Mounted Police: A Law Enforcement Tradition

Chase Brouillette

Abstract

As of recent years, the law enforcement tradition of utilizing horses has been called into question and increasingly scrutinized by the media. In conjunction with this the media's recent trend of covering a variety of negative police stories has created additional challenges in the maintenance of mounted police units. While the concerns raised are certainly valid, this narrative portrayed by the media against police has created a population that associates anything police-related with these negative stories.

After having spent a great deal of time with the Mobile Mounted Unit, I came to understand that mounted police units serve drastically and fundamentally different purposes when compared to their other law enforcement counterparts. Most people's perception is that mounted patrol units are no different from any other type of law enforcement. As a result, I came to the conclusion that an objective documentary presenting all sides of the issues associated with mounted law enforcement could prove to be especially beneficial to the population that they serve. The notion behind this project was that it would enable citizens to weigh all of the issues associated with mounted units and arrive at their own conclusions regarding mounted police.

The result was an expository documentary revolving around the history, uses, and current state of mounted police in North America. The goal of this project was to increase public awareness and education regarding mounted police. The achievement of this goal was evaluated via a survey that gathered information on the audience's understanding and perception of three key points. Respondents were evaluated both before and after viewing the film. Overall, according to the data gathered via survey, the film seemed to achieve this goal of informing the audience and creating a greater public awareness on all three key points.

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Senior Seminar

31 August 2020

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The use of mounted police is a longstanding tradition in the law enforcement industry, with its origins dating back to the 18th century.While mounted units have become commonplace in major cities since then, many civilians do not understand their uses or the training and preparation that goes into maintaining a mounted police unit. On top of that, there has been a lot of media coverage in recent years regarding mounted units and their use to control protests, in conjunction with the negative media coverage that standard law enforcement already receives. As a result of this, mounted units are prone to be categorized with standard police, despite their varying duties and involvement. This combination of lack of civilian education and one-sided media coverage has created a fundamental misunderstanding of mounted police among the communities that they serve, which has resulted in many mounted departments struggling to maintain funding and support.

After spending the initial stages of this project promoting the Mobile Mounted Auxiliary, I came to realize the vast differences between mounted police and standard police officers, and came to become more interested in that aspect than promoting the organization. I began to see that my understanding of mounted police before being exposed to them was skewed and misinformed when compared to the actual applications of mounted units. I saw the discrepancies in the public's understanding of mounted police officers and how civilians could come to benefit

from learning more about them, driving me to want to inform, rather than persuade. Of course, this idea was incompatible with the current promotional project at hand leading to multiple issues. But the drive to inform the public about mounted law enforcement and allow them to weigh the differences remained.

As a result of this, I found myself wanting to deliver a more balanced narrative about mounted police in order to allow communities to better understand mounted police in an unbiased, objective manner. The initial plan for doing so proved to be problematic, as the tone was more promotional rather than journalistic, but the footage and lessons learned from the initial project proved very enlightening in the formulation of a new project.This new project was intended to appeal to a wider audience than the initial one with the goal of providing all sides of the issue, thus allowing viewers to come to their own conclusions regarding mounted police.

Mounted police have generally found themselves in the negative media spotlight for reasons associated with the recent movements against police in general. Organizations such as Black Lives Matter and Antifa have created new challenges in creating positive community interaction between civilians and police. In recent years, police in general have been facing severe media backlash for a variety of reasons, which has had a substantial impact on law enforcement and the public perception of police (Gramlich & Parker, 2017; Schultz, 2019). When police have tried themselves to rectify that situation, they have been met with additional criticism (Norfleet, 2015). The media cycle has seemed to be unforgiving to law enforcement recently and, consequently, mounted police units have found themselves occasionally being included in these perceptions. Because of this, many mounted units have been struggling to complete their duties as units that focus on promotion. As a result, in theoretical terms, the media

has utilized the theory of Constructivism in order to construct a social consensus in which anything police related is viewed in a negative light.

This has caused mounted police units to become a victim of Categorization Theory, which posits that human beings are prone to understand things (like mounted police) by placing them in the same category with similar things that they do understand (like standard police). As such, the media generates a culture behind it in which it is pertinent to associate anything police related with concepts of negativity and division. Resulting from this, mounted police are commonly viewed as nothing more than just another negative police affiliated organization. This can lead to issues, especially considering that mounted police units have vastly different duties and responsibilities when compared to their other law enforcement counterparts. So, when generalized with standard police, mounted units can expect to be fundamentally misunderstood.

Therefore, I planned to use Critical Theory in the production of the documentary to challenge the power structure that creates this dominant ideology in which generalized police are correlated with negativity, and provide a perspective on mounted police to those who have no personal experience interacting with mounted police or have never been informed about their purposes. But at the same time, in the interest of objectivity, I ensured to include the negative side that the media portrays in the documentary as well, to allow people to weigh both sides of the issue and effectively arrive at their own conclusions.

The idea is not to persuade people to support mounted police, but, instead, to provide them with a basis of information to make an educated decision about their thoughts on the matter of mounted law enforcement. The sources that many people get their information from on this topic tend to be biased against mounted police units. So the goal is to create a piece that still

integrates that perspective, but also shares basic information on mounted units, as well as

including perspectives of supporters of mounted police. With this information, the audience will

be exposed to all sides of the issue, instead of just the side that the media promotes. The

motivation behind this is to allow the viewers to have the necessary insight to create informed

opinions on the matter. In doing so, I hope to provide my audience with the information

necessary to allow them to properly differentiate mounted police units from standard police, and

create individual opinions on the matter.

Initially, the project consisted of a promotional campaign for a specific mounted unit, the

Mobile Mounted Auxiliary. There were many issues that disrupted this phase of the project, and

corrupted not only our ability to promote but also our ability to achieve the goal of accurately

representing the unit to its populace. For one, a promotional tone is by definition not objective,

as it stands to serve one side of an issue over another. This proved to be an issue, as it felt as if

the project would be doing the audience a disservice in only providing one perspective on

mounted police. On top of this, the COVID-19 epidemic prevented the proper completion of this

project, leading to the complete reorganization of the project into what is is now.

The project in its current state consists of a documentary film revolving around mounted

police and their history, uses, and current situation. This project shifted the focus of the content

from relying purely on testimonies and footage from one organization, into a research based

piece consisting of interviews from multiple organizations, archival footage and information, and

news articles about mounted units.Thanks to the Masterclass article, I was able to quickly adapt

to this change and was able to properly prepare for my research (Masterclass, 2019). This shift

not only allowed for a more objective video piece in order the better serve the audience, but also

drastically widened the potential audience of the piece, potentially allowing it to have a much broader impact.

The process of creating this project was drastically different from the original rendition planned, as it relied less on field footage and more on gathering various sources and footage, and compiling them. As a result, the project relied primarily on pre- and post- production, rather than the production itself. There were instances where more production was needed once the pre-production and writing were complete, however, these were very minimal. The difference though would be that in the initial run, the writing and editing would largely rely on what footage was gathered and how it could fit together, while in the revised project, it was the opposite: whatever production was needed relied on scripting and other pre-production work. An example of this would be the Baton Rouge Mounted Police interview, and the additional voiceover used the Royal Canadian Mounted Police section. This allowed for a much more streamlined workflow, and made it so that everything was done purposefully and flowed well in the final product.

The planning and scripting for the project was done early to allow plenty of time for planning production events and gathering archival materials. Initially research was necessary to properly transition from a promotional tone to a journalistic one. The Biesterfeld article on documentary types proved to be immensely helpful in doing so, as it details the different types of documentary and their usage (Biesterfeld, 2019). Exposure to this article enabled me to determine that expository documentary was the best route to take for this particular project. From here, the intial planning phases of the project began. This aspect of the project relied heavily on assessing what was still usable from the original vision of the project, and incorporating that to determine what would need to be researched and what archival footage would be needed. This

allowed me to note what sections needed expanding upon, and to begin brainstorming potential interviewees and other sources of information or footage.

From this point, research began, allowing for a more detailed vision of the project for scripting, as well as allowing me to gather some potential contacts for requesting interviews. Notably, I needed sources relating to the history of mounted police, as well as sources for information about the Royal Canadian Mounted Police, and media articles conveying the issues with mounted police units. In my research, I discovered two sources for the general history of mounted police, one containing a detailed synopsis of the history, with the other containing a timeline pointing out major turning points in that history. The Pedigo article provided a helpful detailed overview to start with, while the Paul article aided in compiling this historical data into script format and forming a cohesive chronological overview (Paul, 2000; Pedigo, 2003). While conducting this historical search, I also came across an article published by the International Museum of Horse that detailed the specific history of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police, that I was able to use to supplement the content I later received from the RCMP (Royal Canadian Mounted Police, n.d.). Lastly, my research included analyzing a selection of negative media articles about the mounted police both for use in graphics and for use in developing content for the script. These articles revolved around topics such as the defunding of mounted police, the misuse of mounted police, the morality of animal use in law enforcement, and whether or not police horses are still necessary (Fletcher, 2019; Holdier, 2020; Poon, 2020; Scott-Reid, 2020; Vigdor, 2019). Each of these articles provided a valuable perspective on mounted law enforcement that would need to be countered for objectivity purposes.

At this point, I was ready to begin contacting my potential interviewees as I began writing the script for the documentary. The project began to almost stagnate at this point, as the COVID-19 epidemic was still ongoing, and many people were either too busy to interview or were hesitant to conduct an interview during such a turbulent time. But despite this, I managed to arrange an in person interview with the commander of the Baton Rouge Mounted Unit, as well as an email interview with a representative of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police, who kindly arranged to allow me to use some of their b-roll as well (Appendix A). At this point, pre-production was wrapped up, and I was prepared to go into the brief production phase of the project.

Production began with me recording my voiceover of the script, and continued with conducting the interview with Sgt. Patterson of the Baton Rouge Mounted Unit, as well as a series of emails between me and Catherine, a representative of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police, in which she answered questions I had, and provided me with some of their available b-roll. When the interview with Sgt. Patterson was arranged, I prepared a basic list of questions to gather information about the Baton Rouge unit to add a perspective outside of the Mobile Unit. I consulted to Fuller article to ensure that I would go into the interview with quality questions, so I would have a better chance of capturing good content (Fuller, n.d.). After the interview was conducted I wanted to add more perspectives so I reached out to many other nearby mounted units, as well as attempted to arrange a Zoom interview with someone from the Royal Canadian Mounted Police. While the other units were not able to be interviewed at the time, I did get a response from the RCMP, stating that they could not arrange a Zoom interview, but would be happy to answer questions via email and provide me with some footage. Over the course of the

next emails, I quickly learned that the RCMP are vastly different from mounted patrols in the U.S. and was able to gather a lot of content for that section of my documentary, as well as use the footage they shared with me as b-roll. After, I had a friend who does voice recording agree to record their email quotes for the project. At this point, the production stage was finished, and I was prepared to begin editing.

After assembling the voiceover and interviews I had gathered, and exhausting all of the footage from the original project, I was faced with putting together b-roll from archival and stock footage I had collected (Appendix B). This involved taking stills and manipulating them in Photoshop and AfterEffects to create an interesting movement out of the still image. This was a major part of the documentary as some sections of the documentary focus entirely on archival stills, or news headlines. In order to maintain viewer interest during these sections, it was imperative that these forms of b-roll be put to motion. Once these movements were created, the new footage was cut into my timeline, where I continued to create and add graphic transitions and credits and add music.

The final product consisted of a 17 minute, 5 second documentary containing information about the history of mounted police, the Royal Canadian Mounted Police, the various utilizations of mounted police, the training required for a horse to become part of mounted police, and the current media climate relating to mounted police. The main content delivery method consists of my voiceover and interviews. These are covered by b-roll that consists of footage shot at the Mobile Mounted Unit, footage provided by the Royal Canadian Mounted Police, as well as archival stills, article headlines, and stock footage put to motion in AfterEffects. The project was motion graphics extensive, in that all still photos used needed to be put to motion to create more

audience interest in the image. Additional motion graphics work was done to create transitions between sections, the various news headline graphics used in the current events section, and the title sequence and credits. Effects were used to ease the video transitions, increase interview audio quality, and adjust the levels of the music.

Overall, the methods, strategies, and tactics used for this project were meant to provide all sides of the topic to the audience while, maintaining an objective presentation so as to not persuade them towards any particular conclusion. To accomplish this goal of objectivity, I balanced my research in an effort to not put an emphasis on any particular section. After this, I took caution while writing my script, continually revising it to ensure I was using objective language. I also paid special attention to managing my tone and inflection when recording the voiceovers. It was imperative to ensure that the narration sounded objective and that there was nothing to lead the audience to believe that some bias existed in my creation of the documentary. The Biesterfeld article on objectivity in documentary filmmaking proved to be an immensely helpful source in my pursuit of ensuring a journalistic tone (Biesterfeld, 2020).

The equipment used for this project consisted of my media kit camera and microphone, as well as my computer for research and editing via Adobe Creative Cloud software. The use of the media kit allowed for better mobility and adaptability when it came to gathering the initial footage, as well as the additional interviews and voiceover. This was crucial when it came to recording interviews, as setup was streamlined due to my familiarity with the equipment, and more time was able to be spent focusing on the actual content of the interview. The use of my personal computer and Adobe software allowed for additional mobility and efficiency after production, which was helpful as work could be done from anywhere, as well as the fact that all

programs within Adobe's Creative Suite are compatible with each other allowing a drastic efficiency increase when it came to taking motion graphics through Photoshop, to AfterEffects, and finally to be cut into my timeline in Premiere.

The audience of this project has vastly changed from the original iteration of the project. Initially, we were only targeting a specific locality in order to inform about that community's local mounted unit. Once the project was revised, the audience grew from the original targeted population. The reason for this, is that the revised project incorporates three different mounted units, as well as provides basic information about mounted units in general, therefore making it more accessible to a larger group of people. Therefore, the target audience of the documentary is anyone who is not well informed on mounted policing, with an emphasis placed on those who live in communities with active mounted police units. By broadening my audience, and adjusting the project accordingly, the final product of the project has the potential to not only reach, but also to inform a wider group of people. Hopefully this will lead to the piece having a much more broad audience as well as having more substantial appeal and impact.

There were a few legal and ethical issues faced during the course of creating the documentary. First off, the b-roll I had from the initial attempt was not going to be near enough, so I had to do much gathering of additional footage and stills. During this process, I had to ensure that the footage I was downloading was royalty-free and that there were no fees or licensing issues associated with the footage. The Pilon article was helpful for this aspect of the project (Pilon, 2018). Ethically, I was unsure whether or not some of the officers I interviewed would be willing to be in a film in which the negatives of mounted police are also discussed, but

as a courtesy to them I made sure to keep them aware of the nature of the film and what their role in it would be, to ensure there were no misunderstandings.

The ultimate goal of the project was to instill an all-around better understanding of mounted police in my audience. This goal could be further separated into three sections: the history of mounted police, their current uses, and the current media coverage and political climate surrounding mounted police. Through the entirety of the project, it was important to keep this goal in mind, as it acted as a motivator in regards to maintaining objectivity throughout the documentary. For, if the final product was not objective, it would not serve to create a broader understanding in the audience, allowing them to develop their own opinions regarding mounted police. This goal was assessed with a Survey created via QuestionPro, that consisted of determining the respondents's understandings of the three main areas both before and after viewing the documentary. The answers were given on a four point Likert-type scale consisting of responses correlating to negative, somewhat negative, somewhat positive, and positive (See Appendix C).

The survey ended up gathering a total of 23 volunteers who completed the survey and watched the film. The data for these surveys was compiled using QuestionPro's built-in analytics software (See Appendix D). Before being exposed to the documentary, the viewer answered three questions relating to their knowledge of the history, uses, and current events revolving around mounted police. These responses were overwhelmingly negative, with only an average of 2.38% of those surveyed claiming positive knowledge about these topics. This exhibited the proposed lack of knowledge about mounted police and their duties. After viewing the film, however, these numbers jumped to where an average of 90.47% of those surveyed reported

positive knowledge across the three topics. The average rate of positive change per question was 88.09%. In addition to the survey questions, the optional comment section included gathered 4 responses, all of which positive, including lines like "Very informative, I learned so much," and "Good interviews and music overlays" (See Appendix E). Overall, the survey seems to confirm that the film achieved the goals set in all three subsections, as well as enforcing that the video as a whole proved to be exceptionally educational regarding its topic and audience.

There were many issues faced over the course of this project, but as a result, the final product was better able to accomplish its goals and was more accessible to a wider audience. I feel as if the change from a promotional project to a journalistic one allowed for me to better convey the content I wanted to convey, as well as provide a greater benefit to a larger audience of people. Through the various stages of this project, adaptability was key, as with the changing focus of the project, as well as the changing social climate regarding this Covid-19 pandemic, it was crucial to be able adapt the project along with these parameters. I found that with the virus outbreak ongoing, it was vastly more difficult than normal to procure interviewees and other people willing to help and provide information. This created some difficulty in being able to nail down topics and arrange the outline of the video, as those were dependent on what footage and information I was able to gather. Luckily, I did receive some positive responses, which allowed me to better prepare a script and plan my timeline, as well as proved invaluable to gathering content. Overall, through this experience I learned the importance of being able to adapt a project and how crucial it is to not rely on anything as set, and therefore having backup plans to continue the project if something changes or falls through.

As a whole, I feel very proud of the way the project turned out. Reflecting on the entire process, I am grateful that there were a variety of difficulties that occurred, as I feel they have strengthened me as a video professional, and allowed me to come to understand the importance of adaptability in this field. While this project may have gone on longer than most capstone projects, I believe that allowed time to really feel out the project and its goals, and eventually create something with a much wider range and impact than the project initially proposed. I feel as if the change in the project's focus allowed the documentary to better serve the viewers, as taking it from a journalistic perspective, I was able to incorporate a variety of different thoughts and opinions on the subject, rather than just one. This allowed for a video piece that educated the viewer in a more well rounded way, allowing them to create their own thoughts and opinions on mounted police. As a result, I think that the viewer benefitted drastically more from this iteration of the project than they would have from the original.

Despite their rich history, a lot remains to be seen on the future of the utilization of horses for law enforcement purposes. While the negative media coverage of police is still ongoing, and the division between law enforcement and civilian populations is widening, I hope that this documentary can provide crucial information to civilians during this time of unrest. In the recent efforts to defund law enforcement, some mounted units are already falling victim to budget cuts and cancellations. A notable example from this past June is the Baltimore Mounted Unit, where efforts made by the city council to defund the police department ended up resulting in the disbanding of their mounted unit, which was the oldest continually running mounted unit in the country (Poon, 2020). Due to these recent movements and media trends, mounted police units have seen a significant decline. Ideally, the documentary can enable some to make informed

decisions regarding specific segments of law enforcement, and allow for greater understanding on all sides of this issue. While some mounted units are having their funding cut, others are becoming staples of the community. While this division continues to grow, hopefully some can find comfort and understanding in the content that this documentary provides.

Appendices

A. RCMP emails

B. Archival and Stock photo examples

C. Survey

D. Survey results

E. Survey comments

Appendix A

HQ Media Relations / DG Relations Medias (RCMP/GRC)   Mon, Aug 10, 4:56 PM
to me, HQ

Hi Chase,

Unfortunately, we won't be able to do an on-camera interview. We will provide you with written responses if you send us your questions. We can also provide Musical Ride B-Roll for you to use. You can also suggest other B Roll that you would like and we could see if our video production team has any that meets with the tone and style you are seeking?

Let us know if that works for you.

Catherine

RCMP-National Communication Services/
Services nationaux de communication-GRC
Tel: (613)843-5999

Appendix B

OFFICERS OF B DIVISION N.W.M.P. DAWSON. JULY 1900

Appendix C

How informed are you on the history of mounted police?

○ Not at all   ○ Somewhat   ○ Pretty well   ○ Very

Add Question   Page Break   Separator

Settings   Copy   Logic   Preview   ⋮

How informed are you on the current uses of mounted police?

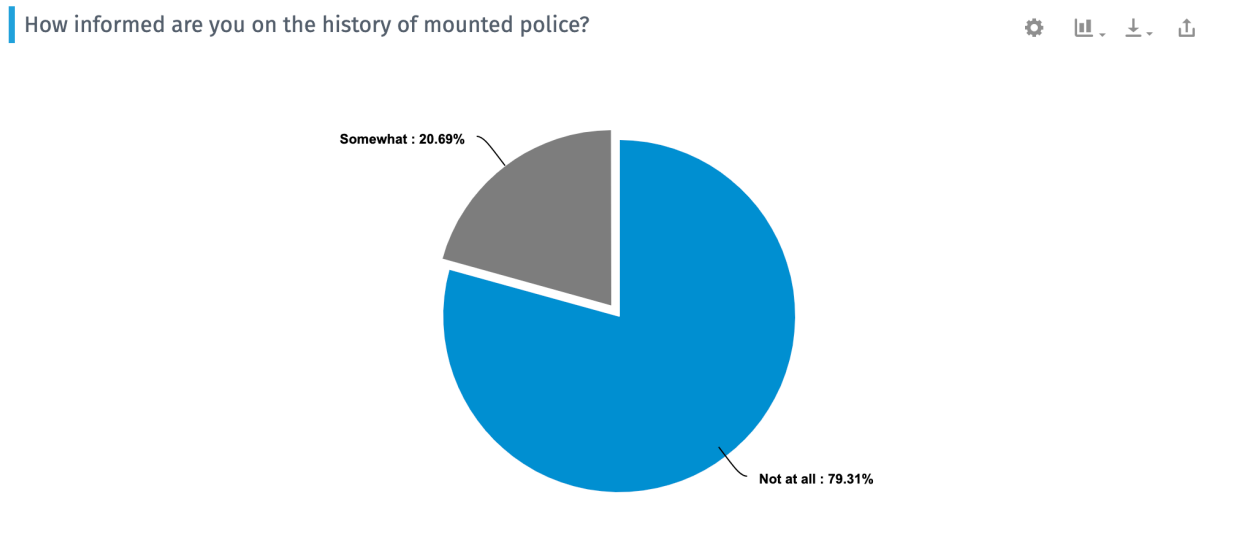○ Not at all   ○ Somewhat   ○ Pretty well   ○ Very

🗑

Add Question   Page Break   Separator

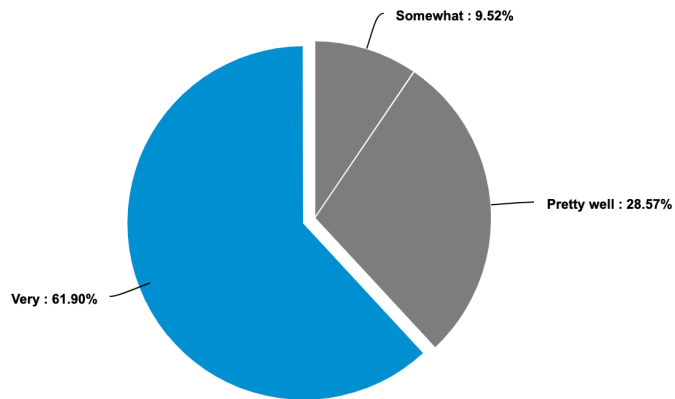How informed are you regarding current events involving mounted police?

○ Not at all   ○ Somewhat   ○ Pretty well   ○ Very

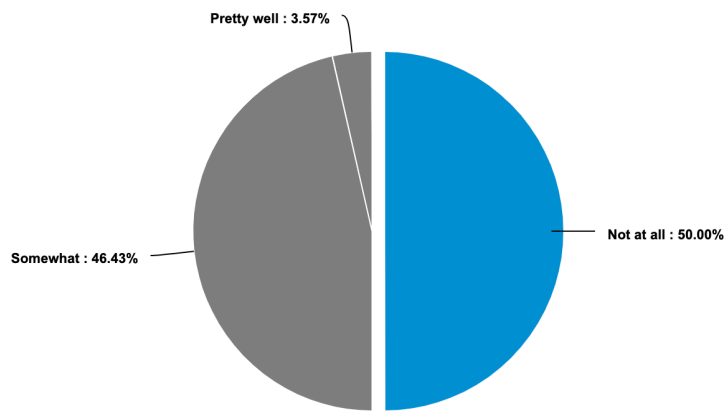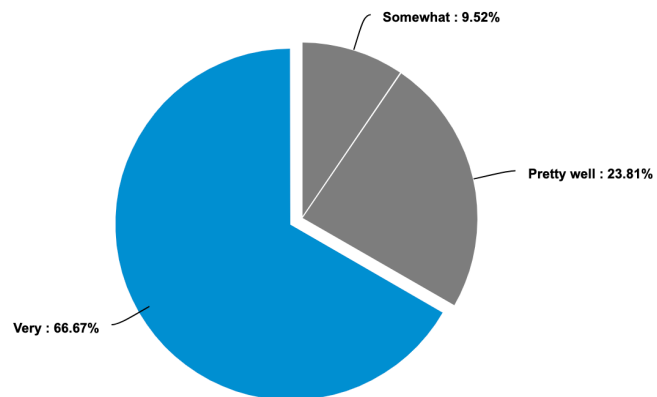Add Question   Remove Page Break   Separator

Appendix D

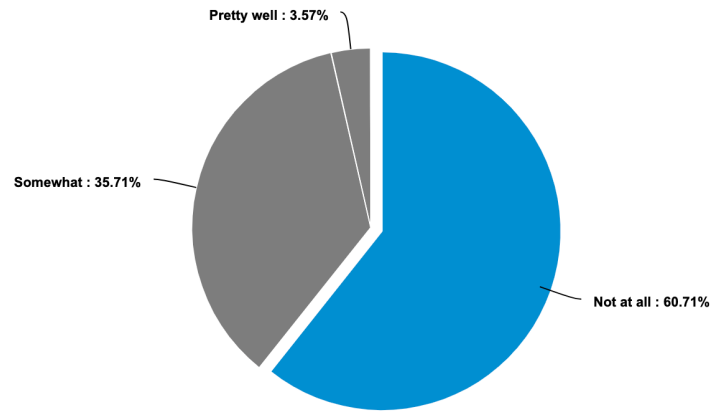How informed are you on the history of mounted police?   ⚙ 📊 ⬇ ⬆

Somewhat : 20.69%

Not at all : 79.31%

How informed are you on the history of mounted police?

Somewhat : 9.52%

Pretty well : 28.57%

Very : 61.90%

How informed are you on the current uses of mounted police?

Pretty well : 3.57%

Not at all : 50.00%

Somewhat : 46.43%

How informed are you on the current uses of mounted police?

Somewhat : 9.52%

Pretty well : 23.81%

Very : 66.67%

How informed are you regarding current events involving mounted police?

Pretty well : 3.57%

Somewhat : 35.71%

Not at all : 60.71%

How informed are you regarding current events involving mounted police?

Somewhat : 9.52%

Pretty well : 28.57%

Very : 61.90%
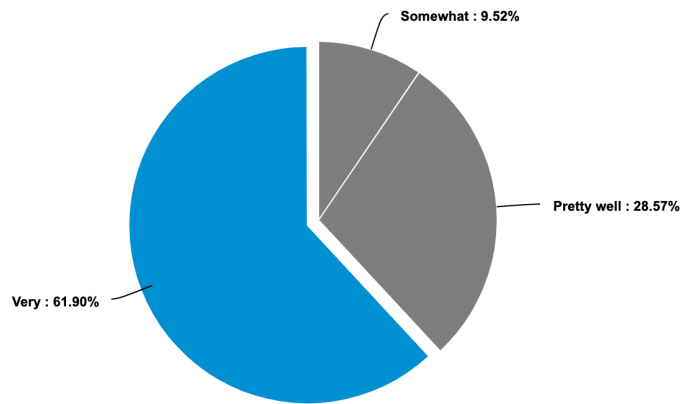
Appendix E

Thank you for watching this documentary! Please leave comments or suggestions in the text box below.

08/30/2020	79033528	Great work gentlemen. Good interviews and music overlays.
08/30/2020	79022656	Very nicely done. Very professional.
08/30/2020	79019724	Wow I didn't realize that police horses went through such rigorous training
08/30/2020	79015492	Very informative, I learned so much!!

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