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Lauren Weeks, Aria Alamalhodaiei Anna Feigenbaum

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Lauren Weeks, Aria Alamalhodaei and Anna Feigenbaum¹

Micro-storytelling and Building Community Communication on Twitter: A Case Study of the @RiotID Project

This paper reports on findings from a content analysis of tweets from the @RiotID project. @RiotID is a civic media project that utilises social media to help train civilians how to identify, monitor and record uses of riot control weapons. This analysis looks at over two years of Twitter data, using an adapted version of Lovejoy and Saxton's (2012) Information, Communication, Action framework to code the sample of 529 tweets. Two key sets of relevant findings arose from the coding. The first relates to the prevalence of community-based interactions on @RiotID's Twitter account. These findings reflect the benefits of using Twitter as a platform to generate two-way communication, as well as to foster practices of promotional communication for social change that go beyond representational sharing. The second set of findings examines how micro-storytelling functioned on the @RiotID account. These findings contribute to scholarship on the storytelling aspects of promotional communication, social campaigns and third sector social media use.

Keywords: Twitter, social media, Digital storytelling, Social campaigns

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INTRODUCTION

Background on @RiotID

In September 2015, a team of researchers at Bournemouth University, along with the NGOs Omega Research Foundation and Bahrain Watch, partnered with graphic designers Minute Works to launch the @RiotID Project. @RiotID is a civic media project that utilises promotional communication and social media strategies to connect with communities. The project was designed to help people identify, monitor and record the use of riot control agents against civilians. Every day, around the world, law enforcement officers use tear gas, stun grenades, rubber bullets and other riot control weapons on civilians. While these devices are marketed as safe and humane 'less lethal' weapons, they regularly cause injuries and even deaths (Haar et al 2017). Based on mounting evidence of these harms – much of which has been gathered by civilians over the past five years --

¹ Corresponding author. Corresponding author. Professor, Department of Communication and Journalism, Faculty of Media and Communication, Bournemouth University, Poole, UK. Email: afeigenbaum@bournemouth.ac.uk

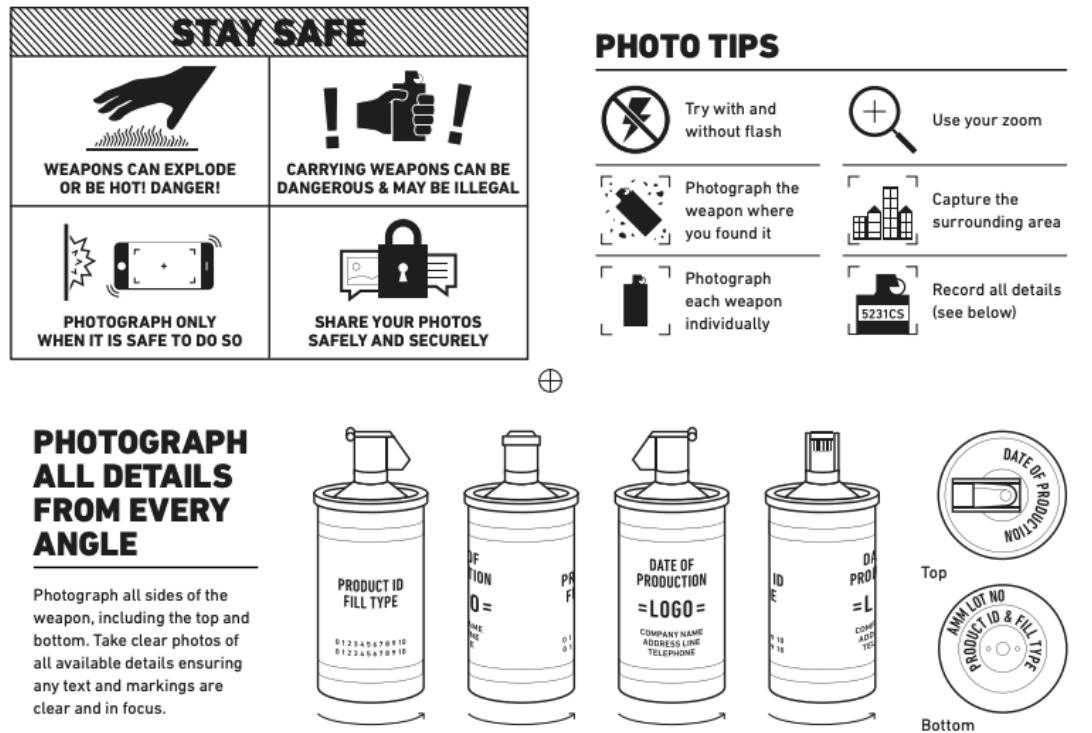
in 2021 the United States Congress opened an investigation into the health effects and dangers of these weapons when used against peaceful protesters. This investigation referenced work by the research team behind @RiotID.

The @RiotID project was originally designed to help people medically respond, monitor human rights violations, challenge the use of force abuses, and identify the manufacturer and country of origin of these devices. The project aimed to educate civilians in the use of force monitoring to help close the gap between how police are advised to use 'less lethal' weapons and how they are used in reality. @RiotID is situated in relation to the broader history of 'cop-watching' or 'sousveillance' practices that date back at least the 1960s when civil rights and Black Panther groups in the United States set up community patrols (Simonson 2016, Feigenbaum and Weissmann 2020). Contemporary sousveillance practices increasingly use digital technologies as a way for protesters and civilians to 'watch back' and monitor police behaviour. As one of the author's of this paper has previously argued, "Today's practices, such as using secure and anonymous smartphone apps and live-streaming technology, follow on from earlier technological and tactical engagements. Today we see media outlets ... recirculate footage of police use of force against protesters. Shared over Facebook and Twitter, these bite-sized broadcast videos can circulate the world within hours of an incident" (Feigenbaum and McCurdy 2018, see also Bennett and Segerberg 2013; Gerbaudo, 2012).

Moving beyond watching and documenting, @RiotID is also positioned in relation to the rise of civic forensics and data aggregation projects. In recent years there has been a push to see these digital recordings of police violence incidents as data points in larger aggregation projects. As Feigenbaum and Weissmann (2020) previously argued, since the 2010s: Major news projects began to aggregate, verify, and analyse incidents of police killings, distributing this information to the public through interactive graphics and data visualisations. These projects by the Guardian (The Counted), the Washington Post (Fatal Force), and earlier efforts began by the Fatal Encounters project, marked a new era in police accountability. Their innovation and amplification were tied to the rise of collaborative social media technologies and platforms. Wiki-style websites, Twitter reports, encrypted emails, and local news stories that could be shared with the click of a button, together with more traditional forms of reporting, made these data journalism projects possible. (Feigenbaum and Weissmann 2020).

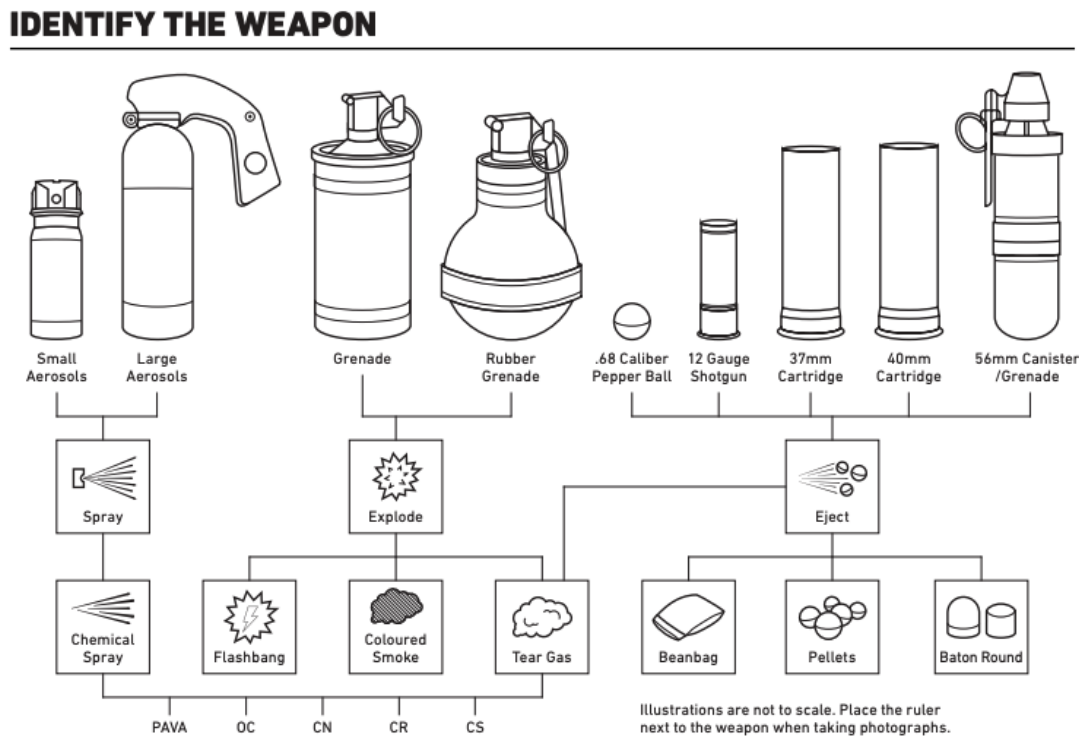
Taking advantage of social media's two-way communication, and particularly the functionality of Twitter, @RiotID intentionally integrated social media connectivity with static, web-based, downloadable infographic guides that trained people to better photo document and upload images of riot control weapons. Utilising standard social media sizes for images, the infographic used a grid design that allowed for individual segments to be easily shared across social media. The guide was originally released in English and Arabic, with further translations done in Spanish, Greek, Italian, Turkish, Italian and French. While the guide was created to be distributed offline, the Twitter account functioned as a place to both document individual incidents and collectively archive reported instances. However, unlike these larger data aggregation projects, @RiotID makes no systematic efforts to collect data on events.

Figure 1: RiotID infographic design by Minute Works



@RiotID works in two steps. First, people on location photo document riot control technologies. By following the instructions for taking photographs provided in the @RiotID pocketbook, people can learn the best techniques for recording and photo-documenting all the information needed to do an identification. This includes photographing the device from all angles and recording all numeric and text information, both around the object and on its top and bottom. Next is step two, using the documented features of the weapon to figure out what it is, as well as the supplier and country of origin. To help people learn to make identifications, we designed a tree diagram that uses the shape and size of different equipment, along with details on different kinds of less lethal impact and chemical munitions. Once a device is narrowed down to its size (i.e. 12 gauge, 37mm, 56mm) and type (i.e. flashbang, OC, baton round) it is easier to identify the manufacturer as different companies make and specialise in different products. For help with identifications, people can tweet their photos to @RiotID or use the hashtag #@RiotID. This Twitter activity is monitored by the @RiotID team who draw on their expert knowledge to help match photographs of weapons being used on the street and where they come from (@RiotID 2015).

Figure 2: RiotID Infographic design by Minute Works



RESEARCH QUESTIONS

In 2016 the collaborative team behind the @RiotID project decided to evaluate how the project was going. This evaluation involved a review of the literature to better understand how the non-profit sector was both utilising and analysing their use of Twitter as a tool for promotional and connective communication. The team aimed to answer the following research questions:

1. How are we currently using Twitter as a messaging platform to relay information to our followers?
2. How are we currently using Twitter as a platform for two-way communication to engage our followers?
3. What methods are most appropriate to analyse and evaluate our Twitter use in order to answer RQ 1 and RQ2?

LITERATURE REVIEW

The decision to design @RiotID in line with the promotional and two-way communicative dynamics of social media and Twitter, in particular, was informed by recent practice and scholarship in the area. Social media continues to grow in popularity, and it is increasingly seen as compulsory for non-profit and voluntary organisations. This rise of social media has contributed to a diverse range of opportunities for the non-profit sector. Researchers have argued that social media provides ample, low-cost opportunities

for non-profits, including engagement with stakeholders and the public (Bortree and Seltzer 2009); fundraising (Saxton and Wang, 2013); enticing volunteers (Zorn, Flanagan and Shoham 2011); strengthening public trust (Guo and Saxton, 2014), and support issues utilising asynchronous real-time advocacy (Guo and Saxton 2014). Used together with existing communication strategies, social media has provided many non-profits' with an arsenal of low-cost, low manpower and accessible information (Waters and Lo 2012) that are manageable (Bernritter et al., (2016), and can be used with ease (Kahraman 2010).

Social media is particularly helpful in broadcasting messages to reach large groups of people instantaneously (Eisenberg et al., 2014) and bringing local issues to international attention. These platforms often allow access of information across time zones and different geographic locations, promoting cooperation and a swifter dispersal of information with the ability of asynchronous communication (Whetsell 2015). Furthermore, the instantaneous direct messages that social media can deliver boosts relationship management, or 'networking' (Miller 2014; Bouwman et al. 2005). This is especially beneficial for non-profit organisations looking to maintain and widen their supporter base. As geographical distance, time and costs go down, organisations can directly connect with their supporters, establish relationships and gather people together in online spaces (Whetsell 2015). The term 'networked non-profit' has emerged to capture this engagement with social media by the non-profit sector. The "networked non-profit" refers to an organisation that uses social networks to extend its influence and effectiveness (Kanter and Paine 2012, p. 7). This adoption of social media has "engendered new paradigms of public engagement" (Lovejoy and Saxton, 2012, p. 1). It presents communication opportunities and diversifies non-profits' networks, for example widening whom it communicates with in terms of clients, volunteers, the media and the general public (Waters 2007). We turn in the next section of this paper to focus on the use of Twitter in relation to non-profits' and how Twitter has influenced this sector.

Non-profits and Twitter

The use of Twitter in the non-profit sector is increasing and it has been suggested that Twitter is a better channel for engaging stakeholders than traditional websites (Lovejoy, Waters and Saxton 2012). As a social media platform that allows users to share tweets with their followers and the general public in real-time. It is a popular platform with approximately 192 million active daily users reported by Twitter in their 2020 shareholder report. Twitter is useful for non-profits' for two primary purposes--information-sharing and dialogic relationship building. Both of these strategic uses are particularly beneficial for non-profit promotion as it allows for the distribution of messages, alongside the maintenance and expansion of a supporter-base (Lovejoy and Saxton 2012).

Lovejoy and Saxton (2012) argue that there are three "paradigmatic types of organisational users of Twitter" within the non-profit sector: "information sources", "community builders", and "promoters and mobilizers." Information sources are presented as the most frequent type, referring to the distribution of factual information. This is because sending information on Twitter is easy, quick and effective, and additionally providing information regarding the non-profit is imperative to increase supporters and funding. In addition, unlike traditional website communication, Twitter allows non-profits to engage in two-way communication: 'followers' can respond to messages, 'tweet' questions, and 'retweet' or 'favourite' information they gel with (Ihm 2015).

This two-way communication is imperative for boosts in non-profits stakeholders and public interest. Twitter allows a 'dialogic loop', in which one party involved in

communication invites the other party to engage, interact, act or reply (Taylor, Kent and White 2001). This is especially easy on Twitter as relevant information can be embedded into Tweets, URLs to websites with additional information can be tweeted, and links to videos, pictures and other interactive material can be included (Baumgarten, 2011). Twitter provides non-profits with the ease of immediate feedback and it has been suggested that the transparency of Twitter—as a public platform—is crucial for the non-profit sector (Taylor, Kent and White 2001).

METHODOLOGY

To better understand and evaluate how @RiotID was being used, the research team drew on this literature to design their study utilising content analysis. Content analysis is now a well-established method for analysing social media content to better understand and build upon communication strategies (Nuenendorf 2016). Due in part to the small sample size of our tweets, we employed qualitative content analysis and looked at general demographic data, rather than utilising methods such as social network analysis and sentiment analysis that perform more effectively on larger sample sizes.

For this qualitative content analysis, we used previously established codes for analysing non-profit communication on social media derived from the work of Lovejoy and Saxton (2012), augmenting this with Whetsell's (2015) codes for organisational storytelling, as well as the addition of organically discovered codes relevant to our case study. The tweets were coded over two different periods, by two separate coders. In each instance, a pilot set of coded tweets were tested for inter-coder reliability with the third researcher, who supervised both coders (the first and second authors of this paper). To maintain some distance from the data, the third author who runs the Twitter account did not engage in the coding process, beyond establishing reliability between the two coders to bridge the datasets together. While the project methodology is shaped by the third researchers' interest in reflecting on advocacy practice to improve its efficacy, the coding was conducted by two authors without prior knowledge of or stake in the outcomes of @RiotID.

The first batch of tweets was coded in July 2016 and included all tweets, retweets, and responses on the @RiotID account from September 2015 – July 2016. We then decided to extend the evaluation period to get a more robust picture of our Twitter use. Using an identical methodological design, the second batch of tweets were coded in February 2018 and included all tweets, retweets, and responses, ranging from July 2016 – January 2018. Tweets were downloaded using the Twitter API. As the paper authors included the account holder, the team were able to easily retrieve all Twitter activity and export it into a spreadsheet for coding. The first batch of tweets coded totalled 342. The second batch of tweets totalled 187.

The Information, Communication, Action Framework

In relation to our third research question, we decided to code our sample of tweets using Lovejoy and Saxton's (2012) Information, Communication, Action (ICA) framework. The ICA framework has emerged as a predominant method for analysing non-profit and organisational communication by coding tweets. Arising out of a small graduate seminar that Gregory Saxton taught on Cybermetrics, this framework responded to literature in the field of public relations and communication that looked at how the rise of new media was transforming traditional one-way communication practices. Contributing to this new field of research, Saxton, along with two of his PhD students (Lovejoy and Chiu), developed

the framework to (1) be able to code messages on the actual platforms that organisations were using, particularly Facebook and Twitter posts; and (2) to look at how, in addition to information and dialogue, organisational social media communication is also about mobilising people to engage in particular actions (Saxton and Guo 2014). The predominant categories identified by Lovejoy and Saxton (2012) in their large-scale study of 73 non-profit organisations' use of Twitter were *information*, *community* and *action*. Their sample contained 4,655 tweets gathered over one month in 2009.

Information Tweets

Information was the most pertinent to the stakeholders of an organisation (Lovejoy and Saxton 2012), as providing information via tweets is imperative for a non-profit organisation to share what is happening within the organisation and remind their followers of what they are interested in (Waters and William 2011). The informational function is a single category, encompassing tweets containing information regarding the organisation, event highlights, news, facts, reports and any other additional information (Lovejoy and Saxton 2012). Whetsell (2015) found that of 193 tweets analysed, 101 were coded as "information", whereas Lovejoy and Saxton (2012) coded 58.6% of tweets as "information". Thus, "information" tweets regarding non-profit organisations emerge as the most utilised tweets, which can additionally be verified by Lovejoy, Waters and Saxton's (2012) study of 100 US non-profits in 2009 that established that the bulk of tweets included a link to another site with more information. "Information" tweets are primarily of one-way interaction and often include links to other sites. They ignite public trust via educational information of the organisation and boost accountability, providing an essential base for more complex functions, such as dialogue and mobilisation (Lovejoy and Saxton, 2012). Consequently, "informational" tweets play a crucial function: they establish a connection with the organisation's mission and stakeholders, and determine a foundational building block for other complex functions, with the main difference between this function and the others are "information" tweets function is to solely inform (Lovejoy and Saxton 2012).

Community Tweets

In Lovejoy and Saxton's (2012) research, "Community" tweets appeared to be utilised the most after "information" tweets. This is because non-profit organisations develop a sense of community with their stakeholders and 'followers' and to build this two-way communication, which Waters and Williams (2011) label as "hooting": the idea of feedback, and "cooing": encourages a balance in the dialogue between the organisation and the public. Developing a sense of community is important as it ensures assurance and openness, to preserve the relationship (Waters and Lord 2009), and to recognise the stakeholders' goodwill (Waters and Feneley 2013). The purpose of "community" tweets is to facilitate an online relationship and community with "followers" (Lovejoy and Saxton 2012). Similarly, in his research sample, Whetsell (2015) found that out of 193 tweets, 50 were coded into the "community" function, which again is similar to Lovejoy and Saxton's (2012) study that found that 25.8% of tweets had a "community" function.

"Community" tweets are a way to interact and engage with followers and stakeholders, which creates an online community (Lovejoy and Saxton, 2012). For Lovejoy and Saxton (2012) "Community" tweets can be split into four sub-categories: recognition (13.2%), acknowledgement of events (0.4%), reply (8.2%) and response solicitation (4.1%). Furthermore, Lovejoy and Saxton (2012) suggest two aspects to the community function: dialogue and community building, such as tweets that spark direct and interactive conversation. Thus, two of the four sub-categories of the "community"

function relate to the “community building element”, whilst the other two relate to the “dialogue” aspect. These interactions via Twitter build community as they facilitate a conversation that includes the followers; this enables people to reach out and collaborate with the account, one another, and co-create content.

Action Tweets

According to this framework, “action” tweets are the final type of tweets non-profit organisations utilise. This type of tweet aims to get ‘followers’ to “do something”, with advocacy at its core (Lovejoy and Saxton, 2012). “Action” tweets are the least frequently used, Lovejoy and Saxton (2012) found that they were ‘tweeted’ 15.6% of the time. Within the “action” function they found seven subcategories: promotion (7%), donation (3.1%), selling (0.5%), volunteers/appeals (0.8%), lobbying and advocacy (0.6%), join another site (1.2%) and learn how to help (1.6%). The “action” function, they argue, is the most tangible as it asks followers to do something to help the non-profit organisation meet its objectives (Lovejoy and Saxton, 2012). Similarly, in his study, Whetsell (2015) found that 42 of 193 tweets were “action” tweets and that within this function followers were an integral part of carrying on the story. Additionally, Whetsell (2015) identified the 8th sub-category of directives to ‘read or watch’, which were 10 of the 42 “action” tweets he coded.

Thus, an explanation for the “information-community-action” function of tweets may follow a trend. Transmitting information is important, and only 140 characters need to be utilised well (Lovejoy and Saxton 2012). Therefore, these types of tweets often contain additional information for ‘followers’ to click on and learn more about the organisation. Then the second function “community” involves building a relationship with ‘followers’ and 2-way communication with these ‘followers’, which is where engagement begins (Lovejoy and Saxton 2012). Finally, “action” tweets centre on mobilisation and advocacy, where users begin to make a difference. Thus, it follows a pattern of “information” as a “core activity” to attract followers, “community” to build and sustain this relationship, and “action” to mobilise ‘followers’ (Lovejoy and Saxton 2012).

Micro-Storytelling on Social Media

In addition to the “information, community and action” function of tweets (Lovejoy and Saxton, 2012), in his analysis of how non-profit organisations utilise storytelling through social media Whetsell (2015) coded for five types of stories within tweets, which were “report, tragic, comic, romantic and epic” (Whetsell, 2015). Whetsell (2015) adapted these codes from Gabriel’s (2000) book on Storytelling in Organisations: “epic” stories illustrate achievements, “comic” stories elicit laughter, whereas “tragic” stories foster pity and centre the narrative on the victim’s impact. Moreover, “romantic” stories encourage followers to become immersed in the overall organisation story, as a character; defined by love, gratitude and appreciation, whilst awakening empathy. Whetsell (2015) added to these four different story types a fifth category called ‘report’. These ‘report’ stories focus on factual accuracy and the transmission of information rather than stylistic flair.

Fisher (1984) describes humans as “homo narrans” or “story telling people”, thus it makes sense for information to be transmitted via a story. Whetsell (2015) found that report stories were the most common within a non-profit’s use of Twitter and most often utilised within the “information” function. Romantic stories were the second most common stories, and epic and tragic stories were used relatively the same (Whetsell 2015). This type of storytelling is effective, as social media spread and exchanges information quickly, which non-profit organisations can take advantage of to build, maintain and sustain advocacy efforts (Guo and Saxton, 2014).

@RiotID coding Framework

In addition to these codes, during the pilot coding stage of this project, the research team developed an emergent set of codes relevant to our particular case study. This adaptation utilised the fundamental three categories of the ICA framework (Lovejoy and Saxton 2012) to code tweets. A tweet would be coded as either information, community or action based. 'Information' tweets were direct tweets that contained information about the organisation's activities, highlights from events by the organisation or any news, facts, reports or information from the organisation. 'Community' tweets included five subcategories, these were: 'reply', 'respond', 'recognise', 'event' or 'retweet'. Finally, 'action' codes included subcategories: 'promote', 'volunteers', 'advocacy', 'join', 'empower' and 'read/watch'. The majority of these codes were taken from Lovejoy and Saxton's (2012) ICA framework, however, the meaning of 'empower' was adapted from 'learn how to help' to 'showing others how to help on their own' for the project. 'Read/watch' was added from Whetsell (2015) and 'retweet' was added as there did not appear to be a code for this in Lovejoy and Saxton's (2012) framework. Moreover, once the tweets had been coded as 'information', 'community' or 'action' the storytelling content of the tweets would be coded, these codes were: tragic, romantic, epic, comic and report (Gabriel 2000; Kostera 2012; Whetsell 2015).

FINDINGS

In relation to our first and second research questions, there were two key sets of findings that arose from coding. The first relates to the prevalence of community-based interactions on @RiotID. This first section of findings looks at research question two, reflecting on how the project itself used Twitter as a platform to generate two-way communication, as well as at how it fostered practices of promotional communication and community connectivity that go beyond representational sharing. The second set of findings relates primarily to research question one, looking at how micro-storytelling worked on the @RiotID account. Employing Whetsell's (2015) method for coding storytelling in tweets, these findings contribute to emergent literature on micro-storytelling and third sector social media use. Although tweet frequency decreased over time, the types of tweets, retweets, and replies remained consistent across the sample period. Yet because of the difference in the size of the samples, it is still valuable to discuss the two coding batches separately as they provide a useful frame to compare and contrast @RiotID's tweeting over time.

Community Interaction on @RiotID

We used the ICA framework to code tweets from the @RiotID account from September 2015-July 2016, and then from July 2016-January 2018. The first batch of tweets coded totalled 342: 80 of these tweets fell into the information category, 257 were coded 'community' and 5 were coded as 'action' tweets. The second batch of tweets, which totalled only 187, nevertheless followed this distribution pattern, with 54 tweets coded 'information,' 129 coded 'community,' and only 4 coded 'action.' This distribution sets @RiotID apart from previous studies on non-profits use of Twitter (Lovejoy and Saxton 2021, Whetsell 2015). Previous literature highlights that the majority of tweets are coded as 'information', whereas, for @RiotID tweets, the majority are 'community' tweets. This is likely because of the process of @RiotID. As a civic media project, @RiotID depends upon group interaction to facilitate potential weapon identification.

On top of this, as @RiotID was a relatively new, voluntary project, its follower-base was very important to promote and grow the organisation. For example, many early tweets used identification tags to draw together members of the nascent @RiotID community:

"#@RiotID guides are live! By @XXXXX @XXXXX @ XXXXX @ XXXXX @ XXXXX distro by XXX"

This tweet was coded as 'community' and was also coded into the sub-category of 'respond': one of five subcategories of the community code.

In the Riot ID project, while one side of the two-way communication is expert, the identifications are only possible through the participation of others. This participation is either one of active or responsive community engagement. In active community engagement, someone photo documents the riot device and sends it to the @RiotID account, or sends another person's photos to the account. For instance, in this tweet @RiotID solicits additional photo documentation to enhance the identification process:

"@XXXXX Do you have any more shots of the canisters or equipment used? For help IDing XXX".

In responsive community engagement, someone responds to tweets from @RiotID, providing further information:

"Do you have any close-up photos of the rubber ball grenade? We work on photo identification: <http://t.co/0rukwnh1SA>".

In this way, the project was able to capitalise on Twitter as a multi-directional conversation platform. This allows for the information not just to be transmitted, but also to demonstrate how the process can be reproduced outside of social media space, as the user is educated in how to do the identifications themselves.

In previous studies using the ICA model for coding, 'retweets' were left out of the study. We chose to include a code for 'retweets' as these are part of Twitter community building and help amplify an organisation's social media presence, exposing the account to a broader audience. This subcategory of 'retweet' was 152 of the 257 coded 'community tweets' in the first batch, and 95 out of 129 community coded tweets in the second batch. 46 tweets were 'respond', 29 were 'recognise' and 'reply' and 1 was 'event'. For example, a 'retweet' would look like this:

"RT @XXXXX: Moving talk from @ XXXXX on impacts of #teargas #stopdsei XXX"

Retweets serve a valuable function in that they allow a greater breadth of tone and style to be visible on @RiotID's Twitter profile. @RiotID operates within a very strict promotional communications strategy, following rules regarding language (e.g. avoiding grandiose adjectives) and tight parameters on the subject matter that gets tweeted from the account. Retweets, however, strategically appropriate different kinds of tweets, such as this one, and bring them into connectivity or the 'networked non-profit' space of an organisation:

"RT @ XXXXX: On the radio (attempting coherent sentences in a slowed down voice) with @XXXXX ft. my new @XXXXX on Tear Gas XXX"

This tweet was coded as comic, one of only 4 to be coded in this category in the second batch. It was also coded in the community function because it helped foster a sense of community and a larger research-driven purpose to the @RiotID project and its focus on the misuses of tear gas globally. Retweets might be deployed similarly way by other charities and non-governmental organisations to extend their networks and incorporate more styles of micro-storytelling that do not fit within the organisation's own social media style guide.

To solicit new engagement beyond their existing network, @RiotID uses a real-time updating column on Tweetdeck that searches for tweets with images and the keyword

'tear gas' (in English). Although limited by language, this allows for coverage of a greater area of the world. While 51% of @RiotID's followers are from the UK—where the project is based—the account has followers from across 6 continents and 36 different countries.

In order to find out how many of our tweets were directly related to the task of IDing riot control weapons, the research team coded for this. The coding was either sorted to 'yes' IDing of a weapon, 'no' IDing of a weapon, or 'associated' – not directly IDing a weapon but in some way associated with the process/weapons/project. Of the 342 tweets in the first batch, 165 were coded as 'associated', 87 were coded as 'no' and 90 were coded as 'yes'. Of the 187 tweets in the second batch, 4 were coded as 'associated,' 175 were coded as 'no' and 90 were coded as 'yes.' There is a marked decrease in the number of tweets with positive identifications or coded as 'associated' after July 2016, in part because there was a reduction in tweeting frequency overall. The large number of tweets coded as 'associated' corresponds to practices of educating users when not directly IDing a weapon, including responding to users' questions or discussing current uses of riot control across the world. For example, this tweet was coded as 'associated' to the practice of 'RiotIDing':

"@XXXXX Do you have any more photos? See #@RiotID XXX"

Tweets were also coded as 'associated' when retweeting other users' identifications, particularly when the tweet is tagged with @RiotID. This tweet, for example, includes a positive identification made by Omega Research Foundation, the NGO that helped construct the @RiotID guide and that helps maintain the @RiotID Twitter account:

"RT @ XXXXX Images + headstamp indicate Chinese Norinco commercial brand CJ ammunition, dated 1994 5.56mm @RiotID @ XXXXX @ XXXXX ..."

Most photos of scenes of riot control that are shared on social media do not include any close-up photos of weapons or devices themselves. This is because of the dangers associated with being close to these weapons and close to police lines. In addition, people are often drawn to the more emotive and visually striking elements of riot control, such as police outfits, large vehicles and the ominous clouds of smoke that often fill the street (Feigenbaum and Kanngieser 2015). Without a clear shot of riot control devices themselves, it is very hard to make identifications.

However, some things are visible from the scene itself. When no close-up canister or weapon shots were available the @RiotID team can still document misuse and excessive use by comparing UN guidelines to what is documented in the photographed scene, corresponding text (if available), and any follow-up conversations with users. For example, a scene may depict architectural structures such as fences or walls that prohibit movement, as is common in a refugee camp or at a border crossing. In these cases, the confinement of movement creates a hazardous situation and the use of riot control agents like tear gas and flash bangs become increasingly dangerous. Protocols state that such agents should not be used when there is no clear escape path as this can lead to suffocation and trampling. For example, @RiotID offered forensic scene analysis of riot control use at the refugee camp in Calais, France:

"Dangerous weaponry used on refugees with no legal status in Calais XXX ft. @RiotID @ XXXXX @ XXXXX"

For this reason, images are crucial for the work that @RiotID does. Tweets that both respond to and use images dominated our feed, with over 80% containing images or links to further information in the first batch. 32 tweets used both an image and a link out to further web-based information, 83 tweets with embedded images, and a further 173 tweets that linked out to other content, often containing a series of images. Only 55 tweets carried no additional media content. The second batch of tweets intensifies this proportion, with only 12% containing no media whatsoever. 60% of tweets in the second batch contained either an image or both an image and link. In addition to this practical

significance of images, it is well documented that tweets containing media content are more likely to be retweeted and responded to (Wu, Hofman, Mason, and Watts 2011; Nagarajan, Purohit and Sheth 2010).

Micro-Storytelling on @RiotID

Using Yiannis Gabriel's model for organisation storytelling, adapted by Whetsell (2015) into codes for social media, we analysed the kinds of stories our tweets contained. We followed Whetsell's (2015) incorporation of Gabriel's four story categories (tragic, epic, romantic, comic), as well as Whetsell's additional category 'report' as a fifth story type for when there was little tone or emotion added to the transmission of information. Of the 342 @RiotID tweets in the first coded section, 233 were coded as 'report', 40 were coded as 'tragic', 32 as 'epic', 29 as 'romantic' and only 8 were coded as 'comic'. In the second batch of 187 tweets, 127 were coded 'report,' 25 were coded 'tragic,' 6 as 'epic,' 25 as 'romantic,' and 4 as 'comic.' This corresponds to previous literature, for example, Whetsell (2015) found that 'report' type stories also dominated his sample and that 'comic' stories were far and few between. However, unlike in our sample, Whetsell (2015) coded for more 'romantic' tweets than 'epic' tweets.

Organisational stories can be powerful; they can evoke an emotive response that can foster change, enhance or enforce belief systems, and create and maintain corporate culture (Brown, Gabriel and Gherardi, 2009). Social media has further influenced the nature of organisational storytelling, transforming it from a one-way linear communication mechanism to a collective and collaborative encounter between the organisation and other social media users. The mechanisms of retweeting and replying can further bolster the number of followers one reaches on Twitter, consequently eliciting a collaborative, holistic and authentic relationship between the organisation and followers. Stories help individuals understand the organisation (Kaul and Chaudhri, 2015) and can help communicate the organisation's motivations and rationale.

As the main purpose of the @RiotID project is to relay information and to do so without emotional commentary, it made sense that 'report' was the most frequently used story type. The project's NGO partner, Omega Research Foundation, works within the funding remit of the European Commission and functions as an impartial authority. Their organisational communication, therefore, takes on an impartial and authoritative tone in relaying information. While this impersonal approach is seen as important in policy-making arenas, the lack of 'personality' and emotion are at the same time said to be poorly suited to Twitter as a social media platform. This can create a bind for non-profit organisations that are looking to increase community engagement without threatening their authorial voice online. However, as stated earlier in the paper, retweets helped mitigate the limitations of an authoritative tone on social media, offering a way to navigate the tricky restrictions of policy-based language.

When other kinds of stories appeared in the @RiotID sample, they were most frequently 'tragic' or 'romantic'. Tragic narratives were often picked up from humanitarian organisations in @RiotID's broader 'non-profit network' that engage much more with emotional or empathetic storylines, centred on personal testimonies and individual people's experiences. For example, this retweet with an active community member and high-profile journalist engages an emotive, human-centred narrative:

"RT @ XXXXX: Five men on hunger strike have sown mouths shut in #CalaisJungle. They request that an ECHR rep visit the camp. XXX."

In the sample, 'romantic' stories were usually expressions of appreciation or gratitude towards others in the @RiotID networked community. 'Romantic' stories often showed appreciation for those involved within the project.

“Our fantastic collaborators are speaking in Geneva tomorrow XXX.”

Occasionally stories were coded as ‘epic’. This is usually related to tweets that were celebrating the educational or empowering aspects of the @RiotID project. For instance, this community response tweet pulled together members to showcase the related Mapping Tear Gas project:

“@XXXXX @ XXXXX @ XXXXX of course. We are keen to track differences in lethal force. A benefit of mapping is the ability to do this”.

The retweet below was also coded as ‘epic,’ because it included an independent recommendation of the @RiotID guide for activists. It also includes the hashtag ‘SharedSolidarities,’ which invokes the feeling of admiration or sense of overcoming adversity common to the ‘epic’ categorisation.

RT @ XXXXX: #Activists know your rights and weapons used against you! @RiotID has v useful info on identifying 'riot' control weapons #SharedSolidarities”

A few stories that the team coded as comic used dark humour or sarcasm to relay what would otherwise likely be a tragic story. However, rather than employ a human-centred narrative, these tweets would centre on state or corporate policies and practices. In relation to the notion of ‘punching up’ in satire, this style of comic tweeting directed anger, disbelief or poked fun at arms manufacturers and police weaponry companies. While not that widely utilised by @RiotID, this style of comic tweeting can perhaps allow non-profit organisations to envelop humour into their tweets, creating the emotional response and community connections conducive to successful social media communication. Also, highlighting the absurdity of many historical and contemporary weapons practices might be an effective tool for engaging the audience with the political and ethical stakes of such campaigns. For example,

“RT @ XXXXX: Ooh, purportedly a list of VIPs attending the big arms fair in UK in Sept. Thanks #HackingTeam! XXX”

“Equipment supplier @ XXXXX advertising these policing essentials for the holiday season XXX”.

Visual storytelling on @RiotID

As discussed previously, in addition to the practical and connective function of images, when images were present in tweets they also often contributed to the storytelling. While the text may have been only informational or coded as report, with the image a more emotive narrative emerged. Thus, the tone of the ‘tweet’ could change when an image was present. Images paired to a report-style tweet could evoke a more ‘romantic’ storytelling, or a more ‘comic’ or ‘epic’ undertone. For example, the tweet’s text below, if it was on its own, would be coded as ‘report’, however, paired with the text and image on the quoted tweet, it evokes a more ‘romantic’ storytelling:

“Spreading the word at #BSF15 #@RiotID XXX”.

Pairing report-style tweets with emotive images or using the quoted tweet function to recirculate an emotive tweet with report-style text are two further ways that policy-oriented NGOs may be able to incorporate connective content and develop more social media-friendly personalities, without compromising their position of expertise.

CONCLUSION

Using Lovejoy and Saxton’s (2012) Information, Communication, Action framework in accordance with Whetsell’s (2015) categorisation of storytelling in non-profit organisations, this paper contributes to a growing body of literature on the

“networked non-profit” (Kanter and Paine, 2012). In particular, two of our findings stand to inform the social media communication strategies of non-profits and voluntary organisations beyond this case study: (1) The use of retweeting to diversify organisational tone and content, and (2) The use of micro-storytelling to amplify the advantages of Twitter as a two-way communicative platform.

The primary shortcoming of this paper is the small sample size. With only 529 tweets it is difficult to generalise any statistical significance to other cases. In addition, the @RiotID case is unique as it was intentionally designed to incorporate Twitter into its operational practice, whereas most NGOs and campaigns utilise Twitter as an add-on means of communication, or develop social media-based activism or campaigns (i.e. #icebucketchallenge, #nomakeupselfie, #IfTheyGunnedMeDown, #thisgirlcan). Further, garnering donations from the audience or otherwise seeking monetary engagement does not factor into @RiotID’s strategic project, and thus differentiates it from many other non-profit organisations. Without the drive to convert engagement into an investment, @RiotID can focus on information spreading and community building, rather than driving those communicative modes into monetised actions.

Further research could usefully develop upon the methodology employed here by utilising larger sample sizes and comparative case studies. Both larger samples and comparative cases would enable a broader analysis of the importance of micro-storytelling in relation to Twitter and social media communication. For example, research questions could include: Do micro-stories help build a follower-base? Do more ‘tragic’ or ‘romantic’ tweets elicit a more emotional response? Are micro-stories more likely to be retweeted? Does using emotional lines compromise the expert position of policy-oriented organisations?

In addition, more statistical methods such as social network analysis and cluster analysis could be employed to yield further insights both on this data, as well as for further research utilising similar coding frames. Due in part to the small sample size, for this initial study we only employed qualitative content analysis and looked at general demographic data. However, more advanced analysis of how tweets spread and circulate, as well as the relation of texts to images and language in different modes of storytelling could all be ascertained through social network analysis, cluster analysis and semantic analysis (among other methods).

@RiotID’s use of Twitter functions as a hybrid of non-profit promotional communication and community empowerment through civic media engagement. At the same time as the project’s non-financial status hinders the finding’s direct relevance to non-profits, it also provides unique insight into how aspects of civic media can be incorporated into non-profit community building through the combined use of community-oriented twitting and micro-storytelling. Bearing witness and giving voice are crucial elements of community building that can be incorporated into broader non-profit and voluntary projects.

Rather than seen simply as sharing a story, in the way many hashtag campaigns work, this more proactive method of soliciting witnessing turns experience into evidence-based data that becomes used as part of real world campaigns to limit the harms of less lethal weapons. Furthermore, by not only soliciting content and response-based participation but also giving away knowledge and expertise, @RiotID is able to utilise Twitter as a two-way communicative platform, turning it into a method for civic empowerment and knowledge transfer. This strategy can be utilised more broadly by non-profits and voluntary organisations if they devise campaigns that encourage responses, such as questions and answers, image-based puzzles, or community skill-sharing.

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