Journal of Qualitative Criminal Justice & Criminology (JQCJC)
Editorial Introduction

Welcome to the first issue of the fourth volume of the *Journal of Qualitative Criminal Justice & Criminology*. This is my first issue as editor, and I am pleased to continue along the path established by Will Oliver. It has been both exciting and challenging to take the reins and transition into this role. Thankfully Will already had a great crop of articles prepared for this issue. In a way, you could argue this issue is a result of both of our efforts. To that end, this issue highlights the journal’s continued emphasis on high-quality qualitative scholarship. The first article by Jaclyn Schildkraut provides an excellent social construction analysis of mass shootings between 2000 and 2012. Joseph Johnson and Natalie Schell-Busey examine the role of battle rap videos posted on YouTube in real world street level violence. Nancy Marion and Ronald Gelleny analyze a series of interviews with Canadian and US officials to understand the transformation of border policies in both nations. These articles provide unique insights and demonstrate the range of qualitative methods being employed across the discipline. The book reviews included in the issue also highlight quality scholarship produced in various arenas.

On a personal note, some may wonder why a person in the midwest is taking over as editor of the journal for the Southwestern Criminal Justice Association. It is all because I am a fan and practitioner of qualitative research methods. I have been a qualitative scholar since graduate school, including writing a qualitative dissertation on computer hacking. My interest in qualitative work continued throughout my career, leading to many studies and publications using unique data collected from on-line sources as a means to understand behavior. I even teach qualitative research methods for our Ph. D. program at MSU, so I am committed to developing these skills in future generations of scholars.

Since having started as editor, I am pleased by the continuing stream of quality submissions. It is always a pleasure to see a new draft awaiting review and consideration. I am also happy to report that we will pursue our first special issue, tentatively titled “Technocrime Research at the Margins.” The call for papers is posted on the journal website (www.jqcjc.org), and Kevin Steinmetz will serve as the special editor for this issue focusing on cybercrime and technology. Manuscript submissions will be due no later than May 15, 2017, if you are interested.

If you would like to develop a special issue proposal please contact me at your convenience by email at jqcjc@msu.edu. I am happy to consider all avenues that may be of interest. It is a critical way to expand the journal’s readership and number of issues published per year, while at the same time increasing attention to all manner of qualitative research methods.

Finally, I must thank the authors for their contributions, as well as our excellent book reviews. Also, major thanks to Kevin Steinmetz for his tenure as book review editor. This is his last issue, and we have identified a new
book review editor, Ashley Farmer, who will begin this month. Finally, I must thank Kate Fedewa for proofreading all submissions and Harriet McHale for her assistance in formatting and assembling this issue. This product will not be possible without her kind help.

I look forward to many more issues as editor while with the *Journal of Qualitative Criminal Justice & Criminology*.

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ABSTRACT

Nearly as soon as the first shot is fired in a mass shooting, the news media already are rushing to break coverage, the likes of which typically last days or, in the more extreme cases, weeks. Though mass shootings are rare in occurrence, the disproportionate amount of coverage they receive in the media leads the public to believe that they occur at a much more regular frequency than they do. In order to understand how the public comes to understand mass shooting events, however, one first must understand how the stories are constructed by the media. The present study takes this important step by examining The New York Times coverage of 91 shootings occurring between 2000 and 2012. Using Best’s (1987, 2006) three-stage model for the creation of social problems, this study considers the naming or defining of the issue, the incorporation of examples, and the use of statistics. The findings indicate that the coverage (a) overemphasized the shooters, (b) highlighted the most extreme examples for comparison, including Columbine and the Oklahoma City bombing, and (c) relied heavily on the use of statistics, particularly victim counts, while omitting any national data that could ground these events in the larger discourse of violence in the nation. Thus, the disproportional coverage of mass shootings, both individually and as a collective phenomenon, serves to solidify these events as a social problem in the US. Directions for future research, as well as potential policy implications for the coverage, also are discussed.

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INTRODUCTION

On December 14, 2012, the town of Newtown, Connecticut, was disrupted when a 20-year-old forcefully entered Sandy Hook Elementary School and opened fire (Barron, 2012). In his wake, 20 first grade students and six faculty and staff members, including the school’s principal, lay dead (Barron, 2012). The gunman then committed suicide as authorities entered the school (Barron, 2012). A later investigation of his residence revealed that, prior to his rampage, he also had shot and killed his mother as she slept in their home (Barron, 2012). Within minutes of the shooting, the story had taken hold of the nation’s focus with little foreseeable chance of letting go.

In a Washington Post-ABC News poll (n.d.) conducted immediately after Sandy Hook, respondents indicated that the shooting was a reflection of broader problems in American society (see also Elsass, Schildkraut, & Stafford, 2014; Schildkraut, Elsass, & Stafford, 2015). Similar sentiments had been echoed after the 1999 Columbine High School shooting, in which 12 students and one teacher were killed by a pair of gunmen. In fact, several researchers (e.g., Burns & Crawford, 1999; Springhall, 1999) have examined Columbine in the context of a moral panic, suggesting that the rarity of school shootings and the continual decline of juvenile crime often are ignored when fear of such violence takes over. These beliefs, however, are not solely linked to mass shootings in schools. Other events, including shootings at a movie theater in Aurora, Colorado; a political speaking engagement in Tucson, Arizona; college campuses including Virginia Tech and Northern Illinois University (NIU); the military base Fort Hood in Texas; malls in Salt Lake City, Utah, and Omaha, Nebraska; places of worship in Oak Creek, Wisconsin, and Colorado Springs, Colorado; and an immigration center in Binghamton, New York, among other locations, also have generated heightened concern amongst the populace. The disparity between public perceptions about mass shootings and their reality of occurrence have far-reaching implications beyond fear of crime, including inciting demands for action that can result in feel-good legislation that rarely gets passed (e.g., Schildkraut & Hernandez, 2014; Soraghan, 2000).

A contributing factor to these perceptions is the amount of media attention that such cases have garnered. Mass shooting events each have become, albeit at varying intensities, what Kellner (2003, 2008a, 2008b) calls a “media spectacle,” whereby media outlets will cover every facet of a story in an effort to win the ratings war. Through local, national, and even international media, these stories permeate television screens, especially on 24-hour news stations, such as CNN, Fox News, and MSNBC. Sensational headlines about these events fill daily newspapers, and the transition of these papers to digital news via the Internet allows even faster and more frequent story generation. These spectacles essentially take relatively uncommon events, sensationalize them, and make the events appear far more commonplace than they actually are (Kellner, 2008a; Surette, 1992). Thus, understanding
the ways in which these events are presented in the news is particularly important, given that the media act as the main source of information for up to 95% of the general public (Graber, 1980; Surette, 1992). As most people never will experience a mass shooting directly, beliefs about these events as a social problem likely are influenced by the media coverage and manner in which the content is presented.

While previous research has examined school shootings (e.g., Chyi & McCombs, 2004; Hawdon, Agnich, & Ryan, 2014; Muschert & Carr, 2006; Schildkraut, 2012; Schildkraut & Muschert, 2014) and, more recently, mass shootings more broadly (Schildkraut, 2014; Schildkraut & Muschert, 2015) in the context of media framing, these studies leave two important gaps in the literature. First, these studies often examine a single event, such as Columbine (e.g., Chyi & McCombs, 2004; Muschert & Carr, 2006), Virginia Tech (e.g., Hawdon et al., 2014; Schildkraut, 2012), or Sandy Hook (e.g., Schildkraut & Muschert, 2014), rather than considering the phenomenon of mass shootings as a whole (see, generally, Harris & Harris, 2012, who call for such an analysis). Second, these studies typically examine frame changing across time and space to see how the focus of stories shift, but fail to consider how the social problem about these events is created through the media discourse.

The present study seeks to simultaneously address both of these literature gaps by examining the media-constructed social problem of mass shootings. Specifically, 91 mass shootings occurring between 2000 and 2012 are examined using qualitative media analysis (Altheide & Schneider, 2013). Employing Best’s (1987, 2006) three-stage model, this study examines how the social problem of mass shootings is defined, how examples are used to substantiate the issue, and how statistics can be used to underscore the seriousness of the problem. The results then can be considered in terms of their broader implication for media practices, public perceptions, and political responses to these events.

THEORETICAL ORIENTATION

Agenda Setting and Claims Making

The mass media play an important role in the social construction of reality as they define and shape issues and events rather than just reflect what is occurring in society (Barak, 1994; Gans, 1979; Tuchman, 1978). In his commentary on how the media contribute to the social construction of crime, Sacco (1995) notes that

The ways in which the news media collect, sort, and contextualize crime reports help to shape public consciousness regarding which conditions need to be seen as urgent problems, what kinds of problems they represent, and, by implication, how they should be resolved. (p. 141)
This process, known as agenda setting, enables the mass media to highlight particular attributes of a story that call attention to and lend support for claims made by the primary group (Entman, 2007; McCombs, 1997; McCombs & Shaw, 1972; Weaver, 2007). Primary claims makers are those who have some sort of exclusive or intimate knowledge about the problem (Best, 1989; Ogle, Eckman, & Leslie, 2003; O’Neal, 1997). This group may include victims, witnesses, or experts in a particular area who call attention to a particular issue and offer potential solutions or simply bring awareness to the problem (Best, 1989; Ogle et al., 2003). Secondary claims makers, on the other hand, are further removed from the issue and simply interpret or disseminate the claims made by the primary claims makers (Best, 1989; Ogle et al., 2003; O’Neal, 1997). Despite often reinterpreting claims made by the primary group, the media are considered to be secondary claims makers (Best, 1989; see also Ogle et al., 2003; O’Neal, 1997).

According to McCombs (1997), one of the main goals of agenda setting is to achieve consensus among the public about the importance a particular topic or issue, and the news media are instrumental in generating this consensus. By highlighting certain stories or issues as important (or, perhaps more accurately, as more important than others), news producers call attention to issues that either may directly or indirectly affect a particular community (Barak, 1994; Entman, 2007; McCombs, 1997; Reese, 2007). Over time, as more coverage is allocated to a particular issue, the saliency of that issue for the public is likely to increase, and eventually the issue becomes a priority for the public’s agenda (Entman, 2007; McCombs, 1997; Reese, 2007). As the saliency increases, policies aimed at addressing the issue also can be pushed as part of the agenda (Entman, 2007). As Cohen (1963) has noted, the media “may not be successful much of the time in telling people what to think, but it is stunningly successful in telling people what to think about” (p. 13).

Rarely, however, does the news or public agenda focus on more than a few key issues at a time (McCombs, 1997). This limited focus stems from the fact that very few issues are able to command the consensus needed to maintain saliency (McCombs, 1997). Most often, the media focus on those issues that are the most serious or atypical in nature (Barak, 1994; Sacco, 1995) or those that threaten society’s perceived stability (Gans, 1979). At the same time, the limited focus on only a few key issues allows for a more complete, full-bodied discussion to take place in both the public and media discourses. When an issue is of perceived importance, the media agenda is impacted as the demand for more information increases (Scheufele & Tewksbury, 2007). Accordingly, how the mass media portray such issues also impacts the way in which the public perceives and understands them (Barak, 1994; Scheufele & Tewksbury, 2007).

How the agenda is set in the media is largely dependent on the organizational constraints of each news agency (Berkowitz, 1987). Most often, the
mass media rely on public or political officials (including members of the law enforcement community) as their sources of information, and, by extension, these groups serve to become the primary claims makers. Given the media’s heavy reliance on these “official sources,” the information that news consumers receive is shaped largely by primary claims makers through the media as secondary claims makers (Berkowitz, 1987). The media, however, do not necessarily play the same type of passive role as other secondary claims makers. By consciously deciding which aspects of a story to highlight or what sources to incorporate, the media play an active role in the construction of reality (Barak, 1994; Gans, 1979; Tuchman, 1978; Weaver & Elliott, 1985). At the same time, however, the shaping of the public agenda, and the creation of social problems by extension, may not always be so deliberate but rather an unintended outcome of reporting the news (McCombs, 1997).

The Creation of Social Problems

To understand the processes of claims making, one must begin with an understanding of what the claims are about—social problems (either actual or perceived). Claims makers have the ability to influence public perception and policy with relation to social problems (Best, 1987). According to Spector and Kitsuse (1977), social problems are “the activities of individuals or groups making assertions of grievances or claims with respect to some putative conditions” (p. 75). Essentially, then, “social problems” are a product of those with the power or resources to define them as such and typically reflect the interests of those who are making the claims. Once claims makers have convinced others of a problem, they then offer solutions to the problem or policies aimed at deriving such a solution (Best, 1987). There are three key components to making claims about social problems: the naming or defining of the issue, the incorporation of examples, and the use of statistics (Best, 1987, 2006).

**Give the problem a name.** When a name is given to identify some type of phenomenon, it essentially is defined by claims makers as some type of social problem (Best, 1987, 2006). By defining the problem, the claims maker can identify its domain—that is, whether the problem is new or whether it has been in existence but not present in the forefront (Best, 1987). In each case, the defining of the problem allows claims makers to create an appearance of originality that will entice constituents to be concerned about the problem (Best, 1987). One technique that claims makers use in defining the problem is vagueness, or, perhaps more accurately, the absence of a precise definition (Best, 1987). This also may signify some element of originality for the problem, even if it is a recurrent issue (Best, 1987).

One way in which the media incorporate this element is to report stories in generalities, even when hard-and-fast facts are available to present to the audience. By writing in generalities rather than specifics, the media can add a level of sensationalism or mystery that entices readers not only to keep
reading the initial piece, but to seek additional information. For example, the
definition of the term “terrorism” has undergone many permutations, par-
ticularly after 9/11. Claims makers even have likened the Columbine High
School shooting to an act of terrorism (Frymer, 2009).

Similarly, definitions of “mass shootings” also remain vague (Schildkraut
& Elsass, 2016). While there is yet to be an agreed-upon definition for mass
shootings, one commonly used description proposed by Congress identifies
such events as

Incidents occurring in relatively public places, involving four
or more deaths—not including the shooter(s)—and gunmen
who select victims somewhat indiscriminately. The violence
in these cases is not a means to an end—the gunmen do not
pursue criminal profit or kill in the name of terrorist ideolo-
gies, for example. (Bjelopera, Bagalman, Caldwell, Finklea, &
McCallion, 2013, p. 1)

Similar definitions have been proposed in the context of mass killings
by the FBI (Morton & Hilts, 2006). These explanations, however, are prob-
lematic in that they require at least four fatalities as opposed even to just
injuries. This condition then excludes a number of mass shooting incidents
that should be included in datasets, such as the 1998 Thurston High School
shooting in Springfield, Oregon, in which 2 people were killed and 27 others
injured. It could be argued that such an event should be included in the data
as the actions and motivations were in line with other similar incidents with
higher death tolls.

Accordingly, for the present study, the definition proposed by Schildkraut
and Elsass (2016) is used to identify incidents of mass shootings:

A mass shooting is an incident of targeted violence carried out
by one or more shooters at one or more public or populated lo-
cations. Multiple victims (both injuries and fatalities) are as-
associated with the attack, and both the victims and location(s)
are chosen either at random or for their symbolic value. The
event occurs within a single 24-hour period, though most at-
tacks typically last only a few minutes. The motivation of the
shooting must not correlate with gang violence or targeted
militant or terrorist activity. (p. 36)

This definition draws upon previously accepted definitions of school
shootings (see Newman, Fox, Harding, Mehta, & Roth, 2004) while broadening
its scope to address mass shootings. Further, it not only addresses the
issue of the four fatality requirement, but also helps to differentiate mass
shootings from spree killings.

**Use examples.** The second component in the claims-making process is
the use of examples (Best, 1987, 2006). Examples often are used throughout
the discourse of the problem, but claims makers typically rely on an extreme case as an initial example to underscore their perceived seriousness of the problem (Best, 1987; see also Barak, 1994). For example, President George W. Bush heavily relied on 9/11 as his example for terrorism in his campaign to engage in war. In addition to furthering their views, these types of examples also are easily identified by and relatable to people whom the claims makers are trying to convince of the social problem (Best, 1987).

When it comes to public mass shootings, regardless of whether they take place in or out of schools, the 1999 shooting at Columbine High School has become the archetypal case to which all other events are compared (Altheide, 2009b; Kalish & Kimmel, 2010; Larkin, 2007, 2009; Muschert, 2007; Muschert & Larkin, 2007). Often perceived to be the first of its kind, Columbine routinely is referenced by claims makers when campaigning for safer schools and gun control following other incidents of school shootings. More recently, attacks occurring outside of schools quickly have been identified as a “Columbine at” that particular type of location, including airports (the 2013 LAX shooting), malls (Columbia, Maryland in 2014), and movie theaters (Aurora, Colorado in 2012). Despite the fact that some mass shootings have been more deadly than Columbine (e.g., Sandy Hook and Virginia Tech), no single incident has surpassed it in terms of the amount of media coverage garnered (see, generally, Muschert & Carr, 2006; Schildkraut, 2012, 2014; Schildkraut & Muschert, 2014).

**Use statistics.** Claims makers also attempt to determine the magnitude of the social problem by discussing numeric estimates (Best, 1987, 2006; see also Barak, 1994; Sacco, 1995). By using these figures, claims makers essentially are able to offer some sort of context within which the social problem exists (Best, 1987). The larger the number, the greater the problem, and, by extension, the more attention it will receive (Best, 1987). Following incidents of mass murder, regardless of the type (e.g., school shooting or terrorism), claims makers regularly include numeric figures to put the issue into context. After 9/11, it was emphasized repeatedly that the attacks killed 2,977 people (excluding the hijackers). As the deadliest attack on U.S. soil, this figure often is used to emphasize the seriousness of the problem of terrorism. Statistics also are used in constructing school shootings as a problem. Claims makers often refer to the 13 killed at Columbine, but that is used as a point of reference for how important these events are. By comparison, the 1998 shooting at Westside Middle School in Jonesboro, Arkansas, claimed five lives, but the 2012 shooting at Sandy Hook Elementary School claimed 26. Not only do these figures emphasize the importance of the problem, they also offer a continuum upon which one can rank perceived importance of the event in the domain of the problem.

Similarly, statistics may be used to justify the stance of a claims maker on a particular issue or policy resulting from the social problem. For instance, the organization Everytown for Gun Safety (n.d.) routinely circulates an in-
fographic claiming the number of school shootings that have occurred since Sandy Hook, regularly updating it as a new event occurs. The statistics purported on their website are used to justify their particular stance on gun control, arguing that tighter restrictions could have prevented the various attacks (tying back to Best's earlier note about how issues are given a name). The number reported, however, is problematic in that it is based on a definition that is poorly constructed and overly vague, thereby inflating the statistics. Specifically, shootings are included if "a firearm was discharged inside a school building or on school or campus grounds, as documented by the press or confirmed through further inquiries with law enforcement" (Everytown for Gun Safety, n.d.). The American Academy of Child & Adolescent Psychiatry (2008) has estimated that over one million children, on average, bring a gun into schools each year; therefore, it is not unreasonable to assume that there are accidental discharges of these weapons while they are on school grounds. In fact, Everytown for Gun Safety (2014) notes that approximately 20% of their events involve incidents where a gun discharged on school property without a single injury or fatality, with six discharges being classified as accidental. Therefore, the number of events they are purporting to have occurred is at odds with statistics based on Bjelopera and colleagues' (2013) or Schildkraut and Elsass' (2016) definitions of mass shootings.

Further, an additional problem of claims making is that often these problems are not put into context, but instead blown out of proportion (Best, 1987). Yet, given the standing of the claims maker, these claims often are taken as accurate (Best, 2006), as illustrated with the example of Everytown for Gun Safety. Claims making can make atypical problems seem typical, and typical problems seem atypical (Best, 1987). Not only does claims making shape public perceptions of these social problems, but the broader reach extends to policy implementation, including policies aimed at increasing social control, prevention, and awareness (Barak, 1994; Best, 1987; Sacco, 1995). These inconsistencies are furthered through the language that is used by claims makers to propagate their agendas, and ultimately affect the social construction of social problems. As Jones, McFalls, and Gallagher (1989) have noted, claims makers have the ability to make "objective molehills" out of "subjective mountains" and vice versa (p. 341).

**METHODOLOGY**

The present study was guided by the question: *How is the discourse on the phenomenon of mass shootings as a social problem constructed in the media?* Using Best's (1987, 2006) model, three issues are examined. First, consideration is given to how the problem is given a name, or more specifically, defined. Next, attention is paid to the way in which examples are used to draw parallels between different mass tragedy events. Finally, use of statistical references to quantify or highlight the magnitude of the problem of mass shootings is examined.
While a broad range of methodologies exist to examine the media, Best’s (1987, 2006) provides a unique opportunity to specifically analyze the manner by which social problems are created. As he notes, the process of claims-making is more often the focus than the claims makers themselves (Best, 1987). A key emphasis is the rhetoric used to support the claims, which helps to examine the values used to substantiate a particular social problem (Best, 1987). This further enables researchers to examine the process of creating social problems, as this study seeks to do in the context of public mass shootings, rather than just considering the content offered to validate the issue.

Data Collection

The present study analyzes the newspaper coverage of 91 mass shootings that occurred between 2000 and 2012. Altheide (2009a) notes that the newspaper format in particular is more compatible than television news with framing in terms of specific audience effects, because it offers a wider variation in views. Attention was paid to the national coverage these events received, and The New York Times was selected as the main news source for the project. Previous researchers (Altheide, 2009b; Leavy & Maloney, 2009; Muschert, 2002; Schildkraut, 2012; Schildkraut & Muschert, 2014; Wigley & Fontenot, 2009) have identified The Times as the national standard for print news, and many newspapers around the country often reprint articles from this source. The Times also has an impressive reach, with a circulation of over 1.15 million readers weekly and nearly 1.65 million readers with its Sunday edition (Edmonds, Guskin, Rosenstiel, & Mitchell, 2012). While The Times’ weekday readership is exceeded by The Wall Street Journal (WSJ) and USA Today, with 2.07 and 1.78 million daily readers respectively (Edmonds et al., 2012), the news formats of these papers depart from the intention of the present study. The WSJ focuses more heavily on business and economic news, while USA Today utilizes a more infotainment approach (Muschert, 2002).

Articles were retrieved using the Lexis-Nexis database, which archives over 300 newspapers nationally, including The Times (Weaver & Bimber, 2008). The database has been credited as one of the leading media archives (Deacon, 2007) and also one of the most widely used in the social sciences (Deacon, 2007; Weaver & Bimber, 2008). Researchers (e.g., Altheide & Schneider, 2013; Deacon, 2007; Snider & Janda, 1998; Soothill & Grover, 1997; Weaver & Bimber, 2008) have noted several benefits to utilizing online media archives, such as LexisNexis, for content analysis. With advances in computer technology, searches through a larger number of news sources can now be conducted quickly, reliably, and remotely (Deacon, 2007; Snider & Janda, 1998; Soothill & Grover, 1997). Deacon (2007), for instance, notes that the computerized searches of media archives actually can increase study validity and reliability as they limit human error (see also Snider & Janda, 1998). Soothill & Grover (1997) further highlight the importance of using carefully constructed search terms to yield the best results.
False positives and false negatives are important considerations when constructing search terms (Deacon, 2007; Soothill & Grover, 1997). False positives occur when a search term has multiple meanings, thus resulting in more results than are intended (Deacon, 2007; Soothill & Grover, 1997). Alternately, false negatives can occur when the search term is so limited that articles are omitted because they do not meet the entered criteria (Deacon, 2007; Soothill & Grover, 1997). In order to maintain consistency between the searches in the present study, the same parameters were used to access articles about each individual event. The city or institution name was utilized as the primary search term rather than the shooters’ names, which likely would lead to increased false negatives and missing data. Institution names were used when the shooting took place at a school, as it is more common for the media to report this aspect. When the shooting did not occur at a school, the name of the city was used. Previous studies examining school shootings similarly have relied on full-text keyword searches using the names of the school and city in which it was located (see Chyi & McCombs, 2004; Muschert & Carr, 2006; Schildkraut & Muschert, 2014).

Data were collected on each of the 91 events for the 30 days including and following the day of the shooting. A study by Chyi and McCombs (2004) examining the media coverage of the Columbine High School shooting found the life span of the story to be limited to one month, despite the fact that other research (e.g., McCombs & Zhu, 1995) has suggested that media coverage of other public issues, such as politics, can last up to 18.5 months. Additional studies examining the coverage of school shootings in the media (e.g., Muschert, 2002, 2007; Schildkraut, 2012, 2014; Schildkraut & Muschert, 2014) also have utilized the 30-day coverage period. Once the articles were downloaded and organized by case, they then were reviewed and culled to be consistent with these previous studies’ parameters. The final dataset for each event included only news stories and editorials; letters to the editors, opinion pieces, blogs, and sports articles (e.g., containing the word “shooting”) were removed.

The final dataset contained a total of 564 articles across the 91 events. This totaled 489,638 printed words. It is important to note, however, that not all events received equal coverage in The Times. Specifically, 21 cases (23.1%) received no coverage in print. Of the remaining 70 cases, five shootings dominated the coverage, representing 57% of the total articles and 62% of the total words published on these events (see Table 1). The remaining 65 events received between one and 19 articles, with a mean of 3.7 articles and 2,881 words per shooting.
TABLE 1: Most Prominent Cases by Coverage

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Event</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Articles</th>
<th>Total Words</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sandy Hook Elementary School</td>
<td>12/14/2012</td>
<td>130 (23.0)</td>
<td>118,354 (24.2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tucson / Gabrielle Giffords</td>
<td>01/08/2011</td>
<td>89 (15.8)</td>
<td>91,715 (18.7)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fort Hood Military Base</td>
<td>11/05/2009</td>
<td>36 (6.4)</td>
<td>35,097 (7.2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Virginia Tech Shootings</td>
<td>04/16/2007</td>
<td>36 (6.4)</td>
<td>33,473 (6.8)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aurora, CO Movie Theater</td>
<td>07/20/2012</td>
<td>31 (5.5)</td>
<td>23,715 (4.8)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TOTALS</strong></td>
<td><strong>322 (57.1)</strong></td>
<td><strong>302,354 (61.8)</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

NOTE: For both article and total words, results are presented as counts with percentage of total data set (N = 564 articles / 489,638 words) in parentheses.

Data Analysis

To understand how the social problem of mass shootings is constructed in the media, qualitative content analysis (Altheide & Schneider, 2013) was used as the primary analytic tool. For scholars in communications and other disciplines, content analysis provides the opportunity to critically analyze texts and language that are put forth by news makers (Bell, 1991; Berg, 2007; Riffe, Lacy, & Fico, 1998). The process of content analysis tends to be both systematic and reliable (Berg, 2007; Muschert, 2002; Riffe et al., 1998). In a broad sense, content analysis allows researchers to categorize media content of various forms (Riffe et al., 1998). Qualitative content analysis, in particular, seeks to identify patterns and themes from which researchers can draw meaning (Altheide & Schneider, 2013; Berg, 2007). Perhaps most importantly, content analysis is unobtrusive and nonreactive (Bell, 1991; Berg, 2007; Riffe et al., 1998). This means that the researcher has no effect on the news product or its creators, as these objects (news stories) are examined after the production has been completed (Bell, 1991; Riffe et al., 1998).

The NVivo 10 software package was used both as an organizational and analytic tool in the present study. Once the articles were loaded, an initial read through was conducted on all of the articles. During a second read through, memos and notes were made regarding recurrent themes, from which a codebook was created (see Appendix A). Each article then was read and coded by the unit of analysis, which, in the present study, was individual sentences. Coding full sentences is useful because it provides an element of context when coding for an existent theme (Berg, 2007). When coding for single words, the context or meaning behind the word is lost, as it is nearly impossible to tell without the surrounding words what the actual meaning is meant to be (Berg, 2007). At the same time, using a larger unit of analysis, such as a paragraph, also would not be useful because it is too broad and
conveys too many ideas in a single unit, creating a sense of research “clutter” for the coder (Berg, 2007).

Upon the completion of coding, a sample of 55 articles, representing approximately 10% of the total articles in the study, was drawn from the five most salient cases, each of which can be considered as an example of media-defined issues. In a separate analysis examining frame changing, for example, these five cases were found to mirror the coverage patterns for the phenomenon of mass shootings as a whole (see Schildkraut & Muschert, 2015); therefore, it was expected that the coding would be representative of the full dataset. It should be noted, however, that a potential drawback of relying on the most salient cases is that shootings of lesser interest (or lesser coverage) may not be structured the same way (e.g., in terms of how the headline is organized), which could result in coverage bias, with these cases being omitted from analysis.

A second coder, independent of the project, was given the codebook and asked to code these articles. Once complete, NVivo was used to calculate a Kappa coefficient for each of the themes. Initially, three of the six themes had a Kappa coefficient below 0.6, which is the rule of thumb for acceptable reliability agreement (Landis & Koch, 1977). The researchers met to discuss possible issues within the codebook, and made alterations as needed to the guide. The independent researcher then re-coded the articles and re-ran the reliability check; all Kappa coefficients were found to exceed the 0.6 benchmark.

ANALYSIS

Give the Problem a Name

In the present study, the “name” of the problem was conceptualized as the headline of each story. The headline, or lead, of a story is the first chance that the newspaper has to capture the audience’s attention. As such, how the leads are framed likely will influence whether or not someone reads the story. Those headlines that are more sensational are more likely to peak a reader’s interest. Further, how the media structure the headline in terms of word organization also can provide insight into the focus or direction of the article. As such, the coding of the headline into categories was based upon the first main word of the headline. Headlines were coded into one of three categories—shooter, victim(s), or event—based on the focus of the headline. Coding of the headlines was discrete, meaning that they could be categorized into only one of these themes, though not all headlines fell into any.

In slightly less than 27% of articles ($n = 151$), the headline either led with the shooter, the victim(s), or the event itself. As illustrated in Table 2, the shooter was the most common reference within these leads, accounting for 57% of story headlines. There were nearly half as many references to the victims (27.8%), and only about one-fifth (15.2%) were references to the event itself.
### TABLE 2: Article Headlines by Main Themes and Qualifiers

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theme</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Shooter(s)</td>
<td>86</td>
<td>57.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gunman</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>44.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Suspect</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>22.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Job Title¹</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>14.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender²</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>9.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Killer</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>8.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Victim(s)</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>27.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Numeric (# Killed)</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>45.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Job Title³</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>28.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Victim</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>7.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Survivor</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>7.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>11.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Event</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>15.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shooting</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>56.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rampage</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>21.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bloodshed</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>8.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Massacre</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>8.7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

¹ NOTE: Variable percentage for victim(s) subthemes may not total to 100.0% due to rounding error.
² Ex: Man, boy, girl
³ Ex: Professor, student, officer, mother

**The shooters.** Disaggregating these main themes into subthemes also provides a number of interesting findings. With respect to the shooters, the most common qualifier (44.2%) used was “gunman.” This particular qualifier was used indiscriminately, meaning it was utilized regardless of whether the shooter committed suicide or not. Conversely, the qualifier of “suspect,” appearing in 22% of the shooter headlines, was used only for those individuals who did not commit suicide.

Whether or not the shooter was referred to as “gunman” appears to be a function of their age. Specifically, younger shooters, particularly if their attacks took place at a school, rarely were referred to as “gunman.” In fact, in 10 article leads about juveniles, the qualifier of “gunman” was used only once.
(Purdum, 2001). Despite that this event took place at school, however, the suspect was 18 at the time of the shooting. For the remaining articles, qualifiers highlighting the youthful nature of the offenders were more common, as illustrated by the following examples:

Teenager Is Charged In Killing of 3 at a School (Tavernise, 2012)
Student Shoots Two Others, One Fatally (“Student Shoots,” 2012)
Middle School Boy Shoots His Principal, Then Kills Himself (“Middle School Boy,” 2003)

Further, in a majority of the headlines (51.2% or \( n = 44 \)), the shooter is discussed in conjunction with the victim. More specifically, these 35 headlines were structured in some permutation of “shooter kills X number of victims.” Offsetting a single shooter against multiple victims highlights the disproportional violence and heightens the newsworthiness of the event (Cerulo, 1998; Sorenson, Manz, & Berk, 1998).

The victims. How the victims are framed in story headlines also provides insight into the way in which mass shootings are defined. Emphasizing the victim, rather than the shooter or the event, provides a different frame of reference for the audience, typically one that is more relatable (Cerulo, 1998). Moreover, highlighting the victims also underscores the unspeakable and horrendous nature of the shooting (Cerulo, 1998).

The most common description of victims (45.2%) is in terms of the number killed or wounded in the event. This is particularly noteworthy because it reduces the individuals to a single number, such as in the following cases:

12 killed, 31 wounded in rampage at army post; officer is suspect (McFadden, 2009)
8 People Are Killed in Shooting at a Nursing Home in North Carolina (Sulzberger & Binker, 2009)
6 Wounded in Mall Shooting; Gunman Surrenders (Associated Press, 2005)

By reporting the number as an aggregate, rather than offering specific names or characteristics of the individuals, The Times again is highlighting the egregious nature of the event. This also can provide an outlet for the reader to perceive a greater chance of becoming one of the victims within the number, particularly with higher counts (see also Cerulo, 1998; Mayr & Machin, 2012).

The next most common way that the victims were described was by their occupation, thus emphasizing what they did, rather than who they were as individuals in nearly 29% of the references. This includes emphasizing whether the victim was an educator, a student, or even a mother:

Professor’s Violent Death Came Where He Sought Peace (Moynihan, 2007)
A *Mother*, a Gun Enthusiast and the First Victim *(Flegenheimer & Somaiya, 2012)*

*Security Guard Is Killed in Shooting At Holocaust Museum in Washington* *(Stout, 2009)*

Reducing the victims to occupational roles again provides a way in which the reader can relate to the victim (see also Cerulo, 1998). The use of such roles can suggest that people in similar capacities also may be at heightened risk of becoming victims of the same fate.

A victim was directly referenced by name in only two article leads (4.9%). Not surprisingly, this was Congresswoman Gabrielle Giffords, who was wounded (but survived) in the 2011 Tucson shooting. Still, in another article, despite her high profile status, she was referred to simply as “Congresswoman.” In sum, the use of the occupation of the victims within the headline allows the writer to convey more information to the audience, as in most instances (Congresswoman Giffords being the notable exception) the reader would not be familiar with the victim by name. Still, the majority of the framing of the victims in the story headlines, regardless of age, gender, or race, is done in a vague and ambiguous manner that further may perpetuate the sensationalism of these events.

The event. Finally, how the event itself is described in the story headlines also warrants inspection. As outlined in Table 2, qualifying the event simply as a “shooting” is most common, occurring in more than half (56.5%) of the headlines leading with the event. It is the remainder of the headlines, however, that warrant closer scrutiny. In nearly all of the remaining headlines, the articles substitute “shooting” with exaggerated qualifiers of the event—bloodshed, rampage, massacre, and attack—to evoke fear and shock (see also Mayr & Machin, 2012). These qualifiers overemphasize the dramatic nature of the events, particularly when the event is situated opposite discussion of the victim:

*Rampage* ‘Took the Lives of a ‘Trouper’ and of ‘the Nicest Guy in the World’ *(Nieves, 2001a)*

*Shooting Rampage* by Student Leaves 10 Dead on Reservation *(Wilgoren, 2005a)*

In six of the headlines (26.1%), including the lead quoted above from a story about the Red Lake school shooting *(Wilgoren, 2005a)*, the qualifier of the event is juxtaposed with the number of victims. In the majority of these headlines, the victim count was offset against the term “shooting”; for only one lead was it situated against the qualifier “rampage.” Thus, even when trying to “normalize” the event as a shooting, the countering with statistics can serve to connote the disproportionality of these events.
**Use Examples**

Another way in which a social problem may be highlighted is through the use of examples (Best, 1987, 2006; Mayr & Machin, 2012). The use of examples provides a point of constant comparison through which the topic or event at hand may be measured (Barak, 1994; Best, 1987). In many instances, these examples are the most extreme cases, which serve to reinforce the seriousness not only of the issue at hand, but also of the example itself. In the case of mass shootings, the use of examples allows readers to contextualize the event at hand, and compare death tolls or major issues, such as gun control or mental health, to other well-known events. References to other events were coded non-discretely, meaning that a sentence could contain reference to more than one event. Further, references to either the event name or location (e.g., Columbine, Oklahoma City bombing) or the perpetrators (e.g., Eric Harris, Dylan Klebold, Timothy McVeigh, Terry Nichols) were coded as other events. Table 3 presents the references to other mass casualty events, as well as the frequency of reference to each.

**TABLE 3: References to Other Mass Casualty Events**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theme</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Columbine High School (1999)</td>
<td>164</td>
<td>50.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Virginia Tech (2007)*</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>18.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aurora, CO Movie Theater (2012)*</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>8.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oklahoma City Bombing (1995)</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>5.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tucson / Gabrielle Giffords (2011)*</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>4.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Santana High School (2001)*</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>3.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Long Island Railroad Shooting (1993)</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>3.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>September 11th Terrorist Attacks (2001)</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>2.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dunblane, Scotland Primary School (1996)</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thurston High School (1998)</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL</strong></td>
<td><strong>323</strong></td>
<td><strong>100.0</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

NOTE: Only events with five or more references reported in this table. Those shootings included in the present study’s data are denoted with an asterisk (*).

This analysis reveals a number of interesting patterns. Columbine was the most referenced event in stories about other shootings, despite the fact that several shootings in the dataset (e.g., Virginia Tech, Aurora, and Sandy
Hook) had higher total victim or fatality counts. Altogether, there were 164 references to the event, which equates to 1 reference in every 3.4 articles. Of 16 different events that referenced Columbine, six shootings—including the 2012 shooting at Aurora, which was repeatedly referred to as Colorado’s (but not the nation’s) worst mass shooting since Columbine—occurred in locations other than schools. Of the school shootings specifically referencing Columbine, two events—the 2001 Santana High School shooting and the 2005 Red Lake Senior High School shooting—draw much deeper parallels to their predecessor, yet do so in very different ways. When references are made to Columbine in the articles about the Santana shooting, the potential impact of the Santana High shooting was heightened by likening it to “another Columbine.” Specifically, writers made constant comparisons between the events, treating them almost as interchangeable:

After all, a school shooting in a white, middle-class suburb like Santee—or at Columbine High School near Littleton, Colo.—where crime is nearly nonexistent, and students’ worries are centered on who is or is not popular and which colleges will or will not accept them, may still provoke shock and disbelief. (Nieves, 2001b)

What happened in Santee or Columbine won’t happen here. (Nieves, 2001b)

Conversely, when the Red Lake shooting makes reference to Columbine, the discussion focused more on the shooters rather than the events themselves. In some instances, the differences between the two locales of the shootings were highlighted. Littleton is an affluent upper-middle-class suburb of Denver, while Red Lake is an impoverished Native American territory nearly five hours from Minneapolis.

Usually this happens in places like Columbine, white schools, always somewhere else. We never hear that in our community. (Wilgoren, 2005a)

While the Columbine killers came from stable families in a well-off suburb, Mr. Weise, who the authorities said was 16, lived on a reservation where 40 percent of the people are poor, and without his parents. (Wilgoren, 2005b)

Yet in other articles, The Times highlighted the shooter’s fascination with Eric Harris and Dylan Klebold. References to Columbine in the articles about Red Lake focused on warning signs exhibited by the shooter: class papers he had written on the earlier shooting, taking medications for depression, and even a suspected plan to carry out his attack a year earlier, on Columbine’s fifth anniversary. Some went even further, offering physical comparisons between the shooters:
Describing Mr. Weise’s black, spiky hair and black Goth clothes, Ashley Morrison, a fellow student at Red Lake High School, told The Associated Press, “He looks like one of those guys at the Littleton school.” (Wilgoren, 2005b)

He [Weise] aped his predecessors in Colorado by wearing a black trench coat.5 (Shriver, 2005)

Additionally, the shootings at both Santana High School and Red Lake were referred to as “the worst school shootings since Columbine,” up until the 2007 Virginia Tech shooting.

Despite whether the shooting occurred within or outside of a school, Columbine often served as a point of reference to which other shootings were compared. In 10 separate instances, people who had been involved directly with Columbine—students who had been at the school that day, parents who had lost their children, or first responders—were quoted to give their take on the present shooting and link it back to April 20, 1999. Some comparisons were made indirectly, by situating the event in a line of cases, with Columbine being just one of the events, if not the first. Still other events, such as the following excerpts, directly associated the current event with the Littleton shooting:

“I think this is a lot like Columbine,” said Jennifer Evans, who lives near Mr. Holmes’s apartment. (Frosch & Johnson, 2012)

That’s a Columbine candidate. (The New York Times, 2011)

“This is like a college Columbine,” he [an unnamed student at Virginia Tech] said on MSNBC. (Stanley, 2007)

The 2007 Virginia Tech shooting, which remains, to date, the deadliest mass casualty shooting in the US, with 32 killed and an additional 23 wounded, was the second most frequently referenced event. Highlighting the death toll was the most common use of the shooting as an example, particularly among coverage of other high casualty events, such as Fort Hood, Aurora, Sandy Hook, and the NIU shooting, which occurred in close temporal proximity (10 months later). Virginia Tech was mentioned in conjunction with Columbine 11 different times, furthering the creation of a pattern of events. Occurring nearly eight years to the day apart, however, the focus of the coverage of Virginia Tech had shifted away from preventative strategies, such as zero tolerance policies and metal detectors, and instead fixated on mental health, particularly as it intersected with gun control. The 2012 Aurora movie theater shooting was referenced 27 times (third highest), typically to help establish a pattern of events. What is most noticeable, however, is that the shooting occurred towards the end of the study, with only five other events occurring between Aurora and the end of the year. Three of these—the Sikh temple shooting two weeks after, the December shooting at the Clackamas, Oregon, mall, and Sandy Hook—referenced the earlier event.
All of the references to the 2001 shooting at Santana High School were made in conjunction with the shooting at Granite Hills High School, which occurred in the same school district nearly two weeks later. Articles about the Santana High shootings also referenced the 1998 shooting at Thurston High School in Springfield, Oregon, particularly in the context of warning signs and crisis prevention. The Santana and Granite Hills High shootings came at the tail end of the rash of school shootings focused around Columbine, while the Thurston High shooting was situated at the beginning of this cycle. Additionally, the Dunblane, Scotland, shooting was referenced multiple times across three articles for the 2012 Sandy Hook shooting. Both events occurred in schools and had high victim counts, the victims primarily were young children, and the attacks were perpetrated by outsiders.

Mass shootings are not the only frame of reference for other similar events. Incidents of domestic terrorism, such as the 1995 Oklahoma City bombing and the September 11, 2001, attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon, also have been used as a point of comparison in the discussion about mass shootings. By comparing mass shootings with acts of domestic terrorism, however, *The Times* may substitute concern over one problem within concern over another (see, for example, Mayr & Machin, 2012). Thus, this does not help readers to understand the problem of mass shootings, but instead situates these events in a broader discourse of safety in the US. Additionally, comparing mass shootings to events with much higher death tolls may generate added fear and heightened perceptions that one could become the victim.

When more closely examining the use of the 1995 Oklahoma City bombing as a referent, only two events—the 2011 Tucson shooting and the 2012 shooting at Sandy Hook Elementary School—incorporated this into the discourse. Writers did so, however, twice as consistently as using the 2001 terrorist attacks, and most of these references ($n = 13$) were tied to the Tucson shooting. The main theme interwoven in the comparison of the Tucson shooting to the Oklahoma City bombing was the idea of extremist, anti-government views:

Not since the *Oklahoma City bombing* in 1995 has an event generated as much attention as to whether extremism, antigovernment sentiment and even simple political passion at both ends of the ideological spectrum have created a climate promoting violence. (Hulse & Zernike, 2011)

Timothy McVeigh and Terry Nichols, the perpetrators of the 1995 bombing, were purported to have carried out the acts as retaliation against the government’s handling of the Branch Davidian case in Waco, Texas. The Tucson shooter, whose motive has remained elusive, was found to have made a number of anti-government web postings in the weeks and months leading up to the shooting. Further, given that victims of both attacks were federal
employees, discussion also occurred as to whether the same precedents (e.g., the use of capital punishment, federal vs. state trials) would be used in his case.

Similar to the use of other examples, both the September 11 terrorist attacks and the Oklahoma City bombing were used to develop a line of cases upon which people could relate the current event at hand. In one instance, these two events were discussed in conjunction with one another. In others, they were placed amidst a line of mass shootings (e.g., Columbine and/or Virginia Tech) to help situate these events in the context of mass shootings, or, perhaps more aptly, to treat the mass shootings both in this study and prior to it as events in the longer narrative of domestic terrorism. Beyond just being one of many, these two events were used to draw specific comparisons to mass shootings to make sense of the shooting and subsequent loss of life:

"The only thing that I personally experienced that was similar to this moment was the Oklahoma City bombing, where another American killed scores of people," Mr. [David] Chipman said of his 25-year career. (Landler & Goode, 2012)

Speaking to reporters on Wednesday, he [Carson City sheriff Ken Furlong] likened the rampage to Sept. 11 and said his city of 55,000 would recover just as New York had. (McKinley, 2011)

Despite that one shooter’s Las Vegas restaurant rampage was classified by law enforcement as “random” (McKinley, 2011), its timing in relation to the tenth anniversary of 9/11, coupled with many of the victims being members of the National Guard, fueled these linkages between the events. Similarly, when the 2009 Fort Hood shooting referenced 9/11, it did so by highlighting violence among Muslims in the US.

Use Statistics

Numeric estimates or statistics can be used to offer additional context to the problem or event at hand (Best, 1987). This can occur in somewhat of a two-fold process. First, by utilizing statistics, claims makers can underscore the magnitude of a given social problem (Barak, 1994; Best, 1987, 2006; Mayr & Machin, 2012; Sacco, 1995). Additionally, having a numerical estimate attached to an event allows it to be compared to other events. Based on how high or low the statistic is, the event can be “ranked” in some type of order against other events. For example, if looking at death tolls, those that are higher typically are perceived to be more important or salient events. The higher the death toll, the more importance or emphasis is placed on that particular event. Table 4 presents the findings of how statistics are used by The Times in the context of the social problem of mass shootings.
TABLE 4: Use of Statistics by Major Themes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theme</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Victim Count of Actual Event</td>
<td>677</td>
<td>35.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community Statistics</td>
<td>139</td>
<td>7.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Victim Count of Other Events</td>
<td>121</td>
<td>6.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rounds Fired</td>
<td>97</td>
<td>5.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>National Statistics</td>
<td>79</td>
<td>4.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spatial Proximity</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>3.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of Weapons</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>2.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Magazine Capacity</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>1.7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

NOTE: A total of 1,930 statistical references were coded. Coding percentages are based on this total number of statistical references. The remaining categories accounted for less than 1% of coding and are not presented.

The most common use of statistics is to report the victim count for the event in the study—this occurs nearly five times as frequently as the next major theme. In 40.7% of articles (n = 166) referencing the victim counts, these statistics were used two or more times in a single article. In 13 articles (3.2%), victim counts were referenced five or more times, one even as high as seven references in a single article.6 Further, victim counts of other events (e.g., Columbine, the Long Island Rail Road shooting, etc.), including those within the study’s time frame referenced by other events, are reported in an additional 121 instances (6.3%).

Victim counts included the number dead (including number of funerals taking place, which can symbolize the number dead), the number wounded, and the number of people present during the shooting.7 Most commonly, victim counts are reported as aggregations—the total number dead or the total number wounded. Similar to the manner in which victims were characterized in story leads, presenting the victims as an aggregation removes their individuality and treats them as one in the same, a process that Mayr and Machin (2012) characterize as “genericization” (p. 70).

Further, victim counts can be considered as a persuasion technique to underscore just how horrific the event was. Take, for example, the following excerpts:

A 20-year-old man wearing combat gear and armed with semiautomatic pistols and a semiautomatic rifle killed 26
people—20 of them children—in an attack in an elementary school in central Connecticut on Friday. (Barron, 2012)

Mr. Roberts shot 10 girls—aged 6 to 13—killing 5 of them and then committing suicide. (Dewan, 2006)

Both shootings share a number of similarities—the victims were killed by outsiders, many of them were in the same age range, similar firearms were used in both events, and they all were killed in a school. Thus, holding these facts constant, and looking solely at the victim count, one could qualify the Sandy Hook Elementary School shooting as being “worse” than the Amish Schoolhouse shooting, particularly if ranking these events on a continuum of “worst school shootings.”

Consider, however, the following passage from a separate article about the 2012 Sandy Hook Elementary School shooting:

The fact that the Newtown massacre, with 26 killed at the school, along with the gunman, was the second deadliest school shooting in the country’s history—after the 32 people killed at Virginia Tech in 2007—once again made this process of examination urgent national business as details emerged from Sandy Hook Elementary School. (Glaberson, 2012)

When juxtaposing the Sandy Hook shooting against the Virginia Tech Shooting, again holding all case facts constant, the former is ranked below the latter. Interestingly, however, when comparing Sandy Hook and Virginia Tech, this often is done to reinforce how horrific the former is, while suggesting that with several more fatalities, it could have surpassed the latter as the nation’s deadliest school and mass shooting. Yet, in the same article, the Sandy Hook shooting also was compared to five other events in addition to Virginia Tech: Columbine (13 killed); the 1927 Bath, Michigan, schoolhouse massacre (44 killed); the Amish Schoolhouse shooting (5 killed); the 1997 Heath High School shooting in West Paducah, Kentucky (3 killed); and the 1996 Dunblane, Scotland, primary school shooting (17 killed). As such, Sandy Hook has become one of the worst school shootings on the continuum. Further, this not only supports Best's (1987, 2006) social problems model in respect to using statistics to emphasize an issue, but also the use of examples.

The theme of “community statistics” also was used in accentuating the problem of mass shootings. This theme encapsulated both the population of the city or town where the event occurred, but also focused more specifically on how many people were present in the immediate vicinity of the shooting (e.g., how many people worked in a given company or attended a particular school or church). Again, by aggregating individuals, regardless of whether or not they were present on the day of the shooting, the use of community statistics implies that someone who falls within the parameters of the community also could have been a victim, such as in these examples:
At least 10,000 people were in the mall at the time of the shooting, the police said. (Schwirtz, 2012)

There were about 7,000 worshipers inside the church when the shooting erupted, a church official said. (McFadden, 2007)

The factory in Melrose Park, an industrial suburb about 18 miles west of downtown Chicago, employs 1,200 to 1,800 people on any given day, said a spokesman, Bob Carson. (Belluck, 2001)

In these examples, the use of community statistics suggests that in these churches, malls, and workplaces, the death toll could have been much higher because more targets were present. Further aggregation was presented by reporting the size of the full community, as opposed to just one fraction of it, and the distance of these shooting sites to larger, more metropolitan areas also was consistently reported to contextualize the “where” of the shootings.

Three other statistical themes were utilized to demonstrate how bad the shootings were or could have been—the number of rounds fired, the number of weapons present, and the capacity of magazines for the weapons. With respect to the number of rounds fired, this typically was discussed in the context of witness statements to how many shots they had heard or how many rounds had been found either in the victims or at the scene. In each event where there was more than one weapon present, the weapons consistently were reported as an aggregate number of firearms. This again creates a sense of collectivity yet ambiguity, just as consistently reporting the total number of weapons present, as compared to the actual number of weapons used, contributes to the idea that the victim count or damages could have been greater. For example, in the 2012 Sandy Hook Elementary School shooting, articles continually reported that the shooter had four guns, despite the fact that all of his victims were shot with only one of the weapons.

Additionally, while both the total number of rounds present and the number fired were both reported, though not typically in conjunction with one another, the former was presented more consistently, suggesting a potentially greater tragedy loomed:

A 9-millimeter semiautomatic Glock was used in the shooting, Chief Dolan said, and investigators found another gun and packaging for 10,000 rounds of ammunition in Mr. [Andrew] Engeldinger’s house. (Associated Press, 2012)

Although he was trained on an M-16 assault rifle in the military, he [Robert Flores, Jr.] was carrying five handguns and more than 200 rounds of ammunition when he walked into the nursing school and methodically killed three instructors. (Broder, 2012)
When compared to the number of fatalities in each event, reporting the number of rounds present may seem both excessive and superfluous. For example, Engeldinger, who had 10,000 rounds of ammunition on hand, killed five and wounded two. Despite having just 2% of the ammunition of Engeldinger, Flores killed three. In sum, while the death toll was deplorable in all cases, it was not necessarily to the proportion of rounds that could have been fired. Without properly contextualizing the 200, 1,000, or 10,000 rounds of ammunition in terms of the victim count or actual rounds fired, these statistics can generate a disproportional understanding of the events. Similar connotations were made when reporting the number of rounds in a magazine, but this statistic most commonly was referenced to further support the gun control position that magazine capacities should be limited. Despite that mental health has gained prominence in the discourse on causal factors since the Virginia Tech shooting in 2007, guns still remain the most heavily focused upon of these usual suspects (Schildkraut, 2014; Schildkraut, Elsass, & Muschert, 2016; Schildkraut & Muschert, 2013).

While the aforementioned statistics serve to amplify the heinous nature of mass shootings, there is one group of statistics that is noticeably absent from the discourse—national statistics. By situating the rare phenomenon of mass shooting in national statistics, such as violent crime rates for individual cities or even the nation at large, the unlikelihood of these events would be underscored. Instead, by omitting these much needed statistics, it serves to heighten the claim that these events are occurring rather commonly. National statistics were used quite infrequently, accounting for just over 4% of all statistics in the dataset. When these references are further disaggregated, as in Table 5, the disproportionality of these events is further heightened.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theme</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Gun Ownership</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>19.0 (0.8)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gun Deaths</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>16.5 (0.7)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of Guns in Circulation</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>15.2 (0.6)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gun Sales</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>10.1 (0.4)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mental Health</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7.6 (0.3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>U.S. Violent Crime Rates</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3.8 (0.3)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

NOTE: Results for coding percentage are reported as percentage of national statistics coded (N = 79) with the proportion of references to total number of statistical references (N = 1,930) in parentheses. The remaining categories of national statistics accounted for less than 1% of coding and are not presented.
National violent crime rates, or more specifically the U.S. homicide rate, were only reported three times in 564 articles. Instead, when national statistics were reported, they typically emphasized guns—what percentage of people (including splits across various demographics) own firearms, how many deaths by firearms occur each year, how many guns are in circulation, and how many new guns are sold or are attempted to be purchased each year. When gun deaths are reported, they are reported in raw counts, rather than standardized rates to give an actual contextualization to the frequency of occurrence. In other cases, vague aggregations are reported, such as in this excerpt:

While he [Representative Mike Thompson] described Sandy Hook as “the worst gun tragedy” in his lifetime, he added that hundreds of Americans “have been killed with firearms” in the four weeks since the massacre. (Onishi, 2013)

The problem in reporting statistics in this ambiguous manner is that the audience cannot determine just how many people were killed in the month following Sandy Hook. Both 200 and 900 are multiple hundreds, but are vastly different when talking about the number of gun deaths. Ambiguity is not solely limited to these vague aggregates. Even when an actual number is reported, as in the following passage, it may be ambiguous:

Thirty-thousand Americans are killed by guns every year—on the job, walking to school, at the shopping mall. (“Lock and load,” 2008)

This selection is problematic in that it does not disaggregate the 30,000 into types of gun deaths for the reader to be able to properly contextualize. For example, in 2012 there were 14,827 people murdered in the US, just under 70% of which were killed by a firearm (Federal Bureau of Investigation, 2012). Therefore, nearly 20,000 gun deaths a year or two-thirds of those fatalities reported in the above quote (“Lock and Load,” 2008), on average, are the result of accidental shootings, suicides, or justifiable homicide, either by law enforcement or private citizens. Yet, by failing to report this breakdown, it may be inferred that all gun deaths are considered to be homicides.

**DISCUSSION**

The present study sought to understand the way in which the narrative of the phenomenon of mass shootings as a social problem is constructed in the media. Coverage from The New York Times for 91 shootings occurring between 2000 and 2012 was examined using Best’s (1987, 2006) model for understanding the creation of social problems. Specifically, attention was paid to how the shootings were given a name, or defined, through the headlines of the articles. Additionally, consideration was given to how examples and statistics were used to highlight certain events within the broader phenomenon, or underscore the egregious nature of these shootings. The
analysis of these articles has led to a number of interesting considerations with regard to these events as a social problem, and has underscored the disproportional coverage these events have received, both individually and as a collective phenomenon.

As Best (1987) notes, the first step is to give the problem a name, which then makes the issue at hand relevant to audiences. In the present study, the most common way that the problem was defined was by the shooters themselves. Focusing more on the perpetrators than the victims or the events allow the media highlight the deviant nature of the crime (Cerulo, 1998). Such deviance is considered to be less acceptable to audiences, but may have the sensational elements needed to keep their attention or have a more vested interest in the problem. When the victims are discussed, they are reduced to a single number or an occupation, creating a level ambiguity about who they were, at least within the leads of the story. This can lead to a heightened belief that the reader has a similar chance of becoming a victim.

The tendency to report in ambiguous terms also is indicative of an absence of a precise definition (Best, 1987). As noted earlier, even a definition of “mass shooting” remains undetermined as there is no exact number of victims, motivations, or conditions that are universally accepted to identify the problem. As a result, this allows for more events to be categorized as mass shootings by claims makers, even when they do not fit what most would perceive to be such an event. At the same time, each time a new event occurs, it is treated as the discovery of a new problem (Best, 1987). The discourse on issues such as causal factors and policy responses is restarted, but no real progress is made to address the problem (e.g., Schildkraut & Hernandez, 2014; Soraghan, 2000).

The use of examples also is important to the creation of social problems as it creates the opportunity for people to identify with those also affected by the issue. As Best (1987) notes, “Selecting horrific examples gives the sense of a problem’s frightening, harmful dimensions” (p. 107), and these can become the referent for the problem more generally. Oftentimes, an introductory example is used as the quintessential case with which the problem is associated. In the case of mass shootings, this is no more evident than with Columbine, which also was the most referenced example in the present study. Although Columbine occurred at a school, other types of rampages, including those occurring at movie theaters, political rallies, immigration centers, and workplaces, also refer back to the shooting. This suggests that Columbine has transcended the discourse of school shootings and solidified its place in an even broader narrative about general rampage violence. Further, given the social reaction Columbine generated as the (perceived) “first of its kind,” continuing to reference this event, even more than 15 years after its occurrence, serves to reinforce the visceral reactions and fear felt as if it were April 20, 1999, all over again. Beyond Columbine, The Times also links
rampage shootings to acts of domestic terrorism, again casting a wider net to reference phenomena that generate the most fear (and readership).

Finally, the use of statistical estimates can assist the reader in assessing the magnitude of the problem in context. Best (1987) further disaggregates the type of estimates that may be used by claims makers. The first, incidence estimates, may be used to identify either the number of cases within a particular social problem or how many people are affected by it. In the present study, however, it is the use of community statistics that take this idea one step further and identify how many more people could have been impacted by a particular incident, such as those in workplaces or public spaces. Similarly, growth estimates allow people to determine whether a problem is getting worse. In the context of mass shootings, the continual reliance on reporting the number of victims allows the reader to determine if these attacks are becoming more lethal or are occurring more frequently.

At the same time, however, the absence of national statistics is problematic in that it does not situate the social problem of mass shootings in the context of crime within the US more generally. For example, within the data for the present study, there were 72 fatalities across 10 events in 2012. By comparison, there were 14,827 homicides reported nationally (Federal Bureau of Investigation [FBI], 2013), meaning that mass shooting victims account for just 0.5% of all homicide fatalities. Further, these same victims represent just 0.006% of violent crime victims known to law enforcement in the same year (FBI, 2013). While the loss of one life is one too many, failure to properly contextualize the occurrence of mass shootings gives audiences the misperception that these incidents are occurring more frequently and that their likelihood of becoming a victim of a similar event is high (see, generally, Elsass et al., 2014; Schildkraut et al., 2015).

Independently, these three components of the social problem each can create a heightened anxiety about a certain phenomenon. Yet when they converge, they create a perfect storm that can captivate audiences and provide credence to the existence of a social problem. In the instance of mass shootings, as constructed by The New York Times, this convergence has emerged as a disaster narrative, with each of the 91 events just a single part of a larger problem (Schildkraut & Muschert, 2014). The coverage, as depicted through the wording of the headlines, the use of examples, and the overemphasis on statistics, has solidified rampage shootings as a social problem in the US.

At the core of the social problem of mass shootings, as with other issues, are the range claims offered by claims makers. As Best (1987) notes, these range claims have the ability to make members of the audience feel as though they have a personal stake in finding a solution by showing them how they may be affected by the problem. In effect, the rhetoric used by claims makers to discuss the social problem of mass shootings may be useful in swaying audiences towards a specific resolution or policy, such as gun control or mental
health legislation. The end goal may be awareness and prevention of future events; however, the lack of context may create a roadblock for a meaningful discourse leading to effective solutions, with the result instead a barrage of “feel good legislation” that actually does not address the issue, though it may give the appearance that something is being done (Schildkraut et al., 2015; Schildkraut & Hernandez, 2014).

The present study is, of course, not without its limitations. These warrant acknowledgement not as fatal flaws, but as ways to improve the research moving forward. The first limitation is in the source of the data—newspaper articles. This does allow the researcher to examine the product that is being presented to the audience, and to do so while not influencing the data themselves. It fails, however, to account for the journalistic processes that lead up to the publishing of each article.

As the decision making process is not accounted for, it is impossible for the researcher to definitively say why 21 cases of rampage shootings at a national level received no coverage or why specific facets of the broader narrative are highlighted more than others. A cursory examination of cases receiving no coverage gives little understanding as to this outcome. One possible explanation that is refuted by this examination is that those cases excluded from the coverage had lower death tolls. While this was true for some, two of the cases had victim counts greater than 10, and 10 shootings in total had victim counts greater than five. Only three cases occurred within close temporal proximity (30 days) of other high profile shootings, and each varied in spatial distance from New York, where The Times is located. While further examination is needed to assess why these events were not highlighted by The Times, it is possible that this outcome is a function of coverage bias.

Similarly, coverage bias also should be considered in terms of the varying amount of articles each case received. While it is possible that the Sandy Hook shooting received considerably more coverage than any other event due to Newtown’s close proximity to New York, a more plausible explanation would be the newsworthiness of the victims. Sorenson and colleagues (1998) have found that those incidents involving at least one factor—“white, in the youngest and oldest age groups, women, of high socioeconomic status, killed by strangers”—are more newsworthy (p. 1514). Each of the Sandy Hook victims embodied several of these characteristics, as did Congresswoman Gabrielle Giffords, who was injured in the second most-covered story. By contrast, though the Virginia Tech shooting was more lethal than both, those killed in the attack were less aligned with this newsworthy victim profile.

Interestingly, not one case in this study received more attention than Columbine, despite that several events in the study were more lethal. One potential explanation for this is the precedent which Columbine set, as it was perceived to be the first of its kind or what Best (1987) refers to as an introductory example. Though other mass shootings had occurred prior to Columbine, this event became the platform upon which the social problem of mass
shootings, both in and out of schools, would be constructed. By comparison, as illustrated by the findings of this study, coverage of other shootings, including the more deadly attacks at Virginia Tech and Sandy Hook, rely on Columbine as a precedent and therefore do not require the distant speculation of what the event means for the future, but instead allows claims makers to emphasize what it means for the immediate aftermath (see also Schildkraut & Muschert, 2014). Thus, not only does Columbine serve as an introductory example, it also serves as a cultural referent for all mass shootings in the US.

An additional limitation which should be considered is the use of only The New York Times as a source of data. As previously noted, The Times has been validated in other research as an important source to use, due to its agenda-setting capacity (Altheide, 2009b; Leavy & Maloney, 2009; Muschert, 2002; Wigley & Fontenot, 2009). Conversely, by utilizing only one paper, in essence only one point of view is offered. Further, many consider the focus of The Times to be more liberal, and, as such, this may be reflected in what is covered, and how it is framed. One way in which to offset this concern would be to compare national coverage with local sources; yet, in order to conduct such analysis, a baseline must be achieved against which to analyze potential disparities. This study then provides such a point of comparison. Additionally, examining national coverage first is beneficial in that the concern over mass shootings, as with other social problems, has been constructed at the national level; thus, related analysis should be conducted within the same metric.

While this research has taken an important first step in understanding the social construction of rampage shootings, it also has provided a number of avenues for future research that extend beyond the scope of this examination. One such opportunity would be to examine how the differences amongst the shooters lead to disparities in their coverage. As noted, the findings of this study indicated that adult male shooters are discussed fundamentally differently than both adolescent male shooters and also female shooters. Such considerations may have important implications for coverage of future events. In order to make such a determination, however, a more detailed examination of the role of gender differences and its bearing on newsworthiness and the content of related coverage is needed.

Additionally, and perhaps more importantly, the cultural relevance of this study needs to be more thoroughly considered. One way in which to do so is to situate the findings in the broader context of cultural criminology. Though the US is not the only country to experience rampage shootings, other countries, such as Germany, Finland, Canada, and Scotland, do not cover these events in the same way as the American media. In essence, these countries do not turn these shooters into folk devils (or, to those who aspire to carry out similar attacks, folk heroes). Thus, it begs the question of why our culture treats these events as media spectacles (see Kellner, 2003, 2008a,
and why many of these shooters achieve almost “rock star status” in relation to the amount of press attention they receive.

Further, the cultural relevance of this study must be more thoroughly considered, and additional examination is needed about the particular role of Columbine. As noted above, despite the higher death tolls, younger victims, and varied locations, none of the rampage shootings included in this study have garnered the same attention or reaction of Columbine. As the seventeenth anniversary of the shooting nears, it is important to consider the cultural legacy of Columbine. What is it, why is it still being talked about so many years later, and why has no other event eclipsed the legacy of Columbine? Such answers remain to be seen, and should be considered in future research.

Still, there are important policy implications to be drawn from the present study. This is not to suggest that the media should not report on these stories. The public has a right to know and the media have the responsibility to inform them. Yet, at the same time, the media should revisit the roots of journalistic practice—to fact check information before it goes out and to present verified facts rather than sensationalized hysteria. They should continue to focus on remembering the victims, particularly as individuals and not a number, rather than glorifying the perpetrators for the next would-be shooter to emulate. They should report these stories with restraint and proportionality, and with information the public can use to make informed judgments about rampage shootings and their occurrence, as infrequent as they are, within society.
APPENDIX A: CODEBOOK

Give the Problem a Name (Headline) – For this series of nodes, code only the headline of the story. Determination of category is based on the first main word of the headline. [Note: Not all headlines will fit this scheme, as some have a totally different focus]

- **Event** – The headline leads off with the event itself, using qualifiers such as shooting, massacre, rampage, etc.
- **Shooter** – The headline leads off with the killer as the main focus. There are some instances where it will appear that it is leading off with the event (e.g., “shooting suspect”), but here the shooting is an adjective and the focus is the shooter themselves. This may be explicit (e.g., shooter, killer, etc.) or more covert (e.g., man, boy, or specifically named).
  - **Given Name** – Code if the shooter is specifically referenced by name as the leading word(s) of the headline.
  - **Gunman** – Code if the leading word in the headline is gunman.
  - **Killer** – Code if the leading word in the headline is killer.
  - **Other** – Code if the leading word in the headline is any other qualifier than those listed here.
  - **Suspect** – Code if the leading word in the headline is suspect.

- **Victim(s)** – The headline leads off with one or more of the victims as the main focus. This may be explicit (e.g., victim, wounded etc.) or more covert (e.g., man, girl, or specifically named). Numerical identifiers (e.g., # dead) also may be used to highlight the victims.

Use Examples (Reference to Other Events)

- **Columbine** – code the sentence if there is a reference to Columbine High School, shooters Eric Harris and/or Dylan Klebold, any of the victims of the shooting, or the event itself (which typically is referred to by name or date – April 20, 1999).

- **Other Events** – code the sentence if there is a reference to any other mass casualty event besides Columbine. This may include other shootings (e.g., Virginia Tech, Aurora movie theater, etc.) including those that are not expressly listed in this dataset (e.g., the shooting of Webster, NY firemen or the shooting at the Empire State Building). It also may include references to bombing or terrorist events, such as September 11th or the Oklahoma City bombing, as well as events that occurred in other countries (e.g., the Dunblane, Scotland primary school shooting or the knifing in China on the same day as Sandy Hook). Events do not have to have occurred within the study period (2000-2012) to be coded.
- *Aurora* – Code the sentence if reference is made to James Holmes (perpetrator), Aurora, or movie theater [shooting]. This should only be coded as an example in coverage of other events (e.g., articles directly related to James Holmes should not be coded with him as an “other event” reference).

- *Dunblane* – Code the sentence if reference is made to Thomas Hamilton (perpetrator), Dunblane, or Scotland primary school shooting.

- *LIRR Massacre* – Code the sentence if reference is made to Colin Ferguson (perpetrator), Long Island, or railroad school shooting.

- *Oklahoma City Bombing* – Code the sentence if reference is made to Timothy McVeigh or Terry Nichols (perpetrators), Oklahoma City, or the Alfred P. Murrah federal building.

- *Santana High School (Santee)* – Code the sentence if reference is made to Charles Andy Williams (perpetrator), Santee, or Santana High School. This should only be coded as an example in coverage of other events (e.g., articles directly related to Andy Williams should not be coded with him as an “other event” reference).

- *September 11 Terrorist Attacks* – Code the sentence if reference is made to the hijackers (perpetrators), September 11th, or the World Trade Center.

- *Springfield (Thurston High School)* – Code the sentence if reference is made to Kip(land) Kinkel (perpetrator), Springfield, or Thurston High School.

- *Tucson (Giffords)* – Code the sentence if reference is made to Jared Loughner (perpetrator), Tucson, or the shooting of Congresswoman Giffords. This should only be coded as an example in coverage of other events (e.g., articles directly related to Jared Loughner should not be coded with him as an “other event” reference).

- *Virginia Tech* – Code the sentence if reference is made to Seung-Hui Cho (perpetrator), Blacksburg, or Virginia Tech. This should only be coded as an example in coverage of other events (e.g., articles directly related to Seung-Hui Cho should not be coded with him as an “other event” reference).

**Use Statistics** – For this node, code any use of numerical estimates (including the use of words, like “dozens” or “millions”). This may include, but not be limited to: victim count (both deceased and wounded), number of rounds fired, magazine capacity (how many rounds the gun holds), number of
weapons, size of community (e.g., town or city population, how many people attended the school, etc.), distance from a larger city (example of proximity), national crime statistics, how many minutes it took responders to arrive, etc.

- **Community Statistics** – Code this for references to statistics related to the community in discussion. This may be a school (e.g., total student enrollment), city / town, or state.
- **Magazine Capacity** – Code this for references to the number of bullets that magazines can hold.
- **National Statistics** – Code this for references to any statistics that pertain to larger, national figures (e.g., annual homicide totals, the number of mental health patients nationwide, etc.)
- **Number of Weapons** – Code this for any references to the number of weapons that the shooter of the event being coded is carrying. Codes should only be made for specific reference to a number of weapons, not general references (e.g., *a weapon*, *multiple weapons*). References either may be numeric or alphanumeric.
- **Rounds Fired** – Code this for references to the total number of rounds fired by the shooter(s), but not references to an individual shot. References either may be numeric or alphanumeric.
- **Spatial Proximity** – Code this for references made to how close the shooting site is from another major event or city (e.g., X miles from Y city).
- **Victim Count** – Code this for references to the number of victims (either all or in part, but not individual victims) in the current shooting.
- **Victim Count of Other Events** – Code this for references made to the number of victims in a different event (e.g., the 13 victims of Columbine).

**ENDNOTES**

1 The study originally examined 2000 to 2010, representing the “post-Columbine era,” during which journalistic practices of covering these events shifted. The study was expanded to include 2011 and 2012, after several high profile shootings, including the attempted assassination of Congresswoman Gabrielle Giffords in Tucson, AZ (2011); the Aurora, CO, movie theater shooting (2012); and the Sandy Hook Elementary School shooting (2012).

2 Circulation estimates as of September 2011.

3 For example, the majority of the coverage of the Virginia Tech shooting consistently references the name of the university rather than Blacksburg, Virginia, where the school is located.
For example, the July 20, 2012, movie theater shooting in Colorado is most commonly referenced as the Aurora shooting, rather than the shooting at the Century 21 movie theater.

Both Eric Harris and Dylan Klebold wore black trench coats on the day of the shooting.

The use of multiple statistical references to victim counts in a single article was most common amongst the highly salient cases: For Sandy Hook (2012), there were 84 references in 63 articles; for Aurora (2012) there were 41 references in 25 articles; for Tucson (2011), there were 84 references across 57 articles; for Fort Hood (2009), there were 44 references in 26 articles; and for Virginia Tech (2007), there were 41 references in 20 articles.

It is important to account for the number of survivors who directly witnessed the attack (e.g., people who were inside Sandy Hook Elementary School or the Aurora movie theater auditorium as it happened). This is a form of direct victimization, which is different than indirect victimization (e.g., people at other nearby schools or who were in other auditoriums at the movie theater or even just resided in one of these communities). The latter is coded as “community statistics,” through which context is offered about how many people could have been victimized, rather than how many actually were.

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**AUTHOR BIOGRAPHY**

Jaclyn Schildkraut is an Assistant Professor of Public Justice at the State University of New York (SUNY) at Oswego. Her research interests include school shootings, homicide trends, mediatization effects, and crime theories. She is the co-author of the book *Mass Shootings: Media, Myths, and Realities* and has published in *Crime, Law and Social Change, Homicide Studies, American Journal of Criminal Justice, Fast Capitalism,* and *Criminal Justice Studies,* as well as several edited volumes.
Old Message in a New Bottle: Taking Gang Rivalries Online Through Rap Battle Music Videos on YouTube

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ABSTRACT
The Internet is changing society, including criminal behavior. It has been shown that gangs are active online, but it is unclear how gangs are using the Internet. Most studies seem to conclude that gang members are not using the Internet instrumentally to commit or promote criminal behavior, but these same studies show that gang members use social media for flame wars— to insult and threaten one another. We argue that using social media in this way is actually an instrumental use of the Internet because it promotes violence. According to the code of the street, a diss requires a response, often a violent one. Using a set of six underground battle rap videos, we demonstrate a connection between online flame wars and street-level violence.

INTRODUCTION
It is estimated that there are about 3.1 billion Internet users worldwide and that 86.9% of Americans are Internet users (Internet World Stats, 2014). Clearly, Internet use is widespread, and it has dramatically changed society (Holt et al., 2012; Holt & Bossler, 2014). People can now stay in touch with long-distance relatives and friends via Facebook, stream TV shows and movies, shop online, find medical information and advice, and get a higher degree without ever leaving their house. The Internet and social media have even been used to help organize revolutions (Lister & Smith, 2011).

Unfortunately, the Internet has also become popular among criminals. In their survey of 585 individuals at risk for and involved in criminal behavior, Moule, Pyrooz and Decker (2013) reported a positive relationship between

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criminal offending and Internet adoption; further, 81% of their sample reported social network usage. With criminals logging on, the Internet has also transformed criminal behavior by providing more criminal opportunities to a wider range of people. For instance, the Internet has increased opportunities in four main cybercrime areas: cybertrespass, cyberdeception/theft, cyberporn and obscenity, and cyberviolence (Holt, Bossler & May, 2012; Holt & Bossler, 2014). While all four areas are important (see Holt & Bossler, 2014, for a detailed review of each area), the current study focuses on cyberviolence.

Cyberviolence involves the ways individuals use the Internet to cause harm in real or virtual environments (Holt & Bossler, 2014). This type of crime includes cyberbullying, which has become an increasingly serious problem as youth exposed to cyberbullying suffer very real consequences, like poor school performance, depression, and suicide attempts (Bonanno & Hymel, 2013; Hinduja & Patchin, 2010; Burgess-Proctor, Patchin, & Hinduja, 2010; Dehue, Bolman & Vollink, 2008). Cyberviolence also includes using technology in support of prospective acts of terror (Holt & Bossler, 2014). Terrorist organizations and other extremist groups use the Internet to recruit new members and disseminate violent messages (Weimann, 2004; Zanini & Edwards, 2001). Weimann (2004) explains that the Internet is ideal for terrorist organizations because it offers easy access, little regulation and censorship, potentially large audiences, anonymity, and the fast flow of information. These traits that make the Internet attractive to terrorists also make it attractive to gang members as a medium through which to communicate and spread their message (Moule, Decker & Pyrooz, 2013).\(^1\)

In part due to the shrinking gap between wealthy and poor communities’ access to technology and the Internet, gang members appear to be increasing their online presence and taking advantage of social media (Pyrooz et al., 2015). According to O’Deane (2011), “its ease of use, potential audience size, and reduced risk of user detection has made the Internet one of the most prominent methods of gang communication” (p. 1). Drawing from law enforcement reports and social networking websites, the FBI’s National Gang Intelligence Center (2011), determined that gang members are “becoming increasingly savvy and are embracing new and advanced technology to facilitate criminal activity” (p. 41). The online presence of gangs has been established by other studies as well (King, Walpole, & Lamon, 2007; Decker & Pyrooz, 2012; Van Hellemont, 2012; Knox, 2011; Decary-Hetu & Morselli, 2011; Decker & Pyrooz, 2011a). Scholarship suggests that more organized gangs may be more likely to take advantage of the Internet (Moule, Pyrooz and Decker, 2014).

According to the NGIC (2011) report, gang members use the Internet for a variety of purposes, including to communicate, intimidate, promote and recruit, showcase illegal exploits, and facilitate criminal activity. Thus, a number of gangs and gang members are essentially “cyberbanging,” or participating in illegally downloading media, selling drugs, coordinating assaults, and
uploading deviant videos (Decker & Pyrooz, 2012; Pyrooz et al., 2015; Van Hellemont, 2012). Part of cyberbanging includes fulfilling expressive goals of defending turf, boasting about violent reputations, and disrespecting rival gangs. Like with cyberbullying and terrorism, social media provides a larger audience for gang activity and a permanent stage for disseminating harmful messages. Haut (2014) notes that, “if not replacing graffiti, cyber-space widens and boosts the impact of this [gang] communication, without noticeably changing its fundamentals and its aims” (p. 24). He goes on to say that while social media communications operate in much the same way that graffiti does in the real world, an important difference is the increased speed and reach of these Internet-based messages (Haut, 2014). The fact that the globalization of gangs has been linked to the dissemination of gang culture via the Internet is proof of the utility of the Internet’s broad reach for gangs (Moule et al., 2014).

One way gang members are spreading their message is through the creation of amateur rap music videos (Decker & Pyrooz, 2011a; Van Hellemont, 2012; Haut, 2014). Advances in social media have given way to new outlets of expression whereby individuals are now capable of creating, editing, and distributing their own content throughout the World Wide Web (Moule, R.K., Pyrooz, D.C. & Decker, S.H., 2013). Gangs have taken advantage of the ease of making and disseminating recordings; many of their communications take the form of gangsta rap that is recorded by a rapper in the gang whose job it is to send out messages via song (Haut, 2014). Recognizing this, some rap music and even gang scholars suggest that researchers might want to look beyond traditional data sources for the empirical traces of “culture in action” (Holt, 2010; Kubrin, 2005; Moule, Pyrooz, & Decker, 2013).

Our study is an attempt to do just that. Using information from street outreach workers (SOWs), we located battle rap videos posted on YouTube by gang members that are believed to be connected to acts of violence, including the death of one bystander and one of the participants. Utilizing the “code of the street” as a lens (Anderson, 1999), we conduct a qualitative analysis of the content of these videos to explore the ways in which these gang members were disrespecting one another in a public forum. Further, using interviews with the SOWs, we discuss how disseminating these videos online using this new public medium would demand a violent reaction according to gang subculture.

Scholars studying the group process of gangs have demonstrated that a governing rule of gangs requires retribution for disrespecting the gang’s name, reputation, or turf (Papachristos, 2009; Decker, 1996; Horowitz & Schwartz, 1974; Short and Strodtbeck, 1965). In areas with poor formal social controls, norms of reciprocity link social status with revenge, and, in order to maintain cohesion, gangs view a threat against one member as a threat to the group (Papachristos, 2009; Horowitz & Schwartz, 1974; Decker, 1996). This leads to a cycle of retaliatory attacks as gangs must continue to
respond to threats in order to defend or maintain their reputations (Papachristos, 2009; Decker, 1996).

According to Decker et al. (2013), the lack of research on group process in non-criminal behavior among gang members is an important omission from gang research. Our examination of battle rap videos posted to YouTube by gang members is a descriptive exploration of a non-criminal activity that gang members are now engaging in. However, we discuss the way in which their non-criminal participation in social media can contribute to the retaliatory cycle of expressive violence. Through a case study analysis of battle rap music videos, we contribute to the literature by showing that social media is a new medium for gang members to increase group cohesion by responding to threats online. We also discuss the possible connection between the online threats and violence in the street.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Rap Music, Gangsta Rap and Rap Battles

Rap music, a form of hip hop, emerged in the music industry in the 1970s from the South Bronx epicenters of hip hop culture alongside graffiti art and break-dancing (Rose, 1994; Basu, 1998). DJ Kool Herc is credited with inventing the form of spinning break beats back-to-back in 1973, while Grandmaster Flash perfected mixing and blending those break beats, but the commercial explosion of rap began with the Sugarhill Gang’s release of Rapper’s Delight in 1979 (Rap of Ages, 2007; Basu, 1998). As a genre, it evolved from the more carefree period of the 1970s and early 1980s into the Afrocentric community stance of the late 1980s, and, now, into “gangsta rap” today (Kubrin, 2005, p. 434). According to critics, gangsta rap with its themes of masculinity, misogyny, crime and violence, was not expected to last (Alton & Spirer, 2003; Conrad, Dixon, & Zhang; Rose, 1994; Ward, Hansbrough, & Walker, 2005). But, this type of rap music was successful in targeting and attracting urban Black youth because it was and is often based on rappers describing the struggles of living in concentrated disadvantage. Moreover, it depicts their experiences with managing to survive under a cultural code, which has emerged because of the combined effect that poverty, unemployment, family disruption, and general isolation has had on them and their communities (Anderson, 1999; Sampson & Wilson, 1995). Much of gangsta rap today then focuses on the group, clique, or even gang life experience, which many urban youth are exposed to at an early age (Anderson, 1999; Kubrin, 2005).

Further, within the evolving history of urban culture and rap is the competitive side of the poetry or word play that goes on between rap artists. Verbal contests stem from the tradition of “the dozens,” which was first solidly documented in African American vaudeville (Wald, 2012). According to Abrahams (1962), playing the dozens is a verbal battle that occurs in crowds of lower class African American boys; one boy insults another boy’s family
member (usually his mother) using rhyme and wit, and the insulted boy must return the insult. The boys retaliate back and forth until everyone is bored, one hits the other, or they are interrupted. For adolescents, playing the dozens helps with the process of identity formation; it allows adolescent males to attain a sense of masculinity by simultaneously rejecting female authority and asserting their own superiority and virility. The dozens also prepares adolescents for similar and more complex verbal endeavors in manhood (Abrahams, 1962). These rhymed exchanges contributed to the birth of rap and, in particular, the rap battle.

The genre then evolved around 1981, when Kool Moe Dee, in a battle of the MCs with Busy Bee, gave birth to the lyrical MC—moving rap past the 1950s, 1960s, and 1970s “rock the party” type of battle that went on between early rap artists in clubs (Alton & Spirer, 2003). Since Kool Moe Dee, the contemporary battle of the MCs is a debate that goes on between rap artists, based on convincing people that they can “move the crowd” and are the best or “dopest” rapper. Sometimes this is done by “dissing” (disrespecting) a rival rap artist. According to Alton and Spirer (2003), after the emergence of Kool Moe Dee and the lyrical MC, rap became a full contact sport, or highly aggressive and competitive, and neighborhoods started taking credit for their own local rapper’s work. By the mid-1980s and early 1990s rap evolved into the hardcore style of gangsta rap and the streets, not the clubs, became the natural stage (Rose, 1994). As gangsta rap popularized and became commercial, the rap artists’ battle on the streets was a way of taking steps toward increased notoriety and fame. And the idea was that “you practice in the streets to see if you can make it in the industry; because anybody could test you at any time; they will come at you” (Alton & Spirer, 2003).

Additionally, violence entered rap battling once the lyrical content changed (Big Daddy Kane, 2003). By the mid-1990s, lyrically and thematically, West coast gangsta rap emphasized skills on the street as much, if not more, as those on the microphone. The emphasis on street skills increased the prevalence of violence in lyrics. To illustrate this point, Herd (2009) examined 340 of the most popular rap songs from 1979 to 1997 and showed that, beginning in 1990, the proportion of songs with violent lyrics escalated dramatically. Further, the attitude toward violence also shifted over time in lyrics so that it was viewed positively and glorified in the later years. Ice T, a known rapper that comes from gang culture, explains that “most rap crews are made up of 50% business men and 50% thugs..you know, homeboys who just came home from jail” (Alton and Spirer, 2003). Thus the “keep it real” mentality began to blur the line between artistic differences and street warfare (Alton & Spirer, 2003). Easy-E, in an interview in the 1990s before his death, said: “Everything you hear on our records, its true... the stealing, robbing, murd--the thieving” (Alton & Spirer, 2003). While this may or may not be entirely factual, with the increasing popularity and commercialization of gangsta rap music, a violent youth culture generally is encouraged as youth
listen to and follow the battles and rivalries (Alton & Spirer, 2003; Anderson, 1999; Kubrin, 2005).4

**Rap and Rap Battles Online**

With the advent of relatively new social media outlets, youth now can do more than just listen to and follow these gangsta rap artists' battles and rivalries; they can participate in them, and the fights may cross over from the virtual world to the street. Lil JoJo's story is an example of the consequences of a rap music/gang rivalry that was allegedly connected with murder. A song by Chief Keef called “I Don't Like,” which glorified his gang, the Black Disciples Nationals, was remixed and popularized by Kayne West. The success of “I Don't Like” inspired aspiring young rapper and alleged rival gang member, Lil JoJo, to upload his own song, “3 Hunna K,” on YouTube. The song “3 Hunna K” mocked Chief Keef and his gang (Howard, 2013; Haut, 2014). Two days after the video was posted on YouTube, Lil JoJo was gunned down (Aqua Blanco, 2012; Haut, 2014).

While we do not know whether Chief Keef was actually involved in Lil JoJo's murder, the case is an example of the way in which social media outlets, and specifically YouTube, have recently reconfigured the relationship between production and consumption, and between professional and amateur content (Weaver, Zelenkauskaite, & Samson, 2012, pp. 1067–1068). Specifically, what we are seeing is the emergence of local amateur rap artists' increasing involvement in the gangsta rap game through YouTube. The problem with YouTube videos, though, is that while many of these local gangsta rap artists are just presenting an entertaining image that is considered “hot” in the rap music industry in order to obtain notice from record labels, others are doing so for more criminal purposes—like to retaliate against other gangs or to coordinate, entice, or brag about street-level assaults (Van Hellemont, 2012). While many gangsta rappers are not real gang members, some gangs are taking advantage of the Internet and social media to use rap music to facilitate the expressive goals of their gangs. Before we explore the six battle rap videos that are the focus of this paper, we discuss the literature on gangs, group process, violence and online behavior.

**Gangs, Group Process and Violence**

While the proper definition of street gangs has been a subject of debate (Decker, Melde & Pyrooz, 2013), street gangs are generally defined as “street-oriented groups, whose membership is youthful, that exhibit persistence across time and for whom illegal activity constitutes a part of group identity” (Decker & Pyrooz, 2011b, p. 156). Research tends to show that gangs are more likely to form in economically disadvantaged areas marked by racial and ethnic heterogeneity (Pyrooz, Fox & Decker, 2010). The organizational structure of gangs varies from gang to gang, but there are two general models of gang organization, instrumental-rational (organized) and informal-diffuse (disorganized) (Decker & Pyrooz, 2011b; Moule et al.,...
The instrumental-rational model proposes a vertical structure with clear leadership roles, regular meetings, and coordinated criminal behavior. These gangs are able to enforce discipline among members and effectively define and achieve goals. On the opposite end of the continuum, the informal-diffuse model describes gangs with a flat structure and loose leadership that is situational. There is a lot of turnover in membership, and formal meetings are rare. These gangs are self-interested groups that sell drugs for individual, rather than group, profit. Research seems to suggest that most gangs are not very organized and that the majority of gangs more closely resemble the informal-diffuse model (Melde, Diem & Drake, 2012; Decker & Pyrooz, 2011b; Decker & Van Winkle, 1996).

According to Decker and Van Winkle (1996), there are several “pushes” (external forces) and “pulls” (attractive qualities of gangs) that lead to the decision to join a gang, but some of the reasons most often cited by gang members are joining for protection from violent victimization, because a friend is in the gang, and to make money (Decker & Van Winkle, 1996; Melde, Taylor & Esbensen, 2009; Melde et al., 2012). Reviews of the literature on risk factors for gang membership conclude that the following factors increase the odds of gang membership: experiencing a critical life event like an injury or disrupted relationship, evincing antisocial tendencies, having pro-delinquent attitudes, having low levels of parental supervision, and interacting with delinquent peers (Decker et al., 2013). Unfortunately, these risk factors are not unique to gang membership because they also predict an increased likelihood of participation in general offending. However, studies show that there is a cumulative effect to risk factors such that juveniles with more risk factors are more likely to join gangs (Melde et al., 2012; Decker et al., 2013).

Joining a gang tends to occur in the early teen years, between 13 and 15 (Decker & Pyrooz, 2011a; Esbensen & Carson, 2012; Pyrooz, 2014). For example, Pyrooz (2014) used data from the National Longitudinal Survey of Youth and found that the majority (73%) of gang-involved youth followed adolescent pathways into and out of gang membership; the modal age of gang onset was 13, while the modal age of gang involvement was 15. Contrary to the common perception of gang life, though, most gang members do not remain in gangs for life. The general length of gang involvement is about two years or less (Pyrooz, 2014; Melde et al., 2012; Decker & Pyrooz, 2011b), though a small subset of committed gang members remain in gangs for four or more years (Decker & Pyrooz, 2011a; Pyrooz, 2014). Factors that predict more stable gang membership include joining a gang at a later age, joining for protection, belonging to a more organized gang, and being involved in more violent activity (Melde et al, 2012).

One common perception of gangs that seems to be accurate is the central role violence plays in gang life. It is often part of the initiation process as new members are either "beat in" or sent on violent missions, and it helps members, and particularly leaders, acquire or re-establish status (Decker,
Further, studies have shown that gang membership increases violent behavior (Matsuda, Melde, Taylor, Freng & Esbensen, 2013; Melde & Esbensen, 2012; Pyrooz & Decker, 2012; Gordon, Lahey, Kawai, Loeber, Stouthamer-Loeber & Farrington, 2004). For example, using a panel study of over 3,700 youth, Melde and Esbensen (2012) demonstrated that self-reported gang membership was associated with a 592% increase in delinquency propensity and a 21% increase in the violent-to-non-violent offense ratio. Once youth left their gangs, their ratio was no different than non-gang youth, which suggested that some quality of gang membership increases the odds of violent offending beyond personal propensities for violence.

Thus, much gang research focuses on group process and the formation of the group identity and the normative standards that produce violence and make it a “defining feature” of gangs (McGloin & Decker, 2010; Decker & Van Winkle, 1996; Decker, 1996). Group process research attempts to understand “what motivates individuals to do things in a group that they would not do as individuals” (Decker & Pyrooz, 2011b, p. 154). Part of this involves understanding the cohesion and solidarity created within the gang by the group identity and the group’s collective norms. In terms of identity, gang membership is displayed through the use of signs, symbols, and clothing. These signifiers of membership help to create a sense of “us versus them,” thereby uniting members, and they serve to intimidate others by demonstrating their proclivity for violence (Decker et al., 2013). Gang turf is also at the foundation of gang identity and group process, as it is where the gang originates, and commitment to the gang is tied to allegiance to territory (Papachristos, 2009; Decker, 1996). Thus, defense of territory is important for both instrumental and symbolic purposes.

Part of the normative belief system held by gang members emphasizes masculinity and posturing (Decker et al., 2013). Horowitz and Schwartz (1974) identified a code of personal honor that stressed the importance of one’s manhood in their study of inner-city gangs. According to Papachristos (2009), these honor codes tend to emerge where formal institutions of social control are missing and so violence becomes the informal means of social control. Being tough and fearless are dominant values in this culture of masculinity. These values are taught and reinforced by gang members; in part, the violent initiation rituals force new members to demonstrate their toughness and fearlessness (Decker, 1996; Decker & Van Winkle, 1996). Thus, a central way of building one’s reputation and proving one’s toughness and fearlessness is through violence.

The honor code of masculinity not only provides guidelines on values but also on behavior; importantly, it shapes gang members’ responses to perceived insults (Horowitz & Schwartz, 1974). In these cultures of masculinity, reputation is purely symbolic and determined almost entirely by the recog-
nition of one’s status (Papachristos, 2009). Horowitz and Schwartz (1974) demonstrate that “a heightened concern with personal honor makes a person both a self-image defender and promoter, i.e., one demands deference from others and is sensitive to any act that suggest that one is not worthy of respect” (p. 240). That is, if a gang member perceives an insult, he must respond with willingness to use violence (Horowitz & Schwartz, 1974). This retaliation serves as a type of justice for a wrong committed.

Further in the group context of a gang, insults or threats must be responded to because they become collective grievances—an insult of one member insults the entire group (Papachristos, 2009; Horowitz & Schwartz, 1974; Decker et al., 2013). Therefore, the ability of the group to successfully retaliate against an insult or threat and protect its members determines both collective and individual honor (Horowitz & Schwartz, 1974). In support of this idea, Decker (1996) argues that expressive gang violence is the result of collective norms and behavior. In addition, Papachristos (2009) contends that gang violence spreads through a process of social contagion as gangs retaliate against threats. A public murder of a gang member threatens the gangs’ social status, and the norms of reciprocity link social status with revenge for that murder. For gangs, then, violence is a group phenomenon spurred by the group beliefs and collective behavior, which lead to escalating retaliatory violence (Short, 1989; Decker et al., 2013). Confirming this, both Decker (1996) and Papachristos (2009) determined that the majority of gang violence in their samples was expressive and retaliatory in nature, having started over nonmaterial matters, like insults to reputation. Papachristos (2009) notes that retaliatory responses become even more necessary when there is a prior contentious relationship because failure to retaliate against a long-standing opponent is “honorific suicide” (p. 117).

The group identity and collective norms that facilitate this retaliatory violence allow individuals to engage in violent behavior that they would not do alone (Decker, 1996; Papachristos, 2009). Decker et al. (2013) describe bonds between gang members that are built on “a common normative orientation and shared activities” (p. 384). Those bonds create a structure that allows violence to be used for what may appear to be minor events, like a look or painted-over graffiti. In this sense, then, violence creates bonds in gangs and builds cohesion among its members. Cohesion varies from gang to gang and can depend on the type of gang and the gang organizational structure, but groups generally become more cohesive as they spend time together engaging in group activities (Papachristos, 2013). Conflicts with authorities or rival gangs are major activities that increase cohesion as the gang unites together in response to common enemies (Decker, 1996; Papchristos, 2013; Decker & Curry, 2002; Decker & Van Winkle, 1996).
**Gang Online Behavior**

The literature on gangs and their online behavior demonstrates that gang members are following the trend of the rest of the world and adopting an online presence. There are primarily two types of studies that have investigated the online behavior of gangs. The first type is interviews with gang members about their Internet use. These studies report that the majority of gang members surf the web. For instance, Decker and Pyrooz (2012) interviewed 174 current gang members from three American cities. They discovered that 78% of the gang members interviewed for their study reported using the Internet. The most prevalent online activity in their sample was viewing YouTube videos. Similarly, Sela-Shayovitz (2012) interviewed 30 gang members in Israel and revealed that all the gang members except for two had access to the Internet at home. They spent about five hours a day online; they played computer games, gambled, listened to music, and watched movies together online.

The second way studies have measured gangs' online presence is to conduct word searches on various social media sites to uncover the degree of gang activity on those sites. For example, Knox (2011) reviewed the scope and extent of gang activity on Facebook. He utilized gang names and slang and uncovered Facebook pages for many prominent gangs, including, Latin Kings, Insane Vice Lords, and the Gangster Disciples. These groups justified their presence on Facebook by calling themselves community or religious organizations. Knox (2011) concluded that there was a high volume of activity by street gangs on Facebook. Likewise, Decary-Hetu and Morselli (2011) conducted a word search and found that 19 prominent gangs, such as the Bloods, Crips, Hells Angels, MS-13, and Latin Kings, had a presence on Facebook, and 11 of those gangs had Twitter accounts. There is also evidence that gang members are creating personal blogs as a venue for promoting their gangs. Van Hellemont (2012) located 170 blogs related to gang activity in Brussels, including among others, individual blogs, whose authors claimed gang membership, and music blogs with songs and pictures of rap groups composed of gang members. It seems evident from interviews with gang members and studies searching the web for gang activity that gangs are online and use social media (King, Walpole, & Lamon, 2007; Decker & Pyrooz, 2012; Decker & Pyrooz, 2011a; Van Hellemont, 2012; Knox, 2011; Decary-Hetu & Morselli, 2011; Morselli & Decary-Hetu, 2013; Shela-Shayovitz, 2012; Pyrooz et al., 2015).

It is still unclear, though, how gangs use the Internet. Are gang members taking advantage of the advances in technology to facilitate criminal activities? The literature investigating this question is sparse and, despite the NGIC (2011) report, has not provided much evidence to support the idea that gangs are actively using their online presence to recruit new members, commit crimes, or instigate criminal activity. For instance, Moreselli and Decary-Hetu (2013) monitored Twitter, Facebook, and MySpace for gang presence
using 56 street gang names. Most of the visitors to the sites were curious about the gangs, and many posted comments expressing support for them. However, the researchers observed no evidence of gangs proactively using the Internet to convert any visitors into becoming gang members. They suggested, instead, that social networking sites are new convergence settings for gang members to interact with a wider audience that shares their underlying values (Moreselli & Decary-Hetu, 2013).

The studies using interviews with gang members tend to show that only a minority of gang members use the Internet for recruitment or criminal activity. According to Decker and Pyrooz (2011a), most gangs they interviewed frowned upon using the Internet to engage in crime, because it would increase the chances of being caught by bringing attention to the crime. Additionally, Sela-Shayovitz (2012) reported almost no link between street activity and online delinquency. In her sample, the majority of gang members did not utilize the web to commit crimes. Only 6.6% reported using the Internet for drug sales. While Pyrooz et al. (2015) reported that current gang members participate in more online crime compared to former gang members and non-gang members, only a very small percentage of gang members said they used the web to recruit new members (8%) and sell drugs (6.6%) or stolen property (4.4%). Pyrooz et al. (2015) concluded that there was little evidence to support views that the Internet facilitates instrumental goals of gangs, like drug sales or recruitment.

Studies tend to show that much online behavior by gang members is similar to that of non-gang youth. Gang members use the Internet to talk to girls or each other, listen to music, watch videos, post videos of themselves, play video games, and do school research (Decker & Pyrooz, 2011a; Sela-Shayovitz, 2012). A recent survey of adolescents in the general population show that 91% use the Internet to post photos of themselves on social media, and 24% post videos online (Wexler, 2014). Further, a Pew Report showed that 72% of teens play video games online or on their phones, 47% of teens talk with others using online video or chat, and 76% of teens use social media (Lenhart, 2015). In addition, it seems that when gang members do use the Internet for illegal activities, their illegal activity was similar to that of youths not associated with gangs. Both Sela-Shayovitz’s (2012) and Pyrooz et al. (2015) reported that the most popular illegal activity in their gang samples was illegally downloading music and other media. Surveys of the general adolescent population show that about 31% admitted to pirating music or movies online (Statista, 2012). Further, Holt et al. (2012) reported that the most common type of cybertheft committed by youth is digital piracy.

While much of gang members’ online behavior seems age-appropriate, the Internet is also providing a new arena for achieving the expressive and symbolic goals of gangs (Moule et al., 2013; Moule et al., 2014). Pyrooz et al. (2015) observed that gang members often used the Internet to accomplish what the authors called “status goals,” by posting threats on Facebook or
videos on YouTube. The viral nature of social media allows the insults posted online to spread quicker than the more traditional word of mouth, and so online insults can have serious real-world consequences. Decker and Pyrooz (2011a) reported that posting videos to YouTube was a “big deal” for the gang members they interviewed, and that the insults posted online could lead to trouble in the street (p. 10).

There is additional evidence to support the idea that gangs use their online presence to communicate the gangster lifestyle and to intimidate rival gangs. Searches through Facebook have revealed that gangs use their pages to issue death threats to rival gangs through subcultural slang and rap lyrics (Knox, 2011). Such searches also have shown an increased use of Facebook and Twitter for “flame wars,” online and vicious retaliatory insults. The trading of insults inevitably evolves to online threats (Decary-Hetu & Mor-selli, 2011). Further, blogs created by gang members are also being used to communicate the gangster style and to promote rivalries with other gangs (Van Hellemont, 2012). Van Hellemont’s (2012) examination of 170 gang blogs revealed a pattern of blog authors claiming territory for their gang, using gang signs and dress, and flaunting weapons, money, and expensive clothing, jewelry, and shoes. More importantly, these blogs were used to post pictures and lyrics that serve the dual purpose of promoting their gang and also insulting rival gangs. Van Hellemont’s (2012) research stops short of connecting the virtual gang insults and threats to real-life consequences but provides indications that the virtual gangland may have repercussions beyond the virtual world.

It seems, then, that research has shown that gang members are active online and using social media to enhance their street reputation and fulfill their expressive goals (Moule et al., 2013; Moule et al., 2014). Further, research has demonstrated that, in order to strengthen group cohesion, it is necessary to respond when the reputation of a gang or a gang member is threatened (Decker, 1996; Papachristos, 2009; Horowitz & Schwartz, 1974), and online attacks are more visible and permanent than normal street attacks (Van Hellemont, 2012). To build on the group process literature and further understand the necessity of responding to insults and threats in the gang subculture, we provide a brief summary of the code of the street.

THEORY

Code of the Street

In his ethnography of inner city life, Anderson (1999) described a sub-culture that has emerged in poor urban communities and that guides the behavior of residents in those neighborhoods. He called this subculture “the code of the street” and compared it to the code of civility that operates in the larger, mainstream society. According to Anderson (1999), the code of the street emerged because of extreme structural disadvantage—poverty, un-
employment, racism, and a lack of faith in the police and the judicial system. As globalization and deindustrialization removed jobs from the inner cities over the last several decades, the masculine identity of the working-class urban male was challenged. Facing few traditional avenues for achieving social status and the effects of structural disadvantage, the urban male began to rely on violence to achieve status in his community (Anderson, 1999; Kubrin, 2005; Patton, Eschmann & Dirk, 2013).

The code of the street regulates this use of violence and centers around the concept of respect—“being treated ‘right’ or being granted one’s ‘props’ (or proper due) or the deference one deserves” (Anderson 1999, p. 33). Respect provides protection but also establishes a person’s self-esteem. Respect can be gained through demeanor, association with certain crowds, family reputation, and appearance—expensive clothing, shoes, and jewelry. All of these modes for gaining respect, though, must be backed up with the ability and willingness to use violence (Anderson, 1999). For instance, wearing expensive jewelry gains a person respect because it shows he or she has money, but more importantly it signifies he or she can defend that property from others who would use violence to take it. A person has achieved the most respect when they are not “messed with” because they have proven themselves as violent individuals. In an area with little faith in the police’s desire and ability to respond to calls, the code of the street provides people with a way to defend themselves from violence by establishing reputations for violence and rationalizing violent payback for perceived insults (Anderson, 1999).

Thus, the code states that if someone is disrespected, it is imperative to respond, or that person leaves himself or herself vulnerable to physical danger. Verbal prowess is one way to defend one’s reputation, but aggression and violence are the more common ways of proving oneself because they are unambiguous. According to Anderson (1999), children living by the code of the street learn to resolve their disputes mainly through physical contests that settle the question of who is the toughest. The use of violence is encouraged by peers and even by parents who often sanction a child for appearing weak. Therefore, children raised by the code are socialized to have a predisposition for violence and to believe that being disrespected is an offense worthy of a violent response.

The Code and Gang Violence

Quantitative studies support the link between the code and violence. Brezina, Agnew, Cullen and Wright (2004) reviewed previous research, and those studies tended to show that the code mediated the relationship between violence and other variables, like race, age, socio-economic status, parental influence, and peer influence. Brezina et al. (2004) also conducted their own direct test of the relationship between the code and violence using the National Youth Survey, and their findings replicated support for the relationship between the code and violent behavior in youth aged 11–17. Stewart
and colleagues (with Simons, 2006, 2010 and with Schreck & Simons, 2006) have also tested the link between the code and violence. They found that neighborhood context, family characteristics, and racial discrimination directly influenced adherence to the code, and that the code mediated the effects of these factors on violent delinquency. They also reported that the effect of street code values on violence is enhanced in neighborhoods where the street culture is widely endorsed (Stewart & Simons, 2006, 2010).\footnote{While these studies support the link between the code and youth violence, they are not direct tests of the influence of the code on gang member violence. Clearly many elements of Anderson’s code overlap with gang culture, including the origin of the code in areas with poor formal controls and few conventional skills for success in mainstream society (Papachristos, 2009; Horowitz & Schwartz, 1974); the centrality of violence in building status (Decker, 1996; Decker & Van Winkle, 1996; Short & Strodtbeck, 1965; McGloin & Decker, 2010; Hughes & Short, 2005), and the importance of retaliation if insulted or threatened (Decker, 1996; Papachristos, 2009; Horowitz & Schwartz, 1974). Matsuda et al. (2013) conducted the only direct test of the link between the code and gang violence using a school-based sample of 2,216 youth. They found that joining a gang significantly increased code acceptance and violent behavior, and that the code of the street mediated a significant portion of the effect of gang-joining on violent offending. Thus, one reason gang membership increases violence is the stronger adherence to the collective norms centered around the code.}

The Code and Rap Music

Research on the lyrical content of rap music generally finds that many references are made both to street code ideals like toughness, aggression, and violence, and also to gangs (Kubrin, 2005; Moule et al., 2013: 151). Kubrin (2005) demonstrated that rap lyrics in 403 commercial rap songs promoted the ideas of the code of the street. In particular, the music provided a formula and a justification for constructing violent identities and reputations. The music also frequently portrayed the use of violence as a form of social control, endorsing violence as a way to respond to challenges or retaliate against someone. Therefore rappers’ lyrics delineate the rules of acceptable and unacceptable behaviors and teach listeners how to respond when the rules are violated—thereby prescribing violence as a method of social control in the urban milieu where gangs navigate (Anderson, 1999; Kubrin, 2005, p. 375).

Further, Patton et al. (2013) drew an important connection between hip hop/rap music, masculine identities, and social media. They suggested that after the 1990s and the death of Tupac Shakur and Biggie Smalls, rap artists changed the nature of rap beefs to settle feuds through verbal and technical prowess rather than with bullets. This left a void in artists’ ability to prove they were “keeping it real”—staying true to the street and their violent identities. Since then, the Internet serves as a medium by which rap
music (and through masculine identities) can be performed in front of a large audience. Patton et al. (2013) argued that social media has evolved into a space where anyone, including gang members, can challenge each other's street credibility.

Our study is an attempt to explore such “culture in action” (Holt, 2010; Kubrin, 2005; Moule et al., 2013; Swindler, 1990) by examining the use of social media as a tool for gang members to achieve their expressive goals. Social media provides a new venue where gang members can easily generate “buzz” or supplement their reputation to achieve their expressive goals (Moule et al., 2013; Moule et al., 2014). It makes insults and threats against rivals more visible and permanent than they would be in normal street confrontations between gangs (Van Hellemont, 2012). We add to the literature by demonstrating that battle rap videos disseminated through social media are a new medium through which gang members are making and responding to threats, and we discuss a possible connection between this cyberbanging and street violence.

THE PRESENT STUDY

The present study is a case study of the circumstances surrounding a set of six YouTube-based underground battle rap videos. These videos were identified by the Pittsburgh Initiative to Reduce Crime (PIRC). PIRC is a city-based cross-institutional program that collaborates with local police and a community-based non-profit organization named Youth Opportunities Development (Y.O.D.) in order to work to reduce gun and gang crime and violence in the city of Pittsburgh. Through biweekly PIRC risk assessment meetings with the two street outreach directors (the executive director and director of operations) from Y.O.D. and their street outreach workers (SOWs), six local underground battle rap videos were identified as an area of concern due to the nature and content of the videos, lyrics, and known gang member involvement. The data and analysis procedures are described below.

Underground Battle Rap Videos and Lyrics

The first source of data consists of the battle rap videos posted on YouTube between September 2012 and November 2012 and the transcribed lyrics from these videos. A purposive sample of six videos was selected to form this case study (N=6). Underground battle rap videos for this study are amateur rap music videos posted on YouTube that portray one individual gang member or group of gang members specifically targeting another individual gang member or group of gang members through their video and lyrical content. In particular, this set of battle videos consist of four local gang-affiliated rappers, each representing a part of their neighborhood and gang, who are going back and forth at each other with counteracting battle rap videos.9
We were first introduced to these videos by the executive director of Y.O.D. at a PIRC meeting in 2012 after two of the six videos in this group were uploaded on YouTube. The executive director explained at the PIRC meeting that the SOWs were hearing local youth talk about these videos in the streets and that these videos were becoming more popular in their communities because of the gang-affiliated rappers. The Y.O.D. directors and the SOWs were concerned about the videos and the public forum because it made the videos available to a wide audience, including other gangs and gang rivals across Pittsburgh. After our introduction to the initial two videos in 2012, we conducted keyword and name searches on YouTube weekly and continued to rely on the Y.O.D. executive director and SOWs to help us uncover the total of six battle rap videos specifically made by the four rappers included in this study.

Once we found or heard about a video, we watched the video to ensure that it was part of this battle rap series—that is, it was conducted by one of the four gang members of interest and targeted one of the other three gang rappers. We also followed up with the Y.O.D. executive director and SOWs, and, upon receiving verification that the video featured one of the rappers of interest, we transcribed the video lyrics. All names were changed to protect the identity of those involved. Overall, the YouTube-based battle rap video data for this study has over 1.3 million views with 4,934 “Likes” and 603 “Dislikes.” And there are around 2,500 comments on these six battle rap videos.

**Interviews with Y.O.D. Directors and Street Outreach Workers**

In addition to the battle rap videos and their lyrical content, our data also consists of a series of in-depth face-to-face and phone interviews with the Y.O.D. executive director and the director of operations and their four SOWs. The four SOWs are representatives from the same four neighborhoods as the rappers in this set of videos. These SOWs were at one point gang members and have ongoing ties to their community. The interviews were open-ended semi-structured interviews (Berg, 2004; Holt, 2010). During the interviews we generally probed for the Y.O.D. directors’ and SOWs’ knowledge and understanding of the background and context of the YouTube-based battle rap videos, the gang-affiliated rappers and other individuals in the videos. We also inquired about the gangs that the rappers were affiliated with. We asked about their impressions of these videos, the Internet, and the on- and off-line impact of such video and lyrical content over time. Because the videos were ongoing, or still being posted, during this project, we were able to contact the Y.O.D. director and SOWs multiple times to ask questions. Generally, each interview lasted between one to one-and-a-half hours, and during the interviews copious notes were taken that were later compared.
In sum, the types of data collected for this study come from multiple sources, allowing us to better understand the gang-affiliated rappers and their intentions with their battle rap videos. Moreover, the data provided insight on the potential impact that such Internet-based videos may have on gangs and gang members on- and off-line. In the following section, we describe our analysis procedures.

**Analysis Procedures**

For the purposes of this study, we utilized a version of the NVivo software package to organize and analyze the transcribed video lyrics and interview content. NVivo is a software package that supports qualitative and mixed methods research, and it allows the researcher to collect, organize and analyze a number of types of data. Berg (2004, p. 291) suggests utilizing such computer-based programs because, “as a result, higher-order classifications and connections can be formulated.”

For the present study, we therefore began by organizing and examining the transcribed lyrics for the context between the four rappers. Immersing ourselves in the lyrical content, we began to open-code the lyrical content, creating initial nodes or themes and then tree nodes or refined themes. Through this process, we uncovered two major themes related to the subcultural code and gang group process; the “disses” exchanged between these gang rappers included both insults and threats. Further, the insults could be categorized by level of severity and potential for repercussions. For the purposes of this study, then, insults are coded into three sub-themes: superficial insults, reputation insults, and “dry snitching” insults. Superficial insults revolve around making fun of someone’s appearance, for example, hairstyle or dress. They are swipes at a person’s social status but are not as potentially damaging as the other insults. Reputation insults are more serious attacks on one’s street abilities and reputation for violence or selling drugs, while “dry snitching” insults utilize personal knowledge of, and stories about, real-world past incidents and failures within the street culture. According to the code of the streets and backed by group process research and the SOWs’ knowledge, reputation and dry snitching insults require a response so that a person’s street credibility is not damaged. Finally, threats are statements of an intention to inflict pain, injury, or death on another. As these relate directly to the code’s mandate to demonstrate a propensity for violence, they are the most serious infraction. If a person allows a threat to go unpunished, it leaves that person unguarded against future violence (Anderson, 1999).

During the open-coding phase of the analysis we also began interviewing the Y.O.D. directors and SOWs in order to help us better understand the lyrical content and context. Finally, we continued to refine our initial lyrical themes and built relationships through ongoing interviews, which allowed us to better understand the battle rappers’ intentions with their battle rap
As a result, we learned more about the possible relationship between on- and off-line gang violence. In the sections that follow, we provide the findings and a discussion of our results, and we conclude with some take-away points from this research.

**FINDINGS**

Coming in as an unknown rapper on the Pittsburgh rap scene, a young man who goes by the name Swerve introduces himself to the world in the first of a set of six battle rap videos uploaded onto YouTube’s website. In Swerve’s four videos he proceeds to insult and threaten his “competition.” And in return, his rivals, Waxy, Lugar and J-Time, come back at Swerve in the subsequent videos in the same manner. Table 1 introduces each battle rap artist by providing information on their neighborhood and gang. Each battle video is made up of an individual rapper creating a unique and individualized rap about another; however, of the six videos, the battles are either from Swerve or intended for Swerve. The other three rappers are not battling amongst one another; they are all just going at Swerve in the similar manner of throwing out lyrics that reflect personalized insults and threats. In the subsections to follow we contextualize the battle raps and our two major themes. Table 2 shows the number of insults, broken down by category, and threats exchanged between Swerve and the other rappers in each video.

### Table 1: Underground Battle Rap Artists

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Artist</th>
<th>Neighborhood</th>
<th>Gang</th>
<th>Posse</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Swerve</td>
<td>North Side</td>
<td>“KTR” Keeping it Too Real</td>
<td>Bull, Chopper, “Certified Guerilla”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Waxy</td>
<td>Hill District</td>
<td>“OTP” On the Payroll</td>
<td>Haiti (brother), Darma, Turner</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lugar</td>
<td>East End</td>
<td>“T2G” Trained to Go</td>
<td>J-Time</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Pittsburgh</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>J-Time</td>
<td>East End</td>
<td>“T2G” Trained to Go</td>
<td>Lugar</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Pittsburgh</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 2: Battle Rap By the Numbers: Insults and Threats.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Diss Type</th>
<th>Video One: Swerve on Waxy</th>
<th>Video Two: Waxy on Swerve</th>
<th>Video Three: Swerve on Waxy 1</th>
<th>Video Four: Swerve on Lugar</th>
<th>Video Five: J-Time on Swerve</th>
<th>Video Six: Swerve on J-Time</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Superficial Insults^1</td>
<td>6/30%</td>
<td>9/30%</td>
<td>8/32%</td>
<td>6/22%</td>
<td>9/30%</td>
<td>11/29%</td>
<td>49/29%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reputation Insults^2</td>
<td>9/45%</td>
<td>8/27%</td>
<td>12/48%</td>
<td>11/41%</td>
<td>13/43%</td>
<td>15/39%</td>
<td>68/40%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Dry Snitching” Insults^3</td>
<td>3/15%</td>
<td>10/33%</td>
<td>4/16%</td>
<td>7/26%</td>
<td>3/10%</td>
<td>8/21%</td>
<td>35/21%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Threats^4</td>
<td>2/10%</td>
<td>3/10%</td>
<td>1/4%</td>
<td>3/11%</td>
<td>5/17%</td>
<td>4/11%</td>
<td>18/10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>170</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1. These insults revolve around insulting appearances (e.g., hair, dress and style).
2. These insults include more serious attacks on one’s street abilities and reputation (e.g., selling drugs, fighting and violence).
3. These insults use personal knowledge of, and stories about, real-world past incidents and failures within the street culture.
4. Threats are statements of a willingness and intention to inflict pain, injury, or death on another.

**Battle Rap Videos 1–3: Swerve Vs. Waxy**

In battle rap Video 1, Swerve begins, "First off I am with Fifty Boss encase you niggas didn't know, nigga. You nice when it come to rap, but I am always trained to go, nigga.” Swerve starts off by claiming where he is from and, in his quick, off-the-cuff style, states right away that he is prepared to battle. This demonstrates the nature of these battle rap videos; they are intended to insult, and essentially disrespect, other gangs and these lyrics or statements have implications for the street. He opens with a reputation insult, saying that while Waxy may be good at rapping (talking), Swerve is “trained to go,” meaning ready to fight. His actions in the video echo his words. In the beginning of this video Swerve walks up to the microphone shirtless and with a pistol tucked into his waistband. According to one Y.O.D. director, “Doing this suggests that he is ready to go to another level with it. These are real street gangs and this is all they got. You can't say you're strapped up if you ain't gonna go there.” In this sense, these amateur rap videos by gang members may differ from commercialized rap videos where weapons are also often brandished to create a reputation and sell records; in these gang videos, a rapper does not show a weapon unless that rapper is willing to use it.

In Swerve’s introduction he claims that he is organized and that he can move weight or product (drugs) and that “it’s too hard a living nigga, but I
ain’t afraid to die. In the mix nigga, I blitz nigga, and made it out alive.” Thus, with his introduction, Swerve is letting all know that he is committed to the street culture, and even to violence if need be, as he has been there. After Swerve introduces himself “to the world,” as he put it in the beginning of this video, he aims much of his lyrics at Waxy, Waxy’s neighborhood, and his gang. In Table 1, we see that nearly all of the lyrics involve Swerve insulting Waxy in this online battle. The majority of disses are reputation insults (45%), questioning Waxy’s ability to deal drugs and make money. For instance, he starts by claiming that Waxy and his mates are all talk and just fronting like they are making “real” money: “might look like ya’ll putting on but we all know ya’ll broke niggas.” He goes on to say that there’s “no action! All that ‘G’ing you doin’ is moving all of them lips. And just to let you know, I’m ‘T’ to ‘G’ to the third degree. Want to battle me, better come to me with like four stacks [$4,000].”

Gloating now with his off-the-cuff flow, “I’m ridiculous with this spin shit and I’m firing off like a Lugar,” Swerve then continues his battle rap on Waxy for 4 minutes and 4 seconds (4:04), throwing numerous insults. As the SOWs put it, “He [Swerve] is going deep with his insults on Waxy.” Swerve even goes as far as dry snitching, bringing into his battle rap some real-world affiliates of Waxy’s: “Why your big brother on ‘Darma’ shit, dance around like a baby. And then the other nigga who think they hard or wanna act up, come G me; I’m strapped up, I’m racked up.” Thus, according to the SOWs, Swerve “goes in” even further beyond superficial insults regarding Waxy’s personal style by insulting, or “dissing,” Waxy’s promotional tactics and ways of making money (reputation insults) and, later, his music label, neighborhood and fellow gang members (dry snitching). In addition, coming back around from his original introduction that he is “in the mix nigga,” Swerve throws out a warning and threat with “[Waxy,] you a soft nigga, I’m a boss nigga, I’ll take the hazel out yo ass.”

Swerve’s first battle rap video ends with him claiming victory in this online battle by expressing, “It’s crunch time and young Waxy is a lunch pack out the box. And I merc the track; young Waxy I think I caught me a body.” The SOWs explain that Swerve is simply an unknown rapper with certain gang affiliations, and that he is attempting to gain some attention and some respect from the local Pittsburgh rap scene by going after a more known rapper/gangster, such as Waxy. This, according to the Y.O.D. director, is Swerve’s attempt to gain “buzz” from the viewers and to entice Waxy into an online rap battle. And, as the director put it: “He [Swerve] disrespects him [Waxy], and now everybody is watching; what’s he [Waxy] gonna do about it now?” It is clear from this quote that Waxy was expected to retaliate against Swerve because he, his gang, and his neighborhood were dissed in Swerve’s video. According to both the code of the street and group process research, these threats had to be answered or Waxy and his gang would lose respect and sta-
In Appendix 1 we provide a “Battle Rap Chart” that displays a timeline of our set of battle rap videos. As mentioned before, the Y.O.D. director and his SOWs were concerned about Swerve’s attempt to get noticed, and, specifically because the video went viral, they were nervous about how Waxy would respond. As can be seen in the chart, within the month Waxy put together his own battle rap video (Video 2) that is entirely centered on Swerve, his neighborhood, and fellow gang members. In Video 2 Waxy is standing in a dark tunnel spray painted with bright neon graffiti. He is wearing a baseball cap and a shirt with an acronym (“OTP” or On the Payroll) that we later find out is signifying his affiliation with a local neighborhood gang. “This is the Hills’ response to Swerve’s video,” explained the director of Y.O.D.

In Video 2 Waxy sets the tone of the battle with the opening line: “Bleached jeans, cut-up pants, ya’ll walk around like some fucking faggot.” Insulting Swerve and his crew for their style, Waxy “goes in” even deeper in the next few lines: “Fuck your boss, you can work for me; rather, all you niggas is dead. And Swerve, what you want nigga? You aint a ‘G,’ you from Northview; you a Crip nigga.” Within the first minutes of his 5-minute-and-35-second battle rap video, Waxy not only uses superficial and reputation insults and then threatens Swerve and his crew, but he also dry snitches—calls Swerve out in public as being a “set tripper.” A set tripper, according to the SOWs, is “someone who switches rags,” or leaves one gang for another gang. In his video Waxy even shows an Instagram photo of Swerve throwing the Crip gang hand sign, providing some evidence that this is true. In the eyes of the Y.O.D. director and the SOWs this now public information could potentially infuriate some individuals living the gang lifestyle. And anybody trying to make a name for themselves could go after Swerve for “breaking the code” (Anderson, 1999).

As can be seen in Table 1, column 3, Waxy takes the battle a step further by using a larger percentage of dry snitching insults (33%). Interestingly, the SOWs note that “Waxy goes hard” at Swerve in his video. That is, if we are just looking at the numbers, Waxy’s lyrics are more intense and personal. While he continues to berate Swerve with superficial insults about his own personal style, as well as his gang members’ style, Waxy goes beyond the superficial by bringing into the battle real personal knowledge about Swerve’s street and neighborhood activities (dry snitching), and threatens him again with this simple message:

Keep trying to rap like (you) a soldier Vick, you fuck around and get killed. Keep trying to rap like (you) a soldier Vick, you fuck around and get killed, fuck around and get killed.

As a final but important note on Video 2, at the end of the video, Waxy is standing at the end of one of Pittsburgh’s many infamous bridges that cross...
the Allegheny River. We learn that Waxy is finishing his battle rap video just outside of Swerve's neighborhood. As the music and beat play in the background, Waxy talks directly to the leader of Swerve's gang: “Hey Bull, tell your sons to come back to reality man. This shit is real over here nigga. I'm almost at the edge, and your niggas' tryna push me. KTR [Keeping it Too Real] and Swerve you a full time rookie, you hear me. Nigga I'll get some fuck KTR shirts and put this music on the back.”

While at the edge of the bridge bordering Swerve's neighborhood Waxy warns Bull that it is “real over here,” and Waxy is essentially asking Bull to pull Swerve back or there could be future trouble between the two neighborhood gangs. The director of Y.O.D. explained that “the Hill District and the North Side are cool. They're not beefing like the North Side and the East End guys.” He continued, “You see, the North Side and the East End have a ‘traditional’ or lasting beef, but these guys don't have that kind of bad history between each other.” Despite Waxy's warning, Swerve does not stop; he comes back immediately at Waxy in Video 3.

“Blue and black Bugatti, I'm taking off like Ducati, and I merc the track and young Waxy I think I caught me a body. Now, I just got me some good news, Waxy finally sent me a diss. It's 8:30pm and I am like it's about time in this bitch.” With these lyrics we see that Swerve is actually excited that Waxy responded to his first battle rap video, and he makes his next battle rap video for Waxy the same evening that he receives the video. In Video 3, Swerve is sitting in a desk chair with a computer monitor behind him flashing his gangs' acronym, “KTR,” on the screen. Swerve responds to Waxy's diss that he is a set tripper, and continues on with a new set of insults, sticking again primarily to superficial (32%) and reputation (48%) insults. According to the SOWs, this video serves a couple of purposes. First, it is Swerve's response to Waxy to clear up the set tripper comment, and to show that he can also “dig up dirt” on Waxy. Secondly, in the video he lets Waxy know that “this is music only, not street beef.” And finally, through his one threat, Swerve expresses to Waxy that even while this is “music only” he will not back down: “[errry me, cherry you, you a sweet nigga but there is thirty shots in all my glocks; I don't run around with sixteens. I'm the realist out here nigga.”

As is, Swerve got the last word in the online battle with Waxy as Waxy did not respond to Swerve's second video. It may be that Waxy was pacified by the fact that Swerve made it clear that this was battle rap and not street battle. In the meantime, Swerve's videos, according to the Y.O.D. director, “definitely are getting some attention now. The [local] people think this type of music is hot and exciting for Pittsburgh. You got guys booming this out their cars across the Burgh now; it's a new fad or something.” Since posting his first battle rap video on YouTube Swerve was getting some “buzz” or attention as the unknown rapper “testing” a more known local rapper. According to the SOWs, with this buzz, Swerve “is just trying to do this for the attention to get on with a record label and to get off these streets.” Thus,
these first three videos demonstrate that some gang members may be using social media as a way to promote themselves and gain attention as rappers to escape the street life, but that they also use social media to communicate disses and threats against other gang members.

With Swerve gaining some local buzz at this point for battling Waxy online, he goes on to produce and upload a new battle rap video, and he focuses on another local rapper who goes by the name of Lugar. Lugar, it was explained by the Y.O.D. director, is from the East End of Pittsburgh and he is a very well-known local gang rapper in the city. According to the director, “The problem with Swerve’s video is that Lugar is from the East End, and with Swerve from the North Side, it only brings the ‘traditional’ beef to the forefront by posting this [video].” And we are not only introduced to Lugar in the next three videos but Lugar vouches for another local gang rapper from the East End, J-Time, to battle Swerve on his behalf. The context of this previous beef is important since Papachristos (2009) noted that an insult is considered even more serious if from a long-standing rival; we will discuss this more below in the discussion section.

**Battle Rap Videos 4–6: Swerve Vs Lugar and J-Time**

Video 4 was first uploaded by Swerve to YouTube in October 2012, the same month that Swerve and Waxy were battling back and forth online. The Y.O.D. SOWs and director speculated that this video (Video 4), stemmed from a Tweet that said, “IM DA KING OF THE BURGH DIRTY NIGGA IM THE DON.” They believed the Tweet was sent out by Lugar and was meant for Swerve, since Swerve mentions Twitter in his video. Standing next to his brother up against a blank white wall as his brother is lighting up a joint, Swerve begins his 6-minute-and-47-second battle:

> I wish a nigga would war-time try me. I’d line him up with a carbon; I’d mess him up with a buck drum, his ligaments look retarded. Now he’s road kill for the birds and the raccoons, he’s garbage. I’m blitzing all you fuck niggas; these rap dudes is targets.

Video 4 is recorded in all black-and-white coloring. And as can be seen in Table 1, Swerve goes on to insult and threaten Lugar throughout his rap, relying primarily on reputation insults (41%) but also increasing the use of dry snitching (26%). In particular with this introduction he is clearly upset, feels disrespected and is coming back at Lugar and his neighborhood and gang.

Swerve’s overall message for Lugar in his battle rap video is simply that he and his gang are “plastic,” or fake and breakable. For example, “I remember that Miami trip, you got stuck again and bucked up..ain’t none of them nigga’s ride for you, real talk, that’s fucked up.” Here Swerve inserts a mock phone conversation in his battle rap, where he plays the part of both Lugar and his drug connect to whom he paid nearly $40,000 dollars in exchange for some product. Basically, he mocks Lugar for getting “fucked around with
an okie doke” or scammed out of not only his money but, according to the Y.O.D. director, “for two or three other dudes or street killers who put up the $40,000 dollars.” Swerve goes on to express to Lugar, “You call yourself the King and the Don, we would have caught a plane nigga and booted out of a dump truck” if someone tried to take that money without a fair exchange.

Swerve tries to lay out in his online battle rap some facts about Lugar and how fake and breakable he and his gang are; he does so by referencing another real incident that took place in New York. He also warns Lugar about his choice words on Twitter:

And you come out the copper [prison] and saying that tough shit on Twitter. That’s my brother nigga with a team of certified killers. That one nigga you said you’d smack around is a certified guerilla. Don’t nobody want that smoke nigga it’s murder time for them niggas.

According to the SOWs, “These are real dudes [meaning gang members and known shooters] that Swerve and his brother are dissing. But, Swerve’s brother, ‘Chopper,’ he is one of them dudes too; so, this [video] is a concern.”

In particular, the SOWs explain that the lyrics are problematic, specifically the reputation and dry snitching insults (67%), and that “go-in” on Lugar in this battle rap video that may lead to heightened and future problems. Essentially, throughout Video 4 Swerve is dry snitching, or, as a director explained, “bringing the streets to the public [through YouTube] with these insults or disses” and then taunting Lugar. He goes even further by threatening Lugar and his affiliates with the idea that Swerve and his affiliates are “real,” “hard,” and “street” (Y.O.D. director, 2012).

Any nigga think he [Lugar] on my top, red dot will get ya off the couch. Pistol in your pocket with ya? We can buck it out, it’s not an issue. Forty-four, that’s a rocket missile, rocket missile. (Swerve, 2012).

Video 4 ends with this warning and threat by Swerve, and it seems as though the SOWs were right to be concerned about the reaction to this video. Within the same week that this video was posted on YouTube, we received a call from the director of Y.O.D. He began the conversation with “It just got real.” On an early evening in October 2012, just after the battle rap video went viral, an affiliate of Swerve’s was attending one of his son’s football games on the East End of Pittsburgh where Lugar and his gang reside. There was a confrontation between the gang members, “and a gun popped out” and led to three shootings, the director explained. The North Side affiliate himself was shot in the stomach, followed by a youth shot in the hand while sitting in the stands. A 64-year-old grandmother was fatally shot by stray bullets. The director went on to explain that “these shootings are directly related to the video. Everything was cool before this [video]. Swerve brought up some real personal stuff [in the video about Lugar and his gang’s street activities] that
he shouldn't have, and there was going to be some response. This is the East End's response for now."

It seems then, that the context of battle rap videos can change when there is a previous beef between gangs. In Video 4, Swerve was responding to an insult posted on another form of social media, Twitter. That public insult from a rival gang member required a response according to his code and group norms (Anderson, 1999; Decker, 1996; Decker & Van Winkle, 1996; Papachristos, 2009; Horowitz & Schwartz, 1974). His battle rap response was more personal than his previous rap video against Waxy and was not framed as "music only." The word on the street conveyed to us by the director was that the football game shooting was retaliation for the insults and threats on the rap video. While we cannot prove that, it would support past research demonstrating the contagion effect of threat that leads to escalating retaliatory violence (Short, 1989; Decker et al., 2013; Papchristos, 2009). Further, it speaks to a possible connection between online threats and street violence that is hinted at in other research (Decker & Pyrooz, 2011a; Van Hellemont, 2012).

Swerve's battle rap video against Lugar, or Video 4, is one of the most aggressive and hostile battles that we came across (see Table 1 for the numbers). Video 5 is similar in content and hostility: it begins with Lugar standing next to an individual who goes by the name of J-Time. We are told by the SOWs, and J-Time himself verifies this within the first couple of lines of his rap against Swerve, that he just recently got out of prison: "I'm home now, Lugar kick your feet up Ima' handle these niggas, you twist the weed up. I'm about to murder this shit then pay my lawyer fees."

After Lugar vouches for J-Time, the 6-minute-and-28-second battle rap video begins in a sort of basement with seven main affiliates (all Black males) standing behind J-Time in the shadows. J-Time then begins to lay down his battle rap with these lyrics:

Swerve, you a bitch and I'm a panty gripper. First you're Crip, then you G, look, that's a set tripper. Type a nigga change colors when he in some shit. Scream "my homies" every time you get around some Crips. I don't understand what part of the game is this? You is throwing GK up, nigga I seen the flick. You's a fucking Crip, nigga you already know. We can fucking go, yea, fucking ho.

As mentioned before, according to the Y.O.D. director and his SOWs, there is a history of feuds between these two neighborhoods (North Side and East End) and their gangs. And, in fact, we learned through our interviews with the Y.O.D. members that J-Time's own brother was murdered in Swerve's North Side neighborhood. J-Time then at this time begins to "go in" on Swerve with a high number of reputation insults (43%) and the highest number of threats in all six videos (17%).
Once more it was the battle rap lyrics, and specifically the reputation and dry snitching insults and threats that the Y.O.D. members were concerned about. For example, in his battle J-Time raps about being “street” and potentially keeping or making this real: “Convicted felon, but you know I still keep the skill. I’ll have a cookout on your block, we can start the grill. It’s warfare, we are in warfare, better ask around. Don’t slip nigga.” J-Time, as it is explained to us, “is not worried about dropping names” in his battle rap. He in fact aims a part of his insults and threats at Swerve’s gang leader, Bull, and even his brother, Chopper. And he goes on to explain, “Reckless, you can tell I ain’t concerned about niggas. This is not just rap, I really do my thug thizzles.” This, according to the SOWs, is just another form of dry snitching, or “going in” and getting personal by “dropping names” or calling out known gang members in his battle rap.

The Y.O.D. director points out that Video 5 is interesting because in the second scene after the dark basement scene, the video switches over to the streets. Here we are watching a large group of neighborhood members, many of whom are teenagers or young adults, dancing behind J-Time as he continues his battle rap. Beyond the battle rap lyrical issues, the Y.O.D. SOWs note that in this scene, these youths are dancing with guns in hand, aimed at the camera. Again, with such a show of force, we are reminded of what the Y.O.D. director said earlier, “Doing this suggests that he [this time J-Time and the East End] is ready to go to another level with it.” And, ending Video 5, in the final cut scene J-Time is back in the dark basement with his seven affiliates in the shadows behind him. They are all wearing shirts that say “FUCK KTR” on the front.

The additional gang members in this video illustrate the collective nature of gang violence. As discussed, insults or threats become collective grievances because an insult to one member insults the entire group (Papachristos, 2009; Horowitz & Schwartz, 1974; Decker et al., 2013). This video underscores this group process because Lugar is joined by fellow gang members, particularly J-Time, who help to threaten Swerve. Further, Video 5 demonstrates an escalation because of the increase in violent lyrics and content.

Video 6 then is Swerve’s response to J-Time, Lugar, and Pittsburgh’s East End, and is the final video in our set of Swerve-based underground battle rap videos. The number of people in this video is a little uncharacteristic of what we have seen in the previous three battle rap videos from Swerve. In Video 6, Swerve is not alone at a microphone (Video 1), alone in front of computer (Video 3), or battle rapping at ease with his brother beside him (Video 4). Instead, Video 6 is set in what appears to be a small, dark clubhouse in a basement somewhere. Behind Swerve stands his brother, Chopper, their affiliate (the “certified guerilla” we were introduced to in Video 4), and at least ten others. Swerve is essentially coming out in full force with this video, and so once again the collective nature of threats and escalation of violence is exemplified.
As Swerve begins his 8-minute-and-30-second video, he and his affiliates are drinking, smoking, and pouring some packaged white powder into their beverages. They just appear to be celebrating. Swerve says, “I’m way terked up, just gotta diss from some fuck nigga named J-Time. After this one I want your dirty ass to drop down to your knees.” Slightly excited but agitated that he got some type of response from Lugar, though it was through J-Time, Swerve battles J-Time, Lugar and the East End with a series of cohesive insults (89%) and threats (11%). In the first few lines, for example, Swerve “goes in” on J-Time and Lugar: "Got a dope head [J-Time] with a cop guy [Lugar] trying to come at me for the title. You wanna be me, wanna G me, just tell me, Swerve, I’m your idol.” Here Swerve knows that J-Time was, or maybe even still is, a drug addict. He is also calling Lugar a snitch, as it was J-Time who took the fall for the case that got him convicted on a felony drug and weapons charge, while Lugar was interestingly never indicted, according to the Y.O.D. director.

Swerve continues in his battle rap to explain his theory about why Lugar is the snitch: “You [Lugar] a Mickey Mouse, a fuck-around and a bitch rat. Got two-to-four for a fat case and a hundred pack of them dips rat. If you ask me, he made a deal with the D.E.A. and is a snitch.” Alluding to the fact that Lugar is going against the code, from here Swerve goes on to threaten Lugar, J-Time and their gang.

If you see a rat, or spot a rat, run his ass down with a rifle. My bands longer, my clips longer, and I stand tall like the Eiffel. Ya’ll be hiding out nigga, it’s not hard to get at you, cause I rock out with my cock out, with my top down, and my glock out. We’ll pop out with them wops out, shut the block down like a lock out. Smith and Wesson, six cylinder, glock, nigga no safety too. A dome shot for your G raise, ya younger sister, and ya baby too. Ray, Rico, J-Time, Lugar, you four niggas is dead.

As Swerve’s brother and affiliates dance to this music like it is a party, Swerve walks over to the wall and picks-up a shovel. The scene then cuts, and comes back to the dimly lit clubhouse but now the camera is in a hole looking up at Swerve, shovel in hand. He then proceeds to shovel up some dirt and throw it over the camera as if he is burying somebody in the ground. Watching this with the SOWs, they explained that “when J-Time got involved [with this online battle], it was death.” And that is “because there is such a traditional beef between the North Side and East End, and because of who J-Time is and who he knows, these videos were death,” according to the Y.O.D. director.

Once again, then, the Y.O.D. members point out the importance of a long-standing rivalry and how that can add to the serious nature of threats. And death did follow in the days after these videos. Shortly after the last video was posted, Swerve was fatally shot. The Y.O.D. director described how
“Swerve got into a car with an affiliate around 12:00 a.m. to go to a party near the East End. And sometime before 3:00 a.m. in the middle of the party someone spotted him” in the house where this party was held. Shortly afterward, around 4:00 a.m., someone pumped a number of shots into the house. The police, who were responding to another shooting in the neighborhood, responded and found Swerve on the kitchen floor with a semiautomatic pistol feet away from him. Swerve had taken several bullets to the body and he was pronounced dead at the scene at 4:25 a.m.

DISCUSSION

It has been shown that gangs are active online (King, Walpole, & Lamon, 2007; Decker & Pyrooz, 2012; Van Hellemont, 2012; Knox, 2011; Decary-Hetu & Morselli, 2011). Studies examining cyberbanging have noted that gang members frequently use the Internet to achieve “status goals,” by promoting their gangster lifestyle and especially through “flame wars”—by insulting and threatening rival gangs (Pyrooz et al., 2015; Knox, 2011; Decary-Hetu & Morselli, 2011; Van Hellemont, 2012). And some studies even hinted at a connection between such cyberbanging and real-life consequences (Van Hellemont, 2012; Decker & Pyrooz, 2011a). The purpose of this qualitative case study was to explore how gang members are using social media to disrespect one another in a public forum. Using interviews with the Y.O.D. directors and SOWs, we wanted to better understand how disseminating these videos would demand a reaction according to their gang subculture and collective norms. According to Anderson (1999), the code of the street values respect, primarily gained through the use of violence, above all else. Allowing an insult or threat to go unanswered threatens the status one has achieved, leaving one vulnerable to attack (Anderson, 1999). Gang research supports that these collective norms govern gang behavior (Horowitz & Schwartz, 1974; Decker, 1996; Decker & Van Winkle, 1996; Papachristos, 2009), and that gang violence is influenced directly by the code (Matsuda et al., 2013). Thus, using multiple sources of data, we wanted to understand how gang members are using social media for achieving expressive goals and whether instigating online “flame wars” promotes violent behavior, just as instigating a face-to-face confrontation does in real life.

In the present case study we described six battle rap videos posted on YouTube by four gang affiliated rappers. These videos demonstrated the utility of social media for gang members. In these videos, the gang members asserted dominance over rival gang members through their lyrics and imagery. They flaunted drugs and guns, and their posse ventured into one another’s territory while exchanging insults and threats. Clearly, gang members can use rap videos on YouTube to achieve expressive goals. Further, while the focus was on the content of these YouTube videos, it is interesting to note that additional social media were referenced in the videos. In Video 2, Waxy used a photo posted to Instagram as evidence of Swerve being a “set tripper.” Ad-
Additionally, Swerve makes reference to an insult posted on Twitter that he is responding to in Video 4. It seems that the gang members in our sample are well connected on social media, and that they traded insults across various forms of social media.

During our analysis of the videos, we discovered several themes in the lyrical content. As we coded the lyrics, we found that the “disses” could be broken into two main categories, insults and threats, and that the insults could be classified into three subcategories—superficial insults, reputation insults, and dry snitching. We believe these distinctions are important because they indicate the level of severity of the diss and the consequent potential for repercussions. As mentioned, Table 1 shows that the rappers used superficial insults pretty consistently; about 30% of the lyrics were superficial insults in every video except for Video 4, where Swerve used such insults only 22% of the time. It makes sense that these battle rap videos would contain a fair amount of the most basic insults since the purpose is to brag about oneself and diss the other person.

Table 1 also shows about 40% of the lyrics were reputation insults. Swerve used this type of insult the most to goad his rivals; in his videos against Waxy, nearly half of his lyrical content was composed of reputation insults (45% in Video 1 and 48% in Video 3). Waxy’s response was to go back hard at Swerve, focusing not only on superficial and reputation insults but also incorporating dry snitching into 33% of his lyrics. Reputation and dry snitching insults are more concerning because according to both Anderson’s (1999) code of the street and the SOWs, these insults are more serious and require more of a response or the targets risk losing “juice” or status, which is dangerous on the streets. “Dry snitching” is a term used by the SOWs to describe the airing of personal street stories, especially failures, to the public. This type of diss was particularly worrisome to the SOWs because, aside from direct threats, dry snitching is the most damaging to reputation.

Despite how hard they went at one another, Swerve and Waxy’s videos stop short of leading to street violence. This demonstrates the importance of the context of rap videos posted online by gang members. One reason violence did not seem to occur is because the rappers themselves indicated that this was “just music.” Swerve’s videos against Waxy appear to be a gang member using social media to increase his reputation as a rapper. By paying close attention to the lyrical conversation in this set of videos, the listener is able to determine the likelihood of a violent conflict. In Video 2, Waxy asks Swerve if he really wants to take this to the next level (violence), and while Swerve responds that he is always ready to go, he says their battle is just the rap. Further, the SOWs explained that the main reason these two likely decided to keep the battle online is that their neighborhoods did not have an ongoing beef. This echoes Papachristos’ (2009) observation that insults between long-standing rivals are more serious; these insults must be answered or they result in major reputational damage—“honorific suicide” (p. 117).
The Y.O.D. director echoed this idea and explained that the Swerve and Lugar battle rap videos were more concerning because of the ongoing beef that demanded escalating retaliation. Of course, there is always a danger that videos like these could provide the impetus for a feud, since the code requires that disses typically be answered through violence, but Swerve and Waxy seem to have agreed to keep the battle within the music.

However, as soon as Swerve responded to Lugar's tweet with a battle rap video aimed at him and the East End, trouble was inevitable according to the SOWs. These gangs have a strong history of beefing, so the battle rap disses, which require a violent response according to the code and collective norms, were more likely to lead to violence (Anderson, 1999; Decker, 1996; Decker & Van Winkle, 1996; Horowitz & Schwartz, 1974). Though we cannot prove these videos directly caused the violence described, we do demonstrate the escalation in the lyrics and imagery of the videos themselves. Video 4 contains the harshest lyrical content from Swerve with 41% of his lyrics being reputation insults directed at Lugar's street abilities and 26% being personal, dry snitching insults. J-Time's response on Lugar's behalf is just as harsh with a similar number of reputation insults (43%) but a larger focus on direct threats (17%) combined with dry snitching (10%). Further in the final two videos, the imagery also indicates a more serious beef. In both J-Time's response and Swerve's final video, the gangsters increase the display of guns and gang members, implying that they have the power and resources to take this to the next level of actual street violence. This show of force and the increase in serious disses—reputation and dry snitching insults along with threats—is an escalation in the videos, and it demonstrates the collective and retaliatory nature of gang threats. With knowledge of the history between the neighborhoods, these online battle rap videos could be used to predict potential violent altercations, which leads us to the policy implications of this research.

In terms of policy, police have already been actively monitoring and using social media sites, such as Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube to investigate and gather evidence of gang activity. Police and prosecutors have used photos and videos posted on YouTube to successfully prosecute individuals of gang-related crimes (Marisco, 2010), and in 2011 YouTube actually worked with several police departments nationwide to identify gang members and their illegal activities (Hanser, 2011). Clearly, agents of the criminal justice system are aware of the benefits of social media sites, like YouTube, for apprehending and punishing criminals.

We propose, though, that such sites could also be used to help prevent criminal behavior. Through our analysis of these videos, we were able to recognize themes of insults, threats and a pattern of escalation, confirmed by the SOWs, which were warning signs of a possible violent conflict. Further, we believe that community-based programs are an important component in utilizing social media to prevent gang violence. The premise of PIRC is com-
munity engagement and empowerment, and it was the partnership between PIRC and the Y.O.D. that allowed for the discovery of these underground battle rap videos. Cross-institutional efforts such as these, combining community-based organizations with city and law enforcement efforts to prevent and reduce violence, are of great importance and value. From these collaborative efforts and through information sharing, we gain knowledge that might not otherwise be discovered or understood, and police can be informed of worrisome online content for prevention purposes. There is greater potential then for saving more lives compared to using evidence gathered online after an assault or murder has been committed.

This study, of course, is not without its limitations. We used a purposive sampling technique in an effort to identify our set of underground battle rap videos. The sample size therefore is focused and small with only six videos from one city in our qualitative analysis. The small sample limits our generalizability so that we cannot say all gang members use social media in the way described. It may be that gang members in Pittsburgh (or even just these four gang members) are more connected online than others, but past studies do not suggest this is true (Decker & Pyrooz, 2011a; Sela-Shayovitz, 2012; Moule et al., 2013; Moule et al., 2014; Pyrooz et al., 2015). So while our study is more exploratory in nature, it still provides evidence of the utility of social media for gang members trying to achieve their expressive goals.

Also, like in all interview research, we are reliant upon the honesty and accuracy of our interview subjects. Our argument is built in part around the information we received from the SOWs and their knowledge of the context behind these videos. We found the SOWs to be incredibly forthcoming and have no reason to doubt their honesty or knowledge of the videos and events. Given that they have former connections to these gangs and still reside in these neighborhoods, we believe they are a reliable source of information on this subject.

Obviously, though, it is another limitation of our study that we were unable to interview gang members directly about these videos. It would have added valuable insight to talk to the gang members involved in these videos or even gang members affiliated with the rappers. Unfortunately, we did not have access to those gang members, in part because the violence discussed in this study made the environment too dangerous at the time. Thus, our analysis of the context of the videos and the violence that occurred around them are limited to the information provided by the directors and SOWs.

CONCLUSION

In this case study we explored a set of six underground battle rap videos posted on YouTube by four gang-affiliated rappers. With the assistance of the Pittsburgh Initiative to Reduce Crime, as well as the Youth Opportunities Development and their SOWs, we were able to show that these gang members
were using social media for achieving expressive goals of trading insults and threats. Through rap music and social media these rappers were provoking one another publically in a way that would demand, at the least, retaliation online according to the code of the street and collective norms and behaviors of gangs. We demonstrated that social media is a new bottle for old messages of disrespect, and that the new medium does not change the expectation of collective response to maintain status.

In the videos there was a clear retaliation back and forth, and the lyrics and violent imagery increased as each gang rapper responded to previous insults and threats. Further, gang members clearly perceived threats as collective threats against the group. Though specific individuals were the primary actors in the videos, they were joined by known gang affiliates to back them up as the threat escalated. Our research also supported the idea that retaliatory responses become more necessary when insults are between longstanding rivals (Papachristos, 2009). Lastly, while we cannot be completely certain given the limitations of the present data, according to word on the street conveyed by the SOWs, the insults and threats traded online through this set of videos was linked to two shootings and shows a possible connection between online gang behavior and violence, which has been hinted at in other studies as well (Van Hellemont, 2012; Decker and Pyrooz, 2011a).

We argue that, based on the types of insults and imagery found in this case study, similar types of insults and imagery could be used to identify potentially problematic online videos in the future with the help and assistance of community-based organizations and their members. It is clear from the present study that further empirical inquiry is needed to better understand the interaction between online and offline gang behavior and the impact that community organizations and monitoring social media can have in preventing any escalation of issues and violence. Relatedly, it would be interesting for future research to verify that current gang members perceive the difference in severity between the types of insults analyzed in our research. Street outreach workers, who are former gang members, made it clear that dry snitching insults were much more serious than superficial and reputation insults and required a definite, harder response. It would be useful to determine if current gang members support this distinction.

Finally, while past research has reported that gang members use multiple types of social media (Moreselli & Decary-Hetu, 2013), we found evidence that rival gang members’ communications with one another span multiple social media applications at once, creating a web of communication. As mentioned, gang members in our study responded in their videos to pictures posted on Instagram and to tweets on Twitter. Future research should delve deeper into this web of communication and investigate the way that gang members may interact through these multiple forms of social media.
Appendix 1

Battle Rap Chart

A 64 year-old grandmother accidentally shot at a youth football game on 10/13/12
Swerve is murdered on the East End 11/18/12

Blue: Rappers neighborhoods are cool with each other
Red: Rappers neighborhoods have a "traditional" feud/break
ENDNOTES

1 While gangs and terrorist groups differ in several important ways, including the facts that gang goals are often more symbolic rather than political or religious and that gangs involve a profit motive absent for most terrorist groups, there are similarities between the two groups. These groups are often composed of primarily male members, solidarity and collective behavior operate in both groups, and violence, which is often used to redress wrongs, is common in both groups (Decker & Pyrooz, 2011). Thus, the “axis of continuity across criminal, deviant, and extremist groups” means that studying the group process of gang members online may help to inform about the group process of these other groups as well (Decker & Pyrooz, 2011, p. 161).

2 Playing the dozens is less common among grown men, but when it is used, it is much more likely to provoke a fight and end in violence (Abrahams, 1962).

3 “Keeping it real” is a simple slogan that represents many complex ideas. According to Basu (1998), in one sense it means the artists continue to live by the principles of the code, which include making money and gaining respect. At a more general level, though, it also means staying true to yourself, not losing your identity, and not being fake—talking about what you know and experienced and not living vicariously through other people’s experiences. Real gangsters lived the life they portray in their lyrics, while studio gangsters make money singing about other people’s experiences.

4 While these rappers claim a reality to their violent lyrics, it is important to remember that not all rappers commit the violence they portray in their music. In the gangsta rap genre, exaggeration and figurative language are often used to boost sales. These conventions of the genre and industry often force rappers to adopt a violent style, but it is often posturing used as a marketing ploy (Nielson & Kubrin, 2014). According to Baker (2011), the commercialization of rap created an “uncomfortable double-dealing as gangsta rappers found it necessary to dwell somewhere between fact (‘I’m only telling it like it is’) and fiction (‘Of course I personally don’t do these things’)” (p. 237).

5 Though the majority of gang members in the Pyrooz (2014) sample joined as teens, he did discover that 17% of the sample experienced adult onset of gang membership.

6 In one sense, this online harassment of rival gangs is still similar to online harassment and cyberbullying that is common among ju-
Online harassment by the general youth population can include threatening messages being sent via email and instant message or posted on social media (Holt et al., 2012; Holt & Bossler, 2014). However, the general youth population is not immersed in the collective norms of gang culture that prize masculinity and reputation and demand a violent response to insults and threats. Thus, while gang youth behavior of taunting and insulting rival gangs may seem similar to non-gang youth that harass each other, it differs in that the collective norms of gangs require a violent response to such insults.

It is important to note that Anderson (1999) does not claim that all residents in these poor areas adhere to the code. He makes a distinction between “decent” families that believe in mainstream values and emphasize school and church as avenues for success and “street” families that prioritize respect and use violence to resolve disputes.

Interestingly, Stewart, Scheck, and Simons (2006) discovered that adhering to the street code exacerbates victimization. This echoes findings from Melde et al. (2009) who reported gang membership was associated with higher levels of actual victimization and perceptions of victimization risk, though lower levels of fear, compared to non-gang youth. Thus, the belief system of gang members that perpetuates violence, in part as a protective factor, actually puts them at more risk for victimization.

The particular videos we obtained were created by gang members. It is important to note that not all amateur rap and battle rap videos are created by gang members, and that rappers often must exaggerate a criminal lifestyle to sell records (Nielson & Kubrin, 2014). However, we purposefully selected battle rap videos posted by gang members so that we could examine the content of their videos and demonstrate a new way these gang members are achieving expressive goals through social media.

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Homeland Security in the Post-9/11 Era: Forced Compliance Along the Northern Border

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ABSTRACT
The border relationship between the U.S. and Canada has traditionally been very trusting, allowing for an ease of trade and travel. However, the terrorist attacks of 9/11 altered this comfortable association. Now, U.S. policy is geared toward protecting the homeland from illegal immigration and potential terrorist actions. In other words, for Americans, security concerns trump trade. At the same time, Canada remains concerned with maintaining an ease of trade and travel with the U.S. To do this, Canada has been forced to establish and implement increased security measures as outlined by U.S. officials, even though there is strong opposition from Canadian officials and stakeholders. This is largely due to the asymmetrical relationship that exists between the countries. Because of the contrast in size and power, the U.S. is able to dictate Canadian security policy at the border. This study examines the border policies since 9/11, particularly the Beyond the Border policy. Using personal interviews with officials and stakeholders in both Canada and the U.S., this study shows that the U.S. is co-opting Canada to increase its security initiatives to be in line with America concerns over homeland security.

INTRODUCTION
Prior to the September 22, 2001 terrorist attacks on the United States, the border relationship between the United States (U.S.) and Canada generally emphasized the unimpeded flow of travel, goods and services. Those seeking to cross the border for either business or leisure found it to be relatively effortless, with little attention paid to immigration and security concerns. Canada sought to maintain this open association since the U.S. was its

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largest trading partner and the source of a considerable portion of Canada’s economic base. Likewise, the U.S. also maintained the friendly relationship not only for trade purposes, but as a way to maintain a stable North America.

That uncomplicated association changed significantly after the terrorist attacks in 2001. Americans became focused on preventing another deadly assault and immediately implemented changes to increase security at all borders, including their northern border. While Canada initially supported the U.S., its attention remained focused on maintaining existing trade and travel flows. To the alarm of many Canadians, the U.S. demanded that Canada also make significant changes in its border policies. The Canadians have done so, sometimes at considerable social and economic costs to their country, as a way to appease American officials and ultimately return to a more trade-friendly border.

This paper is a qualitative analysis of the border relationship between the U.S. and Canada in the post-9/11 era with a focus on the most recent agreement called Beyond the Border. Specifically, we examine whether the U.S. is able to compel Canada to adopt tougher and costly border security measures by linking security issues with future trading opportunities. Scholars have not extensively studied how the U.S. has been able to use its power to influence security policies at the border since 9/11 in an effort to reduce the threat of terrorism and crime. While it is clear that many nations, like the U.S., have retooled and reconfigured their border policies to prioritize policing—as a way to keep out people who seek to cross national borders to carry out acts of violence—the process by which this shift has occurred and the transnational efforts to police “undesirables” remains largely unstudied (Andreas, 2003a). The current analysis is an attempt to fill the gap in the literature. Our findings indicate that American officials were able to shift border policy outcomes toward a more security-based approach because of the asymmetric relationship that exists between the two countries. This occurs despite cultural and policy differences regarding privacy, immigration, and trade issues.

LITERATURE REVIEW: POST 9/11 SECURITY CONCERNS AT THE U.S.-CANADA BORDER

Before the attacks on the Twin Towers and the Pentagon, border policies between Canada and the U.S. were informal, “politically successful policy failures” (Andreas 2003a, p. 2). In essence, the border agreements appeared to provide a heightened security to deter illegal drugs and immigrants from entering the U.S. In actually, the policies did little to significantly stop either one. Instead, the agreements only served to relocate the trafficking patterns to a different site on the border (Andreas, 2003a).

The terrorist attacks brought unprecedented attention to the need to protect the homeland (Andreas, 2003b) and U.S. officials sought to make tan-
gible border agreements with Canada that delineated authority and aligned enforcement with mutual surveillance (Konrad & Nicol, 2008). They pursued policies that would protect Americans from terrorist action and keep the homeland secure. The U.S.-passed Homeland Security Act and PATRIOT Act redefined border policies in these new, more concrete, ways (Drache, 2004). These new border security laws were seen as ways to limit territorial access to the U.S. and keep out perceived “undesirables” (Andreas, 2003b). At the same time, while the U.S. was focused on security concerns, Canadians were anxious about maintaining, or even increasing, trade with the U.S. In fact, the primary goal of Canadians remained the uninterrupted flow of people and commerce across the border (Barry, 2003; Drache, 2004; Konrad & Nicol, 2008; Molot, 2009; Bradbury & Turbeville III, 2008; Sands, 2009; Hussain, 2009; Globerman & Storer, 2009; Moens & Gabler, 2012; Hale, 2012).

While many of the new border security regulations were bilaterally conceived and deployed (Macpherson & McConnell, 2009), others were defined and passed in Congress without regard for Canada’s interests, despite the fact that American and Canadian interests “diverge strikingly” (Drache, 2004). Many of the new policies treated Canada as if it were a “satellite” nation, somehow distantly attached to the U.S. These policies often involved efforts to project American interests on Canada by applying American laws to their country, or even the systematic use of regulatory pressures to secure their compliance (Hale, 2012).

The U.S. was able to do this largely because of the asymmetric relationship between the Canada and the U.S. Tarlton (1965) explains an asymmetric relationship as one in which there are “differences in interest, character, and makeup that exist within the whole society” (p. 869). The states with more power are able to dominate the smaller states (Womack, 2003/2004). A nation’s power is dependent on the size of a state’s population, in addition to its natural resources, territory, economy, and military strength (Adamson, 2006).

The power imbalance that exists between the U.S. and Canada must be appreciated to understand the nature and dynamics of security policies that have developed (Hale, 2012). There are multiple components to the asymmetric relationship. First, the U.S. is much larger in size than Canada, meaning that it has vastly more people and economic resources. Second, the U.S., being the world’s predominant military power, has more influence within the international political system than does Canada (Hale, 2012). Third, Canada is significantly more reliant on the U.S. for trade than the other way around, having developed a long-standing trade dependence on the U.S. (Hegre, 2004; von Hlatky & Trisko, 2012).

Below, we begin by providing an outline of the methodology that we utilized, followed by a brief history of U.S.-Canada border relations. We then proceed to examine U.S.-Canada border relations since the tragic events of 9/11.
METHODOLOGY

To carry out this project we conducted a series of semi-structured elite interviews with officials from both the U.S. and Canada revolving around the American-Canadian border relationship. The use of elite interviews provided several methodological advantages. Elite opinion is an efficient means to gather a large amount of information to analyze the complex issue of decision-making regarding U.S.-Canada border relations. Knowledgeable stakeholders with an intimate knowledge of the issue area could offer a varied and compelling account of differing perspectives and goals regarding the U.S.-Canada border. Semi-structured elite interviews also provide considerable flexibility. That is, answers revealed by preliminary questions allow the interviewers the opportunity to adjust to new premises and shape following questions accordingly (Babbie, 2004; Leech, 2002). Moreover, field research of this nature can allow the interviewer “measures with greater validity than do survey and experimental measures” (Babbie, 2004, p. 308).

Perhaps the most significant disadvantage of elite interviews is the possibility of some interviewees appearing more credible than others and thereby influencing the understanding of the topic (Berry, 2002). Additionally, error may be introduced to the project if the researcher only attains access to particular types of respondents (Goldstein, 2002). The best approach to reduce these problems is to increase the size of the interview pool.

To compile our sample frame we identified interested stakeholders in the Beyond the Border agreement. That is, by carefully analyzing media coverage of the event we identified key American and Canadian negotiators, interest groups, and various government bureaucracies and diplomats assigned to implement and promote the agreement. Furthermore, we examined American and Canadian legislative committee assignments to identify political representatives, their staffers, and oversight committees that had a vested interest in the northern border. Finally, to expand our insight on the topic, we also identified former politicians and diplomats who were previously involved in formulating U.S.-Canada border negotiations. In the end, we were able to interview over 75 individuals representing a wide range of stakeholders, including politicians, Congressional oversight committee staffers, government negotiators, senior government bureaucrats, diplomats, interest group representatives, and other stakeholders (see Appendix A for details). We believe that this relatively large interview pool helped minimize the issue of systematic error that can occur from the elite interviewing process (Berry, 2002; Goldstein, 2002).

To carry out the task of conducting elite interviews with northern border stakeholders, we devised a number of semi-structured interview templates. Each one was designed for a specific type of stakeholder—whether the interviewee was American or Canadian, a political representative, a senior government bureaucrat, or representative of an interest group. Appendix
B provides an abbreviated example of an interview question guideline that was utilized during the project. The interview guide was designed to last for approximately 30-45 minutes, reflecting the general allotted time provided by the interviewees. Utilizing a semi-structured elite interviewing methodology provided the flexibility to tease out and adjust to additional themes and insights that were not anticipated prior to the interview process. As will be discussed in greater detail, our interviews identified several recurring points of border contention between stakeholders of the two countries—these included privacy, immigration, and differences regarding the balance of trade and security issues.

History of U.S.-Canada Border Relations

The Canada-U.S. border—at a length of over 5,500 miles (8,850 km)—is the world's longest international border. The two countries boast 200 years of amenable relations: developing close economic ties and becoming each other's largest trading partner. For many years, the U.S.-Canada border was a thin, relatively weak legal boundary. But over time, the border relationship evolved in response to the practical requirements of trade, security, and sovereignty issues, as well as the changing political climate.

One of the earliest treaties that regulated trade at the border was the Reciprocity Treaty of 1854, which permitted free trade in natural products between the countries, but not in manufactured goods (Molot, 2003; Roussel, 2010; Preston, 1999; Sands, 2009). In the mid-to late 1930s, security concerns replaced trade as the foremost concern when U.S. President Roosevelt and Canadian Prime Minister King created a Permanent Joint Board of Defense (PJBD) to address the interdependent nature of security concerns between the countries (Roussel, 2010). After WWII, relations between the U.S. and Canada continued to strengthen as Canada was viewed by the Americans as a reliable source of materials needed during the Cold War era (Molot, 2003). In return, Canada received favorable economic treatment by the Americans in exchange for its willingness to contribute to continental and North Atlantic defense (Berry, 2003). The focus on international defense continued in 1958 when the North American Aerospace Defense Command (NORAD) was created as a way to establish an integrated air defense capacity.

In 1965, President Johnson and Prime Minister Pearson continued to advance the integration of the two countries by negotiating the Automotive Products Agreement that helped to eliminate tariffs on vehicles and parts. In 1989 President Bush and Prime Minister Mulroney further integrated their economies when they signed the Canada-U.S. Free Trade Agreement (CUSFTA), and then the 1994 North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) between Canada, the U.S. and Mexico. These policies enhanced Canada's access to the U.S. market and had the impact of significantly increasing Canadian economic dependency on access to the American market (Berry, 2003; Bradbury & Turbeville III, 2009). Consequently, Canada continued to lobby offi-
cials in Washington for policies to strengthen trade relations. In 1995, Prime Minister Chrétien and President Clinton signed the “Canada-U.S. Accord on Our Shared Border” (the Shared Border Accord) to increase cooperation in immigration and to increase trade (Bradbury & Turbeville III, 2009). The Shared Border Accord (SBA) made changes in the way Customs and Immigration officials cleared passengers and trucks by use of “harmonized” technology, regulations and procedures (Salter, 2010). In 1995, the two countries also signed Partners in Protection, or PIP. This allowed private industries to develop individualized plans with the Canadian Border Services Agency (CBSA) about their company’s security measures, allowing products to cross the border more easily (Bradbury & Turbeville III, 2009).

While these agreements generally focused on trade, border security concerns garnered increasing attention in the U.S. In 1996, the U.S. Congress passed the Illegal Immigration Reform and Immigrant Responsibility Act, requiring all foreigners to register as they left or entered the U.S. Concerned about the potential for gridlock at the border, Canadian businesses, legislators, and authorities attempted to overturn the provision, but were not successful. To mitigate U.S. security fears, the “Border Vision Initiative” was signed in 1997 by President Clinton and Prime Minister Chrétien. This increased information sharing between Customs and Immigration authorities. The leaders also agreed to a Cross-Border Crime Forum to increase cooperation in dealing with organized crime groups (Salter, 2010; Preston, 1999).

Another agreement emerged as a way to improve trade, called the U.S. Transportation Equity Act for the 21st Century (TEA-21), passed in 1998. This contained $700 million for facilitating economic growth, trade, and the movement of people and goods between border regions. Additionally, in 1999, the Canada-U.S. Partnership Forum, or CUSP, was established. The agreement’s “guiding principles” included: “[a] streamlining, harmonizing and collaborating on border policies and management;[b] expanding cooperation to increase efficiencies in customs, immigration, law enforcement, and environmental protections at and beyond the border; and [c] collaborating on common threats from outside the U.S. and Canada” (Seghetti, 2004, p. 4). In general terms, CUSP focused on infrastructure improvement and harmonizing regulations to facilitate trade and travel between the two countries.

The relationship between Canada and the U.S. returned to the forefront in December 1999, when U.S. Customs officers arrested Ahmed Ressam, an Algerian living illegally in Canada. Bomb-making materials were found in Ressam’s car as he attempted to enter the U.S. from British Columbia. Ressam’s arrest reinforced the need for more border security, but it also brought attention to Canada’s refugee policy, which was seen by the U.S. as weak (Berry, 2003). Despite U.S. concerns about immigration and security, Canada continued to emphasize trade over security matters. In 2000, Canada approved a 6-year, $2.65 billion (CAD) package to improve transportation infrastructure. A significant portion of that money, $665 million, was allocat-
ed for the Strategic Highway Infrastructure Program (or SHIP) to improve trans-border corridors (Bradbury & Turbeville III, 2009).

When George W. Bush became president in 2001, relations between the U.S. and Canada deteriorated again (Nossal, 2009). Early in his administration, Bush announced that he would make his first foreign visit to Mexico rather than Canada. Canadian officials were concerned that American economic and political attention was shifting from the northern to southern border (Berry, 2003). But American officials would soon shift their attention to securing both borders after that fateful day of 9/11.

Aftermath of the 9/11 Terrorist Attacks

In the morning of September 11, 2001, terrorists attacked the United States. Almost immediately, U.S. officials sought to prevent additional dangerous goods and undocumented people from entering the U.S. and causing more harm to the country (Vance, 2008). They temporarily closed all transportation hubs and ports of entry at the borders, including all airports, seaports, and land borders with both Canada and Mexico. It was not long before the border was re-opened and traffic was again allowed to pass, but this time with much tighter security procedures and increased restrictions, higher fees, and more inspections (Ackleson, 2009; Canadian Chamber of Commerce, 2008).

The Americans imposed to unilateral changes to security at the Canadian border in the months after the attack. More border agents were added to carry out extensive searches of cars, trucks and cargo. Congress passed a law that required every traveler to show passports to enter the country and a new federal agency, the Department of Homeland Security (DHS), was created to keep the homeland safe from further attacks.

Initially, many Canadians felt a sense of solidarity with the U.S. after the attacks. When American airspace was shut down, hundreds of U.S.-bound airplanes landed at Canadian airports. The passengers were provided with food and a place to stay until they were able to board airplanes again. Hundreds of Canadians left flowers, flags, notes and candles around the iron railings outside of the American Embassy in Ottawa and thousands of people gathered on Parliament Hill in a show of support (Thompson, 2003).

However, the frame of mind began to change when President Bush, in a speech to Congress, said that America “has no truer friend than Britain” (Bush, 2001). He later thanked many countries for their assistance, but omitted Canada. The omission was a cause for concern among Canadians, some of whom were offended and some of whom feared that Canadian border concerns regarding the flow of goods would be ignored in the future (Thompson, 2003). Tensions were also fueled by false allegations that the men responsible for the attacks entered the U.S. through Canada, giving the impression that Canada was a safe haven for terrorists. Canada was accused of having lax immigration policies because it allegedly did not fully staff the border
and did not support the infrastructure needed to screen individuals coming into the United States. U.S. Attorney General John Ashcroft furthered this belief when, in speaking about the Ressam case, he described the Canada-U.S. border as a “transit point” for terrorists (Pardy, 2011).

Ashcroft’s statements were given more credence when a report was published by the U.S. General Accountability Office which indicated that the security threats from the border with Canada were higher than threats coming from the Mexican border (2010). Moreover, in May 2011, the American Commissioner for Customs and Border Protection gave testimony in Congress that potential terrorists were using loopholes in Canadian immigration laws to enter the U.S. and carry out illegal acts (Pardy, 2011). Relations between the two countries reached a low point when the Canadian government, under Prime Minister Jean Chrétien, supported the United Nations over the U.S. and did not participate in the invasion of Iraq. This angered the Bush administration, while garnering widespread approval in Canada (Young, 2007).

In December 2001, Canada launched an initiative to improve border security. The resulting Smart Border Declaration was an attempt to improve border security while allowing for the flow of low-risk people and goods to cross the border (Berry, 2003). The accompanying Action Plan provided a list of specific action items that would be taken by both governments, separately and jointly, to protect the security of the border while also allowing for trade and travel (Sands, 2009). The Action Plan required that Canada and the U.S. create similar screening criteria for travelers, develop compatible data and communications systems, and share critical information on the movement of goods and people.

Among the action items in the plan were the development of common biometric identifiers for travel documents, expedited clearance for preapproved travelers, prescreening of air passengers, compatible immigration databases, border infrastructure improvements, coordinated law enforcement operations, intelligence sharing, and an exchange of fingerprint data (Sands, 2009). Other aspects of the Action Plan included hiring additional port staff officers and Canadian Border Services Agency (CBSA) personnel as well as Border Patrol officers (Bradbury & Turbeville, 2009). Improvements to infrastructure and the building of joint border monitoring stations were incorporated as well (Moens & Gabler, 2012).

A key element of the Smart Border Declaration was the development of harmonized systems for expediting border inspections. These included Free and Secure Trade (FAST), CT-PAT and NEXUS (Seghetti 2004; Moens & Gabler, 2012). The FAST program is a joint program geared toward expediting border cargo clearance and reducing delays for truck drivers and carriers who are pre-approved and low-risk. Likewise, the NEXUS program is a joint CBP/CBSA program that allows travelers who are pre-approved, pre-screened, and low-risk to be processed more quickly at border crossings. Applicants
for the NEXUS program must be a citizen of either the U.S. or Canada (or a permanent resident of either country) and must not have been convicted of a criminal offense in any country (Bradbury & Turbeville, 2009).

Relations between the two countries were again tested in late December, 2002. An FBI alert was posted for five men of Middle Eastern descent who had allegedly entered the U.S. through Canada using false documents. This led to further allegations that Canadian border security was inadequate. Although it turned out that the alert was based on false information and was withdrawn, the events clearly showed that there were lingering perceptions that Canada’s security was lacking (Berry, 2003).

In January 2005, Canada, the U.S. and Mexico agreed to the trilateral Security and Prosperity Partnership of North America (SPP). The agreement was a plan to coordinate the security policies of the three countries under the presumption that the economy and security of the countries were linked together. Under the SPP, the three governments would establish ten working groups that would address security cooperation and ten other groups that would focus on issues of prosperity (Sands, 2009).

The SPP had three key pillars to support increased security and trade. Specifically, there would be improved security from external threats, strengthened internal security, and increased economic growth for all countries (Ackelson & Kastner, 2009). The SPP would accomplish this through increased intelligence sharing, cargo preclearance procedures, “e-passports” (biometrically enhanced documents), and “e-manifests” (which required truckers to transmit cargo information electronically to U.S. Customs and Border Protection) (Ackelson, 2009; Gilbert 2007; Ackelson & Kastner, 2009). In the long run, the SPP failed to deliver any tangible benefits and was dismantled in 2009 by President Obama (Ackelson & Kastner, 2009).

These events set the stage for President Obama’s administration to create a new agreement with Canada. In 2011, Prime Minister Harper and President Obama met to discuss relations between the two countries. The result was a new joint agreement called Beyond the Border: A Shared Vision of Perimeter Security and Economic Competitiveness. This was a long-term agreement designed to “thin” the border and to “pursue a perimeter approach to security, working together within, at, and away from the borders of our two countries to enhance our security and accelerate the legitimate flow of people, goods, and services between our two countries.” (Beyond the Border, 2011).

**Beyond the Border**

The Beyond the Border Action Plan (BTBAP) builds on the Smart Border Action Plan and the SPP. The primary goals are to facilitate the flow of goods and people across the border, and to simultaneously maintain the security of the border. Thus, the agreement seeks to make it easier to conduct trade and travel to create and sustain jobs, while at the same time making it more difficult for terrorists and criminals to threaten the security of the U.S. (Embassy
of the United States, 2011). Moreover, the BTBAP is a way to reduce costs related to the border. By increasing joint operations through intelligence sharing, money can be saved by both countries (Moens & Gabler, 2012).

Under BTBAP, offshore cargo that was bound for either the U.S. or Canada will be inspected and cleared once for both countries. Additionally, the countries agreed to cooperate more fully on passenger pre-screening and the “no-board” lists for visitors seeking to enter either Canada or the U.S. Canada agreed to update its baggage inspection technology and harmonize its screening of luggage to match systems in the U.S. Canada also agreed to use radio frequency identification technology, already utilized in the U.S. which allows vehicles to cross land borders more quickly, to share data concerning land border crossings, and to collect exit data on outbound international flights in order to create a database with the information. Data can also be shared about those individuals who have been denied visas or those who have been denied entry because of earlier criminal convictions (Moens & Gabler, 2012).

The BTBAP has resulted in permanent changes to border policies between the U.S. and Canada. The interviewees agreed that there had been a significant move toward tighter security at the northern U.S. border. For example, a staffer of a Senate security oversight committee articulated this general consensus by noting that border security was always a concern but now, “the U.S. has a very high goal for security.” A Canadian minister described it as “a very different border” since 9/11. In fact, Canadian government officials and interest representatives overwhelmingly expressed the belief that the U.S. has gone too far in securing the border. A representative of a transportation association expressed it this way: “The U.S. was a big proponent of airline security before 9/11. The U.S. is now stark raving mad about it.”

ANALYSIS

It quickly became apparent in the interview process that many Canadian officials and stakeholders were apprehensive that many provisions of BTBAP and other increased security measures implemented at the border in the years after 9/11 would continue to obstruct trade flows. Canadian interviewees pointed out that their nation’s interests were being ignored by Americans as they pursued new homeland security regulations. Many expressed that Canada was being compelled to institute the policies as a way to ensure continued trade with the US. Interviews revealed three primary issues of concern—privacy, immigration, and trade. Below these concerns are described in more detail.

Privacy Concerns

Canadian and American stakeholders expressed different perspectives regarding the privacy rights of citizens and others living in their countries. For instance, one American Civil Liberty Union (ACLU) official acknowledged
that Canada has stronger privacy laws and higher expectations of privacy than the US. While the U.S. is willing to share personal information with many other countries for security reasons, the official explained, Canadians are more hesitant. Moreover, the U.S. tends to “spread information more widely—we share information with many groups when we get it, but Canadians do not.” According to the representative, Canada “has what is called ‘data protection authorities’ and ‘privacy officers’ who work to protect an individual’s privacy against government intrusion, which the U.S. lacks.” After 9/11, the ACLU official pointed out, “there is widespread concern in Canada about the new U.S. security policies because they involve more sharing of personal information.”

An official from Public Safety Canada agreed, and stated that under President Bush, when the primary focus was on security, many in Canada were skeptical and felt that “Canadian officials were making perilous concessions on information sharing, especially because the shared information could be used for things other than safety concerns.” This official said, “Canadians prioritize our privacy. We have a different read of privacy and security threat. The U.S. policy framework imposed on Canada is a problem.”

These concerns over privacy were echoed by representatives from a Canadian transportation group who explained that as part of the new policy for information sharing, “the U.S. is requiring Canada to provide information that they have no right to share under Canadian law. If the group shared the information, they broke Canadian laws; if they refused to share the information, they violated U.S. law. Moreover, if they sent the information, under Canadian law, they could face legal action for human rights violations.” Consequently, a former Canadian diplomat argued that Canadian citizens would balk at sharing information, stating that “Canadian citizens won’t accept wholesale shipping of records across the border. The thought of this gives Canadians the ‘shivers.’”

A representative of the Canadian Privacy Commissioner also expressed concern about privacy in the post-9/11 border policies. In fact, the individual explained that Canada has had “three major federal inquiries as to how Canada treats privacy and the new relationship with the U.S. Canadian public opinion has been shaken by the extent to which information was shared in a non-controlled fashion. This struck close to home for many Canadians. While most Canadians understand that the economic needs of the country require integration of goods and people, if it requires more exchange of information, it could potentially ‘set Canadians off.’” In the end, Canada, according to the stakeholder, has a “different read of privacy and security threat, so the policy framework imposed on Canada is a problem.”

Other representatives from Canadian civil liberties associations expressed similar beliefs. One civil liberties advocate argued that the new information sharing measures in the post-9/11 era “do not make Canada more
secure, and Canadians do not support them because when Canadians share information, they lose control.” The official expressed concern because under the new policies, if travelers go through Canada, the information belongs to the US. The U.S. can then give that information to a third country, even without Canada’s approval. At that point, the information is not protected and there is nothing Canada can do to protect its citizens.” In the end, the official explained, Canada is losing control of their personal information. He further alleged that the U.S. lacked respect for Canada’s independent policy choices. For example, officials in the U.S. may deny a passenger from boarding a plane, even though Canadian officials allow that person to board (even if he is not going to the US). He was troubled that the U.S. is collecting biometrics on everyone, and he worried what that could lead to if the biometrics were allowed to become available to other countries.

Thus, it became apparent that privacy is one area where many Canadian interviewees felt that the U.S. is “running the show” and is seeking to modify Canada’s policy, regardless of Canadian attitudes about sharing personal information. According to one former official with Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE), while protecting privacy is important to Canadians, it is more important for Americans to secure the border from potential criminals and terrorists. He explained, “There are times when information needs to be shared to help law enforcement succeed at protecting the country.” This was reinforced by a DHS representative, who said that “Canada needs to reform their system because it is critical to share information with other countries to prevent terrorist attacks. They need to do it for themselves.”

Immigration

Immigration policies became an important national security concern for the U.S. after 9/11, and, at the same time, a controversial new law enforcement tool for homeland security (Andreas, 2003b; Adamson, 2006). However, our interview results suggested differing views regarding immigration policies. According to one DHS official, “the countries have different rules for immigration in that Canada allows people into their country that the U.S. would not, and vice versa.” An official from a Congressional oversight committee agreed that “Canadians have a more generous asylum policy than the US, and some seek to abuse this, including potential terrorists.” At the same time, a Canadian ministerial official justified Canada’s more generous immigration policies by explaining that “many Canadians want a liberal way of dealing with refugees.”

After 9/11, Americans became increasingly suspicious of foreigners entering the U.S. As a Canadian Border Patrol representative explained, “Americans now consider all non-Americans (even Canadians) as a threat to the U.S. security, which serves to justify tighter security measures at the border.” As a result, “a border that used to stress a relatively seamless flow of trade and people is increasingly viewed as a security risk.” Many American
officials, however, have a different explanation. A member of a Congression-
 nal oversight committee explained that “American apprehension with Can-
da’s immigration policies is connected to terrorists who are able to cross
the border easily.” He pointed to the 1999 Christmas bomber as an example
of this. This difference in the perception of security threats from foreigners
was aptly summarized by a former ICE agent, who explained that “Canadians
don’t have thousands of aliens coming into their country, so immigration and
border safety is simply not in their mindset. Consequently, Canadians often
think that no threats from foreigners exist.”

Some interviewees noted that Canada is strengthening their immigra-
tion laws to assuage American fears. One representative from a Canadian
business association noted that “while the U.S. sees Canadians as being lax
with immigration, Canada is trying to reform their immigration policies for
their own benefit as well as for the US.” Yet, many American stakeholders do
not believe that Canada has gone far enough. For example, one staffer from
a House oversight committee suggested that the U.S. will never be happy
that Canadians are doing enough with immigration. He stated that “Canada
needed to pass policies so that they did not become a ‘terrorist haven.’” Many
American stakeholders continue to perceive Canada’s immigration policy as
“lax” and remain wary of terrorists abusing Canadian immigration policy as
a way to enter the U.S. to do harm to the American homeland.

Security Versus Trade

The third area where U.S. security concerns appear to trump the inter-
ests of Canadians is trade. Canadian and American stakeholders disagreed
as to whether security issues or trade issues should take priority. This find-
ing reflects the general population of the two countries. A poll taken in 2002
emphasizes this discrepancy. When adults were asked if the goal at the bor-
der should be ease of trade or improved security, 59% of Canadians selected
improved border security, whereas 72% of Americans chose this. Conversely,
ensuring ease of trade and travel at the border was chosen by 36% of Canadi-
ans but only 22% of Americans (Cole, Kincaid & Parkin, 2002).

Most individuals interviewed agreed that American concerns with secu-
ritv have resulted in intensified security on the northern border since 9/11,
and that these policies will be long lasting. One former Canadian official
predicted that “the border between the U.S. and Canada will never be like
it was prior to 9/11—Americans would never be receptive to that.” Another
Canadian official agreed, saying that 9/11 “had a permanent effect on border
policy because it changed the concept of a foreigner.” He explained that “Ca-
nadian agencies will need to maintain security concerns, regardless of fund-
ing concerns.” Yet another Canadian official, a former diplomat, explained
that “the psychological impact of 9/11 was a game changer in Washington.
Even today, American politicians are dealing with an environment that is
still 9/11 centric.” He expressed it this way: “Things got turned upside down
and never got straight.” A representative from the U.S. Coast Guard likewise stated that “security is now the top priority for the country and the organization.” Thus, officials from both countries acknowledge that border policies in the post-9/11 era dictate that “security trumps trade,” and the changes are likely to be permanent.

On the other hand, Canada's foremost concern is maintaining access to the U.S. market, especially since Canada is extremely dependent on trade with the U.S. A Congressional oversight committee representative explained that “while the U.S. has a very high goal for security and sees this as the primary task, Canadians see it the other way. They want to move the flow of goods easily across the border.” These increased security measures implemented after 9/11 by the U.S. were referred to as a “thickening of the border” by former Canadian Ambassador Michael Wilson (Ackleson, 2009).

Many Canadian officials expressed concern and exasperation regarding the continued status of a thickened border. One minister explained that “many business groups are unhappy with the current border situation and are concerned that trade and travel will be indefinitely hindered by the security policies.” A transportation group representative from Canada noted, “Any violation, regardless of severity, requires firms participating in expedited cargo clearance programs to re-apply for program approval.” The representative argued that such “excessive security measures imposed unreasonable costs at the expense of trade goals.”

Many Canadian officials expressed the fear that America's new philosophy that "security trumps trade" would become the permanent fixture on the northern U.S. border. An American policy analyst described one problem in simple terms:

"With its new security policies, the U.S. has choked off tourism in Canada. Many people who occasionally crossed into Canada (maybe once a year or less) will no longer do so because they are now required to have passports and will experience long wait times at the border. Families who have children also will not travel into Canada because passports are expensive and must be renewed every five years. Canada relies on tourism from the United States for a significant income."

This explanation was supported by a number of current and former Canadian diplomats, who unsuccessfully sought to postpone American legislation requiring passports since only a small percentage of Americans had passports.

A Canadian diplomat explained his perspective. He said,

"There is now a tendency of Americans to ignore the trade side of the border relationship. While Americans want
Canadians to be more security-minded, most Canadians have a different goal. Instead of focusing primarily on increased security, Canadians seek to return trade and travel policies [the ease of trade and travel] to what they were prior to 9/11. They do not feel that security concerns should trump trade.” Canadian officials unanimously agreed that the border has thickened post 9/11, which has had a severe economic impact in both Canada and the US. One official expressed the view that while “there was an integrated economy prior to 9/11, that situation no longer exists.”

**Who is driving the car?**

Although our interview results exposed Canada’s concern for preserving cross-border trade flows, many stakeholders expressed the belief that the U.S. is compelling Canada to accentuate increased security needs. Indeed, several American officials made this clear. For example, one American policy analyst explained that the U.S. “wants Canada to become the U.S.” He expounded on this, saying that “U.S. officials want Canada to do what America wants and they are not willing to concede much to Canada.” Another U.S. official from a Congressional oversight committee said it clearly: “We want to transform Canadians into Americans.” While this particular view may be extreme, the interview results did suggest that American security interests were dominating the U.S.-Canada border debate.

While stakeholders identified a number of reasons why the two countries diverged on the balance between security and trade, unsurprisingly, the responses tended to emphasize the trauma of the 9/11 attacks. For instance, a former American ICE agent explained that “Canadians don’t think about security as Americans do because they were not exposed to the acts of terrorism and other crimes on 9/11.” Similarly, a DHS representative agreed that Canadians “did not feel the impact of the terrorism like the U.S. and lack the same feelings of urgency for a secure border.” Canadian officials and interest group representatives also acknowledged that the impact of 9/11 was very different for the two countries. One said, “While Canadians watched the events of 9/11 and felt badly for the US, the attacks didn’t directly affect them.”

A Canadian official intimately familiar with the BTBAP negotiating process explained the divergence in a somewhat different way. He said that “there are cultural differences between the U.S. and Canada. The U.S. has been the victim of “bad guys” and even today continues to be a significantly bigger target than Canada.” He pointed out, however, that even though Canada is not immune to violence (they have arrested dangerous people and have had terrorists in their country), they:

“do not think of security like the U.S. does. Conversely, the Americans think about it a lot. Since 9/11 most Americans are acutely aware that dangerous people exist, but
Canadians don’t think that way. As such, the political climate in Washington is a border strategy that emphasizes security over trade. In the end, the different histories and cultures of the two countries affect their perceptions and the policies they prioritize.

Consequently, although there are ardent differences between the U.S. and Canada on issues of privacy, immigration, and trade, the U.S. expects Canada to revise their security policies to match U.S. demands. This view was specified by both American and Canadian officials. A representative of the DHS pointed out that “much of Canada’s security infrastructure is not up to American standards because it is old and needs to be replaced.” The official went on to explain, “While Canada does well with what they have, we [the U.S.] want them to do more.” This representative further indicated that while “we [the U.S.] think Canada can stop the “bad guys” at points of entry, they do not have the capability to do that.” Areas that Canada needed to strengthen included biometrics and enrolling more people into the known-travelers program. In the end, the official agreed that America is setting security standards for Canada. As a former Canadian diplomat stated it creatively: “Canadians acknowledge the U.S. is driving the car, and Canada gave them a bigger car.”

A Canadian official complained that the U.S. is “demanding that specific equipment be placed in airports.” The official stated that the equipment is manufactured in U.S. and that U.S. citizens/agents must operate it rather than security-cleared Canadians. He noted that “Americans have a lot of muscle and they are not afraid to push it around.” Similar concerns were expressed by another Canadian official, who stated that “the U.S. is one of the most aggressive countries in their security requirements, and are the most outspoken when it comes to setting regulations. Americans want to regulate flights not just in the U.S., but elsewhere. The U.S. is steamrolling Canada.”

A former agent from ICE agreed that the U.S. is “suggesting” additional security policies to Canada. The agent expressed that “Canada may not be embracing change at the pace we (the U.S.) would like, but the Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP) is open to new ideas and that on the whole, the Canadians are getting better and are open to change.” The agent described actions that Canada must take to meet U.S. standards, including “establishing stronger laws that let policing and security agencies go after the bad guys by creating stronger laws on money laundering and other crimes, and establishing a stronger asset forfeiture program.”

Canadian officials expressed similar concerns that the U.S. is dictating Canadian security policies. One official claimed,

America views Canadian security agencies as understaffed and wants to see more Canadian agents at some border crossings. Canadian diplomatic officials felt that the U.S. will en-
sure that Canada implements the same operating systems as the U.S. at the border, and that Canadians will participate in increased information sharing [despite Canadian concerns].

Interview responses tended to converged around the theme that America is demanding additional Canadian investment in border security because American officials believe that Canadian border security policies are currently insufficient. Numerous Canadian ministers and administrators agreed that Americans’ main fear is that Canadians cannot stop the bad guys from entering the country. A leading member of an opposition party in Canada supported this notion when he described a perception among Americans that “Canada is lax on immigration, and is therefore a threat to American security.” Another Canadian ministerial official agreed, but also partly blamed the U.S. for that misperception because U.S. politicians and officials, including former U.S. Secretary of Homeland Security Janet Napolitano, “falsely reported that the 9/11 hijackers came across the Canadian border. Even though untrue, many Americans continue to blame Canada for letting the terrorists into the U.S., leading to the perception that there is a need for greater security at the border.”

Forced Compliance?

Despite differences in views concerning the necessity for more border security measures, Canada has implemented substantial initiatives geared toward strengthening its border security. Canada has allowed for more provisions for information sharing about travelers between the two nations, and has made changes to their immigration policies, making it tougher to enter the country and easier to track questionable individuals. Canada has also opted to reorganize its border law enforcement structure: in December 2003 Canada merged Canada Customs, Citizenship and Immigration Canada, and the Canadian Food Inspection Agency to form the Department of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness Canada to manage the border. It also restructured the Canadian military command system and tightened immigration and refugee policies to allay U.S. fears that terrorists could enter the U.S. illegally from Canada (Bradbury & Turbeville, 2009). Essentially, the Canadian government mirrored the new institutional structures and policy initiatives launched by the United States.

Canada has made these changes as a way to ease American fears that Canada is remiss in its level of security (von Hlatky & Trisko, 2012). The priority for Canadian officials has become “reassuring the United States about border security without impeding trade” (von Hlatky & Trisko, 2012, p. 69-70). Canadian officials believed that they had to alleviate American security concerns as a way to convince the American government that Canada was a conscientious, security-minded country, which would then, in turn, convince Americans to minimize trade disruptions along the border. Thus, they made required changes in the hopes that Americans would agree to once again
“thin the border.” An official with the Congressional oversight committee supported this perception. He said that “Canadians know their relations with the U.S. are important. The Canadians need to convince Americans that they are making significant changes in border security in order to appease them and protect trade relationships.”

Many Canadian stakeholders confirmed this deduction. For example, Canadian diplomats explained that Canada has spent a lot of money to upgrade their security structures (e.g. RFID readable, biometrics, harmonizing portals, surveillance techniques) and shared information with the U.S. to reassure the U.S. that they could enforce security at the border. Further, it was necessary for Canada to “create a package that included both security and trade policies.” The interviewee went on to say, “As soon as the U.S. sees this commitment from Canada, they will be comfortable.” Moreover, the officials explained, “Once Canada gets the security measures put into place, the physical crossing will be made easier.” Another Canadian Diplomat said simply, “This is what we have to do.” Likewise, another Canadian manufacturing association official echoed this by saying that the “Canadians have to do a PR campaign to convince Americans that Canada can do it. They need to convince the U.S. that Canada is doing what it can to alleviate concerns about terrorism.” This sentiment was echoed by another Canadian business official, who explained that “not only has the U.S. put more money into security measures, Canada has also done so.” But he also noted that there is a need to convince the U.S. of that: “Once the U.S. sees that Canada has made multiple security changes, they will be more comfortable and once again open up trade and travel.” But he observed that Canada “may need to do more to increase their security policies to make the U.S. feel safe.”

**An Asymmetric Relationship**

A significant reason why Canada is “jumping on board” with American demands to improve their border security really boils down to asymmetry (Hale, 2012; von Hlatky & Trisko, 2012). The relationship between the two countries is uneven, both in population size and economic status. Canada’s foreign and international economic policies are highly dependent on the United States. They are much more dependent upon trade with the U.S. than vice-versa. As a Congressional oversight committee member commented, “They [Canada] rely on trade with the U.S. and certainly don’t want to see a repeat of a border shut down. So they’ve made the required changes.”

On the other hand, American foreign policies are more diversified. They have more global alliances and relationships. Americans tend to put their relations with Canada relatively low on their list of priorities. Some interviewees in Washington have even referred, lightheartedly, to the relationship as “weeding the garden” or “condominium association issues,” implying that they take little time, effort, or attention.
Thus, Canada is complying with United States’ demands for increased security measures at the border as a way to protect a free flow of trade (Andreas, 2003b). Canada has been forced to establish and implement increased security measures as outlined by U.S. officials, despite reluctance from Canadian officials and stakeholders. Because of the asymmetrical relationship between the countries, the U.S. is able to impose their interests on Canada. While many Canadians seek to return to a robust trade relationship (Molot, 2009), they feel that “security has trumped trade” in deference to American priorities.

Mitchell (1991) helps us understand that the asymmetry between the U.S. and Canada has influenced the course of post-9/11 border policy. The U.S., as the dominant party, has been able to reduce Canada’s role in defining border policy. Although Canada has been given symbolic participation, the U.S. has been able to define the policy. The asymmetry has also affected Canada’s ability to put their goals on the political agenda, particularly with regard to privacy and immigration. Many in Canada agree that the U.S. has forced their will on the Canadian people, largely ignoring their demands for increased privacy and more lenient immigration rules. A representative from the ACLU described it in starker terms: “In the end, we [the U.S.] bully them [Canada] to do what we want, but they are unable to bully us to do what they want.”

DISCUSSION

It has been over ten years since the 9/11 attacks. In that time, the easy relationship between the U.S. and Canada that once existed has changed dramatically. Priorities for both countries shifted, and the previous “low-maintenance approach to managing the border is over” (Young, 2008, p. 48). Now, the U.S. is motivated by protecting the country from further terrorist action rather than easy trade and travel. As the Congressional oversight representative said, “In the time immediately after the attacks, security trumped everything for the U.S.”

Conversely, many Canadian elites would like to see trade trump security, or at least see the two concerns balanced. A Canadian transportation official explained that they would like to “get Americans to re-write their policies so that they can meet their security goals while at the same time maintain trade.” Indeed, multiple Canadian officials expressed the need for the U.S. to see trade and security as one issue together. One Canadian minister argued that it is not one or the other anymore, but rather, security and economy are the same thing. A strong security policy will complement a strong trading relationship.

It is doubtful that the U.S. will give up its security focus in the future. The DHS official made this clear: “While trade is certainly important, we can’t have trade without security. There can’t be too much security — there is nothing bigger or more important than the security of the country.” The U.S. will undoubtedly continue to dominate Canadian security policy at the bor-
der, using its size and economic strength to force Canada to comply with its demands. Canadian officials will need to back U.S. objectives on border security and immigration in return for comfortable trade arrangements (Barry, 2003; Dobson, 2002).

As we approach the future, it is essential that officials from both countries launch new programs that encompass both the United States’ imperative for homeland security as well as Canada’s need to maintain trade (Andreas, 2003a). Officials will need to create agreements on critical issues in order to continue to have an effective border (Farson, 2006; Andreas, 2003a). A Canadian minister supported this notion when he said that the idea is “now to have both security and trade, because they can coexist.” He also warned that the U.S. “has to show a commitment to trade because if the economy isn’t working, we won’t have money to increase security. Where Canada has a commitment to address security issues of U.S., the U.S. has to show commitment to trade.” Another Canadian transportation group reiterated this, saying that “we can have both.”

Luckily, American officials and interest groups are not ignorant of Canada’s need for trade and they recognize the need to maintain the flow of goods with Canada. Many Americans interviewed acknowledge this. In particular, a former ICE agent claimed that the U.S. “knows how important trade is to Canada.” He agreed that trade is important to both countries because it “helps increase revenue in both nations.” The representative of the ACLU reiterated that an open border is important. He explained that “good relations lead to more security because we both want more security. So the U.S. understands the importance of trade with Canada.”

Today, both the U.S. and Canada understand the need to cooperate to further both trade and security concerns. A trucking association official said that “while the two countries sometimes have different ways of doing things, they need to work out a solution.” The DHS official concurred, saying that the two countries “must work together so we are prepared to respond to another attack. If that were to happen, we must be able to respond quickly and get things going again.” One official with an agricultural group explained that “if the countries prepare together for a possible future attack, it will help build trust. If there is another attack, he said, “an imaginary steel door will slam down at the border. To prevent this, the countries need a plan that is designed for faster business resumption, with a slower or selective ‘slamming.’”

Canadians seek to maintain high trade levels, and many Canadian officials agree that security does not have to be a priority over trade. A representative from Canada’s Steel Producers said that these two things are not mutually exclusive. One transportation representative argued that “there is a way to have both, and that trade and security can coexist.” Another travel representative stated, “If security is allowed to trump trade, it is an overreaction and the terrorists have won.” An overwhelming majority of Canadian
ministers, politicians, interest associations, and the public believe that trade should be of at least equal importance as security at the border.

It is critical that industry groups support the new policies in order to have long-term effectiveness. This may mean that industry groups must be given a voice in the implementation of future policies (Hart, 2010). Over time, differences will be worked out, and public confidence in these programs will expand. As this happens, the border will be “reinvented” and a new border culture created (Konrad & Nicol, 2008).

Despite the asymmetric relationship between Canada and the US, there can be no way to predict which country will control the agenda going into the future. The extent to which one country can dominate is dependent upon their willingness to devote time and resources to the task. One state may be more concerned about an issue than the other (von Hlatky & Trisko, 2012). Whatever policies emerge, it is important to note that any new security policies have perceptual and symbolic effects that have political ramifications that are often ignored. These new laws are not only about keeping out undesirables, but are “also about projecting an image of moral resolve and propping up the state’s territorial legitimacy” (Andreas, 2003b, p. 110).

Future research in this area will delve more into the impact of the new security policies at the border. For example, future research may determine how effective the new security policies in both Canada and the U.S. are in preventing terrorism and protecting the homeland from “undesirables.” Future research may also determine the effects of the new security policies on trade and the impact on the Canadian economy, if any. Other research may show how the public’s support (or non-support) of the increased security policies affect implementation of laws. These research studies would show the long-range implications of the shift in border relationships after 9/11.

CONCLUSION

The September 11 terrorist attacks on the U.S. forever altered the border between the U.S. and Canada. While Americans have always been concerned about protecting the country’s borders, they are now more concerned with keeping terrorists and other undesirables out (Andreas, 2003b). At the same time, Canada remains focused on trade.

The balance between trade and security is an issue that will more than likely continue to evolve, depending on the needs of the two countries and potential threats from outsiders. The focus of the U.S. will continue to be security, whereas Canada will focus on trade. The leaders of the two countries must continue to work together to find a fair balance between the two concerns rather than continue with an unbalanced relationship. As noted by a representative of DHS, “Beyond the Border is not about managing the border. But by working together we will create a better border.”
APPENDIX A

Sample of Semi-Structured Interview

Border Battles: Does Security Trump Trade?

Interview Question Guidelines

INTRODUCTION

Let us start by providing you with some context regarding our project. Our research interview today concerns the state of Canadian-U.S. border relations—namely, what is happening to the strong bilateral trading relationship that has traditionally existed between our two countries. Since 9/11, the Canadian and American governments have expressed the need to secure their joint border from security threats, while finding a way to maintain the legitimate flow of people, goods, and services. Through a series of personal interviews with government officials, political representatives, corporate executives and political interest group leaders (in both countries), we are studying what factors have become most important in post-9/11 border initiatives, and how this will affect the current “thickening” trends of the Canadian-U.S. border. (Funding for this project has been provided by the Canadian Studies Faculty Research Grant Program).

Post 9/11 Border Initiatives

Before we begin our discussion of Beyond the Border, we would like to get some comments about the earlier collaborative initiatives that were implemented after 9/11 (i.e. Smart Boarder Accord, Customs-Trade Partnership Against Terrorism, the Western Hemisphere Travel Initiative, the Shiprider Agreement Program) to accomplish the goal of securing the joint border while promoting the legitimate flow of people and trade.

In your opinion,

1. Were any of these earlier initiatives effective? Did your organization support these initiatives?

2. What specific problems continued to hinder the flow of people, goods, and services?

3. Was border security still threatened?

Beyond the Border: Consultation Process

Now we would like to focus on the Beyond the Border negotiation process. After setting up the Beyond the Border framework in February, 2011, the Canadian government announced that it would begin a consultation process to solicit the views of Canadian stakeholders on the proposed project.
4. Did American government officials make a similar effort to consult stakeholders? If not, did you find that the U.S. government made a sufficient attempt to consult with stakeholders?

5. If not, do you believe that such a process should have been instituted? (How might it have helped the process?)

6. What political representatives and/or government agencies, if any, did your organization reach out to (i.e., did you identify key members of the government/representatives (Border States) to talk to)?

7. Did you use other avenues to advocate your position (i.e., coordinate activities with other interest groups)?

8. Did this differ from your past efforts regarding Canada-U.S. border cooperation? How so?

9. Did you attempt to sway lawmakers or talk to similar organizations across the border? What factors led to your decision to try to contact these particular politicians/groups?

10. Do you believe that the media sufficiently covered the issue?

   It's not unusual that negotiations are held behind closed doors; however, it has been suggested that the negotiation/discussion process for Beyond the Border was too secretive.

   11. Do you believe this was the case? If so, why was the process kept so close to the vest?

   12. Should the government have consulted with Parliament/Congress and the public more frequently?

Prime Minister Stephen Harper has stated that this is the most significant agreement since the North American Free Trade Agreement. President Obama stated that expanded trade with Canada was an important component of future economic growth. Yet, the language of the Beyond the Border Action Plan made it clear that the agreement was not intended to constitute an international treaty under international law. Instead, the implementation of the Action Plan will be subject to normal budget, legal and regulatory mechanisms in each country.

13. Why do you think a comprehensive treaty was not negotiated (i.e., similar to NAFTA)?

14. Do you believe that a comprehensive treaty should have been the goal? Why/why not?
Beyond the Border Action Plan

In launching the Action Plan, government officials declared two fundamental guiding principles: (1) each country would respect the other's sovereign right to act independently in accordance with their own interests and laws; (2) the promotion of the principles of human rights, privacy, and civil liberty by both countries would be essential to the rule of law and effective management of the perimeter.

15. In your view, does the final agreement reflect these principles? (If the answer is "no," please explain.)

16. Was this issue a priority for your group when you were lobbying the government?

Since 9/11, we frequently hear an argument that enhanced border security must come at a cost of a thickening border. In other words, security concerns must trump trade.

17. Do you believe that this argument is a false one?

18. Do you believe that the Beyond the Border Action Plan can enhance security and increase trade efficiency at the same time? If not, do you believe that we can ensure both security and trade? (Explain.)

19. Does the Beyond the Border Action Plan set up a framework for further progress in years to come, or is it likely that the border will continue to thicken anyways?

As we already touched upon, the implementation of the Action Plan will be subject to the normal budgetary process. Thus, infrastructure upgrades and other program initiatives depend upon the willingness of the two governments to spend the required capital on the various aspects of the project.

20. Will both sides commit the necessary money to implement the Action Plan?

21. Do you believe that different spending priorities will hinder its implementation (i.e., security vs. trade infrastructure)? (i.e., Will the Obama administration spend the needed political capital on this deal?)

22. How can stakeholders maintain the pressure to ensure that the process will move forward?

23. Are there other obstacles to the implementation of this Action Plan? (e.g., another terror attack/economic stagnation/change in administration in national or state level/pushback from opposing groups)
Some have claimed that Beyond the Border marks a major development in the Canadian-U.S. border relationship. However, others counter that it simply creates a series of “new pilot projects” or builds upon existing cooperative ventures. For example, information sharing was already occurring, the Shiprider program was well established, and the two countries coordinate aspects of security through NORAD.

24. What is your view on this subject—is this plan a significant development?

25. On a scale of 0 to 10, where 10 is as positive as you can be and 0 as negative as you can be, how do you rate the likelihood that the Beyond the Border Action Plan will enhance the flow of trade between Canada and the United States?

26. On a scale of 0 to 10, where 10 is as positive as you can be and 0 as negative as you can be, how do you rate the likelihood that the Beyond the Border Action Plan will enhance security between the two countries?

Officials have yet to decide exactly what information will be shared about Canadian and U.S. citizens when they cross the border.

27. Do you believe that the final decision will sufficiently address information privacy concerns (e.g., biometric information sharing)?

28. Do you believe that the Americans trust the Canadians enough to stop the “bad guys” at the perimeter? (Explain.)

29. How can the success of the program be quantified?

30. With respect to regulatory cooperation, do you fear a “race to the bottom”? Can you identify any specific areas?

31. Does the Action Plan provide adequate accountability in the process?

32. Should Parliament/Congress be given more oversight responsibilities? That is, will MPs have the ability to assess the value and risks of the agreement?
### APPENDIX B

**Overview/Sample of Interview Contact List**

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<th>Political Representatives</th>
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<tr>
<td>Various national political representatives and staffers from both countries</td>
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<td>Present and former diplomats from both countries</td>
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<th>Interest Groups</th>
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<tr>
<td>Air Transport Association of Canada</td>
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<td>American Automotive Policy Council</td>
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<td>American Civil Liberties Union</td>
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<td>Association of Canadian Port Authorities</td>
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<td>Binational Alliance</td>
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<td>Canadian American Business Council</td>
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<td>Canadian Chamber of Commerce</td>
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<td>Canadian Council of Chief Executives</td>
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<td>Canadian Society of Customs Brokers</td>
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<td>Canadian Steel Workers Association</td>
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<td>Erie County Industrial Development Agency</td>
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<td>Hudson Institute</td>
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<td>National Airlines Council</td>
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<td>National Conference of State Legislators</td>
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<td>National Retail Federation</td>
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<td>U.S. Chamber of Commerce</td>
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**Interest Groups cont.**

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<th>U.S. Conference of Mayors</th>
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<td>U.S. Travel Association</td>
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<th>Government Ministries and Departments</th>
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<td>Canadian Border Services Agency</td>
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<td>Canadian Ministry of Agriculture and Agri-Food</td>
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<td>Canadian Ministry of Citizenship and Immigration</td>
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<td>Canadian Ministry of International Trade</td>
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<td>Canadian Ministry of Public Safety</td>
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<td>Department of Homeland Security</td>
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<td>House Committee on Foreign Affairs</td>
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<td>House Committee on Homeland Security</td>
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<td>House Committee on Small Business</td>
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<td>Senate Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs</td>
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<td>Senate Committee on Small Business and Entrepreneurship</td>
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<tr>
<td>U.S. Coast Guard</td>
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ENDNOTES

1 This project was supported by funding from the Canadian Faculty Research Grant Program 2011-12. The grant allowed us to interview approximately 75 individuals in both countries during the summer and fall of 2012. Most asked to have their responses be anonymous, allowing them to speak freely during the interview process.

2 Numerous Canadian officials noted that this initiative was designed to assuage U.S. northern border security fears after the 9/11 attacks. It was hoped that increased border security cooperation would minimize future security policies that restricted the flow of trade and people.

3 Canadian government officials interviewed by the authors expressed the belief that the three-country agreement failed to adequately promote Canadian interests owing to the two very different problems facing each distinct border. Specifically, southern border concerns focused on migration issues while the northern border was denoted by trade issues. Consequently, Canadian officials were eager to resume the two country approach to addressing border relations with their southern neighbor.

4 Several other Canadian officials expressed the concern that heightened border security policies were also to justify higher border taxes to raise American tax revenue, thereby adding further barriers to the flow of trade and people along the northern border.

5 Many officials and representatives interviewed believed that this was an ongoing public relations battle for Canadian border negotiators that was difficult to overcome. Moreover, several of those interviewed specifically believed that a number of American politicians continued (and will continue) to use border insecurities as a means to scare the American public to maintain political electoral support. A recent example of this was Republican presidential hopeful Scott Walker, who raised the possibility of the construction of a fence along the U.S.-Canada border.

REFERENCES


AUTHOR BIOGRAPHIES

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When the Watchers Are Watched: An Interpretive Phenomenological Analysis of Body-Worn Cameras

David A. Makin*
Washington State University

ABSTRACT
This research explores the individual construction of the body-worn camera (BWC) within what would be labeled as an average size police agency. Using a pre- and post-implementation qualitative design and leveraging interpretive phenomenological analysis as the analytical strategy, this research explores the nuanced reaction to this technological diffusion within the agency. Results reveal global themes spanning a continuum of negative and positive reactions to the diffusion, with an overwhelming acceptance of the device and individual construction of how best to use the device. While providing an initial lens of analysis for future researchers, the research includes considerable unanswered questions concerning what the diffusion of this technology holds for officers, agencies, and communities.

INTRODUCTION
Calls for greater police accountability abound as new means of surveillance have diffused throughout society (Goldsmith, 2010). These calls for accountability vest great power within the community, increasingly able to record encounters between police officers and the community. Historically, communities have struggled with holding officers accountable for their actions in the absence of documentation. As current events demonstrate, a state of distrust or diminished trust exists between many police agencies and the communities they serve. Accessible video technology and an efficient means of wide distribution afford the community the means of holding individual officers accountable for their actions. The advent of video evidence, recorded by community members, has led to profound changes in policing and heralded in tremendous progress.

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As Goldsmith (2010) articulated, manifesting accountability within the golden age of video technology transitioned accountability from the court of law and other institutionalized channels to the court of public opinion and, by extension, those within the community with this technology. All too vivid is documentation of South African Police beating a protestor with a disability, police officers in Hong Kong using violence to disrupt pro-democracy protests, the historical account of the LAPD attack on Rodney King or the all-too-recent videos capturing inappropriate use of force and police brutality across the United States. However, this diffusion, while incredibly important to usher in reform, may reinforce police misconduct being the norm (Erpenbach, 2008).

The increase in video documentation of atypical police incidents has created an environment wherein these brutal, graphic, and exceptional reflections of the perception of police are common and increasingly used to generalize police practice. A common search for “police brutality” on the popular flash-video website YouTube, for example, produces over four-hundred thousand videos in 0.31 seconds. This does not reflect four-hundred thousand unique incidents of police brutality. Rather, YouTube serves as a central repository, with each video providing documentation and thus reinforcement of police brutality as the norm.

Nearly two decades ago, Ericson (1995) suggested that police, when threatened with a power imbalance, would overcome to swing the pendulum and reclaim control. As Chan (2001) writes, of the many reasons information technology emerged, one outcome was a means of reasserting control. If the pendulum were swinging as Ericson (1995) suggested, the police would seek to reassert themselves and establish control by providing the context to frame incidents. Subsequently, police administrators face an unusual challenge as the pendulum of power shifts away from the agency, once able to establish the narrative by framing the context, to the community. In fact, in the context of the United States, in an era in which the community increasingly controls the context (Goldsmith, 2010), police agencies have taken steps as a means of reasserting their role in establishing the narrative.

The subsequent growth in surveillance technologies within large municipalities may suggest agencies lack trust in the community. The decision to implement body-worn cameras is a rational augmentation on the logic that implementation may address whatever issues plague the organization, be they actual or merely perceived. However, the response by police administration and city governments may inform and promote poor policy, facilitating short-term gain and resulting in long-term economic and social consequences. More specifically, the administrative response may pursue body-worn cameras (BWC) without considering the impact the device may have on officers, the agency, the community served, or society. Plans for implementation may be made without rigorous evaluation of the technology, leading to poor implementation and unintended consequences (White, 2013).
Currently, research looks from the outside in, establishing dangerous precedent for merely accepting implementation of the BWC without question. In the limited implementation studies on the device, the primary means of assessment relied upon survey research or output measurements—reduction in complaints and use of force (see White, 2013; Farrar, 2013, ODS Consulting, 2011). It is the intent of this research to start on the inside, specifically exploring the individual construction of the BWC as used by officers. Therefore, this research becomes exploratory, undertaken as a means of understanding the implementation of the BWC within an organization.

Recognizing the intersectionality of individual construction of technology, this study frames its analysis through the contextual emergence of the BWC as an accountability mechanism. Subsequently, this research provides a general genealogy of imaging as an accountability mechanism and a general overview of police misconduct, a behavior most often linked to the need for stronger accountability mechanisms. Using this analytical frame, I then introduce the officer perspective, and why the emergence of the BWC is an attempt to regain control, reassert trust in the organization, and reduce personal liability.

**IMAGE TECHNOLOGY AS AN ACCOUNTABILITY MECHANISM**

Prior to the growth of the internet, news organizations and public interest groups relied on photography as a means of holding agencies accountable for their actions (Kappeler et al., 1998). One of the most prominent times in which image technology was used to hold agencies accountable for conduct was in the 1960s. Consider the photograph taken by Bill Hudson in 1963 of a civil rights demonstrator in Birmingham attacked by a police dog. The initial report prompted no investigation. However, presentation of the photograph prompted an investigation and a public apology from the agency. Furthermore, the famous 1967 Newark riots, which lasted five nights and resulted in numerous cases of police brutality, 23 dead, and over seven-hundred injured, produced among many, a powerful black and white image involving two officers walking out a young black male from a home, covered in blood. This photograph epitomized in many ways the reality of those who felt oppressed.

Immortalized within these works are visual depictions of the history of police brutality acting as important sources of cultural transmission for normalized police brutality (Kraska and Kappeler, 1997). The police, while admitting excessive force in certain situations, tried to explain the context within which they occurred—offering them not as a systemic issue of excessive force and misconduct but instead as a tragic response to a devastating event. In many ways, police administrators and individual officers responded by suggesting that these incidents were a rational response to a set of irrational circumstances.
These images represented and reinforced the perception of police as prone to misconduct and excessive force. These images provided proof that, in many incidents, officers engaged in misconduct, which then prompted national inquiries seeking redress. While larger social forces prompted the national inquiries, the role of imaging as an accountability mechanism did have an impact on the perceptions of communities, driving public outcry and subsequent political involvement.

**Video Recording & Accountability**

While a single image can convey a tremendous amount of information, a video provides a visceral recounting of an incident. Very few people have forgotten the video of the brutal beating Rodney King endured at the hands of the LAPD. Likewise, the video of a restrained protestor being repeatedly shocked with a Taser while on the ground has lasting appeal to those who contest the use of the device or challenge policy to increase its threshold placement on the continuum of force.

As cell phones became more compact and the ability to record video became a standard feature, the ability for citizens to record incidents and engage in “citizen journalism” increased (Attia, Aziz, Friedman, & Elhusseiny, 2011, Mansour, 2012). Unlike photography, video would push the pendulum of power towards the community. However, it was not until the advent of social networking, co-occurring with the availability of video recording devices and accessible internet, that the power of the community would tip even more (Attia, Aziz, Friedman, & Elhusseiny, 2011).

**Social Networking and Accountability**

Over the last decade, the amount of information available has increased and the amount of users on the internet has expanded exponentially to a staggering 2.8 billion people (Internet World Stats, 2014). Social networking, as an accountability mechanism, focuses on the ability for users to share their experiences—be they real or fabricated. The two primary mechanisms this occurs through are social blogging and social media websites (i.e., news stories selected and voted upon by users) like Reddit, Nowpublic, and digg. Currently, the capacity for citizens to act as an accountability mechanism is reflected in the speed with which users can “tweet!” or Instagram their daily interactions and the ability of users to disseminate information (in audio, visual, and text) across any time or place via smartphone (Attia, Aziz, Friedman, Elhusseiny, 2011, Bhuiyan, 2011, Mansour, 2012).

**POLICE MISCONDUCT AS THE CATALYST**

**Police Misconduct**

Initially, agencies addressed misconduct via improvements within recruitment, selection, academy training, field training, and supervisory monitoring and review (White, 2007; Chan, 2003; Manning, 1997). Despite
improvements in these areas, incidents of misconduct within agencies reaffirmed the belief that misconduct is a systemic issue amplified by sociopolitical and technological factors. For example, consider the myriad of videos available concerning the Rampart CRASH Unit investigation, video footage of Occupy Wall Street protests and inappropriate use of force complaints, isolated incidents pertaining to closed-circuit video feeds, and the all-too-vivid recordings of officer-involved shootings of unarmed citizens. Proliferation of this footage reinforces the perception that police misconduct is endemic. However, these perceptions are contrary to research demonstrating serious misconduct as statistically low considering the tremendous volume of police-citizen interactions (Baker, 2002).

Decades of research demonstrate misconduct is not a systemic issue. Rather, misconduct is a product of lax organizational and supervisory oversight, officer isolation, victimism, the emergence of an “Us vs. Them” mentality, and the unique local historical, economic, and political issues of the community (Manning, 1997; Skolnick & Fyfe, 1993; Delattre, 1989). The isolation experienced by officers and the nature of police-citizen interactions foster opportunities for misconduct (Baker & Carter, 1994). This can occur via modeling of other officers’ conduct, developing strategies for “what works” (Chan, 2003), and acting with a lack of supervision (Walker & Katz, 2002; Rubinstein, 1973; Reiss, 1971).

When serious issues of misconduct occur, agencies often reexamine the mechanisms that could have uncovered the problem or, as critics may offer, “prevented” the incident. This may result in the formation of committees, additional training and organizational oversight (Ivković & Haberfeld, 2015), implementation of citizen-review boards (Walker, 2001), additional rules to govern interactions (Manning, 1997), and the deployment of integrity tests (Roberts, 2005; Punch, 2000; Skolnick & Fyfe, 1993).

Supervision has been the primary accountability mechanism for police misconduct (Walker & Katz, 2002). However, a combination of patrol staffing and limited supervisory roles within agencies has made it difficult for an ideal level of supervision. The importance of this accountability mechanism is seen in the research of Weisburd et al. (2000), in which 90% of surveyed officers agreed that effective supervision prevents police misconduct. More specifically, when patrol sergeants effectively carry out supervision, there is a noted decrease in police misconduct (Klockars, Ivkovich, Harver, & Haberfeld, 2000; IACP, 1989).

If the greatest internal accountability mechanism is supervision, then agencies and communities may look to the BWC as the technological panacea to the absence of patrol-sergeant-supervised interactions. What follows is an overview of the mobile video system (MVS) and the pilot program initiating the diffusion of the BWC across a police service. Both implementations occurred at the height of criticism of police practice.
Mobile Video Systems

As a means of addressing increasing complaints and allegations of racial profiling, the Department of Justice’s Office of Community Oriented Policing Services (COPS) created the In-Car Camera Incentive Program (IACP, 2004). This program created funds for agencies to deploy the in-car camera within patrol vehicles. The initial cameras were stationary and had a fixed field of view, making them ideal for traffic stops but not as effective for recording other police-community interactions.

A National Institute of Justice report noted that prior to the COP funding initiative, 3,400 (11%) of state police and highway patrol vehicles were equipped with in-car cameras (IACP, 2004). The IACP (2004) found that in the 3-year period following the funding initiative, there was a considerable increase in implementation of the in-car camera, with over 21 million dollars in grants dispersed to agencies. The implementation rate as of 2004 was over 17,500, which represented nearly 72% of total state patrol vehicles (IACP, 2004).

From the internal accountability perspective, the IACP (2004) report noted several dramatic findings, which included “improving agency accountability”. Agencies utilizing the videotapes as a component of supervisory review noted a reduction in officer complaints (IACP, 2004). Officers utilizing the systems reported they believed the system increased safety and they noticed a positive change in citizen behavior when citizens were notified the interaction was being recorded (IACP, 2004). Citizens expressed the systems made them feel safer, though they did note they wanted to know when they were being recorded (IACP, 2004).

From an internal accountability perspective, the problems with the MVS primarily related to the general lack of policy governing the utilization of the system (IACP, 2004). There was a wide range of discretion in the utilization of the device (a reduction in accountability) and officers’ had concerns that the device was primarily a tool for monitoring performance (IACP, 2004).

In addition to these noted problems, the utilization of the MVS and subsequent retention of video recordings created additional challenges. How would an agency approach Freedom of Information Act requests for videotapes of specific incidents? Currently, some agencies still utilize videocassette recorders and the process for examining the footage takes considerable resources. As agencies transition into digital recording, viewing footage is becoming less resource intensive; however, increased requests could increase resources expended. This interaction effect is noted in the work of Chan (2001) pertaining to information requests. In addition, digital video recording is often met with skepticism. As noted in the IACP (2004) report, “a Tennessee jury requested that a patrol car be brought into the court as evidence as they were concerned with the safeguards in place to protect against alteration of the video” (p. 50).
Skepticism within the community coupled with a lack of policy governing the utilization of the MVS prompted the IACP to issue a policy recommendation. The IACP (2004) recommends policy similar to the American Bar Association (ABA) and Justice Project’s policy recommendation concerning the recording of custodial interrogations. The IACP (2004) policy recommends the use of the mobile video system in all priority responses, all vehicular pursuits, all prisoner transports, all crimes in progress, and all traffic stops (IACP, 2004). In addition to mandating recording of these specific situations, the recommendation includes a statement governing the recording of the totality of the incident. Current technology allows for the recording of an entire 12-hour shift. However, the IACP notes that the utilization of the MVS should only occur during police-community interactions with no need to record routine patrol.

BODY-WORN CAMERAS

Prior to describing evaluations of the BWC, it is important to describe the device. According to the official definition, body-worn cameras are mobile audio and video capture devices that allow officers to record what they see and hear. Devices can be attached to various body areas, including the head, by helmet, glasses or other means, or to the body by pocket, badge or other means of attachment (such as in-car on the dash). They have the capability to record officer interactions that previously could only be captured by in-car or interrogation room camera systems. (NIJ, 2012)

There are several different models of devices in use today. In fact, the National Institute of Justice identified eighteen different models (NIJ, 2014). The devices range from shoulder-mounted and head-mounted to gun-mounted and taser-mounted. Mounting can occur to the belt, lapel, the head via a headset, or as an attachment to sunglasses. Models range in size, from a deck of cards for the entire recording device, to a small recording camera attached by a cord or Bluetooth to the storage medium.

Recording resolution ranges from 640x480 to high definition resolutions of 1920x1080. Recording life varies considerably from 1.5 hours to 12 hours with standby time covering an entire shift at the lowest end to well over a week (NIJ, 2012, p. 27). The primary BWCs in use today feature evidentiary safeguards by way of security hashing and user tracking as means of ensuring data is not manipulated and ensuring the authenticity and integrity of the videos. While all devices include date and time stamping of footage, other tasks, such as tagging specific details of the interaction (e.g., case number) and locating those taggings within hours of footage, remain time consuming (NIJ, 2012). Storage of evidence occurs either on the evi-
Evaluations of the BWC

In 2007, the Home Office commissioned an evaluation of a pilot program involving the deployment of head camera devices. The device utilizes a small video camera recording to an internal compact computer drive. The report, titled *The Plymouth Head Camera Project*, noted several initial findings concerning officer safety, reduction in crime, improved crime detection, and increased prosecution. In fact, in the context of officer safety, researchers identified an 18% reduction in officer wounding (Somer, 2007). Additionally, agencies employing the device noted a 40% reduction in complaints, specifically for incivility and excessive use of force (Somer, 2007).

Initial analyses of pilot studies undertaken in Orlando, Phoenix, Mesa, and Rialto suggest implementation of the BWC yielded positive results. Results of the Mesa and Rialto studies suggest a 60% decline in complaints against officers (White, 2013). This tremendous decrease in claims had a profound impact on the agencies’ resources. Additionally, the Rialto evaluation indicated that use of force by officers decreased by 50% (White, 2013). Research on officer perceptions by Jennings, Fridell, and Lynch (2014) indicated police officers generally supported the device and believed it could improve their fellow officers’ behavior, their behavior, and even that of the community.

Unfortunately, while these studies provide some insight, the varied research designs, implementation strategies, protocols, and policies limit their generalizability. For example, initial results suggest that arrest rates increase, because officers are more likely to make an arrest and those arrests are more likely to be charged and to result in a guilty plea (White, 2013, Somer, 2007). However, this has not been corroborated by other studies. Moreover, a widespread technological diffusion of this level necessitates careful planning and a political and administrative commitment to consider all perspectives prior to implementation. It is for this reason that the present study explores the officer perspective, allowing them a voice on the inevitable implementation of the BWC.

METHODS

Recognizing technology is an individual, organizational, and social construction, this research uses a qualitative methodology employing Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA). As summarized by Smith (2011), IPA provides the necessary framework for qualitative data analysis when attempting to gain an insider perspective into a phenomenon while recognizing the shaping of that interpretation by the researcher. While other qualitative methods concern a specific context (i.e., the nature of the phenomenon), IPA replaces the phenomenon as the object of analysis, instead focusing on the *person* experiencing the phenomenon—or in this case, the person experi-
encing the body camera. IPA acknowledges the lived and shared experiences of participants, offering insight into how participants make sense of those experiences (Smith, 2011; Smith, 2004; Smith & Osborn, 2003).

Participant selection focuses on purposive sampling, selecting a small and homogenous sample for understanding the divergent and convergent experiences of specific populations (Brocki & Wearden, 2006). The primary means of participant selection includes the participant’s ability to inform the research questions (Aresti, Eatough & Brooks-Gordon, 2010). Generally data is obtained from these small samples through semi-structured individual interviews, although focus groups (Tomkins & Eatough, 2010), email interviews (Murray & Harrison, 2004), internet forums (Chappell, Eatough, Davies & Griffiths, 2006) and diary entries (Smith, 1999) have been analyzed using IPA. Researchers have also found success in applying IPA to open-ended questions on written surveys (Epstein & Ogden, 2005).

**Summary of Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis**

IPA is a double hermeneutic methodology, meaning the interaction between the participant’s narrative and the researcher’s interpretation is co-occurring as the construction develops (Smith & Osborn, 2003). IPA then is both social constructionist and phenomenological, and it is typified as a Grounded Theory approach. Unlike traditional interview methodologies, the production of an objective record of particular phenomena is not the intention of IPA. Rather, the detailed lived experience of a homogenous sample is the desired outcome (Smith, 2011). These lived experiences are not a straightforward data set ready for analysis, as IPA is not a simple descriptive methodology. Subsequently, the researcher must complete the interpretation of this information. It is this interpretation setting IPA apart from other qualitative methods, which also acknowledge that researchers cannot separate themselves from the findings of their research.

As Smith (2011) details, it would be wholly careless to assume a researcher could suddenly remove themselves from the meanings of the world around them. Subsequently, the interpretation of data within the framework of IPA acknowledges the inability to deny the preconceptions a researcher may hold about their world and its influence on the outcomes (Larkin, Watts & Clifton, 2006). For example, I have spent the last decade studying technology implementation within agencies and most recently finished an analysis of high-volume genetic forensic practice from the officer perspective. My knowledge and experiences working within police agencies affords me a unique vantage point for describing the “real reality” of my respondents (Guba & Lincoln, 1994). However, my capacity for describing this “real reality” is situated within the contextualization of the implementation of the device. It becomes not my interpretation of the perception, but, rather, the interpretation of the phenomena according to my respondents.
Recognizing this basic underlying assumption, IPA provides a methodological framework incorporating a systematic approach to the development of thematic conceptualizations from these experiences rather than broad generalizations. This thematic analysis develops over the course of multiple reviews of the interview material beginning with the development of basic themes, representing commonalities and distinct points, then clustering into organizing themes, and finally coalescing around global themes or superordinate themes (Smith & Firth, 2011; Braun & Clarke, 2006; Attride-Stirling, 2001). The initial thematic analysis is descriptive. However, as clustering occurs, the researcher begins to interpret the organizing themes as they develop. As these organizing themes develop, the researcher identifies superordinate themes, merging the descriptive (what is said) with the theoretical (what is interpreted). The outcome of this process is a heuristic tool of global themes suitable for future research.

As a means of illustrating the process of thematic analysis, consider the following. The context of this conversation concerns the removal of the in-car camera during the implementation.

**Interviewer:** Because the in-car cameras are being removed, right?

**O3:** Yeah, which I find personally frustrating. Just because if you ever watch any of the police videos or any of the shows, if you see an officer walking up to a car and a person starts shooting at them or doing something, they’re scrambling all over the place. I mean, they’re not necessarily facing what’s going on; they’re running around, trying to find cover, trying to do what’s necessary. But you have that broad view from that dash-cam; it catches it all. And with the other camera, now you’ve got: what did the officer see, plus the whole situation. I don’t see why you wouldn’t want both, personally.

The initial analysis of the conversation highlights frustration, a loss of control, potential liability concerns, and fear for personal and professional safety—stemming from the removal of the in-car camera and the inability for the BWC to capture the totality of the incident. While the initial thematic analysis provides ample insight into the phenomenon, missing are the organizing themes, which overlap the extraction of the basic themes. As the researcher obtains more information, additional basic themes and organizing themes develop, providing insight into the phenomena. Lastly, analysis of these organizing themes produces a set of global themes. Specific to the above conversation, the global themes that emerged included missing the nuances of the moment, officer credibility, technology concerns, and establishing the entire context.

**Analogous Research**

As introduced prior, currently no research exists on the BWC experience of police officers and IPA as a methodology is rarely applied in the field of
policing. However, studies on the lived experience of technology use in the field of medicine provide valuable insights into the change in culture and behavior that can occur because of technology adoption. While the field of medicine may seem atypical to the experiences of police, the similarities are considerable. Both occupations carry considerable liability, require immediate decisions, and involve tremendous internal and external accountability and oversight. Alasad (2002) examined the lived experience of critical care nurses and their use of technology in an intensive care unit. The researcher analyzed interviews with 22 nurses and 240 hours of observation. The author found the use of technology helped nurses feel in control because it gave them constant access to critical health information about their patients.

Although stressful initially, nurses emphasized the importance of developing competence in technology. Initially, there seemed to be so much difficulty adjusting to the use of so many different pieces of equipment that it detracted from seeing the patient as human. As nurses gained experience, they were better able to balance the attention given to the patient and the technology used to monitor the patient's health. Many nurses felt once they adapted to the use of technology they greatly relied on it and were not sure how they could function without a constant flow of readily available information. Alasad's study illustrates the ways nurses change their behavior and adapt their rituals because of technology adoption. As discussed within this study, officers underwent the same changes and made similar adaptations.

Location

In an effort to highlight the individual, organizational, and social construction of the BWC, this research takes place in a small agency with 30–40 officers, primarily working patrol. Despite being a smaller agency, the unique context of servicing both permanent residents and a diverse population of college students provides a backdrop for considerable interactions between the police and the community. Moreover, the agency has faced challenges dealing with a marked increase in violent crime, experiencing a 41% increase in violent crime and assaults between 2002 and 2007 and a further 45% increase in Part I index crimes between 2008 and 2010. Concentration of these crimes occurred within areas primarily housing students.

Participant Selection

Inclusion into the research was voluntary and distribution of an interview request occurred by way of the chief of police. This request indicated participation was voluntary and detailed the single research question regarding officer experience with the body-worn camera (BWC). Participants selected the interview location where they most felt comfortable, with all selecting various rooms within the agency. The sample for this study contains a pre- and post-implementation design, including twelve (n=12) officers responding to an extensive survey assessing their perspectives of the BWC and nine officers (n=9) participating in post-implementation interviews. While
twelve surveys and nine interviews may seem low, it is important to note that IPA concerns itself with the unique experiences of participants. When applying IPA, researchers adopt minimal sample sizes, often about ten (Smith et al., 2009). Interviews ranged from 20 minutes to over an hour, totaling approximately six hours of recorded interviews and comprising nearly 170 pages of transcription. A research assistant transcribed the interviews verbatim and analysis occurred within the IPA framework (as described within the methodology section).

The Body-Worn Camera

As detailed prior, there are a range of devices available to agencies. The BWC device used by the agency in the study is the Autonomous eXtended on-Officer Network (AXON), by TASER International. The AXON device acts as a digital recording device—recording interactions at the push of a button—and acts as a communication device for the officer. According to the chief of police, in total the agency spent in the “neighborhood of $60,000” for the initial equipment and for a three-year period of digital storage at Evidence.com, the cloud-based storage service provided by TASER International.

RESULTS

Prior to Implementation of the Body-Worn Camera

Twelve officers (n=12) responded to the survey request. What follows is the thematic analysis of the responses to the open-ended questions, including verbatim quotes from participants. Sectioning of the thematic analysis uses a dichotomous scheme of negative and positive. This scheme was undertaken because the primacy of the initial frustration prior to implementation produced overwhelmingly negative attitudes concerning the device.

Negative Themes

Potential management abuse. When presented with a question concerning their overall feelings towards the BWC, the majority of officers believed implementation of the BWC merely reflected monitoring individual officers. The following statements highlight this frustration.

Regardless of statements used by management, the primary use of these videos will be to police the officers’ actions and to be used for disciplinary actions.

Obviously a tool by administration to monitor officers rather than trust them.

At best it’s probably a desire for lazy management at worst management hopes to use it as a disciplinary tool.

While the above are brief statements, the thematic analysis identified basic and organizing themes surrounding the emotional experiences of the officers, including frustration, anger, and resentment. Some officers reflected
on management as a whole, while others directed their criticisms toward the new chief of police as displayed in the following responses.

Body worn cameras could have the potential to be a great optional investigative tool. Mandating their use as administrative oversight taints the value. If the Chief truly doesn't trust officers and wants to video all of our work, he should get out of his office and meet his employees. We are not the criminals. We are good, hardworking, honest employees who have devoted our lives to public service. We have a tough job and it only gets harder when every word we speak and every action we take is scrutinized out of contexts. It was obvious the Chief made up his mind and was not going to accept any input from the Guild.

The Chief has a great disconnect from his officers. It is easier for him to look at a video than to invest the time to know his officers. If he knew us, he wouldn't push mandated use to monitor us. He would give us a tool to help us.

It is important to add the decision to implement these devices occurred early into the tenure of the new chief of police. The organizational culture was still adjusting as the chief encountered resistance from the police guild and individual officers on organizational decisions concerning staffing and shift adjustments.

**Increased work.** Increased workload is the second negative theme emerging from the thematic analysis. Commonly noted was the increase in workload stemming from reviewing recorded video to ensure it matched the report. Additionally, the requirement to tag videos and add the appropriate metadata (case information, incident details, etc.) concerned officers, as displayed in the following comment: “I will spend way more of my time tagging videos and adding metadata to videos. I will spend less time on patrol doing other tasks because of it.” It is important to add that implementation had not occurred. Officers were constructing the use of the device within their current practices.

Officers were also concerned with potential public information requests, which could increase the workload of the department, removing support staff from other more worthwhile tasks. Several officers believed, “The public records requests for video will be overwhelming... Handling video files as evidence after the fact will be extremely time consuming.” Additionally, officers remarked on the possibility that the camera would inhibit confessions or statements from witnesses, though only a few officers addressed this. The following statement reflects this concern: “There is the real possibility that the camera could hinder our ability to obtain confessions in some situations, suspects tend to stop talking once they know they are being recorded.”
Distracting from the moment. One of the unanticipated negative global themes emerging prior to implementation is the BWC’s potential to distract officers from the moment. The organizing theme reflected the increased danger the device posed to officers. While only discussed by two officers, it did generate a global theme connecting to other potential dangers the device posed to the officer and agency.

I believe that the net effect of the introduction of much of the technology as of late is more of a distraction from police work than an enhancement. The ability to use the senses in real time, and to make quick and correct decisions under stress and time constraints is of extreme importance. Introducing distractions, such as buttons to press, cameras to aim, monitors to monitor, and keyboards to type on detract from these crucial abilities.

As we have seen in news coverage, video only captures a small amount of what is going on and does not always give a true picture of the situation. In addition, if an officer starts to worry about what he is doing and/or saying may look bad on video, will that momentary lapse or delay result in injury to the officer or bystanders?

Missing the nuances of the moment. Connecting to the organizing theme of danger, this negative global theme reflects the concern that the BWC might capture the situation, but miss the nuances of the moment. Additionally, this global theme contained the most basic themes: (a) mistrust of the officer; (b) the sterility of the video, which lacks the emotional state of the incident and prominence of the incident necessitating an immediate response, known as split second syndrome (Fyfe, 1986); and (c) the relationship between experience and a capacity to filter sensory information.

While the camera may provide the officer’s perspective of a scene, it does not capture the peripheral nor the heightened state of the scene. As stated by an officer, “It does not capture all the sounds and details that human perception does.” Building on this point, officers worried about “administration, politicians, the public, etc. not understanding that the camera DOES NOT capture what the Officer perceives, it only captures what the camera is pointed at.....The camera has no training or experience.” This is a point echoed throughout the comments, including the following specifying how the video was actually “unfair” to the officer.

By having a video for the jury to see, they will listen less to the officer’s expertise and perspective and focus on the video, which may or may not show what the officer witnessed and/or actually observed. There may be something in the video that later seems obvious that the officer missed due to psychological stress factors and made judgment calls without
having the benefit of factoring that information into the judgment. Everyone filters sensory information based on their experience. It is unfair to allow juries to believe they have the perspective of the officer using only the experience they bring to the scene and not the experience that the officer does. Juries will have the benefit of watching the video repeatedly while the officer had only once. In criminal cases, the jury may not be able to see something the officer did because the video was out of focus but then deem the officer less credible because of it.

**Potential for abuse.** While not a global theme, the following organizing theme is important as it reflects the mistrust regarding use of the footage by external agencies directly or indirectly. For example, early release of footage could complicate an ongoing case. Additionally, incorrect timestamps and lack of oversight could result in segments of video being released to the media. As officers mentioned, “Cameras have limited abilities and perceptions and could be used negatively by outside influences to create problems. How many times have you seen video where the clips were cut to create the perception someone wanted to portray, rather than the entire circumstance?”

**Officer credibility.** This global theme concerns the capacity for the BWC to undermine officer credibility. Through development of this global theme, officers spoke to the coming evolution of police work and broader concerns involving technology and privacy. While officers acknowledged the utility of the BWC, the broader concern represented how failure to capture a statement on camera may eventually be used to suggest that the statement had never been made. Before the implementation of the BWC, the word of the officer would have been enough. However, the officers believed, “Net affect will be that statements that would have previously been trusted on the officer’s word will need to be backed up by what is mistakenly seen as the truth of an ‘objective’ viewpoint.” Additionally, officers expressed concerns about the erosion of privacy at both the officer and public level, speaking to the “implementation of an Orwellian level of surveillance.”

**Technology concerns.** The overall concern, as reported prior to implementation, regarded potential failures in recording—operator error or technical error and lack of real-time control of the device (e.g., checking where the device is pointed). The latter is not merely the potential that the device is recording out of the field of view. Rather, the device may fail to capture a specific angle and this failure will not be known until the officer reviews the footage. There are no retakes or reshoots as it pertains to incident documentation.

**Curbing discretion.** The last negative theme concerns the capacity for the BWC to curb officer discretion, typified by the following comment concerning the officer being “less likely to be lenient in some circumstances, be-
cause of a fear of discipline for not following the exact letter of the law or policy." Additionally, this theme includes the organizing theme of fear. This organizing theme centers on the hypothetical capacity of the BWC to increase personal liability, including insuring against unmanageable risk. Central to this fear is the potential of deciding not to make an arrest, only to have the person then commit another crime. While not a new fear within the use of discretion, the BWC would provide video evidence of that initial interaction.

**Positive Themes**

*Establishing the entire context.* Transitioning to the positive global themes, officers believed the BWC could reduce liability by establishing the entire context of the incident. While several officers reported the device held limited to no benefit to the organization, some acknowledged the direct benefits concerning liability, best exemplified in this comment: “I like the idea of having my actions recorded to assist me in accurate recording and protecting myself from lawsuits and complaints…. The cameras allow people to see/hear how much we tolerate.” Additionally, officers spoke to the ability to establish the entirety of the context and reassert the actuality into the narrative forming.

We are often being watched and recorded by the public anyways, so I feel better about having the incident captured from my perspective in its entirety, as compared to a 30 second edited clip uploaded to YouTube by a partial citizen.

*Improving professionalism.* The potential the BWC has for improving professionalism within the agency is another positive global theme. Several officers commented on how “implementation of body worn cameras is leading our agency in the right direction” but believed reliance on the BWC as the only means of recording an interaction could prove “misconceived.” Additionally, officers reported the ability for the device to document evidence and hold officers more accountable for their behavior—best represented in the following comment.

Current thoughts are they may be good for some evidence gathering so can be helpful, don’t think they will create any problems for the officers although they may hold some officers to a higher standard of professionalism, will assist in stopping complaints about officers if they occur.

*Pre-implementation summary.* The frustration and suspicion present before implementation reflects the broader context of organizational culture, lack of familiarity with the device, and general concern concerning the device, which while beneficial, could prove detrimental to the organization and individual officers. Central to many of the concerns were the unsatisfactory responses many officers felt they had received about why the agency was pursuing the device. There had been no catalyst event calling for an increase in accountability and there existed no high profile cases or lasting concerns
for accountability. Many officers wanted to know why the device was being pursued, and answers like “it will ultimately help you” were not enough.

When presented with an opportunity to suggest alternatives for using the allocated funding, overwhelmingly, officers indicated training and staffing concerns. The comments ranged from a common statement, such as “training, filling open positions, better and newer essential equipment” and “filling the two open patrol positions” to more frustrated comments, including, “The cameras cost over $40,000. We are still understaffed. Why not hire more cops if they have money to waste on toys.” The following excerpt epitomizes the entirety of the feelings towards the BWC, displaying global themes across the positive and negative spectrums. It is added here in its entirety, as this was a response to an open-ended survey question and nearly perfectly aligns with the positive and negative themes emerging from the analysis.

Absent any cost consideration and given a policy that allows me to use it as a tool and doesn’t dictate using it at all times or doesn’t change how I interact with the public, more ‘hard proof’ from my perspective is great. However, the cost is ludicrous and will only continue to increase. It will add stress when it doesn’t work and at worst will make me appear to be hiding something and thus less credible. There doesn’t appear to be any rhyme or reason for doing this and it makes me suspicious of management’s motivations. The absence (not lack) of direct communication from management about this only furthers my suspicions. Management says it’s for additional evidence to prosecute cases, but the prosecutor’s office rarely dumps cases because of problems with the officer’s testimony. Management says it’s for vindicating us from complaints, but I’ve never heard of someone actually being disciplined for something they didn’t do. There’s an argument for the cameras increasing the community’s trust in officers, but our community trusts us a great deal. The biggest group of people who generally don’t like us are the students, but generally the reason they don’t like us is for what we ACTUALLY do (‘ruin their fun’) not so much because they believe we’re corrupt or dishonest. The notion of cameras increasing officer safety is laughable. A camera won’t save my life unless it’s in the shape, size and composition of a ballistic vest. It might help catch and convict the murderer who killed the cop, but that will be little consolation to their spouse and children. By contrast, the same money that went to fund and maintain the camera could’ve put another cop next to the officer that got killed or could’ve gone towards honing that officer’s DT and firearms skills with additional training.
After Implementation of the Body-Worn Camera

In total, seven patrol officers participated in the post-implementation interviews. Overwhelmingly, the apprehension had subsided. Officer perceptions displayed optimism, enthusiasm, and a greater acceptance of the device and the direct and indirect benefits provided. While overlaps exist within the thematic analysis, the global themes emerging predominately demonstrate benefits instead of suspicion and skepticism. Therefore, the thematic analysis does not employ a dichotomous structure (positive/negative) as the global themes emerging exist on a continuum as officers individually constructed how they would use the device (e.g., while more work is created in one area, a decrease is observed in the other).

Increased Workload. Overwhelmingly, officers reported increasing workload as a primary concern. Primarily, the time taken to tag videos with the appropriate information concerned officers. Officers who were on top of their tagging faced minimal increases in their workload, but if the call queue was elevated for a few days or calls took longer to clear, tagging could backlog, as demonstrated in this excerpt.

More or less, it’s the cases that are going to put you into overtime. But then if you have that added—you know, if you have 20 videos you have to tag, and some of them you have to look through a little bit, that could take you a little bit, like an hour overtime. But again, that’s worst case scenario. That’s cases that are going to really tie you up. But on a normal basis, as long as you keep up with it, and do it every day and keep everything tagged every day and not fall behind, it’s not that big a deal. It gets to be a big deal though if you go three days without doing it, and each night you had 20 different videos, and now you have 60 videos.

The compulsive need for some to review recordings for accuracy in their documentation holds the potential to effectively double or triple the amount of time it takes to complete a report. As an officer shares, “Unfortunately, the cameras have not allowed us to decrease detail in written reports or other areas. There seems to be a trend in law enforcement to increase the amount of detail in our documentation, and the body-worn cameras just add to this.”

Recognizing the increased workload, the agency responded by implementing a pilot test of smartphone tagging, allowing officers the ability to tag videos directly from their smartphones, interacting with the AXON device. For those in the pilot, this was an immediate benefit typified by the following statement, “I really do like it when I can use my phone app to do it, because it’s so much easier, so much faster. I mean, it makes a difference between night and day on tagging videos.” Possessing the ability to tag at the scene, live tagging, is something officers discussed as a prominent factor in reducing their workload.
While smartphone tagging was a response to the increased workload, the volume of information needing to be tagged presented a challenge. This was further complicated by the addition of requests for tagging of specific sections or pieces of information at the request of prosecutors. The following statement summarizes the concerns of many officers: “I think the prosecutor would like certain sections highlighted, like: ‘here’s when we read Miranda, here’s when we did…’ you know?” By the officers’ account, specific tagging requests exceeded the case information to include specific time stamps reflecting more requests for information from various stakeholders. Originally, officers anticipated an increased workload, but few anticipated the introduction of entirely new tasks. Still, they found themselves verifying the accuracy in the report based on the sequence of the video. The following excerpt highlights this specific concern.

I think it [BWC] brought along a whole another slew of issues. Recording laws, and what we’re supposed to be doing, what the department expects us to do, what prosecutors expect us to do, what the law requires us to do, and ultimately how we’re able to work that into our routine. As far as telling people when they’re being recorded. What other things are required to Miranda, that sort of stuff. So it’s just new things that you had to kind of learn and had to work in. Makes a lot of work in some situations too, because I think with some police officers, especially now in a more serious case, where before you were writing everything based off of your notes and your memory, and you’re kind of putting together. When you take notes and you’re memorizing things, those are all things you’re making note of so you can write a better report. So you kind of do that. Well, when you have video, I know for me, well I stopped making note of that stuff, because, well, it’s in the video. I’m going to focus on other things because it’s going to tell the entire story, and I can go back and review that and that’s going to trigger my memory or whatever. But that requires us to look at the video and watch what could be an hour-long section or we’re watching maybe all of our stuff to put together a good report and something we can send over to our prosecutor. So, that can be kind of a headache.

Several officers identified frustration in that their attempts to overcome this workload were stifled. By this, they referred to the availability of the entirety of the incident and explained that they felt writing a detailed report and then tagging the video were a duplication of effort. They believed for low-level cases, such as a DUI blood test, they should be able to refer to the video timestamp, instead of explaining what occurred. As an officer remarked,

I’m of the thinking where, ‘you know what, if you want to know what happened, watch the video. I’ll give you a synopsis
of everything so you can quickly read it. But if you want the
details of what all they said, watch the video, because it’s all
in there.’ It’s just doubling up our work.

The final subtheme developed within this global theme of increased
workload was unique and unexpected. The implementation of the BWC re-
resulted in some officers noticeably increasing their own workload by verifying
the accuracy of what they reported by returning to the video footage.
Unlike the subtheme of self-correcting, this specific subtheme speaks to a
duplication of effort to verify information because the officers worried a po-
tential inconsistency could exist between the report and the video record.

You know, I don’t want to get anything wrong. I don’t want
to miss a small detail, or even contradict something. I mean,
that would be the worst thing possible, is I say this happened,
but the video shows this, or something like that. That’s just...
that would be awful. So I watch my videos from start to finish
of the important stuff, so if I have an interview with some-
one... and we did that a lot before. We were getting recorded
statements from people so we’d have their side of the fence
from their version, not something that I’m taking notes of or
interpreting. I want somebody else to tell the story, so basi-
cally what I end up doing instead is kind of a synopsis of ev-
everything that happened. But then again, that’s still something
we’re going to have to go and watch the video for. I mean,
someday it’s going to make the written reports less detailed,
but there’re too many people that are opposed to that change
right now.

Reducing liability. Reducing liability is a unique global theme, unique
not by its emergence in the thematic analysis, but unique because it was not
a driving force behind implementation of the BWC within the agency. While
the diffusion of the BWC into policing has taken on this characteristic for
many larger agencies (see White, 2013), the emergence of this global theme
reflected the potential benefits of the device. Every officer interviewed ex-
pressed how beneficial this device was for reducing liability. Moreover, each
officer shared a specific example displaying how a lack of the BWC could
have resulted in a lawsuit or disciplinary infraction for the officer.\(^3\) Regard-
less of age, rank, or experience, officers universally agreed this device held
the capacity to reduce officer and agency liability. Several officers went as
far as to offer a very common retort to claims of privacy, typified by the fol-
lowing excerpt:

If someone wants to come in with a lawsuit, it saves my butt.
The opportunity for people to file complaints, it’s great:
there’s always evidence there. So if you have nothing to hide,
why would you not want to be recording everything you're doing? So, that's kind of the way I see it.

Prior to the BWC, it could take several days or even weeks to resolve a dispute. This would produce stress on the part of the officer, command staff (particularly the commander responsible for adjudicating these claims), and the complainant. The introduction of the BWC streamlined the process and alleviated much of the fear and apprehension surrounding these claims. The video evidence also provided a secondary benefit in showing the complainant the entirety of the incident. This is extremely beneficial in cases where the person is intoxicated and their recollection of the incident is quite different.

**Technological frustration.** Frustration represents an interesting global theme, specifically because any technology implementation experiences some “growing pains,” as an officer remarked. However, the frustration experienced within this global theme is associated with potential liability concerns because the technology failed to capture the event, or what was captured represents the officers’ perspective and misses the broader view. This limited viewpoint reflects a common concern because the officer never knows exactly what is captured until they review the video footage. This also bridged to the global theme of increased workload, as officers found themselves preoccupied with if the video captured the entirety of the incident or if it activated. As an officer remarked,

> It’s a little frustrating, because you’re like: ‘ugh, I know the camera should have caught that!’ But it didn’t. It’s not all the time; it’s just in a few cases where I’m like, you know, it could be out of view, or there’ve been a few times when I’ve gone back to look at the video, and it got bumped.

As depicted prior, several officers expressed how reviewing footage could be “painstakingly long, because, you know, you’re sitting around watching video and then typing up, trying to type up details; where, before, you would have just done it.

This frustration is compounded by informal policy and adding another routine to their procedures. With so many procedures already within the organization, adding another one created some frustration for officers, typified by the following excerpt:

> I guess early on one of the big problems obviously is just getting used to another step in your process of doing stuff. Having to turn them on, and then, when you come back (because we’re supposed to turn them off when we return to the station), so if you come back and turn it off and then you run out to something and you don’t turn it back on. Then you go to hit it to activate it, and it’s not even on, so then you turn it on, and then you’re waiting—while you’re still trying to interact with someone—you’re waiting for it to beep, telling you it’s on, be-
before you turn it on again. That can be one of the most frustrating things, just because sometimes those situations are the most fast-acting, stuff's going on, and you really would like to have that information on camera, and you don't have it because you didn't get it on in time, and stuff like that. And that, I guess, is just a learning curve with everything else; you've got to get in the habit of making sure you turn it on.

While the device was field tested, the reality of police work and the need for physical control tactics meant that in some cases the device failed to capture an incident. The following encapsulates this specific point.

We had one incident in particular, where we went to back up [Redacted] officers with a guy who was acting strange and looked like he was high on drugs or something, you know, mental problems or something. And the moment we were hands-on, we were fighting the guy. Both me and the other [Redacted] officers that were out there with the [Redacted] officers had these cameras. Now, in one instance, the other officer, it came off his glasses, and was just twirling. So you get the audio, but it almost makes you sick to watch, because it's spinning. And then mine at that time was on my collar, and you see my cheek half the time, because I'm holding the guy's arm like this, trying to have a control hold on him, and the camera's just looking at the side of my face. Now, all this happened right in front of my patrol car. If we'd have had that dash-cam, the whole scene would have been caught, and then you'd have the audio, and the video of whatever you see from each officer. But, you know, we got none of that, because there's no dash-cam.

Officers shared examples of the cord disconnecting or breaking, the device failing to start recording, and other similar issues. While the officers expressed that many of these issues were user error, it influenced them considerably—including second-guessing themselves on if they activated the BWC. As one officer remarked,

Mentally there're some things to get over, as far as second-guessing yourself. You know, because before, it was: 'well, this is exactly how I remember it, this is exactly how it had to be.' But you're so worried about putting it on paper and submitting it before you've seen the video and made sure exactly what happened, where before—and you know, nine times out of ten it's exactly how you remember it—but you know, you have that doubt, because you know that everyone's going to see the video, and if you said something different, they're going to call you out on it.
Some officers needed the device and it came to act as a secondary layer of protection, in many ways a symbolic "complaint proof" vest, protecting them not from bullets but from liability concerns. The following excerpt expresses the fear some officers hold with the video being unavailable. The context of this incident is a domestic violence call with the likelihood that physical force would be necessary.

He was like: 'Sergeant [name], my video's not working!' Right in the middle of the thing, and he's telling me: 'my video's not working!' I'm like: 'Okay! We can't do anything about it now, we'll just have to do without your video that's not working.' But he was... from my perspective, he wanted that video on, and so he was actually concerned enough about it, you know, even though I couldn't physically fix it at that point, like: 'okay fine, if it's off, it's off.' But I could tell he wanted it on, because if we ended up using force, he wanted to have video of what was going on, and why.

Frustration with technology also influenced officer decision making, if only by delaying their decision to engage. This specific subtheme is an excellent example of the merger of liability concerns and frustration with the technology. Waiting a few seconds or double-checking to ensure the camera is active seems like a minor inconvenience, but to some officers this made them delay interacting with a person until they knew the device was recording. During one interview, the officer demonstrated just how long that delay could take, which is only about ten seconds. He explained, however, that during an incident, time tended to freeze, as he waited for that beep. As an officer shared, this delay is something they need to overcome.

The BWC introduced additional frustration on the part of some officers, specific to the prosecutor's decision to file charges. As an officer remarked, in one incident the BWC captured the criminal act and the prosecutor decided not to file. For some officers their tenure afforded them the ability to minimize these frustrations. As an officer commented, "Actually, I've learned in my career that my job is done once they're arrested and my report is complete, and if I worry too much about what the end resolution is, it's just going to stress me out, and make me mad." However, for some, this presented a unique frustration because, unlike previous case reports with witnesses and statements, now reports could contain actual video evidence of the confession.

**Device location.** While device location does not represent a global theme, it does reflect a prominent subtheme as every officer interviewed discussed the best location for the device. Camera location is one of the technical frustrations experienced by officers. Some officers tried the lapel, others the middle of the chest; some clipped it to their glasses, and others utilized a reverse headband specifically tailored to the device. Over time the majority of the officers transitioned from the lapel and body locations to the head,
most often after reviewing the video and noticing “a lot of times the camera would be pointing off in a direction.” For some officers this created some awkward video captures. An officer explains the decision to switch to a head mount: “It was like: well, what if that camera’s pointing at some girl's chest, and I'm standing here talking to her, and then we look at the video and all it is: ‘am I going to get in trouble?’ You know, kind of like that.”

Individual discretion (officer credibility). While policy dictates the use of the device, the policy does afford discretion on the part of the officer. As some officers noted, not all witnesses, victims, and suspects wanted to talk on camera. This required incorporating very specific and clear statements in their video documentation in order to minimize criticism from the administration, the prosecutor, and defense. An officer recounted a specific case where it became necessary to turn off the camera during an investigation: “I have no worries about someone coming back and saying: ‘well, why did you shut your video off?’ It’s like, ‘well, did you watch the video I do have?’ Because what he told me is, ‘I’m not telling you anything unless you turn it off.’”

The need for officer discretion became apparent when officers expressed changes in their interactions. From their perspective, the device did not change the demeanor of the person. As an officer remarked, “When you tell them you have a camera they often say ‘I don't give a damn’ or something like that. They're usually hyped up and hostile from the start and they just don’t care.” Additionally, the following excerpt elaborates on this point.

When people notice that they're [BWC] there, it's more of a professional relationship between both parties. They don't want to look like the bad guy either, because they know that it's going to be in court, so it's just easier to deal with people. But on the other hand, you have some people who say: ‘well I'm not going to talk to you while you have that on,’ and just flat-out refuse to cooperate.

For the most part, these officers interacted with those primarily under the influence of a substance and the device did not change their behavior. However, officers did notice that it changed their interactions with some individuals and this is why officer discretion to stop recording was important to them. Some officers worried that witnesses and suspects may not want to talk, because it went from being a conversation to something more formal.

Reducing workload. A unique benefit emerging as a global theme is the reduction in work. Officers shared accounts of reductions in time expenditures for impound sheets and DUls. The introduction of the BWC and adjustment in policy allowed the officer to narrate these events. As this officer shared,

Now what I do is say I’ll walk around the car with my flash-light and narrate it out loud: ‘there’s a dent on rear passenger quarter panel, there’s a scratch up here, there’s a panel miss-
ing on this side, broken headlight, there’s a CD player in here, there’s a wallet in the center console, there’s no money in it.’ So I just go through and that’s quick and stored.

As with prior global themes, this specific benefit overlapped with reduction in liability concerns specific to “liability-type stuff.” As an officer remarked,

You can just narrate as you go and you’re covered. There’s other things you can do that for, just with inventorying people’s property, that type of stuff, you know, when you’re searching them. Counting out money—there’s an awesome one—just counting it out loud, so people can’t come back and say: ‘well I had $300 there, where’s my $200?’ You know? And you have it on video.

**Self-Correcting Behavior.** A surprising global theme emerging in the analysis was how the introduction of the BWC improved officer performance. A secondary benefit of reviewing the recorded footage meant that for some officers they noticed mistakes. This self-correcting behavior allowed them to review their interactions and change their language, tone, or even their actions on subsequent encounters. As an officer shared, “I use it as a tool a lot of times to watch myself and say, you know, I think I could maybe do that a little bit better.” The fear prior to implementation that officers would be “Monday morning quarterbacked” or being called before a supervisor to explain decision made in the field changed as it became the officers themselves who were doing the “quarterbacking.”

This benefit spanned the continuum from informal encounters to formal processes like interrogations. One officer shared his reaction to reviewing an interrogation video:

If you watch something like that—‘that didn’t sound that good when I said it like that,’ or ‘maybe I could have gotten him to confess if I’d done it a different way’,—you can go back and critique an entire interrogation. That’s kind of a cool thing that we weren’t able to do before.

For some officers being able to review the footage allowed them to improve their response by looking for particular cues they may have missed and learning from their perceived or actual mistakes. The following excerpt highlights this specific benefit.

We went to a domestic violence scenario not too long ago, and the person happened to be pretty hyped up and out of control. I knew that she had emotional issues, so I allowed things to proceed, or, go along a little bit longer than I probably should have. And after watching them I realized: you know what, I probably should have put her in handcuffs right from the
start, and not let this whole action take, let her take control of the scene. Yeah, I use it as a tool for myself, to critique myself.

However, for some officers, having access to the footage allowed them to overly focus on very minor issues—essentially “nitpicky things.” As shared by an officer, “I’ll just nitpick stuff, like: ‘gosh, I sounded like an idiot. Why did I do that? I shouldn’t have said that,’ or ‘I should have phrased this a different way. Why did I do that?’ And it gives you a chance to critique those things.”

**Improved training.** A common theme in organizational literature espouses how beneficial training opportunities are when they come from within the organization (Chan, 2003). Essentially, an organization learns better from their mistakes than from the mistakes of others. The prominence of a “suicide by cop” incident echoed across the interviews with every officer reflecting on how this was an excellent training opportunity. The following excerpt recounts an officer’s reaction to seeing the video.

We had a guy a few months ago who was yelling and screaming at officers, I think there had been a DV involved. And he had a finger gun behind his back. And he’s yelling, and the two officers, they have their guns out, they’re saying, ‘show us your hands, show us your hands, show us your hands!’ Well, he does this with his finger, and it’s just like that. It’s wild to see that, because you see these crazy videos on YouTube and stuff like that all the time from the bigger departments. But you see somebody that we’ve all dealt with, and two of our officers that we know really well and are good cops—to see how they reacted to it—and you start putting yourself in that situation. Like: ‘wow. What would I have done? Would it have been the same outcome,’ you know?

As a result of this incident, officer training improved because they were able not merely to discuss how it was handled but also to inform the officers on patrol to be aware of this person, because this individual had frequent contact with the police and displayed mental health issues. The location of the camera became an added benefit of this footage, as detailed by this reaction to the video:

It was awesome. And it’s cool to see on the video, too, because you go from like the officers were trained, in the low-ready, where you’re not on-target with that guy; as soon as he goes like this, and you see their video pops up, if they’re wearing the lapel-mounted ones, you can see it pop up right at that time, and they’re assessing it. And it’s almost instant. You know, one of the guys says: ‘you stupid son of a bitch!’ Or something like that, you know, just mad that he would do something like that.
**Retrospective investigations.** The next global theme represents the added benefit of retrospective investigations. Possessing video footage spanning a broad period afforded officers the ability to reexamine prior encounters. This could lead to identification of additional witnesses missed, potential suspects (i.e., people dispersing when the officers arrive who are captured on camera), or, as in the specific incident below, linking items recovered to a series of stolen vehicles. As the officer explained,

> We were looking through the trunk of the car with the property owner (to find out which stuff was his and which wasn’t), there were some items in there—you know, pots and pans and some personal belongings like that—and he was like: ‘nope, no, no.’ Later, I took a case where it involved the same suspect as the stolen vehicle, and one of the things they said was stolen were these cast-iron pans. Well, then I was able to go later back and watch my video again, and, sure enough, they were right on the camera, there right on the video is me pulling them out of the trunk and going: ‘are these yours?’ So, in that instance, it tied those belongings back to the suspect.

**Improving professionalism.** The last global theme mirrors the positive features this device brings to the agency. Namely, that while it is an outstanding device for reducing liability, it also possesses the capacity to improve officer professionalism. There is always going to those who resist this technology, who view it as a violation of privacy or an impediment to the officers’ ability to investigate crimes. However, for the majority of officers, the BWC raised the quality of their interactions. It made them reflect on their interactions—bridging to the global theme of self-correcting behavior—and, as some officers expressed, it held the capacity to hold accountable an officer who needed more training or who simply was not suitable to be an officer. This person was identified as “Officer Questionable,” and the person “who probably shouldn’t even be a cop.” If the BWC could address issues early in an officer’s career or even correct constructions of “what works” for even those most senior, it could improve professionalism within the agency.

**CATALYST EVENTS**

The following section represents the unique catalyst events, those specific examples proving the worth of the device. Catalyst events are those events that prompt changes within an organization. These events may be positive or negative in orientation and, within this research, the catalyst events had a profound influence on the overall acceptance and the successful integration and diffusion of support for the BWC. Presentation of some of these specific events occurs in their entirety. Events ranged from the benign to those with considerable personal and organizational liability.
concerns—including a potential lawsuit believed to be for over a million dollars and a “suicide by cop” incident.

Suicide by Cop

Well, probably the one criminal case, that we ended up getting felony charges on...there’s no doubt in my mind that we would have never gotten criminal charges at all, much less felony charges on. There was a call up on, just off of [Redacted], residential area, middle of the day, domestic situation: husband and wife. He’s really drunk (and again, it’s daylight, so the cameras pick it up really good), and he’s throwing stuff around, yelling and screaming, beats her up a little bit. And he is located, and then he leaves on foot. And officers locate him about two blocks away from the residence. He’s in somebody else’s driveway, he’s yelling and screaming, and he decides, in his drunken ol’ mind, that he’s going to commit suicide by cop. So he acts...so the officers contact him and jump out, and he’s, you know: ‘f you, f you, f you,’ this kind of thing. And he has his hand behind his back, and they tell him to bring his hand out, and he acts like it’s a gun and purposely pulls it around and points the finger at the cops, who already have their guns drawn, and everything else. And they don’t shoot him (thank God) because he didn’t have a gun. But...and that’s all captured on body-worn cameras.... Prosecutor watched the video and actually charged the guy with assault on the officers—even without a gun or anything else—just due to his mannerisms and the fact that he was trying to get the officers to shoot him. And so he ended up getting two counts of assault third. There’s no way in hell he would’ve gotten those types of charges on that case if you didn’t have the pictures to go with it. And, it’s just, the power of pictures is just amazing.

The Wealthy Donor

We had another guy a while back who got arrested—this was last winter. And he was some rich guy who had all kinds of money, and he was a booster for the football team, and all this stuff. And he was just a really belligerent and nasty guy. And I didn’t deal with him up there but I remember coming down here because he was yelling and screaming and pounding on the cell; just causing all kinds of general mayhem. And this wasn’t a 23 year old college student; this was like a 39 or 40 year old adult, you know? And he was being nasty and, you know, belittling, and just like a horrible person. And I remember, at that time, thinking: ‘I’m getting this all on video. Thank
goodness this is all here!’ I made a point of videotaping him, and telling him to just calm down, and he was just so bad. And I remember after that, after we turned our videos off, I said: ‘you know what, I’...because he was threatening to sue[sic]. We already knew that he was going to sue us, because he had money. And I said ‘you know what, this is going to be interesting to see if this goes to court, because he’s suing us, his whole demeanor and attitude is going to be right there for the world to see, and it’s going to be pretty hard to look good, on his part, to the jury.’ Thinking: ‘I don’t know about all the rest of it, but this is really not going to look good, because I wouldn’t want to be in court seeing what I remember what I saw with my eyes, and having the jury witness all of that.’......his attorney probably saw the video and I’m guessing he was like: ‘you know what? I’m not going to court with this in front of a jury [sic] . You were just a big jerk, and maybe we should just make the best of this that we can, so why don’t you just plead guilty to a couple of misdemeanors and we’ll drop a couple of charges for it[sic].’

The “You’re a Racist” Guys
Well, I have had some complaints while wearing the camera, and those complaints have been awesome, because again, it’s usually from intoxicated people. I’ve had a complaint of—actually, I think they were both saying I was racist[sic]. And it was fabulous, because the commander got to review the video, and he didn’t even have to talk to me; just reviewed the video, and saw that I was patient, I was polite, and at the end, each one resolved, the resolution, was like: ‘[the officer] showed more patience than I would have in this situation [sic].’ So, I’m like, ‘hey, that works for me!’

The “You Raped Me” Girl
This catalyst is excerpted instead of quoted in its entirety because it represents an uncommon but deeply troubling catalyst for male officers. This specific incident involved a heavily intoxicated college female, who stated, “I’m going to tell them you raped me.” The recording of this statement, presented at the student accountability board hearing, displayed the totality of the interaction. During this hearing, the young women watched her behavior and her remarks. As the officer recounted, “She was crying. She was so upset that she acted that way,’ and it was sincere, you know. They [the accountability board] could tell that she had no idea what she was doing that night. [The video is] invaluable for us, invaluable for them.”

Some officers discussed concerns of sexual harassment or inappropriate touching during a search by a male officer. Use of the BWC acted as an
additional barrier of protection shielding them from claims of inappropriate behavior.

Policy Diffusion

While officer experience promoted acceptance of the technology and policy, it is the collective stories and accounts of its benefits echoing throughout the agency that became the foundation for BWC acceptance. As expressed during the analysis, at times the officers recounted the same stories, even though they were not working that specific shift. The praises of the BWC were institutionalized, as everyone knew the stories. As Bayley (2001) suggests, it could well be that this word-of-mouth reform acted as a catalyst for officers using the device to its fullest capacity. When asked how best to implement the BWC into another agency, the officers universally expressed how important it is to hear stories of success. The following excerpt encapsulates those sentiments:

The best way, I think, that they could implement cameras in a department that doesn't have them, would be to have the officers actually talk to other people that have them—other officers that have them and use them. Or, alternatively, talk to somebody like you, who has actually talked to officers and got some specific things, information that would cause them to see the benefits to the officer, you know.

The organizational culture further enhanced the diffusion of the BWC, as the command staff proved they were not going to misuse the footage. As an officer mentioned,

If I was in a department where the administration, all they wanted to do was to catch me doing something wrong, and they were just going to use it as a tool to hammer...go on a fishing expedition. Really, if that's all they really wanted, then it would never be a useful tool because all the benefits to me would not be anything I care about. I would just be angry about the fact they want to do it and I would probably hate the whole idea.

Additionally, because of the volume of interactions recorded and officer admissions of mistakes, the potential for abuse of the data was high. However, the command staff did not retrospectively reprimand officers, despite opportunities to do so during the course of the study.

DISCUSSION

Having now spent two years studying the implementation of the body-worn camera within a police agency, the potential for the device to transform policing is remarkable. Analysis of the pre- and post-implementation themes yielded insight into the hesitation, frustration, skepticism, and worry of of-
ficers prior to implementation. These negative themes, while very much a reflection of the technology, in part reflected an organizational culture adapting to a new chief of police and the prominence of perceptions of the administration. However, as displayed in Table 1, several themes disappeared post implementation. Namely, the potential for management abuse and abuse by others were absent. Additionally, the belief that the device held the capacity to curb officer discretion no longer made its way into conversations, though it could pose a considerable challenge with a suitable catalyst event.

While negative themes emerged post implementation, they often were co-occurring and intertwined with the positive themes. As officers gained experience and familiarity with the device, integrating it into their daily routines, they came to experience the immediate benefits. Additionally, these benefits exceeded benefits to the individual officer, as the implementation of the BWC developed alongside the leadership of the new chief of police. While individual officers had been reprimanded because of footage captured by the BWC, these officers believed the interactions were somehow fairer. The footage provided a context, which offered the officer a chance to explain the behavior and the totality of the incident.

Reflecting on this implementation, the diffusion of the BWC across the police service is inevitable and becomes not a matter of if but when. However, this optimism is not without hesitation. Much remains to be studied and it would behoove practitioners and academics to take up this call to research. Police organizations like PERF, the IACP, and other advisory organizations support implementation of this device. Uniquely present in these reports is the call for independent research employing varied research methodologies. This study provides analysis into a two-year implementation of the BWC within an average police agency. However, the fact so few studies exist on the BWC speaks to our anemic response to the study of technology within the police service (White, 2013) when that technology does not align with crime control (Byrne & Marx, 2011).
Table 1: Thematic Analysis Pre and Post Implementation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Prior to Implementation</th>
<th>Post Implementation</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Potential Management Abuse</td>
<td>Potential Management Abuse</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Increased Workload</td>
<td>Increased Workload</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Distracting from the Moment</td>
<td>Distracting from the Moment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Missing the Nuances of the Moment</td>
<td>Missing the Nuances of the Moment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Potential for Abuse</td>
<td>Potential for Abuse</td>
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<tr>
<td>Officer Creditability</td>
<td>Officer Creditability</td>
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<tr>
<td>Technology Concerns</td>
<td>Technology Concerns</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Curbing Discretion</td>
<td>Curbing Discretion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Establishing the Entire Context</td>
<td>Establishing the Entire Context</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Improving Professionalism</td>
<td>Improving Professionalism</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Reducing Liability</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Technological Frustration</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Catalyst Events</td>
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<td>Reducing Workload</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Self-Correcting Behavior</td>
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<td>Improved Training</td>
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<td>Retrospective Investigations</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Improving Professionalism</td>
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</tbody>
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Future Research

At present, few programmatic assessments of the BWC exist within the United States. An overview of the state of research by White (2013) identifies this deficiency and includes several key questions and concerns for the implementation of this device. While the summary provides policy recommendations and calls for general research, several remaining questions exist. What follows is a departure from traditional future research sections; instead, I present a series of questions, segmented by area of research, in the hope that these questions will act as a necessary catalyst for future research on the BWC.

General policy. As agencies develop their internal policy, what influences will the device, when utilized according to IACP or PERF policies, have on officers, agencies, the community, and even the criminal justice system? Moreover, will agencies adopt the IACP or PERF guidelines? The in-car cameras allowed officers to interact with community members outside of the field of view. In the context of the BWC, the only alternative is to not record an incident, which only further opens up an agency and individual officer to
criticism if the recording is not available. Will officers merely turn off the device or employ other tactics to inhibit its use? How will officers adapt to the device on their person? What variations exist across the expectations of stakeholders, which is to say how will police guilds, police unions, or other entities propose policy amendments?

**Officer privacy.** From the individual officer perspective, privacy is a deeply rooted characteristic within the United States (Nissenbaum, 1997) and, as such, even officers have come to expect a certain level of privacy. Police officers experience a myriad of criticisms ranging from the benign to the abusive. One result of this is their capacity to “blow off steam.” These quips, undertaken as a means of alleviating stress or reducing the tense atmosphere of a situation, were never meant for public consumption. However, the BWC possesses no filter and these interactions will be recorded. What influence will the BWC’s limitations on officer privacy have on officer solidarity and organizational cohesiveness?

**Administrative concerns.** From an administrative perspective, how does the utilization of this device influence those who become police officers? Does this marked utilization narrow the applicant pool, and is this narrowing beneficial to the organization? At a fiscal level, what are the initial and ongoing costs of storage—including data redundancy? How should organizations approach what the IACP (2004) referred as one of the emerging challenges to police organizations—the storage of digital evidence? As White (2013) addresses, the cost of implementation and on-going storage may be prohibitive to some cities and agencies. The bureaucratic reality supposes that resources must flow from one program to another, leaving the question as to what programs will receive less funding to implement and maintain the device. Small-scale implementations (30–50 officers) have the potential to cost over $100,000 in startup and ongoing maintenance and storage in the first 3 years of operation. While many agencies may argue the cost of a single lawsuit exceeds the overall costs of BWC implementation, how will this influence smaller agencies who lack frequent lawsuits and will inevitably need to make sacrifices to implement the device?

Concerning storage of digital evidence, what implications exist concerning the cloud-based architecture of the TASER International endeavor, Evidence.com, a website service providing digital evidence storage? What are the implications of utilizing a private company for the storage of digital evidence? Is this an example of successful public-private partnerships, or is this an example of private security companies incentivizing utilization of a technology and creating a dependent consumer? These partnerships introduce an additional line of inquiry: what drives the utilization? The diffusion of the MVS across agencies occurred because of the COPS grant program. It is important to understand what is driving the implementation of these devices. Is it about reasserting control or insuring against future liability? Will insurers provide reduced premiums for agencies adopting the BWC?
Specific to the community, it is important to understand how this technology will influence the community-police relationship (PCR). Moreover, what impact will footage have on victims of crime within the court process? Consider a victim of trauma, reliving the exact moment of the incident in high definition. By extension, consider the psychological impact and organizational stress resulting from documentation of an attack on an officer. Additionally, what of the officer wounded on the job, who now has the ability to review the incident, and the fellow officers who watch helplessly at the assault of a colleague? What impact will this have on mental health, police practice, and training?

Future research must address these questions and subsequent policy implications. Since the 1980s, the in-car video camera has recounted heroism by officers and provided evidence to refute claims of misconduct (Westphal, 2004). Research must examine the complete influence the BWC will have directly or indirectly on the police service, the criminal justice process, and society. Will utilization of this device transform policing? As the second transformative technology, will it exist as merely an investigative tool or will it be utilized as symbolic capital for administrators looking to display technological modernity?

CONCLUSION

The recording, utilization, and retention of video footage by police agencies (specifically, with the rapid deployment of CCTV across the public space and the emergence of the BWC) are often associated with the Orwellian state (Marx, 2013, Mitchener-Nissen, 2014, Surette, 2005). The resulting environment attempts to balance the existing paradigm: retroactive police intelligence and expanded accountability mechanisms. As discussed above, the influence of this level of surveillance upon officers, communities, and the profession of policing remains under-examined.

While the results are preliminary, this implementation study displays the complexity of the BWC as a technological integration beyond what other studies have explored, identified, or accounted for in their analyses. The true implementers of the BWC will not be command staff, researchers, or consultants. Rather, research must acknowledge the true implementers of the BWC—street cops. It is through their insight and experiences that the successful integration of the BWC within police agencies will occur.
APPENDIX 1

BODY-WORN CAMERA IMPLEMENTATION SURVEY

Open-Ended Questions Used:
- The intent of the research is to sit down with officers at a round-table and individually to understand your thoughts on the device. However, prior to implementation I am interested in your current thoughts on the body-worn camera. To benefit the research into the device, could you share your thoughts using the space below?
- Do you foresee any potential detriments of using the technology, and if so, could you provide some insight.
- What, if any, additional influences do you believe are influencing the implementation of this device in your agency?
- What, if any, additional influences do you believe are influencing the implementation of this device across the nation?
- Do you believe the funds for this technology are best allocated to other areas, and if so could you provide a few examples of where funds should be spent?

Follow-up Question and Open-Ended Question:
- Do you believe the device will change the nature of how you accomplish tasks?
  - A great deal
  - A fair amount
  - Not very much
  - Almost none at all
- In reflecting on your answer to the prior question, could you provide an example?
ENDNOTES

1 Twitter is a social networking website allowing users to post brief statements to an unlimited number of followers.

2 Instagram is a social networking website enabling users to post images from their cell phones or other such devices directly to the website.

3 Presentation of these catalyst events occurs later in the analysis.

4 While agencies utilizing the storage system are able to transition back to an in-house network at any time, to do so is prohibitive for most agencies. Subsequently, once an agency has transferred terabytes of information, it becomes exponentially more difficult to develop the in-house capacity.

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AUTHOR BIOGRAPHY

David A. Makin is a Research Fellow at the Washington State Institute for Criminal Justice (WSICJ) Division of Policing and Security. His recent research interests include the relationship between technology, society, and criminal justice.
Dear readers:

The *Journal of Qualitative Criminal Justice and Criminology* has been more successful than many initially believed possible. The idea for this journal originally emerged, as some may be aware, from a qualitative methods class at Sam Houston State University taught by Willard Oliver, who would go on to serve as the first editor of the journal. I have had the distinct pleasure of watching the journal grow from a primordial idea bubbling in a graduate classroom to a full-fledged scholarly outlet. I am immensely proud of what we have accomplished together as editors, editorial board members, authors, reviewers, and, of course, readers. I am confident that the journal will only continue to flourish in the years to come.

*JQCJC* has reached a point where it no longer needs its original stewards. Will recently handed over editorship to Thomas Holt, who will carry the journal forward. I have stayed on for this issue to help ease the transition, but I believe that it is also time for me to step aside as well. I enjoyed every moment as book review editor but new blood is necessary to keep things fresh. So it is with heavy heart that I am stepping down as book review editor of *JQCJC*. Ashley Farmer has graciously agreed to take over my position. I have the utmost confidence in her abilities. She will be the official book review editor of the journal effective Fall 2016.

I would like to thank SWACJ, Sam Houston State University, as well as the contributors, reviewers, readers, and anyone else involved in making *JQCJC* a success. In particular, I would like to express appreciation to Will Oliver. Without his efforts, this journal would not have been more than scribbling in a waste bin.

I wish you all the best as I depart. Keep up the good work.

Sincerely,

Kevin F. Steinmetz  
Assistant Professor  
Department of Sociology, Anthropology and Social Work  
Kansas State University

P.S. On an unrelated note, this issue of *JQCJC* does not include a historical book review. This decision was not due to a lack of interested in producing these reviews (indeed, the historical book reviews have by far been my favorite part of the job). Rather, unforeseen circumstances interfered with the production of a historical review for this issue. Ashley will work to resume these reviews for the Fall 2016 issue.
BOOK REVIEW:
John M. Hagedorn, *The Insane Chicago Way: The Daring Plan by Chicago Gangs to Create a Spanish Mafia*

The University of Chicago Press, 2015; 300 pp.

Reviewed by: Thomas Barker, Eastern Kentucky University, USA

In *The Insane Chicago Way*, Professor Hagedorn opines that the super street gangs in Chicago have fundamentally changed since the 1990s. He provides an “institutionalized history” of the rise and fall of the Spanish Growth and Development (SGD) alliance to document the fundamental changes in Chicago. He rightly concludes that the SGD is “almost completely unknown to the public, the police, the professors and even most gang members” (p. 1). This powerful SGD case study is supported by the author’s long history of gang study and his interviews with gang leaders and street gang members, and with organized crime—Chicago Outfit (Italian Mafia) leaders. His interviews with a retired Outfit leader show the ties between street gangs and organized crime—overlooked by gang researchers who see street gang as “disorganized” crime.

The book examines the networks of power between police corruption, politicians, and street gangs, demonstrating what is known as the “Chicago Way”—envelopes stuffed with money liberally handed to both cops and politicians. These networks of power are often not addressed by street gang experts. Furthermore, Hagedorn addresses the variable nature of gang violence, documenting that Chicago street gangs control violence when they recognize that random violence is bad for business (i.e., random violence interferes with profitable criminal activity) and draws too much attention. His discussion of Chicago street gangs may cause us to reexamine what we think we know about gangs and what we should do about gangs. Reading *The Insane Chicago Way* did that for this reader. The key to his argument is the formation and maintenance of coalitions or alliances between gangs.

The gang alliances of Chicago and Los Angeles—the United States’ street gang capitals—have received a lot of popular and scientific study, but Hagedorn is the first to address Chicago’s unique Spanish Growth and Development alliance—why and how it developed and why it crashed and burned. Historically, in both cities gang alliances developed along racial and ethnic lines; however, Chicago’s gang alliances took on a multiracial and multicultural character. Los Angeles’s Black street gangs formed the Blood and Crips
alliances and the LA Latino gangs came together under the Sureno’s alliance controlled by the Mexican Mafia prison gang. The animosity between Blacks and the immigrant Latinos shaped the gang alliances in Los Angeles, particularly between incarcerated gang members. Chicago’s street gangs, on the other hand, came together under the banner of the People and Folk alliances formed and led by incarcerated Black gang leaders. Unlike in Los Angeles, in Chicago Latino and White gangs joined these alliances, but their membership was predominately African American. According to Hagedorn, the Chicago street gang alliances came into being for three reasons: (a) the need to control random and excessive violence; (b) the need to protect incarcerated members and provide for the welfare of leaders; and (c) the desire to engage in crime for profit—organized crime.

Historically, the alliances became necessary because the war on drugs resulted in the mass incarceration of minority gang members in Chicago and other urban U.S. cities. While incarcerated in 1978, Larry Hoover, leader of Chicago’s Gangster Disciples (a Black street gang), formed the Folk multiracial alliance in Illinois’s Stateville prison to prevent the out-of-control neighborhood gang violence from spilling over into the prisons, then overcrowded by minority gang members. The same year, Jeff Fort of El Rukn (a Black gang), Bobby Gore of the Vice Lords (a Black gang), and Gustavo Colon of the Latin Kings (a Latino gang) formed the People multiracial alliance in response. It was not long before the alliance leaders, recognizing the power of what they had created, were running the street gang crime business, primarily drug trafficking, from their prison cells. Furthermore, the gang leaders demonstrated their ability to control gang violence, even though for all the wrong reasons, proving that gangs are not always “disorganized” crime. The street gang crime business provided income for the incarcerated members and leaders and also controlled violence.

The Chicago Black gangs and their alliances sought to emulate the most successful organized crime coalition in Chicago history—the Chicago Outfit and their Commission. The Outfit “turned over” street level drug sales to the street gangs, but they did not relinquish their traditional protection through the top-down—politicians and police commanders—Chicago Way system [discussed fully below]. The Folk and People alliances did not have access to such protection. Their networks of power and efforts to control illegal drug markets were blunted by the savage war on Black gangs perpetrated by the Chicago Police Department (CPD), exemplified by the torture of more than one hundred Black gang members by CPD Commander Jon Burge. The alliances’ efforts to join in the Chicago Way system were further inhibited by the deplorable economic conditions of Blacks. As a result, overt racism precluded Black participation in Chicago politics. Even those few elected Black politicians were beholden to the Daley machine and the distribution of patronage. Failure to control the politicians and the police doomed the street gangs’ alliance-building efforts.
One of Hagedorn's contributions to the literature on street gangs is his discussion of "the centrality of police corruption to the persistence of Chicago's gangs" (p. 142). Hagedorn's Outfit informant pointedly states, "Without the cops, none of this stuff could happen." The author's analysis supports this statement.

Chicago's history of police corruption and its support for organized crime is legendary. The author demonstrates that in Chicago police corruption is "strongly related" to the rise of street gangs in the 1960s, and that this relationship has continued and expanded. However, the strategies used by the Outfit and the street gangs were different. Throughout its Chicago history, the Outfit corrupted the police from the top (politicians and police commanders) down. The Chicago Way distributed cash-filled envelopes to police commanders and politicians, in return they ensured the smooth operation of crime business. Individual corrupt officers scored on their own, but power and control came from above. As late as 1997, Police Commissioner Matt Rodriguez was forced to resign because of ties to the Outfit. Chicago police officers worked as hit men for the Outfit, similar to the NYPD "Mafia Cops," Louis Eppolito and Stephen Caracappa, in the 1980s and early 1990s. According to Hagedorn, when Black and Latino street gangs took over the retail drug sales from the Outfit, the nature of police corruption changed because Outfit protection did not extend to street gangs and their drug crime networks. Black and Latino street gangs had to strike protection deals with individual officers and units themselves.

In the 1970s, the Marquette Ten was a group of CPD officers who made their own deals with the Vice Lords—a Black gang in the People alliance—and West Gangs to pay for protection of their drug operation. In the most infamous example, the Latin Folk gangs colluded with a CPD gang specialist, Joseph Miedzianowski—called the most corrupt CPD officer in history. OK Miedzianowski robbed drug dealers and kept their money. He sold confiscated drugs to Latin Folk gangs. He was a major drug supplier to the gangs, even selling them on his own. He made crack deals in the parking lot behind the police station where he worked. Hagedorn rightly concludes that rogue cops such as Miedzianowski represent only 5% of the Chicago Police Department and other urban police departments waging the war on drugs. However, important to this discussion is the organized efforts of street gangs, and in this case the Latin Folk gangs, to build working relationships with police to further their illicit operations—a factor often ignored in street gang research. Hagedorn says we should include police corruption in our gang research agenda, and I agree.

Further complicating the "safe" operation of crime business—an Outfit characteristic—was that Black gang members as criminal actors failed to provide for the future as was common to the Outfit. The Outfit invested in legitimate businesses and sponsored future doctors, lawyers and politicians while deigning publicity. Planning for the future by ensuring maximum con-
trol of the political system and attendant patronage made the Outfit the power-
ful crime organization it was and still is. Black gang members and their
leaders lived for the moment in conspicuous consumption—an unsuccessful
way to develop a lasting tradition of power.

The final blow to the People and Folk alliances came when their leaders
were sent to more secure federal ultra-maximum prisons, cutting off their
ability to communicate with and to direct members on the street and re-
sulting in a return to disorganized crime. For these reasons as well as the
traditional animosity between Blacks and Latinos, the multiracial, but pre-
dominately Black, People and Folk alliances faded from the scene, making
way for the Spanish Growth and Development (SGD) alliance: a coalition of
Latino Folk gangs, such as the Insane Dueces, Insane Dragons, Insane Popes,
Insane Spanish Cobras, Insane Unknowns, Maniac Latin Disciples, Latin Lov-
ers and Latin Kings.

Latino gang alliances, formed in the 1970s to fight racist White gangs
provided a model for the new Latino alliance. The SGD movement, like the
Folk movement, started in Stateville Prison; in 1989 Latin Folk gang leaders
called for all Folk gangs to join a Latino alliance—the Spanish Growth and
Development alliance. The new proposed alliance had a developed structure,
a constitution and by-laws, and membership forms modelled after the Latin
King’s structure and organization. The primary reasons for forming the new
alliance were the same that led to the formation of the now fading multira-
cial Folk alliance—control violence on the street, protect incarcerated gang
members and leaders, and keep the gangs focused on criminal activities.
However, the strength of accepting this model evolved into a major weak-
ness. A dispute resolution board, La Tabla, was formed to resolve disputes
between members and gangs. Hagedorn opines that the original concept “set
forth a daring plan to transform Latino gang life in Chicago into a more ra-
tional, violence-mediating, and consciously criminal structure.” It just didn’t
work out that way.

Sixteen Latino Folk gangs formed the SGD. Soon after the formation, net-
works of power developed within the SGD alliance as the two largest gangs—
the Maniac Latin Disciples and the Insane Spanish Cobras—recruited fellow
Latino Folk gangs to join their factions, or families. Three families soon de-
veloped as the gangs joined forces: The Insane Family—seven gangs led by
the Insane Spanish Cobras; The Maniac Family—five gangs led by the Ma-
niac Latin Disciples; and The Almighty Family—four gangs led by the Simon
City Royals (a White gang). The families of gangs, not forgetting their prior
disputes over territory and previous violent acts, began to engage in violent
power struggles that eclipsed the goal of profits for all and led to disaster: a
War of the Families.

The War of the Families degenerated into coordinated attacks by The
Maniac Family against The Insane Family on February 13, 1996, and the
next day, February 14. The attacks left seven people shot and marked the collapse of the Spanish Growth and Development alliance. They also ushered in a War of the Families that resulted in the deaths of hundreds of Chicago gang members.

Hagedorn’s case study, *The Insane Chicago Way*, is an excellent study of the rise and fall of the Spanish Growth and Development alliance. I must admit that I, and probably most gang researchers, was not aware of the SGD and the desire by Chicago Latino gangs to create a Spanish Mafia using the Chicago Outfit as a model. Hagedorn’s work explains why this alliance developed and how it disintegrated. His findings have implications for the general study of gangs and add to our knowledge of how gangs operate in the underground economy and create the necessary networks of power for safe/protected operation of illicit businesses. Gangs are not as disorganized as many opine. This work is a significant contribution to the study of Chicago street gangs and gangs in general and should be read and studied by all serious students of street gangs.
Book Review:
Jody Miller and Wilson R. Palacios, Editors, *Qualitative Research in Criminology*


Reviewed by: Carl Root, Eastern Kentucky University, USA

*Qualitative Research in Criminology* is Volume 20 in the series titled *Advances in Criminological Theory* edited by William S. Laufer and Freda Adler. The title of Miller and Palacios’ contribution brings to mind the saying “one of these things is not like the others.” In fact, they acknowledge as much on page three of the introduction, as they state, “For some readers, our strategy may beg the question, why does a volume oriented around methodology belong in a theoretical series?” Miller and Palacios give a brief answer to this question, but allow the seventeen chapters that comprise their volume to provide the best evidence for such inclusion.

The book is organized thematically into six parts: (a) Qualitative Criminology: History and Epistemology; (b) Narratives, Biography, and Cultural Meanings of Crime; (c) Positionality and the Study of Criminalized Social Worlds; (d) Comparative Social Organization of Place and Crime; (e) Understanding Punishment and Society; and (f) Long Views on Qualitative Criminology. Each part consists of three chapters with the exception of part four, which only has two. Prominent and respected criminologists who have contributed to theory through their own research share insight into their work and in so doing elucidate the myriad ways that qualitative research and criminological theory intertwine.

The first section creates the context for the rest of the book. Covering the history and epistemology of qualitative criminology are Dick Hobbs, Michael Agar and Peter K. Manning. Hobbs provides a brief history of qualitative research in criminology beginning with English journalist Henry Mayhew’s work documenting the lives of London’s working class. Hobbs quickly, but thoroughly, brings the reader through the Chicago School, the radicals of the 1960s and 1970s, and all the way up to the more recent “fierce critiques” by Loïc Wacquant of the role of theory in influential ethnographies. Ultimately, he concludes that fieldwork, properly conducted, “offers the prospect of genuine theoretical innovation” (p. 29). Reflecting on his years conducting drug research, Michael Agar then explores the concept of “library shock,” explaining how different addiction was from the mouths and minds of addicts compared to the descriptions and explanations in the academic literature. (As
he says on p. 37, “The way most of it was written, I couldn’t understand why they called it that.”) At one point, he references the Frankfurt School’s idea of science as preserving ideology and he concludes hoping that this will not continue to be the case for criminology. Finally, Manning describes the role that “cautious generalizations” from his fieldwork on policing played in the development of the dramaturgical perspective. The rest of the volume contains similar discussions on the interplay between theory and their qualitative research.

Part II provides three chapters detailing how the collection of narrative accounts of crime and criminal justice can provide theoretical insight. Sharing observations about the case of 18-year-old “Jez,” Gadd and Corr detail how psychosocial criminology can use in-depth interview and case studies to help make sense of senseless violence. Likewise, Presser and Sandburg share samples from interviews with “Ola,” “Don,” and “Dwight” to illustrate the different ways that personal narrative can elucidate issues of agency and action as both relate to crime. The section concludes with Fleisher’s description of how allowing prisoners the opportunity to educate researchers on inmate argot provided understanding of the cultural meaning of prison rape.

Part III includes three essays on the relevance of researcher identity in qualitative research and theory development. In particular, the essays discussed how this identity provides understanding of a phenomenon through both prior knowledge and exposure (or the lack thereof). First, Bucerius describes how her position as an “outsider” studying male Muslim drug-dealers in Germany offered distinct advantages, contrary to conventional wisdom. Then, Contreras provides the opposite perspective pointing out how his insider status granted increased access in understanding “stickup kids” in the Bronx. This section concludes with Panfil’s research on queer criminology and how her identity provided access, but also how her attempt to avoid certain common assumptions about LGBTQ people almost cost her important insight.

Part IV is the shortest of the sections, containing one fewer chapter than the others. This is likely due to the loss of several contributors, which the editors mention in their introduction. Still, the two chapters provide compelling arguments for expanding the scope of qualitative criminological research beyond its traditional geographic borders. Arias uses research in the shantytowns of Brazil to describe how ethnography, participant observation, and interviews can contribute to a comparative criminology that could likewise open some of the discipline’s traditional theoretical borders for further exploration. Zhang and Chin similarly explain the important role that qualitative research played in their development of a “cartwheel network theory” as an alternative to the dominant narratives of Chinese criminal organizations as the primary culprits of human smuggling.
Part V, on understanding punishment and society, includes contributions from Haney, Liebling, and Lynch on how the connections between qualitative research and theory pertain to studies of corrections. Haney argues for ethnography going beyond thick description to theoretical reconstruction by initiating conversation between the punished and theorists of punishment while describing her own prison ethnography. Liebling describes how such an approach can be greatly aided by considering the types of questions we ask and particularly advocating for appreciative inquiry. Finally, Lynch illustrates how found objects and documents can facilitate another kind of theoretically rich conversation regarding punishment.

The last section of the book is titled “Long Views on Qualitative Criminology” and begins with a chapter by Ferrell on the promise and prospect of cultural criminology as both method and theory. This is followed by Maruna’s argument for qualitative research within an evaluation of what works in criminal justice and a sort of “state of the union” of criminology and qualitative research by Wright, Jacques and Stein. As with the rest of the book, these perspectives span a broad epistemological continuum related to current issues in qualitative research as well as future goals and how to achieve them. The final chapter concludes with a call for a more inclusive criminology where the dichotomy of quants vs. quals can be overcome with collaboration, data sharing, and a broadened lens that looks outside of traditionally studied populations and issues.

Overall the book does a fine job of providing a breadth and depth of perspectives related to qualitative research in criminology and how such research pertains to advances in theory. Specifically, the collection taken as a whole gives the reader the distinct impression that qualitative research is crucial regarding both the development and the refining of criminological theories. A variety of opinions are included related to how qualitative research might garner the respect and resources it deserves in the often restrictive confines of a criminology currently dominated by quantitative research. There are likewise a variety of different approaches to qualitative research, almost as many as there are chapters in this book. Field research, ethnography, interviews, content analysis, narrative, discourse analysis, and other options available to the qualitative researcher are all given consideration. Contributors provide considerable insight into how data collection and analysis in these different types of qualitative research are both informed by and informative to theoretical perspectives. As such this text is a welcome addition to the qualitative researchers’ library and would be a worthwhile reader for incorporation into both courses on theory and methods. It would be particularly necessary in those few programs where qualitative methods are a required part of the curriculum, but just as useful in those where qualitative research continues to remain an elective option.
We live in strange times. Through mobile devices we can access more information than has been available at any other point in human history. We can communicate instantaneously across the world through complex webs of wires, antennae, and satellites. Troves of information are continually stored and processed in massive data centers. In the age of the microprocessor and global telecommunications networks, nearly a single element of social life has remained untouched including crime and crime control. Criminologists struggle to make sense of crime and control in this context where our understandings of the world have been rattled loose under what Jock Young termed the “vertigo of late modernity.” While inroads have been made, more progress is needed.

The *Journal of Qualitative Criminal Justice and Criminology* invites submissions for a special issue entitled “Technocrime Research at the Margins.” *JQCJC* seeks manuscripts focusing on qualitative examinations of technocrime (or “cybercrime”) and crime control issues to help alleviate the dizziness induced by our computer-mediated times. Studies focusing on critical criminological or otherwise marginal perspectives in the area are encouraged. Potential topics of interest include critical examinations of:

- Online harassment and hate speech
- Hackers, pirates, and other tech-subcultures
- “Cyberterrorism” rhetoric and responses
- Technocrime moral panics
- Law enforcement practices and perspectives related to information security

More traditional explorations of technological misuse/abuse may also be considered as well. Persons interested in contributing to this special issue are encouraged to submit abstracts by August 15th, 2016 to the guest editor, Kevin F. Steinmetz, at kfsteinmetz@ksu.edu. Upon abstract approval, manuscripts should be submitted to the guest editor by no later than May 15th, 2017. Manuscripts will be rigorously peer-reviewed.

*JQCJC* will consider only original manuscripts not previously published or currently under consideration elsewhere. All manuscripts should be in English, attached as Word Documents, double-spaced, preferably less than 40 pages (including tables, references, and appendices), and should conform to the latest APA format, without the use, however, of any running headers or DOIs (Digital Object Identifiers). Endnotes, tables, and figures should be on a separate page at the end of the manuscript with call-outs for placement.

We look forward to your submissions,
Kevin F. Steinmetz, Ph.D.
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Kansas State University
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