

# MEDITATION

## Impetus for Enhancing A Global Perspective

Article

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Sacramento, California

October 2003

# Meditation

## Impetus for Enhancing A Global Perspective

This work examines the feasibility of meditation assisting law enforcement agencies adapting to cultural diversity by 2008. Diversity creates a myriad of challenges for California law enforcement for delivery of quality police services in the foreseeable future.

A senior command officer once posed a question of how can the organization improve its ability to deliver services to the community when crime had already declined for seven consecutive years? After much thought, my response was to improve the service provider. There are many avenues available for self improvement, but I conducted research to answer how meditation could assist a mid-sized urban law enforcement agency adapt to cultural diversity.

We all have a perception of meditation and whether or not it has any value in general, much less in the workplace. However, studies indicate a meditation practice can improve individuals' abilities of concentration, focus, problem solving and interpersonal communication skills.

The San Francisco Bay area is populated by an extremely diverse community creating challenges for law enforcement to provide quality services. Whether or not law enforcement may benefit from meditation for adapting to cultural diversity is not unique. Private industry is utilizing meditation to improve employee performance. What is unique to law enforcement is the number and speed of decisions required under difficult situations involving many different people. At stake is the ultimate seizure of an individual's freedom or life. It is of substantial importance to the future of the profession to have police officers processing information effectively and efficiently.

The 2000 United States Census Bureau's results indicate the population will continue to grow in California from 32.5 million in 2000 to 49.3 million by the year 2025. The growth alone will overextend available resources, but more substantial challenges for law enforcement will be the demographic changes in the state.

“The ‘melting pot’ region, which includes California, is made up largely of immigrant and minority populations. For the first time in a century, California’s foreign-born population is greater than its out-of-state born population” (Milken Institute, 2002, p.1). It is important to understand the impact the foreign-born population has on a community; their needs for good and services are as diverse as their numbers. However, “humans everywhere want essentially the same things: happiness, security, a sense of worth and creativity, inner and outer freedom” (Fowler, 1996 p. 22).

California demographic trends further complicate the numerous generational aspects impacting every culture and crossing all economic boundaries. As experts analyze the population today, they have identified four distinct generations. Each of these generations provides a unique challenge due to its perceptions on life, work and recreation that were formed in their years as adolescents and young adults. Exacerbating this equation is the variety of countries where these formative years took place.

Meditation presents a solution to a diverse work force interacting and providing a quality service to an ever-growing diverse population. Meditation practiced by law enforcement professionals can improve their ability to be present in the moment, thus heightening the ability to focus. With a heightened state of awareness the officer increases productivity, improves problem-solving abilities and builds relationships. None of us live in a vacuum. Everything we do affects others. (Fowler, 1996 p173)

The most significant change in California population percentages between 1995 and 2015 is in the Asian, Pacific Islander and Hispanic populations. The Asian, Pacific Islander population is projected to increase to 17.4 percent, while the Hispanic population is projected to increase 43.1 percent. However, the Non-Hispanic White population is projected to decrease to 33.7 percent by 2025, while the Black population is projected to decrease to 5.4 percent.

Racial diversity in California communities will further challenge the flexibility and effectiveness of the law enforcement officer in California for years to come. Studies indicate the pace of immigration will slow, but growth will continue through the year 2020 from births in the United States.

As further example of the diversity, specifically in the Bay Area the following table depicts the ethnic distribution in a local school district as reported in the California Basic Educational Data System (CBEDS) reports dated 2001-02 and 2002-03.

STUDENT ENROLLMENT ETHNIC DISTRIBUTION

	Hispanic	Black	Filipino	Pacific Islander	Asian	American Indian	White
2001-02	19.33%	4.81%	18.10%	1.25%	37.31%	0.45%	18.75%
2002-03	19.43%	4.77%	18.17%	1.61%	38.70%	0.38%	16.94%

The definition of culture should not be limited to nation of origin, religion or custom; generational divergences must also be taken into account. Generational idiosyncrasies play a significant role in cultural diversity as much as nation of origin, religion or custom.

The workplace of today is remarkably different than that of the ‘60s, ‘70s or ‘80s. In past decades, people “knew their place.” Today there are no norms, and rules are being rewritten on the fly, for example younger people supervising older people or women supervising men. As the workforce changes, Matures (those born prior to 1946) are diminishing, while Baby Boomers (those born between 1946 and 1964) and Generation Xers (those born between 1965 and 1980)

are replacing them in the management roles. How will the Millennials (those born between 1981 and 1995) fit in?

Moreover, in California, we have an increasing population of foreign-born residents who present new challenges for law enforcement's ability to deliver quality professional services. This workforce is comprised of multi-generational employees who experts say are predestined for conflict due to their personalities and idiosyncrasies, which makes them unique to their generation.

“Law enforcement too, is influenced by the forces related to change. According to some futurists, changes in a society occur in several major areas, directly affecting law enforcement and compounding the stress inherently associated with the profession”(Sewell, 2002, p. 14). The first, and perhaps the most important, step in handling the forces inherent in change, in general and organizationally, is an awareness of the various stresses.

All human beings are programmed, beginning in the womb through childhood and adulthood. Our parents, siblings, teachers, coaches, peers, religious leaders, employers and mass media, such as television and the movies, program us. Further programming is attributed to advertising, our environment and current events. Our brains have learned to unconsciously direct us toward what we have learned to associate with pleasure and away from what we associate with pain.

Many people are not fully aware of the difficulties the programming can create and how they influence problem areas in their lives professionally and personally. “When you have no perspective on the activities of that trio consisting of your addictive programming, your ego, and your rational mind, you automatically get angry if someone criticizes you” (Leonard, Murphy, 1995 p.115). However, many do realize this, or at least are beginning to, as evidenced by the

proliferation over the past two decades of self-help books, training, meditation techniques, twelve-step programs, bodywork and various forms of therapy. “Now, as never before, we are realizing the tremendous interdependence and interrelationship between the mind and body” (Althouse, L. & Althouse, V., 1989 p.50). “Meditation: this is useful not only for building awareness, but for restoring body centering and homeostasis” (Budd, M. & Rothstein, L., 2000 p. 222).

Studies indicate meditation creates changes psychologically and physiologically. The changes include responses in:

#### Physiological Changes

The global society is generally more familiar with the positive ramifications meditation affects on the physical aspect of the person. Health insurance studies have found that people practicing various forms of meditation have similar results “...in all age groups combined, display a 50% reduction in both inpatient and outpatient medical care utilization compared to controls. Hospitalization is 87% lower for heart disease and 55% lower for cancer” (Orme-Johnson, p.2).

#### Psychological Changes

Most literature in scientific journals and research about meditation has been based on a personal health-enhancing aspect and the importance of ensuring your energy inflow is greater than your energy outflow. “Energy inflow is the process of self-empowerment whereby you rejuvenate your energies in order to create the harmony/balance you need to use those energies” (Hiemstra, 2002, p.2).

As depicted earlier, California is a melting pot of cultures, experiences and vision encompassing a global perspective. Our boundaries are diminishing and are much less

prominent, developing significant impact to our personal ethos systems than ever before. It will be imperative for officers to possess the ability to live globally in their thoughts and deeds to be effective. A meditation practice will provide the practitioner with greater abilities for compassion, contentment, empathy and awareness.

Traditionally, meditation has been associated with and practiced in a religious context. Only recently have meditation techniques been focused on the promotion of an individual's well being. We all have a perception of what meditation involves but meditation is defined by Webster's dictionary as deep continued thought. However, it seems the definition has been expanded to include elements of self-experience and self-realization. "Most descriptions of meditation expressed in behavioral terms include the following components: (1) relaxation, (2) concentration, (3) altered state of awareness, (4) suspension of logical thought processes and (5) maintenance of self-observing attitude" (Peres-De-Albeniz & Holmes, 2000, p.1).

There are many types of meditation and they generally fall into the following categories:

## TYPES OF MEDITATION

<u>Actualism:</u>	It's meditation that uses the energy of inner "light-fire" energy to arrive at the full awareness of your Actual Self.
<u>Biblical Meditation</u>	This form of meditation consists of reflective thinking or contemplation, usually on a specific subject to discern its meaning.
<u>Buddhist Meditation</u>	The purpose of Buddhist meditation is to become liberated from delusion and put an end to both ignorance and craving.
<u>Catholic Meditation</u>	The Catholic Catechism states that meditation engages thought, imagination, emotion, and desire.
<u>Christian Meditation</u>	God leads many people to contemplative prayer without any prior knowledge of discursive meditation.
<u>A Judeo-Christian Technique of Meditation</u>	The Association of Christian Meditators is an organization that teaches a Judeo-Christian form of meditation.
<u>Occult Meditation</u>	This type of meditation follows a particular esoteric form depending upon your ray energy make-up.
<u>Primordial Sound Meditation</u>	Popularized by Deepak Chopra, this style of meditation does not require specific beliefs or a change in lifestyle.
<u>Sufi Meditation</u>	According to this article, Sufi meditation follows the essential rule of self-discovery. All is focused to Allah.
<u>Taoist Meditation</u>	Taoist Meditation methods are gentle and natural, balancing a person's energies.
<u>Technology Induced Meditation</u>	New on the scene, this form of "instant" meditation uses 'mind machine' brain wave entrainment technologies.
<u>Transcendental Meditation</u>	It is one of the most popular and documented meditation techniques now on the face of the earth.
<u>Transmission Meditation</u>	This is a fairly new type of meditation on the scene. Groups work with the Masters of the Spiritual Hierarchy.
<u>Vipassana Meditation</u>	Vipassana meditation is practiced to achieve liberation from suffering through realization of our body-mind processes.
<u>Zen Meditation</u>	We tend to see body, breath, and mind separately, but in zazen they come together as one reality.

(About.com, 2002 pp. 1-4)

Meditation is not an easy fix to problems, but it is "a way of making the mind more awake, clear and wise, a way of discerning truth from illusion, a way of facing up to oneself; overcoming the problems and developing the good things, a lifetime's work" (Holmes, 2002, p.1).

Research suggests that meditation can provide clarity and can simplify situations and decisions. It is intended to quiet the ongoing conversations taking place in the mind, such as prejudices, judgments, and perceptions. Meditation training provides the ability to quiet the

subconscious thought, thus placing the mind in a resting state. While at rest, the mind is open to the present and fully conscious of what the person is experiencing at the moment. Experts refer to this state of mind as mindfulness. “Meditation can enable you to work better in the midst of distraction, to desensitize yourself to annoyances that are sometimes beyond your control” (Althouse, L. & Althouse, V., 1989 p.85).

Meditation training can open the individual to another person’s perspective or point of view. When your subconscious thoughts no longer contribute to the generation of your response, you develop the choice of response contingent upon the facts at hand. “Developing awareness and compassion from yourself shifts your world from one certain suffering to one of new possibilities, or new intimacies, of true health.” (Budd, M., & Rothstein, L., 2000 p. 221)

Despite the recent downturn in California’s economy, the ever-growing foreign-born population is projected to continue to grow through the year 2025. The trend in law enforcement retirements will continue to increase, leaving in its wake at least two generations of employees who will be challenged to work together. To help California law enforcement be receptive for change and differences, a coordinated effort to encourage general use and practice of meditation techniques is recommended. Despite many other types of training law enforcement deploys, meditation is relatively cost-free. “We already have everything we need.” (Chadron p.3, 1994)

My research involved the use of a panel of experts consisting of:

- A meditation program manager/engineer
- An artist/Reiki Master/community volunteer/yoga practitioner
- A Silicon Valley computer engineer/ city council commission member
- A police Commander from a Silicon Valley police agency
- A real estate Broker/community advisory commissioner
- An integral life coach
- A retired community leader/community advisory commissioner
- A police officer union board of director member

Throughout the process, the panel participated in discussions regarding how a good percentage of the general population would agree meditation could have positive impact on law enforcement's ability to adapt to cultural diversity. However, the panel thought it would be difficult to break down the image barriers on meditation within the law enforcement profession. The panel believed law enforcement's view and acceptance of meditation lingers behind that of the rest of the population.

Three alternative strategies have been developed to address the viability of providing meditation training to police officers to assist officers adapting to cultural diversity.

#### Alternative Strategy I: Remaining Status Quo

Remaining status quo is a legitimate course of action but not one recommended after taking into consideration the information gleaned in the future studies chapter and the information presented in this chapter. Status quo does not begin to offer solutions to the how law enforcement handles continued diversity in the structure of the local community and in the workforce. Although this option can work due to the paramilitary-type structure police agencies follow, it will be difficult on the employee since it does not offer any assistance for current relationship deficiencies they may experience. This option will be difficult on those employees who lack the knowledge or initiative to embark upon an improvement process on their own accord. However, as the popularity of the positive effects of meditation continues, a certain percentage of employees will try a program on their own. In reality, there will be a natural progression toward implementation of meditation in police work as Millennials continue to increase in the

police ranks. However, if there is an effort to cause change by encouraging or providing meditation training, positive widespread growth will be a result.

Alternative Strategy II: Police Department Encourages Meditation Training

This option is one that is well on the way to providing positive direction for change. Although the department does not directly sponsor training or provide the time off for employees to attend, it provides information on the availability of training and the projected personal and professional advantages. As in the first option, this too will add some positive outcomes for a small percentage of the workforce. The percentage taking advantage of this option will be higher than in the first option but it will still be those who would eventually take advantage of the training with or without the department's support.

Alternative Strategy III: Department Managers Actively Support Meditation

Training for Employees

Police officers are hired because, among other things, they have a personal drive to provide a service to the community in which they work. If they do not possess the ability or knowledge to perform a quality work product, it is their responsibility or that of management to make certain the training is provided. The Bay Area is an area where cultural diversity is considered an attribute. Diversity can and does present challenges for the individual officer who lacks the ability to block preconceived ideas and prejudices and be present in the moment of decision making. The advantages for police officers who practice meditation far outweigh the negative image some may have of the process.

A department-sponsored meditation program will minimally supply the knowledge of the benefits of the practice and provide the ability for self-improvement

thus enhancing the officer's effectiveness and productivity. The third alternative will have the most impact on the officer's ability to adapt to cultural diversity.

It is clear the demands of cultural diversity in the Bay Area will continue to mount just as the extent of diversity continues to grow. Doing nothing will increase the stress on law enforcement with its delivery of quality police services. The research recommends providing meditation training and support for law enforcement employees in a long-term skills improvement process. The intended result is to improve the officer's ability to learn to be with - not to avoid - what goes on inside the mind relative to cultural differences.

As the ranks of California law enforcement grow younger due to the changes in retirement benefits, the state continues to grow in population. In conjunction with the population growth is a trend for foreign-born population to outnumber the out-of-state born population. The numerous work force generations presently in existence further complicate California demographic trends. Experts have identified four distinctly diverse generations, each with their own challenges and perceptions of life, work and relationships.

Law enforcement can choose to ignore the changes and rate of the changes having influence on their ability to manage a workforce and supply professional services. The result of this action may be positive but it will be left to chance and the ability levels of individuals. However with some planning and openness to a global perspective with techniques for building awareness, Law enforcement may be able to direct a favorable outcome.

Meditation presents a solution to a diverse work force interacting and providing quality service to an ever-growing divergent population. A meditation practice by law enforcement professionals may improve their abilities to be present in the moment, thus improving their ability to focus on the task at hand in the midst of distraction. Awareness, as well as productivity, problem solving abilities and the ability to build relationships all improve.

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