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THESIS

**THE STRATEGIC TROOPER:
ENHANCING RECRUITMENT THROUGH TRUST,
TRANSPARENCY, AND TRANSFORMATION OF LAW
ENFORCEMENT'S IMAGE IN THE DIGITAL AGE**

by

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September 2023

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THROUGH TRUST, TRANSPARENCY, AND TRANSFORMATION
OF LAW ENFORCEMENT'S IMAGE IN THE DIGITAL AGE**

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ABSTRACT

Amid the escalating demands for police transparency and trust, this thesis delves into the potential of social media-based police rebranding to boost public perception and amplify law enforcement recruitment. Scrutinizing these facets through international law enforcement case studies, this study leverages the “strategic trooper” model, inspired by the “strategic corporal” military principle, emphasizing a deep-seated transformation in law enforcement culture and behavior beyond mere rebranding. The results indicate that authenticity—epitomized by trust, transparency, and legitimacy—is pivotal for successful law-enforcement image rebranding and agency transformation. A shallow image change could be counterproductive and be seen by the public as propaganda. With its core tenets, the strategic trooper model could authentically uplift public perception and law enforcement legitimacy, broadening the potential recruit pool. A more comprehensive range of prospective officers could be attracted by fostering an environment of heightened trust and transparency. Implementing the strategic trooper model promises profound, sustainable alterations in law enforcement’s digital persona and recruitment practices, potentially boosting public confidence, community relations, and the appeal of law enforcement as a career choice.

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Law enforcement's landscape and representation have evolved dramatically, driven by shifts in media depictions and public perception.¹ This evolution, fueled by the rise of digital media and platforms like television, movies, and the internet, has significantly impacted the perception of American law enforcement.² Law enforcement agencies have recognized the power of social media in recruitment strategies.³ Ensuring campaigns garner a capable and efficient workforce that can serve and protect communities is paramount. While social media can favorably depict law enforcement through community outreach, educational campaigns, and public safety tips, it has also amplified negative representations.⁴ Such tragedies as the George Floyd case and the Ferguson, Missouri, situation are stark examples of instances when law enforcement was portrayed negatively in mainstream and social media.⁵ The public's interpretation of these portrayals, whether true or false, shapes perceptions and attitudes toward law enforcement.

The immediacy and reach of social media have expanded recruitment resources for law enforcement agencies, yet such tools pose challenges from their duality of impact.⁶ This thesis explores the effects of social media publicity, the societal conception of law enforcement, and the challenges that arise in police recruitment efforts. The “strategic

¹ Ebonie Cunningham Stringer and Jennifer Murphy, “Major Decisions and Career Attractiveness among Criminal Justice Students,” *Journal of Criminal Justice Education* 31, no. 4 (2020): 523–41, <https://doi.org/10.1080/10511253.2020.1814829>.

² Kimberly Collica-Cox and Gennifer Furst, “It’s Not the CSI Effect: Criminal Justice Students’ Choice of Major and Career Goals,” *International Journal of Offender Therapy and Comparative Criminology* 63, no. 11 (2019): 2069–99, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0306624X19834414>.

³ Mary K. Pratt, Patrick Thibodeau, and Emma Snider, “Social Media Recruitment,” Tech Target, accessed October 4, 2022, <https://www.techtarget.com/searchhrsoftware/definition/social-recruiting>.

⁴ Stephan G. Grimmelikhuijsen and Albert J. Meijer, “Does Twitter Increase Perceived Police Legitimacy?,” *Public Administration Review* 75, no. 4 (2015): 599, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/24757820>.

⁵ David R. White and Joseph Ferrandino, “Criminal Justice Students’ Perceptions amid George Floyd’s Death and COVID-19,” *Journal of Criminal Justice Education* 33, no. 1 (2022): 58–75, <https://doi.org/10.1080/10511253.2021.1949026>.

⁶ David B. King, Norm O’Rourke, and Anita DeLongis, “Social Media Recruitment and Online Data Collection: A Beginner’s Guide and Best Practices for Accessing Low-Prevalence and Hard-to-Reach Populations,” *Psychologie Canadienne* [Canadian Psychology] 55, no. 4 (November 2014): 247, <https://doi.org/10.1037/a0038087>.

trooper,” equipped with a comprehensive understanding of the agency’s mission and message, acknowledges the significance of media exposure in influencing public perceptions of the criminal justice system, especially when viewed through the lens of cultivation theory.⁷ To maintain a transparent and balanced perspective and foster positive community relations, officers must comprehend the exposure of negative images on social media while being mindful of the agency’s mission and values, ensuring that their actions align with the agency’s message.

The core research question underpinning this thesis is as follows: How can the rebranding of police on social media increase positive public perception to enhance law enforcement recruitment? Through a comprehensive analysis of police portrayals on social media, strategic communication rebranding techniques, and the cultivation of a positive public image, this thesis provides potential solutions to build a positive narrative that makes law enforcement a more attractive career option for potential recruits. In addition, this thesis analyzes the world of law enforcement, scrutinizing three critical facets: the media’s portrayal of the police, significant recruitment challenges, and the need for effective branding and rebranding strategies to manage public perception. These elements, inextricably intertwined, are key to decoding the complex landscape of law enforcement and the recruitment hurdles it faces. The depiction of police in the media—whether positive or negative—has far-reaching implications for recruitment efforts.⁸ Therefore, these nuanced portrayals help to explain the influence on public perception, societal attitudes toward law enforcement, and the subsequent effects on attracting potential recruits.

Furthermore, this thesis unravels the pressing recruitment issues in the law enforcement field. By highlighting these challenges, it sheds light on the current realities of the profession and the barriers that deter potential recruits, thereby exploring viable

⁷ George Gerbner, “Cultural Indicators: The Case of Violence in Television Drama,” *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 388, no. 1 (March 1970): 69–81, <https://doi.org/10.1177/000271627038800108>.

⁸ Jaeyong Choi, “Asymmetry in Media Effects on Perceptions of Police: An Analysis Using a Within-Subjects Design Experiment,” *Police Practice & Research* 22, no. 1 (2021): 567, <https://doi.org/10.1080/15614263.2020.1749624>.

strategies to overcome these obstacles.⁹ Branding and rebranding strategies constitute a vital component of managing the public image of law enforcement.¹⁰ These strategies are pivotal in conveying the mission, values, and essence of police work, often serving as potential recruits' first point of interaction. By adeptly managing their brand, law enforcement agencies can effectively navigate public perceptions, counter misconceptions, and shape their image in a way that boosts their appeal to potential recruits.¹¹

Through a comparative case study, this thesis analyzes the international landscape and approaches taken by law enforcement agencies in Canada, the United Kingdom, and New Zealand regarding their image management on social media and recruitment strategies.¹² These countries were selected due to their significant progress in leveraging social media to enhance public engagement, promote their services, and recruit new officers, despite grappling with similar issues. Through the examination of these international examples, the intention was to extract insights and practices that could be applicable and beneficial for law enforcement agencies in the United States. By exploring how these agencies have successfully managed their public image and recruitment in an era of heightened scrutiny and media attention, it was possible to glean valuable strategies that could inform the rebranding of American law enforcement agencies on social media. Implementing such strategies might boost their recruitment efforts and enhance their relationship with the communities they serve.¹³

⁹ Shane Burleigh, "Reimagining the Recruitment and Hiring of Police Officers during Tumultuous Times," *Certified Public Manager Applied Research* 2, no. 1 (2021): 1–8, <https://scholarworks.sfasu.edu/cpmar/vol2/iss1/4>.

¹⁰ Jacob Lawson, *Recruitment and Retention of Police Officers in These Challenging Times: Is It Different Now?* (Little Rock, AR: Criminal Justice Institute, 2021), 8, <https://www.cji.edu/wp-content/uploads/2021/07/Recruitment-and-Retention-of-Police-Officers-in-These-Challenging.pdf>.

¹¹ Julia Hill, Darrel W. Stephens, and Anthony Guglielmi, *Branding for Police Agencies* (Washington, DC: Office of Community Oriented Policing Services, 2023), 2, <https://portal.cops.usdoj.gov/resourcecenter/Home.aspx?item=cops-r1126>.

¹² Hannah Hagemann and Lynsey Jeffery, "George Floyd Reverberates Globally: Thousands Protest in Germany, U.K., New Zealand," NPR, May 31, 2020, <https://www.npr.org/2020/05/31/866428272/george-floyd-reverberates-globally-thousands-protest-in-germany-u-k-canada>.

¹³ Kevin P. Morison, *Hiring for the 21st Century Law Enforcement Officer: Challenges, Opportunities, and Strategies for Success* (Washington, DC: Office of Community Oriented Policing Services, 2017), <https://portal.cops.usdoj.gov/resourcecenter/ric/Publications/cops-w0831-pub.pdf>.

Toward the end of this thesis, the focus shifts to the strategic trooper concept in law enforcement and its implications for image management and recruitment efforts. At the heart of this concept is the idea that officers know their agency's strategic goals, that they have been trained and empowered to make decisions that align with these goals, and that this understanding is deeply integrated into the agency's policies and procedures.¹⁴ Constant evaluation and adaptation of the concept to suit evolving contexts are also crucial. By implementing the strategic trooper concept, law enforcement agencies may significantly enhance their operational efficiency and reputation, and by empowering individual officers to make decisions that contribute to achieving strategic goals, agencies can foster increased public trust, accountability, and legitimacy.¹⁵ This empowerment, in turn, positively affects their image, making them more appealing to potential recruits.

Strategic image management plays a crucial role in this process and hinges on three fundamental principles: trust, transparency, and transformation. Trust is the cornerstone of image management.¹⁶ Building and maintaining public trust is integral to a successful law enforcement agency, influencing public perceptions and the ability to serve communities effectively.¹⁷ Transparency, the second principle, significantly influences public perception.¹⁸ Law enforcement agencies that uphold transparency in their operations foster a sense of trust and openness with the public, which is critical in shaping a positive agency image.¹⁹ The third principle, transformation, is a key pathway to changing police culture.²⁰

¹⁴ Charles C. Krulak, "The Strategic Corporal: Leadership in the Three Block War," *Marine Corps Gazette* 83, no. 1 (January 1999): 21, ProQuest.

¹⁵ Teague A. Pastel, "Marine Corps Leadership: Empowering or Limiting the Strategic Corporal?" (master's thesis, Marine Corps University, 2008), <https://apps.dtic.mil/sti/citations/ADA490868>.

¹⁶ Hill, Stephens, and Guglielmi, *Branding for Police Agencies*.

¹⁷ Hill, Stephens, and Guglielmi, *Branding for Police Agencies*; Astrid Dirikx and Jan Van den Bulck, "Media Use and the Process-Based Model for Police Cooperation: An Integrative Approach towards Explaining Adolescents' Intentions to Cooperate with the Police," *British Journal of Criminology* 54, no. 2 (2014): 344–65, <https://doi.org/10.1093/bjc/azt063>.

¹⁸ Judy Pal et al., *Strategic Communications for Law Enforcement Executives* (Washington, DC: Office of Community Oriented Policing Services, 2023), <https://portal.cops.usdoj.gov/resourcecenter/Home.aspx?item=cops-r1126>.

¹⁹ David Brown, "Do Your Officers Have a Voice?," Training Network, January 18, 2023, <https://calibrepress.com/2023/01/do-your-officers-have-a-voice/>.

²⁰ Hill, Stephens, and Guglielmi, *Branding for Police Agencies*.

Law enforcement agencies can cultivate a positive culture by implementing transformative policies that promote fairness, respect, and integrity, improving their public image and attractiveness as a potential career choice.²¹

These concepts culminate in the strategic implementation of online recruitment efforts. These efforts should reflect the actual practices and values of the agency, reinforcing the positive image and trust built through the application of the strategic trooper concept and strategic image management principles. This congruence ensures that recruits are attracted to an authentic portrayal of the agency, laying the foundation for a successful and trusted law enforcement service.²²

²¹ Hill, Stephens, and Guglielmi.

²² Hill, Stephens, and Guglielmi.

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I. INTRODUCTION

Policing has changed over the years, as has the media's depiction of law enforcement work.¹ Television, movies, and the internet have all contributed to the perception of American law enforcement.² The profession currently recruits from ages 20–35. Outside of law enforcement, other companies recruiting those same age groups and generations have realized the importance of social media in recruiting efforts.³ Successful campaigns ensure law enforcement sustains a workforce capable of providing public service and safety to its communities.

Social media conveys and broadcasts images of law enforcement throughout the United States. Positive images of law enforcement show police engaging in community outreach, educational campaigns, and public safety tips on various social media platforms such as Instagram, YouTube, Facebook, and Twitter.⁴ Unfortunately, over the past few years, negative images of police have also surfaced in the media.⁵ The George Floyd incident shows one example of such exposure and its impacts.⁶ Another example that attracted mainstream and social media attention was Ferguson, Missouri.⁷ Whether images are fact-based or not, they are on display and open to interpretation.

¹ Ebonie Cunningham Stringer and Jennifer Murphy, “Major Decisions and Career Attractiveness among Criminal Justice Students,” *Journal of Criminal Justice Education* 31, no. 4 (2020): 523–41, <https://doi.org/10.1080/10511253.2020.1814829>.

² Kimberly Collica-Cox and Gennifer Furst, “It’s Not the CSI Effect: Criminal Justice Students’ Choice of Major and Career Goals,” *International Journal of Offender Therapy and Comparative Criminology* 63, no. 11 (2019): 2069–99, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0306624X19834414>.

³ Mary K. Pratt, Patrick Thibodeau, and Emma Snider, “Social Media Recruitment,” Tech Target, accessed October 4, 2022, <https://www.techtarget.com/searchhrsoftware/definition/social-recruiting>.

⁴ Stephan G. Grimmelikhuijsen and Albert J. Meijer, “Does Twitter Increase Perceived Police Legitimacy?,” *Public Administration Review* 75, no. 4 (2015): 599, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/24757820>.

⁵ Gregory R. Brown, “The Blue Line on Thin Ice: Police Use of Force Modifications in the Era of Cameraphones and YouTube,” *British Journal of Criminology* 56, no. 2 (2016): 293–312, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/43819379>.

⁶ David R. White and Joseph Ferrandino, “Criminal Justice Students’ Perceptions amid George Floyd’s Death and COVID-19,” *Journal of Criminal Justice Education* 33, no. 1 (2022): 58–75, <https://doi.org/10.1080/10511253.2021.1949026>.

⁷ Weston J. Morrow et al., “Examining a Ferguson Effect on College Students’ Motivation to Become Police Officers,” *Journal of Criminal Justice Education* 30, no. 4 (2019): 585–605, <https://doi.org/10.1080/10511253.2019.1619793>.

Social media provides immediate access to positive and negative images of police, and it has expanded recruitment resources for human resource departments.⁸ The aim of this thesis is to determine the impacts of social media publicity, the societal conception of police, and the difficulties in law enforcement recruitment. Cultivation theory has examined exposure to television viewing and its role in shaping the public's understanding of the criminal justice system.⁹ This thesis identifies multiple concepts that underscore the critical role of trust, transparency, and transformation in authentically evolving police culture from the ground up. This transformation beckons a progressive, community-focused perspective on policing, thereby significantly enhancing the public perception and appeal of law enforcement as a career path. With recruitment problems throughout the law enforcement community, analyzing portrayals of police on social media, effectively applying rebranding techniques in strategic communications, and enhancing positive public perceptions of law enforcement careers could help the police build a more positive narrative that enhances the profession's attractiveness to recruits.¹⁰

A. RESEARCH QUESTION

How can the rebranding of police on social media increase positive public perception to enhance law enforcement recruitment?

B. LITERATURE REVIEW

Over the years, the way people receive information through media has evolved. The ecosystem consists of mainstream media, including newspapers, broadcast news, and radio; entertainment media, including television shows, feature films, and streaming services; and social media, including Facebook, Instagram, and YouTube. Each media

⁸ David B. King, Norm O'Rourke, and Anita DeLongis, "Social Media Recruitment and Online Data Collection: A Beginner's Guide and Best Practices for Accessing Low-Prevalence and Hard-to-Reach Populations," *Psychologie Canadienne* [Canadian Psychology] 55, no. 4 (November 2014): 240, <https://doi.org/10.1037/a0038087>.

⁹ George Gerbner, "Cultural Indicators: The Case of Violence in Television Drama," *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 388, no. 1 (March 1970): 69–81, <https://doi.org/10.1177/000271627038800108>.

¹⁰ Julia Hill, Darrel W. Stephens, and Anthony Guglielmi, *Branding for Police Agencies* (Washington, DC: Office of Community Oriented Policing Services, 2023), 22, <https://portal.cops.usdoj.gov/resource-center/Home.aspx?item=cops-rl126>.

channel has played a role in the image projection and storytelling of police. This literature review addresses the theories on media impacts, the evolution of media outlets, and potential roles in the depiction of police. The shifts, gaps, and concepts in these theories contribute to this thesis by evaluating the potential for reputation management in law enforcement to aid in future recruitment efforts.

1. Cultivation Theories

Gerbner's cultivation theory presents a series of media influence concepts.¹¹ His framework analyzes the influence of media (originally television and crime) to create a higher level of social explanation.¹² Gerbner argues that a series of messaging systems designed to inform communities affect those communities' cultures.¹³ Gerbner explains,

Violence, for example, is not a single or simple dimension of behavior. Much of it is not a problem of behavior at all, in the sense of violent motion. It is equally a question of public assumptions about the role of force and the distribution of justice; it is also a problem of shared expectations of the kinds and effects of violence that "we" expect from different types of "others."¹⁴

Studies in cultivation theory have since expanded into media systems, media policy, and media actors and effects. Surette and Chermak, McGarrell, and Gruenewald have examined these roles and expectations related to media influence.¹⁵ Surette has identified gaps in cultivation theory when examining the relationship between media and the criminal justice system, arguing that "the relationship between the media and criminal justice decision-making and policy is not well understood."¹⁶ Regarding the lack of research on media and criminal justice policy-making, Surette maintains that the people involved (consumers and

¹¹ Gerbner, "Cultural Indicators."

¹² Gerbner.

¹³ Gerbner, 71.

¹⁴ Gerbner, 100.

¹⁵ Steven Chermak, Edmund McGarrell, and Jeff Gruenewald, "Media Coverage of Police Misconduct and Attitudes toward Police," *Policing: An International Journal of Police Strategies & Management* 29, no. 2 (2006): 261–81, <https://doi.org/10.1108/13639510610667664>.

¹⁶ Ray Surette, "Methodological Problems in Determining Media Effects on Criminal Justice: A Review and Suggestions for the Future," *Criminal Justice Policy Review* 6, no. 4 (1992): 291, <https://doi.org/10.1177/088740349200600402>.

producers) in media shape it, and the type of messaging system is essential to understanding the relationship.¹⁷ Surette asserts, “Criminal justice policy and decision makers who understand such effects and their relationship to their local environments will be more effective in their efforts.”¹⁸ Understanding the relationship allows for a more strategic focus in communication. He asserts, “In the criminal justice arena, the media are both messengers and actors and cannot be ignored even as they are not fully understood.”¹⁹ Thus, the interplay of factors and gaps in understanding the media arena and the roles that the police and public play are significant.

Research into the media’s portrayals of high-profile police incidents shows how public attitudes toward law enforcement vary, depending on the time and circumstances of the community. In an article for *Policing: An International Journal of Police Strategies & Management*, Chermak, McGarrell, and Gruenewald use cultivation theory to analyze the media’s impacts on and attitudes toward the police following a high-profile police incident.²⁰ They examine how notable—or notorious—incidents impact attitudes toward the police, finding “that news consumption of this celebrated case had no significant effects on general attitudes toward police, police services, and concerns about police harassment.”²¹ Chermak, McGarrell, and Gruenewald’s research finds that an increase in crime within neighborhoods affects public attitudes more significantly than does the depiction of police in the media.²² Predictably, however, community attitudes toward the police decline as neighborhood crime worries increase. Choi arrives at a similar conclusion: “Although media effects were not directly associated with perceptions of the police, media consumption influences our views of the police through variables that represent

¹⁷ Surette.

¹⁸ Surette, 302.

¹⁹ Surette, 302.

²⁰ Chermak, McGarrell, and Gruenewald, “Media Coverage of Police Misconduct.”

²¹ Chermak, McGarrell, and Gruenewald, 261.

²² Chermak, McGarrell, and Gruenewald, 270.

instrumental and expressive perspectives.”²³ Stakeholders, including policymakers, media organizations, and the police, must recognize the media’s influence on public perceptions, focusing on an accurate and fair portrayal to improve the relationship between the police and the communities they serve.

Chermak, McGarrell, and Gruenewald’s research has limitations, as media sources that reach a broad audience offer lessons about the impacts of public exposure to policing in the news.²⁴ Like Surette’s explanation of having no clear understanding of roles in the media arena, Chermak, McGarrell, and Gruenewald acknowledge that “public attitudes toward the police, and probably other crime topics, are susceptible to change. This variability is a problem for public opinion research focusing on a single point in time.”²⁵ These concepts of everchanging media roles, their impacts, and attitudes toward police are significant from a recruitment perspective.

Some researchers have studied the extent of the media’s influence compared to actual police interactions, recognizing a combined impact of the two. Approximately 10 years ago, Callanan and Rosenberger first used the cultivation theory framework to gauge the public’s perception of the police based on the influence of crime-related media consumption.²⁶ This research marked an analytical shift from the effects of traditional media (e.g., news and television) to the impacts of crime-based reality programs. Callanan and Rosenberger suggest, “Viewing television news and crime-based reality programmes significantly increases confidence in the police.”²⁷ According to their research, perceptions of the police arise not only from media influence but also from other significant factors. Choi identifies similar patterns between media depictions of the police and actual

²³ Jaeyong Choi, Haneul Yim, and Randolph D. Hicks, “Direct and Indirect Effects of Crime-Related Media Consumption on Public Confidence in the Police,” *International Journal of Police Science & Management* 22, no. 1 (2020): 45, <https://doi.org/10.1177/1461355719880572>.

²⁴ Chermak, McGarrell, and Gruenewald, “Media Coverage of Police Misconduct,” 275.

²⁵ Chermak, McGarrell, and Gruenewald, 274.

²⁶ Valerie J. Callanan and Jared S. Rosenberger, “Media and Public Perceptions of the Police: Examining the Impact of Race and Personal Experience,” *Policing and Society* 21, no. 2 (June 2011): 167–89, <https://doi.org/10.1080/10439463.2010.540655>.

²⁷ Callanan and Rosenberger, 167.

interactions.²⁸ According to Choi, “Different portrayals of the police may have differential effects on attitude[s] about the police.”²⁹ Choi’s argument builds on Surette’s finding that the media is inconsistent in its portrayals of the police.

Similarly, Dowler argues that community interactions are more valuable than media portrayals.³⁰ Dowler believes in dispelling myths associated with the media’s depictions of police work; law enforcement can facilitate positive police interactions.³¹ He contends that actual interactions with the police are an “important determinant of the public confidence in police officers.”³² In agreement with Dowler’s findings, Callanan and Rosenberger observe that the fundamental relationship between public perception and previous law enforcement contact is more significant than media influence.³³ These studies indicate that experiences with law enforcement and media influence combined contribute to perceptions of the police.

Even though the public can distinguish between crime as drama and crime in real life, misperceptions endure. For example, Callanan and Rosenberger argue that variations in source and type of media have different impacts on the public.³⁴ The introduction of television crime dramas heralded crime as entertainment. According to Callanan and Rosenberger, “It is not surprising that consumption of crime dramas did not affect attitudes towards the police given that this genre is strictly entertainment.”³⁵ Similarly, Rhineberger-Dunn, Briggs, and Rader state,

A primary issue with the media’s inaccurate depiction of crime and the criminal justice system is that it socially constructs people’s perceptions

²⁸ Jaeyong Choi, “Asymmetry in Media Effects on Perceptions of Police: An Analysis Using a Within-Subjects Design Experiment,” *Police Practice & Research* 22, no. 1 (2021): 567, <https://doi.org/10.1080/15614263.2020.1749624>.

²⁹ Choi, 558.

³⁰ Kenneth Dowler, “Media Influence on Citizen Attitudes toward Police Effectiveness,” *Policing & Society* 12, no. 3 (September 2002): 227, <https://doi.org/10.1080/10439460290032369>.

³¹ Dowler, 236.

³² Dowler, 227.

³³ Callanan and Rosenberger, “Media and Public Perceptions of the Police,” 184.

³⁴ Callanan and Rosenberger.

³⁵ Callanan and Rosenberger, 181.

about the nature of crime and how the criminal justice system works. Since most people rely on the media for information about these topics, their perceptions about the system are skewed by this inaccurate information.³⁶

This standpoint builds on Surette's social construction perspective that the expectations of viewers are based on their experiences within the criminal justice system.³⁷ This research is valuable as it examines media influence through source and type while considering the viewers' experiences in determining the overall impacts.

2. Entertainment Media Influence Theories

Studies based on entertainment media and influence theories often ask, Do docudramas and crime shows influence a person's attitudes toward law enforcement careers and choices of college majors, and, more importantly, do they cross the line between information and entertainment? Surette uses the term "infotainment" to describe the integration of media information and entertainment.³⁸ One recurring theme in police and entertainment media is the crime scene investigation (CSI) effect, so named for a franchise of hit forensics-procedural dramas focusing on the eponymous CSI units. Jurists and journalists have claimed that the CSI effect influences trial outcomes because jury members, suffused in various fictional depictions of crime lab technology, either expect mountains of forensic evidence in all cases or place too much unquestioning trust in CSI-style presentations from experts.³⁹ Proof of any such distortions of the legal process remains largely anecdotal, however.⁴⁰

On the other hand, the CSI effect may have a role in the recruitment and education of new law enforcement professionals. Specifically, Collica-Cox and Furst evaluate the CSI effect and how people perceive actual crime, images of police, and the ability to

³⁶ Gayle Rhineberger-Dunn, Steven Briggs, and Nicole Rader, "Clearing Crime in Prime-Time: The Disjuncture between Fiction and Reality," *American Journal of Criminal Justice* 41, no. 2 (June 2016): 258, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s12103-015-9300-z>.

³⁷ Ray Surette, *Media, Crime, and Criminal Justice: Images, Realities, and Policies*, 5th ed. (Stamford, CT: Cengage Learning, 2015).

³⁸ Surette, 19.

³⁹ Donald E. Shelton, "The 'CSI Effect': Does It Really Exist?," National Institute of Justice, March 16, 2008, <https://nij.ojp.gov/topics/articles/csi-effect-does-it-really-exist>.

⁴⁰ Shelton.

conduct investigations through depictions on television compared to the real-life examples of the criminal justice system.⁴¹ Collica-Cox and Furst's study finds that "although most criminal justice students appeared to enjoy watching crime-related shows, they indicated that it was not influential in their decision-making to study or pursue a career in the criminal justice field."⁴² Other research argues that entertainment media influences the criminal justice system by providing another lens for viewing police work. Alejo claims, "CSI-like television shows have glamorized the profession, leading some students to believe that their jobs will resemble those on television; this is not the case."⁴³

Along with the concepts presented by Alejo, Stringer and Murphy examine how entertainment media influences criminal justice students and their perceptions of police work.⁴⁴ According to Stringer and Murphy, "The 'CSI effect' suggests that media greatly influences public and student perceptions about the criminal justice system."⁴⁵ Their study explains how Collica-Cox and Furst's research does not support its claim: "Instead, students in their study report choosing criminal justice because it is interesting and because they believe this course of study is related to the real world."⁴⁶ Like other studies on cultivation theory and interactions with the police, theories about the influence of entertainment media acknowledge a gap in what is known. This body of research recognizes greater media influence, which is essential for understanding how interest, entertainment, and information shapes a person's selection of a college major or career.

Yet another study shows that exposure to entertainment media influences criminal justice students' courses of study. Ridener, Kuehn, and Scott's study shows a significant correlation between crime television show viewership and criminal justice major selection,

⁴¹ Collica-Cox and Furst, "It's Not the CSI Effect."

⁴² Collica-Cox and Furst, 2090.

⁴³ Kavita Alejo, "The CSI Effect: Fact or Fiction?," *Themis: Research Journal of Justice Studies and Forensic Science* 4, no. 1 (2016): 2, <https://doi.org/10.31979/THEMIS.2016.0401>.

⁴⁴ Stringer and Murphy, "Major Decisions and Career Attractiveness."

⁴⁵ Stringer and Murphy, 525.

⁴⁶ Stringer and Murphy, 525.

and it exposes several variables in the research.⁴⁷ The impacts of family influence, continued viewership throughout college studies, and authentic content have a significant effect beyond actual interest in each show.⁴⁸ Ridener, Kuehn, and Scott propose that “to serve students better, in terms of attracting and retaining them in the [criminology and criminal justice] major, curriculum development, career advisement, and recruitment efforts should consider the personalities and demographics these majors begin their college careers with.”⁴⁹ In addition, they suggest, “Criminal Justice agencies may also want to consider why students choose this major and what makes them distinctly different from other students when entering and graduating from college.”⁵⁰ This research may have implications for recruitment.

Likewise, further studies indicate that crime shows can indirectly affect police legitimacy depending on the depiction of the police. Dirikx and Van den Bulck argue that the police’s application of procedural justice in citizens interactions may predict individuals’ willingness to cooperate with the police.⁵¹ Dirikx and Van den Bulck’s model of media exposure uses an education and messaging framework. Like Ridener, Kuehn, and Scott’s college recruitment argument, Dirikx and Van den Bulck contend that the police’s procedural justice strategies should include methods of enhanced communication to all segments of society.⁵² This research highlights the external and internal variables in the attractiveness of policing as a career. These arguments matter because entertainment media not only amplifies direct exposure—indirectly reinforcing police legitimacy and thus shaping interactions with police—but also facilitates law enforcement’s strategic messaging.

⁴⁷ Rebecca Ridener, Sarah Kuehn, and Paul Wesley Scott, “Why Do Criminology and Criminal Justice Students Choose Their Major? An Examination of Parental, Personality, and Other Individual Characteristics,” *Journal of Criminal Justice Education* 31, no. 1 (2020): 1–22, <https://doi.org/10.1080/10511253.2019.1650085>.

⁴⁸ Ridener, Kuehn, and Scott.

⁴⁹ Ridener, Kuehn, and Scott, 17.

⁵⁰ Ridener, Kuehn, and Scott, 17.

⁵¹ Astrid Dirikx and Jan Van den Bulck, “Media Use and the Process-Based Model for Police Cooperation: An Integrative Approach towards Explaining Adolescents’ Intentions to Cooperate with the Police,” *British Journal of Criminology* 54, no. 2 (2014): 344, <https://doi.org/10.1093/bjc/azt063>.

⁵² Dirikx and Van den Bulck, 360.

Scholarship on entertainment media has significant gaps regarding the extent of individuals' actual police interactions. Donovan and Klahm address these limiting factors, including exposure to real-life police interactions, preexisting pro-cop beliefs, and exposure to information from other sources that shape individuals' views and interest in such crime dramas.⁵³ Their research "support[s] the notion that fictional media not only play a role in shaping perceptions of crime and criminal justice issues but also generate questions about how viewers reconcile real-life events with fictional ones."⁵⁴ As with the CSI-effect studies, Donovan and Klahm recognize concerns that "exposure to fictional crime dramas complicates the processing of criminal justice-related information by blurring the line between what is real and what is not."⁵⁵ The overlap of cultivation and media effects theories shows that combining fact, fiction, and instant information confounds the fundamental aspects of police work.

3. Social Impact and Social Influence Theories

Social media involves network-based web applications that rapidly change how people work together to get things done.⁵⁶ Many researchers argue that social media alone does not directly influence a person's perception of the police strictly from viewing, reading, or sharing it. Latané's theory of social impact is one of many frameworks illustrating how amplified information affects a person's perspective—through "the strength" of the message, "the immediacy" of the information, and "the number" of sources that provides the information.⁵⁷ Mir and Zaheer believe this concept belonged to the age before social media, yet no studies connected these disparate media eras until the 2010s.⁵⁸

⁵³ Kathleen M. Donovan and Charles F. Klahm, "The Role of Entertainment Media in Perceptions of Police Use of Force," *Criminal Justice and Behavior* 42, no. 12 (2015): 1261–81, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0093854815604180>.

⁵⁴ Donovan and Klahm, 1277.

⁵⁵ Donovan and Klahm, 1277.

⁵⁶ Doug Divine, Toni Ferro, and Mark Zachry, "Work through the Web: A Typology of Web 2.0 Services," in *Proceedings of the 29th ACM International Conference on Design of Communication* (New York: Association for Computing Machinery, 2011), 121, <https://doi.org/10.1145/2038476.2038501>.

⁵⁷ Bibb Latané, "The Psychology of Social Impact," *American Psychologist* 36, no. 4 (April 1981): 344, <https://doi.org/10.1037/0003-066X.36.4.343>.

⁵⁸ Imran Mir and Arshad Zaheer, "Verification of Social Impact Theory Claims in Social Media Context," *Journal of Internet Banking and Commerce* 17, no. 1 (April 2012): 3, ProQuest.

Mir and Zaheer study this gap in the literature on social media and its impact on society. As Latané describes, “It seems reasonable to expect that an individual will experience more impact the higher the status, the more immediate the influence, and the greater the number of other people affecting him or her, and data typically bear this out.”⁵⁹ Latané explains that the more frequent the exposure to a concept or idea (regardless of the methodology), the more immediate and personal the exposure, the more significant its impact.⁶⁰ Research by Latané as well as Mir and Zaheer validates social impact theory’s applicability to social media advertising.

Although the research connects the theory with the information channel, additional variables might play a role. As Latané explains, previous experiences with a product or brand as opposed to perceived social media exposure could have negative or positive influences.⁶¹ Adding to the principles of social impact, Nowak, Szamrej, and Latané describe how media influences personal interactions within a society.⁶² According to their research, public opinion “reflect[s] a process of group interaction as people discuss their beliefs and impressions with relatives, friends, neighbors, coworkers, and others.”⁶³ This body of research explores the interaction between social media and interpersonal relationships. Building on the aforementioned research, Cross and Fine conclude that future research into those relationships’ strengths adds value to the analysis of social media impact.⁶⁴ According to Cross and Fine, “Social media content about the police was related to legitimacy perceptions, where more negative social media content about policing was associated with more negative perceptions of police legitimacy.”⁶⁵ These studies link

⁵⁹ Latané, “The Psychology of Social Impact,” 344.

⁶⁰ Latané, 344.

⁶¹ Latané, 344.

⁶² Andrzej Nowak, Jacek Szamrej, and Bibb Latané, “From Private Attitude to Public Opinion: A Dynamic Theory of Social Impact,” *Psychological Review* 97, no. 3 (1990): 362–76, ProQuest.

⁶³ Nowak, Szamrej, and Latané, 363.

⁶⁴ Allison R. Cross and Adam D. Fine, “Police-Related Social Media Exposure and Adolescents’ Interest in Becoming a Police Officer,” *Police Practice and Research* 23, no. 5 (2022): 565, <https://doi.org/10.1080/15614263.2021.2017932>.

⁶⁵ Cross and Fine, 563.

exposure, social impact, and perceptions developed from various social media sources to provide a fuller picture of the media's effects.

Technology and instant exposure to information have allowed scholars to evaluate social influence, providing a powerful messaging system for law enforcement. Additional research into the police's social media exposure has been around for the past 10 years. Goldsmith addresses the idea of a "new visibility" around policing that introduced technology platforms such as "mobile phone cameras, video-sharing platforms, and social networking sites."⁶⁶ Goldsmith finds, "New citizen-controlled media technologies and their associated social uses have meant the seeds of scandal-mongering, and reputational damage, have been cast much more widely, posing a huge reputational threat to contemporary police organizations."⁶⁷ Wood and McGovern recognize the strategies used by law enforcement under Goldsmith's new visibility concept. Wood and McGovern delineate positive uses of message strategies: "Numerous police organisations have made a strategic decision to employ humour on social media, via memes and other comical posts, to increase community engagement with their content and manage their public image."⁶⁸ Colbran also examines the use of digital platforms to enhance police transparency and mitigate negative information messaging.⁶⁹ These examples demonstrate the importance of social media from the community's perspective, whereby the police provide value by increasing accountability and public trust.

Despite some disagreement about social media's influence on the public's perception of the police, researchers agree with the importance of law enforcement's presence on social media. Livingstone has studied the significance of social media

⁶⁶ Andrew John Goldsmith, "Policing's New Visibility," *British Journal of Criminology* 50, no. 5 (2010): 914, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/43610808>.

⁶⁷ Goldsmith, 930.

⁶⁸ Mark A. Wood and Alyce McGovern, "Memetic Copaganda: Understanding the Humorous Turn in Police Image Work," *Crime, Media, Culture: An International Journal* 17, no. 3 (December 2021): 305, <https://doi.org/10.1177/1741659020953452>.

⁶⁹ Marianne P. Colbran, "Policing, Social Media and the New Media Landscape: Can the Police and the Traditional Media Ever Successfully Bypass Each Other?," *Policing and Society* 30, no. 3 (2020): 295, <https://doi.org/10.1080/10439463.2018.1532426>.

relationships between the police and citizens.⁷⁰ Livingstone says, “Social media is a low-barrier outlet for the public to express their support, displeasure, and everything in between about law enforcement, but it can also be used by police departments to open new channels of communication with these same stakeholders.”⁷¹ Law enforcement’s utilization of social media can be both informational and educational. As such, these studies have shown law enforcement can also utilize social media as an opportunity to address societal challenges, too. Law enforcement transparency is at the top of the list for social media inclusion.⁷² Ellis argues that while “views may ‘not change fundamentally’ through such consumption,” the basis of these views may provide insight and be utilized to develop public trust and confidence in law enforcement.⁷³ Studies have asked whether shared images and videos of apparent police misconduct with mass audiences affect the public’s perception of police.⁷⁴ The studies also determine that two-way communication and role responsibilities on such platforms allow law enforcement an opportunity to increase engagement.⁷⁵ This messaging system enhances transparency and accountability, further contributing to police legitimacy.

Studies that apply social impact theory demonstrate a public interest in accessing social media to understand information aligned with existing personal beliefs. Thus, the public’s views on police legitimacy vary based on the authenticity of the information, source outlet, and the impact of consumers’ political ideologies.⁷⁶ According to Intravia, Thompson, and Pickett, “Consuming adverse stories about the police on the Internet was

⁷⁰ Randall M. Livingstone, “Public Relations and Public Service: Police Departments on Facebook,” *Policing and Society* 32, no. 5 (2022): 599, <https://doi.org/10.1080/10439463.2021.1941012>.

⁷¹ Livingstone, 608.

⁷² Lauren Mayes, “Law Enforcement in the Age of Social Media: Examining the Organizational Image Construction of Police on Twitter and Facebook” (PhD diss., Temple University, 2017), ProQuest.

⁷³ Justin R. Ellis, “More than a Trivial Pursuit: Public Order Policing Narratives and the ‘Social Media Test,’” *Crime, Media, Culture* 17, no. 2 (2021): 201, <https://doi.org/10.1177/1741659020918634>.

⁷⁴ Brown, “The Blue Line on Thin Ice,” 294.

⁷⁵ Lemuria Carter, Jason Bennett Thatcher, and Ryan Wright, “Social Media and Emergency Management: Exploring State and Local Tweets,” in *Proceedings of the 47th Hawaii International Conference on System Sciences* (Piscataway, NJ: IEEE, 2014), 1968–77, <https://doi.org/10.1109/HICSS.2014.249>.

⁷⁶ Jonathan Intravia, Andrew J. Thompson, and Justin T. Pickett, “Net Legitimacy: Internet and Social Media Exposure and Attitudes toward the Police,” *Sociological Spectrum* 40, no. 1 (2020): 73, <https://doi.org/10.1080/02732173.2020.1720554>.

negatively related to police legitimacy, whereas social media consumption was not related.”⁷⁷ The authors explain that perceptions of source credibility explain these differences in outcomes.⁷⁸ What individuals like, follow, and share based on individual interests reflect such differences. Intravia, Thompson, and Pickett state, “Those who engage with negative police stories online (i.e., commenting, posting, sharing) may already have strong beliefs/attitudes, and such engagement may reinforce one’s personal stance/ideology about policing, thus having no effect on the consumer.”⁷⁹ The public receives positive and negative images of police every day, and people focus on social media information. Pulido writes, “Citizens will pay more attention to the content published in social media because people are interested in knowing how science can contribute to improving their living conditions and in accessing crucial information.”⁸⁰ This research provides a basis for future studies to determine whether social media reinforces a person’s perceptions or challenges those ideas.

The consensus in this literature review regarding images and media impacts on the perception of police contrasts with additional studies of actual police interactions. Additionally, the research delineates degrees of direct and indirect media influence. This thesis combines law enforcement’s actions, communications, and messaging systems with public interaction as a focus of image reputation management and police recruitment.

C. RESEARCH DESIGN

This thesis analyzes different media theories, including social media influence, examining the concept of policing’s new visibility and the role of image perception.⁸¹ It analyzes how social media depicts and delivers information on police interactions, examining law enforcement’s branding practices on social media to manage image reputation. It investigates practices to understand changes in approaches, including target

⁷⁷ Intravia, Thompson, and Pickett, 73.

⁷⁸ Intravia, Thompson, and Pickett, 73.

⁷⁹ Intravia, Thompson, and Pickett, 73.

⁸⁰ Cristina M. Pulido et al., “Social Impact in Social Media: A New Method to Evaluate the Social Impact of Research,” *PLoS One* 13, no. 8 (August 2018): 17, <https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0203117>.

⁸¹ Goldsmith, “Policing’s New Visibility,” 914.

audiences, locations, and media outlets, to inform law enforcement efforts. Then, this thesis identifies law enforcement uses for social media specific to image management and recruitment efforts.⁸²

Next, this thesis presents a comparative case study that analyzes law enforcement agencies in Canada, the United Kingdom, and New Zealand to understand the media's portrayal of the police, significant recruitment challenges, and the use of effective branding and rebranding strategies to manage public perception. This aspect of the thesis involves evaluating recruitment policies and practices, marketing campaigns, and reputation management techniques, especially on social media.

Then, the "strategic trooper" concept, a strategic foresight method among U.S. servicemembers, is explored for its applicability to American law enforcement. The result is a roadmap for rank-and-file police with a combined strategic vision in a tactical environment. The program's analysis includes research on its training and implementation requirements and ascertains the program's impact on image management and the rebranding of police work on social media. Finally, this portion of the thesis offers techniques and ideas to expand recruitment practices to address the problem of a depleting police workforce.

The research sources used in the thesis included peer-reviewed journals; law enforcement and armed forces policies, procedures, and guides; and magazines, journals, and presentations on recruitment and leadership. This thesis relied on documents such as marketing and branding journals as well. The study included social media concepts, platforms, and principles featured in scholarly articles, books on media effects, social impact, and cultivated theory. Finally, the research included associated mainstream news coverage, public access videos, and images of police misconduct.

⁸² Christa Miller, "The Social Media–Police Branding Relationship," *Officer*, June 5, 2012, ProQuest; Charles C. Krulak, "The Strategic Corporal: Leadership in the Three Block War," *Marine Corps Gazette* 83, no. 1 (January 1999): 18, ProQuest.

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II. THE MEDIA AND LAW ENFORCEMENT RECRUITMENT

In the complex, multifaceted world of law enforcement, this chapter casts a focused lens on three pivotal aspects: the portrayal of police in media, significant recruitment issues, and the essential task of managing public image through adept branding and rebranding strategies. By illuminating these interconnected aspects, this chapter aims to unpack the intricacies of the law enforcement landscape, unveiling the recruitment challenges and potential avenues for image enhancement within this crucial yet often contentious domain. These themes help to explain the implications of the media's portrayal of police for law enforcement recruitment and acknowledge the efforts to improve its reputation. By exploring how police agencies establish their brands, rebrand when necessary, and communicate their missions and values, this chapter strives to reveal how law enforcement can navigate societal perceptions, ultimately enhancing its effectiveness and attractiveness as a prospective career path.

A. MEDIA DEPICTIONS OF POLICE MISCONDUCT

Technological advances in media have had a significant impact on police accountability, notably with cameras in the hands and on the uniforms of ever more participants in ever more police encounters with the public.⁸³ In fact, some groups and individuals have sought to effect radical transparency with concentrated campaigns of recording even mundane police routines.⁸⁴ However, exposure to police misconduct and its relationship to the public is nothing new. Gauthier and Graziano explain, “Examinations of the relationship between attitudes about police and news media have regularly been undertaken since the Rodney King incident in 1991.”⁸⁵ In addition, a more adverse public opinion of police has likely arisen from the increased frequency of negative news portrayals

⁸³ Gary Cummings, “Civil Rights Auditors: Defining Reasonable Time, Place, and Manner Restrictions on First Amendment Activities” (master’s thesis, Naval Postgraduate School, 2019), 1, <http://hdl.handle.net/10945/64128>.

⁸⁴ Cummings, 3.

⁸⁵ Jane Florence Gauthier and Lisa M. Graziano, “News Media Consumption and Attitudes about Police: In Search of Theoretical Orientation and Advancement,” *Journal of Crime and Justice* 41, no. 5 (2018): 504, <https://doi.org/10.1080/0735648X.2018.1472625>.

of law enforcement, based on the cultivation framework.⁸⁶ Considering the different media through which consumers access news, the influence of television news has proven inconsistent, and the impact of newspapers on shaping attitudes has been consistently negligible.⁸⁷

Important distinctions exist between traditional media (such as television, radio, and newspapers) and new media (primarily digital forms like social media, blogs, and online news platforms). Traditional media often provides more in-depth and investigative coverage but may be slower to report and subject to editorial gatekeeping.⁸⁸ On the other hand, new media, particularly social media, has democratized the dissemination of information, allowing real-time sharing of user-generated content, including videos and first-hand accounts of police interactions.⁸⁹ However, it can also lead to the rapid spread of misinformation or decontextualized information.⁹⁰ Thus, each form of media offers different advantages and challenges when depicting police misconduct, shaping public perception, and influencing the discourse on law enforcement practices.

Social media plays a role in police interactions in several ways. As Intravia, Thompson, and Pickett argue, “News media today are reporting police misconduct with a more critical lens than in previous times.”⁹¹ Police departments use social media to connect with their communities, share information, and gather intelligence.⁹² The image of law enforcement in this high-visibility outlet outlines the importance of establishing an effective police–media relationship.⁹³ Activists use social media to organize protests and

⁸⁶ Gauthier and Graziano, 506.

⁸⁷ Gauthier and Graziano, 505.

⁸⁸ Surette, *Media, Crime, and Criminal Justice*.

⁸⁹ “The People Formerly Known as the Audience; Social Media,” *Economist*, July 9, 2011, ProQuest.

⁹⁰ Joan Donovan and Danah Boyd, “Stop the Presses? Moving from Strategic Silence to Strategic Amplification in a Networked Media Ecosystem,” *American Behavioral Scientist* 65, no. 2 (February 2021): 335, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0002764219878229>.

⁹¹ Intravia, Thompson, and Pickett, “Net Legitimacy,” 59.

⁹² Christopher D. O’Connor, “The Police on Twitter: Image Management, Community Building, and Implications for Policing in Canada,” *Policing & Society* 27, no. 8 (November 2017): 909, <https://doi.org/10.1080/10439463.2015.1120731>.

⁹³ Rob C. Mawby, “Promoting the Police? The Rise of Police Image Work,” *Criminal Justice Matters* 43, no. 1 (Spring 2001), 44, <https://doi.org/10.1080/09627250108552970>.

bring attention to issues related to policing, often through the spread of misinformation and false information about police interactions and activities, leading to increased tensions between the community and the police. Media depictions can frame the lens through which the public views the roles and interactions of police.

Negative images of police officers captured on camera, be they videos, photos, or eyewitness accounts, can and do significantly damage police legitimacy.⁹⁴ Legitimacy is based partly on the perception that police officers act fairly and justly and are accountable to the communities they serve.⁹⁵ When negative images of police misconduct or brutality are widely disseminated, particularly in the viral context of social media, they can erode public trust in law enforcement and undermine the perception of police legitimacy.⁹⁶ For police officers to perform their duties effectively, they need trust and cooperation from members of the public.⁹⁷ Overall, technological advances in media have profoundly impacted police accountability and will likely continue to shape the way law enforcement accountability is viewed in the future. Out of the 2014 fatal shooting of Michael Brown and the subsequent civil unrest arose the term the “Ferguson effect,” suggesting that law enforcement officers are less proactive in policing due to negative attention toward the police, accusations of racial bias, and increased incidents involving excessive force.⁹⁸ As Copeland, Carmen, and Semukhina explain, “Unlike previous negative publicity disseminated in the traditional media outlets, the Ferguson effect was not localized to any specific community because of the propagation of information on social media.”⁹⁹ As such, negative perceptions of the police can now affect communities that were once unaware.

⁹⁴ Choi, “Asymmetry in Media Effects on Perceptions of Police,” 567.

⁹⁵ Murray Lee and Alyce McGovern, “Force to Sell: Policing the Image and Manufacturing Public Confidence,” *Policing & Society* 23, no. 2 (June 2013): 121, <https://doi.org/10.1080/10439463.2011.647913>.

⁹⁶ Intravia, Thompson, and Pickett, “Net Legitimacy,” 58.

⁹⁷ Dirikx and Van den Bulck, “Media Use and the Process-Based Model,” 344.

⁹⁸ Morrow et al., “Examining a Ferguson Effect,” 585.

⁹⁹ Christopher Copeland, Alex del Carmen, and Olga B. Semukhina, “Revisiting the Ferguson Effect: Law Enforcement Perception of Recruitment in the Post George Floyd Era,” *International Journal of Police Science & Management* 24, no. 3 (September 2022): 262, <https://doi.org/10.1177/14613557221074988>.

A perception focusing on a corrupt or abusive police agency may damage the entire profession's reputation. Gauthier and Graziano's research has found that negative attitudes toward police rest on increased exposure to pessimistic law enforcement coverage on the news.¹⁰⁰ As Rhodes and Tyler describe, "The Ferguson incident served as an environmental jolt to law enforcement, drawing fractures in police community relations into the light."¹⁰¹ The correlation between the level of trust among citizens and their interactions with, or disconnection from, law enforcement agencies raises several concerns regarding the impact of police communication efforts on shaping public trust in the police.¹⁰² This distorted perception can lead to mistrust and a breakdown in the relationship and legitimacy between the police and the communities they serve.¹⁰³ It has also been shown that people inclined to have a negative perception of police regularly consume media related to criminal activity.¹⁰⁴ In summary, media depictions of police misconduct can serve as a powerful tool for accountability and social change—at least they do when reporting is fair, accurate, and balanced.

B. LAW ENFORCEMENT'S RECRUITMENT PROBLEMS

As important as the broader landscape of law enforcement portrayals is, the intersection of negative media depictions of the police and their ensuing recruitment challenges is crucial, as these two areas are intrinsically linked and have a profound impact on the fabric of law enforcement agencies. Over the past several years, law enforcement agencies have faced difficulties attracting and retaining talented individuals if they are perceived as part of a system that perpetuates injustice and violence. Damage to law enforcement's reputation can result in a shortage of qualified individuals willing to apply for positions, making it harder to attract and retain talented individuals committed to

¹⁰⁰ Gauthier and Graziano, "News Media Consumption and Attitudes about Police," 506.

¹⁰¹ Trisha N. Rhodes and David H. Tyler, "Is It Cool to Be a Cop? Exploring the Differential Impact of Ferguson on Police Applicants," *Policing: A Journal of Policy & Practice* 15, no. 1 (March 2021): 493, <https://doi.org/10.1093/police/paz013>.

¹⁰² Lee and McGovern, "Force to Sell," 119.

¹⁰³ Justin Nix and Scott E. Wolfe, "The Impact of Negative Publicity on Police Self-Legitimacy," *Justice Quarterly* 34, no. 1 (2017): 85, <https://doi.org/10.1080/07418825.2015.1102954>.

¹⁰⁴ Choi, Yim, and Hicks, "Effects of Crime-Related Media Consumption," 1.

serving their communities.¹⁰⁵ As described by Copeland, Carmen, and Semukhina, “The Ferguson effect had a statistically significant impact on both the state of recruitment and recruitment efforts in [their] study. Departments that experienced the Ferguson effect were more likely to see a worsening of their recruitment situation and had to increase their recruitment efforts.”¹⁰⁶ The events in Ferguson seem to have been a crucial wake-up call that has drawn more scrutiny to law enforcement, potentially affecting its recruitment efforts.¹⁰⁷ Many police departments lack diversity among their officers, which can make it difficult for certain communities to trust and engage with the police. As Rhodes and Tyler argue, “Recruitment of highly qualified applicants has been a defining characteristic of police reforms for decades.”¹⁰⁸

Without question, law enforcement used to enjoy a surplus of promising applicants, particularly in the decades following World War II. As Cox et al. explain, “Community relations programs, developed in the 1960s, were initially an experiment in bridging the gap between the police and the community. Such programs were later to become a revolution in policing.”¹⁰⁹ A career in law enforcement often draws individuals due to the unique opportunity it presents to make a direct, positive impact on their local communities and to build meaningful relationships with community members. In the past, law enforcement was considered a secure and stable career path that offered good pay, benefits, and opportunities for advancement.¹¹⁰ Additionally, police officers were often viewed as

¹⁰⁵ Shane Burleigh, “Reimagining the Recruitment and Hiring of Police Officers during Tumultuous Times,” *Certified Public Manager Applied Research* 2, no. 1 (2021): 1–8, <https://scholarworks.sfasu.edu/cpmar/vol2/iss1/4>.

¹⁰⁶ Copeland, Carmen, and Semukhina, “Revisiting the Ferguson Effect,” 269.

¹⁰⁷ Rhodes and Tyler, “Is It Cool to Be a Cop?” 504.

¹⁰⁸ Rhodes and Tyler, 492.

¹⁰⁹ Steven M. Cox et al., “A Brief History of Police in the United States,” in *Introduction to Policing*, 4th ed. (Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications, 2020), 28, https://us.sagepub.com/sites/default/files/upm-assets/106141_book_item_106141.pdf.

¹¹⁰ Michael D. White et al., “Motivations for Becoming a Police Officer: Re-assessing Officer Attitudes and Job Satisfaction after Six Years on the Street,” *Journal of Criminal Justice* 38, no. 4 (July 2010): 520, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jcrimjus.2010.04.022>.

respected members of the community who played an important role in maintaining public safety and order.¹¹¹

Today, however, the landscape of law enforcement has changed. High-profile incidents of police misconduct and brutality have eroded public trust in law enforcement, making it more difficult for agencies to recruit qualified candidates.¹¹² The social and political climate has also shifted, with a growing distrust of law enforcement among certain population segments and a heightened awareness of systemic issues within the criminal justice system.¹¹³ Rhodes and Tyler note, “Many cities are reporting hiring and retention issues, yet it is unclear whether this is due to changes in citizen perceptions of police or something else entirely.”¹¹⁴

The shortage of personnel in American law enforcement is significant today, made worse by the continued rise in resignations, up 18 percent in 2021, and retirements, which increased 45 percent in 2021.¹¹⁵ Burleigh explains, “With the last of the Baby Boomer generation retiring out of law enforcement, Gen X officers taking early retirements in record numbers, and a lack of qualified applicants, hiring managers are now in a bind.”¹¹⁶ Several factors contribute to this problem, but arguments of negative reputation, stigma, and the lack of diversity have been introduced into the concept of police legitimacy, negatively impacting the attractiveness of a law enforcement career. Law enforcement must recruit, hire, and retain a workforce representative of the community that can succeed and is supported by society as a whole.¹¹⁷

¹¹¹ White and Ferrandino, “Criminal Justice Students’ Perceptions,” 59.

¹¹² Burleigh, “Reimagining the Recruitment,” 1.

¹¹³ Joseph J. LeStrange, “Four Guiding Principles for Successful Leadership for the Future of Policing,” *Police Chief* 89, no. 9 (September 2022): 38–39, <https://www.policchiefmagazine.org/magazine-issues/september-2022/>.

¹¹⁴ Rhodes and Tyler, “Is It Cool to Be a Cop?,” 492.

¹¹⁵ Richard H. Donohue and Bob Harrison, “A Way Forward for Policing Recruiting,” *Police Chief* 89, no. 12 (December 2022): 27, <https://www.policchiefmagazine.org/magazine-issues/december-2022/>.

¹¹⁶ Burleigh, “Reimagining the Recruitment,” 2.

¹¹⁷ Donohue and Harrison, “A Way Forward for Policing Recruiting,” 29.

Even more concerning than the lack of diversity within agencies is the insufficient representation of demographic diversity in line with the general public.¹¹⁸ The question is whether law enforcement agencies can implement social media recruitment strategies to address this issue. Law enforcement agencies are concerned primarily with exploring opportunities to enhance police representation and diversity.¹¹⁹ Diversity in law enforcement can broadly impact police culture and community relations. Law enforcement agencies that embrace diversity can build a workforce that reflects the communities they serve, leading to improved communication and trust with the public.¹²⁰ Regardless, a diverse police force brings new perspectives, ideas, and approaches to policing that can enhance the effectiveness of law enforcement. However, law enforcement diversity alone may not change police culture by way of addressing allegations of systemic racism and bias.¹²¹ The key to changing police culture is hiring qualified people with a high emphasis on values and morals in a diverse society. A cultural shift can help foster a more inclusive environment that values diversity, equity, and inclusion, thereby positively impacting police–community relations.¹²²

C. **BRANDING PRACTICES (IMAGE MANAGEMENT)**

Reputation and image management starts with identifying the cause of recruitment difficulties through an internal self-evaluation process. Understanding the vital role of social media in promoting diversity and representing the community are essential for law enforcement’s image.¹²³ In order to address the problem of recruitment, law enforcement agencies may need to self-reflect as organizations. In identifying approaches and internal actions to address the causes of recruitment difficulties, Mark Haynes adds, “It is critical

¹¹⁸ Michael F. Aiello, “Procedural Justice and Demographic Diversity: A Quasi-Experimental Study of Police Recruitment,” *Police Quarterly* 25, no. 3 (September 2022): 388, <https://doi.org/10.1177/10986111211043473>.

¹¹⁹ Aiello, 403.

¹²⁰ Kate Linklater, “Inclusion Capital: How Police Officers Are Included in Their Workplaces,” *Societies* 12, no. 5 (2022): 1, <https://doi.org/10.3390/soc12050128>.

¹²¹ Linklater, 1.

¹²² Linklater, 16.

¹²³ Aiello, “Procedural Justice and Demographic Diversity,” 403.

for departments to consider how they represent themselves, including their goals and values. Advertisements that show the authentic daily activities of a police officer are much more likely to attract candidates who want to do the job.”¹²⁴ Therefore, managing media depictions and public perception of law enforcement is essential, not just for attracting new, qualified, and diverse recruits but also for maintaining the morale and commitment of current officers. These strategies will require a new type of messaging to increase diversity within agencies. Along this line, Aiello argues, “Online recruitment materials, along with a department’s website and social media presence, represent some of the most critical opportunities to carefully consider how to present best the agency’s workforce, goals, and relationship to the public.”¹²⁵

Building on the discussion of recruitment challenges necessitates considering how these difficulties provide a persuasive opportunity for law enforcement agencies. By rebranding or redefining their image, these agencies could potentially attract new recruits and nurture public trust. Branding practices in law enforcement on social media can involve using social media platforms to create a positive image of the department and its officers. Branding techniques can include posting photos and videos of officers engaging in community events, sharing information about crime prevention and safety, and highlighting the department’s accomplishments. Lawson explains, “Police agencies need to establish a brand that is easily recognizable.”¹²⁶ Law enforcement branding on social media can be a powerful tool for building trust and positive relationships with the community.

Branding an employer can increase recruitment efforts by creating a positive image of the company and its culture, generally making the company more attractive to potential employees. In order to emphasize the company’s position as an employer, several marketing concepts, particularly branding and human resources, must be integrated to

¹²⁴ Mark L. Haynes, “It Starts at Home: Internal Actions Police Agencies Can Take to Improve Staffing” (master’s thesis, Naval Postgraduate School, 2020), 83, <https://hdl.handle.net/10945/66655>.

¹²⁵ Aiello, “Procedural Justice and Demographic Diversity,” 403.

¹²⁶ Jacob Lawson, *Recruitment and Retention of Police Officers in These Challenging Times: Is It Different Now?* (Little Rock, AR: Criminal Justice Institute, 2021), 8, <https://www.cji.edu/wp-content/uploads/2021/07/Recruitment-and-Retention-of-Police-Officers-in-These-Challenging.pdf>.

create an employer brand.¹²⁷ A strong and consistent brand can convey important information about the company's values, mission, and culture, which can help to attract job candidates who are a good fit for the organization. As Noutel et al. explain, "The intention of this Marketing process is similar to any other commercial brand: to attract new customers and keep the current ones."¹²⁸ Simply put, the marketing concept ensures a company is attractive as a way to increase recruitment and retention. In the law enforcement context, investing in a brand can be a means of attracting high-quality candidates for a law enforcement career.¹²⁹

The employer brand is the reputation that an organization builds as an employer, and it is based on the experiences of its current and former employees. Organizations with strong employer brands are more likely to attract top talent because they offer a compelling employee value proposition, which includes competitive salaries, benefits, and a positive workplace culture. Employer branding serves as a roadmap for identifying the best jobs available.¹³⁰ A law enforcement agency's ability to brand its jobs, tasks, and opportunities is another way to establish positive interactions with the community.¹³¹

Legitimacy and public trust are crucial aspects of employer branding practices. In the context of employer branding, legitimacy is essential for creating an image of the organization that is credible and trustworthy.¹³² Lawson illustrates how a law enforcement agency can create a credible image:

One way to reach quality police officer applicants is to invest in establishing a brand. Commercial branding has been used for product advertisement for decades. This is a strategy that has been underutilized by law enforcement agencies. When you hear the phrase, "Be all you can be," most everyone

¹²⁷ Raquel Noutel et al., "An Employer Branding Strategy: Developing a Talent Attraction Model through Action Research," *South Florida Journal of Development* 2, no. 1 (2021): 420, <https://doi.org/10.46932/sfjdv2n1-031>.

¹²⁸ Noutel et al., 6.

¹²⁹ Lawson, *Recruitment and Retention of Police Officers*, 8.

¹³⁰ Ralf Wilden, Siegfried Gudergan, and Ian Lings, "Employer Branding: Strategic Implications for Staff Recruitment," *Journal of Marketing Management* 26, no. 1–2 (2010): 69, <https://doi.org/10.1080/02672570903577091>.

¹³¹ Miller, "The Social Media–Police Branding Relationship," 2.

¹³² Wilden, Gudergan, and Lings, "Employer Branding," 77.

recognizes that the United States Army is being advertised. Also, everyone knows that M&M's "melt in your mouth, not in your hands." Police agencies need to establish a brand that is easily recognizable. If an agency does not take control of the narrative and market its qualities through successful branding, external forces such as media perceptions may dominate the narrative.¹³³

Public trust reflects citizens' confidence in the organization and its activities.¹³⁴ The level of public trust in an organization can influence its ability to attract and retain top talent. Therefore, it is critical for organizations to engage in employer branding practices that are perceived as legitimate and trustworthy.¹³⁵ As a result, organizational branding includes transparency about company culture, values, and practices and ensures the messaging is consistent with the employee experience. Failure to do so can lead to a loss of public trust and negatively impact an organization's reputation and ability to attract and retain talent.¹³⁶

Social media platforms provide an opportunity for individuals and organizations to broadcast information about their online reputations with their target audience. An online reputation refers to how an individual or organization is perceived by others online, and social media platforms allow individuals and organizations to control the messaging about their reputations.¹³⁷ By leveraging social media platforms, individuals and organizations can communicate their values, achievements, and cultures through posts, stories, and interactions with their followers. For example, organizations can share information about their corporate social responsibility initiatives or highlight their employees' achievements to build positive online reputations. As Marin and Nilă explain, "In economic studies, it can be observed that social media networks play a vital role in the way professional identity

¹³³ Lawson, *Recruitment and Retention of Police Officers*, 8.

¹³⁴ Lee and McGovern, "Force to Sell," 108.

¹³⁵ Wilden, Gudergan, and Lings, "Employer Branding," 77.

¹³⁶ Wilden, Gudergan, and Lings, 63.

¹³⁷ Georgiana Diana Marin and Constantin Nilă, "Branding in Social Media. Using LinkedIn in Personal Brand Communication: A Study on Communications/Marketing and Recruitment/Human Resources Specialists Perception," *Social Sciences & Humanities Open* 4, no. 1 (2021): 1, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ssaho.2021.100174>.

is promoted; this feature is greatly influencing an individual's online reputation.”¹³⁸ By leveraging social media platforms effectively, individuals and organizations can build trust, strengthen their brands, and communicate their values and achievements to their audience.

Branding practices on social media can be powerful tools for building trust and positive relationships with the community. However, the media's portrayal and public perception can influence the depiction of police absent law enforcement's ability to promote its merits effectively through strong branding.¹³⁹ As a result, branding requires careful consideration of the messages and content being shared and an understanding of the impact on the community. According to Lawson, the branding “strategy has been underutilized by law enforcement agencies.”¹⁴⁰ Still, it also requires careful consideration of the shared messages and content and their impact on the community. Having a solid messaging platform is important, but ensuring the actions and performance of the messenger is vital in providing trust and confidence in the brand.¹⁴¹ This type of strategic communication from law enforcement agencies has the ability to reach employees, potential applicants, and the community as a whole.¹⁴² Trust and confidence come with an ability to shift the culture toward legitimacy and acceptance.

D. CONCLUSION

This chapter analyzed the complex interplay between police recruitment, image perception, and branding. By understanding the obstacles encountered in law enforcement recruitment, policymakers can accurately identify areas that require concentrated effort to entice a fresh wave of police officers. Strengthening bonds with the community can fortify

¹³⁸ Marin and Nilă, 1.

¹³⁹ Lawson, *Recruitment and Retention of Police Officers*.

¹⁴⁰ Lawson, 8.

¹⁴¹ Lawson.

¹⁴² Darrel W. Stephens, Julia Hill, and Sheldon Greenberg, *Strategic Communication Practices: A Toolkit for Police Executives* (Washington, DC: Office of Community Oriented Policing Services, 2011), 18, <https://portal.cops.usdoj.gov/resourcecenter/ric/Publications/cops-p222-pub.pdf>.

the binding social contract that underpins efficacious policing, boosting public trust and credibility through demonstrable actions followed by effective communication.¹⁴³

A rebranding campaign can help create a sense of excitement and momentum around the company, making it more appealing to job candidates. Rebranding can also help to differentiate the company from its competitors and communicate its unique value proposition to potential employees.¹⁴⁴ Creating a positive image, having a brand, and rebranding when needed can also help to increase recruitment efforts by improving the company's visibility and reach. In the context of hiring, employer branding refers to the collection of mental, financial, and practical advantages that job seekers connect with working for a specific organization.¹⁴⁵ For example, a company with a strong online presence and a well-designed website is more likely to be found by candidates searching for job opportunities. Familiarity with the essential needs of potential employees can aid companies in constructing an appealing and competitive employer image.¹⁴⁶ These image reputation efforts can help to attract job candidates who are a good fit for the organization and increase the chances of successful recruitment.

The rebranding process, particularly when amplified by the far-reaching influence of social media, can spark this transformation, creating an attractive and reliable portrayal of law enforcement.¹⁴⁷ Understanding these concepts allows law enforcement to perceive recruitment hurdles not merely as roadblocks but as gateways to pioneering change that can rejuvenate and fortify the future of law enforcement. If law enforcement does not proactively engage in self-reflection and effective communication with the community or identify strategies to brand or rebrand its image, it could further exacerbate the already worrying decline in police recruitment.

¹⁴³ Yaxian Qiu, "Enhancing Police Legitimacy through the Use of Twitter—A Mixed-Method Study of Police Communication via Twitter in England and Wales" (PhD diss., Bangor University, 2021), <https://research.bangor.ac.uk/portal/files/39124745/2021QIUphd.pdf>.

¹⁴⁴ Noutel et al., "An Employer Branding Strategy," 418.

¹⁴⁵ Wilden, Gudergan, and Lings, "Employer Branding," 66.

¹⁴⁶ Wilden, Gudergan, and Lings, 58.

¹⁴⁷ "Police Branding & Image Management," Police Social Media, July 11, 2017, <https://police.socialmedia.com/news/police-branding-management/>.

III. CASE STUDIES: AN INTERNATIONAL APPROACH

Negative images of police in the United States have spurred law enforcement agencies across the globe to increase positive interactions with the public they serve. The images and killing of George Floyd sparked protests beyond U.S. borders. National Public Radio reported, “U.S. protesters rallying against the killing of George Floyd and countless other black Americans are being heard around the world as demonstrators launched their protests in the countries such as the United Kingdom, Germany, Canada, Iran, and New Zealand.”¹⁴⁸ Significant incidents concerning the police’s use of force in locations across the United States and globally have captured substantial media attention, underscoring the criticality of maintaining positive relations between law enforcement and the communities it serves.¹⁴⁹ Against this backdrop, this chapter aims to analyze the strategies used by the police forces of Canada, the United Kingdom, and New Zealand regarding their image management on social media and recruitment. In recent years, social media has become an essential tool for law enforcement agencies worldwide to communicate with the public, promote their services, and recruit new officers. Law enforcement agencies in these three states have made some promising strides in this connection, some of which yield recommendations for the United States.

A. CANADA

This section analyzes how three significant aspects shape the policing landscape in Canada—media depictions of police, law enforcement recruitment strategies, and image management and branding tactics. Media portrayals of the police have some impact on public sentiment and perceptions of law enforcement. Current police recruitment strategies provide insight into the composition of the force and its resulting capabilities and public image. Finally, Canadian law enforcement’s image management and branding strategies reveal how its agencies build their public persona and strengthen public trust. As doubts

¹⁴⁸ Hannah Hagemann and Lynsey Jeffery, “George Floyd Reverberates Globally: Thousands Protest in Germany, U.K., New Zealand,” NPR, May 31, 2020, <https://www.npr.org/2020/05/31/866428272/george-floyd-reverberates-globally-thousands-protest-in-germany-u-k-canada>.

¹⁴⁹ Nix and Wolfe, “The Impact of Negative Publicity,” 84.

over the legitimacy of law enforcement grow, police agencies throughout Canada strive to cultivate positive connections between officers and communities.¹⁵⁰ This tripartite analysis provides a comprehensive understanding of the complexities involved in the representation, composition, and public perception of the Canadian police.

1. Media Depictions of Police Misconduct

The portrayal of the Canadian police in the media has not always been positive, with instances of perceived misconduct and racial bias often grabbing headlines.¹⁵¹ The role of law enforcement has been called into question due to several high-profile cases, creating a ripple effect on their public image.¹⁵² For instance, racial prejudice has emerged, prompted by reports of discriminatory treatment from individuals of marginalized communities, particularly racial minorities and First Nations peoples. One notable incident involved a First Nations chief who alleged racial profiling during a violent arrest, triggering nationwide debates.¹⁵³ Furthermore, the advent of social media and the proliferation of mobile devices have led to increased circulation of videos showing purported police misconduct. These publicized events have fueled discussions around systemic issues within law enforcement, underlining the profound impact of media representation on the public's perception of the Canadian police.¹⁵⁴

The Canadian government has developed a nuanced understanding of the media's critical role in shaping police legitimacy. In order to enhance the public level of trust with the Canadian police, law enforcement agencies must achieve new levels of oversight,

¹⁵⁰ Kevin Walby and Courtney Joshua, "Framing Fantasies: Public Police Recruiting Videos and Representations of Women," *Current Issues in Criminal Justice* 33, no. 2 (May 2021): 155, <https://doi.org/10.1080/10345329.2020.1818425>.

¹⁵¹ Leyland Cecco, "Canada Urged to Open Its Eyes to Systemic Racism in Wake of Police Violence," *Guardian*, June 14, 2020, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2020/jun/14/canada-systemic-racism-history>.

¹⁵² Cecco.

¹⁵³ Leyland Cecco, "First Nations Chief Shown Being Punched by Canadian Police in Video," *Guardian*, June 12, 2020, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2020/jun/12/canadian-police-punch-first-nations-chief-canada-video-chief-allan-adam>.

¹⁵⁴ Leyland Cecco, "Canada Police under Scrutiny after Two Women Die after Encounters with Officers," *Guardian*, June 5, 2020, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2020/jun/05/canada-police-under-scrutiny-after-two-women-die-after-encounters-with-officers>.

transparency, and accountability.¹⁵⁵ McKay's 2021 report identified a change in police culture and norms:

Given the pervasive nature of systemic racism in policing in Canada, the House of Commons Standing Committee on Public Safety and National Security . . . has concluded that a transformative national effort is required to ensure that all Indigenous, Black and other racialized people in Canada are not subject to the discrimination and injustice that is inherent in the system as it exists today. The Committee was told that accountability, oversight and transparency are critical to restore trust with Indigenous and racialized communities subject to systemic racism.¹⁵⁶

The Canadian government is striving to address systemic racism within law enforcement, recognizing that positive media portrayals and the public perceptions that result are crucial for the police to function effectively. In this way, transparency, accountability, and fairness in police practices, accurately reflected in media narratives, can foster public trust and enhance police legitimacy.

2. Law Enforcement Recruitment

Police recruitment in Canada often involves a comprehensive approach that includes both traditional and modern methods. In order to expand the application pool, the Canadian police have found an additional use for social media.¹⁵⁷ The Canadian approach to police recruitment on social media involves using platforms such as Twitter, Facebook, Instagram, and LinkedIn to promote job openings, engage with potential candidates, showcase community involvement, provide information about the recruitment process, and answer questions from candidates (see Figure 1).¹⁵⁸ Different methods and strategies have been developed for multi-prong image management and recruitment approaches. As Meijer and Thaens discovered, "Social media are being used to enhance citizens' input in police investigations, to strengthen the public image of police departments, to control crowds, to

¹⁵⁵ John McKay, *Systemic Racism in Policing in Canada: Report of the Standing Committee on Public Safety and National Security* (Ottawa: Canada House of Commons, 2021), 15.

¹⁵⁶ McKay, 15.

¹⁵⁷ Walby and Joshua, "Framing Fantasies," 151.

¹⁵⁸ "Police Officer Careers," Royal Canadian Mounted Police, June 29, 2021, <https://www.rcmp-grc.gc.ca/en/police-officer-careers>.

tackle crisis situations, to obtain better input in policy-making processes and to attract new police officers.”¹⁵⁹

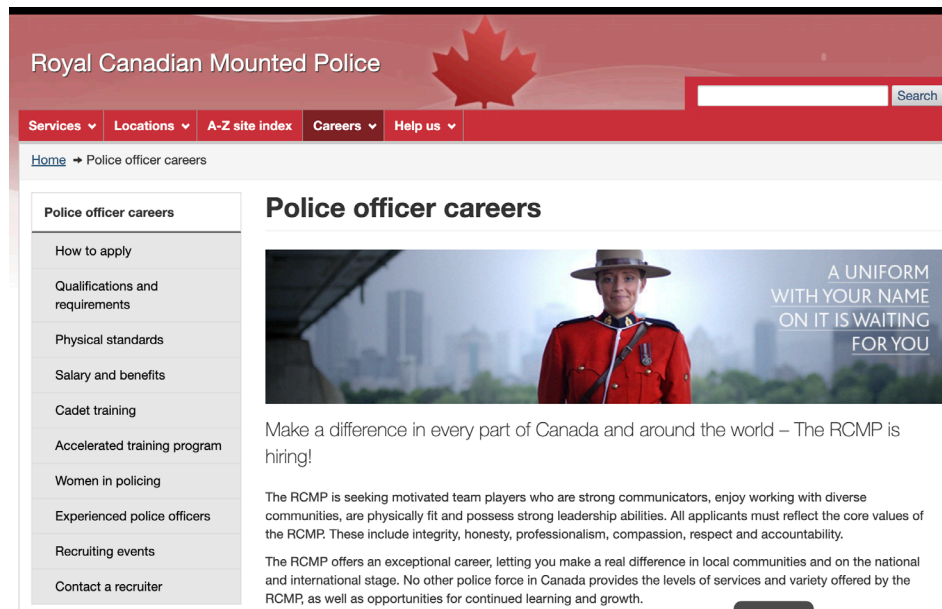


Figure 1. Royal Canadian Mounted Police’s Career Web Page.¹⁶⁰

The Canadian police utilize a variety of social media platforms to communicate. To attract new recruits, the Canadian police use YouTube for a variety of messaging concepts.¹⁶¹ As diversity has taken center stage across social media platforms and police reform concepts, the Canadian police are not immune from the conversation. It is crucial for law enforcement to consider the traits of individuals who convey messages, including their gender, ethnicity, age, and position within the organization.¹⁶² Walby and Wilkinson explain the Canadian response: “Attempts at representation of traditionally

¹⁵⁹ Albert Meijer and Marcel Thaens, “Social Media Strategies: Understanding the Differences between North American Police Departments,” *Government Information Quarterly* 30, no. 4 (2013): 343, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.giq.2013.05.023>.

¹⁶⁰ Source: Royal Canadian Mounted Police, “Police Officer Careers.”

¹⁶¹ Walby and Joshua, “Framing Fantasies,” 151.

¹⁶² Joey Carrier et al., “Online Canadian Police Recruitment Videos: Do They Focus on Factors That Potential Employees Consider When Making Career Decisions?,” *Police Practice & Research* 22, no. 6 (October 2021): 1597, <https://doi.org/10.1080/15614263.2020.1869549>.

underrepresented groups are also demonstrated through recruitment-oriented posts.”¹⁶³ Although various social media platforms are used for Canadian police agencies’ public interactions, Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube remain the strongest systems.¹⁶⁴

3. Branding Practices (Image Management)

The first Canadian police force to adopt new media technology was the Toronto Police Service.¹⁶⁵ As Meijer and Thaens explain, “The initiative to use social media was taken by a police officer who was stationed from the Toronto Police as a Youth Outreach Officer at the local branch of Crime Stoppers to encourage students with information about criminal activities to call Crime Stoppers.”¹⁶⁶ Canadian police forces use social media to manage their image and reputation in several ways. Not only do they use social media as a recruitment tool, but they also provide a level of transparency and accountability by sharing information about their activities and addressing public concerns.¹⁶⁷ The Canadian strategy helps to build trust with the public and demonstrates that police forces are accountable to the communities they serve. Canadian police forces use social media to showcase their community involvement and positive interactions with citizens.¹⁶⁸ Research conducted by O’Conner suggests that “Twitter was used to help manage the image of the police and build community.”¹⁶⁹

In addition, police forces use social media to educate the public about their roles and responsibilities and the laws and regulations governing their actions.¹⁷⁰ Utilizing social media to educate the public can help to dispel myths or misconceptions about law enforcement and promote a better understanding of the important work that police do.

¹⁶³ Kevin Walby and Blair Wilkinson, “The Visual Politics of Public Police Instagram Use in Canada,” *New Media & Society* 25, no. 5 (2021): 10, <https://doi.org/10.1177/14614448211015805>.

¹⁶⁴ Walby and Joshua, “Framing Fantasies,” 151.

¹⁶⁵ Meijer and Thaens, “Social Media Strategies,” 347.

¹⁶⁶ Meijer and Thaens, 347.

¹⁶⁷ Carrier et al., “Online Canadian Police Recruitment Videos,” 1597.

¹⁶⁸ O’Connor, “The Police on Twitter.”

¹⁶⁹ O’Connor, 899.

¹⁷⁰ Carrier et al., “Online Canadian Police Recruitment Videos,” 1597.

Moreover, Canadian police forces' social media use has shown how an open networking strategy can help build lasting community relations.¹⁷¹ See Figure 2 for Public Safety Canada's social media protocol.



Figure 2. Public Safety Canada's Social Media Protocol.¹⁷²

In order to improve community relations and enhance the effectiveness of community policing, Canadian police officers may communicate externally with the public through authentic and individual messaging.¹⁷³ This direct approach utilizes social media as a messaging board to interact with citizens, thus helping to manage law enforcement's image and legitimacy.¹⁷⁴ Advertisements for the Community Constable Program illustrate such an approach (see Figure 3).¹⁷⁵

¹⁷¹ Meijer and Thaens, "Social Media Strategies," 348.

¹⁷² Source: "Public Safety Canada's Social Media Protocol," Public Safety Canada, May 2, 2019, <https://www.publicsafety.gc.ca/cnt/ntcs/scl-md-en.aspx>.

¹⁷³ Meijer and Thaens, "Social Media Strategies," 347.

¹⁷⁴ Grimmelikhuijsen and Meijer, "Does Twitter Increase Perceived Police Legitimacy?" 9.

¹⁷⁵ "Community Constables," Royal Canadian Mounted Police, January 15, 2019, <https://www.rcmp-grc.gc.ca/en/community-constables>.

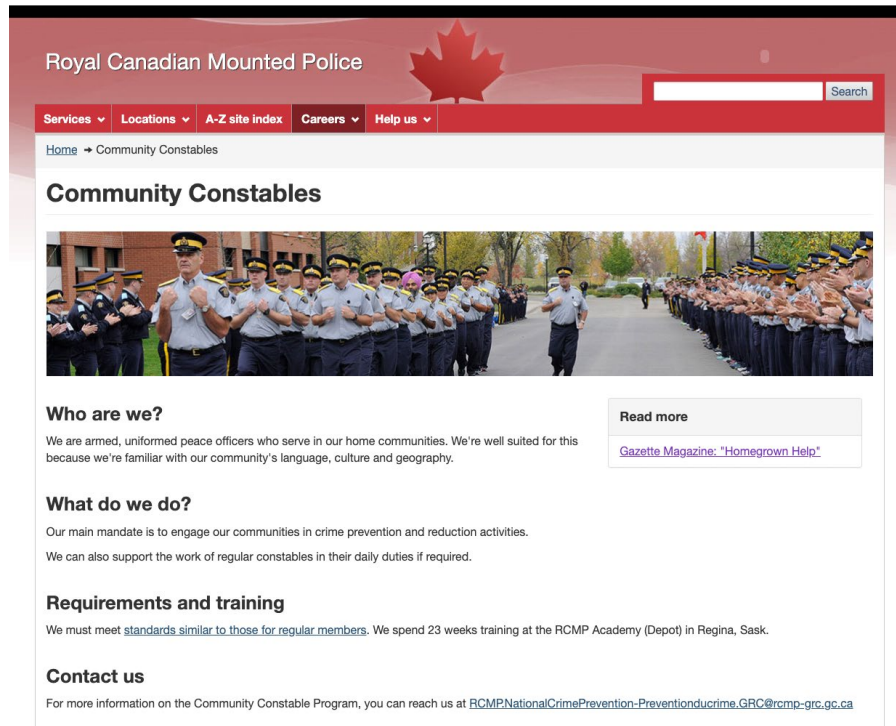


Figure 3. Royal Canadian Mounted Police’s Community Constables Web Page.¹⁷⁶

Beyond transparency and legitimacy, image management on social media creates a sense of attractiveness. As Carrier et al. point out, “Good organizational reputation and management reputations of organizations and their respective management teams can hold a lot of weight for potential job applicants.”¹⁷⁷ Canada also uses the homegrown approach not only to garner support from communities but also to help communities understand the police (see Figure 4).

¹⁷⁶ Source: Royal Canadian Mounted Police.

¹⁷⁷ Carrier et al., “Online Canadian Police Recruitment Videos,” 1588.

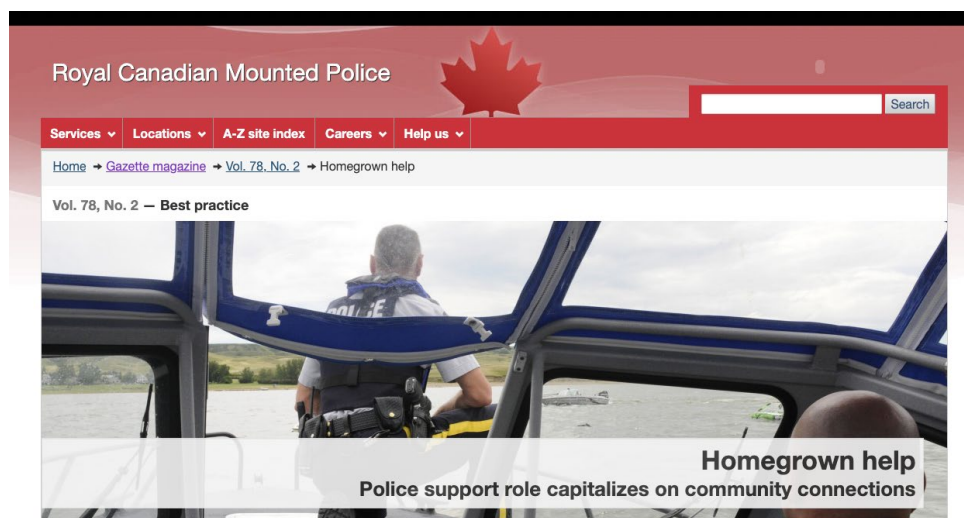


Figure 4. Best Practices Published in Royal Canadian Mounted Police's *Gazette* Online.¹⁷⁸

Overall, social media is an important tool for Canadian police forces in managing their image and reputation by showcasing positive interactions with the community, addressing incidents of misconduct, educating the public, and promoting positive stories and achievements. By branding a positive image of the Canadian police on social media, their communications remain broad and transparent.¹⁷⁹

B. UNITED KINGDOM

This section comprehensively explores key factors influencing the public perception and operational efficiency of the United Kingdom's law enforcement sector. These crucial considerations span three distinct yet intertwined topics: the role that media portrayals of police misconduct play in shaping societal trust in the police; the growing issues surrounding police recruitment, particularly their potential effects on diversity, morale, and the overall effectiveness of the force; and the strategic approaches taken by

¹⁷⁸ Source: Amelia Thatcher, "Homegrown Help," *Gazette* 78, no. 2 (2016), <https://www.rcmp-grc.gc.ca/en/gazette/homegrown-help?gz>.

¹⁷⁹ Nathan Isaak and Kevin Walby, "Police Union and Police Association Communications on Social Media and Legitimacy Spillover in Canada," *International Criminal Justice Review* 32, no. 3 (September 2022): 328–45, <https://doi.org/10.1177/10575677221082070>.

police departments in managing their public image, which have significant implications for community relationships and operational outcomes.

1. Media Depictions of Police Misconduct

In May 2020, numerous protests and crowds gathered in London, Manchester, and Cardiff, expressing their discontent over the death of George Floyd.¹⁸⁰ Since 2020, some of the headlines across the United Kingdom have questioned the legitimacy and authority of the police:

- “More than 1,500 UK Police Officers Accused of Violence against Women in Six Months.”¹⁸¹
- “‘A Black Man’s Life Is Not Valued’: Attack on Year-Long Delay of UK Police Death Inquiry.”¹⁸²
- “Five UK Police Officers Shared Violent Sexual Images in Relation to Sarah Everard’s Murder, Police Watchdog Says.”¹⁸³

In the United Kingdom, police legitimacy is crucial for maintaining public trust and confidence in the police force, especially through its representation in the media.¹⁸⁴ Legitimacy is earned by demonstrating professionalism, accountability, and fairness in policing practices. The likelihood of damage to a law enforcement agency’s reputation is proportionate to the exposure and dissection of its policing policies.¹⁸⁵ Thus, the United Kingdom has the responsibility of ensuring its messaging is transparent. To accomplish

¹⁸⁰ Hagemann and Jeffery, “George Floyd Reverberates Globally.”

¹⁸¹ Rachel Hall, “More than 1,500 UK Police Officers Accused of Violence against Women in Six Months,” *Guardian*, March 14, 2023, <https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2023/mar/14/more-than-1500-uk-police-officers-accused-of-violence-against-women-in-six-months>.

¹⁸² Mark Townsend, “‘A Black Man’s Life Is Not Valued’: Attack on Year-Long Delay of UK Police Death Inquiry,” *Guardian*, June 6, 2020, <https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2020/jun/06/a-black-mans-life-is-not-valued-attack-on-year-long-delay-of-uk-police-death-inquiry-darren-cumberbatch>.

¹⁸³ Sharon Braithwaite and Kara Fox, “Five UK Police Officers Shared Violent Sexual Images in Relation to Sarah Everard’s Murder, Police Watchdog Says,” CNN, October 22, 2021, <https://www.cnn.com/2021/10/22/uk/uk-police-officers-misconduct-everard-gbr-intl/index.html>.

¹⁸⁴ Qiu, “Enhancing Police Legitimacy,” 29.

¹⁸⁵ Qiu, 51.

this strategic approach to communications, police in the United Kingdom aim to enhance positive and active engagement with their citizens by engaging with the public on broad topics.¹⁸⁶

In today's digital age, online platforms have become an essential tool for law enforcement agencies to effectively communicate with the public. As Qiu argues, "Police use of social media is more than a form of posting information to bypass the mainstream media, but an integral part of policing work to present the image of the police to the public."¹⁸⁷ As a result, there has been a shift from the traditional approach of police information sharing. In the United Kingdom, as Qiu describes, "all forty-three police forces in England and Wales have corporate Twitter accounts, and they have also employed other forms of social media channels such as Facebook, Instagram, and Flickr."¹⁸⁸ However, having a presence on social media is not enough. Qiu's research in the United Kingdom has found that an essential aspect of social media presence involves posting police work, providing a lens to the image of public service beyond presenting information dumps to the media.¹⁸⁹ Social media platforms allow for enhanced communication efforts between the police and the public. Going beyond town halls and community meetings in the United Kingdom, social media enables police agencies to reach a larger audience and has proven to be a more effective means of communication.¹⁹⁰

2. Law Enforcement Recruitment

One significant hurdle in the United Kingdom was the public's eroded trust in police, ignited by high-profile instances of police misconduct both domestically and internationally. According to Thomas, "The number of police officers in England and Wales fell from more than 143,000 in 2010 to 123,171—an exact reduction of 21,564."¹⁹¹

¹⁸⁶ Qiu.

¹⁸⁷ Qiu, 35.

¹⁸⁸ Qiu, 33.

¹⁸⁹ Qiu, 35.

¹⁹⁰ Qiu, 80.

¹⁹¹ Kim Thomas, "Up the Beat," *Public Finance*, no. 2 (February 2020): 21, ProQuest.

The establishment of the Police Uplift Programme followed the government's commitment in July 2019 to hire 20,000 more police officers in England and Wales.¹⁹²

In addition to this commitment, the United Kingdom has addressed the issue of diversity within its social media campaigns. By utilizing social media, the United Kingdom has represented a more diverse image of the police.¹⁹³ Finding innovative ways to reach recruitment and applicant targets in law enforcement can be problematic. The United Kingdom has apparently succeeded: "As of 31 March 2021, every one of the 43 police forces in England and Wales has hit or surpassed its first-year recruitment target since the launch of the Police Uplift Programme in September 2019."¹⁹⁴ In addition, the Uplift Programme has identified a more diverse workforce than ever before based on the most recent statistics (see Figure 5).¹⁹⁵

¹⁹² Matthew Rycroft, "Accounting Officer Assessment: Police Uplift Programme," Home Office, February 24, 2023, <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/home-office-major-programmes-accounting-officer-assessments/accounting-officer-assessment-police-uplift-programme>.

¹⁹³ Qiu, "Enhancing Police Legitimacy," 17.

¹⁹⁴ Kit Malthouse and Priti Patel, "United Kingdom: Recruitment Drive Delivers Almost 9,000 Additional Police," Government Digital Service of the United Kingdom, April 29, 2021, <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/recruitment-drive-delivers-almost-9000-additional-police>

¹⁹⁵ Malthouse and Patel, 1.

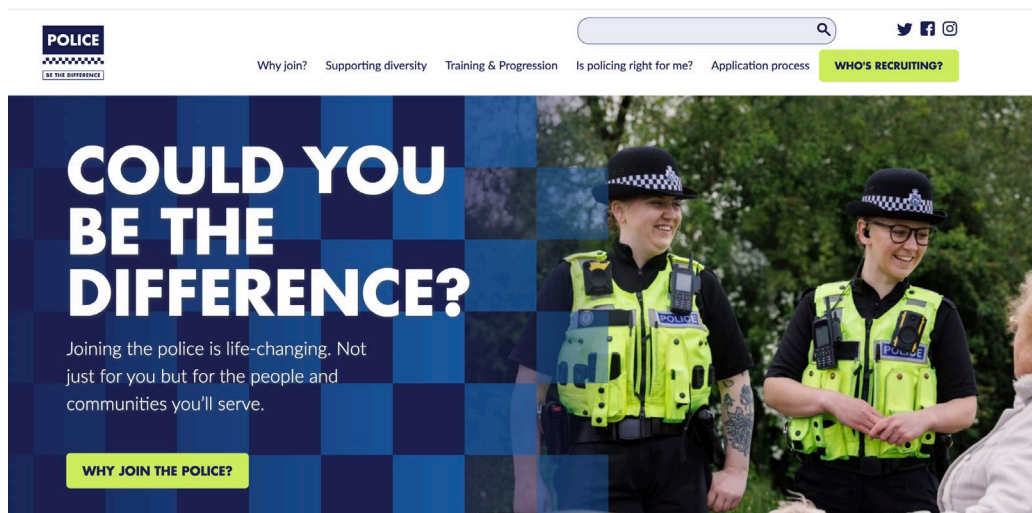


Figure 5. United Kingdom's Join the Police Home Page.¹⁹⁶

In the United Kingdom, diversity in policing is crucial for creating a police force representative of the communities it serves (see Figure 6). As Davies explains, “Diversity in policing is slowly improving. The Department has an objective to support forces to become more representative of the communities they serve, although it has not put recruitment targets in place, and recognises that this will not be sufficient in itself to change the culture in policing.”¹⁹⁷

¹⁹⁶ Source: His Majesty's Government, “Want to Become a Police Officer?,” Join the Police, accessed April 12, 2023, <https://www.joiningthepolice.co.uk/>.

¹⁹⁷ Gareth Davies, *The Police Uplift Programme* (London: National Audit Office, 2022), 7, <https://www.nao.org.uk/reports/the-police-uplift-programme/>.

How we're creating a diverse and inclusive police service

- **Recruitment and selection processes** - all police recruitment processes are fair and based on merit.
- **Positive Action** - local forces have a range of initiatives underway to encourage people from all backgrounds to apply to join the police and support serving officers. Check out your chosen force's website to see what positive action initiatives they're running.
- **Faith considerations** - police forces are supportive of all religions, making adjustments to give officers the time and freedom to practice their faith.

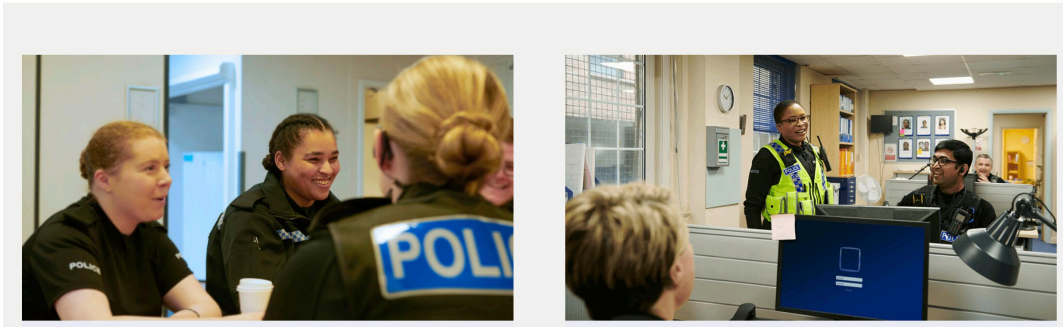


Figure 6. Diversity and Inclusiveness Highlighted by Join the Police Online.¹⁹⁸

The United Kingdom's approach to these challenges has focused on restoring public trust, ensuring equitable recruitment practices, and emphasizing the intrinsic rewards of a career in policing. However, such recruitment efforts do not exist in a vacuum. The following section delves into the concept of image management and its role in shaping public perception of the police by analyzing the interplay between the United Kingdom's image management and recruitment to identify effective public relations strategies.

3. Branding Practices (Image Management)

Police departments in the United Kingdom have addressed the issues of image management, marketing, and risk management through significant efforts to establish digital communications utilizing social media platforms.¹⁹⁹ These three principles combined form the police forces' strategic communication system for interacting with the public. As Qiu explains, "It is within this context that the police are trying to adapt Twitter, one of many social media tools, into their communication strategies with the aim of

¹⁹⁸ Source: His Majesty's Government, "Want to Become a Police Officer?"

¹⁹⁹ Qiu, "Enhancing Police Legitimacy," 33

enhancing police legitimacy.”²⁰⁰ The police can enhance their reputation and legitimacy by examining their strategies, methods, and approaches from a marketing viewpoint.²⁰¹

The United Kingdom has seen an increased commitment from the law enforcement community in leveraging social media as a strategic tool to enhance its image, strengthen police legitimacy, and transform its agencies. According to Crump, “Police forces in England and Wales have found themselves under political pressure both nationally and locally to engage with the public through contact on the street, partnership working, and the provision of information as a basis for accountability.”²⁰² The United Kingdom has found a strategy to rebrand and reimage police legitimacy through social media, allowing law enforcement an untraditional means of communicating with the public.²⁰³

The open communication concept introduces information about the police and the public through a diverse lens. According to Qiu, “Users of social media tools are incredibly varied with different personal biographies, social backgrounds, political preferences, and ethical values, which leads to different reactions towards the police visibility as they have different views about, and experiences with, the police.”²⁰⁴ Furthermore, law enforcement has identified ways to merge social media and image management in the United Kingdom (see Figure 7). As Qiu’s research reveals, “Police in England and Wales, as in other parts of the world, are using social media to construct and reconstruct the institutional ‘brand’ and police image to enhance their legitimacy.”²⁰⁵

²⁰⁰ Qiu, 247.

²⁰¹ Qiu, 268.

²⁰² Jeremy Crump, “What Are the Police Doing on Twitter? Social Media, the Police and the Public,” *Policy & Internet* 3, no. 4 (2011): 7, <https://doi.org/10.2202/1944-2866.1130>.

²⁰³ Qiu, “Enhancing Police Legitimacy,” 24.

²⁰⁴ Qiu, 28.

²⁰⁵ Qiu, 256.

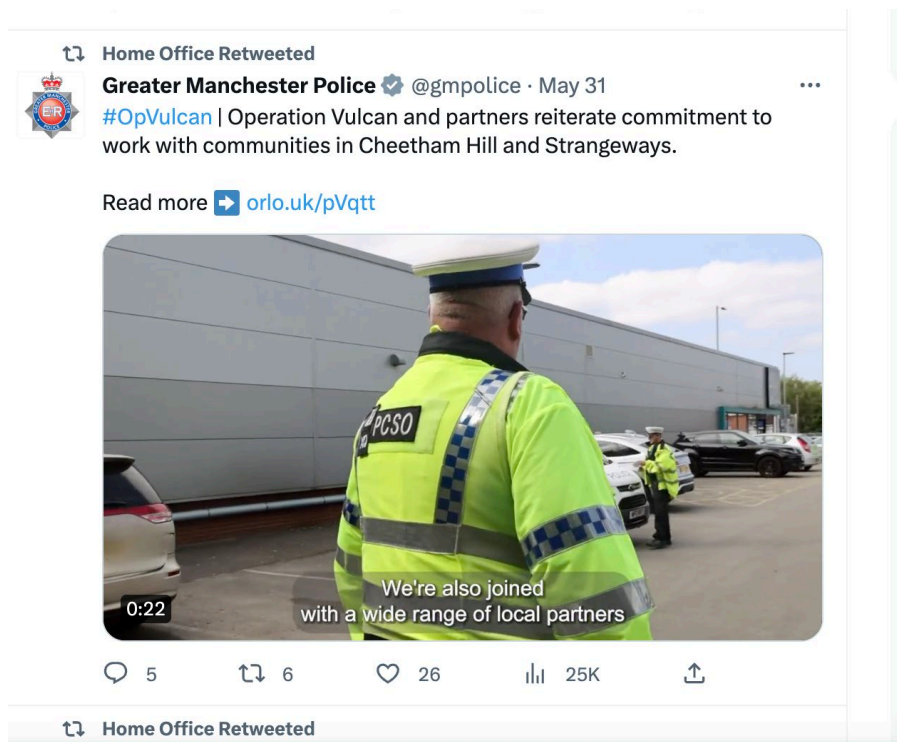


Figure 7. United Kingdom’s Home Office Presence on Twitter.²⁰⁶

Marketing and promotional strategies are nothing new. Much like other media, social media has been used to remind people of a product (or career opportunity) and increase awareness among the general population.²⁰⁷ From a law enforcement standpoint, legitimacy and job satisfaction among police officers increase when an agency develops an internal and external marketing campaign.²⁰⁸ Qiu underscores the importance of portraying the police as citizens, too:

The image of the British bobby that they promote is depicted as a citizen in uniform, operating minimal force, subject to the rule of law rather than any party politics, and is working by public consent not coercive powers. This model of virtue would protect the public from crime and disorder more

²⁰⁶ Source: Greater Manchester Police (@gmpolice), “Operation Vulcan and partners reiterate commitment to work with communities in Cheetham Hill and Strangeways” [retweeted by Home Office], Twitter, June 2, 2023, <https://twitter.com/ukhomeoffice>.

²⁰⁷ Rosemary Thackeray et al., “Enhancing Promotional Strategies within Social Marketing Programs: Use of Web 2.0 Social Media,” *Health Promotion Practice* 9, no. 4 (2008): 340, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/26736808>.

²⁰⁸ Qiu, “Enhancing Police Legitimacy,” 41.

effectively than a force that relies on the state's monopoly of violent means, its unique advantage lies in cultivating public support.²⁰⁹

This analysis of law enforcement in the United Kingdom has highlighted the impact of media depictions on public trust, the importance of addressing recruitment challenges, and the role of strategic image management. The United Kingdom's branding strategy is simple and follows the guideline of being easily recognizable.²¹⁰ In addition to being transparent, the United Kingdom's positive branding image and system of communications have the aim of enhancing public trust.²¹¹ Its positive branding on social media has expanded to another messaging system for job awareness with an avenue to improve recruitment and overall police-community relationships.

C. NEW ZEALAND

In New Zealand, interconnected narratives of media portrayal, public perception, and consequent recruitment trends provide a picture of the police force's evolving identity. Thus, this section explores the myriad ways the New Zealand Police have faced these challenges, initiating strategic image management and innovative branding campaigns to attract diverse and capable candidates and to foster a positive public image.

1. Media Depictions of Police Misconduct

As in many other countries, thousands of people in New Zealand gathered to protest the killing of George Floyd and instances of police brutality, regardless of government restrictions on large gatherings in response to the COVID-19 pandemic.²¹² While New Zealand may seem geographically isolated from the epicenter of social upheaval in

²⁰⁹ Qiu, 48.

²¹⁰ Lawson, *Recruitment and Retention of Police Officers*, 8.

²¹¹ Qiu, "Enhancing Police Legitimacy," 157.

²¹² Hagemann and Jeffery, "George Floyd Reverberates Globally."

Minneapolis following the tragic killing of George Floyd, echoes of the global outrage reverberated deeply within the island nation.²¹³ According to Warner and Antolini,

The Indigenous Maori people in particular have pushed back against police use of force, which disproportionately affects them. . . . Maori and Pacific people make up about 25% of New Zealand’s population. But in the last decade, 66% of people shot by police have been members of the Maori and Pacific Islander communities, according to advocates and news reports. Maori and Pacific people are also more likely to be tasered and pepper-sprayed than white New Zealanders.²¹⁴

These startling statistics highlight the claims of racial disparities permeating New Zealand’s law enforcement and echo concerns of systemic discrimination in countries worldwide.

New Zealand has also had its fair share of police misconduct on display in the media, absent any racial improprieties. One such incident that sparked widespread controversy was from the Waitematā Police District, marking a violation of the expected standards of behavior of New Zealand’s police force. Ham describes the incident as follows:

A police officer from the Waitematā Police District has been found guilty of misconduct for posting sexually explicit videos of himself and a number of women on social media—including one of his subordinates. The videos showed him and the women engaging in sexual activity. The Independent Police Conduct Authority oversaw a police investigation into the incident, which found that although there was no evidence of criminal offending, the officer was guilty of misconduct.²¹⁵

²¹³ Gregory Warner and Tina Antolini, “As New Zealand Police Pledge to Stay Unarmed, Maori Activists Credit U.S. Protests,” NPR, June 11, 2020, <https://www.npr.org/sections/live-updates-protests-for-racial-justice/2020/06/11/874851593/as-new-zealand-police-pledge-to-stay-unarmed-maori-activists-credit-u-s-protests>.

²¹⁴ Warner and Antolini, paras. 1, 8.

²¹⁵ Katie Ham, “Police Officer Guilty of Misconduct for Posting Explicit Videos on Social Media,” Stuff, October 26, 2022, <https://www.stuff.co.nz/national/300721398/police-officer-guilty-of-misconduct-for-posting-explicit-videos-on-social-media>.

In this increasingly digital world, another video, this time from Christchurch, sparked a heated debate over law enforcement conduct in New Zealand.²¹⁶ Guilford says, “A video showing a Christchurch police officer kicking a man in the head while he was handcuffed and lying on the ground is circulating on social media, with some calling it an example of police brutality.”²¹⁷ When a police officer engages in unethical or unprofessional behavior, such as posting explicit videos online, or is captured on video using seemingly excessive force, it creates a negative image that can be quickly amplified by an interconnected, digital society. Such incidents not only tarnish the reputation of the individual officers involved but can also cast a shadow over the entire force, damaging the public’s trust in the institution.

The media’s portrayal of the New Zealand Police encompasses numerous facets, from internal instances of misconduct to allegations of racial discrimination against the Indigenous populace and potential displays of police brutality. Each of these aspects can profoundly influence community sentiment and the degree of trust placed in law enforcement, thereby underscoring the importance of transparent, equitable, and responsible policing practices.

2. Law Enforcement Recruitment

Like many other law enforcement agencies worldwide, the New Zealand Police have faced challenges in attracting new recruits, particularly in recent years.²¹⁸ The New Zealand Police have established a sense of trust, legitimacy, and confidence among the public they serve.²¹⁹ The New Zealand Police have made a concerted effort to improve their image and reputation, promoting their positive impact on communities and

²¹⁶ Jonathan Guildford, “Accusations of Police Brutality after Officer Kicking Man in Face during Arrest Is Captured on Film,” Stuff, May 7, 2021, <https://www.stuff.co.nz/national/crime/125047678/accusations-of-police-brutality-after-officer-kicking-man-in-face-during-arrest-is-captured-on-film>.

²¹⁷ Guildford.

²¹⁸ Angelique Nairn and Ruby Roebuck, “Promoting the Police: A Thematic Analysis of the New Zealand Police Recruitment Campaigns and the Construction of Officers’ Identities,” *Journal of Criminology* 55, no. 2 (June 2022): 222, <https://doi.org/10.1177/26338076221085310>.

²¹⁹ Alexa Daniels-Shpall, *Strategies for (Re)Building Community Trust: A Review of Practices in the New Zealand Police* (Wellington: Fulbright New Zealand, 2019), 6.

highlighting the opportunities for personal and professional growth that a career in law enforcement offers.²²⁰

The New Zealand Police use various recruitment strategies to attract suitable candidates to join the force. These strategies include digital marketing, university career fairs, and information sessions.²²¹ The New Zealand Police use social media platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, and Instagram to promote the police force as a career option.²²² They also use paid advertising campaigns to reach a wide audience. The New Zealand Police attend various university and career fairs to promote police careers among students and job seekers.²²³ The police force holds information sessions via the Chat Cops platform so that potential recruits can meet current police officers, ask questions, and learn more about the recruitment process (see Figure 8).²²⁴



Figure 8. New Zealand's Chat Cops Home Page.²²⁵

²²⁰ "New Cops," New Zealand Police, accessed February 1, 2023, <https://www.newcops.govt.nz/>.

²²¹ New Zealand Police.

²²² New Zealand Police.

²²³ "Events," New Zealand Police, accessed April 21, 2023, <https://www.newcops.govt.nz/events>.

²²⁴ "Chat Cops," New Zealand Police, accessed April 21, 2023, <https://www.chatcops.co.nz/>.

²²⁵ Source: New Zealand Police.

To attract a workforce representative of the country, New Zealand’s police recruitment campaigns target specific groups of people, such as the Maori and Pacific Islanders, to increase diversity within the force.²²⁶ Through the New Zealand Police’s referral program, current police officers are encouraged to refer suitable candidates for recruitment. The New Zealand Police have also partnered with the military to recruit former servicemembers with transferable skills. The police force also conducts regional recruitment drives to attract candidates from outside the main cities.²²⁷ These strategies are designed to attract diverse candidates and ensure that the police force reflects the communities it serves (see Figure 9).

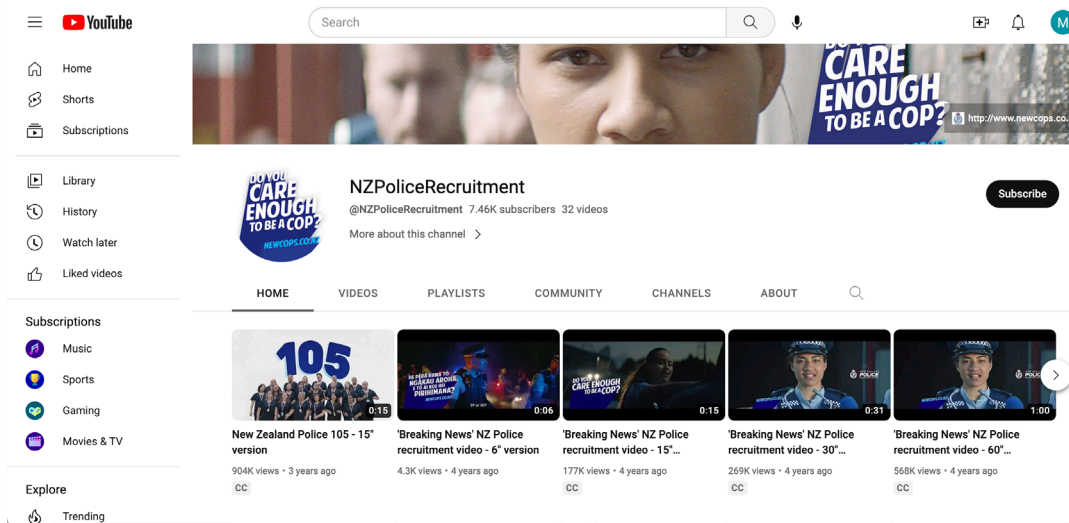


Figure 9. New Zealand’s Police Recruitment Campaign on YouTube.²²⁸

Ongoing efforts ensure that the New Zealand Police continue to attract a diverse and talented pool of candidates to meet the evolving needs of the communities they serve.²²⁹ The aim of the New Zealand Police’s new recruitment campaign, “Breaking

²²⁶ New Zealand Police, “New Cops.”

²²⁷ New Zealand Police.

²²⁸ Source: NZPoliceRecruitment, “NZPoliceRecruitment Channel,” YouTube, accessed April 21, 2023, <https://www.youtube.com/@NZPoliceRecruitment/featured>.

²²⁹ New Zealand Police, “New Cops.”

News,” is to mitigate the crisis facing some police departments in the United States.²³⁰ In addition to broadcasting commercials on television, the New Zealand Police have established several websites containing details on the recruitment process and virtual conversations with current police officers.²³¹ In utilizing social media to recruit new officers, the police force has created a sense of transparency and accountability by responding to questions and concerns from the community.²³²

The New Zealand Police have improved the recruitment process, making it more accessible and transparent.²³³ They have established partnerships with community organizations and educational institutions to raise awareness about law enforcement careers and the positive impact that police officers can have on their communities. By employing interactive recruitment, the New Zealand Police can look beyond the recruit, develop relationships, and identify the core values of candidates among four common themes: “Make New Zealand safe, Diversity is key, We are normal people, and Interesting and rewarding career.”²³⁴ The sales pitch seems simple, but as a type of rebranding—as discussed in the next section—it envisions a career beyond traditional recruitment messaging. New Zealand’s law enforcement has strongly emphasized diversity and inclusiveness, aiming to reflect the demographic makeup of its society.²³⁵

3. Branding Practices (Image Management)

Addressing the pivotal role of public trust in law enforcement, in 2019, Ian Axford wrote a paper on strategies for rebuilding community trust in the New Zealand Police.²³⁶ As a result, several of these implemented strategies have proven successful in establishing police legitimacy and enhancing community relations, thereby developing into promising

²³⁰ Nairn and Roebuck, “Promoting the Police.”

²³¹ Nairn and Roebuck.

²³² Nairn and Roebuck.

²³³ Nairn and Roebuck.

²³⁴ Nairn and Roebuck, 227.

²³⁵ New Zealand Police, “New Cops.”

²³⁶ Daniels-Shpall, *Strategies for (Re)Building Community Trust*.

recruitment opportunities.²³⁷ New Zealand recognized it could not address a recruitment problem without first understanding the degree to which image reputation and public trust contributed to law enforcement operations.²³⁸

New Zealand's strategy to improve responsiveness includes collaborating with external community stakeholders and ensuring external engagement is executed efficiently through internal efforts.²³⁹ These strategies often involve using social media platforms to create a positive image of the department and its officers, including posting photos and videos of officers engaging in community events, sharing information about crime prevention and safety, and highlighting the department's accomplishments.²⁴⁰ The police collaborate with the community to establish trust; this external approach to enhancing responsiveness involves two broad categories: incorporating the community's point of view into police operations and partnering with community allies to attain improved outcomes for the community.²⁴¹

The New Zealand Police recognize the importance of community partnerships in decision-making and actively work to engage with external stakeholders.²⁴² By incorporating the community's perspective into police operations and collaborating with community allies, the police aim to improve their responsiveness and better address the community's needs. The police have established platforms via social media for obtaining guidance and feedback from the community and incorporating the community's outlook into police decision-making.²⁴³ As Daniels-Shpall explains, these structures include "community advisory boards, national responsiveness strategies, police leadership selections, and disaster response" with community and police integration.²⁴⁴

²³⁷ Daniels-Shpall, 24.

²³⁸ Daniels-Shpall.

²³⁹ Daniels-Shpall, 39.

²⁴⁰ New Zealand Police, "New Cops."

²⁴¹ Daniels-Shpall, *Strategies for (Re)Building Community Trust*, 8.

²⁴² NZPoliceRecruitment, "NZPoliceRecruitment Channel."

²⁴³ New Zealand Police (@nzpolice), "Posts," Twitter, accessed February 14, 2023, <https://twitter.com/nzpolice>.

²⁴⁴ Daniels-Shpall, *Strategies for (Re)Building Community Trust*, 9.

The New Zealand Police are dedicated to upholding public trust and confidence by incorporating community partnerships into their decision-making process.²⁴⁵ The police have implemented various mechanisms to seek community input and ensure its perspective is represented in police operations.²⁴⁶ Additionally, the police have adopted a strategic vision and goals to guide these efforts and created an organizational structure to manage and carry out the work.²⁴⁷ This emphasis on the importance of community engagement and responsiveness to community needs demonstrates the police's commitment to serving and protecting the people of New Zealand and fostering a safe and secure society for all.

D. CONCLUSION

The innovative practices currently utilized in Canada, the United Kingdom, and New Zealand are compatible with best practices outlined by the U.S. President's Task Force on 21st Century Policing.²⁴⁸ The U.S. Department of Justice has also identified and outlined several challenges and strategies for success in this new era of law enforcement recruitment.²⁴⁹ The strategies outlined focus on three overarching concepts:

- Hiring candidates who share the community's and department's values and vision,
- Making the hiring process more efficient, and
- Advancing diversity and inclusiveness in the hiring process.²⁵⁰

The transformation of law enforcement in the countries examined in this chapter is closely tied to transparency and the cultivation of public trust. Fundamental to this process is the strategic use of media and professional image management. By clearly communicating their commitment to modern hiring practices—that is, seeking candidates

²⁴⁵ Daniels-Shpall, 17.

²⁴⁶ New Zealand Police, "New Cops."

²⁴⁷ Daniels-Shpall, *Strategies for (Re)Building Community Trust*.

²⁴⁸ President's Task Force on 21st Century Policing, *Final Report of the President's Task Force on 21st Century Policing* (Washington, DC: Office of Community Oriented Policing Services, 2015), https://cops.usdoj.gov/pdf/taskforce/taskforce_finalreport.pdf.

²⁴⁹ Kevin P. Morison, *Hiring for the 21st Century Law Enforcement Officer: Challenges, Opportunities, and Strategies for Success* (Washington, DC: Office of Community Oriented Policing Services, 2017), <https://portal.cops.usdoj.gov/resourcecenter/ric/Publications/cops-w0831-pub.pdf>.

²⁵⁰ Morison, 3.

who resonate with the community's and department's values, making the hiring process more efficient, and championing diversity and inclusivity—law enforcement agencies can enhance their public image and foster a deep-seated trust with the communities they serve. Proactive measures such as these could pave the way for a profound shift in law enforcement culture and engender a modern, efficient, and diverse workforce that genuinely mirrors community values and aspirations. Transparency and a carefully managed public image can transform law enforcement into a more trusted, inclusive, and respected institution. Conversely, there is a risk of stagnation in recruitment processes without strategizing to implement these practices in U.S. law enforcement agencies. Inaction may perpetuate outdated procedures, potentially leading to a workforce that lacks alignment with the community's values and fails to represent its diversity.

IV. THE STRATEGIC TROOPER

A strategic communications approach involves social media, police branding, and recruitment strategies that emphasize the importance of diversity, community engagement, and public trust.²⁵¹ This chapter explores the intersection of these three law enforcement areas and the implications of these approaches for agencies seeking to improve their effectiveness and enhance their public image. By identifying best practices with international police agencies and incorporating these concepts into American law enforcement campaigns, this chapter aims to provide a template for systematic methods of shaping the public perception of law enforcement and enhancing police recruitment.

The strategic trooper represents a novel approach to policing, using strategic thinking and community-oriented practices as a framework for enhancing law enforcement's effectiveness. This concept focuses on three key themes: trust, transparency, and transformation. When embedded within the strategic trooper model, these concepts could offer a roadmap for improving public perception and relationships between the police and the communities they serve. The model provides agencies with an understanding of the ramifications of misconduct, recognizes their responsibility in upholding legitimacy, and grasps the profound impact of misconduct on agencies, allowing officers to become better equipped to make informed and responsible decisions, thus establishing trust and positive relationships within the community.

A. STRATEGIC MINDSET

The strategic corporal, a military doctrine emphasizing the individual servicemember's crucial role in achieving strategic goals, is the direct forebear of the strategic trooper.²⁵² The concept recognizes that the actions of individual servicemembers

²⁵¹ Judy Pal et al., *Strategic Communications for Law Enforcement Executives* (Washington, DC: Office of Community Oriented Policing Services, 2023), <https://portal.cops.usdoj.gov/resourcecenter/Home.aspx?item=cops-r1126>.

²⁵² Krulak, "The Strategic Corporal."

can have far-reaching strategic consequences.²⁵³ As such, individual servicemembers must be trained and empowered to make decisions that align with strategic objectives. In today's media-saturated world, a servicemember's actions can be instantly broadcast worldwide, significantly impacting the public's perception and confidence in the military operation.²⁵⁴ To maintain a positive public perception, a branch of the armed forces or an agency must develop an image management system to create a transparent, legitimate, and accountable message on social media.²⁵⁵

In translating this concept to law enforcement, the strategic trooper would be equivalent to the strategic corporal. Much like their military counterparts, police officers often find their actions have far-reaching implications, especially given the immediacy and pervasiveness of social media.²⁵⁶ Every interaction between a police officer and a community member has the potential to shape public opinion about the entire law enforcement agency.²⁵⁷ Therefore, the same principles of responsibility, ethical decision-making, and understanding of the larger strategic implications can be impactful for a law enforcement officer—a strategic trooper.

Similar aspects of the strategic corporal concept have been established in law enforcement agencies across Canada, the United Kingdom, and New Zealand. As such, establishing a strategic trooper concept in American law enforcement would emphasize the importance of individual officers in achieving an agency's strategic goals. Respective officers would be trained and empowered to make decisions that align with those goals.²⁵⁸ Strategies must be developed, trained, and implemented before an image can be projected

²⁵³ Franklin Annis, "Krulak Revisited: The Three-Block War, Strategic Corporals, and the Future Battlefield," Modern War Institute, February 3, 2020, <https://mwi.usma.edu/krulak-revisited-three-block-war-strategic-corporals-future-battlefield/>.

²⁵⁴ Annis.

²⁵⁵ Karen Bullock, "(Re)Presenting 'Order' Online: The Construction of Police Presentational Strategies on Social Media," *Policing and Society* 28, no. 3 (2018): 345–59, <https://doi.org/10.1080/10439463.2016.1177529>.

²⁵⁶ Matthew Wood, "The Strategic Constable," *Blue Line*, July 13, 2020, <https://www.blueline.ca/the-strategic-constable/>.

²⁵⁷ Mark Lomax, "Historical Changes of Policing," *Police Chief* 89, no. 9 (September 2022): 60–61, <https://www.policechiefmagazine.org/magazine-issues/september-2022/>.

²⁵⁸ Krulak, "The Strategic Corporal."

positively to rebuild an agency's reputation.²⁵⁹ Establishing and applying the strategic trooper concept necessitate a detailed understanding by law enforcement agencies. Thus, the concept development step would involve an exhaustive delineation of the agency's strategic objectives and identify specific, actionable steps that individual officers could undertake to support these goals.²⁶⁰

Officers must be adequately trained in the strategic trooper concept and sufficient tools and resources made accessible to them to facilitate decision-making in line with strategic objectives. Key to this training process is enhancing officers' critical thinking, decision-making, and problem-solving skills, thereby allowing for cogent and strategy-aligned actions.²⁶¹ Officers must be empowered with the authority to make field decisions independently while ensuring they are adequately informed to align their actions with both the agency's strategic goals and the community's expectations. Empowerment forms a crucial cornerstone, enabling officers to apply their understanding of the strategic trooper concept practically and giving them the autonomy to make informed decisions in the field.²⁶²

Implementing the strategic trooper concept requires the integration of the idea into the very fabric of the agency, from policies and procedures to officer training and development programs.²⁶³ Ensuring a seamless, agency-wide implementation guarantees a consistent approach toward the agency's strategic goals.²⁶⁴ An essential part of this phase in the strategic trooper concept is developing a robust review or audit system, which

²⁵⁹ Hill, Stephens, and Guglielmi, *Branding for Police Agencies*.

²⁶⁰ Wood, "The Strategic Constable."

²⁶¹ G. R. Boyce, "Training and Educating the Strategic Corporal" (master's thesis, Marine Corps University, 2008), <https://apps.dtic.mil/sti/citations/ADA490789>.

²⁶² Teague A. Pastel, "Marine Corps Leadership: Empowering or Limiting the Strategic Corporal?" (master's thesis, Marine Corps University, 2008), <https://apps.dtic.mil/sti/citations/ADA490868>.

²⁶³ R. D. Coleman Jr., "Recruiting the Strategic Corporal in the 21st Century (through the Year 2010)" (research paper, Marine War College, 1999), <https://apps.dtic.mil/sti/citations/ADA514644>.

²⁶⁴ Coleman.

measures the impact of individual officers' actions on the strategic goals.²⁶⁵ Based on these evaluations, corresponding changes can be introduced into training and development programs, thus ensuring that the strategic trooper concept remains relevant and effective.²⁶⁶

Although several components and steps are identified, three categories would be developed to ensure proper implementation: "training, education, and professional development."²⁶⁷ A program must involve all levels of leadership within an organization. To increase practical judgment and decision-making, the training should include topics pertaining to the study of ethics and leadership, as well as current events and past practices.²⁶⁸ A professional demeanor is a crucial characteristic expected consistently from strategic troopers, regardless of the environment.²⁶⁹ Doing the right thing every time, irrespective of who might be watching, is an expectation of today's law enforcement personnel.

Evaluating Canada's application of the strategic corporal concept, Wood identifies some implications for training development.²⁷⁰ According to Wood, the development of such a training curriculum could incorporate leadership content that is typically lacking in tactical and strategic training:

Management training (separate from leadership training) is generally reserved to those promoted to supervisory positions, and even then, is not on-going throughout their careers. . . . Among other benefits, effective leaders have been shown to produce alignment with organizational goals, a sense of cohesiveness and personal development among followers, improved relationships between leader and follower, and increased morale and productivity. Police constables with effective leaders benefit from improvements in emotional intelligence and are likely better equipped to

²⁶⁵ Lynda Liddy, "The Strategic Corporal: Some Requirements in Training and Education," *Australian Army Journal* 2, no. 2 (2004): 139–48, <https://search.informit.org/doi/pdf/10.3316/ielapa.200509429>.

²⁶⁶ Liddy.

²⁶⁷ Boyce, "Training and Educating the Strategic Corporal," 3.

²⁶⁸ Boyce, 27.

²⁶⁹ Wood, "The Strategic Constable."

²⁷⁰ Wood.

respond to the moral dilemmas they regularly face. Most importantly, effective leadership is also the cornerstone of culture change.²⁷¹

One key aspect of the strategic trooper concept is the need for officers to work effectively with other law enforcement and civilian organizations.²⁷² The military has recognized that success in modern conflicts often depends on coordinating and collaborating with various partners, including other military units, government agencies, and non-governmental organizations.²⁷³ Woods acknowledges the importance of transitioning this armed forces strategy to Canadian law enforcement, focusing on community engagement and trust as an essential foundation for building an effective response.²⁷⁴

In summary, the strategic trooper concept in law enforcement would involve developing a clear understanding of strategic goals, training and empowering officers to make decisions that align with those goals, integrating the concept into agency policies and procedures, and evaluating and adapting the concept as necessary.²⁷⁵ In doing so, law enforcement agencies could ensure that individual officers are empowered to make decisions that contribute to achieving strategic goals, thereby enhancing public trust, accountability, and legitimacy.²⁷⁶

B. STRATEGIC REBRANDING: IMAGE MANAGEMENT

Implementing a strategic law enforcement approach to image management and rebranding involves a deliberate and intentional effort to improve public perceptions of law enforcement agencies.²⁷⁷ Ultimately, the solution must address both the perception of law enforcement in the public eye and the realities of the job, making law enforcement a more

²⁷¹ Wood, paras. 11–12.

²⁷² Pal et al., *Strategic Communications for Law Enforcement Executives*.

²⁷³ Nathan Wood, “The Strategic Corporal Revisited,” *Marine Corps Gazette* 102, no. 10 (October 2018): 56–60, ProQuest.

²⁷⁴ Wood, “The Strategic Constable.”

²⁷⁵ Pal et al., *Strategic Communications for Law Enforcement Executives*, 70.

²⁷⁶ Wood, “The Strategic Constable.”

²⁷⁷ Hill, Stephens, and Guglielmi, *Branding for Police Agencies*.

attractive and diverse career option for individuals committed to serving their communities and upholding the law.²⁷⁸

A strategic trooper's actions could significantly affect law enforcement's public image and community relations. Trust, transparency, and transformation become integral in this context. By being transparent in their actions, building trust with community members, and actively participating in the transformation of policing practices, a strategic trooper contributes positively to the law enforcement agency's image management. This approach aligns with the essence of the strategic corporal concept, ensuring that the actions taken at the ground level align with and contribute to the larger strategic goals of the institution they represent.²⁷⁹

1. Trust as a Cornerstone of Image Management

Trust is an indispensable cornerstone in image management for law enforcement.²⁸⁰ It significantly influences the public's perception of police agencies and directly impacts their legitimacy and effectiveness.²⁸¹ When communities trust their local law enforcement, they are more likely to cooperate, report crimes, and adhere to the rule of law, thereby creating a safer environment for all.²⁸² Moreover, trust can help law enforcement agencies mitigate crises more effectively, as they rely on the public's goodwill and cooperation during challenging situations.²⁸³ In essence, trust operates as a kind of social contract, establishing an implicit agreement between law enforcement and the public based on mutual respect, understanding, and cooperation.

The strategic trooper model actively fosters this critical element of trust. This model places an emphasis on officers' developing deep, meaningful relationships with the communities they serve. Strategic troopers—or any other officers thus trained and

²⁷⁸ Rhodes and Tyler, "Is It Cool to Be a Cop?"

²⁷⁹ Krulak, "The Strategic Corporal."

²⁸⁰ Hill, Stephens, and Guglielmi, *Branding for Police Agencies*.

²⁸¹ Hill, Stephens, and Guglielmi.

²⁸² Dirikx and Van den Bulck, "Media Use and the Process-Based Model," 344.

²⁸³ Dirikx and Van den Bulck.

empowered—are not mere enforcers of the law but partners in community development and safety. As the Task Force on 21st Century Policing examined, “The myth of police as warriors fighting a battle between good and evil must be replaced with a vision of police as guardians working in partnership with the community to achieve safety.”²⁸⁴ By being approachable, accountable, and genuinely engaged with their communities, strategic troopers can help build a foundation of trust that positively influences law enforcement’s public image. Police become familiar faces rather than anonymous uniforms, thereby humanizing the force and making it easier for the community to trust and connect with them.²⁸⁵ In this way, the strategic trooper model plays an instrumental role in enhancing law enforcement’s image through trust building, which leads to a greater sense of police legitimacy.²⁸⁶

2. Transparency’s Role in Image Perception

Transparency holds a pivotal role in shaping the public image of law enforcement. Being transparent involves clear, open communication about processes, operations, and decisions.²⁸⁷ As Brown explains, “In any organization, but especially in a police department, clear and concise communication is essential to maintaining order and preventing problems.”²⁸⁸ It is a demonstrative action that reassures the public that law enforcement is performing its duties ethically and responsibly.²⁸⁹ A transparent law enforcement agency allows the public to see and understand how and why decisions are made, promoting a sense of fairness and justice.²⁹⁰ In fact, transparency can alleviate concerns, prevent misunderstandings, and eliminate rumors or misconceptions that can

²⁸⁴ 21CP Solutions, *Task Force on 21st Century Policing: A Renewed Call to Action* (Chicago: 21CP Solutions, 2023), 6, <https://www.21cpsolutions.com/21st-century-policing>.

²⁸⁵ Qiu, “Enhancing Police Legitimacy.”

²⁸⁶ Qiu, 157.

²⁸⁷ David Brown, “Do Your Officers Have a Voice?,” Training Network, January 18, 2023, <https://calibrepress.com/2023/01/do-your-officers-have-a-voice/>.

²⁸⁸ Brown.

²⁸⁹ Qiu, “Enhancing Police Legitimacy.”

²⁹⁰ Mawby, “Promoting the Police?”

tarnish the public image of law enforcement.²⁹¹ As Pal et al. argue, “Timely, transparent, and authentic communications can be one of our most important tools to build trust and legitimacy with the communities we serve.”²⁹² Essentially, transparency can work as a trust-enhancing tool, fostering public confidence and a sense of security, thus positively affecting law enforcement’s public image.²⁹³

The strategic trooper model integrates transparency as a key component in its approach to image management. Strategic troopers are encouraged to engage openly with their communities, explaining their actions and decisions, providing clear information about law enforcement processes, and maintaining an open dialog about community concerns and issues. Pal et al. affirm this idea:

Legitimacy and trust are the cornerstones of strong public safety—but to build a firm foundation on those stones requires mortar. That mortar is communications. Trust starts with the community’s awareness and appreciation of public safety issues and concerns and the acknowledgment that they deserve consideration.²⁹⁴

The goal is not only to operate transparently but also to actively demonstrate this transparency in everyday interactions and communications.²⁹⁵ This open, proactive approach enables the community to see and understand the workings of law enforcement, fostering a sense of trust and connection.²⁹⁶ Hence, by promoting transparency, the strategic trooper model effectively enhances law enforcement’s image.

The importance of this openness in law enforcement, underscored by the strategic trooper model, cannot be overstated. Transparency builds the foundation of public trust, a cornerstone of effective policing. As public perception shifts from viewing law enforcement as a secretive, inaccessible institution to an open, communicative body, a

²⁹¹ Pal et al., *Strategic Communications for Law Enforcement Executives*, 31.

²⁹² Pal et al., iv.

²⁹³ Pal et al.

²⁹⁴ Pal et al., 5.

²⁹⁵ Pal et al.

²⁹⁶ Pal et al.

profound change in community dynamics ensues.²⁹⁷ Conversely, if law enforcement agencies continue to embrace secrecy and uphold the “thin blue line”—the perceived barrier between law enforcement and the public—the potential for community disconnect, distrust, and discord only increases.²⁹⁸ The continued narrative of a few bad apples can no longer be the response. A clear call to action for all law enforcement agencies is to actively demonstrate their commitment to transparency and openness, thus positively influencing their perceived image and effectiveness.²⁹⁹

3. Transformation: A Pathway to Changing Police Culture

In the realm of law enforcement, transformation signifies a deep-seated shift and evolution in its modus operandi, strategies, and prevailing culture. The way the public perceives law enforcement depends significantly on the ability of these agencies to innovate, adapt, and better themselves over time.³⁰⁰ As Hill, Stephens, and Guglielmi explain, “Because brands are perception-based, they are flexible and changeable based on new information or a different interaction.”³⁰¹ Transformation could manifest itself in several forms: the integration of advanced technologies, the implementation of community-centric policing methods, or the enhancement of training and ethical norms.³⁰² Law enforcement agencies exhibit their readiness to evolve positively by demonstrating a commitment to transformation.³⁰³ This inclination not only fosters a positive image but also signifies progress, adaptability, and a commitment to persistent enhancement.³⁰⁴

The strategic trooper model plays a crucial role in spearheading the transformation of a law enforcement career, thereby molding a favorable public perception. A strategic

²⁹⁷ Hill, Stephens, and Guglielmi, *Branding for Police Agencies*, 63.

²⁹⁸ Jamie Duncan and Kevin Walby, “Police Union Political Communications in Canada,” *British Journal of Criminology* 62, no. 1 (January 2022): 90, <https://doi.org/10.1093/bjc/azab043>.

²⁹⁹ Goldsmith, “Policing’s New Visibility,” 916.

³⁰⁰ Hill, Stephens, and Guglielmi, *Branding for Police Agencies*.

³⁰¹ Hill, Stephens, and Guglielmi, 1.

³⁰² Lomax, “Historical Changes of Policing,” 61.

³⁰³ Lomax, 60.

³⁰⁴ Pal et al., *Strategic Communications for Law Enforcement Executives*, 47.

trooper is not merely a law enforcer but a change instigator within the law enforcement framework.³⁰⁵ However, there is more to this transformation than the local trooper's visibility in the community. The interactions, communication, and understanding of the community's needs through the agency's values are equally important.³⁰⁶ This strategy exemplifies a forward-thinking approach to law enforcement that equally values community relations, openness, and trust building as it does law enforcement.³⁰⁷ Strategic troopers advocate novel methodologies, welcome innovation, and proactively seek ways to serve their communities better. A strategic trooper would signify a shift away from the conventional law enforcement model and act as a beacon of transformation within agencies and communities.³⁰⁸ This transformation, personified by the strategic trooper, has the potential to boost the public image of law enforcement substantially, signaling a forward-looking, community-oriented approach to policing.³⁰⁹ The following steps could be taken to implement such an approach:

1. Conduct a perception audit: Before any changes can be made, it is vital to understand the current perceptions of the agency among the public and key stakeholders. Conducting a perception audit can help identify areas of concern and opportunities for improvement.³¹⁰
2. Define the agency's values and brand: The agency's values and brand should be defined and communicated internally to all officers and staff. Internally defining the brand will ensure that all members understand what the agency stands for and how they can contribute to its brand.³¹¹
3. Engage with the community: Engaging with the community is a critical component of a strategic image management and rebranding approach.

³⁰⁵ 21CP Solutions, *Task Force on 21st Century Policing*.

³⁰⁶ Hill, Stephens, and Guglielmi, *Branding for Police Agencies*, 2.

³⁰⁷ Pal et al., *Strategic Communications for Law Enforcement Executives*, 11.

³⁰⁸ 21CP Solutions, *Task Force on 21st Century Policing*.

³⁰⁹ 21CP Solutions.

³¹⁰ Nix and Wolfe, "The Impact of Negative Publicity."

³¹¹ Noutel et al., "An Employer Branding Strategy."

Community engagement must go beyond interactions on social media and involves building relationships with community members, listening to their concerns, and working collaboratively to address issues.³¹²

4. Communicate effectively: Law enforcement agencies should communicate effectively with the public and stakeholders, using clear and concise language and a variety of channels, including social media, press releases, and community events.³¹³
5. Invest in training: All personnel should be trained to be ambassadors of the agency's brand and values.³¹⁴ The investment in development includes training in community policing, cultural competency, and customer service.
6. Monitor progress and adjust as needed: Measuring progress is essential in evaluating the effectiveness of the agency's image management and rebranding efforts.³¹⁵ Tracking public perception through surveys, monitoring social media engagement, and measuring community trust levels will provide real-time results and allow for adjustments to the approach as needed based on feedback and outcomes.

Implementing a strategic approach to image management and rebranding in law enforcement involves defining the agency's brand and values, engaging with the community, communicating effectively, investing in officer training, monitoring progress, and making necessary adjustments.³¹⁶ In doing so, law enforcement agencies can build trust and confidence with the public and improve their overall image.³¹⁷ Trust subsequently

³¹² Kevin M. Steele, "Trust Is the Bedrock of Policing Success," *Police Chief* 89, no. 9 (September 2022), 47, <https://www.policechiefmagazine.org/magazine-issues/september-2022/>.

³¹³ Steele.

³¹⁴ Wood, "The Strategic Constable."

³¹⁵ O'Connor, "The Police on Twitter."

³¹⁶ Hill, Stephens, and Guglielmi, *Branding for Police Agencies*.

³¹⁷ Hill, Stephens, and Guglielmi.

facilitates more effective law enforcement cooperation with the community, thereby enhancing safety and harmony within the community.³¹⁸

C. STRATEGIC IMPLEMENTATION OF EFFECTIVE RECRUITMENT

Implementing a strategic rebranding approach to police recruitment involves a deliberate and intentional effort to improve law enforcement agencies' image and attract a diverse pool of qualified candidates.³¹⁹ Defining the agency's brand and values is crucial to ensure uniform comprehension of its ethos and distinctiveness.³²⁰ Before any recruitment efforts are initiated, a law enforcement agency must delineate what it represents and how it differs from other agencies.³²¹

Second, it is vital to conduct thorough research on the perceptions of law enforcement and the target audience, helping to identify areas of concern and opportunities for improvement.³²² The analysis can start with getting out into the community, establishing a communication platform among the community members, identifying public perceptions of law enforcement, and pinpointing the target audience to identify potential areas of concern and improvement. The research phase can help elucidate the most effective recruitment channels and the most resonant messaging for potential recruits.

Next, it is necessary to develop a comprehensive recruitment strategy. The design of a recruitment strategy should be data-driven; reflect the agency's brand and values; and outline the target audience, recruitment channels, messaging, and the metrics by which the success of the recruitment efforts will be evaluated.³²³ Simultaneously, revising recruitment materials ensures the agency's brand and values are consistently

³¹⁸ Pal et al., *Strategic Communications for Law Enforcement Executives*, 42.

³¹⁹ Hill, Stephens, and Guglielmi, *Branding for Police Agencies*, 13.

³²⁰ Noutel et al., "An Employer Branding Strategy."

³²¹ Hill, Stephens, and Guglielmi, *Branding for Police Agencies*, 21.

³²² Rhodes and Tyler, "Is It Cool to Be a Cop?"

³²³ Donohue and Harrison, "A Way Forward for Policing Recruiting"; Pal et al., *Strategic Communications for Law Enforcement Executives*; Hill, Stephens, and Guglielmi, *Branding for Police Agencies*, 12.

communicated. Materials should be updated to include language, images, and messaging that are inclusive and appealing and accurately represent the agency's culture.³²⁴

Another essential aspect is utilizing targeted recruitment channels to optimize reach and effectiveness. Social media, job fairs, and community outreach events can be employed to reach specific audience segments.³²⁵ These channels should reflect the agency's brand and values and be tailored to the target audience.³²⁶ The process should involve a continuous phase of evaluation and adjustment. The success of the recruitment strategy should be assessed regularly and changes made as necessary.³²⁷ The process could include tracking recruitment metrics such as application rates, the diversity of applicants, and hiring rates, allowing for insightful modifications to the recruitment strategy.³²⁸

In conclusion, successfully implementing a recruitment approach involves a series of strategic steps. The process begins with defining the agency's brand, conducting research, developing a strategy, revising materials, utilizing targeted channels, and continuing with evaluation, and each step contributes toward an effective and efficient recruitment process.³²⁹

D. CONCLUSION

To be effective, image management practices in law enforcement must be based on the actual practices and values of the agency.³³⁰ Agencies should prioritize building relationships with the community, providing transparent and accountable services, and upholding the values they claim to represent.³³¹ Only then can branding on social media be

³²⁴ Steele, "Trust Is the Bedrock of Policing Success," 46.

³²⁵ Noutel et al., "An Employer Branding Strategy," 428.

³²⁶ Lawson, *Recruitment and Retention of Police Officers*.

³²⁷ Lawson, 3.

³²⁸ Sherrie A. Madia, "Best Practices for Using Social Media as a Recruitment Strategy," *Strategic HR Review* 10, no. 6 (2011): 19–24, <https://doi.org/10.1108/14754391111172788>.

³²⁹ Madia.

³³⁰ Hill, Stephens, and Guglielmi, *Branding for Police Agencies*, 14.

³³¹ Hill, Stephens, and Guglielmi, 45.

an effective tool for promoting a positive image of law enforcement and building trust with the public.

A strategic approach provides a roadmap for law enforcement agencies aiming to foster stronger police–community relationships, enhance transparency, and uphold their value system. Trust, transparency, and transformation are fundamental elements in the effective image management of law enforcement agencies. Trust builds the foundation for strong relationships between the police and the community while transparency bolsters this trust by promoting openness and fairness in law enforcement operations.³³² Conversely, transformation showcases the agency’s ability to adapt and evolve, signaling its commitment to continual improvement and community-centric service.³³³ As 21CP Solutions indicates in its report, cultural transformation starts with leadership and involves behavioral change:

The mission of policing is to protect the community from crime and violence without inflicting harm. The mission is best achieved by working collaboratively with local government, service providers, and community members to build and maintain a safe environment utilizing a broad range of programs, strategies, and agreements. Law enforcement must not be used as a substitute for government and civil society addressing the complex, underlying drivers of crime and violence. Success in this area will be influenced by police leaders who understand and can implement a whole-of-government and whole-of-community approach.³³⁴

The strategic trooper concept, which encapsulates three elements—promoting trust, advocating transparency, and driving transformation—can significantly enhance law enforcement’s image. The strategic trooper embodies positive change within the law enforcement structure, shaping a favorable public perception. However, this approach requires a significant commitment to training, accountability, and organizational culture change. Although a cultural shift may not be the all-inclusive solution, it may be a good start toward changing behavior and attracting the next generation of public servants.

³³² Lomax, “Historical Changes of Policing,” 60.

³³³ 21CP Solutions, *Task Force on 21st Century Policing*.

³³⁴ 21CP Solutions, 6.

V. CONCLUSION

This thesis examined the role that social media plays in image management for the police and its impact on law enforcement recruitment. Law enforcement agencies must be strategic in their use of social media, as it has become an essential tool for shaping public perception and recruiting new officers.³³⁵ While social media presents a unique opportunity for law enforcement agencies to engage with their communities, it also comes with challenges, such as the potential for negative publicity and the need for officers to maintain a professional image. Ultimately, the success of law enforcement recruitment depends on agencies' ability to effectively navigate these challenges and leverage social media to their advantage.³³⁶

However, regarding the underlying “doing versus saying” principle, a law enforcement agency's social media presence must genuinely reflect its actions and ethos.³³⁷ Simply projecting an image of community engagement and professionalism online is insufficient if the actual practices do not align with this portrayal.³³⁸ For example, an agency might post frequently about its dedication to diversity, inclusivity, and community involvement, but if its recruitment strategies do not translate into a diverse workforce or if its officers are not seen actively engaging with all community segments, the disconnect between what is said (online persona) and what is done (actual practices) can harm the agency's credibility and public trust.³³⁹ Thus, while leveraging social media is critical, it is equally important for law enforcement agencies to ensure that their online communications align with their real-world actions. This alignment can create an authentic, trustworthy public image to attract potential recruits and enhance community relations.

³³⁵ Pal et al., *Strategic Communications for Law Enforcement Executives*.

³³⁶ Mayes, “Law Enforcement in the Age of Social Media,” 138.

³³⁷ Miller, “The Social Media–Police Branding Relationship,” 2.

³³⁸ Hill, Stephens, and Guglielmi, *Branding for Police Agencies*, 14.

³³⁹ Hill, Stephens, and Guglielmi.

A. FINDINGS

Image management practices in law enforcement on social media, such as branding and marketing campaigns, are meant to promote a positive image of the agency to the public. However, these practices are ineffective if the agency is not actually doing the things it or its branding claims to represent.³⁴⁰ When law enforcement agencies use social media to promote themselves as community-oriented, accountable, and trustworthy organizations, they are essentially making promises to the public about the values they uphold and the services they provide. If these promises are not fulfilled in reality, the agency's image management efforts will come across as disingenuous and hollow.³⁴¹ Moreover, according to Qiu,

Everyday policing activities are visible to the public and have symbolic meanings of the police actions. Through presenting this visibility online, and conducting meaningful interactions with citizens, the allocated resources are producing and re-enhancing the domination of the police. Police communication, as a form of policing activity, implies exercising police power via social media through engaging with citizens. It is through this process that the police legitimacy is . . . reproduced.³⁴²

However, any disconnect will be apparent to the public if officers do not engage with community members or prioritize community-oriented activities. Similarly, suppose an agency promotes itself as being transparent and accountable but fails to adequately investigate complaints of officer misconduct or provide information about its practices and policies.³⁴³ In this case, the public will see through these claims. In this way, image management practices on social media can have the opposite effect of what they intend if they are not grounded in reality.³⁴⁴ Instead of promoting a positive image of the agency, they can erode trust and confidence in law enforcement among the public.³⁴⁵

³⁴⁰ Hill, Stephens, and Guglielmi, 12.

³⁴¹ Pal et al., *Strategic Communications for Law Enforcement Executives*, 39.

³⁴² Qiu, "Enhancing Police Legitimacy," 263.

³⁴³ "Media Relations," College of Policing, May 24, 2017, <https://www.college.police.uk/app/engagement-and-communication/media-relations>.

³⁴⁴ Isaak and Walby, "Police Union and Police Association Communications."

³⁴⁵ Donovan and Boyd, "Stop the Presses?"

This thesis underscores that transformation—representing a profound change and progression in law enforcement’s practices, strategies, and culture—plays a pivotal role in molding public perception. This commitment to transformation can significantly uplift law enforcement’s image by showcasing progress, adaptability, and a continuous pledge to improvement.³⁴⁶ Vital to this transformative process is the strategic trooper, who embodies a forward-thinking approach to law enforcement that extends beyond conventional duties. By fostering strong community relations, advocating transparency, and building trust, the strategic trooper paves the way for a fresh perspective on policing. The role epitomizes a departure from the traditional law enforcement model, signifying a wave of transformation within agencies.³⁴⁷ Notably, enhancing public trust and transparency not only renews the image of law enforcement but also bolsters recruitment efforts by making a career in law enforcement more appealing.³⁴⁸ This transformation, personified by the strategic trooper, symbolizes a progressive, community-focused approach to policing, thus substantially augmenting the public image and attractiveness of law enforcement as a career choice.

B. RECOMMENDATIONS

To be effective, image management practices in law enforcement must be based on the actual practices and values of the agency. Agencies should prioritize building relationships with the community, providing transparent and accountable services, and upholding the values they claim to represent.³⁴⁹ Only then can social media be an effective tool for promoting a positive image of law enforcement and building trust with the public.³⁵⁰ A training or policy guide with an image management focus on building police–community relationships, promoting transparency, and upholding the agency’s value system could cover the following areas:

³⁴⁶ 21CP Solutions, *Task Force on 21st Century Policing*.

³⁴⁷ Cox et al., “A Brief History of Police in the United States.”

³⁴⁸ Nikki Brown, “What Is Your Story? Promoting a Positive Image of Police,” *ICMA Blog*, August 21, 2020, <https://icma.org/blog-posts/what-your-story-promoting-positive-image-police>.

³⁴⁹ Pal et al., *Strategic Communications for Law Enforcement Executives*.

³⁵⁰ Hill, Stephens, and Guglielmi, *Branding for Police Agencies*, 39.

1. Community-oriented policing: This section could cover the importance of building positive relationships with the community and engaging in community-oriented activities, such as attending neighborhood meetings, hosting community events, and participating in outreach programs.³⁵¹
2. Transparency and accountability: This section could cover the importance of being transparent and accountable in all aspects of law enforcement, such as conducting thorough investigations of complaints, providing timely and accurate information to the public, and regularly reviewing and updating policies and procedures.³⁵²
3. Values-based policing: This section could cover the importance of upholding the agency's core values and principles, such as integrity, professionalism, respect, and fairness. It could also cover strategies for promoting these values among officers and ensuring that they are reflected in all aspects of law enforcement.³⁵³
4. Communication and conflict resolution: This section could cover effective communication strategies for building positive relationships with community members and resolving conflicts respectfully and constructively.³⁵⁴
5. Training and professional development: This section could cover the importance of ongoing training and professional development for officers to ensure they have the necessary skills and knowledge to effectively engage with the community and uphold the agency's values and principles.³⁵⁵

Overall, the guide would emphasize the importance of community-oriented policing, transparency, accountability, values-based policing, effective communication,

³⁵¹ 21CP Solutions, *Task Force on 21st Century Policing*.

³⁵² Daniels-Shpall, *Strategies for (Re)Building Community Trust*.

³⁵³ Morison, *Hiring for the 21st Century Law Enforcement Officer*.

³⁵⁴ Lestrangle, "Four Guiding Principles."

³⁵⁵ Wood, "The Strategic Constable."

and ongoing training and professional development in building positive relationships with the community and promoting trust and confidence in law enforcement. It would provide practical strategies and examples of best practices to help agencies achieve these goals.

C. FUTURE RESEARCH

Further research beyond the strategic trooper concept could delve into several intriguing areas. One such area is the intersection of technology and law enforcement, exploring how evolving technologies such as social media, data analytics, and virtual reality could bolster the strategic trooper concept. Another significant area is impact measurement, necessitating empirical research to assess the real-world effects of this concept on community perceptions, officer behavior, and crime rates. Research in these areas could explore overcoming potential barriers to implementing the strategic trooper model or investigate its impact in varied community settings. The importance of this conclusion lies in its affirmation of the crucial role that trust, transparency, and transformation play in the image management of law enforcement agencies. It is essential for law enforcement to continue to adapt in the age of instantaneous communication and constant media exposure; the image of law enforcement is more than just a matter of public opinion—it is integral to the efficacy of policing itself.³⁵⁶

Diversity and inclusion within law enforcement agencies also present a rich field for exploration, investigating how the strategic trooper concept could be harnessed to promote a diverse and culturally sensitive workforce. Similarly, the study of policy and legislative changes required to facilitate the implementation of the strategic trooper concept could yield valuable insights, potentially involving a comparative analysis of different jurisdictions to identify best practices. Ultimately, adapting the strategic trooper concept to other contexts, such as rural versus urban settings or communities with varying cultural backgrounds, could provide a deeper understanding of the versatility and applicability of this concept. These areas of research may contribute significantly to the ongoing evolution of law enforcement practices.

³⁵⁶ Pal et al., *Strategic Communications for Law Enforcement Executives*.

Public trust in law enforcement correlates directly with the effectiveness of policing; when confidence is high, communities are more likely to cooperate with police, leading to more effective crime prevention and resolution.³⁵⁷ Similarly, transparency reduces suspicion and fosters a deeper understanding and acceptance of law enforcement actions, while transformation shows a commitment to improvement and adaptation, key qualities that communities expect from the institutions serving them.³⁵⁸ The strategic trooper concept, which encapsulates these three elements, is vital because it offers a pathway for individual officers to influence the broader perception of law enforcement positively. In a climate where every action can be broadcast and scrutinized, every officer becomes a potential ambassador for one's organization.³⁵⁹ The strategic trooper's role in promoting trust, advocating for transparency, and driving transformation could significantly impact law enforcement's public image.

Finally, the call for further research underscores the need for continuous learning and adaptation in law enforcement practices. By examining potential challenges and impacts of the strategic trooper model in varied settings, law enforcement agencies may gain valuable insights that can guide their evolution, thus ensuring their ongoing relevance, effectiveness, and positive community relations. These concepts will be indispensable in the future success of law enforcement's mission to serve and deliver safety to communities.

³⁵⁷ Pal et al.

³⁵⁸ Mawby, "Promoting the Police?" 45.

³⁵⁹ Mawby.

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