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The use of Facebook in creating police identity

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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

Police posting	Shares, reactions comments
Woman found safe and well.	4181
CCTV image of a man police wish to speak to	2051
Images of a man the police would like to speak to	195

Story Selected

POLICE POSTING: "NAME has been found safe and well. Thank you everyone for sharing."

This is the ending to a story of a woman (early 20's) who was reported missing while attending a festival.



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