

University of Wales Trinity Saint David

Leadership and the Individual

Provide a 5000 word review of your personal leadership successes and/or personal challenges. This reflective review can be about leadership situations that you have been a part of that impacted individuals under your influence. You can reflect on the leadership of other leaders that have influenced you or you may have personally witnessed and how it influenced others.

BMPO7005D

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1-13-2026

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Leadership and the Individual

Provide a 5,000 word review of your personal leadership successes and/or personal challenges. This reflective review can be about leadership situations that you have been a part of that impacted individuals under your influence. You can reflect on the leadership of other leaders that have influenced you or you may have personally witnessed and how it influenced others.

You should consider the leadership styles used at the time and evaluate the effectiveness of the style used. Furthermore, consider the effectiveness of the style as if it was either appropriate for the situation or different style could have been more appropriate.

Continue your reflection on potential future leadership challenges where the style of leadership, use of leadership, traits of leadership, and appropriateness of leadership could have either a positive impact or a negative impact on complex partnerships.

Additionally, your reflection should take into consideration how leaders and manager engage employee's motivation and behaviours that are both positive and negative influences to the executive levels.

Futhermore, you should consider how financial and human resources factors and impact decision making allocation of resources and drives changes.

Ensure you consider each psychological and team theories that frame behaviour, personality, perception, motivation and emotional intelligence

Introduction –

Being a female senior leader within a rural, police force has presented a range of personal and professional leadership challenges that are intrinsically linked to organisational culture, legitimacy and gendered expectations. Police culture has traditionally valued toughness, hierarchy, and command-oriented decision making, promoting leadership models grounded in transactional control and coercive power (Reiner, 2010). Successful leadership has long been associated with masculine stereotypes and transactional styles (Schein, 1973). Analysis of police leadership demonstrates these macho transactional approaches persist despite numerous reform initiatives (Rowe, 2006). Policing continues to be a predominantly male dominated environment with deeply ingrained gender disparities evident across recruitment, career progression and workplace culture (Alexander & Charman, 2023). Women in policing continue to confront structural and cultural barriers that hinder equitable career opportunities and progress and females are still disproportionately under-represented at senior ranks (Brown et al., 2019).

Within this occupational culture, transformational behaviours such as empathy, ethical role modeling and shared decision making can be interpreted as signs of indecisiveness or diminished authority (Silvestry, 2007). Indeed, my leadership approach, which leans towards a more transformational style, has often been perceived as weakness or indecision by senior colleagues. Throughout my career, I have been encouraged to adapt to a more authoritarian leadership style consistent with research showing that women in policing must contend with persistent gender norms forcing them towards adopting more assertive and dominant traits to gain acceptance within a traditionally masculine setting (Brown et al., 2020). Another challenge I have faced as a female leader, is striking a balance between demonstrating authority but not coming across as unduly confident or pushy. According to the “double bind” theory, women are frequently criticised for either being too assertive or not assertive enough (Eagly & Carli, 2007). The dual credibility challenge of being female and attempting to operate outside of cultural conventions also exists for women who do not conform to these macho norms (Davis & Silvestry, 2020).

In this paper, I will describe a specific example where I chaired a meeting to promote Organisational improvement and encountered skepticism and dismissive conduct from senior male colleagues who were unwilling to make changes or even to take my suggestions into consideration. My decisions were questioned more frequently than those of my male colleagues, requiring me to continually prove my worth in line with the “prove it again” dynamic common to women in male dominated professions (Williams et al., 2016). I will use Gibb’s Reflective cycle (Gibbs, 1988) to examine the very personal consequences of these leadership challenges resulting in periods of self-doubt and fatigue, echoed by studies demonstrating that female leaders are more susceptible to stress, loneliness and emotional exhaustion when they work in environments where they must continually negotiate legitimacy (Brown et al., 2020). I have become particularly self-aware, and conscious of how my actions are interpreted, to the point of feeling pressured to alter my behaviour to conform to a more macho stereotype. This positions me, ironically, as complicit in perpetuating the status quo and reinforcing existing power structures, a dynamic that, according to Silvestry (2006) is often driven by the desire for acceptance or credibility.

Section 1: Personal Leadership challenge – Reflection using Gibbs

Policing has traditionally been influenced by toughness, composure, hierarchical authority and a strong emphasis on order and discipline (Reiner, 2010). These masculine traits are typically associated with transactional leadership models, where leaders are seen as stoic individuals who maintain control, as opposed to transformational leaders, who demonstrate emotional intelligence, empowerment, and collaboration. Officers embedded into this culture equate effective leadership with dominance and discipline, viewing interpersonal and developmental approaches as incompatible with the perceived risks and unpredictability of front-line policing (Brown et al., 2020). As a result, transformational leaders may experience resistance, challenges to their legitimacy, and isolation, despite substantial evidence linking transformational leadership to improved ethical conduct, performance, and public trust (Bass & Riggio, 2006). My personal experience is illustrated by research which shows that female leaders frequently have to demonstrate their competence, adjust their behaviour to fit dominant cultural expectations and negotiate gendered assumptions about policing which affects how others perceive their leadership (Alexander & Charman, 2023). Women are still under-represented in senior roles despite advances in representation, and their journey to leadership is impacted by continued structural and cultural barriers that influence perceptions of their efficacy and legitimacy (Silvesty, Brown & Fleming, 2023).

Description –

His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services (HMICFRS, 2025) recently found that North Wales Police required improvement in how it investigates crime. Chief Officers tasked me to design an audit process for Inspectors to strengthen investigative supervision, allocation and victim care. During a strategic meeting that I chaired, several senior male colleagues repeatedly spoke over me, dismissed my suggestions without consideration, and redirected discussions as if my points had not been raised. They made it clear they saw little value in the proposals and were not prepared to consider or support my suggestions. The situation left me questioning my leadership style and my ability to do the task I had been assigned. Research has shown that when female leaders encounter resistance, undermining or overt challenges from male senior officers, these interactions can trigger self-doubt and internalised questioning of their leadership ability, feelings closely aligned with imposter syndrome (Eagly & Carli, 2007). Such experiences not only erode confidence but also reinforce Organisational cultures in which women feel compelled to overperform, self-monitor, or adapt their leadership identity to gain acceptance (Dick & Hyde, 2006). I recognised that if I allowed the behaviour to continue, it would not only diminish my leadership credibility but also reinforce a culture where such conduct was acceptable. I reminded the room of the purpose of the meeting and that the Chief Officer team expected improvement. I openly invited contributions from quieter voices particularly those that had been overshadowed by the interrupting few, to ensure that all voices were heard. Encouraging participation, driving collective improvement, and supporting others to excel are all intrinsic motivators for me. Self-determination theory highlights that motivation is most effective when it comes from within such as the satisfaction of helping others grow or making a collective impact (Deci & Ryan, 2000).

Feelings –

At the time I felt disappointed, demoralised and angry. Research demonstrates that when leadership norms are aligned to masculine influences, women leaders are more likely to experience challenges to their legitimacy, including being interrupted, excluded from informal networks, having their decisions questioned or being subjected to heightened scrutiny compared to male counterparts (Ely, Ibarra & Kolb, 2011). Others present during the meeting later told me they had felt particularly uncomfortable and were dissuaded from contributing, demonstrating that interrupting and dismissive behaviour by leaders undermines psychological safety by signaling that speaking up carries interpersonal risk, thereby discouraging contribution from others (Edmondson, 1999). Such behaviour functions as micro-inequities: subtle, often unintentional, and habitual actions that devalue or undermine others and reinforce power and status hierarchies (Rowe, 1990). Repeated interruptions eventually teach the target and onlookers that involvement could result in humiliation, disregard, or diminished status, encouraging self-silencing as a defensive tactic. Studies show that leader behaviour perceived as dismissive or uncivil are associated with lower levels of psychological safety and higher levels of employee silence (Morrison, 2014). In my experience, I have found that workplace incivility leads to resentment, low morale, less productivity and discretionary effort. Such behaviour evokes anger and feelings of injustice, it compromises psychological safety which can lead to stress, reduced job satisfaction and potential burn-out. In hindsight, I would like to have challenged the individuals directly and more assertively, highlighting to others that the behaviour should not be tolerated or accepted as the norm and encouraging upstander culture in future (Silvesty, 2017).

Evaluation –

Upon reflection, the incident revealed both positive and negative elements. On one hand, I gained support from a number of progressive (and perhaps sympathetic) colleagues who not only endorsed the proposal but advocated for its implementation. The process was adopted and was an overwhelming success with 5000 Inspector Investigation Reviews having been conducted across the Force to date. However, this experience had a detrimental effect on the broader team, undermining psychological safety, stifling meaningful dialogue, and discouraging individuals from assuming personal responsibility. The situation posed a distinct leadership challenge, to which I reverted to my established transformational leadership style, shaped by prior experience and the influence of positive role models. Social learning theory suggests that leadership behaviours are acquired through observation, practice, feedback, and reinforcement (Bandura, 1997). Experiential learning theory further explains that police leaders internalise transformational behaviours by engaging in concrete experiences, reflecting on outcomes, envisioning innovative approaches and actively experimenting with alternative leadership strategies (Kolb, 1984). Upon reflection, I should have adopted a more assertive leadership style, one better suited to the specific situation, rather than defaulting to a passive and overly consultative approach. Transformational leaders can temporarily adopt a more assertive, authoritative style when doing so protects the mission, the people or the Organisation (Bass, 1985). Situational leadership theory also stresses that effective leaders must adapt their style to the maturity of the followers and the specific demands of the context (Hersey, Blanchard & Johnson, 2013).

Analysis –

This example aligns with research which shows that women in leadership positions often experience “micro-invalidations” such as being interrupted, overlooked or having ideas attributed to others (Eagly & Carli, 2007). Recognising this insight allows for the ability to identify such behaviour in the future, intervene appropriately, and prevent it from being normalised within the team. I have since reflected on what it was about my suggestions or communications that evoked such a negative reaction from colleagues. I understand there is unlikely to be one cause and that male leaders may exhibit dismissive behaviour due to a combination of psychological biases, organisational culture and gendered power dynamics. Eagly and Karau (2002) in their Role Congruity Theory argue that leadership roles are culturally coded as “masculine” emphasising assertiveness, dominance and control, women in leadership challenge these expectations creating discomfort and resistance from male colleagues. Interrupting or ignoring women’s contributions is a commonly documented outcome of role incongruity, and their dismissiveness may be an attempt to reassert alignment with expected leadership norms. This bias can undermine a female leaders perceived legitimacy and efficacy, contributing to lower intrinsic motivation as described in self-determination theory, which argues that feelings of competence, autonomy and relatedness are central to motivation, dismissive treatment erodes these needs and diminishes motivation and engagement (Deci & Ryan, 2000). Where an organisational culture has traditionally valued masculine leadership traits, this may unconsciously reinforce behaviour that undermines women and condescending behaviour can be a symptom of this unchallenged, legacy culture (Eagly & Karau, 2002). Addressing behaviour in real time would prevent its normalization as leaders shape culture through their attention to and correction of specific behaviours (Schein, 2010).

Conclusion –

I have come to accept that adopting a more assertive and direct approach, as opposed to my collaborative style, would likely have led to more favourable outcomes, given the specific characteristics of the audience. I acknowledge that my default tendency towards a transformational leadership style, while effective in some contexts, may not always be fully understood or valued by all audiences. This insight has highlighted that flexibility of leadership is crucial, and that different situations require adaptive leadership strategies tailored to the preferences and expectations of those involved. For example, when immediate action is essential and consultation would cause harmful delays, Bass & Avolio (1994) argue that even within a transformational leadership framework, leaders must adopt directive behaviours during crises to ensure safety and maintain organisational visibility. Yukl (2013) notes that in emergencies autocratic decision making may be necessary because participative processes take too long. Hersey, Blanchard & Johnson’s (2013) situational leadership model shows that directive behaviour is also effective when follower readiness is low, when they lack the necessary skills or confidence to complete the task, directive behaviour from the leader is particularly effective. Transformational leaders may also intervene assertively to prevent harm or uphold ethical standards. Brown and Trevino (2006) suggest that ethical leadership occasionally necessitates authoritative enforcement to safeguard organisational culture, a point particularly relevant in the example provided.

Action Plan-

Reflecting on the incident through Gibbs' Reflective Cycle has facilitated a deeper understanding of how key leadership strengths, such as collaboration, empathy and reflective decision-making, are consistently supported in academic literature as essential to effective leadership. However, this reflection has also highlighted that these strengths are not always recognised or rewarded in practice, particularly within environments where more directive or transactional leadership behaviours are often favoured. I also acknowledge that flexibility in leadership style, as opposed to relying on my preferred transformational approach, is crucial for achieving positive outcomes in varying situations. By adopting a flexible leadership approach, where my style can shift according to the demands of the situation and readiness of the followers, I am better positioned to respond effectively to a wide range of challenges, thereby improving both my leadership effectiveness and the workplace environment. In order to strengthen my leadership practice at Chief Inspector rank I plan to:

- Build emotional resilience and confidence - structured mentoring and sponsorship by senior female leaders can help counter systematic barriers, support leadership self-efficacy and improve retention and progression of women into senior ranks (Brown, 2021).
- Develop and practice leadership flexibility - situational leadership theory argues that leaders must adapt their style to the competence, confidence, and task demands of followers shifting between directive, supportive and participative behaviours as circumstances require (Hersey, Blanchard and Johnson, 2013).
- Regular reflection - engaging more actively with reflective practice using models such as Gibbs enables leaders to critically examine their actions, decisions and emotional responses in order to improve future performance and professional judgement (Schon, 1983).
- Champion women's networks and development schemes - help create Organisational conditions that promote psychological safety, inclusion and equitable access to leadership opportunities, thereby enabling future female leaders to encounter fewer systematic barriers contributing to longer term Organisational effectiveness and legitimacy (Silvestry, 2018).

Moving fluidly between styles helps women meet situational demands without triggering stereotype-based backlash (Eagly & Karau, 2002). Research indicates that women receive the highest leadership ratings when they exhibit both warmth and competence (Eagly & Carli, 2007), a combination that helps them overcome gendered status barriers. Switching between collaborative and authoritative styles enables women to display the "optimal mix" of leadership traits (Glick & Fiske, 2001). I now recognise that a single leadership style is not universally effective and effective leaders must be able to adapt their behaviour to the requirements of the situation (Yukl & Mahsud, 2010). Contemporary leadership research underscores the importance of adaptive leadership, the capacity to adjust one's approach based on factors such as complexity, uncertainty and team capability. This is an area I need to become more conscious of, and more adept at navigating.

Section 2: Motivation and power within policing

Motivation is a critical factor in enhancing police leadership, as it directly impacts the performance, morale, and job satisfaction of officers and staff. Theories of motivation offer police leaders valuable frameworks to understand how to influence and inspire their teams effectively. Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs (Maslow, 1954) states that human motivation is driven by a series of needs that must be met progressively, starting from basic psychological requirements and advancing to self-actualisation. For police leadership, this hierarchy suggests that officer's basic needs such as personal safety, wages and job security should be met before higher order needs such as career advancement and personal growth can be effectively addressed. Kline (2008) affirms that Maslow's model has particular relevance in the context of policing, where officers must be supported in both their physical and psychological wellbeing to perform their duties effectively. Female leaders tend to adopt less authoritarian and more empowerment-based approach which aligns with Maslow's theory, particularly the higher-level needs for autonomy, esteem and self-actualisation (Eagly & Carli, 2007). This indicates that leaders who can address the diverse needs of their officers and staff, ranging from basic physical needs to the desire for autonomy and personal growth are more likely to create a productive and satisfied police force.

Herzberg's two-factor Theory (1966) further examines motivation by categorising job factors into two distinct groups: motivators and hygiene factors. Herzberg argues that while hygiene factors such as pay and working conditions are necessary to prevent dissatisfaction, motivators like achievement, recognition, and personal responsibility are crucial for driving performance and satisfaction. Women leaders often stress team participation, inclusivity and shared decision making (Rabe-Hemp, 2019). This aligns with Herzberg's theory, particularly the job motivators associated with job satisfaction such as recognition, responsibility, and meaningful involvement. By engaging officers in decision making processes and encouraging distributed leadership, female leaders increase staff's sense of ownership and intrinsic satisfaction, this reduces Organisational conflict and improves morale (Silvestry, 2017). For police leaders, Herzberg's theory highlights the importance of not only ensuring fair rewards and appropriate working conditions but also providing officers with meaningful tasks, recognition and opportunities for career progression.

Vroom's Expectancy Theory (1964) provides another valuable lens for understanding motivation within police organisations. This theory claims that individuals are motivated by the expectation that their efforts will lead to desired outcomes. In the case of police officers, motivation is influenced by the belief that their actions will result in rewards they value, such as promotions, recognition, or improved working conditions. Thompson and McHugh (2009) highlight the importance of transparent and achievable career pathways, as well as a fair and consistent reward system, in enhancing officers' motivation. A strength of female leadership lies in the developmental and coaching leadership style, closely aligned with expectancy theory which proposes that motivation increases when individuals believe their efforts will lead to desirable and attainable outcomes (Vroom, 1964). By aligning organisational goals with individual rewards, police leaders can cultivate a more engaged and high-performing workforce. For effective leadership, police managers must ensure that

officers perceive a clear link between effort and reward, if officers see no link then motivation drops.

McGregor's Theory X and Theory Y (McGregor, 1960) offers a contrasting perspective on employee motivation, focusing on leadership style. Theory X assumes that employees are inherently lazy and require strict supervision, while Theory Y posits that employees are self-motivated and thrive when given autonomy and responsibility. These theories suggest leadership approaches can range from authoritarian (Theory X) to participatory (Theory Y). While both approaches can be effective in certain contexts, many modern police leaders are increasing Theory Y, which emphasizes trust, empowerment and autonomy (Reiner, 2010). The College of Policing Leadership Review (2020b) explicitly promotes empowering leadership, staff autonomy and engagement which strongly aligns to Theory Y principles. Schafer (2009) argues that police leaders who adopt a Theory Y approach are likely to experience higher levels of motivation and job satisfaction among their officers, as they create an environment of mutual respect, innovation, and professional growth. Women leaders commonly demonstrate strengths in communication, empathy and relationship building helping to create cohesive teams and supportive work climates (Silvestry, 2007).

Self-Determination Theory (SDT) (Deci & Ryan, 1985), provides further insights into the motivational dynamics within policing organisations. SDT asserts the importance of autonomy, competence, and relatedness in fostering intrinsic motivation. According to SDT, individuals are most motivated when they feel they have control over their work, are skilled in their roles, and experience positive relationships with colleagues. For police leadership, this means officers who are empowered to make decisions, have regular opportunities for professional development, and feel supported by their peers and supervisors are more likely to be motivated and engaged in their work. Research suggests that female leaders employ more transformational and relational approaches, which can enhance intrinsic motivation in ways which align with Self-determination theory (Eagly & Carli, 2007). I personally identify with Self-Determination Theory, recognising that I am intrinsically motivated when I have autonomy over my decisions, am trusted to manage tasks independently and have opportunities to develop and empower others to success. Research by Eagly and Carli (2007) indicates that women in leadership roles are more likely to combine warmth and competence, creating environments where officers feel supported yet challenged, thereby optimising motivation and performance.

Several key theories of power also provide valuable insights into the mechanisms through which police leaders can wield influence and authority within their forces. French and Ravens (1959) foundational work on the bases of power identifies five key sources of influence: legitimate power, reward power, coercive power, expert power and referent power. Legitimate power stems from an officer's formal position within the police hierarchy is a critical form of authority in the police force, especially among senior officers. Reward power allows leaders to influence officers through incentives such as promotion or desirable assignments, motivating officers to align with organisational goals. Coercive power meanwhile, involves the ability to enforce compliance through disciplinary actions, which can be used to maintain order and accountability. Expert power is derived from specialist knowledge or skills and

Referent power arises from a leaders personal qualities, such as charisma and integrity, and their ability to inspire loyalty and commitment. In police organisations, legitimate and coercive power are structurally embedded in rank and disciplinary authority, but over-reliance on these bases can lead to compliance without commitment and can undermine trust (Reiner, 2010). By contrast, expert power, derived from operational competence, and referent power, based on integrity and respect have been shown to strengthen leadership legitimacy and enhance officer motivation, especially in complex high-risk environments (Silvestry, 2003). Power is therefore an essential element of effective police leadership as it influences organisational behaviour, morale and public trust.

Individual learning theories also significantly influence police leadership by shaping how leaders acquire knowledge, model behaviour and develop their teams. Experiential learning aligns strongly with transactional and command and control leadership models where learning is reinforced through compliance, supervision and performance outcomes (Kolb, 1984). Officers who learn primarily through concrete experience and active experimentation may respond positively to clear direction and structured authority, particularly in high risk and time critical situations. However, an organisation overly reliant on this learning-leadership alignment risks entrenching hierarchical leadership models that are less effective in complex problem-solving, ethical decision making and partnership working (Silvestry, 2017). Social learning theory (Bandura, 1977) highlights the importance of role modelling police leaders ethical conduct, communication and procedural adherence directly influence subordinate behaviours and reinforcing organisational standards and culture.

In contrast, officers with reflective learning practices are more likely to engage with transformational leadership models, which emphasise shared values, critical reflection and personal development (Bass and Avolio, 1994). Transformational leaders inspire learning through vision, mentoring, and empowerment (Bass & Riggio, 2006). Police leaders who encourage reflective practice, learning from error and constructive challenge can foster psychological safety and continuous learning across teams (Edmonson, 1999). This supports ethical awareness and professional judgement which are increasingly important to modern policing (College of Policing, 2020b). Situational learning theory suggests that leadership style should vary depending on followers' competence and confidence, both of which are influenced by learning style and experience (Hersey, Blanchard & Johnson, 2013). The ability of police leaders to adapt their leadership style to accommodate learning preferences will therefore be critical to enhancing Organisational effectiveness, successful partnerships and legitimacy.

Section 3: Future leadership challenges

Financial and human resource factors are crucial elements of leadership decision making, influencing both the allocation of operational resources and the strategic direction of Organisational change (Yukl, 2013). Budgetary constraints, austerity measures and fluctuating central government funding place significant pressures on police leaders to prioritise limited resources, often requiring difficult trade-offs between frontline services, specialist resources and community engagement initiatives (Brown, 2021). Similarly, human resource considerations such as workforce capacity, skill, diversity and retention directly shape decisions regarding deployment, team structuring and leadership succession planning (Silvestry, 2017). Leaders must therefore balance efficiency, operational effectiveness and public accountability, often under high scrutiny whilst fostering motivation and wellbeing among officers and staff. These pressures fuel Organisational change, encouraging innovation, adoption of new technologies and multi-agency partnerships to boost impact despite resource limitations (Reiner, 2010). Future police leaders face unique challenges arising from the increasing reliance on complex partnerships with agencies across criminal justice, health, local government, private sector and third sector organisations.

Contemporary policing problems such as safeguarding, organised crime, terrorism, cybercrime and vulnerability are characterised as “wicked problems” that cannot be addressed by policing alone (College of Policing, 2020a). This complexity presents significant leadership challenges as the style, traits and appropriateness of leadership behaviour can have both positive and negative consequences on collaborative outcomes (Grint, 2010). In partnership settings, police leaders must often operate without formal authority over partnership organisations, making coercive or directive leadership inappropriate and counterproductive (Bryson et al., 2015). Leadership styles that rely on traditional command and control approaches may therefore prove increasingly ineffective in complex partnership settings. Authoritarian or overly hierarchical leadership can inhibit trust, collaboration and information sharing across Organisational boundaries, thereby undermining partnership effectiveness (Silvestry, 2017). A rigid, hierarchical style may also suppress innovation, reduce partner engagement and create defensive responses among agencies with different professional cultures (Fleming, 2012).

Conversely, research indicates that overly passive or laissez-faire leadership is associated with role ambiguity, diminished accountability and inconsistent service delivery, outcomes that are particularly detrimental in high risk safeguarding contexts requiring timely and decisive interventions (Bass & Avolio, 1994). Adaptive and collaborative leadership styles are more likely to support shared decision making and collective problem solving, which are essential in multi-agency environments (Heifetz, Grashow & Lisky, 2009). Leadership that is insensitive to power dynamics, Organisational cultures or community perspectives may reduce partnership effectiveness. Conversely, leadership that is inclusive, adaptive and contextually appropriate has the potential to enhance collective capacity to respond to complex harm. Inclusive leadership has been shown to foster psychological safety and enhance shared situational awareness, enabling teams to communicate openly, make more effective decisions and respond adaptively to complex situations (Nembhard & Edmondson, 2006). Adaptive leadership, which involves reading the

context and regulating behaviour accordingly, is increasingly recognised as critical for effective collaboration within police partnerships.

Leadership traits, therefore, play a critical role in shaping future partnership outcomes. Traits such as emotional intelligence, openness, integrity and cultural competence are recognised as essential for leaders operating within diverse partnership landscapes (Goleman, 2000). Leaders lacking these traits may struggle to manage competing priorities, professional cultures and power imbalances inherent in partnerships, leading to conflict or disengagement from partner agencies. Leaders who demonstrate empathy, humility and strong interpersonal skills are better positioned to build trust legitimacy, both within policing and externally thereby enhancing co-operation and long-term partnership sustainability (O'Neil, 2015). Leadership traits expected of effective partnership leaders such as emotional intelligence, empathy, communication skills and ethical sensitivity are frequently aligned with traits stereotypically associated with women (Goleman, 2000). Recognising and supporting diverse leadership styles has the potential to enhance psychological safety, trust and innovation across partnerships. Failure to recognise and legitimise alternative leadership styles risks diminishing female leaders and weakening partnership effectiveness (Eagly & Carli, 2007). Without addressing structural barriers such as gender bias, lack of role models and limited access to influential networks, policing risks under appreciating leadership approaches that are well suited to partnership working (Silvestry, 2018).

Police leaders operate in highly complex environments that demand the application of diverse leadership models to navigate operational, strategic and organisational challenges. Transformational leadership advocates inspiring and motivating officers towards shared goals, while adaptive leadership focuses on reading the context and moderating behaviour in response to emerging challenges (Bass & Avolio, 1994). Effective decision making is influenced by both financial and human resource constraints which shape the allocation of operational resources, staffing and the capacity to implement organisational change (Yukl, 2013). Police leaders increasingly operate within complex multi-agency partnerships, requiring collaborative approaches, inclusive leadership and encouraging psychological safety to maintain shared situational awareness and effective communication (Nembhard & Edmondson, 2006). Female leaders often adopt empowering and participatory styles that align with motivation theories, promoting autonomy, competence and engagement among officers (Eagly & Carli, 2007). Collectively, these factors highlight the multifaceted challenges of future police leaders, requiring both strategic insight and adaptive, situational sensitive interpersonal skills.

Conclusion –

This paper has demonstrated that leadership effectiveness is no longer solely defined by authority or operational competence, but the ability to motivate, engage and influence officers and staff. Police leadership is shaped by a complex interplay between leadership styles, officer motivation, individual learning styles, gendered expectations, and individual and organisational power dynamics. Each should not be considered in isolation as they are interdependent. Understanding these interacting factors highlights the need for leadership approaches that combine credibility, fairness, reflective learning and adaptive use of power. Leadership styles that promote psychological safety, learning and inclusion are particularly important for shaping positive employee behaviour, enhancing motivation and supporting adaptive responses to complex contemporary policing demands (Edmondson, 1999). Situational leadership theory emphasises adapting leadership style to the competence, confidence and needs of followers enables leaders to flex between directive, coaching, supporting and delegating behaviours in response to changing circumstances (Hersey, Blanchard & Johnson, 2013). This adaptability fosters organisational resilience, improves employee motivation, and enhances operational effectiveness by ensuring that leadership behaviours are appropriately matched to situational demands. Police leaders must navigate diverse operational contexts and strategic partnership working whilst managing limited resources and heightened public scrutiny (Reiner, 2010).

Women in police leadership positions occupy a pivotal role within this evolving landscape. Despite persistent structural and cultural barriers, research indicates that leadership approaches commonly associated with female leaders such as relational and transformational styles, can positively influence employee motivation, commitment and discretionary effort (Eagly & Karau, 2002). These approaches are strongly linked to increased trust, engagement and ethical behaviour among employees, all of which are essential for effective policing and public confidence. However, female leaders often face increased scrutiny and gendered expectations, which can constrain leadership behaviour and impact representation unless organisations actively challenge biased leadership norms (Silvesty, 2017). A key challenge for policing will be ensuring that leadership frameworks, development pathways and organisational cultures fully recognise and support diverse leadership styles. Embracing inclusive leadership has the potential to enhance employee motivation, strengthen professional identity, and foster more effective and sustainable partnerships. Failure to do so risks alienating women leaders and perpetuating leadership models that undermine motivation and learning. The presence of women in leadership roles contributes to the legitimacy of the police service by reflecting the diversity of the community it serves, fostering public trust and challenging traditional, male-dominated organisational norms (O'Neill, 2015). Supporting women in leadership is therefore, not only an issue of equality, but a strategic necessity for the future effectiveness, legitimacy and resilience of the police service (College of Policing, 2020b).

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