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The Economics of Policing Research

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On April 22, 2013, Canadian police announced the arrests of two individuals suspected of plotting to carry out a terrorist attack on a passenger train in Toronto. In the wake of the arrests there was significant public discussion on the issue of domestic terrorism, particularly as news of the plot closely followed the tragic events of the Boston Marathon bombings. One of those who commented publicly was the leader of Canada's federal Liberal party, Justin Trudeau, who suggested that it was necessary for societies to search for the "root causes" of domestic terrorism (Campion-Smith 2013). During a news conference a few days later, in response to a reporter's question about Trudeau's statement¹, then Canadian Prime Minister Stephen Harper replied, "this is not a time to commit sociology" (Cohen 2013). A number of Canadian academics used the occasion of Harper's remark to take public exception to what they termed his "anti-intellectualism" (Strong-Boag et al. 2013). In support of their contention, they noted that the Prime Minister's statement reflected a generally dismissive attitude within the Harper government towards the social sciences, an attitude that was evidenced by cuts to research funding, and the inability of researchers to be heard by policy-makers (ibid.).

At the same time that the Prime Minister was decrying the need for critical thinking on a complex policy problem, federal, provincial and municipal governments were working behind the scenes at grappling with another thorny policy issue: the rising costs of public policing. In 2012, Canadians spent an estimated \$13.5 billion on public policing alone, a figure that represented a 2.8% increase over the previous year (Hutchins 2014). This increase was not anomalous: police spending had largely been on the incline since the late 1990s (ibid.). Whereas government budgets had been more willing to absorb rising costs during strong economic times,

¹ To provide some context for this question: the previous week the Leader of the Opposition, Justin Trudeau, had been taken to task by Conservative officials for his comments following the Boston bombings on the need to find the underlying roots of terrorist activities (Fitzpatrick 2013).

an uncertain economic future brought with it a growing awareness that such increases were likely not tenable over the long-term. Thus, talks were held among the provincial, territorial and federal Justice Ministers in January 2012, during which they agreed to convene a summit on the ‘economics of policing’ (PSC 2013). At a subsequent meeting in October of that year, the Ministers also agreed they would use the summit as a vehicle through which to begin the process of developing a common agenda for public policing in Canada (PSC 2013). The summit was organized by a federal agency, Public Safety Canada, and held in Ottawa in January 2013. Invited attendees included policy-makers, civil servants, police chiefs, union leaders and selected academics, who were asked to engage in discussions centred on three themes: ‘efficiencies within police services,’ ‘new models of community safety,’ and ‘efficiencies within the justice system’ (ibid.). From these discussions, emerged a key message: lack of public investment in domestic policing research meant that there would be little empirical knowledge upon which policy-makers could draw in order to inform their efforts (ibid.). Further, what little Canadian research did exist was scattered among various silos of knowledge-gathering, and thus would not be easily accessible or usable (ibid.).

The focus of the present paper is on how both the ‘economics of policing’ crisis, and policy-makers’ inability to draw on domestic research to resolve it, were generated by successive Canadian governments sharing an ideologically-informed view of the relative importance of criminal justice research. This view, as I document below, fairly consistently resulted in the prioritization of immediate economic considerations (budget cuts) over long-term investments in research to support criminal justice policy-making. To place this situation in historical context, I begin this paper by sketching out the creation of a fairly vibrant criminal justice research culture that once existed within Canada, the products of which were (relatively speaking) valued by

policy-makers and used to inform public policy-making. This culture was not to last. In subsequent sections, I trace the means by which this culture was killed, not by a single blow, but through systematic dismantling by successive governments – the proverbial death by a thousand cuts. Although each of these governments differed, in some respects, in terms of their political orientations, what they shared in common was a particular neo-liberal economic agenda that proved to be somewhat unique to Canada. As a consequence, these governments defunded research programs, cut government research jobs and, when it was felt that data was required on an issue, often limited external consultation to select contract workers. As I show in the pages below, by the time that the most recent government was formed in 2006 – a government that paired its version of economic neo-liberalism with a social conservatism that, at least until recently, did not place much social value in independent criminological research either – there was little capacity for domestic policing research left for them to cut away at (although it happened, regardless). As a result, when governments in 2012 realized the extent of the policing crisis they were facing – a crisis that at least one researcher had predicted years earlier (Murphy 2004) – they were had little more than a “rather anemic body of empirically based, applied or evaluative police studies” from which to formulate solutions (Murphy 1999: 208).

The hey-day of Canadian policing studies (relatively speaking)

The years immediately following the Second World War² have generally been regarded by Criminologists as “halcyon days,” during which the discipline experienced not only tremendous growth, but also wielded a significant degree of influence in shaping criminal justice

² From approximately the early 1950s to the late 1960s/early 1970s.

policy-making (Gibbons 1999: 400; see also Garland 2001³; Sherman 2004; Haggerty 2004). For Canadian criminal justice researchers of the time, it would perhaps be more accurate to pinpoint their own ‘halcyon days’ as occurring in the 1970s: it was under the Trudeau government that the Canadian federal government invested heavily in the production of criminological research (Stenning 1999). They did so in the belief that the products of such investments would assist policy-makers in formulating sound, evidence-based policies (ibid.).

Much of the support provided criminal justice research was channeled through the Research Division of the Ministry of the Solicitor General⁴. The Division was created in 1969 for the purpose of generating research from which federal policy-makers could draw. To accomplish this task, the Division hired research staff to administer a budget allocated for external research activities, the results of which staff would disseminate across various networks that included policy makers, criminal justice practitioners and the research community (Rock 1986; Stenning 1999). A key funding initiative implemented by the Ministry was the Contribution Grants program, which supported the development of criminology research centres across Canada (Stenning 1999; Murphy 2014). A former Division Director describes the function of this support as helping to “train criminologists, to encourage innovative studies, and to employ undergraduates in research” (Woods 1999: 173). Contribution grants ranged from \$25,000 to \$130,000, and were given to applicant schools seen as maintaining a “strong academic presence” in the criminal justice field (ibid.). Four of the major centres were housed at the Universities of Ottawa, Montreal, Toronto and Simon Fraser. Smaller institutions also acquired support, using

³ For the purposes of clarity, I should note that Garland (2001: 95) appears slightly less nostalgic for these ‘good old days’ when “the penal-welfare paradigm and its criminological analysis Continued to shape practical reasoning.”

⁴ Today known as Public Safety Canada.

the funds to establish their own research units (Stenning 1999). The program not only helped set up and maintain these research silos, but allowed for direct funding of independent research projects (ibid.). Augmenting the Contributions program were other initiatives, including the Research Interns Program, which provided \$60,000 for undergraduate training as research assistants (Woods 1999). Summarizing the net effect of these and other 'investments', Phillip Stenning (1999: 180) states that the

material and moral support by the Federal government for the development of university-based criminological research in Canada must be regarded as critical not only for the birth of a genuinely Canadian criminology, but also for the influence which such research gradually assumed in the criminal policy development process here.

Throughout the 1970s, the Ministry of the Solicitor General was not, however, the only government agency to play a major role in the development of Canadian criminal justice research. In 1974, a federal-provincial commission was established to discuss the formation of a body that would be tasked with collecting criminal justice statistics, which would be used to improve criminal justice policy-making (Haggerty 2001). After disagreements about the nature and composition of this agency were finally settled, in 1981 the federal government established the Canadian Centre of Criminal Justice Statistics (ibid.). The Centre produces the annual Uniform Crime Report (UCR), annual reports on the operations of the various components of the criminal justice system, and biannual and/or occasional papers on identified crime trends or special topics. In 1977, under the auspices of Industry Canada, the Trudeau government also established a mechanism for providing support to academic research through the creation of the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada (SSHRC). Set up as Canada's principal funder of all research in the social sciences, SSHRC was yet another programme through which policing researchers could seek funding for independent research. There were

also other, smaller and perhaps less obvious, avenues through which policing research was being supported by the federal government at this time. For example, in 1976 the Canadian Police College (CPC) was established through federal support in order to fulfill the need for a national training centre for police officers. To facilitate knowledge on policing best practises and improved training outcomes, the CPC developed its own research unit of six dedicated researchers (Beare 2014). The CPC also played an important role in knowledge mobilization through its in-house journal, which aimed to connect police practitioners to the latest in Canadian policing research (ibid.). Some policing researchers also benefited through the creation of the Law Reform Commission of Canada (LRCC) in 1970, a body created under the Ministry of Justice and tasked with producing research-based policy recommendations on law reform issues.

Undoubtedly, in this brief review I have omitted one or several other avenues through which policing research in Canada was fostered during our own ‘halcyon days.’ However, the above examples should provide ample context for understanding the changes that came, and the impact of these changes over time on Canadian criminal justice policy-making.

The axe begins to swing – the Mulroney years

In the early to mid-1980s the mood of federal policy-makers in Canada was very different from how it might have been characterized in the preceding decade. The economic woes of the 1970s – principally high unemployment rates and increasing inflation – had hardened into a global recession. That recession ushered in a tide of U.S.-style neoliberal ideology, the principal political proponents of which were notably Ronald Reagan in the U.S. and Margaret Thatcher in the U.K. In 1984, Reagan and Thatcher were joined by a third believer in neo-liberal economic reform: the newly elected Canadian Prime Minister, Brian Mulroney (1984-1993). Mulroney, who formed the first Conservative majority government elected in some 26 years, had succeeded

in breaking a Liberal party stranglehold by appealing to both social conservatives in the West and economic conservatives in Ontario and the Atlantic provinces (Hunt 1994). Setting the economy as his government's top policy issue, he oversaw the privatization of federal corporations, cut social spending, and set about to liberalize trade by, among other things, hitching Canada's wagon to the North American Free Trade Agreement. Following up on his campaign promise to trim federal government spending by handing out "pink slips and running shoes" (cited in Lane 1998: 49), Mulroney also sought to implement bureaucratic reform through rationalizing Ottawa's federal civil service and implementing a new public managerial approach (Pollitt and Bouckaert 2004). Although derided by some for not going far enough to achieve significant bureaucratic reform (Savoie 1994; O'Neal 1994), the Mulroney government's efforts in this quarter were to have detrimental impacts on the production of criminal justice research in Canada (Murphy 1999).

It has been suggested that the beginning of the end of the halcyon days of Canadian criminal justice research came as the result of what became known as the Nielsen Task Force (Woods 1999; Beare 2014). In 1984, Mulroney appointed Deputy Prime Minister Erik Nielsen to head a commission of representatives from both public and private sectors tasked with reviewing over 1,000 federal programmes (Lane 1998). Some have argued that the recommendations of the Nielsen Task Force were not successful in achieving significant reforms (Savoie 1994; O'Neal 1994). However, in combination with across-the-board budget cuts instituted across each government ministry, the result was a series of blows to criminal justice research. Within the Solicitor General's Ministry there were significant cuts. One casualty was the loss of the Research Interns Program, which had provided a vehicle for undergraduates to get direct exposure to criminal justice research (Woods 1999). The Fund for Independent Research was

discontinued (ibid.). Internal research capacity for policing studies was gutted (ibid.). Outside of the Solicitor General, federally funded organizations were also feeling the pinch: the Canadian Police College (CPC) began to work on the basis of a cost recovery model (Beare 2014). No longer operating with secure funding for research efforts, the CPC's *Canadian Police College Journal* ceased publication in the late 1980s and the number of CPC researchers dwindled from six to three to one, "and then none" (ibid.). A subsequent round of budget cuts in 1992 saw the Mulroney government abolish the Law Reform Commission of Canada. The defunding of this program, in combination with similar other cuts to publicly funded research, has been described as having "deprived Ottawa of several important sources independent research and advice" (Clarkson and Wood 2010: 324).

The one area in which the loss of research capacity did have a significant impact was in relation to the federal government's orientation towards criminal justice policy. Whereas in the U.S. and U.K. economic conservatism was twinned with a growing social conservatism that saw penal-welfarist reforms replaced by 'get tough on crime' populist approaches (Garland 2001), this was less the case in Canada. Looking back on some eight years of Conservative rule, Hatt and colleagues (1992) observed that little had changed: the criminal justice policy directions set by Pierre Trudeau's Liberal government (1968-1984) remained largely in place under Mulroney's Conservatives. Thus one might reasonably surmise that the defunding of research in this area⁵, and the growing disconnect between policy-makers and researchers, was, for the most part, less about changing social values than it was about generating economic quick fixes.

⁵ Given its mandate, some might arguably view the abolishment of the Law Reform Commission as ideologically motivated.

Belt tightening, (neo) Liberal style – the Chretien and Martin governments

By 1993, the Mulroney government's economic agenda had had little impact on the country's fiscal woes. Thus, the in-coming Liberal government of Prime Minister Jean Chretien (1993-2003) inherited a sizeable deficit, the elimination of which was targeted as its most vital policy issue. Although leader of a political party with a history of being more liberal on social issues than their Conservative counterparts, Chretien's appointments to key cabinet positions, principally the selection of Paul Martin as Finance Minister, demonstrated his willingness to place the goal of deficit reduction above all other considerations – "fiscal and economic priorities would trump social priorities" (Patten 2006: 327).

Like Mulroney, the Chretien government began the process of taming the country's budget deficit through spending cuts and a reorganization of the civil service. To the latter end, federal policy analysts were tasked with analyzing the state of the civil service following the earlier Mulroney reforms (Schmitz 1994; O'Neal 1994). One report's author concluded:

Government is not working as it should. That appears to be the consensus of most outside government, and is shared even by many within it. Discontent has been focused on unresponsive politicians and distant bureaucrats. Much of it implicates the 'system' generally and its alleged 'wasteful' spending habits (Schmitz 1994).

Rejecting Mulroney's use of across-the-board budget cuts, the Chretien government opted instead to develop a model of Program Review based on an initiative that had been implemented in the Department of Transport (Bourgon 2009). All federal government bodies were tasked with evaluating their existing programs and services and developing proposals for the future that would take into account the government's fixed budget targets (Mauro 2011). Each program was to be evaluated on the basis of six key questions:

1. Does the programme or activity continue to serve a public interest?
2. Is there a legitimate and necessary role for government in this programme area or activity?

3. Is the current role of the federal government appropriate or is the programme a candidate for realignment with the provinces?
4. What activities or programmes should, or could, be transferred in whole or in part to the private or voluntary sector?
5. If the programme or activity continues, how could its efficiency be improved?
6. Is the resultant package of programmes and activities affordable within the fiscal restraint? If not, what programmes or activities should be abandoned? (Bourgon *ibid.*: 22).

In relation to federal funding of criminal justice research, one significant impact of this evaluation process was that research was again de-prioritized and, in some instances, research programs were axed entirely on the ground that funding research was no longer deemed to be a ‘legitimate and necessary role for government.’ Notable among these cuts was the defunding of the Contribution grants program in 1995, the program which was largely responsible for the development of Canada’s criminology centres and thus had played “an important role in encouraging criminological research” (Beare 2014). The Research Division of the Solicitor General was also restructured, losing some research jobs, with others transferred to the Department of Justice (Stenning 1999). The result of this restructuring, according to Gerald Woods (1999: 174), was the creation of the Police and Security Branch, under which “police research did not flourish.” It did not flourish, he suggests, because its internal research capacity was gutted, and what fewer funds were available for research were increasingly being given to external agencies and contractors to carry out the work (see also Murphy 1999). Viewing the criminal justice research landscape throughout the 1990s, Don Clairmont (*ibid.*: 153) has observed that during this time “virtually all federally-funded research in the criminal justice field [was] actually contracted literature reviews, highly specific policy background papers, or precise

delimited evaluations.⁶” Thus, there was “much less opportunity for liberal social policy researchers to obtain funding for any research that [was] not closely tied to departmental policy concerns for literature reviews and evaluation pieces” (ibid.: 154). In those instances where independent researchers were consulted by government, some academics felt they were simply being asked “to legitimate policies in which they have no influence” (Brodeur 1999: 135). The one bright spot for many criminal justice researchers in another wise bleak research landscape was the government’s decision to reinstitute the newly renamed Law Commission of Canada in 1997.

Remarkably, as had been the case under the previous Mulroney government, the adoption of a neo-liberal economic agenda by the Chretien and Martin governments, combined with the decoupling of research from policy-making, did not, for the most part, have a significant impact on the direction of federal criminal justice policies. Whereas the U.S. was witnessing a rise in ‘penal populism’ under successive neo-liberal governments, in Canada penal sanctions did not increase and Canadian adult incarceration rates remained largely stable (Meyer and O’Malley 2005; Pratt 2007). This is not to say that Canada was at this time a perfect example of penal welfarism – work by Roberts et al. (2003), Moore and Hannah-Moffat (2005) and Hogeveen (2005), among others, suggests otherwise – but rather that the punitive trend seen elsewhere appeared to have “exercised a more muted influence on policy development in Canada” (Roberts et al. 2003: 39). Surveying the effects of penal populism more globally, Nils Christie (2004: 59) posed a question that has never been fully answered: “What [was] so peculiar to Canada?” One potential answer lies in the ideological orientation of Canada’s then ruling party: while the federal Liberal party under Chretien and his successor, Prime Minister Paul Martin, had adopted

⁶ For a more global discussion of this phenomenon, see Christie (1997) and Matthews (2009).

certain economic tenets of the U.S. variant of neo-liberalism, the Liberal party remained centre-left on social issues. Further, Martin, in particular, first as Finance Minister and then as Prime Minister (2003-2006), was committed to debt reduction and balanced budgets, resulting at the close of his tenure in a track record of five consecutive surplus budgets. Perhaps, having witnessed the results of penal politics in the U.S. – spiralling criminal justice costs (Christie 2004) – continuing Canada’s relatively restrained criminal justice policies appeared to make good economic sense.

Penal politics comes north – the Harper legacy

Anyone familiar with Christie’s book *A Suitable Amount of Crime* (2004), from which the quote in the preceding section – “What [was] so peculiar to Canada?” – has been taken, may have noticed that the verb tense has been changed from *is* (as it was in the original) to *was*. The switch in tenses signals the present state of affairs, following a sizeable shift in the orientation of Canadian criminal justice policy-making. That shift began in 2006 with the election of Stephen Harper’s Conservative government (2006-present): a coalition of social conservatives (many from the western Reform party) and economic conservatives, who had united under a man they generally viewed as more socially conservative than his predecessor, Brian Mulroney (Patten 2008). Playing to this faction of the party, Harper set out early on to remind Conservatives of their common enemy: “the social agenda of the modern Left” with “its system of moral relativism, moral neutrality and moral equivalency” (cited in Scherer and McDermott 2011: 115).

A key component of Harper’s political platform has been a populist ‘get tough on crime’ stance that borrows heavily from the punitive rhetoric and policies found in the U.S. Thus, since the Conservatives have come to power, and despite the fact that, as elsewhere, violent crime rates

have been in near-consistent decline (Perreault 2013), Canadians have been presented with a series of criminal justice bills that have sought to increase sentences for criminal offenses, extend offenders' periods of parole ineligibility and/or increase police surveillance powers. Any attempts by criminal justice experts at dissuading government policy-makers – usually done through the media, as one of the few avenues still available to criminal justice researchers to be heard – have been fallen on deaf ears or drawn condemnation in response. For example, when experts challenged the government on the necessity of increasing police powers to conduct warrantless searches under the proposed Bill C-30 (the *Protecting Children from Internet Predators Act*), Public Safety Canada Minister, Vic Toews, advised that citizens could “either stand with us or with the child pornographers” (CBC News 2012). Such dismissive views were not unique to members of the Harper government, but were widely supported by rank and file party members. Harper's ‘committing sociology’ comment was subsequently endorsed by Conservative Member of Parliament, Pierre Poilievre, who, following Harper's example, opined in a TV news program that “the root cause of terrorism is terrorists” (Poilievre 2013). Mr. Poilievre later defended his remarks in the House of Commons, saying, “yesterday, a small army of Liberal pseudo-intellectuals had a collective spasm after I said that terrorists are the cause of terrorism ... Let us follow the facts, not Liberal ideology, and let us target the root cause of terrorism, they are called terrorists” (ibid.).

In a policy environment in which independent academic scholarship was routinely devalued in favour of policy-makers' conceptions of morality and/or their own ‘common sense’ approaches to crime, it ought not be particularly surprising to discover that support for criminal justice research was not initially perceived as a significant concern. Indeed, shortly after coming to power, and at a time when Canada's economic situation was relatively healthy following years

of austerity, the Conservative government announced \$1billion in federal spending cuts. One of the programmes on the chopping block also happened to be one of the few remaining bodies of federally funded independent criminal justice research left: the Law Commission of Canada. Thus, shortly after producing a landmark report on the future of policing and security in Canada (LCC 2006), the LCC was defunded on the grounds that it failed to provide “value for money” (National Post 2006). Speculation that the cut was intended to silence potential criticism of the government’s future legislation was confirmed when Treasury Board President, John Baird, specifically stated that the Harper government failed to see “value” in funding a program that would challenge “legislation [the government] believes is right” (ibid.).

None of the above is to suggest that the federal government completely abstained from funding any criminal justice research, but rather that it chose to be highly selective in terms of what research it would support and how that money would be committed (usually for a fixed term). As an example, despite the Prime Minister’s expressed disdain for ‘committing sociology,’ the Harper government established the Kanishka project in 2011, a 5 year, \$11 million funding envelope for researchers working on terrorism-related issues. Further, as occurred under previous governments, when budget surpluses exist, Public Safety Canada continues to contract research out to private organizations and academic scholars. The reports produced are limited in scope to literature reviews or, less frequently, studies employing fairly simple research methods, aimed at answering pre-selected research questions. It is worth noting that these contracts, of \$25,000 or less (to avoid the public tender process), are offered only to selected individuals or groups. While others’ experiences may vary, based on my own exposure to this process, these reports have limited public value, because of the nature of the consulting

process, and the fact that the existence of this work is often never acknowledged outside of the consulting agency or openly shared with other researchers and organizations.

After years of a combination of large scale defunding, and selective funding of special projects, by 2014 policing research in Canada could be found in three, largely disconnected, knowledge pools. The first is the body of reports commissioned by federal, provincial and municipal agencies for internal use. A perusal of some of these reports reveals that they are typically of an applied and/or evaluative nature, conducted either by police crime analysts or external contractors. The second consists of the reports produced by public commissions of inquiry into policing-related matters⁷, which rely in large part on witness testimony and reviews of the existing research. Third, there is the work that continues to be independently produced by Canadian academic researchers. Perhaps the best description of this body of work I have encountered is as “a critical, largely theory driven, police scholarship, in which we have a number of internationally known and recognized policing academics ... [but] little applied academic research” (Murphy 2014). Lacking “both access and funding,” Canadian scholars, Murphy suggests, “theorize about policing, but lack a body of research-based evidence upon which to draw on and test our largely hypothetical and theoretical critiques” (ibid.).

Fallout and the scramble to regroup

While the federal government was busy shrinking the pool of funds available to criminal justice researchers, policing costs were escalating, largely unchecked. Not everyone was completely unaware of the existence of this trend: the problem of increasing policing costs had

⁷ Notable examples include: the Braidwood Inquiry, the Missing Women’s Task Force Inquiry, the Ipperwash Inquiry and the McDonald Commission.

been identified in a 2004 report commissioned by the Canadian Association of Police Chiefs⁸. The report's author, Christopher Murphy, drew on survey and interview data with police leaders across Canada to construct a picture of a looming crisis in public policing, a crisis that could only be averted by a commitment to finding innovative solutions. The ability to formulate such solutions was, however, significantly impaired, as Murphy noted, by the fact that "virtually every issue explored in this discussion paper remains largely uninformed by Canadian research" (ibid.). Rather than fostering empirically informed policies and practises based on the particularities found within Canada's domestic policing arrangements, policy makers seemed intent on "relying on past practice, imported knowledge and untested innovation" – practises that would generate few solutions (ibid.).

At the time the Murphy report (2004) was being drafted, the annual figure for policing costs (2002) was an estimated \$7.8 billion per year (Shankarraman 2003). Ten years later (2012), the cost had increased by approximately 73% to an annual figure of \$13.5 billion (Hutchins 2014). It was at this point, in 2012, that Canada's Justice Ministers arrived at the same conclusion as Murphy: something needed to be done to check both rising demands on police services and the costs generated⁹.

Deciding, if somewhat belatedly, that there was a role for the federal government to play in the effort to tame policing costs, Public Safety Canada scrambled to take a leadership position

⁸ The original version of this report is no longer available, as the CACP's Police Futures Group is defunct. A version of this report can be found on the also defunct Canadian Review of Policing Research, an academic initiative.

⁹ It is worth noting that the Ministers were made keenly aware of the amounts involved, because of the continuing work of one of the few federally funded research programmes not completely destroyed through budget cuts: the Canadian Centre for Criminal Justice Statistics.

in spearheading a new agenda for public policing. To that end, they organized the summit previously referenced and then launched four further initiatives.

The first of these initiatives was both the easiest to set in motion (in terms of costs and other resources) and, perhaps, the most obvious starting point. Following the demise of the research dissemination system established through the former Solicitor General's office and through the CPC journal, policing researchers had championed the idea of a centralized body that would coordinate research efforts across Canada and make study results easily accessible within and across institutions, agencies and communities (Murphy 2004, 2013; Griffiths 2013). However, the government chose not establish (and thus fund) such a body, and PSC tasked itself instead with setting up its own web-based portal through which police agencies, academic researchers, government agencies and other groups could ostensibly post links to the studies they had either conducted or commissioned. In March 2014, they rolled out the Index of Policing Initiatives (<http://www.publicsafety.gc.ca/cnt/cntrng-crm/plcng/cnmcs-plcng/ndx/srch-eng.aspx>), a search engine that allows web users to search for studies linked to one of the government's three 'Economics of Policing pillars': 1. efficiencies within police services; 2. models of community safety, and; 3. criminal justice system efficiencies. As of April 30, 2014, the portal contains synopses of 137 studies conducted by police agencies and, as of yet, no work by independent researchers.

The second initiative undertaken by the federal government was to refer the issue of the 'economics of policing' to the Parliamentary House Standing Committee on Public Safety and National Security for study and recommendations. The Committee began its work in June 2012, calling witnesses representing different levels of government, policing groups, and academics from across Canada and other countries. Transcripts of the meetings reveal that the Committee

was repeatedly told what policing researchers had long known: successive years of government refusals to invest in domestic policing research had left the country with little capacity to formulate sound policies in this area. The most telling example of such testimony came when the Director General of Public Safety Canada's Policing Policy section, Mark Potter, was asked by a committee member where escalating police salaries in Canada rank in terms of global comparison. Potter's (2012) response: "I'm not aware of the precise data on that question. Part of the challenge of this issue, as my colleague mentioned, is having the right research, the right data on which to build decisions."

The third of the initiatives undertaken by PSC was to refer a question on the future of Canadian policing models to the one of the few remaining government funded independent research bodies: the Canadian Council of Academies. The Council was established under the Martin government through a \$30 million endowment for the purposes of conducting up to five assessments on the state of existing scientific knowledge on a public policy issue of interest to the referring government body¹⁰. Thus, as is the case with the study on the 'economics of policing' being conducted by the House Committee, PSC was able to piggyback on an existing program to generate research without having to directly fund it. In 2013 the Council convened a series of meetings at which policing experts from Canada, the U.S. and the U.K.¹¹ were tasked with advising Council staff on how best to address this question, a tricky proposition in light of the lack of available evidence on key issues. The report is set to be published in the fall of 2014.

¹⁰ The PSC request was unusual. More typically, the Council addresses questions requiring scientific advice on highly technical issues, such as 'aboriginal food security in northern communities,' 'environmental impacts of shale gas extraction,' and the 'health effects of conducted energy weapons.'

¹¹ Consultations were on a strictly voluntary basis; there was no remuneration for Council participation.

PSC also convened three further ‘summits’. The focus of one of these summits was the challenges police face in working in remote northern communities; another was centred on issues related to police training and education. The third of these summits, and perhaps the most telling, brought together police researchers and police and community leaders to begin the process of developing a national research agenda. In March 2014, PSC and Simon Fraser University selectively invited participants to a 3 day symposium and workshop, during which feedback was invited on how to grow a research agenda and build a network of researchers to execute it. The tenor of the discussions was established early in the proceedings when a representative of Public Safety Canada began his speech by advising there would be no new federal funding earmarked for policing research¹², and that researchers would therefore be expected to look to existing funding streams through which to accomplish the summit’s goals. Not surprisingly, these remarks left many in the crowd doubtful as to the viability of establishing any policing research agenda in Canada, given that the principal funding envelope to which they now have access are grants from the SSHRC. What researchers at the meeting were keenly aware of was that their chances of securing funding from SSHRC were highly limited as a consequence of two factors: 1. the budget for SSHRC had just been cut,¹³ and 2. the SSHRC review panel structure meant that

¹² To ensure the accuracy of this statement, I checked my recollection with four other colleagues who were also present for this discussion. One of those attendees recalled hearing a wry summary of the overall summit message from a mutual acquaintance: “net: no new money.”

¹³ SSHRC’s budget was initially cut by some \$14 million over two years by the Harper government (Flaherty 2012). However, showing its preference for selective funding initiatives, this figure was amended to \$7 million following the government’s decision to add \$7 million in social science research funds to support industry-academic research partnerships that would result in tangible benefits to private industry (ibid).

criminal justice researchers not only compete against each other for limited funds, but against proposals from researchers within very different policy domains¹⁴.

Whither neoliberalism? Explaining the road not travelled

It would be easy, if somewhat glib on my part, were I to simply attribute the systematic gutting of Canada's policing research agenda to 'neoliberalism' and the apparent willingness of various Canadian political leaders to embrace this political-economic philosophy. However, in attempting to do so, I am confronted by one of the central ironies found in this story: roughly at the same time that Canadian policy-makers first began to devalue criminal justice research (the mid-1980s), Anglo-American policing research started to flourish elsewhere, principally in the U.S. and the U.K.¹⁵ (Bradley and Nixon 2013). Indeed, while a Canadian federal government was articulating an explicitly US-style neoliberal agenda, which it enacted through massive spending cuts, the federal governments of these two other countries, which were also ostensibly neoliberal in their policy orientations (Garland 2001; Christie 2004), were assuming responsibility for investing in the collection and analysis of policy-relevant criminal justice data, and were doing so on a relatively significant scale (Skogan and Frydl 2004; Bradley and Nixon 2013). Scholarly portraits of this period present American and British policy-makers as treating policing research as a public good, which, if nourished through federal support, would yield valuable insights upon which sound policies and practises could be constructed (Sherman 2004; Manning 2005; Bradley and Nixon 2013). Why was it then that 'neoliberal' Canada took a

¹⁴ SSHRC applicants who submit for a review under group 2, which includes Criminology, will be in a pool that potentially includes assessors and competitors from anthropology, archaeology, linguistics, translation, political science, public administration, law, criminology, geography and urban planning and environmental studies (SSHRC 2014).

¹⁵ This was also true of Australia; however, due to space constraints I have selected to focus on the U.S. and the U.K.

divergent path on the question of whether policing research was a public good and/or one that it should support?

A reading of the relevant literature suggests at least two, non-mutually exclusive, answers. The first of these has to do with fundamental differences in the degree to which the respective governments adopted socially conservative attitudes toward crime. To a much more significant extent than could be found in Canada (Roberts et al. 2003), crime in the U.S. and the U.K. was seen as a major public policy issue necessitating strong government responses (Garland 2001). While in many instances such responses were ‘penal populist’ in nature, leading to harsher criminal justice laws, demands that ‘something be done’ about crime also led these governments to invest in criminal justice research. In keeping with their policy aims – crime suppression – the resulting research was invariably oriented toward the development of practical, applied crime fighting solutions (Haggerty 2004; Matthews 2009). Thus, from the 1980s onwards, policing scholars have been hit with a veritable tsunami of policing research from the U.S. and the U.K., the bulk of which is of an evaluative, technical and/or otherwise applied nature – from ‘broken windows’ to ‘problem-oriented policing’, from ‘hot spots’ and ‘COMPSTAT’ to the more recent evolution of ‘evidenced based policing’ (Weisburd and Neyroud 2011; Bradley and Nixon 2013). Until 2006, the situation in Canada was very different, as successive federal governments retained a fairly moderate, penal-welfarist approach to crime (Roberts et al. 2003). As a consequence, there was less perceived need to support the type of applied policing research being conducted elsewhere, and other forms of policing research clearly had little value to federal policy-makers (an attitude held to the present).

The second answer lies in the commitment of governments to the adoption and implementation of public managerialist approaches. As a review of Canadians’ history in this

area makes evident, public managerialist philosophy was generally viewed by successive governments as little more than a justification for cost-cutting (see Savoie 1994). The most extensive exercise in implementing something approaching public managerialist reform in Canada – the Liberal government’s Program Review – was clearly oriented more towards bureaucratic rationalization (ie. cutting budgets) than about improving efficiency and effectiveness in the delivery of criminal justice or other public sector programs (see Bourgon 2009). By way of contrast, the public managerialist approach, as adopted in U.K. policy-making circles, has seen an emphasis on not only rational management of resources, but also on enhanced forms of public accountability and evidenced-based policy-making (Newburn 2003; Manning 2005). As a result, “the intellectual landscape of police research in the UK ... changed considerably,” as the federal government, through the Home Office, increasingly supported “a research agenda specifically designed to generate evidence for better policing policies and practices” (Bradley and Nixon 2013: 18). The landscape in the U.S., while perhaps less reflective of an overt infatuation with public managerialism, was otherwise notably similar to that of the U.K. as a result of a long-held belief that “science can and should improve public administration” (ibid.: 18). Not surprisingly, then, when research-poor Canadian policy-makers found themselves embroiled in a self-generated policing crisis of which they had no immediate way out, they turned to experts from these two countries for possible solutions¹⁶.

Moving forward to stay still

Since the 1990s, Canadian criminologists have been sounding the alarm on two key criminal justice issues affecting public policy: the need for governments to support independent

¹⁶ Policing experts from the U.S and the U.K. were called as witnesses before the House standing committee studying the ‘economics of policing’, served on the Canadian Council of Academies expert panel on this topic, and were invited speakers at the various PSC-convened summits.

police research (Murphy 1999; Clairmont 1999; Woods 1999; Stenning 1999) and the increasing disconnect between researchers and policy-makers (Brodeur 1999; Haggerty 2004). These warnings have been repeatedly dismissed as self-interested clamoring and/or the bleating noises of ivory tower academics out of touch with realities ‘on the streets.’ Having observed four successive governments – under Mulroney, Chretien, Martin and Harper, respectively – deprioritize, defund and devalue policing and other criminal justice research, Canadian policing is now routinely deemed to be in a state of near-crisis. That the potential for this very crisis was explicitly recognized and brought to attention by a policing researcher some ten years ago (Murphy 2004), suggests that the ‘crisis’ was possibly avoidable had various governments seen the utility in supporting criminal justice research.

From 2012 to 2014, we saw a flurry of government activity, as noted, which sparked within some a brief hope that the various governments spearheading the ‘Economics of Policing’ might assume leadership of the issue and begin to look at how to regenerate a dynamic policing research culture here in Canada. Writing some five years later, I can report that – beyond conferences and empty rhetoric, and despite a change in government – nothing much has happened. Actually, nothing has happened at all.

Reading the Canadian situation in light of the contemporaneous experience of policing researchers in the U.S. and the U.K. there may be a temptation on the part of Canadians, and those from other countries with similarly limited funding, to cast an envious glance. However, any such envy should be tempered by the realization that the situation of our American and British colleagues, albeit perhaps better funded, comes with its own burdens and limitations. Some contend that chief among these is insufficient funding (Sherman 2004), while others have suggested that it is the requirement to produce increasingly technical research often devoid of the

social import necessary to effect meaningful policy change (Haggerty 2004). Still other scholars point out that our research efforts – whether in the U.K., the U.S., Canada or elsewhere – continue to be hampered by an inability to foster meaningful partnerships between police practitioners, researchers and policy-makers (Weisburd and Neyroud 2011; Bradley and Nixon 2013). In essence then it appears that no research environment is perfectly ideal for policing scholars and there is ample scope for improvements. That said, the playing field of policing research is uneven, and it remains a fact that the body of knowledge produced is – and will continue to be into the foreseeable future – dominated by the type of work currently being generated by researchers in better funded countries.

What of the Canadian situation? A necessary starting point for effecting any improvement in relation to the quandary in which Canadians presently find ourselves would be for the various levels of government to actively reject three fallacies that lie at the heart of the choices made over the past few decades. These are: 1. that quality, independent academic criminal justice research is not a public good; 2. that rigorous independent academic research is not an economically sound investment for governments to make¹⁷, and; 3. independent academic research is not necessary for the formulation of sound criminal justice policy-making. As to the question of whether we can expect such a radical shifting in thinking on the part of Canadian policy-makers, I defer to a much greater student of politics than I: “Whoever wishes to foresee the future must consult the past” (Machiavelli, 1513).

¹⁷ As to the typical anemic literature reviews routinely produced on contracts (Clairmont 1999).

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