Constructing Crime: Understanding the Roles, Functions and Claims-Making Activities of Media Relations Officers in Ontario

by

Sonya Buffone

A thesis

presented to the University of Waterloo

in fulfillment of the

thesis requirement for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

in

Sociology and Legal Studies

Waterloo, Ontario, Canada, 2019

Authors Declaration

I hereby declare that I am the sole author of this thesis. This is a true copy of the thesis, including any required final revisions, as accepted by my examiners.

I understand that my thesis may be made electronically available to the public.

Abstract

Despite a growing body of prior research, little attention has been paid to media relations officers (MROs) and how media releases are constructed for the public. This research begins to address this gap by examining the roles and claims-making capacity and activities of police MROs throughout the province of Ontario. Using a sequential qualitative-dominant mixed methods research design, survey data from 19 police services informed the semi-structured interviews conducted with MROs, corporate communication specialists, and civilians (N=26). The findings suggest risk management has a significant influence on how MROs report on crime, inform the public of risk, but also, to educate the public in their role as risk managers. Specifically, crime is constructed so that the likelihood that "something will happen" is emphasized and the public is strongly encouraged to adopt measures to manage their own safety (responsiblization strategies). Thus, I argue that claims-making activities are used by police as a tool of legitimation that is shaped by two dominant discursive frames: (1) As primary definers, constructing crime in terms of risk and promoting citizen risk management; and (2) Projecting positive images of the police to the public. Thus, as legitimation agents, MROs play a key role in justifying and attaining support for the organizational ideals and goals police services value.

(or blame?) you for encouraging me to take this path. Thank you for believing in me 13 years ago when I walked into your office as a clueless undergrad. You taught me how to think analytically and critically, two skills that have helped carry me to this point. You've always believed in me and pushed me to be my best. Dr. Haggerty, what an absolute honour it was to have you serve as my external examiner. Your work has always intrigued me. Thank you for challenging me to really defend my position. Your comments and feedback were incredibly insightful and immeasurably useful in helping to make sense of my work and producing a dissertation to be proud of. Finally, Dr. Esselment, thank you for your challenging but intensely thought-provoking questions. You have encouraged me to think outside of the box in ways I had not planned to.

My dear friend Alli, you are my go-to person! I mean this in the absolute most literal way: I would not have survived this degree without you! You have been my lifeline, from start to finish. For 9 years you've listened to me vent (and rant and cry), talked me through so many crazy times, offered some amazing (and always insightful) advice and encouraged me to forge onward even when it seemed impossible. You have always been there for me, no questions asked. One of the best outcomes of this degree is the friendship we have built. I cannot thank you enough. I am forever indebted to you, my friend.

Angela, thanks for being such an outstanding role model. You came into my life at a really crucial time and immediately had an impact. I am so grateful for your willingness to listen and coach me through my concerns. You have a way of making light of literally any situation; most importantly, you helped me to see the light on the other side of the PhD tunnel and opened my eyes to the possibilities in life after grad school. Thank you for your support on this journey.

Dave and Donna, though not directly involved in my thesis journey, you have played a role in pushing me across the finish line. Although you may not know it, working alongside both of you for the last 9 months has been so enlightening. I have so much respect and admiration for you both academically, professionally and personally. Your willingness to take a chance on me (in my role with CEPT2) created a newfound faith (much needed) in my ability to complete this.

To my dear colleagues and friends, Sarah, you handled the brunt of my worries during that final push, thank you for your advice and compassion, Shannon, Angela C, Tawnessa, Paige, Nyasha, Katie, Marta and Tasha, who have listened to my worries, picked me up when everything seemed too overwhelming and celebrated my triumphs, THANK YOU!

To my amazing family. First, my mom and dad, you built the foundation that allowed me to pursue this dream. You have been the most admirable role models instilling in me the value of hard work and determination. No matter how crazy my dreams, you have always been my biggest fans. Thank you for your enduring support throughout my educational journey (which has seemed endless). Without your love, support, encouragement, guidance (and willingness to help with the grandkids), I would have never made it to this point and I am forever indebted to both of you, for all you do. This degree is as much yours as it is mine! My in-laws, Fred and Brenda, when I met you I was just beginning this journey. Thank you for your support and encouragement over the last 8 years. Brenda thanks for making sure I was meeting my deadlines and Fred thank you for your calming presence which has made a huge difference through the crazy times! You two have helped with the grandkids too, giving me the time I needed to get this thing done.

My amazing wife, best friend and soulmate, Amanda. Thank you isn't enough for all you've done. You have sacrificed more than anyone so I could pursue this degree. You have

been with me every step of the way, celebrated each milestone and helped me overcome each

hurdle. Without your love and support this thesis would not be. Lastly, but most importantly, my

girls, Sydney and Addison, this degree is for you. You two are my moon, my sun, my world.

This degree has taken me away from you but I hope this accomplishment will some day

symbolize the importance of hard work and perseverance. I hope you will see that everything I

do, I do it for you- this degree is no exception.

Dedication

To my girls, Sydney and Addison.

Table of Contents

List of Figures

xiii

List of Tables

xiv

Chapter 1: Introduction

The press release below represents an official news release from the London Police service in Ontario:

> ***Marihuana Grow Operation***
> *July 30, 2015*
> *On Wednesday, July 29, 2015, members of the Guns and Drugs Section, consisting of members of the London Police Service and RCMP, executed a Controlled Drugs and Substance Act search warrant at a St. Clair Crescent residence.*
>
> *Seized were the following items:*
> *- 104 marihuana plants - $104,000*
> *- 479 g of marihuana - $4,790*
> *- 2,175 g of marihuana bud and dried leaf mixture - $450*
>
> *Total - $109,240*
>
> *As a result of investigation, Mark Anderson (64) of London, has been charged with the following Controlled Drugs and Substances Act offences:*
> *- Unlawfully producing marihuana, contrary to section 7(1); and*
> *- Possessing marihuana for the purpose of trafficking, contrary to section 5(2).*
> *Mark Anderson has been released from custody with a court date of August 14, 2015 [London Police, 2015, original formatting].*

This press release is a straightforward account of a successful police operation resulting in a drug seizure and arrest. However, rather than simply stating an arrest was made for illicit drugs, which could likely be accomplished in a few pointed sentences, the article emphasizes the amount of drugs seized and their value. Notice also that part of the text is separated from the rest. The emphasis placed on the value of the drugs also highlights the value or significance of the arrest and by extension, the value of the police service. The article is constructed to convey more than the fact that an arrest was made. Here let us also consider what is not reported in this excerpt. It is not clear, for instance, what evidentiary grounds led to the issuance of the search warrant. This

excerpt, like much of the policing research we see, focuses on instrumental aspects of police work (e.g., decision-making, discretion, misconduct), but overlooks how police manage information and actively shield "aspects of their deployment strategies, including their priorities and whom they are targeting as threats," while glossing over their effectiveness in deterring crime (Ericson, 1989, p. 207; see also Chermak, 1995; Ericson et al., 1991; Lovell, 2003). This study attempts to elucidate how media releases like this are constructed for the public, by examining the role, claims-making capacity and activities of media relations officers from police services in the province of Ontario.

Police agencies appear to be facing increasing media scrutiny[1] resulting from some highly-publicized events like the 2010 G20 summit in Toronto, the 2012 student protests in Québec and the shooting death of Sammy Yatim by a police constable in Toronto in July 2013.[2] However, negative coverage of the police is not new. In fact, police-community relations have been fraught with tension since the 60s (Lovell, 2003; Motschall & Cao, 2002). Researchers have long documented the "thin blue line" and officers adherence to a particularly stringent "us versus them" conception of the social world (Conser, 1980; Herbert, 1998). Despite the contentious othering of the public, a negative public image is problematic for police agencies whereas a positive public image is essential to reducing citizen complaints, cultivating public respect and confidence and acquiring support for the organization's actions and efforts (Bolger, 1983; Cooke & Sturges, 2009; Mawby, 2010). Indeed, favourable media coverage, public cooperation and support are vital for effective policing (Lee & McGovern, 2014).

---

[1] See for example (Iacobucci, 2014); https://globalnews.ca/video/4024165/after-increased-scrutiny-some-cops-are-foregoing-proactive-policing/

[2] Though I would argue we tend to see mostly negative media coverage of the police, it is important to recognize that this scrutiny can also be positive. Consider, for example, the recent string of positive news stories recognizing the work of Toronto Police constable Ken Lam, who peacefully arrested Alek Minassian, following an incident where he drove his van into a crowd of people killing and injuring more than a dozen.

Police organizations have made significant efforts to manage their image in attempts to garner public support. Such efforts include a rhetorical shift from a traditional police "force" to a police "service," where the once reactive role of the police is transformed to one that requires officers to analyze, plan and initiate proactive approaches to address community problems (Ericson, 1982; Lee & McGovern, 2014; Vinzant & Crothers, 1994). According to Garland (2001), police today aspire to represent their role as "a responsive public service aiming to reduce fear, disorder and incivility" (p. 18) rather than merely as crime fighters. This aspiration has led to the establishment of community policing programs as well as problem oriented policing (POP) movements (see for example, Goldstein, 1979; Telep & Weisburd, 2012). To manage this image and establish direct and effective communication with the public, police agencies rely increasingly on media relations officers (MROs)[3] (Cook & Sturges, 2009; Ericson, 1989; Lee & McGovern, 2014; Lieberman et al., 2013; Mawby, 2010; Motschall & Cao, 2002).

Beginning in the early 70s, politicians and external institutions were pressuring the public police to develop a professional business-like mentality, focused on preventative measures, to deal with crime (O'Malley, 2010). Such trends continue today, insofar as police agencies are engaged increasingly in risk assessment and risk management activities while providing copious information to insurance companies with vested interests in risk management and loss reduction (Macquire, 2000). This pressure, in conjunction with a society permeated by risk, has ultimately led to the restructuring of the police role (Ericson & Haggerty, 1997; Lee & McGovern, 2014; O'Malley, 2010).[4] As Anderson and Brown (2010) write, "the omnipresent risk awareness and

---

[3] Within the literature, media relations officers are also often referred to as Public Information Officers (PIOs) and/or public relations officers (PROs). When specific sources are cited I adopt the designation the author has used. However, in all other instances I have elected to use the designation Media Relations Officers (MROs) given that within a Canadian context police services adopt this terminology.
[4] Please note the notion of "risk society/risk consciousness" is derived and influenced directly from Beck's (1992) *Risk Society.*

the lack of trust in social institutions for managing risks have dramatically influenced the organization of criminal justice and policing in risk society" (2010: 546). Likewise, O'Malley (2010) maintains that the "informational characteristic of risk, the centrality of security information and its linking to prevention transforms the police role" (p.30). Police organizations today devote significant attention to risk assessment and risk management practices. This has implications for the way in which the organization functions.

Behind the scenes, police services are involved in various forms of 'information patrolling' to influence how crime, social problems and the police image are constructed. In fact, Manning (1997) contends that policing is based on appearance rather than reality; using myths and rituals, police deliberately construct an image of themselves as efficient crime fighters even when this construction is illusory. The emphasis on crime fighting is not the only image-work police organizations engage in. Other images emphasize community policing initiatives and risk management strategies.[5] In this sense, policing is not only instrumental (task oriented) in getting things done, but also largely symbolic, in cultivating a functional image (see Manning, 1988).

Nearly 40 years ago Chibnall (1975) argued, "Police-media analysis needs to look behind the projection of favorable and unfavorable images, to examine the way in which the occupational ideologies and routine professional practices of communications systematically shape and distort reality" (p. 74; see also Surette & Richard, 1995). The police are primary providers and definers of crime news and social problems given their frontline position in the criminal justice system (Cook & Sturges, 2009; Lee & McGovern, 2014; Schulenberg & Chenier, 2014) and structural location in 'news beats' (see Reich, 2012); as such, it is crucial to understand the claims-making processes of police organizations and how such processes shape

---

[5] For a full discussion on these roles refer to Surette (2007). Also see, Lynch (1998). Though Lynch discusses these roles as they relate to parole officers, her research can also be applied to the police context.

discourses of crime and public trust in the police.[6] MROs are the primary claims-makers within the organization. They play a fundamental role in informing the media and public about crime, social problems and agency operations while shaping directly how the organization and its members are constructed in popular discourse (Cook & Sturges, 2009; Mawby, 2010; Motschall & Cao, 2002; Lee & McGovern, 2014). Despite the significance of their role, little to no research has examined the claims-making activities of MROs, especially within a Canadian context.[7] To address this gap in the literature, the purpose of the present study is to examine the roles, claims-making capacities and activities of media relations officers from police services across the province of Ontario.

Claims-making is defined as an implicit and intentionally rhetorical process carried out by individuals or groups with vested interests in how issues are constructed (Loseke, 2003; Miller & Holstein, 1993). Claims are disseminated to persuade audience members to acknowledge and accept as "true" a perspective concerning an issue or topic. The present study seeks to understand the claims-making processes MROs engage in to construct crime and the police organization's image.

Reports of crime are often scripted in a formulaic way so that media users learn what to expect about crime events including, "who commits it, who falls victim to it, what happens after its commission and how it can be resolved" (Filak & Pritchard, 2007, p. 66). Such narratives rely on predictable characters, dramatic events and powerful emotions to convey a particular image of

---

[6] Given media reliance on police sources, police are primary definers of crime. Crime news is police news, the police decide what to report about a given criminal event and how to report it. Conversely, academics or eyewitnesses are rarely included in event coverage and are thus considered secondary definers of crime (Schulenberg & Chenier, 2014, p. 267).

[7] I recognize there may be similarities in terms of the roles and activities of MROs in Canada and other countries, but argue that the roles and claims-making processes of MROs in Canada likely differ from other countries given unique socio-political contexts, organizational structures and cultural environments (e.g., police, public and media cultures).

crime. Once established, these constructions remain relatively stable over time (Filak &

Pritchard, 2007). It is difficult to incorporate information that is inconsistent with such value-

laden and preconceived notions of crime. Though extensive research addresses media

constructions of crime, virtually no research has examined how police organizations construct

crime. Such research is important given that police agencies play a prominent role in translating

crime and social problems into public discourse. As primary definers of crime, police services

have vested interests in how crime is understood and they have the power to 'patrol the facts'

(Ericson, 1989). Such interests include the promotion of institutional objectives and needs, as

well as the facilitation of appropriate solutions and responses to crime (Schulenberg & Chenier,

2014, p. 267). Manning (1997) argues that by defining crime, police aim to elicit public support

for their crime-fighting mandate.[8]

In this thesis, I argue that as legitimation agents, MROs play a key role in justifying and

attaining support for the organizational ideals and goals police services value. To this end,

claims-making activities may be seen as a tool used in the service of legitimation and are shaped

by two dominant discursive frames: the first, most emphasized frame involves constructing

crime in terms of risk (as primary definers of crime) and the responsibilization of the public,

while the second frame centers on constructing positive images of the police to the public.

This research will contribute to the police literature insofar as it will be among the first to

examine media relations officers in the province of Ontario. On a practical level, this research

will inform police policies that govern how information is processed and, ultimately, how that

information is disseminated to the public. Research has shown that public perceptions of crime

---

[8] For example, Manning (1997; 2008; 2014) has explained in detail how crime statistics are utilized by the police for various purposes, including to convey efficiency, to improve their chances for survival and to enhance their public relations.

are at odds with realities of crime (Glassner, 2000; Mawby, 2010; Lieberman et al., 2013). My research will elucidate strategies used by police services to manage their image via crime news while proposing directions to improve police communication practices. By gaining a better understanding of claims-making processes, this research will improve the efficiency and effectiveness of claims-making within police organizations. The findings will also provide police agencies with strategies to improve communication with the public and the media, helping to enhance police-public relations.

In the next chapter, I review the literature on media relations officers and outline the research questions guiding this study. In Chapter 3, I identify the methodological framework and methods used for data collection. In the chapters that follow, I discuss the findings. Chapter 4 explains the organizational and systemic factors that shape how MROs construct crime, followed by Chapter 5, which looks at the logics of communication and Chapter 6, which examines how MROs construct crime and their image for public consumption. In Chapter 7, I take a closer look at how MROs perceive their relationship with the media in general. Finally, in Chapter 8, I discuss the implications of the findings for police and the public and I also outline directions for future research.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Chapter 2 provides a brief overview of the emergence of media relations units in police departments and outlines the roles and activities of media relations officers. The research that has been conducted on PIOs/PROs in England, the U.S. and Australia is summarized and the complicated nature of police-media relations is discussed. I also provide a brief outline of gaps in the extant literature in conjunction with the research questions of the proposed research. Lastly, in the final section of this chapter, I outline the theoretical frameworks informing this research.

The Emergence of Media Relations Units in Police Departments

In the politicized climate of the early 60s, the practices and tactics adopted by police to deal with volatile situations (e.g., urban riots) were questioned and criticized (Lee & McGovern, 2014; Lovell, 2003; Motschall & Cao, 2002). During this period the reluctance of police to release information to the media further undermined trust (Lovell, 2003; Mawby, 2010; Motschall & Cao, 2002). In the North American context, to address public concerns and implement reforms within police organizations two national level groups, The President's Commission on Law Enforcement and Administration of Justice (1967) and the National Advisory Commission on Criminal Justice Standards and Goals (1973), were instituted (Lovell, 2003; Motschall & Cao, 2002). These groups advised police agencies to build stronger community relations and establish more positive relations with news media outlets (Bolger, 1983). In response to the suggested reforms, public information units were developed and media relations officers were established within police departments across the United States and Canada (Ericson, 1989; Lovell, 2003; Motschall & Cao, 2002). Such changes were purported to improve the flow of information between the police, public and media while establishing stronger relations between the public and police (Mawby, 2010; Motschall & Cao, 2002). More recently, a number of law enforcement

agencies, including the Commission on Accreditation for Law Enforcement Agencies (CALEA), the International Association of Chiefs of Police (IACP) and, in Ontario, the Ontario Media Relations Officers Network (OMRON), continue to encourage the expansion of media relations units and formal training of officers specifically in media relations (IACP, 2014).[9]

Research on police services' use of the media for public relations purposes finds that in general, the strategies implemented have shifted from reactive to proactive (Lee & McGovern, 2014; Lovell, 2003; Manning, 1997; Mawby, 2010; Motschall & Cao, 2002). Lovell (2003) contends that police agencies have traditionally embraced a reactive approach using the media for the purposes of damage control. Supporting this contention, research conducted by Surette and Richard (1995) with Florida PIOs found much of their work was reactive in nature and did not involve pre-packaging or proactive news creation. Recently however, police agencies have come to recognize the importance of proactive communication with the media given that it represents a primary means through which the public view law enforcement and crime (Lee & McGovern, 2013). Police-media policies (also referred to as public relations policies) are now formalized within police standard operating policies (Lee & McGovern, 2014), as Lovell explains, "recognizing that their image is shaped by the news media […] police have adopted policies to ensure their performances are anticipated, rehearsed and otherwise routine" (2003, p. 142). Media policies are crucial when it comes to using social media as well, given that misuse of such platforms can compromise criminal cases and threaten officer safety leading to departmental embarrassment and "exposure to civil and criminal liability" (Stuart, 2013,

---

[9] OMRON is part of the Ontario Association of Chiefs of Police (OACP).

paragraph, 1). Media relations officers are responsible for instituting and implementing these policies.

Media Relations Officers

As a key figure in police administration, MROs serve as an "important symbol and instrument of law enforcement's move from a closed system (paramilitary) to a more open system (service work) of communication" (Motschall & Cao, 2002, p. 177; see also Motschall, 1995). Moreover, Manning (1971) maintains that the institution of public information units serves as a mechanism for police agencies to cope with persistent social problems like public distrust (see also, Cooke & Sturges, 2009; Lee & McGovern, 2013; Mawby, 2010; Motschall, 1995), while Ericson (1989) suggests that increasing the jurisdiction of their public relations units serves to enhance the "ideological arm of the police" (p. 208). Police organizations engage in operational and non-operational communication activities to contend with changes in society requiring diverse communication strategies, increasing pressures to be efficient and effective and high levels of political dissatisfaction with policing functions and tactics (Lee & McGovern, 2013; Mawby, 2002). Operationally, police invoke media outlets to assist with investigative functions, while at the non-operational level media relations strategies are utilized as a means of communicating with myriad stakeholders and to protect the police image while demonstrating effectiveness and accountability (Lee & McGovern, 2013; Mawby, 2002).

The need for media relations officers continues to grow given extensive media coverage of incidents involving questionable police tactics (Mawby, 2010). Moreover, increasing fiscal constraints and a society driven by various forms of media and technological advancements (e.g., cellphone cameras, social media etc.) means "more than at any other time in their history, police officers need to make their case directly to the citizens through effective public presentations"

(Cheatham & Erickson, 1984, p.103; Mawby, 2010). Public distrust and growing budgetary constraints amplify the need for police to sustain public support for the police organization as well as their activities. Image and perception are arguably equally as important as arrest rates when it comes to assessing police effectiveness (Lee & McGovern, 2013).

Through the reproduction of positive images of policing, media relations officers presumably play a central role in garnering public approval, confidence and trust in garnering support for police activities and budgets (Lee & McGovern, 2013; Motschall & Cao, 2002). As primary spokespersons for the police department, MROs are in charge of facilitating the release and flow of information from the police department to external audiences. As strategic communicators these officers are required to "move beyond the mechanics of language and toward an understanding of situations, contexts, audiences and their opinions and media demands and formats" (Lovell, 2003, p. 142; see also Chermak, 1995). MROs employ various forms of strategic communication formulated to build positive relationships between police organizations and the publics they serve, and are responsible for myriad activities including arranging interviews and news conferences, preparing major occurrence news releases, clearing releases to the news media, establishing positive relations with the media and providing the public with information about police activities (Cook & Sturges, 2009; Cutlip et al., 2000; Ericson, 1989; Lee & McGovern, 2014; Lieberman, 2013; Lovell, 2003; Mawby 2010; Motschall & Cao, 2002; Surette, 2001).

Additional activities MROs engage in include delivering media training to officers in the organization, developing policies and guidelines around media contact, attending public events to promote the organization, distributing daily crime incident information to various media outlets, responding to crime scenes where local media may gather and fielding calls from beat

reporters regarding news events or developments on prior occurrences (Lee & McGovern, 2014; Lovell, 2003). Despite the fundamental role MROs play in police departments, little research has examined the characteristics and roles of these officers[10], or the claims-making processes they engage in and research that has been conducted in a North American context is rather dated.[11] In the section that follows, I outline research that has examined MROs while highlighting some of the gaps in the extant literature.

Empirical Studies

In general, research on MROs has been descriptive in nature focussing on the characteristics of these officers and their role(s) within the police organization (Chermak & Weiss, 2005; Lovell, 2001; Motschall & Cao, 2002; Surette & Richard, 1995). For example, in one of the first studies to examine the characteristics of public information officers (PIOs) in the United States, Surette and Richard (1995) surveyed 91 PIOs in Florida and found structural differences in the organization of this position. More specifically, two distinct groups - sworn public information officers and civilian public information officers - characterized the role. In general, several attitudes and characteristics were similar between the two groups. For instance, the average age of PIOs was forty, they had served in the position for about five years, nearly all of them had a college background and believed their work had an impact within their agencies and that is was valued by the Chief. On the other hand, sworn PIOs differed from civilian PIOs in the sense that sworn PIOs were more likely to be male, had a higher salary, possessed less media-related experience and earned degrees in criminal justice. Civilian PIOs were more likely to be female, had lower salaries, broader media-relations experience and had degrees in communications.

---

[10] Although some research has explored the roles played by MROs, uncertainty remains on the transferability to Canadian police services and whether these roles differ by the characteristics of the police services.
[11] Given that it was conducted over a decade ago (see for example, Lovell, 2001; Motschall & Cao, 2003).

Moreover, sworn PIOs were also found to be less satisfied with their job environment compared to civilian PIOs. The functions of these officers were similar across both groups in that the role required them to liaise between the media and their organization, arranging interactions between the media and other department personnel. Their role was mostly reactive in nature, responding to media inquires rather than pre-packaging news for dissemination. Interestingly, a follow-up survey conducted by Surette (2001) found that this dichotomy of the PIO position remained six years later.

In another largely descriptive study, Chermak and Weiss (2005) surveyed 203 PIOs in large American cities and found that these officers came from various ranks within their agencies. These authors also found that on average PIOs possessed 4.3 years of public relations experience and received at least 50 hours of specific training in the police-media relations' field. Similarly, in perhaps the largest national level study of PIOs in the United States to date, Lovell (2001) found that 89% of municipal law enforcement agencies possessed a designated public information officer, with more than half (69%) of these employees receiving some form of media skills training. Over 75% of these employees were sworn officers serving directly under the Chief. Lovell (2001) found that PIOs were the principle claims-makers for the department, responsible primarily for routine communication with members of the media and these officers represented the central source of information about departmental activities.

Other researchers have focused on understanding the structural aspects of media relations departments within police organizations as well as the goals and priorities of media relations officers (Cook & Sturges, 2009; Lee & McGovern, 2014; Mawby, 2010; McGovern & Lee, 2010; Motschall & Cao, 2002). For example, having conducted extensive research with media relations officers in the UK, Mawby (2010) sought to provide a longitudinal perspective on the

development of police communications structures and processes.[12] Survey data from 42 police public relations officers were compared to data collected in 1996/1997 and in 2000/2001.[13] Interviews were also conducted with PIOs to gain deeper insight into the priorities and practices of police communications. The data reveal, and provide further support for, two key themes identified in the literature on MROs: (1) continuing professionalization and (2) the expanding mandate of communications departments (Lee & McGovern, 2014; Leishman & Mason, 2003; Lovell, 2003; Mawby, 2002; Surette, 2001). Specifically, Mawby (2010) found that communications departments are not only recruiting communications professionals, but also that "…the use of the name 'corporate communications' is not simply re-labeling; it denotes the strategic direction in which police communications is moving and is supported by an increase in communications budgets and the size of departments" (p.129). Communication departments are also taking on more responsibility for activities that include corporate communications strategies, reactive and proactive media liaison, the marketing of campaigns, internal partnership communications and Internet development (p. 130; see also Mawby, 2007). Interview data reveal that police communications managers are using social networking websites and creating websites targeted at specific sections of the public as a means of bypassing the traditional media (Mawby, 2010).[14]

　　Cooke and Sturges (2009) conducted a case study to examine how PIOs in England manage their organization's public image in an era characterized by heightened accountability

---

[12] See Mawby (1999; 2002; 2010).

[13] Survey data included information on departments' names and functions, their place in the organizational structure, their terms of reference, staffing levels, areas of professional expertise, communications strategies, operating hours, methods of communication and numbers of contacts with media and other organizations (Mawby, 2010).

[14] In bypassing traditional media police are publishing/releasing their own material (for example, on Facebook, Twitter, service websites) rather than relying on external media sources (i.e., news reporters) to publish this information. The type of information shared by police includes anything from crime news, to positive PR stories, or police events in the community.

and transparency. These authors found that public information officers oriented communication activities primarily towards three groups: the public, partner agencies (e.g., with bodies such as parish councils and Neighbourhood Watch groups) and general interest parties (e.g., victims of crime) (Cook & Sturges, 2009). Like Mawby, Cook and Sturges (2009) found the police services they observed possessed well-staffed professional corporate communications units. Interviews with personnel charged with overall responsibility for corporate communications, revealed that the need to manage the media and preserve their reputation demanded strategic, professional and proactive approaches to communication. In addition to the direct publication of information prepared and disseminated by professional communicators, police forces relied increasingly on police websites as resource banks to communicate information to the public about police activities. Cooke and Sturges assert, "…Online publication has increased the breadth, timeliness and accessibility of information about policing available to the general public, as well as offering new possibilities for two-way interaction between the police and the communities they serve" (2009, p.419). According to Stuart (2013) police services can utilize social media for public relations, crime prevention and criminal investigation purposes as it can aid in apprehending fugitives, singling out suspects, linking individuals to street gangs and providing evidence of criminal activity (p. 7).

McGovern and Lee (2010) examined the type of work performed by police media units in Australia and found that the following accounted for much of the work executed by these units: "(1) the management of public risks and attempts to actuate public self-governance or responsibilization; examples would be public safety campaigns, deterrence measures, but also other support for operational policing; (2) the management of police reputation or 'image work'" (p. 106; see also Lee & McGovern, 2014; Mawby 2002). In their follow-up qualitative study,

15

Lee and McGovern (2013) conducted semi-structured interviews with key directors of public relations branches across five police departments in Australia to gain a better understanding of the discourses and practices of public relations directors. Offering further support to their earlier findings, the public relations directors interviewed identified two key goals defining their work: (1) Presenting to the public (and the police organization) "positive images and narratives of police work" and (2) Reducing "risks to the public through information and education" (Lee & McGovern, 2013, p. 121). Importantly, public relations directors indicated that these goals could be achieved only if the media, public and members of the police organization perceived the department as legitimate and trustworthy. To secure public trust and enhance perceptions of legitimacy public relations officials appear to rely on a variety of proactive media strategies that present positive images of policing while also emphasizing that the police are 'doing something' (Lee & McGovern, 2013). These researchers conclude that the 'core business' of public relations officers is image work and in response to the multi-mediated environment characterizing their work, Australian police organizations are engaging in proactive forms of media work as a means of "selling themselves" (Lee & McGovern, 2013, p.119).

In a Canadian context, research has yet to look at the actual work or role of MROs within police organizations, but rather focuses on the use of social media platforms at the organizational level. For example, Schneider (2016a) examined the presentational strategies of the Toronto Police Service (TPS) on Twitter. An analysis of 105,801 official TPS tweets reveals that officers used Twitter often to share "personal" information on the private lives of officers (e.g. tweets referencing non-police work, such as sports tweets). The purpose of such tweets, Schneider (2016a) argues is to present officers as 'average' community members with relatable community interests; this process serves to "delineate the individual officer from the police organization *but*

16

does so in an official capacity as a police officer, an initiative that diminishes the appearance of authoritarian relations" (p. 143, italics original). Schneider argues further, that this may lead eventually to the erosion of legitimacy efforts, on behalf of the police, that rely on impersonal authority.

To understand the claims-making activities of MROs it is important to acknowledge not only what they present and how they present it, but also what takes place behind the scenes, particularly in terms of how media relations officers relate to the mass media in general. One of the primary activities of MROs is to liaise with various news media outlets. As such, it is necessary to provide some context surrounding the complicated relationship between the police and the media.

Police-Media Relations: Maintaining Control

In what follows I provide a brief overview of the complicated relationship between police organizations and the mass media in general.[15] Some scholars suggest this relationship is akin to "lovers too blinded by their passion, each needs and is made stronger by the presence of the other […] they can't live together but are compelled to speak daily" (Lee & McGovern, 2014, p.9 see also Ellis & McGovern, 2016). Indeed, police organizations depend heavily on the cooperation and involvement of the media in disseminating information about crime and positive images of police work, while the media rely on the police to provide them with crime information to formulate newsworthy stories. According to Reiner (2008), the police-media relationship is best understood as a complex loop of interdependence.

---

[15] In the context of the present research the mass media is defined as, communication technologies that possess the capacity to circulate information widely to multiple recipients (Lovell, 2003). Mass media technologies include, for example, radio, television, newspapers, magazines and the Internet.

Research in this area focuses typically on the power dynamics of the police-media relationship and can be summarized in terms of two conflicting positions on the nature of this relationship.[16] The first perspective holds that the media play an important 'watch-dog' role over the police especially when it comes to high-profile news events such as, for example, the G20 summit in Toronto (Cook & Sturges, 2009; Huey & Brohl, 2012; Lovell, 2003; Mawby, 1999; Schulenberg & Chenier, 2014). In fact, according to Schulenberg & Chenier (2014), during crisis events such the G20, the position of the police as primary definers of crime is undermined in favour of citizens and protestors.

The police may very well be the most watched organization in society (Cooke & Sturges, 2009; Mawby, 2002). Lovell (2003) contends that the mass media are central to police administrative and strategic reform. More specifically, Lovell (2003) argues that technological innovations have increased the amount of information about police available to the public and, "this information has undermined the political and social legitimacy of police, resulting in movements towards image, organizational and even strategic reform" (p.4; see also Chermak, 1995). Moreover, Huey and Broll (2012) take issue with the position that police dominate the police-media relationship. Interviews with detectives revealed feelings that signified a lack control over how their work is represented in news stories. What is more, detectives felt that the pressures placed on reporters to generate crime-related stories undermined their ability to conceal their investigative activities and techniques (Huey & Brohl, 2012). This can be problematic given that in some cases the integrity of an investigation may be undermined when sensitive information is released.

---

[16] Though I am presenting these perspectives in binary terms it should be recognized that the police-media relationship is not static but rather dynamic in nature. The balance of power shifts over time. As Lee & McGovern (2013; 2016; see also Ellis & McGovern, 2015) have argued this relationship is symbiotic but always changing, developing and mutating.

In contrast, some researchers suggest that by prohibiting access into their social, cultural and physical spaces, and by circulating positive news as a means of harnessing media power to their advantage, the police attempt to control the news media (Chermak, 1995; Chinball, 1981; Ericson, 1989; Mawby, 2010; Lee & McGovern, 2014). In essence, police organizations engage in media-relations for self-serving purposes, primarily to protect their reputation and image; assist with the control and apprehension of criminals; and promote the aims, ideologies and interests of the police (Chinball, 1981; Mawby, 2010). According to Manning (1971), the public's understanding of crime and police action is constructed through the imagery of the media, "which is developed from information obtained from "official police sources" (p. 180). Chibnall's (1981) seminal research on English crime reporting revealed that though the police-media relationship is reciprocal, it is largely asymmetric with police possessing the upper hand. Specifically, police control the relationship given they do not depend on the media to achieve their goals and they are also the gatekeepers to information desired by the media.

Recent research suggests police may still dominate this relationship.[17] For example, several scholars contend that given technological advancements and the professionalization of public relations departments, police do not consider traditional media to be the primary channel of communication anymore (Cook & Sturges, 2009; Lee & McGovern, 2014; Mawby, 2010). Nevertheless, it is worth noting that police forces still recognize the importance of maintaining positive relations with traditional news media given their desire to achieve a number of goals

---

[17] I wish to emphasize that given the complexity of this relationship it is inappropriate to assume that police dominate relations entirely. As Mawby argues, there is a multitude of relationships that exist "between reporters and their sources, between local police stations and reporters and between individual police forces and news organizations" (2010, p.136).

including the need to demonstrate transparency, reassure people, garner publicity for unsolved crimes and project a positive police image (Mawby, 2010).

According to Lee and McGovern (2014), though police organizations have moved away from overt forms of control of the media, new forms of control include the use of media relations units, which serve as a channel through which all information pertaining to the organization is managed and circulated. By broadening their scope and use of communications, police agencies have maintained strategic control of the information disseminated as well as how their image is constructed in popular discourse (Chermak, 1995; Lee & McGovern, 2014). Perhaps the most profound way in which police organizations possess control over the news media is related to the construction of crime news.

Research has long documented that when it comes to crime news, ultimately the police decide what is presented (e.g., Chermak, 1995; Chibnall, 1977; Fishman, 1980; Grabosky & Wilson, 1989; Lovell, 2003). In their research of police-media interactions, Crandon and Dunne (1997) found that 93% of police-initiated briefings were used by the media, revealing the high level of control police possess over the nature of crime reports provided to the public. Relatedly, McGovern and Lee (2010) found that of all crime-related stories in the largest metropolitan cities in Sydney, Australia 67% reproduced directly the themes of police media releases. In other words, newspaper reporters used the content of police media releases verbatim and published this content as objective news (McGovern & Lee, 2010).[18]

Reiner (2010) has noted how police exploit the media to secure resources and acquire prestige by constructing crime waves. Certainly, news reporters have little choice but to rely on the social construction of crime events provided by police given that they rarely witness these

_____

[18] Objective in the sense that news stories are presented as completely factual accounts, thus limiting opportunities for subjective interpretations of the event.

events directly. What is more, in news stories about crime, police officials are cited as experts, deemed worthy of shaping public perceptions of crime (Chermak, 1995; Lovell, 2003). As primary sources for the production of crime news, police are provided an official public forum to define what is important about crime, respond to limitations in their response(s) and advocate for proposed solutions (Chermak, 1995). According to Chermak (1995), "Police departments categorize crimes in a way that is self-promoting and supportive of traditional responses to crime. They decide when story information should be released, limiting access to reports and diverting attention from specific events" (Chermak, 1995, p.38).

To summarize, media relations officers play a necessary and prominent role within police organizations. In general, researchers have focused on describing the characteristics and roles of MROs, examining the structural aspects of media relations departments and outlining the goals and priorities of MROs. Despite the invaluable contribution of this research to our understanding of MROs and the work they do, there are three significant gaps in the literature that have yet to be addressed. First, there is virtually no literature on MROs in a Canadian socio-legal and political context.[19] Second, the claims-making processes MROs engage in to construct crime have yet to be examined. More specifically, the literature has yet to observe how MROs, as knowledge workers, craft, package and frame crime as risk, as opposed to deviance and the police as guarantors of security, rather than crime fighters. Third, research has yet to investigate the strategies and tactics employed by MROs to construct and manage the police image to the public. The present study seeks to address these gaps in the literature by answering the following research questions:

---

[19] With the exception of the research conducted by Ericson et al., (1989) in *Negotiating Control* which provides some discussion on the role of public relations officers.

Research Questions

1. What are the organizational and systemic factors that impact and shape the nature of claims-making within police organizations (e.g. size, centralization, formalization/professionalization, relationships with news media)?

    (a) What are the characteristics of MROs in law enforcement agencies in Ontario?

    (b) What types of public relations techniques or activities are adopted by MROs in law enforcement agencies in Ontario?

    (c) What roles do MROs perform in their organizations?

2. How do organizational and systemic factors inform claims-making processes, specifically in terms of the priorities, practices and direction of media relations' activities?

    (a) How do these organizational and systemic factors shape how police organizations construct crime?

        (i) How do MROs frame crime and the role of police within a broader discourse of risk?

    (b) How do these organizational and systemic factors shape how police organizations construct and manage their image to the public?

        (i) What types of communications activities/strategies are utilized to demonstrate legitimacy, effectiveness and accountability?

        (ii) How are these strategies implemented to garner public support and trust?

    (c) How do official press releases reflect the claims-making processes and activities that MROs say they practice?

3. How do MROs perceive their relationship with the mass media?

In essence, given the increasing professionalization and expanding mandate of media relations units in police departments, as well as the primary claims-making role of MROs, it is absolutely imperative to re-examine how crime is constructed for and disseminated to the public. Theoretically, the present research is informed by the social constructionist literature as well as the literature pertaining to policing in the risk society. In the sections to follow I discuss both theoretical positions in more detail.

Social Constructionist Theory: Constructing Crime and Social Problems

Theoretically, to understand the claims-making practices MROs engage in, the qualitative phase of this research will be guided by the social constructionist literature. At the core of constructionist theory are questions pertaining to the ontological and epistemological nature of social problems. Specifically, is there an objective reality to any given social condition and can we know this reality? But also, how do we come to attribute certain social conditions to a particular problem status? In order to address these questions constructionist theory focuses on claims-making processes (Miller & Holstein, 1993; Ibarra & Kitsuse, 1993).

Constructionist research recognizes that multiple realities exist, constituted through processes of interpretation 'whereby social actors constantly negotiate meaning and understanding' (Schulenberg, 2016, p. 16). Constructionist research seeks to understand the processes through which social actors make sense of their world. In this sense, researchers must focus on the interpretation process, aiming to discern how social actors define their realty how they come to produce and reproduce their behavior (Schulenberg, 2016, p. 21).

Structural functionalists view social problems as intrinsically immoral conditions that can be objectively observed and repaired (Miller & Holstein, 1993). In other words, social conditions are assumed to exist independent of one's interpretation of them. As such, some conditions are

truly accepted as objective problems (Miller & Holstein, 1993). According to Blumer (1970), objectivist research strategies reflect "a gross misunderstanding of the nature of social problems" and are "ineffectual in providing for their control" (Blumer 1970, p. 299). The misunderstanding he was referring to was that emphasis was being inappropriately placed on specific "objective" conditions presumed to be the sole determinants of whether or not a condition was inherently problematic.

Constructionist theory moves away from objectivist conceptions of social problems aiming instead to discern what people know and use in distinguishing the objectionable in their lives (Ibarra & Kitsuse, 1993). Individuals are conceived as perceiving subjects engaged actively in the process of constructing social conditions as moral objects (Ibarra & Kitsuse, 1993). Social problems are viewed as constructions, rendered as such through claims-making and collective definitional processes (Best, 1993; Blumer, 1970; Fuller & Myers, 1941; Hilgartner & Bosk, 1988; Loseke, 2003; Spector & Kitsuse, 1975). In essence, research aims to understand the subjective definition of a given condition as opposed to the objective nature of that condition (Best, 1993; Fuller & Myers, 1941; Loseke, 2003).

In studying social problems, contextual constructionists focus on the processual nature of claims; seeking to discern how they are constructed and why certain claims receive attention while others fail to (Best, 1989, p.248). As Miller and Holstein (1997) argue, social facts must be deconstructed and attention given to how these facts are asserted, disputed and resisted through claims-making processes (Miller & Holstein, 1997, p.xii). Constructionist research recognizes that problems are constructed in particular ways in an effort to 'set the stage' for particular solutions (Loseke, 2003). Through the analysis of claims-making processes, constructionist research illuminates how knowledge reflects power and politics (Loseke, 2003). Claims are

disseminated by individuals or groups including professionals, media outlets, politicians, activists and special interest groups, who have *vested interests in particular issues and how they are constructed* (Loseke, 2003). Miller and Holstein (1993) suggest that claims-making processes are both implicitly and intentionally rhetorical and are used by individuals/groups to persuade audience members to acknowledge particular conditions as problematic (see also, Ibarra & Kitsuse, 1993). Claims-making processes can be assessed by outlining strategic uses of language and the differences in meaning and consequences it can have in shaping the social problems process (Ibarra & Kitsuse, 1993).

According to Best (1987), "rhetoric is central, not peripheral, to claims-making. Claims-makers intend to persuade and they try to make their claims as persuasive as possible" (p. 115). As such, Best argues, researchers should aim to discern the principal categories involved in claims-making including: grounds, warrants and conclusions.[20] Best defines grounds as essential elements within any claims-making campaign insofar as they provide basic definitions and facts about the issue at hand; thus, grounds create the foundation for subsequent discussions (Best, 1987). Warrants appeal most often to a sense of morality or the moral good (Loseke, 2003), they are statements used to validate the conclusions suggested by claims-makers (Best, 1987). Finally, conclusions are defined as the ultimate goal(s) of claims-making campaigns (Best, 1987). Many researchers have utilized constructionist frameworks to analyze the rhetorical claims surrounding the emergence, extent, causes and solutions to conditions rendered problematic (Best, 1993). Such empirical research includes Jenkins' (1995) study of the social construction of serial homicide, Gusfield's (1981) analysis of drinking and driving and Parnaby's (2003) research on

---

[20] Best (1987) borrows this from Toulmin's (1958) article titled *The Uses of Argument.* Toulmin suggests that every argument follows a basic structure.

Toronto's squeegee kids (see also O'Grady et al., 2010). I now turn to a discussion of the second theoretical framework that informs the present research.

Policing the Risk Society

Some scholars argue the late modern era is characterized by the notion that human responsibility is intrinsically attached to risk (Beck, 1999; Giddens, 1991). In other words, not only are individuals perceived to be the cause of risks, but they are also responsible for their minimization. According to Garland (1996), risk ideologies are rooted in the genre of criminological discourse that gained influence in the mid-1970s. This discourse included the following theoretical frameworks: rational choice theory, routine activity theory, crime as an opportunity and situational crime prevention theory that starkly contrasts earlier conceptions of crime which view criminal activity as a "deviation from normal civilized conduct" that is explained "in terms of individual pathologies" (Garland, 1996 p .450). On the other hand, the "new criminologies of everyday life (criminologies of the self) see crime as continuous with normal social interaction and explicable by reference to standard motivational patterns" (pp. 450-451). Consequently, crime is a risk that can be calculated by the offender and the victim, or an accident to be avoided (Garland, 1996 p. 451).

To understand the prevalence of risks and solutions to address those risks in our daily lives, we rely on "expert identification and calculation" of risk (Lupton, 2013 p. 12). Police organizations play a fundamental role in identifying, defining and managing risks (Lee & McGovern, 2016). Ericson and Haggerty (1997) were among the first to explain how risk ideologies and increasing demands for accountability influence police organizations, maintaining that the police are influenced fundamentally by "the risk logics of external institutions and the classification schemes and knowledge requirements they entail..." (p. 17). These authors contend

that researchers have ignored largely how the risk communication systems within which police

operate influence their behaviour (Ericson & Haggerty, 1997). Although Ericson and Haggerty

(1997) agree that crime fighting and societal protection is part of policing, they believe this focus

overlooks the contribution made by the police to broader political functions including regulation,

governance and security. Policing, they argue, "consists of the public police coordinating their

activities with policing agents in all other institutions to provide a society-wide basis for risk

management (governance) and security (guarantees against loss)" (p.3). Thus, police behaviour

must be understood within the context of a broader institutional network of governance in risk

society (Chan & Rigakos, 2002; Ericson & Haggerty, 1997; Lee & McGovern, 2014; O'Malley,

2010). This perspective suggests that institutional demands for knowledge of risk influence

directly how police think and act. Within the risk society, the police mandate is not about

deviance, control, or order, but rather, officers are "knowledge workers" and their focus is on

risk, surveillance and security (Ericson & Haggerty, 1997). The centrality of risk consciousness

in modern society necessitates that the police play a primary role in defining, compiling and

disseminating knowledge about risk (Ericson & Haggerty, 1997).

In essence, Ericson and Haggerty's (1997) theory proposes that police behaviour is

influenced by the knowledge work they do and by the risk communications they exchange with

multiple institutions.[21] Beyond producing data to be used later for insurance purposes, police

data is also used to set acceptable standards of risk, to identify potential threats against

institutions and to manage the threats that might compromise the functioning of an institution

(Ericson & Haggerty, 1997; Lee & McGovern, 2014). The officer acts as a knowledge broker

---

[21] For example, these institutions include insurance companies, regulatory agencies, financial institutions, health
organizations, welfare agencies and motor vehicle agencies.

serving as both an expert advisor and security manager to other institutions. Thus, the risk society has direct implications for the functioning of the police organization as a whole.

Several researchers have documented how information management in a risk society has influenced police organizations (Lee & McGovern, 2014; Macquire, 2000; Manning, 2008; 2014; McGovern, 2005). In the context of the risk society, the police may be conceived as 'managers of unease' insofar as they, "promote a vision of a predictable, ordered future by, in part, publicizing the security efforts of the agencies they represent by drawing on specialized, esoteric knowledge regarding risk and available risk minimization strategies" (Boyle & Haggerty, 2012, pp. 247-248). According to Lee and McGovern (2014), risk logics "circumscribe what, when, by whom and to what ends information can be released to the media and public" (p. 43). Through risk reduction and responsibilization police organizations are able to communicate and manage public safety; as primary definers of risk the police have the ability to help govern public safety. On the other hand, the capacity of the police to define public risk and their expertise in risk management means they also control what "appear as rational solutions to the problems at hand" (Lee & McGovern, 2014, p. 45). Police organizations approach crime control in a strategic, future-oriented and targeted manner that focuses on the identification, analysis and management of persistent and developing risks (Macguire, 2000). Therefore, we need to better understand how crime can be framed as risk and subsequently managed by the police. In the next chapter, I outline the methodological framework of this research and I explain the methods used for data collection.

Chapter 3: Methods

In this chapter I describe the methodological framework that guided this research and explain the methods used for data collection. Quantitative and qualitative research are informed by different assumptions about the nature of reality and how we can comprehend this reality. Quantitative research is grounded in objectivist conceptions of reality, which consider social reality to be a fixed external entity composed of a series of causal relations that can be predicted and controlled. Quantitative research designs adhere to the natural science model of research and are concerned with capturing aspects of the social world through precise and accurate measurement techniques expressed numerically (e.g., percentages, correlations, probability values) (King & Horrocks, 2010; Neuman, 2007; Porta & Keating, 2008). Quantitative research designs are not without limitations. For example, according to Schulenberg (2004), quantitative research has been critiqued for its "oversimplification of reality- that is, this type of research requires a numerical coding" that fails to capture the diversity and complexity characterizing social processes (p. 96).

Qualitative research is grounded in constructionist conceptions of social reality, which consider the meaning of social life to be reflected in the ideas, beliefs and perceptions people possess about reality (Creswell, 2009; Denzin & Lincoln, 2000; Klenke, 2008). Epistemologically, qualitative researchers contend that knowledge stems from "abstract descriptions of meanings and is constituted through a person's lived experience" (Klenke, 2008, p. 21; see also Creswell, 2009). As such, qualitative research focuses on the process of how meanings are created, negotiated, sustained and modified, as perceived by the research subjects (Schwandt, 2003).

In the social sciences there is a tendency to focus exclusively on the differences between quantitative and qualitative research while ignoring the similarities these approaches share. This

focus is problematic for this exploratory study, because to gain a comprehensive understanding of the roles and activities of MROs, a multi-method approach was necessary. As Onwuegbuzie and Leech (2005) argue, "much of the quantitative–qualitative debate has involved the practice of polemics, which has tended to obfuscate rather than to clarify and to divide rather than to unite researchers" (p. 394). Despite differences, these approaches are similar. For example, both quantitative and qualitative research involve the use of observation to answer research questions, both describe their data and both construct explanatory arguments from their data (Onwuegbuzie & Leech, 2005; Tashakkori & Teddlie, 1998). Arguably, quantitative and qualitative research may be better perceived to exist on a continuum rather than representing polar opposites (Onwuegbuzie & Leech, 2005).

I approached the present research from a pragmatist worldview, recognizing that both quantitative and qualitative techniques contribute to our understanding of social phenomena. According to Tashakkori and Teddlie (1998), pragmatists embrace both quantitative and qualitative approaches to research and reject assumptions underlying the quantitative/qualitative dichotomy. In order to provide an in-depth examination of MROs in Ontario, specifically, who they are, what they do, how they do it and why they do it, a qualitative-dominant sequential mixed-methods research design was adopted[22] (Onwuegbuzie & Leech, 2005; Schulenberg, 2004; Tashakkori & Teddlie, 1998). Most importantly, this design provided the opportunity to explain *what* and to *what extent* organizational (e.g., size of the service, centralization and formalization) and systemic factors (e.g., characteristics of the communities' police serve and the nature of relations between MROs and external news media outlets) shape the nature of claims-making within police organizations. For pragmatists, the decision to use quantitative or

---

[22] Please note, this method is discussed in more detail below.

qualitative methods depends on the research question posed (Tashakkori & Teddlie, 1998; Schulenberg, 2007). The research questions posed in the present study demanded both quantitative and qualitative data collection techniques. My first research question asks what organizational and systemic factors shape the nature of claims-making within police organizations and therefore demanded a quantitative approach. A quantitative design was necessary to generate descriptive statistics to explain the characteristics of MROs including their activities and roles, the tactics and strategies used by MROs and the organizational factors associated with the MRO position.

Subsequent research questions in this study seek to gain a deeper understanding of *how* organizational and systemic factors inform claims-making capacities and activities of MROs and therefore demanded a qualitative approach. Qualitative research methods provide the opportunity to obtain an in-depth understanding as to *how* MROs construct crime and the police in popular discourse, as well as *why* specific strategies are adopted to achieve their goals. In this sequential qualitative-dominant mixed-methods design, I did not attempt to test theoretical propositions. Moreover, given the literature on MROs to date, it would have been difficult to generate theoretical propositions to test. Thus, this research was largely exploratory; my intention was to gain a deeper understanding of the role and claims-making activities of MROs in Ontario.

The first phase of my research involved quantitative data collection techniques (surveys) while the second phase involved qualitative data collection methods (semi-structured interviews). In sequential mixed-method research designs, the first method is used for the purposes of *development.* In other words, data generated from the first method are used to inform the second method (see for example, Onwuegbuzie & Leech, 2005). In the present study, the quantitative findings were used to elucidate the organizational and systemic factors that shape

31

the nature of claims-making within police organizations and to inform sampling decisions for the second qualitative phase. The initial quantitative data analysis also led to the identification of MROs that are similar but also different from each other in terms of organizational and attitudinal characteristics. This aided in the selection of participants for the semi-structured interviews in the second, qualitative research phase. In addition, a sequential mixed-methods design was also used for the purposes of *complementarity*. Specifically, the qualitative (interview) data was used as a means of elaborating, enhancing, illustrating and clarifying some of the key themes identified in the survey. As such, the qualitative data added breadth and scope to the quantitative findings.

Adopting a pragmatic worldview, the present research was guided by the contention that the research question determines the method. The research questions posed in this study demanded a mixed-method approach. The decision to implement a QAUL-dominant research design was driven by the fact that one of the three central research questions (RQ2) seeks to gain a deeper understanding of the claims-making activities of MROs, while RQ3 demanded an in-depth examination of how MRO's perceive their relationship with the media. Qualitative research aims to understand the world of lived experience, from the perspective of those who live in that world (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000; Grbich, 2009; Porta & Keating, 2008).

Research Setting and Participants

In the province of Ontario policing is performed at three levels: Federal, Provincial and Municipal. Serving at the federal level the "O" division of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP) has 12 detachments stationed across three districts (GTA, North East and South West) (RCMP, 2014). The RCMP are responsible for dealing with matters related to border security, drugs and organized crime, as well as international policing matters. The Ontario Provincial

Police (OPP) headquarters are stationed across five operational regions: Central (Orillia), East (Smiths Falls), Highway Safety Division (Aurora), North-East (North Bay), North-West (Thunder Bay) and West (London). The OPP provide policing services to areas that do not have their own local police forces and their responsibilities include crime prevention, traffic safety, investigations, intelligence and community relations (OPP, 2014). There are approximately 58 independent municipal police services in Ontario (My Police, 2014). Municipal agencies have jurisdiction over the cities and regions they serve and are responsible mainly for crime prevention, order maintenance, traffic enforcement and community relations at the community level. Finally, there are 10 Indigenous police agencies in Ontario. Thus, in total there are 86 police services in the province of Ontario. In the sections that follow, I discuss first the method I adopted to gain access to the field and, second, the sampling techniques and data collection methods used.

Gaining Access

The need to establish a plan of entry into the field is important. In fact, such a strategy is paramount when performing research within an organizational structure like that of the police, which is hierarchical, paramiltaristic and largely insular (Punch, 1989). Gaining access to police services requires negotiations with key gatekeepers, as they can help or hinder the research depending on their opinions about the validity and value of the project. Thus, establishing positive relationships with gatekeepers is crucial insofar as they provide a necessary link to participants (Beg, 2009; Reeves, 2010; see also Creswell, 2009).

As the commanding officer, the Chief or Commissioner of police is the primary gatekeeper for the present study. Officers are not permitted to participate in research external to the organization unless the project has been cleared directly by the Chief/Commissioner of the

organization. To initiate access into the field, I sent an email directly to the Chief/Commissioner of each police service (see Appendix A). The email outlined in detail the proposed objectives of the research and a copy of the survey instrument and semi-structured interview guide were attached; however, this initial approach was unsuccessful. In fact, after nearly a month of unreturned phone calls and emails, I was forced to embrace a more aggressive approach to gain access to the field. This process began when a colleague connected me with a municipal MRO he knew from a committee they both served on. The officer and I exchanged several emails in late January 2015.[23] During our discussions, the officer informed me that an Ontario Media Relations Officers' Network (OMRON) meeting was scheduled to take place in February 2015. OMRON is supported by the Ontario Association of Chiefs of Police (OACP) and MROs from across Ontario, at all levels of policing (municipal, OPP, RCMP) convene at these meetings three times in a calendar year. I saw this meeting as an excellent opportunity to connect with potential participants, but I had to be cleared and granted access to attend the meeting.

The officer I had been in contact with sent a request that I be able to attend the meeting, to the officer acting as *Director of Government Relations and Communications* from OACP, as well as to the Chair and Vice-Chair of OMRON. I was informed a few days later that I was permitted to attend the meeting to present a fifteen-minute overview of my research.[24] Although my access to the meeting was extremely limited, it proved invaluable for gaining direct access to MROs. Approximately one week following the meeting, OACP sent out an email to all OMRON members requesting they participate in my research if they were interested. The email included a brief outline of my research purpose and methods. In addition, two documents were attached to

---

[23] These emails entailed introductions to one another and discussions about my research goals and aims.
[24] These meetings are typically very 'closed' to outsiders. The fact that I was able to attend at all was very promising according to the officer I had correspondence with.

the email, the letter of information pertaining to the survey (Appendix B) and the survey tool

itself (Appendix C). If interested in participating in the research, officers were instructed to

complete the survey and send it directly to me via email, or if the officer wished to remain

anonymous (only 2 officers chose this approach), they could send the email to the OACP

representative who would then forward the survey directly to me. It is important to note that one

of the gatekeepers was an OACP rep from OMRON who requested that this be provided as an

option.[25] Officers were given four weeks to submit the survey if they wished to participate.[26]

Although this situation made the recruitment process more passive than I would have

liked, the fact that the email request was sent, on my behalf, by OACP was advantageous for

several reasons.[27] First, given the source, I am confident that the email was sent to *all* MROs

serving in the province. Second and perhaps most importantly, this method provided my research

and myself as a researcher, a significant degree of credibility. Finally, this method allowed for a

higher degree of anonymity for officers to complete the surveys insofar as they were given the

option to send the survey to the OACP representative who would then forward it to me.[28]

Difficulty gaining access to the field initially meant I was extremely cautious about

waiting too long to arrange interviews with officers who expressed interest in the research. In

addition, because the MRO position can be a busy position, I wanted to ensure I secured

interviews with officers as soon as possible. As such, a question was included at the end of the

survey that asked if the officer would be willing to participate in a follow-up interview.[29] Upon

---

[25] I want to emphasize that the survey did not ask for personal information and was organization/duty specific and everyone involved belonged to OMRON.

[26] Although I would have preferred a two-week time frame, I was advised by my contact at OACP that four weeks was the most reasonable time frame.

[27] 'Passive' in the sense that I was not the one contacting MROs directly.

[28] Although most officers provided contact information and were open to further participation in the research it should be noted that two out of 19 officers did elect to send the survey anonymously.

[29] The OACP contact strongly advised me to include this question to speed up the process of recruitment.

receiving completed surveys from the officers, I sent an email thanking them for their

participation and informed them that I would be contacting them to set up a time for an interview

once a preliminary analysis of the survey data was completed (Appendix D). My intention was to

obtain a sample that reflected small and large police services at the municipal level, as well as all

regions at the provincial level.

Sampling & Data Collection Methods

Two modes of data collection were used: a cross-sectional survey and semi-structured

interviews. First, descriptive statistics were derived from cross-sectional surveys. Second,

interviews with MROs served as the main source of data for this research project.

Survey Questionnaire

The method of data collection for the first phase of the research was a cross-sectional survey.

According to Creswell (2009) survey designs allow researchers to quantitatively describe trends,

attitudes or opinions of a population. Given that little to no research has examined Canadian

media relations officers, the purpose of the survey was to generate descriptive statistics about the

characteristics of MROs (for example, sex, age, rank, experience, education, training etc.), the

tactics used by MROs (including their activities and roles) and the organizational factors

associated with the MRO position. Survey data addressed research question number one and

provided the opportunity to explore and explain *what* and to *what extent* organizational factors

shape the nature of claims-making within police organizations. Finally, survey results were used

to inform sampling decisions for the second qualitative phase of research. Specifically, sampling

decisions were informed by the organizational factors that shape the nature of claims-making.[30]

---

[30] The specifics of these decisions are explained below.

To make the present study as inclusive as possible, I included 74 of the 86 police services outlined, in the sampling frame for the quantitative phase of this research. Given the distinctive operational functions of the RCMP, as well as the highly centralized nature of the organizational structure of the RCMP, MROs from the 12 districts outlined above were not included in the study.[31] Therefore, the sample included MROs from provincial, municipal and Indigenous services. Given the small sample size, surveys were distributed (as outlined above) to *all* of the elements listed in the sampling population.

All survey data were collected from March 2nd to March 31st 2015. Despite distributing the survey to all MROs in the sample population and reminding officers about the survey with two follow-up emails that were sent by the OACP representative on my behalf, the response rate was significantly lower than I had hoped.[32] In total, I received 19 completed surveys including, 13 from municipal services (68%), 4 from OPP (21%) and 2 (11%) from Indigenous services (25.68% response rate). However, this small sample size did not pose significant limitations to the present research for two specific reasons. First, the research design was qualitative-dominant and I was still able to utilize survey data to inform sampling decisions for the interview phase. Second, given that there is little to no research on MROs in a Canadian context and the fact that the research was largely exploratory in nature, any data proves invaluable to enhance our understanding of this position. The aim of the survey was to inform the qualitative data collection and analysis, not to generalize findings. Specifically, sampling decisions for the semi-structured interviews were informed by the survey data related to organizational factors (e.g.,

---

[31] Because an OACP representative sent the request to participate in my research, RCMP MROs were actually sent the survey tool. I did not receive any completed surveys from members of the RCMP, but it is important to note that I made the decision to exclude them from my sample prior to commencing data collection.

[32] The initial email reminder was sent out on March 16th 2015 and the second reminder was sent a week later on March 23rd 2015.

size, centralization, formalization and professionalization), as well as systemic factors (e.g.,

relationships with news media and community characteristics).[33]

In terms of organizational factors, three considerations were important for selecting

participants. I wanted to ensure the interview sample included police services that varied in

organizational size, varied in the extent to which they had centralized, formalized and

professionalized media relations units and finally, varied in the extent to which the MRO role

was formalized.[34]

With respect to the systemic factors of interest to this study, I selected interview

participants with some variation in the following features: (1) The size of the population served

(this is obviously directly related to the organizational size, e.g. a larger police service equates

directly with a larger population served), (2) the type of service (e.g., provincial, independent

municipal) and (3) the geographic landscape (e.g., rural, urban). Further, I included participants

who reported both positive and negative relationships with different news media sources. In

essence, descriptive statistics (frequencies/percentages) were used to identify MROs that were

similar but also different from one another in terms of organizational and attitudinal

characteristics.

Measurement

A number of variables included in this survey were adapted from Mawby (2007) and Motschall

(1995). To ensure the survey was applicable to Canadian police services and to address my

---

[33] Please note, the organizational and systemic factors of interest to the present study are defined in detail in the measurement section.

[34] As outlined later in the chapter, formalization refers to the degree to which the MRO position is an established position in the department guided by rules and regulations, whereas drawing on Mawby (2002; 2010; 2014), 'professionalization' refers to any strategic changes (e.g., use of the name 'corporate communications'), as well as the level of expertise possessed by personnel in media units. As Mawby (2010) notes, professionalization is supported by the practice of recruiting communications professionals (see also McGovern, 2015, p. 6).

research questions, I modified and added several survey items. Based on prior research

conducted in the US and UK, RQ1 examined organizational and systemic factors, such as size,

centralization, formalization/professionalization and relationships with the news media:

>**RQ1.** What are the organizational and systemic factors that shape the nature of claims-
>
>making within police organizations

Organizational and systemic factors included any conditions that shape the structure of the police

organizations and media relations departments included in this study.[35] Specifically,

organizational factors included internal factors (size of the service, centralization and

formalization), while systemic factors included external factors (characteristics of the

communities' police serve and the nature of relations between MROs and external news media

outlets).

Organizational Factors:

I) *Size of the service*. This included the number of employees in the entire organization as well as

the total number of employees in the media relations department (see Appendix C Section 1 Q1

& Section 2 Q10). Size also included the yearly budget for the entire organization and the budget

allocated specifically to the media relations department (see Section 1 Q3 & Section 2 Q9).[36]

II) *Centralization.* According to Motschall (1995), centralization is the degree to which decision-

making in the organization is concentrated at the top. Questions used to measure this variable

asked the extent to which media relations activities have to be cleared by a higher authority in

---

[35] In this thesis 'structure' is conceptualized in conventional sociological terms, mainly drawing on structural-functionalist conceptions (Comte, 1893; Durkheim, 1984), which define structure as persistent patterns of action/interaction that repeat over time. This is discussed in detail in Chapter 4.

[36] It is recognized that MROs may not know some of this information. In such cases and when possible, this information was obtained from publications made available on the police services' websites.

the organization and whether MROs are involved directly in establishing media relations policies for their service (see Section 2 Q13 & Section 2 Q17.a).

III) *Formalization.* This is the degree to which the MRO position is "an established position in the department guided by rules and regulations" (Motschall, 1995, p. 37). Formalization was measured by the following survey items: (1) whether or not the media relations unit functions as an independent department (see Section 2 Q13 & Q13.a); (2) how long the the media relations department has been established in years (see Section 2 Q8); (3) whether the MRO position is designated as a management/supervisory level position within the police department (see Section 2 Q14); (4) whether the service has formal written media relations policies (see Section 2 Q17); (5) whether the department archives all official press releases (see Section 2 Q18); (6) whether the service has a policy that stipulates which police officers and police staff are permitted to liaise with the media (see Section 4 Q33); (7) whether the MRO received specific training in communications, public relations, or media relations prior to assuming the media relations position in the department (see Section 5 Q43); (8) and finally, whether the MRO received any communications, public relations, or media relations training since assuming the media relations position (see Section 5 Q44).

Systemic Factors:

IV) *Community Characteristics.* Three survey questions measured the characteristics of the communities served by the agencies in this study: the population of the community served by one's service (see Section 1 Q5); the overall geographic landscape (e.g., rural, urban) (see Section 1 Q4); and whether or not there are high percentages of minority groups in the community (see Section 1 Q6).

V) *Relationships with news media*. This variable included MRO's views about the media. The survey questions that measure this concept asked the degree to which the MRO believes they have a good relationship with local media, national media, local newspaper personnel, national newspaper personnel, local radio personnel and national radio personnel (see Section 4 Q35). Additional questions measure the extent to which the MRO feels they can trust news reporters, the degree to which they feel the news media focus on negative stories about the police and the degree to which MROs feel the news media focus on positive stories about the police (see Section 4 Q35).

> **RQ1a)** What are the characteristics of MROs in law enforcement agencies in
>
> Ontario?

To answer the first sub question, I included the following demographic variables: sex; age; educational attainment; field of study; years of service as MRO; previous experience in MRO position; whether or not any type of communications, public relations, or media relations training has been received and the number of training hours; current rank; ethnicity (race) (see Section 5 Q37-Q46).

> **RQ1b)** What types of public relations techniques or activities are adopted by
>
> MROs in law enforcement agencies in Ontario?

To determine the public relations techniques and activities adopted by MROs, the following four survey items were included: (1) whether the respondent describes their approach to media relations activities as proactive or reactive (see Section 2 Q21); (2) the extent to which respondents consider persuasion of the public to be a goal of their activities (see Section 3 Q30); (3) the extent to which respondents consider crime prevention to be a goal of their activities (see Section 3 Q31); and (4) whether their service recruits: trained journalists, public relations

specialists, or marketing specialists (see Section 2 Q22-Q24). In addition, respondents were also

asked to indicate the extent to which they agree with the following statements: being able to

handle interview questions well is important in my work; being able to write well is important in

my work; having a good appearance on TV is important in my work; being able to manage the

media is important in my work (see Section 3 Q25-Q28).

RQ1c) What roles do MROs perform in their organizations?

A series of survey questions were included to capture the roles performed by MROs in their

organization. Respondents were asked to indicate first whether or not they are responsible for:

providing in-service media relations training, drafting in-service communications policy or

guidance, providing communications support to individual officers, coordinating public

functions, maintaining the services' website, producing the services' annual report, internal

communications, ensuring the service is perceived as legitimate and ensuring the service is

perceived to be accountable. Respondents were asked to rank the importance of each item

identified above (see Section 3 Q29). Another series of questions asked respondents to indicate if

they are responsible for writing press releases, preparing service publications (online or in print),

holding press conferences, fielding daily media inquiries, making formal contact with news

media, planning conventions, meetings, workshops, contacting government officials, making

presentations to city officials, making presentations to community groups, maintaining social

media sites (e.g., Facebook, Twitter). Finally, respondents were asked to rank the importance of

these activities (see Section 3 Q32).

Semi-Structured Interviews

The second phase of this research was guided by the contention that knowledge is socially

constructed and negotiated. Though survey data illuminated organizational and systemic factors

that shape the nature of claims-making within police organizations (and helped to identify officers willing to participate in an interview), surveys were not the most appropriate data collection method for phase two of this research. Thus, in accordance with Roulston's (2010) argument that "interviews must be used in ways that are consonant with the epistemological and theoretical assumptions underlying a study's design" (p. 204), the second method of data collection involved conducting semi-structured interviews. This method was used to answer research question two:

RQ2. How do organizational and systemic factors inform claims-making processes,

specifically in terms of the priorities, practices and direction of media relations activities?

By providing participants with the opportunity to reflect on and share their lived experiences, qualitative interviews produce detailed information about the social world (Klenke, 2008; Roulston, 2010). Seidman (2006) argues that a major strength of the qualitative interview is that it allows researchers to examine the context and meaning of people's behaviour. Likewise, Miller and Glassner (2004) contend that interviewing affords researchers the ability to collect and rigorously examine individuals' accounts of their lived realities. The interview serves as a construction site where knowledge is built and it provides researchers with access to the ways in which individuals develop and understand notions of rationality, morality and social order (Miller & Glassner, 2004). A major strength of semi-structured interviews, according to Hermanowicz (2002), is that, "...if executed well, it brings us arguably closer than many other methods to an intimate understanding of people and their social worlds" (p.480). Further, semi-structured interviews are advantageous insofar as they encourage researchers to develop strong rapport with participants and to practice reflexivity throughout the research process (Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2004).

Consistent with a sequential mixed-methods research design, the survey results obtained in the first phase of the research were utilized to inform sampling decisions for the semi-structured interviews. After an initial analysis of survey results, officers who expressed interest in participating in a follow-up interview were contacted via phone (between March 31st and April 30th 2015) to set up a time and place to conduct the semi-structured interview.[37] I introduced myself, re-outlined the purpose of the research and emphasized that further involvement in the project was completely voluntary. Following each phone call, I sent an email to the participating officer that included: the Letter of Information and the informed consent to participate in an interview attached (see Appendix E & Appendix F). These ethics forms outline the purpose and importance of the study, benefits to participating organizations, techniques of data collection, that participation is voluntary and further contact information.

The interviews explored, in more depth, emergent themes identified through the survey data. Moreover, the interviews provided an in-depth understanding of the claims-making activities and capacities of MROs. Interviews were conducted between May 2015 and January 2016 with a total sample size of 26 that included 10 OPP members and 16 independent municipal members. To accommodate scheduling requests, one focus group was conducted with a total of seven participants from the OPP. The interview sample included: three corporate communicators (civilians), one former corporate communicator (civilian) and 22 MROs. The sample of MROs includes, one Deputy Chief, nine sergeants, eleven constables and one civilian member. Sixteen interviews were conducted face-to-face, while three were conducted, upon the officer's request, via Skype. To protect the identity of the participants in this study, all interviews were assigned a

---

[37] This included a basic descriptive analysis of survey results (i.e., frequencies and percentages).

number.[38] Most interviews were conducted directly in the MRO's office at their specific detachment/service, with the exception of two interviews which were conducted in coffee shops at the officer's request. On average, interviews lasted between 60 and 90 minutes, with the exception of the focus group, which was 158 minutes long. At the outset of each interview consent forms were reviewed and signed.[39] All interviews were audio recorded with consent and transcribed verbatim. A semi-structured interview guide that included 20 questions was used to conduct the interviews (Appendix G). The semi-structured format was selected for the present study because it offers flexibility to explore themes as they emerge and the open-ended format gives respondents an opportunity to provide detailed and rich responses (Klenke, 2008; Berg, 2009). Depending on the interview's flow, the order of the questions varied. Upon completion of the interview, each officer was sent an email thanking him or her for their participation (Appendix H).

Semi-Structured Interview Questions

The first four questions asked were used to "break-the ice" while also providing the opportunity to get to know the participant (see Appendix G Q1-Q4). The remaining questions asked in the interview were used to answer research question two:

> **RQ2.** How do organizational and systemic factors inform claims-making processes,
> specifically in terms of the priorities, practices and direction of media relations'
> activities?

---

[38] Any time a direct quote is used from an interview, participants are identified in the following manner: Corporate Communicators are denoted by 'CC' followed by a followed by a numeric designation (e.g., CC1, CC2 etc.). Media relations officers are denoted by 'MRO' followed by a numeric designation, as well as a rank designation (e.g., MRO1, constable MRO2, sergeant etc.)

[39] For the Skype interviews, participants were asked to provide oral consent and were later provided with consent forms via email.

RQ2a) How do these organizational and systemic factors shape how police organizations construct crime?

To answer the second central research question and sub question, the following questions were asked in the interview: how would you describe your role as a MRO? (see Q4a-e); in general what types of social problems keep the police organization busy; can you speak to the public's understanding of crime and social problems in their community; describe to what extent is it important to share crime news and stories with the public?; what strategies are most effective for disseminating news about social problems and crime to the public, why? (see Q6-Q9a-f & Q13).

RQ2b) How do these organizational and systemic factors shape how police organizations construct and manage their image to the public?

(i) What types of communications activities/strategies are utilized to demonstrate legitimacy, effectiveness and accountability?

(ii) How are these strategies implemented to garner public support and trust?

To answer the second sub question, the following questions were asked in the interview: what are the primary public relations techniques or activities used in your organization; what strategies are most effective for garnering public support and trust for the police; what strategies and tactics are utilized to demonstrate legitimacy, accountability and effectiveness of police operations (see Q8 & Q11).

RQ3 How do MROs perceive their relationship with the mass media?

To answer the third research question, the following questions were asked: in general what's your opinion of the media; how do the interests of the media relate to organizational interests;

how do reporters shape daily MRO tasks? do reporters make your job difficult; and are there particular strategies you use to deal with various media outlets.

Rapport and Reflexivity

Developing rapport is crucial to establish a sense of trust with participants and elicit truthful responses (Berg, 2009; Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2004; Klenke, 2008). As such, researchers are encouraged to constantly reflect on their own positionality throughout the research process and to maintain boundaries between the role of the interviewer and interviewee (Hesse-Biber & Levy, 2004). Establishing rapport with a guarded organization like the police can prove challenging.

To establish rapport with officers for the present study, I began each interview by briefly introducing myself and highlighting my previous experience researching the police. Such strategies helped to "break the ice" during the initial phases of rapport building. I also learned early on in the research process that the MRO community is relatively tight knit and this meant it took only a couple of positive interview experiences to secure a degree of rapport and credibility within the 'MRO community'. For instance, upon meeting officers for the first time, several commented that they 'had heard great things about me and my research.' I interpreted this as a sign that I was indeed gaining a degree of credibility among MROs.

Qualitative research has been scrutinized for selectivity in reporting results and for the possibility of reactivity (Schulenberg, 2004). To address such issues researchers are encouraged to engage in reflexive practices throughout the research process. According to Bott (2010), "central to maintaining reflexivity is the need for researchers to constantly locate and relocate themselves within their work and to remain in dialogue with research practice, participants and methodologies" (p. 160). Such practices can help illuminate how underlying power dynamics

47

shape the research process (e.g., how the degree of social status held by the researcher/researched might shape the interview process).

In many cases researchers working within an interpretive framework attempt to alter inherent power imbalances that can exist when adopting a post-positivistic worldview by shifting the role of the "expert" from the researcher to the researched. Most research assumes that power imbalances between the researcher and the researched favor the researcher; however, this is not always the case. Consequently, researchers often overlook the influence that researcher/researched power dynamics have on the research process. This is particularly problematic when "researching up" which involves research subjects who represent professional or powerful places (e.g., police officers) (Neal & Mclaughlin, 2009). When "researching up" Desmond (2004) emphasizes the need for researchers to recognize how power dynamics infiltrate their research because "working in an elite field poses major difficulties which stem from the challenges of researching up, which are quite different to those encountered in studying down" (as cited in Neal & Mclaughlin, 2009). Moreover, individuals with a degree of social status often have more control over the research (Reeves, 2010) and any attempt on behalf of the researcher to develop a "flatter" research relationship is difficult (Neal & McLaughlin, 1995, p. 695).

Within the context of the present project all of the officers I interviewed possessed a higher degree of "social status" than me. Specifically, the officers I interviewed were older than me and they were also relatively well-seasoned experts in their careers. I, on the other hand, was not an expert, but rather, a student. Moreover, due to the nature of police work, typically the only time officers are questioned is by their supervisors or in a courtroom. Moreover, I entered the research acutely aware of my positionality as a female researcher in a traditionally male

dominated environment. Some research suggests that being female may facilitate efforts to access guarded organizations. According to Gurney (1991), for example, female researchers often have less difficulty gaining access to male dominated environments because they are perceived as less threatening than men. However, I also recognized that my positionality as a female researcher had the potential to influence how I was received, as well as how I related to participants and interpreted the data.

A final issue that I had to contend with was reactivity. According to Schulenberg (2004), "short term observations can lead to building inadequate rapport with subjects and long-term engagement may cause a halo effect where the observed perform in an exemplary fashion due to the presence of an observer" (p. 120). Given that I was dealing with media relations officers who are trained what to say, how to say it and when to say it in a public form, I expected to encounter significant difficulties managing their front stage persona in order to access their backstage realities.[40] Interestingly, I did not find this to be the case. In fact, several officers appeared more than willing to talk openly with me.[41] To ensure that I remained cognizant of such issues throughout the research process, I wrote point form notes during and immediately following the interview process. These notes were used to record information pertaining to my perceptions of the officers, their reactions to me, as well as my own emotions and overall perceptions of my experiences. Given that the present study is QUAL dominant, I discuss concerns related to the trustworthiness of the data below.

---

[40] According to Goffman (1999), individuals engage in 'front stage' behaviour when they are conscious of the fact that others are watching. On the other hand, 'backstage behavior' is how we behave when we are unrestrained by the expectations and norms that shape our behaviour when we are 'front stage'. In other words, 'back stage' behavior is how we might behave when we are in the comfort of our own home.

[41] Officers 'willingness to speak openly' was, from my perception, apparent not only through body language but also, in the way that they spoke rather candidly with me. Interestingly, I was offered a tour of nearly every station/detachment I visited following the interview.

Trustworthiness: Validity in Qualitative Research

In contrast to positivistic research, qualitative researchers use different criteria to establish

validity and reliability in their studies (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). For qualitative researchers,

trustworthiness represents the extent to which a study's findings are credible, confirmable,

dependable and transferable (Guba, 1981; Shenton, 2004). In addition to the reflexive practices

outlined above, several steps were taken to ensure the trustworthiness of the findings presented.[42]

According to Schulenberg (2016), credibility is established when the evidence between

participants' view of their social world and the researcher's interpretations of that reality are

well-aligned. To ensure the credibility of the research findings in this study, first, I engaged in

member checks to ensure that my interpretations accurately reflected MROs view of their role.

All participants were given the opportunity to review their interview transcripts. Follow-up

discussions with both corporate communications specialists, as well as several MROs confirmed

that my interpretations accurately reflected how they view and experience their social world. In

fact, one of the corporate communications specialists from this study currently sits as Chair on

OMRON and he asked me to attend the conference (in October 2018) to present an executive

summary of my research findings.

Second, as Shenton (2004) highlights, one form of triangulation, to achieve credibility, is

to "involve the use of a wide range of informants" (p.66). The sample in this study clearly

incorporates a wide range of participants. For example, interviews and surveys were conducted

with officers from municipal and provincial services, officers from different ranks in their

organizations and finally, both uniform and civilian participants. This method of triangulation

---

[42] It should be noted that reflexivity is one way to ensure the *Confirmability* of the research findings

was useful to compare and contrast individual viewpoints and experiences, thus ensuring that a

rich understanding of the roles and activities of MROs in Ontario was achieved.[43]

Data Analysis

Quantitative Analysis

SPSS was used to analyze the survey data generated from the first phase of this research. The

program assisted in generating descriptive statistics of the distribution of survey responses

including frequency distributions and measures of central tendency. Unfortunately, the small

sample size did not allow for testing the statistical significance of relationships between

variables.

Qualitative Analysis

Given the methodological framework for this study (qualitative dominant mixed methods

design), several analytical techniques were used to examine the interview transcripts. During the

first stage of analysis, I used analytic induction. As Schulenberg (2016) explains, analytic

induction is a research strategy which encourages investigators to recognize data that "supports

or refutes themes identified from previously analyzed data" (p.3). Events or cases are compared

to one another within a concept and concepts are continually refined in an effort to better reflect

social reality as it is experienced by research participants (Schulenberg, 2016). In analytic

induction, negative cases are used to revise or redefine theoretical explanations. Based on the

data generated from the surveys, I developed a working hypothesis to examine how the interview

data supported or refuted the findings generated from the survey data. During this phase of the

analysis, my focus was on examining the potential influence of organizational and systemic

---

[43] I would also like to highlight that the criteria of *transferability* is possible in this study. Given that many of the findings align well with what research in other countries has found, I would not be surprised if we saw similar results with MROs in other provinces in Canada. Future research should examine this further.

factors on claims-making processes. This type of data analysis involved what is referred to as successive approximation.[44] In practice, successive approximation involves "iterative movements between data and existing theoretical concepts that guide further data collection, refine theory and develop empirical generalizations" (Schulenberg, 2016, p. 306). Survey data generated general concepts which were further refined as I analyzed the interview data. This led to the development of larger thematic interpretations. This phase of the analysis involved deductive coding methods. As Strauss and Corbin (1998) explain, when "a researcher derives hypotheses from data, because it involves interpretation, we consider that to be a deductive process" (p. 22). In the present study, deductive codes were derived from the surveys and these codes were used as sensitizing concepts to help identify relevant themes in the interview data (Charmaz, 2006). According to Blumer (1969): "Sensitizing concepts […] give the user a general sense of reference and guidance in approaching empirical instances. Whereas definitive concepts provide prescriptions of what to see, sensitizing concepts merely suggest directions along which to look (p. 148).

RQ2 and RQ3 demanded a different analytical approach. During the second phase of qualitative analysis, the methods I used included data fracturing, the constant comparison method and inductive coding. Specifically, these methods were utilized to examine how media officers construct crime and their relationships with the media.

To fracture data, researchers must identify patterns and concepts and recognize the relationships between the emergent concepts (Schulenberg, 2016). When we fracture the data we essentially take it apart, we organize it and we reassemble it so that it conveys a story (Glaser &

---

[44] The theoretical framework for the analytic induction approach is successive approximation.

Strauss, 1967; Strauss & Corbin, 1998). As Schulenberg (2016) explains, fracturing the data and coding are synonymous. Fracturing of the data breaks it down to allow for the process of coding.

In line with the constructionist research paradigm, inductive coding was used to gain a deeper understanding of MROs presupposed knowledge (Schulenberg, 2016). According to Schulenberg (2016), inductive coding is a type of coding which allows researchers to elaborate on meanings "by creating larger conceptual categories" (p. 309). During this phase of the analysis, I developed codes inductively by identifying themes and patterns as they emerged from the interview transcripts. This approach allowed me to identify key words and phrases used by participants, the meanings attached to the words and phrases and how MROs made sense of their social world. In this sense, the themes and categories I developed were grounded in the data, but unlike grounded theory methods, theory development was not the desired outcome (Corbin & Strauss, 1998). Once the interview transcripts were coded, I used the constant comparison method to refine the categories that were developed and to determine the relationships between concepts. At this stage, my goal was to look for patterns within and across codes and to amalgamate codes into larger categories (Schulenberg, 2016).

Conclusion

I approached the present research from a pragmatic worldview. A QUAL-dominant sequential mixed-methods research design was necessary to address the current gap in the literature and to provide an in-depth examination of MROs in Ontario. This design provided the opportunity to examine MROs with a specific focus on who they are, what they do, how they do it and why they do it. The research questions posed in the present study drove the method and demanded quantitative and qualitative data collection techniques. My intention was not to test theoretical propositions, rather, I sought to gain a deeper understanding of the role and claims-making

activities of MROs in Ontario. In the next chapter, I explain the organizational and systemic

factors that shape how MROs construct crime.

Chapter 4: An Overview of Media Relations Units & MROs

In Chapter 2 I highlighted research that focuses on the roles MROs engage in outside of Canada, primarily in the US, UK and Australia. I have argued there is little to no research that examines the roles and claims-making activities of MROs in police services in Canada. The purpose of Chapters 4 and 5 is to present findings from the survey and semi-structured interviews conducted with MROs in Ontario. Specifically, survey data distinguishes the structural and systemic factors underlying media relations units within police services in Ontario (RQ1), while the interview data provides a more comprehensive understanding of how claims-making practices within these organizations are shaped (RQ2).[45]

In general, survey data generated from the present study provides basic descriptive information about the roles, activities and characteristics of MROs in the province of Ontario. Unfortunately, due to the small sample size (n=19), it was not practical to examine the data beyond the univariate level. Nonetheless, the data provide some context to understand MROs and media relations units within police services in Ontario. I outline first descriptive statistics summarizing the characteristics of MROs, followed by the roles played by MROs in the police services surveyed. Subsequent sections are then organized thematically, by the key structural and systemic factors of interest to this study.

Characteristics of MROs Surveyed

There is a fairly even split between males (57%) and females (42%) employed in the media relations role, with slightly more males occupying the position. Consistent with what previous research has found (see for example, Motschall & Cao, 2002; Surette & Richard, 1995), the

---

[45]Any time a direct quote is used from an interview participants are identified in the following manner: Corporate Communicators are denoted by 'CC' followed by a numeric designation (e.g., CC1, CC2 etc.). Media relations officers are denoted by 'MRO' followed by a numeric designation and a rank classification (e.g., MRO1, Sergeant; MRO2, Constable; MRO3, civilian etc.).

respondents in the current study are between the ages of 35-44 (47%) and 45-54 (47%). When it comes to rank, nearly half, 42% of the MROs sampled were Constables, 37% were Sergeants, one was Chief and 16% were civilians. Finally, there appears to be little ethnic diversity; in fact, 84% of the respondents identified as white, while the remaining 16% were Indigenous.

The majority of MROs possess a college education (47%), while just over one- third, 37% have an undergraduate degree. Unsurprisingly, given their profession, close to half of the respondents have a degree in criminal justice (47%). Other fields of study cited include, 'Social Science' (11%), 'Law' (11%) and 'Other' (21%), with police foundations as the most commonly cited. Over half the officers sampled (58%) indicated they had been in the media role for between 2-5 years, while under one-quarter (21%) assumed the role for one year or less and the remaining 21% of the respondents were in the position for more than 5 years. Training for the MRO position is rather minimal insofar as most officers take on the role with no previous public relations or media relations training. In fact, 74% of those sampled had no previous training while just over one-quarter (26%) had some form of training relevant to the media position. After assuming the position, all officers in the sample had received training in the form of a one-week (40 hours) media relations course offered at the Ontario Police College.

Roles

RQ: 1(c) What roles do MROs perform in their organizations?

On a five-point scale, respondents were asked to rank the importance of 21 media relations activities drawn from previous research (Mawby, 2007; Motschall, 1995). Survey findings suggest the roles performed by MROs across Ontario are not only consistent, but the extent to which certain roles are valued over others also appears consistent. The findings below are presented in order of importance (most to least) for each of the roles examined.

According to the respondents in this study, the following four external communications activities represent the most important, or highly valued, aspects of the media relations role: 1) ensuring the police service is perceived as legitimate, 2) ensuring the police service is perceived to be accountable, 3) writing press releases and 4) communicating with the public. In fact, 100% of the respondents ranked each of these activities as 'important' or 'extremely important' aspects of their role. Participants also consider 'Fielding daily media inquiries' and 'Maintaining social media sites' rather important, given that 95% of the respondents felt each of these activities were 'important' or 'extremely important'. Moreover, and not unsurprisingly, 84% of the respondents felt that 'Holding press conferences' is 'important' or 'extremely important'. Finally, three internal bureaucratic activities were also valued highly: 1) Providing internal communications support to individual officers, 2) Maintaining the police services' official wFIRSTebsite and 3) Preparing agency publications. In total, 74% of the respondents ranked each of these activities as 'important' or 'extremely important' aspects of their role.

The level of importance attributed to the 11 remaining activities is less straightforward. For instance, while 63% percent of the sample felt 'Answering media requests for public records' was an 'important' or 'extremely important' aspect of their role, nearly one-third (32%) considered this aspect of their role 'not important at all', or 'not important'. Further, survey data suggests that internal communications activities are not valued to the same extent as external communications activities. In fact, although 58% of respondents felt that 'Providing internal communications' was 'important' or 'extremely important', over one-third of the sample, (37%) rated this as 'not important at all' or 'not important'. Similarly, while 58% of the participants considered 'drafting in-service communications policy or guidelines' 'important' or 'extremely

important', just under one-third, 32% rated this activity as 'not important at all' or 'not important.'

When it comes to 'Coordinating public functions', 53% of the respondents felt this role was 'important' or 'extremely important'. On the other hand, nearly half (47%) of the sample felt this aspect of their role was 'not important at all' or 'not important'. Relatedly, 53% of those surveyed felt 'Making presentations to community groups' is 'important' or 'extremely important' while just under one-third, (32%) ranked this as 'not important at all' or 'not important'.

Interactions with formal external contacts did not constitute part of the media role for some participants. Well over one-third, (37%) of those sampled felt that 'Contacting government officials' was not part of their role. This activity was not evaluated as overly important for those who did define it as part of their role considering that only 32% of the respondents felt this was 'important' or 'extremely important', while nearly half, (52%) considered this to be 'somewhat important' and 16% ranked this as 'not important at all' or 'not important'. Similarly, 36% of the respondents felt that 'Making presentations to city officials' was not part of their role. Of those who felt this was an aspect of their role, 37% ranked it as 'important' or 'extremely important', 42% felt it was 'not important at all' and finally, 21% felt it was 'somewhat important'.

Survey results also suggest that some behind the scenes activities were ranked high in importance for about half of those sampled. Interestingly, one-quarter, (26%) of respondents did not consider 'Writing speeches' an aspect of their role. Of those who felt speech writing was part of their role, just under half, (47%) ranked this activity as 'important' or 'extremely important' while 16% considered it 'not important at all' or 'not important'. Similarly, one-quarter, (26%) of respondents indicated that 'Planning conventions, meetings and workshops' was not part of

their role. For those who considered planning activities as part of their role, 42% ranked it as 'important' or 'extremely important' and 21% felt it was 'not important at all' or 'not important'. Nearly half the sample, (42%) indicated they were not involved in producing the 'service's annual report.' Of those involved in creating the annual report, just over one third, (37%) felt this activity was 'important' or 'extremely important', while 21% felt it was 'not important at all' or 'not important'. Finally, only about one-third of respondents felt internal training activities were of importance, seeing as 37% percent indicated that 'Providing in-service media training' is 'important' or 'extremely important', while one-quarter, (26%) ranked this activity as 'not important' and just under one-quarter, (21%) felt it was only 'somewhat important'.

Systemic Factors

Community Characteristics

In terms of community characteristics, nearly half (47%) of the sample served a population of less than 100,000, 16% served a population between 100,001- 200,000, 16% served a population between 200,001- 400,000 and finally, just under one-quarter, (21%) served a population of 400,001 or more. The geographic landscapes of the communities served were described as 'Urban' by close to two-thirds, (63%) of those surveyed, while just over one-third, (37%) described the landscape as 'Rural'. The survey data also suggests the population demographic is predominately white. In fact, close to half of the respondents (42%) indicated that visible minority groups make up 25% or less of the population. Comparatively, only 16% of those surveyed indicated that visible minority groups represent 40% or more of the population served. It should be noted, two of the respondents who reported that visible minority groups represented

40% or more of the population were from Indigenous services; as such, visible minority groups comprise the entire population served by these agencies.[46]

Organizational Factors

Size of the Service

Nearly half (47%) of respondents indicated their service employed between 50 to 300 members, while over one-third (37%) had more than 1000 personnel employed. When it comes to the size of the media relations unit specifically, the majority are headed by one individual. In fact, close to half of the services sampled (42%) had only one employee, 32% of the sample had two to four employees in the media relations unit, while just over one-quarter (26%) had more than four employees. In terms of annual budget, just over half (53%) of the sample reported having more than thirty-million dollars, 26% had somewhere between one-million and ten-million and the remaining 21% had between 10.1 million and 20 million annually. Unfortunately, the survey did not yield useful statistics on the annual budget for media relations units specifically (58% missing cases for this particular variable).[47]

Building on the survey findings, interview data highlight that the size of the police service has some influence on the size and structure of the media relations unit. As common sense would dictate, larger services possess larger media units (i.e., the media relations unit will have more than one individual working within it). Upon deeper analysis, there are some unique features that characterize larger media units that we do not see in smaller units. For instance, as the following corporate communications specialist with 12 years experience in a large municipal

---

[46] Please note this variable had several (32%) missing cases. Several officers (n=6) left this question blank on the survey.

[47] Some reasons officers provided for not specifying a budget included that there was not a specified budget for the unit, or they did not know the amount allocated.

service explains, a media unit that includes both civilian and uniform members typically

characterizes larger organizations:

> For a service our size, our corporate communications unit is actually quite small.
> We are a mix of both uniform and civilian members of the service, which we find
> works very well. So, we have a director who is a civilian he would be like a Staff
> Superintendent equivalent. So very high-ranking officer. He oversees the unit.
> There's then myself and another civilian member who have more supervisory
> responsibilities and we sort of divide the office into two streams … in my role, as
> issues management, I oversee the media relations officers of which we have three
> and they are all uniformed constables, as well as a social media officer who is also
> a uniformed constable [CC1].

This quote speaks to the highly-structured composition of media units within larger police

services. In the context of the present research, 'structure' is conceptualized in conventional

sociological terms, mainly drawing on structural-functionalist conceptions (Comte, 1893;

Durkheim, 1984), which define structure as persistent patterns of action/interaction that repeat

over time. Additionally, I also draw on Weber's (1958) definition of the ideal bureaucracy (i.e., a

highly organized environment) to provide a deeper understanding of how police media units are

structured. According to Weber (1958), to promote organizational efficiency the 'ideal

bureaucracy' is characterized by the following features: specialization, hierarchy of offices, rules

and regulations, technical competence and formal written communications. To a large extent,

police media units, particularly in larger organizations, possess many of the features of the ideal

bureaucracy. As I explain below, the structural differences between large versus small police

services have implications for the degree to which the units are professionalized as well as the

way in which media officers approach claims-making processes.

Centralization

Survey data suggests decision-making making processes within media relations units are

relatively centralized. For example, close to half (47%) of those surveyed specified that media

relations activities had to be cleared by a higher authority. Comparatively, slightly less than one-quarter (21%) indicated that media relations activities did not have to be cleared. Another indication of the centralized decision-making process is the fact that the direct supervisor to the MRO is typically a higher-level authority. Twenty-six percent of the respondents report directly to the Commissioner/Chief, 32% report to an Inspector, while 16% report to a Staff Sergeant. Interestingly, when it comes to establishing media relations policies, it seems this process may be slightly less centralized, insofar as over half (58%) of those surveyed indicated they played some role in establishing policies, while just over one-third (37%) had no role in these activities. Unsurprisingly, the Commissioner/Chief was the individual most likely to be responsible for establishing media relations policies according to 63% of the respondents.

Professionalization

In general, public relations techniques and activities do not appear to be overly professionalized within the organizations surveyed when compared to international police agencies who are increasingly employing public relations specialists (Lee & McGovern, 2014; Mawby, 2010). Nonetheless, there is some evidence to suggest this may be the direction police services are heading in Ontario. Survey data reveals nearly one-third (32%) recruit trained journalists, just over one-quarter (26%) recruit public relations specialists, and only one service in the sample had recruited a marketing specialist.

Formalization

Previous research documents the fact that media relations units and the MRO role within police departments in the United States, the UK and, Australia have become increasingly formalized (Lee & McGovern, 2014; Mawby, 2010). Survey data for the present study provides some support for these findings, namely in terms of the formalization of media relations units in

general. With the exception of the OPP, police media relations units in Ontario have existed for a relatively short period of time.[48] In fact, nearly one-third (32%) of the respondents indicated the media relations department was established less than five years ago, 26% were established in the last five-to-ten years, with the remaining 42% established more than ten years ago. Despite this, it seems media relations units (and activities) are becoming increasingly formalized in Ontario. For example, just under two-thirds (63%) of those surveyed revealed that "media relations" represented an independent unit within their service. In smaller services, this type of independent unit is atypical; they rarely have a specific unit dedicated solely to media relations. Nonetheless, 90% of respondents report that the media relations unit possessed written media policies, while 95% of those surveyed reveal that official press releases are not only archived but retained indefinitely. The importance of this indefinite archival practice warrants discussion. Drawing on Weber (1958), archival practices clearly reflect the significance of formal written communications which are valued enough to be archived indefinitely. Viewed through another lens, the accumulation of formal communications also signifies the police role as 'knowledge workers', in the sense that the archival process reflects a large accumulation of 'media relations' knowledge (Ericson and Haggerty, 1997). Finally, from a risk management perspective, archives also provide a means through which future legal risks can be mitigated. Importantly, the practice of archiving formal written communications highlights how discursive frames are maintained and perpetuated in police services. Finally, 63% of the respondents indicated that their department possessed a policy stipulating who is permitted to liaise with the media. In most cases, according to 93% of those sampled, media inquiries must be directed to the MRO.[49]

---

[48] According to survey respondents, the OPP have had an established media relations department since 1996.
[49] There are exceptions to this rule as stipulated in writing on the survey by some respondents. For example, higher-ranking officers (Sergeants, Detectives, Inspectors etc.) are permitted to speak to the media.

The relative infancy of media relations units in police services in Ontario is perhaps most apparent from the survey data pertaining to the formalization of the MRO role. For example, just over half (53%) of the respondents designated the MRO position at the management/supervisory level. Moreover, when it comes to communications training, nearly three-quarters (74%) of the respondents had no prior communications or media relations training prior to assuming the role. All respondents indicated they had received communications training upon assuming the position.[50]

Professionalization and Formalization of Media Units: Large vs. Small Services

Overall, survey data indicate that despite the relative infancy of media units in police services in Ontario, they are nonetheless becoming increasingly formalized.[51] The interview data provides a more comprehensive understanding of this trend, which is arguably more prevalent in larger media units. As I explain below, the incorporation of civilian members in media units illuminates how larger police services are not only becoming increasingly formalized, but also progressively more structured and professionalized in their claims-making practices. These findings seem to support what previous researchers have found outside of Canada (Lee & McGovern, 2014; Leishman & Mason, 2003; Lovell, 2003; Mawby, 2002; Surette, 2001).

As was the case in each interview I conducted with members of large organizations, a civilian member referred to as a 'Corporate Communications Specialist' or 'Corporate Communicator' commands the media unit, which is most often referred to as the 'Corporate

---

[50] Training is minimal. MROs are required to attend a one-week training course on media relations and communications, which is offered at the Ontario Police College.

[51] As outlined in Chapter 3, formalization refers to the degree to which the MRO position is "an established position in the department guided by rules and regulations" (Motschall, 1995, p. 37). This was measured with 8 survey items; see chapter 3 for a full overview of the items included. Drawing from Mawby (2002; 2010; 2014) I define 'professionalization' as reflected by strategic changes (e.g., use of the name 'corporate communications'), but also in terms of the level of expertise possessed by personnel in media units. As Mawby (2010) notes, professionalization is supported by the practice of recruiting communications professionals.

Communications Unit'. The integration of communications specialists in police services reflects

not only the increasing formalization of media relations practices, but also the

professionalization of media units in general. In fact, the training and experience of the corporate

communications specialists I interviewed is perhaps most indicative of such trends. All of these

individuals possessed some form of communications expertise unrelated to police work. Drawing

on Weber (1958), this degree of expertise reflects the specialization and technical competence

features that characterizes efficient bureaucracies. An interview excerpt from a corporate

communicator with 14 years of experience summarizes the expertise he brings to the municipal

organization he serves:

> It's like a symbiotic relationship because I am not a police officer and I really
> don't understand what it's like to be a police officer, but I am an expert in
> communications. He's the cop, so I learn from him in terms of how things actually
> function or work but then I can assist him with making it look and sound the right
> way before it goes out the door. (CC2)

To this end, the corporate communicator provides a high-level of 'specialization' in

communication that a police officer cannot. This statement illustrates how the corporate

communications specialists in this study view themselves as *translators of police discourse*. As

this individual explains, 'expert' communications skills are necessary to craft media releases in a

way that makes them 'look and sound right' for public consumption. Thus, the underlying

message here is that the technical competence corporate communications specialists possess is

necessary to make police claims-making processes effective in translating the police message.

Moreover, the notion of a 'symbiotic relationship' mentioned by this participant also illuminates

the perception shared by many corporate communications specialists that this civilian role

provides some sort of balance to the communications process. For instance, according to a

former corporate communications specialist with over 20 years experience with the OPP:

We bring a different expertise and perspective to it […] I knew what the media wanted. I knew where they were going to go with something because it would be where I'd want to go with it. So it's just kind of a… you know, upfront kind of thing that makes it easier to establish the rules and guidelines. A huge part of the job was preparing Q and A's on contentious issues. You prepare questions that you know they are going to ask and then you're always ready with an answer [CC4].

This statement also highlights the expertise this corporate communications specialist brought to the OPP given her previous experience as a reporter and editor. The 'insider knowledge' she possesses about what the media will expect from the police, allows her service to proactively strategize responses to the media. Again, this reflects the perception that corporate communications specialists have the technical competence that police officers do not, to ensure that claims-making processes are effective in delivering the police message.

Experience working in politics and news reporting in general was quite common among the corporate communications specialists I interviewed. The following quote is from a provincial corporate communications specialist with nearly eight years of experience in the role. The role of the corporate communications specialist is to oversee all media relations activities and provide guidance on communications practices. He explains:

When it comes to media releases going out, the MRO provides the vast majority of information. I just put a little bit of polish on it, so it shines when it goes out the door. And the product is what the level of expectation is from the people I work for across the hall -- being the Commissioner and our Provincial Commanders. So, you know, like we have a very high level of expectation [CC3].

This quote suggests that the primary function of a communications specialist is to use their skill-set to ensure that media releases are crafted eloquently before they go out the door. Again, this highlights the role corporate communications specialists play as *translators of police discourse*. This statement also provides an excellent example of how media units in large organizations, like the OPP, are becoming increasingly structured. As this individual explains, media releases are 'polished' to meet institutional expectations.

In addition to specialized communications expertise, the incorporation of civilian experts in larger organizations also relates to the highly centralized claims-making processes practiced by these services. This 'hierarchy of offices' provides another example of how these media units closely resemble Weber's (1958) ideal bureaucracy. The following excerpt is rather telling about how news releases are vetted in larger organizations:

> If the officers out in the field or the investigators out in the field are doing news releases for their cases they get sent here to the media officers, they draft them they make sure that they fit in with our standards corporately and then either myself or my director will review them before they are released publicly [CC1].

As this corporate communicator points out, anything released from this service has been crafted to fit "standards corporately" and has also been vetted by communications specialists. The need to recognize the historical conditions underlying the existence of actual statements considers the following: "[…] which object or area of knowledge is discursively produced; according to what logic is the terminology constructed; who authorized it; and finally, which strategic goals are being pursued in the discourse" (Díaz-Bone et al., 2007, p.5). The notion of 'Corporate standards' is important given that such standards ensure that all media releases fit within a structured frame. This speaks to the highly structured nature of media units in larger organizations. In another example, this media officer from a large municipal service explains the extensive vetting process his media releases are subject to:

> The director of communications reviews all of our media releases. And if not him then it's one of the other corporate managers. So, he reviews everything, it's more for- it's not so much the investigative stuff that he's reviewing. That's my job to know enough about what to put in and what not to put in. His job is to look at it and see, make sure that all the legal stuff is taken care of so to make sure that I didn't release the name of a 17-year-old, things like that. His job is just a second pair of eyes for grammar, punctuation, consistency those things [MRO16, constable].

This statement outlines the standards that media releases must meet. As a means of enforcing those standards and ensuring they are met, all media releases are reviewed by the individual at the top of the media unit 'pyramid'. Again, this statement highlights the highly-centralized and structured nature of claims-making within larger services.

On the other hand, in contrast to larger police services, interview data reveals that smaller organizations are somewhat less professionalized given they do not typically employ corporate communications professionals within their media unit. Many of the smaller services have only one individual working in the media relations role and, in some cases, they fill several different roles in their organization (e.g. school resource officers; community officers etc.). As this media officer with less than one-year experience explains, "I'm a bit of a multi-tasker, I'm not a full-time media guy. But it does take up a large percentage of my time, there's no doubt about that" [MRO6, Sergeant]. This sentiment was quite common among participants from smaller services. Despite the fact that many felt media work consumed a large portion of their workload, they had to fulfill other roles in addition to media relations.

Smaller organizations are far less likely to adopt the corporate communications designation for their unit. In most cases, the unit is referred to as 'Media Relations' or 'Public Relations'. Nonetheless, claims-making processes in smaller organizations are still relatively centralized insofar as the MRO typically reports directly to command personnel as usually found in the Executive Office (e.g., Inspector). A media officer from a small municipal service explains:

> "I create the press release in the morning and send it to my Inspector for review. He has to see it and that's fine with me, because once he sees it and reviews it, if there are issues, he's said ok to it. So, it really takes the heat off of me. Whereas if I just put it out, I mean, I have to own it" [MRO3, constable].

The type of vetting process discussed by this officer speaks to the highly structured environment of the police organization in general, as opposed to the media relations unit specifically. Similarly, in her transition from journalist to media officer for a small rural police service this participant remarks: "So at first … I'd have all of my media releases vetted. I still have a lot of them vetted but it was hard to kind of switch that mentality over [MRO5, civilian]. Despite the fact that smaller services appear to be less professionalized, it seems the claims-making processes are still centralized to a large extent.

The fact that larger organizations employ corporate communications professionals and denote media units as 'corporate communications' reflects the way these police services approach the claims-making process. As Mawby (2010) argues, the 'corporate communications' distinction is not simply an exercise in 're-labelling' but rather, signifies the strategic nature of police communications activities. In the context of the present study, the idea of strategic communications is crucial. With 'strategy' defined as "a careful plan or method" (Merriam-Webster, 2017*)*, this approach involves pre-emptively planning what message(s) will be delivered by the police, as well as how these message(s) will be delivered.

Strategic communication is important for three key reasons. First, it reflects broader strategic efforts to engage in proactive policing. Such efforts include, for example, community policing initiatives, "an umbrella term describing a broad family of initiatives through which police have sought to re-invent themselves" (Johnston, 2003, p.188). According to Loader and Walker (2001), community policing strategies attempt to entrench policing into the "governance of local social relations" (p. 15). These approaches contrast traditionally reactive approaches to crime control, which involve beat patrol and responding to crimes after they occur, as opposed to engaging in proactive problem-solving activities.

Second, a strategic approach to media relations is also vital as a means of attaining support for police policies and practices. This speaks directly to the role of MROs as agents of legitimation and the need to continually obtain public support for police activities and conduct.[52]

Third, although the participants in this study did not define the media as inimical to police functions, it was clear that the adoption of a strategic approach to communications was an effective way to deal with unsolicited media inquiries. To a large extent, strategic communication practices are another indicator of the highly structured nature of media units within larger police services.

Consistent with Mawby's (2010) findings, several participants from large organizations emphasized the importance of strategic communications practices. According to a municipal corporate communicator, claims-making processes necessitate a strategic approach:

> You know, there has to be strategic reasons why you're doing media relations and it has to be more than just 'keep the public informed,' [or] 'keep them on our side.' … The two main reasons we do it is to educate the public and to solve crime. And oftentimes we don't get to use certain stories because they aren't of those two primary important roles. So, some stuff sits and we just don't get to it. (CC2)

This statement demonstrates that services with corporate communications specialists spend a significant amount of time planning carefully what, when, why and how they will communicate with public. This strategic approach to claims-making encapsulates all forms of communication that police services engage in. While discussing the advent of social media use in her service, a municipal level corporate communicator explains: "I remember sitting here at the service many years ago and saying to a few people, 'I think this social media thing is really taking off. I think that we maybe need to get on this and take a look at what our strategy is.' And, you know our whole social media strategy developed since I've been here." This sentiment illustrates the

---

[52] The notion of MROs as agents of legitimation is discussed at length in chapters 5 & 6.

importance placed on structuring media relations in larger police services. As this corporate

communications specialist explains, when the service had no strategy in place for social media

there was a need to develop one.

Interview data indicates that the OPP, one of the largest police services in Ontario, adopts

a strategic approach to claims-making. A corporate communicator, with nearly 20 years of

previous experience in private sector media and nine years with the OPP, describes the role in

these terms: "I provide corporate communications support… strategic communications advice on

various initiatives […]" (CC3). Moreover, CC3 describes how a strategic approach helps

alleviate potential communications issues:

> If you're doing strategic communications, you have to accommodate her needs
> and her needs and his needs, all the way along the way. So, if you've got all the
> content and the front end of the strategy and the roll-out built and built properly,
> … it's understood you don't have problems when it comes to getting your
> messages out to the public and media.

According to this participant, effective communication requires understanding the needs of

various stakeholders and this demands a strategic approach.

The perception that communication activities must be strategically facilitated is not

simply a corporate ideal, it also permeates a media officer's approach to claims-making within

those organizations. An MRO explains his approach to media relations as follows: "Before I ever

head down the hallway there to talk, or downstairs for a media appearance, I want to make sure

I'm as educated as I can be on the matter and with a strategy going in: What's our message?"

(MRO7, Sergeant). Similarly, in speaking on the importance of communicating messages on

behalf of the OPP, the MRO had this to say:

> And that's where people like [MRO9] are so valuable to us, with *key messaging* and
> strategies in place and what not. It doesn't matter what detachment you speak to, we have
> the same strategy, the same *key messaging* in front of us when we're doing our
> interviews. So, when [MRO9] speaks to a reporter in her community and that reporter

71

calls me and asks me the same questions hoping to get a different angle, they're getting the same answers from MRO9 as they're getting from me which, you know, we're on the same page. You know, that's our response. That's our collective response. (MRO12, sergeant)

As this MRO highlights, a strategic approach to communications is not only helpful in communicating the message but it also provides an effective way to manage the media. A second media officer explains how the OPP utilize strategically what they refer to as 'key messaging', to contend with the media and ensure the police service is perceived to be credible:

> The more trained our officers are, the more polished they are in terms of having *key messaging* ready. You know anybody can prepare a media release but it's the *key messaging*. If you have that in your back pocket and you start answering using your *key messages*, the media know you got your game on and you're very prepared as opposed to other agencies that just come up and somebody not trained would try to wing it. You can tell the difference. I think we were kind of pioneers in that area [MRO18, Sergeant, italics added]

This idea of key messaging is important because it speaks to the structured discourse and standardization of the message that characterizes claims-making in large police organizations. This excerpt also implies that 'key messaging' provides the OPP with a competitive edge to handle the media; an advantage not shared by smaller organizations who lack the same level of structured messaging. Further, key messaging illustrates the importance placed on formal written communications in media units within larger more bureaucratically complex police services (Weber, 1958).

The absence of a strategic approach to media relations by smaller organizations does not suggest they enter into these processes haphazardly. In fact, though there was little mention of any sort of strategic approach to communications practices, several of the MROs interviewed from smaller services emphasized the importance of 'consistency' in what they say and how they say it when communicating with the media and the public in general. The fact that an MRO role in a small municipal service was created to ensure consistency, speaks to this notion:

> My position was treated as a new position with the [name removed] police
> service. There had never been a media relations officer with the service before. It
> was just … officers here and there, sergeants and stuff, or Inspectors, depending
> on how serious the incident was, that were talking to the media. And there was no
> sort of consistency with how that message was being delivered. (MRO5, Civilian)

Her position helps to ensure messages delivered to the media are consistent. The idea of

consistency in messaging also bears on structure – in this case, the MRO position is created to

foster consistent patterns of conduct that will repeat over time and eventually with another

individual serving in the MRO position. With time, the media relations role and activities in this

service will be structured. An MRO from a small municipal service also explains:

> Look at the White House. They have a press secretary. They have someone that
> communications is all they do. They get the White House message out there,
> right? And it's consistent. The media gets a consistent message. They have a
> consistent relationship with that person and I think that's important and we need to
> foster something like that as well. (MRO6, Sergeant)

This quote suggests that not only is consistency essential when it comes to communications

practices but also, to ensure consistent relationships are formed with the media. Thus, it can be

argued that claims-making in smaller police organizations is also structured at least to some

extent. Arguably, smaller media units are less reflective of Weber's (1958) ideal bureaucracy.

Conclusion

To summarize, the data suggest there are structural differences in the media units in large versus

small organizations. Although it is not surprising that larger police services possess larger media

units that are more structured, professionalized and formalized, such structural differences have

implications for the way in which media officers approach the claims-making process. Larger

organizations typically employ communication specialists in their media units and thus their

approach to claims-making is highly strategic. Smaller organizations do not typically employ

communication specialists. When it comes to claims-making processes, though less strategic

than larger services, smaller organizations are strategic in the sense that they tend to focus on ensuring that there is some level of consistency in what they say and how they say it.

Findings from the current study support previous literature, with some notable differences (Lee & McGovern, 2014; Mawby, 2010; Motschall & Cao, 2002). Over half (58%) of the Ontario media relations units have been in existence for ten years or less, suggesting that media relations are as established as their international counterparts. Despite this, the increasing formalization and centralization of these units is apparent. As independent police service units, 90% of the respondents indicated that their unit has formal media policies. The relative infancy of media relations units in Ontario is perhaps most apparent given the lack of formalization of the media relations role specifically. In contrast to what previous research has found, only half of the sample designated the MRO position as management/supervisory and, in most cases, the individual assuming the role of MRO had no prior media training or experience in communications or media relations. What is more, the MRO position in Ontario appears to be more ephemeral than in other countries given that 58% of the sample had served in the position for only 2-5 years.[53] Finally, the minimal level of training provided to MROs reflects the roles lack of formalization. The only training requirement is a one-week course offered at the OPC. In the next chapter, I turn to a discussion about how MROs structure crime as agents of legitimation and translators of police discourse.

---

[53] Although I recognize that this length of time in "one position" is atypically long in police services in Canada, it is important to note that, internationally, 3-5 years in the MRO position is relatively short.

Chapter 5: Constructing Crime and the Logics of Communication

Chapter four elucidated the organizational factors that impact and shape the nature of claims-making within police services. In this chapter, the focus shifts to explicating factors that shape how crime is constructed for the public. I draw on theoretical propositions from Lee & McGovern (2013; 2016) to explain how MROs construct crime (RQ2a).

Police Communications Practices

Twenty years ago, Ericson and Haggerty (1997) argued that risk permeates all aspects of police work. More recently, research on the work of well-established media relations units in Australia has found that risk strongly influences how police organizations communicate with the media (; Lee & McGovern, 2014; 2016; McGovern, 2008). Findings from the present study corroborate Lee and MCGovern's (2016) contention that notions of risk directly influence the activities of media relations units. Interview data indicate that, apart from the strategic approach to claims-making adopted by larger police services, the organizational and systemic factors examined in this study do not dictate the way in which police organizations construct crime. Rather, regardless of how the media unit is structured, these constructs are influenced profoundly by risk discourses that seek responsibilization of the public (see also McGovern, 2008).

According to Lee and McGovern (2016) the following three logics explain police engagement with the media: (1) The management of public risks and the responsibilization of the public; (2) The management of police image or 'image work'; and (3) Attempts to increase confidence or trust in policing and in the legitimacy of the organization (p.1295; see Figure 1). Lee and McGovern (2016) argue, "while empirically discreet in practice these three logics overlap and mutually reinforce one another" (p. 1295). In the context of the present study, these key logics for communication are used to explain why MROs utilize their own media platforms

to engage directly with the public, while also providing a lens through which we can understand how MROs construct crime and the police image to the public. In essence, these three logics constitute the organizational ideals and goals police services value and pursue. As I explain in the sections to follow (and in the next chapter), the data reveals that as legitimation agents, MROs play a key role in ensuring these logics are practicable.

MROs as Legitimation Agents

Findings in this study reveal that as legitimation agents MROs play a key role in justifying and attaining support for the police mandate. Claims-making activities may thus be seen as a tool used in the service of legitimation, shaped by two dominant discursive frames: the first, most emphasized frame involves constructing crime in terms of risk (as primary definers of crime) and the responsibilization of the public, while the second frame centers on constructing positive images of the police. For police services, the necessity of legitimation efforts cannot be understated. As has been documented extensively in the literature, the police monopoly over crime control is rather tenuous given continued growth in the provision of private security markets (Loader and Walker, 2001; McGovern, 2008; Rigakos, 2002; Shearing, 1992). Moreover, in light of several high-profile police misconduct cases in both the US and Canada and a broader public awareness of the limitations police face when it comes to detecting and controlling crime, public confidence and trust in the police is increasingly threatened. We do not have to look far to see this erosion of confidence; for example, following the guilty verdict of Toronto Police Constable James Forcillo, for the shooting death of Sammy Yatim, public polls found that public trust in local police officers had dropped significantly (Hong, 2016). Media relations units were established to address problems of this nature (Cooke & Sturges, 2009; Lee

& McGovern, 2013; Manning, 1971; Mawby, 2010; Motschall, 1995) and it is through the work of MROs that these legitimation efforts are made practicable and effective.

Figure 1: Logics of Communication from Lee & McGovern (2016, p.1295)

Constructing Crime

Interview data from the present study reveals that risk logics inform how MROs construct crime and social problems in three fundamental ways. In the context of this study the term 'risk logic' refers to a method of reasoning (both conscious and unconscious) rooted in notions of risk. This includes thinking about crime (and the police image) in terms of risk assessments (the identification, quantification and characterization of threats) and risk management (mitigation of risk, communication of risk). Risk as a concept is multidimensional and subjective, as Slovic and Weber (2002) point out:

> A paragraph written by an expert may use the word several times, each time with a different meaning. The most common uses are: (1) Risk as a hazard: "Which risks should we rank?" (2) Risk as probability: "What is the risk of getting AIDS from an infected needle?" (3) Risk as consequence: "What is the risk of letting your parking meter expire?" (4) Risk as potential adversity or threat: "How great is the risk of riding a motorcycle?" (p.4).

The first way in which risk logics influence constructions of crime is reflected in the perception, among those interviewed, that the police are (and should be) the primary definers of crime news. Second, most of the communication activities MROs engage in are centred on informing the public about perceived risks, as defined by the police. Third, beyond informing members of the public about potential risks, a significant portion of what MROs communicate involves encouraging responsibilitization. In other words, members of the public are advised to take preventative measures to manage their own risks (e.g., through public safety messages). The first theme is explored in more detail below. The second and third themes are the focus of Chapter 6.

Expertise in Risk Communication

To understand how police organizations construct crime, we must first appreciate what MROs prioritize when communicating with the public. Arguably, what they prioritize will inform what information they consider worthy of sharing with the public. Survey data indicates there is a significant degree of consistency in the public relations goals, activities and priorities of MROs. In fact, over three-quarters of those sampled (80%) indicated that persuasion of the public is a goal of media relations activities; this is perhaps unsurprising considering that police organizations have long made claims to special expertise in risk management (Chan & Rigakos, 2002; Ericson & Haggerty, 1997; O'Malley, 1996). As such, the police have vested interests not only in defining crime, but also in identifying appropriate measures to address the problems thus defined.

Interview data suggests participants in this study feel compelled to control messages about crime. This finding is interesting in light of Schneider's (2016b) research which finds that growth in social media use has led to less police control over story-telling processes. In the case of the present research, media officers' strategic efforts to control messages about crime are

78

necessary to ensure the first logic (the management of public risks and the responsibilization of the public) is viable. More specifically, as primary definers of crime news, police place themselves in a privileged position to define and manage public risks and to offer advice to encourage the public to take charge of their own safety. What is more, from the police perspective, their role as primary definers of crime news also ensures the organization is perceived as legitimate (Logic 3). In general, participants embraced the idea that, in reporting crime news, the police perspective of an event should reflect the "facts". One MRO comments: "Part of my role is to decipher rumor from fact" [MRO14, constable]. Some participants felt the media plays a role in disseminating false information: "The media can put a lot of misinformation out there and, obviously, you know if it's coming from us then it's going to be the right information [MRO5, civilian]. This statement articulates the perception that police are always privy to correct information in a way the media are not. Many officers explained that the media are not solely to blame for the dissemination of mistruths. Social media platforms, in conjunction with electronic devices equipped with audio and video recorders, allow citizens to spread what police define as misinformation as well. For example, in discussing a lockdown that occurred at a local community college in a large city, one MRO observes:

> […] the media have a responsibility to all the students that are in lockdown mode there too, because every one of them is texting or tweeting like 'What's going on?' and there's so much misinformation getting out there … the sooner I can jump in there and be part of that solution to get out some true facts, the better. [MRO7, sergeant].

This officer sees his role as conveying the 'real' story and correcting misinformation by revealing the police perspective. In a similar vein, another media officer from the OPP laments:

> Everybody is a journalist. So it's very difficult to control the truth. I guess the big obstacle we have right now is social media and people with their cell phone videos, posting them to Twitter or selling them to the media before we even have the chance to tell the story. … the problem with that is people can post anything they want but

79

it's out of context, you know, until you actually find out what happened [MRO4, Sergeant].

Citizen journalism can therefore undermine the ability to control how a particular incident is defined; in consequence police lose their ability to patrol the facts (Ericson, 1989). This reflects the assumption among participants that police accounts of events are the most accurate given that the police possess contextual knowledge that others do not. The perception that police are and should be, primary definers of crime is also reflected by corporate communications specialists, as the following individual discerns:

> I think, with the evolution of the modern-day media officer in policing, it provides us that opportunity to get ahead of some of the information and be able to dispel rumours. And we've seen that … through social media we're monitoring … there can be some misinformation that is coming out. And through the use of Twitter, for example, we're able to correct that misinformation. So, we can right the wrongs very quickly. But I think getting ahead of the information in a lot of ways, being able to dispel rumors where and when we can, is very, very important, because we know if we don't say something they will seek out information elsewhere. [CC3]

This highlights the perception that without police accounts of an event misinformation is pervasive. The role of the media officer is to ensure that the police account is disseminated to compete with other sources of (mis)information and to dispel any mistruths. Maintaining their role as primary definers of crime news demands that police adopt a proactive approach to their claims-making activities.

A Proactive Approach

The aim of being the primary definers of crime news has implications for how police organize communications with the public. In communicating crime news, police have traditionally embraced a reactive approach (see for example, Huey and Brohl, 2012). However, aligned with their claims to special expertise in risk communication and management, police organizations are increasingly proactive in their communication practices. Survey data for the present study

supports this contention given that respondents were more likely to define their activities as

proactive, rather than reactive in nature. In response to the following survey question, "*Overall,*

would you describe your approach to media relations as proactive?" Ninety percent of those

surveyed felt their activities were proactive. Comparatively, when asked if they felt their

approach to media relations was reactive in nature, 53% felt their media relations approach was

reactive.

Interviews also support that MROs primarily define their role as proactive. According to

an MRO with 15 years experience, the OPP have become increasingly proactive:

> You have to know how to use the media for both the organization and law
> enforcement positively and to work together … it's a different way of doing
> business … it's not being entirely reactive all the time. It's actually being proactive
> to positively put things out there [MRO11, Sergeant].

Police organizations have largely moved away from their traditional reactive approach, as a

corporate communicator from the OPP explains:

> You're your own news channel, right? So, we have a YouTube channel and, if we
> don't think something's going to get covered, we put it out anyway and tell the
> public where to find it: 'Here it is, you know?' We have videos about fraud
> prevention, senior's fraud and it goes directly out to the community level. So, we
> have ways to get the information out there [CC3].

This demonstrates that police organizations are much less reliant on conventional media to get

the information they want out to the public and have taken matters into their own hands. As such,

MROs are motivated to release their own material, especially if they feel mainstream media will

not provide coverage of a particular story. This supports previous research which finds that given

technological advancements and the professionalization of public relations departments, police

do not consider traditional media to be the primary channel of communication anymore (Cook &

Sturges, 2009; Lee & McGovern, 2014; Mawby, 2010).

The perception that social media has aided efforts to implement a more proactive

approach to claims-making was a sentiment shared by several participants. For instance, when

asked if he considers his role to be reactive or proactive in nature a MRO with the OPP

responded:

> I'd like to think that it's more proactive than reactive from our perspective. We're
> always looking at current issues and we're trying to be proactive in our messaging,
> crime prevention messaging whether it's Internet safety or anything that you can
> think of, we're trying to stay in front of that. Of course, we are reactive when
> something happens and it does, every day. So, we have to respond to that too, but
> it's very important to stay proactive. And social media has really helped us to do
> that. We can now do that, where we couldn't as easily in years gone by [MRO4,
> Sergeant].

According to this officer it is crucial to communicate with the public in a proactive manner and

social media enables officers to do this efficiently.

The presence of MROs within police services not only enhances opportunities to engage

in proactive claims, but it also provides opportunities to control directly the messages received

by the public. Consider, for example, this officer's response when asked what strategies are most

effective when it comes to sharing crime news with the public:

> Social media gives us that ability… without social media we have to rely on the
> media and although the media is a nice tool for us we don't have control over what
> they decide to put out. So, through social media, our website, Facebook, Twitter,
> we're about to get into Instagram as well. We're hitting a lot of people with what
> we want them to know. So, it gives us control over not only what information
> they're getting but how they're getting it [MRO3, Constable].

This statement reflects how MROs can utilize social media platforms as a means of controlling

the information (e.g. patrolling the facts) received by the public. As this media officer explains,

the police can bypass traditional media given their ability to control what information the public

receives from the police and where they receive it. As I will illustrate throughout this chapter,

MROs also use their own communication platforms to respond to misinformation and as a means to directly influence public perceptions and knowledge about crime.

The majority of the officers interviewed felt their work is proactive in nature. Others felt they lack the time or resources to engage solely in proactive claims-making practices. For instance, this MRO from a large municipal organization lamented: "We don't have enough time and resources to always be proactive. We can only be reactive and you know, let's be honest, there are times when we don't even have enough manpower to be reactive to things that we should be reactive to" [MRO16, Constable].

The Conversation: Necessity and Timeliness

Thus far, I have explained how MROs utilize a proactive claims-making approach to patrol the facts and uphold their position as primary definers of crime. In adopting this approach to claims-making, MROs also stressed the importance of releasing something in a timely manner (not just through the media, *but directly,* on behalf of the police service) on any given incident that might attract attention. This perception is summarized in the following statement by a corporate communications specialist from the OPP who explains: "Modern day media relations for the police include being not only in the first wave of coverage, but having an instantaneous response or at least something that will at least keep you in the story as a credible source of information and a trusted source of information" [CC3]. As this communications specialist describes, it is crucial for media officers to say something and to do so promptly. In another example, a media officer summarizes the importance of releasing material in a timely manner:

> I think it's huge, for us, organizationally, to get our story out there. If we don't put information out there, what does that do? That just leaves the door open for people to create their own stories, right? I don't think you can be silent because people may not agree with what you have to say, but if you don't say something they're going to make it up anyway. In this day and age, everybody's a reporter right? And everybody has an opinion about what's going on. So, I go back to the fact that I

think it's important for us to get our 'two cents' out there as well about what's going on and to get the story out there as quickly and as accurately as possible and as much information as we can share without jeopardizing the integrity of anything investigatively or otherwise [MRO6, Sergeant].

This assertion also elucidates the perception, outlined above, that police officers are, by virtue of their job, in a privileged position to get the 'true' story out there (i.e., primary definers) and the importance of actually getting the story told.

In a similar manner, this media officer explains her observation that many police services now strive to "beat the media to the storyline" [MRO5, civilian]. Many participants share this sentiment. As an extension of their desire to remain primary definers of crime news, several MROs conveyed the need to release their own material quickly to prevent misinformation from spreading. As a Sergeant with the OPP explains: "We can't have a void in our coverage. Misinformation fills that void pretty easily and it's not police information. We have to release something and we have to do it quickly" [MRO9]. It is also important to get the story out to ensure that the media does not pursue sources outside of the police (another example of police patrolling the facts), as another officer comments: "And one of the things that we find is if we don't put that story out, or they [the media] don't get an answer from one of us, they'll start to shop around" [MRO11, Sergeant].

While many of those interviewed expressed a strong desire to be the first to get the story out to the public, some felt that being first was next to impossible. The following corporate communicator explains:

The chances of us being able to be the very first ones ever to put a message about something that's happened is not likely. Particularly and I am talking more about those high-profile, maybe even emergency-type, situations or crisis-type situations. But I think that what we've tried to do, particularly with our social media strategy, is to at least get out there and provide the public and the media with some reassurance that we're aware and that we're working on information and please come back to us for more information as opposed to leaving that dead silence that's

out there. Our ability to get out immediately on social media to say, 'yes we have a call for, you know, a gun call at this school. We are on our way. We will provide an update. Please come back to this 'hash tag', or this account for updates,' and constantly repeating that message, even with the smallest of updates, to at least let people know that we're being timely with our information […] There's always something that you can say and even if it is 'we don't know anything right now but we know there's a situation going on and we're going to get you information', is at least letting the public and the media know that you're taking responsibility for providing that information and I think that's very important [CC1].

While it is nearly impossible to be the first to 'say something,' it is nonetheless a priority to

release something and to engage actively in the conversation. Indeed, the perception that police

must, at the very least, always remain an active voice in the police-crime discourse is a common

theme. An MRO with the OPP echoes this sentiment:

Even if we're not first to get it out there, we have that one shot that we still send out our media release, even though the whole story's been out, but not from us. It just sets that tone, this is what the OPP has released and we can say this is our information. It's official. Whatever else is being published out there didn't come from us and I can't confirm that because it's still under investigation [MRO8, sergeant].

For this individual, providing the official police account of an incident serves as a way to

differentiate the police construction of that event from other constructs formed by the media. In

this sense, the police attempt to patrol the facts (Ericson, 1989). Social media also provides

opportunities for the police to get their story out and to distinguish the police perspective from

other perspectives:

Social media, I think, adds so much to our ability to communicate … with social media, the public, they want to have some validated information that they can say 'this is police information' and as soon as we Tweet something out from our account, that's police information, that's verified, that's legitimate. And they love that! They want to have the police perspective, the police angle. So, if we can give that to them quickly and continuously that helps [MRO14, Sergeant].

A corporate communications specialist also points to the need to engage in ongoing discussions:

You have to engage in the conversation on major events that are happening. You don't really have a choice. But you also have to do it strategically, with purpose,

because you want to really, ultimately support a successful conclusion to that response … The main reason we put out a media release is to educate the public, or help catch a criminal, not just to let everyone know what's going on [CC2].

For this individual active engagement in discussions of major events is necessary to resolve whatever issue may be at hand. Communication is not about keeping the public informed, but rather, media releases are goal oriented, to generate an arrest, or help solve a case. Recent research examining police use of Twitter in a Canadian context finds that police use of these platforms is unidimensional; the dialogical potential of Twitter is not utilized, as Kudla and Parnaby explain, "[Toronto Police Service] use Twitter first and foremost as a means to legitimize the organization […] organizational precepts of police image appear to preclude meaningful forms of engagement with citizens via Twitter" (2018, p. 1). Findings from this study seem to support these findings, highlighting how MROs consider it necessary to engage in the conversation but in a very unidirectional way, to get the police message out.

The Conversation: Claims-making and Risk

The perception that the police must release material and in a timely manner cannot be understood apart from the risk logics that inform much of how and why MROs communicate with the public. Such perceived pressures illuminate further how police organizations are increasingly governed by risk logics (Ericson and Haggerty, 1996; Lee & McGovern, 2016). In addition to safeguarding their role as primary definers of crime, the tendency to release police material in a timely manner also acts as a legitimation strategy (logics 2 & 3); a way to mitigate organizational risk, such as threats to the police image.[54] The act of releasing something helps manage the

---

[54] The idea of protecting the police image is an extension of the broader image work MROs engage in, which is discussed in more detail in Chapter 6. However, given the association this particular form of image work has with risk management in general, I outline it in this section.

perception that the police have "something to hide". A municipal MRO explains that the media

always interpret silence in a negative light:

> We have to be careful what we say… I'm not going to say, "sorry, I can't tell you."
> I may say that, but I'm going to follow it up with why. Right? I mean, it's all about
> even educating them. I mean, historically we used to say no comment. But then you
> say, 'no comment,' then 'what are you hiding? I mean why can't you tell us?' At
> least get the story out there from us and share why you can't share, why you can't
> tell them, right? I mean, give them a better understanding because, if not then,
> they're going to go somewhere else and they're going to find the information and it
> may not be accurate, do you know what I mean? [MRO1, constable]

If silence is interpreted as the police hiding something and news releases not generated by the

police are more likely to contain inaccuracies, to counter these threats, officers feel the need to

say something, even if it means simply explaining why the information cannot be shared:

> I definitely think it's better to have something to say […] You can't say nothing
> because then it makes it look like you're trying to hide something, it makes it look
> like it's worse than it is, it makes it look like, you know, the perception there from
> the media is they're being tight-lipped, there must be something, something else
> happening here [MRO5, civilian].

It is clear that the act of releasing something mitigates the risk of appearing less than transparent

as an organization. A former corporate communications specialist from the OPP reiterates this

point: "The big thing we used to say is we don't ever want to create the mystery by saying

nothing because it will come back to bite us. So, we wanted to be very clear in the facts that we

present so that it's clear. We have to say something" [CC4]. As she explains, releasing something

alleviates the potential for the service to be 'burned'. Releasing something was also necessary to

avoid being 'caught off guard', as the following quote emphasizes:

> The challenge is when you're caught a little bit off guard and you don't have all the
> facts. You're never given the leeway to say 'no comment,' right? You want to have
> a message or you really want to have something that you can say, you know? I
> might say something like 'I really can't say anything on that but what I can say…' I
> want to lead them into our message somehow but still play the role of either
> educating or assisting the investigation somewhere in there [MRO7, Sergeant].

This statement encapsulates several of the themes discussed thus far. The act of releasing

something is not only necessary to avoid being caught off guard but it is also used as a means of

ensuring the police message is circulated.

In addition to protecting the police image, a second threat addressed with a proactive and

timely approach to communication is related to investigative processes. According to some of the

officers interviewed, releasing their own material relatively quickly was one means to ensure that

investigations are not undermined, as the following municipal MRO explains:

> I'm aiming to give them as much information as quickly as possible. That will alleviate how many questions I will get from them. In truth, I really am. I want to give them as much information as I can that they're then not going to question me. I don't want to put myself in a position where I put something out there where it leads to more questions which might compromise the investigation [MRO3, constable].

Minimizing questions from the media helps to protect the integrity of investigations, as another

officer explains:

> I share as much information as I can in a release. Vagueness leaves a lot of unanswered questions for the media and then if I'm not, I mean, that's only more time that I've got to spend answering ten calls as opposed to sending out a complete release that satisfies almost everybody. I like to send out as much as I can without disclosing the stuff that we're not allowed to disclose or that we withhold due to investigative reasons, such as maybe a weapon that was used in a robbery or some hold-back information. Essentially, what is I am getting at, I don't want to compromise the investigation [MRO1, constable].

Releasing as much information as possible is an effective strategy to deter further questioning

from the media and protect the investigation and this sentiment was expressed by the majority of

participants regardless of whether they worked for a small or large police service.

Conclusion

A consistent theme that emerged in the interviews was the perception among participants that the

police are (and should be) primary definers of crime news. This perception has direct

implications for how police communicate crime news with the public. Police services are becoming increasingly proactive in their claims-making capacities and according to the MROs in this study, they feel compelled to release their own information directly and in a timely manner, to ensure the police perspective is central to the conversation. These pressures are deeply intertwined in the risk logics that inform how and why MROs communicate with the public. Such activities on behalf of media officers not only ensure police secure their role as primary definers of crime, but they also mitigate organizational risks. In the next chapter, I discuss how most of the communication activities MROs engage in revolve around defining risks and encouraging members of the public to manage their own risks.

Chapter 6: Constructing Risk and the Police Image

In Chapter 5 I discussed how efforts to control messages about crime are necessary to ensure the logics outlined by Lee and McGovern (2016) are practicable.[55] In this chapter, I extend this discussion, focussing specifically on how MROs construct crime. I argue the claims-making processes MROs engage in provide another means through which the ideas and aims (logics) of police agencies are rendered practicable. In the first section, I discuss how MROs construct crime in terms of risk (RQ2a-continued). In the second section, I explain how MROs construct the police image (RQ2b).

Risk and Public Responsibilization

Communicating Risk

A key goal of this research is to gain a better understanding of the priorities, practices and direction of the claims-making processes MROs engage in, as well as how police organizations go about constructing crime. When it comes to communicating with the public, survey data reveals that crime prevention is one of the most critical aspects of the media relations role. In fact, all the respondents (100%) indicated that crime prevention is an 'extremely important' goal of media relations activities.[56] Interview data support this finding elucidating how MROs view and disseminate this type of messaging. Embracing the role of risk educator, one media officer with the OPP explains: "I love getting a message out and trying to make people aware of the risks they face on a day to day basis" [MRO13, Sergeant].

---

[55] These logics are outlined in Chapter 5. Given their significance to my argument, I include them here as well: (1) The management of public risks and the responsibilization of the public; (2) The management of police image or 'image work'; and (3) Attempts to increases confidence or trust in policing and in the legitimacy of the organization (see, Lee and McGovern, 2016)

[56] For this survey question, participants were asked to indicate, on a ten-point scale, the extent to which they felt crime prevention is a goal of media relations activities (1= least important and 10= most important). All respondents answered this question by selecting either a 9 or 10 on the scale.

Data support the contention that crime prevention and public safety messaging are largely synonymous with risk communication and that risk communication constitutes a large part of the claims-making of MROs (McGovern, 2008; 2015). This focus on risk communication is paramount because to convince the public that police are effective in their risk management efforts and to persuade the public to buy into responsibilization (Logic 1), the very notion of what risks are 'out there' to be 'avoided', must first be defined. For MROs, claims-making provides ample opportunity to define what risks are worth paying attention to. In this sense, claims-making is a tool used to support police efforts to manage crime-related risks and to encourage the publics' responsibilization.

One way MROs disseminate information about risks is through 'public safety messaging.' For example, a media officer in a large city, explains: "Most of our communication really bubbles down to public safety. Yeah. That is, I mean, really, that's our role. Even if it's not a grand scale public safety issue, it's safety to someone" [MRO16, Constable]. Another OPP officer claims public safety messaging as the end goal of her communication efforts: "You want every one of your initiatives, in the end, to result in memorable public safety messaging" [MRO10, Sergeant]. Public safety messaging is a reflection of risk communication, as respondents observed:

> Public safety messaging is the most important thing we do because along with the media you can reach a pretty big audience with any sort of [information]. For example, if there's fraud going on, if there's phone fraud going on, you can reach the public in a big way and let them know you know to **be careful** because this is going on in your community [MRO5, civilian].

> Even a basic every day news release about a string of break and enters in a community, you know, with the break and enter news releases [is] making sure that the information has gone to the media in a timely way [and] that it's informative enough that the **public can make decisions about what they need to know and what they need to do** [by] providing crime prevention tips if it's appropriate. Those

are all factors that we … go through in our minds when we're doing that one news release [CC1].

Public safety messaging involves notifying the public of possible risks (e.g., phone fraud, break and enters) so that in turn, individuals can act to minimize those risks.

When asked which types of crime stories are most important to share with the public and why, media officers describe potential threats (e.g., home and car break and enters, forms of fraud, etc.). Threats are understood in the context of crime prevention. Consider for example, the following exchange between an MRO, a corporate communications specialist and myself:

> MRO7: Right now, frauds are huge. That's why we are talking about it in the TV spot. …It's a doomed type of investigation … It's hard to solve a lot of the ones that are being done because they're from overseas…. our best tool is to **warn the public**. **I could spend every day actually warning the public about the latest type of fraud out there -**- mostly by email or telephone, you know, whether it's posing as the CRA or if they're posing as a utility company. I could talk forever, but just to be able to keep going out there and keep them aware and ask them then to tell other people. In the crime prevention world of things … we are the ones who know how many occur and the **volume is huge**.

> S: So, to a large extent and correct me if I'm wrong, but it's risk management sort of? In terms of… you are communicating messages that encourage the public to protect themselves, or, in other words, to manage their own risks?

> CC2: It's not risk management. It's crime prevention. It's educating the public so **they don't get taken**.

> MRO7: Yeah, I'd have to agree. I don't see that as risk management at all, it's crime prevention.

This exchange again shows how public safety messaging by MROs centres on defining *potential risks* and educating the public accordingly. Interestingly, this quote also illustrates that MRO7 and CC2 are averse to defining their work as a form of risk management. When asked directly whether they are engaging in 'risk management' both are quick to re-frame risk-management as crime prevention. This type of distinction signifies how police largely conceive of their role in terms of crime fighting. In sum, when it comes to constructing crime news, the focus on risk

discourse serves two fundamental purposes. First, such claims allow police to frame which risks are worth paying attention to and second, once defined as such, police assume a prominent role in managing those risks. As I will explain in the section that follows, for police, risk management often involves educating the public to embrace responsibilization.

Educating the Public

In addition to communicating risks, the MROs in this study also emphasize the importance of 'educating' the public by providing advice on how to mitigate risk. This role, as "educators" offers another means through which Logic 1 (the management of public risks and the responsibilization of the public) is operationalized. This role assumes police possess certain risk awareness and knowledge that those outside of the organization lack. Given their claim to this specialized knowledge, their role as "risk educators" is strategic; aiming to generate a sense of trust and confidence in the police. As risk educators MROs thus attempt to reinforce the legitimacy of the organization. When asked to consider the most important goal of communicating with the public, an MRO with the OPP states: "I want to encourage [the public] to **protect themselves**, to engage in **better vigilance**, to ensure they practice **personal safety for their finances, their families, their relationships, their property. It's vigilance**, it's crime prevention, that's what we do" [MRO10, sergeant]. As this quote suggests, MROs are involved in educating the public, not only about the risks they face, but also about risk reduction behaviours. Crime prevention and risk communication are largely synonymous when it comes to understanding the claims-making activities of MROs. The messages considered are basic, yet necessary:

> We have to boil things down to the most basic level and that's messages like, you know, **lock your doors** … a lot of times we get criticized for putting out [that] information because people say: 'Well you're treating people like they are idiots,' you know, 'You're telling people to lock their doors'. We do that because we see

that not everyone does lock their doors. [MRO16, constable].

Common-sense messaging often emphasizes the likelihood that something will happen (as

evidenced by the message to "lock your doors"), providing the opportunity for officers to

educate the public so that they might implement their own safety measures. Many of those

interviewed valued public safety advice messaging:

> There's the community safety piece, which is a really important aspect of our role.
> It's really important that you can provide valuable information to members of the
> community and in some way affect their life. Whether it's a safe driving tip, or a
> crime prevention tip through using media or social media to get that message
> across, it's really exciting. It's delivering common sense messaging reminders,
> creating that top of mind placement which is mostly subliminal but they need to
> hear it [MRO4, Sergeant].

A common theme in the interviews was the importance of highlighting potential risks while

encouraging responsibilization:

> I actually like educating the public because I am a firm believer that if we can educate the
> public they are in a better place to **protect themselves**. So, I just like communicating with
> the public and making sure that they have all of the information they need to protect
> themselves [MRO2, Sergeant].

The desire to educate the public is also motivated by the perception that members of the public

generally do not understand the risks they face in their own neighborhoods and the inability of

the police alone to prevent crime. Interview excerpts reveal the perception that police alone

cannot combat the problem of crime. Asked whether the public has a good understanding of

crime in their neighbourhood a Sergeant with the OPP lamented: "There are misconceptions that

we can solve everything. The public fails to understand that they have a vital role in their own

security. They're complacent" [MRO4, sergeant]. This statement couples the need for the police

to educate the public to engage in responsibiliztion efforts. According to an officer from a small

municipality: "It's always been about, you know, letting people know what's going on. That's

crime prevention at its best. Because if people don't know what's going on, then they just kind of

think nothing's going on … if there's break and enters going on in your neighbourhood you should know about it and then maybe **you'll lock your doors**" [MRO3, Constable]. Further, the following quote from a municipal MRO illustrates how efforts to educate the public are packaged as 'crime prevention':

> When I say 'educating the public,' [I mean] not only on what we do, but what they can do and *what we together as a community can do to prevent crime*. An example of that is, you know, constantly sending out messages... I mean, one of the things that is huge in our city and I'm assuming it's everywhere, [is] thefts from motor vehicles. But it's such an easy crime to prevent, but … for the most part, people like to believe: 'Well, it can't happen to me. You know, it's been in my car for months or years or whatever the case may be. The GPS that I've had for two years, you know, it's not worth anything to me no one's going to steal it.' You know and that's just one example, but just to educate the public, make them aware that **it can happen and this is what we can do to prevent it** [MRO1, Constable].

It is important to note that this officer considers education of the public to involve 'collective efforts' to combat crime, as evidenced by statements like "we together as a community" and "we can do to prevent it". Yet, the example he uses to illustrate his point (car thefts) focuses on educating the public to engage in their own risk management practices. Overall, this quote provides a clear example of two key themes identified in this section: many of the claims-making activities MROs engage in centre on efforts to notify the public of potential crime-risks, and to educate the public on how to manage these risks (as a responsibilization strategy). These claims-making processes are forms of risk communication that render a key organizational aim practicable (Logic 1).

Thus far I have provided an overview of how MROs perceive their role as well as what they say they do. The question remains however, to what extent do media officers do what they say they do in practice (RQ2c)? In other words, do official media releases actually reflect risk communication practices? Though a comprehensive content analysis is beyond the scope of this research, a cursory analysis of media releases published on official police service websites

further substantiates the contention that risk communication constitutes a large part of the

claims-making MROs practice. For example, the following media release from the London

police illuminates what risk communication looks like in practice:

> **Attempted Fraud Warning**
> Wednesday July 19, 2017
>
> The London Police Service would like to take this opportunity to *warn the public* of an attempted fraud which has taken place in London recently. Someone posing as a London Hydro Worker called a local restaurant claiming their hydro would be cut off if they did not pay money in arrears. London Hydro was contacted and advised that they did not make the phone call.
>
> There was no monetary loss in this case but we would like to *alert businesses and citizens* to *be mindful* of unsolicited calls and to verify, through external sources, the legitimacy of the person on the other end of the phone.
>
> London Hydro and other companies would not make first point of contact calls of this nature.
>
> If you have been a victim of a fraud, you are urged to call the police and report the incident. Your information could protect others from becoming a victim [London Police, 2017, *italics added*].

The three themes I have discussed throughout this chapter are clearly evident in this news

release. First, the risk is communicated/defined (in this case an attempted fraud is identified).

Next, information is provided to educate the public about this particular risk (i.e., details about

the event that took place are provided, information about what Hydro and other companies

would **not do** is described). Finally, self-responsibilization is encouraged (i.e., citizens are

advised to be, "mindful of unsolicited calls and to verify, through external sources, the

legitimacy of the person on the other end of the phone"). To provide another example of what

risk communication looks like, consider the following release from the Peel police:

> **New "Grandparent Scam" Targets Seniors**
> Tuesday September 05, 2017

The Peel Regional Police Fraud Bureau are advising residents of a new type of "Grandparent Scam" targeting seniors.

The scam involves a phone call being made to the victim, by an individual claiming to be a family member, usually a grandson. The victim is asked to purchase expensive 'Rolex' watches. The victim is advised that the watches are needed to pay back an outstanding debt and in some instances, needed as a gift. The victim is directed to send the watch to an address, usually in Quebec, through a courier service.

They impress upon the victim that they do not want any other family members to know.

Peel Regional Police would like to remind residents that in the event they receive a call similar to this, they should verify the details of the request through another family member. Any requests for money by unverified parties on the phone should be treated suspiciously.

Here are some other tips to remember:
- If someone calls claiming to be a lawyer/attorney or police officer, they will not ask you for money/jewellery over the phone.
- Residents with elderly family members who live alone, or have published phone numbers, should make them aware of this.
- Residents, in general, should be cognizant of the fact that there are many fraudulent schemes out there, using the internet and phone calls to contact potential victims. Requests for money should be treated with caution and an appropriate amount of due diligence should be practiced.
- Education is the key to prevention with this type of scam. To learn more about this scam and other scams affecting Canadians, residents are encouraged to visit www.antifraudcentre.ca
- Peel Regional Police also offer some more Safety for Seniors links which can be accessed here. [Peel Police, 2017]

Again, this article illuminates the three themes I have used to explain the claims-making processes MROs engage in. First, the risk is communicated/defined. Second, information is provided to educate the public about the potential risk. Third, several tips are offered to encourage responsibilization of the public. Finally, consider the following media release from the Toronto Police Service concerning break-and-enters:

Public Safety Alert, Spike in overnight commercial Break-and-Enters, Crime-prevention information offered
Saturday, August 26, 2017

Investigators from 42 Division would like to make the public aware of a recent spike in overnight commercial Break-and-Enters within the boundaries of 42 Division. From August 10, 2017 to August 25, 2017, there have been over 30 commercial Break-and-Enters.

In the vast majority of these commercial entries, a man has smashed the front glass door and targeted the cash drawers and cash registers. In many of these occurrences, he has also cut wires for the audible alarm system.

The same man is believed to be responsible for the majority of these entries. These commercial Break-and-Enters have occurred between midnight and 4 a.m., with the man entering and exiting within minutes.
Several entries have occurred to neighbouring businesses in the same commercial plazas on the same nights.

The man is described as black, 20-30, wearing a hooded sweatshirt and back packs. Investigators would like to provide the following safety tips to the businesses to improve security:
        -keep your doors and windows secure by locking them
        - keep both interior and exterior lights on during overnight hours, both front and rear doors
        - have and activate a monitored security alarm
        - do not keep cash or any other valuables in your businesses overnight
        - activate and record CCTV surveillance and security cameras
        - these Break-and-Enters occur in the overnight hours, so please be extra vigilant during the night to lock all doors and windows, activate your security alarm with perimeter settings on
        - if you are aware of a suspicious vehicle or person in your business/property area, call 9-1-1 immediately.

Using these tips may help keep **you and your property safe and secure** [Toronto Police Service, 2017].

Thus, it appears there is a considerable degree of consistency in what MROs say they do, when it comes to constructing crime and how they actually go about doing it. I now turn to a discussion about how MROs in this study go about constructing the police image.

Constructing the Police Image: Legitimacy, Trust and Accountability

In Chapter 5 I argued MROs deem it important to release messages and to do so in a timely manner, as a strategy of legitimation; that is, to avoid the public perception that they are less than

transparent. In this section, I provide a more comprehensive overview of the image-work of MROs. According to Lee and McGovern (2014), public dissemination of positive policing stories is an image management practice associated with the logics of police-media engagement. Supporting Lee and McGovern's (2014) findings, survey data reveal that efforts to protect the police image are prioritized among MROs. Of those sampled, 84% 'strongly agree' and 15% 'agree' that '*Handling interview questions well is important* and that '*Being able to write well is important.'* Moreover, 90% of respondents 'agree' or 'strongly agree' that '*Having a good appearance on TV is important'* and all respondents 'agree' or 'strongly agree' that '*managing the media is important*.' According to the officers interviewed, each of these activities bears on how the media officers are perceived, but also on how the police service as a whole is perceived. In terms of prioritizing image work, all of the respondents aimed to portray their service in a positive light and consider external communications activities as essential to ensuring the police service is seen as legitimate and accountable.

Interview data further support the contention that image management is considered a vital aspect of the media relations role, while also elucidating different forms of image work MROs engage in. This section highlights how image work is vital to ensure that two organizational aims are met, the management of police image (Logic 2) and attempts to increase public trust in policing and in the legitimacy of the organization (Logic 3). In many ways image work is embraced by the MROs in this study because it is believed to strengthen and sell the police brand, but also because it protects the police image in light of the fact that police acknowledge the limits of their ability to control crime and provide security (see Garland, 1996). The image work MROs engage in provides another example of their role as agents of legitimation.

In general, organizational and systemic factors appear to have little influence on how the police image is constructed and managed. Regardless of the size of the media unit, MROs adopt a similar view of their role and utilize a similar approach to manage the police image. For example, according to one MRO, "My role is to protect and preserve the public image of the [service]" [MRO2, sergeant]. The desire to proactively promote the police is also important, as an MRO from a small municipal service explains:

> I really find it fulfilling when there's a story that is a good, a really good news story for the police service. I just feel like there's a lot of negative just about policing in general in the media… so, if we can get a story out there that shows our police officers doing something really good in the community, … I find that part really fulfilling when we can actually put the good news stories out there and show people that the police are doing good in the community as well and it's not all about the negative stuff that happens. … with social media, we get a lot of feedback and sometimes it's not the best, but when you put those good news stories out there you get all the feedback saying like: 'good job officers, good job [name of service removed] police service.' I feel like that's kind of my whole goal. I think with my position is to bring that to light and make the service look as good as I can in the public. [MRO5, civilian]

Good MRO work is being defined as proactive image work that functions to mitigate negative perceptions attributed to the media. This MRO's statement also reaffirms the importance of social media as way to garner positive feedback.

To support a positive police image, media officers tend to rely on two different forms of proactive claims-making. The first strategy is to generate positive images of police officers through what I have termed 'feel good stories.' These stories typically centre on what may be defined as 'noble activities', which consist of police officers engaging in an activity or event that is above and beyond traditional policing duties of crime fighting. For example, when asked how important it is to get positive stories out about the police organization, a corporate communicator concluded:

100

Very important. And, as I said, that's almost entirely what my colleague's role and that of our writers and photographers is about. They are constantly going out … and covering events. For instance, at noon today I'm heading down to [location]. The service is participating in a first responders recognition day with the Trillium gift of life network with organ donation. They wanted to recognize the donations that a couple of our officers made after losing their lives on duty and, as well, we have some of our own members who have been recipients, or are waiting to be recipients of organ donation … we'll be covering that event and putting that up on our website and through social media and, you know, we do those things all the time. Every day there's something going on in this service where one of our members is going above and beyond or even just their day-to-day responsibilities and getting out there and covering that information and putting it out there to the public so they can get a better understanding of what really makes up our police service. The more we can showcase the good work of our officers certainly the better off that we are. [CC1]

Image management is so imperative in this organization that an entire team is dedicated to it. The 'organ donation' example is reflective of the type of 'feel good' stories used for image management purposes.[57] Stories of this nature are utilized to build confidence in the police and reinforce the legitimacy of the organization. Social media platforms also enhance the capability of police services to frequently release these types of stories. As a MRO from the OPP explains, social media has aided her efforts to present the service in a positive light:

With Twitter … I re-tweeted something from one of my followers who saw an officer was helping somebody fix a bike. The officer actually stopped and had the bike flipped over and, from the picture on Twitter, it looks like he's fixing the chain and [my follower] says, 'You know, … this is great policing, I love police at the OPP', blah, blah, blah. So, those are good stories to share with the public, so I re-tweeted it and I think a second detachment re-tweeted it as well. I think, with Twitter, you're going to see a lot more of those sort of recognitions [MRO9, Sergeant].

As a 'feel good' story, the officer did not have to generate the story but only 're-tweet' it. In this sense, the act of re-tweeting acts as a form of legitimation in and of itself; the original tweet is validated given that it is consistent with the positive police image the service wants presented to

---

[57] I want to be clear that I am not in any way downplaying the significance of this event. The actions of these officers who lost their lives are truly remarkable and, in my opinion, the generosity of these officers deserves recognition.

the public. Social media not only increases opportunities for such stories but also to circulate these stories widely.

A second image management strategy media officers use is to disseminate stories emphasizing crime-fighting success. An MRO from a large municipal service provides an example:

> If there's, let's say, a lot of pressure or concern in the community about misuse of Tasers, we will deliberately start putting out good Taser arrest stories just so people know that this is routine for us. Hardly anybody ever gets hurt in a Taser and, you know, this guy actually had a sword and we were able to resolve that without killing him. So, I mean, that's the kind of positioning ... We may not ordinarily put out a Taser story, but if it was a political issue, we may do five of them in a month [MRO7, Sergeant].

The release of 'Taser arrest' stories serves two purposes. The first is to combat negative coverage and thus protect the police image and the second is to emphasize successful crime fighting on behalf of the police. Both strategies are employed to portray the service positively. In another example, when asked whether getting positive stories out was a priority for his unit this corporate communicator commented:

> Yeah. It's hugely important now because of the discussions about value for dollar. You know the cost of policing and how expensive it is. We find that we have to tell the public what's going on every day as much as you can because we're expensive and people want to know what they are getting for their money. So, if you're not telling them about great arrests and fixing this and solving that, it will build up and eventually be really bad for your police service [CC2].

This comment provides support to Garland's (1996) argument that state agencies (like the police) are increasingly concerned with 'customer relations' which renders their mission to be about serving consumers, "and being responsive to their expressed needs, rather than serving the more abstract notion of the public good" (p. 456). Further, this statement also reflects the 'customer service' agenda outlined by Lee and McGovern (2014) insofar as it articulates the perception that media officers can both promote the service and justify its existence by highlighting crime work.

102

Further, research suggests that the public is more likely to view the police as legitimate when police are perceived to be effective crime fighters capable of reducing crime and disorder within a society (Tyler, 1990; Reisig et al., 2012). Therefore, the emphasis placed on media releases that highlight crime fighting is necessary to ensure the police are seen as legitimate and effective and by extension, to win public support for the organization. The following exchange with a former communications specialist with the OPP illustrates this imperative:

> CC4: I mean the [media relations] function is vital for a healthy police service to continually share information with the public. There's a lot of great police work being done everywhere and the last thing that the investigating officer usually thinks of is telling the world about it after it's done. Like he or she will work three months on a major case and, you know, arrest five people and make dozens of charges and then they're finished because now they're just concentrating on court. So, we're the ones in the organization that have the responsibility of saying well, that was fantastic, we're going to pluck that one out and we're going to write it up in a way that protects everyone's interests and we're going to share that with the public. And if it wasn't for us that would never happen.

> S: So, your role is to let the public know: Okay, this is what we're doing. We are being effective in this capacity?

> CC4: Yeah, we're spending your money wisely. We've solved a huge crime here and by the way don't you get taken by the same type of thing.

This exchange illustrates the view shared by many participants in this study, that crime fighting success stories convey that the police are legitimate. For this officer, the cost-benefit calculation is black and white; solving a 'huge crime' promotes the perception that the police are spending public money wisely. Another media officer echoes this sentiment:

> I think it's important to share with the community what it is that we do and what services we have to offer should certain situations arise, such as our canine units and to be able to show it, you know, a demonstration kind of thing, or our emergency response unit propelling from the top of a building or blowing out the side of a wall and forced entry… It's exciting stuff that we don't see every day. But it's a good education piece … because public safety is expensive, you know? … a lot of complaints are the cost of policing, right? But essentially, it's the cost of public safety, right? [MRO1, Constable]

Again, this statement illustrates the perception held by many of the MROs in this study that public perceptions of legitimacy are contingent on crime fighting successes. This perspective is interesting given that it is largely unsubstantiated, MROs do not know their effectiveness and have no way to measure (outside of anecdotal evidence) whether their efforts are successful in perpetuating a legitimate image. Because the police possess privileged access to coercive resources and are thus the only entity "equipped to deal with every exigency in which force may have to be used" (Bittner, 1970 p. 17), the versatility of the police mandate explains and justifies the need for a 24-hour emergency service. In turn, this provides the "organizational and ideological resource base to reinforce the claim to an extensive mandate" (Loader and Walker, 2001 p. 14). For the MROs in this study crime stories are thus believed to be functional, a means through which to demonstrate the police doing what they are 'supposed to do' in practice. In other words, sharing the occasional and 'exciting stuff' associated with the police 'crime fighting' is seen to be important for promoting a positive, public, (cost)effective image in support of the general legitimation work of MROs.

When it comes to image management, the same question addressed in the previous section on risk is also relevant here: To what extent do media releases reflect what media officers say they do in practice (RQ2c)? A cursory analysis of media releases published on official police service websites indicates there is continuity in how MROs describe image management strategies, the structure and content of media releases. Consider the following media release detailing a drug investigation from the Niagara police:

> **Drugs - Drug Investigation Leads to Three Arrests**
> Friday September 22, 2017
>
> On Thursday, September 21, 2017 members of the Central Region Street Crime
> Unit conducted a drug investigation into a suspected Heroin and
> Methamphetamine Trafficker operating from a Welland residence.

The investigation concluded with multiple arrests and the execution of a Controlled Drugs and Substances Act search warrant at a Hellems Avenue Welland residence.

During the course of the investigation, police seized 96.7 grams of suspected methamphetamine (street value of $9670), 15.2 grams of suspected heroin (street value of $4560), 8 grams of suspected fentanyl (street value of $2400) and hydromorphone capsules. In addition to the drugs, police seized trafficking indicators including scales, cellular telephones, cash and packaging material. Additional charges were laid after locating a prohibited weapon (brass knuckles) and stolen property (bicycles).

The following persons were arrested and held for a bail hearing in St. Catharines scheduled for September 22, 2017:

Adam Fougere, 33 year of age of Welland
- Possession of Heroin for the Purpose of Trafficking (2 counts)
- Possession of Methamphetamine for the Purpose of Trafficking (2 counts)
- Possession of Fentanyl for the Purpose of Trafficking
- Possession of Hydromorphone
- Possession of a Prohibited Weapon
- Possession of Property Obtained by Crime Under $5,000
- Possession of Stolen Property Under $5,000 (2 counts)

David Cowe, 32 years of age of Welland
- Possession of Heroin for the Purpose of Trafficking
- Possession of Methamphetamine for the Purpose of Trafficking
- Possession of Property Obtained by Crime Under $5,000
- Breach of Probation

Robin-Lynn Winmill, 27 years of age of Welland
- Fail to Comply with Recognizance

This news release provides an example of a 'crime fighting success' story (a drug seizure and

arrest) that shares similarities with the media release presented in Chapter 1. This excerpt

emphasizes the amount of drugs seized and their value, while also highlighting other items

seized at the crime scene (with the dollar value listed for each) and the number of charges laid

against each offender. The prominence placed on the number of charges laid, the value of drugs

and the stolen items highlights the value or significance of the arrest and by extension, the value

of the police. The following news release from the Kingston police provides a second example of

the type of 'crime fighting success' story police services typically release:

> ### *Calls for Service from September 19, 2017*
> Kingston Police had 163 calls for service during the 24-hour period starting from 5:00 a.m. on September 19, 2017. Of these, 111 calls occurred in the city central area, 31 in the west end, 6 in the east end and 5 north of Highway 401. Some of these included:
> - 5 domestic calls
> - 2 assault calls
> - 1 sexual assault
> - 6 harassment calls
> - 3 fight/disturbance calls
> - 6 undesirable calls
> - 2 alarm calls
> - 11 noise complaints
> - 3 missing person calls
> - 4 Mental Health Act calls
> - 4 medical assist calls
> - 12 assist citizen calls
> - 4 break and enter calls
> - 8 theft calls
> - 2 shoplifting calls
> - 4 mischief calls
> - 2 fraud calls
> - 6 motor vehicle collisions
> - 1 impaired driving call
> - 8 driving complaints
> - 17 suspicious activity calls
>
> There were 8 men arrested within the last 24 hours, between 25 and 82 years of age, for the following: theft, assault, sexual assault, and breach probation. Three persons were arrested on outstanding warrants.
>
> Residents are encouraged to view the Kingston Police Crime Mapping Tool that can be accessed through the website here. To further community awareness and improve accessibility to calls-for-police-service occurring in the community, Kingston Police has merged Geographic Information Systems (GIS) technology with police calls-for-service data for user-friendly public consumption.

This type of media release is unique to the police, as it is not something that would be

released by news media outlets. The sole purpose of a release of this nature is to inform

the public about the types of crime fighting activities police engage in and the calls for

service they receive. This release does not focus on one particular incident, but rather, emphasis is placed on the sheer volume of calls received within a 24-hour period and the type of calls responded to and arrests made. These types of media releases are used to portray the police as efficient and effective crime fighters. A news release of this nature also conveys a sense of accountability on behalf of the police services; it is a way of highlighting the fact that the police are extremely busy doing the things they are "paid to do".

News releases published on several police service websites also featured 'feel good stories', another image management strategy used by MROs. For example, the Hamilton Police Service published the following news release:

Constable Beck Wins 2017 Excellence in Performance Award

For immediate release: September 20, 2017

Congratulations to Constable Sara Beck on receiving the Excellence in Performance award from the International Association of Women Police.

The award is given annually to a female officer who distinguishes herself by her exceptional policing skills that have made a significant impact in her community.

Constable Beck has been with Hamilton Police Service for 11 years and is currently the co-chair of Hamilton's Human Trafficking Coalition. In 2015, Constable Beck identified a need to expand the Vice Unit to include a Human Trafficking Unit.

Her work rescuing women from trafficking situations led her to the idea of creating care packages for victims, who often left situations without appropriate shoes or a winter jacket. Hamilton Police Service's Victim Services now keeps bags handy for investigators at all times. The bags include pyjamas, hygiene items and gift cards.

Constable Beck accepted her award on September 18 during the International Association for Women in Policing 55th annual training conference in Cairns, Australia.

This article highlights the compassion this officer possessed for victims she 'rescued'. In another

example of a 'feel good' news release the Halton police describe a running event police

participate in to honour officers who have lost their lives in the line of duty:

> **Annual Run to Remember in Honour of Fallen Peace Officers**
> **Release Date:** September 20th, 2017 - 11:05am
>
> The *Run to Remember* is a 460 kilometre relay run from the Ontario Police
> Memorial in Toronto to the National Police Memorial in Ottawa. The run is
> completed by police service members from across Canada to raise awareness for
> the National Police Memorial and raise funds for the families of officers who
> have lost their lives in the line of duty.
>
> The *Run to Remember* begins at Queen's Park (Toronto) on Thursday, September
> 21 and will end in Ottawa on Saturday, September 24, 2017 on Parliament Hill.
> Held on the last Sunday of September each year in Ottawa, the National Police
> Memorial honours peace officers who have lost their lives in the line of duty.
>
> There are 275 officers from 22 different police agencies participating in this year's
> run, including 18 officers from the Halton Regional Police Service. The run has
> grown substantially since it began in 2005 with just 24 participants.
>
> Sergeant Mark Dienstmann from the Tactical Rescue Unit and Run Coordinator
> for the Halton Regional Police Service: "Our officers have made a personal
> commitment to train and participate in this event. I am very proud that our
> officers recognize the importance of honouring those who have made the ultimate
> sacrifice. Each kilometre they run signifies their dedication to not only those who
> have fallen, but also to their families who are left behind."

This media release provides a prime example of some of the strong language used in the 'feel

good stories' to convey a positive image of the police. Some examples of the persuasive

language used include: "personal commitment", "honouring those who have made the ultimate

sacrifice" and "dedication to those who have fallen and their families."

Image-Working the Public Trust: Personalizing the Role and Transparency

Perhaps the most interesting theme that emerges in regard to MRO image-work is the perception

that having a recognizable face helps generate public confidence in the police service. Consistent

with prior research, police officers (not solely MROs) use Twitter as a way to personalize the

organization (Schneider, 2016b). Schneider (2016b), for example, found that police officers used personal or sport (non-police work) tweets as a presentational strategy to portray themselves as down-to-earth 'average jane' officers who share common community interests and to cultivate the perception that police officers are personable and relatable members of the community (p. 141). Presenting relatable images is a strategy to win public trust, as an MRO explains:

> I think credibility goes hand in hand with accountability. So, if I can establish myself as a credible person in the media I think, you know, that there's going to be people who see that I am willing to be accountable for what I am doing, right? So, I think … just being a little more informal with people even, especially with the social media. It's a relatively informal platform, so I use my first name on my social account, I have my picture, which was a big step for me [laughs] on my Twitter account, you know so people can put a face to who I am. I think that goes a long way to developing a strong relationship with them […] I think when people see that I am excited about stuff, or if I am open about what I'm doing and about what our organization is doing, then I think that goes a long way to building confidence with the public [MRO6, Sergeant].

According to those interviewed, an air of informality is one way to break down perceived barriers or differences that might stand in the way of engendering public trust:

> It's just bringing a human face to policing. You know because everybody thinks we're these people that wear these uniforms and we have no feelings and we're just kind of robots. And, through my work here and social media I've tried to, you know, I've been complimented with again just bringing a human face to this side of policing. I think the public starts to feel comfortable with consistency. I am that consistent person who is the face of the service [MRO2, Sergeant].

By personalizing their role, MROs attempt to generate images of the police officer as sharing an identity with members of the public. Interestingly, for this officer, bringing a human face to a digital platform is an effective strategy to personalize the police. Another officer explains his belief that his self-presentation has direct implications for public trust:

> I think it's proving yourself every time when we're doing something, be it a media release or media appearance, that we're reliable, available and we're accurate you know? It's showing the appearance we have is legitimate and the more we do it the more trust we earn and once they start trusting us and believing in us, we've done our job [MRO14, sergeant].

For this officer, trust in the media officer is essential to generate trust for the organization as a whole. Another way to garner public trust is related to the notion of transparency. Several officers explained that their role as MRO was not only to present the good work done by officers but also to admit mistakes and address any cases of misconduct. The following officer explains how being open and honest with the public about mistakes is one strategy to attain trust:

> I fully admit when I am wrong. Yeah and if you go out on Twitter, if you look back, I don't delete my tweets. If I make a mistake it'll be right there. I think that's very important to be honest when we make mistakes, to call out, or to fess up when others have made mistakes as well. [MRO14, Constable].

Though some officers in this study indicate that they will in fact address difficult subjects (e.g., admitting when they are wrong), recent research from Kudla and Parnaby (2018) finds Toronto Police Service Twitter users actually "avoid addressing difficult subjects, whether by not initiating sensitive exchanges" or by completely disregarding tweets that challenge their legitimacy (p.10). Kudla and Parnaby's findings challenge O'Connor's (2015) findings that police use of social media forces them to address criticisms in a very public way.

Overall, MROs in this study believe proactive image-work is imperative to secure trust and to manage the organization's legitimacy. These findings seem to complement Kudla and Parnaby's (2018) research which finds that police use of Twitter is strategic, to disseminate information that tends to reinforce their legitimacy. In the next section I discuss how image work is a form of risk management.

The Police Image and Risk

I have argued that claims-making activities cannot be understood in isolation from risk management logics and that the image-work MROs engage is also influenced by risk logics.

Image work is a way of managing risk. Many of the participants are well-aware of the threat of negative media coverage. As Manning (1958) argues, police must contend constantly with the impossible mandate; that is, the need to defend public order while at the same time upholding the rights of individuals. Consequently, the police image is always at risk. Despite their commitment to protect the police image, many of the MROs in this study recognize the precarious nature of public trust in the police and, as a result, many see public trust as provisional. A corporate communications specialist highlights the precarious nature of the police image:

> I think, to gain trust, you know, a big part of that is on the MRO to display respect, goodwill and a good reputation. I equate that to pebbles on a beach. If he puts out three really good media releases today, that talk about great arrests and great successes, we've just put three little stones on a pile. And eventually that pile will get to be two or three feet high. And we've built up a lot of great goodwill … all of those wonderful things for our image and reputation we've built up. And then, along comes a story in which an officer has been charged with sexually assaulting his neighbour and the media smash that pile down. So, what we do then is we put out, the next day, a really great story about a good police arrest and we put another stone on that pile and another stone and then after four or five weeks the pile is starting to look like a pile again. So, it's rebuilding the public trust a stone at a time. And if our police Chief is charged with drinking and driving there goes the pile. That's the way I look at it [CC2].

Recognizing the volatility of the police image, MROs believe that media releases about arrests help build and, in some cases, restore a tarnished police image and public trust. In another example, a corporate communications specialist from the OPP states:

> A number of years ago, in the middle of [names region], … there was a cruiser collision right in one of their main intersections. It veered off into a building and that was a front-page picture in the news. You know it was a town investigation involving our police car, but you know what? All those positive stories that we had all went away because this cruiser was involved in a collision. Didn't matter that we weren't at fault. What mattered was our cruiser ended up in somebody's store front. And then, we had to start building it back up again. When you get into transparency and accountability and holding people accountable for their actions, when we make a mistake we publicize it. We deal with the issue. We come front and centre.

This further highlights the precarious nature of the police image and the role that media relations officers play in managing that image. Overall, the findings in this chapter indicate that very specific strategies are adopted to secure public trust. Media officers believe that trust is established through unidirectional communication in the absence of social interaction and meaningful dialogue (see also Kudla & Parnaby, 2018). This view of public trust is interesting as many media officers held the belief that trust can be developed through unidirectional communication.

Conclusion

While organizational factors examined in this study appear to have little influence over the claims-making activities of MROs, drawing on Lee and McGovern (2014) I have argued throughout Chapters 5 and 6 that risk management has a significant influence on how MROs report on crime. The perception that the police are (and should) be primary definers of crime is a prominent theme. Several of the officers felt the police depictions of events are necessary and that timely dissemination is important for winning public support for policing activities. As a result, it is important to approach media relations proactively as there is pressure to not only release something from the police perspective in a timely manner, but also to maintain active involvement as stories unfold.

An analysis of how MROs construct crime reveals that claims-making processes serve two primary purposes. The first is to inform the public of the risk(s) they face while the second is to educate the public in their role as risk managers and to encourage them to take measures to mitigate those risks. Interview data also highlights the MRO's role in proactive image work. One strategy MROs use to maintain a positive police image is to promote 'feel good stories' about officers or events. The second strategy is to publicize stories that highlight crime-fighting

successes by the police service. According to the MROs, proactive image-work is imperative to present the police in a positive light and to manage the organization's legitimacy. Many view the media role as a way to manage public trust or trust deficits through incremental and continuous use of pro-policing media releases through both conventional and social media. I have illuminated throughout this chapter how, as legitimation agents, media officers play a vital role in ensuring that the fundamental organizational ideas and goals police service's value and pursue are practicable. In the next chapter I focus on MROs perceptions of the police-media relationship.

The purpose of this chapter is to address Research Question 3 by examining how MROs in Ontario perceive their relationships with the mass media.[58] When it comes to police-media relations, both survey and interview data support what previous research has found: the relationship is complicated and perhaps best understood as a complex loop of interdependence (Chinball, 1975; Lovell, 2003; Mawby, 2002; Reiner, 2008). On one hand, respondents in this study reveal they share rather positive relationships with various media members and outlets. On the other, this relationship can be undermined given the different objectives of news and police organizations which is reflected in some of the negative views expressed by participants. In the sections to follow, I first focus on positive perceptions of the media, followed by a discussion of the negative views. Next, I provide an overview of how risk ideology permeates MROs' justifications for fostering and managing these relationships. Finally, I explain how MROs view the power dynamics of the police-media relationship.

Favourable Views of the Media

Overall, interview and survey data show that MROs in the present study characterize their relationships with different media sources fairly positively. As one participant commented, "I've got a great working relationship with the media" [MRO1, Constable]. According to another constable: "I've always felt like we've had a quite positive working relationship with the media" [MRO15, Constable]. This sentiment was also evident in the survey data. In particular, respondents rate their relationships with *local* media sources quite positively. For example, over one third (37%) 'agree' that they posses a '*good relationship with the local media'*, while over

---

[58] As outlined in Chapter 2, in the context of the present research, the mass media is defined as, communication technologies that possess the capacity to circulate information widely to multiple recipients (Lovell, 2003). Mass media technologies include, for example, radio, television, newspapers, magazines and the Internet.

half (53%) 'strongly agree' with this statement. Further, nearly the entire sample of respondents (95%) 'agree' or 'strongly agree' they have a '*good relationship with local newspaper personnel*,' and finally, 32% 'agree' and 63% 'strongly agree' that they possess a '*good relationship with local radio personnel*.' The following statement by a media officer in a large municipal service illustrates the extent to which MROs feel they share positive relationships with local media personnel:

> So I have been working in here on and off for seven years and I've known my wife for eight and I tell you that I speak to these local reporters more than I speak to my own wife during the day. So that kind of goes to show you the relationship that I have with these people. I firmly trust that they won't break the trust we've built and they firmly trust that I'm not going to lead them off on some tangent just because I don't want information to go out right? And you know it's... they'll find out very quickly if I am lying to them… everything is disclosable in court right? So if they said, "but you told me this just so I wouldn't broadcast that," they'll find that out very soon and that trust we've shared for eight years now has been broken. Same with them, like if I tell them something, "this part is off the record," and if I look up and they report something like, "according to [MRO16] this, that and the other thing," that's you know, it's very easy for us to know when that trust is broken [MRO16, Constable].

As this excerpt explains, MROs and the local media typically share close working relationships given the fact they are in contact daily. According to this participant, daily interactions help facilitate positive working relationships over time and thus also help foster a level of trust on behalf of both parties. This positive relationship is negotiated and is based on maintaining trust with reporters, as a media management strategy.

It is perhaps, the frequency of contact that distinguishes MRO's perceptions of local versus national media sources. When it comes to national media sources, survey data indicates MROs characterize these relationships positively overall, but slightly less favourably than local sources (see Table 1). For example, when asked whether they felt they had a '*good relationship with national media*' 11% 'disagree', 37% were 'neutral', 32% 'agree' and 21% 'strongly agree'.

Further, respondents characterized their relationship with national newspaper personnel (11% 'strongly disagree/disagree'; 37% 'neutral'; 53% 'agree/strongly agree') and national radio personnel (16% 'strongly disagree/disagree'; 37% neutral'; 47% 'agree/strongly agree') similarly.

Table 1: Perceptions about Relationships with Media Sources

Media Source	Strongly disagree/disagree (%)	Neutral (%)	Strongly agree/agree (%)
Local	--	11	89
National	11	37	53
Local (newspaper)	--	5	95
National (newspaper)	11	37	53
Local (radio)	5	--	95
National (radio)	16	37	47

*Respondents were asked to indicate the extent to which they 'agree' or 'disagree' with the following statements: '*I have a good relationship with the national newspaper personnel*'; and '*I have a good relationship with national radio personnel*'.

Interview data also sheds light on the extent to which local media organizations are typically viewed more positively than their national counterparts. For instance, the exchange below, between a media officer from a small municipal service and myself, provides a clear example of how this differentiation is made:

> MRO6: It's a fine balance for us right? I have to keep my media partners happy too, especially locally, I find, because they are very supportive locally, I find, for us. … I am really fortunate with my local media partners. I notice a big difference dealing with local media because we drew some outside attention, some provincial media attention, during that drowning investigation. And there's a bit of a difference dealing with the bigger center media people versus the local people.
>
> S: That's interesting. Do you think it's a matter of trust?
>
> MRO6: For sure, there's that aspect of it. And the sense I got from, I don't want to give the guy a bad name because he did a good job and he was good with me, but I could certainly sense that he was more aggressive than my local people about the information and about what was going on. And it seemed a little more cutthroat to me, for him. I don't know if that's a good term to use or not, but you know, a little

more competitive for him about getting the story. And I did actually have to say to him at one point: 'you know I need to include my local media when we're talking' because I think he didn't do it. I think, if I had of let him run with it, he would have just done his own story. When we did a bit of a media scrum, he would've just been content to have just me and him and not the other agencies there. So, I had to say to him basically 'whoa, if we're going to do this, everybody is going to be included in it', you know? We rely on our local media to get community events that we're involved in out and all that other side of things that typically the larger media outlets don't bite on, right? [MRO6, Sergeant]

According to this officer, local media agencies possess a different and less aggressive mentality than the larger national media sources. The police appear to be less accepting of the dynamic this 'aggressive' mentality creates. This excerpt also highlights the fact that many police services recognize the importance of fostering positive relations with the media as a means of garnering media support in order to, in turn, foster community relations. This idea is examined in more detail later in this chapter, but first, I discuss the negative perceptions of the media.

Mistrust and Fear: Contentious Views of the Media

Participant's responses to additional questions about the media seem to support previous findings that police-media relations tend to be somewhat contentious (Chermak & Weiss, 2005; Chinball, 1975; Mawby, 2002). In response to the statement '*In general, I trust news reporters,*' nearly one-quarter, (21%) indicated they 'strongly disagree' or 'disagree', just under half, (47%) were 'neutral' while 32% 'agree' or 'strongly agree.' A general sense of distrust is perhaps even more apparent from responses to the statement, '*The news media focus on negative stories about the police.*' Nearly half of the sample, (42%) 'strongly agree', with this statement and 11% 'agree', while 47% remain 'neutral.' Additionally, nearly one-quarter, (21%) 'strongly disagree' or 'disagree' that '*The news media focus on positive stories about the police*,' while 53% remained 'neutral' and just over one-quarter, (26%) 'agree' with this statement. Despite a general sense of mistrust evident in the survey data, it is not entirely clear whether the respondents in this study

perceive the news media to be biased against the police. When asked how they felt about the following statement, *'The news media seek out ways to make the police look bad,'* 42% 'disagree', just over one-quarter, (26%) remained 'neutral' and just under one-third, (32%) 'agree' or 'strongly agree' (see Table 2). Overall, the rather high percentage of respondents who selected 'neutral' for these survey items is rather interesting.[59]

Table 2: Perceptions about Relationships with Media

Survey Item	Strongly disagree/disagree (%)	Neutral (%)	Strongly agree/agree' (%)
In general, I trust news reporters.	21	47	32
The news media focus on negative stories about the police	--	47	53
The news media focus on positive stories about the police	21	53	26
The news media seek out ways to make the police look bad	42	26	32

Interview data provide a more comprehensive understanding of how and why participants in this study view the media negatively. Two themes dominate the negative perceptions held: (1) the realization that members of the media simply expect more from the police than they can provide when it comes to reporting crime and (2) the perception that there is some risk when engaging with the media which results in a general sense of mistrust.

---

[59] Though it is not appropriate to make any definitive claims, it may be surmised from these findings that MROs are reluctant to discuss their perceptions of the media. As such, I felt strongly that this topic warranted further examination through the interview process. What I learned is that media officers were more than willing to discuss their views of the media with me. In fact, in many cases, they discussed this relationship without any prompting on my part.

Negotiating Media Expectations

According to many of those interviewed, one of the most frustrating aspects of dealing with the media is the latter's demand to disclose details about events as they unfold. For the participants in this study, this demand for detailed information is problematic because it can compromise ongoing investigations. Participants expressed that police always prioritize the investigation rather than the publication, while for the media it is only about the publication. Such conflicting mandates can be frustrating for the police. For example, when asked what he found to be the most challenging aspect of his job, this media officer explains:

> Dealing with the media. That frustration level...That whole aspect of getting that information, because I know what the media is going to want, sometimes it's frustrating for me because then I have to do an interview and I know what they're going to ask me and I can't say anything. So, I kind of come across looking stupid. Like I really do. I mean, I remember one time we had a fire at [location's name removed] and it was early on and the investigators couldn't give me anything. So, CTV came and they knew there was something going on. I mean CTV! They're not stupid, right? They knew there was more to the story, but I couldn't give them anything. And I kept basically saying: 'I can't answer that, 'no, I can't comment on that' and on the news that night, they basically made me look stupid. Well they did make me look stupid. They said, "okay so kind of a lead in, but police told us 'yeah I can't answer that' and then we have this, but when we asked police 'yeah sorry I can't answer that'." And they did that three times in a row, it was like a freaking gong show and it made me look horrible. So, yeah, that's probably the most frustrating part of my job …I want to give them as much as I can. They always want more and there's always that juggling act of what I can and cannot give them and then how do I deal with that [MRO3, Constable].

To protect the integrity of investigations, it is not always possible to provide the media with the information they demand. As he explains, this puts him in a precarious position and ultimately not only undermines how he is viewed as the media officer, but also how the police service is perceived as well. Ultimately, the onus is on the media officer to maintain the integrity of the investigation by finding an appropriate balance between secrecy and publicity. Another officer

from a smaller service shares a similar outlook, as he explains how the media mistrusts the police

and are never truly satisfied with the information they receive:

> I mean, we can never give them enough. They want the whole story and it's unfortunate, but I mean even the murder that we had on [name of street removed] we said, "We don't have anybody arrested but there's no public safety issue." Well, the media asks, "why is there no public safety issue?" "Well we can't give you that information because it's part of the investigation. It could compromise the investigation." And there is so much of that. I am sure the media hates me saying it, but I use it on them all the time. But it's true. The investigation is the most important thing and we'll give you what we can. And if we tell you something even though we don't clarify the reasons behind it you have to trust us. But the media doesn't usually want to do that. So it's always a bit of a battle [MRO20, Deputy Chief].

This excerpt illustrates the important and yet somewhat conflicting roles MROs have in their

organization whereby they act as information safe keepers but are also responsible for

information sharing to satisfy the media and public. Newsperson's expectations and demands for

information were not the only point of frustration for participants. A second point of contention

centres on the fact that the media tend to emphasize thrilling and dramatic news stories, while

ignoring more mundane stories. The expectation for police to always provide these types of

stories was met with frustration by many. As this corporate communications specialist explains:

> The media are still addicted to crime news. It's what drives the news cycle. So, they have an insatiable appetite for information. So, we have to feed the beast, as it's called, or else the beast will rip our arm off because the public is demanding to know what is going on. That's put way more pressure on the media relations officer than anything. That's the number one. Before it used to just be reporters yelling at the media officer saying, "why the hell didn't you tell us about this?" But now, the reporters already know what's going on because it's on social media and now they're waiting for us to say something. [CC2]

According to those interviewed, the demand for crime news has put increasing pressure

on MROs. Police are expected to deliver this news or risk scrutiny, not only by the

media, but also by the public. Another officer explains:

120

> You know, working in that industry, I saw the ratings are just so important for radio and television. I sat in the morning meetings where I've seen so many morning show hosts. Their box is packed because their second rating was down and they're fired. You know? In the newsroom, it's no different. Their goal is obviously, they'll tell you yeah it's to report the news, but it's to sell advertising and to support their station. Like it has to sell. That's why there aren't very many good police stories out there. You don't hear about the officers that are cutting their hair for cancer, or are in the malls taking underprivileged children shopping and doing all these community things, or presenting a cheque for $5,000. This is the stuff the public needs to hear. You know, maybe the small local media, they'll publish that stuff, but the larger media they don't care about it. They'd rather hear about the sexy stuff. The stuff that bleeds, right? [MRO22, Sergeant].

This officer, who has previous experience working for the media, recognizes the pressures placed on reporters to deliver dramatic news and he blames this for the lack of attention given to stories that depict police favourably. This quote also highlights that 'feel good' stories and events may not be of interest nationally, in turn, this means cultivating positive working relations with local media outlets is crucial for MROs to foster positive police-community relations.

Mistrust and Risk

Perhaps most striking in the interviews was the sense of apprehension participants conveyed about their relationships with the media. The more ominous perceptions centered on the potential risks involved with media engagement. Ultimately, this fear leads to an overall mistrust of the media. As one officer explains:

> You'll notice there are a lot of older officers who have the attitude: 'tell the press it's nothing.' It's just the attitude. I don't think you'll find a lot of officers that enjoy talking to the media because there's not a lot to be gained in it for them, only danger. It's a situation we can't control and police officers like to be in control of the situation. So, there's nothing to be gained for us in engaging with the media, but we recognize that it's necessary [MRO17, Sergeant].

According to several participants, facing the media is a no-win situation. The following exchange, between a former corporate communications specialist, two MROs from the OPP and myself, illustrates this:

CC4: We never, ever said 'no comment', but there were times when we did not engage in something. I can remember, when you get W5 [laughs] and you know it's going to be a no-win. There is absolutely no way you're going to win it to do an interview. You cut your losses and you have them beat you up just in their prologue or whatever. And that's it.

MRO17: Yeah. Get beaten up for a day as opposed to getting beaten up for a week.

S: Because of the story they will "spin"?

CC4: Yeah. And you usually get a good heads-up of where they are going with it anyway. So, sometimes you just cut your losses and say well it's going to happen but it's not going to be as bad.

MRO18: And a lot of times it's not too bad. And if it was, yes they'd [referring to corporate communicators at headquarters] send extra body armour for us [laughing]

CC4: [laughing] It would be a lot of prep work if we took on something like that.

MRO18: Huge! Weeks! Depending on the case right?

To some extent it seems MROs view media-engagement competitively, as evidenced in this quote with multiple references made to "winning" and "losing". This captures how many MROs felt; in police-media encounters there is only ever one winner. This exchange also provides an example of the sense of vulnerability expressed by participants when it comes to dealing with the media. The decision to participate in a news story is based on perceptions of institutional risk. A risk assessment is made and, even though they recognize they will be viewed negatively if they decline to participate, they consider the risk of participating far greater. In another similar example, this officer explains the inherent challenges in engaging with the media when it comes to contentious issues:

I have turned down interviews. I know CTV, for instance, yesterday wanted to do an interview on the new 420 vapour club [name of street removed] that apparently opened yesterday. And, I guess, people with medical marijuana licences can go in there with their medical marijuana and if they want to light up in there they can. And I knew, I mean, the *[name of newspaper]* tried to ask me about it last week and I've talked to people here and we've really got nothing to say about it. It's a business. If they're within the law, then they're within the law. But I mean, I don't

122

want to get into an interview about it because I know what they're going to ask me and I can't give them an answer on it. I can't tell them is it legal, or is it not? Well you know what? If they're within the laws and they've got medical marijuana- but I mean, I don't want to say something that's going to get turned around "oh, the [name of police service removed] support marijuana use!" It's too much of a risk. It can go one way or the other. And I don't want to put myself in that position, so I told them sorry we don't have any comment and I've been given permission to say that in this case [MRO14, Constable].

This participant describes another perceived 'no-win' situation where the risks of commenting outweigh the possible benefits. The decision to forgo media interviews was not the only way participants conveyed their lack of trust in the media. Several participants highlighted the need to be guarded when dealing with the media. One OPP officer explains, "I watch what I say. I'm always afraid, because I don't want them biting me back, you know?" [MRO9, sergeant]. A second OPP officer lamented:

I'm very careful about what I say. You know what? There is no 'off the record' so I don't use the word suicide. No. Instead I say, "it's a death investigation. There's no foul play suspected. It's non-suspicious," those things and they can figure it out from there. But there will be no further information … Yes, I've had good relationships with the media, but I will not make that jump because I don't want them to come back on me [MRO10, sergeant].

Officers worry about having the media 'come back' on them and are therefore guarded about what they share and how they package information.

To summarize, two factors contribute to the negative views of the media by police: the perception that the media have unrealistic expectations of the police when it comes to information sharing and the awareness that police-media engagement involves some degree of risk that must be assessed and managed. Thus far, I have described the police-media relationship in binary terms (i.e., positive versus negative views). However, I use the remainder of this chapter to illustrate that this relationship is too complex to be understood in such terms. The remainder of the chapter will focus on the motivating factors that drive police to maintain these

relationships, as well as, the relevance of control in these relationships. In the next section, I explain how participants not only recognize the importance of building successful relationships with the media but they also emphasize this.

Building Relationships: Give-and-take & Risk Management

Whether participants express positive or negative views of the media, these perspectives clearly have minimal impact on their desire to develop and maintain positive relations with the media. Interview data indicate that media officers play a vital role in forming effective relationships between their respective services and the media. Although participants were not asked directly how relationships with the media are established or managed, most stressed the significance of building and sustaining positive working relationships. These findings support Mawby's (2010) contention that police forces recognize the importance of maintaining positive relations with traditional news media for a variety of reasons, including the need to demonstrate transparency, to reassure people, to garner publicity for unsolved crimes and to project a positive police image (Mawby, 2010). The findings in this study highlight another factor motivating MROs to cultivate positive relations with the media; the desire to manage institutional risks. Consider the following excerpt from an interview with an OPP media officer with nearly six years' experience:

> I didn't plan on being a media officer. I came into a relationship where the media was happy to put the police front page in a negative light. It was a very hostile environment and so they were looking for things to write that were negative about the police and I had a lot of bridge building to do and it took me years to do it. So, even when I was in the position on a temporary basis, I called the local media and basically held an open house and said, "this is who I am, I work for the OPP but I would be happy to understand your deadlines" and so we had a conversation like we're having right now, 'I want to know what your deadlines, I'll tell you some of my standard operating procedures that will affect you as far as your time lines and we'll try and work together'. And try to build the bridge that way. And it did work. I was probably lucky. Maybe it was personality. But it was all about relationship building then. I would have never thought, when I came on as an officer, that, that would be one of my biggest roles, building partnerships with media, but it turned out to be a great thing. Those relationships are really important to us. They weren't

124

as important way back, but we now realize how important they are. So, the media and us are on the same page. We're not best friends (laughs). We have a working relationship. So, I have no problem telling them, "You're stepping too far into the investigation, I can't tell you anything from this point on." So, I have to draw that line in the sand for them. And at the same time, they'll say to me, "This isn't something I want to report on, is it?" And I'm saying you know, "it's a suicide, you don't want to report on this." We have that understanding, that he won't report that I said it was a suicide, but he'll say the police are investigating. So, it takes us back to relationships and building them. And that's where a lot of us are that have been in this role for a while [MRO12, Sergeant].

This example highlights the intricacies of relationship building and how the responsibility to maintain these relationships is largely in the hands of the MRO. This officer found the task challenging, but as she explains, it was essential to ensure that the working relationship is functional and that both parties have a mutual understanding of each other's aims. Perhaps most significantly, this excerpt illuminates the desire on behalf of the police to harness the media to their advantage to mitigate perceived institutional risks. The officer in the example above engaged in 'years of bridge building' in an effort to mitigate the media's propensity to 'put the police front page in a negative light'. Another officer explains the importance of building trust: "Yeah, so when you work here, it's like I said, we're all people. You have to build trust and that trust is not something that is just there. You have to build it and maintain that trust, right? So yeah, I think for me having been here for a while, actually, you can ask MRO15, when she came, you know, I told her these are the reporters that you can trust and you can tell them the whole story" [MRO16, constable].

MROs see media relationship-building as building reciprocity. For example, one OPP officer with about a year experience explains, "I enjoy the relationship I have with the media and make sure they get the message. I always give them what they need and they will do their part to give me what I want [MRO13, sergeant]. Similarly, an officer from a large municipal service calls the relationship with the media "a two way street. They scratch my back and I'll scratch

theirs. I'll give them what they need and they will reciprocate that as well. So, I just enjoy the whole dynamic of that relationship" [MRO19, constable]. Corporate communications specialists also share the sentiment that the police-media relationship is nurtured by a give-and-take approach. An OPP communications specialist said the following regarding his relationship with the media:

> It's a give-and-take relationship. It's about understanding each other's needs and building a relationship. Our goal is to always try and make it as positive as possible to benefit police-media relations. I think you're seeing that change over time […] some people who came on the job in the late seventies, early eighties are now seeing what we can do to foster positive relationships, an on-going positive relationship with the media, where you're the go-to for source information regardless of what the issue is [CC3].

Police services have come to realize the importance of positive media relations; that a give-and-take relationship facilitates trust in the police on behalf of the media and, as a result, the police become the 'go to' source for information, reinforcing their role as primary definers of crime. Trust, however, is not the only benefit of this reciprocal relationship. In describing her relationship with local media, an MRO explains how the give-and-take nature of the police-media relationship helps mitigate negative media attention:

> In general, I would say that my relationship with them is good. I think that it's a lot of give-and-take. If I'm available and if I'm willing to give them information and willing to do interviews and if I'm willing to be flexible and, you know, [say things like] 'Oh yeah, you know what? It's my lunch hour, but you know what? I'll do it right now because I understand that you have a deadline" or whatever. I think it goes both ways, if you have a better relationship with the media then obviously they won't be so quick to criticize you a lot of the time, or, you know, if there's a negative story they may not put such a negative spin on it. [MRO5, Civilian]

Relationship building with the media is essential to managing institutional risk. This participant feels that by making herself available and by providing the media with information they want, the media will in turn view her service positively and thus, will be less likely to 'criticize' the service even if there is a 'negative story' to release.

Police-Media Relations and the Issue of Control

A large body of research contends that the police engage in concerted efforts to control the news media (Chermak, 1995; Chinball, 1981; Ericson, 1989; Mawby, 2010; Lee & McGovern, 2014). According to Lee and McGovern (2014), police services have traditionally controlled the media by restricting access to information. The findings in the present study support this contention, suggesting the media relations enhances the ability of the police to withhold information as a means of controlling the news media and assuaging perceived institutional risks.

MROs are the central conduit through which information flows from the police service to the media. Media officers recognize this and the extent to which they can control what information is shared, when it is shared and how it is shared. This sentiment is articulated by this officer from the OPP: "I think we're all type A personalities in here and leaders wanting to be in control and even when you're doing media, even if you have that sense that you're not in control, you are in control because you can control that information being given out [MRO8, Sergeant]. Several officers suggested that withholding information from particular media outlets deters these outlets from generating negative stories about the police.

A common theme among participants is that they withhold information from certain media outlets if they have wronged their organization in some way. For example, an MRO from a large city explains, "[T]hey [referencing the media] have to be careful too, because I am pretty much their only source here for information. They don't want to burn any bridges. I mean we need them, but they need us more. At least in my opinion. Maybe they feel different? But without us, they've got no news" [MRO3, constable]. In another example, this Deputy Chief (acting MRO) from a small service explains how, thanks to relationship building, the media is aware of the consequences of undermining the police with negative coverage: "Because we built

a relationship, you build that trust and they know what they can get from you. Because they

know if they've burned you too many times they're not going to get anything from you anymore.

You're not going to be forthcoming, you're going to release limited information" [MRO20,

Deputy Chief]. According to this officer, the media are well aware of the consequences of

'burning' the police. This sentiment was not lost on the provincial police either. When asked

how he deals with the more difficult media outlets, an OPP officer with 22 year's experience

explained:

> I shut 'em down. Yeah. Like the [name of newspaper removed] for instance. They're not police friendly at all and they're always looking for an opportunity to lash out at us. So, one time they printed a story that was just so negative and not accurate and I asked for a retraction and they said no. So, we shut them off… With permission from my superiors, I shut them down for two weeks. And we let them back in on week-three, because they were so desperate. You know, as much as they like to chew us apart, we're their food, you know? They need us. And we realize that we need them too. I don't think we need them as much to get the story out, but we still rely heavily on them to get our version of the story out in depth. Social media provides that quick little hit. You still need the perspective and they're still open to that. And they're very helpful in doing that. I wish they were as kind to us as we feel about them. I still think there's a lot of apprehension in a lot of media agencies. You know, they believe we're still hiding something, or we're being secretive, or like Gestapo or something, which is so far from the truth. Those days are gone, for the most part [MRO4, Sergeant]

This excerpt illustrates how media officers control information in an effort to curtail negative

media coverage and to re-establish the parameters for the relationship with particular media

outlets. According to this officer, suppressing information, if only for a short period, sends the

necessary message to the media. Given heavy media reliance on police, for crime news, MROs

believe their information control practices are extremely effective. Withholding information is

also an effective way to mitigate institutional risks, according to a corporate communications

specialist:

> If a media outlet published something bad about us, you wouldn't necessarily withhold information, ok? But you're not going to get any extra value-added or

context if you treat us like jackasses, right, you know? There's another side to the story and, sensationalize as you want for whatever your purpose might be, we're not going to speak to that agenda. But we're going to be really limited in what we say in the future and you're not just affecting your own outlet, you're affecting all of them. So, they, the media, will then start governing themselves in a certain area. Whereas, well you want to know why you're getting limited information? Ask this guy that works for the TV station. Go get the correct stuff and you're going to spend time re-reporting or cleaning up the mess, right? So, get it right the first time [CC1].

Although this communications specialist qualifies the withholding of information (i.e., "we're going to be limited in what we say") the effect is similar. The perception among MROs is that releasing limited information to the media leads to efforts on behalf of the media to self-govern and thereby minimizes institutional risks. This statement provides another illustration of how controlling 'what, when and how' information is released is one strategy MROs implement to establish the parameters of their relationship with particular media outlets.

Data suggest media officers attempt to shape crime news, especially news stories deemed deleterious to the image of policing. They do this by censoring media outlets and limiting access to information to promote a give-and-take relationship. This, however, does not discount the fact that they also recognize the necessity of the media. Indeed, as some of the excerpts above allude to, MROs recognize the police need the media as much as media need the police, at least to some extent. As the following MRO commented:

I was telling someone the other day my goal is to get enough followers on Facebook so that we don't need the media anymore. Like that would be just wonderful if we just could do our own stories. But you know what? Being a former reporter, I know that that's not going to happen, I know that realistically we do need the media. We need the media to get public safety messages out. We need them to get those out there. Because obviously they have a wider audience, there's you know one service putting out the story, as opposed to ten different media outlets putting it out you know? Obviously they're going to be able to reach a lot more people [MRO5, Civilian].

Despite this media officer's desire to possess a monopoly on crime news reporting, she recognizes the necessity of the media to circulate information widely. To provide another

example, when asked about their relationship with the media, this MRO and corporate

communications specialist had the following to say:

> MRO7: We need them and they need us. Very symbiotic […]
>
> CC2: Yeah. I'm the same. A dance partner. We're not in charge of them and they're not in charge of us. They are important partners, they have a role to play, they have a job to do. They know that the public has an insatiable desire for news, for police news. We're the source of that news so we have to prepare to dance with them every day. The idea though, is that they're not our friends and they're not our enemies, they are a professional dance partner.

According to these participants, the police-media relationship is choreographed.[60] MROs feel

they need the media to deliver messages because media sources are perceived to have greater

reach to wider audiences. As an officer from a large municipal service commented:

> I absolutely think we still need the media. We have a pretty strong presence on social media and through our website. It still doesn't equate to the collective audiences of every major newspaper radio and television station in the city […] we still need their help in putting out messages to the public and it just allows us to deliver our message in exponential news to more audiences. Particularly in times of emergency or in times of a crisis the more people we can reach and the faster we can reach them the better off everybody is and I absolutely think that there's still a valuable role for them to play [MRO22, Sergeant].

Despite the strong presence of his service on social media platforms, this officer recognizes he

needs the media to reach broader audiences with police information (e.g., public safety

messages, calls to the public for information on ongoing investigations etc.). Another officer

explains: "I mean we're not delivering a message to the media we're delivering a message to the

community through them right? I mean it's not the media that you're sharing the story with, I

mean it is but they're just a path to get the message to the community" [MRO1, constable].

---

[60] To put this differently, supporting Ericson's (1980) concept, the act of 'patrolling the facts' is a choreographed activity.

Therefore, in some circumstances, the police recognize the media as a valuable conduit to communicate information.

Conclusion

When it comes to police-media relations, survey findings support what previous research has found; the relationship is complicated (Chinball, 1975; Lovell, 2003; Mawby, 2002). On one hand, the respondents in this study reveal that they share positive relationships with various news sources. Specifically, relationships with local media sources are rated slightly more positively than national news sources. On the other hand, participants in this study do not trust the media to present their activities in a positive manner. Over half (53%) of the participants indicate that they believe the news media focus on negative stories about the police. This lack of trust stems from two primary concerns. The first is related to the unrealistic expectations the media have regarding information sharing. These demands are met with resistance because releasing too much information can potentially undermine an investigation. Consequently, MROs play an important role in finding a reasonable balance between secrecy and publicity. The second concern is related to the perception that any engagement with the media threatens the institution of policing. Despite any negative feelings about the media, most participants felt that building and sustaining successful relationships was not only necessary, but also essential. They have strategies for maintaining positive 'give-and-take' relations with the media, such as limiting information as a choreographed move to bring recalcitrant media outlets into line.

Chapter 8: Discussion and Conclusions

In Canada, virtually no research examines the roles and activities of media relations officers within police services. The purpose of this research was to begin to address this gap by examining the roles and claims-making activities of MROs in the province of Ontario. This study utilized a qualitative-dominant sequential mixed-methods research design. The quantitative data include 19 surveys completed by MROs and corporate communications specialists from municipal police services and the provincial police (OPP). Qualitative data include 26 coded interviews with MROs and corporate communications specialists. The purpose of this chapter is to provide a summary of the key findings and to discuss the implications of these findings for future research. The limitations to this research will also be discussed.

Revisiting *Policing and the Risk Society*

The findings in this study demonstrate that *Policing the Risk Society,* the watershed text written over 20 years ago, remains relevant today. In their seminal work, Ericson and Haggerty (1997) argue that the risk society reorients the organizational police focus, shifting activities, "towards governing problems in terms of probabilities and potential harms" (1997: p. 27). One of Ericson and Haggerty's most notable assertions is that within the risk society, officers are "knowledge workers" influenced by the knowledge work they do and by the risk communications they exchange with multiple institutions.[61] Ericson and Haggerty (1997) contend that police are influenced fundamentally by "the risk logics of external institutions and the classification schemes and knowledge requirements they entail" (Ericson & Haggerty, 1997 p. 17). This perspective suggests institutional demands for knowledge of risk influence directly how police think and act.

---

[61] For example, these institutions include insurance companies, regulatory agencies, financial institutions, health organizations, welfare agencies and motor vehicle agencies.

The findings in this study build on the work of Ericson and Haggerty. I, too, agree that the centrality of risk consciousness in modern society requires the police to play a primary role in defining, compiling and disseminating knowledge about risk (Ericson & Haggerty, 1997) but, like Ferret and Spenlehauer (2009), I reject the idea that police [only] passively respond to external demands for risk knowledge. As Battistelli & Galantino argue, "even a controlled extension of rational action, such as that found in probabilities theories applied to risk, is no longer sufficient to afford an understanding of how social actors and systems perceive and address contemporary risks" (2018, p. 3). Though I acknowledge that reporting demands from other institutions (e.g. the data entry demands placed on patrol officers, the increasing use of software programs like PredPol etc.) play a role in organizing police work, as I will argue throughout this chapter, the risk logics of external institutions and the demands for risk knowledge from these institutions, are no longer the *only* driving force behind how police think and act, rather, what we see today is, their own institutionally defined risk logics also drive this. In other words, police now play a much more active role in establishing "criteria through which institutional participants understand risks and articulate their preferred courses of action" (Ericson & Haggerty, 1997: p.127). What this means is that the police are no longer governed solely by the risk formats of other institutions. Instead, police now play a proactive role in *governing* risk formats (see also, McGovern, 2005). In this sense, the police have regained a sense of control over their role in the risk society. The establishment of formalized media relations units and the increasing professionalization of staff within those units has played (and continues to play) an integral role in rebuilding (and maintaining) this control in the risk society.

It is worth noting that some researchers have questioned the broad-ranging thesis Ericson and Haggerty propose. For example, O'Malley (2015) comments:

[The authors] effectively abandon examination of some of the 'heartland' of traditional policing (violence against the person, property offending, etc.). Yet these are sites where arguably risk-orientations may not have penetrated a resistant police culture. Nor do they examine the domain of crime prevention that PTRS and the governmentality writers focused on as a central site for risk society policing […]. The emerging governmental 'logic' of risk, together with economic pressures, has not so much transformed police, but rather has transformed policing, externalising this most risk-focused police work to other agencies (p.429).

The findings in this study challenge O'Malley's contention that risk orientations have only penetrated certain aspects of policing. I would argue the risk society has indeed reshaped the police, not just policing. As I highlight throughout this chapter, risk logics have penetrated the organizational consciousness of the police and are reflected in organizational ideals and goals and this signifies the transformation of the police (not just policing) we have seen in the risk society.

Structural and Systemic Factors that Characterize Media Units

Research question one asked what organizational and systemic factors impact and shape the nature of claims-making within police organizations. Findings suggest that size of the department does seem to matter. In general, survey data supports research that finds media relations units and the MRO role are becoming increasingly formalized and professionalized (Lee & McGovern, 2014; Leishman & Mason, 2003; Lovell, 2003; Mawby, 2002; Surette, 2001). This trend, however, is particularly more salient in larger police services where civilian members play a significant media relations role as corporate communication specialists. The incorporation of these civilian members reflects the increasingly structured and centralized origins of claims-making within these organizations. Media units in larger police services are

reflective of what Weber (1958) refers to as the 'ideal bureaucracy', given that they possess several of the six key elements that define this type of bureaucracy.[62]

The findings in this study outline some of the organizational features of media units within police services in Ontario, but also shed light on how claims-making processes are formulated. In support of Mawby's (2010) findings, I have argued that the incorporation of corporate communications professionals and the formal designation of these units as 'corporate communications' reflects the strategic nature of claims-making that larger police services engage in. This strategic approach has implications for *how* claims are formulated and *how* they are disseminated. Specifically, this strategic approach to claims-making involves pre-emptively planning what message(s) will be delivered by the police, as well as how these message(s) will be delivered. Like the units themselves, where corporate communications specialists oversee all claims-making activities, claims about crime are also highly strategic. Formal communications are meticulously planned and scripted by corporate communications experts, who possess highly specialized knowledge about claims-making processes. Accordingly, claims-making is strategic communication; a highly centralized process bounded by formal rules and regulations (Weber, 1978).

Strategic communication practices are important for three key reasons. First, they reflect broader strategic efforts by police to engage in proactive communications. Second, strategic communication is also a means through which to attain support for police policies and practices. This speaks directly to the role of MROs as agents of legitimation and the need for police organizations to continually generate public support for police activities and conduct. Finally,

---

[62] These include: (1) Specialization; (2) Hierarchy of offices; (3) Rules & regulations; (4) Technical competence; (5) Impersonality; (6) Formal written communications (Weber, 1978).

strategic communication efforts were often cited by participants to operate as an effective way to deal with unsolicited media inquiries.

Though smaller organizations do not appear to be as professionalized or highly structured in their claims-making activities, the MRO role is becoming formalized. These services emphasized the importance of 'consistency' in what they say and how they say it when communicating with the media and the public in general.

These findings provide the necessary foundation to analyze how police organizations construct crime. The implication of these findings is that there is some alignment in the structure of media units and in the roles and activities of MROs in Ontario police services and internationally (Cook & Sturges, 2009; Lee & McGovern, 2014; Leishman & Mason, 2003; Lovell, 2003; Mawby, 2010; McGovern & Lee, 2010; Motschall & Cao, 2002; Surette, 2001).[63] In general, although police media units in Ontario are not as well-established in terms of professionalization and formalization as those outside of Canada, the data in this study suggests they are heading in that direction.

In light of some of the more recent literature that has looked at MROs, these findings provide some evidence to suggest we are lagging when it comes to formalizing the MRO role (see for example, Lee & McGovern, 2014). The implications of these findings may be of interest to police services. The lack of communications training MROs possess prior to assuming the position, and the lack of training they receive upon assuming the position, raises some concerns about the effectiveness of the role from the police perspective. The media role demands a significantly different skill set than what is required as a uniform officer. In fact, several communications specialists felt the media relations role takes, at the very least, a year for officers

---

[63] Though, arguably, the similarities with international/national police organizations are more evident within larger police services in Ontario.

to become accustomed to. This 'transition period' coupled with the fact that the role appears to be rather transitory in nature, may be problematic for police services. The average length of MRO tenure was between 2-5 years (58% of the sample). From a police perspective, one could argue that officers are transitioning out of the role soon after they become experienced veterans. This creates a cost-benefit problem; police organizations may be wasting valuable resources by investing in training that translates into effective performance in the role for only a short period of time.

As legitimation agents, MROs play a key role in ensuring organizational ideas and goals are practicable. Given the significance of this role, we will likely see police services continue to invest in more training for this position. Logistically and financially, training would be most effective if provided once officers assume the role as it is difficult to predict who will apply for the position (unless they are appointed). Training should extend well beyond the one week course offered at the OPC and should be ongoing. Alternatively, if police organizations are not willing to invest in training, another possibility is to recruit and hire individuals who already possess communications expertise to fill the MRO role (like the civilian corporate communications specialists, for example). Additionally, it is recommended that police services consider making the MRO position a longer term or permanent position. Rendering this position long-term would be advantageous for police departments for several reasons: it would help personalize the role and thus enhance opportunities for building trust and confidence in the police service, it would help justify long-term investments in training and it would provide a high-level of consistency and structure to the role. What is more, if the position is perceived as a long-term investment with the potential for growth through ongoing training, it is more likely to attract suitable candidates with the motivation to excel in the position. In essence, the

responsibilities and demands placed on MROs calls for a higher degree of formalization and professionalization. Notably, these recommendations are in line with the advice outlined by other scholars who call for increasing professionalization of the police, highlighting the importance of differentiating roles within police organizations and relying less on "generalist police officers" (Beare, et al., 2014: p. xii).

In terms of the organizational structure of media relations units, the incorporation of civilian members with extensive communications knowledge and experience appears to be beneficial for police services. As highlighted in Chapter 4, several officers and corporate communications specialists described their relationship with each other as one of balance. Corporate communications specialists possess expertise in communications, which police officers receive little training in. Most of these civilians are former reporters or have extensive experience in communications roles and thus know how to formulate effective and strategic media releases. According to the participants in this study, a strategic approach to claims-making is advantageous for police services for two fundamental reasons. First, a strategic approach to claims-making ensures that organizational ideas, goals and aims are reflected and executed. Second, as highlighted by participants throughout this study, a strategic approach is believed to provide an effective means through which institutional risks can be mitigated.

In terms of future research, police services in other provinces should be examined to see if the same trends in media unit structuring are present, as well as if the same degree of professionalization, formalization and centralization is apparent. A larger scale project would be beneficial to assess the extent to which different media unit structures (e.g., a corporate unit versus a non-corporate unit) influence public perceptions of the police (i.e., trust, legitimacy, confidence), or fear of crime.

Constructing Crime as Legitimation Agents: Risk and Public Responsibilization

The second research question in this study asks how organizational factors inform claims-making processes (in terms of priorities, practices and direction of media relations activities). Findings reveal that despite the fact that larger organizations adopt a more structured/strategic approach to claims-making, this approach does not appear to have a profound impact on how crime is constructed; when it comes to the actual *content* of crime constructs we see little difference between large and small organizations. In fact, findings suggest that risk logics not only inform, but also permeate all claims-making processes MROs engage in regardless of the size of the organization they serve (see also, McGovern, 2005; 2008). As Figure 2 depicts, two fundamental demands (informed by risk logics) shape the claims-making activities MROs engage in as legitimation agents: the need for police to be primary definers of crime and the need for police services to invest in image work to ensure the police are constructed favourably.

Findings also support Lee and McGovern's (2013; 2016) contention that the following three logics explain police engagement with the media: (1) The management of public risks and the responsibilization of the public; (2) The management of the police image or 'image work'; and (3) Attempts to increase confidence or trust in policing and in the legitimacy of the organization. In the context of the present study, I argue the significance of these logics extends well beyond the dynamics of police-media engagement. These three logics reflect broader organizational ideals and goals and as legitimation agents, MROs play a key role in ensuring these logics are practicable. In other words, a significant amount of the work MROs engage in seems to reinforce these logics, particularly when it comes to claims-making activities.

It is important to note that my research differs from Lee and McGovern's (2016) in two fundamental ways. First, these key logics for communication are used to explain why MROs

utilize their own media platforms to engage directly with the public (as opposed to their specific focus on police-media engagement). Second, and perhaps more importantly, while Lee and McGovern (2016) are concerned with understanding what motivates police-media engagement, my concern is to understand how MROs utilize claims-making as a tool, to construct crime in particular ways.

I argue that risk logics inform how MROs construct crime in several fundamental ways. First, participants in this study clearly feel that police are (and should be) the primary definers of crime news. In this sense, MROs feel compelled to control messages about crime. Some strategies MROs utilize to establish control over crime news include proactive claims-making practices, releasing media releases in a timely manner and remaining active in ongoing dialogues concerning crime news. The perception that police are (and should be) the primary definers of crime news is necessary to ensure the first logic (the management of public risks and the responsibilization of the public) is viable. More specifically, as primary definers of crime news, police place themselves in a privileged position to define and manage crime-related risks and to offer advice to encourage the public to take charge of their own safety. What is more, as primary definers of crime news, the police attempt to reinforce the legitimacy of the organization, ensuring logic 3 is addressed.

Second, interview data indicate clearly that crime is constructed within a discourse of risk by placing an emphasis on what *could happen*.[64] This is significant because from a Foucauldian perspective, risk is recognized as a direct extension of regulation; the power of risk "does not reside in the fact that it is happening, more that it *might* be happening" (Adam & van Loon, 2002, p.2; see also, Mythen & Walklate, 2006). In constructing crime within a risk discourse, the

---

[64] In this sense, crime is constructed in such a way, that the risk of victimization is presumed to be equal for everyone, regardless of age, gender, peer group, SES leisure activities etc.

claims-making processes MROs engage in centre on calls to responsibilize the public. In this

sense, police assume a crucial role as 'risk educators'; providing advice on how to mitigate crime

related risk and avoid risky situations. This role, as "risk educators" is one strategy used by

police to generate public trust and confidence in the police, in an effort to reinforce the

legitimacy of the organization in general.

At the organizational level, the claims-making processes MROs engage in reflect the

institutional shift police organizations continue to make, moving away from reactive to proactive

policing practices. However, the significance of this risk discourse (i.e., constructing crime as

risk, focussing on responsibilization) also has broader political implications; such constructs

reflect a particular form of crime governance, characterized by Garland (1996) as the new

'criminologies of everyday life', or more specifically, a 'responsibilization strategy' (p.452).

These strategies attempt to make individuals, "answerable for the risks and uncertainties in their

life […] instead of being brought into line by the direct force of the state, individuals are

encouraged to become self-policing (Mythen & Walklate, 2006, p. 385). Risk constructs are thus

strategic, reflective of the broader institutional aims of the police, to engage the public in crime

control efforts. As Garland explains:

> A number of targets and techniques of persuasion are identified by such analysis. The
> simplest of these, but also the most wide-ranging is the publicity campaign, targeted at
> the public as a whole, or specific groups of potential victims or offenders. These
> campaigns, which involve extensive mass **media advertising** […] aim **to raise
> consciousness, create a sense of duty and thus change practices** […] The recurring
> message of this approach is that the state alone is not and cannot effectively be,
> responsible for preventing and controlling crime (1996, pp. 452-453, emphasis added).

To this end, the MRO plays an active role in generating this rethinking of social control; attempts

to monopolize crime control efforts are perceived to have failed. The roles and activities of

MROs therefore embody a new way to construct crime and policing. The claims-making

processes MROs engage in characterize a broader effort by policing organizations to scale down expectations, redefine the police aims and alter criteria by which failure and success are judged; this of course aligns with responsibilization strategies, police are quick to acknowledge the limitations they face in controlling crime (Garland, 1996, p. 458).

The responsibilization strategy is one way to exercise power, a form of governance-at-a-distance, "with its own forms of knowledge, its own objectives, its own techniques and apparatuses" which serves to extend the police capacity for action and influence (Garland, 1996, p. 454). Indeed, such strategies (as noted above) also provide an efficient means to contend with issues of legitimacy. As Habermas (1973) explains:

> The state can avoid legitimation problems to the extent that it can manage to make the administrative system independent of the formation of legitimating will. To that end, it can, say, separate expressive symbols (which create a universal willingness to follow) from the instrumental functions of the administration. Well known strategies of this sort are: the personalizing of objective issues, the symbolic use of inquires, expert opinions, legal incantations etc. (p. 657)

In constructing crime as risk, police engage in this very process Habermas outlines. Police demarcate expressive symbols (personalizing crime related risk; providing expert advice on risk and risk management strategies) from instrumental functions of the organization (law enforcement and order maintenance).[65] As I explain in Chapter 6, when crime is defined as risk, public safety is personalized, because responsibilisation strategies are encouraged. The crime problem is thus no longer exclusively a police problem, but rather, a collective problem to be dealt with at the institutional (police organizations) and individual levels. Nonetheless, even in this context, the role of police remains paramount because when they position themselves as primary definers of crime, they also place themselves in a position to circulate expert opinions about risk. In

---

[65] See Wilson (1968)

defining the problems police thus also define the solutions to those problems. In this sense, police come to own the problem (Best, 1987; Loseke, 2003). As such, the public is led to believe that police not only have the expertise to define risk, but also that the police are expert advisors who can provide strategies to contend with the problems as they have defined them.

Figure 2: Conceptual Map of Findings (RQ1 & RQ2)
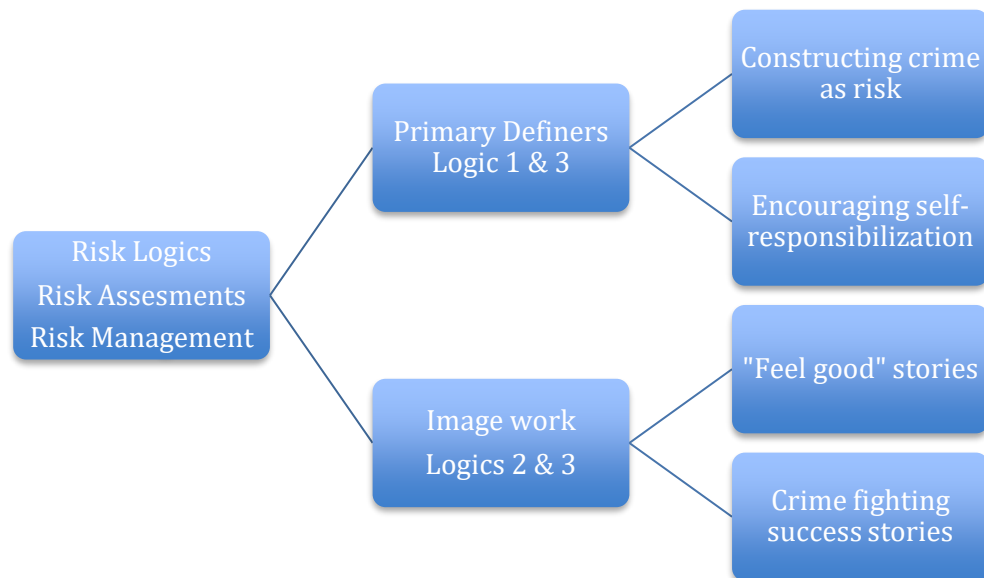
Implications

The police role as primary definers of crime news and the tendency to define crime in the context of risk discourses, has implications for the ways in which we understand and address crime. In the context of risk, crime is not viewed as an aberrant social condition but rather, a "risk to be calculated, or accident to be avoided" (Garland, 1996 p. 451). The problem, however, is that the very notion of risk is conceptually complex, with little consensus in the literature about how to define it (Battistelli & Galantino, 2018). According to Beck (1996), risk is a real byproduct of modernity. Yet, O'Malley (2009) views risk more as a way of thinking and acting on problems (e.g. governmentality). Though some scholars contend that risk is an objective condition that can

be measured with statistical accuracy (see for example, Zender, 2009; Rosa, 2010), others argue that risk is not inherently objective, it "does not exist out there independent of our minds and cultures, waiting to be measured", rather, the very nature of risk is subjective, something that has been constituted to help us cope with the uncertainties of life (Slovic & Weber, 2002 p.5). In this sense, all aspects in the process of defining and assessing risk are subjective, "from the initial structuring of a risk problem to deciding which endpoints or consequences to include […]" (Slovic & Weber, 2002 p.5). As primary definers of crime news and risk educators police thus play a fundamental role in shaping our views of crime related risk, as well as what we perceive to be the most effective course of action to address those risks.

One unintended consequence of constructing crime in terms of risk, is that crime is seemingly normalized, as it is perceived to be widespread; an 'unintended by-product' of everyday life (Garland, 1996). As highlighted throughout this thesis, MROs tend to construct crime in the context of risk discourses, with a specific focus on mobilizing the public to take steps to manage their own safety. This emphasis fails to delimit the likelihood of its occurrence and the potential for victimization. In other words, when crime is conceived as "continuous with normal social interaction and explicable by reference to motivational patterns" (Garland, 1996 p. 450), the potential risk of victimization is perceived to have no boundaries. The claims-making processes MROs engage in tend highlight the potential that something *could happen*, while failing to acknowledge the risk of something *not happening*. Further, in many cases, constructing crime in terms of risk brings light to a host of minor incivilities and as Kelling and Wilson (1982) have found, minor incivilities inspire public fear.

The implications of constructing crime in this way are worth noting. Research has long shown that public perceptions of crime are rather disproportionate to the realities of crime;

144

regardless of whether crime levels are increasing, decreasing or stable, crime is most often perceived to be on the rise (Brennan, 2011; Roberts and Grossman, 2016). Consequently, fear of crime remains a significant social problem (Clemente & Kleiman, 1976; Ferraro, 1995; Hale, 1996; McGovern, 2008). The problem of 'fear of crime' then, is a problem for police services, because such fears often lead people to believe that the system has failed to prevent crime (Robertson & Grossman, 2016). Consequently, public confidence and trust in institutions like the police is undermined. This assumption, in conjunction with the "normality of high crime rates" is problematic for police services not only because it undermines legitimacy, but also because it creates "problems of overload" (Garland, 1996 p. 455). This also reflects the limits of the sovereign state as delineated by Garland (1996). As state agents, police services face a quandary, cognizant of the need to "withdraw or at least qualify their claim to be the primary and effective providers of security and crime control", the police also understand the political implications of this are potentially "disastrous" (Garland, 1996, p. 449). This state of affairs reflects a considerable predicament police services must contend with; crime must be constructed so that the police are deemed to be necessary (i.e., they must not be "too effective" in their efforts to combat crime), while at the same time, to attain public trust and confidence, they must ensure that their crime fighting efforts are perceived as highly effective (i.e., they need to show they are 'keeping a lid' on things). The tendency for MROs to focus claims-making efforts on responsibilization of the public provides an effective way for police to manage this predicament. As risk educators, MROs encourage self-responsibilization measures thereby offloading responsibility to the public to take charge of their own security. Indeed, participants in this study were candid about the fact that the police alone cannot be responsible for security provision and crime prevention. Public responsibilitization was considered one of the most important claims-

making activities that MROs engaged in. To address perceived shortcomings in security provision, police emphasize their role as primary definers of crime and engage in proactive image work. Such efforts provide one avenue through which police can (presumably) secure their role as legitimate and efficient crime fighters.

It should also be recognized that the police role as primary definers of crime and as risk educators is well aligned with the broader role of the police as agents of civic governance, a role in which the police are not "limited to techniques of security oriented to the prevention and detection of crime"; rather, the police mandate is to "ensure order, security and welfare of the general condition of stability and prosperity" (Loader & Walker, 2001 p. 14). In this context, police engage in myriad activities, most of which do not invoke the use of legitimate force (Loader & Walker, 2001). Policing then, may be conceived as:

> […] one of a number of 'translation mechanisims' that enable government to rule 'at a distance' (Shearing, 1996) through the freedom of self-calculating individuals and communities; its implication in assorted programmes and strategies of rule representing one significant means by which the conduct of 'free' agents is aligned with the objectives of authorities wishing to govern (Loader & Walker, 2001 p. 17).

To some extent, as agents of civic governance the police mandate is becoming more expansive which is problematic on two grounds. The first issue is that this creates problems of legitimacy for the police, as Habermas (1973) has commented, as state activity expands, the need for legitimation increases.[66] The second issue is a public one. In controlling definitions of risk, police also control what solutions seem feasible to address problems as they are defined. In this sense, police possess a significant degree of power to determine the safest, or best solutions to address the conditions they define as problematic (Lee & McGovern, 2014; Slovic, 1999). Further, the emphasis placed on responsibilizing the public focuses on the conduct of potential

---

[66] Please note, the issue of police legitimacy is discussed throughout this chapter.

146

victims (rather than individual offenders), with the aim of modifying "everyday routines of social and economic life by limiting the supply of opportunities, shifting risks, redistributing costs and creating disincentives" (Garland, 1996 p. 451). Controls are thus embedded in frameworks of everyday life (Garland, 1996). According to Garland (1996), despite the fact that responsibilization strategies are a form of 'governance-at-a-distance' such initiatives give the state even more power to govern crime (p. 454). As Garland explains: "Where the state once targeted the deviant for intensive transformative action, it now aims to bring about marginal but effective changes in the norms, routines and the consciousness of everyone" (1996 p. 454).

Responsibilization however, is only possible if the public buys into the idea- we must be willing and able to take charge of our own safety. It is also important to recognize that any buy-in requires the public to trust police constructions of crime and suggested strategies to protect themselves from crime. One significant problem with responsibilitization strategies concerns the unequal provision and distribution of security (Garland, 1996). Discrepancies in security provision and distribution are likely when crime prevention efforts are shifted from the state to non-state agencies. This can lead to the commodification of security and an 'inequtiable patchwork of provision' (Loader and Walker, 2001, p. 13; see also, Garland, 1996). This is problematic given that low-income communities typically possess the highest crime rates but lack the resources necessary to purchase security, or to engage in measures to protect themselves. These communities may also lack the "flexibility to adapt their routines or organize effectively against crime" (Garland, 1996 p.463).

Image Work: Legitimacy, Trust, Accountability and the Police Image

Research question 2(b) asked how police organizations construct and manage their public image. The interview and survey data in this study illuminate the fact that image management is

perceived as a crucial aspect of the MRO role, offering further support to Lee and McGovern's (2013) contention that media officers engage in proactive media work as a means of enhancing perceptions of legitimacy, trust and accountability. Organizational and systemic factors did not appear to have a profound influence on how the police image was constructed. To a large extent, the image work MROs engage in reflects a risk management strategy. Many of the participants expressed an awareness of the ever-present threat of negative media coverage, as well as the tendency for media outlets to focus on negative as opposed to positive police stories. Proactive image work is one-way police organizations mitigate these risks.

Two different forms of proactive claims-making are utilized to foster positive images of the police. The first strategy generates positive images of the police through 'feel good stories'. These stories focus on 'noble activities' of the everyday police officer. Stories of this nature are effective because they play on widely accepted notions of morality (Best, 1987: Loseke, 2003).[67] The second image management strategy MROs discussed was formulating and distributing stories that emphasize crime-fighting successes. In doing so, the police organization is promoted, while its existence is justified. Focussing on crime fighting successes ensures the police are viewed as effective crime fighters capable of detecting and reducing crime and disorder within their communities. This particular strategy is not new, as Manning (1997) has argued; policing is founded on appearances rather than reality. According to Manning, police manage appearances through myths and rituals to depict a particular image of police as crime fighters. Manning (1997) argues further that, in reality, police have little impact on crime; thus, police must expend considerable effort to ensure they are seen to be doing something about crime. The emphasis on crime fighting successes may also be a direct reflection of more recent demand for police to

---

[67] In this sense I am referring to behavior(s) observed to be inherently 'good' or 'right'. In this context, police are often observed to be going out of their way.

provide adequate customer service (Lee & McGovern, 2014). As many of the officers in this study explained, policing is an expensive service, as such, taxpayers want to know they are "getting something out of" this expense.

In constructing positive policing stories MROs play a significant role in ensuring that the organization is viewed as effective, legitimate and trustworthy (this addresses logic 3). These activities are a direct reflection of how, as legitimation agents, the activities and claims-making activities of MROs ensure that the organizational ideals and goals of the police services they serve are fulfilled.

Implications

The research findings in this study highlight the role of MROs as legitimation agents, as well as the significance of legitimacy for police organizations. As such, it is important to consider why legitimacy is so important and to recognize what social factors might threaten police legitimacy today. Legitimacy signifies a "belief that the *police are entitled to call upon the public to* follow the law and *help combat crime*" (Tyler, 2004 pp. 86-87, emphasis added; Tyler & Fagan, 2008). When members of the public perceive the police as legitimate, they consent to police authority to dictate their behaviour and are thus more likely to align their behaviour to the principles of external authority (Tyler, 1990). Legitimacy and responsibilization strategies thus, go hand-in-hand; demands for the public to practice self responsibilization are likely to be embraced only if the police are perceived as legitimate. In turn, police are more likely to be effective in both responding to and preventing crime and disorder (Beare et al., 2014). Legitimacy deficits are thus problematic not only for police services, but also for society in general.

The need for legitimacy is even more important for police services given increasing growth in private security markets, both at the local and national level, which continue to

undermine the monopoly over crime control that police once possessed (Loader and Walker, 2001; Rigakos, 2002; Shearing, 1992). Another area of concern, as many officers in this study acknowledge, is related to the rise of the "citizen journalist". The 'citizen journalist' brings to light incidences of police misconduct (that may have otherwise gone undetected) providing ample opportunities to attest the transparency and accountability of police organizations (Framer & Sun, 2016; Greer & McLaughlin, 2010; Mohler, 2017). As evidenced in the case of Robert Dziekanski, who died in 2007 after a dispute with the RCMP in a Vancouver airport, footage from spectators can be used to verify or undermine the police record of an event (Beare et al., 2014). Now, more than ever before, police activities are subject to public surveillance which has led to heightened demands for reforms to police practices. For example, in recent years, there have been increasing demands for uniform officers to be equipped with body-worn cameras (Roberts and Grossman, 2016; Griffiths, 2019). Thus, the case for legitimacy has never been greater.

In recent years, several high-profile cases of police misconduct, in both the US and Canada, have contributed to public outrage over police practices, resulting in declining confidence and trust in the police and widespread social movements, like 'Black Lives Matter' (Beare et al., 2014; Weitzer, 2015). Previous research suggests that media coverage of highly publicized, contentious police-citizen interactions erodes public confidence immediately following the event, but over the longer term, public confidence tends to return to previous levels (Weitzer 2002). As Mohler (2017) highlights, research has yet to examine the implications of the citizen journalism trend on public perceptions of police legitimacy. Mohler's (2017) quantitative study reveals that the type of police footage (police acting in ways that were positive, negative, or neutral) shown to participants has a significant influence on perceptions. Negative videos were

found to have the largest influence, contributing to significantly decreased perceptions of police legitimacy. On the other hand, positive and neutral videos were found to increase perceptions of legitimacy. Thus, the importance of the MRO role for police services cannot be understated. Police services must remain cognizant of the fact that public perceptions of legitimacy are being continually challenged. As noted by Beare et al., (2014), surveys over the past decade show that public confidence in Canadian police is declining. Future research should examine the extent to which public perceptions of police legitimacy are influenced by positive policing stories (particularly when they are released directly from the police service). Another possible direction for future research is to examine the specific type of positive stories most likely to elicit public confidence and trust (i.e., feel good stories vs. positive police-citizen interaction stories, stories of successful arrests etc.).

MROs & the Mass Media: Understanding the Relationship

Research question three asked how MROs perceive their relationship with the mass media. For years, research has characterized the police-media relationship as a complex interdependent loop (Chinball, 1975; Lovell, 2003; Mawby, 2002; Reiner, 2008). The findings from this study support this, revealing that while respondents feel they share rather positive relationships with various media members, they also express negative views of the media. These negative views stem from the fact that police and the media have contradictory objectives when it comes to reporting crime news. In general, frequency of contact plays a key role in cultivating positive working relationships between MROs and media members, as most MROs expressed sharing relatively close and trusting working relationships with various local news outlets.

The findings from this research also support literature which finds that police-media relationships can be contentious (Chermak & Weiss, 2005; Chinball, 1975; Mawby, 2002). The

negative views expressed by MROs about the media centered on two key themes. First, there was a general sentiment that many members of the media hold unrealistic expectations of the police when it comes to reporting crime news. MROs in this study feel that constant pressure, for details about events as they unfold is problematic as it threatens to undermine investigative processes. Second, there was a general recognition that, even with mutual trust established between the two parties, any interaction with the media posed some degree of risk for the organization; therefore, trust between the police and media is always tenuous. This perception is reflected in the way that MROs describe their interactions with the media; no-win situations that often leave them feeling vulnerable. These findings offer support to the growing body of literature which finds that police do not always dominate the police-media relationship (Lovell, 2003; Huey & Broll, 2012; Schulenberg & Chenier, 2014).

The findings of this research also contribute to the literature by providing an in-depth analysis of the important role MROs play in managing the police-media relationship. A common theme throughout the interviews centered on the importance MROs attribute to developing and maintaining positive relationships with the media (see also Mawby, 2010). The desire to build and maintain positive relations with the media is fueled largely by the need to harness the media to their advantage to mitigate perceived institutional risks. For example, several MROs explained how positive relationships with media members and outlets can help deter the media's propensity to publish news that paints the police negatively.

The MROs in this study also describe reciprocity as a key function of relationship building with the media. In this sense, police recognize that the relationship involves a give-and-take mentality to ensure that the interests of both parties are met. This transactional logic is key to facilitate trust in the police on behalf of the media. This is advantageous for the police because

when the media trust police sources, they become the 'go to' sources for information, which helps sustain their role as primary definers of crime.

The issue of control in police-media relations is complex. Several researchers argue that the police engage in concerted efforts to control the news media (Chermak, 1995; Chinball, 1981; Ericson, 1989; Mawby, 2010; Lee & McGovern, 2014). The findings in the present study support this, highlighting the important role MROs play as information gatekeepers. Media officers must constantly balance the need for secrecy and publicity and they recognize their role as the central conduit of information. The important role MROs play in controlling what information is shared, when it is shared and how it is shared cannot be understated. Information control is one way police organizations attempt to assume some control over the media. To some extent, as discussed in Chapter 7, information control helps to deter media outlets from generating negative stories about the police, thus assuaging perceived institutional risks.

Finally, the findings from this research also shed light on the fact that police recognize that although media interests do not align well with police interests, the media still play a necessary role in the dissemination of important news. According to the MROs interviewed, the police need the media given their ability to circulate information widely.

Implications

The MRO role as legitimation agents is important for police efforts to maintain legitimacy in relationships with the media. Findings highlight the important role MROs play in cultivating and maintaining positive and productive relationships with media members and outlets. Interview data indicate that for the police, the relationship with the media must be functional for three fundamental reasons: to safeguard against institutional risks; to maintain some semblance of control over what, when and how messages are delivered to the public; and to ensure important

public safety messages are distributed to a wider audience than the police can reach on their own. As such, there are three key recommendations police services might consider to ensure positive and effective relationships are formed between their services and the media. First, hiring practices must recognize the important role MROs play in relationship building and thus should emphasize this as a key responsibility. Suitable candidates must be open to establishing positive working relationships and should be screened to ensure they do not harbour negative or antagonistic views of the media, as such beliefs will be detrimental to these relationships. This recommendation is particularly important given that research has long documented how the police culture cultivates an 'us versus them' mentality that can undermine relationships with those external to the police organization (Nhan, 2014). Second, police organizations would be wise to invest in on-going training for MROs that focuses specifically on relationship building skills. As highlighted throughout this research, the police-media relationship is complex and thus formal training is crucial to help MROs manage this relationship effectively. Finally, given that proximity and frequency of contact play a key role in building positive and trusting relationships between the police and media, it is recommended, as noted earlier in this chapter, that police services consider making the MRO position a longer term or permanent position thereby enhancing opportunities to build positive relationships shaped by reciprocity and trust. Many MROs highlighted the importance of being in the role longer-term in order to build effective relationships.

Despite the fact that this research focuses on the roles and activities of MROs, given that the media make-up the other half of this relationship, it would be shortsighted to ignore implications on the other side. Findings highlight the perception, among the officers in this study, that the media play a watchdog role over the police (see also, Cooke & Sturges, 2009;

Griffiths, 2019; Mawby, 2002; Lovell, 2003; Roberts and Grossman, 2016). As highlighted, the MROs in this study recognize how the media can leave them feeling vulnerable. Arguably, the media play a key role in ensuring policing services remain legitimate, transparent and accountable to the public they serve. To gain a more holistic understanding of the police-media relationship, future research should expand on the work of Lee and McGovern (2014) and examine how members of the media construct and navigate relationships with MROs, in a Canadian context.

Limitations

As with any research endeavour, limitations must be acknowledged. The first limitation of this study concerns the survey's small sample size. The sample frame identified at least 74 police services, this translates into a response rate of only about 23%. It is important to re-emphasize that because the police are such a guarded organization, it is difficult to gain access for research purposes. In light of this consideration, this sample size is reasonable; however, this clearly has implications for the representativeness and generalizability of the data, from the sample to the larger population of MROs. Given that the research is QUAL dominant, the issue of representativeness is not a significant concern; the aim was to gain an in-depth understanding of the roles and claims-making activities of media relations officers. Nonetheless, future research should examine the organizational and systemic factors that influence the claims-making practices of MROs, ideally, with a larger sample size.

A second limitation worth noting is the absence of the RCMP from this research. Although the decision was made at the outset, for practical and logistical reasons, to exclude the RCMP, this limits our understanding of the claims-making processes of MROs. As a federal organization, media relations units within the RCMP likely possess structural differences that

should be examined, to gain a holistic understanding of how structural factors might influence claims-making processes. In fact, in discussions with members of the OPP, I learned that the RCMP possess highly formalized and professionalized media relations units resulting in highly structured claims-making activities.[68] Future research should examine media units within the RCMP and the claims-making activities of MROs within these units. Given that the RCMP have recently been subject to extensive public criticism as a result of several high-profile cases of sexual harassment and discrimination, it would be interesting to examine their image management strategies to combat negative press resulting from these incidents.[69]

A third limitation to this research concerns the fact the sample only includes police services from the province of Ontario. Although this decision was strategic, it limits our understanding of the structure of media units as well as the claims-making processes of MROs in other provinces. Future research should examine media activities in police services across Canada.

Finally, this research examines the issue of claims-making from only one perspective, that of the police. As such, this study does not look directly at how the public, as consumers of police claims, understand crime or perceive the police. Future research should examine how particular claims-making strategies influence public understandings of crime, as well as their perceptions of police legitimacy. For example, research should look at the extent to which highly structured/strategic claims-making influence public trust in the police or fear of crime. This type

---

[68] The OPP officers I interviewed, who dealt with the RCMP with some frequency, also informed me that the RCMP are extremely secretive about their media relations practices. As one officer put it, "You don't have a hope in hell of getting them to talk. I can't even convince them to discuss their strategies and we're the freaking OPP".
[69] See for example, https://globalnews.ca/news/3988233/rcmp-sexual-harassment-claims-rise/

of research would help police organizations gain a better understanding as to what claims-making strategies are most effective in eliciting public confidence and trust.

Conclusion

As primary claims-makers within the policing organization, MROs play a fundamental role in informing the media and public about crime, social problems and agency operations while attempting to shape directly how the organization and its members are constructed in popular discourse (Cook & Sturges, 2009; Mawby, 2010; Motschall & Cao, 2002; Lee & McGovern, 2014; McGovern, 2008). This study contributes to the literature, by examining the roles and claims-making activities of MROs within a Canadian context. A QUAL-dominant sequential mixed-methods research design utilizing survey and interview data reveals a number of key findings. First, the MROs in this study argue that police are (and should be) primary definers of crime news. This perception has direct implications for how police communicate crime news with the public. One of the most significant arguments made throughout this study is that as legitimation agents, media officers play a vital role in ensuring that the fundamental organizational ideas and goals police service's value and pursue are practicable. Risk ideology not only shapes these organizational goals, but it also influences how MROs perform their role. Specifically, risk management has a significant influence on how MROs report on crime. In communicating crime and social problems directly to the public, police strive to inform the public of the risk(s) they face, but also, to educate the public in their role as risk managers and to encourage them to take measures to mitigate those risks. Data also reveal that MROs play a significant role in promoting positive images of the organization. Finally, I have also highlighted that MROs play a vital role in cultivating and sustaining positive and productive relationships with the media. This research addresses the 'tip of the iceberg' when it comes to police

157

communication activities. As media relation units continue to expand becoming more formalized and professionalized and as claims-making processes become more structured and strategic in nature, more research is necessary to understand these processes and how they influence public perceptions of crime and the police.

References

Abrahamson, M. (1983). *Social research methods.* Englewood, Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall.

Adam, B., & van Loon, J. (2000). Repositioning risk: The challenge for social theory. In B. Adam, U. Beck & J. van Loon (Eds.), *The Risk Society and Beyond*. London: Sage.

Anderson, L., & Brown, M. (2010). Expanding horizons of risk in criminology. *Sociology Compass*, *4*, 544-554.

Battistelli, F., & Galantion, M.G. (2018). Dangers, risks and threats: An alternative conceptualization of the catch-all concept of risk. *Current Sociology,* 1-15.

Beare, M., Dupont, B., Duxbury, L., Huey, L., Mackenzie, I., Murphy, C., Neyroud, P., Roach, K., Shearing, C., Stephens, D., & Waller, I. (2014). Policing Canada in the 21st century: New policing for new challenges. Ottawa (ON): The expert panel on the future of Canadian policing models, Council of Canadian Academies.

Berg, B.L. (2009). *Qualitative research methods for the social sciences (7th ed.*), Boston, M.A.: Allyn and Bacon.

Berger, P., & Luckmann, T. (1966). *The social construction of reality: A treatise in the sociology of knowledge.* London, UK: Penguin Books.

Best, J. (1987). Rhetoric in claims-making: Constructing the missing children problem. *Social Problems,* 34, 101-121.

Best, J. (1989). *Images of issues: Typifying contemporary social problems.* New York, NY: Walter de Gruyter.

Best, J. (1993). But seriously folks: The limitations of the strict constructionist interpretation. *Social Problems*, 129-145.

Bittner E. (1970). The functions of the police in a modern society, Washington, DCUS Government Printing Office.

Blumer, H. (1970). Social problems as collective behaviour. *Social Problems 18*, 298-306.

Blumer, H. (1969). *Symbolic interactionism: Perspective and method.* Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.

Bolger, J.B. (1983). Marketing techniques and media relations. *Police Chief*, *45*, 36-41.

Bott, E. (2010). Favourites and others: Reflexivity and the shaping of subjectivities and data in qualitative research. *Qualitative Research, 10,* 159-173.

Boyle, P. & Haggerty, K.D. (2012). Planning for the worst: Risk, uncertainty, and the Olympic games. *British Journal of Sociology, 63*, 241-259.

Brennan, S. (2011). Canadians perceptions of personal safety and crime. *Statistics Canada, Juristat, 31(1).* Retrieved, April, 19 2018 https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/pub/85-002-x/2011001/article/11577-eng.pdf

Chan, W. & Rigakos, G.S. (2002). Risk, crime and gender. *British Journal of Criminology*, *42,* 743–61.

Charmaz, K. (2006). *Constructing grounded theory: A practical guide through qualitative analysis*. California, USA: Sage Publications Inc.

Cheatham, R.T., & Erickson, K.V. (1984). *The police officer's guide to better communication*. Glenview, IL: Scott, Foresman.

Chermak, S. (1995). Image Control: How police affect the presentation of crime news. *American Journal of Police,* 14, 21-43.

Chermak, S., & Weiss, A. (2005). Maintaining legitimacy using external communication strategies: An analysis of police-media relations'. *Journal of Criminal Justice, 33*, 501-512.

Chibnall, S., (1975). The police and the press. In J. Brown and G. Howes, (Eds.), *The police and the community* (pp. 67-81). Farnborough, UK: Saxon House.

Chibnall, S., (1977). *Law-and-order news: An analysis of crime reporting in the British Press*. London: Tavistock.

Chibnall, S., (1981). The production of knowledge by crime reporters. In S. Cohen & J. Young (Eds.), *The manufacture of news. Deviance, social problems and the mass media* (2nd ed.) (pp. 75-97). London: Constable.

Clemente, F., & Kleiman, M.B. (1976). Fear of crime among the aged. *Gerontology,* 16, 207-210.

Conser, J.A. (1980). A literary review of the police subculture: Its characteristics, impact and policy implications. *Police Studies,* 2(4), 46-54.

Cooke, L., & Sturges, P. (2009). Police and media relations in an era of freedom of information. *Policing & Society, 19*, 406-424.

Corbin, J., & Strauss, A. (2007). *Basics of qualitative research: Techniques and procedures for developing grounded theory* (3rd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Crandon, G.L. and Dunne, S. (1997). Symbiosis or vasselage? The media and the law enforcers- the case of Avon and Somerset police. *Policing and Society*, *8*, 77-91.

Creswell, J.W. (2009). *Research design: Qualitative, quantitative and mixed methods Approaches* (3rd ed.). Thousand Oaks, C.A: Sage Publications.

Cutlip, S.M., Center, A.H., and Broom, G.M. (2000). *Effective public relations*. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall.

Denzin, N.K., & Lincoln, Y.S. (2000). Introduction: The discipline and practice of qualitative research. In N.K. Denzin, and Y.S. Lincoln (Ed.), *Handbook of Qualitative Research* (pp. 1-29). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

Diaz-Bone, R., Buhrmann, A.D., Gutiérrez Rodríguez, E., Schneider, W., Kendall, G., & Tirado, F. (2007). The Field of Foucaultian Discourse Analysis: Structures, Developments and Perspectives. *Forum: Qualitative Social Research,* 8, Retrieved, August, 8 2018 from http://www.qualitative-research.net/index.php/fqs/article/view/234/517

Durkheim, E., (1984). The division of labour in Society. Free Press, New York, NY: Macmillan Publishers Ltd.

Ericson, R.V. (1989). Patrolling the facts: Secrecy and publicity in police work. *British Journal of Sociology,* 40, 205-226.

Ericson, R.V. (1982). *Reproducing Order: A study of police patrol work.* Toronto, Canada: University Of Toronto Press.

Ericson R.V. & Haggerty, K.D. (1997). *Policing the risk society*. Toronto, Canada: University of Toronto Press Incorporated.

Ericson, R.V., Baranek, P., & Chan, J. (1991). *Representing order: Crime, law, and justice in the news media*. Toronto, Canada: University of Toronto Press.

Ericson, R.V., Baranek, P., & Chan, J. (1989). *Negotiating control: A study of news sources*. Toronto, Canada: University of Toronto Press.

Farmer, A.K., & Sun, I.Y. (2016). Citizen journalism and police legitimacy: Does recording the police make a difference? In M. Deflem (Ed.), *The politics of policing: Between force and legitimacy* (pp. 239-256). South Carolina: Emerald Insight publications.

Ferraro, K.F. (1995). Fear of crime: Interpreting victimization risk. Albany, NY: State University of New York Press.

Ferret, J. & Spenlehauer, V. (2009). Does policing the risk society hold the road risk. *British Journal of Criminology*, 49, 150–164.

Filak, V.F., & Pritchard, R.S. (2007). News (un)scripted: An analysis of support and blame in the wake of two fatal shootings. *Journalism,* 8(1), 66–82.

Fishman, M. (1980). *Manufacturing the news.* Austin, TX: University of Texas Press.

Farmer, A.K., & Sun, I.Y. (2016). Citizen Journalism and Police Legitimacy: Does Recording the Police Make a Differnece? *Sociology of crime, law and Deviance,* 21, 239-270.

Fuller, R.C., & Myers, R.M. (1941). The natural history of a social problem. *American Sociological Review,* 6, 320-329.

Garland, D. (1996). The limits of the Sovereign state: Strategies of crime control in contemporary society. *The British Journal of Criminology,* 36, 445-471.

Garland, D. (2001). *The culture of control: Crime and social order in contemporary society.* Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Gilbert, L.S. (2002). Going the distance: Closeness in qualitative data analysis software. *International Journal of Social Research Methodology, 5,* 215-228.

Glaser, B., & Strauss, A. (1967). *The discovery of grounded theory.* Chicago, IL: Aldine.

Glassner, B. (2000). *The culture of fear: Why Americans are afraid of the wrong things.* Delaware, NY: Aldine de Gruyter.

Goffman, E. (1999). *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life.* Volume 174 of Anchor books. Peter Smith, Publisher, Incorporated.

Goldstein, H. (1979). Improving policing: A problem-oriented approach. *Crime & Delinquency,* 25, 236-258.

Grabosky, P. & Wilson, P. (1989). *Journalism and justice: How crime is reported.* Leichhardt, AUS: Pluto Press.

Griffiths, C.T. (2015). *Canadian criminal justice a primer.* Toronto, ON: Nelson Education Ltd.

Grbich, C. (2009). *Qualitative data analysis: An introduction.* Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

Greer, C., & McLaughlin, E. (2010). We predict a riot?: Public order policing, new
        media environments and the rise of the citizen journalist. *British Journal of
        Criminology,* 50, 1041-1059.

E.G. Guba (1981), Criteria for assessing the trustworthiness of naturalistic inquiries,
        Educational Communication and Technology, 29, 75–91.

Gurney, J.N. (1991). Female researchers in male-dominated settings. In M. Pogrebin (Ed.),
        Qualitative Approaches to Criminal Justice: Perspectives from the Field (pp. 377-
        382). London: Sage Publications.

Gusfield, J.R. (1981). *Culture of public problems: Drinking driving and the symbolic order*.
        Chicago, IL: The University of Chicago Press.

Habermas, J. (1973). What does a crisis mean today? Legitimation problems in late capitalism.
        Social Research, 40, 643-667.

Hale, C. (1996). Fear of Crime: A Review of the Literature. *International Review of Victimology*,
        4, 79–150.

Halton Police Service. (2017, September 20). Annual run to remember in honour of fallen Peace
        Officers. Retrieved, September 30 2017, from
        https://www.haltonpolice.ca/about/media/media_release_rss.php

Hamilton Police Service. (2017, September 20). Constable Beck wins 2017 excellence in
        performance award. Retrieved September 30 2017, from
        https://hamiltonpolice.on.ca/community/news/2017/09/constable-beck-wins-2017-
        excellence-performance-award

Herbert, S. (1998). Police culture reconsidered. *Criminology, 36*, 343-369.

Hermanowicz, J.C. (2002). The great interview: 25 strategies for studying people in bed.
        Qualitative Sociology, *25*, 479-499.

Hesse-Biber, S.N. & Leavy, P. (2004). *Approaches to qualitative research: A reader on
        theory and practice.* Oxford, New York: University Press.

Hilgartner, S., & Bosk, C.L. (1988). The rise and fall of social problems: A public arenas
        model. *The American Journal of Sociology,* 94, 53-78.

Holsti, O.R. (1968). Content analysis. In G. Lindzey & E. Aaronson (Eds.), *The handbook
        of social psychology (2nd ed*., vol. II) (pp. 596-692). Reading, MA: Addison-
        Wesley.

Hong, J. (2016). Pollster finds rapid drop in public trust in police. *Toronto Star.* Retrieved September 30 2018, from: https://www.thestar.com/news/crime/2016/01/31/pollster-finds-rapid-drop-in-public-trust-in-police.html

Huey, L., & Broll, R. (2012). 'All it takes is one TV show to ruin it': A police perspective on police-media relations in the era of expanding prime time crime markets. *Policing & Society,* 22, 384-396.

Iacobucci, F. (2014). *Police encounters with people in crisis*. An independent review conducted for Chief of Police William Blair, Toronto Police Service.

International Association of Chiefs of Police (2014). Retrieved August 8 2014, from http://www.theiacp.org.

Ibarra, P., & Kitsuse, J. (1993). Vernacular constituents of moral discourse: An interactionist proposal for the study of social problems. In G. Miller and J.A. Holstein (Eds.), *Constructionist Controversies: Issues in Social Problems Theory* (pp. 21-54). Hawthorne, NY: Aldine de Gruyter.

Jenkins, P. (1995). Using murder: The social construction of serial homicide. *Journal of Symbolic Interaction,* 18, 221–223.

Johnston, L. (2003). From 'pluralisation' to 'the police extended family': Discourses on the governance of community policing in Britain, *International Journal of the Sociology of Law,* 31, 185-204.

Kelling, G.L., & Wilson, J.Q. (1982). Broken windows: The police and neighborhood safety. *Atlantic Monthly,* 249(3), 29-38.

King, N. & Horrocks, C. (2010). *Interviews in qualitative research.* London: Sage Publications.

Kingston Police Service. (2017, September 19). Calls for service from September 19, 2017. Retrieved, September 26 2017, from https://www.kingstonpolice.ca/news-community/news-releases/

Klenke, K. (2008). *Qualitative research in the study of leadership.* Bingley, WA, UK: Emerald Group Publishing.

Kudla, D. & Parnaby, P. (2018). To serve and to tweet: An examination of police-related twitter activity in Toronto. *Social Media & Society,* 1-13.

Lee, M., & McGovern, A. (2013). Force to sell: Policing the image and manufacturing public confidence. *Policing & Society,* 23, 103-124.

164

Lee, M., & McGovern, A. (2014). *Policing and media: Public relations, simulations and communications*. London: Routledge.

Lee, M., & McGovern, A. (2016). Logics of risk: police communications in an age of uncertainty, *Journal of Risk Research*, 19, 1291-1302

Leishman, F. and Mason, P., (2003). *Policing and the media: Facts fictions and factions*. Cullompton, UK: Willan.

Lieberman, J.D., Koetzle, D., & Sakiyama, M. (2013). Police departments' use of Facebook: Patterns and policy issues. *Police Quarterly,* 16, 438-462.

Lincoln, Y.S., & Guba, E.G. (1985). *Naturalistic inquiry*. Beverley Hills, CA: Sage.

Loader, I., & Walker, N. (2001). Policing as a public good: Reconstituting the connections between policing and the state. *Theoretical Criminology*, 5, 9-35.

London Police. (2015 July 30). Marihuana Grow Operation. Retrieved, August 3 2017, From file:///Users/sonyabuffone/Documents/Media%20Relations%20Stuff/Content% 20Analysis%20Articles/Marihuana%20Grow%20Op%20-%2015-81372.webarchive

London Police. (2017 July 19). Attempted Fraud Warning. Retrieved, August 3 2017, from http://www.londonpd.com/news/

Loseke, D. (2003). *Thinking about social problems: An introduction to constructionist perspectives*. Hawthorne, NY: Aldine de Gruyter.

Lovell, J.S. (2003). *Good cop/bad cop: Mass media and the cycle of police reform*. Monsey, NY: Willow Tree Press, Inc.

Lovell, J.S. (2001). *Police performances: A study of police organizations and media relations.* Final Report (2000-IJ-CX-0046). Washington, DC: National Institute of Justice.

Lynch, M. (1998). Waste Managers? The new penology, crime fighting and parole agent identity. *Law & Society Review,* 32, 839-870.

Macquire, M. (2000). Policing by risks and targets: Some dimensions and implications of intelligence-led crime control. *Policing and Society, 9,* 315-336.

Madill, A. (2008). Core Category. In L.M. Given (Ed.), SAGE encyclopedia of qualitative research methods. Retrieved, March 26 2014, from http://knowledge.sagepub.com/view/research/n72.xml.

Manning, P.K. (2014). Information technology and police work. In D. Weisburd & G. Bruinsema (Eds.), *Springer Encyclopaedia of Criminology and Criminal Justice* (pp. 2501-2513). New York, NY: Springer-Verlag.

Manning, P.K. (2008). *The technology of policing: Crime mapping, information technology, and the rationality of crime control.* New York, NY: New York University Press.

Manning, P.K. (1997). *Police work: The social organization of policing* (2nd ed.). Prospect Heights, IL: Waveland Press.

Manning, P.K. (1988). *Symbolic communication: Signifying calls and the police response.* Cambirdge, MA: MIT Press.

Manning, P. K. (1971). The police: Mandate, strategies, and appearances. In J.D. Douglas (Ed.), *Crime and Justice in American Society* (pp. 149-193). Indianapolis, IN: The Bobbs Merrill Co.

Mawby, R.C., (1999). Visibility, transparency and police media relations. *Policing and Society*, 9, 263-286.

Mawby, R.C. (2002). Continuity and change, convergence and divergence: the policy and practice of police-media relations. *Criminal Justice*, 2, 303-324.

Mawby, R.C. (2007). *Police service corporate communications: a survey of forces in England, Wales and Scotland*. Birmingham, UK: University of Central England.

Mawby, R.C. (2010). Police corporate communications, crime reporting and the shaping of policing news. *Policing & Society,* 20, 124-139.

Mawby, R.C. (2014). The presentation of police in everyday life: Police-press relations, impression management and the Levenson inquiry. *Crime, Media, Culture: An International Journal,* 10, 239-257.

Merriam-Webster Dictionary. (2018). Retrieved March, 26, 2017, from https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/strategy

McGovern, A. (2005) conference paper at the 2005 TASA conference "The New South Wales Police media unit: A history of risk communications." Retrieved, August 9 2016, from http://www.tasa.org.au/conferences/conferencepapers05/papers%20(pdf)/com_mcgovern.pdf

McGovern, A. (2008). *Policing media: controlling representations of the new South Whales Police Force.* Unpublished doctoral dissertation. Sydney, Australia: University of Western Sydney

McGovern, A., & Lee, M. (2010). Cop[ying] it sweet: Police media units and the making of news. *Australian and New Zealand Journal of Criminology,* 43, 444-464.

Miller, G., & Holstein, J.A. (1993). Social constructionism and social problems work. In G. Miller & J.A. Holstein (Eds.), *Constructionist controversies: Issues in social problems theory* (pp. 131-152). Hawthorne, NY: Aldine de Gruyter.

Miller, J. & Glasner, B. (2004). The inside and outside: Finding realities in interviews. In D. Silverman (Ed.), *Qualitative research: Theory, method and practice* (pp. 125-139). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

Mohler, M.E. (2017). Policing in an Era of Soursveillance: The Influence of Video Footage on Perceptions of Legitimacy. ProQuest Dissertations Publishing. Portland State University.

Motschall, M. (1995). *The role and strategies of police public information officers in law enforcement agencies*. Unpublished doctoral dissertation. Detroit, MI: Wayne State University.

Motschall, M., & Cao, L. (2002). An analysis of the public relations role of the police public information officer. *Police Quarterly,* 5, 152-180.

My Police (2014). My police.ca. Canada's information portal. Retrieved May, 9 2014, from http://www.mypolice.ca/police_agencies/Ontario.html

Mythen, G., & Walklate, S. (2006). Criminology and terrorism which thesis? Risk society or Governmentality. *British Journal of Criminology,* 46, 379-378.

Nahn, J. (2014). Police Culture. The encyclopedia of criminology and criminal justice. Pp. 1-6. Blackwell Publishing. Retrieved, July 13 2018 from https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/abs/10.1002/9781118517383.wbeccj371

Neal, S. & Mclaughlin, E. (2009). Researching up? Interviews, emotionality and policy-making elites. *Social Policy, 38*, 689-707.

Neuman, W.L. (2007). *Social Research Methods: Qualitative and Quantitative Approaches (7th ed.)*. Boston, M.A.: Allyn and Bacon.

Niagara Police Service. (2017, September 21). Drugs- Drug investigation leads to three arrests. Retrieved, September 30 2017 from https://www.niagarapolice.ca/en/news/index.aspx?page=3&newsId=f3e3bd0e-ae73-4342-a622-8ed8b49ae79d

O'Grady, W., Parnaby, P.F., & Schikschneit, J. (2010). Guns, gangs, and the underclass: A constructionist analysis of gun violence in a Toronto high school. *Canadian Journal of Criminology and Criminal Justice, 52,* 55-78.

O'Malley, P. (2010). *Crime and risk*. London: Sage Publications.

O'Malley, P. (2015). Revisiting the classics: 'Policing the risk society' in the twenty-first century. *Policing and Society,* 25, 426-431.

Onwuegbuzie, A.J., & Leech, N.L. (2005). On becoming a pragmatic researcher: The importance of combining quantitative and qualitative research methodologies. *International Journal of Social Research Methodology, 8,* 375-387.

OPP (2014). Ontario Provincial Police. Retrieved May 9 2014, from http://www.opp.ca/ecms/index.php?id=286.

Parnaby, P.F. (2003). Disaster through dirty windshields: Law, order and Toronto's squeegee kids. *Canadian Journal of Sociology*, *28*, 281-307.

Peel Regional Police (2017, Sept 05). New "Grandparent Scam" Targets Seniors. Retrieved, September 24 2017 from, https://www.peelpolice.ca/modules/news/index.aspx?newsId=24f97bea-d819-49a3-a631-8555a24fa7fb

Porta, D.D., & Keating, M. (2008). *Approaches and methodologies in the social sciences.* Cambridge, UK: University Press.

Punch, M. (1989). Researching police deviance: A personal encounter with the limitations and liabilities of field-work. *British Journal of Sociology, 40,* 177-204,

RCMP. (2014). Royal Canadian Mounted Police. Retrieved May 9 2014, from http://www.rcmp-grc.gc.ca/on/detach/index-eng.htm

Reeves, C. (2010). A difficult negotiation: Fieldwork relations with gatekeepers. *Qualitative Research*, 10, 315-331.

Reich, Z. (2012). Different practices, similar logic: Comparing news reporting across political, financial, and territorial beats. *International Journal of Press/Politics*, 17(1), 76–99.

Reiner, R., (2008). Policing and the media. In T. Newburn, (Ed.), *Handbook of policing* (2nd ed.), (pp. 313-335). Cullompton, UK: Willan.

Reiner, R., (2010). *The politics of the police* (4th ed.), London: Wheatsheaf Harvester.

Reisig, M.D., Tankabe, J., & Mesko, G. (2012). Procedural justice, police legitimacy and public co-operation with the police among young Slovene adults. *Journal of Criminal Justice and Security*, 14, 147-164.

Rigakos, G. (2002). The new parapolice: Risk markets and commodified social control. University of Toronto Press.

Roberts, J.V., & Grossman, M.G. (2016). Criminal justice in Canada: A reader (5th ed.). TO, ON: Nelson Education Ltd.

Rosa, E.A. (2010). The logical status of risk- to burnish or dull. *Journal of Risk Research,* 13, 239-253.

Roulston, K. (2010). Considering quality in qualitative interviewing. *Qualitative Research,* 10, 199-228.

Schneider, C.J. (2016a). Police presentational strategies on twitter in Canada. *Policing and Society,* 26, 129-147.

Schneider, C. J. (2016b). *Police and social media: Social control in an era of new media.* Lanham, MD: Lexington Books.

Schulenberg, J. L. (2004). *Policing young offenders: A multi-method analysis of variations in police discretion.* Unpublished doctoral dissertation. Waterloo, ON: University of Waterloo.

Schulenberg, J.L., (2007). Analyzing police decision-making: Assessing the application of a mixed method-mixed model research design. *International Journal of Social Research Methodology: Theory and Practice*, *10*, 99-119.

Schulenberg, J.L., & Chenier, A. (2014). At international protest events the 'buck stops here': Media frames defining the police and protestors as social problems. *Canadian Journal of Criminology and Criminal Justice,* 56, 261-294.

Schulenberg, J.L., (2016). *The dynamics of criminological research.* Don Mills, ON: Oxford University Press.

Schwandt, T. A. (2003). Three epistemological stances for qualitative inquiry: Interpretivism, hermeneutics and social constructionism. In N. Denzin & Y. Lincoln (Eds.), *The Landscape of Qualitative Research: Theories and Issues* (pp. 292-331). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Seidman, I. (2006). *Interviewing as qualitative research: A guide for researchers in education and the social sciences.* New York, NY: The Teachers College Press.

Shearing, C.D. (1992). The relation between public and private policing. *Crime and Justice,* 15, 399-434.

Shenton, A.K. (2004). Strategies for ensuring trustworthiness in qualitative research
projects. *Education for Information, 22*, 63-75.

Slovic, P., & Weber, E.U. (2002). Perception of risk posed by extreme events. Retrieved,
January 20 2017, from
https://www.ldeo.columbia.edu/chrr/documents/meetings/roundtable/white_papers/
slovic_wp.pdf

Spector, M., & Kitsuse, J.I. (1975). Social problems and deviance: Some parallels. *Social
Problems, 22*, 584-594.

Strauss, A.L. (1987). *Qualitative analysis for social scientists.* New York: Cambridge
University Press.

Strauss, A., & Corbin, J. (1998). *Basics of qualitative research: Grounded theory procedures
and techniques* (2nd ed.). Newbury Park, CA: Sage.

Stuart, R.D. (2013). Social media: Establishing criteria for law enforcement use. *FBI Law
Enforcement Bulletin*. Retrieved October 8 2014, from http://www.fbi.gov/stats-
services/publications/law-enforcement-bulletin/2013/february/social-media-
establishing-criteria-for-law-enforcement-use

Surette, R., (2001). Public information officers: The civilianisation of a criminal justice
profession. *Journal of Criminal Justice*, *29*, 107-117.

Surette, R., & Richard, A. (1995). Public information officers: A descriptive study of crime news
gatekeepers. *Journal of Criminal Justice, 23*, 325-336.

Tashakkori, A., & Teddlie, C. (1998). *Mixed methodology: Combining qualitative and
quantitative approaches.* Applied Social Research Methods Series #46. Thousand
Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

Telep, C.W., & Weisburd, D. (2012). What is known about the effectiveness of police practices
in reducing crime and disorder? *Police Quarterly, 15,* 331-557.

Toronto Police Service. (2017, August 26). Public Safety Alert, Spike in overnight commercial
Break-and-Enters, Crime-prevention information offered. Retrieved, September 24 2017,
from http://www.torontopolice.on.ca/newsreleases/

Tyler, T.R. (1990). *Why people obey the law: Procedural justice, legitimacy, and compliance.*
New Haven, CT: Yale University Press.

Tyler, T.R. (2004). Enhancing police legitimacy. *Annals of the American academy of political and social sciences,* 593, 84-99.

Tyler, T.R., & Fagan, J. (2008). Legitimacy and cooperation: Why do people help the police fight crime in their communities? *Ohio State Journal of Criminal Law,* 231-275.

Vinzant, J., & Crothers, L. (1994). Street-level leadership: The role of patrol officers in community policing. *Criminal Justice Review, 19*, 189–211.

Weber, M. (orig. 1904-1905). *The protestant ethic and the spirit of capitalism.* New York: Charles Scribner's Son's, 1958.

Weitzer, R. (2015). American policing under fire: misconduct and reform. *Society,* 52, 475-480.

Zender, L. (2009). Security: Key ideas in criminology. Paris, Lavoisier.

Appendix A- Recruitment Letter for Chief of Police
(This was sent in the body of an email message)

Dear [Police Chief],

I would like to invite your organization to participate in a study I am conducting as part of my doctoral degree in the Department of Sociology and Legal Studies at the University of Waterloo under the supervision of Dr. Jennifer L. Schulenberg. Below I explain this project and what involvement would entail if you permit members from your organization to take part in this research.

The purpose of the present study is to examine the roles and activities of media relations officers in Ontario, with a specific focus on understanding how crime news is formulated and disseminated to the public. The research study consists of two phases, both of which will require the participation of MRO(s)/PIO(s)/Corporate Communications serving in your department. Overall, the research project does not require a significant amount of time from the MROs, in fact, the operational burden for participation in this research is minimal. During phase one, I am conducting surveys with voluntary participants to better understand the characteristics and roles of MROs, as well as the activities MROs engage in within their police departments. During phase two, I am conducting interviews with a sample of MROs who have participated in the first phase of the research. During this phase I will also be examining official press releases to see the work of a MRO in action.

Your organization's participation in this study is voluntary. Additionally, if you wish to permit MRO(s) from your organization to participate in this research, participation on behalf of the MRO is also voluntary. The decision to participate and/or the content of interviews/surveys will not be shared with the participant's employer. Participants may decline to answer any of the survey or interview questions asked at any time during the research process. Participants may also advise the researcher at any time during the study if they decide to withdraw, without any negative consequences for the participant or your organization. The survey can be completed at participant's own convenience as it will be sent via email and will take approximately 15-20 minutes to complete. The interview will take approximately 60-90 minutes to complete and will take place at a time and location that is most convenient for the participant. Alternatively, interviews may also be conducted via Skype in the event that a face-to-face meeting is not possible. With permission from the participant, the interview will be audio recorded to facilitate data collection and analysis. I have attached a copy of the survey instrument and the interview guide that will be used to this email. If participants agree to participate in both the survey and interview, the data will be linked in the analysis, however, all information about participants, and your organization will remain completely confidential. Officer's names will not appear in any thesis or publication resulting from this study. All data collected during this study will be retained for no more than 10 years in a locked filing cabinet in my home.

There are no known or anticipated risks to participants or your organization in this study. Benefits of participating in this study include the potential that research findings may be utilized to generate suggestions to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of claims making

within police organizations. The findings also have the potential to provide police agencies with viable strategies to improve communication with the public and the media, helping to enhance police-public relations.

If you are interested in receiving more information pertaining to the results of this study, or if you have any questions or concerns, please do not hesitate to contact me at either the phone number or email address listed below. If you would like an executive summary or a copy of the thesis, please let me know by providing me with your email address. When the study is complete, I will send you the requested information. I expect to complete the study by January 31, 2016.

As with all University of Waterloo research projects involving human participants, this project has been reviewed and received ethics clearance through a University of Waterloo Research Ethics Committee. However, the final decision about participation is yours. Participants who have concerns or questions about their involvement in the project may contact the Chief Ethics Officer, Office of Research Ethics at 519-888-4567, Ext. 36005 or maureen.nummelin@uwaterloo.ca.

You may also contact my supervisor Dr. Jennifer L. Schulenberg at (519) 888-4567, ext. 38639 or by email at jlschule@uwaterloo.ca.

I want to thank you in advance for your interest in this study. Please advise me either through email or by phone if your organization is interested in participating. I look very forward to hearing from you at your earliest convenience.

Sincerely,

Sonya Buffone Ph.D. Candidate
University of Waterloo
Email: sbuffone@uwaterloo.ca
Phone: 1-226-338-5722

Appendix B- Recruitment Letter for Surveys for MRO

(This was sent in the body of an email message)

Dear [potential research participant],

I would like to invite you to consider participating in a study I am conducting as part of my doctoral degree in the Department of Sociology and Legal Studies at the University of Waterloo under the supervision of Dr. Jennifer L. Schulenberg. Below I explain this project and what your involvement would entail if you decide to take part.

The purpose of the present study is to examine the roles and activities of media relations officers in Ontario, with a specific focus on understanding how crime news is formulated for and disseminated to the public. I am conducting surveys with interested participants in order to better understand the characteristics and roles of MROs as well as the activities MROs engage in within their police departments. If you agree to participate in the survey there is a possibility that you will be asked to participate in a follow-up interview. If you agree to participate in both the survey and interview, the data will be linked in the analysis, however, all information about you, and your organization will remain completely confidential.

Participation in this survey is voluntary, you do not have to fill in the questionnaire or any of the questions. Your decision to participate and the content of the survey will not be shared with your employer. The survey will take approximately 15-20 minutes to complete and can be completed at your own convenience. If you wish to participate, the survey will be sent directly to you via email. All information about you will remain completely confidential. Your name will not appear in any thesis or report resulting from this study.

Data collected during this study will be retained for no more than 10 years in a locked filing cabinet in my home. There are no known or anticipated risks to you as a participant in this study. If you are interested in receiving more information regarding the results of this study, or if you have any questions or concerns, please contact me at either the phone number or email address listed below. If you would like an executive summary or a copy of the thesis, please let me know by providing me with your email address. When the study is complete, I will send you the requested information. I expect to complete the study by January 31, 2016.

As with all University of Waterloo research projects involving human participants, this project has been reviewed and received ethics clearance through a University of Waterloo Research Ethics Committee. However, the final decision about participation is yours. Participants who have concerns or questions about their involvement in the project may contact the Chief Ethics Officer, Office of Research Ethics at 519-888-4567, Ext. 36005 or maureen.nummelin@uwaterloo.ca.

I want to thank you in advance for your interest in this study. Your opinions and perspective are valuable to ensure everyone's voice is included. Please contact me by email, or phone if you are interested in completing the survey.

Sincerely,
Sonya Buffone Ph.D. Candidate
University of Waterloo
Email: sbuffone@uwaterloo.ca
Phone: 1-226-338-5722

Appendix C: Survey Instrument
SECTION 1: ORGANIZATIONAL/COMMUNITY CHARACTERISTICS

For each of the questions below type your answers in the grey boxes, or fill in your answer on the blank line provided.

Q1. How many employees does your service employ?

☐ Less than 50   ☐ 301-500
☐ 50-150   ☐ 501-1,000
☐ 151-300   ☐ More than 1,000

Q2. What level of policing does your service represent?

☐ Provincial (OPP)
☐ Municipal

Q3. What was the overall yearly budget of your service for the most recent fiscal year? $_____

Q4. How would you describe the overall geographic landscape of the community/jurisdiction in which your service serves?

☐ Rural
☐ Urban
☐ Suburban
☐ Other (please specify) _____
☐ Not sure

Q5. What is the population of the community (jurisdiction) served by your agency?

☐ Less than 100,000   ☐ 400,001- 500,000
☐ 101,000 –200,000   ☐ More than 500,000
☐ 200,001- 300,000   ☐ Not sure
☐ 300,001-400,000

Q6. In your opinion, what is the percentage of the population of visible minorities in the community/jurisdiction served by your agency (ie. Asian, black, Indigenous , etc.)? _____

SECTION 2: MEDIA RELATIONS DEPARTMENT CHARACTERISTICS

For each of the questions below fill in your answer on the blank line provided, or check your answers in the grey boxes below.

Q7. What is the name of the department responsible for communications, media liaison and public relations?

_____

Q8. In what year was this department established (in its current structure)?

_____

Q9. Please indicate the annual budget, allocated by your agency, to the media relations unit

$_____

Q10. How many staff are employed in the media relations department? _____

Q10a. Of these employees how many are:

_____ Sworn Officers

_____ Civilians

Q11. Number of employees who perform the designated Media Relations function in your unit:

_____

Q12. What are the standard operating hours of your unit?

Monday to Friday _____ to _____

Saturday _____ to _____

Sunday _____ to _____

Statutory Holidays _____ to _____

Q13. Does your unit function as an independent department? ☐ Yes ☐ No

Q13a. If part of another department, please specify which department:

_____

Q14. Is the Media Relations position designated as management/supervisory level in your agency?

☐ Yes ☐ No

Q15. Who is your direct supervisor?

☐ Commissioner/Chief of Police   ☐ Staff Sergeant
☐ Deputy Commissioner/Deputy Chief   ☐ Sergeant
☐ Chief Superintendent/ Superintendent   ☐ Other (please specify) _____
☐ Inspector

Q16. How are media relation's officers selected in your agency?

☐ Appointment/Reassignment (by senior level staff)
☐ Promotion
☐ Standard selection process (i.e., apply, resume and interview)
☐ Other (please specify) _____

Q17. Does your agency have formal written media relation's policies (i.e., document that sets out long-term objectives for communications, media and public relations activities)?

☐ Yes   ☐ No

Q17a. If YES, check all of the following involved in establishing media relation's policies for your agency:

☐ Commissioner/Chief of Police   ☐ Media Relations Officer
☐ Deputy Commissioner/Deputy Chief   ☐ Other (please specify) _____
☐ Chief Superintendent/ Superintendent

Q18. Does your department archive all official press releases?   ☐ Yes   ☐ No

Q18a. How long does your department keep official media releases available for public viewing?
_____

Q18b. How long are the official media releases retained by your department? _____

Q19. To what extent do media relations activities have to be cleared by a higher authority in your agency?

☐ Almost Always   ☐ Usually   ☐ Sometimes   ☐ Rarely   ☐ Almost Never

Q20. What constraints do you face in your position as a Media Relations Officer (select all that apply)?

☐ Lack of funding   ☐ Lack of autonomy
☐ Lack of co-operation from police officers/staff   ☐ Too much autonomy
☐ Lack of cooperation from media organizations   ☐ There are no major constraints
☐ Lack of experience in the position
☐ Lack of knowledge of the media/public relations field
☐ Lack of human resources
☐ Other constraints (please explain)

_____
_____

Q21. Overall, how would you describe your approach to media relation's activities?

☐ Proactive
☐ Reactive
☐ Other (please specify) _____

Q22. Does your service recruit trained journalists?   ☐ Yes ☐ No
If yes how many are currently employed? _____

Q23. Does your service recruit public relations specialists?   ☐ Yes ☐ No
If yes how many are currently employed? _____

Q24. Does your service recruit marketing specialists?   ☐ Yes ☐ No
If yes how many are currently employed? _____

For questions 25 to 28 please circle the number that best represents your opinion regarding each of the following statements:

Strongly Disagree	**Disagree**	**Neutral**	**Agree**	**Strongly Agree**
1	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**

Q25. Being able to handle interview questions well is important in my work.

1	2	3	4	5

Q26. Being able to write well is important in my work.

1	2	3	4	5

Q27. Having a good appearance on TV is important in my work.

1	2	3	4	5

Q28. Being able to manage the media is important in my work.

1	2	3	4	5

29. For each item identified in the table below, check each activity that you are responsible for. Please also circle the number on the scale that best reflects the level of importance you attribute to each activity you have selected (1=not important at all, 5=extremely important).

Responsibility	Yes Responsible for ✔	Importance of this responsibility				
		Not important at all				Extremely Important
1. Providing in-service media relations training		1	2	3	4	5
2. Drafting in-service communications policy or guidance		1	2	3	4	5
3. Providing communications support to individual officers		1	2	3	4	5
4. Coordinate public functions						
5. Maintaining the agency's website		1	2	3	4	5
6. Producing the agency's annual report		1	2	3	4	5
7. Internal communications		1	2	3	4	5
8. Ensuring the agency is perceived as legitimate		1	2	3	4	5
9. Ensuring the agency is perceived to be accountable		1	2	3	4	5

Q30. To what extent do you consider persuasion of the public to be a goal of your activities? (1= least important; 10= most important).

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Q31. To what extent is crime prevention a goal of the media relation's activities? (1= least important; 10= most important).

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Q32. For each item identified in the table below, check each activity you perform. Please also circle the number on the scale that best reflects the level of importance you attribute to each activity you have selected (1=not important at all) (5=extremely important).

Activities	Yes Responsible for ✔	Not important at all				Extremely Important
1. Writing press releases		1	2	3	4	5
2. Preparing agency publications (online or in print)		1	2	3	4	5
3. Holding press conferences		1	2	3	4	5
4. Fielding daily media inquires		1	2	3	4	5
5. Answer media public records request						
6. Communicating with the public		1	2	3	4	5
7. Planning conventions, meetings, workshops		1	2	3	4	5
8. Maintaining agency social media sites (e.g., Facebook, Twitter)		1	2	3	4	5
9. Writing speeches		1	2	3	4	5
10. Contacting government officials		1	2	3	4	5
12. Making presentations to city officials		1	2	3	4	5
13. Making presentations to community groups		1	2	3	4	5

SECTION 4: MEDIA RELATIONS

Q33. Does your service have a policy that allows all police officers and police staff to liaise with the media?

☐ Yes   ☐ No

Q34. Please explain any restrictions imposed by your service (for example, is media liaison restricted to officers of a particular rank?)

_____
_____
_____

Q35. Please circle the number that best describes your feelings in response to the following statements:

Strongly Disagree	**Disagree**	**Neutral**	**Agree**	**Strongly Agree**
1	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**

I have a good relationship with local media.	1	2	3	4	5
I have a good relationship with national media.	1	2	3	4	5
I have a good relationship with local newspaper personnel.	1	2	3	4	5
I have a good relationship with national newspaper personnel.	1	2	3	4	5
I have a good relationship with local radio personnel.	1	2	3	4	5
I have a good relationship with national radio personnel.	1	2	3	4	5
In general, I trust news reporters.	1	2	3	4	5
The news media focus on negative stories about the police.	1	2	3	4	5
The news media focus on positive stories about the police.	1	2	3	4	5
The news media seek out ways to make the police look bad.	1	2	3	4	5

Q36. In the first column in the table below please indicate the number of organizations you communicate with in any given week.

Organization	Number communicated with on a weekly basis (average)
1. Newspapers	
Local/regional	
National	
2. Radio Stations	
Local/regional	
National	
3. TV stations	
Local/regional	
National	
4. Criminal Justice Agencies	
Local/regional	
National	
5. Government Agencies	
Local/regional	
National	
5. Community organizations	
6. Other (please specify below)	

SECTION 5: DEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTICS

For each of the questions below type your answers in the grey boxes, or fill in your answer on the blank line provided.

Q37. Sex

☐ Male   ☐ Female

Q38. To which age group do you belong?

☐ 25 to 34 years of age
☐ 35 to 44 years of age
☐ 45 to 54 years of age
☐ 55 years of age or older

Q39. What is your highest level of education completed?

☐ High school   ☐ Doctoral degree (Ph.D, etc.)
☐ College or trade apprenticeship
☐ Undergraduate degree (BA, BSc, etc.

☐ Masters degree or equivalent (MA, MSc, LLB, etc.)
Q40. What field of study did you pursue your degree in.

☐ Communications   ☐ Social Sciences
☐ Criminal Justice   ☐ Administration
☐ Law   ☐ Other (please specify) _____

Q41. How long have you served as the media relations officer for your department? (Please specify time in position in months).

_____

Q42. Have you served in the media relation's position for any other police agencies throughout your career?

☐ Yes   ☐ No

Q43. Did you have any specific training in communications, public relations, or media relations prior to assuming the media relations position in your department?

☐ Yes   ☐ No

Q43a. IF YES please specify the type of training as well as the approximate amount of time spent training (i.e., number of hours or days)

_____

_____

_____

Q44. Have you received any communications, public relations, or media relations training since assuming the media relations position in your department?

☐ Yes   ☐ No

Q44a. IF YES please specify from what source(s):

☐ Ontario Police College
☐ In-service
☐ Other (please specify) _____

Q44b. IF YES please also specify the type of training as well as the approximate amount of time-spent training (i.e., number of hours or days)

Q45. What is your current rank?

☐ Inspector   ☐ Constable
☐ Staff sergeant   ☐ Civilian
☐ Sergeant   ☐ Other (please specify) _____
☐ Detective

Q46. Please specify your ethnic origin (or race):

☐ White
☐ Hispanic or Latino
☐ Black
☐ Aboriginal
☐ Asian
☐ Other (please specify) _____

Q47. Are you willing to be contacted to participate in a follow-up interview?

☐ Yes   ☐ No

Q47b. IF YES please provide your name, organization and preferred method of contact below:

Name: _____

Organization: _____

Email: _____ and/or

Phone: _____

University of Waterloo

Survey Feedback Letter

Constructing Crime: Understanding the Roles, Functions and Claims-Making activities of Media Relations Officers in Ontario

Date

Dear **(Insert Name of Participant),**

I would like to thank you sincerely, for your participation in this study entitled "Constructing Crime: Understanding the Roles, Functions and Claims-Making activities of Media Relations Officers in Ontario**.** As a reminder, the purpose of this research is to examine the roles and activities of media relations officers in Ontario, with a specific focus on understanding how crime news is formulated for and disseminated to the public.

The survey data collected will contribute to a deeper understanding of the roles and activities of MROs in Ontario. This data will also generate suggestions to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of claims making within police organizations. It is hoped that this research will help inform policies within police departments that govern how information is processed and, ultimately, how that information is disseminated to the public. And finally, the findings will also provide police agencies with viable strategies to improve communication with the public and the media, helping to enhance police-public relations.

I am currently in the process of analyzing the survey data and once this process is complete I will contact the officers directly, via phone, who expressed an interest in participating in a follow-up interview. I will work to set up an interview with you at a time and place that is most convenient for you.

I wish to emphasize that any data pertaining to you as an individual participant will be kept completely confidential. Once all the data are collected and analyzed for this project, I plan to share this information with the research community through my dissertation, as well as in conferences, presentations, and journal articles. If you are interested in receiving more information regarding the results of this study, or would like a summary of the results, please notify me directly (via email or phone as noted below), and when the study is complete I will send you the information. In the meantime, if you have any questions about the study, please do not hesitate to contact me by email or telephone.

As with all University of Waterloo projects involving human participants, this project has been reviewed and received ethics clearance through a University of Waterloo Research Ethics Committee. However, the final decision about participation is yours. Participants who have concerns or questions about their involvement in the project may contact the Chief Ethics Officer, Office of Research Ethics at 519-888-4567, Ext. 36005 or maureen.nummelin@uwaterloo.ca.

You can also contact my supervisor, Dr. Jennifer Schulenberg at (519) 888-4567 ext. 38639 or email at jlschule@uwaterloo.ca.

Sincerely,

Sonya Buffone Ph.D. Candidate
Department of Sociology & Legal Studies
University of Waterloo
Email: sbuffone@uwaterloo.ca
Phone: 1-226-338-5722

University of Waterloo

Researcher: Sonya Buffone Ph.D. Student
Department of Sociology & Legal Studies
University of Waterloo
Email: sbuffone@uwaterloo.ca
Phone: 1-226-338-5722

Dear (insert participant's name):

Purpose of the study
The primary objective of this research is to examine the roles and activities of media relations officers in Ontario, with a specific focus on understanding how crime news is formulated for and disseminated to the public. The police are primary providers and definers of crime news and social problems given their frontline position in the criminal justice system as such, it is crucial to understand the claims-making processes of police organizations and ultimately, how such processes shape public trust in the police as well as understandings and discourses of crime. Media relations officers play fundamental role given that they are responsible for informing the media and general public about crime, social problems and agency operations. The decision to participate and the content of the interview will not be shared with your employer.

Procedures involved in the research
For this portion of the project, to develop a better understanding of the roles of MROs, as well as the activities MROs engage in within their police departments I am requesting your participation in a face-to-face interview on a day and time most convenient to you. The interview will take approximately 60-90 minutes to complete and will be conducted at a location that is convenient for you. The interview questions seek open-ended responses about your role as a MRO in your organization. If you so wish, you may decline to answer any of the interview questions asked at any time during the interview. You may also advise the researcher at any time during the study if you decide to withdraw, without any negative consequences for you or your organization. With your permission, the interview will be audio recorded to facilitate the collection and analysis of data. If you agree to participate in both the survey and interview, the data will be linked in the analysis, however, all information about you, and your organization will remain completely confidential. All information you provide is considered completely confidential. Your name will not appear in any thesis or report resulting from this study, however, with your permission anonymous quotations may be used. Data collected during this study will be retained for no more than 10 years in a locked filing cabinet in my home.

Potential harms, risks, or discomforts

There are no known or anticipated risks to you as a participant in this study. If you decide to participate, any data pertaining to you as an individual will remain confidential. The goal of conducting interviews is to obtain a better understanding of the roles and activities of MROs in Ontario. In addition, the questions aim to uncover how crime news stories are formulated for the public. Given these research goals, the questions asked in the interview do not pose risks, harms or discomforts to you. Further, the information collected and your identity, as well as any information related directly to your organization will remain completely confidential. Ultimately, you have the option to decide how the information you provide will be used. You may stipulate conditions under which I am permitted to use any quotations from your interview.

Potential benefits
Each participant, upon request, will be provided a copy of the final thesis. The results from this study will be of direct benefit to academics, and law enforcement agencies. By participating in this project you have the ability to contribute to a deeper understanding of the roles and activities of MROs in Ontario. It is expected that the results from this study will generate suggestions to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of claims making within police organizations. It is also hoped that this research will help inform policies within police departments that govern how information is processed and, ultimately, how that information is disseminated to the public. The findings will also provide police agencies with viable strategies to improve communication with the public and the media, helping to enhance police-public relations.

Confidentiality
With your permission the interview will be audio recorded to facilitate the collection and analysis of data. I wish to emphasize that if you decide to withdraw from the interview at any point, you can request that any, or all, responses and or data related to you as a participant be destroyed immediately. Additionally, you do not have to answer any questions if you do not want to. I am assigning a number to each interview, rather than your name, and all of the survey data collected will be held in strict confidence in several ways. First, the informed consent form will be kept separate from the paper, audio and electronic interview data and destroyed no more than 10 years after study completion. Second, your audio-recorded responses will also be assigned a number and this number will not be identifiable in any publications generated from this study. All audio recordings will be securely locked in a cabinet in my home. Upon completion of the study audio recordings will be erased. Third, in order to ensure anonymity of participants in the final report and in all presentations and publications, anonymous quotations will be used. In the event that there is any possibility that a quotation may not protect your right to anonymity (as indicated above), I will contact you so you can review the quote and so that you have the opportunity to provide informed consent for its use.

You will receive a signed copy of this consent form for your records. If you have any questions regarding this study, or would like additional information to assist you in reaching a decision about participation, please contact me at 1-226-338-5722 or by email at

sbuffone@uwaterloo.ca. You can also contact my supervisor, Dr. Jennifer L. Schulenberg at (519) 888-4567 ext. 38639 or by email at jlschule@uwaterloo.ca.

I wish to assure you that this project has been reviewed and received ethics clearance through a University of Waterloo Research Ethics Committee. However, the final decision about participation is yours. Participants who have concerns or questions about their involvement in the project may contact the Chief Ethics Officer, Office of Research Ethics at 519-888-4567, Ext. 36005 or maureen.nummelin@uwaterloo.ca.

I would like you thank you in advance for taking the time to participate in this interview. Your opinions and perspective are valuable.

Sincerely,

Sonya Buffone Ph.D. Student
Department of Sociology & Legal Studies
Email: sbuffone@uwaterloo.ca
Phone: 1-226-338-5722

University of Waterloo

Constructing Crime: Understanding the Roles, Functions and Claims-Making Activities of Media Relations Officers in Ontario

Please mark the "Yes" and "No" boxes with your initials to indicate whether you are providing consent to each of the consent and privacy options outlined below.

	Consent and Privacy Options	Yes	No
1	I understand and willingly agree to participate in a face-to-face interview to be scheduled and conducted at my convenience.		
2	I agree to have the interview audio recorded.		
3	I would like to review a copy of my transcript.		
4	I am willing to allow the researcher to use quotations from the interview providing they are cited anonymously (the quote does not identify me).		
5	I am willing to allow the researcher to use quotations from the interview that are not completely anonymous as long as I am contacted by the researcher so I can review the quotation and give my consent to use it.		
6	I would like to receive a copy of the final thesis		
7	I agree to be contacted at a future date if the researcher would like clarification on my answers to any of the interview questions.		

I have read the information presented in the attached Letter of Information about a study being conducted by Sonya Bittner of the University of Waterloo. I have had the opportunity to ask questions about my involvement in the study and to receive additional details about the study. I understand I may elect to withdraw from the study at any time and I voluntarily agree to participate in this study.

This project has been reviewed and received ethics clearance through a University of Waterloo Research Ethics Committee. However, the final decision about participation is yours. Participants who have concerns or questions about their involvement in the project may contact the Chief Ethics Officer, Office of Research Ethics at 519-888-4567, Ext. 36005 or maureen.nummelin@uwaterloo.ca.

By signing this consent form, you are not waiving your legal rights or releasing the investigator(s) or involved institution(s) from their legal and professional responsibilities.

_____
Name of the Participant (please print) – Date (dd/mm/yyyy)
_____
Signature of the Participant

In my opinion, the person who has signed this informed consent is agreeing to participate in this study voluntary, understands the nature of the study, and any consequences of participation.
_____
Signature of Researcher or Witness

_____
Email address

APPENDIX G- Semi-Structured Interview Guide

1. Participants will be asked a series of demographic questions
    - -Years of service with the police
    - -rank/years in MRO position
    - -education/training
    - -MRO training

2. Why did you elect to become an MRO?

3. Do you enjoy your position as a MRO?
    a) What aspect of your role as a MRO is most fulfilling?

4. What are the major functions of the media relations unit?

5. How would you describe your role as a MRO?
    a) What aspect of your role do you consider most important? (**try to tap into crime fighting/risk management aspects mentioned).
        (i) You mention_____ Can you explain why this is such an important aspect of your job?
    f) Can you describe a typical day for me?
    g) What's an exciting day like on the job?

RISK RELATED QUESTIONS WHEN RELEVANT (e.g., when the interviewees bring up notions of risk management the following questions can be asked):
1) In mentioning _____ you sort of bring up this idea of risk, how do you define the types of risk police organizations manage?
2) How can these risks be managed by your organization?
3) What strategies do you use to make the public aware of these risks?

6. How important is your role within the organization? Why?
    c) Is it important to have a sworn officer in this position, as opposed to a civilian or PR specialist for example? Why?
7. What would happen without someone in this role? What issues could arise?

8. Explain what you consider to be the most important thing you aim to achieve when communicating with the media/public (E.g., citizen assistance, crime prevention, positive police image, partnerships with the community).
    a) Is it important to get the message out first (before the media does) why?

9. Has your job changed over the years? (if so how?)
    a) Has the relationship between police and the media changed as a result of having MROs within the organization?

9. What are the most difficult/challenging aspects of your job as a MRO? (explain)

10. Can you speak to the public's understanding of crime and social problems in their community?

  a) To what extent is it important to share crime news and stories with the public? Explain.

11. What are the primary public relations techniques or activities used in your organization?

12. What strategies are most effective for disseminating news about social problems and crime to the public? Why?

  a) Are there specific policies/procedures you are required to follow when preparing news releases?

    i) If yes, how effective are these policies/procedures?

    Ii) Do you find some forms of media to be more effective for sharing crime news? Why or why not?

  b) In general are their particular stories that you would not consider sharing with the public? Why or why not?

  c) How do you decide what stories to report and what not to report when disseminating information about crime and social problems to the public?

  d) How do you decide what information to report and what information not to report when writing crime report releases?

    i) Are certain crime stories given more weight than others? Why or why not?

13. Do you decide who/how/and when an officer in the organization is permitted to speak to the media?

  a) If yes, what criteria are these decisions based on?

14. To what extent does the seriousness of an incident or offense influence who in the department is interviewed by the media? (So for example, are there certain cases where the Chief or deputy chief may have to appear in front of the media?)

  a) Can you explain the criteria these decisions are based upon?

15. When information is delivered by higher-ranking officer's who is responsible for packaging/preparing that information?

16. What strategies are most effective for garnering public support for the police?

  a) What strategies/tactics are utilized to demonstrate legitimacy?

  b) What strategies/tactics are utilized to demonstrate effectiveness of police operations?

  c) What strategies/tactics are utilized to demonstrate accountability?

17. What strategies are most effective for garnering public trust in the police?

18. How are news stories within the police organization formulated?

19. How do you prepare for major news releases?

20. In general what's your opinion/view of the media?
      a) How do the interests of the media relate to organizational interests?
      b) How do reports shape daily media tasks?
      c) Are there particular strategies you use to deal with various media outlets?

University of Waterloo

Interview Feedback Letter

Constructing Crime: Understanding the Roles, Functions and Claims-Making activities of Media Relations Officers in Ontario

Date

Dear **(Insert Name of Participant),**

I would like to thank you sincerely, for your participation in this study entitled "Constructing Crime: Understanding the Roles, Functions and Claims-Making activities of Media Relations Officers in Ontario. As a reminder, the purpose of this research is to examine the roles and activities of media relations officers in Ontario, with a specific focus on understanding how crime news is formulated for and disseminated to the public.

The interview data collected will contribute to a deeper understanding of the roles and activities of MROs in Ontario. This data will also generate suggestions to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of claims making within police organizations. It is hoped that this research will help inform policies within police departments that govern how information is processed and, ultimately, how that information is disseminated to the public. And finally, the findings will also provide police agencies with viable strategies to improve communication with the public and the media, helping to enhance police-public relations.

I wish to emphasize that any data pertaining to you as an individual participant will be kept completely confidential. Once all the data are collected and analyzed for this project, I plan to

share this information with the research community through my dissertation, as well as in conferences, presentations, and journal articles. If you are interested in receiving more information regarding the results of this study, or would like a summary of the results, please notify me directly (via email or phone as noted below), and when the study is complete I will send you the information. In the meantime, if you have any questions about the study, please do not hesitate to contact me by email or telephone.

As with all University of Waterloo projects involving human participants, this project has been reviewed and received ethics clearance through a University of Waterloo Research Ethics Committee. However, the final decision about participation is yours. Participants who have concerns or questions about their involvement in the project may contact the Chief Ethics Officer, Office of Research Ethics at 519-888-4567, Ext. 36005 or maureen.nummelin@uwaterloo.ca.

You can also contact my supervisor, Dr. Jennifer Schulenberg at (519) 888-4567 ext. 38639 or email at jlschule@uwaterloo.ca.

Sincerely,

Sonya Buffone Ph.D. Candidate
Department of Sociology & Legal Studies
University of Waterloo
Email: sbuffone@uwaterloo.ca
Phone: 1-226-338-5722