



# **Digital and social media: the panacea of transformative engagement with young people; rhetoric or reality? Qualitative based research exploring police led digital and social media engagement with young people in Nottinghamshire.**

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## **ABSTRACT**

The disengagement of young people from community participation is a debate that pervades the literature and is a concern for UK policing whose strategic aim is to secure the efficient and effective engagement of young people in an operational landscape that is shaped by austerity. Digital and Social Media is seen as offering immense potential to deliver enhanced participation at a fraction of the cost of traditional engagement, but there is a distinct lack of empirical research associated with the police use of digital and social media to engage young people. The aim of this research is to allow young people to shape the way Nottinghamshire Police engage with them via digital and social media. To this end, a 40-point engagement framework based on the principles of 'Quid Pro Quo' reciprocal engagement is offered as the product of this youthful insight. The theoretical positioning of the research is within the Interpretivist paradigm and social control theory and procedural justice theory justify why engaging young people is so important to the survival of the British style of policing. A qualitative methodology frames the research design, which includes the use of the semi-structured interview and four focus groups involving young people. The thesis suggests that young people are not disinterested, lackadaisical or apathetic when it comes to police engagement, they are simply disconnected from the police engagement framework, which appears to have failed historically to understand how and why young people wish to participate in policing. Whilst participants felt that Nottinghamshire Police's digital offer is suitable for young people, it is concluded that digital and social media is not the 'Holy Grail' or indeed the panacea for police engagement and therefore young people may not yet be ready to accept such technology and swap physical visibility and accessibility for their virtual counterparts.





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## **CHAPTER ONE:**

### **INTRODUCTION: Engaging young people via digital and social media**

The purpose of this chapter is to introduce the research thesis and in particular its aim and objectives. The theoretical positioning of the research will be explored within the Interpretivist paradigm, which will highlight the academic and operational value of the research topic within the context of social control theory and procedural justice theory. Two further contextual backdrops: austerity and the pluralization of policing; and hidden victimization will serve to highlight the academic importance of this exploratory study. The requirement for empirical research within this particular field is confirmed within chapter two which concludes that there is a distinct lack of empirical research not only associated with the police use of digital and social media to engage young people, but in the general field of digital and social media engagement (see: Banaji & Buckingham 2009; Gerodimos, 2010; Craig, 2011; Ruddell and Jones, 2013; Kilburn, 2014, and Shepherdson, 2014). The final sections of this chapter provide a basic introduction to the evolution of UK policing, featuring the importance placed on face-to-face community contact within police models of community engagement. The chapter will then provide a brief overview of salient terminology, paying particular attention to the terms digital and social media, transformative engagement, and citizen participation. The chapter then concludes by outlining the structure of the thesis through a brief summary of the remaining six chapters.

#### **Research title, aim and objectives:**

Digital and social media: the panacea of transformative engagement with young people; rhetoric or reality? Qualitative based research exploring police led digital and social media engagement with young people in Nottinghamshire.

The aim of this research is to understand from a young person's perspective, how Nottinghamshire Police can effectively engage with young people via digital and social media.

Five objectives define this research:

- 1) (A) To explore young people's experience of and inclination toward engaging with Nottinghamshire Police via digital and social media. B) To explore how Nottinghamshire Police can raise the profile of its digital and social media platforms.
- 2) To explore whether young people think it is important to communicate (via digital and/or social media) with Nottinghamshire Police.
- 3) (A) To determine what kind of information young people want to receive from Nottinghamshire Police. (B) To explore how young people want to receive information from the police. (C) To explore how young people are prepared to pass information / report concerns to the police.
- 4) To explore young people's views on the suitability of Nottinghamshire Police's digital and social media content.
- 5) (A) To examine young people's opinions, understanding and experience of the Neighbourhood Priority Survey (NPS). (B) To find out how Nottinghamshire Police can encourage young people to become involved in this process via digital and social media.

### **Austerity and the pluralization of policing**

The operational value of this thesis is highlighted when one considers the 2008 global financial crisis. According to Ben Bernanke, an American economist and chairman of the US Federal Reserve between 2006-2012, this represented the worst

financial crisis in history. In 2010, the UK Comprehensive Spending Review (CSR) detailed how the coalition Government intended to achieve economic stability in the face of global economic uncertainty. The Chancellor George Osborne made clear that the 'economic books' had to be balanced by 2020, and reducing the budget deficit (the difference between how much the Government borrows and how much it raises through tax) was a prerequisite for ensuring economic stability. The Comprehensive Spending Review (2010) directed most government departments to deliver savings of 20% within the spending review period (2011-2015). The impact on policing during this period was significant with £2.1 billion efficiency savings having to be achieved. This resulted in the loss of 37,000 police members, 17,000 of whom were warranted police officers, 15,500 were police staff and 4,500 were PCSO's (Greenhalgh and Gibbs, 2014).

The shock of such large-scale losses can be explained in part by what Kemshall and Maguire (2001, cited by Millie and Bullock, 2012) call the 'policification' of policing. Since the 1960's policing has benefited from continued and substantial funding support from successive governments, which has seen police numbers triple from 100,000 to approximately 300,000 by 2010 (Greenhalgh and Gibbs, 2014). Due to this significant historical investment in police numbers, policing has experienced 'mission creep' resulting in widespread involvement in areas that traditionally have not been seen as core policing business. One issue that now faces UK policing is how it manages the uncomfortable process of withdrawing from the partnership activity that is no longer sustainable. Austerity has in some respect forced UK policing to re-evaluate its purpose in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century and re-assert a focus on the areas where it will have maximum impact. The enhanced use of mobile data by front line officers to maximize visibility within neighbourhoods has been one way of addressing this. So too has the requirement to improve the use of the Internet and social media. In Nottinghamshire, the closure of 17 police 'front counters' (receptions) reinforces this requirement as reduced opportunities for members of the public to physically attend their local police station means that the organization must identify more innovative ways in which the public can access its services. This thesis serves to involve young people in identifying innovative ways of encouraging young people to access police services and engage with the police in a changing operational landscape.

The pluralization of policing, or the outsourcing of policing provision to external providers, represents both an opportunity and a risk for Chief Constables and Police and Crime Commissioners (PCC's) in their attempts to innovatively explore different methods of service provision and improve accessibility for the public. Therefore the debate surrounding the outsourcing of policing function remains a credible and relevant, albeit sensitive consideration for UK policing. Loader (2000) suggests that the pluralization of policing can be defined by the increasing fragmentation of 'policing' and the delivery of policing function in four distinct ways:

- 1) 'Through' government, where policing services commissioned by the government are provided by commercial providers, for example the deployment of CCTV.
- 2) 'Above' government, where policing is provided transnationally, for example through EuroPol.
- 3) 'Beyond' government, where policing services are purchased by community members themselves, for example private security patrolling.
- 4) 'Below' government, where communities come together to undertake policing services in the form of Neighbourhood Watch.

Stenson and Silverstone (2013) provide a word of warning, arguing that whilst outsourcing to commercial providers may provide financial efficiencies in times of austerity, there is an unacceptably high price to pay in terms of police legitimacy. Stenson and Silverstone (2013) argue that alternative service providers are not generally subject to the same scrutiny and regulation as the state police and cannot therefore be held to account for their actions and performance. Historically a police monopolized policing provision has defined the modern sovereign state and therefore accountability has been relatively clear. Pluralization of policing however brings with it questionable lines of accountability which will undoubtedly impact on community perceptions of legitimacy ergo trust and confidence. How do young people have a genuine say on the decision making process within a fragmented and multi-faceted policing framework of provision?

Loader (2000) argues that policing has for centuries been based on the notion of sovereign state and its monopoly of legitimate force manifested in the uniformed presence of the police. Increasingly in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, the legitimate use of force has and continues to move further away from the restraints of the sovereign state. Rhodes (1997, cited by Loader, 2000), calls this 'differentiated polity' in which policing has transformed into a "dispersed mechanism of governance" (Loader, 2000, p.329) where non-police agencies possess statutory powers to use force, for example in detaining members of the public or searching them. The threat to police legitimacy and public trust and confidence posed by the institutional expansion of the use of force is notable, especially when considering public contact associated with stop and search interventions. Potentially, the unaccountable actions of alternative policing providers could damage the reputation of state policing and affect society's status quo. Successive governments have attempted to address such concerns through legislative interventions such as: the 2001 Private Security Industry Act; the 2003 creation of the Security Industry Authority; and in December 2014, the introduction of the statutory licensing of private investigation activities. Nevertheless, it is felt that UK policing will face increasing pressure to mitigate the unacceptable risk that is posed by pluralization. A further concern is that as communities experience the pluralization of policing with private and community based agencies undertaking crime prevention and detection work (Newburn, 2008) the police are no longer seen as the primary agency for delivering local engagement. Therefore chief officers are questioning the cost and necessity to deliver local engagement in its traditional form. This thesis within the context of young people, will explore whether digital and social media can not only facilitate the withdrawal of traditional engagement intervention in support of pluralization, but also explore how it can potentially mitigate the risk pluralization poses to the British style of policing.

### **Hidden victimization and the threat of emergent criminality- cyber crime**

In 2009, the National Police Improvement Agency (NPIA), now the College of Policing held a social media conference (*Policing 2.0*) and identified four distinct uses for digital and social media within a policing context: crime and Intelligence, media and communications, information technology, and citizen engagement. Crump (2011)

further commented that digital and social media offered a legitimate source of criminal intelligence and real-time information in relation to operational emergencies such as flooding or serious road collisions as well the opportunity to protect people against online criminality. This particular area has recently been identified as a significant emergent threat for policing globally. On 19 January 2017 an ITV report revealed that the crimes figures contained within the 2016 Crime Survey for England and Wales almost doubled due to the inclusion of 3.6 million Fraud and 2 million Computer Misuse type offences (ITV, 2017). It is becoming increasingly acknowledged that traditional criminality is changing, diversifying and transferring online. This has resulted in policing globally being forced to frantically re-evaluate its capacity and capability to deal effectively and efficiently with this emergent crime. Part of the policing response to this new form of criminality is to provide crime prevention information to the public in order for them to take personal responsibility for minimizing the risk they face. This thesis, whilst not specifically focusing on cyber crime, is expected to steer future operational tactics and determine how young people in particular will be most receptive to police initiated crime prevention messaging for this and other types of criminality.

### **Research Paradigm**

A paradigm is a belief system that steers the way we conduct research- a “basic belief system or world view that guides the investigator” (Guba and Lincoln, 1994, p.105). Guba and Lincoln (1994) also suggest that three aspects generally characterize paradigms: epistemology, ontology and methodology. Our theory of knowledge and understanding of reality underpins our methodology, which in turn strategically steers the research method and process of data analysis within the study. This thesis sits comfortably within the Interpretivist paradigm, with a relativist ontology, which emphasizes the importance of personal ideological position when interpreting social reality. Social reality is a multi-layered and complex phenomenon (Cohen *et al*, 2000, cited by Dash, 2005) where meaning is constructed or negotiated through dialogue and not discovered. Qualitative methodology is typically associated with this paradigm and in this study four focus groups and five semi-structured interviews were used to establish the meaning of data secured through interaction

with the participants. Reality is socially constructed, dynamic and subjective, with time, social setting and age often serving to shape our understanding of meaning. It is therefore important that we understand motives, meanings, reasons and other subjective experiences, which are time and context bound (Hudson and Ozanne, 1988). It is to this end that young people have been purposefully involved in the research process. Only by providing opportunity for young people to explain and define their requirements will agencies such as the police be able to sensitively shape their digital and social media engagement strategies in the future. The purpose of this research is to achieve an understanding of the process of engaging young people via digital and social media whilst acknowledging that the process and understanding of it is likely to change as time and context evolve.

The process of police engagement with young people should be seen in the context of contributing to society's functioning as a whole. The police play a key role within the socialization process of citizenship. Young people grow up and become law-abiding citizens who support the state by regulating their own behaviour to maintain the status quo associated with society's norms and conventions. Society is held together by consensus; austerity is a threat to social cohesion and has the potential to disrupt the status quo. Police engagement through digital and social media is seen as a direct response to the threat posed by austerity in an attempt to engender social cohesion. As a serving police officer for 22 years, I have been involved in the engagement of young people in many varied contexts. The purpose of such engagement has served as an opportunity to socialize and integrate young people into the normative framework of law-abiding society. Therefore it is essential that agencies such as the police maximize the effectiveness of their social control interventions. In this respect, the police can be seen as social engineers who have an important role to play in the maintenance of society and in particular social order. In order to understand society it is important to understand the relationship the police have with other elements of society- in this case young people. According to Emile Durkheim, people have two sides to their nature; a selfish side that is driven by biology and a need to satisfy basic selfish human need and a side that believes in morality. In order to shape and discipline the two sides of human nature, social control theory and procedural justice offer an understanding of how the police can



promote normative behaviour through establishing trust, confidence and police legitimacy. Historically, a process of face-to-face communication has underpinned this process of socialization. This thesis serves to provide empirical evidence that will shape the way digital and social media can be used by policing to promote normative behaviour through establishing trust, confidence and legitimacy with young people.

### **Social Control Theory**

Social control theory suggests that socialization and social learning facilitates social control, which in turn promotes normative behaviour (Murphy *et al* 2008, cited by Jackson *et al*, 2012). Communities have a responsibility for their own behaviour. Whilst environmental context may offer reasons for behaviour, people have choices and these choices can be manipulated by society in order to curtail deviance and promote obedience according to what society deems to be normative. Social control theory suggests that deviant or criminal behaviour is simply predictable behaviour that has not been socially controlled and where the offender has relinquished ties to convention, which enables the participation in criminality. The origins of this theory are aligned to classical schools of criminology in the 18<sup>th</sup> Century during the 'Enlightenment'. This was a 17<sup>th</sup> to 18<sup>th</sup> Century period of western history associated with developments in philosophy, reason as well as science. Cesare Beccaria (1764), an Italian philosopher and criminologist of this period offered a philosophical judgement that human beings can control their behaviour. They choose to commit crime and this choice can be influenced or deterred by the threat of punishment (Beccaria 1764, cited by Biography.com Editors, 2016). This theory is based on the principle of rationality and that human beings have free will and choice and that pain and pleasure are the main determinants of these choices. Swift and proportionate punishment can, not only deter an offender from future criminality but also be seen by society as an example, which can serve to secure future obedience to societal convention.

Emile Durkheim, a 19<sup>th</sup> Century French sociologist and one of the principal founders of modern sociology offered the view that crime serves the function of identifying behavioural boundaries reinforced by society through negative reaction. Social order

(or consent) is maintained through the process of socialization and avoidance of societal disapproval. Individuals require external societal control to limit the insatiability of human biological need. Deviancy occurs when societal control breaks down and the individual disengages, becoming more self-reliant. This normative disconnect allows self-interest to become a dominant force and leads to deviancy or disobedience. This state of normlessness Durkheim calls 'anomie'. One can see Durkheim's position on the importance of societal regulation in maintaining social order, but his study into altruistic suicide, which is characterized by a sense of duty to commit suicide for the benefit of others, offers a poignant reminder that over regulation can also lead to adverse consequence. This reminds us that UK policing through community engagement and the use of digital and social media must strive for a sophisticated and proportionate balance between the societal need to control and maintain consent and the requirements of individual citizens. Both over regulation and de-regulation can result in anomie with adverse consequences.

The purpose of UK police led community engagement is to establish public trust and confidence thereby ensuring the continuance of the British system of policing, which is based on cooperation and consent. Public trust and confidence legitimizes policing in that citizens accept not only the role of the police as an institution, but the role of social policing which is epitomized by self-regulation, social obedience and compliance with societal norms and convention. The use of procedural justice within policing is central to securing public consent and legitimacy and both elements, procedural justice and legitimacy will be explored further in the next section.

### **The pursuit of legitimacy through Procedural Justice**

In 2014, the HMIC (Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary) introduced PEEL (Police Effectiveness Efficiency and Legitimacy) assessments as a tool by which the public can judge the performance of their local police force in three key areas: effectiveness, efficiency and legitimacy. This now serves as the future blueprint for policing which must prove their effectiveness in preventing, reducing and investigating crime and anti social behaviour, whilst also protecting the vulnerable. The police must ensure efficiency, provide value for money and display how they are

able to secure legitimacy in the eyes of the public. The inclusion of legitimacy within these assessments can be seen as a strategic return to the fundamentals of policing that are enshrined within Sir Robert Peel's 1829 'Peelian' principles. The nine 'Peelian' principles have the commonality of gaining public approval, securing the respect and co-operation of the public, and preserving public favour. All elements serve to secure and maintain the consent of the public thereby allowing the British style of policing to survive. When one considers that the current population of England and Wales is approximately 65 million and is served by a police force establishment of approximately 207,000 members who are largely unarmed, it becomes apparent why policing is so heavily reliant on the consent of the public. For every one member of police staff within the 43 forces in England and Wales there are 314 members of the public.

Academic research suggests that legitimacy: "...the right to govern and the recognition by the governed of that right" (Beetham 1991, cited by Jackson and Bradford, 2012) is key to the future maintenance of public consent, with procedural justice or fairness being at the very heart of securing legitimacy. Procedural justice theory states that the fair application of law, policy and procedure can enhance legitimacy and that four key components have a central part to play (Tyler 2007, cited by Jackson and Bradford, 2012): 1) Voice: allowing communities to be involved in the decision-making process allows people a voice and promotes self-efficacy; 2) Neutrality: a police service that is honest, neutral (Lind 1997, cited by Jackson and Bradford, 2012) and consistent in the application of service delivery reassures the public that their interests are being protected (Lind and Tyler 1998, cited by Jackson and Bradford, 2012); 3) Respectful treatment: being treated with dignity and respect reassures people that their rights are being protected; and 4) Trustworthiness: threading fairness, benevolence and sincerity throughout the application of procedure and decision making enhances perception of honesty, dependability and integrity. The benefits of procedural justice and legitimacy include: more people accepting decisions, even if the outcomes are not desired, and enhanced public support and cooperation with the police (Tyler 1988, 1990; Tyler and Huo, 2002 cited by Jackson and Bradford, 2012). Where communities do not see fairness, public support decreases and community fracturing or disengagement can take place. This

area of research is extremely important when one specifically considers the considerable number of face-to-face contacts that take place between the police and young people on a daily basis and the lasting impression that negative encounters can have on young people especially as they transition into adulthood. Fagan and Tyler 2005, (cited by Jackson and Bradford, 2012) suggest that police engagement strategies form part of the process of 'legal socialization', which unfolds during the early life of a young person. It is this process or series of experiences and interactions with the police and judiciary that determine perceptions of legitimacy, which in turn determines obedience and compliance with the law and institutions that represent the law. The relevance for policing is clear, police forces must direct sophisticated engagement strategies that promote generic democratic values toward younger adolescents in order to address the changes in perceived legitimacy that are associated with the transition into adulthood. Historically, within the UK and other countries such as the US, Canada (excluding Quebec) and Commonwealth Nations whose laws are rooted in English common law, this has been achieved through close proximity, face-to-face interaction. UK policing must focus on procedural justice as a means to not only shape the context in which the police interact with young people, but also to influence obedience and compliance with police process as well as societal norms in general. Digital and social media is seen as a means by which the four key elements of procedural justice can be delivered, with a view to enhancing police legitimacy and increasing young people's cooperation and support for the police. This thesis aims to provide a bespoke insight into how policing can maximize the impact of procedural justice on young people through the use of digital and social media.

### **The evolution of UK policing and the importance of face-to-face communication**

The following section seeks to provide a basic introduction to the evolution of UK policing. At the core of contemporary policing, police integration into local communities and face-to-face contact and engagement has featured significantly. Chapter seven concludes that young people within this study still require face-to-face traditional communication despite the technological advancements that now offer a variety of digital engagement opportunities. This section will provide

historical context and insight into the value that has and is placed on face-to-face community contact by UK policing. It is important to understand the history behind the current model of policing so that we can better understand the implications of potential future models of policing that are based on virtual integration and communication.

The history of UK policing can be traced back over a thousand years to Anglo Saxon times where much emphasis was placed on citizen self-regulation and community led apprehension and punishment of criminals. This community self-regulation continued as the Normans established Feudalism in England in the eleventh century. The statute of Winchester in 1285 appeared to reinforce this community based crime fighter approach to the prevention of crime and apprehension of suspected offenders (Rawlings 2003, cited by Myhill 2006). However, as Feudalism declined in the fourteenth century and communities grew, communal policing became less effective and a move toward more official forms of policing became apparent.

In 1663, the City of London began employing paid individuals to guard the streets of London at night. These individuals continued the crime fighter role and were deemed very effective until the eighteenth century. In 1748 Henry Fielding became the Chief Magistrate for Westminster in London. Due to the dynamic and increasingly complex nature of local communities, the decision was made that a more professional and organized system of crime control was required. As a result the salaried 'Bow Street Runners' were formed. According to economic historian Tomas Ashton (1899-1968), in approximately 1760, the industrial revolution caused an unprecedented increase in population growth in cities. This in turn created unemployment, poverty and crime, especially in and around the River Thames. Counter invasion scares associated with the French revolution and Napoleonic wars, combined with the Nore Naval mutiny of 1797 (Ridley, 2013) resulted in the creation of the first marine police force in 1798; paid for by local merchants.

At the turn of the nineteenth century, there was a period of extreme political unrest. This culminated in the Peterloo Massacre, on 16<sup>th</sup> August 1819 in Manchester (BBC, 2007), which resulted in the death of 18 and injury of 700 people. This was deemed

by many to be the catalyst for the formation of a truly professional police force. In 1829, Home Secretary, Sir Robert Peel established the Metropolitan Police Force and this is seen as the birth of modern policing despite organized paid policing having already been established in Scotland, Ireland and France, years before. In reality it signified the formalization of existing practice. However, a noticeable change in policing philosophy can be seen at this time with Sir Robert Peel coordinating a shift in emphasis away from the enforcement led crime fighter role, to one of crime prevention through high visibility and proximity based community contact. Officers were assigned 'beats' conducive to physically meeting and integrating with local communities.

From 1829, all new police officers were given a set of 'General Instructions', containing nine principles of policing known colloquially as 'Robert Peels 9 Principles of Policing' (Home Office, 2012). The purpose of these principles was to secure 'policing by consent'. Direct, face-to-face community contact formed the cornerstone of this new crime prevention role and this can be seen throughout many of the policing principles. For example, principle two highlights the importance of securing and maintaining public respect. Principle three recognizes the importance of securing public co-operation. Principle five notes the importance of providing an independent service and 'friendship' to the public, and principle six reminds us that the police are simply members of the public who are paid. The pursuit of public consent, favour and respect were the initial foundations upon which trust, confidence and legitimacy are now coveted. Securing the consent of local communities also served as a means by which the Government could mitigate the risk of civil and political unrest associated with rising unemployment, poverty, crime and the ever-present conflict with France. Forming bonds with the public through personal street level contact and achieving true 'insider' status (see page 155) where 'the police are the public and the public are the police' (Peel's seventh principle) could be seen to give the impression at least that the police were part of and on the side of the majority. This was important at the time because a public concern was that the newly formed Metropolitan Police would simply mirror the fractured, corrupt and violent police force that was already established in France (Stenson, 2016).

At the turn of the twentieth century, the 'walking and talking' based policing system, which was based on face-to-face interaction with local communities became subject to criticism for its failure to catch criminals. As a result, in 1903, the Metropolitan Police became mobile, purchasing its first motorised vehicles. Technological development continued to grow exponentially into the 1930's when in 1934 the information room in New Scotland Yard became the blueprint for modern day police control rooms. With the implementation of the '999' emergency call system in 1937, complimented by further developing mobile transportation in the 1960's, UK policing attempted to improve police/community relations through swift call handling in order to prevent and detect crime. It is clear however that this attempt to move away from an enforcement model failed. Newburn (2003) reported that technology and mobilization was in fact serving only to alienate local communities. This 'professionalization' of the policing system had in fact served only to loosen physical ties with local communities and perpetuate an enforcement model of policing into the 1980's and 1990's (Fielding, 1996 cited by Myhill 2006). This professional and mobile style of policing provided little opportunity for public face-to-face interaction, and even less opportunity for engagement with Black, Minority and Ethnic (BME) communities.

In the 1960's, US research identified that poor community engagement was resulting in community alienation. In the UK, Alderman identified similar issues in the 1970's, as did Lord Scarman in his report following the Brixton riots of 1981. This provided a catalyst for UK policing to start its journey once again toward improving police / community relations through community engagement, integration and close proximity, face-to-face contact. The importation of community based policing principles from the US served as the foundation for the development of UK Community Policing; a model of policing that saw the police more as social facilitators than crime fighters.

In 1959 Canadian-American sociologist Erving Goffman published 'The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life'. This was a pioneering book that placed face-to-face interaction at the centre of sociological study. The following section provides an

introductory insight into the work of Goffman in the context of the development of Community Policing and Neighbourhood Policing (see below) showing clearly the importance of proximity based community communication. This section also discusses the relevance of Goffman's work to the findings of this thesis

Goffman (1959) defined face-to-face interaction as: "the reciprocal influence of individuals upon one another's actions when in one another's immediate physical presence" (cited by Sternberg, 2012, p.50). Goffman's work was focused purely on the interaction and discourse that takes place when two people are physically co-located. Therefore, physical proximity or 'co-presence' is very important as it: "renders persons uniquely accessible, available and subject to one another" (cited by Sternberg, 2012, p.51). In a policing context, this uniquely accessible position provides opportunity for policing to maximize its impact on the perception of young people. Chapter five reveals that the young people who took part in this research study require re-assurance that their engagement and participation in a policing context will be meaningful and well received by the police. It maybe that young people believe that face-to-face interaction presents the most favourable opportunity for the police to present a positive image and make a good impression thereby developing a rapport or sense of togetherness that can often be associated with close proximity familiarity.

In 1959 Goffman (cited by Barnhart, 1994) introduced the theory of dramaturgy into sociological study, using it to explain social interaction through a theatrical metaphor. Goffman's 'self-presentation' and dramaturgical work suggests that the meaning of social roles are developed through social interaction which he sees as being analogous to an actor giving a performance in front of an audience. Props, non-verbal communication, and 'scene setting' are all used to make the 'performance' more believable. This process Goffman calls 'Impression Management', which involves people attempting to present an acceptable image of themselves to others.

It is clear that the process of impression management is a complex one and so carries with it certain risks. Not delivering a favourable impression is one such risk,



which can cause embarrassment and potentially damage a newly forming relationship. Conversely, the presentation of the perfect performance can also have its risks in terms of assessing the credibility or sincerity of the 'other' actor. In a policing context, this can be seen as the young person making a judgement based on first impressions about the sincerity of the police interaction. It is in this respect that non-verbal leakage of 'expressions given off' (Birnbaum, 2008, p.229) become important in carefully peeling back the mask of performance, gaining a glimpse of what Goffman calls the 'back stage'- the area where there is no 'performance'. Through careful consideration of such leakage, the young person may gain a better and more truthful insight into the intention of the attending police representative.

From a policing perspective, cognisance of Goffman's dramaturgical and self-presentation theory may explain why young people appear and behave in certain ways, especially when in the presence of a police officer during street level interaction. Goffman suggests that people tailor their behaviour to their audience. So, a young person's 'presentation' to a police officer may be different to that presented to a friend, parent or schoolteacher. Such presentation may also be affected by the close proximity of others, including peers. By understanding the theatrical nature of such social interaction, police officers can avoid stereotyping, thereby enhancing the quality of street level interaction and enabling the delivery of procedural justice.

Goffman believes that impression management can only be achieved if others are in sync with the individual's own perception of self. Goffman was also interested in the ways individuals manage their 'persona' by strategically hiding information that is not congruent with their projected image; for example, by not disclosing information during interaction that could be perceived as unreasonable. He implied that technology mediated communication may be limited in richness due to a lack of non-verbal cues. However Bullingham and Vasconcelos (2013) suggest that the development of online technology and the creativity associated with social media platforms has added 'richness' to this form of communication. The technological advancements associated with social media now enable participants to conceal elements of the offline self. This facilitates more effective and creative management

of their projected online persona. Having said this, Bullingham and Vasconcelos (2013) conclude that this projected online persona remains firmly anchored in the persons offline self. Interestingly, in 2008 Birnbaum published a thesis based on an eight-month ethnographic study of how university students made use of Facebook. Birnbaum showed how the work of Goffman could be applied to computer-mediated communication by recording the use of online self-presentation techniques to mould acceptable online personal profiles. Birnbaum concluded that US college students use Facebook to present an image of how they think others would see them as a student, and this invariably differed to how they saw themselves as a person. Birnbaum showed how online profiles were designed to give the impression that students were active, adventurous 'party-goers' and in line with the stereotyped profile of an undergraduate. In order to promote this image, students would carefully stage their online profile accordingly omitting any information that painted a contrary picture. Within the policing context, understanding these online 'performances' is important in shaping the way policing understands and then interacts with young people. To base an engagement process on the online or 'staged' profile of young people would serve to base the engagement process on a stereotyped caricature, which undoubtedly would harm relationships between the police and young people.

In 1963 Goffman published his book 'Stigma' (cited by Crossman, 2016) in which he discusses how personal attributes can adversely affect an individual's identity, preventing their participation in society. Goffman identifies three types of stigma: blemishes of the body; blemishes of character, such as extremist political beliefs; and blemishes of group identity or membership of denigrated social groups. Goffman argues that for some, the personal impact is so great that they withdraw from society. Such stigma presents policing with a complex engagement conundrum and it is apparent that policing must adopt a tailored and sophisticated engagement programme in order to enhance participation from members of such communities. Not only does policing have to overcome physical and emotional withdrawal from society, but also overcome the psychological impact that communities may feel as a result of being labelled, stereotyped and often discriminated against. Earlier in this chapter I discuss the importance of procedural justice and legitimacy in securing

trust and confidence within communities; it may be that the framework of engagement presented within this thesis provides a preliminary foundation upon which future research can explore the sophistication required for engaging young people associated with such stigma.

Tilley (2003, cited by Newburn, 2008) suggests that immediately post millennium, there were three principal models of policing competing for dominance within UK policing: Intelligence led policing, which lent itself to an enforcement style of policing; Problem Orientated Policing (Tilley *et al*, 2006), which was first proposed in 1979 in the US and found popularity within the UK in the mid 1990's; and Community Policing, which was based on a system of foot patrol where officers were allocated geographical beats. Within this model, policing strives to achieve a balance between law enforcement, crime prevention, problem solving, face-to-face community engagement and partnership working. Whilst all three models of policing involve a degree of community engagement, it is generally accepted that Community Policing places greatest focus on community participation or engagement and it was this style of policing that developed in the mid-2000's into what we now term Neighbourhood Policing (Home Office, 2005).

Neighbourhood Policing emerged from the Community Policing principles of the 1980's and early 1990's, culminating in the Home Office 2004-2008 strategic plan and the government White Paper 'Building Communities, Beating Crime' (2005). This formalized the vision for Neighbourhood Policing, which was to be accessible and responsive to citizen's needs. Contemporary policing since 2005 has been defined by an unwavering commitment to improving trust and confidence within communities through close proximity or face-to-face engagement. Digital and social media now offer an alternative approach to the engagement of communities and it is important for policing to understand how this approach can enhance the vision of Neighbourhood Policing in terms of accessibility and responsiveness to community's needs.

## **Defining the terminology: what is digital and social media?**

Digital media is defined by TechNet-Microsoft as being: "...audio, video and photo content that have been encoded (digitally compressed)" (TechNet-Microsoft, 2010, p.1).

Social media is defined as:

"A new set of Internet tools that enable shared community experiences both online and in person. Social media allows people with basic computer skills to tell their stories using publishing tools such as blogs, video logs, photo sharing, podcasting and wikis" (Technology in Translation 2007, cited by Copitch and Fox, 2010, p.44).

Digital media is the digitized media content that is transmitted over computer networks (Technet Microsoft, 2010) and social media relates to the myriad of websites and applications that enable users to create and share content or to participate in social networking (Oxford Dictionaries, 2016).

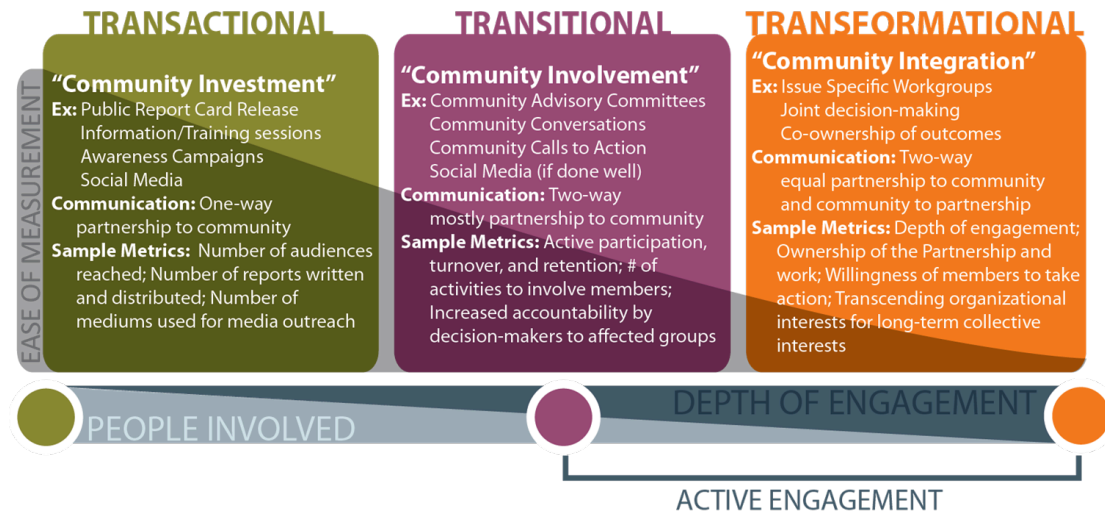
Rutherford (2010) suggests that social media can be aligned to three categories: 1) Content sharing and organizing sites such as Flickr and YouTube; 2) Content creation and editing sites such as Wikipedia; and 3) Social Network Sites such as: Facebook and Twitter (see Appendix Thirteen).

## **Transformative Community Engagement**

Simplistically community engagement is a process by which participation is enabled. Myhill's 2006 definition of community engagement has been adopted as the foundation from which key elements of this research thesis has been developed:

"The process of enabling the participation of citizens and communities in policing at their chosen level, ranging from providing information and reassurance, to empowering them to identify and implement solutions to local problems and influence strategic priorities and decisions" (Myhill, 2006/2012. p.1).

With regard to transformational community engagement, Rospert (2013) refers to the ‘community engagement continuum’, which involves three elementary parts to engagement: transactional, transitional and transformational engagement.



© Strive 2012  
 Content adapted from Bowen et al, *When Suits Meet Roots*. 2010  
 Sample Metrics adapted from Pastor et al, *TRANSACTIONS, TRANSFORMATIONS, TRANSLATIONS: Metrics That Matter for Building, Scaling, and Funding Social Movements*. 2011

Transactional engagement involves a one-way dialogue where information is pushed to audiences in order to disseminate information. Similarities can be drawn to Arnstein’s 1969 ‘Ladder of Participation’ (see page 22) in which the bottom three rungs (manipulation, therapy, and informing) signify minimal actual engagement. Whilst transactional engagement may be useful in certain circumstances, meaningful engagement requires a two-way dialogue, sharing of power and control with the user and a significant progression up Arnstein’s ‘Ladder of Participation’.

Engagement through connection and conversation is the priority for marketers (Evans and McKee, 2010), and this is reinforced by Harfoush (2008, cited by Felesky, 2008), who suggested that transformative engagement was a key factor in the success of Barack Obama’s 2008 Presidential election social media campaign:

“A wrong way (to use Twitter) would be to come online and not really spend the time having conversations with people, just to continually blast one way messages all the time and then not be part of the community” (Harfoush 2008, p1, cited by Felesky 2008).

Despite the apparent significance of transformative engagement within the political world, Brainard and McNutt (2010) found in their analysis of US based police departments that the social media platform Yahoo was still being used simply to push information in a non-transformational attempt to increase visibility and presence online. These findings were also supported by UK research undertaken by: Crump (2011) who found similar findings in relation to the use of Twitter; and Socitm (2010, cited by Ide-Smith, 2010) who found that whilst one third of UK councils had used social media as a community safety communication tool, the majority simply used the platform to inform rather than invite two-way dialogue. Transitional engagement is a move along the engagement continuum, becoming more sophisticated and meaningful in that a two-way dialogue is achieved. This dialogue is however led by the organization rather than the user. Similarities to Arnstein’s ‘Ladder’ can again be seen in terms of the middle rungs ‘consultation’ and ‘placation’. Transformational engagement is seen as the most sophisticated and deepest level of engagement (Rospert, 2013). At this level, communities are empowered, treated as equals in the partnership and fully involved in the decision-making and problem solving process. This is the aspiration for policing and is seen as the way in which public satisfaction, trust and confidence in policing will be improved and legitimacy secured.

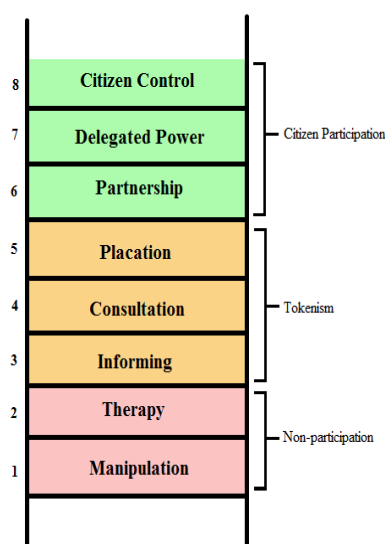
### **Citizen Participation**

There is no single agreed definition for either civic (Adler and Goggin, 2005), or political (Uhlener, 2001, cited by Lamprinou, 2013) participation. At its most simple, participation is defined by the Oxford English Dictionary as being the act of taking part in something. Participation means different things to different people and in the social sciences, participation is achieved when the public express opinion and exert influence, be it politically, economically or civically. A wider interpretation includes

formal and informal activities such as: volunteering, being involved in community groups, lobbying, campaigning, demonstrating, boycotting products, purchasing fair trade products, being 'neighbourly', and donating (Pathways through Participation, 2011).

A two and a half year UK based 'Pathways through Participation' project conducted by the Institute for Volunteering Research in 2009 involved 100 in depth interviews and identified three overlapping categories of participation: social (collective activities), public (interaction with agencies), and individual (individual actions and choices). The study, which focused primarily on public participation and its links to political participation, concluded that participation must not only be meaningful and have a purpose, but the experience must also be positive for the individual. This study also found that people react negatively to agencies imposing themselves and are more likely to participate if they are invited. Structured opportunity to participate at an early age is considered to be a good foundation for future participation. The benefits associated, as well as the diverse opportunities available must be clearly articulated to capture interest, especially of those who are dis-engaged. A lack of trust and confidence in the political system, limited efficacy and how others perceived them were all identified as influencing factors for participation, which must be considered by policing.

### Arnstein's Ladder of Participation



Arnstein's 1969 ladder of participation presents a very simplistic and generic insight into the complexities of participation that has since guided many commentaries on participation. There are eight sliding scales or levels of participation within the ladder, distinguishing the 'haves', who have the power and influence and are positioned on the top rungs, and the 'have-nots', who do

not have the power and influence and are positioned on the lower rungs. The aspiration of policing is to provide engagement that reflects the upper rungs of participation thereby enabling citizen control, but the reality is that opportunity historically remains within the lower rungs of the participation ladder only.

Whilst an assessment of Nottinghamshire Police's positioning either along Rospert's (2013) 'Continuum of Engagement' or Arnstein's 'Ladder of Participation' is beyond the scope of this study, it is anticipated that a general understanding of how well Nottinghamshire Police engage with young people will be secured.

### **Thesis structure**

**Chapter two** starts by briefly introducing and reviewing the literature relating to community engagement and the police. The chapter then offers a comprehensive critical analysis of the literature that relates specifically to the police use of digital and social media to engage young people. The chapter then explores why young people use digital and social media and why it is considered important for policing to use this technology to engage young people. A brief exploration of the influence digital and social media has on civic and political participation is then provided prior to the chapter concluding with an assertion that the academic literature relating to the police use of digital and social media to engage young people is very limited.

**Chapter three** is the methodology chapter, which examines in detail the qualitative methodology used within the research programme. The chapter provides a critical overview of thematic analysis, which was the preferred method of analysis for examining the emergent data themes, prior to discussing and considering a further seven key components: qualitative methodology, the focus group, the interview schedule, moderating skills, the pilot, transcribing focus group data, and the semi-structured interview. The chapter then concludes by discussing salient research ethical considerations.



**Chapter four** introduces Nottinghamshire and Nottinghamshire Police as the research backdrop. The demographic profile of Nottinghamshire is presented and key policing challenges are highlighted. These also serve to justify the selection of the research area for this thesis. The chapter introduces some salient local academic research, which provides further justification for undertaking this research prior to then focusing specifically on a review of police led community engagement within Nottinghamshire. The purpose of the review was not only to provide a snapshot of evidence in relation to how Nottinghamshire Police engaged its local communities, but also to identify a legitimate area of academic study that would serve as the focus of this research thesis.

**Chapter five** reports specifically on the findings that relate to research objectives one (A) and (B), two, and three (A), (B), and (C), presenting the narrative data that has emerged from the qualitative research undertaken. Explanatory text facilitates an in depth interpretation and analysis of the findings and emergent themes are examined and cross referenced to the pertinent research identified within the literature review which is detailed in chapter two. The chapter will show that whilst some young people do have a preference to receive information from the police via digital and social media, there is still a requirement for traditional communication especially when passing information to the police. The chapter also explores nine types of information that that can potentially serve to not only legitimize the role of policing in the eyes of young people but also mitigate the risk of hidden victimization.

**Chapter six** reports on the findings that relate to research objectives four and five. This chapter practically examines participant (young people's) experience and opinion of Nottinghamshire Police's digital and social media content, as well as the Neighbourhood Priority Survey (NPS). The findings presented will suggest that Nottinghamshire Police's current digital and social media engagement strategy is generally in line with user requirement. It will also introduce three key criteria that may provide an insight into how policing can manage young people's perception of policing within the theoretical contexts of social control, procedural justice and the notion of extending police legitimacy.

**Chapter seven** provides a reflexive account of the research conclusions paying particular attention to determining whether the original research aim and objectives have been achieved. This chapter presents further discussion of two contextual backdrops: police austerity and the pluralization of policing and hidden victimization and the threat of emergent criminality. These contextual backdrops define how the contribution of this thesis is positioned and should be viewed as the principal justifications for undertaking the research. This chapter will then specifically bring together the empirical findings to answer the study's original research objectives and it is within this section that the 'online engagement framework' will be introduced. This framework represents the collective findings of past and present research that will provide insight into the pre-requisites of what I call 'Quid Pro Quo' engagement with young people. The chapter will then discuss how the research is aligned to the theoretical perspective of the Interpretivist paradigm and will conclude by detailing how digital and social media can be used by policing to promote normative behaviour and compliance through the establishment of trust, confidence and legitimacy in the eyes of young people. The chapter will highlight some relevant research limitations and then provide concluding commentary in terms of the future direction of policing and potential further pertinent academic research that may be applicable.

## **CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **Police digital and social media engagement and young people**

This chapter provides a comprehensive critical analysis of the literature that relates to the police use of digital and social media to engage young people. The key words used in the literature review search strategy included: police, engagement, participation, participatory media, social media, digital media, young people, children, and youth.

To provide contextual background, chapter one defines transformative engagement and citizen participation, and the initial section of this chapter provides a brief introduction and review of the literature that relates specifically to traditional community engagement and the police. Within this particular section, the importance of face-to-face communication in community engagement is explored in some detail. The chapter then provides a detailed insight into the use of digital and social media by young people, outlining explicitly why it is important for policing to consider the use of this technology as an engagement tool. The chapter then discusses the potential use of digital and social media to enhance policing's online image in the context of the 'demystification' of policing (Reiner, 2000). The chapter concludes that the academic literature relating to the police use of digital and social media to engage young people is very limited. It is worthy of note that in order to gain further insight into the area of digital engagement and young people, the chapter presents a brief exploration of the effect digital and social media has on the civic and political participation of young people.

## **A brief introduction to community engagement**

It is generally accepted that the terms community and engagement are difficult to define, and that both terms can mean different things to different people (Myhill, 2006). The Oxford dictionary defines community as a group of people living in the same place or having a particular characteristic in common. The reference to common characteristics is important because communities manifest in all shapes, sizes and localities. Communities may be virtual and defined through common interest and linked by social media; they may also be transient in nature emerging and reforming through time. Nevertheless, the onus is on the police and their partners to identify with the community and adopt an effective and tailored engagement framework in order to develop the trust and confidence that is required to legitimize the framework of British policing which is based on public consent.

It is clear from a review of the literature that community engagement has been subject to numerous definitions, but for this thesis, the definition offered by Myhill (2006) has been adopted and serves to frame key elements of the thesis:

“The process of enabling the participation of citizens and communities in policing at their chosen level, ranging from providing information and reassurance, to empowering them to identify and implement solutions to local problems and influence strategic priorities and decisions” (Myhill, 2006/2012. p.1).

From this definition, one can see key elements that appear to be threaded throughout many of the definitions associated with engagement: ‘enabling’, ‘participation’ and ‘empowerment’. For Wang (2011, cited by Reitz, 2012), engagement means giving the consumer a voice by providing opportunity to participate. Atherley (2011, cited by Reitz, 2012) sees engagement as being defined by active participation. Online user engagement, which will be discussed in more detail later in this chapter, involves the provision of opportunity to: watch, download, read, listen, and comment on content (Evans and McKee 2010, cited by Reitz, 2012).

Marci (2006, cited by Reitz, 2012) when measuring emotional response to commercials concluded that users are more engaged when commercials are placed in context. This is an important consideration for policing especially when engaging young people, as online content must be seen as being in context. Rappaport (2007, cited by Reitz, 2012) believes that advertising is no longer about interruption and repetition; it is about user relevance. Policing must therefore seek to inform, educate or entertain so that users can develop a sense of ownership (Edelman 2007, cited by Reitz, 2012). To generate loyalty, there must be an emotional connection between user and the brand. Within the arena of online consumer engagement, Mollen and Wilson (2010, cited by Reitz, 2012) used the Stimulus-Organism-Response (S-O-R) model and concluded that users must experience cognitive immersion before truly becoming engaged. Policing it appears must therefore strive to generate a dynamic and pleasurable state in their users in order to facilitate full engagement.

### **Public trust, confidence and community engagement**

In 2014, Lister *et al* conducted a review of the literature in relation to community engagement and reported that there is an evidence base that suggests community engagement can nurture positive collaboration between police and the public. Specifically, community engagement can provide more effective neighbourhood priority identification and better community relations, which ultimately serves to legitimize the role of policing in the eyes of the community (Lister *et al*, 2014). Historically, police engagement within communities has involved traditional methods such as: beat surgeries, attending community group meetings, door knocking, and Safer Neighbourhood Group coordination. Community participation in such events is generally low and lower still for Black, Minority and Ethnic (BME) communities. Research does however suggest that the willingness to participate is somewhat higher than the actual participation itself (Casey, 2008). Open public meetings are a traditional method of engagement used by the police, but are associated with a low participation rate, especially for young people.

## **Why is community engagement so important in relation to young people?**

Nelson *et al* in 2010 provides a reasoned argument for why it is essential to engage effectively with young people. Whilst her survey based research focused on young people in Northern Ireland, one can see how the findings are relevant to mainland Britain. Nelson *et al* (2010) found that the relationship between the police and young people in Northern Ireland was tense, resulting in a reluctance to approach the police either as a victim or witness to a crime. Both police and young people were found to hold negative perceptions of the other. The police were failing to understand the needs of young people and stereotyped based on perception of clothing and behaviour; whilst young people themselves held the view that the police did not understand their problems, constantly targeted them, and did not feel the police to be polite, helpful or fair. It appears from this research that young people do not see procedural justice in their interactions with the police and therefore the perception of legitimacy is absent. The potential for hidden victimization caused by a reluctance to report crimes to the police (see chapter five) is evident and if left unchecked this could lead to a normative disconnect (see chapter one), or what Durkheim refers to as a state of normlessness, which in turn could lead to criminality and disorder.

In 2012, the report of the Young People's Scrutiny Group and Scrutiny Management Board offered a statistical analysis based review of the relationship between police and young people in a West Midlands borough of the UK. The survey based study sought to bridge the gap between the police and young people in order to enhance understanding thereby creating a stronger community. The findings from the study supported those of Nelson *et al* in 2010, concluding that there is an unstable relationship between police and young people based on a mutual misunderstanding, poor communication, and poor interaction. If engagement, and in particular online engagement is to succeed, the study recommended that the engagement process must be interesting to young people and should involve young people in its development.

## **The importance of face-to-face communication in community engagement**

Within a business context, a 2009 Forbes Insight survey of 760 business executives (cited by Murphy, 2011) revealed that face-to-face communication was the preferred choice of executives for addressing the specific needs of more complex business sales. 82% of participating executives disclosed that face-to-face communication was critical in the key area of 'persuasion'. This survey concluded that face-to-face communication encouraged greater customer engagement and is more effective than online communication for delivering key messages because online communication is often impeded by distraction. Within this thesis (chapter five), young people suggest that personal contact by a uniformed police representative within the school environment is a preferred method of engagement because young people within this context are a 'captive audience'. This suggests that if the police require the effective participation of young people, they must first secure their full attention and the classroom appears to offer this opportunity. Conversely, online remote communication either mobile or within the comfort of the home may not be so effective, due to potential distraction.

Experiential Communication Theory (Satir 1967, cited by Antai-Otong, 2007) may also provide insight into why young people feel so strongly about face-to-face contact. Satir suggests that clear, honest and direct communication, which involves verbal and non-verbal communication is a pre-requisite for effective communication. Mutual clarification between both sender and receiver and consistency between gesture and behaviour play an important part in effective communication. Non-verbal communication is introduced as a key factor for securing effective communication as tone of voice and bodily expression can often paint a sophisticated image of meaning. Simmel (1908, cited by Soboroff, 2012) expands this argument by suggesting that eye contact can play a key role in effective communication, supporting non-verbal communication. In fact, both Goffman (see page 15) and Simmel (cited by Soboroff, 2012) suggested that successful interaction and communication requires members to share meaningful gestures and this can only be achieved through physical co-location.

In 2006, Mills *et al* (cited by Gapsiso & Wilson, 2015) asserted that face-to-face communication was the most effective form of verbal communication when persuasion or motivation was a required outcome. Similarly, Emmitt and Gorse (2006) concluded that: “face-to-face interaction is still considered the preferred method for resolving problems and contentious issues” (cited by Gapsiso & Wilson, 2015, p.208).

Daft & Lengel (1983) offer Media Richness Theory as a reason why face-to-face communication is seen as the most efficient form of communication. Whilst it should be acknowledged that this theory was developed prior to the cultural explosion of digital and social media, the relevance of the central tenets of the theory to social media platforms can still be seen. Within the context of this theory, media richness is associated with how much understanding communication can generate. If the communication generates greater understanding through the additionality of non-verbal cues, it is considered high in media richness; if not, it is considered low in media richness. Media Richness Theory proposes four criteria for facilitating greater understanding: the availability of immediate feedback, the availability of non-verbal cues, the use of simple, natural language, and the personal touch. Perhaps Media Richness Theory could explain why young people within this study favour face-to-face contact with the police when reporting personal and potentially sensitive information. Research presented within this thesis as well as Wright *et al* (2013) revealed a concern among young people that the police may not take their concerns seriously. Close proximity, media rich communication may be seen to provide an opportunity for young people to directly and quickly assess the sincerity of police response to their reports by offering a personal opportunity to analyse body language in order to determine how seriously the police are taking their complaint or report.

### **Trust and Confidence**

Trust and confidence are important considerations for young people when determining how to engage with policing. Bradford and Jackson (2013) suggest that trust and confidence is essential for securing public cooperation and participation.



Trust is defined as: “To say we trust you means we believe you have the right intentions toward us and that you are competent to do what we trust you to do” (Hardin, 2006, cited by Jackson & Bradford, 2012, p.5).

Lasthuizen *et al* (2012) found that where the perceived benefits of participation (in this case sharing and receiving information) outweighs the perceived cost, participation is more likely to increase. Dwyer *et al*, (2007) noted that Social Networking Sites record all interactions and retain a record for potential future social data mining, whereas face-to-face interaction leaves no such trace. Despite this, their online survey of MySpace and Facebook users concluded that for online interaction, trust is not as necessary in the development of new relationships as it is for face-to-face encounters. This would suggest that online relationships could develop even where there is a perception of weak privacy safeguards. Interestingly, the young people who participated in this study declared a reticence to allow online technology to nurture such a relationship with policing. It is worthy of note that the research conducted by Dwyer *et al* involved 117 adult subjects who were over 18 years of age. It may be that because younger people place such weight on anonymity and confidentiality, the perception of risk associated with the digital footprint left by online police participation is simply too great and this anxiety and distrust of online police engagement manifests in a reluctance to engage with policing online and a need to engage offline in proximity based face-to-face setting.

### **Police use of digital and social media to engage young people**

“The (Obama) campaign gave new media the opportunity to become an integrated part of the communications campaign...It helped to access a lot of people by giving them the tools to organize, to create events, to connect with each other and give them everything that they needed, so that when they went offline they were fully equipped...to pass on talking points to neighbourhoods and families...everything that we did was to connect people, because it was a movement that was fundamentally about people” (Harfoush, 2008).

The significance of this quote is that it reminds us that in order to fully understand the role of digital and social media in policing, we must look further afield than policing itself. It is clear that there is a distinct lack of empirical research not only associated with the police use of digital and social media to engage young people, but in the general field of digital and social media engagement (see: Bennett *et al*, 2008; Banaji and Buckingham, 2009; Gerodimos, 2010; Craig, 2011; Ruddell and Jones, 2013; Kilburn, 2014, and Shepherdson, 2014). This empirical disparity becomes more noticeable when one considers young people. A key theme within the literature however, is 'potential'. 21<sup>st</sup> Century technology is described as having immense potential to deliver enhanced participation in young people, but few studies appear to have secured the correlation between the salient variables. Ruddell and Jones (2013) provide supporting comment noting that there has been much practitioner and academic commentary regarding the usefulness of police digital and social media, but there has been little empirical research.

The following section provides a laconic introduction to the general area of digital and social media. The concepts of participation and transformational engagement have been discussed within chapter one and this provides a foundation from which this chapter can now explore what is in fact a limited literature base.

### **Understanding why young people use digital and social media**

To understand how to engage effectively with young people using twenty-first century technology, it is important to understand why young people use such technology. Gerodimos (2010) describes this requirement as understanding end user motivations, preferences and attitudes (see also Banaji, and Buckingham, 2009). The Internet has become the first port of call for the acquisition of news and up to date information for young people (Dutton and Helsper, 2007), but Gerodimos (2010) reminds us that there are still gaps in understanding why and how users seek, process and pursue Internet based opportunities. Securing this understanding should serve as a suitable foundation from which the potential of digital and social media can be exploited.

Boyd (2014) provides a good introduction to this understanding in her eight-year exploration of online engagement with young people in the US between 2005 and 2012. Her research involved 166 semi-structured interviews and she found that social media provides a virtual freedom; a means by which young people can stay connected to friends in a 'shrinking landscape' caused by the physical time constraints imposed by such things as homework, part time work, and sport. Threaded throughout Boyd's work is the concept of the 'networked public', a real or imagined online space where young people can socialize informally, connect and makes sense of their worlds. Boyd found that young people fabricate their social media identities through a process sociologist Erving Goffman calls 'impression management' and the way young people present themselves online is important to them. Image or 'digital persona' (Boyd, 2014) should therefore be a factor considered by policing when using such platforms to engage young people, as should peer influence, which can shape the type of social media used by young people. Interestingly, Boyd found that family is also an important factor in social media attraction- if parents are known to use a particular social media platform it becomes increasingly unlikely that young people will be drawn to it.

Rose and Morstyn (2013) reported that 90% of Australian 12-17 year olds and 97% of 16-17 year olds were using social networking sites. Research undertaken by the Australian Communications and Media Authority (ACMA) in the form of an online survey, focus groups and case studies found that social media appears to be embedded into the daily routine of young people. Whilst this research is limited by a survey sample size of 55 young people with a supporting qualitative methodology that lacks diversity in terms of age, ethnicity and gender, it is supported by research undertaken by: Banaji and Buckingham, 2009, and The Pew Internet and American Life Project, 2010. This finding is also supported by Boyd (2014) who remarked that staying connected with their communities or friends is natural, even expected and is considered as normal as watching TV.

Livingstone and Bober (2005) undertook a qualitative study, which included 14 focus groups of young people between 9 and 19 years in 2003. The research concluded that digital and social media is used predominantly for finding out information about

school, communicating with friends and family (see also Ito *et al*, 2010), playing games, and downloading music. This is supported by the more recent research of Reich *et al* in 2012, which found that teenagers used Social Networking Sites (SNS) such as MySpace and Facebook to stay connected with friends and strengthen offline relationships.

A potential dilemma for policing is if young people view digital and social media engagement as an imposition on their online personal spaces. Whist Roblyer *et al* (2010, cited by Junco, 2011) found that only 15% of students in their study reported a feeling of privacy invasion by the faculty use of Facebook, policing must still be cognisant of this risk and take mitigating action by adopting innovative and sensitive communication strategies in order to successfully use this particular media to engage young people.

It appears that the use of digital and social media as a means of communication depends on a multitude of factors and that young people use both online and offline communication to sustain social networks, moving freely among different communication forms (Drotner, 2000; Pew, 2001b cited by Livingston and Bover, 2005). This suggests that police communication strategies must be multi-dimensional and not simply reliant on digital or social media.

### **Why is digital engagement with young people important?**

A primary reason is because young people are seen as being at the forefront of new media uptake (Bennett *et al*, 2008) and more likely to participate in online engagement (Rainie *et al.*, 2012). This provides a foundation for participatory democracy in the form of enhanced civic engagement through their online interaction. The relevance of this becomes apparent when one considers a societal concern that suggests a crisis in democracy, epitomized by declining social capital, civic and political participation. Of particular concern are young people who are considered by some to be lackadaisical and apathetic with regard to civic and political responsibility and too easily distracted by emerging consumer and entertainment culture (Bennett *et al*, 2008). Commentators such as Banaji and

Buckingham (2009) however, suggest that the problem may in fact lie with a society that has and continues to exclude young people. Boyd (2014) provides supporting testimony by submitting that young people's voices rarely shape public discourse as few listen to what they (teenagers) have to say. Buckingham also suggests that another reason for the perceived decline in the civic and political participation of young people is the fallacious interpretation that such participation is in fact in decline. A more reasoned argument is that the traditional view of what constitutes civic and political participation may no longer be relevant to young people. Research indicates that whilst young people may feel alienated by traditional notions of citizenship and politics, they are interested in the day-to-day issues that affect them, and are prepared to engage given the opportunity, but on their own terms (Henn, *et al*, 2002). Once invited to the table of engagement, it appears that young people have a healthy appetite and it is therefore the responsibility of the system to provide young people not only with the food but also the appropriate cutlery.

This opportunity to engage is seen by many as being facilitated by digital and social media, and in particular the Internet. It is suggested that social media may offer a more inclusive participatory platform for achieving 'networked citizenship' (Banaji and Buckingham, 2009) and an alternative to the traditional interpretation of citizenship, which may only serve to alienate the younger generation. The explosion of online involvement by young people could be considered further indication of a desire to participate, albeit there is suggestion that there remains a gap between the willingness to participate in digital media and active civic participation in terms of getting involved in a social cause that has personal meaning (Rheingold, 2008).

The Pew Internet and American life project (2010) provides good reason why the digital engagement of young people is important because their research identified that 95% of US teenagers aged 14 to 17 years engage in online activity and that 73% of them are using Social Networking Sites (Lenhart *et al*, 2010). This project further identified that 70% of 18 to 29 year olds use Social Networking Sites, with Facebook being the most popular (73%), followed by MySpace (48%) and LinkedIn (14%). A study in 2008 by the Australian Communications and Media Authority (ACMA) found that whilst 8-11 year olds spend approximately 30 minutes per day online, 15-17

year olds spend approximately 2.5 hours online per day emailing, messaging, chatting on Social Network Sites, completing homework, playing online games, and viewing audio-visual content (ACMA, 2008). Within the UK, despite a slight declining usage, Facebook remains the default Social Networking Site for adults and is still used by 2.5 million young people aged 13 to 17 years, albeit the popularity of sites such as Snapchat and WhatsApp for 13 to 20 year olds is increasing (Rose, 2015).

A further reason why the digital engagement of young people is important is because for some, young people are regarded as the 'digital generation'; the "pioneers of new media culture" (Drotner, 2000 cited by Livingstone, S. and Bober, M., 2005, p.5), technically expert, but at the same time naïve, vulnerable and in need of support and guidance. Prensky (2001) coined the term 'Digital Natives, Digital Immigrants' where adults (digital immigrants) are deemed not to talk the same language as their children who are considered digital natives, fluently born into the digital world. Boyd (2014) suggests that the term 'digital native' does not necessarily mean digitally effective or competent with technology and this is an important point, serving as a timely reminder for police forces who wish to engage the younger generation effectively in order to mitigate the ever growing threat of online harm exposure to young people (Beckett and Warrington, 2014).

### **The role of digital and social media in policing**

The accelerated development of digital and social media has led to increased accountability within policing. Never has police decision-making been under so much public scrutiny. Policing is becoming increasingly 'de-mystified' (Reiner, 2000) through greater public access to information which in turn means that the public are becoming better informed about policing and more confident to challenge police decision-making. Media communication has been transformed through technology. Communication can be instantaneous and global, through the use of mobile technology such as smart phones and social media. The negative portrayal of policing through new media, exemplified by the death of Ian Tomlinson at the G20 summit in 2009 had a dramatic impact on policing. Such negative publicity can impact so severely that it threatens the very foundation upon which British policing

is based. It is therefore essential that UK policing embrace digital and social media so that it can exert positive control over the way in which the public digitally views them.

Within the UK, Downes (2013) indicates that 98% of British police forces now have a corporate Twitter account, with an average of 18,000 followers; 96% have a Facebook account; and 94% have YouTube accounts. The proliferation of digital and social media technology in policing, especially post August 2011 UK riots is undisputed as most police forces now have a social media presence in some format. Bartlett *et al* (2013), identifies three distinct ways in which British policing uses digital and social media: 1) To engage with communities 2) To gather intelligence, and 3) To enforce the law. Within the community engagement arena, the use of digital and social media is focused on providing reassuring contact, sharing information and dispelling rumours thereby making communities safer (Bartlett *et al*, 2013).

### **Image, policing and new media**

“Policing in Great Britain has always been as much a matter of image as much as of substance” (Reiner, R. 1994 cited by Shepherdson, 2014, p.2).

Image is an important factor within digital and social media engagement. Police forces use social media in part to promote an image or brand. Some argue that positive media images are nurtured to improve trust and confidence through transparency and accountability. Others argue that this process improves trust and confidence through a Machiavellian portrayal of legitimacy by filtering out negative images and stories and nurturing the positive. Lee and McGovern (2012, cited by Shepherdson, 2014) suggest that globally, policing must sell an image and to dismiss social media as public relations spin would be foolhardy. The relationship between policing, public scrutiny, increased visibility through new media, reputation and legitimacy are complex. Policing must be progressive in order maintain the healthy relationship which is conducive to maintaining the foundation on which the British system of policing is based- public consent. Shepherdson (2014), in a post-graduate

Masters dissertation, interviewed five Journalism students at Nottingham Trent University and considered the effect of social media in shaping the perception of the public. Shepherdson suggests that social media has the capacity to enlighten and inform the public with regard to police practice, and this could affect their perception of the police, which in turn could influence feelings of trust and confidence. The darker side to this is that user generated content is often influenced by large media organizations who seek to give meaning to content thereby influencing and shaping the way the information is viewed by consumers (Shepherdson, 2014). The risk to policing is that if large media institutions are able to manipulate information to provide partisan context designed to shape perception, unless policing develops a robust and trusted online voice, it may fall victim to the partisanship that can be embedded in generic media messaging. Shepherdson further remarks that unless policing adopts a proactive position, social media could in fact perpetuate a distorted policing image, which ultimately serves to undermine public confidence. Information passed through social media, which may not have been accessible through traditional media is often condensed into sound bites, which can quickly lose its meaning without the requisite context. This can result in the mass circulation of misinformation, which in turn feeds what Baudrillard (1994, cited by Shepherdson, 2014) calls 'hyper-reality', a blurring between fact and fiction where people may become inclined to believe the fiction. This is why the establishment of a trusted voice and the proactive use of social media to dispel myth and rumour is an essential ingredient of any policing communication strategy.

### **The 'potential' of digital and social media**

The College of Policing publication- 'Engage: Digital and Social Media Engagement for the Police Service', is a good example of how anecdotal evidence badged as case studies are used to highlight the ways in which policing is using new media to engage their communities. This highlights an important issue associated with the literature, in that recommendations are made without obvious reference to empirical provenance. Good, innovative examples are provided regarding the use of Facebook, Twitter, Blogs and Websites, but the term potential in its various guises keep appearing. Bain *et al* (2014) found that many public facing police websites in the UK



and US have easy to navigate website pages that direct communities to new information sources as well as promoting a positive image. Within the context of his work however there appears to be limited narrative discussion regarding the contextual use and non-use of such websites. Who are the people that use such websites? What are the age profiles? Why do they use the websites? Is the detail relevant, interesting and appropriate? Does it really encourage the user to participate and engage more with either the police or their local community? Fazzini (2003, cited by Kilburn, 2014) suggests that police websites should offer crime statistics, video clips, safety tips, as well as opportunity for community feedback, but again he doesn't provide advice regarding what young people require from such online websites.

Flouch and Harris (2011) conducted an 'Online Neighbourhood Networks Study' between December 2010 and March 2011. This study involved a survey of 400 participants; the content analysis of three London based 'citizen run websites' (sites that are created and maintained by local communities), and numerous focus groups and interviews. Whilst the focus of the study related to the relationship between local councils and their communities, the study did provide a useful insight into the relationship between local communities and the Metropolitan Police Service (MPS). Whilst the research findings were not tested using statistical analysis, the study concluded that online engagement via citizen run websites do serve to enhance a sense of belonging, efficacy, 'neighbourliness' and community participation. It also served to enhance positive attitude towards those public agencies that engaged with them online and this includes the police. Flouch and Harris (2011) asked the question whether an online virtual presence can positively affect trust and confidence and their conclusion was positive, but without the use of quantitative based statistical testing, any association or indeed correlation between the variables unfortunately cannot be inferred through this research.

Ruddell and Jones (2013) undertook one of the first studies to explore user perception of social media and its usefulness to policing. The study is based on a random telephone survey sample of 504 community residents and 314 university students in a medium sized Canadian city. Whilst its findings cannot be generalized

due to the sampling limitations, it did present some interesting data, which was supported by statistical analysis. The research identified that younger, better educated community members were the main users of police social media, with little use from the over 65 year category, who coincidentally saw little future for social media. They also found a correlation between social media use and police confidence. Those who were accessing police related digital and social media (websites and Twitter) expressed higher confidence in policing, albeit the relationship between Facebook access and police confidence was not found to be significant. With regard to satisfaction, a positive relationship was established between website access and satisfaction, but not with Facebook and Twitter access. In terms of understanding why this relationship exists, further research is required to determine whether in fact it is the digital and social media that caused the increased confidence and satisfaction or simply that those with higher levels of confidence and satisfaction were more inclined to use police related digital and social media.

In 2012, Lasthuizen *et al* undertook police based social media research on user participation. Using the social psychology expectancy-value model for an online experiment involving the use of Twitter, Lasthuizen *et al* found that the use of social media could stimulate online citizen participation. This was achieved by not only enhancing dialogue between the police and local communities but also encouraging them to: activate their own social networks, visit police websites and contribute information. Lasthuizen *et al* were able to show how people generally participate in action when the perceived benefits are higher than the perceived costs. The study therefore concluded that highlighting group benefits in social media content is more likely to enhance community participation.

### **The effect of digital and social media on civic and political participation**

Based on four focus groups of young people aged between 15 years and 21 years, Brandtzaeg (2012) conducted a qualitative study exploring the characteristics of civic engagement in young people. He found three distinct types of online civic engagement undertaken by young people:

- 1) Supportive practices: or 'micro-participation' (Haller 2011, cited by Brandtzaeg, 2012), which require limited effort, for example: online petitions, joining online groups and sharing information.
- 2) Deliberative practices: or 'discursive practices' (Davies and Chandler 2012, cited by Brandtzaeg, 2012), which involve young people discussing and debating salient issues.
- 3) Collaborative practices: where young people combine to collectively address local, regional or national community issues.

Brandtzaeg's conclusions revealed that information sourcing from young people within his study was predominantly Internet based and therefore traditional mass media was not a relevant media source for young people. Content that was easily available and sharable was important and the formalities of political engagement are a turn off for many young people as the process is seen to be too complex, with insufficient information available to demystify the process. Brandtzaeg identified seven characteristics of effective social media related engagement involving young people:

1. Being informed.
2. The use of pictures and imagery is important.
3. There should be an orientation toward issues that represent the here and now.
4. Engagement must be informal, flexible and bespoke.
5. Issues must be relevant and self-defined.
6. Engagement should be rational, but there is acknowledgement that some engagement can be emotional or intended as a means of 'showing off'.
7. The content must be interesting.

Gibson *et al.* (2009) provide a very positive 256-page handbook comprising multiple shared experiences of digital and social media. This handbook showcases an unwavering belief that digital and social media can be used to revitalize

communities, promote democracy, deliver public services and mobilize communities for collective action. This collection of shared experience is qualitative in nature and in no way seeks to present a correlation between new technology and enhanced participation, but the authors present their argument as an invitation for society to embrace new technology and determine for themselves whether the huge potential can be realized.

Gibson *et al* (2009) do not see technology as a panacea, but more of a method by which engagement can be made cheaper and more accessible. In order for this to happen, barriers to digital engagement such as the social divide that exists between those who have Internet access and those that do not must be addressed. So too must the inherent belief that investment by public services is too risky. Whilst austerity and shrinking budgets may feed such a belief, as technology develops, Gibson *et al* (2009) suggests that the cost of failure becomes less and the opportunity to experiment becomes easier and with more pressure being placed on the need to engage creatively, playing it safe may be seen as presenting a risk in itself.

Banaji and Buckingham (2009) suggest that other than the work undertaken by CivicWeb, a research project funded by the European Union, there is little empirical research, which clearly shows the link between the organizational use of digital and social media and enhanced participation in young people. CivicWeb is a three-year international, mixed method research programme, which looked at the relationship between online activity and the offline civic participation of 15 to 25 year olds. The research is significant in so far as it surveyed 3,300 young people in seven European countries and undertook focus groups with 50 young people. The study found that whilst the potential of the Internet is apparent, policy makers should be guarded against a utopian view that networked technologies are inherently democratic, automatically resulting in democratic outcomes. Social media can be a valuable tool to engage the already engaged, but not necessarily the dis-engaged (see also: Gibson *et al*, 2003, cited by Banaji and Buckingham, 2009). Such digital technology may simply serve to perpetuate the 'digital divide', widening the gap between the 'haves' and the 'have-nots'. This study concluded that traditional offline interventions such

as youth outreach workers are still most suited to engaging the dis-engaged. It also suggested that online engagement must be well publicized, provide easy access and be geared toward topics that are relevant, fun and entertaining to young people. Interaction must also be constructive in so far as it is designed to achieve something.

Backstrom (2013) found that News Feed Algorithms are essential for delivering the right content to the right people at the right time, so users don't miss the stories that are important to them. Effective News Feeds can increase 'likes', 'comments' and 'shares' by up to eight percent (Backstrom, 2013). Having said this, it appears that young people are yet to be persuaded that those who hold the power are ready and willing to listen and be influenced by young people (see Boyd, 2014). This view is further supported by research undertaken by Gerodimos (2010) in the presentation of a postgraduate doctoral thesis focusing on the connection between online media, young people and political engagement. Using qualitative surveys to explore young peoples motivations and use of social media, the findings from this study suggest that young people are willing to engage online but subject to 'terms and conditions'. In other words, the engagement has to be meaningful, which signifies a consumerist approach to online engagement. The study identified that young people often felt politically alienated and dis-engaged, not through apathy but due to a feeling of being unable to make a difference. The conclusion was that whilst social media is a tool for access, the key to motivated online engagement is rooted far deeper than innovative apps and websites with longer-term political and civic socialization playing a major role.

UK researchers Couldry, Livingstone, and Markham (2007) firmly believe from their study of one thousand 18 plus year olds, that exploiting digital technology is not in fact the future for encouraging civic involvement in young people. They believe that more emphasis should be placed on improving the offline opportunities for engagement. More importantly they support the research undertaken by Buckingham (2000) and Banaji and Buckingham (2009) by stating that young people are not apathetic, they simply do not have the appropriate opportunity to engage. Furthermore, opportunity to engage is only the start, as self-efficacy is an important factor in the decision to participate. Young people must be persuaded that their

engagement means something and that their voices will be heard and considered appropriately. Having your say is not the same as being heard and this very issue is considered to be a key reason why young people may not participate in the civic or political process. One could suggest that engagement and participation in policing should therefore be influenced by knowledge and self-efficacy.

Zuniga *et al* (2012) found that informal discussion networks produce social capital and civic and political participation, by enhancing awareness and knowledge, sparking collaborative motivation and providing the opportunity to participate. With regard to increasing social capital (the collective value of social networks that bring people together to mutually cooperate and do things for each other) Zuniga *et al* (2012) conducted a US based survey in 2008 and found that seeking information via social media sites is a good predictor of social capital, civic and political participation. Therefore there is a requirement for policing to know what information young people actually want from them and this is partly the empirical gap, this doctoral thesis intends to address.

### **Concluding reflections**

The literature concerning digital and social media impact on participation is littered with rhetoric in the form of statements, recommendations and prophecies about how agencies should exploit the use of digital and social media. In reality there is limited academic evidence that convincingly links digital and social media use with enhanced participation of any kind. Boulianne (2015, cited by Wihbey, 2015) concluded from a meta-analysis of 36 studies on the relationship between Social Networking Site use and offline behaviour, that causality of transformative impact is difficult to achieve simply because few studies employ an experimental design which involves experimental and control groups. Therefore, whilst the effects of digital and social media may indeed run wide and deep, conclusive proof remains elusive when it comes to establishing a definitive connection. Philavanh (2010) further suggests that inconclusive proof is due to the dynamic nature of digital and social media where digital platforms evolve at such rapid pace, presenting difficulties in sustaining and justifying long-term rigorous empirical research.

Nevertheless, there is suggestion that digital and social media can have an impact on civic and political participation, but the evidence base is mixed. Whattam (2009, cited by Copitch and Fox, 2010), Flouch and Harris (2011), and Brandtzaeg (2012), suggest that online engagement can empower communities, provide a voice, and enhance dialogue, perceptions, feelings of efficacy and social cohesion. Whereas Couldry *et al* (2007), Gibson *et al* (2009), and Gerodimos (2010), conclude that digital and social media are not the panacea for engaging young people and that such methods of engagement may not in fact be the future for the younger generation.

This chapter presents an interesting debate concerning the perceived decline in civic and political participation of young people in general which potentially presents a fundamental issue for agencies such as the police who strive to engage young people using digital and social media. Whilst commentators such Bennett *et al* (2008) suggest some young people may be lackadaisical and apathetic, others such as Buckingham (2000) and Banaji and Buckingham (2009) suggest that young people are not disengaged or disinterested, simply disconnected from the mainstream culture that appears to have failed to understand how and why young people wish to participate civically and politically. It is the responsibility of society in general and agencies such as the police in particular to identify what makes young people 'tick' and present relevant opportunities to participate in a meaningful way. Young people resist a top down approach to civic or legal socialization (Youniss *et al*, 2002 cited by Brandzaeg, 2012). Therefore policing must be sophisticated and adopt a bottom up approach which facilitates a sense of ownership and self expression, thereby reflecting the informal, flexible, convenient and interactive elements often associated with music, gaming, video and dating sites which appeal to young people (Youniss *et al*, 2002, cited by Brandzaeg, 2012). It is the how and why young people wish to participate that has been identified as an empirical gap in the literature and it is the intention of this thesis to further the academic knowledge in this particular area by exploring young peoples perceptions of digital and social media engagement by Nottinghamshire Police.

Never has there been a more important time for policing to exploit the opportunities presented by new media technology. Austerity, political influence and the 'demystification' of policing present new challenges to policing in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century and young peoples participation in policing can be seen as preparation for good future citizenship. Policing is a complex, multi layered and dynamic entity that requires the energy and innovation of young people. It is therefore essential that police leaders find a way to inspire young people to not only get involved in community participation but also the police itself.

The exponential rise of new media technology coincides with one of the biggest challenges ever to face UK policing- austerity. In 2010, the comprehensive spending review resulted in significantly reduced policing budgets and wide scale reviews of operating models. All aspects of policing including investigations, response and neighbourhood policing are changing to reflect the new operational landscape, which is being forged by the economic climate. It is widely accepted that digital and social media have a role to play in this new landscape, as policing must now consider simple, cost efficient solutions for engaging local communities. The issue it faces is to determine what works; never has it been so important for policing to know 'what works' especially within the communications and engagement arena. Whilst the UK College of Policing has developed a 'what works research map' detailing approximately 200 current police related research projects, and the Society for Evidence Based Policing is forging new collaborations between academic institutions and policing, the police use of digital and social media to engage young people does not currently feature as a research priority. This is an empirical opportunity, which undoubtedly will be grasped as both forums gather pace and become more established and it is in this respect that this exploratory research serves as a first step in realizing this opportunity by involving young people in shaping the way policing should engage with them via digital and social media.



## **CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY**

The purpose of this chapter is to provide a considered understanding of the research methodology and design considerations that pertain to the chosen qualitative method of study. Key methodological topics such as: the use of focus groups in qualitative research, group composition and size considerations, the preparation of the interview schedule, the value of good moderating skills, and the thematic analysis of focus group data provide a focus for discussion.

Research methods are the tactics used to harvest information during the research process, whereas research methodology is the strategic framework for the research (Dawson 2009). Research methodologies include: quantitative research, where numerical data is gathered using questionnaires or structured interviews, coded and then analysed; and qualitative research, where semi or unstructured interviews and focus groups for example are used to explore the attitudes, behaviour and experiences of participants (Porter, 1996, cited by Jangu, 2012).

### **Principal research framework- qualitative methodology**

LeCompte and Goetz (1982) identify four key areas of criticism associated with qualitative methodology: internal and external reliability, and internal and external validity. Whilst they are explicit in recognizing that certain strategies can be employed to guard against such criticism, they do acknowledge that achieving external validity from case studies and small research samples is a legitimate concern. Guba and Lincoln (1994) however, suggest that qualitative methodology should in fact be assessed by different criteria: trustworthiness and authenticity. These criteria are further defined as: credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability. To achieve credibility, the research must be trustworthy and be seen as a true reflection of the participants involved in the study. Within this research

study, the focus group process was subject to a pilot thereby allowing the interview schedule and questions to be tested. Young people and associated experts were included in the design and delivery of the study, thereby ensuring communication throughout was appropriate. Each focus group was digitally recorded and then carefully transcribed to ensure accuracy, whilst moderator selection and training served to encourage meaningful disclosure from all participants. To aid transparency, at the conclusion of the research the thesis will be made available to all participants who took part in the research.

The use of focus groups within qualitative methodology is a disciplined process, which is systematic and verifiable, and whilst findings cannot be generalized, they do have the potential to be transferred. Transferability is concerned with how far the results of the research can be transferred to other contexts. Guba and Lincoln (1994) suggest that it is down to the researcher to decide how far this can be taken. The context of the research is compared to that of their current situation and if there are sufficient similarities, the results may be inferred. The aim of this study is to provide detailed information regarding a relatively small group of people in order to identify patterns or trends. A 'thick description' (Barnes *et al*, 1994-2012. p.6.) of the research method is therefore provided to aid transferability. Dependability refers to the stability of the research process. For this study, care has been taken throughout to ensure a robust, logical, and transparent progression through the research stages, thereby allowing the results to be viewed with integrity. Confirmability is concerned with objectivity and ensuring the research is not tainted by researcher bias. To this end, Miles and Huberman (1994, cited by Shenton, 2004) suggest a test for confirmability is researcher disclosure of pre-disposition. This study has been undertaken with transparency and accountability with an audit trail of key decision-making being reflected within the body of the research, so that conclusions, interpretations and recommendations can be traced back to their sources. Standardized procedures have also been used to gather data, with specific briefings to moderators serving to mitigate the risk of conscious or unconscious imposition of subjective and personal bias on proceedings.

## The Focus Group

The focus group or “carefully planned discussion designed to obtain perceptions on a defined environment” (Krueger, 1988. p.88, cited by Smithson, 2000) is a qualitative technique used in recent years by market researchers (Templeton, 1987, cited by Smithson, 2000) and is considered to be one of the most common data collection methods in qualitative research (Gill *et al*, 2008). It shares features with the less structured interview and contains aspects of the group interview where the group discusses a wide variety of topics. There are also links to the focused interview, where respondents are selected because of their prior involvement in the research field. The focus group simplistically is a group discussion guided by a moderator, and as with most qualitative techniques, it allows the researcher to understand the different points of view that may evolve from the dynamic interactions of individual members. The focus group is also particularly useful as a means of securing initial data, which can then be used to inform the design of larger studies (Vaughan *et al*, 1996, cited by Smithson, 2000), which suits the purpose of this exploratory research study.

An advantage of this method is that a more truthful or qualified response from members can be more forthcoming. In face-to-face individual interviews, respondents are rarely challenged over seemingly inconsistent answers, whereas in the focus group, challenge from other members can often address such issues. A disadvantage however, is the lack of researcher control when compared to the one to one interview. Ironically, this is seen as a positive by feminist researchers who describe the sinister power in-balance that is often associated with quantitative research.

The ability to facilitate such a process also presents difficulty, as it is not a simple task. The moderator must be skilled enough to deal with the extremes of personality, which may be present. For example, those who dominate and those who capitulate and withdraw. It is also important to be able to diplomatically deal with participant conflict as well as topic digression. An enhanced communication style that can be adapted to suit the requirements of the participants is also required

and this was particularly true for this study where the participants were aged between 13 and 16 years.

### **Demographic profile of research participants and research team**

The four focus groups that were completed for this study were undertaken between March and May 2015 and included 27 young people aged between 13 years and 16 years of age. The first focus group, which also served as the pilot study involved two participants aged 15 years and 16 years of age. Within this group, one participant was male and one was female, but both defined their ethnicity as 'white British'. Focus group two comprised seven participants, four male and three female, aged between 14 years and 16 years of age. Five participants defined their ethnicity as 'white British', one as 'any other white background', and one as 'white / Asian'. Focus group three comprised eight participants, five male and three female, aged between 14 years and 16 years of age. Four participants defined their ethnicity as 'white British', one as 'any other Asian background', one as 'any other White British', and one as 'Indian'. Focus group four comprised nine participants, four male and five female, aged between 13 years and 15 years of age. None of the participant's recorded their self-defined ethnicity and one participant recorded a disability. Each of the focus groups took place on school premises and within school time.

The moderating team for this study comprised School and Early Intervention Officers (warranted constables and Police Community Support Officers who work within schools), who work predominantly within the school environment and two police staff members whose careers had been dedicated to working with young people in a preventative and enforcement capacity. Each moderator had expertise in working with young people and was already known to the participants who took part in the focus groups. This was seen as a key advantage because a rapport between moderator and the participants had already been established.

### **Conducting the focus groups- composition and size**

Time and resource will usually dictate the scale of research undertaken by the qualitative researcher and the focus group is good example of how such factors can

potentially limit the credibility of a study. Calder (1997, cited by Bryman, 2012) suggests that as a minimum, more than one focus group should be undertaken. In fact it is recommended that the 'saturation effect', which is achieved when no new relevant data is being revealed, should be reached prior to concluding the use of the technique. Unfortunately, time, resource and participant access precluded this as a planned strategy and therefore four focus groups were chosen as the sample size for this study.

The method by which the participants were chosen was not bound by the requirements of probability sampling, as there was acknowledgement from the beginning that results from this study would not be representative and therefore generalizations could not be made. The purpose of this study is to understand and provide insight and not infer. Therefore purposive sampling, where the researcher selects the participants based on requirement was deemed to be appropriate. The aim was to select a sample of young people who possessed sufficient variation that would allow for contrasting opinion. 'Gate-keepers' at several schools and one 'youth group' were identified, based on prior professional relationship and each organizational representative was asked if they would be prepared to facilitate access to young people. Whilst some declined citing a variety of legitimate reasons, three schools plus one 'youth group' agreed to participate in this study.

A letter of formal introduction (Appendix Two) was given to each representative. This letter detailed the research aim, objectives and requirements of the study. A signature was obtained permitting members of the research team to approach young people and seek provisional support to be part of the focus group process. A briefing letter, together with relevant assent and consent forms (Appendix Three and Four) were given to those young people who expressed an interest and they subsequently returned the paperwork having discussed and agreed participation with their parent or guardian.

In determining the size, composition and duration of the focus groups, careful consideration was given to factors that are relatively unique to young people. For example, each focus group was designed to last no longer than 90 minutes to avoid

participant fatigue and disinterest. Krueger and Casey (2009) recommend that where sensitive information or topics are to be discussed, it is more appropriate not to mix gender within the focus group- this was considered within the planning stages and discounted as an issue. Krueger and Casey (2009) also recommend that age ranges should be kept to within two years simply because developmentally, the interests and experiences of young people will vary greatly. Ironically, this was a primary reason why the age group 13 years to 16 years was chosen as a focus group parameter, so that such variation in experience and perception could be captured. Considering this potential issue, careful planning and sensitive moderation served to mitigate the risk of younger participants capitulating or deferring to older peers, and older participants simply dismissing the comments of their younger associates. The widening of the age profile also guarded against the selection of close friends and cliques, which could have served to stifle conversation. Fortunately, for each of the four focus groups, the participants already knew each other and were already part of an established formal group within their school environment. To maximize the potential effectiveness of the focus groups, participant numbers were limited to between six and nine participants per focus group. This number was selected based on the recommendations and experiences of researchers identified from the literature review (see Gill *et al*, 2008; Krueger and Casey, 2009).

### **Preparing the interview schedule**

A questioning route was chosen instead of a general topic guide as it provides structure for the moderator and aids subsequent analysis. The questions were conversational and therefore designed to stimulate discussion between participants who could then take the discussion to greater depth. The questions within the interview schedule (Appendix Five) were designed to offer the best opportunity to gather the richest data in relation to the five research objectives. This didn't however, detract from the requirement to be sensitive, avoiding questions that could serve to embarrass or incriminate the young person. Basic minimum requirements of question design and delivery were adhered to and these included, ensuring questions were: clear, short, one dimensional and specific (Krueger and Casey, 2009). The question delivery was designed in a manner that was familiar to

the participants, and presented in plain English, without jargon. To facilitate this process, experts within the field of young people, in the form of Schools and Early Intervention Officers and other Police staff members were invited to a workshop where a briefing was provided and feedback received in terms of proposed question design and delivery.

Within the interview schedule, care was taken to identify the key questions- the ones that drive the research and generate the greatest data yield. Key questions take the longest to answer, generate the greatest number of probes and invariably receive the greatest analysis. It was therefore important that each moderator had confidence in the interview schedule and knew exactly which questions were the key questions. In the design of any interview schedule, it is important to maintain the interest of the participants and for this study, the interview schedule included two elements specifically designed to spark interest and generate discussion. Firstly, participants were asked to access and view the corporate Nottinghamshire Police website and associated social media platforms prior to participating in the focus group- no other steer was provided. This was designed to facilitate discussion within the focus group regarding the quality and accessibility of the website and other media platforms. For those participants who did not have had access to the Internet at home, their local school or youth group were encouraged to facilitate access. For those who simply were unable to achieve prior access, a print out of social media information (Appendix Six) from the corporate website was created and this was viewed by the participants within the focus group. A further tactic used within the focus group to stimulate interest and discussion was for the participants to physically complete a Neighbourhood Priority Survey (Appendix Seven). This experience was then used as a key discussion topic with the focus group.

### **Moderating skills**

It is important to get the right moderator for focus groups involving young people, especially within this research study, as there is an acknowledged power imbalance between the research team and the focus group participants. Whilst the topic of the focus group is not personally sensitive, it is about police engagement and the

research team were either police officers or police staff members and as such it was further acknowledged that there could have been a degree of inhibition or nervousness within the focus group. The research (moderating) team have an affinity with young people. It is their vocation and they possess very important communication skills that are essential for such work. They are also known to the research participants and have had prior opportunity to develop a level of trust and confidence with the participants, which served to put the participants at ease. These are the main reasons why these officers / staff members were chosen to lead this stage of the research. To supplement the generic skill set of this team, two workshops were held during which each member of the research team was briefed in terms of moderating requirements and considerations. These considerations included: setting the ground rules early for the group, for example informing the group that they are allowed to talk to each other and that they don't have to raise their hand to talk, but being respectful of others who are talking and to be guided by the moderator. The moderators were reminded to respect each participant at all times, listen carefully and believe that each participant has something valuable to offer. A principal reason for holding the workshops was to ensure that each moderator understood the purpose of the study so that they could guide the discussion carefully to where the most important information may be hidden. The moderators were reminded of the need to communicate clearly, be open and avoid being defensive. This was important because during a focus group, the dynamics of the process means that emotive opinion and sometimes statements, which are factually incorrect, are often imparted and there can be a sub-conscious inclination on the part of the moderator to respond to the information in a defensive manner. If not managed effectively, this can adversely affect the quality and point of the focus group. For each focus group, there were two moderators: the moderator lead who directs the conversation and the assistant who has responsibility for the logistics which include: timings, recording, the venue, note taking, session de-briefing and dealing with unforeseen distractions.



## **The Pilot**

A pilot study, also known as the feasibility study or small scale 'trial run' (Polit *et al*, 2001, cited by Van Teijlingen and Hundley, 2001) was undertaken. The purpose of the pilot was to give advance warning about which elements of the main research study could fail. Specifically, the pilot study can: assess the feasibility of a study, identify logistical problems, and provide training data for moderators. The purpose of this pilot was to test the interview schedule, or more specifically the interview questions to ensure that there were no unforeseen issues in relation to wording or structure. It also provided an opportunity to secure insight into the process, which could then be used to guide future moderating. Whilst it is acknowledged that the pilot should replicate the key features of the main research, access restricted the number of participants within the pilot to two young people. Two members of the research team took the role of moderator and moderator's assistant and the feedback that was generated was distributed to other members of the wider research team. Some interesting points were raised: for example, a cautionary note concerning timing was recorded. The pilot focus group lasted 75 minutes and only involved two participants, which raised concerns that the interview schedule which contained fifteen questions was too long and would either cause the focus group to over-run or result in insufficient time to gather information in the right depth. The pilot also highlighted which questions generated greatest discussion and which questions elicited least discussion, which served to heighten awareness amongst the research team.

## **Transcribing Focus Group data**

Recording, transcribing and coding data for analysis with regard to focus groups can present significant difficulties due to the large amounts of data that is generated. Researchers are encouraged to record and then transcribe the content of each focus group as this allows for accurate recording of data and guards against memory attrition. It also facilitates further examination of what respondents have said as well as providing an open and honest account of the information provided which can be

scrutinized or indeed used by others in the future. The benefits of recording and transcribing are self-evident, but so too are the associated problems, for example the cost and time of transcribing the data. As a result, two Command Team Support Officers (Personal Assistants) were commissioned to transcribe the focus group recordings and the additional capacity this generated was used to conduct the fourth focus group.

### **The Semi-Structured Interview**

For this study, five semi-structured interviews (four telephone based and one face-to-face) were undertaken; all with media officers representing Nottinghamshire, Leicestershire and Lincolnshire Police forces, Childline, and Barnardos children's charity. These interviews were intended to provide organizational context and perspective to the analysis of data secured from the four focus groups. The semi-structured interview can often add additional layers of subtlety and depth to participant's thoughts and feelings. However, they are rarely used as a stand-alone method, simply because time and cost can often make it difficult to achieve a sufficient sample size to achieve external validity. Nevertheless, the rich picture that is achieved through this method leads many qualitative advocates to pose the question of necessity in relation to external validity. The main difference between the semi and unstructured interview is that with the semi-structured interview, the researcher has a pre-defined list of questions to ask. This method does allow flexibility in terms of enabling the respondent to elaborate on their answers. Those who feel that the use of such schedules serves only to restrict access to true respondent reality favour the unstructured interview where the interviewer may have an aide memoir. This type of interview follows a more conversational style and there is greater leeway given to the respondent when answering questions.

## **Thematic Analysis- an overview**

Thematic analysis is considered to be one of the most common forms of qualitative analysis (Guest, 2012), and is used for:

“Identifying, analyzing and reporting patterns (themes) within data; it minimally organizes and describes your data set in (rich) detail. However, frequently it goes further than this, and interprets various aspects of the research topic.” (Braun and Clarke, 2006, p.79).

Braun and Clarke (2006) believe that thematic analysis should be seen as a foundational method for qualitative analysis, whilst Boyatzis (1998, cited by Braun and Clarke, 2006) sees it as a tool or core skill that should be learnt and used across qualitative methodology. Within thematic analysis, there is an emphasis on examining emergent data themes. Researcher judgement, generally determines what constitutes a theme, as prevalence does not automatically create a theme; nor does prevalence equate with importance or significance.

Thematic analysis is not tied to a particular theoretical framework and can work effectively within the context of different theoretical frameworks. Within this study thematic analysis is being used within the Interpretivist paradigm. The aspiration of the research is to understand the meaning associated with the thinking and behaviour of young people in relation to engagement with the police via digital and social media. As a result, the focus group was selected as the preferred research method to establish the meaning of data presented by the young people involved in the research. The approach taken within this study is an inductive or bottom up approach where themes are linked to the data and not to a particular pre-conceived theory. The data generated is coded without being bound by a pre-existing coding frame and whilst five research objectives have been identified for exploration, the study is not designed to test a hypothesis and has been guided by the data that is gathered. The analysis of data within this study has been subject to thematic analysis at the latent or interpretive level of analysis, which is a more in depth process which

seeks to examine the underlying meaning and ideologies of the data (Braun and Clarke, 2006). Attempts within the analysis phase have been made to move beyond the semantic or surface layer of description, to include interpretation that speculates an ideology for young people in relation to their engagement with the police and the presentation of 'Quid Pro Quo' engagement in chapter five is a salient example of this.

### **Step-by-step guide: six phases of analysis**

In phase one, I developed familiarity, by immersing myself in the data. This was achieved simply through repeated reading of the Focus Group data, which had been transcribed. All four transcripts were actively read and re-read in the first instance and notes were taken regarding ideas for coding and interesting features of the data.

During phase two, the initial coding took place. Codes are basic data elements or sections that are interesting to the analyst. Coding is a process of labelling (in this case with a word), thereby organizing and sorting data, which then become the foundation for developing the analysis (Impact, 2012).

The purpose at this stage was to organize the data into meaningful groups (Tuckett, 2005, cited by Braun and Clarke, 2006). The data at this time did not constitute a theme, as these are much broader and developed in phase three. This phase of coding can be undertaken manually or with the assistance of computer aided software such as NVivo. For the purpose of this study, there was no access to computer-aided software and therefore the data coding was undertaken manually with colour coordinated coded extracts being collated and stored in computer files. All data extracts were coded through a cyclical process that involved reading and re-reading the data set and then collated together with each code.

### Example of coding within thematic analysis

Page 60 shows an example of stage two, three, four and five of this study's thematic analysis process.