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Maxim Tapsell

Rhainnon Williams

Digital Policing

Critically analyse the role that technology plays in everyday policing,
including the specific features of digital policing, and the effectiveness of
their impacts on policing practices, the community and the most
vulnerable.

Throughout the history of policing, it is clear to see the insane amounts of technological improvements that have been made. Till this day the police force throughout England and Wales and around the world are increasing their technological knowledge and continuing to make advancements in areas already made useful to police officers every single year. An increase in technology is not only more effective for the police, technology increase also proves to be extremely efficient in their day to day roles. 'New technology will enable London's Metropolitan Police to process historic images from CCTV feeds, social media and other sources in a bid to track down suspects.'

(Woodhams, 2022) With crime throughout the United Kingdom ever evolving and continuously adapting to new introduced police technologies, it is vitally important for the police force to not fall behind and let the potential criminals get the upper hand or one step ahead of the police and the law and justice system itself. Therefore, to combat this the police have to become the adapters on a daily basis and make sure they record and note everything different to then help further work on their next step of adaptation and recognition of their next technological step. It's important to note that a lot of police work does not require major amounts or slight amounts of technology, however it is becoming increasingly closer to a technological reliant force due to how much more effective and efficient technological advancements are in supporting the police force throughout England and Wales. 'As a modern police force, I believe that we have a duty to use new technologies to keep people safe in London' (Satariano, 2022)

The police use technology each and everyday and the most recent, new and improved device is a mobile device which the police will use rather than a pocket notebook. This

device will have an application developed to allow the officers to take notes, signatures, photos and many more. These can prove more efficient for the police as the data can be backed up by the police to a digital cloud which can keep information and data safe which is required under the Data Protection Act 2018. 'The software alternative to scribbling down notes will reduce the amount of paperwork officers need to do on a daily basis – saving time and keeping cops on the beat for longer.' (Bunting, 2022)

For the police, having a place in the digital footprint is essential for them in order to police the digital aspect of the world. A rising and rapidly growing part of everyone's everyday lives involves social media. Social media plays a massive part in the world as it can be used for absolutely everything. This ranges from legal posts such as business advertisement all the way to illegal activity such as drug dealing and radicalisation. This is one of the reasons why it is important for the police to remain an active presence on social media. Through uses of many different types of technology. 'Recent advances in communications technology are providing a medium for individuals or groups to subscribe to extremist worldviews and form networks' (O'Rourke, 2022) These advances as stated above can be such simple things such as facebook posts, people who you follow or have following on instagram or can be through various other methods such as crypted messages and perhaps through the dark web, which proves extremely hard for the police to gain access into. Usually gained by undercover agents. 'Pulling information from every part of an individual's various social media profiles, Voyager helps police investigate and surveil people by reconstructing their entire digital lives' (Levin, 2022) Voyager is one of the many different organizations that help companies around the

world identify potential extremist recruitment officers or posts across social media to potentially brainwash the public into believing their ideology. This is a method and organization widely used around the world which works closely with the government and government organizations such as MI5 and MI6 to help combat such issues to national security.

The police also have technology for a broader range of digital policing which includes perhaps the most important part of technology, the CCTV cameras. CCTV cameras are used around the globe and are forever being improved with the latest technologies. CCTV is imperative for the police to provide an overwatch on the public such as providing security in the street, it is also important for the police in locating and obtaining evidence in any cases provided to them. Digital policing spreads globally and all countries around the world will share their CCTV in coherence if needed if an international threat is predicted in the future. This can be used to help track down any potential threats or people on the run from any sort of authorities. 'The United Kingdom found that CCTV has a modest but statistically significant impact on crime, with particular effectiveness for reducing vehicle crime' (Mason, 2022) Vehicle crime is one of the most popular forms of crime throughout the United Kingdom. 'The number of vehicles stolen in the UK rose three per cent in 2021, according to Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency (DVLA) data.' (Shale-Hester, 2022) Dealing with vehicle crime comes with all sorts of technology which almost all have relation to the CCTV cameras. The police have technology which includes speed cameras and ANPR cameras which will all have CCTV recordings integrated. These systems will then digitally alert the police forces in the current and surroundings areas of the motor offense which can then be

dealt with through a points system or in the case of an ANPR system the police can prepare to sting the vehicle and bring it to a halt and deal with the offense there. Therefore proving that digital policing is making the day to day general policing much more effective and efficient.

Throughout the United Kingdom, the police forces have set units which focus on cyber crime and digital policing as a whole. These units can cover everything ranging from fraud, tracking, hacking and many more. All of these crimes prove to be difficult to prove however when a specific unit is provided with up to date technological advances and funding it can prove more effective and efficient. The cyber crime unit works closely with the other police units to ensure their job is dealt with in a safer manner and dealt with, with great efficiency. The cyber crime also can indulge in much more serious crime ranging from sex trafficking rings, paedophile rings and the dark web. All of these crimes have an even further impact on a nation and a globe as a whole as it is causing physical and mental damage to not only the victim but the friends, family and community around them. 'One of the world's biggest ever dark web police stings leads to 150 arrests including 65 in US and 24 in UK' (Baker, 2022) Many criminals believe that the dark web is a safe haven for them to carry out their business as usual however these criminals could not be any more wrong. This is due to the adaptation digital policing has taken on the matter. The police will use digital policing methods to comb over seized data, accounts shut down and hacking to get an insight and undercover involvement which can lead to a domino effect of arrests. It is however vitally important that the dark web is dealt with correctly by the police as any sort of scare, the dark web admins will become suspicious and change their ways of operation. 'what the FBI did on a massive

dark web child pornography site called Playpen: the agency deployed malware, so that when a user clicked on a child pornography related forum their real IP address was sent to investigators' (Cox, 2022) This was conducted by a hacking method used by cyber police by placing malware in seized accounts on the dark web.

Digital policing also plays a large factor in community work. Digital policing isn't solely revolved around tackling crime but rather a method in keeping in touch with communities as well. This mainly comes through the use of social media which can be used to advertise events hosted by the police, local recruitments and many more. This can help keep the police in touch with the community as it can add a safe space for people to raise any issues in their community and ask any questions they may have. However, this can also be done online via social media pages such as a facebook page as it then covers more potential areas for the police to maintain contact with the community if they do not have a mobile device. Digital policing through social media is imperative for the community as community issues seem to be less serious crimes and questions and can be dealt with through quick email and private message response rather than taking up 999 calls which could potentially prevent operators from getting serious crime reports.

Despite the many measures in place digitally for the police to interact with their communities, some communities or members of the public in general seem to feel like the increase in digital policing methods can sometimes inflict on the public's personal and private matters and privacy as a whole. Digital policing can come in forms of drones and authorities data breaching and collecting which is always put into effect when there is a potential risk to the public. 'Those deploying it can in effect turn back the clock to see who you are, where you've been, what you have done and with whom, over many

months or even years,' (Nast, 2022) This for some of the public can prove to be an improvement and provide a more secure area as some would think that if you have done nothing wrong, you should have nothing to worry about. However there is a large opposing factor by some members of the public where they had described it to be almost like an open-air prison to them and completely violates all privacy. With both of these factors having good points it is clear to see why an on-going discussion for a number of years is occurring throughout the United Kingdom revolving around digital policing measures such as surveillance. This is an issue for the digital aspect of policing as the bridge between the public and the police is imperative for the safety and effectiveness of the police force and also the public. Trustworthiness is the most important ingredient to a community and nation as a whole.

Digital policing is massively important when dealing with the vulnerable throughout the United Kingdom. Vulnerable people include children under physical and sexual abuse, sex trafficking targets, already sex trafficked people, radically vulnerable people and many more. One police process and method taken includes the T.H.R.I.V.E process. This stands for; Threat, harm, response, investigation, vulnerability, engagement. This process is used nationwide in dealing with vulnerable people. '85% of street sex workers report using heroin and 87% using crack cocaine.' (Aspinall, 2022) Vulnerable people are people who are constantly at risk of physical, mental and sexual harm. Those who are vulnerable often do not seem to know how or know to seek help. Without support these vulnerable people can be put at risk even further, or perhaps again in the future due to reoffending. 'A lack of such support could mean police

detentions and voluntary interviews of mentally vulnerable suspects risk producing unreliable evidence.’ (Dehghani, 2022) Digital policing is available to those who are vulnerable in many ways through methods such as social media and online awareness. This can come through many new ways of contacting the police through social media and different media devices potentially at hand, it can also help through awareness campaigns which may be presented at schools or in local areas by officers working in and with communities. With social media being the largest and most popular industry technology wise throughout the world it is important to take advantage of that and get messages and support digitally to those who are vulnerable. Digital policing can also make those who are vulnerable aware of charities and government organisations who are there solely support the vulnerable and potentially prevent any abuse physically, mentally or sexually progressing or happening in the first place. However it does cause an issue as not every vulnerable person has access to technology. This is why it is vulnerable to take advantage of how fast media can spread throughout social media and it can there potentially reach said vulnerable people in other ways such as face to face meetings with teachers or tutors or perhaps other family members. ‘Complaints to police about alleged crimes linked to the use of Facebook and Twitter have increased by 780% in four years, resulting in about 650 people being charged last year’ (Guardian, 2022)

Digital policing is also used in many other methods to prevent vulnerable people potentially becoming vulnerable in the first place. It should not be assumed that all people are made vulnerable. Some members of the public throughout the United

Kingdom can potentially be born into vulnerability through their parents or guardians being convicted criminals in the past or through ongoing unreported household crimes such as abuse occurring. 'Over 6,800 children were identified as needing protection from physical abuse last year. 1 in 14 children have been physically abused.' (Kemp, 2022) However, some children or adults can become vulnerable over time due to ongoing community issues such as county lines crime, sexual trafficking, modern slavery and many more. 'The crime is called county lines because dealers use dedicated mobile phone 'lines' to supply drugs. These criminals often exploit vulnerable adults to move and store drugs and money and regularly use coercion, intimidation, violence (including sexual violence) and weapons.' (Devonsafeguarding.uk, 2022)

Digital policing uses a variety of methods to counter these crimes such as data collection, hacking, seizure of electronic devices to get an insight and involvement inside the criminal organizations and bring them down from the inside out. This is important for the vulnerable and the communities as a whole as this can prevent making these vulnerable people available to such vicious organizations in the first place and further increase not only community trust but community safety. Digital policing also uses easier, more effective methods of teaching and introducing vulnerable people and communities to technology which can later on lead to contact lines bridges between the vulnerable, the communities and the public as a whole to the police so they can seek the support they need to. 'The 18 companies we are announcing today have the potential to help a number of the key affected groups during Covid-19, including young parents, the elderly at home, and the homeless, as well as giving people tools to look after their own mental health during isolation.' (Gov.uk, 2022)

Cyber crime is committed daily throughout the United Kingdom by criminals of organisations as stated above and many other different types of crimes as it proves easier for the criminals to cover up their digital print than face to face crime. However this is completely wrong in many ways. All cyber crime falls under the acts of the Computer misuse act 1,2,3,3a, Malicious Communications Act and General Data Protect Regulations 2018. With all these acts and legislation involved, it gives the digital policing units the technology and authority to deal with cyber crime. Individuals and organisations in the UK reported losses of £1.3bn to fraud and cyber crime between 1st January and 31st July 2021' (Scroxton, 2022) Almost all cyber crimes committed leave a digital footprint which can be used to track and investigate thoroughly by cyber crime units. These digital footprints are left through search history, application history and uploads to the cloud which can be investigated by cyber crime units however these units have to ensure they do not affect any evidence found as it may later be relied upon in court. 'Threats become more frequent in 68% of cases when the sextortion victim complies with demands.' (Vojinovic, 2022)

To conclude this essay, it is clear to see the effectiveness digital policing brings to everyday policing practices, dealing with the communities and vulnerable people. It proves thoroughly that cyber crime and many other digital crimes are committed daily and are becoming increasingly harder for the police to investigate and deal with. Despite that it also shows that digital policing is not all about actual dealings with crime but is also there to add to the police's arsenal of equipment and proves to be a brilliant method to spread awareness, increase campaigning and add multiple other options for

direct contact for any questions or issues needing to be raised. 'The cost-benefit threshold of digital policing is different to each organization, but many different technologies that have been used in the private sector can make a world of difference to officers in the field.' (Base-Bursey, 2022) Adding to the above statement, it also adds a world of difference to the public and communities around the United Kingdom. Although there are many opinions for and against digital policing methods and actions it is clear to see that the digital policing methods and actions do make an exceptional difference to communities and vulnerable people in many ways. There will always be disputes around privacy to the general public which overtime will continue. However, it is important for the government and police forces to find that balance of public trust and digital policing strategies which can keep the public safe. The police forces throughout the United Kingdom are definitely benefiting from digital policing and new technologies as it is making their job more efficient and effective throughout their daily policing practices. Digital policing I believe is also making communities a better safe space for all involved including the vulnerable. 'Digital policing will make it easier for the public to make contact with the Police wherever they are in the country, enable us to make better use of digital intelligence and evidence' (Howell, 2022)

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