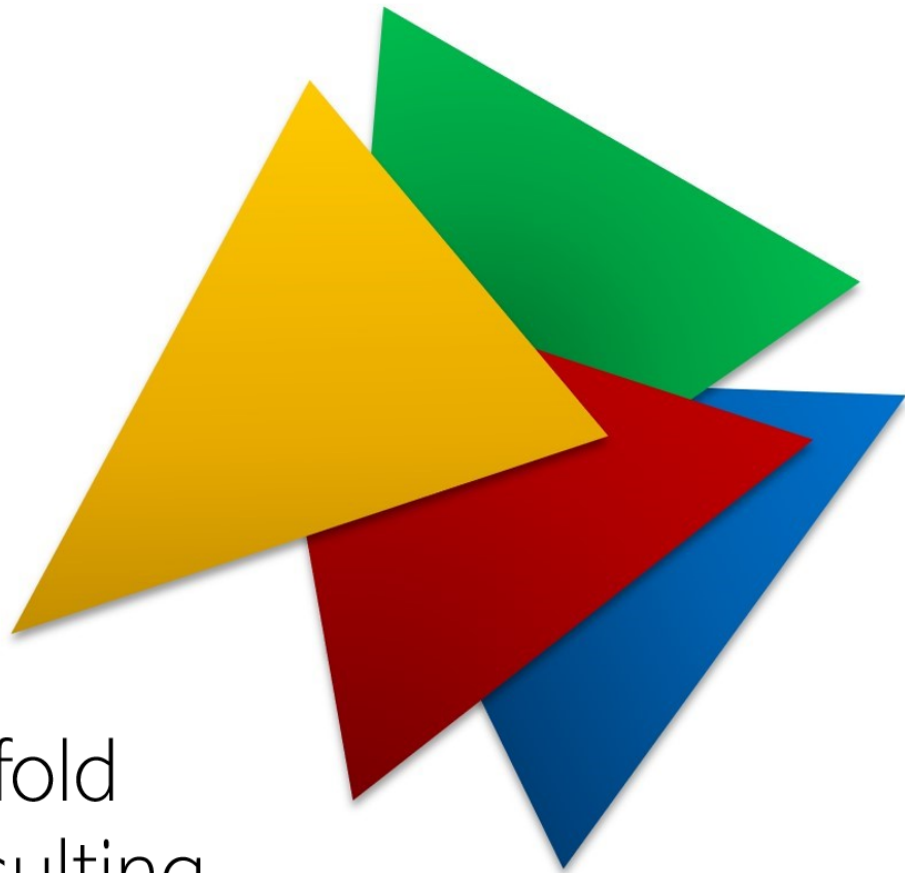


POLICY RISK ASSESSMENT

OPTIMAL LAW ENFORCEMENT STRATEGY AND TACTICS



Conifold
Consulting
Services

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Law enforcement officers regularly confront uncertain situations in the line of duty. This report provides a neuroscience-informed approach to accurately perceiving a situation, devising a predictive model in real time, and deploying the best set of tactics to meet strategic objectives.

INTRODUCTION

The objective of law enforcement is to reduce crime and maintain public order, ensure the well-being and safety of police officers and the communities they serve, and incur the least cost in the process. Optimal law enforcement approaches will employ tactics which meet these strategic objectives. It is therefore useful to continuously evaluate the success of current tactics in meeting strategic objectives. This process requires accurately perceiving reality and keeping a range of tactical options available for deployment, at both the individual and organizational level. A formal method of engaging in deliberate strategy with such monitoring has been devised from first principles. The cyclical process of conscious perception, decision-making, and implementation is described by Conifold Theory. This theoretical framework was devised by Izi Stoll at the Western Institute for Advanced Study, building on previous work by John Boyd and Karl Friston.

This framework focuses on managing uncertain situations by expanding the tactical toolkit. Specifically, this framework helps people to maximize perceptual accuracy and attentional focus, identify the true state of reality, construct and consider predictive models of cause and effect, then select and implement the model which best achieves the strategic objective (Figure 1). Purposeful, practical application of Conifold Theory can therefore aid in handling tense, dynamic situations in real time. This approach can also aid in devising long-term structural overhaul in organizations, by guiding a deliberate and strategic change in operations. In each case, an identical process is employed to guide information acquisition, predictive modeling, and conscious selection of behavior to meet the stated objectives.

Action does not happen spontaneously. It is rooted in three major root causes: wiring, training, and context. Firstly, our brains are wired to have certain biases in processing information. Our perceptions of the world can be distorted, and our attention can be hijacked by irrelevant factors. An awareness of factors influencing reflexive behavior can therefore be useful in making more accurate assessments of a situation. Secondly, experience can prime our brains and our bodies to respond in specific ways to certain contexts, precluding the exploration of new tactical approaches. An operational framework that provides numerous tactical options can therefore be useful in managing a situation toward a desirable outcome. Thirdly, context is key. The complex process of accurately perceiving threats, identifying several possible responses, and choosing the best course of action must occur in real time. It takes strength, smarts, and clarity of mind to make good decisions in dynamic situations, and this requires using our wiring and training to full potential. Enhancing awareness of perceptual biases, expanding the tactical options available for officers to meet strategic objectives, and engaging with the context of the situation with excellent resources and situational training already in place are three major ways to improve law enforcement outcomes.

Any overall strategy and specific tactics must be designed to meet the following success criteria: achieving law enforcement goals to reduce crime and maintain public order, ensuring the safety and well-being of police officers and members of the communities they serve, and incurring the least cost in doing so. The aim is to identify an overall strategy and specific tactics to meet each of these priorities effectively.

This report contains an outline for two strategic methods of law enforcement, Escalation and Engagement, with an assessment of how well each approach meets the success criteria. Based on the present assessment, guidance is provided on infrastructural change which can be implemented at the departmental level to ease the personal risk to officers and the resource costs incurred by departments.

A PRACTICAL APPLICATION OF CONIFOLD THEORY

In choosing behavior, humans either explore new tactics or exploit existing ones. The behavior that provides the best fit with reality will be the one that is most successful in reality. Like all animals, we save energy by repeating tactics that have worked in the past and that we know how to do. Only when these tactics cease to work effectively, do we explore new tactics. This choice is accomplished by being attuned to reality.

Attuning to reality requires accurate perception, focused attention, and an acceptance of truths, even difficult truths. Attuning to reality also requires initiating actions which trigger advantageous responses rather than oppositional responses. To meet one's goals or strategic objectives, one must be attuned to reality, both in accepting sensory input and deliberately choosing behavioral output. The more attuned to reality a person is, the more sensory information that person can accept into their mental model of the world and the more effectively that person can act within the world.

These mental models are built around an understanding of cause-effect relationships, which define the structure and operation of the world. Sensory information coheres into semantic truth statements, which correspond to *facts about reality* (e.g. there is a loud noise and bright flash coming from that direction). Further data permits the formation of syntactical truth statements, which correspond to *sequences of events in reality* (e.g. there is now debris arriving from the same direction as the loud noise and bright flash). It is useful to build predictive models from these semantic truth statements and syntactical relationships between them. Even if a similar paired stimulus of 'noise and flash' sometimes precedes innocuous events, such as a firecracker, it is useful to recognize that such an event *may* signal danger. Being able to parse the difference, with deep attention to useful perceptual cues and lower attention to unimportant stimuli, is a critical skill. This ability allows a person to develop more nuanced mental models and choose more context-appropriate behaviors to deal with a situation.

Some people do not believe in objective reality. This is not a useful stance. The human brain is a truth engine, capable of recognizing semantic truths and building predictive models around them. To deny this capacity is to deny one of the greatest assets of human nature. To deny reality itself is to divorce the self from reality, at one's own peril.

The ability of human beings to make their way in the world, choosing behavior to meet strategic objectives, is made possible by continuously integrating new sensory data into our predictive models, then choosing a behavioral output based on the expected effects of the chosen action. This process, of consciously choosing behaviors to meet strategic objectives, is detailed in Conifold Theory. The framework not only helps to reduce acute errors in perception and decision-making for individuals (e.g. police officers in a tense and dynamic situation) but also helps to reduce systemic errors in perception and decision-making at the organizational level. The linear algebra underpinning the theory provides a measure of discrepancies between expectation and reality, and the resulting cost function directs a behavioral solution. The solution depends on whether the existing behavior is capable of meeting the strategic objective, and doing so in a cost-effective, low-risk way. In that case, it is best to exploit the gains built up over time, and continue using well-established tactics, thereby reducing the amount of work expended to achieve a goal. However, if the current tactics are not, objectively speaking, working successfully, then it is best to explore new methods of achieving the goal. The energetic expenditure to revise the predictive model, establishing new ways of thinking and new ways of acting, can have a huge pay-off.

THE ENGAGEMENT CYCLE

This cycle guides an individual or an organization to accurately perceive reality, attend to important factors rather than distractors, identify semantical truth statements, integrate sequences of these statements into predictive models of reality, consider the likely response to modelled actions, decide on the action or set of actions which best meet the strategic objective, implement these actions, and continue to engage with reality by starting the cycle again, honing the actions implemented to continually meet stated goals.

The engagement cycle is schematized in Figure 1 on Page 6.

OBSERVE: The first step is to observe reality, making use of all available sensory apparatus. Building a model of reality to operate within begins by perceiving reality clearly.

ORIENT: The next step is to orient toward salient stimuli, discarding irrelevant stimuli. It takes practice to parse the two, and any errors should take the form of paying attention to possibly irrelevant stimuli.

VERIFY: A single computational cycle is complete when a semantic truth statement can be asserted. Such a factual statement encodes information and represents a perceived event.

CONSTRUCT: If multiple computational cycles have been completed, a predictive model can be constructed, providing hypothetical syntactical relationships between various actions and results. Over time, many of these sequences or predictive models are constructed. It is important to note that this set of beliefs, while useful, may not be completely accurate. This set of predictive models is the knowledge gained from experience, and it guides decision-making. The more tactics gained, the more tactics will be available. The more perception gained, the more information will be available to select the most context-appropriate tactic.

CONSIDER: Once predictive models of reality have been *constructed*, these models can be assessed for how well they meet the strategic objective(s).

DECIDE: Once predictive models of reality have been *considered*, an individual or organization can decide which tactics to deploy to meet the strategic objective(s).

IMPLEMENT: Once a decision is made, purposeful and deliberate action must be taken to implement the chosen tactics.

FEEDBACK LOOPS: An individual or organization may wisely choose to reiterate the engagement cycle in order to continuously monitor the response to tactics, updating the predictive model accordingly, as new information arrives. This hewing to reality – by expanding perceptual awareness, attentional focus, and conscious decision-making – permits the individual or organization to consistently increase the amount of information available, without resulting in data overload, because irrelevant data is constantly discarded as useful information is amplified and refined. The end result of this strategic approach is to act more effectively within reality and therefore meet the desired objectives.

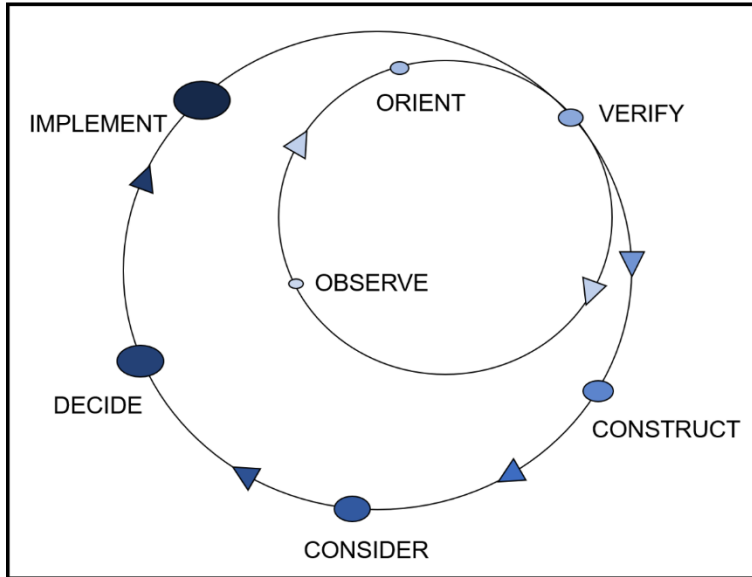
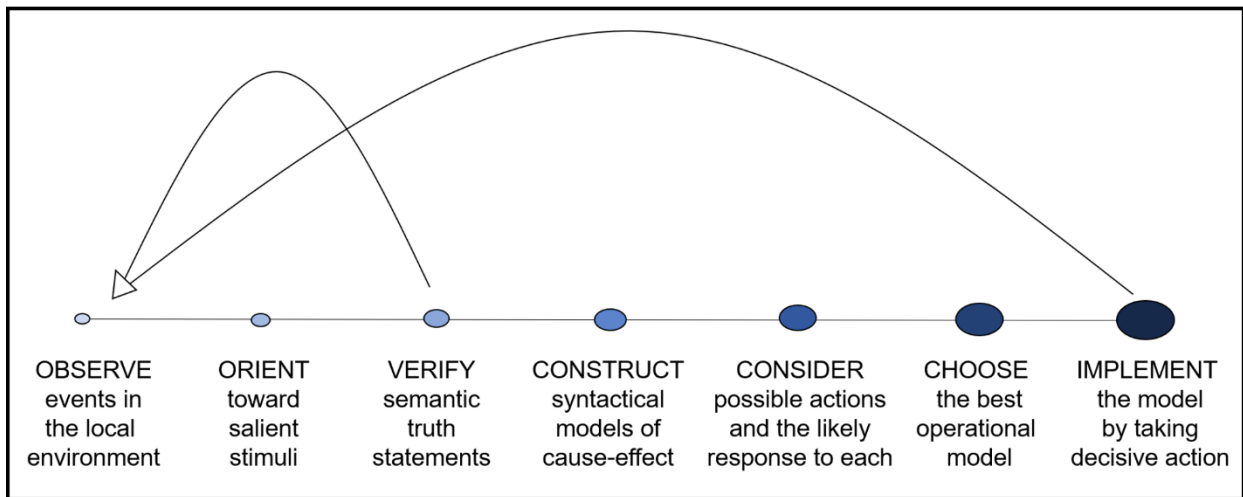


Figure 1. (Top, Cross-Sectional Schematic; Bottom, Side-View Schematic). Both graphics depict the process outlined by Conifold Theory. This linear algebraic approach to continuously updating predictive models of the world based on incoming data was established by Izi Stoll, building on the previous work of John Boyd and Karl Friston. The multi-step process includes *observing* the local environment, *orienting* toward potentially important events or stimuli, *verifying* these perceptions are accurate, and *repeating* this cycle as necessary, then *constructing* a predictive model that describes both reality and personal objectives, *considering* the strategies and tactics which would best achieve those objectives, *deciding* on the most useful approach based on predicted success factors, *implementing* the decision by taking resolute and purposeful action, then repeating this process with ongoing feedback.



STRATEGY 1: ESCALATION

Here we evaluate the use of *current* tactics and strategic approach, dubbed ‘Escalation’, and whether predicted responses to this approach are expected to meet the law enforcement objective of maintaining law and order, while reducing the personal risk to officers and the resource costs incurred by departments (Figure 2).

1. Resource Allocation

With this strategy, resource allocation supports the purchase of military-grade weaponry to oppose conflict, rather than addressing the root causes of societal unrest; spreads funding thinly between standard police work and a range of unrelated tasks; and dispatches armed duty officers to every single callout rather than having alternative approaches available.

The result of this strategic approach is to overburden officers and the policing system itself. The responsibility of having to manage all societal problems causes on-the-job stress and an increased error rate. The impulse to push harder and build up a stronger arsenal is a standard brute force tactic – however, it risks instilling fear, hostility, uncertainty, and an exacerbation of public distrust toward authority figures. The result is the opposite effect of that intended. This approach does not serve to reduce crime, risk to officers or cost to departments. A change in tactics is in order when the existing toolkit does not achieve the stated objectives.

2. Situational Approach

This Sub-Strategy can be roughly equated with the police training program of ‘Killology’, developed and administered by Lt. Col. Dave Grossman. Lt. Col. Grossman is an expert in martial arts training and military psychology, focusing on the factors that enable and restrain killing in combat situations. In his best-selling book, *On Combat*, Lt. Col. Grossman he recounts a formative discussion with an older retired colonel¹, who explains: “Most people in our society are sheep....Then there are the wolves, [who] feed on the sheep without mercy.... Then there are the sheepdogs, and I’m a sheepdog. I live to protect the flock and confront the wolf.” This is a greatly admirable calling, one which Lt. Col. Grossman adopted and expanded into a full structured approach. However, while this approach serves a particular purpose, it provides only a narrow toolkit for addressing the variety of situations police officers find themselves in. Optimized for combat, this approach inevitably militarizes any interactions by dividing the populace into binary sheep-wolf categories.

This approach fails to take into account the fact that human behavior is far more varied than this three-role framework would suggest. A police officer permanently in ‘sheepdog’ mode – expecting wolves to show up – will tend to err on the side of assuming danger and escalating situations unnecessarily. Since treating the public only as prey animals and potential attackers does not accurately reflect the reality of peacetime civilian life in the United States, this approach will lead to choosing actions which do not work in that reality. A change in tactics is in order when the toolkit is too limited to negotiate the complexity, nuance, and diversity of situations police officers meet every day.

¹ Grossman, D. “On Combat: The Psychology and Physiology of Deadly Conflict in War and in Peace.” PPCT Research Publications, 2004.

3. Public Accountability

The strategic approach of opposing transparency, oversight, and officer discipline is a cultural norm in many police forces today. This approach focuses on maintaining job security rather than facilitating job success. While union protections and peer support does promote a sense of well-being and a better quality of life, there are long-term hidden costs to this exceptional position. Specifically, public distrust rises when abuse of power is both possible and tolerated. A lack of police licensing, standards, and enforcement of standards leads the public to distrust police officers as legitimate authority figures.

Demonstrating that the rule of law applies to all citizens is a necessity of law enforcement. Without this, society is left with only a struggle for dominance and privilege. Once again, it is worth noting that humans are not mindless prey animals, but rather have an acute and innate sense of justice. They will recognize when rules are not applied equally. If the burden of responsibility is not paired with rights, and rights are not paired with responsibility, humans will recognize the presence of an unfair privilege, and they will not tolerate this state of affairs. It is worth noting that this perception is entirely rational, not irrational. Ignoring a rational response to one's own behavior – in this case, a growing distrust of the police the public – leads to a dangerous divorce from reality. And again, divorcing the self from reality does not help the self to act effectively within reality. A change in tactics is in order when one's behavior regularly provokes discord, and this begins with engagement with how others perceive that behavior.

Predictive Model of Action and Response in Current Context

The strategic approach of escalation coaches officers to act reflectively, not only fearful of bad outcomes, but actively preparing for them. Rather than driving the course of events toward a non-violent conclusion, this strategy makes such a conclusion inevitable. A defter approach would train police officers to gather key information, use perceptual cues to more accurately assess the threat level, and employ an awareness of attentional distractors that hijack the brain into an autonomic fear response. This situational awareness and flexibility permits alternate conclusions to tense situations.

Over time, the militarized approach erodes efforts toward the long-term goal of creating a safe and thriving society, disintegrating the public trust. The overall strategy of resource allocation heavily weighted toward weaponry, situational training heavily weighted toward aggressive tactics, and a general freedom from public accountability is likely to cause non-optimal responses. Specifically, the preparation for combat is likely to result in perceptual errors (due to over-reliance on the fear response) and decision-making errors (due to a lack of options to manage situations). The public response to militarization of the police force and perceived lack of accountability is likely to take the form of opposition to authority and increased levels of civil disobedience. The overall outcome from this strategic approach is therefore likely to be a lower success rate in maintaining public safety, a higher risk to responding officers, and higher resource costs.

How Well Are Objectives Achieved With This Approach?

The goal of reducing crime is not met by the strategy of escalation; this approach may lower street crime but does not ensure the overall rule of law is in place. The goal of maintaining public order is not met either; aggressive tactics reduce societal stability, leading to more conflict. This strategic approach also does not incur the least risk or cost; instead it creates an escalating positive feedback loop which draws resources, while accelerating risks to the safety and the well-being of both police officers and the public.

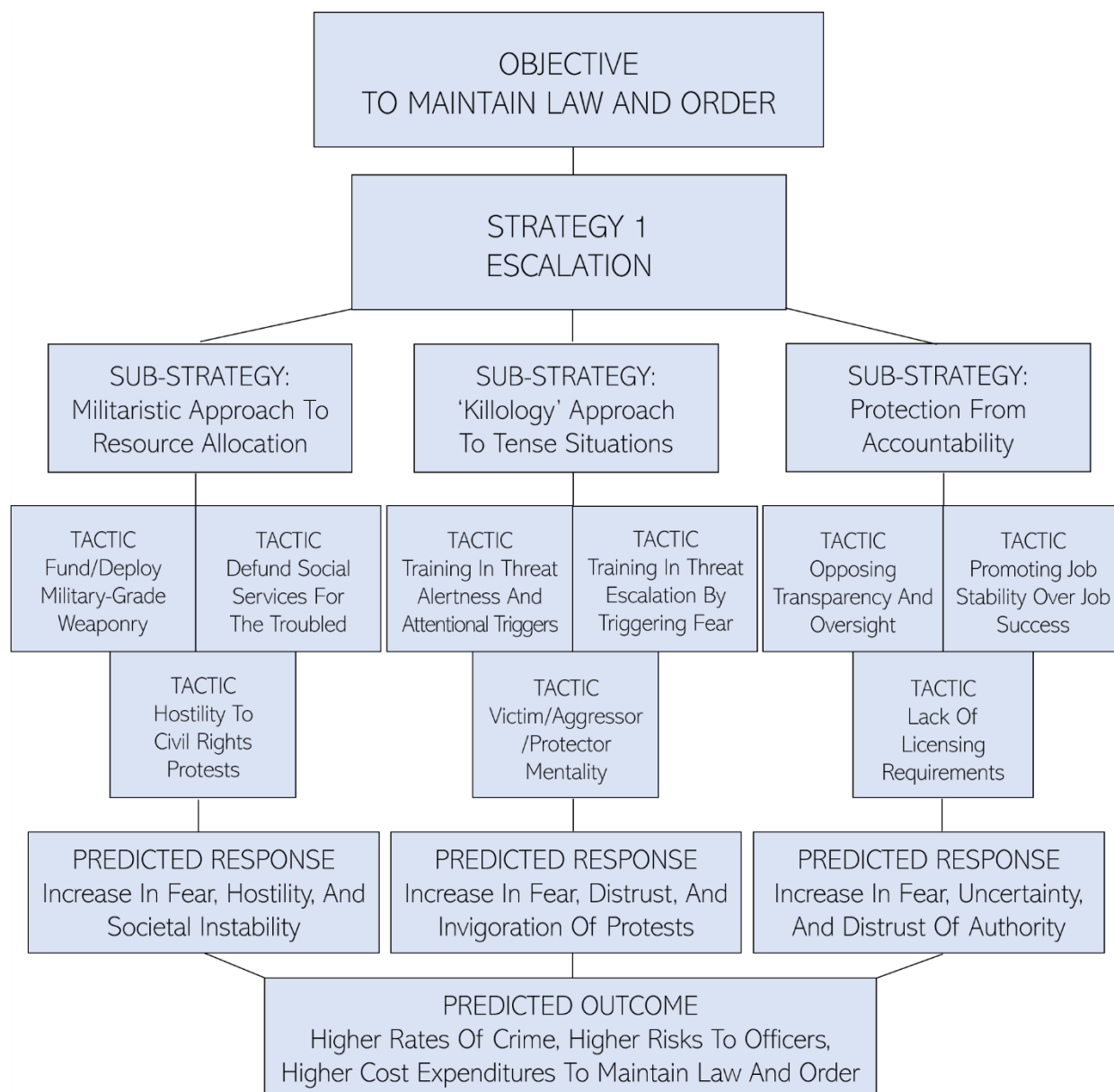


Figure 2. A flowchart detailing the strategic approach of 'escalation' – including sub-strategies, tactics, predicted responses, and predicted outcomes. The strategic approach modeled here *does not achieve* the objectives of law enforcement, to reduce crime and maintain public order, lower job risk for police officers, and incur the least expenditure in the process.

STRATEGY 2: ENGAGEMENT

Here we evaluate the use of *new* tactics and strategic approach, dubbed ‘Engagement’, assessing whether predicted responses to this approach are expected to meet the law enforcement objective of maintaining law and order, while reducing the personal risk to officers and the resource costs incurred by departments (Figure 3).

1. Resource Allocation

This strategic approach rebalances the focus of policing on maintaining public safety and reducing crime by addressing the root issues that lead to felonies, misdemeanors, disorder and unrest. The goal is provide sufficient funding for the critical tasks of patrol, dispatch, investigation, administration, the maintenance of professional standards, and record-keeping, while reducing the spending on military-grade weapons and militaristic combat training. Also recommended is resource allocation towards mental health professionals and social workers to attend callouts that would benefit from this dispatch. Overall, a reconsideration of public safety funding may lead to higher spends by city councils, but with less burden on responding officers. Indeed, the entire system may benefit from having a wider variety of methods available to enhance public safety and to address root causes of crime.

Overall, the expected outcome of this approach is a reduction in poverty, drug abuse, domestic violence, and untreated mental illness, with a corresponding reduction in reported crime. Deploying resources to the root causes of societal instability will serve to make the job of law enforcement easier, with a lower burden in the number of incidents permitting police officers to more deeply engage with incidents that do occur.

2. Situational Approach

This Sub-Strategy can be roughly equated with a combination of de-escalation training, perceptual bias training, attentional factors training, and training in real-time predictive modeling to aid decision-making. Together, these tactics teach police officers to engage higher cortical pathways while managing dynamic situations, allowing for appropriate decisions to be made for the threat level and personality response type of the engaged party.

It should be said that many police forces do prioritize de-escalation approaches. These include steering the individual or individuals toward multiple off-ramps by providing clear verbal orders, raising the volume of verbal commands to issue more stringent warnings, and firing warning shots before any disabling or lethal shots. In 2017, The International Association of Chiefs of Police issued a guidance document which introduced a new consensus policy on the use of force ². This document places greater reliance on de-escalation techniques, and training is advised to support this strategic approach. The present analysis comes to the same conclusion, that de-escalation is a sensible method for resolving tense situations and lowering the risk to responding officers. The present analysis also highlights the need for perceptual cue bias training and attentional focus training to develop real-time predictive models, and the use of these predictive models to aid decision-making and tactical approach on a case-by-case basis.

² International Association of Chiefs of Police. “National Consensus Policy and Discussion Paper on Use of Force.” 2017.

3. Public Accountability

An acquiescence to measures which institute transparency and oversight in police operations is predicted to enhance the effectiveness of law enforcement. Such measures may include: maintaining standards by requiring police to hold state licenses, maintaining transparency in operations by retaining evidence from body cameras, and maintaining benchmarks for tactical behavior by reprimanding officers whose actions fall short of these standards and rewarding officers who identify new tactics to navigate difficult situations.

These accountability measures will only be welcomed by officers if they are provided with the training and encouragement to live up to these standards; in other words, the training and accountability need to be instituted together. Yet these measures would provide officers with greater capability to handle situations and simultaneously provide the public with assurance of this fact. The overall effect of instituting these strategic initiatives is therefore expected to be greater success in meeting the goals of law enforcement: namely, reducing crime and maintaining order.

Predictive Model of Action and Response in Current Context

The strategic approach of engagement changes the focus of resource allocation from combat response to addressing the root problems in society, particularly with the aim of reducing poverty and drug abuse which lead to callouts. This strategic approach also focuses on altered training, educating officers in neuroscience-informed tactics of engaging higher cortical pathways to maximize the effectiveness of perception, decision-making, and behavior. This approach also recommends resource allocation for community engagement, particularly with the aim of bridging ties to the next generation. And finally, this approach recommends a greater acquiescence to public accountability, in the form of licensing and standards.

This 'engagement' approach supports efforts toward the long-term goal of creating a safe and thriving society. The predicted response to a careful reconsideration of resource allocation, situational training, and accountability measures is a renewal of public trust and respect toward police officers, accompanied by a greater willingness to obey these authorities. The outcome from these measures is likely to be a higher success rate in maintaining public safety, a lower risk to responding officers, and lower resource costs.

How Well Are Objectives Achieved With This Approach?

The strategy of engagement is predicted to reduce crime by not only allocating resources to this end but also addressing the root causes of societal dysfunction that lead to police involvement. This approach is predicted to achieve the goal of maintaining public order, as police have a greater variety of resources and training at their disposal to tactically handle dynamic situations. As a result, this strategy should lead to a negative feedback loop of disorder and distrust, thereby reducing conflict. This strategy also has the benefit of incurring the least risk and cost - lowering the necessity for expensive resources and staffing costs, while lessening the risks of engagement for both police officers and the public.



Figure 3. A flowchart detailing the strategic approach of 'engagement' – including sub-strategies, tactics, predicted responses, and predicted outcomes. The strategic approach modeled here *does achieve* the objectives of law enforcement, to reduce crime and maintain public order, lower job risk for police officers, and incur the least expenditure in the process.

DECISION

In assessing two different approaches to law enforcement, it is predicted that Strategy 2 (Engagement) should provide superior outcomes on all measures, compared with Strategy 1 (Escalation). With regard to each of the success criteria – reducing crime, maintaining public order, lowering personal risks and incurring the least cost – Strategy 2 is expected to meet each key priority most effectively.

IMPLEMENTATION

Based on the assessment above, infrastructural change is recommended to maximize the effectiveness of law enforcement. The following strategic reforms may usefully be implemented at the departmental level to achieve public safety, ease the personal risk to officers and lower the resource costs incurred by departments.

1. Resource Allocation

For some police departments, it may be worth reconsidering how funding is allocated. For example, in the city of Denver, over one-third of the city budget is spent on public safety: \$588 million in the year 2020, of \$1.5 billion in total. While personnel and resource costs are eminently justified, there remains scope for re-evaluating the needs of the community to maximize the impact of public safety expenditures. In particular, reinforcing the following funding allocations will support city police departments to meet their objectives:

Subsidize community care. Funding is needed for social support in American cities. If people have the social support they need, they are less likely to make active threats to public safety. Therefore, expenditures on after-school programs, healthcare infrastructure, crisis centers, homeless outreach, food banks, utilities assistance, and addiction services are useful adjuncts to public safety expenditures. Within public safety budgets, staffing can be more sensibly allocated. For example, identifying calls where dispatch could send a social worker or mental health professional, rather than a police officer, may both relieve officer workload and address longer-term issues for individuals struggling in the community.

Focus on crime response and investigations. Funding is needed to support patrol, dispatch, investigation, administration, professional standards, and records. These personnel costs build safer cities, where people feel they have recourse to the law. By contrast, the use of funds on military-grade weaponry does not build safe and thriving communities, but rather instills fear and desperation. The public response to this resource allocation and deployment does not achieve the strategic objective of maintaining law and order, but rather favors the more likely outcome that people will recoil from the hostile clampdown and fight back with even greater intensity. Maintaining focus on de-escalation and public safety is a more reliable method to reduce tension and achieve the stated objectives of keeping law and order.

Sponsor outreach efforts which support the next generation to survive and thrive. Law enforcement exists to protect and serve communities, not to infringe on the lives and livelihoods of American citizens. Yet there has been a catastrophic loss of trust between law enforcement and the communities they serve. If police officers do not state that black lives matter, many people will be skeptical that every citizen will be treated by police as if their lives do matter. If police officers refuse to declare that what happened to George Floyd and Breonna Taylor is wrong, and should never be repeated, members of the public may believe that police officers will treat them the exact same way, and they may act accordingly. If people believe they are fighting for their very *survival*, then they have nothing to lose and they will fight harder than any person who merely wants *control*, no matter how professionally committed they are to the task. Police officers serve the goal of law and order, do not intend to infringe on the constitutional rights of American citizens, and do not wish to instigate a struggle for survival with their fellow citizens. Sending the clear message that everyone deserves the opportunity to survive and thrive will help to regain trust between police officers and the communities they serve. Developing a clear message for youth will be particularly useful, as trust can be built in communities by teaching the next generation both how they can stay safe and what support they can expect from the police if they do find themselves in danger.

2. Situational Training

Law enforcement officers strongly benefit from training in flexible engagement, in order to identify the best tactics to meet strategic objectives in real time. This type of training is becoming more important than ever in the current context, given the public movement toward the abolition of Qualified Immunity. Qualified Immunity is a judicial doctrine that shields police officers from being held personally liable for their actions in civil suits, unless the plaintiff can show the officer violated ‘clearly established statutory or constitutional rights of which a reasonable person would have known’. The justification for removal of Qualified Immunity rests on the argument that law enforcement officers should reasonably be expected to know the law *better* than the average ‘reasonable person’. The assignment of accountability is therefore said to be untenable on the grounds that taxpayers have already paid for the training of police officers to knowledgeably enforce the law, and so payouts for civil lawsuits incurred for mistaken application of the law should not come from taxpayers. Given this movement, and the risks entailed by serving officers with additional accountability under the law, police officers have a right to better training in de-escalation techniques, so they have more tools at their disposal to navigate challenging situations. Recommended training operations include:

A neuroscience-based approach to assessing situations as accurately as possible. Police officers should strongly benefit from training to develop a neuroscience-based understanding of perceptual bias and attentional distractors. This allows the officer to choose attentional focus, thereby engaging higher cortical pathways to make decisions, rather than more limited autonomic fear pathways. Training for reducing the autonomic fear response and expanding perceptual awareness include the following two critical pieces: developing awareness of perceptual biases, which are hard-wired into the brain, and developing methods to discard distractors, which manipulate attention and reduce the ability to properly assess a situation.

Deploying tactics which achieve strategic objectives. Police officers must choose actions which achieve the goal of maintaining law and order. This means placing a duty to the public before personal gratification. It should be said that appropriate behavior does not occur spontaneously in humans. Instead, defining appropriate behavior requires the establishment of norms and group training to implement these norms. Recommendations for the establishment of norms that would further strategic objectives include instituting the following policies: Firstly, police officers should not place individuals in chokehold position, nor engage in any other incapacitating techniques on unarmed individuals. Secondly, police officers should not seize personal property for their own personal use, nor to fund departmental activities. By establishing and enforcing these norms, department chiefs may find less struggle with public scrutiny.

Identifying ways to expand the options available in a situation. In a challenging and dynamic situation on the ground, it can be hard to exhibit discipline and restraint. It becomes impossible when the mindset of policing is driven by training in reflexive kill responses, rather than a focus on meeting community needs. Recommendations for expanding the toolkit includes the following two approaches: Firstly, police officers should be provided with the training and resources they need to uphold their oaths, without resorting to lethal force. Training which supports this goal would provide greater focus on psychological factors in attention and perception, as well as psychological techniques in persuasion. Resources which support this goal would include access to mental health professionals, and the ability to defer calls to them. Secondly, police officers should have the professional opportunity to discuss successes and failures, formally sharing knowledge and experience with peers. This process, called ‘sunshining’, sheds light on techniques that work and techniques that do not work. The articulation of information in a formal setting not only distributes useful intelligence, but also prepares capable and engaged officers to take on tough leadership roles.

3. Establishing Accountability

Every reasonable citizen wants police departments across the United States to be successful – with low crime rates, the ability to respond quickly when crimes do occur, and the true-blue American pride of maintaining safe and thriving communities. The present assessment demonstrates that the best way to accomplish this goal is by allocating resources sensibly; focusing on de-escalation training rather than militaristic tactics; upholding the rule of law and the rights of all citizens; ensuring that police officers have the knowledge, skills, and resources to enforce the law; rewarding officers who build ties with their community rather than letting this difficult work go ignored; and finally, disciplining officers who abuse their position, damaging the public trust. To achieve the strategic objective of maintaining law and order, individual police departments will need to build accountability with the communities they serve. Several actions are recommended to meet strategic objectives by creating an environment of law and order:

Require state licenses for police officers. Many professionals hold state licensing to ensure they have current and required training and credentials to perform their work. Police officers should also be required to hold a state license. Education and training should be required to fulfill licensing requirements, so police officers are prepared to handle difficult situations without resorting to incapacitating or escalating tactics. The licensing should also require that police officers are equipped with knowledge of the law, so officers are better able to serve their cities and uphold their oaths to the constitution.

Institute transparency through evidential means. Whenever there are no consequences for harming others, stealing, lying, and abusing power, human beings will be tempted to do exactly that – and police officers, despite a professional commitment to the law, are no different than anyone else in experiencing that temptation. Police officers should be held accountable for their actions by wearing body cameras and maintaining visible badge numbers. Indeed, power must always be balanced by responsibility, or the rule of law does not stand. Records of police actions should not be considered a menace to serving officers, but rather a method of ensuring everyone remains accountable to the rule of law. If individual police officers are afraid of accountability, they either suspect their actions cannot stand up to public scrutiny or they do not believe the public to scrutinize fairly. This reasoning is exactly why transparency is needed on all sides.

Institute independent oversight for complaints lodged. No department on earth is equipped to judge its own failures, but no department on earth will willingly acquiesce to outside oversight. This is simply a fact of human nature. Yet independent oversight, conducted in good faith, can aid in finding fair solutions to difficult situations. To maintain law and order, there should be prosecution of police officers who cause grievous harm and sensible discipline of police officers who betray the trust of the community by fomenting disorder or engaging in crime. We should not only acknowledge behavior that falls short, but reward actions that enhance the overall safety and security of our community. By holding everyone to a high standard of accountability, including themselves, police officers are best equipped to hold the trust of the community.

CONCLUSIONS

Sometimes it is necessary to identify new ways of engaging with uncertain situations. Yet more often we rely on tried-and-known tactics. It is difficult to remove ourselves from these patterns of behavior and identify other ways of navigating situations. A practical application of Conifold Theory, based on the principles of conscious information processing, provides a path to doing exactly that. This approach prompts long-term structural change, expanding the number of available tactical options for clients. It also offers advantages to those operating in real time, by enhancing clients' perceptual accuracy and reducing decision errors.

This proposed 'engagement' approach may prove useful for law enforcement, by outlining a set of tactics which 1) optimize resource allocations, 2) enhance situational training, and 3) reinstitute public trust. In combination, these reforms are expected to better meet the strategic objectives of law enforcement: reducing crime, maintaining public order, lowering personal risks to police officers, and incurring least cost to the department.

A primary objection to flexible engagement is that such action is a concession to the concerns of citizens and protesters, one that will only encourage further protests. However, there is no evidence this approach encourages further protests. By contrast, this approach is likely to *reduce public support for protests and lessen the perceived requirement for them*. When the Genesee County Sheriff in Michigan and Miami-Dade Police Chiefs in Florida joined protesters by taking a knee with them, instead of opposing them with force, the public response was overwhelmingly positive. When the Denver Police Department instituted a flexible approach to call response over the summer of 2020, by dispatching unarmed social workers instead of armed officers on hundreds of occasions, the public response to this was also overwhelmingly positive. Indeed, taking meaningful action in response to citizen concerns builds trust and places police departments in a stronger position to resist future changes which are costly or untimely.

Small but meaningful changes can help police departments achieve their aim of maintaining public order in cost-effective and low-risk ways. These targeted reforms are predicted to cut short cycles of increasing violence, increasing property damage, and increasing expenditures on police resources.

Systemic change is hard. But the first step is to recognize that a host of untapped strategies are available. The second step is to establish clear guidance on laws and tactics. The third step is to support police officers by funding and deploying the training and resources they need to do their jobs effectively.

It is important to note the immense challenges of work in law enforcement. The uncertainty and risk inherent to the job provides enormous stress. This is exacerbated by having limited training and resources available to conduct the work, which leads to feelings of being ineffective and unappreciated. Individuals need support when their entire career structure undergoes a change in public perception. It is the role of police chiefs and their departmental administration to facilitate changes in practice so that officers are better able to meet the challenges of a dynamic situation on the ground. By responding sharply and wisely to the needs of the community, police chiefs and duty officers will be able to achieve their personal and professional goals, by building stronger communities and earning the respect of their constituents.

In summary, switching tactics is a necessary skill for policing, and this is true at the departmental level as much as at the individual officer level. This strategic flexibility keeps the police ahead of the game – able to define how events unfold, rather than being pushed into a reactionary position that increases expenses and puts individual officers at increased risk.

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