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Fragile Alliances:

Culture, Funding and Sustainability in Police-Academic Partnerships

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Abstract

Background: *Police-academic partnerships have developed significantly over the past decade or so, spurred on by the expansion of the evidence-based policing movement, the increasing value attached to impactful research in the academy, the ascendance of the professionalisation agenda in the police and the growing necessity of cross-sectoral collaborations under conditions of post-financial crisis austerity. This trend has given rise to a burgeoning literature in the discipline of criminology which is concerned with charting the progress of these partnerships and setting out the ideal conditions for their future expansion.*

Aims and Objectives: *We advance a sympathetic critique of this literature, adding a note of caution to its largely optimistic outlook.*

Methods: *We do this by combining a narrative review of the literature on police-academic partnerships with insights from elsewhere in the social sciences and observations from our experience of running the International Strand of the N8 Policing Research Partnership.*

Findings and Discussion: *While we recognise that police-academic partnerships have certainly come a long way, and have the capacity to make important contributions to police work, we argue that they remain 'fragile' alliances, beset with fractious occupational cultures, unreliable funding streams and unsustainable inter-institutional relationships. We also reason that the structures underpinning this 'fragility' do not represent problems to be overcome, for they help to protect the integrity of the two professions.*

Conclusion: *We conclude by offering pragmatic measures for sustaining police-academic partnerships during those difficult periods characterised by cultural dissonance, a paucity of funding and the turnover of key personnel.*

Key Messages

- Over the past decade, police-academic partnerships have developed considerably in scope and size.
- This process has been spurred on by shifting attitudes towards research in the police and academy.
- However, these partnerships are largely confined to a select few countries in the Global North.
- They are also rendered 'fragile' by issues relating to culture, funding and sustainability.

Key Words

Police, academics, partnerships, research

Fragile Alliances:

Culture, Funding and Sustainability in Police-Academic Partnerships

Introduction and Background

The increasing prominence of police-academic partnerships over recent years has caught the attention of criminologists who have brought into effect a small but growing literature exploring the phenomenon. One of the most notable features of this literature is its optimistic outlook. Recognising that police and academics bring different skills and information bases to an array of pressing issues – from responding to vulnerable victims, to solving crime, to evaluating new initiatives – the literature tends to prioritise what are perceived to be 'successful' partnerships with the aim of helping new ones to emerge. But making police-academic partnerships function effectively can be difficult, even elusive. The contribution of this article is to strike a more cautious note, reviewing the international literature on police-academic partnerships, not to celebrate success stories (though they do appear) so much as to highlight the obstacles. This is not because we seek to diminish the value of these partnerships. Quite the opposite in fact. For the most part, we believe in the contribution they can and should make to police work – but we do think there should be more appreciation of the complications involved. In what follows, we review the history and development of police-academic partnerships, before exploring key barriers to their successful operation relating to differences in culture, the maintenance of funding streams, and the sustainability of personal and institutional relationships across the professional divide. We argue that, while there has clearly been progress in the development of police-academic partnerships in many parts of the world, they remain 'fragile alliances' at constant risk of falling apart. First, however, it is necessary to define what we mean by the term 'partnership' and to set out the article's methodology.

The term 'partnership' is defined in different ways in different strands of police work, depending on the professions and sectors involved. When it comes to police-academic partnerships, one of the most prominent understandings comes from the distinction between research *on*, *by, for* and *with* the police (see Weatheritt 1986; Goode and Lumsden 2018). In research *on* the police, the academics set the priorities and carry out the research. In research *by* the police, the police set priorities and conduct the research. Neither model is seen to entail partnership working – though it is important to add that this is not a critique because both have significant roles to play. In research *for* the police, the police commission, though do not necessarily fund, the research and academics undertake the research. Here we begin to see the emergence of partnership working, albeit in a relatively weak form, since the relationship between police and academics is often instrumental in character. In research *with* the police, both sets of actors are involved in all stages of the research process, from formulating the problem, to designing the data collection strategy, to disseminating the results. It is this model which brings genuine partnership working into view. The typology thus depicts increasing levels of interaction running through different research activities. A similar picture is drawn in another well-known typology – namely, Rojek et al's (2015: 31) distinction between cooperation, coordination and collaboration. Indeed, it is useful to note the parallels between these typologies, for research *with* the police is more or less synonymous with collaboration – i.e. long term, multistrand research projects with common goals – and the two terms are often used interchangeably. In practice, of course, these distinctions are not always clear-cut. Reflecting on their experience of police-academic

partnerships in Belgium, for example, Easton and De Vlieger (2018) explain how research *on* and *for* the police often involves working *with* the police. In what follows, then, we use the term 'partnership' to refer to research *for* and *with* the police, while appreciating how these definitional boundaries can sometimes be fluid in reality.

Methods

The centrepiece of our methodology is a narrative review of the extant literature on police-academic partnerships. We searched Google Scholar, ProQuest and the Web of Science for publicly available articles, books and reports using multiple key words and their variants (e.g. 'police-academic partnerships', 'police-researcher relationships', 'police-university collaborations' and so on). When screening the results, we did not use precise inclusion and exclusion criteria in relation to either content or data quality and type – as per quantitative (systematic and meta-analysis) reviews – instead opting for the generation of an expansive picture of the existing research literature. We did though apply more general quality control criteria by including only those outputs published through reputable academic presses or official organisations. The initial search took place in August 2017 and generated 190 relevant publications. However, as the research base has grown between the initial search and the present time of writing (December 2019) we have added a further 25 publications. In line with the narrative review approach, and taking into account the space limitations of the journal article format, we proceeded to focus on what we considered to be the most important themes in this literature – namely, history, culture, funding and sustainability – using only a limited number of these publications.

It is important to stress, however, that our methodological approach encompasses more than just a narrative review of the extant literature on police-academic partnerships. To begin with, we engaged with literatures from elsewhere in the discipline of criminology (e.g police history and police sociology) and the social sciences more broadly (e.g. the policy process and the critique of Eurocentrism) to better contextualise and critique the findings of this review. Furthermore, we drew upon our experience of running the International Strand of the N8 Policing Research Partnership (PRP) – a network which brings together eight universities and eleven police forces in the North of England in a programme of joint events and research. Between 2015-2018, the Strand organised panels and workshops on police-academic partnerships at the American Society of Criminology, the European Union Agency for Law Enforcement Training (CEPOL), the Stockholm Criminology Conference and two international conferences at the University of Sheffield. It also facilitated two fieldtrips to the Oregon Center for Policing Excellence and to universities and police agencies in Norway and Sweden. We used these events and visits to question and corroborate our search results. For example, in countries where our search failed to generate results (as was the case in France and Germany) we contacted police scholars in those countries to see if we were missing publications in other languages and whether police-academic partnerships were actually in existence. The ensuing analysis is informed by all these methods.

Findings and Discussion

We now critically discuss our findings over four sections: history, culture, funding and sustainability. In so doing, we advance the argument that while these partnerships have certainly come a long way in recent years, and have the capacity to make important contributions to police work, they are nevertheless best characterised as 'fragile' alliances.

History

It is important to map out the history and development of police-academic partnerships as presented in the extant international literature. This task, however, first requires us to consider issues of historiography – that is, how this narrative has been constructed by scholars in the discipline of criminology. We demonstrate how it exhibits two notable and often taken-for-grant features: it is geographically biased towards the Global North and it is imbued with a sense of optimism and progress.

In terms of geographical bias, the 'international' literature is in reality focused on a small number of countries in the Global North – in particular, Australia, Belgium, New Zealand, Norway, Sweden the UK and and the US. There is more to this bias than simply our methodological orientation towards English-language publications. To some degree, it is a consequence of the more general Anglocentric or Eurocentric make-up of the discipline. It is increasingly acknowledged, for instance, how criminological research exhibits an institutional bias towards the Global North for a variety of reasons including language, methodology, theory, funding sources and disciplinary path dependencies (Carrington et al 2016). In following this institutional trajectory throughout the ensuing discussion, we are guilty of reproducing some of these biases and reinforcing the 'problem', so to speak – though we at least do so with our 'eyes open' and recognise this shortcoming.

At the same time, however, this bias also reflects the reality of where police-academic partnerships have come into effect. Alemika (2009: 483), for instance, remarks how in Africa 'police authorities have not utilized research findings to reform their policies and practices'. This is because in Africa and many other regions in the Global South the police often still follow a monopolistic, hierarchical model developed from colonial paramilitary predecessors in which research has little role to play since academics are seen as critics by those in power (see Mawby 2008) – though there is growing interest in police research among international NGOs and aid donors as part of the 'security sector reform' agenda, where questions about the rule of law and trust take centre stage (Waldman and Barakat 2016). Yet it is equally important to avoid the impression that police-academic partnerships are, by contrast, ubiquitous in the Global North. Huey and Ricciardelli (2016), for example, bemoan the lack of both partnerships and police research in Canada, which they ascribe to limited funding and difficulties in gaining access to police and their data.

In relation to in-built notions of optimism and progress, Reiner (2010) observes how earlier histories of the police in the Global North tended to put forward a 'rose-tinted' account of the institution's development. The same can be said about many histories of police-academic partnerships. When the international literature is examined from a birds-eye perspective, for instance, it is possible to see a clear developmental trajectory from a limited amount of research *on* the police towards research *for* and/or *with* the police – or, expressed differently, from minimal and light-touch partnership to widespread and more-involved partnership. Collaboration represents something of a teleological end-point in this developmental trajectory towards which police and academics seem to be almost ineluctably drawn. In the remainder of this section, we map out the key contours of this geographically biased and optimistic narrative, before arguing that we need to challenge this emergent orthodoxy by placing more emphasis on the difficulties in making police-academic partnerships work.

In the early to mid-20th century, there was for the most part little reciprocal interaction between police and academics. One senior police officer succinctly captured this situation with the following words: 'The best way to make police policy … is for one officer to take responsibility and to decide what he wants' (Davis 1975: 42). This is a view which sees the police alone as able to address problems or solve incidents. When police research did take

place, it was generally undertaken by academics working independently and was critical in tone. This in turn led to the so-called "dialogue of the deaf", whereby academics conducted research *on* the police from a distance, paying little attention to the needs of their subjects, while the police reciprocated by disregarding the findings which often contained uncomfortable conclusions (Bradley and Nixon 2009). Indeed, reflecting on their experiences as observers on police car ride-alongs during the 1960s, Reiss and Skolnick recall how the police officers they interacted with were so sensitive to any potential exposure of wrong-doing that they were never invited back (McEwan 2004: 14). When examples of genuine partnership working did materialise during this period – such as through the initiatives of August Vollmer, Police Chief of Berkeley, California, who sought to enhance the professionalism of his officers by linking them up with academics based at the University of California – they are framed as the exception rather than the norm (Rojek et al 2015).

By the 1970s, however, more policy-focused, collaborative research *for* and/or *with* the police was increasingly occurring alongside this critical research *on* the police. The new research was often spearheaded by national initiatives and police research agencies, such as the Police Foundation in the US, the Home Office in England and Wales and the National Council for Crime Prevention in Sweden. The Police Foundation's Kansas City Preventative Patrol Experiment, for example, initiated the first scientifically controlled test of the relationships between police patrol and crime (Kelling et al. 1974). Over subsequent decades, projects in this vein gathered momentum. In the mid-1990s, the Locally Initiated Research Partnership Program funded by the US National Institute of Justice led to the establishment of 39 research projects across the country focusing on the development of evidence-based improvements to community policing, 28 of which resulted in police departments making changes to their practices (McEwan 2004). In 2015, the College of Policing, the Higher Education Funding Council for England and the Home Office launched the £10 million Police Knowledge Fund to increase evidence in priority areas and embed an evidence-based approach in police work. This fund supported the development of 14 police-academic research collaborations involving 39 police forces and 30 academic institutions (Teers et al. 2018).

In the literature, these 'progressive' developments are conventionally explained with reference to a deep-seated cultural transformation spurred on by four macro- and meso-level factors – namely, the expansion of the evidence-based policing movement, the increasing value attached to impactful research in the academy, the ascendance of the professionalisation agenda in the police and the growing necessity of cross-sectoral collaborations under conditions of post-financial crisis austerity. Each is now examined in turn.

'Evidence-based', 'evidence-led' or 'research-informed' practice has today emerged in several professional domains including health, education and criminal justice. 'Evidence-based policing' (EBP) – a concept initially coined by Sherman (1998) – borrows heavily from health practitioner-academic partnership models and medicalised understandings of research design. This includes an emphasis on randomized controlled trials (RCTs), systematic reviews and meta-analyses – though EBP has since evolved from this somewhat narrow doctrine and orthodoxy (Fielding et al. 2020). Advancing EBP requires academics to be 'active collaborators in finding practical, workable solutions, rather than distant critics or elite scientists imposing top-down prescriptions with little regard for varied temporal, spatial, organisational and social contingencies' (Cockbain and Knutsson 2015: 4). It also requires investment in mechanisms for knowledge exchange, translation and use (Fyfe and Wilson

2012; see also Nutley et al. 2007). EBP, in other words, demands at minimum research *for* the police, though ideally research *with* the police. From its origins in the US, it is now a global movement, with much of the impetus coming from government agencies and police themselves, in part through Societies of Evidence-Based Policing which have been established in Australia, Canada, New Zealand, the UK and the US (Hunter et al. 2019). Importantly, the expansion of EBP has been facilitated not just by rationalist lesson drawing between these countries, but also by common background factors in the Anglosphere such as: shared political economic ideologies; complementary electoral patterns; and the prevalence of 'epistemic communities' and thinktanks (Greene 2014). Nevertheless, it would be wrong to give the impression that EBP has spread unbounded. Evaluations have shown that, although results do transfer across cities and countries, they are still dependent on the local policing culture in the transplanted location being conducive to issues of implementation (Strang 2012; Bradford et al. 2018). Furthermore, many police and academics alike view the application of the 'scientific' model of research, which revolves around the testing of hypotheses under experimental conditions, as being only sometimes appropriate in a field of practice so dependent on understanding and influencing complex human behaviours (Hough 2010).

The EBP movement has been complemented by a series of interlinked developments in the academy. To begin with, there have been changes in the nature and status of criminology, with the volume of outputs expanding in response to governmental interest in crime prevention and the formation of government-funded research units, particularly in Australia Scandinavia, the UK and the US (though not all these government initiatives have survived) (Skogan and Frydl 2004). Furthermore, criminology has been affected by growing demands for social science research to engage communities of all kinds, including the police, as part of a public criminology agenda (Loader and Sparks 2010). There have also been changes in the measurement of academic worth within the context of the so-called 'impact' agenda, which judges academic research on its ability to influence not just scholars in academic settings but also practitioners and policy-makers in non-academic settings (Chubb and Watermeyer 2016; Pearce and Evans 2018). There are, however, variations in how such activities are valued in different countries. For instance, a recent inventory of 209 police research projects in Australia revealed that less than half of the final research reports identified clear implications for police practice (Herrington 2016).

These contextual changes in the production of police research have dovetailed with the ascendance and consolidation of the professionalization agenda in the police (Sklansky 2014). In many European countries, for example, police training academies have been transformed into accredited institutes of higher education, such as the Police University College in Norway. Professionalization has encouraged police institutions not only to train police officers and staff to undertake their own research (research *by* the police), but also to work in partnership with others (research *for* and/or *with* the police) (Braga and Davis 2014; Goode and Lumsden 2018). The value placed on such reforms has moved at different speeds in different countries, however, with only some requiring police officers to engage with higher education (itself likely to impart more favourable attitudes towards research). In the US, for example, only 1% of law enforcement agencies require new recruits to have university degrees, whereas in Norway all police officers must be educated to degree level (Rojek et al. 2015). It is notable that this process again replicates elements of the health model where practitioners (nurses and doctors) are required to have university qualifications – a process which helps to embed practitioner-academic partnerships (Beal 2012).

The final part of the picture relates to the global economic down-turn in the late 2000s and early 2010s which has prompted police budget cuts and a drive for 'efficiency savings' in a bid to create a smaller, leaner and less costly public sector. In the UK, for example, upon assuming office in 2010, the newly formed Conservative-Liberal Democrat coalition government initiated a comprehensive spending review which, among a swath of other cuts, stipulated a 20 per cent reduction in the central government police budget over the period 2010/11–2014/15 (White 2015). Similarly, in Canada an uncertain economic future has brought with it a growing awareness that the rising costs of police work are not tenable over the long term, leading various stakeholders to consider how to increase effectiveness and efficiency. Such fiscal restraints may encourage the police to work 'smarter' by drawing on research evidence formulated through police-academic partnerships (Goode and Lumsden 2018; Huey and Ricciardelli 2016).

In sum, the international literature advances a geographically biased and optimistic narrative on the history and development of police-academic partnerships which revolves around a shift from limited research *by* or *on* the police towards more abundant research *for* and/or *with* the police. We too regard this movement as 'progress', especially within the context of an increasingly impoverished public sector. However, we cut our optimism with a healthy dose of caution. The factors driving the movement towards partnerships do not eliminate the problems and difficulties associated with police and academics trying to work together more closely. These partnerships remain fragile alliances. This fragility, we argue, relates to differences in culture, the difficulties in maintaining funding streams, and issues with sustaining personal and institutional relationships across the professional divide. Each of these dimensions is now explored in turn.

Culture

The culture clash between academics and practitioners has long been recognised (Birnbaum 2000). In the ideal-type depictions of this clash, academics are seen to be relatively detached from the problems they study, while practitioners are part of the practical response to these problems; academics spend time weighing different perspectives so as to understand the relationship between facts and values, while practitioners deal with hard facts and evidence; academics want to explore problems on a broader societal scale, while practitioners want to solve problems on a more localised scale; academics enter into a long process of discussion, deliberation and peer review to communicate their findings to the academic community, while practitioners need prompt solutions; academics are writing for journal editors, other academics and students, while practitioners are looking to satisfy their immediate constituents (i.e. the public as citizen-consumers) and bosses (Locock and Boaz 2004). The cultural differences between academics and practitioners in police work essentially represent a microcosm of this debate. In this section, we examine key differences in police and academic occupational culture and how they form barriers to partnership working. Our specific focus is on issues of distrust, relevance and reward systems (on these categorisations see: Alpert et al. 2013: 17-25).

Distrust arises in large part from the lasting legacy of research *on* the police. Many of the 'classic' academic studies of the police from the 1960s, 1970s and 1980s are sociological examinations of the power relations which exist between police officers and marginalised or criminalised populations (e.g. Skolnick 1966; Punch 1979). These studies are often written in the 'critical tradition' (Bradley and Nixon 2009) and primarily focus on controversial issues, such as police deviation from the rule of law and abuses of power perpetuated directly and indirectly upon the aforementioned populations. In other words, they stand back from

their object of study, adopt a critical stance and attempt to uncover information which the police may want to keep secret. In his study of Amsterdam's Warmoesstraat, for example, Punch (1979: 4) describes the researcher's task as 'how to outwit the institutional obstacle-course to gain entry and how to penetrate the mine-field of social defences to reach the inner reality of police work'. This has in turn led the police – an inherently secretive institution, which has a tendency to close ranks against perceived outsiders and enemies (Westmarland 2005) – to become defensive against and suspicious towards academics. As Reiner and Newburn (2008: 353-4) remark, they become 'anxious about how they are going to be represented to other audiences, such as the managers or agencies to whom they are accountable'. This posture on both sides represents an important barrier in the emergence of partnerships across this occupational divide.

Issues of relevance stem from the fact that there has traditionally been very little occupational overlap between academics and practitioners in the policing field. The two sets of actors have been influenced by contrasting demands and driven by distinct philosophies, values and motivations. In broad terms, academics have only a limited appreciation of the 'daily rigors' of police work (Fleming 2010: 141), and police officers tend to lack understanding of academic theory, research design and analysis (Skogan 2010). Academics value scientific evidence, whereas police officers value action, experience and craft skills. These two occupational standpoints have divergent interpretations of what is relevant in terms of research aims, data collection and the conclusions which can be drawn from findings (e.g. about whether a policy, strategy or tactic was 'effective') (Lum et al. 2012; Fleming and Rhodes 2018). As Alpert et al. (2013) emphasise, this differs markedly from, say, the medical field, where there is great a deal of fluidity between academics and practitioners. Not only do they have the same or complementary undergraduate degrees and draw upon a complementary scientific methodology, but they often occupy both roles at once or switch between the two, working as both an academic and practitioner – a 'pracademic'.

Even when academics do engage with questions of direct relevance to the practical side of police work, the publications they produce are not always particularly digestible or useable from a police point of view, nor are they delivered in a timely fashion. This is principally a result of their differential reward systems. In an ideal world, police officers would like academics to produce short outputs with clear conclusions supported by unambiguous evidence which can be operationalised with immediate effect – that is, 'something they can use to drive policy in a practical way and evidence-based data that can inform practice' (Fleming 2010: 142). While it may well be possible for academics to write in this format, such outputs tend not to be highly valued within their professional environment, which prioritises theoretically informed, empirical narratives of 8,000-10,000 words, littered with caveats, extensively referenced and often written in esoteric prose (Buerger 2010; Lum et al. 2012; Rojek et al. 2015). While more emphasis is gradually being placed on writing practitioner-friendly outputs in the academy – especially through the 'impact' agenda – the rewards systems is still far from being aligned with police needs.

In sum, while there is evidence of cultural convergence between police and academics – as depicted in the preceding section – this should not be overstated. As one police officer put it in a recent evaluation of the UK Police Knowledge Fund: there is still much 'eye-rolling and sighing' during police engagements with academics (Teers et al. 2018: 59). These dispositions thus contribute towards our framing of police-academic partnerships as fragile alliances.

Funding

Broadly speaking, funding for police research comes in two forms: in-kind and monetary. With regard to in-kind funding (essentially the time of those doing the work), the most any given police-academic partnership can achieve is limited by the aims and generosity of the individuals and institutions involved. In-kind funding is usually linked to specific projects over a short period and cannot be relied upon to maintain any partnership over time. As a general rule, partnerships require targeted monetary funding specifically intended to underwrite any necessary staffing and capital costs. In this section, we explore issues surrounding access to monetary funding for police-academic partnerships, with a focus on four main sources: police, governments, universities and research councils.

In most countries, police do not see the funding of research and evaluation as their responsibility. Unlike in commercial manufacturing, their core budgets do not contain a general proportion for 'research and development' – though forces in countries which value EBP are increasingly building their 'in force' research capability and employing 'evidence champions' to promote the value and use of research (Hunter et al. 2019). Police have instead tended to see those costs as falling elsewhere, in particular upon government (as in England & Wales, France, the Netherlands or the US) and universities (Fleming 2010). Greene (2010) argues that police research will not truly be effective until it becomes a core part of police operations rather than occupying its present marginal position. So-called 'research and planning units' do of course exist within some police forces. Haberman and King (2011), for instance, analysed 103 responses from a sample of 671 police agencies in the US, all of which had some kind of research and planning unit. However, the main tasks undertaken by these units were administrative in nature, measuring efficiency and analysing and collating data – i.e. research *by* the police – rather than undertaking evaluative research or collaborating with outside academics. There are nevertheless a few examples of police funded research. In one, Braga and Davis (2014) show how an embedded practitioner (Braga) can disseminate research evidence and spark ideas for helpful research from within the police – though it is important to note that even in this case Braga's own involvement was tied to the leadership of a particular police chief and was evaluated using US Bureau of Justice Assistance funding.

Government funded research is probably more common than police funded research. But while government funding has produced a significant volume of publications, austerity pressures have shown its vulnerability. In the UK, substantial staff and budget cuts have seen the replacement of government researchers doing research themselves with government researchers collating results produced by others and administering external funding, for instance through the 'What Works' centres whose primary task is to undertake systematic reviews and promote evidence-based policing. Following an evaluation of the What Works Centre for Crime Reduction, Hunter et al. (2017) found that such centres can produce a strong body of brief, authoritative reviews, but they also discovered that positive perceptions of usefulness and utilisation among police take a long time to develop and thus require a long-term sustainable structure of funding to create impact. What Works centres have also tended to be confined to crime reduction initiatives rather than also encompassing day-to-day police work or decision making.

Universities also fund police research, primarily through PhD studentships. For the most part, however, studentships focus on academic research topics and therefore represent a further instance of research *on* the police rather than *for* and/or *with* the police. Occasionally, funding does encourage studentships on collaborative projects developed by police and academics together, as in the N8 PRP initiative in the UK (https://n8prp.org.uk/),

but this has only been a specific initiative over a relatively short time period (five years). Nor will even these studentships be able to facilitate major evaluations or provide multi-site evidence-based policing, both of which require coordination across several research sites. The 'science' model of a senior academic receiving programme funding to carry out research, involving several doctoral students, is not a common one in criminology.

A final source of monetary funding comes from external research bodies, such as: government research councils, with priorities often being the more efficient delivery of services and crime reduction (see Rojek et al. 2019); international bodies such as the EU or UN agencies, with priorities commonly being the management of global threats like migration or terrorism; and, sometimes, charities or foundations, with priorities being those of the founders. In the Global North, such funding is increasingly marketised, competitive and driven by funder priorities (Bourguignon 2018). Competitive funding is normally fixed-term, relatively short and budget limited, so that in practice it is not very relevant to day-to-day police work and fails to underpin long-term development of partnerships. Partnership working is predicated on a number of factors. There needs to be sufficient time to establish initial relations and agree access on that project, work through the layers of police hierarchy to establish what it means for each type of participant, undertake the study (and, if this is an evaluation this means before-and-after measures, as well as control groups), analyse the results, disseminate the results back to all members of the partnership, write them up for practitioners and change day-to-day practice towards evidence-based practice. The typical one- to three-year grant simply cannot accomplish all of this (see Shapland et al. 2017 for the time scales required to undertake pilot projects on restorative justice and the police, and Strang 2012 on the requirements for running an experiment).

Unfortunately, all sources of monetary funding are limited in scope and depth and thus represent barriers to the formation of police-academic partnerships. There are numerous findings attesting to this problem. Rojek et al. (2015), for instance, undertook a comparative survey of US police agencies to find out about their relationships with academics. They found that one of the primary reasons for not participating in a partnership with academics was a lack of funding and resources (56% of respondents). In sum, lack of funding represents another key dimension of fragility in police-academic partnerships.

Sustainability

Most police partnership working focuses on operational matters and involves either the development of strategic policy at force level (for example, on crime reduction), street-level activities with other professionals in individual cases (such as child protection cases) and/or working with the local community (Bull 2010). Police agencies are not required by legislation, national policy or inspectorates to work with academics or researchers – though there is often some encouragement to do so. Police-academic partnerships are therefore optional and hence they fight for resources with other initiatives. In this section, we explore the sustainability of such partnerships with a focus on the difficulties surrounding both individual and institutional relationships.

The small number of well-known, long-term and successful police-academic partnerships often feature a key individual in the police agency, usually in a senior position, who values the research and is able to act as gatekeeper (see, for example, Braga and Davis 2014; Easton and De Vlieger 2018). This makes partnerships vulnerable to changes in senior police personnel and corresponding shifts in police priorities (Strang 2012). Police work involves responding to a host of demands from many different audiences, all of which compete for

police resources, so decisions about how to allocate those resources are highly discretionary. This issue is compounded by the hierarchical nature of the service – new chiefs often come with new initiatives and priorities and the wish to make his or her mark on the service (see Matusiak et al. 2016). The exposure of partnerships to the turnover of key personnel runs throughout the research on partnerships (see, for example, Fleming 2010 on Australia). As such, Engel and Henderson (2014) argue that the sustainability of partnerships built on an individual relationships approach is questionable and the likelihood of moving beyond assistance with specific projects is unlikely – though it could be strengthened, they suggest, if the individual researcher is embedded in the organisational structure of the agency (see, for example: Braga and Davis 2014; Willis 2016).

Having a formal structure for the partnership can thus provide both reassurance and the will to maintain momentum in times of difficulty. For instance, the Queensland initiative – a collaboration between the Queensland Police Service, the University of Queensland and local Queensland universities – has demonstrated how participation in an initial research project (the Queensland Community Engagement Trial) followed by the establishment of a formal partnership can encourage the partnership to incorporate more projects, enable officers to train athe university and create an expectation that emerging problems may benefit from research or evaluation attention (Bennett et al. 2018). A formal structure also demonstrates the will of those senior in all the organisations involved to back the partnership and may be the prop to maintain the partnership even through radical organisational change. This has occurred with the Scottish Institute for Policing Research (SIPR). Despite the merger of eight forces to form Police Scotland, Fyfe and Richardson (2018) comment that the symbolic function of knowledge through research was key. Investing in research allowed police not just to keep up with 'what works', but also to cement legitimacy in relations with external audiences (see also Scottish Funding Council 2017). The formal, multi-university approach is thus more likely to have sustainability and continuity over time. Other strengths include greater scope and breadth of expertise and the opportunity for police officers to become more fully engaged in the research process through training in partner universities (Engel and Henderson 2014).

But while there are examples of longer term, large-scale partnerships, they are not the norm. Rojek et al.'s (2015) major survey in the US found that though most partnerships were ongoing at the time of the research (12% for more than five years), of those which had ended, 70% reported that the partnership lasted one year or less, and only 6% reported that the partnership had lasted five years or more. Alpert et al. (2013) found that 32% of the 871 US law enforcement agencies they contacted reported partnership working with researchers, but partnerships which had a formal structure only existed in 18% of agencies on a short-term basis and 10% on a more long-term basis. As Alpert et al. (2013: xi) write: 'participation in research partnerships is largely the practice of a small number of very large enforcement agencies in the United States'.

In sum, it is rare that individuals alone can sustain a partnership. External spurs to action are needed to create a partnership in the first instance, to bring in new agencies to a partnership, and to sustain partnerships in lean times. These spurs include funding (particularly more long-term funding from programmes which have relatively general aims, such as combating violence, or crime reduction, or increasing public legitimacy in the police); dissemination of results (for example, the National Institute of Justice websites); and supplying adequate researchers (capacity building). These tasks are best suited to inspectorates, governments and

national funders. In the present era of austerity, however, these tasks are rarely considered a priority. This in turn makes long-term police-academic partnerships 'fragile'.

Conclusion

In recent decades, there has clearly been progress in police-academic partnerships in certain parts of the Global North. From isolated initiatives and a climate of mutual suspicion, there has been a considerable growth in research *for* and/or *with* the police. However, we argue that the optimism about the development of police-academic partnerships needs to be a cautious one. In the foreseeable future, these partnerships can, we suspect, only be fragile alliances. Cultural differences, unreliable funding streams, and difficulties in sustaining individual and institutional relationships across the professional divide are likely to haunt attempts at partnership working.

We do not, however, make these comments to diminish the significance of police-academic partnerships. We believe they have a positive contribution to make to the policing landscape, especially under conditions of austerity where the police are being asked to do more with less. For this reason, we do want to offer some suggestions from our research as to how partnerships can be nurtured moving forwards. In keeping with the cautious outlook of this article, these suggestions are not based on wishful thinking. They do not involve, for instance, legislative changes to create a statutory basis and budget for police-academic partnerships. They instead revolve around the more pragmatic and immediate process of maintaining inter-institutional relationships during those periods when the obstacles relating to culture, funding and sustainability are all in play. They include: (i) maintaining a small number of personnel in each organisation who take responsibility for responding to requests for research; (ii) tasking a small number of personnel in each organisation with communicating a profile of new research and findings to senior staff and frontline practitioners; (iii) bringing together key individuals at regular intervals to exchange ideas; (iv) scoping new opportunities for acquiring resources to undertake research; and (v) committing to implement those initiatives which research and evaluation have shown to be beneficial, even if they are no longer the highest priority to senior management. These suggestions thus involve achievable measures for smoothing over the rough patches when there is cultural dissonance, funding is sparse and key personnel are moving on. In this way, police and academics can be more prepared for those important moments when culture, funding and elite interests do line up.

While these measures may help police-academic partnerships to be less fragile, we want to end by emphasising that a degree of fragility is by no means a bad thing because it helps to protect the integrity of the two professions. As Greene and Skinns (2018: 60) observe, 'to some extent, cultural differences *need* to exist so as to prevent the blurring of occupational boundaries and the undermining of the interdependent independent relationship that is necessary in order to sustain police academic partnerships'. If research does become too closely tied to the organisational interests of the police it runs the risk of 'losing its vital critical distance and becomes an arm of, and justification for, prevailing practices (or dominant programmes of change) rather than an engine of critical improvement' (Crawford 2017: 208; see also Sheptycki 2018). There is, therefore, a real need for academics to retain their 'critical edge' (Braga and Davis 2014). In other words, the fragility which characterises police-academic partnership should be viewed in both positive and negative lights.

Research Ethics Statement

The authors of this paper have declared that research ethics approval was not required since the paper does not present or draw directly on primary data/findings from empirical research.

Contributor Statement

The paper was developed from 'ideas papers' written by each of the four authors. One author then took the lead in each revision, with all other authors commenting upon and agreeing that revision.

Conflict of interest statement

The Authors declare that there is no conflict of interest.

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