Are UK universities more ethical than police organisations?

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Abstract: University academics have long been at the forefront of important work researching and critiquing some of the more unethical dimensions of policing. However, in recent years an increasing number of UK academics, universities and students have faced scrutiny and censure, in relation to a range of unethical behaviours and practices. This paper draws upon relevant literature to examine if UK universities are more ethical than the police. The comparison is justified by reference to a number of recent concerns and developments in higher education and policing in the UK and these will be explored. Of particular significance to this paper has been the development by the College of Policing of the Policing Education Qualifications Framework (PEQF), which provides universities with a prominent role in police education. The PEQF has been developed to professionalise the police and to reform problematic aspects of police occupational culture and improve ethical standards. Transferring the site of education from a police academy to a university campus is regarded as a way to weaken police culture socialisation processes. However, this paper contends that university campuses are also problematic sites, where, for example: racism, sexual misconduct, bullying and other unethical practices occur. The paper contributes to a body of literature which cautions against assumptions that involving universities in police education will lead to improvements in the practices of the public police.

> *I just had to get this off my chest. Academics talk about how the police need to change, but guys, have you thought about where you are working? Give us a break.*
> Professor David H. Bayley (quoted in Heslop, 2015: 522)

Introduction

In 2011, the world's preeminent international policing scholar: Professor David H. Bayley,[2] published a short essay in which he compared the management practices of universities with police agencies (Bayley, 2011). Drawing on his extensive experiences of teaching and leadership in American universities and his research into policing across the globe, Bayley concluded that, 'compared with universities, where so many of their critics work, police score better in practice and management, or at least, they are no worse' (ibid: 313). In the article, Bayley focussed briefly on the topic of university ethics and values. He raised concerns about: 'sexual harassment', 'racial discrimination', 'unequal treatment of female students' and inappropriate staff and student sexual relationships on campuses; and he contended that 'universities give less attention to the discussion of values and the ethical dilemmas of their work than the police' (ibid: 315).

The current paper takes inspiration from Bayley's essay, as well as the author's experiences of serving as a police officer and working as a university academic in the United Kingdom (UK). The paper draws upon academic literature from the fields of policing and higher education (HE) studies, as well as other sources, to examine if UK universities are more ethical than the police. The comparison will be justified by reference to a number of recent concerns and developments in HE and public policing in the UK and these will be explored.

Of particular significance to this paper has been the announcement by the UK's College of Policing (COP, 2016) of its Policing Education Qualifications Framework (PEQF). The PEQF will fundamentally change police education in England and Wales (Wood, 2018). From January 2020, police constable recruits will be required to obtain a degree level qualification before joining the police or in the initial years of service. Consequently, UK higher education institutions (HEIs) are about to become key actors in police education.

Although the PEQF has been developed with the explicit aim of 'professionalising' the police (COP, 2016), there are other 'pragmatic drivers' motivating the change from traditional police training models to involving HEI's (Brown, 2018: 4). It has been suggested that as police leaders seek to reduce training budget costs in the context of a climate of 'austerity', the dominant approach to understanding the PEQF is in 'fiscal terms' (Wood, 2018: 2). A further objective of involving universities in police education is to reform problematic aspects of police occupational culture and improve ethical standards (Home Office, 1999; Brown, 2018). Research has identified that traditional police academies are problematic sites where recruits are 'socialised' into the police and begin to assimilate some of the undesirable aspects of police culture (Fielding, 1984; 1988; Chan, 1996; Prokos & Padavic, 2002). Shifting the site of education from a police academy to a university campus is regarded as a way to 'weaken' police culture socialisation processes (Home Office, 1999; Wimshurst & Ransley, 2007; Blakemore & Simpson 2010). However, the current paper contends that many UK university campuses should also be regarded as problematic sites, where, for example: racism (NUS, 2011), 'lad-cultures' (Philips & Young, 2013), 'epidemic' levels of sexual misconduct (Batty et.al, 2017), extensive bullying (UCU, 2012) and other unethical practices occur. These matters have received little attention within the UK policing studies literature.

The paper proceeds by reviewing existing literature on relationships between policing and the academy, before documenting how university academics have been at the forefront of important work researching and critiquing some of the more unethical aspects of policing. It is then explained how, in the last decade, concerns and developments surrounding police ethics have been influenced by two related themes. These are firstly: a series of high-profile corruption and misconduct cases, involving all echelons of the police, and secondly: the police professionalisation agenda. The discussion of police professionalisation will return us to the involvement of universities in police education. Finally, it will be explored how, in recent years, many UK academics, universities and students have also faced scrutiny and censure, in relation to a range of unethical behaviours and practices. In accord with Bayley (2011), the paper concludes that universities are no more ethical than the police. The paper contributes to a body of literature which cautions against assumptions that involving universities in police education will lead to improvements in the attributes of officers and the practices of the public police.

Policing and academia

While historically UK universities have played a limited role in the initial professional education of the police, other relationships between policing and the academy are more established. Although academic research into policing only began in Britain in the early 1960's (Reiner, 2010), much of what is known about the inner practices of the police has emerged from the scholarship of 'outsider' researchers based in universities. The UK 'pioneers' of policing research[3], such as: Michael Banton, Maureen Cain, Simon Holdaway and Robert Reiner, are well known and respected, and their early texts are regarded as

'classics' of the field.[4]   Since the days when Simon Holdaway (1979) could compress most of British policing scholarship into an edited book of less than 200 pages, the academic study of policing has developed to the extent where police studies may be regarded as an emerging academic discipline in its own right (Jones, 2015). Alongside the 'striking' expansion of criminology within UK mass higher education in recent years (Loader & Sparks, 2012: 9), there has been a steady growth of vocational and other policing study programmes; as well as the establishment of numerous university based centres/institutes of policing studies and research. [5]

Setting aside for the moment the literature on graduate policing, there are a sizable number of articles which have examined relationships and differences between policing and universities. The themes include: differences in cultures and methods of working (Bullock & Tilly, 2009); different approaches to knowledge (Weisburd & Neyroud, 2011; Cantor, 2014); different interpretations of what constitutes research 'evidence' (Fleming & Rhodes, 2008; Williams et al. 2019); different expectations concerning research 'outcomes' (Kelty & Julian, 2012); as well as a body of work examining police and academic collaborations more generally (Loftus et.al 2014).

In their examination of relationships between universities and policing, Bradley and Nixon (2009: 426) categorise two broad research traditions shaping the police studies landscape over many years. The first they term: 'the critical police research tradition', which is conducted by researchers who study the police at a distance, without any formal obligation to meet their occupational or educational needs. Whereas the second: 'policy research tradition', was established to provide the ideas and evidence to improve policing and is conducted by researchers committed to a closer engagement with the police[6]. Like many social science typologies the categories are ideal types (Weber, 1949), as policy oriented research is 'not necessarily uncritical' (Newburn & Reiner, 2012: 807) and the work of some scholars, bridges the policy and critical research camps (Bradley & Nixon, 2009; Heslop, 2012).

Newburn and Reiner (2012) document how government sponsored police policy oriented research emerged in the UK in the late 1970s and has expanded since the mid-1980s, with many studies being conducted by the police themselves (see also, Brown, 1996). In the last decade, policy research has become further embedded in UK policing with the emergence of evidence-based policing (EBP) (Heaton & Tong 2015; Brown et.al 2018; Flemming & Rhodes, 2018). Drawing on traditions from medicine and the underpinning methodologies of the natural sciences, EBP promotes, 'the use of the best available research on the outcomes of police work to implement guidelines and evaluate agencies, units, and officers' (Sherman, 1998: 3). EBP is an integral constituent of the PEQF and the police professionalisation agenda more broadly (Brown et al. 2018, Williams at al. 2019); with the core idea of the police themselves conducting and applying research evidence to improve their practice, in collaboration with academics and other partners (COP, n.d.; CCEBP, n.d.)[7].

Whether under the framework of EBP or in other contexts there are many productive research collaborations between policing and the academic community (Loftus et al. 2014: 3). Although their different agendas and working practices have been well documented (Cantor, 2004; Bullock & Tilly, 2009; Kelty & Julian, 2012), police organisations and universities bring distinct, though mutually beneficial assets to collaborative research projects. Most evidently, the police are a rich source of data for academic research (Dawson & Williams, 2009). As practitioner academics, the police also bring their 'craft knowledge' (Flemming & Rhodes, 2018) and 'insider' perspective to the research process, together with the epistemological purchase this viewpoint is argued to bring (Young, 1991; Holdaway, 1993;

Heslop, 2011a). Whereas, outsider researchers, are argued to bring an external critical gaze to the study of policing and provide the police with an important 'accountability function' (Loftus et.al 2014: 3).

A further important asset which universities/academics bring to collaborative research projects are their experiences and well-developed protocols for dealing with the ethics of research. While it will be discussed how a *Code of Ethics* has recently been developed for the policing profession (COP, 2014), it will suffice here to note that its key principles are predominantly directed towards operational policing or other internal concerns. Although it would go too far to claim that police practitioners have no involvement in research ethics approval and monitoring processes, they rely heavily on the ethics expertise and protocols of external academic partners. The author's own experiences as a former practitioner researcher provide a case in point here. Although being involved in a number of empirical research projects, involving human participants (Heslop 2011a, 2011b; White & Heslop, 2012), he was never required to submit to any police *internal* research ethics procedures.

Without underestimating the importance of policy and EBP research to the study and practice of policing, the critical research tradition has arguably played the most illuminating role in developing scholarly understanding of the core functions and inner practices of the public police. Critical research into the police emerged in Britain in the late 1960s and 1970s, against a background of rising concerns about law and order, police corruptions scandals and growing public questioning of authority (Reiner, 2010; Newburn & Reiner, 2015). It is claimed that 'many academics have been motivated primarily by the intellectual project of advancing the analysis of policing as mode of control and governance' (Reiner, 2010: 9); though for a few scholars, police research has also played a pivotal role in advancing their academic careers (Heslop, 2012). As late as 2005, the field of police studies remained dominated by a coterie of elite scholars who have 'known each other since the 1970s; attended many police-oriented conferences in the United States, United Kingdom, Canada, and on the continent; and appeared in, reviewed, and praised each other's books' (Manning, 2005: 6).

In the UK context, university academics have been at the vanguard of important critical work, researching and documenting some of the more controversial aspects of policing. The themes include: police racism (Hall et al, 1978; Holdaway, 1996, 1997; Rowe, 2004); sexism, (Brown, 1998; Holdaway, 1998); police corruption (Newburn, 2015); covert policing (Loftus et al., 2016); police use of force (Waddington & Wright, 2008); police media relationships (Mawby, 2010); police ethics (Westmarland, 2005, 2013; Westmarland & Rowe, 2016); as well as an extensive body of empirical research literature drawing on the concept of police culture (e.g. Holdaway, 1983; Loftus, 2008) [8].

Police culture

Much of the research and theorising about the public police is based on the premise that they possess a distinctive occupational culture[9]. Although other occupational groups have their own cultures (Reiner 2016), the police are viewed distinctively, due to their extensive discretionary powers and isolation from the public (Sato, 2003). In accord with established sociological and anthropological definitions of culture, the police culture refers to 'a set of shared informal norms, beliefs and values that underpins and informs police outlooks and behaviour towards people' (Loftus, 2008: 757). Although the notion of a monolithic police culture is untenable (Reiner 2016), international research into police culture has sought to identify its common key features. According to orthodoxy, these features include: a common subscription to mission, cynicism, authoritarian conservatism, racism, sexism, as well as an 'us/them'

division of the social world (Loftus, 2009; Waddington, 1999; Reiner, 2010). While there is significant scholarly debate across academic disciplines regarding how any culture develops and functions (Baldwin et. al. 2012), an influential idea in police studies is that cop culture functions as a 'coping mechanism', to insulate officers from the hazardous environments of policing (Paoline, 2003). While aspects of police culture may therefore be 'appreciated' (Waddington, 1999), the concept is more typically invoked by academics and other commentators to explain and condemn a range of unethical practices.

Police misconduct and ethics

Although it has been argued that academics have played an important role in raising public awareness about aspects of police misconduct, they are not the only critics to have done so. Investigative journalists (such as the *Secret Policeman*[10]) have also played an important role, as have internal police 'whistle-blowers', social media 'bloggers'[11], and the Independent Office for Police Conduct (IOPC). Newburn (2017) documents how from the earliest days of the formation of the 'new police' in the eighteenth century, to the phone hacking scandal of recent years, UK policing has been littered with cases of malpractice and misconduct. Relatively recent cases include: the Birmingham Six; the Guildford Four; the Carl Bridgewater affair; Hillsborough; and possible impropriety in the Stephen Lawrence murder investigation (ibid).

In the last decade, concerns and developments surrounding the ethics of policing have been influenced by two themes, which some may consider to be related. Firstly, there has been a further series of well publicised alleged or proven police corruption and misconduct cases (Newburn, 2015). Worryingly, many of the cases relate to the conduct of not only rank-and-file officers, but also senior police officers, including numerous Chief Officers (COP, 2015; Holdaway, 2017), the Police Federation (HOC, 2014) and many Police and Crime Commissioners (*The Telegraph*, 2014). While some of the incidents can only be categorised as outright criminality/corruption, others take us into the more ambiguous territory of police ethics. As Newburn (2015: 1) reminds us, 'the simple but uncomfortable fact is that complex ethical problems are an inherent part of policing'.

Police professionalisation

The second theme relating to developments surrounding police ethics is the police professionalisation agenda. While it has been argued that the idea of policing as a profession is not a contemporary one (Holdaway, 2017), it is generally acknowledged that, historically, policing has not held the formal status of a profession (Heslop, 2011c). Although the sociological literature on professions (i.e. Evetts, 2003, 2006) establishes that the terms profession and professionalisation are essentially contested concepts, contemporary policing policy developments are based on a straightforward taxonomic (or 'trait') approach, as exemplified in the work of Kleinig (1996). To adapt a list provided by Kleinig these traits include: (1) provision of public service; (2) self-regulation and involvement of a professional body; (3) a code of ethics; (4) a body of expert knowledge; and (5) educational qualifications. Recently, there have been a number of official reports which have made the case for police professionalisation (Neyroud, 2011; Winsor, 2012), followed by institutional and policy developments to carry the recommendations forward. In 2012, the College of Policing was established by the Home Office as the professional body for the police service in England and Wales and an initial important project led to the development and

adoption of a new *Code of Ethics* for the policing profession (COP, 2014). This was followed in 2016 by the announcement of the PEQF.

Police training and education and the PEQF

Despite longstanding concerns about the pre-entry educational standards of police recruits, there has historically been no nationally set minimum educational criterion for recruit selection in England and Wales (Neyroud, 2011). The author joined a large provincial police force in 1988 with few academic qualifications, let alone a degree, and under similar circumstances could do so today. While some commentators may have thought this unsatisfactory back in the late 1980s, the perceived educational deficiencies of the police may seem acute in an era when the public police face such complex, criminal, terrorist, financial and ethical challenges (HMICFRS: 2017). Building on the recommendations of Neyroud (2011) and Winsor (2012), the PEFQ will fundamentally change police education in England and Wales. From January 2020 there will be three new national entry routes into policing as follows: (1) a self-funded undergraduate (pre-join) professional degree in policing; (2) a Police Constable Degree Apprenticeship (PCDA); and (3) a two-year conversion programme for those whose first degree is not the professional policing degree (COP, 2019). Along with the establishment of the COP as the police professional body and the adoption of a new *Code of Ethics*, the PEQF is regarded as a further key constituent of police professionalisation. It is contended that requiring new entrants to be graduates will bring the police into alignment with other UK public service professions (i.e. nursing, teaching and social work), at the same time as providing police recruits with the benefits of higher education (Christopher, 2015), and help to 'weaken the negative elements of the occupational culture' (Home Office 1999: 79).

Graduate policing

However, the arguments for and against requiring UK police officers to be graduates has been one of the most contested policing policy debates in the last decade. The debate has been framed by a body of empirical studies, from the UK and internationally, which have examined relationships between graduate education and a range of police officer attributes and policing outcomes (e.g. Heslop, 2011a; Macvean & Cox, 2012; Hallenberg & Cockcroft, 2017). Along with some useful reviews of the literature, which have sought to synthesise the findings and draw some overall conclusions (Patterson, 2011; Brown, 2018). In the most recent and comprehensive literature review into previous graduate policing programmes Brown (2018: 11) finds that, '…the empirical evidence base is not strong enough to draw definitive conclusions about the improvements that more specific graduate attributes bring to policing and this is particularly the case for UK based research'. Brown suggests that while policing degree programmes appear to 'confer no particular advantage to police officers', it is their 'experience of university *per se'* that seems to be important (ibid: 1).

Although the UK based research literature provides examples of police students having positive experiences on university programmes, leading to perceived improvements in their professional practice (i.e. Jones, 2015), much of the literature documents their negative experiences (Heslop, 2011a; Macvean & Cox 2012; Hallenberg & Cockcroft 2017; Cox & Kirby 2018). Moreover, there is little evidence to indicate that the anticipated improvements to police integrity and ethics and the changes to police occupational culture have occurred (Brown, 2018). Indeed, with regard to the aim of making positive changes to police occupational culture the empirical evidence appears to point in the contra direction.

Research by the author (Heslop, 2011a) into one of the first UK post-employment police studies foundation degree programmes, identified that the pedagogic practices of academics contributed to negative features of police culture being 'reproduced' within the university environment. Subcultural tensions between academia and policing were evident in Macvean and Cox's (2012) multisite study of police education in university settings. And in more recent research into the impact of HE programmes on police culture, Cox and Kirby (2018: 559) conclude that, 'negative aspects of police culture can be developed even within a university'.

Although some researchers accept that the pathway to changing police culture is not simply through shifting the site of police education from a police academy to a university campus, different reasons are posited about why. Cox and Kirby suggest that police culture continues to develop within HE institutions 'through police association and placement training' (ibid: 559). While this explanation is plausible and is supported by their own and other empirical research (e.g. Heslop, 2011b), it may underestimate the impact of cultural and other problems found in contemporary UK universities. These problems will be returned to next.

Universities/academic misconduct and ethics
The classic 'campus novels' from *Lucky Jim* (Amis, 1954) to *The History Man* (Bradbury, 1975) and beyond, provide considerable fictionalised insight into the murkier aspects of university life. In *The History Man,* the anti-hero, Dr Howard Kirk, regularly partakes in recreational drug use, and (despite being married) has no qualms about sleeping with his students, some of whom he persuades to perform domestic chores at his home. Yet the novel is set in an era (1972) when British academics could only be dismissed for 'gross moral turpitude' and despite his highly unethical antics, Dr Kirk has seemingly not yet crossed that line. According to Kirk, gross moral turpitude is a, 'very vague concept', but it's rumoured to 'involve raping large numbers of nuns'. Whereas, in a scene from the film *Educating Rita* (Gilbert, 1983), Dr Frank Bryant provides his assessment of what it takes for a university academic to be dismissed:

> To get the sack, it would have to be rape on a grand scale. And not just with students, either. That would only amount to a minor misdemeanour. No, for dismissal it would have to be nothing less than buggering the Bursar.

While the above narratives are fictionalised and (somewhat inappropriately) comedic, they are arguably accounts that take from tacitly understood realities.

More recently and outside of fiction, many UK universities, academics and students have faced scrutiny and censure in relation to a range of all too real unethical behaviours and practices. The controversies have occurred against a background of three decades worth of macro-level changes within the UK HE sector which have been comprehensively documented within the adult education literature. In particular, a large critical literature has developed on the increased 'marketisation' of higher education (e.g. Brown, 2010; Molesworth et al, 2011; Brown & Carasso, 2012) and its associated themes, such as: students as 'consumers' (Molesworth et.al 2011); the rise of 'performance management' and academic 'performativity' (Ball, 2012); and the 'commodification' and the 'devaluing' of higher education' in general (Collini, 2012, 2018a, 2018b). Although much of the critique has come

from within the academy, academics stand accused of having become 'deprofessionalised' (Morrish, 2015) and the institutions where they work are becoming 'universities without integrity' as their 'inner callings are emptied out to be replaced by the callings of others' (Barnett 2003: 71). As one of the most influential critics of contemporary universities asserts:

> …genuine academic freedom in British universities is in a parlous condition. Not because uniformed commissars are frog-marching outspoken academics off to jail (not that there are that many outspoken academics in the first place). It is more a matter of the daily erosion of intellectual integrity… (Collini, 2018a).

It is not only intellectual integrity which is under threat. The issues and scandals which are of more pressing concern to university students, staff and the public include: 'epidemic levels' of sexual misconduct by university employees and associated 'cover-ups' (Batty et.al, 2017); racism on campuses and similar cover-ups (NUS, 2011); a 'culture of cruelty' within UK universities (Farley & Sprigg, 2014) involving high levels of bullying and harassment of staff (UCU, 2012); allegations of serious research fraud (Turner, 2018); 'mis-selling' of degree courses (NAO, 2017); and extensively publicised concerns over transparency and the salary packages and 'perks' of senior university leaders (UCU, 2017).

Despite this critical discourse students appear to have embraced the market for HE and nearly half of young people in England go on to attend university (DfE, 2017). From January 2020, prospective and serving police officers in England and Wales will be joining the HE student population and may find themselves on campuses where some of the above mentioned unethical practices occur. Although some of the issues are interrelated, it may assist the discussion to categorise them under the following four broad themes: (1) institutional/leadership; (2) academic cultural; (3) individual ('bad apples'); and (4) student cultural.

Institutional/leadership

Firstly, some of the problems in universities occur at the *institutional*, or at least the senior leadership level. An obvious example is the widely publicised concerns over the salaries and perks of senior university staff. While no one has suggested that Vice Chancellors' (VC's) and their senior colleagues have committed any crimes, the issues are regarded as 'scandalous'. As Chakrabortty, writing in *The Guardian*, opines:

> Scandals aren't meant to happen in British universities. Parliament, tabloid newsrooms, the City … those we expect to spew out sleaze…Yet we should all be scandalised by what is happening in academia. It is a tale of vast greed and of vandalism – and it is being committed right at the top… If this were just about individual greed, we could sling out a few bad apples and carry on. But what's rotten in universities is the rules observed by the people at the top (Chakrabortty, 2017).

Even the former Government minister, Lord Adonis, who was responsible for introducing the tuition fees system in the UK has described the £808,000 salary package of one VC as a 'sick joke'; and it is contended that in an age of tuition fees, university VC's are becoming 'figures of hate and symbols of

institutional greed' (Kyereme, 2017). As one student puts it, 'I didn't go to university to pay a Vice Chancellor £800,000' (ibid).

These comments take us to related institutional issues concerning tuition fees and the poor quality of some academic courses. According to a recent deeply critical report by the National Audit Office (NAO), the university tuition fees system lets students down so badly that it borders on a financial 'mis-selling' scandal (NAO, 2017). While universities were not responsible for the introduction of the tuition fees system, nor do they administer it, they are accused of offering many, 'shoddy but expensive degree courses' (Bennett, 2017). According to the NAO report, a third of students did not think their course provided value for money and many may not realise their degree will not lead to a well-paid graduate job (NAO, 2017). Indeed, on the day the author was finalising this paper, a leading national news story concerned a graduate student who had taken legal action against a UK university over 'false advertising claims' about her degree course (BBC, 2019a). Although the student had graduated with a first-class degree in international business studies, she received a £60,000 pay-out from the university's insurers after claiming that the university 'exaggerated the prospects of a career'. While problems such as this are evidently applicable to graduates across a range of disciplines, it will be interesting to see how matters unfold in the new era of self-funded pre-join professional policing degree programmes. At a time of national recruitment shortages for some public service professionals, graduate: teachers, nurses and social workers are almost certain to find a job at the end of their degree courses (NHE, 2018; HOC, 2019). However, at a time of police austerity, we may wonder how many newly qualified (self-funded) pre-join professional police degree holders will be appointed into the police?

Academic culture or a few bad apples?

As referenced above, like a well-known approach to explaining police misconduct, it is tempting to put some of the problems in universities down to a few 'bad apples' (Newburn, 2015). While there are certainly academics whose conduct is highly untypical of their profession on the whole, the problems seem to go well beyond the behaviour of a few rogue individuals and the issues may more appropriately be categorised as *cultural.* Although there has not been the same level of intellectual effort devoted to researching problematic aspects of university culture, as police culture, there is a growing body of work from academics and others which either implicitly or explicitly draws on this concept and which raises many serious concerns.

It has been argued, for example, that there is a 'culture of cruelty' within UK universities (Farley & Sprigg, 2014) involving extensive levels of bullying and harassment of staff (UCU, 2012; see also Keashly & Neuman, 2014). Additionally, the issue of sexual misconduct (on students and staff) by academics is also receiving significant attention by scholars and other commentators and the problem is argued to be at 'epidemic levels' (Batty. et.al, 2017). However, it is not just the primary inappropriate behaviours which are receiving criticism, but also the methods deployed by universities to cover up the problems. Recently, there has been criticism of the extensive use by universities of legal non-disclosure agreements (NDAs) (or 'gagging orders') (BBC, 2019b). Figures obtained by the BBC show that UK universities spent approximately £87 million on pay-offs with NDAs since 2017, and many academics claimed to have been 'harassed' out of their jobs and made to sign non-disclosure agreements after making complaints (ibid).

Student cultural

Finally, it is not only the institutional practices of universities and behaviour of some senior leaders and academics which are causing concern on UK university campuses. While most students conduct themselves perfectly properly during their time at university, there is significant evidence from multiple sources that many do not. There are considerable concerns surrounding the experiences of black and minority ethic (BME) students and allegations of racism. Although there are no overall figures for the number of racist incidents on HEI campuses, a 2011 report by the National Students Union (NUS) identified that one in six black students had experienced racism at their institution (NUS, 2011). More recently, the President of the NUS, Shakira Martin, disclosed that she received calls from students reporting racist incidents on a 'daily basis' and complained that, 'universities are more concerned about their reputations than confronting the racist abuse of students' (BBC, 2018).

Similar concerns have been raised about the so called 'lad-culture' (Philips & Young, 2013) and the related problems surrounding the high incidences of student-on-student, sexual harassment and assaults occurring across many UK universities (UUK, 2016). Although this problem has also been recently described as an 'epidemic' (*Times Higher Education*, 2018) and as a 'cultural' issue (UUK, 2016), victim reporting rates amongst students are argued to be 'shockingly low' and suspiciously unrepresentative of the scale of the problem (*Times Higher Education,* 2018). However, the more recent case of the Warwick University 'rape chat scandal' has raised major concerns about a 'rape culture' existing on some UK university campuses and the allegedly unethical ways in which universities mishandle complaints from student victims, in order to protect their reputations. In the case of Warwick University, this alleged damage limitation strategy seriously backfired following the recent screening of the harrowing BBC 3 documentary, '*The Warwick Uni Rape Chat Scandal'* (BBC, 2019c). The documentary reports on incidents in 2018 when a number of male students made sickening rape threats against female students in a Facebook group chat. The below are a few examples:

'Rape the whole flat to teach them a lesson'; 'Oh god. I would hate to be in the firing line if I had a vagina'; 'I swear to god if it's that girl in my flat, I'm going to go all 1945 advancing Soviet Army on her and rape her in the street while everybody watches; Rape her and run' (ibid).

The university's handling of the investigation has come under serious criticism from victims and other students and this was a key theme in the BBC documentary. As with the problems of racism and other hate crimes on campuses, UK universities are accused of putting their reputations rather than victims first (UUK, 2016, BBC, 2019a, 2019b).

Discussion and conclusion

It is recognised that this paper has devoted much of its focus on the problematic aspects of police and university practices and behaviours, which may be broadly categorised as unethical. It is also accepted that the concerns and issues raised in this paper are not representative of the institutions as a whole and certainly not the majority of the professionals who work in them. The author served for 28 years as a British police officer and has worked for three years as an academic in a UK university. The vast majority of his experiences have been of working with dedicated and professional individuals in both

institutions. This been said, over nearly three decades, the author could not have failed to have experienced/witnessed and no doubt even been involved in some aspects of police work which can certainly be described as unethical. Correspondingly, his more recent and limited experiences of working as a university academic have not been without concern.

It is also recognised that some may contend that a comparison of policing and university ethics is unjustified in the first place. After all, there are significant differences between the functions and overall practices of both institutions. Considering their extensive powers and their defining capacity to use force (Bittner, 1980), the public police have long been recognised a legitimate target for critical sociological enquiry. Putting it bluntly, if some academics are having sexual relationships with their students and bullying their colleagues, at least they are not physically beating or fitting them up. However, this paper has argued that a comparison of ethical issues between policing and universities is justified on several grounds. Academics have, with good reason, been some of the most prominent critics of the police and while this should not cease, it is contended that, when *relevant,* there is also a need for academics to look at some of the problems in their own back yard. An example of this relevance is the debate about involving universities in the professional education of the police. It is recognised within police studies that there was once a so-called 'golden age of policing' in Britain, or at least the perception of one (Reiner, 2010). As Reiner explains, '… the 1950's seem a 'golden age' of tranquillity and accord, with only hesitant harbingers of coming crisis' (ibid: 68). Since then, significant social change and many decade's worth of critical academic enquiry has established that this golden age of policing has well-and-truly come to an end. There is something of a parallel within UK higher education, which arguably experienced its own 'golden' age in a period up to the late 1970s. After which, according to Furedi (2011: 1):

> …the culture of academic life has been transformed by the institutionalisation of the policies of marketisation [and] quaint academic rituals and practices have been gradually displaced by management techniques as departments mutate into cost centres often run by administrators recruited from the private and public sector.

While critical scholars in the field of HE are well attuned to these developments and their implications for academic practice, the changes and problems within UK universities are hardly discussed within the emerging literature on police education. An important theme of this paper has been the recent developments within police education, as universities become key players in the education of the police. For some prospective and serving officers, their experiences at university should develop them as individuals in positive ways (as they certainly did for this author) and perhaps even make some improvements to policing practice. However, this cannot be assumed. As Cox and Kirby (2018: 551) point out, 'ironically, in an age when evidence-based policing is championed, the benefits of future recruits studying at the university has not been fully explored'.

This paper has argued that there are many ethical problems in contemporary universities. Even if the 'internal' issues such as, the lack of transparency, staff bullying and harassment, and perceived financial greed of some senior colleagues, are not regarded as all that relevant to a police officer's education, some students will find themselves on campuses where 'lad-cultures' and even 'rape-cultures' seemingly persist; and sexist, racist and other inappropriate practices occur. If police recruits

can become 'socialised' into problematic cultures and ways of behaviour within the highly disciplined and regulated confines of a police training academy, then why not on a university campus?

Notes

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[2] See Heslop (2015).

[3] See *Police Practice & Research: an International Journal* (various issues) for the series: 'Pioneers of Police Research'.

[4] See *Policing & Society: an International Journal of Research & Policy* (various issues) for the series: 'Revisiting the Classics'.

[5] Including, for example: Canterbury Christchurch University; Liverpool John Moores University; Cardiff University; and the Open University.

[6] Bradley & Nixon's typology resonates with the established distinction within police studies between 'sociology of the police' and 'sociology for the police', which can be traced back to the seminal work of Banton (1964).

[7] In England and Wales, the Cambridge Centre for Evidence-Based Policing (CCEBP) based at the University of Cambridge, as well as the Universities' Police Science Institute (UPI) based at Cardiff University are prominent HE institutions advocating EBP methods and collaborations.

[8] In citing these examples the author wishes to make clear that there is no implication that that work cited is not aimed at improving policing, or that the scholars have not engaged closely with the police. The works are merely cited as examples of scholarship which falls broadly within the critical tradition.

[9] Recent reviews include: Cockcroft, (2013); Bacon, (2014).

[10] BBC television programme, *The Secret Policeman*, screened October 2003. For a more thorough discussion of this programme and its implications see McLaughlin (2007, chap 6).

[11] See, for example: 'The Truth' at: http://www.charliefoulkes.co.uk/truth/index.html

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