to connect, communicate, and build a relationship with the public. The idea of using Facebook technology was first introduced to Maleke by officer Jaimee. Jaimee, the Commander of Technical Services in the department and a Lieutenant for over seventeen years, is responsible for maintaining the heart of the police network. Jaimee and his staff of police personnel help the department with all technologies ranging from desktop computers, to laptops, to in car cameras, to in-car computers, and even software issues. According to officer Maleke, Jaimee introduced the idea of implementing Facebook into the department since other police agencies were doing the same. While Jaimee is credited for the innovative idea of using Facebook, Maleke made it clear that Jaimee did not provide him with any guidance, nor a clear set of directions on how to properly use it within the department.

With this being the reality, Maleke began to start the department's Facebook page with complete police discretion. When Maleke set out to launch the department's page, he

thought it would be as simple as creating an account just like any other. However, it turned out to be a cluster of problems that would take time to resolve. These challenges will be discussed in the next chapter to follow. After knocking down a few barriers, Maleke was able to utilize Facebook in more ways than one to the benefit of their department.

Chapter 4. Findings - - - Use of Facebook by Department

The information in this study was drawn from interview and survey data during the summer of 2012. An unidentified police department in Ohio was selected to evaluate how Facebook has impacted community-police relations in their department. The department was fairly large in size. Of the police personnel employed in the department, only two were interviewed and surveyed. To protect the reputation and identity of the department and its officers, anonymity was ensured.

This chapter will discuss the uses and problems the department encountered while using Facebook. This study found that the department used Facebook to share an assortment of information with the public spanning from local events, crime prevention information, to crime alert(s), and crime trend information. Further investigation, however, found that the limitations outweighed the benefits. In fact, due to budget cuts and the sporadic nature in how Facebook was used made it impossible for officers to effectively monitor and oversee the department's page. Despite the limitations Facebook brought, officers found it to be helpful and a step in the right direction in their goal to improve police-community relations.

Uses of Facebook

Without any necessary supervisory approval required, Maleke began to chart out how the department's Facebook page would make its mark. In our interview, Maleke expressed it would be used to cater to the community's interest. When asked what those interests were, Maleke reported that information regarding crime alerts, crime trends, local event information, and anything public safety related were shared.

For example, a local community program called "The Safety City," was promoted through the department's Facebook page. Safety City is an organization committed to

teaching children safety tips, such as how to properly cross the street and memorize important information (i.e. their home phone number), and the proper measures to take in the event of a fire. Posts like these were seen by officer Maleke as a creative way to inform the parental community of positive services available for them and their children.

Another example is posts regarding crime trends. During the time period of this study, there was an influx of phone scams happening against elderly citizens. Through investigation, it was discovered that adolescent youths were calling elderly citizens portraying to be familial members locked up in a foreign country in need of bail money. The victims were then instructed by another person portraying to be an officer that this was the best way to help out. Those who were conned by the wayward youth would willingly wire the disclosed amount of money using Western Union to the designated location. According to the department's page, it cost one elderly couple almost \$8,400. This phone scam quickly became a huge problem for the city that many average-day-citizens were unaware of. To bring the problem in a brighter light, Maleke decided to use the public information tool Facebook. Within a couple weeks after posting about the incident, the department experienced a decrease in complaints about the scam. It remains to be unknown whether citizen awareness or regular police work calmed the crime because there were seldom tips provided from citizens.

After this scam, the police picked up on another crime targeting the elderly. This time, it dealt with elderly citizens being burglarized while they were presently at home. In the interview, Maleke explained that a talented duo of suspects pretended to be employees of the water company, whereby they then informed the resident(s) that the water meter needed to be checked for safety precautions. The first suspect would distract the resident, while the

other would gouge the residence for all its valuables. According to the posting, the suspects looked to be “Hispanic and Middle Eastern males between the ages of 20-30 years of age” (Mar. 6, 2012-FB page).

With more of these incidents happening, Maleke decided to post a more detailed description of the crime. Maleke figured that doing so would keep the community aware of the issue and hopefully bring it to a halt. The post read:

SCAM ALERT. On Friday 2 Hispanic males 20 to 30 years old went to the residence of an 89-year-old female and said that the landlord sent them to check on her water. She let them in and she followed one of the men into the kitchen to "check the water" while the other man went into the lady's bedroom and stole her jewelry. The 2 men then fled in a black jeep. Remember to always be sure who you are letting into your home. Always ask for identification and refuse anybody that you feel is suspicious. If anybody has any information on this crime call crime stoppers at 255-1111. Sgt. Maleke - Police (Mar. 6, 2012-FB page).

Here, the police are working with the community to keep them informed of crimes that are affecting their neighborhoods. The suspects are described as young males between the ages of twenty to thirty-years-old. The police provide descriptors for the getaway vehicle, which is reported to be a black Jeep. The police then proceed to provide crime prevention information, such as warning community members to be cautiously aware of whom they let in their homes. They also provide tips on how to properly execute that task by informing citizens to ask visitors for proper identification. Finally, they provide citizens the necessary information on how to safely report any tips or crime information they may have regarding the crime. With this specific post, citizens were encouraged to call the crime stoppers hotline

or to provide tip information on the post. The portion requesting citizen feedback is an important element that must be understood. By officers asking for citizens to provide tip information directly on their Facebook page, it first tells us that they are open to community dialogue. As officer Maleke stated, “we would rather know what is going on in the community, than not to know.” By the department providing citizens with the option to post on their Facebook page, it shows that they are attempting to engage the community—a prime principle under the community-policing rubric. More importantly, with the department sharing crime information directly with the public (instead of news media outlets), it proves how the department is working to become more transparent and accountable with themselves and the public.

With the power of one post, police were able to complete a multitude of tasks. First, they were able to inform the community about a crime; second, describe a specific incident; third, describe the suspects and victims involved; fourth, provide crime prevention information; and finally, provide information on how to report the crime if a citizen has any information. The most important highlight here is that the information can be displayed for as long as the police choose and not have to worry about information being miscommunicated or left out, which is typically the case in news media reports of crime. The use of Facebook as a crime-fighting tool looks to produce many benefits for the police department. However, it is important to assess these uses with a critical lens.

Let us start to evaluate this phenomenon with critical race theory. We quickly learned that suspects in the majority of crimes posted were only people of color (specifically, Latinos and/or Middle Easterners). As discussed earlier in Chapter 2, people of color tend to be targeted in media when it comes to crime. There were no crimes posted targeting or

alleging any one of white race for a crime. When it is learned that the suspects are male and between the ages of twenty and thirty, the elements of class and age are also brought into account. From a feminist perspective, we are able to pinpoint why the male gender is identified as the primary indicator of this crime. The crimes communicated dealt with elderly citizens being robbed by young males. Robbery, in general, is a crime of power and control (two masculine traits) that involves the physical taking of a person's possessions. The power and control dynamics of masculinity is what helps us understand why the male gender is an indicator of the crime.

When one looks at these crime postings as a whole, one can easily see how class, race, and gender intersect to create a horrendous image against people of color. The picture that has been painted for the public to fear is of young men of color preying on helpless elderly people. These public postings further pushes subtle depictions of colored people that are reminiscent of slave days—an image of a crazed and uncontrollable group who will harm any and everyone. Moreover, street crimes tend to be crimes committed by the poor and oppressed people. The connection made in mass media—which now includes social media—between street robbery and people of color continues to show the inferior social status that people of color hold alongside whites in our society.

Another point that cannot go unnoticed is the way in which Facebook is continuously used to promote a one-dimensional image of crime. By placing attention on street-level offenses such as robbery, the public is blinded to the more severe and covert forms of robbery they experience on a day-to-day basis by corporations who cheat them through very sophisticated patterns. The unfortunate reality to understand here is that even though law enforcement officials have new ways to address crime, these new methods are being used to

target crimes that do not necessarily cause the most damage to the fabric of our society.

Most importantly, it creates no other way of thinking about crime for the public since this is the only image they are commonly presented with.

Another way Maleke used Facebook was as a service based function—such as friendly community reminders. For example, Maleke posted in the month of June a weather advisory alert catered to all community members with a focus on the elderly. The post read, “Today is going to be a HOT one! Remember to keep an eye on the elderly. Take advantage of places that are established cooling stations. Stay hydrated and stay safe!!” (June, 28, 2012). The message here is an overall example of how Maleke wishes to build a friendlier relation within the community. First, he warns that it will be very hot outside, then he proceeds to inform citizens to take the necessary precautions to stay cool, while simultaneously noting the importance of watching over the elderly community. In the ending message where he states, “stay safe and hydrated” is just another friendly reminder that they want community members to not only be safe, but also know they care.

Facebook was also used as a service based function to update the community regarding special holidays. One example is Halloween. The night before and the day of Halloween the weather was brisk and wet. Officers were uncertain whether or not Halloween trick-or-treating hours would take place during the broadcasted time. To keep the community aware, Maleke posted:

trick or Treating for the City of *** is still scheduled for tomorrow (31st) from 6pm-8pm. The *** Police Department will determine if the time needs to be changed but as of now trick or treat will be held on Halloween. Please take the time to plan according for the weather. Sgt. ***.

This posting does two things, one for the department and one for the community. For the community, it keeps them informed that the nightly festivities of Halloween will still occur as scheduled. If the scheduled time were to change, the community would be notified. For the department, it promotes a positive image by showing the community they are aware of how the weather can possibly affect their ability to securely patrol neighborhoods during the Halloween night. Moreover, the police department takes on citizen accountability by informing them they will keep them up-to-date if the scheduled trick-or-treating time will change.

In another effort to keep the community aware and involved, Maleke made a posting regarding the city's neighborhood watch program. This program is dedicated to bringing neighbors together and fighting crime. In order to build community awareness, Maleke posted:

The *** Department would like to invite citizens to participate in their block watch program. Anybody interested can get more details by going to www.***.com and clicking on the Community Services tab. Information can also be obtained by calling either Officer *** at ***-**** or Officer *** at ***-****. Block Watch is not only a way to meet your neighbors, but also an effective crime-fighting tool for your community that has proven results. Join or start of Block Watch today! Sgt. ***.

The post received seven likes and three comments from its fans. While it was one of the most recognized posts from the department's newsfeed, the comments left were only from the neighborhood watch's Facebook page. However, despite the lack of citizen commentary on the post itself, the initiative to increase community involvement and awareness of such programs on behalf of the police department cannot be ignored. Furthermore, the department

continues to show an interest to hear the voice of the community by providing direct contact information in the form of officer names and their phone number. If citizens wanted to know more information about neighborhood watch, the department attached a link to the neighborhood watch's Facebook page, along with their personal website.

In addition to community program and crime trend information, Maleke also used Facebook to recruit new officers. At the time of the study, recent budget cuts in the department, along with a set of retiring officers, cost the department to lose over half its patrolling staff. However, with the new fiscal year rolling in, the department received funds to bring in new recruits. In order to spread the word, Maleke posted information about the recruitment call on the department's Facebook page. Whether the posting caused an increase in police employment applications or not, remains unknown, as the new employment process had not began.

As the research shows, within a couple of months, Maleke discovered innovative ways to connect with the surrounding community. Thus far, it has been utilized to provide the community with information regarding local events, crime prevention information, crime alert, and crime trend information. Today, the site has over 600 fans. It has been a struggle to improve community-policing relations via Facebook, despite Maleke's best efforts. In his interview, Maleke pointed out a variety of problems he encountered that prevented the department's Facebook to be utilized to its fullest potential. An analysis of these problems will now be addressed.

Problems encountered with Facebook

With a new tool in hand, Maleke was ready to use Facebook to improve the quality of service provided to the city's citizens. However, before that journey could begin he had to

set up the department's page from the ground up. As mentioned earlier, Maleke was shocked from the beginning when it was discovered that another Facebook page impersonating the department already existed. This truth quickly alarmed Maleke because the information being distributed on the site was not from the department and any information broadcasted could place the public's safety at risk. This security concern forced Maleke to take action and contact Facebook directly to shut down the page.

Maleke's first route to shut down the fraudulent Facebook page was an e-mail to the company. In his interview, Maleke explained it had been at least a week and there had been no response. Upset by this, Maleke decided to call Facebook. However, his phone calls did nothing but send him to countless unhelpful operators. It was not until three weeks later that Maleke received an email from Facebook informing him that the false Facebook page would be deactivated and shut down.

Maleke made it clear that this incident was "a very scary thing." He could not believe someone had created a public profile representing the department. The problem with social media sites such as Facebook is that it permits anyone to create a profile with the ability to impersonate anyone they wish to be—even though such tactics are against the Facebook user(s) agreement. With businesses and public safety institutions now utilizing such technology, the situation becomes worse. The possibility that anyone can impersonate a well-known entity and subsequently publish fraudulent information can cause a swamp of confusion and chaos. In any instance, the average-day-citizen who is unaware that the information presented is not from the authentic source can unknowingly take what is presented at face value and interpret it as true and accurate.

When asked what happens to those who are found to be wrongfully impersonating public safety entities such as the police, Maleke said, “options are limited.” Nothing can legally be done if someone is found to be in violation of creating a mock police Facebook page. In fact, courts rarely respond to subpoenas related to social media concerns submitted by officers. The ability for information to be manipulated, distributed, and presented as true was a pressing concern since its discovery.

The second issue elaborated upon was the difficulty navigating through the Facebook site. Maleke explained that he often found it hard to operate Facebook because of its constant changes and updates within its user’s settings. At the time of this study, Facebook was going through a major facelift—upgrading from its standard profile picture newsfeed page to a more detailed newsfeed called “timeline.” This new installment evolved the entire Facebook layout, forcing Maleke to learn and adjust to the changes. The timeline feature allowed a more detailed account of each Facebook user, giving the exact time, location, and date when ones profile was established, as well as, an easier way to navigate through posts distributed by the user from months to years. Maleke explained that new information could not be published until he was completely aware how these new changes would effect and appear on the department’s page. Abrupt Facebook updates like these was just one reason why Officer Maleke was not only hesitant to use this technology, but also concerned that information would not be presented in a proper fashion.

The third issue Maleke encountered with using Facebook was finding the time to monitor it. With him being the only officer monitoring the site, Maleke found it strenuous to actively respond to its demands. As mentioned earlier, Maleke occupied a variety of different roles within the department, including, but not limited to, Sergeant, Community

Service Officer, and an on-call patrol officer. Spread too thin, one of his primary concerns was not being able to respond to citizen's feedback in a timely manner. When a posting was sent out by the department—such as the phone scam discussed earlier—Maleke could not always provide a speedy response to citizen's who commented. Sometimes it took him at least two or three days before he could address a citizen's comment. This delay concerned him because he did not want citizens to think their questions (or responses) were being purposely ignored. For the community-policing model to work effectively, it is important that officers quickly respond to citizen's needs in a timely fashion. Failure to do so could result in a sense of carelessness on behalf of the police. Maleke tried his best to prevent this, but due to a lack of available manpower, he could not always respond.

Lack of manpower was not the only reason Maleke could not quickly respond to citizen concerns. It was also discussed that some comments made by citizens were considered too inappropriate to warrant a response. For example, insults against the department were not addressed and were taken down as soon as possible. One example Maleke shared, dealt with a citizen threatening to kill a certain group of police officers within the department. The detailed nature of the insult made Maleke place the Facebook user under investigation. The confidential nature of this study does not allow for further information to be shared. Despite this, it should be noted that although Maleke did not respond to insults, negative posts against the department are a rarity.

The final and most disturbing problem Maleke shared regarding his experience with Facebook dealt with communication. During our interview, Maleke discussed an appalling account of child pornography that was being circulated across the social media site by a Facebook user. The department received a tip from a community member via telephone that

a man was posting images of child pornography on their personal Facebook page. In an attempt to shut down the page, the department had to go through a series of loop holes. Similar to their first experience with shutting down the page impersonating their department, the first attempt to contact Facebook failed. Maleke explained that no response was received after countless phone calls the first day. Frustrated by the lack of immediate concern, an e-mail was sent out. Yet, even with an e-mail marked urgent, Facebook still did not respond. It was not until an officer within the department, made contact with a friend law enforcement officer, in another state, who had contacts with a staff member of Facebook, that the child pornography page was shut down. According to Maleke, it is incidents like these that make him “wish Facebook would work with police more efficiently.”

Child pornography is a heinous crime primarily because its victims are defenseless children who have no power to protect themselves. Maleke found it disheartening that Facebook would not take swift action to dissolve the problem. For weeks on end since receiving the tip, the child abuser continuously posted nude pictures of children on their public Facebook page and the police were unable to stop it. “For a company based on communication, they are bad communicators,” said Maleke.

This department is not the only one to suffer from the police-Facebook communication struggle. In fact, Facebook was recently cited by Clovis police department of New Mexico for failing to meet a subpoena deadline, whereby they were required to release a Facebook account holder’s information who had been accused of online bullying. According to the report, Facebook indicated that they were not required to respond to individual cases (Clovis News Journal, 2012). Internationally, Facebook has failed to contact police authorities when they have discovered serious abuses of their technology. In Australia,

for example, Facebook failed to notify police officials they shut down a string of accounts that were involved in an international child pornography syndicate. The persons involved had created fake Facebook user accounts and used them to post child pornography in the form of images and video on their newsfeed. Officers only became aware of the incident during the Australian Federal Police-led international investigation, which discovered the misuse by operating under fake Facebook profiles. What is most astonishing, is that the lead investigator sent up to ten messages to Facebook asking them to inform the police department of this abuse, yet no actions were made by Facebook. The chief security officer representing Facebook had provided a mediocre response for its failure, stating that it is crucial users follow their policy of using their own personal information when creating an account to ensure a more secure environment in the world of social media (The Age, 2010).

After discussing his experiences with Facebook, Maleke was then asked to share what suggestions he had for Facebook and to also discuss where he sees its use with police departments in the future. As he explained, Facebook has taught the department to be more involved with the public and to be more aware of what they are using on a daily basis to communicate. Maleke expressed that in ten years he does not see Facebook as prevalent as it is today. However, he does believe that whatever the new tool in the future may be, social media will have a major role in the foundation it is built upon. Therefore, he found it very important that police personnel stay on top of such technology in order to be a viable police force today and in the future. As he so eloquently put it, “It’s like math, if you do not learn the basics, you will not know the most advanced parts of it.”

While Sergeant Maleke’s experience with Facebook could be considered rather expansive, Lieutenant Jaimee’s was quite brief. As mentioned earlier, Jaimee, the

Commander of Technical Services in the department and a Lieutenant for over seventeen years, is responsible for all operating technology of the department's police network. While this may be the case, Jaime quickly noted during the interview that she did not have any involvement with the operation of the department's Facebook page once it was set up. In fact, she made it clear that her only involvement dealt with introducing the idea and then subsequently trying to set it up. However, to her and Maleke's dismay, it was discovered that a Facebook page for their department already existed. Once Jaimee and Maleke found out another Facebook existed, Jaimee passed the technology torch into Maleke's hands. When asked why she did not stick around to assist Sergeant Maleke from that point on, Jaimee explained that her position only required her to inform officers of new technology that can assist them. According to Jaimee, it was not the responsibility of her, or the unit, to teach or coach partner officers on how to properly utilize new technology. It was encouraged however, to read police literature that was handed out at a conference in Michigan a few months prior. This literature discussed how to effectively use Facebook in daily police operations. Despite Jaimee's lack of use with Facebook in her department, she did point out a few problems that she encountered and a few issues that she believed would need to be addressed in the future.

Jaimee's first problem with Facebook echoed the same tune of Maleke's—its lack of communication with officers. According to Jaimee, "it's not set up as a support site." She could not call Facebook to receive a viable response when setting up the page. In fact, it took countless e-mails to finally get the department's Facebook started. She was also disappointed when she heard that Maleke did not receive a speedy response from Facebook regarding the fraudulent page that already existed. As a result of its lack of support tools,

Jaimee questions the viability of Facebook in the future for not just her department, but for others as well. She further stressed that in order for Facebook to be viable with police agencies, it should have a separate department dedicated to assisting law enforcement officers when they have questions or concerns that need attention.

Another Facebook concern of Jaimees dealt with officer's resilience to change. Jaimee indicated that it is difficult to get lead commanders involved in using Facebook or any new technology for that matter. Some officers in the department had never used Facebook or were aware that the department had its own Facebook page. Jaimee stated, "It's hard to create change and get them interested in the field of technology." This problem, however, may stem from the fact that many officers have been discouraged from using any type of social media, regardless if it is used within or outside of the workplace.

The resistance to change is not an unfamiliar phenomenon in police work. Often times, any new changes that deviate from regular police work are rarely met with open arms. The only time change is somewhat embraced is when it brings in much needed resources to hire more staff or garner in more equipment. Jaimee further professed that even if resources allowed, she still believed that officers would not have the necessary time to learn the new technology. This belief comes primarily from officers being stretched too thin within the department. During the time of this study, the department lost over half its staff due to upcoming retirees and state budget cuts. With an upcoming retiree pool, the department was pressured to hire new staff, train them, and get them on the streets promptly. This being the status quo, many officers were assigned multiple roles to fulfill.

Despite Jaimee's list of concerns with Facebook, she did have a few positive outlooks. When the idea first circulated across police departments nationwide, she "thought of it as a

web that could attach to so many different things in the community.” After reading and seeing the variety of ways Facebook could benefit a police department, she hinted at being excited about it. With Facebook having millions of users accessing its site everyday, she believed it to be a good way to market the department and get information out to the community—sort of a like a multiplier effect. It should be noted however, that even though she saw Facebook as an innovative way to reach the community, she still believed the department’s public website was a more sufficient tool for the community to access and obtain up-to-date information regarding the police. What is most interesting is that this may have to do with the fact that the department’s site is under her control with a unit of officers set in place to monitor it and keep it up to date.

The final portion of the study was a survey instrument regarding the usage of Facebook, which was completed by both Sergeant Maleke and Lieutenant Jaimee (See Appendix A for survey questions). In the beginning, it was assumed that more officers were involved with the operation of Facebook, however through both interviews it was discovered that only Jaimee and Maleke were involved with the implementation, direction, use, and monitoring of the department’s Facebook page. Therefore, only these two officers were handed a survey and asked to return it. The approximate return time was a week. Sergeant Maleke returned his survey via e-mail (due to an out of town vacation) and Lieutenant Jaimee’s survey was picked up in person at the department. After a thorough analysis of both the survey instrument and the in person interviews, two findings were concluded. First, most responses given in the interviews matched up with the responses given in the survey questionnaire. Second, although most responses matched up, there were a couple contradictions noticed from the survey that did not fall in line with what was said during the

interview process regarding their usage with Facebook. A brief discussion on those contradictions will be discussed now.

First, according to Lieutenant Jaimee, after setting up the department's Facebook page, she had no involvement whatsoever. However, in the survey questionnaire she indicated that she utilized a desktop, a portable laptop, smartphone, and tablet pc technology to operate the department's Facebook page. The fact that Lieutenant Jaimee used over four different forms of technology to monitor the Facebook page would have to indicate that she had more involvement than what was mentioned during the interview.

Second, Sergeant Maleke indicated in both the interview and the survey that he tried to post at least two or three times a week on their department's Facebook page. Yet, after conducting a thorough content analysis of the department's page from a few months prior, during the study and after the time frame of the data collection process, there were seldom posts made. In fact, there would be a time period of two to three months before an actual post was made. Currently, there has not been a post made since Halloween of 2012. This long time span of disuse may be an unfortunate indication that the department will soon discontinue its ties with the once admirable new police community connection tool. Only time will determine the department's future.

In conclusion, Facebook has afforded this police department the ability to communicate with their community on a variety of different levels. From weather updates, to crime prevention advisories, to community event reminders, this department joined the crusade of police departments nationwide utilizing Facebook in their daily police operations. While their intent to build a stronger connection with the community was vibrant, there was a laundry list of problems that held them back from doing so. These roadblocks included, but

were not limited to, a lack of necessary resources to properly staff and monitor the department page, police personnel reluctance to embrace new technological change, police inhibitions against the constant unexpected system user-face changes of the site, as well as, the possibility of another individual or entity mimicking their department, and a broken line of communication between themselves and Facebook. Despite these critical issues—that arguably deserve a dire need of scholarly attention in the field of criminology—the officers involved believed that Facebook was a beneficial undertaking, as it would prepare them for the future technology(s) that will takeover the current popular social media monster known as the Facebook.

Chapter 5 - Conclusion & Discussion

October of 2011, the department joined the bandwagon of nearly 1,300 police departments nationwide currently using Facebook in their daily police operations (John Jay College of Criminal Justice, May 2011). While the research literature on this field has proven to provide an expansive outlet of resources for police and the community at large, it was surprising to find that this department's use of the technology was at least, minimal. This chapter will pinpoint where the use of Facebook was limited and provide elaborations as to why, as well as, discuss the positive advantages brought, and the direction future research should take when looking at this new field of police and social media.

To begin, many news articles have discussed how police departments have used Facebook to connect with the public to solve crimes (see Chapter 1). Yet, in this study, Facebook was rarely used as an interactive tool between police and civilians to fight crime. In fact, Facebook was used by the department as an informative based tool to keep the community aware of ongoing investigations and crimes that effected their neighborhoods. What is more interesting, is that certain crimes appeared to be granted more attention than others. A quick comparison of the daily local media news reports on crime and the police department's Facebook page would show that many dangerous crimes that occurred during the time of this study—such as the influx of neighborhood arsons and gun violence—were neglected from the department's Facebook page. The lack of focus in regards to those two crimes may have had to do with the department's inability to properly staff the Facebook page and ensure speedy responses to any potential tips.

Although the department did not receive many tips from the community regarding crimes they posted about, there was one positive side affect Facebook provided them. With

the ability to post and share information on Facebook, police could display a detailed account of crime information on any particular crime for as long as they wished to share it. Before social media sites such as Facebook existed, police departments would rely upon news media outlets to get crime information out to the public. The time crunch slots of television caused most police reports to be cut short and subsequently misreported. Facebook, however, allowed the department to modify this problem, as posting about crime (or any information shared) stayed visible for the citizens until the police chose to take it down. Not only did Facebook allow them to keep important messages up for an extended period of time but, it also worked to their benefit by allowing them to share information in the way they wished to share it. For example, when Maleke posted about the phone scams, he was able to provide specific details on the suspects, the getaway vehicle, primary motive behind the crime, common victims sought out, as well as, a recent example explaining exactly what happened during the criminal act. These essential facts permitted officers to keep community members alert for clues that would help prevent them from becoming future victims of these crimes. Despite their efforts to provide details on crimes they selectively chose to share, it was discovered that the department failed to implement an engagement strategy that would keep the community in the know about their Facebook page.

The phrase “engagement strategy,” in this context, is an effort by which the police actively work with the community to keep them informed about programs they are jumpstarting. Both Sergeant Maleke and Lieutenant Jaimee expressed early on good intentions about using Facebook to improve and increase community-police relations. Together, they established a page representing the department with the intent to get the community involved. However, in the interview with Sergeant Maleke, he explained that the

department's use of Facebook was not advertised through mainstream media on their behalf. The rationale given for not broadcasting their Facebook page through media was because they believed 911 to be the primary source to connect citizens with them. They were further convinced that the police website (separate from Facebook) was their next alternative. After a review of both the interviews and a content analysis of the department's page, two key points became apparent.

First, the department clearly had no engagement strategy set up to inform the community about their Facebook page. During the interviews I was informed that the police never promoted it through news media, newspaper, radio, or local magazine outlets. Although both officers made the claim that they believed Facebook would be a great asset to help build bridges between themselves and the public, neither of them put together an effective engagement strategy to successfully make citizens aware.

Second, another example of police rhetoric was because no effort was made by police personnel to actively get the word out about their relationship with Facebook. As discussed in the Chapter 3, Jaimee advocated for the department to join Facebook because many other large police departments nationwide had already made their footprint in the arena of social media. This fact could lead many to believe that Facebook was just created by the department, as a symbol to show they were doing their part in staying on top of the new cutting edge technology that is impacting the field of policing. Time and time again history has proven that police forces are notorious for starting new programs without effectively executing them just to make it appear on the surface that something is being done to change a noticeable problem—police rhetoric.

Despite this possibility, I would argue that this was not so much a case of police rhetoric, but rather a perfect example of a police department stretched too thin because of a lack of resources. From the beginning, the department did in fact embrace the idea of using Facebook. They had high hopes for their department after researching and seeing the tremendous benefits Facebook provided to those departments who used its high-tech sophisticated functions (see Chapter 1).

However, due to the lack of officers available to monitor and oversee the page, Maleke was reluctant to advertise such a new establishment to the department's laundry list of program initiatives to increase community-police relations. In fact, during the interview when I asked Maleke why he had not pushed the Facebook page to the media's attention, he responded that even though he saw it as a great necessity, he also believed that "adding more layers of communication creates an environment that permits diminished returns of citizen complaints." With the department already down half its staff, due to retirees and budget cuts, he did not want to push another route of communication between themselves and the public that he knew would end up being neglected since he was the only one attending to the page. The last thing any department would want is a net of information that is being ignored because of their own failure to notice it. Furthermore, failure to provide a speedy response to citizen feedback and complaints could lead to a lack of confidence in the police department and damage its reputation. Looking at the issue from this angle, we can see why Maleke was cautious about promoting Facebook in the public light. A recent peek at the department's page would indicate that this is still the status quo as there has been no posting made from the police department since Halloween—nearly four months since the new year. In terms of engagement strategy, the fan base count was near 400 at the beginning of the study and

reached 500 by the end. Months have passed since then, and the fan base count has not moved upward, which may be an indication that the department's Facebook page has reached its final stretch.

Additionally, because the department did not encourage its officers to have their own personal Facebook account, getting them to feel comfortable with the Facebook technology proved to be a struggle in of itself. As discussed in Chapter 3, many officers were dissuaded from creating their own personal Facebook page out of fear that their activity would damage the department's moral reputation. A pristine example of why an officer fears the idea of using Facebook was recently discussed in the city's local newspaper. According to the report, a Facebook user had gained access to an undercover officer's personal Facebook account and revealed them publicly through the social medium. The end result damaged the entire undercover investigation. This report, along with many others nationwide, is just one reason why the notion of using Facebook in police initiatives could be detrimental to a department's goal(s).

In addition to that, both interviewees expressed that many officers were clueless to the existence of having a Facebook page representing the department. This lack of awareness is a huge indication that the line of communication in the department may be damaged. Moreover, amidst the sparse amount of time and resources available to monitor and staff the department's page, the officer's lack of awareness about having a Facebook further explains why its impact was not as strong in this department, as it was in others.

Therefore, it is my argument that although the use of Facebook was a preemptive idea by the police force to build a stronger connection between themselves and the public, its establishment was ineffective to its goal. A minuscule amount of funds, officer reluctance to

embrace Facebook technology, along with cuts in the police force, were all primary factors in this organization's failure to use Facebook to improve their police operations. Despite that reality, I the researcher find it mindboggling that the police force did not use the same staff in charge of the department's website to operate the Facebook page.

In discussion it was learned that the police website had its own separate staff dedicated to monitoring and updating the site. When this was discovered, I questioned why both of these entities—the police department website and Facebook—were not monitored together under the responsibility of just one team. The response given was one of power separation and an indication that better police management is needed. According to Lieutenant Jaimee the website was her team's responsibility and Facebook was Sergeant Maleke's. Regardless as to why Sergeant Maleke and Lieutenant Jaimee did not partner together to tackle these two very similar community-police initiatives, it must be noted that an attempt to work with the community was well intended. For that reason, I argue that police rhetoric was not the case here.

Chapter 6 - Future Research

The research presented here is extremely limited primarily because of the sample chosen. Although the police department was large in size, its lack of funds and short staff prevented Facebook from being used to its fullest potential. In this day and age of constant information sharing, the arsenal of options Facebook can provide to officers are endless. Officers in this department, however, did not have the time and resources necessary to utilize the technology to its fullest extent, and this fact, limits the research from providing any firm knowledge on whether the use of Facebook truly provided any real improvements in police work and most importantly police community relations.

For those reasons, it is my recommendation that the next sample chosen be a much bigger police department with securer resources. Cities of suggestion include, but are not limited to, Dallas, Texas, New York, New York, Chicago, Illinois and Miami, Florida. All these police departments currently have their very own Facebook page with continuous newsfeed updates occurring hourly, daily, and/or at least every other day. Because these departments are active users of Facebook, it should yield more reliable results that can better gauge whether the use of Facebook provides any beneficial difference of service from regular police work. Also, because these departments are much bigger in size, they are likely to have a larger fan base, which will bring in a diverse variety of civilian feedback that can be further analyzed to give insight on how they view police use of Facebook. The feedback found in the content analysis of this study was often times minimal. Citizens rarely liked any of the posts made by the police and when comments were made, it was seldom that the comment related to the material posted. Moreover, because the department was very inactive in its use since its establishment, it was not surprising to notice citizen attention and commentary had

slowed. It should be noted that one of these cities was the ideal choice for this study but transportation and financial limitations of the researcher prevented this route.

The second recommendation falls in line with citizen feedback. The research in this study is tremendously flawed because it fails to gauge the community's perspective on whether or not police use of Facebook improves the quality of service provided to them. While officers were interviewed about their opinions and experience with the department's page, citizen feedback was significantly neglected. In order to make up for this limitation a content analysis on citizen feedback commentary was performed but the results were limited because citizen responses overall were low. To cut this hatch for future research, a few recommendations are in order.

One idea would be to send surveys to fans that comment or like posts made by the police department. The researcher can then click on the Facebook user's account that commented or liked a posting made by the department and, if the Facebook user's account allows (depending on their privacy settings), send them the survey via the Facebook message feature. The survey should be formatted as a document attachment with proper instructions on how to return it. The survey should also be sent once through the Facebook message option. To help increase the return rate, the survey should also provide civilians the option and information needed to print and mail the survey back if anonymity is a concern. If anonymity is not an issue, the survey should provide the necessary information on how to properly respond back with a friendly reminder to electronically reattach the completed survey.

In addition, the police department in this study had a low fan base. Hypothetically, the low fan count could technically be by choice, since the officers purposely did not market

the Facebook page for reasons discussed in Chapter 3. Despite that fact, it still does not answer the question of how more than 500 fans were aware of a police department page that was not marketed. Therefore, it is my recommendation that a strategy be devised in order to gauge community awareness of police use of Facebook. One idea could be to stand outside of a police headquarters or heavily populated area (such as a mall, university, or bus stop) and pass out question cards that ask civilians a variety of questions. Questions can include but are not limited to (a) Are you aware that your local police department has a Facebook page? (b) If so, how did you find out? (c) What information do you look forward to finding on the local police Facebook page? (d) Do you find the information presented beneficial to you? (e) Are you comfortable commenting and/or liking posts made by police? (f) If not, why? (g) What suggestions do you have for the police regarding the Facebook page?

These two simple solution strategies can help us better measure the community's perception of police use with Facebook. All these questions in the current research still remain unknown. If this method is used in future research, we can expect an abundant amount of new knowledge to be gained and contributed in the field of criminology. As discussed in Chapters 1 and 2, community-policing is a practice between the police and its citizens to work together to pinpoint and find solutions against problems that affect their neighborhoods. How can we truly measure community-policing effectiveness in the world of social media if we fail to account for civilian perception? Such an important element cannot be ignored and therefore it is further recommended that any researcher in this field try their best to include these methods.

The third recommendation for future research falls yet again with police department resources. Because the department in this research had minimal funds, there was no unit put

in place to staff, monitor, and operate the Facebook page on a consistent bases. Before this information was known, I originally planned to conduct direct observations of the police officers during the operation of the Facebook page. Direct observations would have given me the opportunity to cross check what was said during the interviews by seeing what was actually being done during operation. However, because there was no unit set in place, I never had the opportunity to do so. Therefore, it is recommended that the researcher be that direct observations can be executed. Also, because obtaining police trust is a difficult task to ascertain in the field of academia, it is also recommended that the researcher ensure officer trust is secured to gain full raw access to the officer(s) who are working with Facebook.

Fourth, just like time and resources were needed by the police department in this study to utilize Facebook to its fullest potential, the same necessary tools will be needed by the next researcher who decides to take on this mission. Because there is a multitude of possibilities available to study with police use of Facebook, it is important that a team rather than just one researcher is assembled to get the best reliable research. It was very difficult to acquire all the information I gathered working alone with officers who had ambiguous schedules. A team is much more suitable to get the job done because tasks can be divided and the time needed to collect the research can be cut in half.

Despite the limitations found within this study, a few positives should be noted. Looking at this phenomenon under the left realist perspective, the Facebook technology was used to improve communication and dialogue between the police and the public. Historically, police and public relations have not been the best knit with one another. Many people, especially people of color either fear or feel distant from law enforcement officials. Rather than making them out to be the crime problem, police officials who use Facebook in their

line of work need to think of new effective ways to include colored populations to be apart of their dialogue in the fight against crime. Also, as opposed to only showcasing positive accomplishments of police work, it is also important that police acknowledge on their page when they make mistakes. This will not only help increase police accountability, but also show the public that police are human and not perfect. Animosity against police sometimes spans from the idea that police see themselves as model citizens who are not prone to error. If police are willing to own up to their mistakes in the public sphere (i.e. social media), they are more likely to build trust from their community members and build a long lasting respectful police reputation. Moreover, police personnel need to figure out creative ways to effectively present a more fair and balanced representation of the real crime problems that affect us.

In a world run by social media the route of research options are endless. While this research focused on the social media site of Facebook, there are many other social sites alike that police have used. From MySpace to LinkedIn to Twitter, police departments nationwide are taking the social medium branches by storm. Therefore, it is also recommended that future researchers focus their lenses on other social mediums as well to see how police are using these similar, but yet, different forms of technology in their daily operations. Following this route will allow us to cross compare and see the ways in which different social mediums prove to be the best fit for police departments. It may be found that one social medium is best in one department and a failure in another. More importantly, we will have a plethora of police opinions regarding their take on social media, which could and most likely will impact policy.

History continues to show that research has a major role in public policy. When lawmakers seek to implement new and or change old laws, they look to the research for guidance. Because police use of social media is growing at a fast pace, it is very important that scholars keep up and cover all spectrums of this hot phenomenon. By doing so, we can at least know with peace of mind that policy makers have the necessary information needed to make sound appropriate decisions in their hand crafted legislation.

As of late, many electronic freedom fighter organizations, such as the Electronic Frontier Foundation (EFF) have argued that police officials have abused their police powers when using social media in online investigations. Specifically as discussed in chapter 2, EFF has accused police officials of violating the terms of service agreements that accompany social media sites, which forbids users from creating fake profiles that impersonate real people. The research literature and information presented in chapter 1 and 2 have discussed accounts whereby police have created fake profiles to nail targets of their undercover online investigations. Police sometimes have gone as far as invading the privacy of the target's Facebook friend's accounts to get the information they seek. Whether or not these approaches are legal remains questionable, however, according to the standards and policies of the social media sites, the behavior is surely unethical. The only way to ensure that these relevant issues are dealt with properly when the time comes to address them is to ensure that we as researchers do our job and get the knowledge that we know out there.

In conclusion, it is important to note that the best policies are guided by ethical and reliable research. It is crucial in this day of age that researchers conduct their studies in an ethical manner and abide by all guidelines of the Human Subjects Review Board. Any work deviating from that scholastic standard should be shunned by academia and restarted until

done properly. While the work of researchers can sometimes be a daunting and dreadful process, the work we produce is a cherished work of art that directly contributes to the growth of our society in a variety of ways. The results, opportunities, and possibilities we create in our contributions are endless. This study is a perfect example of that. The future findings to be dug in this field will open up an insurmountable amount of knowledge to help us better understand how police and social media work together in a world run by technology.

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APPENDIX

Consent Form and Survey Instrument(s)

Eastern Michigan University - Adult Consent Form:

Invitation to Participate

You are invited to participate in this research study. The information here is being provided in order to help you make an informed decision on whether or not you would like to participate. If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to ask.

Basis for subject selection

You are eligible to participate because you are a law enforcement officer in a U.S. police department who is assigned to operate your department's Facebook page.

Purpose of this study

The purpose of this study is to evaluate why and how your police department is using the social media site of Facebook to improve police performance—specifically with police-community relations and the fight against crime.

Explanation of Procedures

A combination of surveys, direct observations and one-on-one interviews with staff operators will be conducted to find out how the use of Facebook has helped your department circumvent crime and improve the quality of services provided to your community members.

Potential Risks and Discomforts

This study is strictly an evaluation of how your department utilizes Facebook to improve the quality of service your entitled to provide to the community. You may be concerned that unfavorable findings may risk termination of the program. This is an understandable concern, therefore as an appreciation of your participation the police department will not be identified and all information obtained will be confidential. However, the risk is highly unlikely considering the fact that many reports on police departments who use Facebook have been commended and met with high esteem.

Potential Benefits to Subjects

The collection of this data will provide an assortment of benefits to police departments nationwide. Departments considering Facebook or who have already implemented the technology can use the information gathered here to learn benefits and disadvantages; learn how to avert any avoidable mistakes discovered; and most importantly, learn more effective ways to utilize the social media site to their benefit.

Potential Benefits to Society

Results from this research may help police departments learn how they can provide better quality service to their communities.

Assurance of Confidentiality

Any information obtained during this study, which could identify you will be strictly kept confidential. The information obtained during this study may be published in academic journals or presented at academic meeting but your identity will be strictly kept confidential. Evaluators will assign each officer a pseudo-name to substitute for your real name. For example, if your real name were Bob, evaluators could choose the pseudo-name Joe or Kelly when referring to statements or comments collected during survey administration and interviews.

Rights of Research Subjects

Your rights as a research participant have been explained to you. If you have any further questions concerning your rights, please do not hesitate to contact Eastern Michigan University's Institutional Review Board (IRB).

Voluntary Participation & Withdrawal

You are free to decide to not participate in this study or to withdraw at any time without adversely affecting your relationship with the evaluators. Your decision will not result in any loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled.

Documentation of Informed Consent

You are voluntarily making a decision whether or not to participate in this research study. Your signature certifies that the content and meaning of the information on this consent form have been fully explained to you and that you have decided to participate having read and understood the information presented. Your signature also certifies that you have had all your questions answered to your satisfaction. If you think of any additional questions during this study please contact the investigators. You will be given a copy of this consent form to keep.

Signature of Subject

Date

In my judgment the subject is voluntarily and knowingly giving informed consent and possesses the legal capacity to give informed consent to participate in this research study.

Signature of Researcher

Date

Identification of Researcher:

Seyed Mirmajlessi
Graduate Assistant E-mail: Smirmajl@emich.edu

Staff Operator-Officer Survey

Survey Instructions

Please read each section of the survey carefully, as some sections warrant different responses. Indicate your response by circling the appropriate letter. A pen or a pencil may be used to complete the survey. I appreciate your time and careful completion of this survey.

Biography

Pseudo-Name:

1. How old are you? _____ years.

2. Please indicate your sex. (mark with an X)

Female _____

Male _____

3. What is the highest level of education you completed (circle one).

- a. Some high school
- b. High school graduation
- c. Community college/technical training/diploma/etc.
- d. Some university
- e. University graduation
- f. Post-graduate or professional degree

4. What is your current rank or role within the police department? (circle all that apply).

- a. Patrol Officer
- b. Community Policing Officer
- c. Detective
- d. Captain
- e. Sergeant
- f. civilian/non-police personnel
- g. Other _____ (please specify)

5. How many years of police experience do you have? _____ years.

6. Were you assigned to this position, or, did you request it? (mark with an X)

Assigned _____

Requested _____

Police Use of Facebook (FB)

1. What types of information do you share through your department's FB page? (circle all that apply)

- a. Crime prevention information
- b. Missing Persons (children and adults)
- c. Wanted Persons
- d. Traffic Alerts
- e. Severe Weather Conditions
- f. Public-Service Announcements
- g. Crime Stats
- h. History of police department
- i. Diversity of police department (e.g. officer's race, gender, etc)
- j. Public Relations Tool or Reputation Management
- k. Crime Scene Photos/Videos
- l. Information on how to provide crime tip information
- m. Information on how to provide crime tip information anonymously
- n. Awards won or to commend an officer for good police work
- o. Other _____
(please specify)

2. What forms of technology does the department use to operate your Facebook (FB) page? (circle all that apply)

- a. Desktop computer(s)
- b. Portable Laptop(s)
- c. Smartphone(s) (PDA or mobile cellular phone)
- d. Apple I-Pad(s)
- e. Tablet PC(s)
- f. Other _____ (please

specify)

3. During your shift, how many officers monitor and operate the department's FB page?

- a. 1
- b. 2-3
- c. 4-5
- d. 5-6
- e. 7 or more
- f. No full time-time staff/done on a part time basis when officer has free time.

4. On average, how many times per day do you post crime prevention information?

- a. 0
- b. 1
- c. 2
- d. 3

- e. 4 or more
 - f. Post whenever there is available time, given there is no full-time staff
5. On average, how many times per day do you post crime scene/video related information in order to receive tips regarding an unsolved crime?
- a. 0
 - b. 1
 - c. 2
 - d. 3
 - e. 4 or more
 - f. Post whenever there is available time, given there is no full-time staff
6. On average, how many times per day do you post information regarding missing persons (children, adults and fugitives)?
- a. 0
 - b. 1
 - c. 2
 - d. 3
 - e. 4 or more
 - f. Post whenever there is available time, given there is no full-time staff
7. On average, how many times per day do you post traffic alert announcements?
- a. 0
 - b. 1
 - c. 2
 - d. 3
 - e. 4 or more
 - f. Post whenever there is available time, given there is no full-time staff
8. On average, how many times per day do you post severe weather information?
- a. 0
 - b. 1
 - c. 2
 - d. 3
 - e. 4 or more
 - f. Post whenever there is available time, given there is no full-time staff
9. On average, how many times per day do you Facebook as an investigative tool?
- a. 0
 - b. 1
 - c. 2
 - d. 3
 - e. 4 or more
 - f. Post whenever there is available time, given there is no full-time staff

10. On average, how many times per day do you share information as a Public Relations tool for the media, also referred to as “Reputation Management”?
- 0
 - 1
 - 2
 - 3
 - 4 or more
 - Post whenever there is available time, given there is no full-time staff
11. On average, how many responses per post do you receive in regards to crime information—i.e. crime scene photos/videos that necessitate tips and missing persons?
- 1-2
 - 2-3
 - 3-5
 - 6-9
 - 10 or more
12. On average, how many responses per post do you receive in regards to announcements that are non-crime related—i.e. traffic alerts, severe weather conditions and award announcements?
- 1-2
 - 2-3
 - 3-5
 - 6-9
 - 10 or more
13. On average, how many responses per day do you deliver to ‘fans’ that post questions on your Facebook page?
- 0
 - 1
 - 2
 - 3
 - 4 or more
 - Post whenever there is available time, given there is no full-time staff

Interviews with Staff Operators of FB

1. How did you become an officer?
2. What is your role in the operation of your department’s FB page?
3. How many operators usually work with you on the FB page during your shift?
4. Do you need supervisor approval before posting any information on your department’s FB page?

- a. If so, could you please explain the process?
 - b. If no, skip to questions 5b
5. Has there ever been a time where you had to post information to the community without supervisor approval?
 - a. If yes, why?
 - b. If no approval is needed, how do you decide what information to post?
6. How often do you communicate messages to the community members of your department's FB page?
7. What types of information do you commonly share with the public?
8. Could you please explain the process of how the information is shared?
9. For different types of information shared, do you use different formats of communication?
 - a. For example, if there is an unsolved robbery, does your department release surveillance video/pictures of the crime scene or describe the incident through text when requesting tips from community members?
10. Do you allow community members to post questions or statements on your FB page? If so, do you respond?
 - a. When do you decide to respond?
 - b. In what situations do you decide not to respond?
11. If yes to question 10. On average, how many responses do you receive per post? Does it depend on what information is being posted?
12. When you do receive responses, would you characterize them as positive or negative?
13. What trends (if any) have you noticed using the department's FB page?
 - a. For example, does certain information posted that warrants a response, receive more attention at different times of the day?
14. How is information from Facebook shared with officers?
 - a. Do you give information to specific units? Please explain the process.
 - b.
15. What are your attitudes regarding the use of FB in your department?
16. Have you experienced any difficulties operating FB? If so, please explain?
17. Is there anything you wish you would have known about FB before implementing it into your department?
18. Have you spoken with other police departments who use FB for tips and advice on how to utilize the technology to its full advantage in your police operations?
19. Do you have any suggestions that could improve the efficiency of FB in your department?
20. How do you expect to use what you have gained in the future?