



## Toward a Profession of Police Leadership

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### Executive Session on Policing and Public Safety

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### Introduction

Policing has changed in recent years and continues to evolve. Police agencies must contend with new threats, new technologies, new crimes and new communities, all of which create new challenges and opportunities for policing. The public's expectations have changed, and the public safety arena now includes more stakeholders with whom police must work to tackle some of the endemic and complex issues facing communities. As a result, leading police organizations has changed, too. Police leaders are increasingly expected to run efficient businesses that effectively prevent as well as investigate crime. Thus, the skill sets required of police leaders in shaping their organizations today differ greatly from those required 20 years ago.

Although pockets of good practice in police leader development are seen across the nation, the ability of the policing profession to translate these isolated successes into more effective leadership in general is debatable. Most departments continue to view leadership as a "property" of the individual rather than the organization and, therefore, attempts to develop

better functioning organizations rest heavily on “improving” individuals. Little attention is given to the system in which the leader operates or to how individuals can create and distribute a climate of leadership throughout a police organization. This — we argue in this paper — limits the innovation that is possible in a police organization, as it reinforces the role of the leader as the individual with all the answers. There are missed opportunities in this, given the complexity of the policing environment as it has evolved, and only by addressing these opportunities can law enforcement organizations hope to meet the challenges they face. Articulating what we hope to achieve through leadership, and how we might better develop and support the qualities that will allow police organizations to reach these goals, allows us to move farther toward a profession of police leadership.

### **What Is Leadership?**

It is a truism that there are as many definitions of leadership as there are people asked to define it, and it is apparent that leadership — and good leadership in particular — means different things to different people (Northouse, 2013). Many theories guide the understanding of leadership, and thinking has evolved from the “great man” theories of classical leadership (e.g., Sun Tzu circa 400-320 B.C.) to a greater appreciation that leadership requires collaboration between

groups of individuals operating in systems. We now talk about leaders as being transformative or servant in their approaches and their relationships with (and influence over) their followers as paramount. However, the focus on the individual characteristics of leaders remains strong (Grint, 2011). An understanding of the environment in which leaders operate is lacking.

### **The Changed Environment of Policing**

Policing is both complicated and complex. A complicated environment has many moving parts that operate systematically and require a high level of coordination. This characterizes many of the day-to-day activities of police work, from responding to immediate threats to public order to the investigation and prosecution of cases. Complicated environments have known — if complicated — solutions and respond to well-thought-out standard operating procedures. A complex environment, on the other hand, involves multiple interacting and diverse elements, which create a setting that is not clearly defined (Uhl-Bien, Marion and McKelvey, 2007) and may lead to unintended consequences (Sargut and McGrath, 2011). Responding to complex environments requires new learning, innovation and different ways of doing things. Standard operating procedures have little relevance because the environment calls for exploration, new discoveries and adjustments (Uhl-Bien, Marion and McKelvey, 2007). The organization needs to learn its way out of its problems (Day, 2000).

Much of what occupies police time can be regarded as complex. It is often said that the police are the first responders to a whole range of social issues (Bittner, 1990/2005). Although police may not be statutorily responsible for fixing those problems, there is incentive for them to do so when those problems lead to a rise in crime and a reduction in actual or perceived public safety, the metrics against which police performance is generally measured (Millie and Herrington, 2014). Such social problems involve a range of factors that are more appropriately dealt with upstream, and to prevent crime, police need to engage with other agents to collectively solve complex social ills. We argue that complicated problems (e.g., public (dis)order, crowd control, and investigating crime) require something more akin to management and ensuring that established processes are followed. Complex problems, however, call for true leadership, which might be defined as using one's ability to influence groups and systems to address complex needs.

Although leadership models and development approaches generated to support organizational activity that was grounded in physical production may have been helpful during the last century, they are not well-suited to a complex modern policing environment (Uhl-Bien, Marion and McKelvey, 2007). Modern policing organizations need to recognize the importance of the leader as an enabler of the learning, innovation and adaptation required rather than the top-down bureaucratic administrator of technical fixes to well-known problems (Uhl-Bien, Marion, and McKelvey, 2007). Heifetz, Grashow and Linsky (2009b) note that

leaders most commonly fail by treating leadership problems with management solutions. This is particularly tempting, as management problems — even complicated ones — have a known solution or set of solutions. A leader can rely on using his or her authoritative expertise to get the job done: The answer is known, and the leader's role in this is to encourage others to apply the "fix" effectively. Where issues are complex and only a group that has learned new ways of operating can tackle them, leaders need to experiment and engage with stakeholders rather than simply apply technical and authoritative expertise. Because complex problems do not have straightforward answers, leaders do not necessarily have the answer, and they achieve nothing by using their authority to dictate what should be done. "Faking expertise" in complex environments can be counterproductive. In Schafer's (2009) review of the FBI's National Academy development program for midcareer police supervisors, he noted that participants expressed the belief that leaders "[f]eeling like [they] have the answers and are always right" inhibited effective leadership (Schafer, 2009: 249). Our own experience working with police leaders across the world tells us that leaders feel pressure to use their technical expertise to try to solve complex problems. Members of police organizations continue to expect that the person with the most pips, crowns, bars or stars on his or her shoulder will be in a position to tell the rest of the group what to do (Heifetz, Grashow and Linsky, 2009a). Police leaders find this expectation hard to resist because authoritative expertise has most often been rewarded by promotion through the ranks of

the organization. As such, even if leaders accept that they do not always have the answers, they arguably feel an immense pressure to proceed as if they do.

### **The Consequences of Using Authoritative Expertise Instead of Leadership**

Evidence shows that giving in to the temptation to treat authoritative expertise as a substitute for leadership is counterproductive for police organizations and for public safety in general. A study from the U.K. compared one force's strategic plans between 1997 and 2009 to identify whether its strategic priorities had changed during that time (Marnoch, Topping and Boyd, 2014). The authors concluded that, instead of dealing with new problems, the strategic plans repackaged unsolved problems and recycled solutions across the years. Another, as yet unpublished, analysis of the minutes from the Australia and New Zealand Police Commissioners' Forum from 1920 to the present demonstrated remarkable similarity in issues across the years (G. Ashton, personal communication, March 12, 2014). That problems have not been "solved" suggests that, instead of using leadership and learning new ways of doing things, police organizations have continued to administer the same authoritative and technical (and ineffectual) fixes to complex problems. Marnoch, Topping and Boyd (2014) concluded that this reflected a constrained form of decision-making that did not consider all options. To say the same thing another way, for the leaders in this force (and perhaps many others), when all you have is a hammer, everything looks like a nail.

### **Reframing Leadership and Its Development**

If the solutions to complex problems lie in galvanizing stakeholders to think about and deal with things differently rather than exercising authoritative expertise, then we can perhaps best characterize true leadership as an emergent, interactive dynamic between individuals working in networks to produce new patterns of behavior or new modes of operating (Uhl-Bien, Marion and McKelvey, 2007). Leadership is not simply the work of an individual but a process that individuals within an organization engage in. Leaders are those who act to influence this dynamic (Uhl-Bien, Marion and McKelvey, 2007; Day, 2011; Iles and Preace, 2006). This has significant implications for our approach to leader and leadership development. Instead of treating leadership as the property of the leader, with individual enhancements resulting in hoped-for benefits to the organization, developing leadership must focus on creating social capital within an organization (Edmonstone, 2011). Instead of sending individuals to courses to make them better leaders, we must improve leadership as an activity in the organizational system (Bolden and Kirk, 2006; Edmonstone, 2011; Ylitalo et al., 2006). This requires a move away from investing only in those at the top of the organization who have authority roles to recognizing the importance of (informal) leaders dispersed throughout the police force. It necessitates a very different approach to developing police leaders from that currently available across much of the U.S. In essence, we are talking about supporting the development of learning organizations.

## Leadership and the Learning Organization

In learning organizations, “people continually expand their capacity to create the results they truly desire, where new and expansive patterns of thinking are nurtured, collective aspiration is set free, and people are continually learning how to learn together” (Senge, 1990: 3; Davie and Nutley, 2000). The development of learning organizations is facilitated by a recognition that learning is an investment that improves actions and performance, that learning is appreciated (and measured) by customers and client groups, and that being focused on staff engagement and well-being benefits this end (Shipton, Zhou and Mooi, 2013). Challenging existing ways of doing things is key, and fostering the learning of staff members is a central strategic goal (Shipton, Zhou and Mooi, 2013; Yeo, 2005), even though this collective learning may be slower to achieve (Campbell and Armstrong, 2013). Stone and Travis (2011), in an earlier paper in this series, saw learning new ways of doing things (innovation as experimentation) as one of the four planks of a new professionalism (the other three are accountability, legitimacy and national coherence). Although this might be difficult for police departments to achieve, this learning is how policing can elevate itself from a trade to a profession. However, such innovation can be dangerous. Mitzberg, Ahlstrand and Lempel (1998) argue that an organization that values innovation must also be tolerant of mistakes and willing to celebrate and learn from errors as well as successes. We do not believe that this characterizes most police departments, although there is evidence from overseas that

policing and learning organizations need not be mutually exclusive (Filstad and Gottschalk, 2011).

There is something of a chicken-and-egg dilemma about creating learning organizations. Organizational cultures that facilitate collective learning are supported by formal leaders who value a distributed leadership approach, but such leaders can only be developed within a culture that values organizational learning and shared leadership. The role for the formal leader is in setting a climate in which employees can continuously expand their capacity to learn, understand complexity and set the vision for the organization (Dalakoura, 2010). For this to happen within existing leader development paradigms, organizations need to equip formal leaders with an understanding of leadership, as reliant on more than their individual roles, and create a climate conducive to such an understanding. The question is: how much of a refocus of existing leader development programs and organizational culture would this involve?

## Developing Leaders, Leadership and Learning Organizations

### Moving From Training to Developing Police Leaders

We make a deliberate distinction between development and training. Training suggests that there are certain knowns that a leader must have, and that there are proven solutions to identified problems. Development, on the other hand, embraces the goal of building capacity to respond to a range of unknown and unforeseen problems (Day, 2011). Given our previous discussions

around the complexity of the police leadership environment, it stands to reason that we endorse a development rather than a training approach. The leadership-learning literature is evolving, but we actually know very little about what works in police leadership and its development. Much of what we know about police leadership is based on limited observations, small case studies, “and anecdotal accounts of ‘celebrity’ chiefs” (Schafer, 2009: 239; Pearson-Goff and Herrington, 2014; Neyroud, 2010; Kodz and Campbell, 2010; Campbell and Kodz, 2011), all of which invariably focus on the individual leader rather than leadership. As we attempt to articulate an approach to leadership development, we must be careful not to unconsciously revert to type and simply construct a technical-skills-based system. What we know is that, in moving toward being learning organizations, police departments need to consciously capture and develop the collective thinking of organizational competency programs for leaders.

The process used to develop police leaders across the U.S. tends to be ad hoc. U.S. policing invests heavily in tactical and operational training and uses the U.S. Constitution as a text for governing activities. The police profession then provides and prioritizes training throughout the police officer’s career to respond to high-liability issues such as use of force or response to domestic violence, with more tailored training in operational excellence in specialty units such as organized crime, narcotics, gangs or violent crime investigation. Although this training is generally regarded as good quality and important for successful

police work, it is technical and does not focus on developing leaders or supporting leadership.

Leader development emerges at the more senior (largely captain or lieutenant) ranks as officers move into management positions and, through those, into executive leadership roles. Police agencies offer or sponsor some leadership development opportunities, but individual officers committed to their own advancement and growth seek other opportunities. Either way, the executive-in-training often has to aggressively seek out such opportunities rather than wait to be prepared for advancement by the profession or the police agency.

Highly regarded programs and schools that provide leader development opportunities for mid- and senior-level managers include the University of Louisville’s Southern Police Institute, Northwestern University’s Center for Public Safety, and Johns Hopkins University’s Division of Public Safety Leadership. In addition, the FBI National Academy, the Police Executive Research Forum, and individual organizations utilizing the International Association of Chiefs of Police’s Leadership in Police Organizations (LPO) course (see sidebar, “Leadership in Police Organizations”) offer opportunities specifically for police leadership development. The wide availability of programs hints at a wide variety of views about what such programs should contain. Academic literature can provide some sense of what police leaders need, although the quality of the research on which such findings are based is often questionable, being

## Leadership in Police Organizations

With funding from the Office of Community Oriented Policing Services, the International Association of Chiefs of Police adapted a leadership course taught at the United States Military Academy at West Point (N.Y.) for use in law enforcement agencies, now entitled “Leadership in Police Organizations.” In 2001, the Arlington County (Va.) Police Department operated as a pilot site for LPO. At the time, the chief reasoned that traditional chain-of-command formulations had relegated police officers to the role of “privates,” not “officers.” This drove entry-level training and supervisory practices and belied that first-line officers operate in a leadership role in every sense of the word. Officers routinely exercise decisional authority in complex, ambiguous circumstances, under pressure, with insufficient information. And they must do so in a way that is fair, impartial, and perceived to be so. This requires leadership ability. The formal leaders of the organization must also have a firm grasp of management and leadership principles if they are to credibly guide the organization. The future of the organization and the profession depends on the caliber of leaders developed within police agencies, as the great majority of formal leaders come from the ranks.

At the Arlington pilot site, leadership was defined as the process of influencing human behavior to achieve organizational goals that serve the public while developing individuals, groups and the organization for future service. The three-week course focused on behavioral science, leadership theories, understanding group formation, human motivation, concepts of followership, and the practical application of these concepts to the workplace. LPO was taught primarily to classes of officers from several agencies who would return to their own departments with enhanced skills and new networks.

Milwaukee is another police department that has embraced the LPO program as part of a wider range of operational and technological changes designed to improve the department’s performance. This agency had been managed in a traditional, risk-averse manner; however, a generational shift in the junior- and middle-management ranks indicated receptiveness to positive change. LPO slotted neatly into this.

In Milwaukee, rather than providing training to improve individuals’ skills and then sending learners back to a perhaps unwelcoming status quo, a vertical slice approach is used to generate a mixed group of ranks. Group discussions elicit different viewpoints and perspectives about the same topic. The stated goals of LPO in Milwaukee are that every department member (sworn and nonsworn) should have a shared understanding of organizational development, group behavior and human motivation; enhanced leadership skills and a common vocabulary to help solve conflict in the workplace; and a network of similarly minded colleagues. LPO’s mixed-rank structure gives class members the opportunity to forge connections with officers of different ranks, with whom they can form mentoring relationships and from whom they can seek advice outside the formal chain of command. In this way, leadership, formal and informal, is truly dispersed throughout the organization, and the approach develops not just individuals but networks of individuals who can operate better within the organization. Excellent leadership cannot flourish in a dysfunctional culture but, if dispersed widely enough, it can create a new one.

largely based on perceptions rather than objective measures. There remains no objective assessment of what is needed from senior police executives (Pearson-Goff and Herrington, 2013; Schafer, 2009). This content becomes even more difficult to agree on when we consider the demands of the complex environment and what is needed to develop leadership, not just better technical leaders. Policing tends to rely on developing individual competencies to address organizational problems (McGurk, 2010), but there is an important, although subtle, distinction between training for competencies and developing for capability. Competence involves telling people what knowledge and skills they need, whereas capability involves equipping individuals to adapt, generate new knowledge and continually learn (Fraser and Greenhalgh, 2001). Clearly, developing capability lends itself more readily to supporting leadership and learning organizations, although much leader development remains preoccupied with the technical knowledge and skills required of those at particular ranks. Although it is certainly important for effective management practices, this training does not develop leaders.

Of course, even those programs of study more closely aligned with developing leader capability are only part of the story in developing distributed leadership and organizational capability to deal with complexity. Yet, in law enforcement in the United States and worldwide, the leader, rather than the system, is the focus of development, and little is made of the organizations to which transformed leaders return (Day, 2011; Bolden

and Kirk, 2006; Edmonstone, 2011). Developing individuals is important, but if it is the exclusive focus of an organization's attempts to generate leadership, it neglects the bulk of leadership capacity that resides in the rest of the organization as well as the importance of situation and context in achieving goals (Bolden and Kirk, 2006).

### **Moving From Developing Police Leaders to Developing Learning Organizations**

Some development opportunities, such as LPO, promote leadership at all levels of the police organization by bringing multiple ranks of officers together (in Milwaukee, the ranks of captain, lieutenant, sergeant, detective and officer are routinely found in LPO classes). Although these programs still focus on the individual leader, they acknowledge that leadership happens as part of a larger system which is explored in the classroom (see sidebar, "Leadership in Police Organizations," on page 7). This contrasts with most other leader development opportunities, which group individuals of similar ranks together to develop their skills away from the workplace. Although there are good reasons for this in hierarchical organizations (where dissent in front of the boss may end a career), this compounds the already individual focus of the development and limits the availability of a realistic, multiranked context in which to practice one's skills (Bolden and Kirk, 2006; Edmonstone, 2011). To the best of our knowledge, LPO has not been formally evaluated, although it is well-regarded by senior officers across a range of jurisdictions (Rosser, 2013). It would be interesting to see if such multilevel programs result in better leadership outcomes



than programs that focus only on a small group of rank-peers drawn from across agencies.

Leader development — even that which recognizes leadership in a system — does not automatically give rise to the development of learning organizations. Formal leaders have a role to play here through embracing and valuing organizational learning, but development must target the organization, too (Yeo, 2005). Yang, Watkins and Marsick 2004 provide a three-level structure for a development approach that targets:

- Individual learning through engaging in continuous learning, dialogue and inquiry.
- Group-level learning through teams learning together and collaborating.
- Organizational learning, developing learning-supportive systems, empowering staff, and providing leadership around learning.

Leadership and the development of learning organizations clearly rely on more than traditional classroom learning and require multiple well-coordinated activities to develop employees and the system in which they operate (Dalakoura, 2010). Dixon (1993) provides further insights into what such a development program might look like, describing it as:

- Located in the realities of day-to-day work, not away from them.
- Focused less on experts telling leaders what they should do.

- Allowing longer time frames for “learning.”
- Focused on community and organizational learning rather than individual outcomes.

Development needs to be embedded in the workplace, grounded in an environment where individuals share their knowledge with coworkers, and based on an organizational structure that supports collaborative learning (Ortenblad, 2004). These underlying principles require a longitudinal, rather than a snapshot, approach to individual development; place those in the system (rather than the experts at the front of a classroom) in the central role; and support individuals in transforming their learning into workplace action. The term “action learning sets” has been used to describe such an approach and can be used to galvanize learning around a particular issue. For example, a vertical slice of formal and informal leaders in an organization, including those from external agencies, might be brought together (such as in the case of the LPO program) to collectively think about and address a specific problem. Such action learning sets allow for stretching conversations to identify and explore systemic tensions and dilemmas intrinsic to the problem, emphasizing reflection and review. This approach helps build social capital by encouraging people to understand how to relate to others, coordinate their efforts, build commitments and develop extended social networks (Edmonstone, 2011). The key features of this approach are less about organizational structure and more about how people within the organization think about the relationships between the outside world, their organization,

their colleagues and themselves (Davie and Nutley, 2000). Structures become more fluid, and a greater breadth and depth of resources (inside and outside of the organization) are available to deal with concerns. This is the real work for formal police leaders: encouraging their organization to change its values, its established hierarchical practices, and its culture to better prepare itself to meet the challenges ahead — which cannot be achieved by using authority alone (Heifetz and Laurie, 1997). The net result of this work is the development of organizational leadership and, in turn, learning organizations.

### **The 70:20:10 Framework for Leadership Development**

Some workplaces are seeking to support leadership development through the 70:20:10 framework. Although it is still focused on the individual, this framework contextualizes individual learning in the workplace environment and, in doing so, facilitates an organizational shift in thinking about leadership — from regarding it as an individual attribute to viewing it as an organizational commodity. The 70:20:10 approach — based on the work of McCall, Eichinger and Lombardo at the Center for Creative Leadership (Kajewski and Madsen, 2012; Jennings, 2013) — posits that 70 percent of the learning an individual does occurs at work, through stretch assignments, projects and day-to-day experiences; 20 percent occurs through networks and, in particular, through being coached and mentored by peers and more senior staff; and 10 percent occurs through formal schooling opportunities outside the office. Of course, it is the 10 percent that has

characterized much of what we know as leader development, and few approaches hold the organization to account for nurturing the 90 percent of development that occurs outside the classroom. That 70 percent of learning occurs through daily work means that if an organization does not create an environment in which individuals can reflect, experiment and adapt, a significant opportunity is lost. This 70 percent does not necessarily need to be structured, although the individual is undoubtedly aided by a better understanding of his or her own learning objectives and actively seeking out opportunities to meet these. Instead, the 70 percent relies heavily on the latent culture of the organization, and the nurturing of learning in line with the characteristics of a learning organization. There are undoubtedly challenges here for policing, with a fast-paced operational life leaving little opportunity for such significant cultural shifts, unless these are undertaken consciously. For an example of the 70:20:10 framework, see the sidebar, “The Australia and New Zealand Police Leadership Strategy.”

### **Challenges to Developing Learning Organizations**

We have already said that, whereas the right organization will support the right sort of leader development approach, the right sort of leader (and leadership) development is also required to give the organization a fighting chance of developing into a learning organization. This is where formal leaders — chiefs and their senior staff — have to lead by example and clear the cultural obstacles that stifle the values inherent in

## The Australia and New Zealand Police Leadership Strategy

The Australia and New Zealand Police Leadership Strategy (PLS) uses the 70:20:10 approach to blend individually focused classroom learning with action and development in the workplace. Instead of employing a traditional didactic approach to leadership development, wherein a more knowledgeable person imparts this knowledge to others, PLS focuses on sharing tacit knowledge about leadership and experimenting with new ways of operating in practice. There is no training in running meetings, setting budgets or dealing with labor contracts, although this may be added into the mix through the selection of technically focused courses to make up the 10 percent. Rather, the focus of the strategy is on exercising and building leadership in the workplace and on reflecting deeply on what true leadership means.

PLS lasts 18 months and includes five three-day workshops held at the Australian Institute of Police Management (AIPM). These workshops account for the 20 percent component and are set up as learning circles. The 10 percent of formal classroom learning and the 70 percent of workplace learning are structured through individual development plans. Individual participants develop these plans and identify what formal courses they feel they need to increase their individual technical skills as well as what workplace experiences and opportunities they require to enhance their leadership practice. There is no standard blend of activities, and participants must identify their own development goals. For some, this includes a commitment to experiment with different approaches to their leadership in the workplace, to test out new ways of doing things and monitor the results. For others, this includes seeking out opportunities to shadow the commissioner at national meetings or identifying and addressing complex organizational issues.

The learning circles (20 percent) provide a sounding board for leadership challenges for the group and an opportunity for individuals to learn and benefit from the collective wisdom of their peers. The organization assists in the development and execution of the individual development plans that structure the remaining 80 percent. If a participant requires an opportunity to experiment with leadership through a stretch project, the organization needs to support this. Similarly, the organizational hierarchy must encourage and sanction opportunities for participants to act in more senior roles (with greater duties). And, of course, applications for external classroom-based learning must be funded.

PLS is designed for aspiring commissioners, deputy commissioners and assistant commissioners from across Australasian policing and law enforcement, and the first cohort completed its 18-month involvement in mid-2014. An initial process evaluation was undertaken by the AIPM. Among other findings, this evaluation identified that the real success of the program is hard to pin down. Should retention, promotion or portability be regarded as an accurate measure of success? Or is the strategy's success better measured through qualitative and personalized means? Certainly all participants perceived a benefit from their involvement, and several have moved on to more senior roles. But it is perhaps too soon to assess whether the strategy has had its desired impact on an organization's learning culture, such that leadership is viewed as owned and nurtured by the organization as well as the individual.

This novel approach to development is not without its challenges. A key aim of the strategy was to move leader development away from a focus on classroom-based learning and empower organizations to take ownership of leadership in the workplace through the 70 percent. This departure from traditional development approaches (where individuals are sent on programs and courses and their development becomes the responsibility of the educators) can be overlooked, with aspects such as the formal workshops and learning circles becoming the strategy instead of being viewed as complementing a broader — workplace-based — approach. To say the same thing another way, organizations must not underestimate their role in building leadership and a culture of

### The Australia and New Zealand Police Leadership Strategy (continued)

learning under a 70:20:10 framework, and a strategy such as PLS must guard against being seen as little more than another formal learning opportunity (i.e., externally provided via the 10 percent and 20 percent components). As such, it is important that, as we experiment with novel ways to develop leaders and organizational leadership, we do not inadvertently rebottle traditional approaches and undermine the bulk of development that must occur in — and be nurtured by — the organization.

organizational learning. Some of these obstacles are personal and ego-related. It is challenging for a chief to acknowledge that he or she does not have a monopoly on the good ideas that will take the organization forward. But acknowledging that they do not have all the answers and leading from the front in this way is — paradoxically — the sort of authority-laden action required of formal leaders to signal a shift in approach and provide the space required to encourage collective and shared leadership (Jones, 2014). Of course, chiefs tend to become chiefs precisely because they have good ideas, and they are held to account by their political masters to enact these good ideas. It is therefore risky to one's career to admit that others may have better ideas, lest one be replaced. Importantly, also, such culture change is a long-term project, the fruits of which may only be realized after a chief's tenure ends. Buy-in to such an approach across the profession is needed to ensure that when one chief leaves, his or her replacement is more likely to be aware of (and sympathetic toward) the leadership work in progress and to continue to support this work rather than reverting to a traditional technocratic, bureaucratic and authoritarian approach. This is why agreement on what we mean by a profession of police leadership is so important: to protect

an organization from lurching back and forth between the ideologies of individual chiefs. When that happens, the opportunity for the longer term development of organizational leadership and a culture of learning may be lost.

Other values inherent to learning organizations can be challenging for police departments to reconcile (Mintzberg, Ahlstrand and Lampel, 1998). We have noted the difficulties police organizations face in tolerating and learning from mistakes. Typically, mistakes lead the pendulum of risk appetite to swing to the extreme, and internal and external calls for bureaucratic safeguards are heeded and applied. Individuals are found at fault, and a culture of blame overtakes any deep and meaningful learning that might be found. Arguably, police departments face a similar problem when learning from their successes. Police culture values individual modesty and concentrating on getting the job done. Focusing heavily on a win is not always rewarded by one's peers, and valuable lessons tend not to be exploited for organizational good. Paradoxically, those seeking to make the most of successes for personal gain, through the promotion system, are rewarded for articulating their individual roles in the success rather

than exploring the organizational dynamic that worked. As a result, experimentation and innovation — when they do occur, and even when they succeed — tend to remain parochial.

Police departments tend also to be inward-looking. Many promotions are made from within a department, and with this insularity comes the baggage of individual and departmental history — the good and bad — and a stifling of the diversity of ideas and experience needed to tackle problems in new and innovative ways. Mobility of staff between departments is not common, and neither is lateral entry into the management and leadership of organizations from nonpolice roles. This is starting to emerge overseas, and the U.K. is experimenting with lateral entry of nonpolice into superintendent-level positions (the U.S. rank equivalent would be commander in California, major in many state police agencies, and inspector in most northeastern police forces other than Boston's) (Winsor, 2012; Home Office, 2013). The hope is that this will bring much needed diversity to policing and, with this, diversity in how entrenched and complex policing problems are tackled.

The ledger is not entirely in the negative, however, and one factor in favor of police departments moving toward becoming learning organizations is the policing structure. Rank and discretion in most police departments are inversely related; the further one progresses through one's organization, the less freedom one has to exercise discretion. By dint of the (relatively) low level of supervisory visibility and high level of discretion

experienced by most front-line police during their day-to-day work, they are encouraged to use their judgment and their tacit knowledge rather than rely entirely on the directions of others. The trick for police leaders is to permit the same freedom in decision-making and problem solving when front-line police are in the company of those of higher rank, instead of reinforcing the more natural tendency to default to authority. If we can hold on to this, we can better develop distributed organizational leadership and the learning organizations that we need.

## Conclusion

The development of learning organizations rests on a shared approach to leadership and a commitment to ongoing organizational learning. Supporting this starts with developing leaders and their individual skill sets, but it does not end there; consideration needs to be taken of the organizational settings required for leadership to flourish and organizations to thrive. If we want true leadership in policing, then we need to support it within police organizations. And that means we need to better understand that leadership is about creating a climate in which innovation, experimentation and collaboration can flourish, valuing this, and accepting that this may be challenging. This new type of leadership requires, perhaps, a new type of chief, a new type of leadership accountability and a new type of leadership development. Rather than simply equipping individual leaders with a given set of competencies and skills to enable them to make the right decisions and do the right thing,

development must encourage the creation of an environment that allows for collective learning and feeling one's way through situations. Such leadership development is part of a broader push to develop learning organizations, although we need to understand more about what it is that works here, and how police organizations and public safety can benefit.

With this in mind, we conclude this paper with two calls. First, we advocate a two-pronged approach to developing a profession of police leadership, incorporating both police leader development and leadership development to generate learning organizations. Leaders require a blend of management skills (e.g., planning, organizing, budgeting, staffing and directing), personal skills (e.g., the ability to communicate, motivate and inspire others), leadership skills (e.g., strategic focus, analytical competency and cognitive flexibility), and, in policing, a healthy dose of operational experience (still seen as the *sine qua non* of credibility). Leadership requires the organization to support the use of these skills to create a learning environment. No one course of study will achieve this, and it requires an individual and organizational commitment to learning. The particular challenge for U.S. law enforcement is developing both highly skilled leaders and organizational leadership coherently across the U.S. Perhaps it needs to start as a pocket of activity in one or two of the larger agencies, with flow-on benefits emanating from there. It would certainly make sense that police departments of sufficient size (e.g., the 5 percent

with 100 or more staff; Reaves, 2011) think about their organizational strategy for dealing with complex problems, and how their leader and leadership development approaches contribute to this.

Our second call is for systematic research on leadership and leader development, their impact on developing learning organizations, and the net benefits of this. The established literature on police leadership is noticeably lacking in outcome-focused studies, with most research concentrating on perceptions of "good" leadership rather than objective measures (Pearson-Goff and Herrington, 2013; Schafer, 2009; Neyroud, 2010; Campbell and Kodz, 2011). Little research has conceptualized or measured the impact of leader or leadership development on an organization, and it remains difficult to articulate the measurable outcomes that one hopes for. Are crime rates a good measure of police leadership? Is community satisfaction? What about an assessment of the strategic position that a police organization adopts and its engagement with complex social problems? We would argue that if we are looking to identify real leadership in action, then effort and evidence of innovation throughout the organization might be better indicators than outcome success, as they indicate a willingness to experiment rather than maintain the status quo. In any case, the debate needs to continue and we need to identify ways of more meaningfully measuring leadership so that this — rather than short-term gains — is encouraged within our police organizations.

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