

HOW WILL SOCIAL INTELLIGENCE INFLUENCE A POLICE OFFICER'S
INTERACTION WITH THE PUBLIC BY 2020?

by

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The Command College Futures Study Project is a FUTURES study of a particular emerging issue of relevance to law enforcement. Its purpose is NOT to predict the future; rather, to project a variety of possible scenarios useful for strategic planning in anticipation of the emerging landscape facing policing organizations.

This journal article was created using the futures forecasting process of Command College and its outcomes. Defining the future differs from analyzing the past, because it has not yet happened. In this article, methodologies have been used to discern useful alternatives to enhance the success of planners and leaders in their response to a range of possible future environments.

Managing the future means influencing it—creating, constraining and adapting to emerging trends and events in a way that optimizes the opportunities and minimizes the threats of relevance to the profession.

The views and conclusions expressed in the Command College Futures Project and journal article are those of the author, and are not necessarily those of the CA Commission on Peace Officer Standards and Training (POST).

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The Human or the High Tech Police Officer

The officer drove toward the scene of the disaster, feeling both anxious and nervous. His anxiety was not from inexperience; after all he was a twenty-four year veteran of the force. As he continued the five-mile drive, the officer tried desperately to recall his previous training and experience. Assigned to the Technical Services Unit for the last seven years, Officer Smith's job as a police officer was much different now compared to when he started. Officer Smith was able to recall a time when police officers regularly interacted with the public. He remembered being dispatched to calls and using his interpersonal skills as a tool to defuse volatile situations. Now Smith, like a majority of the other sworn officers, monitors and directs artificial intelligence units.

Smith's anxiety quickly turned to panic as he approached the scene. The disaster was actually a typical emergency by today's standards. There were people gathered around the incident with raised voices and aggressive postures. A few people broke from the crowd and ran toward Officer Smith for help. As the people huddled around the officer, expecting him to bring a sense of calm and order to the situation, he froze. It was like he was a rookie officer being thrust into a dangerous situation without the benefit of training. Not only was he unable to take control of it, he was unable to exercise basic social interaction skills. This is in direct contrast to Smith's skills away from the job.

Officer John Smith has a wife and three kids. He lives a typical middle-income lifestyle in the city he serves as a police officer. John and his wife have many friends, and enjoy their social life outside of work. On a personal level, John's social skills are adequate to above

average. He is active in the community and serves as a positive role model for his children. In his role as a police officer during this time of crisis, though, his performance was ineffective at best. Arguably, Officer Smith's performance at the scene of the emergency could be attributed to his diminished capacity of professional social intelligence.

Social Intelligence and Policing

Social Intelligence describes our ability to connect with each other. According to Daniel Goleman, the author of *Social Intelligence*, "The human ability to form social connections can be a powerful neural tool. Social awareness and social facility are the high-level topics of social intelligence. Social awareness includes primal empathy, attunement, empathic accuracy, and social cognition. Social facility includes synchrony, self-presentation, influence, and concern." (Goleman, 2006). As law enforcement officers are recruited, selected, and trained little emphasis is placed on social intelligence. Community Oriented Policing hints at the value of social intelligence, but falls short of expressly declaring its place in professional law enforcement. The police and the community have mutually benefitted from the Community Oriented Policing philosophy and enhanced relationships. It will be important for these relationships to continue as some of the frontline law enforcement activities are augmented or even replaced by advances in technology.

One of the unintended consequences of technology in law enforcement may be a diminished capacity to interact interpersonally as the law enforcement community becomes more reliant on technology. As noted, the skill and ability of police officers interacting with the public has been the cornerstone to partnerships with the community that are mutually beneficial. According to Matthew J. Parlow, an Associate Professor of Law at Marquette University of Law,

“During the last twenty years, community policing has been the dominant approach to local law enforcement” (Parlow, 2012) In contrast to using technology, Community Oriented Policing is the ultimate in human interaction. The mission statement of many law enforcement agencies now describe how authentic integration between law enforcement and the public it serves provides the foundation upon which overall public safety thrives. The implied message is that law enforcement officers have the skills, ability, and desire to develop relationships. In fact, technologies often employed by the police to also protect their citizenry achieve the opposite response.

In a March 2009 article in Chicago Magazine, writer Noah Isackson describes the implementation of cameras, artificial intelligence, and GPS in the City of Chicago. “Some residents like the idea, but it appears a majority are critical. One reason is the idea of ‘Big brother’ watching. Another criticism is the fear that community oriented policing is being replaced with this technology. Citing fiscal justification, City leaders explain the advantage of this technology compared to the recruitment, training, hiring and retention of additional officers. In a city that “pioneered” the community oriented policing concept, residents are left feeling a little cold by the lack of personal interaction with their neighborhood officer.” (Chicago Magazine, 2009). Even commonly utilized technologies by cops in the field can have a long-term adverse effect on their relationship with the community.

Technology: Tools for Policing

An emerging law enforcement tool in the late 1980’s was the introduction of the Mobile Data Terminal (MDT or MDC). This tool was further developed over the next ten years to become an invaluable staple of law enforcement’s daily operation. Computer Aided Dispatch

(CAD) systems were used as investigative tools, and field personnel began to rely on information provided in response to calls for service.

The use of Global Positioning Satellites (GPS) and Automated Vehicle Locators (AVL) began to emerge in the following decade. As these technologies became widely accepted, a trend began to emerge. Officers began losing the ability to coordinate and make use of the information previously assessable in their brains while enroute to calls for service. Recall of historical information, persons associated, streets and cross streets, hundred block numbering systems became automated, and therefore instantly available at the officers' fingertips without the use of mental recall skills. According to Turlock Police Sergeant Tony Silva, officers began losing their ability to communicate coordinating response information from memory. Emphasis was diverted from personal knowledge to what is digitally available, said Silva, and officer safety and logical perimeter considerations were sacrificed with this reliance upon technology. Another defensive technology in common use has resulted in a wide array of unintended consequences.

First introduced into policing in 1999, the Taser became a proven and widely accepted law enforcement tool. The Taser is a non-lethal weapon platform system that uses electrical current to disrupt voluntary control of muscles. It has been credited with saving lives as an alternative to deadly force. A reduction in injuries to officers is also attributed to law enforcement's use of the Taser according to a May 2011 article by the National Institute of Justice (National Institute of Justice, 2011).

By the late 2000's, officers became reliant on the ability to temporarily incapacitate dangerous individuals from a distance with the use of the Taser. According to Turlock Police Sergeant and lead defensive tactics instructor Miguel Pacheco, dependence on the Taser

diminished the frequency with which officers exercised the skills of hands-on pain compliance and joint manipulation techniques. As a result, when the use of the Taser was inappropriate with a mildly resistant individual, the perishable skills of arrest and control techniques suffered.

A parallel argument can be made for social intelligence and tactical communication. Tactical communication is a perishable skill. If not afforded the opportunity to exercise the skill, confidence with and effectiveness of the skill diminishes. If artificial intelligence and similar technologies augment or replace police officers, the social intelligence of officers may diminish.

The Impact of Social Media

Social media and email are examples of technology that have indelibly altered personal communication methods and skills. Megan Puglisi, a writer for The Daily Athenaeum in West Virginia wrote, “Although media and networking sites were created to facilitate better communication, social networks are ruining the public communication skills of college students in America.” (Puglisi, 2010). As email became the prevalent method of information dissemination, the ease, speed, and accessibility established itself as alluring, contributing to a decline of social skills. This is important to law enforcement in that as officers engage and leverage the speed and ease of email and social media, their interpersonal skills may be slowly eroding. An article in the Orlando Sentinel in August of 2012, entitled “Have social media hurt communication in the workplace?” highlights the impacts social media can have on interpersonal skills. The article states, “We can email, we can text. We can Facebook, we can tweet. But can we talk? Not so much, or so well, as we did not so long ago. To rework a famous movie line from pre-digital times: What we’ve got here in the age of social media, ironically, is a failure to communicate.” (Orlando Sentinel, 2012) How an officer detects, interprets, and responds to interpersonal nuisances has an impact on the perception of the quality of service provided.

Officers who send conflicting, oppressive, or discourteous signals can have a similar effect. These can be subtle messages fundamentally predisposed by the officer's social intelligence.

Social Intelligence: A Necessity to Understand and Teach Police Officers

According to Daniel Goleman, social intelligence is closely related to emotional intelligence. Social intelligence relates to the neuroscience between human influence, the brain and the body. Emotional intelligence focuses on capabilities and skills within a person. This would suggest that emotional intelligence can be intentionally increased or decreased with directed effort, while social intelligence can be less influenced through intentional effort.

An example can be found in the book *Emotional Intelligence 2.0* by Bradbury and Greaves (2009). The book offers several examples of the power of emotion and the importance of understanding and managing our emotions. Whether it is adjusting to change, experiencing tragedy/pleasure, or managing stress; emotional intelligence subconsciously impacts all of our experiences. While the book often references external experiences, it focuses on how the individual can develop personal skills and capabilities. (Bradbury & Graves, 2009).

Social intelligence appears to be less susceptible to physiological practices and more influenced by experiences and interactions. In his book *Social Intelligence*, Daniel Goleman describes the neuroscience between human influences, the brain and the body (Goleman, 2006). In contrast to his 1995 book (entitled *Emotional Intelligence*) that focused on capabilities and skills within an individual, *Social Intelligence* describes our ability to connect with each other. The human ability to form social connections can be a powerful neural tool. Social awareness and social facility are the high-level topics of social intelligence. Social awareness includes primal empathy, attunement, empathic accuracy, and social cognition. Social facility includes

synchrony, self-presentation, influence, and concern. If we were able to understand and exercise the linkage between these theories, we could capitalize on primal instincts which could generate infinite possibilities of enhanced human interaction. (Goleman, 2006)

Police officers are trained to use appropriate force, enforce the laws, keep the peace and a multitude of other tasks. Little or no training is provided in the area of social and emotional intelligence. This has not been a priority, in part, because the importance and influence has not been universally recognized. Technology is advancing at a staggering rate. Law enforcement has generally embraced the benefits of technology. As it continues to become more sophisticated, more critical functions of law enforcement may be replaced with technology. The unintended consequences associated with the implementation of advanced technology in law enforcement may be the decrease of social and emotional intelligence in law enforcement officers.

This raises the question; how much value does the public place in the social interaction with a police officer? Will the general citizenry accept artificial intelligence in frontline law enforcement? With the rapid pace of advances in technology and the growing relationship between technology and law enforcement, consideration must be given to the possibility of reducing or eventually removing the human factor from many aspects of frontline law enforcement.

In a 2009 article, FBI Agent Timothy Turner asserted that emotional intelligence is important to the law enforcement profession (Turner, 2009). By analyzing and comparing officer behaviors, Turner was able to measure individual emotional intelligence. The study suggests the need for law enforcement executives to model and provide coaching/mentoring in order to support their subordinate's development of essential emotional intelligence competencies. With

developed emotional intelligence, officers will be afforded a better opportunity for “well being”. A standard of emotional intelligence could be established, which would be used as a benchmark to be considered in the identification, selection and development of future law enforcement officers. (Turner, 2009)

James Vlahos is a columnist for Popular Mechanics. His Internet article explores some of the advantages and disadvantages of computer-controlled surveillance. Some artificial intelligence enabled video monitoring and analysis systems are programmed to detect suspicious activity. The computer program then alerts its human partner of the situation. “There are an estimated 30 million surveillance cameras now deployed in the United States shooting 4 billion hours of footage a week.” (Vlahos, 2009). At the heart of the debate in this article is the balance between technological advances in government operated video monitoring systems and the public’s privacy concerns. This is not a new debate and the article forms no definitive conclusion. One argument relative to the topic of this futures portfolio is the notion that the number of police officers could be reduced by this advance in technology. (Vlahos, 2009).

Social Intelligence: Where do we go from here?

As technology continues to be introduced into daily law enforcement activities, the ability for police officers to effectively interact and create partnerships with the community may be challenged. Social intelligence is a perishable skill. An officer’s ability to resolve conflict and enlist the trust of a community needs to be exercised regularly. As law enforcement continues to evolve the following factors should be considered relative to the relationship between law enforcement and technology:

- 1) Police officers’ ability to effectively interact with the public must not diminish

- 2) Emphasis should be placed on social intelligence when recruiting and selecting police officers.
- 3) Agencies should engage in regular training for police officers to emphasize the importance of social intelligence.
- 4) Law enforcement should implement continuous methods of gauging the public's satisfaction with new technologies

Three key elements will be necessary as we continue implementing new technology in law enforcement. As technologies are considered, the implementation plan should include guarding against the unintended impacts of the technologies. Those key elements include awareness, training and assessment.

- Awareness – This involves getting the potential impacts on the radar. As we marvel over the increased efficiency, streamlined processes, and ease of use associated with new technologies, a pause should be given to just be aware of how it may diminish the skill of social intelligence.
- Training – Training should be provided to all sworn officers in the area of social intelligence. This training should be provided no less than annually and will include current interpersonal techniques. Some examples may include verbal judo, tactical communication, and conflict resolution.
- Assessment – All technology plans should include a post-implementation assessment. Part of the assessment should measure how much human interaction was eliminated as a result of the implemented technologies.

As technology continues to evolve and new opportunities are created for public safety, both social and emotional skills must be strengthened and used so the future police officer is a smart, techno-emotional and socially aware human machine.

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