



# WALKING THE TALENT TIGHTROPE:

Becoming a 'Top Cop' in  
the Metropolitan Police  
Service (MPS)

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## Abstract

Chief police officers represent a small cadre of individuals who have risen to occupy some of the most important and, arguably, testing roles within modern British public life, wielding a powerful influence over crime, security and safety in the UK. However, although there is now a significant body of research on policing, very little of it has focused on examining those who occupy the top ranks of the police service and the processes by which they are identified, selected, assessed and appointed.

The purpose of this study is to consider what constitutes a 'top cop' within the modern Metropolitan Police Service (MPS) and to review the key steps in the chief officer selection and appointment process. Based upon an extensive literature review and confidential interviews with a sample of chief officers in the MPS, the research examines the backgrounds, experience and leadership qualities of the MPS chief officer team. It also explores their views on the challenges of modern policing, on key policing debates, such as direct entry, and the 'system' and processes that got them to where they are.

Building on the works of Reiner (1991), Wall (1998) and Caless (2011), it is intended that this research study will shed some new light on this elite, but relatively undocumented group, which will be of interest to academics and practitioners alike, and also encourage others to undertake further research in this field.

The study concludes by highlighting some key aspects of the chief officer selection and appointment process that are worth revisiting and refining in the face of the growing leadership challenges that policing faces at the top of the service. Specifically, the thesis sets out five recommendations for wider consideration by the police Human Resources (HR) community. These include:

- The need to establish a national talent management approach to support the appointment and ongoing development of chief officers;
- Commissioning research to define the leadership skills and experience that are required at chief officer level;

- Introducing more robust evaluation and external validation into the chief officer selection and appointment process;
- Reviewing and repositioning Direct Entry within the police service;
- Reviewing the chief officer structure within the MPS

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## Glossary of Terms

<b>AC</b>	Assistant Commissioner
<b>ACPO</b>	Association of Chief Police Officers, replaced in 2015 by a new body, the National Police Chiefs' Council (NPCC)
<b>BAWP</b>	British Association for Women in Policing
<b>BME</b>	Black and minority ethnic
<b>BPA</b>	Black Police Association
<b>CC</b>	Chief Constable
<b>CEO</b>	Chief Executive Officer
<b>Chief Officer</b>	A police officer who holds the ranks of assistant chief constable or commander (in the MPS); deputy chief constable or deputy assistant commissioner (in the MPS); chief constable or assistant commissioner/deputy commissioner/commissioner (in the MPS).
<b>CPOSA</b>	Chief Police Officers' Staff Association, a staff association established to represent the interests of senior police personnel in national matters
<b>DAC</b>	Deputy Assistant Commissioner
<b>DCC</b>	Deputy Chief Constable – widely considered as equivalent to DAC in the MPS
<b>HMIC</b>	Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary
<b>HPDS</b>	High Potential Development Scheme, a scheme designed to fast track talented police officers to senior police leadership levels, now superseded by the national Fast Track Programme for serving constables and the Direct Entry for Inspector Programme for external recruits
<b>HR</b>	Human Resources
<b>MOPAC</b>	Mayor's Office for Policing & Crime
<b>MPA</b>	Metropolitan Police Authority
<b>MPS</b>	Metropolitan Police Service
<b>NSCAS</b>	National Senior Careers Advisory Service

<b>NPIA</b>	National Policing Improvement Agency, established to provide expertise to the police in information technology, information sharing, recruitment and learning & development. However, it was abolished in 2011, with its functions picked up by a number of other bodies, including the newly established College of Policing
<b>SCC</b>	Strategic Command Course
<b>SPNAC</b>	Senior Police National Assessment Centre

## Chapter One: Introduction

“The practice of senior police leadership impresses as a difficult task for at least two reasons. First, the role of the police in liberal democratic society remains ambiguous and contested. Moreover, it is not entirely clear how police effectiveness is to be measured. Even if police leaders do manage to establish definite aims and objectives for policing it is by no means easy to reform and restructure the police organisation as a design to achieve these goals. Yet, in spite of these problems, police leaders remain public figures appraised and evaluated in terms of police ‘efficiency, economy and effectiveness’ - as well as fairness and integrity. Their competence is judged against an extensive range of criteria and in relation to a general but somewhat opaque model of ‘professionalism’. Second, they are embedded within an occupational culture that is characterised by more or less shared - yet sometimes contradictory - notions concerning the definition of the ‘appropriate’ conduct that is expected from them.”

(Adlam, 2003, p.34)

### Overview

This research is a study of the chief police officers in the Metropolitan Police Service (MPS). They are the elusive, elite and powerful individuals who run policing in the capital city of the United Kingdom and they wield considerable influence and power (Blair, 2009; Caless, 2011; Reiner, 2000; Waddington, 1999). It has been observed that following the formation of the MPS in 1829, there was “no outline of principles of how policing was to be done nor an overall strategy; that has to be inferred from the later correspondence and first police instruction books” (Grieve, 2015, p.18). This perhaps, in part, accounts for why the development of UK policing has been so heavily influenced by the style and character of its police leaders.

Chief officers are widely regarded as having reached the top of their profession. In the MPS, they are overseen by the highest ranking police officer in the country, the Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis.<sup>1</sup> As the visible leader and ‘top cop’ for London (with additional national responsibilities), the Commissioner works within a governance system of political control and oversight which includes the Mayor of London and the Home Office (Pepper,

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<sup>1</sup> Although this is the full title of the rank, for practical use the Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis is referred to simply as “Commissioner”.

2011). The Commissioner is at the heart of the governance system of policing London and bestowed with a national overview of policing as the principal policing advisor to the government (Blair, 2009). Lord Denning in the case of *R v. Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis, Ex Parte Blackburn* [1968] famously stated that the commissioner was “independent of the executive” and his duty “is to enforce the law of the land...No minister of the Crown can tell him that he must, or must not, keep observation on this place or that; or that he must, or must not, prosecute this man or that one. Nor can any police authority tell him so. The responsibility for law enforcement lies on him. He is answerable to the law and to the law alone” (Denning, 1968). Although realities of command are somewhat more complicated, the Commissioner is undoubtedly one of the most powerful positions within modern public life (Blair, 2009; Stevens, 2005).

However, in spite of the prominence and visibility of chief police officers, there has been very little academic study into defining what a ‘top cop’ is, and what kind of person actually becomes a ‘top cop’ in the modern policing era in the UK. This study seeks to address this shortfall in knowledge by engaging directly at the chief officer rank within the MPS to explore these issues. A study into the leadership of the British police serves to provide an insight into one of the nation’s great institutions, which is charged with maintaining order, equipped with a monopoly on the use of force within society and empowered through a bond to the monarchy to uphold the sovereign’s peace (Emsley, 2009; Holdaway, 1983; Reiner, 2000; Waddington, 1999). Policing has been described as being in “the unique position of enforcing the law in a liberal democratic society” (Loftus, 2009, p.199). It is therefore both interesting, and important, to understand who leads such a powerful organisation, and how these individuals achieved their position. Emsley has observed that, although the police is an institution, police officers have “different origins and aspirations, with careers and family lives [that follow] different and very personal trajectories” (Emsley, 2009, p.119).

An additional dimension of this study is that it acts as a barometer on the issue of gender and racial diversity within the modern police. It is notable that the current narrative continues to be dominated by a lack of visible ethnic minorities in the senior ranks, which is facilitated by an institutional “canteen” culture that favours a status quo typified by a white, male,

heterosexual leadership cadre (Blair, 2009; Dizaei, 2007; Paddick, 2008).<sup>2</sup> Waddington has argued that “whether at the level of individual attitudes, common beliefs and stereotypes, there is compelling evidence to support the view that the police – especially the lower ranks – are hostile to racial and ethnic minorities” (Waddington, 1999, p.101).

The purpose of this chapter is to set out the structure of this thesis and provide guidance on the relevance and importance of this enquiry. It also provides an overview of key themes surrounding police leaders which need to be considered within the framework of the subsequent research.

### **The Strategic Commanders**

The Commissioner does not work in isolation, and is supported by a small group of chief officers, the Chief Officer Group, which consists (within the MPS), of commanders, deputy assistant commissioners (DACs), assistant commissioners (ACs) and a single deputy commissioner. The chart (overleaf) shows the executive structure of the MPS.<sup>3</sup> From this, it can be seen that there are 30 chief officers in the MPS, which is approximately 15% of the chief officer strength nationally. Although perhaps not a sizeable number, the political and strategic weight of these individuals is significant; as Leishman *et al.* state, they occupy a “unique position in the roll call of key players in the field of police policy making” (2000, p.40). These chief officers have all been promoted from the rank of superintendent or chief superintendent via the Strategic Command Course (SCC), which has served as the gateway into senior leadership in British policing since just after the Second World War; successful completion of the SCC is a pre-requisite to appointment as a chief officer (Blair, 2009; Paddick, 2008; Stevens, 2005). The SCC can only be accessed by officers who have successfully passed the Senior Police National Assessment Centre (SPNAC), which is a selection process that assess the capabilities and skills of candidates seeking progression into the highest ranks. SPNAC has the aim of identifying “those who are capable of being an effective chief officer”

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<sup>2</sup> Canteen culture in the police has been the subject of considerable academic study and debate, and commonly ascribed traits include conservatism, suspicion, cynicism, sense of mission, machismo and pragmatism (Chan, 1997; Loftus 2010; Reiner, 2000; Sherman, 1980; Smith & Gray, 1983; Waddington, 1999). It is often portrayed as a pervasive, malign and potent influence on the behaviour of officers (Waddington, 1999).

<sup>3</sup> During the course of this research, there have inevitably been some changes in personnel within the MPS executive team, the most notable of these being the appointment of Cressida Dick to succeed Sir Bernard Hogan-Howe as the first female MPS Commissioner.

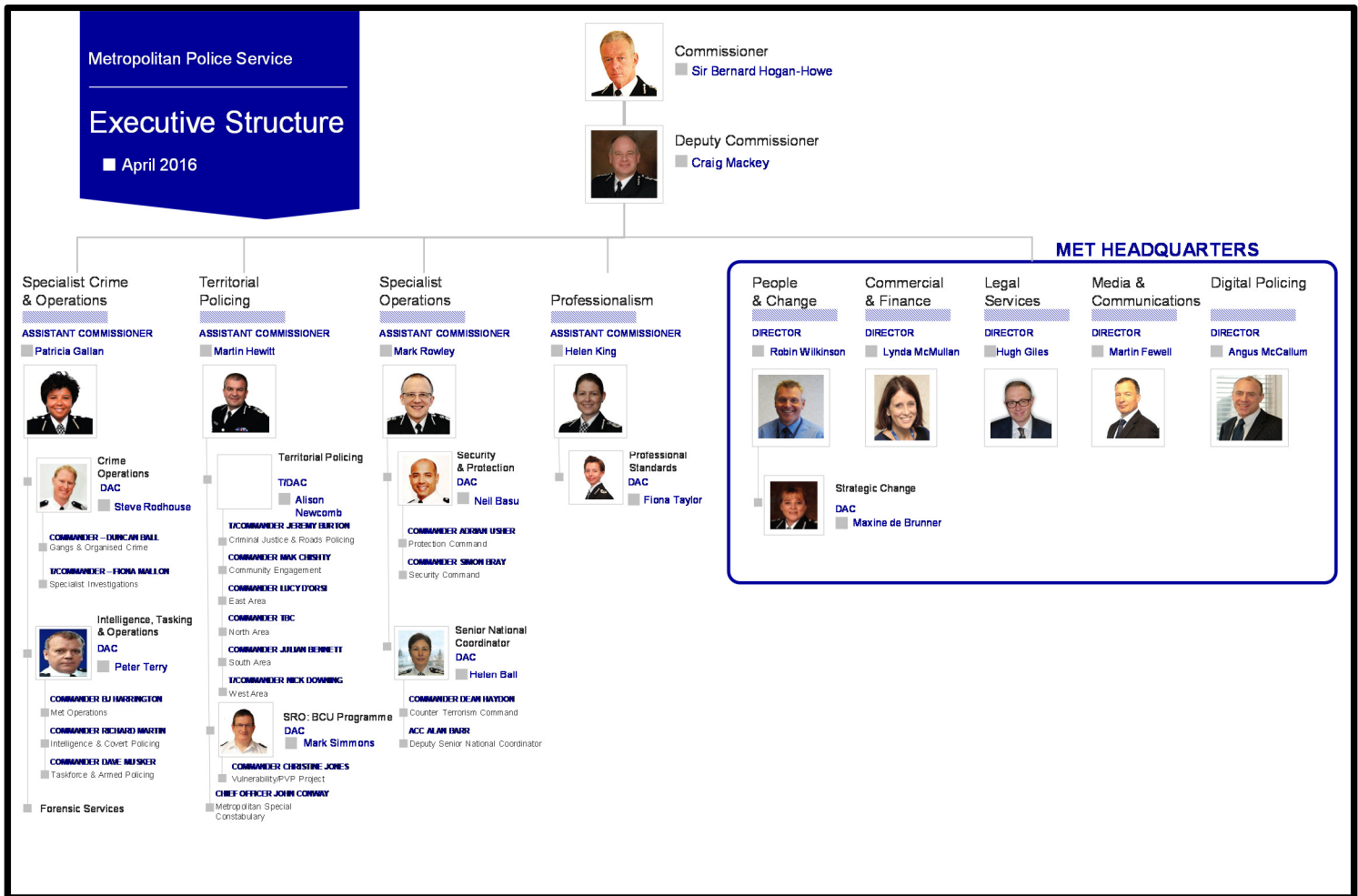


Figure 1 - The executive structure of the MPS, as at April 2016

(College of Policing, 2016c, p.3). This policy of identifying and selecting future chief officers from within has had significant implications for the police service as it has contributed both “to the realignment of the mechanisms that effect control over police management” and “reconfigured the social structure of police management, so that...chief constables have...ceased to be part of the local ruling elite and have become, instead, a very special self-selecting and internally accountable, professional elite with links to the police policy-making process” (Wall, 2013, p.29).

A national police staff college for senior British police leaders was opened in 1948 in Ryton-on-Dunsmore outside of Coventry. The mission of the staff college was twofold: “Firstly it needed to develop the police leaders of the future, so that the Police Service would no longer need to look to the armed services, or indeed anywhere outside its own ranks, for its top leaders. Secondly, the college saw the need to develop leadership in general within the Police

Service” (Villiers, 2009. p.71). This specific focus on police leadership and senior command helped to buttress the policy of selecting senior police officers from within the police service. The college was moved to Bramshill in Hampshire in 1960 and remained committed to “educating potential senior officers and training them for command” (Wall, 2013, p.29). The Special Course<sup>4</sup> and SCC were first offered to candidates in 1962 (Villiers, 2009). This was evidence of the police assuming “responsibility for its own leadership development” (Newburn & Neyroud, 2013, p.xxvi). This development was a distinctive departure from the previous practice of selecting commissioners and chief constables from other professions, predominantly the military (Reiner, 1991); indeed the move away from close ties to the military has continued despite “down the years many attempts by different governments to reintroduce military values into police leadership” (Grieve, 2015, p.22).<sup>5</sup> The establishment of the staff college has been credited for effecting a fundamental overhaul of police leadership as chief officers “changed from gifted amateurs into professional bureaucrats” (Wall, 2013, p.29).<sup>6</sup>

## **The quest for professionalism**

Professionalism within policing has traditionally been seen as a form of reactive police reform prompted by external events and pressures. Typically, a greater push for professionalisation within British policing has followed events during which the police as an institution has been unable to respond effectively and efficiently (Brain, 2010; McLaughlin, 2007). Professionalism gathered pace from the early twentieth century onwards, through the efforts of professionalisation “pioneers” such as August Vollmer in the USA and Chief Constable Athelstan Popkess in the UK (Williams, 2014). Chief officers currently find themselves on the frontline of what has been described as “the challenge of moving the police up-market and into a professional service” (Leishman *et al.*, 2000, p.26). British policing, in keeping with developments in the USA and other places, has been a victim of the “persistent pull of police professionalism” (Sklansky, 2011). It has featured as part of a wider process of reform and

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<sup>4</sup> A development programme for gifted officers to progress them rapidly to the rank of inspector

<sup>5</sup> Grieve cites the Trenchard Scheme of the 1930s, which is discussed in greater detail in later chapters, as a prime example of this statement.

<sup>6</sup> It should be noted that Commissioner Sir Harold Scott was appointed from a senior civil service post in 1945 with no police experience. However his was the last appointment of a policing “novice” to this post.

improvement, however it has had an impact on both those who currently lead the police and those who aspire to lead the police in the future (Stevens, 2005).

The British investment in police professionalism has looked to the innovations and experimentation undertaken within the policing landscape in the USA. Efforts to instil professionalism into policing in the USA were engendered in the 1960s by “a related series of social crises” which included urban racial disorders, anti-war political protest, and the emergence of a widespread drug culture (Walker, 2014). The UK encountered very similar issues, particularly in the 1970s and 1980s in the sphere of public order with industrial disputes and deteriorating relations between black youth and the police in urban areas (Blair, 2009; Brain, 2010). It must also be noted that British policing, at an operational and (increasingly) political level, has forged very strong links with US policing. This includes professional exchanges that have resulted in modern British police leaders having a good understanding of US innovations and a willingness to import US methods into the British policing environment (Blair, 2009; Stevens, 2005). In some respects, professionalisation has been seen as an effective tool to secure public legitimacy for policing: “Professionalism, by definition, involves belonging to a profession and behaving in a way that is consistent with professional standards. A profession is an occupation that requires extensive training and the study and mastery of specialised knowledge. It usually requires accreditation, certification, or licensing. It has a specific code of ethics, and it holds members accountable” (Carter & Wilson, 2016).

Over recent years, and following the establishment of the Bramshill staff college in the 1960s, British policing has wrestled with the issue of professionalisation. It has become an aspiration for many both inside and outside of policing, albeit commentators have observed that there “is an ambivalence within the [police] service as to whether it is truly professional or not. ‘White collar’ and ‘blue collar’ will continue to coexist as no formal qualifications have been developed for the workforce” (Leishman *et al.*, 2000, p.26). It has been argued that the drive towards a professional status, akin to the law or medicine, is “perceived as a panacea for most of the ailments plaguing police work...courts would question police procedures less frequently, and defence attorneys would be less able to resort to trickery or to disparaging the police officer on the witness stand...the press would be less inclined to distort new items



against the police, and the status of the law enforcement profession would encourage its selection by high calibre men or women as a career. The public would be supportive of police actions and its cooperation would decrease the crime rate” (Perrier, 1979, p.52). To a chief officer, such benefits, if realised, are of immense political value.



*Figure 2 - Bramshill House, the Police Staff College, prior to its closure in 2015*

## **The culture of management**

The culture of chief officers is an important dynamic that requires consideration. By virtue of their rank and distance from the operational focus of the beat Bobby, they are no longer “street cops” but are now “management cops”, with a distinct culture, outlook and behaviour traits (Chan, 1997; Reuss-Ianni, 1983). This can be seen as a benefit as they are removed from the problematic association of the police canteen culture which has been cited by academics as an organisational influence that impedes reform (Loftus, 2010). Certainly, it has been argued that the working culture of the management cop is bureaucratically juxtaposed to the

operationally led culture of the street cop. Arguably of greater relevance is the assertion that the management cop is loyal to their career, their progression and their social and political networks of other management cops over and above being loyal to their operational “street cop” colleagues (Reuss–Ianni, 1983). Palmiotto concluded that upon comparing management cop practice against the culture of the street cop, it is easy to “recognise that a schism exists between the street cop culture and the management cop culture” (Palmiotto, 2000, p.51). Moskos observed that “I do miss working with people willing to risk their life for me...as a police officer, I would risk my life for others, even those I didn’t know, and even those I knew I didn’t like. That’s part of the job” (2008, p.1). This represents a good description of how the culture of the street cop is operationalised. It is dominated by the need to protect yourself and your colleagues whilst not trusting management cops to look out for your interests (Reuss-Ianni, 1983). As such, street cop culture is officer-centric and reflects the experiences of police officers in the field (Wilson, 2015). Meanwhile, the following characteristics have been attributed to management cop culture:

- It demands a watchdog system that can uncover and expose any internal wrongdoing or corruption and so protect the public image of their force;
- It expects supervisors to act on clearly defined rules and procedures;
- It tries to do away with the old reward system so that the old rules for getting ahead no longer work;
- It sees in job stress the potential for police action that can lead to public relations problems. The public needs to be protected from cops who are out of control;
- It has imposed forcewide techniques and practices for controlling activities by officers that are not in keeping with departmental rules and regulations;
- It has to produce numbers to prove its accomplishments;
- It attempts to reconcile the demand for greater productivity, efficiency, and responsiveness to the community with the demand for improved employee relations and working conditions;
- It often implements new management techniques, such as a system in which numerical indicators of performance are set as the basis for reward or punishment;
- It pays little attention to actual police practice. It designs new programmes and procedures on the basis of seemingly rational and logical factors, while ignoring street-

level practice that has more impact on day-to-day operations and the practical outcome of the intended programmes;

- Management cop culture has bureaucratised police work to make it more easily managed

(Palmiotto, 2000, Reuss-Ianni, 1983)

That management cops in the British system have risen through the ranks from being a street cop to chief officer is a source of pride and serves to legitimise the mandate of senior leaders to lead (Holdaway, 1983; Stevens, 2005). Street cops are focussed on getting the job of policing done in the public arena (Graef, 1989). However, management cop culture gets “its salience and meaning not in the traditions of the job, but rather in theories and practices of scientific management and public administration” (Reuss-Ianni, 1983, p.6). This can lead to operational cops perceiving that police leaders have eschewed operational values for personal and professional advancement. To a street cop “senior ranks are divorced from reality, living a comfortable and trouble-free existence on the upper floors of police headquarters” (Waddington, 1999, p.231). Their interest in politics and public opinion over the interests of operational teamwork marks them out as being “less loyal to the street cop culture” (Reuss-Ianni, 1983, p.121).

Senior police officers face distinct challenges from those operating on the frontline (Graef, 1989; Stevens, 2005). Accordingly, it can be argued that street cop culture is completely unsuitable for command situations; police leaders are required to operate within a managerial culture based on values of professionalism, performance and accountability: “In short, they need a whole new mindset when they assume managerial responsibilities” (Wilson, 2015). Additionally it can be argued that a narrow “officer centric” operational culture will neglect the political role the police play in the field of national and local policies, the internal nuances, dynamics and politics of the police organisation, the bureaucratic constraints such as authorisation procedures and paperwork, and the tensions between formal realities, individual commitments and the situated nature of police work (Manning, 2007; Wilson, 2015).

## A unique senior police personality

As part of the increasing volume of research that is being undertaken into those who police, researchers have considered whether there exists a “police personality”, a term used by academics to explain a commonality in behaviour and professional outlook which runs through those who choose a police career and decide to police their fellow citizens (Balch, 1972; Adlam, 1981). Some researchers “have detected personality differences between the police and the public, supporting the existence of a police personality” (Abrahamsen & Strype, 2010, p.99). The obligations, responsibilities and experiences of working as a police officer constitute “an atypical social experience” (Adlam, 1981, p.161). The existence of a police personality can be condensed down into two distinct models, the psychological and the sociological. Balch has observed that “either explanation is plausible, and both may be correct” (Balch, 1972, p.106).

The psychological argument proposes that police officers share certain base characteristics which they display before joining the police and this serves to influence their decision to become police officers (Vastola 1978). Balch argued that policing attracts “authoritarian individuals” (Balch, 1972).<sup>7</sup> Reiner noted that this is often closely aligned to “the preservation of a valued way of life, and the protection of the weak against the predatory” (Reiner cited in Loftus, 2009, p.90). Common reasons for joining include a desire to “help people, work with people...social or public service” (Jackson, 2006, p.67). These sentiments are exemplified in a number of police autobiographies published in recent years (Blair, 2009; Moskos, 2008; Paddick, 2008; Stevens, 2005), and they strengthen the view of Bonifacio that “cops are born and not made” (1991, p.147).

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<sup>7</sup> The ability of police officers to use legitimate force against citizens, including the use of firearms, has dominated much of the academic debate surrounding the characteristics of the police (Waddington, 1999). Muir developed a typology of four police types based upon the use of force: *the Professional* acknowledges that force is necessary on some occasions but endeavours to restrict its use as much as possible. *The Reciprocator* has an issue accepting that he or she sometimes has to use force. *The Enforcer* has no problems using force. *The Avoider* hesitates to use force but lacks empathy for citizens (Muir, 1977). These are relevant to the wider debate on senior police officers as they wield such influence and direct control over the use of force during policing operations such as football matches, demonstrations, and hostage scenarios (Blair, 2009; Graef, 1989, Waddington, 1999).

The sociological model argues that police officers are a product of occupational socialisation, the process “by which newcomers interact with members of the occupation and the occupational culture...some personalities of newcomers would be shaped to some extent by the occupation” (Chen, 2016, p.18). Policing places great institutional value on conformity of professional behaviour when faced with the uncertainties of operational police work. This underpins the influence of occupational socialisation as “a pattern of shared basic assumptions that was learned by a group as it solved its problems of external adaptation and internal integration, that has worked well enough to be considered valid and, therefore, to be taught to new members as the correct way to perceive, think, and feel in relation to those problems” (Schein, 2004, p.17). The sociological argument asserts that the unique demands associated with policing serve to shape the personality of individual officers (Blair, 2009; Graef, 1989; Moskos, 2008; Reiner, 2000; Vastola 1978). During the process of socialisation, certain skills and ways of behaving are acquired, as well as norms and values that are typical for a particular occupational group (Abrahamsen & Strype, 2010).

A group of police officers can be described as “a clustering of many different traits” (Pervin & John 2001: 5). It would be wrong, however, to confuse the existence of a police personality with universal character uniformity. Contrary to the assumption of homogeneity, a number of researchers have found personality differences amongst police officers (Abrahamsen & Strype, 2010). Moskos observed that the “shared experiences of police work help overcome many differences, but the so-called Blue Brotherhood is not a monolithic entity as much as a tent under which a diverse clan of cousins constantly feuds and squabbles...police identity is not so much a unifying force as a tool that allows effective functioning in spite of differences” (Moskos, 2008, p.2). The existence of a level of individuality within the ranks of the police serves to accommodate and facilitate those police officers with the desire, drive and determination to progress into a chief officer position (Caless, 2011). This permissibility will also capture individuals who have displayed characteristics during their career which are considered outside of the norm, although it is rare for truly unique and non-conformist personalities to progress. This can be explained by the conclusion that the police remains institutionally conservative and slow to change (Dizaei, 2007; Paddick, 2008). It is for this reason perhaps that the police has been referred to as the “last great unreformed public body” (Grieve, 2015, p.23)

As leaders of large, complex and powerful institutions, chief officers have received increasing levels of input as part of their career development into the principles and practice of command. Many of the studies into senior British police leadership undertaken by the Home Office concluded that the ranks of chief officers were filled with individuals who relied on the “traditional pervasive ‘leader as commander’ style of police leadership, as well as the more recent trend to emphasise the importance of ‘softer’ leadership styles” (NPIA, 2011, p.21). The central presence of command in senior leaders is perhaps unsurprising as it has been argued that all police officers “tend to be authoritarian, dogmatic, and conservative and that these attitudes are engendered as a direct corollary of their basic functions of enforcing the law and maintaining public order” (Potter cited in Adlam, 1981, p.153). The challenges of police work coupled with the practice of selecting chief officers from within the ranks has created a conservative leadership culture. In many respects, this psyche does not radically differ from the traditional police personality traits, although senior officers typically display an additional component that underscores their drive to seek out progression and advancement. Put succinctly, this could be described as being “steadfastly ambitious” (Barham, 2010a).

### **Qualified candidates**

British policing, when compared to European and American policing institutions, is unique in not requiring any formal qualifications as part of the selection process to join as a police constable. This is at odds with the broader drive for professionalism in policing, as discussed earlier in this chapter. Concerns about the low educational standard of police officers in the 1960s prompted an MP to ask the Home Secretary, Roy Jenkins, in the House of Commons how many graduates were in the police forces of England and Wales; the House was informed that there were 69 graduates in total, with 19 in the MPS (Whitfield, 2004). Graduate recruit numbers remained low during the 1970s and it was not until the 1980s that future chief officers started receiving the opportunity to attain undergraduate degrees as part of their professional development (Blair, 2009; Paddick, 2008; Stevens, 2005).

Reiner discovered in his study that only 20 per cent of chief constables in England and Wales had a degree and they had all achieved their degree while serving as a police officer (Reiner,

1991). It has been noted that although “possession of a degree is no guarantee of an open mind, it is more likely to be associated with receptiveness to alternative perspectives” (Leishman *et al.*, 2000, p.41). However the views of many commentators within policing is encapsulated in the reply of the Police Federation in response to the creation of a new Graduate Entry Scheme in 1967: “They’ve [graduate recruits] got to go through the mill...The fact that they’ve got a good degree doesn’t mean that they’re going to be any good as a copper” (Whitfield, 2004). The importance of being a “good copper” with the ability to be a good “thief taker” is deeply ingrained within police culture and endures regardless of the rank of the police officer (Stevens, 2005).

## **Research aims and objectives**

The objective of this study is to define what constitutes a chief officer within the modern MPS, and to explore how these individuals have arrived at this senior leadership rank. Although there has been a great deal written on policing both in academic and other circles, there are very few studies of chief officers themselves. As Silvestri writes: “Those at the top of the police organisation continue to remain relatively absent from academic discourse, with the majority of studies focusing almost exclusively on the lowest levels of the organisation, favouring the lives of the rank and file than those of their managerial counterparts” (2011, p.2). This thesis seeks to help plug that gap and shed some light on the chief officer group that comprises the top tier of the MPS. Specifically, this study aims to address the following questions:

- What experience and qualities do chief officers in the MPS bring to their roles?
- How has the leadership requirement within policing changed?
- Is there a consensus on the qualities of those who should lead Britain’s largest police force?
- What is involved in the journey to become a chief officer in the MPS?
- Is the process of selection and appointment to become a chief officer delivering the right kind of leadership for the police service?

The research on which this thesis is based will explore these issues through both a review of relevant literature and by interviewing a sample of chief police officers within the MPS. The methodological approach is described more fully in the next chapter.

## **Thesis structure**

The structure of the thesis has been set out as follows:

- Chapter Two describes the methodology utilised by the author to undertake this research. It includes a comprehensive summary of the origins, motivations and justifications for this research topic, the background of the author and the issues associated with studying police officers;
- Chapter Three comprises a review of literature in order to draw out how the leadership requirement for chief officers has been shaped by wider contextual changes and challenges. It describes how the MPS as an organisation has changed and the new challenges and demands that places upon the senior leadership team. It also discusses how leadership notions have evolved and what this means for the qualities sought for the top team in the MPS;
- Chapter Four explores some of the debates that have dominated the fields of recruitment, selection and appointment for chief officers and provides a critical analysis of how far these processes are equipped to find the right leadership for the police service;
- Chapter Five is the first of two chapters that provides an analysis of the research data gathered. Specifically, it seeks to examine the qualities and the experiences of the MPS chief officer team and where they stand on key policing debates such as direct entry and diversity;
- Chapter Six provides further insight into the careers of the chief officers and describes their experiences of the selection and appointment 'system' and processes that have got them to where they are;
- Chapter Seven draws together the findings from the earlier chapters and summarises the conclusions of the study, and the implications for the police service. The conclusions suggest that there are some key areas for learning and reflection, not least the need to



revisit aspects of the chief officer selection and appointment process and to introduce active talent management for both those aspiring to chief officer and current incumbents in the rank. The chapter also sets out some research recommendations, which it is hoped will contribute to both knowledge and future practice in this area.

## Chapter Two: Methodology

“The lack of literature on chief police officers reflects the enduring problems involved in studying and trying to gain access to elite-type groups.”

(Silvestri, 2011, p.9)

### Introduction

This chapter outlines the methodological approach taken in this study. It is imperative that at the heart of any valid research there is a sound methodology that clearly sets out how the research data was collected (or generated) and how it was analysed (Kallet, 2004). The need to employ a robust and defensible methodology is a requirement consistent across all doctoral level studies (Bryman, 2012). As Vaismoradi, Turunen & Bondas summarise “consumers of research assess the quality of evidence offered in a study by evaluating the conceptual and methodological decisions the researchers have made. Therefore, the researcher needs to make good decisions to produce evidence of the highest possible quality” (2013, p.398).

This chapter also explains the genesis of this thesis, the background of the author, and some of the complexities and challenges encountered when carrying out the research. This study was underpinned by the use of both quantitative and qualitative methods of investigation. The quantitative approach was evidenced through the analysis of existing MPS and College of Policing data and information relating to senior appointments in policing. The basis of the qualitative research was the completion by the author of 12 semi-structured interviews with senior officers in the MPS: three ACs, four DACs and five commanders. This sample group was selected as a theoretical sample, drawing on Glaser and Strauss's grounded theory formulation, in order to enable the author to explore key processes and perceptions that will contribute to the ongoing corpus of research (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). This research is not based on a preconceived theoretical framework; instead it draws on an interpretive theoretical framework, which places a primacy on how actors interpret and make sense of the environment and pressures within which they operate, and find their own solutions to conflicts and dilemmas. As Glaser & Strauss note in this type of research: “The evidence may

not necessarily be accurate beyond a doubt (nor is it even in studies concerned only with accuracy), but the concept is undoubtedly a relevant theoretical abstraction about what is going on in the area studied” (1967, p.23). It is hoped that the narratives provided in the interviews will yield some useful interpretive themes in relation to not just how the group negotiate the internal police organisation, but also in relation to the complex wider world in which they work (including issues about race and gender), as well as illustrating how they find ways to rationalise the choices and career routes they have deployed.

## **Research context and background**

The subject of this research is of great interest to the author, both from a professional and academic perspective. As with many sectors, policing is experiencing a period of unprecedented change. Reiner argues in *The Politics of Policing* that the nature of policing (as institutions and practises of control) has changed as a result of broader changes to the economic, political and cultural context of our society (Reiner, 2000). These broader changes have led to shifts in the organisational structures of the police, including patterns of recruitment, promotion and leadership, and changes to the demography of the police service itself (albeit the latter still lags behind the wider society of London). The result of globalisation, with all its interdependencies and rapid migratory flows, has led to a less homogeneous, more diverse and complex, multicultural society. In addition, the growing emphasis on human rights, equal opportunities (race and gender, as examples) has affected both the professional ideologies of HR as well as the police organisation and the lobbies and official bodies that try to hold the police to democratic account (Stenson & Silverstone, 2013). Accompanying the growing appetite to reform and re-think policing in the UK has come an increased scrutiny of those senior officers who are leading the police service – their knowledge base, professionalism and leadership. At the same time, however, there is a dearth of literature on chief police officers. As Reiner wrote back in 1982: “The character of police work at the senior levels of the organisation is the greatest gap in the growing body of knowledge which social scientists have accumulated about the police...While we have some knowledge of the social origins and previous careers of recruits, we do not have this information for senior officers” (Reiner, 1982, p.165-74). Interestingly, the position has changed little since then. As social research is typically “done because there is an aspect of

our understanding of what goes on in society that is to some extent unresolved” (Bryman, 2012, p.6), this lack of literature makes a current study of chief officers both timely and of practical significance, with the potential to make both a contribution to academic knowledge and positively impact the development of policing in the UK (Bryman, 2012; Reiner, 1991; Scraton, 2007; Silverman, 2010; Yin, 2003).

This study has been influenced by the professional experiences and interests of the author in the fields of resourcing, selection and progression of senior officers within British policing. The author is a senior member of police staff within the Human Resources Directorate of the MPS. This position has served to inform the design stage of this research by giving visibility of relevant materials and facilitating access to senior police officers. In recent years, there has been an increasing drive for evidence-based policing to know “what works” in policing and to use it to influence future practice. The College of Policing’s Five-Year Strategy sets out their commitment to “evidence-based practice” which will “challenge and improve the way policing is delivered” (2014a, p.13). The contribution to “evidence-based practice” made by this thesis is important as British policing is currently reviewing the direction of travel for the selection of future chief officers. It is hoped that this work will make a significant contribution to the policing evidence base, developing knowledge in key areas such as police recruitment, workforce development, police leadership and police culture, and that it will help those currently involved in organisational level decision-making to make the right choices “about whether and how to employ a particular strategy” (George & Bennett, 2004, p.272).

## **The author**

The author is a senior human resources director working within British policing as a member of police staff. By completing a professional doctorate the author has been able to embrace “the complexity and challenge of new knowledge production in partnership with the workplace and which empowers practitioners to develop their professional practice” (Scott *et al.*, 2004, p.26). The author has an extensive professional background within resourcing, workforce development, leadership and talent management. The author has held senior positions which include being the Head of Leadership, Talent & Resourcing for the MPS and organisational lead for various HR, change and professionalism workstreams. The author is a

qualified A1 assessor, provides coaching for aspirant chief officers and regularly represents the MPS at national board level meetings chaired by the College of Policing. The author has also been responsible for pioneering new approaches to progression and selection within British policing. The author is a current and longstanding senior member of the Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development. By virtue of the author's position within the MPS and her involvement in key strands of work in the areas of resourcing, selection and leadership, she has been able to mobilise support for this project both from within the MPS and the College of Policing.



*Figure 3 - The author (far right) receiving a Commissioner's Excellence in Policing Award in 2015 with her team in recognition of their work in the field of recruitment*

## **The research**

The purpose of this research has been to undertake a review of senior police leadership within the MPS by examining both who these people are and their journey to the top of the organisation. The study has focused on chief officers within the MPS for a number of reasons. With over 31,000 police officers, the MPS accounts for one-quarter of police officer numbers nationally, making it by far the largest and most influential UK police force. In many respects, London has more in common with other great global cities like Paris and New York, rather

than with smaller forces, especially rural ones, in the UK. The MPS also has the largest and most diverse pool of chief officers, and as such has the greatest movement in and out of the chief officer ranks. Nationally, the MPS is widely regarded as a net exporter of talent to other forces, although many senior officers having acquired county experience choose to return to the MPS on selection to a higher rank. The diversity of London, its capital city functions and the pace and complexity of policing in London arguably create a uniquely challenging policing environment, which places additional scrutiny and demands on senior leaders within the MPS. By confining this study to the MPS, it is hoped that the research can act as a case study which invites replication studies from researchers exploring other policing settings. On a pragmatic level, the author's position and her good relationships with a number of chief officers in the MPS ensured their support and participation in this study. The chief officer population was chosen for this study, both to ensure the research was manageable in scope, but also in recognition of the significant role that this group has in setting the wider leadership context for the MPS.

The research was accomplished by undertaking a series of semi-structured interviews with chief officers in the MPS utilising a pre-designed questionnaire. The questionnaire used was adapted from the one used by Reiner in his review of chief constables (Reiner, 1991). Reiner's study, specifically his identification of four typologies of chief constables<sup>8</sup>, has proven extremely influential both in academic and policing circles. However, more recently, questions have been raised in relation to the continuing validity of Reiner's typologies for modern policing. A more recent study of chief officers by Caless, which uses a similar methodological approach to this study, uses the Reiner typologies as a benchmark in the interviews, but it is telling to note that one interviewed chief officer defiantly stated that "I'm none of Reiner's stereotypes all the time, and I don't know anyone who is" (Caless, 2011, p.107). For this reason, the question schedule on which this research is based was refined and updated to include other more recent work from academics, specifically Wall (1998) and

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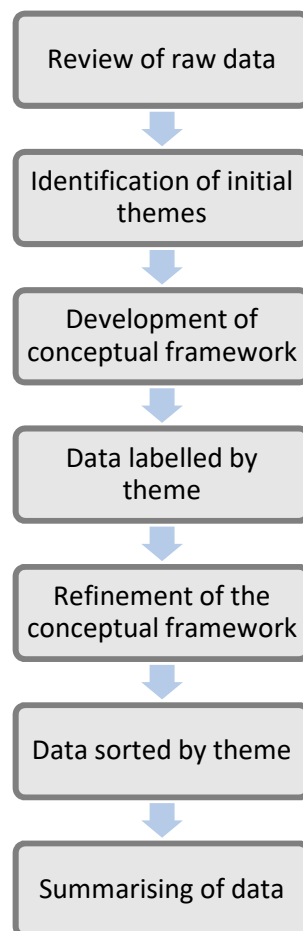
<sup>8</sup> These were the "Baron", the "Bobby", the "Boss" and the "Bureaucrat" (Reiner, 1991). These typologies have been subject to much review, analysis and comment. Their key characteristics have been briefly described as follows: the Baron fears creeping politicisation; the Bobby resents any attempt to influence his actions; the Boss resists, in particular, increasing control from the national government and any "left leaning" undermining of the police; and the Bureaucrat believes that conflicts with politicians can be managed through "professionalism and diplomacy" and strongly favours robust local consultation (Bayley & Stenning, 2016).

Cales (2011). It was also amended to reflect the specific and individual nature of the enquiry at hand. As a result of discussions with the author's supervisory team it was agreed that this approach provided the best opportunity of getting the information needed from the interviewees "in order to answer each of the research questions" (Bryman, 2012, p.473). Utilising an existing template was useful and also represents a common tactic within doctoral studies: "frequently, researchers use existing questionnaires, rather than designing their own instruments. Thus, they avoid redesigning the wheel" (McBurney & White, 2009, p.46). Consistent with Reiner and Cales's approaches, each interviewee was questioned on their journey to chief officer, their views on the chief officer role and their experience of the selection and appointment processes for senior officers.

One of the issues associated with research into the police is that even conventional methods of data capture can be difficult as "police conversations are far more revealing when the camera isn't rolling" (Moskos, 2008, p.8). Herbert observed that his structured interviews of police officers "taught me little that I had not already learned from my many informal conversations" (Herbert, 1997, p.34). In line with the experiences of other academics, the author undertook an interview approach which could be best described as "semi-structured"; the question schedule she had constructed was used flexibly to allow the interview subjects to expand their answers and explore the subject in full (Bryman, 2012). A semi-structured approach allowed for new ideas, topics and points of conversation to be discussed by encouraging interviewees to elaborate in greater detail than possible by a strict adherence to interview questions (Becker *et al.*, 2012, p.132). A copy of the question schedule that formed the basis of the interviews is set out at Appendix A. Most of the interviews took between one and a half to two hours. Ethical approval for the research was granted by the London Metropolitan University Ethics Committee.

The data generated from the interviews was subjected to thematic content analysis, which made best use of the professional background of the author. This process was successfully utilised by Reiner (1991) and subsequently emulated by Cales (2011). Applying it within this research is consistent with the requirement for doctoral methodology to "stand a test of time, show itself worthy of the investment of the research act and offer testimony to the credence of research outcomes" (Clough & Nutbrown, 2012, p.ix). In accordance with a thematic

content analysis, the data analysis began with open coding (Strauss and Corbin, 1990) to facilitate the development of initial concepts. Using this approach, all of the interview material was reviewed by the author to identify recurring themes. Using both these recurring themes and also issues suggested by the interview question schedule, an initial conceptual framework was devised [this initial conceptual framework is set out at Appendix B]. Themes were sorted and grouped under the main themes within the framework. This framework was used to produce an organised dataset that reflected the different aspects relevant to this research. After this, the preliminary conceptual framework was revisited and refined. The data was then sorted by theme (using A3 thematic charts) to allow for an intensive review of content. As the final step in the data analysis, the author systematically worked through all the original data to distil it and place it within the thematic charts. This process is set out pictorially below.



*Figure 4 - Data analysis process*

The use of this approach was also supplemented by a comprehensive literature review. This allowed the author to use a flexible and multi-method approach to the research, with the



qualitative and quantitative aspects each contributing in a distinct way to the evidence base and when combined offering the potential to give a powerful insight into the research area that could better inform future policy and practice (Angrosino, 2007; Bryman, 2012; Herbert, 1997; Moskos, 2008). The author enjoyed full access to material kept by the MPS, the Home Office and the College of Policing. She visited numerous facilities including the Bramshill Staff College, New Scotland Yard and the Home Office.

Although fully supported by the MPS, the author retained full independence in respect of content and publication throughout the conduct of this research.<sup>9</sup> Furthermore this thesis was self-funded. Ethical issues and conflicts for the “researcher – practitioner” were discussed, defended and written about within the taught elements of the Professional Doctorate. Ethical considerations concerning interviews were discussed within the supervisory process, and addressed through the steps outlined below.

## **Researching the police**

Researching the police is not easy. The peculiarities of police culture are such that police officers can be difficult, insular and reluctant to speak out (Graef, 1989; Reiner, 1991). The culture of suspicion, a conservative desire to avoid problems, and the responsibility of representing the first stage of the criminal justice system all contribute to an uneasiness around outside or unnecessary scrutiny (Blair, 2009; Reiner, 1991; Thomas *et al.*, 2014). It has been noted that police officers are questioning of external enquiry as it must be “examining defects in police organisation and conduct” (Banton, 1964, p.vii). High profile incidents, involving scandal or allegations of corruption, have all served to reinforce this perception (Brain, 2010). Bayley observed that a “scholar who studies the police must be willing to do extensive fieldwork in unprepossessing surroundings, to brave bureaucratic intransigence, and to become politically suspect and socially déclassé. Only a handful of scholars have been willing to do this” (1990, p.7).

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<sup>9</sup> Appropriate authority, as mandated by the London Metropolitan University’s ethics policy, was sought and given by the Metropolitan Police, the College of Policing, and the Home Office prior to the commencement of the taught elements of the doctorate.

The study of chief police officers is both interesting and challenging from a methodological perspective. The difficulties encountered when "researching up" have been much documented (Cormode & Hughes, 1999; Hughes & Cormode, 1998; Hertz & Imber, 1995; Schoenberger, 1991; Moyser & Wagstaffe, 1987). These challenges relate both to the impact of power differentials between the researcher and subject, and the difficulties in accessing an organisational elite. An elite has traditionally been conceived as those individuals "so placed within the structure that by their decisions they modify the milieu of many other men" (Mill, 1953, p.112). In effect, an elite is those who exercise the main share of authority or power within an organisation or institution. Using this definition, it can be seen that chief officers are part of an elite within the police service. As Silvestri succinctly summarises: "By virtue of their rank, they [chief officers] are distinct and set apart from the rest of the non-elite officers in the police" (2011, p.9). It has been noted that "the dearth of studies on senior police personnel can...be attributed to the difficulties associated with acquiring access to elites" (Haggerty, 1993, p.101). Certainly, the success of this research was dependent on eliciting sufficient co-operation from the elite group of chief officers within the MPS.

When describing the types of researchers undertaking academic enquiries, Brown identified the following categories: "inside insiders" (serving police), "outside insiders" (former police), "inside outsiders" (non-police academics) and "outside outsiders" (external commentators) (Brown, 1996). There has been much debate within academic circles around the advantages and disadvantages of being an insider or outsider. Being an insider can yield a number of benefits, including a shared understanding of concepts, a level of subject matter expertise, numerous contacts and access to material not openly available to other researchers. It can, however, also present some problems, with academics citing the potential for bias, subjectivity and a risk that the researcher may leap to conclusions without seeking appropriate clarification or explanation (Bryman, 2012; Silverman, 2010). Within the context of this study the author found herself simultaneously an insider because she was a MPS employee with a good policing network and an outsider because she was a member of police civilian staff as compared to the research participants who were all warranted police officers. The author was also conscious that her positionality changed throughout the research, with some members of the chief officer group more prepared to embrace the author as an insider

than others. Potential perceptions of the author as an “official” HR person with the organisational lead for resourcing and progression could have prohibited the chief officer group’s participation in the research or their willingness to engage in open discussion during the interview. In planning the research, the author carefully thought through the “relative risk of cultural collusion versus unhelpful power dynamics” (Ritchie and Lewis, 2003, p.66). To counter some of these challenges and to form the basis of a good research relationship, some academics typically favour the researcher assuming a deferential or “suppliant” position (McDowell, 1998; Silvestri, 2011). As the research group were operating at a more senior level in the MPS hierarchy, the author automatically assumed a more subordinate role and, in general, found this to be a successful strategy in encouraging participants’ self-disclosure and reducing any perceived threat from being seen as an HR “official”. Some academics also argue that a research relationship is most productive when researcher and participant are matched on key socio-demographic criteria. Feminist researchers, in particular, argue that matching on gender supports data collection (Finch, 1984; Oakley, 1981; Conti & O’Neil, 2007). As the majority of the elite group were male, matching on gender was not possible for this research study. The author’s experience in the course of this study suggests that this was not actually detrimental to the quality of the research; indeed, one of the female chief officers interviewed showed less affinity with the author than many of her male counterparts, proving to be abrupt, challenging and very inflexible with her time. As Rubin and Rubin make clear: “Unlike some schools of feminist research, our approach to qualitative interviewing emphasises the ability to go across social boundaries. You don’t have to be a woman to interview a woman, or a sumo wrestler to interview sumo wrestlers” (1995, p.39).

## **The research group**

The author was conscious of the need to interview as diverse a group of chief officers as possible within the boundaries of the MPS, in order to contribute a broad spectrum of views, experience and opinion to this study (Silverman, 2010). The engagement of suitably qualified respondents within such a specialist area of public life is necessary “to invest some faith and certainty in the rigour of [the] enquiry” (Clough & Nutbrown, 2012, p.xi). Equally, it has been noted that researchers can fall into the trap of focusing too much on the number of interviews

as opposed to the quality of interviews. Berry explains this as being due to the fact that in “elite interviewing the error term is largely hidden to those outside the project while the number of cases, the “n”, is there for all to see and judge” (2002, p.680). The author was therefore keen to balance the requirement to interview a reasonable sample, with the desire to ensure all interviews were of a suitably high quality. In the event, the author secured time with 12 senior officers, specifically three ACs, four DACs and five commanders. As there are 30 chief officers within the MPS, this represented 40% of the target population, a statistically valid pool albeit it does not capture all MPS chief officers. It is noted that the MPS chief officer population is a relatively homogeneous one (predominantly white, middle-aged men), allowing for a smaller sample to capture much of the internal diversity. The author was able to use prescribed selection criteria (gender, ethnicity, length of service/age, rank) to ensure diversity within the sample, so that the influence of these variables could be explored through the responses. It is also noted that the author was not attempting a full census of MPS chief officers in the way that Reiner delivered in his study of chief constables (Reiner, 1991), but instead was intent on canvassing views from a sample of MPS chief officers. For these reasons, the author was content with the 12 interviews undertaken.

The list below sets out some of the different routes the author used to gain access to chief officers in the MPS:-

- Personal and professional network (Ostrander, 1993)
- Word of mouth
- Chief Police Officers’ Staff Association (CPOSA)
- Gatekeepers<sup>10</sup>

Some of these avenues proved more fruitful than others - the author’s personal network certainly proved the most productive in negotiating interview access and building a good research relationship. However, in order to avoid potential bias by only speaking to chief officers who were well known to the author, the author endeavoured to pursue different avenues and thereby gain access to the most diverse pool of chief officers. For example, the researcher spent an hour talking to one chief officer’s staff officer about the context for, and

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<sup>10</sup> Typically, gatekeepers were either personal assistants or staff officers who had close access to the chief officer

purpose of, this research study. He then engaged his principal, who agreed to take part on the basis of the staff officer’s recommendation.

The following table details the interviewees who participated in this study<sup>11</sup>:

Interview Number	Pseudonym	Length of Service	Location of Interview	Length of Interview	Date of Interview
1	“Max”	23 Years	NSY, London	2 hours	19.08.16
2	“Kelly”	28 Years	NSY, London	1 hour	22.08.16
3	“Sarah”	29 Years	NSY, London	3 hours	22.08.16
4	“Ben”	23 Years	NSY, London	2 hours	23.08.16
5	“Brian”	33 Years	College of Policing	2 hours	23.08.16
6	“Jenny”	28 Years	NSY, London	2 hours	25.08.16
7	“Ray”	30 Years	NSY, London	2 hours	25.08.16
8	“Steve”	26 years	NSY, London	1.5 hours	26.08.16
9	“Mike”	32 Years	NSY, London	1.5 hours	31.08.16
10	“Bob”	26 Years	NSY, London	2.5 hours	05.09.16
11	“Andrew”	23 Years	ESB, London	2 hours	07.09.16
12	“David”	22 Years	ESB, London	2.5 hours	12.09.16

*Table 1 - Profile of the MPS chief officers interviewed*

## Research challenges

The issue of “whether the researcher has the trust of the subjects of the research, and how their behaviour may be modified by the presence of a researcher” (Reiner & Newburn, 2008,

<sup>11</sup> It should be noted that the interview subjects were all given pseudonyms to preserve their anonymity. To prevent the possible identification of individuals, particularly in the case of the 3 females and 3 BME officers, the specific rank of the chief officer has not been shown in the table above.

p.354) is a thorny one. In this study, all interviewees were assured that their responses would be kept both confidential and anonymised to encourage chief officers to be open and honest during their interview. Guaranteeing the anonymity of individuals and incidents is common when carrying out research with police officers (Caless, 2011; Graef, 1989; Reiner, 1991; Scraton, 2007). Reiner secured co-operation from chief constables by giving them a “pledge of anonymity” (Reiner, 1991, p.44). Other researchers assured their subjects of “absolute confidentiality” (Muir, 1977, p.12). The impression of the author was very much that the open, honest and frank views secured during the data collection process for this study would not have been possible without the assurances given that identities would not be published, and only made known to academic supervisors during the data research phase<sup>12</sup>. In general, the author found that chief officers in the MPS were extremely co-operative with the research. However, there were one or two exceptions to this. The author’s position within the MPS certainly helped her to gain access to many of the chief officers interviewed. However, during the course of the interviews themselves, it sometimes acted as a barrier. As some of the chief officers perceived the author as an “expert” in this field already, they had to be encouraged to impart their views and to overcome a concern that they were telling the author things that she already knew. As alluded to above, one of the interviews with a female subject was difficult. The individual objected to some of the HR policies and practices that were delivered in the MPS and took the interview as an opportunity to critique them with the author. The interviewee avoided answering some of the questions asked, despite the author circling back to them through the course of the interview (Berry, 2002). Ultimately, the chief officer in question cut short the interview. Despite this experience, the author was still able to extract some valuable information from the interview and in fact it seemed that given the nature of some of the responses, the participant was giving a fairly open account of herself and her views. There was at least one occasion with a different interviewee where the author felt that this was not the case and that the participant was making an effort to provide “correct” responses to the questions asked, rather than his true thoughts and feelings. In this instance, the interviewee seemed intent on impressing on the author that he was a forward-thinking individual, whose views exactly coincided with the strategic direction of the MPS. In his influential work, *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life*, Goffman described the motives

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<sup>12</sup> In presenting the research findings, the author makes no reference to the interviewee’s exact rank within the chief officer levels in order to preserve the anonymity of the small number of female and BME officers.

that an individual may have for trying to project a certain impression onto others in any given situation (1959). In the context of this study, the author is inclined to believe that the individual was using the interview as an opportunity to engage with the researcher in her professional capacity in order to perhaps secure an HR advocate who could advance his career ambitions. It was therefore necessary to interpret the responses from this interview with a degree of caution.

In keeping with other academics the author did encounter issues concerning her proposed use of voice recording during the interviews: “data from recorded interviews was less revealing than what I could gather through casual conversation...I found that when the tape recorder is running, police officers remain on guard, talking in a stilted and formal style” (Moskos, 2008, p.8). By not recording the interviews, the author was concerned that some of the qualitative data could be lost in the challenge of accurately recording the interview responses, whilst endeavouring to engage and keep pace with the interviewee. Balanced against this was the potential for the interviewees to be more circumspect and less open in their responses because of their discomfort with the presence of a recording device (Byron, 1993). Although there is pressure on the researcher to secure robust evidence and document findings as fully as possible, issues such as these cannot be discounted lightly as “all qualitative research is predicated on establishing personal, moral and political relationships of trust between the researcher and the researched” (Scruton, 2007, p.16). The author therefore chose not to use a recorder and instead to rely on copious amounts of notes being taken contemporaneously. As soon as practicable after the conclusion of the interview, the notes were typed up by the author to provide a fully developed set of data.

Before commencing interviews, the author was conscious that good practice within the field of social sciences advocates piloting research (Yin, 1989). Given the challenges in negotiating time with the chief officer pool, the author was concerned about the practicalities of carrying out pilot work with this group, but equally did not want this to lead to poorer quality questions and interview outcomes. As set out by Peabody *et al.* (1990), the researcher pre-tested her questions on a senior mentor and the HR Director within the MPS, before carrying out the interviews. This proved a useful exercise in helping to refine the question schedule and also

led the researcher to revise the ordering of her questions during the interview to avoid repetition.

One final point of note concerns the challenges of accessing relevant material held by the College of Policing and Home Office. The author was keen in the course of this study to secure quantitative data that tracked the efficacy of the national selection and appointment processes over time. It appears that this form of evaluation is not completed by either the College of Policing or Home Office. In fact, there is very little evaluative data that is routinely collected. By virtue of her “insider” position, the author was able to request and secure some data from the College of Policing, however had she been an “outsider” this information would not have been accessible. As Caless states when talking about the NPIA (predecessor to the College): “many of NPIA’s data were not available to the non-police enquirer and NPIA itself exhibited unnecessarily fussy protectiveness of its published material” (2011, p.23).

## **Conclusion**

It is clear that getting the methodological approach right is crucial to the success and validity of any research. It constitutes “the construction and justification of the enquiry which ultimately gives credence to, or calls into question, the findings” (Clough & Nutbrown, 2012, p.ix). A research methodology must be capable of withstanding academic scrutiny and serve to support the author in making an original contribution to the academic field of policing studies (Silverman, 2010). It also enables the author to demonstrate to readers that the contribution made by the study is reliable, accessible, readable, interesting, robust, informative, defensible and valid (Yin, 2003).

The purpose of this chapter was to explain and defend the methodological approach taken in this thesis. It has set out the background and context to this study, the background of the author, the interview process, research issues encountered, and ethical considerations. The approach described has drawn upon the methods and experiences of many senior scholars and academics, particularly those whose studies are grounded either in policing or in researching elite groups. Methodologically, this study of chief officers has highlighted the need for a careful approach to managing the dynamics between chief officers and researcher



in order to secure data that is of the highest quality, is valid, relevant and stands the test of time. The pace of change within the MPS is significant – there is a regular churn within the ranks of MPS chief officers, either through officers retiring or moving on to new things. This study aims to provide valuable insight into chief officers' experiences and views, but in a way that is not bound by current structures and therefore likely to become obsolete quickly.

## Chapter Three: Leading for London

“No profession is more dependent on the quality of its leadership than policing. But unless careful thought is given to its development, dispersal, context, and practical application ... [this] will not translate into organizational success.”

(Flynn & Herrington, 2015, p.1)

### Introduction

Any discussion on the behaviour, the style and scope of the most senior ranks in the MPS is inextricable from a wider consideration of police leadership across the police service. There is a wide body of literature on both leadership and policing; both topics have attracted the interest of various government departments, academics (particularly sociologists, psychologists, and criminologists), politicians, professional associations and practitioners over recent years. It has been argued that “textbooks and monographs on policing are being published at a pace that is no longer possible for even specialists in the field to keep up with” (Reiner & Newburn, 2008, p.347). However, there is comparatively less said about chief officers themselves. As Wall writes “Even where the literature does address the police, it tends to emphasise the lowly constable rather than chief officers...By and large, the chief police officer is fairly absent from existing literature on the police” (1998, p.2).

This chapter focuses on reviewing relevant literature in order to provide an evidence-based account of what a ‘top cop’ in the MPS looks like in respect of their leadership role and style. The chapter begins with a discussion on how the leadership requirement for chief officers has been shaped by wider contextual and societal changes that have taken place and also demands made upon the police. The changing face of the MPS is examined both in relation to the changing policing context and also in relation to understanding the journey undertaken by senior officers in the MPS. The latter part of the literature review focuses on the emerging discourse on leadership in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, exploring what this means for the qualities sought from a top team in the MPS.

## **An overview of police leadership**

Much has been written about leadership, particularly over the past century. Academics and practitioners alike refer to many different models or theories of leadership. When discussing senior leaders, terms such as transformational or strategic leadership will be frequently used in conversation. It has been argued that leadership “is one of the most important predictors of whether organizations are able to effectively function in dynamic environments” (Pearson-Goff & Herrington, 2014). Despite this, a review of the literature does not suggest one clear and universally agreed upon definition of the concept. Rost indeed notes that “over 60 percent of the authors who have written on leadership since about 1910 did not define leadership in their works” (Rost, 1991, p.7). It has been argued that leadership is a very elusive and hard to quantify quality, which explains why most books on leadership produce so much heat and so little light (Grint, 2010). Police leadership has been characterised as a complex, abstract idea defined in many different ways by many different people (Alison & Crego, 2008). Leadership, particularly ‘good’ or ‘successful’ leadership, means different things to different people (Northouse, 2013). To look internally within the police service, it is evident that the Police Federation, for example, will have a different perspective on what they want from their senior leaders to other stakeholders, such as the Police & Crime Commissioner or Home Secretary. This is exemplified by the starkly different approaches of two successive MPS Commissioners, Sir John Stevens and Sir Ian Blair, where arguably the latter’s tenure as Commissioner suffered as a result of unfavourable comparisons to his predecessor, Sir John Stevens, who was lauded by many, particularly those at the grassroots of the MPS, as a “highly experienced copper’s copper” (McLaughlin, 2007, p.199).



*Figure 5 - Sir John Stevens,  
Metropolitan Police  
Commissioner (2000-2005)*



*Figure 6 - Sir Ian Blair,  
Metropolitan Police  
Commissioner (2005-2008)*

What is clear from the many debates surrounding police leadership is that the behaviour, style, and manner of senior police leaders goes to the very heart of how policing is administered, delivered and engages with wider society (Blair, 2009; Paddick, 2008). Albeit there is a lack of consensus on the precise meaning, across the literature on leadership there is a broad and consistent agreement concerning what individual characteristics and behaviours are necessary in order to be regarded as a good leader. It has been argued that “mastery of social psychological arts such as leadership, communication and motivation is a pre-requisite to successful management” (Poole, 1986, p.79). To focus on the police leader, studies suggest the following list of attributes are desirable:-

- Ethical
- Problem Solving
- Role models
- Creating a shared vision
- Good communicators
- Engendering Organisational Commitment and Culture
- Critical and creative thinkers
- Decision makers
- Trustworthy
- Legitimate
- Caring for Staff
- Driving Change

(Blair, 2009; Brain, 2010; Graef, 1989; Home Office, 2012a; Northouse, 2013; Pearson-Goff & Herrington, 2013; Schafer, 2009; Stevens, 2005; Yuille, 1986)

However, these studies have been identified as suffering from a common drawback: “the complexity of the topic and the difficulties facing researchers in accessing police departments and police leaders with whom to conduct robust research [mean that] the majority of the research is based on convenience samples and perceptions of what constitutes good leadership, or on small case studies, with even fewer studies that address objectively what is needed from police leaders, and how leaders might be best developed. The literature does

not provide a strong case for what objectively measured successful leadership looks like, or how this might be measured” (Pearson-Goff & Herrington, 2013, p.3). Equally, such competency based studies have been criticised for ignoring the circumstances or broader context in which leadership is exercised (Shamir and Howell, 1999; Zaccaro and Horn, 2003). They promote the idea that leadership can be effectively performed by adhering to a standard set of prescribed behaviours that remain constant regardless of other extraneous factors (Hollenbeck *et al.*, 2006; Carroll *et al.*, 2008).

### **Leadership in changing times**

In order to be able to understand any changes to the leadership requirement for chief officers, an understanding of the shifting landscape in which current police leaders operate is necessary. As Leithwood, Jantzi & Steinbach argue: “Times change and productive leadership depends heavily on its fit with the social and organisational context in which it is exercised. So, as times change, what works for leaders changes also” (1999, p.3). Interest in police leadership has gained an increasing foothold in academia in response to concerns over police/public interaction, social unrest and societal changes, and the development of community policing (Kelling & Wilson, 1982; Savage, 2007). Equally, such developments have had profound implications for police leadership. Interestingly, the degree to which policing has changed remains the subject of debate within the literature. Jones and Newburn question the extent to which “current developments in policing should be interpreted as a sharp qualitative break with the past” (2002, p.129). They emphasise instead some of the consistencies and continuities in policing, which can be overlooked through this debate. Certainly, they cast doubt on whether the police have undergone fundamental change as a result of managerialist reforms. However, when considering some of the environmental changes that are now impacting on the police, it seems inevitable to conclude that police leaders now inhabit a very different world to their predecessors.

The police service over the last couple of decades has been framed by a socio-political context characterised by growing consumerism, increased globalisation, increasing global turbulence and increasing scrutiny and accountability. Chief Constables are now accountable to a complex mesh of stakeholders – HM Inspectorate of Constabulary (HMIC), PCCs, regulatory

bodies, multi-agencies, the public, to name but a few. Chief officers are no longer as insulated as they were in the 1950s when arguably they were answerable only to the Home Secretary and Prime Minister. Describing the governance arrangements for the MPS that survived up until the latter part of the twentieth century, Fletcher and Stenson refer to the MPS's "unique bi-partite process of governance involving the Commissioner(s) and the Home Secretary, which deliberately excluded London's population" (2009, p.14). Oversight of police performance and behaviour now involves a complex network of community groups, local and national boards, advisory groups, complaints commissions and governmental departments. HMIC independently assesses the police "asking the questions that citizens would ask" (HMIC). In 2004, the Independent Police Complaints Commission was introduced to oversee the police complaints process in England and Wales, and set standards. In London, the Mayor's Office for Policing & Crime replaced the Metropolitan Police Authority (MPA) in 2012 to provide oversight of, and challenge to, the MPS.

Alongside these developments, public and media interest in, and scrutiny of, the police have grown exponentially. As Pagon sets out: "not only has police work changed; so have the public and the communities into which it is separated. No longer do people uncritically accept whatever the police are doing in the name of a war on crime. People identify problems and they want solutions. They want the police to be effective and accountable. To meet those demands, police leaders have to change themselves, their organisations and their people" (2003, p.167). The police have had to become increasingly responsive to the media as they recognise the consequences of negative press coverage (McLaughlin, 2007; Newburn, 2007). This has necessitated not only investment in press or corporate communication offices, but also increasing engagement with new forms of media and communication technology. Deiser and Newton describe how the advent of social media demands new skills from senior organisational leaders, giving "authenticity a new and more important meaning, as first person engagement and visibility become critical success factors. Leaders need to be confident to engage in creating rich media messages that make people take notice and that trigger their response. To do so, they will have to develop a distinctive voice that stands out from the noise, and that is credible and authentic. Producing compelling messages in the realm of participatory media is strikingly different from the traditional world of broadcast media" (Center of Leadership & Change Management, 2015).

The influence of social media, instant messaging and blogs, along with Twitter, YouTube, MySpace and Facebook, have changed forever lifestyle patterns but also the manner in which criminality is committed: for example, the use of social media was exploited by criminals looking to commit serious crime during the 2011 Duggan Riots in London (MPS, 2012). Internet crime and identity theft have significantly influenced crime trends (Blair, 2009). Websites can offer ways to access police communications, the location of police traffic controls, and social media used to agitate groups in fast time. Technology is also impacting upon reactive policing tactics and investigations, which necessitate changes to traditional crime control and prevention activities. Additionally, evidence suggests that future crime trends will demonstrate less localised crime and far greater incidence of crimes perpetrated by international organisations based overseas (Clarke & Knake, 2010). As a result, police leaders are now required to respond and react to operating in this new environment. As one chief officer stated "Crime is shifting into the space that most people consider to be private – in the house, on the internet...You can't deal with that with yellow jackets and boots" (GetSurrey, 2016). Such new and evolving threats in and around policing necessitate what has been described as the "Herculean task [of] transforming a police force that has traditionally been good at old-fashioned 'visible' policing to one matching an age where more and more crime is taking place in the home and online" (GetSurrey, 2016).

Arguably, then, police leaders in the twenty first century are palpably policing a different world to that of ten or twenty years ago. Gascón and Foglesong (2010) describe the new budgetary challenges that affect police agencies. Guy Standing describes a new emerging and "dangerous" class, the "precariat", a growing group of people whose work status is precarious, usually through short-term jobs, and who therefore have the potential to introduce new instabilities in society and could be susceptible to the call of extreme political parties (Standing, 2011). Bayley and Nixon (2010) describe "the changing environment" for policing, including the rise of terrorism and new patterns of immigration, both of which present real world challenges to the police leader that we have seen exacerbated over recent years. The police is responsible for governing the populations of a nation state (Brodeur, 2007; Waddington, 1991). Policing essentially means maintaining social and political order and it extends far beyond crime control or public order. Increasingly, police leaders have found themselves drawn into wider political debates, for example, when highlighting the

operational challenges created by migration. In 2007 the Chief Constable of Cambridgeshire became subject to the spotlight when she disclosed that the force had seen rises in some crimes which could be directly associated with migration. These included drink-driving involving foreign nationals and the emergence of an "international dimension" to crimes including cannabis production, human trafficking and credit card skimming (BBC, 2007). If the role of the police leader is to maintain and promote a well-regulated society using the influence and tools of governance from above (Stenson, 2012), issues such as this present a new and evolving threat.

Police leaders are responsible both for the management of their organisations but also the management of the people within those organisations. As Wall writes: "...the efforts of the police have been concentrated upon two main problems. The first has been the effective maintenance of order and the control of crime, the second has been to establish control over its own personnel" (1998, p.1). Police leaders are conditioned and institutionalized to manage in a manner most compatible with the organisational structure of their force. On a very simplistic level, policing was formed during the Industrial Revolution and organised on an industrial footing: shifts of police officers, organised and supervised by sergeants and inspectors, working within hierarchical structures that clearly distinguish command decision-makers from front line staff. The emphasis is on structure over flexibility, and operational interchangeability is prized. Policing is also delivered by an organisation which arguably follows a military model (Geller & Swanger, 1995; Waddington, 1991). Such models are not well suited to external demands for change or accountability (Blair, 2009). They also do not lend themselves well to the new generation of police officers that are starting to come through (Brain, 2010; Stevens, 2005). Commentators have increasingly affirmed that the newer generation of police officer recruits have failed to blend successfully into existing policing organisations (Alsop, 2008, Beck & Wade, 2004, Hicks & Hicks, 1999). The new policing generations show more propensity to challenge traditional law enforcement practices and the commitment to 24-7 policing, setting them apart from those who have long espoused, and committed to, the military organisational model and a lifestyle that places work above home life. The younger cohorts instead tend to:

- Place a greater value on balancing work and family



- Be more comfortable with questioning authority and challenging the traditional chain of command
- Demand ongoing performance feedback
- Expect transparency
- Rely on instant feedback from electronic communication and social networking.

(National Institute of Justice, 2012)

Equally, however, research has indicated that later generations tend to be more accepting of issues such as race, immigration and diversity, and tend to be more responsive to the concerns of diverse communities (Pew Research Center, 2007). Such an approach to policing is clearly desirable and necessary within the complexity of the current policing environment, particularly in London (Blair, 2009; McLaughlin, 2007, Stevens, 2005). The challenge for the police leader is how to positively channel this new generation of recruits within the constraints of the existing structures.

If the police leader is to lead institutions which are composed of cross generation officers, inevitably they will need to address “clash points”, which result from using traditional work standards on employees who have different ideas about autonomy and supervision (Harrison, 2007; Sullivan, 2004). As such, the police will need to sustain a focus not only on recruitment but also retention of a new generation of officers within a multi-generational workplace. Profiles of these newer employees sharply contrast with those of the older cohorts who supervise and manage in the police today (Graef, 1989; Reiner, 1991). Leadership challenges such as these require a revisiting of the skill sets of those being promoted into the top jobs within policing, as well as having implications for the future of police management training; in future, there must be more emphasis placed on:

- A global perspective, which is essential in a modern era that has seen the rise of technology, cyber-crime, terrorism, a changing socio-economic landscape and increasingly diverse working environments (Brain, 2010; Clarke & Knake, 2010)
- The ability to exercise creativity in the workplace, and challenge existing working methods (Heifetz, 1994; Stevens, 2005)
- Change management and adaptivity (Reeves & Deimler, 2011; MPS, 2014)

- Mastering technological trends (MPS, 2012)
- The ability to integrate strategic, cultural and political influences within decision-making (Blair, 2009; Reiner, 2000; Stevens, 2005).

Against this backdrop, police leaders have faced an urgent need to modernise the service if they are to respond effectively to these changes and challenges in the policing context.

## **The Modernisation Agenda**

Police leadership has found itself at the centre of the wider and ongoing police modernisation agenda which has influenced police strategy since the 1980s and gained momentum in the 1990s. The police have often been seen as “reform resistant” notwithstanding the significant social changes that now confront the service (Loveday *et al.*, 2008). The importance of the police within the wider mechanism of state functionality and control is clear: “in internal affairs of the state, the lack of efficient and effective police – visible and otherwise – would deny public safety, and anarchy or something dangerously close to it would prevail. The police are therefore one of the most essential of our public services” (Winsor, 2011, p.9). It was the recognition of their importance within society, and the power wielded by senior leaders within the police, which has influenced a noticeable drive towards the need to review and modernise (Blair, 2009; Brain, 2010; Savage, 2007). A ‘Modernisation Agenda’ was therefore instigated as a result of the pressure created by the combined drivers of system failure, influences from abroad, a self-identified internal requirement for change and the politics of the police (McLaughlin, 2007; Reiner, 2000).

Although the full history of the modernisation agenda is beyond the scope of this study, it is useful to mention here the main themes contained within it as they have all impacted on how police leaders are selected, instructed, expected to behave and engage with wider political actors. These drivers were influenced by the following prevailing views:

1. The view that the police sector had been treated generously in the years before relative to some other areas of the public sector;
2. The view that despite that generous treatment police performance had been less than satisfactory – ‘where’s the return’ for the money spent?

3. The view that police leadership lacks the 'quality' necessary for the challenges which now face the service;
4. The view that the police remained the 'last un-reformed' public service and that, as a consequence, a comprehensive programme of reform is necessary;
5. The view that there are 'too many' individual police forces and that the smallest police forces should be amalgamated to make them into more viable units.

(Savage, 2007, p.209)

One of the first phases of the 'Modernisation Agenda' saw the emergence of 'new public managerialism' during the 1990s, with an emphasis placed on a strong performance culture across the service, as part of the government-wide drive to introduce measurable performance indicators to drive efficiency, external accountability and improve standards across policing. It promoted the notion of the police as a service, "based upon a new language of welfare delivery which emphasises efficiency and value for money, competition and markets, consumerism and customer care" (Butcher, 1995, p.161). Predictably, it bore serious implications for police leadership, with its requirement to meet the demands of a modern performance culture, balance the skills of management and leadership, as well as partnership working (Long, 2003). It was now expected that the senior police leader would be skilled in areas such as business planning, financial management, relationship management, information technology and marketing, amongst other strategic management processes (McLaughlin, 2007), requiring competence in areas that may not previously have been considered as essential for senior police leaders. Interestingly, such change placed a premium on police leaders as 'managers' and yet, at the same time, police leaders were coming under increasing pressure not only to perform, but also to transform. There is a clear conflict here in the emphasis on police leaders achieving targets set by central government and the achievement of more long-term partnership objectives.

It is debatable what impact 'new public managerialism' had upon the police service. As Wall writes "on the one hand it can be seen to have made some quite dramatic changes upon the funding structures of public sector organisations, whilst on the other hand, its impacts have been more limited in other areas of the same public sector organisations, particularly in terms of occupational cultures" (1998, p.307). Some commentators have suggested that the police

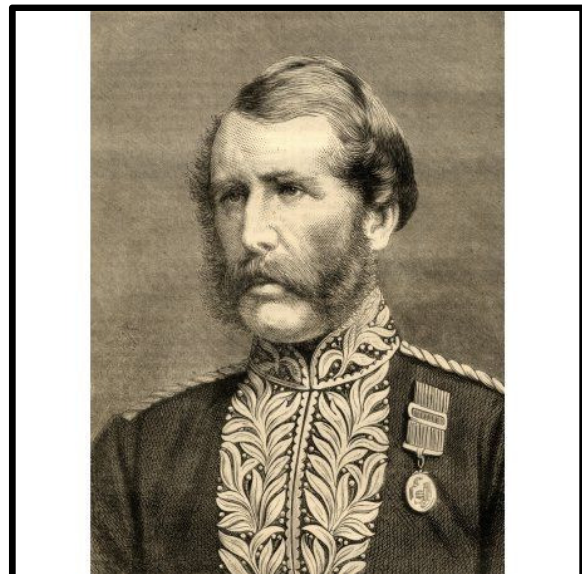
service was better positioned to resist aspects of the reform agenda than other parts of the public service, such as the Probation Service (Ashworth, 2009). Certainly, the police service has not been subject to some of the changes witnessed within the National Health Service, where the Griffith Reforms of the 1980s saw the creation of General Managers, effectively severing the link between the professions and the management structure, and the creation of the internal market in the 1990s. Reform of the police service has perhaps not been assisted by an absence of research evidence to demonstrate a clear link between particular styles of police leadership and police effectiveness (Dobby *et al.*, 2004). This not only strengthens the case for a study into senior leadership now, but also serves to illustrate the difficulty faced by those seeking to reform or modernise.

### **The changing face of the MPS**

Scrutiny of the quality and nature of police leadership is not a recent enterprise and certainly not a new phenomenon for the MPS. As far back as 1886, the Trafalgar Square Riot led to the resignation of the then MPS Commissioner, Sir Edmund Henderson, amidst accusations of poor decision-making.



*Figure 7 - Trafalgar Square Riot 1886*



*Figure 8 - Sir Edmund Henderson,  
Metropolitan Police Commissioner (1869-  
1886)*

The past decade has seen a series of high profile issues culminating in chief officer resignations, which have magnified concerns about the failures of police leaders and added

to the call for a new type of police leadership. In July 2011, the then MPS Commissioner, Sir Paul Stephenson, resigned as a result of speculation over his connection with a former Deputy Editor at the News of the World. The following day, AC John Yates resigned over criticism of a review he carried out of the 2006 police investigation of the News of the World royal phone hacking scandal.



*Figure 9 - Sir Paul Stephenson, Metropolitan Police Commissioner (2009-2011)*



*Figure 10 - Sir John Yates, Metropolitan Police Assistant Commissioner (2006-2011)*

In August 2011, the Duggan Riots precipitated further concerns about the capabilities of the senior leadership team. The lack of clear leadership during the initial stages of the riots led to chronic command issues, leading to a less than ideal scenario where serious decisions were being taken by junior officers as opposed to senior commanders. When she stated in Parliament that the police response was “simply not acceptable”, the Home Secretary was commenting on the command team based in New Scotland Yard (UK Government, 2011). This also reflected on the internal structuring of the police, which differentiates between ‘Street Cops’ and ‘Management Cops’ (Reuss-Ianni, 1983; Reuss-Ianni & Ianni, 2005). The Duggan

Riots prompted searching questions around the ability of the MPS command team. There was surprise and incomprehension at the speed and violence of the disorder which was reinforced by unpreparedness demonstrated by “senior government figures having abruptly to return from their holidays and an outnumbered police force caught on the back foot” (Murji & Neal, 2011).

Alongside a continuing critique of MPS senior leaders has come a drive to both improve and diversify police leadership, with developments in the spheres of equality and diversity significantly impacting on the MPS. The 1980s were dominated by a series of civil disturbances between the police and an increasingly disaffected black youth, particularly in areas such as London, Bristol, Leeds, and Liverpool. These ‘race riots’ were compounded by cultural, organisational and political failings on the part of the police senior management at the time. The manner of inner city policing in the 1970s and 1980s was heavily criticised, with, the leader of Lambeth Council, Ted Knight, claiming the police were not agents of good government or agents of cohesion but “an army of occupation” (McSmith, 1996, p.256). Following the 1981 Brixton Riots, the Home Secretary appointed a judge, Lord Scarman, to launch an enquiry. The Scarman Report represented a watershed in UK policing, with its acknowledgement of a breakdown in community relations and a dangerous increase in resentment and mistrust towards policing from sections of the black community. However, it did not stop the tensions between the police and sections of the ethnic minority community spilling over into more violence in following years. The face of policing in the UK, and in particular London, was to change forever after the tragic murder of Stephen Lawrence in 1993.

In April 1993, a young black man, Stephen Lawrence, was stabbed to death after being attacked whilst waiting for a bus. He was allegedly murdered by a gang of white youths, although both a Crown Court trial and prosecution against the alleged perpetrators at the time failed to secure any convictions. These failed investigations were labelled as racist at worst, incompetent at best, by critics, Stephen Lawrence’s parents and the wider black community. Amid claims of police corruption and investigative failures attributed to police bias because of the colour of the victim, Sir William Macpherson headed up an inquiry into the murder in 1999. The inquiry reported “a failure of leadership by senior officers” within

the MPS (Macpherson, 1999, para. 46.1). It also famously concluded that the MPS was “institutionally racist”, an incredibly damaging label which has dogged the MPS to this day: “Complaints of police racism...raise more fundamental questions about policing in a multicultural society” (Chan, 1997, p.27). Macpherson described “Institutional Racism” as: “the collective failure of an organisation to provide an appropriate and professional service to people because of their colour, culture or ethnic origin [which] can be seen or detected in processes, attitudes and behaviour which amount to discrimination through unwitting prejudice, ignorance, thoughtlessness, and racist stereotyping which disadvantages minority ethnic people.” This was far removed from the more politically acceptable notion of racism being limited to just some ‘bad eggs’ within the ranks of police officers. The Lawrence Enquiry “became one of the most important moments in the modern history of criminal justice in Britain” (BBC, 2004), eclipsing even the impact of the Brixton and Tottenham Riots on the psyche of the police, and the black community. The findings served to underpin and reinforce the long held belief from minority communities that the police was racist, discriminated against them and that the criminal justice system in its entirety was fundamentally biased towards them. The fierce debate around police discrimination has continued for many years, evolving from police behaviour towards the black community to encompass the treatment of minority groups within the organisation.

Since the publication of the Macpherson Report, there have been a number of efforts to ensure the MPS is representative of the communities it serves and to eliminate any discriminatory practices. Representation within the senior ranks of the police service has featured prominently within academic and government debate (Home Office, 2010; Parliament, 2013). If we look back at the experiences of Alison Halford, the first woman to reach the rank of Assistant Chief Constable in the British Police Force, and Norwell Roberts, Britain’s first black police officer, it is evident that there has thankfully been positive progress in relation to both gender and ethnicity. Alison Halford released the story of her fight for equality within her book, ‘No Way Up The Greasy Pole’ (1993) in which she frankly described her 30 years in the police force, revealing such shocking incidents as the requirement for a group of female recruits going through the MPS selection procedure in 1961 to remove all their upper clothing and then parade and answer questions before a panel of senior officers. Following this story, the Equal Opportunities Commission said that her case “had a major

impact in raising the profile of the issue of Sex Discrimination of women in the police and of women in top jobs generally” (Museum of Liverpool, 2003). In 1967, Norwell Roberts became Britain’s first black police officer when he joined the MPS. He retired in the late 1990s after 30 years’ service and recalls his very first placement at Bow Street Police Station, where he was ostracised by his colleagues: “Buttons were ripped from his uniform, his cars were regularly vandalised. “On the very first day, the sergeant said to me, ‘I’ll see that you never finish your probation, nigger,’ ” he recalls” (The Telegraph, 2012). The years since then have seen the police actively working to eliminate such discrimination and drive good practice across the service. In 1973, there was a huge step forward when female police were integrated directly into the MPS. In 1987, the British Association for Women in Policing (BAWP) was founded with a specific remit to ensure that the voices of women are heard across the police service. In September 1994, the Metropolitan Black Police Association (BPA) was formed following discussions between black staff and the MPS.

Despite these advancements, the reality is that progress has been slow, and both black & minority ethnic (BME) and female officers remain under-represented, especially in higher ranks (Dick, Silvestri, & Westmarland, 2013). To focus on women, in the MPS 18% of officers in the rank of Inspector and above are female (Police and Crime Committee, 2014a). This is below the national average (Police and Crime Committee, 2014b). In the highest echelon of the MPS females are represented as follows: the rank of Commander (2 out of 14), DAC (3 out of 8) and AC/Deputy Commissioner (2 out of 5). It was not until 2009 that the MPS appointed the first female AC, Cressida Dick.<sup>13</sup> Morton argues that policing has traditionally been

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<sup>13</sup> It must be noted that in early 2017 during the completion of this research, Cressida Dick was appointed by the MPS to succeed Sir Bernard Hogan-Howe as MPS Commissioner. It has been acknowledged that by virtue of her gender this was a “ground-breaking appointment” (Stevenson et al, 2018). Dick herself is quoted as stating that the appointment of a female Commissioner would “send a strong message [that Scotland Yard was] modern and representative” (Vogue, 2017). It has been argued that her appointment as commissioner is the culmination of the efforts made by the police to respond to “the crisis of legitimacy that occurred in 1980s Britain when the force was entirely dominated by men” (The Guardian, 2017a). Certainly, her appointment has meant that each of the emergency services in the UK are now led by women (Cressida Dick, MPS Commissioner; Dany Cotton, the Commissioner for the London Fire Brigade; Heather Lawrence, the Chair of the London Ambulance Service). Similarly, women now fill top positions across the criminal justice system (with Chief Constable Sara Thornton



considered blue collar, manual work to be undertaken by men (Morton, 1993). Female progression within policing therefore rests upon the cultural approval of women taking up non-traditional professions (Natarajan, 1994). When discussing senior female officer advancement, the term 'glass cliff' has been applied – this describes how rather than encountering 'glass ceiling' barriers to advancement female officers may risk being promoted to higher-level positions that carry an increased likelihood of failure (Kumra & Manfredi, 2012; Ryan & Haslam, 2004). Female officers may feel pressured to apply for senior positions despite their perceived lack of readiness and, in this way, senior management can appear to demonstrate support for female officer advancement, whilst also protecting the existing hierarchy (Ryan & Haslam 2007). Senior female officers have also been cited as suffering when faced with the existing culture of 'presenteeism' (Lund, 2013). The notion of promotion being based upon 'time served' is a central aspect of policing ideology and is an important means for establishing leadership competency (Silvestri, 2011). Moreover, visibly performing extensive hours has long been accepted as characterising stamina and commitment to the role (Graef, 1989; Reiner, 1991; Silvestri & Crowther-Dowey, 2008; Stevens, 2005). However, such behaviour serves to amplify implicit gender discrimination and marginalisation, particularly for officers who work part-time and/or have caring responsibilities (Williams & Segal, 2003). Although the MPS does offer a wide range of flexible working options it would be negligent to assume that policy implementation alone will significantly improve the progression and retention of frontline and senior policewomen (Thompson, 2008). Indeed, if part-time work arrangements are treated as external to core operational duties, utilisation will likely inhibit career prospects (Silvestri & Crowther-Dowey, 2008).

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chairing the National Police Chiefs' Council, Alison Saunders as the Director of Public Prosecutions in the Crown Prosecution Service and Lynn Owens serving as Director-General of the National Crime Agency). This has been referred to as: "unprecedented feminization in responsibility for the management of the criminal justice system and law enforcement" (Stephenson et al, 2018). However, some have questioned whether the appointment of Cressida Dick, a privately schooled, Oxbridge-educated, 'fast-tracked' (constable to superintendent within 10 years) daughter of Oxbridge academics, truly represents as big an advance for equality as proclaimed (The Guardian, 2017b). What also remains in question is whether others will follow where she leads. It is notable that during the course of this research the more junior chief officer ranks have not demonstrated any strides forward in respect of diversity (in January 2018, only 2 out of 13 Commanders and 2 out of 8 DACs are women), suggesting there is not a rich pipeline of female talent eligible for promotion at senior level.

The lack of female and ethnic minority officers occupying senior ranks was brought into sharp focus in 2011 following the drive to appoint a new MPS Police Commissioner. It was noted that all of the four applicants who applied for the post were white male, culminating in the successful appointment of Bernard Hogan-Howe. This all-male shortlist resulted despite calls from London Mayor Boris Johnson for a “Detective Chief Inspector Jane Tennison figure to shake up the male-dominated Met” (The Times, 2011). The Evening Standard also ran an article on potential female successors entitled ‘Can these women save the Met? Restoring trust lies with senior females’ (Evening Standard, 2011). Such a call for more women in leadership to transform policing is not new (Carrier, 1988; Heidensohn, 1992, 2000; Spillar, 1999; Silvestri, 2011). There is a broad body of research outlining the positive impact women bring to police work and leadership practice. It has been argued that female officers are less likely to use excessive force, are more peaceable in their role and display greater understanding and competency in engaging with children and females, particularly in the context of abuse and violence (McElvain & Kposowa, 2008; Page, 2007; Schuller & Stewart, 2000; Sun, 2007; Rabe-Hemp, 2008; Waugh, Ede, & Alley, 1998). It has also been argued that senior female officers align with more transformational leadership characteristics that diverge from established policing practice (Silvestri, 2011). Examples include championing employee work-life balance and supporting the inclusion of employees in decision-making processes. Those employing such behaviours are more likely to create real progressive internal change and align the police with a more principled, service-oriented ethos (Brown, 2003; Casey & Mitchell, 2007; Dobby, Anscombe, & Tuffin, 2004; Hassel & Brandl, 2009; Wood, Fleming, & Marks, 2008). However, it has been suggested that the police rank hierarchy and the dominant, masculine police identity will serve to prevent the adoption of a true transformational leadership model (Silvestri, 2011).

## **Police leadership models**

The starting point for initial studies into police leadership, including those focusing on the most senior ranks, was the assumption that an autocratic and impersonal leadership style was the preferred option. The police service has traditionally practised what it terms a military style of leadership, i.e. an autocratic, transactional style, characterised by the use of rank and

the chain of command. A rigid 'command and control' military structure was seen as essential to the police leader to build corporacy in an organisation which allows constables on the street considerable discretion, to ensure rapid mobilisation in crisis situations and to give the public confidence in the police (Brief *et al.*, 1981; Jermier & Berkes, 1979). The qualities valued in a military leader having "a good brain in his head...good judgement ... decisive, to show the men that he knows the job and is able to make up his mind about things, quickly if need be" (Jackson, 2007, p.12) are all applicable to the policing arena. However, this style of leadership has overlooked a key distinction between the police and the military, specifically the discretionary nature of police powers and the doctrine of policing by consent rather than policing by force. As former MPS DAC, Alan Brown, describes when talking to PoliceOracle.com, "If you look at how the training of an officer unfolds right from the first day, everything is all about command and control. This is very necessary because the public expect the police to be authoritative. However, where that principle starts to come unstuck is when other resources outside of the police need to be used" (Brown, 2010). Brown goes on to detail how police leaders need to liaise with a range of external agencies and partners to deliver a successful strategic response, with a command and control mindset inhibiting rather than enabling this work. For these reasons, it is clear that a different kind of leadership emphasis is required to that of military policing, one in which communication skills, sensitivity to cultural diversity, problem solving and interagency working are paramount (Hahn, 1998).

In the 1980s 'Transformational leadership' was being developed which was an approach where leaders concentrated on transforming their subordinate colleagues through a range of encouraging and enabling behaviours (Bass, 1985; Toor & Ofori, 2009). This concept was developed into a full leadership theory entitled the Full-Range Leadership Model (FRL) which influenced many subsequent studies and academic research and continues to dominate the current discourse surrounding effective police leadership development (Campbell & Kodz, 2011; Densten, 2003; Schwarzwald *et al.*, 2001; Singer & Jonas, 1987). The FRL model distinguishes between transactional and transformational leadership. Transactional leadership focuses on rewards and discipline. Transformational engages higher values, with leaders seeking to motivate subordinates by setting out an organisational vision, providing a good example and appealing to moral values, intellect and desire to fulfil individual potential and contribute to organisational aims. Ultimately the transformational leader is expected to

be able to bring about change and encourage innovation, whereas the transactional leader is more likely to maintain the status quo. Morality and ethics are central to the transformationalist agenda and it has been argued that leadership without “ethical conduct can be dangerous, destructive, and even toxic” (Toor & Ofori, 2009, p.533). This has to be considered against the realities of police behaviour which can often be neither ethical nor morally defensible (Dizaei, 2007; Graef, 1989; Morton, 1993; Paddick, 2008).

Over the last fifteen years, police leadership research has also been influenced by theories relating to ‘Emotional Intelligence’ and personality. Two of the most recent papers support a relationship between high emotional intelligence and effective police leadership, providing it is coupled with a genuine sense of morality and low narcissism (Hawkins and Dulewicz, 2007; Yocum, 2007). Further recent work, including the largest UK study (Dobby *et al.*, 2004), has set out to reveal and, to a limited extent, test core leadership competencies for senior police officers (Weiss, 2004; Silva, 2004; Devitt, 2008). They have gone back to first principles, and rather than testing the prevalence of particular styles and behaviours, as specified by one of the current leadership models, they have started with long lists of competencies and sought to identify the most essential ones. On the whole, they have helped support the notion that a mix of transformational and to a lesser extent transactional related behaviours, skills and attributes are desirable.

Alongside these developments, the UK police service has also embraced the twin concepts of professionalisation and professionalism. Viewed historically, policing has not been conferred with the same professional status as the traditional professions, such as medicine and law. However, the drive for professionalism in policing attempts to remedy this. At the heart of the traditional view of a profession is the emphasis placed on professional knowledge. With its roots in the United States, this model is based around the teaching of high-level academic theory to drive learning and promote innovation. It challenges the traditional notion of police leadership, emphasising intellect and ‘a sharp mind’ over and above the view that the police service requires leaders with operational policing credibility. The issue of whether police leaders need a breadth and depth of frontline policing experience remains a topic of lively debate, which can be traced through the issue of graduate recruitment and direct entry into management, and is discussed in further detail in the following chapter.

## Typologies of police leadership

In his review of senior officers entitled “Chief Constables”, Reiner constructed four typologies or ideal types to define chief constables in British policing at that time (Reiner, 1991):

- The baron – who will have had “more military experience than most chief constables” and prefers a “paternalistic but hierarchical structure, mediated by norms of deference and noblesse oblige” (1991, p.306)
- The bobby – whose “pedigree is working class, self-consciously so for he is very much a ‘man of the people’” (1991, p.306). He “relishes ‘war’ stories” and is very much “the bobby on the beat promoted to the top job in the constabulary” (1991, p.307)
- The boss – who is also “working class and proud of it” (1991, p.307), but is very much “the boss of his force, although he controls mainly through authority not power” (1991, p.308)
- The bureaucrat – who ideally “combines a mastery of modern managerial approaches with the charismatic image of a traditional bobby or detective” (1991, p.308).

Reiner concluded that the bureaucrat would ultimately displace the other types of police chief. More recent studies in this field suggest that times may have moved on, with not all of Reiner’s types remaining as valid today. Long notes that Reiner’s types were male centered and do not take into account the leadership contribution that women now make in the police service (Long, 2003, p.638). In his study of the Chief Constables of England & Wales, Wall builds on Reiner’s typologies by using the career patterns of chief constables to describe the following career types: “county men” appointed to chief constable after a military career; “spiralists” who typically had a military background, and then initiated their policing careers as chief constables in smaller forces before ‘spiralling’ to command larger forces; “officer class” who were appointed after attending Hendon Police College and were clearly regarded as ‘suitable officer material’; “timeservers” who had risen slowly through the ranks; and “high flyers” “typical of many of today’s chief constables who had risen quickly through the ranks with the assistance of accelerated promotion” (1991, p.266). More recently, Caless noted in his research that “Today’s chief officers decisively reject ‘simple labelling’ by some margin. Although 23% can live with some form of simple designation, 77% cannot. Of the latter majority, more than a quarter rejected what they saw as the misleading nature of leadership

labels and stereotypes” (2011, p.110). Elsewhere, Greer & McLaughlin propose an addition to the typologies – “the mediatised police chief, who is subject to unprecedented 24/7 news media scrutiny, criticism and, if deemed necessary by an increasingly adversarial press, ‘trial by media’” (2012, p.135).

The position of the Commissioner in the MPS has been referred to as the “Poisoned Chalice” such is the scrutiny associated with the rank and role (Greer & McLaughlin, 2012). Sir Ian Blair was arguably the first MPS Commissioner to contend with the transformed political and news media environment of the modern age. In common with all commissioners of recent years he had to deal with the politics of the Home Office, the HMIC, other forces and pressure groups. He also inherited a force still dealing with the aftermath of the “Institutional Racism” label and had to contend with a Conservative Mayor of London as his immediate supervisor (not ideal given his reputation for being Labour’s favourite ‘politically correct’ policeman), and the newly created Independent Police Complaints Commission (Blair, 2009; McLaughlin, 2007; Greer & McLaughlin, 2012). Blair was therefore in new and unpredictable territory for a police commissioner and facing complex, diversive, and mediatised interests. Blair, an Oxbridge graduate with a successful police career which included postings as Chief Constable of Surrey Police and Deputy Commissioner of the MPS, was forced to resign following a tempestuous relationship with the Mayor and the media. Academics have subsequently concluded that the fate of Blair, his ‘trial by media’, laid down a clear symbolic marker about what a MPS Commissioner should look like and what kind of policing philosophy is acceptable in modern Britain with a powerful media (Greer & McLaughlin, 2012). Blair’s successor, Paul Stephenson, affirmed once in office that he had to assert his independence from a complex and volatile political environment, and distance himself from his predecessor’s policing philosophy and media predilections (Evening Standard, 2009). It is interesting to note that Stephenson also fell victim to a lack of credibility within the media. Stephenson noted that the work of the MPS was being “eclipsed by the on-going debate about relationships between senior officers and the media. This can never be right” (The Guardian, 2011a). One of the conclusions that can be drawn from the fate of both Blair and Stephenson is that the current Commissioner, Bernard Hogan-Howe, represents a new type of police chief not identified by Reiner: “the media police chief” (Greer & McLaughlin, 2012, p.19).



*Figure 11 - Sir Bernard Hogan-Howe, current Metropolitan Police Commissioner*

## **Conclusion**

It has been recognised that police organisations in general and, in the context of this study, the MPS in particular, have been criticized for years for the perceived failures of their senior leaders. Recent times have witnessed a growing debate around the role, the quality, the attributes and the diversity of police leaders. Aligned to this, there has been increasing interest from the public, media and academics to name but a few in police leadership. Some have questioned the service's ability to attract and develop skilled leaders – “that is, people who can manage complex organisations as opposed to commanding field operations” (Bayley, 1996, p.85). Difficult questions have been asked around whether chief officers have the capabilities, including the strategic and intellectual skills, to develop appropriate responses to the new and challenging policing context (Canter, 2016). The nature of many police tasks is such that there exists an enduring need for hierarchical rank-authority, and command and control will remain an important tool in the institutional armoury. This is needed to provide direction, protection, accountability and a sense of safety and security for those inside and outside policing. However, as police leaders are required to confront the very real complexity of social problems that lead to crime, as well as the complexity of inner workings of their own departments, a better understanding and nurturing of different approaches to leadership is vitally important. There has undoubtedly been a great deal of investment placed into the reform and modernisation of police leadership models and behaviour (Alison & Crego, 2008). However, in spite of this, evidence would suggest that the biggest drivers for institution wide changes to command and leadership reform have been brought about as a response to critical

incidents where existing police practices have failed victims and attracted serious critique (Blair, 2009; McLaughlin, 2007).

This chapter has demonstrated that the many and diverse changes to the policing context demand new skills and competencies from police leaders. As Wall describes, these new competencies are “almost precisely the opposite of those required by their predecessors a century, or so, ago” (1998, p.202-203). Although there exists a broad spectrum of work on the topic of senior leadership, it remains far from complete or sufficiently comprehensive. 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 largely based on perceptions rather than objective measures” (Flynn & Herrington, 2015, p.8). In essence, there remains no objective assessment of what is needed from senior police officers (Pearson-Goff & Herrington, 2013; Schafer, 2009).



## Chapter Four: The 'System'

“Over the past 160 years the selection and appointment process has changed dramatically. Qualities once revered are now reviled, and the scientific appraisal of chief constables means that no matter who the police authorities appoint, they will be acquiring a certain pre-determined set of competencies. This is a far cry from the days when police authorities wanted someone they could trust to command their force as they wished, whether it be a social equal in the counties, or a trusted servant in the boroughs.”

(Wall, 1998, p.203)

### Introduction

The debate over the future direction of senior leadership appointments in the police is based upon two very distinct viewpoints. The traditionalist 'Pre Winsor' system of police progression is predicated on police officers beginning their careers as constables and working their way up through a highly structured career ladder comprising a series of hierarchical ranks to achieve superintendent or chief superintendent rank. At this point, those who aspire to higher office, will enter the process to be selected as a chief officer. Modern times have, however, seen the notion of this linear career path challenged. Aligned to this has been increasing public interest in how the police service should both manage and support the progression of officers up to the highest ranks. In July 2011, the Conservative Prime Minister David Cameron told the House of Commons that the system for producing police leaders was “too closed” with “only one point of entry into the force”. He went on to note that “There are too few – and arguably too similar – candidates applying for the top jobs...I want to see radical proposals for how we can open our police force and bring in fresh leadership”. The prime minister was referring here to the introduction of a direct entry model of recruitment that would bring people with different skills and experience directly into senior police officer roles and, in the process, subvert the assumption that all senior police leaders would be drawn from within the service. At the heart of this modernist 'Post Winsor' approach is the belief that experience as a police constable is not required in the senior echelons, where previous demonstrable senior management and leadership skills are of more utility than the ability to arrest suspects or investigate crime (Barham, 2010b; Caless, 2011).

This chapter looks in detail at the current and historic processes by which chief officers in policing have attained their position. Having considered the shifting context for policing and the dilemmas of police leadership in Chapter Three, this chapter reviews relevant literature in order to critically evaluate the extent to which both the traditional model of police progression and more recent developments are equipped to find the right type of leadership for the police service. Against a backdrop of new equalities legislation, a dominant liberal egalitarian cultural value system (albeit not shared by all sections of the population), new conditions and expectations, and a growing awareness of the need to carefully manage impressions of the police following the Leveson Inquiry, this chapter considers whether the processes of recruiting and selecting people for chief officer roles stand up to the shifting demands and fresh challenges of policing. Within this, the chapter considers whether the selection and appointment methods are sufficient to address concerns about the calibre and diversity of candidates that are coming through for senior police leadership positions.

### **The traditional model of police selection and progression**

Although there is some evidence that promotion through the ranks has been modernised and professionalised<sup>14</sup>, it is notable that there has been little fundamental reform in the way in which UK police leaders are recruited, trained and progressed. It is a fact of the current British policing system that most, if not all, chief officers will have worked their way up from a bobby on the beat. This means that when compared to other organisations, even public sector ones, the UK police service has been unique in facing the challenge of growing all its future senior police leaders from those that join the service at the most junior rank of constable (Charman, Savage and Cope, 1999, p.281-301). In this respect, the UK police service sits apart from police forces elsewhere in Europe (Leishman & Savage, 1993). Such arrangements have been in place since the middle of the last century. Similarly, UK police forces choose “not to recruit [police officer] specialists, nor different people for specific departments...it is assumed that the person who is going to make a good dog handler, detective, or senior officer should all have the same qualities at the time of selection into the police service” (Ainsworth, 1995, p.582). It has been noted that the suggestion that this system should be changed to become

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<sup>14</sup> Promotion to the ranks of Sergeant and Inspector is no longer solely reliant on legal understanding, but also a period of work-based assessment where the candidate is assessed in the workplace to demonstrate their competence.

aligned to many European and Commonwealth policing systems of selection and progression, which select on academic achievement and provide undergraduate courses as standard, has been derided as being too academic (Canter, 2016). Discussions over stratified recruitment have been traditionally rejected on the grounds of being inegalitarian (Bayley, 1996; Blair, 2009). However, it has been observed that this is a curious approach as “the military, on whom police departments are partially modelled, has long accepted the distinction between commissioned and non-commissioned officers” (Bayley, 1996, p.86).

Under the traditional model of police advancement, once an officer reaches superintendent or chief superintendent rank, they can enter the process to be considered for chief officer rank. Over the last couple of decades, this process has become far more structured and scrutinised. The Commissioner of the MPS, for example, is now subject to an extensive selection and interview process before being selected. In stark contrast to this is the example of 1971, where “Robert Mark was summoned to the House of Commons by Reginald Maulding, the Home Secretary, who greeted him with the words “Are you going to do this ruddy job for us?”” (Blair, 2009, p.101). This represented the entirety of his selection process. Although the introduction of more transparency and scrutiny is clearly a positive development, the process that is now in place to select and appoint chief officers could be described as somewhat prolonged. As Caless describes it: “All aspirant chief officers have to be recommended by their chief constables, have to pass the successive ‘gateway’ stages of the (Senior) Police National Assessment Centre (PNAC), and the Senior Command Course (SCC) with its modular programmes and additional academic studies, before being eligible to apply for vacancies at the first chief officer rank of assistant chief constable”<sup>15</sup> (Caless, 2011, p.11). This process in itself will take a minimum of one year to complete assuming that an officer successfully passes each element of the process at first attempt. In reality, the process is likely to span significantly longer. Caless goes on to relay one officer’s experience of working through the process, which took “six years and four months from obtaining a recommendation to being appointed as ACC” (2011, p.11-12).

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<sup>15</sup> Or Commander in the MPS.

The path to senior police leadership is then a slow one (Bland *et al.*, 1999), arguably too slow. Reiner notes that after the initial step up from constable to sergeant those who want to have a realistic chance of becoming a chief constable must move fairly rapidly through the middle management ranks. He notes that “this follows from the simple arithmetic fact that most prospective chiefs reach sergeant rank in their late twenties so they have just over 20 years to achieve seven further promotions before they reach their early 50s, after which age few chief constables are appointed” (Reiner, 1991, p.78). Analysis carried out by the MPS has shown that the average career service for an officer attaining superintendent rank (widely regarded as the start of the senior manager tiers) falls between 18-22 years’ service (MPS, 2010). This suggests that officers are promoted to senior manager roles relatively late in service. Research carried out by Awamleh into managerial innovation suggests a negative correlation between the latter and length of service (1994). If applied to the policing context, this could suggest that police leaders may not be being promoted to senior ranks at an optimal time in their careers to drive the much needed innovations and reforms set out in Chapter Three. Charman, Savage and Cope note that “The long career path to ACPO rank can mean that officers do not attain higher office until late in their police career, thus ‘wasting’, or at least delaying the impact of, managerial skills which could have been put to good effect while they were younger” (1999, p.285). In 2010, the Hay Group report, *Stepping Up: Making the Move to ACPO*, pointed out that the police service may need “to see how development can be accelerated so that officers reach senior levels earlier. This would...increase...the time officers spend at senior levels and thus, the return the service gets back on their investment” (p.24).

### **Choosing candidates for SPNAC**

It is an idiosyncrasy peculiar to police culture that when introducing themselves, officers tend to give their rank, name, location and then length of service. This is indicative of the value that continues to be placed first and foremost on individual’s working experience within the police or ‘time served’. As Silvestri writes: “The importance of time-serving is a critical ingredient in demonstrating commitment and credibility. Getting to the top involves achieving an identity that has been cultivated through a full-time, long, and uninterrupted career pattern” (2011, p.80). As part of the Winsor Review of British policing the Chief Police

Officers' Staff Association (CPOSA) acknowledged that "the best talent in the police service could be better developed, moving from a time served approach to rapid progression based on competence and potential" (Winsor, 2012, p.172). Dick and Metcalfe concluded that the police continued to rely upon inappropriate selection procedures, including rank seniority and time served (Dick & Metcalfe, 2001). Under this traditional approach, evidence suggests that candidates for chief officer 'wait their turn' before they are recommended for SPNAC. Up until 2012, the MPS had a policy of only recommending officers for SPNAC, who had held two senior command roles at chief superintendent rank and fulfilled a minimum tenure of four years in rank. In a 2014 review of leadership in the MPS, Deloitte summarised the issue as: "leaders are not comfortable having realistic conversations around potential...Feedback from focus groups suggest that, at more senior ranks, performance conversations are focused on a three year plan to promotion" (MPS, 2014, p.17). This suggests that in the traditional model, progression to chief officer is merely a question of 'when' rather than 'if', with few honest conversations actually taking place around performance and potential. Such a culture has a number of possible effects:-

- It risks populating the senior tiers of the police service with incumbents who are valued for their length of service or experience rather than longer-term potential or talent
- It presents a danger that the service will continue to mirror the diversity of the current leadership tiers. Silvestri talks persuasively around the influence of time in the careers of female police officers and how the emphasis on achieving full-time status remains one of the 'irresolvable conflicts' for women wishing to progress (Silvestri, 2011, p.81)
- Analysis carried out by the NPIA also shows that officers with fewer years' service perform better in the assessment stages for chief officer than their peers with longer service, suggesting there is a better 'fit' between the qualities of these candidates and the requirements of chief officer rank (NPIA, 2010a).

It is perhaps for these reasons that the College of Policing has, in recent times, urged forces to take a wider view when considering which of their officers to support for the chief officer selection process, asking them to prioritise 'talent' or 'potential' over a 'time served' approach and thereby "to support other highly talented individuals who have significant

potential but who may not yet have had the opportunity to undertake the full range of challenges within senior roles” (ACPO, 2013). However, it is debatable how successful, in practice, this drive has been.

When recommending officers for SPNAC, chief constables are asked to base their considerations on the following:-

- Evidence of substantial and challenging command in a significant role
- Evidence of policing operations
- Evidence of leading and implementing organisational strategy, and managing finances against a backdrop of performance and delivery demands
- Promoting and Managing Equality, Diversity and Human Rights

(College of Policing, 2016c)

This illustrates the continuing importance that is placed on chief officer applicants having a strong operational command track record and experience. As the Hay Group state: “operational experience is seen as a major factor in judging how prepared people are for ACPO and so it is likely that...young superintendents are putting off ‘working towards’ ACPO, as they feel they have to first build up this operational experience” (2010, p.31). This traditional approach to chief officer selection is underpinned by the concept of ‘ready now’, or to frame it slightly differently “a heavy focus on assessment against current performance and readiness for the next role, rather than longer term potential” (Hay Group, 2010, p.41). This suggests that the leadership qualities that characterise a good superintendent will also be those that are needed at chief officer level. Given the increasing importance to police leadership of executive leadership skills, such as stakeholder management, strategic planning, financial management and other corporate abilities, explored in the previous chapter, this is clearly a cause for concern.

### **SPNAC Assessment and the Strategic Command Course (SCC)**

If supported by their chief constable, candidates for chief officer will then enter a national assessment centre, SPNAC, which comprises a suite of exercises including a written

management exercise; presentation and interview; group exercise; chief officer briefing, and a media exercise. Each of these exercises are based on the following set of competencies:-

- Serving the Public
- Leading Strategic Change
- Leading the Workforce
- Managing Performance
- Professionalism
- Decision Making
- Working with Others

Interestingly, these very same competencies are also used to assess police officers at more junior ranks. There is little to differentiate what an aspiring chief officer would be expected to evidence over and above a superintendent. Undoubtedly, this lack of a clear articulation of what qualities and experience are required to operate effectively at chief officer level is confusing for candidates, but it also likely hints at a broader lack of clarity across the police service in respect of what constitutes a good chief officer. As Hay state there is a clear need “to review and then communicate more clearly the competencies and professional experience required to operate at ACPO level” (2010, p.42). The heavily competency-based approach also arguably leads to the type of process that Sir John Woodcock, HM Chief Inspector in the 1990s, alludes to when interviewed by Wall in 1997, which may not achieve the desired “analytical honesty in relation to people’s capabilities” but “does bring into vogue the tendency to make more people into swans than they otherwise are” (Wall, 1998, p.197-198). In short, the focus on assessing competence could make individuals reluctant to acknowledge their development gaps and address them. As Neyroud summarised: “there should be a much stronger focus on potential linked to an individual’s contribution with a more development centred approach” (2011, p.120).

Scrutiny of SPNAC itself reveals an apparently robust and rigorous assessment process, however, what is less easy to judge is how predictively valid the results of the process are.

There are no longitudinal studies available from the College of Policing, which evaluate performance at SPNAC and subsequent performance as a chief officer. As Caless write: “Although PNAC acts as a gateway to the rest of the chief officer development process, there are no objective correlatives through which it can be assessed as a distinct process. This is research that should be done, if only to sustain confidence in what appears to be rigorous, independent and fair” (Caless, 2011, p.23). It is also notable that some forces, in particular the MPS, have previously been critiqued for sourcing coaching and other development for their officers in the build-up to SPNAC. In 2013, Sara Thornton (Director for SPNAC) wrote to all chief constables expressing a concern about the role of coaching in candidates’ preparation for SPNAC: “I recently commissioned some work with those currently on the SCC to explore this issue further. Amongst other things, the research found that some of the coaching services being paid for by forces specifically seek to train candidates for the assessment process. I would ask colleagues to consider carefully the preparation support they fund and whether or not this seeks to develop the individual in such a way that represents value for money and the return on the investment is likely to provide a long term benefit to the individual, Service and the public we serve” (ACPO, 2013). This is perhaps most worrying in its suggestion that officers could ‘learn to pass’ the main assessment barrier to chief officer.

If successful at SPNAC and accepted onto the SCC, individuals embark on a 3-month modular learning programme, with components on Managing Police Finances, Leadership & Ethics, Business & Strategic Partnerships and Professional Policing. As with SPNAC, there is little evaluative data available on the SCC. Arguably, there is a confusion around whether the SCC is an assessment or developmental step. Ostensibly, it is a pass or fail course, with standards reported to have been tightened over the last two years (Police Oracle, 2014). However, records show that no officers attending the course have failed it in the last five years, although a small handful have withdrawn (College of Policing, 2015). In their review, Hay pulled out the shortcomings of the course in equipping people to step up to chief officer: “Programme management, project management, long term change management, good governance, risk management – all require a different perspective, understanding, and methodology which are not well catered for by the SCC. These aspects are not well invested in for senior people” (2010, p.12). There have also been suggestions that sequencing the course prior to an officer taking up a chief officer position is flawed. As Neyroud pointed out: “the SCC was...not



necessarily in the right place and that, because it was providing training prior to appointment, there were inevitably quite a number of members of the course who were trained but not appointed, therefore the skills trained for were not being used in the role for which it was being trained” (Review of Police Leadership and Training, 2011, p.121).

## **Local appointments**

Once through the national stages of the selection process, candidates must then apply for a chief officer vacancy within an individual force. Typically, police forces will advertise ACC/Commander posts in specialist policing publications, as well as on the College of Policing and their own force websites. Forces are given a degree of discretion in how they structure their appointments process: “It is for the CC (and Commissioner) to decide how they wish to run their appointment process and which candidate they wish to appoint. The CC (and Commissioner) should involve an independent member during assessment, shortlisting and interviewing of candidates” (Home Office, 2012b, p.2). However, there is some legislation with which forces must comply and which signal the relationship between politics and the selection of senior police leaders. Schedule 8 of the Police Reform and Social Responsibility Act 2011 sets out the requirements that Police and Crime Commissioners must fulfil in the appointment of chief constables for police areas outside of London. This Act also serves to clarify the selection procedure for the Commissioner of the MPS. Section 42 deals with the appointment of Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis, upon recommendation by the Home Secretary in recognition of the national responsibilities associated with the office. The Act states that “the Commissioner is appointed by Her Majesty upon recommendation by the Secretary of State. In making this recommendation, the Secretary of State must have regard to any recommendations made by the Mayor’s Office for Policing and Crime”.<sup>16</sup> Section 43 relates to the appointment of the Deputy Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis, which is exactly the same process as that for the appointment of the Commissioner. The appointment of ACs, DACs and Commanders in the MPS is made by the Commissioner, although the Commissioner is required to consult the Mayor’s Office for Policing and Crime before making the appointment.

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<sup>16</sup> By virtue of the Greater London Authority Act 1999 the MPS were already accountable to the Mayor of London, an elected post since 2000, with considerable powers over selection and performance management.

In recent times, it is the local appointment stage, of all the stages in the chief officer selection process, that has come under most criticism, with concerns that:

- Candidates are being 'earmarked' for particular jobs, with bias towards internal candidates
- It is confusing and overloaded
- There is an inconsistency of interviewing skills and approach.

(Hay Group, 2010, p.43)

In a recent review of the chief officer appointment process, the College of Policing expressed concerns around the "perceived fairness, integrity and transparency of current selection processes. Responses focused on barriers including 'favoured internal candidate in applicant pool' [and] inconsistencies in support available" (2016d, p.5). Historically, the MPS has struggled to attract external candidates for Commander positions. A recent internal briefing note suggested that this was attributable to both the attractiveness of the role, but also a perceived complacency by the MPS: "There is some perception that the Met is overly complacent and assumes officers want to come here...The Met gives the impression that 'if you don't want to come (or want to leave) then we don't want you'. It was highlighted that we need to do more to reach out and create interest with potential applicants and really sell the benefits and opportunities from policing in London" (Heritage, 2017, p.4).

An example of an advert for a recent Commander post in the MPS is given over the page. What this serves to reinforce is the complexity and multifarious demands of the modern chief officer role. It underlines the career transition that is involved in stepping up to chief officer rank and the executive leadership skills that are demanded from role holders at that level. Chief officers are expected to be "proven leaders" who can operate at ease in a "complex political and stakeholder environment", with the necessary skills to meet the needs of communities and the public, as well as driving "internal structural and cultural change". However, in this particular process, rather than assess candidates against the requirements of the role as specified in the advert, they were required to evidence the MPS competencies of Operational Effectiveness, Organisational Influence and Resource Management through an interview with, and strategic presentation to, the MPS Commissioner, MPS Deputy Commissioner, MPS HR Director and an independent panel member. When combined with

the numerous other parts of the selection process, this clearly illustrates that a modern day chief officer must display grit and tenacity if they are to navigate their way through the selection and appointment process and successfully emerge as an ACC/Commander. Perhaps more pertinently, it also reinforces the theme that, at both a national and local level, there is no consensus on what police leadership is and how it can be objectively assessed. Different competencies and skills are being used at different points of the chief officer selection process and it is questionable whether the emphasis on a competency approach is really getting to the heart of assessing the executive leadership skills that we see from Chapter Three are clearly needed by our senior police officers. If the selection and assessment system to chief officer is to be truly effective, it is suggested that this needs to be resolved “by developing clear and unambiguous role profiles, defining expectations, openly stating who and what is involved in each stage of the selection process” (College of Policing, 2016d, p.6).

## **COULD YOU LEAD TODAY'S SERVICE— AND BUILD TOMORROW'S?**

**Commanders - Salary on appointment £94,692 p.a. plus allowances**

**The Metropolitan Police Service (MPS) wishes to appoint highly skilled and experienced police officers as Commanders to tackle one of the most demanding roles in policing. We are looking for proven leaders with the confidence to operate in a complex political and stakeholder environment, along with the ability to deliver real and continuous improvements in all areas of performance including public confidence.**

Crime and safety are the biggest issues for Londoners and our role is to make sure we fight crime effectively by delivering Total Policing.

Working to meet the diverse needs of communities, partners and stakeholders, you will ensure effective delivery towards achieving our safety and confidence objectives. Overcoming complex challenges by managing core issues and developing solutions, and managing structural and cultural change to improve service delivery will be pivotal in these roles.

An approachable individual who leads by example, you will be expected to set high professional standards to deliver our priorities so that we can provide a police service for Londoners to be proud of.

For further details and to apply, please download the [information pack](#), [application form](#), and [diversity monitoring form](#).

*Figure 12 - An example of an advert for a recent Commander post in the MPS*

## **Strategies to identify police 'high-fliers'**

Alongside the traditional model of police advancement lie an array of different recruitment, training and development strategies that have been put in place to identify those with leadership potential at an early stage in their careers and fast-track their progression. In commenting on the idiosyncrasies of a 'single-entry' system of recruitment, Charman, Savage & Cope note that: "single-entry systems...entail recruitment at the same point both of those with management and supervisory potential and of those better suited to work as a constable...this then necessitates a range of special provisions for the identification of 'high-fliers' amongst the rank and file and training/educational programmes to match...the effectiveness of the machinery for in-service selection and senior management training thus becomes an acute concern" (1999, p.284). One of the first of these fast-tracking initiatives was a short-lived experiment known as the Trenchard Scheme, which was introduced in the 1930s (1934-1939) by the then Commissioner, Hugh Trenchard. The scheme sought to select the best constables, as well as "suitably qualified" young men from schools and universities, train them in leadership at Hendon Police College, before they graduated as junior inspectors (Boyle, 1962). It was based upon the success of a similar scheme which Trenchard had introduced into the RAF in the 1920s. The Trenchard Scheme continued until the Second World War with a clear impact in terms of the progression of its graduates (Boyle states that, of 197 graduates, nearly one-third attained the highest police posts, including the MPS Commissioner, Sir Joseph Simpson). "The full legacy of the Hendon scheme was felt in 1965, when all of the top positions in the police service were occupied by its graduates" (Wall, 1998, p.217). It was, however, deeply unpopular with the rank and file and was criticised as a militarising step, which sought to establish an 'officer class'. It has also been suggested that the scheme did not solve the issue of senior command, but simply created an 'Old Boys' Network' that dominated the senior ranks of the police, particularly the MPS. In spite of this, it has been argued that "axing the scheme was a mistake because it created the potential for future leadership dearth as the Hendon men retired, a fact recognised by the 1960-62 Royal Commission" (Policing Today, 2012). As a consequence, the Royal Commission made recommendations which included the creation of a fast track scheme to the rank of inspector in 5 years, which eventually became the basis for the Graduate Entry Scheme and the 'Special Course' (Stevens, 2005).



*Figure 13 - Viscount Trenchard,  
Metropolitan Police Commissioner  
(1931-1935)*

The Special Course was introduced in 1962, with the objective of attracting high quality recruits into the service and providing them with training to reach high rank (Adler *et al.*, 1994, p.3). The Graduate Entry Scheme followed in 1968 with similar ambitions, but with a tighter focus on attracting university graduates into the service as part of a strategy aimed at re-badging the police service as an attractive graduate career option. This course was revisited in the 1990s and renamed the Accelerated Promotion Scheme for Graduates in 2000. It underwent a subsequent 'rebranding' as the High Potential Development Scheme (HPDS) in 2004 before being replaced by the Constable to Inspector Fast Track scheme in 2014. Ironically, the latter, although introduced under the banner of direct entry, remained a fast track scheme where officers progressed from constable to sergeant to inspector rank within a three year timeframe rather than joining the service at the rank of inspector. In 2016, the College of Policing revisited the scheme and amended it to a true Direct Entry Inspector Scheme, targeting it at "a current middle manager with supervisory skills and leadership experience" (College of Policing, 2017).

As Wall notes, "there has been some controversy over the effectiveness" of these schemes. The Special Course appears to have demonstrated the greatest impact in respect of the number of its officers who have achieved high rank: "in 1991 sixty per cent of chief constables had taken the special course" (Wall, 1998, p.227). It was described by Blair as "the alternative to the recreation of officer entry, like that in the armed services. This was partly done to honour Peel's original vision, but more to placate the Police Federation, to whom the concept

of officer entry was an anathema” (Blair, 2009, p.76). However, as Charman, Savage & Cope note we are constrained in evaluating the true effectiveness of this and other schemes by the absence of any research “examining not just those Special Course graduates who have succeeded in reaching senior office but also those who have not, either through failure to gain promotions or through wastage to the service” (1999, p.288). They go on to suggest that the mere fact of being selected onto the scheme could be a more significant factor in an individual’s subsequent progression than the experience of the scheme itself – ‘a self-fulfilling prophecy’. Similarly, the HPDS operated its own promotion pathway, with HPDS officers subject to a specific provision in the police promotion regulations which meant that they could be promoted as soon as they satisfied their Chief Officer that they were competent in the new rank (College of Policing, 2014b, p.18). In practice, competence was tested by forces in different ways and with differing levels of stringency. Arguably, the promotion provision created an in-built promotion success for scheme members, with no evaluation completed by the College of Policing (or its predecessor, the NPIA) to determine whether HPDS officers were more effective senior officers than non-HPDS officers. More generally, there has been limited analysis around how successful any of the fast-track schemes have proven and what the exact nature of their impact has been on leadership within the police service (see Hill & Smithers, 1991; Adler, Lowden and Snell, 1995). What these schemes have meant, however, is that in spite of, or perhaps because of, the single entry point into the police service, the process of selection into a senior position has in practice often been triggered at a fairly early stage of an officer’s career or, as Caless suggests: “patronage, which might be described as the (subjective) capability to identify potential and advance it by granting opportunities and giving recognition to achievement, is still a major factor in the selection of chief officers. Chief officers testify constantly to the ‘golden finger’ and ‘the tap on the shoulder’ that identified them as having the wit and will to rise” (2011, p.78).

### **A question of patronage**

When analysing the journey of a police officer into a senior role, it is clearly necessary to consider not only the formal aspects of the selection and appointment process, but also those informal mechanisms which operate around the process and can significantly influence an individual’s candidacy. Nepotism, favouritism, patronage and protection within police forces

have long featured within research and commentaries on British policing (Graef, 1989; Hellowell, 2003; Morton, 1993). They are closely associated with the concept of police corruption, which is a topic beyond the scope of this study, and are engrained within the conceptualisation of British policing culture as institutionally racist by failing to provide an “appropriate and professional service [the racism] can be seen or detected in processes, attitudes and behaviours which amount to...discrimination” (Sir William Macpherson cited in Macionis & Plummer, 2008, p.337). Overt and discriminatory subjective favouritism in policing goes against the code of ethical conduct expected through New Managerialism which expects the police to “act with integrity, avoiding conflicts of interest and acceptance of gifts aimed at influencing conduct, eschewing nepotism and favouritism” (Punch, 2009, p.4). However within the cultural context of policing such behaviour has traditionally been considered as acceptable, tolerable, desirable or expected (Hellowell, 2003; Morton, 1993). Over recent years the impact of such behaviour has been keenly felt and contested within the field of progression and selection. It has been argued that nepotism and favouritism go to the heart of whether those who rise are the best candidates for the organisation (Caless, 2011). As Moran notes the fact that “selection and promotion should be by merit is now a deeply engrained value in British society. This does not mean it is always practised” (2015, p.314). Nepotism or abuse of position to secure preferential treatment has not been limited to police promotions. In 2011, one of the factors that prompted AC John Yates’s resignation was an allegation that Yates had helped a media executive’s daughter secure a police staff position in the MPS (The Telegraph, 2011a). Such behaviour is not limited to the MPS; in 2010 the Chief Constable of North Yorkshire was given a final written warning after an extensive disciplinary investigation for trying to help a relative get a job against huge competition from other applicants (The Guardian, 2011b).

The scrutiny, pressure and challenges associated with police promotion, particularly to the most senior ranks, has seen the MPS experiment with several processes over recent years. It is perhaps understandable that police leaders are often more comfortable in choosing their senior executive teams, although this does “open the door to claims of nepotism, discrimination and patronage” (Barham, 2010a). The existence of an ‘Old Boys’ Network’ in the MPS, which favoured the selection and progression of white heterosexual male officers into senior roles has been extensively discussed in recent research and autobiographical

works (Dizaei, 2007; Morton, 1993; Paddick, 2008; Segrave, 2014). In his research, Caless describes how the “identification of individual potential and the channelling of that potential into candidacy for chief officer is still very much rooted in a personal patronage exercised by senior officers” (2011, p.43). Wall describes the “practice of informal interviewing, particularly, ‘ordeal by dinner’” as part and parcel of the traditional chief officer selection process (1998, p.198). In *Stepping Up: Making the Move to ACPO*, Hay Group reference the tension between “the positive effects of senior encouragement and the negative effects of ‘old boys club’ perceptions” (2010, p.27), with a particular salience for BME and female officers. In the 1970s, Kanter stated that “if sponsors are important for the success of men in organisations, they seem absolutely essential for women” (1977, p.92). Pogrebin *et al.* describe how the lack of senior BME role models makes the lack of sponsors and mentors even more relevant for black officers, particularly female BME officers (1999). In an effort to respond professionally and negate such effects the MPS does rely on rigorous selection procedures. A recent innovation includes the use of a talent assessment tool called the Performance and Potential Matrix (PPM) that is used to assess candidates’ potential and performance and inform which officers can enter a selection process (MPS, 2016a). However, no selection or assessment process is perfect. Ultimately the purpose of police promotion processes is to “attempt to identify those who best meet the published criteria. It is not an exact science. Various checks and balances including the presence of an Occupational Psychologist at every stage are built in to add objectivity but it remains a predominantly subjective assessment” (MetIBB, 2016).

### **Selecting the right leadership for the police service**

A review of the mechanics of the traditional method of preparing and selecting people for chief officer roles has indicated there are a number of potential areas of concern, both in respect of the formal and informal aspects of the process. It is important now to consider how these issues affect the quantity, quality and diversity of candidates coming through. As Caless observes, it is difficult to objectively assess “whether there is a latent prejudice or discrimination against women for the most senior roles in policing or whether or not sufficient candidates of the right calibre have proffered themselves, or even whether this is a perception rather than fact” (2011, p.54). Van Ewijk suggests that the structure of the



traditional police career path should facilitate diversity: “no matter at what hierarchical level a new recruit starts, potential vertical mobility is high: there is always a possibility to move upwards in the organization by applying for promotion courses. In theory, everyone can become chief of the police force. This is different than, for example, the hierarchical structure in hospitals, where nurses are trained to be nurses and are expected to assist doctors until they retire; they are not expected to become doctors by completing additional training during their career. This is a good starting point for diversity” (2011, p.2). Arguably, then, on paper the current system of police advancement could favour diversity, albeit this has not been evident in practice.

The past decade has seen a series of high profile issues and chief officer resignations, which have magnified concerns about the failures of police leaders and the need to both improve and diversify police leadership. In 2007, the MPA expressed concern about the number, quality and diversity of the talent pool eligible to fill Commander posts: “Top class leaders are thin on the ground, and this problem will only exacerbate unless current arrangements for identifying, developing and accelerating promotion at all ranks are fully addressed” (MPA, 2008). In its recent review of chief officer appointments, the College of Policing identified a number of challenges, not least a lack of candidates and a lack of diversity: “The main challenge identified...was the lack of available candidates from which to attract applicants. Chief constables in particular reported that the lack of available candidates affected their ability to make comparisons during the selection process. The small number of applicants meant a lack of choice, which could limit the decisions made. Responses from PCCs and chief constables which support this challenge included ‘inability to select the best possible candidate due to small pools’, ‘lack of competitiveness could lead to complacency’ and ‘not enough candidates to compare one against another’...Chief constables reported that, due to the limited number of eligible applicants from which to attract candidates, there was a lack of diversity and ability to share ideas, thoughts and experiences. Responses included; ‘lack of diversity in command teams’, ‘lack of diversity in the process in the widest sense’ and ‘lack of cross-fertilisation of ideas and experiences’” (2016d, p.3). To underpin this, if we consider the last four Commander appointment processes run by the MPS, we see a total of 13 candidates selected for Commander posts; of these, all were white candidates, only one was female, and there was only one successful candidate from outside the MPS. If we look at the

composition of the police workforce, we see that of the 201 chief officers nationally, 21% are female and less than 2% are BME (Home Office, 2015). This suggests both a fairly homogeneous and closed talent pool. Certainly, feminist researchers have emphasised the slow progress towards integration, particularly as rank increases, and the continuing gendered nature of policing (Heidensohn, 1992, 2000 and Silvestri, 2011). It has been suggested that if we continue with the traditional model of police advancement, it will take at least two generations before we start to see any difference at the top of the organisation (MPS, 2016b).

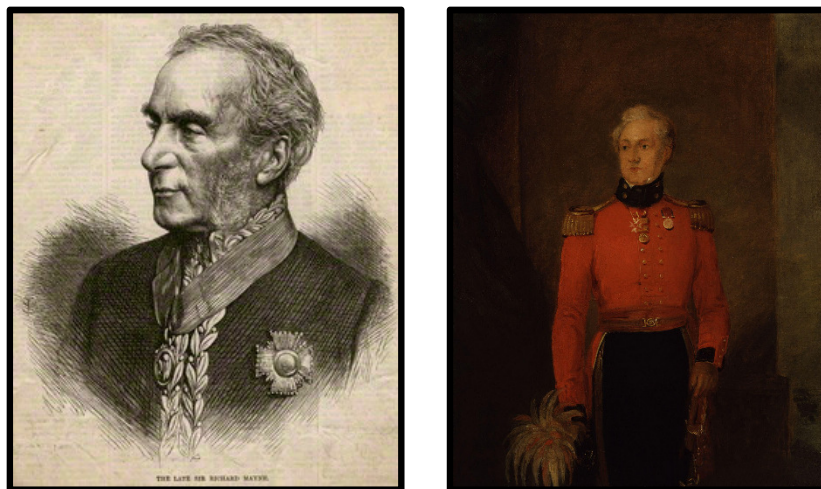
### **A new model of police selection and progression**

The drivers to refresh and revisit how police leaders are selected and progressed are then both political and operational. When looked at in the round, it is clear that the traditional system of police selection and progression is, in many regards, not fit for purpose. The issues set out above have combined with growing concerns over the effectiveness of chief officers in the modern age to create a burning platform for change. Politically, the need to improve diversity, enhance community confidence and engage effectively with policing stakeholders in the post-Lawrence environment (Blair, 2009; McLaughlin, 2007) means that the police service needs to do something different. As Hunt writes, it cannot ignore the fact that there is an “increasing demand for services, a lack of clarity as to the role and functions of police, and doubts about the capacity of police management and leadership to cope with this situation” (Hunt, 1995, p.40). The blueprint for the proposed changes was accordingly set out in the final report of Tom Winsor, the HMIC. This report articulates the need for police recruitment over the forthcoming years to be “more flexible, allowing people with valuable experience in other fields the opportunity to bring those skills into the service at a senior level which would help transform modern policing in Britain” (The Telegraph, 2015). However, not all stakeholders across the police service were convinced; indeed, there remains an instinctive rejection by many of the idea that ‘any leaders’ could lead a police force (Caless, 2011), in spite of the fact that it is difficult to isolate leadership skills that are distinct to policing. The debate over whether senior police leaders should be recruited from within or from outside the police service is not a new one and has, interestingly, come almost full circle over the last century, albeit it continues to generate as much heat now as it did when first discussed. As

Wall notes: “The issues...of promotion by merit and also of internally recruiting chief officers were, through the correspondence columns of the Police Review, the first major policing issues to be debated by police officers as a whole” (Wall, 1998, p.159). Prior to the rollout in 2014 of the direct entry schemes proposed by Winsor for the ranks of inspector and superintendent, both the Police Federation and the Superintendents’ Association were vociferous in affirming their support for a single point of entry into the police service, arguing that future leaders must be able to demonstrate experience of dealing with complex police operations, critical incidents, investigations and a wide array of operational policing activities if they are to inspire the confidence of the public they serve and the staff they supervise. As Nathan Constable wrote in 2013 in his blog: “The service’s reaction to the proposal [of direct entry into senior policing ranks] has been almost universally negative. For once, we present a united front. The Fed is opposed to it, the Supers Association is against it and many members of ACPO appear to have reservations... The fact is that you simply cannot walk into the police, stick a crown on your shoulder and make the kind of decisions we expect Superintendents to make. It is not solely about “performance management” or outstanding business ability. A Superintendent may well be partly a business manager but they are also police officers. A Constable with the rank of Superintendent. How can you be a Constable with the rank of Superintendent if you have never actually been a Constable?” (2013). Similarly, Heffernan argues that: “By recruiting through the ranks, police organisations provide incentives to younger officers, solidify morale and ensure that executives have experiences in common with line staff...In particular leadership positions should be limited to those who have served in line positions, faced the hardships typical of those positions, and performed well when confronted with those hardships” (Heffernan, 2003, p.140-141).

The strength of these reactions are interesting when considered against the fact that up until the middle of the last century, MPS Commissioners were drawn from outside the confines of the police service. In fact, the role of MPS Commissioner was considered so complex that it was beyond the capabilities of one individual alone and the responsibilities of the post were initially divided between three people. Commissioner Sir Charles Rowan, a British Army Lieutenant Colonel who had seen active duty during the Peninsular War and the Battle of Waterloo, was appointed as the first senior commissioner to ensure that the new force would have military structure and discipline. He was supported by a junior commissioner, Sir Richard

Mayne, who was a trained barrister and required to provide legal counsel and guidance to the force in the application of criminal law. These joint commissioners were also supported by another barrister, John Wray, who acted as the “Receiver” or chief financial officer for the force (Morton, 1993). The system of having joint commissioners was discontinued in 1855 upon the death of Captain William Hay who served as the replacement to Rowan from 1850 (Durstun, 2012). The relationship between the two commissioners was not productive, and it was decided that one commissioner would be more effective (Emsley, 2014). From that point onwards, MPS Commissioners were selected from the ranks of the military. As Leishman and Savage record: “The first joint Commissioners of the Metropolitan Police were Sir Richard Mayne, a lawyer, and Sir Charles Rowan, an army colonel. From their appointment, in 1829, to the end of the Second World War, the tradition was to choose successive commissioners from the ranks of (mainly retired) senior military officers. This style of chief officer appointment was also quite the norm in the old county forces outside London. It was only after 1945 that the policy of career police officers for all ranks began to apply” (1993, p.5).



*Figure 14 - Sir Richard Mayne and Sir Charles Rowan, joint first Metropolitan Police Commissioners (1829-1850)*

Any reform of police senior leadership has to attempt to overcome the numerous and well documented difficulties, some would say insurmountable, of reconciling the activity of policing with the process of management (Leishman & Savage, 1993). Winsor’s Report recognised that the police leader of the future has to possess the range of skills and management experience of a chief executive. However, it also acknowledged that there are

certain elements of the role of chief officer which do require on-the-job learning by candidates, specifically:

- An understanding of what it means to be a police constable;
- An understanding of the organisational culture of the police;
- the knowledge to challenge the operational requests and decisions of experienced police commanders;
- the confidence to challenge the operational requests and decisions of experienced police commanders

(Winsor, 2012, p.174)

The challenge is not inconsiderable, and further complicated by the operational realities of equipping candidates with the requisite skills. It signalled a decisive departure from the tried and tested career path of chief officers who, since the 1970s, have all started their policing lives as an “omni-competent police constable” (Crawford, 2011, p.148).

The importance of the role and function of the police constable within the landscape of British policing cannot be understated. The Office of Constable casts a sizeable shadow over any debate concerning direct entry into the highest police ranks. Many senior officers in their published memoirs fondly recount their memories of pounding the beat, which serves to cement the importance of this type of experience into the organisational psyche of those following in their footsteps (Blair, 2009; Paddick, 2008; Stevens, 2005). Indeed, the clear inference from much of the currently published material by retired senior officers is that service in the rank of police constable is vital to ensure that chief officers “have no illusions about the reality of police work” (Stevens, 2005, p.346). It can be argued, through history and operational reality, that the police constable is both the foundation and the cornerstone of the British police. They are also the drivers of police culture (Fielding, 1986). According to a former President of ACPO the “office of constable is the bedrock which underpins the delivery of justice in this country. It reminds us that those charged with enforcing law and order are office holders who are ultimately accountable to the law, not to any employer,

politician or anyone else with a vested interest, for their actions. Its value and worth to the public has been demonstrated time and time again and it is the office which provides chief constables with their operational independence – from which legitimacy and consent flows” (Police Federation, 2008). The way in which the police constable is viewed within the broader fabric of criminal justice, not just as a rank, but as an embodiment of tradition, authority and discretionary application of power over the civilian, has resulted in tensions as the future of British policing is to be seemingly entrusted to those who have not walked the beat. One contributor to Winsor’s report noted that:

“I believe that the greatest strength of our current rank structure is that everybody starts as a Constable, and experiences and understands the role they are asking others to perform. I am a Superintendent, and I can confidently stand in front of any of my officers and know that I understand what I am asking them to do. Equally the fact that I have done their role provides my officers with a degree of reassurance...this type of experience cannot be taught in a sterile environment such as a classroom, it must be experienced...Any attempt to parachute people in at senior ranks will damage the service we provide to the public, and it is a very dangerous proposal”

(Winsor, 2012, p.175).

The counterpoint to this view was succinctly summarised by another contributor to the Winsor Report: “Officers need to get into the real world – the service desperately needs external people coming in at higher ranks to modernise this outdated service” (Winsor, 2012, p.175). In his critique of the traditional linear police career path, Pagon draws on the following analogy, it would be “equivalent to entering the hospital as a nurse, working one’s way up to a position of doctor, then to an assistant director and finally to the director of the hospital. While we may laugh at this example from medicine, that is what was typically done in police organisations” (2003, p.167). It has been argued that the review of how senior leaders are selected “was intended to end the ‘closed shop culture’ within policing and improve the blend of officers running the modern service” (The Telegraph, 2015). Modernisation of policing, in particular, would be facilitated by individuals joining in senior roles who had an understanding of policing but no deep seated socialisation or indoctrination

in the existing culture which impacts the initial careers of young in service constables (Blair, 2009; Fielding, 1986; Stevens, 2005).

One of the other perceived benefits of direct entry, which has been emphasised in particular by the MPS, is its potential to address concerns over representation and diversity. In October 2008 the MPA commissioned a Race and Faith Inquiry to examine the way that diversity issues were managed within the MPS. After months of interviews and testimonies the findings were finally published in July 2010. The findings contained numerous recommendations, including Recommendation 4 which stated that there needs to be a "...more flexible approach to recruitment, to increase diverse representation at senior ranks and develop the entire organisation and its performance" (MPA, 2010, p.12). In essence, if the MPS were able to externally recruit a more diverse profile of senior officers, it could change its leadership profile far more quickly than through traditional progression and selection attempts (MPA, 2010). A number of commentators on direct entry have, however, struck a cautionary note in respect of the extent to which direct entry should be viewed as a means to increase diversity within the senior ranks of the police service, emphasising that merit, not ethnicity or gender, must be seen as the sole determinant for selection into these positions, both for the credibility of minority groups and also the direct entry scheme itself (Hogan-Howe, 2013; Smith, 2015). Some academics have gone further and suggested that a direct entry model could exacerbate the very diversity issues that it is intended to overcome by creating even more competition for a reduced number of senior roles. Considering the implications of this for women, in particular, Silvestri observes that: "Rather than representing an opportunity for change...[this] appears to have strengthened the predominantly male culture of long working hours, aggressive and competitive behaviour, maintaining gendered identities in the police organisation. In this context policewomen often have to make stark choices between pursuing promotion and fulfilling commitments outside of work" (Silvestri, 2005, p.278). It is also of concern that direct entry increasingly appears to be regarded as the main lever in the MPS's proposals to address diversity concerns. In many senses, it represents the ideal strategy: it offers the prospect of quickly changing the face of the police service and has potential to sweep across all minority groups. However, to focus on this alone risks papering over a number of deeper cracks and issues that need to be addressed, not least the culture of

policing and the norms and values of police officers, if minority groups are to be treated equally and achieve success in the police service.

Aligned to the above are concerns around whether direct entry will fully realise its intended benefits. Since the opportunity opened in 2014, only 23 people have been selected as direct entry superintendents, significantly less than originally hoped for;<sup>17</sup> of this group 47% are female but only 13% are BME. At the level of superintendent, it has been argued that “the kind of applicants thought most suitable for direct entry could exhibit very similar social characteristics...those seen as most eligible are likely to be drawn from the officer ranks of the armed services, or be current members of the intelligence services or other enforcement agencies. The potential pool may extend to lawyers and senior public and private sector managers” (Loveday, 2013). A review of the profile of the initial intake of direct entry superintendents shows that the scheme is already attracting some former military officers. One-third of those selected come from either police or military related roles (College of Policing, 2016b, p.4). Although there has been a close association between police leadership and the military throughout the history of British policing, with many senior officers in the MPS and county forces previously holding high military office (Morton, 1993; Wall, 1998), it has been stressed that the police “should not be seen as a refuge for passed over Majors. Just as a senior police officer would be incapable of commanding a brigade in action, it is clear that a senior army officer is unqualified to act at ACPO rank” (Kernaghan, 2013, p.13). At this point, it is too early to properly evaluate the effects of direct entry.<sup>18</sup> None of the candidates, for example, have yet attempted to step up to chief officer rank. The College of Policing interim evaluation of the scheme suggests some early positive signs, with line managers and coaches suggesting direct entry superintendents are influencing change, to a degree, by being: “more willing to challenge upwards, less constrained by hierarchical leadership, more open to change and encouraging others to be the same” (College of Policing, 2016b, p.6). However, the direct entry superintendents themselves have expressed concerns “about

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<sup>17</sup> The College of Policing’s Fast Track and Direct Entry second interim evaluation report describes the ambition that 20 programme members would join per cohort, meaning by now there should be 60 direct entry superintendents in place nationally (2016b, p.4).

<sup>18</sup> Although Smith’s article “Don’t call me Ma’am: Directed Entry into leadership roles in British Policing” provides an interesting first insight into the profile and motivations of the inaugural direct entry superintendent cohort (The Police Journal: Theory, Practice and Principles, 2016, Vol. 89(4) 311–326).



potentially losing their unique qualities (both in terms of their pre-existing skills, personal characteristics and leadership style)” (College of Policing, 2016b, p.6). Data on the costs of advertising and administering the scheme are difficult to obtain. The College of Policing have indicated that their marketing and selection budget for cohort 3 alone was circa £400,000, but this does not take into account any additional spend on salaries, training and supplementary activity delivered by individual forces (College of Policing, 2016a, p.1). Arguably, then, direct entry is a costly infrastructure and significant investment to secure a very small number of people whose impact on the police service has yet to be proven.

Overall, direct entry clearly remains an emotive topic for many both within and outside the police service. It is perhaps inevitable, albeit not always helpful, that there are both high expectations and intense scrutiny of the new direct entrant superintendents. This comes in spite of a notable ambiguity from key stakeholders around the precise outcomes that direct entry is anticipated to achieve for the service; as Smith notes: “the narrative that surrounds the direct entry debate tends to be concerned with ‘new perspectives’ and ‘changing culture’ – difficult outcomes to map and measure, compared with the more tangible areas of police delivery (e.g. reduce burglary in a given neighbourhood). Whatever the desired outcomes delivered by the ‘talented’ individual that is being sought, the expectation of the organisation is key. If extraordinary ability that is viewed as a ‘game changer’ for the organisation is anticipated, this may be too high an expectation. Adding value in the particular area required may actually be all that is required” (Smith, 2015, p.164). Perhaps most tellingly, Smith concludes that much of the language surrounding direct entry to date has been unhelpfully provocative: “significant elements of the narrative offered in relation to direct entry adopt a position that external is better. It is perhaps more accurate (and certainly less provocative) to consider the external talent pool as different.” (Smith, 2016, p.313). Arguably, changing the narrative in this way and contextualising the direct entry schemes against the backdrop of a broader talent management strategy takes some of the heat out of the debate around direct entry and allows for a more constructive future assessment of its merits.

## Conclusion

This chapter has examined the processes by which senior police officers are selected for and appointed into chief officer roles. Each of the various stages involved in these appointments, both at a national and local level, and on a formal or informal basis, have been reviewed, particularly in light of recent debates around direct entry for police managers, strategies to develop and fast track officers for senior leadership, and ongoing issues of patronage. What is clear from this literature review is that the transition to chief officer level is a significant and critical step in the leadership pipeline for the police. As such, it is important that the 'system' of police selection at this point is not conceived merely as another promotion process, designed to assess more of the same, but is instead framed to test the changing shape of the job and the unique challenges and demands that the chief officer role will bring. Similarly, any system of police selection at this level must work hard to draw through the most talented at the superintendent rank, and not just those who are valued for their traditional operational skills and competence. If the service selects candidates for chief officer on the wrong premise and continues to assess them against traditional competencies rather than the executive skills that are required to be successful at this level, the model of selection that the service is working to become almost academic.

As demonstrated within this review the existing research within the field of police senior selection and progression has been generated from numerous sources. Over recent years research from established police academics, such as Reiner and Wall, has been enriched by the candid autobiographies of retired senior police officers and studies undertaken by government bodies and the Police Federation. This chapter has identified that the progression to the senior ranks of the police is influenced to a lesser or greater extent by talent spotting, patronage and participation in accelerated promotion schemes. Senior command is the preserve of the "steadfastly ambitious" candidate as opposed to the most skilled police officer in the field (Barham, 2010a). Undoubtedly it is "only the most resilient and single-minded...[that] achieve the goal of appointment as an ACC in a police force or as a commander in the Metropolitan Police" (Caless, 2011, p.40).

## Chapter Five: Unveiling the Met's 'Top Cops'

"There are two kinds of people: those who want to be someone and those who want to do something."

(Morrow quoted in Monnet, 2015, p.13)

### Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to present an analysis of the current members of the Chief Officer Group of the MPS. Beyond the pomp and ceremony of their roles, positions and authority, they constitute a small cadre of individuals who have, using various methods, strategies and career paths, risen to occupy some of the most important roles within modern British public life. They are an elite within policing, who exert a powerful influence over crime, security and safety in the UK. Through the use of confidential interviews with the current leadership team of the MPS, this chapter serves to unveil who the current leaders in the MPS are and the experience and qualities they bring to the role. As this study is based on only a small sample of chief officers in the MPS, this chapter will present dominant themes and contradictions from the research. This is done not with the intention of trying to generalise the findings across the entire pool, but in the hope that others will take up the baton and investigate some of these themes and issues further. This is of value to both academics and police practitioners as "leadership is an important component in police administration, so we should constantly search for a more effective understanding of leadership within the police" (Gaines & Worrall, 2012, p.173).

Specifically, this chapter will focus on the following themes that emerged during the course of the interviews:-

- The leadership style debate
- The changing organisational context
- The nature of experience
- Diversity (race and ethnicity, gender)

It attempts to pull together and classify the differing views of the chief officer group within the MPS by proposing four different categories of chief officers, who each exemplify different dominant perspectives and patterns of experience. These four categories are then used as a mechanism to both cluster and understand responses, as well as some of the disparate and contradictory views that emerged during the course of this research.

## **Typology of chief officers**

Although no two chief officers are the same, each bearing their own unique characteristics and contradictions, it is possible to broadly make sense of them under certain categories and to use these categories to help to group their responses. The thematic analysis from this research suggests there are certain key factors or influences on chief officers that may help to define these categories:-

- **Dominant management / leadership ideology** – this describes the extent to which the chief officer espouses a predominantly transformational or transactional approach to leadership and the influence this then has on their frame of reference.
- **Response to the changing organisational context** – the responses of the chief officer group were informed by their interpretation of, and reaction to, the wider social and contextual changes that are affecting the police (as set out in Chapter Three). Some revealed themselves as keen proponents of change who are actively embracing the new context within which they find themselves, whilst others demonstrated different coping mechanisms to deal with their discomfort with the new demands being placed on them, in some cases preferring to harken back to a previous ‘golden’ era of policing.
- **Value placed on policing experience** – the nature of both their own policing experience and the primacy they place on policing experience from those around them is an important determinant of their own individual career choices, their approach to the management of new talent coming through the organisation and their thinking on a number of current policing strategies, including direct entry, training and fast-track schemes.
- **Career trajectory** – the particular educational background and career trajectory of each individual, including the nature of the individual challenges and barriers they

have encountered on their pathway to the top, shapes their approach to both the job and their dealings with those around them.

Using these four dimensions, this study has identified four categories or types of chief officer: the 'old school copper', the 'fast tracker', the 'plodder' and the 'reformer'. These types pull together certain dominant themes or influences, but they do not seek to suggest that the chief officers interviewed will invariably fit neatly into one type; as Reiner writes: "They represent tendencies, when all the pressures on a particular chief point in the same direction. Flesh and blood individuals are not likely to fit the totality of a type...The result is likely to be a contradictory hybrid, deviating considerably from a pure type" (1991, p.305). Despite this cautionary note, it is suggested that these four types (as set out below) do provide a useful frame of reference both to refine and interpret the rich range of chief officer responses collated within this research study. Of those interviewed, 16% fell predominantly into the 'old school copper' category; 25% into the 'fast tracker'; 16% into the 'plodder'; 33% into the 'reformer'; 8% fell between categories.

Table 2 - Typology of chief officers in the MPS

Category or type	Major Characteristics			
	Leadership style	Response to changing organisational context	On the nature of experience	Career trajectory
<i>'Old School Copper'</i>	<p>Transactional focus</p> <p>Favours a command and control style</p> <p>Likes to be seen as a 'copper's copper'</p>	<p>Low tolerance of change</p> <p>Accepts but doesn't espouse decisions from above</p> <p>Doesn't identify themselves with the leadership of the organisation – identifies with the tiers below</p>	<p>Values policing experience above all</p> <p>Their experience of policing is largely operational rather than managerial</p> <p>Talks a lot about operational credibility and competence</p>	<p>Slow but determined pathway to the top</p> <p>Career pathway often characterised by several attempts to pass selection processes</p>
<i>'The Fast Tracker'</i>	<p>May not necessarily have a dominant leadership approach</p> <p>Has not always spent enough time at each rank to mature their leadership style</p> <p>Due to this may be reliant on the rank structure to get things done</p>	<p>High tolerance of change</p> <p>May not always drive change, but has a good intellectual ability and can adapt quickly to it</p> <p>May struggle to sell change to those around them</p> <p>May risk being seen as slightly self-serving rather than working for the benefit of the wider organisation</p>	<p>Recognises the importance of policing experience but typically may hold more administrative experience themselves</p> <p>May lack credibility with the rank and file because of perceived lack of operational policing experience</p> <p>May feel threatened by recent developments post Winsor</p>	<p>Swift pathway to the top – typically having been on either a graduate or fast track scheme</p> <p>Joined with the mission to lead the service</p> <p>Often demonstrates an advantaged social and educational background</p>

Category or type	Major Characteristics			
	Leadership style	Response to changing organisational context	On the nature of experience	Career trajectory
<i>'The Plodder'</i>	<p>Demonstrates more of a paternalistic style</p> <p>Typically displays good people skills</p> <p>Likes to take people with him/her</p> <p>Gives credit to the team for their work and achievements</p>	<p>Typically goes with the flow</p> <p>Tends to be more reactive to change rather than a driver or initiator of change</p>	<p>Values policing experience but also recognises the value that those with other experience can bring to the table</p> <p>Typically has a strong operational pedigree, but may play this down</p> <p>May defer to those with more managerial or administrative experience</p>	<p>Slow ascent to the top – almost 'surprised' they have arrived there</p> <p>Credits success with being in the right place at the right time</p>
<i>'The Reformer'</i>	<p>Shows a strong preference for a transformational approach</p> <p>May see some of our female and BME chief officers fall into this category</p>	<p>Actively drives reform of policing</p> <p>Strong proponent of the need to transform the service</p> <p>Typically very aware of the public presentation of the police</p> <p>Ardent supporter of the police's diversity and equality agenda</p>	<p>Values other experience as well as policing</p> <p>Supports Winsor's Direct Entry schemes</p> <p>Typically builds good relationships with those from government, politicians and other influential stakeholders</p>	<p>Often shows a very quick career trajectory</p> <p>May have benefitted from working with like-minded individuals who have actively sponsored their career progression</p>

### Leadership style debate

As articulated within Chapter Three, the modern chief officer cadre find themselves in the midst of an ongoing debate around the desirability of adopting either a majority

transformational or transactional leadership ideology. Although an in-depth examination of this topic is beyond the scope of this study, it is important to surface it here as part of the consideration of the wider framework of chief officer characteristics. Broadly speaking, the interviews carried out suggested that policing and police leaders have moved away from transactional to transformational methods of leadership (Deluga & Souza, 1991). This is despite the fact that transactional has been the traditional and preferred approach for police leadership in Britain. It clearly represents a style which many senior leaders remain most comfortable in using, particularly the group identified as 'Old School Coppers': "I've worked in this organisation for a long time and I've seen different management and leadership fads come and go. I think it's all a bit clichéd really. No one is going to fit exactly into these rigid leadership types. These people who espouse a visionary, transformational leadership are often just saying one thing and doing another. At the end of the day, we're just paying lip service to it. Our people need clear direction and a firm hand and this fluffy new leadership thinking won't help with that" (Interview 7).

It has been noted that modern leadership analogies "either lionize that [transactional] model or deride it as utterly inappropriate for a civil police force" (Cowper, 2000, p.228). The 'Old School Coppers' clearly fall into the former camp, majoring on the effectiveness of a transactional leadership style in command and control scenarios and its efficacy in an "authoritarian organisational model" such as the police (Vera & Koelling, 2013, p.68). This group tended to place an emphasis on the rank structure and the importance of a visibly strong, unwavering leader. They also attested to the standpoint that transactional leadership need not always have negative connotations and implications (Taylor-Bianco & Schermerhorn, 2006). One senior officer recalled that: "I was in the TSG [Territorial Support Group - a specialist public order unit] for several years, and I remember very clearly the first introductory briefing given to us by our operations superintendent. He said "there is no place for debating or a question & answer session in the middle of a riot. Just follow orders". Now I do not subscribe to all of that, however fundamentally command and control leadership, transactional leadership, is and can be very effective. We should not be afraid to use it although it does not seem very popular at the moment" (Interview 10). Another chief officer noted that "transactional leadership has got a very bad press recently. However actually it is all about how you use command and control leadership. I worked for one commander with



real charisma. He was shouty but he did it in such a way that we would follow him into hell. He was good, which helped, but he was very much the boss. He got away with this style because of his character. I can think of some colleagues I work with now who if they tried to be transformational...well I think people would laugh at them” (Interview 9).

Others, specifically the ‘Reformers’, critique the transactional model as being overly autocratic, militaristic and not in keeping with the ethos of modern, participative policing. They point to the increasing challenges that have been levelled at this approach in the last decades, not least by the general trend towards community policing (Coleman, 2008). The clear move to participatory transformational leadership has been seen as being beneficial in terms of staff participation and community engagement, occurring at a time when the police face real challenges in building trust and confidence within the wider community (Blair, 2009; Paddick, 2008). It also represents a conscious and deliberate departure from the heritage of senior military figures being chief officers. The adoption of transformational command styles is evidence of the great lengths policing and chief police officers have gone to distance themselves “from the contamination of militarism” (Cowper, 2000, p.230). One interviewee noted that “quite simply what was acceptable behaviour when I joined in the 1980s would now quite possibly get me disciplined. I can see no place for shouting and ordering in the modern MPS...It is not effective, in my view, it is abusive and it would switch off many of my colleagues and their interest in working to the best of their ability” (Interview 1).

When questioned on how they would describe their own leadership style, many of the interviewees struggled to clearly articulate the qualities and attributes that underpin it. The ‘Fast Tracker’ group, in particular, struggled to define their personal leadership approach, demonstrating a tendency to talk about leadership as a theory rather than how they personally chose to practise it. Many found it easier to describe what it felt like to be a recipient of, or witness to, poor leadership than to set out in clear terms what good leadership looked like. This perhaps reinforces the notion that in spite of “the existence of thousands of leadership programs, books, and strategies addressing leadership, as well as the incredible importance placed on the ability to lead, leadership remains one of those concepts that is relatively easy to recognise retrospectively, but much more difficult to identify, describe, and articulate prospectively” (Jarvis *et al.*, 2010, p.45). Interestingly, though, the entire pool felt

strongly that it was leadership that made the difference, with both the 'Plodders' and the 'Reformers' setting out a cogent case to this effect. This accords with wider academic research that identifies the concept of leadership as the most important skill for both police leaders and those aspiring to reach the rank of chief officer (Dantzker, 1996). There was also a clear view from the interviewees that one of the most important factors in determining their approach is context. As one interviewee summed it up: "I'm not sure I have one dominant leadership style. I try to flex my approach according to the situation I find myself in and the people I am dealing with" (Interview 4). The able police leader will know when the time is right to deploy the appropriate leadership style contingent on the circumstances, situation and strategic intention. One senior officer observed that "I have a preference but I regularly use both depending upon my audience and the task at hand. I am sure all of us [chief officer group] do. Even the Commissioner has to use both styles" (Interview 11). The majority of the interviewees conceded that they use both styles as required.

When asked if there were qualities or attributes specific to police leadership, there was no absolute consensus across the interviewees. As might be expected, the "responses suggest the presence of some commonalities, but also disagreement and contradiction in what constitutes leadership and what ensures leadership efficacy" (Schafer, 2010, p.7). Both the 'Reformers', the 'Plodders' and the 'Fast Trackers' described skills that are of equal relevance to senior leaders across industry; in other words, when describing police leadership they saw it as generic leadership skills framed within the particular context of police work. Across the groups, common responses included:

- Being committed to achieving a high quality service to the community
- Supporting, developing and inspiring staff;
- Demonstrating strong ethics and high standards;
- Having relevant knowledge and skills

In many respects, this list has much in common with the description of desirable police leadership qualities and behaviours detailed in Chapter Three. However, there were some subtle differences apparent by type. In particular, the 'Old School Coppers' honed in on the importance of operational competence and decision making skills (Graef, 1989; Stevens,

2005). They articulated the importance of being able to make quick and often life-changing decisions in difficult circumstances based on limited information. Elsewhere, both the 'Reformers' and 'Fast Trackers' described the importance of political awareness and the ability to work effectively with politicians (Blair, 2009; O'Leary *et al.*, 2011). As one interviewee stated: "There is also a point at which politics kicks in. I have seen eight Commissioners, all with very different styles – some more successful than others (although it depends how you define success). In general, we are very poor at speaking truth to power. That links to your career aspirations – how one fits with this or doesn't. Commissioners manage in different ways and we have suffered horribly with that" (Interview 5). One interviewee notably differentiated between what he saw as those traits that were common to the current crop of police leadership (detail-oriented, risk adverse, cynical, 'a tad glass half empty') and those qualities he felt should be present (innovative, challenging, future focused), particularly bearing in mind the future challenges and changing expectations of the chief officer role (Interview 12).

### **Changing organisational context**

As described in Chapter Three, policing has undergone a huge period of change and adjustment over a relatively short period of history (Brain, 2010; Emsley, 2009; Stevens, 2005). During the course of the interviews, many of the interviewees made reference to the scale of changes they had witnessed through their career. Both the 'Fast Trackers' and 'Reformers', and to some extent the 'Plodders', saw these changes as inevitable: "one thing is for sure – and that is the inevitability of change. The nature of crime is changing, policing is becoming increasingly political, and the wider context – the economy, the population, attitudes to policing – is changing. All of that means we need to adopt different approaches within the police service" (Interview 4). Others were more ambivalent around the changes, with some of the 'Old School Coppers' using language that suggested the changes represented a threat to the old established way of doing things. To some, the changing context was framed as a matter for regret: "over the life of my career we have changed from a force to a service, and the changes have been seismic really. The officers joining now are working in an environment so far removed from how things were in the 1970s and 1980s that I feel like I am from another planet" (Interview 8).

Nearly all were well aware that the new challenges and changes embrace the whole spectrum of policing – from roles and responsibilities to workforce composition to race relations and community engagement – and that this means a clear change in the scope of, and the demands placed upon, the chief officer role. Some of the ‘Reformers’, however, did not think that the police service was doing enough to respond to the changing policing context: “We’re at a crossroads for policing – I’m not sure people are truly grasping that. Policing in 5/10 years will be so different – the technology, the demands, the nature of staff, the expectation. Are we adapting and innovating to respond to that as much as we can? Don’t get me wrong, we are doing a lot of change in the Met, but there has not been a pace of change like that before. It is a different world to when I joined” (Interview 1). The scale of the change certainly prompted the ‘Reformers’ and the ‘Fast Trackers’ to feel that chief officers needed in future to demonstrate different skills and abilities or, at least, to place more emphasis upon certain skills. A summary of these skills and abilities (as mentioned across the interviews) is set out below.

<b>Skill / Ability</b>	<b>Description</b>
Understanding the corporate business	Working to the corporate framework and acting in a more ‘cross cutting’ way
Negotiating & influencing across boundaries	To ensure that the needs of specific areas of responsibility are aligned with those of the wider organisation
Relationship building with stakeholders (internal & external)	Building effective relationships with the most senior stakeholders outside the force (and nationally) as well as with internal stakeholders (e.g. Police Federation, staff associations, etc.)
Commercial and business acumen	The ‘business’ side of this would incorporate not only aligning business delivery to corporate finances but also a greater understanding of strategic HR and corporate governance responsibilities. The inclusion of ‘commercial acumen’ starts to reflect the broader moves across policing to operate more commercially.

Skill / Ability	Description
Ability to truly empower others	Setting a leadership style and environmental culture that supports this empowerment and gets the best out of people.
Personal resilience	Nearly all interviewees recognised the demands placed on chief officers, the risks that these will increase, and the importance of personal resilience in effectively managing them.
Confidence to operate with 'uncertainty'	This represents the growing complexity and uncertainty within which all police officers and staff in the police service operate. For chief officers in particular, being able to manage this uncertainty would be a key element of being able to empower those beneath them.
Strategic visioning	A number of comments were made referencing the need for the chief officer role, and therefore the individuals in these roles, to operate more 'strategically'. It necessitates chief officers having an understanding of the future policing challenges over the coming 5-10 years and being able to set out how their area of business, as well as the wider force, can prepare to meet these challenges.

*Table 3 - A summary of the skills and abilities needed by future chief officers*

The majority of the interviewees, then, recognised the changes in their role and the new demands that the changing economic and social context was placing on them. Some embraced this, whilst others regarded it with more ambivalence and possibly even with a sense of threat. It was clear that for many – the 'Old School Coppers', the 'Plodders' and even some of the 'Reformers' – there was a nostalgic regret for the 'good old days' when they were operational police officers and doing proper 'bobbying'.

## The nature of experience

As discussed in the previous chapter, there remains across the police service a strong belief that in order to lead the police service, chief officers must have proven their policing ability across the lifespan of their careers; in other words, a prerequisite of police command is experience as a police officer. The single entry point of recruitment into the police service has meant that technically any police recruit could in future rise up to become a future chief constable or MPS Commissioner; as Judge sums it up: “Every young policeman carries a chief constable’s baton in his truncheon pocket...Every recruit, at least in theory and regulation, starts off on the same footing” (Judge, 1972, p.164). The current cadre of MPS chief officers are all graduates of recruit training as a police constable and have then progressed up through the ranks. As one interviewee stated: “looking back my favourite rank was PC. You have a great deal of opportunity to enjoy the job, work in a team and race around trying to make a difference. I am probably looking at my time through rose tinted spectacles but I only have good memories of my time as a street cop” (Interview 8).

This does, however, prompt the enquiry as to whether there is anything that serves to differentiate those who have risen to become chief officers today from the rank and file. One first area of focus could be the educational backgrounds of the chief officer pool. MPS figures show that currently less than 1 in 5 new recruits join the service with a degree (MPS, 2016c). In fact, the current entry requirements stipulate that candidates must hold only a GCSE or equivalent pass in English and complete a Level 3 Certificate in Policing as a pre-join requirement<sup>19</sup>. However, of those MPS chief officers interviewed, two-thirds held a degree at the point of joining the police, with five (including all those categorised as ‘fast-trackers’) having studied at either Oxford or Cambridge, widely regarded as two of the highest ranking universities in the UK. This suggests that chief officers in the MPS typically have both a higher educational attainment level than their non-chief officer counterparts and outperform in terms of the types of institutions they attended. Equally, of the remaining chief officers interviewed all studied for a degree or higher qualification once within the service, with these degree subjects either being related to the law, criminology or to police leadership and management. As one interviewee stated: “Policing is becoming increasingly complex,

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<sup>19</sup> A Level 3 qualification is equivalent to A-Level

particularly for those leading the service. I'm not sure I'm persuaded that all police constables need to hold a degree to deal with the practicalities of policing on the streets, but I do think that you need to be able to demonstrate those higher level intellectual abilities to perform successfully as a chief officer. Certainly, when I looked across at my competition, I could see that I would need a degree to acquire parity with those who were intent on getting to the top" (Interview 10). This underscores the view within the police service that if you are to advance to senior positions, a degree is a prerequisite.

Of the pool interviewed, only one-quarter had some experience of working outside of the police service. Two interviewees had served in the armed forces, with one having successfully graduated from Sandhurst. Another had joined a leading bank's graduate programme on graduation from university and spent a further two years in industry, before re-thinking and settling on a career in the police service. Of the others, all joined either straight from university or school, with many noting that they had long held an aspiration to become a police officer. Table 4 below shows the age at which the chief officer group interviewed joined the police, with the average age of joining being 22.5.

<b>Age at which joined the police</b>	<b>Number</b>
19	1
21	2
22	4
23	2
24	1
25	1
27	1
N=12	

*Table 4 - Age at which the chief officers interviewed entered the police*

When asked what initially attracted them to a policing career, the majority of those interviewed cited the nature of the work itself and the prospect of making a difference. Similar intrinsic motivations were found across the 'Old School Coppers', 'Plodders' and 'Reformers', with only one or two (notably the 'fast-trackers') indicating more mixed motives: "I joined the Met on the Special Course – I would never have come in without being on a fast-track scheme. I always had it in my mind that I would rise up to become a chief officer. I had no interest in being a career PC for life" (Interview 9).

This analysis suggests that, although carrying certain educational markers of success, which may in turn be suggestive of a greater likelihood of subsequent advancement in the police service, most of the chief officers interviewed became committed to a career in policing at a relatively early stage and were driven by an innate passion for, and attraction to, the work itself. Only a small minority showed that their motives for joining the service were driven by other considerations in terms of advancement or career. In short, the expectations and motivations for joining the police service of the chief officer group interviewed do not seem to put them vastly out of step with their rank and file peers. In many respects, this initial view of the police is likely to have shaped their subsequent attitudes, perspectives and practices; as one interviewee observed: "We're all absolutely shaped by our formative years of being a cop – that can be good, but equally those experiences can shape us in the wrong way...in many ways, we become institutionalised and our mindsets and attitudes, even as chief officers, remain closer to those of a police constable. That initial view of policing remains the primary lens by which we organise and make sense of our subsequent experience" (Interview 5).

In the previous chapter, it was noted that there is an inherent resistance across the police service to leaders joining to become senior officers without prior policing experience. When invited to give their views on direct entry into the police service, the MPS chief officer pool was divided, with the 'Old School Coppers' and 'Fast Trackers' demonstrating more scepticism and the 'Plodders' and 'Reformers' tending to be more open to the idea. Many of the latter felt that it was "utter madness – the idea that for a 55,000 people organisation the Commissioner has to start as a PC" (Interview 11). For them, policing command should not remain the unique preserve of Reiner's 'Bobbies' - experienced police constables who have



progressed through the ranks to reach the heights of chief officer (Reiner, 1991). As one said: “there is no magical art to being a chief officer. You need generic skills which are to be found in any leader who is successful in the public sector, coupled with the political radar to navigate the corridors of power and a little bit of luck” (Interview 8).

However, the ‘Old School Coppers’, in the main, disagreed with this idea and instead dwelt on the issue of credibility and whether the new breed of direct entry officers would inspire the trust and confidence of the men and women below them. For this group, the notion of operational credibility lies at the heart of police leadership and legitimises the entitlement of the chief officer to command. Their views accorded more with the argument that for the elite leader there is “no substitute for personal experience when it comes to dealing with problems. That’s particularly true in times of crisis, when there is less time to develop ideas and plans. Wisdom gained from one’s own history provides a head start” (Giuliani, 2003, p.xiv). It has been acknowledged within the wider study of leadership that society has conditioned a perception that asking for help is “a sign of weakness” (Mostat, 2009, p.54). This has the potential to be magnified within the hierarchical structures of the police: “in my opinion there is a clear expectation for the most senior officer in the room to have the answers. Asking for suggestions and requesting tactical advice from subject matter experts in public order scenarios is perfectly acceptable in police culture but troops expect the highest rank to have the plan and have the answers” (Interview 10). Such a cultural framing is most commonly demonstrated by chief officers seeking to demonstrate and comment on their operational prowess in the rank of constable (Blair, 2009; Stevens, 2005). As one interviewee noted “you do not have to ask a cop twice to start reciting some old war stories or tales of previous policing experience. Every senior cop likes to think they were a real crime fighter and thief taker, when in all honesty experience of being a good staff officer and administrator are more valuable skills for chief officer” (Interview 12). One interviewee concluded that “we [chief officers] want to think of ourselves as top street cops when in reality we stopped being operational many years ago...promotion and front line policing do not rest easily together” (Interview 8). A former MPS AC reflected that “once I thought that it was a strength for a chief constable to have served at every rank in the force because it developed an understanding and grounding for the job. But now I am not so sure. Someone rising through the ranks can develop their own prejudices or preferences – ‘sacred cows’ that may affect

their objectivity in planning, managing budgets and assessing priorities. Perhaps it would be better to parachute in an outsider who would not have that baggage - and the more varied their [sic] backgrounds the better” (quoted in Caless, 2011, p.191-92).

Interestingly, direct entry was one area where there were some clear contradictions within the interview typologies. One ‘Fast Tracker’, for example, rather drily observed that “direct entry could work – they’d have to be good candidates. But when I see some of the current incumbents, I think why not” (Interview 9). One ‘Reformer’ notably expressed some clear reservations around direct entry and how its success would be defined: “we need to let it run its course, but it does worry me when the College of Policing talks about evaluating the success of the scheme in terms of whether or not it churns out competent superintendents – to me, that’s pointless. I have lots of competent superintendents and I can easily grow my own. A key rationale for direct entry was to challenge expected thinking. It was about difference. What would be fascinating to see is if X is still bringing real difference in 3 years or if they are indistinguishable from every other superintendent. If the latter, what a very expensive waste of time and money. What I get annoyed about is these disciples of direct entry, who often have very little understanding of policing. If I had a batch of officers with chief officer potential, I’d rather swop them with external managers for a period of time. So our people go out to get real insight into another organisation. People go on about how that isn’t possible, but it is” (Interview 1).

Perhaps one of the most interesting insights into direct entry came from one of the ‘Reformers’, who was a keen proponent of the concept, but wanted to see it taken much further and directly linked into the imperative to build greater diversity across the police service: “It is the only way to change the look of the organisation quickly. But over the last 2 cohorts, direct entry has not been successful at doing that. If direct entry can’t get BME, it won’t help us. It’ll just block up the process even more with white officers. We need to make diversity the prime purpose of direct entry – that would mean a change to the law. Why aren’t we doing direct entry for BME/female/gay? It would be hugely controversial. But those are the barriers that have always been put up and which mean we are where we are now. The conversation today is the conversation we’ve been having for at least the last 20 years. It will take two generations otherwise to see a real difference at the top of the organisation...one

generation to change the PC pool and then another generation to get them up. So if we're happy that it will take 50 years, then let's leave things as they are, otherwise we need a real game changer" (Interview 6).

## **Reflections on diversity**

Building on the above, all of the chief officers interviewed were asked about their views on whether more females and ethnic minorities should be recruited into senior positions in the police service and what more could be done to expedite this. All, without exception, advocated the need for more diversity within the service. Commentators have argued that "policing diversity has become the pre-eminent theme in current debates about policing" (Rowe, 2002, p.424). Certainly, many of the chief officers interviewed talked eloquently and at length about the need for more visible representation. A couple noted that the emphasis in recent debates on diversity and policing has changed considerably during the time they have been working within the police, moving away from the more traditional focus on the external pressures of policing diverse or ethnic minority communities to an internal assessment of the lack of visible diversity in all ranks of the police: "over 40% of Londoners are from BME backgrounds, whilst only 12% of MPS police officers are from BME communities...We need to do more if we are to safeguard police legitimacy and build trust and confidence in BME communities" (Interview 3). Table 5 (overleaf) shows the diversity of the MPS chief officer team, as at September 2016. It is noticeable that although the figures appear to be more representative at the AC rank, there is markedly less diversity at the Commander rank, which suggest in future there will be a significantly less diverse pipeline of talent available to promote within the chief officer ranks.<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>20</sup> As previously noted, during the course of this research, there have been some changes to the MPS executive team, notably the selection and appointment of Cressida Dick as the first female MPS Commissioner. Interestingly, however, this diversity breakthrough has not been mirrored at the more junior chief officer ranks, where we see little evidence of improvement (as at January 2018, there have been no changes to the diversity profile at the AC level and, in fact, a decline in diversity at both the DAC (with only 25% of the rank now being female) and Commander levels (with no BME representation now evident).

Rank	% Male	% Female	% White	% BME
<b>Commissioner</b>	100%	0%	100%	0%
<b>Assistant Commissioner</b>	60%	40%	80%	20%
<b>Deputy Assistant Commissioner</b>	63%	37%	75%	25%
<b>Commander</b>	86%	14%	93%	7%

*Table 5 - Diversity of the MPS Chief Officer Team, as at September 2016*

Critics have argued that this is an example of the police failing, organisationally, to address the learning from Macpherson. The chief officer group interviewed had mixed views on this, with some reflecting that this position merely reflects the lack of visible diversity in wider British society: “There is a lack of representation at senior levels in many industries and organisations, the police is just one of these” (Interview 9). When pressed around the theme of diversity, a couple of the interviewees appeared merely to be rehearsing standard organisational responses rather than truly embracing the message. As the BBC observed in 2016, the standard organisational response in the post Macpherson political environment has been for leaders to accept that the “police need to represent the communities they serve, and right now that is not happening enough” (BBC, 2016).

Through the course of the research, it also became apparent that there were some clear tensions apparent in the views across interviewees. One interviewee, for example, revealed: “it is bordering on a religion. Or a cliché. At every meeting it constantly hovers over senior management teams...the need to be representative or find ways of becoming more representative although at times the benefits of such inclusivity are not always clear” (Interview 7). Another interviewee, however, felt that many of her chief officer peers had not properly taken up the mantra of diversity. She expressed some real concerns that across the service, her peers were not accepting of the diversity imperative and building it into national and local approaches; as she articulated it: “unless senior leaders see it as their personal responsibility, it isn’t going to happen. I’d like to know how many conversations there are at

chief officer level around where are our BME and female talent. This whole issue must move from being seen as an HR one to be seen as a line manager one” (Interview 3). Certainly, when probed on what more the service could be doing to respond to diversity issues, many struggled to articulate a strategic narrative, instead drawing on individual cases of coaching and sponsorship of BME and female officers that they were undertaking. One interviewee, in particular, pushed the challenge back to the author, in her capacity as Head of Talent & Resourcing, underlining that this was first and foremost “an HR issue around how we recruit and progress a visibly representative police” (Interview 2). This is perhaps reflective of the view articulated by another interviewee that some of her colleagues seem to think that they “shouldn’t be saddled with all this management and people stuff, when actually if you look at a good Chief Executive, they would be spending 40-50% of their time on people and talent management. The chief officer view here does seem to be that that isn’t policing” (Interview 6).

A number of interviewees, including those from a female and BME background, did express a concern about the MPS’s current approach to developing a more representative leadership and its potential to be divisive. There was some concern that the current message being disseminated throughout the MPS was being misinterpreted by the majority workforce as giving BME officers, in particular, an ‘easy ride’ to promotion, in turn causing cynicism amongst non-BMEs officers, while also putting off some BMEs from applying for promotion. As one BME chief officer noted, the current emphasis on positive action interventions and support, particularly around promotion processes, could drive the perception “...that if you’re from any kind of minority...If you’re black Asian, Muslim, female, disabled or whatever...you have some kind of easy path or ride to promotion because we’re obviously trying to encourage more representative leadership. We do need to encourage people to apply, but I think the way that message is sent down and the way it’s being received is that somehow minorities have an easy ride. I’m BME and I’ve been told in the past you should definitely apply for the promotion process, you’ll definitely get it. The underlying message there is that it’s not because I’m good at my job or I should be promoted but because ‘you’re black’, effectively ... not intended as racist comments but there’s an interpretation that that’s what’s happening. I don’t think that’s the case actually but certainly I was reluctant to get involved in those kind of positive action drives because I didn’t want to be seen as a token

promotion...” (Interview 4). There was a sense given by some of the chief officers that diversity had become such a sensitive topic that it was impinging on the ability of officers to properly lead and performance manage teams: “currently we simply cannot have honest and transparent conversations concerning race and diversity for the risk of making a career limiting gaffe. We are increasingly considering more and more radical solutions, including positive discrimination which is frankly unlawful at the moment” (Interview 7). As one officer noted “sometimes, in the middle of yet another report detailing the organisational failings in the ability of the MPS to be representative, I do wonder whether actually we should be investing equal energy in fighting crime. I fear we run the risk of alienating officers not from a BME background with the current approach being taken to recruitment, promotion and retention” (Interview 9). However, interviewees also observed that there was no easy answer to this challenge, given the barriers and historic lack of support and opportunities for BME and female officers. A female chief officer described her discomfort in taking up some of the positive action development that was offered to her when seeking promotion to chief superintendent and then chief officer: “I didn’t want people thinking I was promoted purely based on my gender, rather than merit. But then I looked back at some of the struggles I’d had and some of the opportunities that I’d missed out on because of my gender, and I thought why not” (Interview 3). This suggests that whilst the MPS has some good intentions to encourage diversity, the organisational message around this needs to be carefully crafted and communicated to ensure that it is not being misconceived as certain groups being given unfair advantage, rather than promoting inclusion and equality of opportunity.

Of the small number of female and BME chief officers interviewed, none of the BME officers felt they had been treated overtly differently because of their race. However, there were references made to the ‘canteen culture’ and examples of inappropriate racial comments provided; as one interviewee noted: “... you need to have a fairly thick skin to be a police officer because there is a good sense of camaraderie...it’s based on a culture of people mocking each other all the time...” (Interview 4). Interestingly, the female chief officers were able to articulate more examples of potential differential treatment. Two of the females noted that when they joined the police, as women, they felt they had to prove themselves worthy of the job, and that some jobs were seen to be kept for the boys. As Silvestri notes: “Demonstrations of credibility in the police organisation are enacted through the association

with operational work and crime fighting. The gendering of police work prizes the concept of action and physical strength; nowhere is this more obvious than in operational roles” (2011, p.93). The suggestion is that for women, more so even than men, it is important that they prove their operational prowess if they are to be able to compete for higher rank. However, a further potential complication here concerns how jobs are allocated and the consequences this can have for career progression. One of the most senior female interviewees (Interview 3) was candid in her view that, although she had achieved high office within the police, she now found herself in a ‘dead job’, which would not furnish her with the career profile to move on or up. As Silvestri puts it: “[the] work was not grounded in operations, which is necessary for being put in the frame for leadership roles” (2011, p.100). Chapter Three references the use of the metaphor of the ‘glass ceiling’ to describe the barriers that women face in climbing the corporate career ladder. However, the individual interviewed described an experience that came closer to ‘the glass cliff’, whereby she had broken through the ‘glass ceiling’, but had been placed in a leadership position that, albeit not necessarily high risk, was equally not conducive to her future career advancement (Ryan & Haslam, 2005). Another female interviewee made reference to the fact that men still stopped and stared when women entered the canteen, or areas which were predominantly male dominated: “...there is an issue when a woman walks into a canteen and all the officers still stop and stare. They were doing it in 2004 and they are still doing it today” (Interview 6). It does, however, have to be noted that there are dangers in overgeneralizing the experiences of the two female subjects referenced above. The third female interviewee was insistent that she had not suffered from any detriment on account of her gender, reflecting the fact that there will be great diversity of experience amongst women in the police.

Another fascinating dimension that arose during the course of the interviews with the female subjects concerned whether or not they were demonstrating traits more commonly associated with ‘maleness’. As Hearn & Parkin stated: “women who become leaders are often offered the presumed accolade of being described as being like men” (1986-87, p.38). It is noteworthy that all of the female chief officers interviewed were unusual in the sense that they either did not have children or their partners acted as the primary carer for their children – a situation which is unlikely to accord with the experience of most female officers in the MPS. As one interviewee pointed out: “I just don’t see how I could do what I do with a family”

(Interview 2). One interviewee described the senior sponsorship that one of her female colleagues received and, in the process, sheds some interesting light on the challenges facing women with families who want to progress in the police service: “my friend was told to draw up her career plan by a chief officer who was sponsoring her development. She did – and as it was an important thing for her, she included consideration of family and children on it. He wasn’t happy and made her re-work it to just focus on work aspects” (Interview 6). There was also a sense that traditional gender stereotypes – the assumption, for example, that female leaders would bring a softer, more caring approach - were inhibiting their abilities to lead. Two of the female interviewees gave examples of when they had been critiqued for demonstrating attributes that they considered their male counterparts would be praised for: “I was told that I came across as aggressive in a recent appraisal. I don’t consider myself to be aggressive, I’m assertive in a way that you have to be at this level. I’m certainly no more aggressive than any of my male colleagues” (Interview 2). The third female, however, noted that although she was comfortable with her style now, she had, at previous points in her career, felt under pressure to adapt her approach to try to be more assertive and dominant (Interview 3). This left a sense of a no win situation for this group, where all were coming under criticism irrespective of whether they assumed what are typically regarded as more male or female leadership styles. This in itself provides a revealing insight into some of the challenges facing ambitious women in the police service who are looking to make the step up to the most senior leadership ranks.

## **Conclusion**

The MPS is changing and evolving considerably at the level of chief officer: “gone are the days when the Metropolitan Police was led by men such as Sir Edward Bradford, whose qualifications were based on his service as a distinguished military officer – which included being half-eaten by a tiger while on colonial service in India” (The Telegraph, 2011b). The composition of chief officers, in keeping with the wider policing landscape, has adjusted to accommodate the new expectations associated with political and social oversight. The purpose of this chapter has been to give an insight into the current cadre of chief officers within the MPS – their careers, their qualities and their experiences. They have been clustered into typologies as a device to show both their similarities, but also the variety and



contradictions to be found amongst the group. In essence, this chapter suggests there are two types of semi-traditionalists, the 'Plodders' and the 'Old School Coppers'. Both demonstrate elements of Reiner's 'Bobby', but differ in their approach to some of the broader changes that are taking place across the policing landscape. To some extent, both these types may be seen as a 'dying breed', but this is overly simplistic. All of the typologies demonstrate strengths and flaws. Both the 'Plodders' and 'Old School Coppers' arguably demonstrate the strongest mastery of operational policing skills and, as such, are likely to command the trust and confidence of the rank and file. The 'Fast Trackers', meanwhile, although possibly the most political of the typologies, may suffer from a lack of respect from, and credibility with, those below them. What is clear is that the 'Reformers', with their willingness to innovate and transform, are likely to be seen as the 'future' of the police service and, if enough of them exist, may increasingly displace the others in future chief officer appointments.

Although the chief officers interviewed demonstrate some themes in common – a passion for the police, a desire to make a difference, a progression from the ranks to senior office – the evidence suggests they all have very different views and attitudes to a whole smorgasbord of policing issues and topics. Where they do agree is that the nature and expectation of the chief officer role has changed markedly and, as many of them also recognise, this requires both them and their peers to draw on new skills, abilities and leadership approaches if they are to successfully steer the police service through its evolving context.

It has been recognised in both this and previous chapters that the concept of direct entry into the police service has been proclaimed by many as the panacea for many of the current issues within policing. None of the current cadre of chief officers in the MPS have yet come through that route – all have progressed up from police constable, although the interviews did identify that many had been on some form of fast track or accelerated promotion scheme (see the following chapter for details). Interestingly, the views of many of those interviewed suggested a greater openness to the idea of direct entry than may have been expected. However, this was tempered by a concern across the group that the concept may end up being oversold and under-delivering, particularly in respect of its ability to deliver a more diverse senior leadership team.

Chief officers, as is the case with all police officers and staff across the police service, are expected to represent those they police (Paddick, 2008). That this development remains a work in progress (in common with the wider diversity debates) is underscored by many of the observations the group made in respect of race and gender. It indicates that there is still more work for the police to do in truly embracing diversity in its broadest sense and to address the problems that continue to face both women and BME officers in achieving senior rank. In the context of this research, some of the issues faced by ambitious women within the service were particularly apparent and this perhaps points to the need for the service to do more to recognise that men and women alike will bring a diversity of leadership styles and that the emphasis should be on ensuring both develop the skills and abilities to lead the service through the challenges and demands that were outlined in Chapter Three.

## **Chapter Six: The ‘Beauty Parade’: Competing to be a ‘Top Cop’**

“Once you pass the SCC, so the beauty parade to be appointed as a chief officer begins”

(Interview 5)

### **Introduction**

The previous chapter examined the views of chief officers on police leadership, the changing policing context and key policing issues, namely direct entry and diversity. This chapter focuses on how those senior police officers interviewed have risen to become chief officers and the challenges and barriers encountered on their pathway to the top. It explores their views on, and experiences of, making the step-up to chief officer, offering insight on their career profiles, their perceptions of what proved instrumental in setting them on the path to the top, and the selection and appointment processes themselves. What is clear from the accounts given is that, although there are inevitably differences in experience and opinion, there is an overriding sense that the talent management processes across the police are in need of a review and refresh if they are to select the right leaders to take the service forward.

The final part of the chapter explores the interviewees’ perceptions of some of the dilemmas unique to being a chief officer in the MPS. The descriptions given suggest there are some structural and organisational factors that impact on the expectations and requirements of those who hold chief officer rank in the MPS, which sets them apart from their chief officer peers in other forces.

### **Career profiles**

We move now to examine how the chief officer group interviewed successfully attained promotion to the most senior levels of the police service. The profile of the individuals interviewed shows that most were appointed to chief officer in their early to mid-forties. The youngest age at which a chief officer was appointed was 39 and the oldest was 50. The average age was 43.5 yrs – see Table 6 overleaf for the full distribution of ages.

<b>Age when appointed to chief officer</b>	<b>Number</b>
39	1
41	1
42	3
43	2
45	4
50	1
N=12	

*Table 6 - Age when appointed to chief officer*

On average, the group have served as chief officers for six years, with the range running from three years to 14 years. Most have been chief officers for less than five years, as Table 7 below shows. However, the very fact that some interviewees had accumulated some length of service as chief officers does suggest that, at variance to some of the concerns expressed in Chapter Four, the service has been able to reap a good return on investment from these individuals. It is perhaps inevitable that those officers who had a longer length of service as chief officers tended to be older – arguably, this is a product of simple maths - but it could also perhaps suggest a concern for the future if we see new younger generation talent potentially having to wait some time before a vacancy at chief officer level becomes available.

<b>Years as a chief officer</b>	<b>Number</b>
1-5	8
6-10	2
11+	2
N=12	

*Table 7 - Number of years as a chief officer*

On average, it took the group interviewed 21 years to be promoted from constable to chief officer (see Table 8). This bears out the view expressed in Chapter Four that the pathway to senior police leadership is a slow one, albeit as progression from police constable to chief officer necessitates promotion through six ranks, it is hard to see how this could be speeded up unless some ranks are removed. With regard to the group interviewed, it means that the individuals have already had to move fairly rapidly through the ranks; as one interviewee commented: “You do have to be selfish about making sure you are being tested in what you’re doing. I don’t see any point in moving over the line and staying too long in a role unless you want to develop a deep specialism like a murder SIO. In that case, you really have to write off being a chief officer” (Interview 1). Another chief officer observed that: “If you want to be a chief officer, you need to always be critically looking at yourself and where your gaps are” (Interview 12). It was perhaps because of this need to be constantly looking ahead at the next career step, that the majority of the group believed career progression was best served by remaining as a uniformed officer. As Reiner noted: “It is a widely believed aspect of police mythology that specialists are unlikely to reach chief constable rank, because the Home Office and police authorities look for a wide variety of work experience within the force” (1991, p.80). Despite this perception, 50% of the group interviewed had taken the time to specialise as detectives. One detective interviewee felt that although this had made it harder for him to progress to the higher ranks, now he was in post as a chief officer, it made him far more “marketable” (Interview 11).

<b>Years taken to achieve promotion to chief officer</b>	<b>Number</b>
16	1
17	1
18	1
19	2
20	1
21	1

<b>Years taken to achieve promotion to chief officer</b>	<b>Number</b>
23	1
24	2
25	1
27	1
N=12	

*Table 8 - Length of service when appointed to chief officer*

If we isolate the female and BME chief officers interviewed, there was no evidence that it was taking this group longer to attain chief officer rank, with the average years taken remaining steady at 21 years.

### **Tipped for the top**

Interestingly, of those chief officers interviewed two-thirds had been on some form of fast track or accelerated promotion course. As one interviewee commented: “Fast track schemes are essential, both to bring talent through, but also to manage the shape and diversity of the workforce. It is too easy to get lost in the Met unless you’re on something like that” (Interview 5). Another observed that: “Any organisation must have a way of bringing in the most gifted and exceptional at the bottom. If you think that people join at the bottom with no qualifications really and then you look at what is needed to be a chief officer – we must have enough exceptional people coming in to ensure that when the pool is whittled down you have the talent coming through” (Interview 12). Contrary to what might be expected, many of the ‘Old School Coppers’ were also reasonably supportive of the concept of fast-track schemes, but as one observed: “Being operationally credible is very important for fast trackers. I would advise people on the schemes to balance operational credibility with the need to stretch (Interview 10). Ironically, perhaps, it was the ‘Fast Tracker’ group themselves who expressed the most reservations around the fast track schemes. Part of this seemed to reflect a concern that the current schemes were not as effective as the ones that had been in place previously: “If you’re asking my opinion of the fast track schemes we have now, my experience is hit and

miss. The scheme I was on was only fast track in the sense you got to take the sergeants' and then the inspectors' exam quickly – your development was not fast track. You still had to prove yourself” (Interview 2). Possibly the most insightful observation on the fast track schemes came from one of the ‘Reformers’ who, in reflecting on the changing nature of careers and the new generation of officers (see Chapter Three), noted that: “the concept of a 40 year career has gone. People want mobile careers where they can move in and out. The fast track and direct entry schemes have to interact – direct entry is the way to bring back the best people who leave, say, as inspectors. People who complain about direct entry and fast track don’t see that vision at present” (Interview 6).

All of those interviewed were asked whether becoming a chief officer was part of their career plan. Most, outside of the ‘Fast-Tracker’ group, denied having a plan: “I didn’t have a plan. When jobs got boring, I looked for something else to do, either laterally or on promotion. Would it have been better to have a plan? – possibly in terms of my development” (Interview 11). Although many of the interviewees appeared vague when questioned around whether their career advancement benefitted from mentoring – “there was an ACPO sponsor for the Special Course and I must have had someone at middle manager level, but I think I was fairly low maintenance” (Interview 5) – nearly all recalled one influential senior figure or sponsor who had personally championed them and their career progression. Drawing on imagery from the National Lottery, Caless memorably describes this as “the golden finger”, a metaphorical tap on the shoulder from a more senior officer to indicate they were selected to go further (2011, p.43). In the words of one interviewee: “I certainly benefitted from bits of sponsorship – nepotism really. As a chief inspector I was a staff officer to the Assistant Commissioner and he then sponsored me all the way up to chief officer. He arranged different moves for me at the expense of other officers and parachuted me into places to get the experience I needed” (Interview 2). As another summed it up: “Sponsorship matters – I came into TP and I was given a huge portfolio that was utterly disproportionate to what others had. But I had the confidence of the TP AC. He invested in half his team (those he had confidence in) and the other half were just ticking over. I am not suggesting that is a good leadership approach, but that is how you get or create the opportunity” (Interview 5). Most of the interviewees appeared to accept this patronage as part and parcel of the culture of the MPS, even those who had perhaps not benefitted from it to the same extent as others: “I had 3

attempts at Commander. I passed the Extended Interview as it was then – people for PNAC were selected then on an individual basis rather than Metwide. I think I was seen as a safe pair of hands, but I was not a favoured son. In the end, because of my particular background and skillset, I was given a chance at temp promotion to a particular role - and I just remained continuous. Finally, I was substantively promoted” (Interview 9). Even the ‘Plodders’ whose pathway to chief officer may typically be described as less assured or more protracted than some of their counterparts credited their success to that one influential senior sponsor: “I was sound operationally, but just very bad at passing selection processes. I never considered going for chief officer – I loved my job as a Borough Commander and considered I’d done well to get there. But then I was told by a chief to go for it. It was a surprise, but he gave me a lot of help and here I am” (Interview 8).

### **Selection and appointment as a chief officer**

When questioned on their experience of the selection and appointment process to become a chief officer, there was a clear dichotomy of views across the interviewees, with some describing it as “tortuous”, “a real old saga” and “far too protracted”, whilst others reported that it was “rigorous”, “stringent”, and “about as fair a process as any”. Focusing initially on SPNAC, many of the group felt that it was broadly fit for purpose, although others saw clear room for improvement. As may be expected, the ‘Old School Coppers’ felt the fact that the process now emphasised operational competence was a good thing: “Now they are really pushing around those operational competencies, which has to be a good thing. Before people were getting through because they were good at processes” (Interview 10). Others, however, namely the ‘Reformers’ were less convinced: “If you buy the issue of broader leadership, the selection process should focus on managing risk and managing the future. We should take for granted that candidates are a capable leader of policing and take more notice of psychometrics, leadership styles, and so on. Our only value at the moment seems to be operational ‘grip’ and I find that worrying” (Interview 6). Across nearly all of the interview subjects, there was a manifest concern that the success of the process relies too greatly on forces being discerning around who they put forward. For some, particularly the ‘Old School Coppers’ and ‘Plodders’, at the root of this was a concern that forces were pushing people into the process too early: “We pull people out to do PNAC and the SCC too early. They should



do at least 2 postings at chief superintendent level. They need to spend at least 7-8 years as a chief superintendent. People are being pulled through too early. The system will eventually lock up so people will have to stay in role for longer” (Interview 10). Others felt that forces were not being stringent enough in identifying those with true chief officer potential: “You have to have a pedigree but also potential to be a chief officer. Those either not supported or unsuccessful in the process often haven’t got the difference between being a chief officer and a chief superintendent (Interview 3). Linked to this was a concern that the current process is too short sighted: “We need to look at chief officer potential far earlier in people’s careers – there is still this sense of a rite of passage. We only look at stretch of one rank – we should look at potential to go right to the top. We need a development pathway that starts earlier and looks longer” (Interview 12). Overall, the interviewees gave a clear sense that the service was struggling with its talent management processes, preferring to promote those considered to be a ‘safe pair of hands operationally’ than to take a risk on those with less of a track record but arguably more potential: “We select a big chunk of mediocrity. Almost like we have to balance talent with safety – that gets translated into mediocrity. We have to understand the operational stuff but not do it. So the whole process is haphazard” (Interview 5). As many of the interviewees pointed out, the process of identifying those with potential for chief officer needs to ideally start far earlier, reaching down to at least superintendent. By waiting until individuals get to chief superintendent, the “potential gene pool gets smaller and smaller so that by the time you get to the point of choosing PNAC candidates you haven’t got a lot of choice” (Interview 1). One of the ‘Reformers’ also underlined the consequences of this for the police service’s diversity ambitions: “There is still too much emphasis on natural selection – that sense that you have to look and behave like me to be successful. We don’t value difference enough and we then bear the consequences of that” (Interview 11).

Similarly, the views of the group on the SCC were split. The ‘Reformers’ and to some extent the ‘Fast Trackers’ saw value in the course for individuals’ development: “I think it’s good. It’s an excellent opportunity to step out from the day job. I believe everyone could benefit from time outside policing. It’s about developing executive skills” (Interview 12). Both the ‘Plodders’ and the ‘Old School Coppers’ were less convinced. One of the ‘Plodders’, in particular, was notably outspoken in his critique of the course: “What an utter load of rubbish. It made people worse. It fostered the concept you were special and you had reached an elite.

It was horribly competitive even though you weren't marked competitively. What a poisonous environment" (Interview 3). This notion of the SCC fostering the sense that the group were 'special' or an 'elite' pervaded many of the interviews and, to a greater or lesser extent, was an anathema to many of the interview subjects: "Everyone who talks at the SCC talks about you as the future chief constables - it perpetuates that sense of 'we are the chosen ones' – you are chosen but mostly by yourself ... because you keep thrashing through these processes" (Interview 1). Even some of those who were, in general, more supportive of the SCC questioned its relevance to the MPS because of the way the force uses its Commanders: "If SCC is about developing people to make the organisation successful in 5 years' time, we do need a process that re-sets mindsets. But we don't use Commanders like that – they're really nothing more than big chief superintendent roles. So the course becomes just another hurdle. People do it and then we put them back into the organisation to do what they were doing before" (Interview 11). A small number of the interviewees also questioned how sensible it was that the development offer for chief officers both starts and ends with the SCC: "There is no development as people step up to the various roles and ranks within the chief officer tiers. It doesn't make sense. It has to be about ongoing learning" (Interview 1). As another interviewee summarised: "You can go from PNAC to Chief Constable with nothing much in between and that can't be right" (Interview 11).

It is perhaps the final step in the chief officer appointment process – the 'in-force interviews' - which drew the most accord across all the interviewees. The group broadly agreed that, although this stage of the process is in itself fairly straightforward – the post is advertised, candidates are selected for interview on the basis of their application form and the successful candidate is identified on the basis of their performance in the interview – it breeds frustration as both another hurdle to get through following PNAC and the SCC, and also in the fact that there is no consistency across forces: "It means you have to negotiate your way through lots of subtly different application processes, all with slightly different assessment criteria and forms. It is just a hassle coming after what is already a fairly tortuous process" (Interview 4). This step in the process also proved to be the most controversial in respect of potential patronage and bias. Many of the interviewees noted that they had been invited to social dinners or drinks with chief officers and other key stakeholders in advance of the interview and that this had clear potential to rule you out of the running. As one interviewee

noted: “Trial by assessment is one thing, trial by sherry is quite another” (Interview 3). Another observed that: “Since all the candidates have passed PNAC and the SCC, and should therefore have the experience, skills and qualifications to do the job, the final decision is really based on whether you look and sound like the type of person the panel want to work with” (Interview 10).

## **Dilemmas of chief officers in the MPS**

In the course of the interviews, some of the interviewees, particularly those at commander rank, provided a compelling analysis of some of the dilemmas peculiar to being a chief officer in the MPS. They described the unique composition of the MPS, the scale of its policing responsibilities and challenges, and the resultant large establishment of chief officers. The MPS currently has five ranks at chief officer level, which is two more than any other force (Commander, DAC, AC, Deputy Commissioner and Commissioner). The number of commanders is particularly high, with 13 commander posts in the three main directorates of Specialist Crime and Operations (five posts), Territorial Policing (five posts) and Specialist Operations (three posts). These posts do not factor in commanders who are also seconded to other units. One interviewee noted that “there are far too many commanders in the Met. In my time we probably had over 25 posts at one time, including those who are temporarily promoted and farmed out for special projects. And each Directorate also has a DAC to support the AC, so yes we are too numerous as an ACPO team” (Interview 9). The volume of commanders in the MPS has an impact on the status of the post, and how commanders view themselves within the wider landscape of policing. As one interviewee explained “on paper a commander is equivalent to an Assistant Chief Constable in any other force yet nothing could be further from the truth. We are definitely less empowered, less stretched and less respected in my opinion. We are treated at times like chief superintendents with very large portfolios” (Interview 7). There is a clear perception that they are nominally chief officers but are not really utilised as such. Commanders are not members of the MPS Management Board and do not attend Chief Officer meetings unless they are presenting a specific agenda item (Interview 8). Such treatment raises additional considerations for those seeking to establish a career within the chief officer grades of UK policing: “Ideally I would like to be an ACC in a busy county and city force. I feel being a commander in the MPS is de-skilling me and making

me less attractive as a police leader” (Interview 12). Another comment reinforced this: “as a DCC you would stand in for the Chief Constable during any absence and be responsible for running the organisation on a day-to-day basis whereas as a DAC you wouldn’t even have a seat at the top table” (Interview 7). As one AC interviewee noted: “It is hard being a Commander or even a DAC in the Met and being so far away from the executive decision making. It is easy for me to say you are part of the executive but they don’t feel it”. As another pointed out, this creates a disconnect between the Commander and DAC/AC level, with commanders sometimes conceiving themselves as ‘victims’ of Management Board and not really seeing themselves as part of that executive leadership tier. Certainly, in the course of the interviews, when describing Management Board or executive leadership decisions, many of the commanders talked of ‘their decisions’ rather than ‘our’ decisions, underscoring that they saw themselves as at a remove from this senior leadership layer.

In describing some of the challenges of the current chief officer structure in the MPS, some of the interviewees also gave a clear sense that there was not enough ‘space’ or delineation between the ranks at chief officer level. There was agreement that there needed to be clarity regarding the lines of accountability at chief officer ranks and that the various ranks needed to ensure they were operating at the current level. As one interviewee observed: “Because there are so many of us, we all seem to be operating at one level down from where we should be. The AC is critical in determining how their DACs and Commanders operate. If the AC role was focussed on shaping the long-term strategic direction of the force, managing the most senior external stakeholders, and setting the policing agenda on a national scale, and stepping away from operational day-to-day business performance, then this would enable the subsequent roles to operate at a more strategic level” (Interview 12). This critique of the current structure and modes of leadership was not limited to any one interview type, but appeared prevalent across all of the commanders interviewed. As another noted: “Management Board operates more as a group of representatives from the various business areas rather than a cohesive executive board which is focussed on the organisation first and then business areas second” (Interview 11). Many of the interviewees recognised the positive aspects of working at the MPS, the ‘London Factor’ considerations, as one interviewee termed them, such as the opportunity to deal with some of the most complex and high profile operational challenges in policing and a place where officers with a specific specialist policing

interest/experience could make a contribution at a very senior level. However, the points raised by the interviewees did suggest wider issues around the attractiveness of chief officer roles in the MPS in comparison to other forces, with a clear concern that the roles in the MPS did not offer enough breadth, influence or strategic responsibility and were seen to be more focused on responding to high volume crime and managing political pressure.

## **Conclusion**

The review of the career profiles of the chief officers interviewed suggest there is no one template for success. However, taken as a collective, although they may reject the notion themselves, the chief officer group can best be understood as an elite in policing, who have been singled out from their peers, either as a result of their own ambition or through direct patronage from a senior sponsor, and promoted (through a fairly arduous process) to the most senior tiers of the police service. As Reiner memorably notes: “Underlying the whole career pattern of the successful there is the blend of luck, effort, drive and self-confidence...It is the sense of having, and deserving, a place in the sun” (1991, p.100).

What is clear from the statements given is that the selection and appointment process to chief officer is not without its problems and challenges. Inevitably, any final test of an appointment process must be its efficacy in nurturing and selecting the ‘right’ candidates, in other words, those with the most suitable leadership qualities and values. Understandably perhaps, the group interviewed did not explicitly express a view on whether the current processes were promoting the most worthy candidates. It seems doubtful though from the comments made by the group that the current chief officer selection and appointment processes are geared up to support either chief officers or the broader police service in adapting to the changing policing context. To use the words of one of the interviewees: “If you look at the skills & qualities you need to run an organisation, it is doubtful we’re even assessing them in our processes. Any chief executive has probably got good at what they do because they have worked in and experienced different environments, but where does that feature in policing? We need to look again at what we value, do enough in the chief officer gateway to ensure our people develop and demonstrate those executive skills and then, once

they reach chief officer rank, we shouldn't take our foot off the development pedal”  
(Interview 11).

## Chapter Seven: Conclusions: Changing the Face of the MPS

“Now I will do it my way. I don’t want to be boring. I don’t want to be exciting. And I don’t want to be a celebrity. I don’t want to be a police leader who people will follow out of a mere sense of curiosity. It is my aim to be a top police leader in charge of one of the most important police services in the world”

(Sir Paul Stephenson, Commissioner of the Metropolitan Police 2009 – 2011, cited in Greer & McLaughlin, 2012, p.140)

### Introduction

This study was initiated as a result of the author’s interest in, and passion for, leadership and talent management in the police. Despite the powerful and influential role that chief police officers fulfil, Chapter One described the paucity of academic research into this group and the processes by which they have achieved their senior rank. Lasswell, cited in Parsons (2002), saw public policing as a form of ‘social planetarium’ to “enable communities to observe themselves and reflect on their problems and the kind of futures they would like to see” (p.54). One of the drivers behind this research was, therefore, to explore a previously neglected area of police research and extract some learning and potential areas of reflection for the police service. This takes on additional significance in light of the importance of policing within the fabric of wider society: “The police are...one of the most essential of our public services” (Winsor, 2011, p.9). As outlined in Chapter Three, the police service is contending with a number of evolving and increasingly challenging demands and pressures, which reinforces the need for first class leaders at the top of the police service. As such, it is crucial that the leadership of the police is chosen and supported by the most effective HR processes available.

At the heart of this research was a series of confidential interviews completed with a small group of chief officers within the MPS. The author does not proclaim that the study paints either a definitive picture of chief police officers or the chief officer selection and appointment process. However, it is hoped that the views and experiences set out in Chapters Five and Six will help to build a deeper understanding of both the demands on, and qualities of, chief police officers. There are, inevitably, limitations to the research approach taken. As Charman *et al.* note one of these is the adoption of: “...primarily a ‘users’ perspective, i.e.

the views of those who have experienced the various stages involved in ‘getting to the top’ in police management” (1999, p.298). A comprehensive assessment of chief officers and their selection and appointment process would necessitate a more systematic methodology. Nevertheless, it is hoped that this study has set out enough of interest to spark further enquiry in both academics and practitioners alike.

## **General conclusions**

It is apparent from both the review of the literature and the interviews undertaken as part of this study that current police leaders operate within a changing world. Chapter Three described the shifting societal and cultural backdrop; the increasingly complex modes of governance of the police (Fletcher & Stenson, 2009); the challenging relationship with the media in recent years, and the growing recognition by police leaders of the importance of the public presentation of the police and police managers. Beyond their brief to tackle crime and maintain public safety, police leaders are now required to evidence that they are taking seriously multifarious public concerns, not least the requirement to improve the internal diversity of the service. The chapter concluded that the many and diverse changes to the policing context demands new skills and competencies from the police leader, and yet there is no clear consensus from key stakeholders on what these new skills and competencies are. What is clear though is the increasing complexity and significance of the role of chief police officers, and the importance of strong police leadership in achieving the service’s goals and objectives, not least in maintaining the public’s confidence in the police.

Chapter Four considered the current selection and appointment processes for chief officers. The chapter reviewed both the traditional model of police progression, whereby police officers can only progress to senior positions having entered and progressed up from the rank of constable, and the more recent introduction of a direct entry recruitment system. It examined both in light of the need to select and progress a sufficient quantity, quality and diversity of candidates. Undoubtedly, under the current ‘system’ of selection, it is not easy to become a chief officer. Chapter Four reviewed the many steps that are involved in the process, both at a national and local level. However, there is a lack of any objective evaluation of the efficacy of the process. As Caless states: “Such evidence as exists seems to indicate



that eventually virtually all police officers who get through the SCC obtain posts as ACCs. If that impression is objectively true, then there needs to be greater rigour in the appointments process. It cannot be healthy for the police service that attendance on a learning programme like the SCC practically guarantees employment. Data are lacking in the public domain and the whole area of chief officer appointment would benefit from greater transparency and perhaps some independent professional assessment” (2011, p.232). In recent years, direct entry has been introduced as a challenge to the traditional ‘single entry’ system of police progression and selection. It has been lauded by many as an opportunity to transform the senior tiers of the police service, making the service accessible to a new tranche of managers, who will bring different skills, experience and, it is hoped by many, greater diversity. Although it remains early days, Chapter Four concluded that, at this stage, it is uncertain whether the police service will truly reap the expected benefits from direct entry, but that a change in the language surrounding direct entry may help it to become better understood across the police service. Going forward, it will be important to ensure that robust evaluation processes are wrapped around the direct entry system to ensure that the police service realises a suitable return on investment from it. Overall, Chapter Four concluded that both systems of progression (the traditional model of police advancement and the post-Winsor direct entry system) are currently hamstrung by the lack of clarity on what the service wants from chief officers – operational prowess or executive leadership expertise. The bottom line is that until this has been clearly defined, the model of selection becomes a moot point.

The analysis presented within Chapter Five can be used to start to develop a picture of the qualities and experience of the current chief officer team in the MPS. To facilitate the discussion, a typology of four categories of chief officer was presented. These chief officer categories are, in Max Weber’s terms, “ideal types” and in reality the interviewees represent a mix (Coser, 1977). Where the typology comes into its own is in demonstrating some of the common threads and patterns from the research, and also some of the variations on the common themes. It is interesting to observe that of those interviewed, most fell predominantly into the ‘reformer’ or ‘fast tracker’ category. There were fewer in the ‘old school copper’ or ‘plodder’ categories. This could suggest that the latter two categories are potentially being superseded by the former, albeit a degree of caution is required here as absolute numbers of chief officers in each category are small. What is indisputable is that the

'reformers' possess many of the skills and qualities that will be needed for the future success of policing. What the police service will need to reflect on is whether there are also aspects of the 'old school coppers' and 'plodders' that they wish to preserve, not least the respect and confidence they command from the rank and file for their operational competence and credibility.

Interestingly, the interviews revealed a degree of consensus around the qualities that will be needed by future leaders of the police service, at least from the perspectives of those MPS chief officers interviewed. Most of the interviewees agreed that an effective chief officer needs to adapt their leadership style to suit the context, something which is acutely important for an organisation which operates through a rank structure. In addition, future chief officers will need to master a new set of executive leadership behaviours, including evidencing more commercial acumen, strategic visioning and relationship building skills. The competent chief officer will need to understand how to operate within the corporate world and to set an organisational tone and culture that will secure the best from those working within it. They must also be able to fulfil the demands of their roles effectively, despite the increasing ambiguities and uncertainties that the police service faces. Reassuringly, these skills sit comfortably against the skills and competencies set out by a review of the literature (Chapter Three) and are, in fact, the types of skills that may well be required of a senior executive in any type of industry. Whilst this may be seen as a positive, a number of those interviewed struggled to identify where operational competence and credibility fits within this framework. Certainly, the interplay of operational and executive leadership skills needs to be reconciled across the service if only to reduce the confusion that exists when selecting candidates for the chief officer appointment processes. As Reiner notes: "The ideal model...is someone who combines intellectual mastery of professional management skills with the operational experience and street credibility to command the confidence of the troops and the public" (1991, p.348). The correct balance may be challenging both to articulate and also to find. However, to do so will be critical to increasing the likelihood of the police service promoting the right people to senior command positions.

The final part of Chapter Five focused on the important issue of diversity within the MPS. Viewed objectively, it appears that many of the stepping stones to bring about a change to

the diversity profile of the MPS have been set in place. However, a review of the experiences of those interviewed suggest that there remains, in particular, a gendered substrata to the police. Issues of gender bias have long been of interest, no more so than now, when the rise of women to prominent positions on the world stage (Theresa May, Angela Merkel, Nicola Sturgeon) appears to contrast sharply with the more everyday experience of working women. A review of the executive structure of the MPS shows that there have been some senior female appointments, however it was notable in the research that all those females interviewed were either single or childless women – a status not necessarily representative of many of their more junior female colleagues.<sup>21</sup> It was also noted that there remains a body within policing who are unconvinced that women are suitable leaders of the police. Given the traditional macho culture of the police service, it would be easy to assume that these detractors are always male, but Hearn & Parkin (1987) concluded that, in many cases, it is women who are more critical of other women. In the MPS, this is commonly referred to as “pulling up the drawbridge behind you” (Interview 3).

In general, the interviews left a sense that the service is still not going far enough to address the diversity imperative. In 2014, the Commissioner, Sir Bernard Hogan-Howe, called for legislative changes to enable the MPS to become more representative: “Scotland Yard chief Sir Bernard Hogan-Howe today called for a change in the law to allow positive discrimination to recruit more ethnic minority officers in London. Sir Bernard said there should be a five year period of 50/50 recruitment for white and ethnic minority officers so the force reflected the diversity of London’s population. He wants to replicate a radical Northern Ireland system which saw a temporary change in the law to allow one Catholic officer recruited for every Protestant officer. Speaking on BBC London radio, he said the Met was currently recruiting one in five officers from ethnic minorities but ‘at that rate we will not get there and I think a 50-50 scheme for a short time would be a good idea.’” (Evening Standard, 2014). Linked to this, one of the interviewees (Interviewee 6) set out a persuasive case for the introduction of direct entry schemes that specifically focus on minority groups as a means to drive change to the MPS’s diversity profile. Arguably, although such radical options would offer the prospect

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<sup>21</sup> As previously noted, during the course of this research Cressida Dick was appointed as the first female MPS Commissioner. Although lauded as a significant breakthrough for the advancement of women in the police service, she too is atypical of many of her more junior female colleagues as she does not have children.

of effecting significant advances in diversity, they could also have the potential for negative effects on minority groups. As Calwman writes: “positive discrimination is often an easy, quick-fix solution that tends to conceal the real problematics...It too often creates false dichotomies and hides complexities” (The Occupied Times of London, 2013). Minority groups within the MPS will understandably want to be seen as having been selected or promoted based on merit, not gender or ethnicity. Some of the feedback secured from the chief officers interviewed suggested that MPS diversity policy does not always translate into effective practice or, at the very least, can have some unintended consequences – not least a pushback from some within the majority population who feel the diversity agenda is being promoted at their expense. Equally, a more long-term and sustainable solution must be to review and challenge existing structures rather than create a two-tier system, with one pathway for the majority workforce and one for minority groups; as Read, writing on positive gender discrimination, makes clear: “What I do challenge is the method chosen, the creating of a separate system. Does it just give more excuses for traditional models to discriminate against women in business?...Can a new and tiny model really make a difference for a significant number, or are we better off focusing our efforts on transforming what’s already built?” (Stuff, 2017). Driving forward such radical solutions could overshadow the continuing need for a full programme of cultural and diversity reform that remains essential if the police service is truly to change the experience of policing for minority groups.

Drawing on the findings from Chapter Four, the starting point for Chapter Six was the belief that the current selection and appointment processes for chief officer were not fit for purpose. Interestingly, the group interviewed had mixed perceptions of the processes by which they had achieved chief officer rank, with some perhaps reluctant to critique a process that had, after all, successfully promoted them to senior command. Assessing a consistent set of skills and qualities across each stage of the chief officer selection and appointment process will undoubtedly have a positive impact on the outcomes achieved, but this is not the only potential area for improvement. In the course of the interviews, many emphasised the need for earlier identification of individuals with the potential to perform well as chief officers. This would ensure that a sufficiently skilled, experienced and diverse cadre of candidates are nurtured and developed for the future, rather than just fishing from the rather narrow pool of individuals who make it through to chief superintendent rank. As one

interviewee observed: “Because our talent pipeline is so narrow our selection options are limited. We are appointing people who are capable rather than outstanding” (Interview 6). To reframe this, in a context where the police service is not getting a big enough supply of potential candidates through, the actual selection methodology is no longer the primary issue. To date, the service has focused its efforts on identifying a small group of talented individuals at a very early stage in their careers through a range of fast track and accelerated promotion schemes; indeed, many of those interviewed had themselves graduated from such schemes. These schemes have been regularly re-worked and re-badged, but an ongoing theme has been the absence of any objective evaluation of their impact on the police service (see Chapter Four). Given the pressing and changing future leadership requirements of policing, it would be worthwhile to look again at these talent management processes and how potential ‘stars’ at middle manager level can be identified and groomed for chief officer roles. This should include consideration of whether these individuals would benefit from time outside of the police service, through a more structured process of either secondments or attachments to other organisations. Fortunately, some thinking around this last issue is already taking place, with the College of Policing establishing a national secondments working group, albeit this work is not yet explicitly linked into talent and succession planning.

In looking again at processes to recruit and progress talent within the police service, it has to be noted that the absence of a nationally co-ordinated approach to managing and appointing senior talent appears to be the source of a number of current issues. As one interviewee summed it up: “Outsiders looking in would be amazed to know that we have no clue who our future Commissioners will be – that we have no planned successors for the biggest role in UK policing. In fact, any chief officer can throw their hat into the ring. How can we not know who the future Commissioners are and where they are coming from, so that we can then plan their careers, how we develop them, prepare them etc.?” (Interview 1). In its 2016 research into Chief Officer Appointments, the College of Policing has suggested that further national or central oversight of chief officer appointment processes may be helpful, but this recommendation stops short of advocating a nationally managed approach to talent at this level (College of Policing, 2016e). In keeping with this theme, it is suggested that once selected as a chief officer, active talent management needs to be re-introduced with formalised opportunities for ongoing professional development. It cannot be right that

individuals are spending some years as a chief officer (in the context of this research, 10+ years in some cases), and are progressing from commander/ACC up to assistant commissioner/chief constable with no formal development or training available after the SCC.

Finally, Chapter Six set out some dilemmas and tensions specific to chief officers in the MPS. These findings suggested that there was at least one chief officer layer (the commander rank) within the MPS that found themselves uncomfortably sandwiched between the operational aspects of policing and the executive leadership level. These interviewees felt that their role should be about strategic planning and moving the organisation forward, but in practice, due to the number of leadership levels in the MPS, they found themselves pushed below their official remit. This suggests that not only does there need to be greater clarity around the core activities and responsibilities, as well as the skills and abilities, needed from each chief officer tier within the MPS, but that it may also be timely to review the MPS chief officer structure and whether it is properly supporting talented officers in meeting the demands of policing in future.

## **Recommendations**

The learning from this study indicates that there are some aspects of the chief officer selection and appointment process that are worth revisiting and refining in the face of the growing leadership challenges that policing faces at the top of the service. The following five research recommendations have accordingly been constructed for wider consideration within the police HR community. The background and professional experience of the author lend themselves to this form of review and evaluation. The systems for senior police selection and progression currently find themselves undergoing extensive review and reform and are, in many respects, at a crossroads. The time is therefore ripe for an introspective discussion, drawing on the findings and recommendations from this study.

### **Recommendation One: Establish a national talent management approach to support the appointment and ongoing development of chief officers**

Currently, the police service lacks a national or central approach to appointing and managing talent at the chief officer level, with limited real evidence of succession planning both within

and between police forces. Given the breadth and depth of responsibilities that role holders have at this level, this appears to be a significant gap. Back in 2011, Neyroud observed that “there is still not a clearly understandable process, that supports...the development of potential Chief Officers from middle management through senior management into and beyond strategic management” (Neyroud, 2011, p.109-110). Six years later, this observation still holds currency for the police service. Certainly, a review of private sector practices would suggest that they invest far more time and resources into talent management and succession planning at this senior executive level.

A national talent management scheme could be co-ordinated by the College of Policing. The intention would be threefold:

1. To properly identify, prepare and equip leaders for the highest ranks of the service, with a specific remit to both ensure that sufficient quality, quantity and diversity of candidates are accessible for senior appointments and to develop successor pools for key roles.
2. To support newly appointed chief officers in making the step up to the executive level and in quickly getting to grips with their new roles.
3. To offer ongoing professional development and training to chief officers post the SCC. Currently, the only available national development at this level precedes appointment as chief officer. Under this new approach, chief officers would be able to access development that is pertinent to the role they are appointed to and also supports them in adapting to their changing operating environment and the new demands and challenges which they continually face as police leaders.

Previously, the NPIA facilitated the National Senior Careers Advisory Service (NSCAS), a development service designed to support ACPO and senior officers / staff aspiring to senior command. Although it ostensibly had a responsibility for ensuring there were sufficient staff and officers to meet the growing leadership challenges at the top of the service, in practice it became merely a forerunner to SPNAC and was viewed by many as just an additional hurdle that had to be overcome in the quest for chief officer. In any event, it was decommissioned in 2011 as part of a cost reduction exercise. In a letter to police forces in 2010, the NPIA made

clear that the future of NSCAS would be determined by: “the availability of funding, and the ...financial position of the NPIA following the Comprehensive Spending Review and subsequent budget allocation decisions” (NPIA, 2010b). Any new national approach or scheme would need to look back at the lessons and learning from NSCAS to ensure that it properly adds value and addresses any issues identified with the previous approach. Careful positioning would also be required given the role of Police and Crime Commissioners in senior selection at force level, albeit this alone shouldn’t deter the service from scoping how a national approach could work.

**Recommendation Two: Complete research to define the leadership skills and experience that are required at chief officer level**

It is suggested that research should be commissioned at a national level to define the skills and experience that need to be evidenced by those applying for the chief officer selection and appointment process. This should then be used to underpin each stage of the process, both at a national and local level. Although some of this work may have been completed previously, it is timely to review it both as part of an ongoing review of the skills and experience required for chief officer level roles, but also, more specifically, as there remains confusion, inconsistency and a lack of clarity across the service.

As has been previously discussed, the route to senior rank in the police can be a very individual and personal journey, with officers with a wide variety of backgrounds achieving the role and status of chief officer. However, the findings from this study lend support to the emergence of a new suite of executive leadership skills, which chief officers will need to demonstrate if they are to successfully lead the police service in future. This is not to suggest that operational policing skills and experience are obsolete at this level. The police are increasingly being called upon to deal with events of unprecedented threat and harm to the wider population. The MPS must retain sufficient resilience and leadership capacity to be able to respond to multiple incidents at chief officer level. This therefore requires a new approach to the way in which officers are trained, prepared and evaluated for senior command responsibility.



In order to drive improvements to both the readiness and quality of candidates for chief officer, it is suggested that the police service needs to clearly set out what balance of experience, operational skill and executive leadership behaviour are required for chief officer. Without this, it could be argued that some chief officers will achieve their rank based on a track record and experience that doesn't enable them to fulfil the full gamut of responsibilities at this level. One potential way forward would be to require candidates for chief officer to prove they are a capable leader of policing in respect of operational skills, competence and experience prior to coming forward for SPNAC. The remainder of the selection and appointment process could then credibly focus on assessing the broader executive leadership requirements and the individual's fit with the changing policing context. Achieving a balance in this way between operational and executive leadership skills would then recognise that, although senior police officers are "not the same as managers scrutinizing financial spreadsheets in the executive suite at the top of the corporate skyscraper" (Hoogewoning *et al.*, 2015, p.99), there are some generic leadership capabilities which are required to run any large-scale organisation. The trick, as Cales makes clear, is "the application of those generic competencies to the work of chief officers in commanding their forces" (2011, p.232).

### **Recommendation Three: Introduce robust evaluation and external validation into the chief officer selection and appointment process**

At the current time, the chief officer selection and appointment process appears to be a fairly closed system with little independent evaluation or external validation. It is apparent from the interviews that many of the chief officers interviewed credit a senior sponsor with helping them on their path to senior command; indeed, this appears to be an accepted custom and practice. However, this does not sit comfortably within a process that should be open and transparent. It also has clear ramifications for the police service's diversity agenda with minority groups potentially not having recourse to the same support.

If, as Charman *et al.* (1999) suggest, "the ultimate test of a system of selection, training and appointment of senior police officers is whether they allow, facilitate and encourage those with the most appropriate qualities of leadership, attached to sets of desirable values, to "get to the top" of the police hierarchy", then there must be an ongoing and objective assessment

of how well the current processes enable this. At the very least, this should help to build the trust and confidence of both candidates and other key stakeholders in the process.

#### **Recommendation Four: Review and reposition Direct Entry within the police service**

The interviews provided some interesting perspectives on direct entry, with some tensions apparent between the views of the chief officers. What was notable is that, although not vehemently opposed to it, very few of the chief officers were yet convinced that it would solve the 'crisis in police leadership'. As Chapter Four discussed, one of the biggest challenges for the direct entry system is the expectation that it will deliver an immediate transformation of the service. As one interviewee countered: "It's necessary. It's a build – it won't change culture overnight, but it is a contributor to cultural change. You'll get a slightly different sense of the middle management level when you have someone who hasn't been instilled with 15/20 years of policing" (Interview 12). If we accept this, there is clearly a need, certainly within the MPS, to reconcile this against the expectation that direct entry would offer a quick solution to inject some much needed diversity into the senior echelons of the organisation. It would, therefore, be helpful to explore how direct entry could be repositioned within the MPS to support a more positive future discussion around its efficacy.

At the chief officer level, Winsor has already paved the way for non-British police leaders to become chief constables in the UK if they can evidence experience of a similar type of policing. Although senior external appointments can be risky, the evidence from Chapters Three and Four suggest that it is not always possible to source the requisite quality of police leaders from within the police service and that this issue will be further compounded by the sweeping changes impacting on the police in future. However, it is questionable whether the right answer to this problem is to look to senior police leaders in different countries. In practice, the new direct entry legislation requires candidates to be sourced from countries with similar policing models, such as the US, Canada, Australia, New Zealand, all of which are too far-flung to make relocation a ready option for many. Many commentators also question what added value senior police leaders from these forces can truly bring in respect of culture and context. As stated at the National Fast Track & Direct Entry Professional Reference Group: "There are probably better pickings in Europe where they have better and more interesting styles and

practices of policing” (College of Policing, 2016f). An alternative way forward would be to open chief constable roles more widely to senior leaders across industry. The College of Policing has plans to consult on this, but with a view to extending such a system of entry only to other public service leaders with a clear operational focus to their roles, for example, chief fire officers. It is suggested that direct entry at this level could push beyond the public services. As Charman *et al.* (1999) note the appointment of civilian staff into many senior policing roles and the opening up of ACPO posts to non-sworn officers has, to some extent, already paved the way for this development. Although it would be controversial, the chief constable role arguably has much in common with a CEO role. Certainly, within the MPS, there is a sufficient command team in place where you could work on such a model. In effect, the MPS already has four chief constables (the ACs) running the various business groups, so it would be possible to overlay this with a CEO, as long as stakeholders are willing to accept that most of the operational matters would be dealt with at AC level.

#### **Recommendation Five: Review the chief officer structure within the MPS**

The ranks in the MPS have grown considerably since the inception of the ‘New Police’ in 1829, especially within the chief officer ranks. As described in Chapter Six, the MPS has five senior leader ranks, three more than the standard British model, and more than are typically found in European police forces, which generally have leadership structures which are both flatter and built upon a notion of direct entry which has only recently been implemented by British policing (Webb, 1993). The MPS structure includes commanders, DACs, ACs and the Commissioner. The numbers of commanders are the most numerous. There are currently four ACs and one Deputy Commissioner, all capable of fulfilling the role and responsibilities of the Commissioner of the Metropolis, the official title of the Commissioner of the MPS.

Although the MPS is undoubtedly a complex organisation, managing significant levels of risk, it is well served by a healthy layer of chief superintendents responsible for operational command units, overseen by commanders. If we consider the feedback from the chief officer group interviewed, it suggests that the organisation is top heavy, with individuals working one or two levels below where they should be. In effect, there is not enough ‘space’ and delineation between the MPS chief officer ranks. This, in turn, suggests there is a need to

revisit the chief officer structure within the MPS and specifically test where there are opportunities to streamline it. Inevitably, there will be differing views on how best to achieve this. In late 2016, the MPS toyed with the idea of removing the commander rank, but more recently have moved away from this position having decided that there is still a demand for this rank, not least because the career transition from chief superintendent to DAC would be too great.

If further investigation supports the views of the chief officers within this study, the author is of the view that consideration could be given to removing the rank of DAC. Within the current structure, a DAC cannot substitute or act on behalf of the commissioner, and arguably their function overlaps with both the commander and AC ranks. The removal of this rank would create a flatter leadership structure which can be seen as being beneficial in terms of command procedures and the professional development of commanders aspiring for progression. This recommendation would also support greater discretion, decision-making and autonomy in junior ranks. If it is felt that this is a step too far at the current time, at the very least, it is clear that the roles and functions of each chief officer layer within the MPS need to be clearly mapped out to define distinct remits and reduce any duplication of responsibilities.

### **Limitations and future research directions**

As alluded to above, there are some limitations associated with the results of this study. In the first instance, the interviews are perception-based rather than factual (albeit perceptions are important). This means the views expressed could be biased or one-sided. Just because some of the chief officers believe that current practices and processes are flawed, it may not mean that this is the case. Given this, it may be helpful in future to triangulate the views expressed by the chief officers in this study with research that examines these issues in a more objective way.

Secondly, this research was focused for the reasons outlined in Chapter Two on chief officers in the MPS, albeit many of these officers will have also served in other police forces. It may

be beneficial for future work to examine the views and experiences of those chief officers serving in other forces.

## **Final remarks**

British policing benefits immeasurably from embracing new and improved ways of working to respond to new demands, challenges and threats. Without doubt, competent evidence-based research has a positive impact on the performance of the service. This research is often best achieved by researchers who have a sound understanding of the area of policing which they are investigating (Brain, 2010; Graef, 1989; Moskos, 2008; Reiner, 1991; Thomas *et al.*, 2014). The intention of this study is to help to drive improvements to policing practice, in addition to highlighting suitable areas for further research and consideration. It is the hope of the author that this thesis represents a valuable and useful addition to the existing body of research relating to police leadership, which will have salience for both academics and practitioners within the policing community.

Leadership in the police is of vital importance. It sets the tone and direction of an immensely powerful and important public institution. Inevitably, improvements and recommendations have been highlighted in the course of this study, however, at the same time, all of those chief officers interviewed left a positive picture of their commitment, their passion and their curiosity for public service and policing. In the words of Caless: “In the sense that we perhaps get the police we deserve, my final conclusion is that we are probably well served by the police we have, which is not to say that reform of police function and purpose is not overdue” (2011, p.235).

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## Appendix A: Question Schedule for chief officers

1. Establish gender, age and ethnicity.
2. When did you join the police?
3. Were you a graduate when you joined the police?
4. What police force did you join?
5. In which year did you join the MPS?
6. In which year did you undertake the Strategic Command Course?
7. When did you get promoted to chief officer rank?
8. Would you describe your career as being predominantly “uniform” or “detective”?
9. Do you think the best operational police officers become the best chief officers?
10. Have you ever been the member of a fast track promotion scheme (Special Course, Accelerated Promotion Scheme for Graduates, High Potential Development Scheme)?
11. What is your opinion of fast track promotion schemes?
12. How did you become a chief officer? (Was it part of your career plan? Did you benefit from mentoring?)
13. What are the requirements to be appointed into a chief officer post?
14. Are there any common character traits in the modern chief officer?
15. What was your motivation to become a chief officer?
16. What barriers did you face in becoming a chief officer?
17. What was your experience of the process of selection and appointment to become a chief officer? (prompt through each stage: in-force recommendation, SPNAC, SCC, in-force appointment)
18. What do you believe the role of a chief officer to be?
19. What are the organisational and operational challenges of being a chief officer?

20. How would you describe your leadership style?
21. Are the current selection and appointment processes for chief officers fit for purpose?
22. What is your view on direct entry at the ranks of inspector, superintendent and chief constable?
23. Does a chief officer require a solid grounding in police work in the rank of constable? (MetIBB, 2016; Stevens, 2005)
24. Do you believe chief officers require policing experience at all or is it a role which could be undertaken by talented individuals from outside organisations?
25. Do you think that there should be more females and people from both white and non-white ethnic minorities recruited to senior positions and, if so, what may be done to enhance this?

(Caless, 2011; Caless & Owens, 2016; Reiner, 1991; Stevens, 2005; Wall, 1998; Metropolitan Police Inspector's Branch Board, 2016)

## Appendix B: Initial Conceptual Framework

<b>1. Personal details</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1.1 Gender</li> <li>1.2 Age</li> <li>1.3 Ethnicity</li> <li>1.4 Graduate status</li> <li>1.5 Other</li> </ul>
<b>2. Career history</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>2.1 Date of entry</li> <li>2.2 Type of force entered (county, city, MPS)</li> <li>2.3 Work experience outside of a police force</li> <li>2.4 Detective/specialist/uniform profile</li> <li>2.5 Membership of a talent/fast track scheme</li> <li>2.6 Speed of promotion through the ranks</li> <li>2.7 Other issues</li> </ul>
<b>3. Appointment to chief officer</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>3.1 Age when appointed to chief officer</li> <li>3.2 Length of service when appointed to chief officer</li> <li>3.3 Position when appointed to chief officer</li> <li>3.4 Time gap between attaining SCC and promotion to chief officer</li> <li>3.5 Length of service as a chief officer</li> <li>3.6 Pathway to chief officer (deliberate, accidental, well planned, etc.)</li> <li>3.7 Motivation to become a chief officer</li> <li>3.8 Barriers/difficulties experienced</li> <li>3.9 Career strategies</li> <li>3.10 Other</li> </ul>
<b>4. The chief officer role</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>4.1 Views/feelings about the chief officer role</li> <li>4.2 Views on what the requirements/qualities are to be a chief officer</li> <li>4.3 Espoused leadership style</li> <li>4.4 Main challenges of being a chief officer</li> <li>4.5 Other issues</li> </ul>
<b>5. The chief officer selection and appointment process</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>5.1 Experience of; views about</li> <li>5.2 What is needed</li> <li>5.3 Other suggestions for change/improvement</li> </ul>
<b>6. Routes to the top</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>6.1 Views/feelings about fast-tracking</li> <li>6.2 Views/feelings about direct entry</li> <li>6.3 Views on police experience as a pre-requisite to chief officer rank</li> <li>6.4 Diversity/what would make a difference</li> <li>6.5 Other issues</li> </ul>
<b>7. Other key issues (not covered above)</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>7.1 Personal reflections</li> <li>7.2 Ease/difficulty of exploring certain subjects</li> <li>7.3 Contradictions / tensions</li> </ul>

