The use of Facebook in creating police identity

Conference or Workshop Item

How to cite:


For guidance on citations see FAQs.
Introduction
Stories communicated on police owned Facebook sites are a potential place in which identity can be created for forces. Unlike traditional media stories, social media stories are co-constructed by many individuals (i.e. they form a ‘networked narrative’, Page Harper and Frobenius, 2013). What work do these stories do for police identity?

Method
Narrative analysis of the most ‘engaged with’ story in a given week

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Police posting</th>
<th>Shares, reactions comments</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Woman found safe and well.</td>
<td>4181</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CCTV image of a man police wish to speak to</td>
<td>2051</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Images of a man the police would like to speak to</td>
<td>195</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Analysis considers:
How the story is told and how it shapes police identity

Police posting:
• Only mentions the woman and the social media community as characters (not themselves)
• Neutral in tone
• Inclusive of the social-media community

Community re-positioning:
• Introduce the police as characters, some credit them with case resolution, and others credit the social media campaign “The power of social media great news”
• Other suggest the police are nannying or have wasted resource on this case
• “cant even put ya self on the missing list for a day anymore without ya face being all over social media #Overreacting”

There is no follow up commenting by the police – so all repositioning is done by the public

Conclusions:
• Stories are now being told in a fragmented network by the community as well as the police
• New media is still being used by forces as if it were old media (i.e. static and not interactive)
• Dyadic interaction may be an important opportunity for police identity and community building