

The police, as well as other emergency services and public-sector organisations, are operating in an environment which is rapidly changing. All predictions are that this change is likely to increase still further in the next 10 to 15 years (Price Waterhouse Coopers (PWC), 2017). Price Waterhouse Coopers (2014, p. 5) argue that “tremendous forces are radically reshaping the world of work as we know it. Disruptive innovations are creating new industries and business models and destroying old ones. New technologies, data analytics and social networks are having a huge impact on how we communicate, collaborate and work”.

As the National Police Chiefs’ Council (NPCC) APCC (2016), and Farrar in this special issue (SI) identify, policing is dramatically changing as well: the role of the police in our societies and communities; changing crime types; globalisation, an increasingly interconnected world and crime across borders; partnership working; changing public and employee expectations; changing concepts of leadership; population growth, and increasingly diverse workforces that includes younger and older as well as more diverse nationalities and abilities; climate change and resource scarcity; the technological revolution – the so-called Fourth Industrial Revolution – including artificial intelligence, use of drones, robotics, driverless cars, and how all this will impact on the police and communities we serve; and issues of stress, mental health and being traumatised by all these changes are just some of these challenges. This SI has touched on some, but only a small number of these potential trends.

One thing that seems to be clear in relation to all this change is the need for leadership, as Gergen (2016), Professor in the Center for Public Leadership at Harvard Kennedy School of Government also points out. Effective leadership would seem to be a key in helping individuals and organisations predict, prepare, and thrive in this future. Deloitte (2017), just as an example, in their Global Human Capital Trends survey, argue that the leadership challenge is urgent and growing in importance. If this is the case, then police leaders of the future will need to demonstrate some unique skills and abilities to deal with all the changes that are coming their way. How prepared and skilled are our current and future leaders for this rapidly changing, increasingly complex global world? Perhaps not very, if the themes in a number of reports are to be believed. Deloitte (2017), for example, point out that leadership is an increasingly pervasive concern among HR and business leaders around the world. In the World Economic Forum’s (2015) Survey on the Global Agenda, 86 per cent of respondents felt we currently have a leadership crisis in the world.

So what skills and abilities will current and future police leaders need to possess? No doubt many of our senior leaders already possess these, but if so, are these recognised, valued, and rewarded as highly as they need to be, and are they being used to best effect?

Metcalf in our first article in this SI argues that these changes necessitate system-wide change and compels institutional reform. In England and Wales, the Policing Vision 2025 (NPCC and APCC, 2016) attempts to grapple with some of this, but we are not sure this has identified all the key issues. What are the fundamental, core, systemic issues that we need to be looking at here that are not already being heavily debated and developed? What are the things that may creep up on us and catch us unaware? These are the questions that initiated work on this SI in the first place, and we would like to address here.

The first fundamental, which again provided the focus for this SI, is that policing is a people business and will remain so – people, serving and protecting people in crisis, on the edge, sometimes facing terrible life and death situations. This fundamental is unlikely to change. At the end of the day, even with the pace of change, at the centre of all this we are still looking at the same stressed, vulnerable, scared, slowly evolving, immensely complex,



human beings within the police community as well as those we serve. Here we are looking at what are sometimes called the softer skills to leadership, although there is nothing soft about the urgent business imperative to fully embrace these people's issues.

Of course, there are many people aspects to police leadership that must be developed for the future, but are there some underpinning root causes that create the numerous symptoms we observe? We think there might be, and a number of these have been explored in this SI. There seems to be one fundamental cause though that Farrar in this SI touches on that we would like to develop a little further. This factor relates to the skills and abilities to look forward and plan for the future. This planning to predict the likely future demands for policing however needs to be innovative, holistic, and system-wide and be structured, strategic, long lasting, and avoid duplication. A continually gushing pipeline of innovative future-oriented ideas, thought and debate seems to be a fundamental requirement if police leaders are to be prepared continually for the future. This factor is not unique to policing and is also a key area identified in a number of reports not focusing specifically on policing. The Global Human Capital Trends Survey (Deloitte, 2017) report argues for the need to develop fundamental leadership capabilities including the ability to collaborate across boundaries and conceptualise new solutions. Steckler and Torbert (2010), following 40 years of research, show that only 5 per cent of leaders demonstrate a consistent capacity to innovate and to successfully transform their organisations.

We also see this in the police and in many of the papers submitted to this SI. From this, we wonder whether this future-oriented thinking and innovative ideas pipeline is as prevalent and abundant in police leadership as we need for the future? We are not talking here about failings in any individual senior leader. As Thornton points out in her foreword in the introduction, we are also not talking about leaders just being innovators themselves, but also creating the right environment that allows and encourages the workforce to be innovative themselves. As Metcalfe in our first paper highlights, it is the system we are exploring and questioning – the challenging nature of policing itself; using the skilled people we have to best effect; attracting, recruiting, promoting, and developing senior leaders; and the leadership skills and qualities that are valued and rewarded. Without this future-oriented thinking there seems to be a real danger that policing may be forever locked in the short-term, reactionary, hectic, and parochial mode that seems familiar to so many.

If this innovative, systemic, and future-oriented thinking is not as prevalent as desired, why might this be? Could it be that currently within policing there is just not sufficient time to look to the future; so busy putting fires out there is no time left to look at the cause of these fires? Is it there are just insufficient resources put into future-focussed departments? Is it that we are dealing with complex wicked problems, as Thornton in our introduction points out, that are difficult? Is there a complacency culture connected to policing's excellent abilities to cope with crisis, that we wait until these wicked problems reach a crisis point before really acting? Or might there be some deeper, more fundamental root causes of these issues?

Operational policing can certainly be a very fast-paced, adrenaline-filled, reactionary, environment, underpinned (often subliminally as Bueermann, 2017 identifies) by a sense of danger and fear. What impact might this have on a human being trying to work in this environment and make sense of it all?

We wonder if this issue of stress and fear – either related to the policing environment or the pace of change being experienced (as Gergen, 2016 highlights) – may be relevant here? We certainly know that the first tendency of the human being as a natural reaction to stress and fear is contraction and withdrawal – the opposite of what we are looking for in relation to innovatively planning for the future. The human brain is essentially divided into three unique sections. The oldest part of the brain sits at the base of the spinal column and operates the most basic of physiological functions. The middle part is our animalistic section. It is here where most human beings, including police officers and leaders, function, particularly when

functioning in fear. The newest part of the brain is our neo-cortex or new brain. This area is where human beings perform creatively, moralistically, and compassionately. When we shut down this area of the brain, as officers may have to do to survive in the challenging, stressful, sometimes violent environment in which many police officers/leaders have to work, our responses shift to the limbic area of our brain that focus on emotions: anger, fear, and aggression. This shift is one of survival rather than thriving, and results in a loss of higher executive thinking.

Charles *et al.* (2014) illustrate the importance of police officers functioning in the neo-cortex in responding to a crisis type of environment. They argue that this type of crisis environment can have negative effects on the neural pathways which facilitate brain integration. Charles *et al.* (2014) emphasise the importance of brain integration and the police officer's ability to use each of the four quadrants of the brain to think creatively and communicate effectively – just the type of things we are looking for in planning for the future. In their research, Charles *et al.* (2014) found that those police officers who were able to focus and use the entire brain responded faster and more effectively than those who exhausted the emotional and mental realms of the brain.

We also wonder whether there is an additional, potentially more impactful issue that develops from this? This is that many of the police officers that are regularly working in these types of threatening operational environments are the ones that are promoted to senior leadership positions and have to survive not only the challenges and stresses involved in being a police officer, as discussed above, but also those involved in leading the enormous, challenging, complex, fast-paced, and rapidly changing police organisations. As a result, might some of those leading our police organisations be experiencing a double jeopardy?

In our second paper in this SI, Grint, Holt and Neyroud highlight that these threatening operational policing environments are the most highly valued and recognised environments when it comes to promotion processes. Senior leaders are the ones primarily tasked with developing the longer-term, strategic focussed, and innovative future vision for their organisation. However, because of the skills they are required to demonstrate during the promotion processes, and because of this double jeopardy they may experience, we wonder if some of the senior leaders that are selected, might not be as highly skilled and trained to work and think in the future orientated innovative and holistic way that is required?

Does all this impact on the police services' ability to develop for the future in a more structured, strategic, and systemic way – become a self-developing service – as Metcalfe in our first paper explores?

There are many questions that emerge as we consider this new and creative approach to our vision of police leadership. First, is this a police specific challenge, or indicative of a broader issue of people tending to focus on the more immediate and pressing issue in front of them as opposed to the longer-term bigger picture? Is it just more difficult, less tangible, or less urgent to be focussing on the longer term? Are people in general less skilled at developing longer-term, holistic themes? Many who work in the police are not frontline police officers that experience the pressures of frontline service – can they not operate in a different way? The police service is increasingly working with academia, so cannot the academic environment enable this creative, forward thought development? Steckler's and Torbert's (2010) findings mentioned earlier, which are not specifically focussed on policing, may be of relevance here. Academic environments are also very fast-paced, demanding, challenging, complex, and rapidly changing environments often underpinned by fear. Are these environments enabling any more than the police the higher executive functioning and long-term, creative, and innovative forward thought?

Keeping our focus on police leadership, the question here beginning to emerge from this exploration might be how do we consistently ensure police leaders of the future have the skills and abilities needed to develop more innovative, future focused thought and ideas generation and adoption? As McLeod and Herrington in our third paper in this SI highlight,

one key element is in relation to diversity in the workforce in the broadest sense – getting a range of approaches and skills at all levels in the police should help to address some of the issues raised in this paper. As Long points to in his foreword in the introduction, and Melling in the first of our practitioner papers in this SI, education for police leaders also seems key. Education which focusses on why it is so important and how they can create a more forward-looking innovative environment. It might also be important to explore with our new leaders the neuroscience behind their work, and the impacts this world of stress, trauma, and crises can have on the way the brain functions including the importance of higher executive functioning. There also appears to be issues around talent management to consider including how we use to best affect the considerable skills the police service has in this area, as well as the types of skills and abilities we value and reward in our leaders.

We hope you have enjoyed this SI and that it has assisted, enthused, and challenged you. And what now? What can be done to take all the important issues discussed in this SI about police leadership forward in a systemic way? An international think tank further research, a conference perhaps? We would like to leave you with this question, together with two important messages for leaders from PWC (2017, p. 5) – Act now, and make a bigger leap.

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