EDITORIAL

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Our flock of young seagulls

Michael J. DeValve*

In their proposed theme for the Canadian Association of Chiefs of Police (CACP) Executive Global Studies Program, program co-moderators Davey and Taylor (2022) raised three crucial concerns related to the future of policing. Each concern is framed as a question, in the context of embracing a new generation, both inside and outside of police organizations. First, they asked "How do we remain a sustainable profession?" Second, "How do we respond to and best serve the needs of the people who have always, statistically, defined our primary market?" Third, "What do we do now in the face of broken trust?" I will address each of these questions in turn, but first, something completely different.

John is a retired violin teacher. He studied music at Ithaca College, which then housed one of the most prestigious schools of music and music education in the nation. *Everyone* smoked, humans were preparing to employ World War II technology to send humans to walk on the moon. There was a bar in the dormitory. After college, he was drafted for service during the Vietnam War. In 1989, John's son attended that very same college, complete with a picture of John as a junior hanging on the wall opposite his dorm. HIV was on everyone's mind, as was the fall of the Berlin Wall. In 2024, John's grandchild will seek admission to college—the college where John's son works today—amid a resurgence of fascism, continued warfare, economic uncertainty, and the very real possibility of climate catastrophe.

John, as superlative fathers are wont to do, introduced his son to a book. It is a children's book, really, but it has a grace sufficient to justify John's son assigning it for an undergraduate culminating seminar at the college where he works. *Jonathan Livingston Seagull* is about, well, a seagull. Readers witness a seagull being and becoming decidedly un-seagull-like, but in so doing, being and becoming the truest seagull. Jonathan, you see, liked to fly. Others of the flock, though, flew merely to get to the trawlers offshore or to beaches in order to have scraps hurled at them by beachgoers. Jonathan, outcast from the flock for his foolish flying, eventually ascended to higher planes of existence. Eventually, he became a great teacher of transcendent truth. In Jonathan, we might discern imprints of both Shakyamuni and Jesus; we might also witness the bastardization of their messages by those who seem to seek them.

What are we to learn about policing in 2023 from a short children's book about beach birds? I'd say there are at least two things we can learn from a fictional seagull about what's broken in policing in both Canada and the United States.

Sure, Jonathan was special. He learned things quickly; he was the Great Realizer, really in two senses: he had profound insights into his nature, but he also put those insights into practice. He *real*ized what he *realized*. Special, yeah, but Jonathan was just like every other gull on the beach. He did works that seemed magical, divine, but he was just a bird. He was a bird who understood freedom (not to be confused with *gonna-do-what-I-wanna-ness*), but he was just like you and me. Ahem… I mean, he was like every other gull.

When Jonathan, his student Fletcher Lynd Seagull, or any of their students transcended their states the way Jonathan and Fletcher had done, a couple of things were true, though. First, the gulls had been *hungry* to learn. They had felt a question, some kind of massive, mouth-sized insight that moved fetus-like under their flesh and at the same time out in the haze offshore. It was a truth they could not resolve fully, but it was there, unmistakably.

Second, in their search for that truth through standard means, they had failed and so eventually ceased trying. When their… despair… collided with their unbowed hunger to learn, a kind of fearlessness, a nakedness, arose in them. In the ceasing of the trying, the thing they sought overtook them like a thief, and captured them.

Third, the gulls that successfully transcended the beach strewn with feathers, broken glass, and bird shit all lived their insights. They lived through their freedom like light through a prism. They didn't carry their realization cloistered in the vault of the heart. Thus lived, the insights compounded and deepened, revealing even grander and simpler insights: "Let's begin with Level Flight" because my wingtip isn't the same thing as the moon. In the living itself, a greater learning happened. Although it isn't a precise fit, the best word I can think of for what is revealed here is praxis.

Fourth, and despite what many of the throngs of gulls portrayed in the book seem to think, *all* of the capacity to be *just like* Jonathan is already present in each member of the throng. Witnessing the becoming of Jonathan and Fletcher, it becomes clear that the being and the becoming are blurred to the point where the distinction is no longer useful. Each gull held all of the keys to his or her own shackles; each gull possessed all of the tools needed for their own freedom.

Fifth, and perhaps most crucially, at the very core of the core of the insights that moved the gulls to higher, brighter states was the practice of love. All of the majesty, all of the might, all of the profundity at work in this simple story is

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wrapped around the Maypole of love, and none of it is possible without love. Love, we see, is the path and the end, the capacity and the reality. I define love as "the art-like, individualized, unconditional, aware and end-less praxis whereby a human or organization mindfully, assertively and continuously labors for the actualization of another human being as an end in herself, without thought of return, without reliance upon authority, without fear, or possibility of cessation" (DeValve, 2015, 103), and I think such a definition is fully consonant with what we learn from *Jonathan Livingston Seagull*. I also think it has the potential to confound all prior and prevailing precepts about leadership.

Let us return now to the three terrifying and beautiful questions of the beginning.

"How do we remain a sustainable profession?" This question assumes that policing is in fact a sustainable profession, and I am rather far from convinced of this idea. If I am honest, in fact, I tend to think that it isn't sustainable, at least not as it exists currently. No, I don't mean to invoke the recent defunding conversation, much of which is powered by raw rage. Rage is not sound straw for policy brickmaking, but that insight is hardly news. What may be news is that policing, and justice and human services more generally, can be fully sustainable, although the fixes may be rather radical.

Sustainability is, at its heart of hearts, about power. The UN's 17 Sustainable Development Goals (Department of Economic and Social Affairs, 2023) make this plain: ends to poverty, hunger, inequality; access to health care, education, clean water, economic opportunity; clean and affordable energy, responsible consumption, and the rest all boil down to the having and the sharing of capacity. The lesson we learn about power from sustainability studies, though, is that power itself must be reimagined. In an article some time ago (DeValve, 2017), I observed that power as leveraged for justice practice is grand, hierarchical, micro-controlling, rough. This is a gross misunderstanding of power. True power is shared, networked, life-affirming and life-giving.

Force use in policing is inevitable. The use of force, though, even of the most modest force, should be understood as more than a regrettable necessity; force use must be understood as a failure of all other modalities of connection. It will be necessary, but its use should be a thing that saddens everyone, most of all the officer using it. Instead of understanding police organizations as being defined in terms of their corner on the market of state-condoned force, if policing seeks to be a sustainable endeavour (and it should), the power it must harness must be of the sustainable kind.

"How do we respond to and best serve the needs of the people who have always, statistically, defined our primary market?" I began our contemplations together here with an introduction. My dad is one of the three or four most remarkable humans I have met in my 52 rather rich years. Yeah, he's my hero. When he was in college, his focal concerns (or ultimate concerns as theologian Paul Tillich would say) were his senior recital, getting a job, not getting involved in that blasted war in Vietnam. During his student teaching, he was approached by a whip-smart, knock-out brunette English teacher. Her mom was not at all pleased that her elder daughter had fallen for a musician, and so to close the deal with that brilliant, smoking hot brunette, Dad had to woo her mother, too.

Somewhat later, and even more as a classical musician, John probably thought little of his own son's love of rock-and-roll: *Stone in Love* and Frankie Say Relax made little sense to him as objects of admiration and emulation. John's grandchild will be 17 in a matter of weeks. He uses pronouns that did not exist when John's son was taking grammar classes. His focal concerns are, like any teenager, dating and algebra, but social media has made for him a radically different landscape for both than the one traversed in the 1980s by John's son. He follows "influencers." He himself has "followers." I can get the fear of being drafted that Dad had, but I can never know what it was like to get that letter. I can understand wanting to be respected, but I can't get my head around counting clicks or thrilling over the likes of the influencers my own child follows. The thing is, just like Dad the musician, I don't have to.

Understanding another doesn't mean agreeing with them or sharing a perspective. It means caring, listening well, listening authentically, learning fearlessly, and not trying to be "hip," "slapping" or whatever the kids say. I don't get it, and the key is that I get that I don't get it. Let it all be a mystery but let the thing you give be you. Do not *try* to serve communities. Be with them without guile or agenda, and the service will arise. Policing done properly is a radical gift of love, and the essence of that gift isn't some "best practice." It is you. *You* are the best practice. If such a praxis as this is achieved and sustained, it no longer matters which community is the current focus of service; serving needs becomes natural, authentic, sustainable, transparent, real.

"What do we do now in the face of broken trust?" The wisdom of the seagull is clear:

- ***Face the reality of the broken trust without defense or agenda.*** A song by the band Simple Minds, "*Don't You (Forget about Me),*" was the number one song in the land when the Philadelphia Police Department *bombed a residence* from a helicopter, killing 11 people. The MOVE bombing of the Osage neighborhood in May of 1985 happened in living memory but is rarely discussed in relation to police legitimacy. This and many other instances require public redress. No, your agency may not have bombed a neighborhood. Maybe it happened in a different country, even. That's truly wonderful news, and true enough. Nevertheless, and whether you like it or not, every police officer and police executive own a tiny shard of that moment. Like it or not, every officer kneeled on a neck in Minneapolis. Every officer owns a portion of Keenan Anderson's death. It is far better to reconcile with that reality than it is to try to deny it. Forgetting is, in this context, a brand of cruelty. Remembering, painful though it may be, has healing in its wings.
- ***Clarify commitments.*** When we marry, as some do, often we offer vows to each other. Those vows can be scripted or extemporaneous, but they represent a concrete commitment to abide by a set of principles. We make vows once but live them daily. Except when we don't. Sometimes, then, it makes sense to return to the vowing process, to dust off what was given so freely early on, and to make fresh the commitments we once made. Renewing vows doesn't presuppose breach of the vows, of course, but in the marriage between police and community, there is more than ample reason to refresh our commitments.
- ***Do not seek trust.*** If you *pursue* legitimacy, you will never achieve it. Simply be worthy of trust. If you're living those

commitments above, the rest will come in time, but be sure never to act towards commitments with an intention towards another end. Be end-less. Just be.

- ***Listen authentically, learn fearlessly, and realize what you realize.*** Part of the basic equipment police officers of all positions and portfolios need is a fearlessness of learning. Criminologically, we have confronted the "nothing works" moment and then had to get up the next day to keep trying. Criminologically, that fertile despair mentioned earlier has given rise to verdant new thinking about harm and healing. That verdancy springs not necessarily from the criminological ideas themselves, but from that courageous learning that comes from failure, and the authentic application of new insights.
- ***Be vulnerable.*** Jonathan was insatiable. He was aflame. He *wanted* to fly: faster, higher, trickier. One might even say he had given himself over to flight without anything kept back for himself. My advice to you that are serving, and to you who may yet step forward to serve, is to get comfortable being naked.

It is entirely unfair of me, an ivory-tower academic, to insist on learning fearlessly, and all police executives should feel fully free to ignore this message. Then again, we are in a place of… despair….

CONFLICT OF INTEREST DISCLOSURES

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COMMENTARY

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LEPH 2023: Together again towards resilient communities

Isabelle Bartkowiak-Théron,* Richard Bent,† and Jonas Hansson‡

The Global Law Enforcement and Public Health Association is convening its 2023 European Regional Conference on Law Enforcement and Public Health in Umea, Sweden, May 21–24, 2023. As per the usual flavour of the conference, the program is multi-focused, and multi-disciplinary. It is with unbridled enthusiasm that we anticipate the usual mix of scholar- and practitioner-led discussions, focused on the importance of collaborative partnerships, and their contribution to the prevention and amelioration of persistent challenges to personal and social safety and well-being.

This year, the conference headline is *Together towards resilient communities.* Its core aims are to help promote healthy lives and well-being leading to peaceful and inclusive societies through an integrated approach to law enforcement and public health. One key goal for the conference and its attendees is to help build police–public health partnerships that are effective, accountable, and inclusive. These goals are aligned to the Rio+20 Conference, and its Sustainable Development Goals to overcome social marginalization and discrimination (particularly SDG3 – good health and well-being, and SDG16 – peace, justice and strong institutions: https://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/sustainable-development-goals/).

According to the conference website (https://leph2023umea.com/themes),

> The achievement of effective public health outcomes is often the result of intersecting law enforcement and public health policy that underpins integrated practice. Law enforcement, especially through the activities of police forces, has a crucial but often unacknowledged role in the protection and promotion of public health. This means that there is an inadequate approach to research and investigation of ways in which law enforcement can be most effectively engaged and be most effective in carrying out their public health role.

One key objective for the World Health Organisation is Global Health Security, defined as "the activities required, both proactive and reactive, to minimize the danger and impact of acute public health events that endanger people's health across geographical regions and international boundaries." This necessitates a combined effort across multiple government jurisdictions, not just public health organizations. Past conferences developed the ideas of how the broader area of law enforcement (policing, prosecution, the courts and corrections) shares common space with public health in dealing with the symptoms of many underlying social issues. They brought to light the need for collaboration and bold and innovative leadership to overcome resistance or barriers toward common objectives.

The 2023 conference will continue to explore the substantive areas in which police–public health partnerships are important. Topics such as the prevention and response to mental health issues, first responders' mental health and well-being, and emergency preparedness will be explored across several streams. Similarly, the organizational issues that are so crucial to making partnerships work will be addressed by some speakers, either by way of specific collaborative examples (how they work, or otherwise) or by way of more conceptual presentations. Some professions which have become key contributors to the advancement of the LEPH will also be a key feature of the conference (such as public prosecutors or police prosecutors, legal defenders, coroners, magistrates, and forensic nurses).

Some methodological approaches to LEPH problem-solving will also be prominently featured across the conference. Accordingly, trauma-informed policing practices will be discussed, as well as harm reduction initiatives, across topics such as childhood adverse experiences and early intervention; alcohol, tobacco and other drugs; and the legal and policing frameworks that apply to such issues.

Some of our conference contributors will also reflect on the creation of the science of LEPH, by analyzing case studies and presenting on methodological issues. As such, there will be several themes on education, with global educators discussing new trends, opportunities, and obstacles. These sessions will aim to bridge some of the gaps across fields and provide insight into emerging trends in establishing shared terminologies (and sometimes collaborative policies) across the professions.

As is the case for all LEPH conferences, marginalized communities are an important priority theme of LEPH2023. Marginalization is the enemy of security and health. Too often around the world, police have, often unwittingly, been agents of marginalization. Inclusive policing works to overcome marginalization by according equal or greater attention and

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support to populations at increased risk because of exclusion and unequal access to justice. Some communities are particularly at risk of exploitation and harm. Accordingly, major marginalization and vulnerability themes will cover topics such as child protection, child exploitation, neurocognitive disorders and barriers to communication (including issues such as acquired brain injury, epilepsy), female genital mutilation, gender-based and domestic violence, racial and ethnic disparities in access to care and health (and the over-representation of vulnerable groups in the justice system, particularly in prisons and the public health role they now play).

Public health is an active partner in crime prevention as well as a range of other complex social issues, such as mental health, infectious diseases, road trauma, community and domestic violence (with keynote presentations and several sessions on the topics of domestic violence and intimate Partner violence), alcohol and drugs, and disaster management. As well as providing state-of-the-art updates from national and international experts in both police and public health, LEPH2023 will bring together experience and examples of successful partnership initiatives and hear of lived experiences from the widest range of settings.

The LEPH2023 conference bears an overall flavour of community resilience and presents marginalization and disadvantage as social enemies of security and health. Historically, marginalized and disadvantaged individuals and groups in societies have not enjoyed the same levels of care and protection, and this remains particularly prevalent in certain countries of the world where the full gamut of human rights are not valued or recognized. Furthermore, a resurgence of an ill-advised "war" rhetoric towards social groups in some parts of the world is likely to increase the risk of these social groups being further marginalized and isolated from justice and health services, especially in low socio-economic areas. It is impossible to have community resilience where some community members are excluded or are not afforded the same protections. Law enforcement and public health agencies are far more likely to have regular contact with marginalized persons; yet those same persons are far more unlikely to have equal access to preventive health care. Public health and law enforcement both have a role to play in overcoming such deeply entrenched disadvantages.

Global research is crucially needed in all matters mentioned here. However, there are many low- and middle-income countries that do not have the capacity to conduct research or implement sustainable plans to overcome their own pressing issues, such as famine, pandemics, lack of education or even access to clean water. Even in developed countries, health systems are strained, as are broad law enforcement systems. While there is need to strengthen health systems globally, finding a holistic approach to strengthen these systems and system partnerships is becoming urgent.

The LEPH2023 conference will provide much needed opportunities to highlight some of the strong collaborations that exist in Sweden and Europe, such as the engagement of the Polisförbundet, the Swedish police union, in furthering relationships with public health. The Swedish Police Union emphasizes the importance the Swedish police's role in people's safety and a democratic and legally secure society. The Union advocates for the improvement of basic police officer training towards an academic bachelor's degree to strengthen the police profession in relation to other professions. In addition, an academic degree gives police officers access to further academic studies in Sweden as well as abroad. This also means that the path to research is facilitated and that those police officers who want to engage in applied research in police work and in policing partnerships have greater opportunities to do so.

The LEPH2023 conference is an evolution of the major themes of past conferences, leading naturally to developing the broad objective of building community resilience. With an emphasis on the idea of "Together," we will build resilient communities. Collaborative approaches move us towards developing and advancing the concepts of community health and well-being, and sees law enforcement and public health contributing to global health security. Health Security should be viewed as an overarching LEPH objective, and the need to realize this objective has never been more pressing. Conferences such as the LEPH conferences need to explore and share promising practices and bring public and private sectors together in a collaborative effort. LEPH2023 does just that.

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ORIGINAL RESEARCH

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Decriminalization of the possession of illicit substances for personal use: A proposed theory of change to improve community safety and well-being outcomes in Canada

Janos Botschner,* Julian M. Somers,† and Cal Corley‡

ABSTRACT

Addressing the harms associated with criminalizing the problematic and addictive use of substances is a complex undertaking. In many cases, problematic substance use has a relationship to prior and current adversities and has been characterized as an "affliction of inequality." Community partners, leaders and policy makers will benefit from an informed understanding of the potential role of decriminalization as part of system-wide efforts that have the potential to achieve urgent societal goals. We draw on relevant and up-to-date domestic and international research to present a theory of change for approaching the decriminalization of personal substance use as one part of an integrated strategy addressing health and safety. The proposed theory of change should serve as a guide to understanding, designing and participating in effective whole-of-system strategies and actions. As a living document—and starting point for collaborative community safety and well-being planning—the material presented here should be refined as additional evidence and insights become available.

Key Words Addiction; drug policy, drugs, problematic substance use; whole-of-system responses; theory of change.

INTRODUCTION

The decriminalization of simple possession of illicit substances is a focus of debate and discussion in Canadian society and policing. Over the past 2 years, there have been growing calls from constituencies across Canada to decriminalize the simple possession of illicit substances. For example,

- In May 2022, the Province of British Columbia was granted an exemption under the Federal *Controlled Drugs and Substances Act* to allow for the possession of small amounts of substances within that province. The exemption came into effect on January 31, 2023. Other jurisdictions are considering seeking similar exemptions as they try to deal with the present addiction crisis; and
- Both the Canadian Association of Chiefs of Police and the British Columbia Association of Chiefs of Police have set out resolutions supporting decriminalization, but only as part of an integrated set of health and public safety reforms (Special Purpose Committee on the Decriminalization of Illicit Drugs, 2020; British Columbia Association of Chiefs of Police, 2021).

Notable within this discourse are two distinct but related tendencies. One is a restricted framing of the problem that does not include, or fully contemplate, evidence implicating the need for broader policy reforms. The other can be characterized as *reacting* to aspects of crises rather than *responding* strategically and holistically in ways that address both immediate and longer-term benefits for individuals and for society.

From a public policy perspective, pressures to respond to urgent demands for simple solutions can make it difficult to develop and implement actions that are informed by the best available evidence and lived experience. While unidimensional solutions are currently receiving the most attention, the issues embedded within "decriminalization" are complex, are interconnected and can be made worse by interventions that are incomplete and insufficient.

When thinking about issues like this, it can be useful to reflect on relevant past experiences aimed at reforming

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Canadian services addressing addiction and mental illness. One such case was the deinstitutionalization of psychiatric services in Canada, over a 40-year period, beginning in the 1960s (Sealy & Whitehead, 2004). As these psychiatric hospitals were depopulated, individuals who had experienced chronic mental illnesses were discharged into the community, where they were to receive access to community-based services. But those community-based programs were often fragmented, incomplete, and lacking integration (Trainor et al., 1999).

Canadians who experienced serious mental illnesses and who happened to be poor or otherwise disadvantaged were the most severely impacted. Despite the good intentions of governments and human services, many struggled to integrate into their communities, find safe affordable housing, and obtain appropriate and timely treatment and supports. As a consequence, many ended up unhoused and frequently in contact with the police and criminal justice system—the system of last resort in these circumstances.

> …the post-asylum world involved a complicated matrix of services that were not under the jurisdiction of any one governmental department and did not necessarily fit neatly into Canada's constitutional federalist framework. Medical services, housing and employment needs along with financial and family support services required a delicate degree of bureaucratic coordination in a … world of red tape. (Dyck, 2011, p. 187)

The deinstitutionalization of psychiatric services offers lessons and insights into what could occur in the context of decriminalization if a carefully planned, correctly-scoped, approach is not developed and implemented—especially as it pertains to individuals and communities experiencing social and economic marginalization. The rationale for deinstitutionalization was given impetus by values related to community integration, recovery, and personal agency, influenced by the nascent mental health consumer movement. However, the resulting impacts on public health, social, and policing systems were in many cases unanticipated, negative, and persistent.

Understanding and responding to such wicked problems requires that a diversity of perspectives, information sources, and experiences be considered. In short, a whole-of-system lens and corresponding framework for change are required.

APPROACH

The present article describes an empirically-based and pragmatic approach police and other community-based leaders can use to: (a) develop a contextualized understanding of where, how, and why decriminalization may enhance community safety and well-being outcomes; and (b) implement collaborative reforms with a high likelihood of helping vulnerable/marginalized individuals avoid unnecessary contact with the justice system.

Our overarching objectives were to:

- Clarify the issues that decriminalization aims to address as a policy issue;
- Assess relevant knowledge on what works to alleviate the harms associated with the use of substances; and
- Establish guideposts for decriminalization that reflect its potential contribution, within a system-wide approach, to a complex set of societal problems, the ultimate aim being to improve individual and community safety and well-being outcomes.

We sought to describe the features of an evidence-informed approach in which the decriminalization of personal substance use is one part of an integrated and effective strategy to address the multiple harms associated with the problematic use of addictive substances. This entailed: reviewing the research on the relationship between the legal status of substance possession and the criminalization of marginalized substance users (Moniruzzaman et al., 2022b); examining additional domestic and international policy-focused research relevant to decriminalization and collaborative community safety and well-being; and designing a proposed theory of change. This theory was refined based on dialogue with key informants representing a diversity of expertise and lived experience. The result is a strategic mix of pragmatic, mutually-reinforcing actions for driving community safety and well-being outcomes, consistent with Canadian values related to justice and social inclusion.

POLICY AND RESEARCH RELATED TO DECRIMINALIZATION

Addiction and problematic substance use are significant public health and societal issues. The choice to experience the effects of mind- and mood-altering substances is not a moral failing, nor are behaviours involving the problematic use of substances, which often stem from complex personal and group experiences. Moreover, emerging and recovered knowledge is shedding new light on the potential value of various psychoactive substances, such as psychedelics, for western medical and traditional healing and community building practices (e.g., Aday et al., 2020),[1] and greater recognition of harms associated with familiar psychoactive substances such as alcohol (e.g., Paradis et al., 2022; see also Johnson, 2016). In this context, moving hurriedly to decriminalization in the absence of a sound, pragmatic framework that integrates relevant health and social supports may result in policy failure.

For example, while those who currently use illicit substances unproblematically may enjoy a lessening of the risk of becoming criminalized, it does not follow that those whose current use is problematic will necessarily transition towards unproblematic use solely because of a change in law regarding substance possession. In some cases, these individuals may end up with reduced access to treatment and support services, while nothing new is done to address the conditions that gave rise to, or perpetuate, problematic use.

By contrast, Portugal's National Strategy for reversing an addiction and poisoning crisis offers a number of insights into what can be achieved through a broader and more integrated perspective (Greenwald, 2009; Hughes & Stevens, 2010). For one, it dealt with concerns about accountability within a

[1] Pollan (2018) also provides an extensive account, suitable for both academics and the public, including a lengthy list of peer reviewed research.

public health context—not as a criminal matter. In addition, it focused the attention of all Portuguese citizens on a range of measures aimed at enhancing opportunities for social inclusion and the resources necessary to achieve improved health and public safety outcomes.

However, the Portuguese model is not the only one that might offer value to the Canadian context. International evidence regarding the decriminalization of substance possession has been synthesized in a recent structured review (Moniruzzaman et al., 2022b). The review included multiple databases and examined 2,518 articles, with 11 publications satisfying all inclusion and exclusion criteria. The results indicate that the decriminalization of substances can produce potential benefits but only when introduced alongside strategies and resources to promote recovery from addiction. When implemented unilaterally, the decriminalization of drug possession has been followed by evidence of increased harms.

The elements of what we believe would be an effective pathway forward are also aligned to growing public expectations for policy that reflects reconciliation and social justice objectives, the need for consultation, as well as other emerging research which was reviewed in addition to that identified in the review conducted by Moniruzzaman et al. (2022b).

For example, in Canada, extensive evaluation of the Housing First initiative, At Home/Chez Soi, demonstrated that supporting people's needs for safe, stable, inclusive housing is an effective platform for recovery, even for those with the most complex mental health and addiction needs (Goering et al., 2014). There is also a body of policy- and practice-based research that adds to our knowledge about the importance of supporting stability and inclusion, in the context of looking at how people are defined within systems of care, and of efforts to examine the broader societal values that sustain risks for instability and exclusion (e.g., Rosenheck, 2012).

Consequently, attention to upstream factors is essential. It has long been known that efforts directed at the upstream conditions that constitute risks for adverse childhood experiences and trauma, including poverty, social exclusion, and family violence, would not just lessen the longer-term risk for addictive behaviours but would have numerous other beneficial impacts on human development, community safety, and general prosperity (e.g., Felitti, et al., 1998; Whitfield, 1998; Foege, 1998).

The pan-Canadian At Home/Chez Soi initiative was both designed and implemented with people who had relevant lived experience, and a similar approach is needed to successfully develop an effective strategy to prevent the criminalization of people who use substances. Effectively addressing harmful substance use in Canada requires recognition of the enduring impacts of historical trauma/mass trauma and developmental trauma (e.g., Maté, 2022) and social exclusion (e.g., Cohen, 2022; Cacioppo & Patrick, 2008). Doing so would also serve to ensure policy relevance while concurrently addressing the widening public trust deficit (e.g., Edelman, 2022).

It is also crucial to include and respect the experiences of people who have journeyed to recovery from addictions. They possess crucial insights into the factors that contribute to change, and yet their voices are often excluded from policy planning. Many of those who have recovered from addiction and mental illness report stigma associated with speaking out about their experiences, signaling a need for immediate action to ensure their respectful inclusion in planning.

The use of illicit substances is widespread across industrialized populations, with many of the harms associated with the use of addictive substances—notably, criminalization and death—being risks for all users; however, these harms are not evenly distributed (Stevens, 2011). The burden of using illicit and addictive substances is experienced most profoundly by those who live on the margins of society (Marmot & Wilkinson, 1999, cited in Stevens, 2011).

Although criminal activity and criminalization are important public policy challenges associated with illicit substances, evidence has long revealed illicit substance use to be best understood as a problem implicating public health, societal inequities, and social exclusion (Alexander & Somers, 1990). The most effective approach to resolving this problem is one that recognizes these dimensions and incorporates a blend of person-centred responses focusing on addressing social harms, ensuring equitable access to essential resources, and enhancing collaborative community safety and well-being practices (see, for example, Trainor et al., 2004; Norris, 2020). To that end, criminal justice reforms and corresponding changes to policing practices are necessary but, in and of themselves, insufficient to achieve broad community safety and well-being outcomes.

Over the past decade, Stevens and colleagues have undertaken extensive policy-focused work to examine the bases for, and implications of, various "drug policies" (Stevens, 2011), including jurisdiction-specific, utilization-focused evidence-based policy research (Hughes et al., 2018). Most recently, this has included the development of a synthesis and corresponding framework for alternatives to criminalization for simple substance possession (Stevens et al., 2022).

Several persistent findings and conclusions from this extensive body of multi-jurisdictional work are relevant to the Canadian context, with the caveat that "research in this area is complex, incomplete and not capable of providing definitive answers about what the outcome of any given approach will be in [a particular jurisdictional] context" (Hughes et al., 2018, p. 78):

- Although illicit substance use is widespread and not confined to socio-economically marginalized groups, "the health and criminal harms of problematic drug use are most likely to be experienced by people who are economically, socially and racially excluded" where substance use, dependence and related harms can be viewed as "afflictions of inequality" reflecting social exclusion, and asymmetrical distributions of power and opportunity (Stevens, 2011, pp. 129; 13).
- While societal inequity is "indispensable to the understanding of contemporary patterns of drug use, drug control and related harms," health service practices tend to focus on individual responsibility to change unhealthy behaviours, with interventions generally ignoring broad structural determinants of risk, such as poverty, inequality, and features of social, institutional and physical environments (Stevens, 2011, pp. 5–6). Understanding the dynamics of disconnection and its influence on substance-related interactions with police can be difficult to unpack. For example, research conducted in the UK

(Stevens, 2008) indicates that, while Black people are at a higher risk for arrest than White people at a population level, the experience of racism at the individual level takes place "alongside all the inequalities that go with it" (Stevens, 2011, p. 99). Yet, as Maynard (2017, p. 99) points out, citing work by Owusu-Bempah and Wortley (2011), the use and sale of illicit substances is more frequent in White than in Black communities.

- Policies on substance use, themselves, may often sustain "inequalities in the distribution of power, resources and respect" through their blend of social welfare and social control measures. Conversely, public health approaches focus on promoting well-being while concurrently mitigating a range of physical and social-psychological harms (Stevens, 2011, p. 5).
- The importance of substance users/people with lived experience having a voice in the development of government approaches to illicit substances, a space traditionally driven by the perspectives of the medical/health and law enforcement sectors, cannot be overstated (Stevens, 2011).
- That prohibitionist policy is neither a rational nor an effective response to the known harms of substance use (Stevens, 2011).
- Mixed approaches, drawing from depenalization, diversion, and decriminalization, may be advantageous in situations involving high levels of both cannabis and opioids, where linkages exist between problematic use and unemployment (Hughes et al., 2018).

Concurrent with the present work, Stevens et al. (2022) reviewed English-language research on decriminalization of possession for personal use from nine jurisdictions. The specific search terms and methodology they used differed from the previously mentioned review (Moniruzzaman et al., 2022b) in that it included reforms related to cannabis, resulting in 158 articles identified for retrieval and analysis. This research process was guided by the following considerations related to alternative measures for dealing with simple possession (Table I).

Based on their review, Stevens et al. (2022, p. 31) conceptualized the range of policy alternatives to criminalization of simple possession into three categories, identifying two possible negative outcomes that could arise under different circumstances of implementation (Table II).

The result of these efforts was a general theoretically grounded, empirically informed framework intended to address: the level and nature of substance use; social integration of people who use substances; levels of organized crime; health harms associated with substance use; and the overall social costs of substance use. The following key considerations were identified (Stevens et al., 2022, p. 31).

At a macro-level are the conditions of the social systems in which alternatives to decriminalization operate. Stevens and colleagues identified two related categories:

- **Structural conditions** involving the distribution of resources and power within a society that influence who controls the consumption of substances; and
- **Evolving social mores** shape policy and practice reform.

These structural and cultural conditions may, in turn, influence the shape and practices of institutional contexts, such as:

- **Political environments** impacting the implementation of decriminalization across jurisdictions—for example, the use of administrative law and non-criminal penalties;
- **Illicit markets** as reflections of declining moral condemnation of substance use, especially where unproblematic

TABLE I Considerations guiding development of Stevens et al.'s (2022) framework (p. 32)

Whether alternative measures for dealing with simple drug possession:

- Avoid criminalizing people who use drugs
  - Without increasing the health harms of drug use
  - While not intensifying the role and harms of organized criminal involvement in drug supply;
- Maintain the possibility to intervene in drug use;
- Divert those who need it into treatment
  - Without flooding the treatment system with those who do not need it
- Are cost effective.

TABLE II Framework for classifying policy alternatives to the criminalization of personal possession, with potential unintended negative outcomes

Policy Position	Definition
Depenalization	Reduction in the use of existing criminal sanctions, without changes to legislation
Diversion	Either *de facto* (in practice) initiatives or *de jure* (in law) legislation that direct people away from criminal sanctions and towards educative, therapeutic, or social services Post-sentence or post-conviction diversion is not included, as they are not alternatives to criminalization
Decriminalization	The *de jure* removal of criminal sanctions for the possession of substances for personal use Criminal sanctions may be replaced by civil penalties (e.g., fines), by measures for diverting people towards health or social support (e.g., dissuasion commissions in Portugal), or by no sanction at all (full decriminalization)
Potential Negative Unintended Outcome	**Definition**
Net widening	Bringing more people into contact with the criminal justice system than before the alternative was implemented
Mesh thinning	Imposing more control on people brought into the criminal justice system than if the alternative did not exist

Based on Stevens, A., Hughes, C., Hulme, S., & Cassidy, R. (2022). Depenalization, diversion and decriminalization: A realist review and programme theory of alternatives to criminalization for simple drug possession. *European Journal of Criminology, 19*(1), 31.

use becomes more widespread among those with higher socio-economic status;
- **Use of criminal sanctions** in the context of shifting attitudes about the role of the criminal justice system and the ways that finite public resources are prioritized and allocated;
- **Practice culture and priorities of police and prosecutors** and the ways that these may impact arrest and charging practices (reflecting differing levels of resistance to the use of alternatives to criminalization);
- **Healthcare and welfare system capacities supporting social integration,** to calibrate the availability of effective services to the levels of demand created by the use of alternative measures; and
- **Research and evaluation capacity,** notably whether attention is paid to emerging evidence, and whether communities and systems can collaborate to fund and learn from the results of research and evaluation.

As these elements were shown to interact dynamically through various feedback loops, it can be expected that some outcomes may have reciprocal effects on initial conditions, and that mechanisms in each of these areas may, in turn, influence the broader context of substance use in a community or society. For example, attitudes and beliefs about substances and those who use them—i.e., that lesser penalties might decrease the stigma of substance use—could potentially encourage some to seek help, or loosened social norms that act as formal and informal deterrents to acceptability might create gateways to use for others.

From an operational policy perspective, Greer et al. (2022) proposed a set of features to help structure the design of non-criminal responses to the possession of substances for personal use. They cautioned that decriminalization should not be considered as a single concept or a static model that can be adopted across contexts. Rather, they argued that decriminalization should be seen as a way of framing sets of systematic interventions, adapted to the unique circumstances of implementation within specific contexts.

Similarly—and importantly for the Canadian context—the Health Canada Expert Task Force on Substance Abuse (May 2021, p. ii) emphasized five core issues as the context for its recommendations:

- Stigma
- Disproportionate harms to populations experiencing structural inequity
- Harms from the illegal market
- The financial burden on the health and criminal justice systems
- Unaddressed underlying conditions.

In addition to specific recommendations related to the features of decriminalization, the Task Force emphasized the following: the need to invest in a range of supports for those who use substances or who are in recovery; the importance of establishing a base of evidence related to substance use and the effectiveness of public policy related to the health and well-being of Canadians; and the necessity of involving people with personal experience in implementing the recommendations of the Task Force. The Task Force also foregrounded respect for the sovereign rights of Indigenous peoples and the provision of appropriate approaches to prevention and treatment as key elements of a suitable response.

In its second report, focusing on the draft Canadian Drugs and Substances Strategy (Health Canada, n.d.), the Health Canada Expert Task Force (June 2021) drew attention to the role of lived, living and historical trauma in the lives of many who use substances problematically—with attention to historical experiences among Indigenous populations in Canada.

In addition to calling for contextually sensitive approaches to public policies on substances and echoing its earlier (May 2021) call for significant investments in addressing the impacts of substance use, the Task Force advocated for public policy that is person-centred and evidence-based and that attends to the stigma often associated with substance use. Finally, the Task Force recommended that, in addition to decriminalization, the Drugs and Substances Strategy should be informed by an overarching public health framework. Notably, a public health framework is neither a medical nor a justice led approach, *per se*. Instead, it integrates "non-medical factors that influence health outcomes"—what are known as *the social determinants of health* (e.g., World Health Organization, 2023). These include housing, employment, and relationships.

In its second report, the Task Force (June 2021) also advocated for broad access to a publicly funded supply of addictive drugs (PSAD), including a range of distribution channels.[2] The latter recommendation reflects the depth and urgency of concern about the addiction crisis in Canada. Yet findings from a recent rapid review by Moniruzzaman et al. (2022a) indicate that there is not—at present—a body of evidence demonstrating either the safety or effectiveness of PSAD as a solution to the broader objectives which decriminalization seeks to address.

Two contemporaneous initiatives are underway in Canada that might help address this lacuna. In British Columbia, a 3-year exemption to the federal *Controlled Drugs and Substances Act*, involving the personal possession of small amounts of illicit substances, came into force on January 31, 2023. This may provide an opportunity for impact data to be collected and evaluated. In Ontario, the Centre on Drug Policy and Evaluation plans to conduct research on a longitudinal cohort of people who use addictive substances to assess the use and impacts of the integration of three supervised injection sites in Toronto with the services of the community health agencies to which they are linked (Centre on Drug Policy Evaluation, 2022). A key anticipated focus of this second initiative is to evaluate outcomes for people who use substances.

The complex nature of problematic substance use and the need for a holistic multi-system response were captured in a recent communiqué from the Union of B.C. Indian Chiefs

[2] "Develop strategies to use existing health infrastructure as sites for safe supply distribution including pharmacies, public health clinics, harm reduction services, and other appropriate service locations. … Although a significant initial investment will be required to reshape the system and address the drug toxicity crisis, costs can be expected to decrease over time as the impact of new, more effective policies is felt." Health Canada Expert Task Force on Substance Abuse: Report 2 (2021, June, pp. 10–11).

(UBCIC, August 31, 2021), in which its President, Grand Chief Stewart Phillip, stated:

> The overdose crisis is a symptom of unaddressed, long-term problems that only holistic and systemic changes can address. The recent BC Coroners Service Death Review Panel report highlighted the links between overdoses, poverty, and housing instability as well as mental health conditions. We call for safe and affordable housing, mental and physical health systems free from racism and discrimination, accessible socio-economic services to support people in crisis, and a full spectrum of culturally appropriate substance use services to meet the needs of all people who use drugs.

As the Scottish Drug Deaths National Task Force (2022) asserted, "the right to the highest attainable standard of physical and mental health [should be] accessible and enforceable for people who use drugs, removing any discriminatory separation between drug dependency and other health conditions."

Drawing from the preceding research and the recommendations of Greer et al. (2022), Table III describes the features of a proposed framework for decriminalizing currently illicit substances in Canada. Together, these features are intended to support the role of police agencies as a core partner in collaborative community safety and well-being practice and to position them as contributors to constructive social change, where it is recognized that the problematic use of substances is principally a social and health issue, rather than a criminal one.

THEORY OF CHANGE

A theory of change describes and illustrates how and why certain impacts are expected to happen in a particular context, as a result of a set of linked activities (Center for Theory of Change, n.d.). It is a high-level description of the connections between the specific elements of an initiative and its intended outcomes. These connections may be based on theory-generated ideas and/or founded in reviews of evidence of what works. For example, Flynn et al. (2020) and Stevens et al. (2022) outline a literature search and synthesis process comprised of the following sequence: identification, screening, eligibility, inclusion. Theories of change have several important uses (Botschner & Corley, 2021):

- Organizing thoughts about complex problems and how to tackle them;
- Framing, planning, monitoring, and evaluation work; and
- As reference points for ongoing reflection, learning, and public communications about progress in implementing a social innovation and how this aligns to the things its constituents and stakeholders consider important.

From a *what works* perspective, theory-based design and evaluation looks to frame and understand how, for whom, and under what contexts complex interventions work or not (Flynn et al., 2020). Theory-driven approaches to evidence synthesis and intervention design benefit from the development of an initial theory of change (Pawson, 2016).

While definitions of what constitutes suitable evidence may vary, Davies and colleagues' general, policy-focused definition is useful: evidence "(however construed) can be independently observed and verified, and … there is broad consensus as to its contents (if not its interpretation)…[and it]… comprises the results of 'systematic investigation'" (Davies et al., 2000, pp. 2–3).

However, unlike evidence-based program-level design and delivery, systems-level initiatives emphasize complex processes that benefit from shared learning and systematic collaboration among key stakeholders. Directed at the level of individual systems or ecosystems (systems-of-systems), this typically includes work to understand and shape conditions that are associated with a likelihood of producing positive effects or minimizing negative effects (i.e., determinants of health or risk).[3]

Examining and addressing the relationships that can bring about changes in systems, as opposed to the discrete parts of programs, involves social innovation (Patton, 2016). This kind of context-based learning and collaboration is a hallmark of community safety and well-being practice (e.g., Nilson, 2018).

Theories of change should not be static—they should be used as reference points for ongoing learning and reflection (e.g., through research and evaluation) and can be refined as the learning journey progresses.

While more expansive in scope and complexity than ordinary programs, frameworks for system-level change may use a logic model[4] format to show the relationships between ultimate goal(s), long-term and intermediate outcomes, and the strategies to be used to bring those about. Importantly, these should also specify core assumptions (evidence, values) about how the desired change can and should be created (Ebrahim, 2019). This basic structure is shown in Figure 1.

[3]This is often referred to as collective impact. See, for example, Walzer et al. (2018).

[4]Logic models help planners and evaluators map out the relationships between the inputs, activities, and outcomes involved in a change process (Taylor & Botschner, 1998).

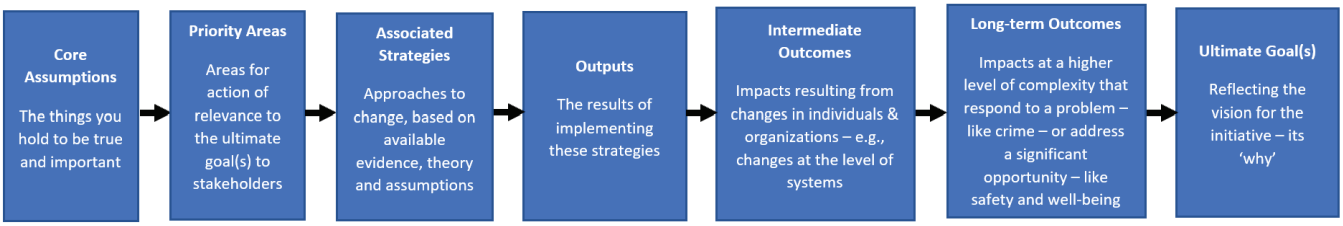

FIGURE 1 Framework for System-Level Change

In the case of large, complex issues, a broad initial framing can help to structure the ongoing work of learning and refining the intervention (Shearn et al., 2017).

Although criminal activity and criminalization are important public policy challenges associated with illicit substances, the thrust of evidence points to illicit substance use as a problem of public health,[5] societal inequities, and social exclusion.[6] The most effective approach to resolving this problem is one that recognizes these dimensions and incorporates a blend of person-centred, whole-of-system responses focused on addressing social harms, inequitable access to essential resources, and enhancing collaborative community safety and well-being practices.

Figure 2 presents a theory of change that positions criminal justice reforms and corresponding policing practices as necessary but, in and of themselves, insufficient to achieving broad community safety and well-being outcomes. This requires shared accountability for the harms that current and historic practices and inequities, including criminal justice processes, have on members of socially excluded communities.

[5] At the individual level, this may include early developmental traumas, as well as those occurring at various points across the lifespan. Population-level historical trauma and racialized trauma (ongoing collective and individual exposure to race-based stressors) may also be implicated.

[6] In addition to experiences of overt trauma or systemic racism, this can also include lack of access to resources resulting from economic marginalization—which, itself, may be a consequence of systemic racism.

We propose four priority areas for action that, based on the available evidence, could shape the social and service conditions within a jurisdiction to optimize the likelihood that a set of proximal and longer-term outcomes may be realized. The associated strategies and their anticipated outputs seek to address upstream, midstream, and downstream (acute) issues and opportunities. Thus, this framework includes a strategic mix of intensity and beneficiaries, across the range of proposed interventions.

In addition to population-level outcomes, the theory of change identifies important system-level benefits, including reduced substance-related criminal activity; opportunities to allocate police resources to serious crime and other enforcement priorities; and enhanced capacity across the human service ecosystem to engage in collaborative learning and joined-up action.

The theory of change emphasizes the importance of efforts to enhance social inclusion and address societal inequities—through the involvement of people with lived/living experience in ongoing learning and activities focused on refining this framework for change.

The journey implied by the theory of change involves confronting new ideas and grappling with changes that are sometimes at odds with long-held beliefs, customs, and practices. This process will benefit from an openness to exploring and challenging assumptions and a commitment to crafting a common base of values while avoiding attempts to characterize the problems of, and responses to, the addictive use of substances in terms of single issues and solutions. As contexts

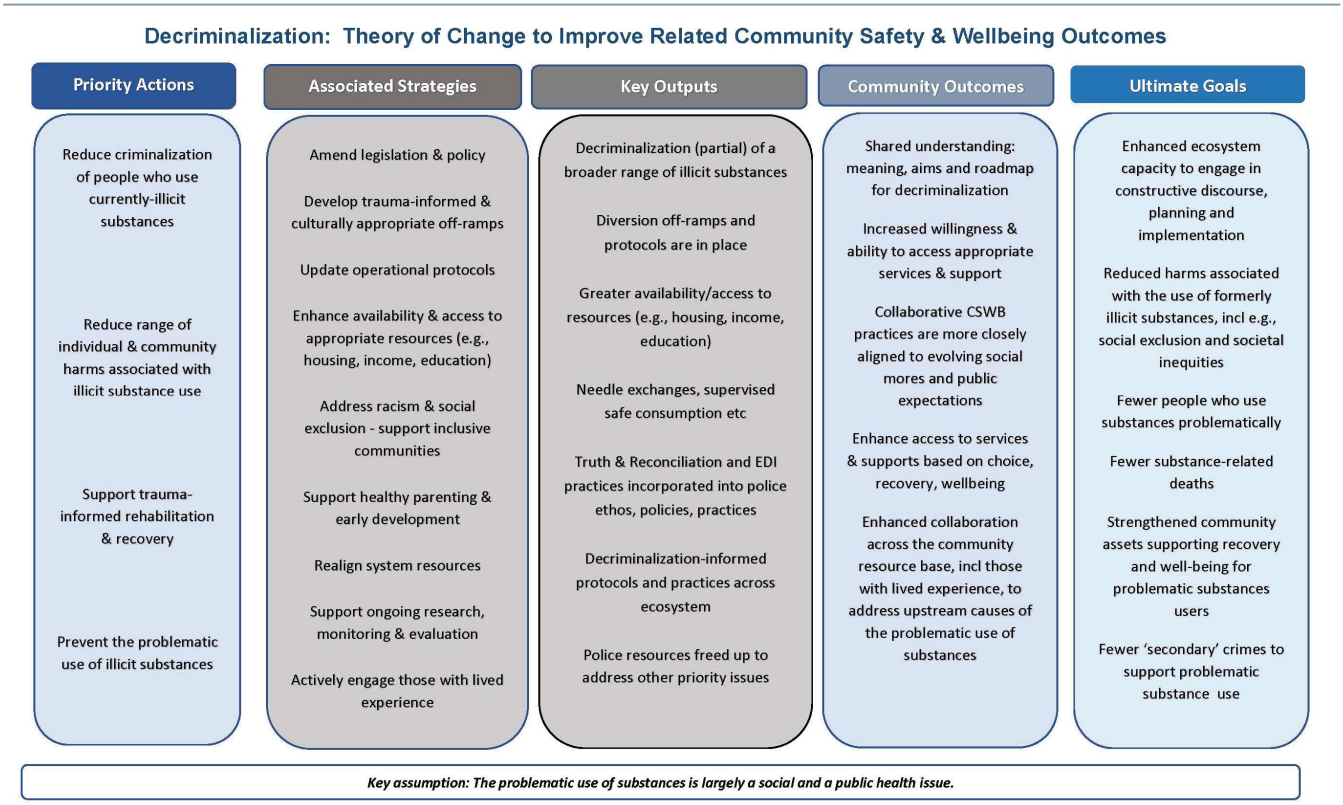

FIGURE 2 Decriminalization: Theory of Change to Improve Related Community Safety and Well-Being Outcomes. EDI = equity, diversity, and inclusion; CSWB = community safety and well-being.

TABLE III Decriminalization policy: Design considerations for Canadian jurisdictions[1]

Feature	Details/Considerations
1. Reform architecture	
Reform objectives	Understanding that problematic substances use is primarily a public health and social issue: • To reduce the harms of criminalization associated with apprehension for the use of illicit substances, including those stemming from social exclusion and societal inequities[2] • To reduce the prevalence of deaths arising from overdoses and from poisoned supply of illicit substances[3,4] • To enhance access of persons with complex needs to services, supports (notably housing[5] and income[6]) and an enhanced community resource base[7] supporting equity, inclusion, choice, recovery and well-being—recognizing that these are among the root causes of problematic substance use • To reflect evolving social mores and public expectations related to the recreational use of currently illicit substances and emerging research findings related to the potential physical and psychological health benefits of certain substances that are currently classified as illicit • To support the deployment of finite police resources towards more serious crimes that pose a greater risk to public safety.
Legal framework[8,9]	In the context of Bill C-5, currently before the Senate of Canada, the *Criminal Code* and the *Controlled Drugs and Substances Act* would be amended to reduce criminal consequences of simple possession for personal use. Some of its features include: • Removal of mandatory minimal sentences for simple possession crimes • Conditional sentences • Diversion This approach does not constitute full decriminalization, in the sense that it retains the options of other non-criminal sanctions (e.g., within a public health model) and/or diversion to services and supports. The potential benefit of enhanced access to needed treatment and resources should be tempered with measures aimed at preventing net widening, especially with respect to racialized community members. These amendments would be applied largely through provincial and municipal policing authorities and practices. Currently, British Columbia has received an exemption from federal law under section 56(1) of the CDSA, on the basis of a plan that includes adequacy of supports available to substance users, sufficient training to law enforcement to enable them to facilitate access to these resources, and a monitoring system to document the impacts of decriminalization. In this jurisdiction, those over 18 years will not face criminal penalties if found with less than 2.5 grams of any opioid, cocaine, methamphetamine, or MDMA (or any combined amount of these four substances, which have been identified as most probably connected to the ongoing opioid crisis). The exemption will not apply if there is evidence the adult is using the substances for more than personal use. If simple possession remains a criminal offence, but removal of punishment is an objective (i.e., depenalization), then eligibility criteria (Feature 2) and actions upon detection (feature 3) will need to be established. If simple possession is removed from the criminal code, it must be decided whether or not alternative penalties will be applied. If no additional penalties are applied, then prosecutorial/police discretion or diversion are not relevant. Models with no new penalties are considered full decriminalization.

[1]Adapted from Greer, A., Bonn, M., Shane, C., Stevens, A., Tousenard, N., & Ritter A, (2022), The details of decriminalization: Designing a non-criminal response to the possession of drugs for personal use, International Journal of Drug Policy, 102, pp. 20–22. http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0

[2]See Stevens, A., (2011), *Drugs, crime and public health: The political economy of drug policy* (Routledge).

[3]See Hughes, C. E., & Stevens, A., (2010), What can we learn from the Portuguese decriminalization of drugs? The British Journal of Criminology, *50*(6), 999–1022, and Scottish Drug Deaths Task Force, (July 2022), *Changing lives: Our final report.*

[4]See Rao, I. J., Humphreys, K., & Brandeau, M. L., (2021), Effectiveness of policies for addressing the US opioid epidemic: A model-based analysis from the Standford-Lancet Commission on the North American opioid crisis, *The Lancet Regional Health—the Americas.*

[5]See Goering, P., Veldhuizen, S., Watson, A., Adair, C., Kopp, B., Latimer, E., Nelson, G., MacNaughton, E., Streiner, D., & Aubry, T., (2014), *National At Home/Chez Soi final report* (Calgary, AB: Mental Health Commission of Canada).

[6]See Hughes, C. E., & Stevens, A., (2010), What can we learn from the Portuguese decriminalization of drugs? *The British Journal of Criminology, 50*(6), 999–1022.

[7]See Trainor, J., Pomeroy, E., & Pape, B., (2004), *A frame*work for support, 3rd edition (Toronto, ON: Canadian Mental Health Association, National Office).

[8]Summary according to Klippenstein, L., (2022), Decriminalization of drugs in Canada: What does it mean and how would it work? Law Now (August 9).

[9]See also, in this regard, recommendations of the Health Canada Expert Task Force on Substance Use (2021 May 6), Report 1.

Feature	Details/Considerations
Reforms that occur in law (*de jure*) or reforms that occur only in practice or procedure (*de facto*)	Modest *de jure* reforms are underway, as described above. *De facto* reforms should reflect, but also extend, those embodied in Bill C-5, should it be proclaimed. Minimally, these should focus on ongoing training, supervision and support for the effective implementation of practice changes reflecting identified *de jure* reforms, as well as any exemptions granted to particular jurisdictions. For more effective and durable changes in policing practices to support the aforementioned objectives, police services should foster, support, and incent a culture of collaborative community safety and well-being that foregrounds problematic substance use as a social and a public health problem, and which recognizes: • That its root causes lie in social distress and exclusion; • That effective responses involve: ◦ Collaboration to strengthen the community resource base; and ◦ A culture of community safety practice that seeks to redress systemic discrimination and historical trauma as determinants of a multitude of harms.
2. Eligibility criteria	
Age	In light of exemptions currently granted to British Columbia, and emerging brain science showing that brain development extends from childhood to 24 or 25 years of age, it would be prudent to begin by fixing eligibility somewhere between 18 and 25 years. From a practical standpoint, 18 years may be the most feasible age cut-off.
Population	Calls to action related to truth and reconciliation, and Gladue, should inform decisions related to population-specific considerations.
Previous and concurrent offending	Scaled (intensified) non-criminal sanctions (such as suspension of a driver's license) where use/possession represents an ongoing threat to public safety should be considered. Because there is evidence implicating substance use in domestic and intimate partner violence, this should be considered as an opportunity to align policies and practices across these two issue domains. More active, trauma-informed, supportive diversions to resources, based on choice, respectful engagement and an understanding of the root causes of problematic substance use, should be deployed. Consideration of whether previous convictions will be expunged retroactively if simple possession is no longer a criminal offence should parallel steps taken in relation to cannabis, or, for example, as recommended by the Expert Task Force on Substance Abuse.[10]
Place	This should be considered based on an analysis of the geographic distribution of substance use, substance-related harms, and social and economic marginalization, so as to avoid over-policing and under-supporting those experiencing societal inequities and social marginalization.
Type(s) of substances	Independent evaluation of the effectiveness of British Columbia's approach should inform this decision.
Threshold quantity (TQ)	There is currently no single TQ that has been identified in the published research literature upon which to base a recommendation. As above, information from an evaluation of BC's implementation of its exemption should inform a refinement of TQs in other provinces (notwithstanding potentially salient differences across geographies and jurisdictions). The cautions identified by Greer et al. (2022) should be considered carefully in determining TQs, which should reflect provincial data on possession, health risks, and geographic characteristics. In addition, provinces should recognize the potential cross-jurisdictional dynamics involving sparsely populated areas adjacent to jurisdictional borders and how differing TQs between provinces may unintentionally incent an increase in cross-border traffic.
3. Actions upon detection of substances for personal use	
No actions/sanctions	Not applicable in the current context
Deterrence strategies	Determination of application of administrative or civil sanctions, such as fines, driver's license suspension, community service orders, should consider factors such as whether possession was concurrent with intoxication and intimate partner/domestic violence or the operation of a motor vehicle.
Diversion and referral to therapeutic or educational strategies	Diversion should be undertaken to enhance access to needed health and social services, consistent with reform objectives (above). Training, education, and organizational cultures within police agencies should be calibrated and supported to minimize the risk net widening by bringing more people into the orbit of the criminal justice system.
Enforcement strategies	Determining if/when police can confiscate/destroy substances: This interacts with age and population, such as enforced confiscation for minors. Responses to non-compliance with diversion should focus on persistent, trauma-informed and respectful engagement, over criminal penalties. As previously indicated, the specific contexts of driving under the influence and of intimate partner/domestic violence should be considered as occasions that may warrant the application of criminal penalties where community-based referrals are determined to be unsuited to the situation.

[10] See also recommendation 4 in Expert Task Force on Substance Use: Report 1 (May 2021)

change, so may certain values, interpretations of evidence, and the ways in which evidence is sought and established.

Police agencies are core partners in collaborative community safety and well-being practice. They can also contribute to constructive social and system change where it is recognized that the problematic use of substances is principally a social and health issue, rather than a criminal one. But they cannot do this alone—achieving collective impact of this nature will require mobilizing a diversity of perspectives and efforts, some of which have not traditionally been at the table.

Successfully separating people who use substances from the consequences of criminalization will require a shared vision, together with an integrated set of policies and practices to address the range of upstream risks and downstream harms. An effective approach should entail a person-centred, whole-of-system response that focuses on addressing such social and societal issues as marginalization and inequitable access to essential resources, and by enhancing collaborative community safety and well-being practices that prevent, and enable recovery from, substance-related harms.

CONCLUSION

There is significant evidence showing that negative outcomes associated with the use of illicit substances are concentrated among those most exposed to risks for ill-health, criminalization, and victimization. These harms are often exacerbated by the application and enforcement of policies traditionally aimed at controlling the distribution and use of illicit substances (Stevens, 2011). Moreover, in many cases, problematic substance use is a direct consequence of past or current adversities (e.g., Maté, 2008) and can be characterized as an "affliction of inequality."

Addressing these harms is a multifaceted undertaking, but one that has been shown to be achievable in Canada and internationally. Community partners, leaders, and policy makers will benefit from an informed understanding of the potential role of decriminalization as part of system-wide efforts to achieve urgent societal goals, including helping make our communities safer and healthier.

There are no silver bullets. Such complex issues cannot be resolved through unitary or unidimensional solutions. A set of recommended actions, expressed as a theory of change, is offered to guide the development and implementation of whole-of-system strategies for enhancing community safety and well-being, with particular attention to illicit and addictive substances.

The theory of change is intended to guide coordinated and collaborative efforts to shape conditions known to increase the likelihood of achieving intended outcomes. It is not a substitute for an action plan. Rather, it should support the development of a well-informed plan of action. More particularly, it should serve as a guide to understanding, designing and participating in the delivery of effective whole-of-system strategies. In this respect, it can be a centrepiece for engaging in dialogue and ongoing learning with various stakeholders and constituencies.

Furthermore, the theory of change can help partners and collaborators maintain a focus on the interacting conditions that can either promote or derail positive community safety and well-being outcomes. It may not be possible to shape all of these conditions at once—different approaches may be required for different contexts, such as urban and rural settings, or as Indigenous controlled and managed initiatives. However, the theory of change can serve as an essential reference to ensure alignment of the strategies as designed and implemented over time, perhaps in a phased manner, benefitting from ongoing learning through research and evaluation (whether as time-focused pilot demonstration projects or longitudinal initiatives). As a living document, the current theory of change should be further refined as additional relevant evidence and insights become available and are reflected through the lenses of evolving societal values and priorities.

There is much to learn from our past experiences implementing single-focus, large-scale, changes to Canadian health and human services. Many of the unintended outcomes of these initiatives had profound and negative implications for our most marginalized community members. Seeking to address the harms of criminalized substance use in the absence of a broad, whole-of-system, framework risks repeating that history, by inadvertently perpetuating marginalization through inattention to root causes and by foregoing essential opportunities for healing and recovery. Evidence and experience strongly indicate that working collaboratively, transparently and systematically to address determinants of risk and promote community safety and well-being stands the greatest chance of benefitting those who have been most adversely affected by current policies.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST DISCLOSURES

The authors have no conflicts of interest to declare.

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ORIGINAL RESEARCH

Journal of
COMMUNITY SAFETY & WELL-BEING

Sex buyers' attitudes: A study of Toronto's online "Escort Review Board"

Rock Leung,* and Mikhaela Gray-Beerman*

ABSTRACT

Many recognize that people who buy sexual services create a demand for services that can lead to exploitation and harms to individuals and communities involved, but little research in the Canadian context has been published to understand these buyers. The present research sought to understand the attitudes of people who buy sex towards people who provide sex services by analyzing comments posted by Toronto Escort Review Board members between April 1 and October 31, 2021. A set of 15 comments were randomly selected for each of 6 searchable characteristics: "young" (age), "spinner" (body type), "ebony" (race), "trans" (gender), "submissive" (disposition), and "greek" (activity). This research reveals an attitude of consumerism in people who buy sex that leverages online communities 1) to select almost any type of person for a sexual experience and 2) get the support of fellow members to help them pursue a desired sexual experience. However, analyzed comments also suggest that members who buy sex generally ignore, consciously or unconsciously, possible exploitation or the impact on the welfare of the individual in the short and long term. Ongoing collaborations between Canadian law makers, the criminal justice system, and health and education sectors are needed to reduce the demand in sex services. This research shows there is much more work to do to confront the consumeristic views of people who provide sex services held by people who buy sex and combat online cultures that promote the exploitation of others.

Key Words Prostitution; sex buyer; commercial sex industry; internet; sexual exploitation; consumer; online community.

INTRODUCTION

Social equity and preventing exploitation are crucial for the well-being of communities and individuals. To tackle exploitation in human trafficking, Canada and other nations have adopted the legally-binding Palermo Protocol, which includes the article to "adopt or strengthen legislative or other measures, such as educational, social, or cultural measures… to *discourage the demand that fosters all forms of exploitation* of persons, especially women and children, that leads to trafficking [in people]" (Article 9(5), emphasis added). Many recognize that people who buy sexual services create the demand for these services and are the economic driving force of human trafficking and the broader sex industry (OSCE, 2021). Thus, research is needed to understand this group (e.g., their attitudes and motivations) in order to help our health-care, education, human services, and criminal justice sectors reduce the demand for sex services that leads to exploitation and harms to the individuals and communities involved.

There is a growing body of research that aims to understand people who buy sex and their impact on the sex industry. For example, while, as a group, people who buy sex can be diverse (Joseph & Black, 2012; Monto & Milrod, 2014), research has shown that their attitudes differ from those of non-sex buyers in various ways, such as: more likely to report being unhappy, thinking about sex and participating in the sex industry more frequently, more likely to report sexual aggression, and having less empathy for women in the industry (Farley et al., 2017; Monto & McRee, 2005). These studies have focused mainly on comparing sex buyers with the national sample through surveys and interviews (Durchslag & Goswami, 2008; Farley et al., 2017; Hammond & van Hooff, 2020; Hunt, 2013; Joseph & Black, 2012; Monto & McRee, 2005; Monto & Milrod, 2014) and analyzing posted comments on online review boards (Alves & Cavalhieri, 2021; Bounds et al., 2017, 2020; Jovanovski & Tyer, 2018).

Much of the research on understanding people who buy sex services has come from the United States, the United Kingdom, and Australia, but little research from Canada has been published. One of the few peer-reviewed Canadian studies examined the self-reported propensity to violence among surveyed men in the Greater Vancouver Area who bought sex (Lowman & Atchison, 2006).

Therefore, the present research aims to examine the attitudes of Canadians who buy sex, as represented in the online

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comments left by members of the Toronto Escort Review Board. This research defines "people who provide sex services" as those who offer a sexual experience for money, either voluntarily or under coercion, threat, or force. Please note that content in the following sections are sexually explicit and may trigger some readers.

METHODS

The goal of the present research was to examine the attitudes of people who buy sex towards people who provide sex services through the random selection and content analysis of comments left by Toronto Escort Review Board (hereinafter, "TERB") members. Specifically, these comments were retrieved from TERB's "Toronto (GTA) Ontario > Escort @ Massage Reviews" forum, where members who buy sex post reviews, discuss their experiences, and ask for recommendations. Viewable by anyone who creates a TERB account, these comments can reveal what people who buy sex think about those who provide sex services by how they speak about these individuals. Analyzing online comments, a frequently-used research method, can reveal freely-expressed attitudes and opinions that might be harder to uncover in more controlled interviews and surveys. While many studies have sought to study people who buy sex by recruiting arrested offenders, online forums allow access to the views of a broader set of people, who can express their views anonymously without fearing negative consequences while being in a program.

This research also aims to further our understanding of the attitudes of people who buy sex by focusing on a set of identifiable characteristics of people who provide sex services that can be searched online (e.g., using the TERB search tool). After reviewing past research and scanning TERB comments to identify commonly used terms, six terms associated with different types of identifiable characteristics were chosen (see Table I for definitions): "young" (age), "spinner" (body type), "ebony" (race), "trans" (gender), "submissive" (disposition), and "greek" (activity). For each term, the TERB's search engine was then used to find comments related to that term within a set date range (April 1 to October 31, 2021).

From these search results, a total of 90 comments (15/term) by TERB members were randomly selected for screening and content analysis. Comments were screened to ensure that only comments deemed to have been made by prospective or actual people who buy sex (i.e., not someone advertising their services) were selected. Comments that did not contain the member's thoughts or feelings about a person (or people) who provides sex were also screened out. If a comment was screened out, another comment was randomly chosen.

The TERB members who posted the analyzed comments generally appeared to be men (although this could not be

TABLE I Searchable characteristics of people who provide sex services, definitions according to TERB Community, research importance, and number of search results between April 1 and October 31, 2021

Characteristic Type	Search Term	Definition	Research Importance	Number of Search Results
Age	"young"	Young persons involved in the sex industry, often those under the age of 25, usually under the age of 20	Research in the United States found a strong desire to select for "young" people who provide sex services (e.g., Bounds et al., 2020). Are attitudes similar in Canada?	1010
Body type	"spinner"	Petite woman, the suggestion being that a petite woman could "spin" on the anatomy of a man during penetrative intercourse	Very little research has looked at attitudes towards body types, such as spinner.	628
Race	"ebony"	Persons of African-Canadian/American heritage, particularly persons of dark or black skin	A few studies have looked at selection on race (e.g., Bounds et al., 2017; Durchslag & Goswami, 2008) but more is needed.	185
Gender	"trans"	A transgender person	Little published research exists examining the attitudes of people who buy sex to transgender people who provide sex.	35
Disposition	"submissive"	Submits to a dominant person	It is a common theme in contemporary Internet pornography.	178
Activity	"greek"	Anal sex	Anal sex is widely regarded as a "high-risk sexual behaviour" due the significantly greater risk to the non-penetrating participant of contracting a sexually transmitted infection. This term was chosen to examine the attitudes of people who buy sex towards persons providing sex services who expressly do or do not engage in more high-risk sexual services.	396

Note: TERB Community definitions taken from PHNINE, (24 February 2006), "Abbreviations and Terms," Forums > General Area > The Lounge. https://terb.cc/xenforo/threads/abbreviations-and-terms.110329/

TERB = Toronto Escort Review Board.

verified), based on their member usernames (e.g., "King", "dude"), as well as references to their own body parts and the services they sought.

RESULTS

The analysis revealed various attitudes related to each of the six characteristics and attitudes that apply more broadly. This research also uncovers TERB members' attitudes towards people who provide sex services, as well as towards other members.

Strong interest in "young" people and expectation of higher rates

Of the six search terms used, "young" yielded the greatest number of results. Almost all comments (13/15) indicate an interest in "young" or "young-looking" people who provide sex services. Only one comment associated "young" with inexperienced, which the poster disliked.

The comments queried for this data set reveal a higher fee for services from a younger person. For example: "if she is good looking and young then the price is merited… More money doesn't mean more services, that's just the price of admission to enter a young hot girl's booty." and "Overall Impressions: Nice cute, super young looking… her prices were hyperlinked at an external website, which listed her as a 'diamond' rate of $300/hr, which is well above ordinary rates of $120–$140/hr." These comments reveal an economic interest in "young" people from people who buy sex and thus a higher demand for them in the sex industry.

Higher expectations and ratings of "spinner" physical traits

The majority (12/15) of the comments related to the "spinner" body type revealed a heightened evaluation of the bodies of people who provide sex services. For example: "Pictures are 100% accurate. Long hair all the way down to almost the hip. Body is very lean and toned, not a spinner but no extra fat anywhere; smooth flat belly. BB's are natural, stats are spot on." Further, these comments expressed an expectation that a person with the "spinner" body type would possess certain features or be proportioned in specific ways. For example: "Body is petite but the [breasts] don't match her well in my opinion, she should have got a size smaller for her build."

Members often created rating systems in their "reviews" to evaluate a specific person providing sex services to share this information with other members. For example: "[S] is short, her body is actually really tight/toned. Face wise, again looks are subjective, I'd rate her GND-GND+ [Girl Next Door]," and "Overall, I liked [M] and enjoyed the session… Some numbers which I find helps add a bit more to the review: Face: 7/10 Body: 7/10 Service: 8/10 Attitude: 8.5/10." The numeric ratings of "face" and "body," as well as the service provided, show an attitude commodifying the bodies of the people who provide sex services, where they are seen as products.

Eroticization of "ebony"

Almost all (13/15) of the "ebony"-related comments reflected an expressed preference by the poster for Black people who provide sex services. For example: "[C] is an ebony beauty with a fit curvy body. She has a smile that lights up with deep soft eyes and a hint of mischief. A pretty face and luscious lips," and "[C] seems like she would fit my ebony cravings." While such comments expressed a selection based on race, they did not reveal further reasons.

Novelty of buying services from "trans" people

Some (7/15) of the "trans"-related comments revealed a deliberate selection for transgender. For example: "Blonde fake b--bs trans girl for me and my girl to play with for her birthday. Any help would be great," and "I've been watching trans porn but only enjoy watching a [transgender individual] f**k another girl, the hottest was [A] and [G] f*****g a trans." These comments suggest a selection for transgender individuals out of a desire for a novel sexual experience.

Fear of an unexpected encounter with a "trans" person

Some (5/15) of the other "trans"-related comments highlighted that some people who buy sex are afraid of accidentally encountering a transgender individual who presents as female. One member posted:

> A terrible paranoia of mine… is that the "chick" turns out to be a dude … Call it paranoia, fair enough. I don't mean to offend anyone. No disrespect to people who choose to do whatever with their body and preferences and so forth but, I do believe in life HONESTY is the best policy. So, here's the question: how can you be sure if "she" is truly a she? And, how many of these "girls" advertising on LL ["LeoList"] do you think used to be dudes at some point?

Many members asked for clarification from others about whether a particular individual providing sex services was transgender or not. For example: "I would guess 80% that she is trans… I learned on here [TERB] the signs to look for," and "The word 'GURL' she uses makes her a little suspect. It's usually used by trans."

Comments also reveal that members would feel deceived if they believed that they were engaging sexually with a biological female and later discovered that the person was actually a transgender female. For example: "Informed consent is informed consent. There are no exceptions. I think we all have the right to choose who we are with sexually. Not disclosing, especially in advertisement, is deceptive IMO [in my opinion] and can lead to dangerous situations (I do NOT condone violence, it is just a reality)," and "There was a while back one post-op TS [post-operative transexual person] on LL listed under female escorts which is not only terribly dishonest but may be asking for trouble too from someone finding out after the fact." These comments suggest that the perceived deception could be expected to lead to a risk of violence toward the transgender individual.

"Submissive" seen as permission for aggression

Nearly all (14/15) of the "submissive"-related comments were related to members looking for a particular sexual experience. Some members associated "submissive" with a receptiveness to aggression. For example: "She seemed to enjoy being submissive … showed her who was the boss lol," and "[B] is super tight. I needed lots of lube to assist. But once you are in, she can take a pounding, and she loves it…" Similarly, members

used "submissiveness" to find people with a non-objecting, "agreeable" personality. For example, "IMO, [B] has a very pleasant GND face and a modest, easygoing personality. She was submissive and agreeable, soft-spoken and sincere, with just enough smiling enthusiasm to say 'it's on.'"

Other members associated "submissiveness" with a lack of enthusiasm for the sexual encounter, which they would avoid. For example: "I was under the impression from past reviews [O] was more of a dominant rather than submissive partner. I have her booked, I just don't want to be disappointed with a non-enthusiastic person."

Pursuing a desired sexual experience

Comments across multiple search terms show members' desire for a specific experience that made them feel good about themselves. For example, some members expressed a preference for "spinner" (i.e., petite) women because of the contrast in body sizes, which might make them feel better about their bodies. For example: "BTW her hands are small, so it makes junior look big," and "I'm 6ft and it was like watching one of those hentai ogres ravishing a pixie." As another example, members used the term "submissive" to help find a person with a non-objecting and agreeable disposition or to avoid someone who lacked enthusiasm with the sexual encounter, which would negatively impact the experience.

Helping and looking for help from other members

Comments show members' appreciation for the help they give each other through information and advice. For example: "Hey guys, this is my first time to book with an SP [Service Provider] and I really would love to know your thoughts and your recommendations on who to choose," and "Thanks for all the suggestions." As another example, when some people who provide sex services advertised requiring an additional fee for "greek" (i.e., anal sex) or did not advertise that they offer "greek," some members expressed appreciation for learning about ways around it. For example: "Didn't know Greek was offered. Thx for the review and intel." These comments reveal that members appreciate the community's support in better finding their desired sexual experience.

DISCUSSION

The findings of this research support the growing body of literature studying the demand side of the sex industry, specifically the attitudes of people who buy sex towards people who provide sex services.

Different attitudes towards people providing sex services and other members

This study and other research reveal that review board members generally view people providing sex services as products in a vast marketplace that caters to consumers (Bounds et al., 2017). Members appear to enjoy and exercise a virtually unlimited power of choice. In this case, they regard many aspects of a person's identity (e.g., age, body type, race, gender) as sexualized or sexualize-able (Alves & Cavalhieri, 2021; Bounds et al., 2020; Jovanovski & Tyler, 2018). They also look for specific experiences, such as opportunities to be aggressive (Bounds et al., 2020; Durchslag & Goswami, 2008; Farley et al., 2017) or novel encounters. Rates are affected by demand and supply. Like other marketplace-related platforms, online review boards give people who buy sex greater consumer power to easily search for desired characteristics and exchange information to buy a specific experience.

In contrast, members appear to view other members as fellow consumers in a supportive community (Bounds et al., 2017). This research revealed appreciative attitudes of members towards each other.

Consumerism that ignores harms

Research shows that TERB and other such online forums help people who buy sex increase their consumer power. These forums equip them with more information and support to get more value for their money and protect their consumer rights and safety (e.g., fear of undesired encounters).

While this attitude of consumerism is prevalent in this age where the Internet supports multitudes of product and service reviews, analyzed comments suggest that TERB members who buy sex generally ignore, consciously or unconsciously, possible exploitation or the impact on the welfare of the individual in the short and long term. Comments reveal that these members tend to focus on meeting their desires, with little empathy expressed for the person providing sex services (Alves & Cavalhieri, 2021; Farley et al., 2017). Many members would like people providing sex services to show that they enjoy the experience, even if fabricated (Alves & Cavalhieri, 2021; Hammond & van Hooff, 2020; Jovanovski & Tyler, 2018). These findings complement other research that has found that people who buy sex often ignore the exploitation of vulnerable women (Bounds et al., 2017, 2020; Hunt, 2013) and pressure them for unsafe practices (Alves & Cavalhieri, 2021).

This research also found that the TERB online forum, like other such forums, has reinforced cultures where views (e.g., on transphobia, aggression towards people providing sex services) are normalized (Alves & Cavalhieri, 2021; Bounds et al., 2017; Jovanovski & Tyler, 2018). While the comments do not represent the views of all buyers or community members, they arguably come from the more vocal and expressive members, who have a greater influence on normalizing attitudes and views of the community.

Further research is still needed to better understand the demand side of the sex industry, such as the experience of people in racialized and 2SLGBTQIA+ communities who provide sex services, awareness by people who buy sex of human trafficking, and intersectional marginalization. There are many initiatives in public education, policing, and the criminal justice system to reduce demand, and more research is also needed to identify the most effective approaches and best practices, especially in a Canadian context.

This research offers insight as Canada continues to grapple with the difficulty of regulating an industry that has, for decades, vexed our nation's policymakers and public alike. While there is an active debate about whether providing commercial sex is work, the power imbalance, the recruiting of marginalized people, and the documented negative multifaceted impacts on many individuals while in the industry and after, suggest that the sex industry is exploitative in nature. Ongoing collaborations between Canadian law makers, the criminal justice system, and health and education sectors is needed to reduce the demand in sex services. This research

shows that there is much more work to do: i) to confront the consumeristic views of people who buy sex regarding people who provide sex services, and ii) to combat online cultures that promote the exploitation of others.

CONCLUSION

This research aims to contribute to the body of information available on the Canadian sex industry by examining the attitudes of people who buy sex towards people who provide sex services. It reveals an attitude of consumerism in people who buy sex that leverages the online tools and communities 1) to select almost any type of person for a sexual experience, and 2) to get the support of fellow members to help them pursue a desired sexual experience. Laws and policies, as well as public education in communities on all aspects of the sex industry, are needed to reduce the power imbalances and pervasive exploitation of vulnerable people within the sex industry in Canada, increasing their safety and well-being.

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CONFLICT OF INTEREST DISCLOSURES

The authors have no conflicts to declare.

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ORIGINAL RESEARCH

Journal of
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Resilience pathways and help-seeking preferences for Ontario police services

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ABSTRACT

Despite the availability of mental health services, post-traumatic stress injuries (PTSI) among Canadian police services members continue to be significantly more prevalent than in the general population. The purpose of this study was to identify sources of resilience and help-seeking preferences among Ontario police personnel. We used a path analysis of online survey data to test the direct and indirect effects of mental and physical health, stress, health literacy, and attitudes toward mental health treatment on life satisfaction, community belonging, and resilience, while controlling for social contextual factors. Self-rated mental health, life satisfaction, and community belonging directly predicted resilience. Multiple positive indirect effects on resilience emerged, including from attitudes towards mental health treatment via community belonging, and mental health and community belonging, both via life satisfaction. Life stress had a negative indirect effect on resilience via life satisfaction. This study offers initial evidence of factors that influence resilience among police personnel and suggests that efforts to support resilience in this population may be well served by focusing on enhancing life satisfaction and community belonging.

Key Words Mental health; well-being; community belonging; structural equation modeling.

INTRODUCTION

The prevalence of post-traumatic stress injuries (PTSIs) among Canadian public safety personnel (PSP) continues to be significantly higher (M=44.5%) than in the general population (M=10%) (Carleton et al., 2018a). Occupational stress among PSP has been identified as a growing local and global concern (Kim et al., 2018; Pietrantoni & Prati, 2008). Research has largely focused on the prevalence of PTSI among PSP (Carleton et al., 2018a; Faust & Ven, 2014) and/or examining interventions to alleviate the distress of PTSI (Richards et al., 2021; Regehr & Bober, 2005). There are gaps in understanding the nature of occupational stress within and between different PSP populations (University of Regina, 2016). Specifically, there is limited understanding concerning PSP's preferences for how to access mental health information and services (Haugen et al., 2017) and sources of strength of PSP who remain well-functioning—that is, who maintain performance and productivity—despite similar exposure to traumatic stress (University of Regina, 2016; Janssens, 2021; OPP Final Report, 2021).

Research on the interaction between exposure to traumatic events and resilience in PSP is under-examined (Horswill et al., 2015; Janssens et al., 2021; Oliphant, 2016; Pietrantoni & Prati, 2008). Studies from the field of war trauma indicate that resilience and distress, including post-traumatic stress, often co-exist and can have parallel pathways (Suarez, 2013). A similarity between these two fields of research is the collective experience of persistent exposure to traumatic experiences. Police services members are trained professionals and are uniquely resilient but they are still susceptible to the effects of cumulative traumatic stress (Regehr et al., 2021). Trauma is the emotional response that can result from an individual or a shared occurrence of a stressful event perceived as traumatic. (Regehr & Bober, 2005; Suarez, 2016). In most cases the aftermath of trauma leads to resilience. However, when traumatic stress is part of daily work, other aspects of life may be impacted, which results in increased vulnerability to mental distress such as PTSIs (Mishara & Martin, 2012). Contemporary theories of resilience focus on social ecologies of resilience rather than solely on individual factors (Ungar, 2018). Police forces are part of a collective organizational culture and part of the larger community that they serve, and all components of their social ecology should be included in understanding

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what fosters resilience and prevents PTSI. This study aims to facilitate this exploration among police services to identify pathways that can enhance resilience.

This study focused on PSP in Ontario, where there was concern reported in 2018 regarding suicides among police services members (OPP Final Report, 2021). Concerns about deteriorating mental health were previously reported in the 2012 Ombudsman report on Ontario Provincial Police (OPP) officers (Ombudsman Ontario, 2012). The OPP's internal review on what might be preventing officers from seeking mental health support points to the limited data about the impact of mental health stigma, lack of trust in mental health support, organizational pressures, and recruitment practices impacting the wellness and help-seeking behaviours of police services members who access mental health supports (OPP Final Report, 2021; Carleton et al., 2018a). Existing research indicates that most people, including PSP, do not develop post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) following experiences of traumatic stress, but this does not mean that they do not experience suffering and stress (Pietrantoni & Prati, 2008; Regehr & Bober, 2005; Regehr et al., 2021). The framework of PTSI recognizes this and validates the co-occurrence of other experiences of mental distress, such as depression, anxiety, and addictions, as responses to trauma in addition to PTSD. Further consequences of PTSI among PSP include suicide ideation and/or completion (Stanley et al., 2016), which is a current concern of the OPP (OPP Final Report, 2021) and in Canadian PSP overall (Carleton et al., 2018b).

Modelling Contributing Factors to Resilience

In response to these gaps in the examination of resilience and policing, this study focused on the identification of a) contributing factors to the resilience of police members; and b) their preferred practices to access mental health information in a sample of police members in Ontario. A structural equation model (SEM) was used to test a hypothesized model to understand resilience pathways in a sample of police officers. This model is the ideal method of analysis for this data because it allows the use of multiple indicators and allows for the estimation of reciprocal, direct, and indirect/mediated relationships among constructs (Morrison et al., 2017). From a focused review of previous research (Regehr et al., 2021; Richards et al., 2021; Velazquez & Hernandez, 2019), the following latent variables were selected as factors that contribute to resilience: attitudes towards mental health treatment, health literacy, self-rated mental health, self-rated physical health, level of stress, and sense of community belonging. In addition, demographic data was collected as well as nominal preferences for mental health support. The model tested the following hypotheses:

1) More negative attitudes towards mental health treatment and lower health literacy will be associated with lower resilience scores; and
2) Low levels of any of self-rated mental health, physical health, life stress, and sense of community belonging will be associated with lower resilience scores.

Attitudes Towards Mental Health Treatment

Attitudinal barriers in seeking mental health services have been identified as enhancing the risk of PSP developing mental health difficulties and of suicide (Ballenger et al., 2011; Carlan & Nored, 2008; Clement et al., 2014; Conner et al., 2018; Richards et al., 2021). While resilience is not considered the absence of mental health difficulties (Pietrantoni & Prati, 2008; Suarez, 2013), it is not nurtured by the presence of those difficulties (Mishara & Martin, 2012), which can be prevented by early access to treatment and support.

Resilience

Resilience is understood as the negotiating transactions between the individual's abilities and their social and physical ecologies that allow them to use those abilities (Ungar, 2012; 2018). There are inconsistent views of how resilience can be fostered for communities and/or individuals. Often in policing studies, "resilience" has meant the absence of mental health symptoms (McCanlies et al., 2017) or a combination of other individual and social factors such as hardiness, optimism, sense of agency, etc. (Fyhn et al., 2015; Thompson, 2022). This study aims to facilitate an exploration among police services to identify pathways that can enhance their resilience on a collective and individual level.

Health Literacy

Health literacy is defined as the ability to access, understand, and use information to make health decisions. It is well known that low health literacy is associated with poorer health outcomes (Berkman et al., 2011). In Canada, about 60% of adults "lack the capacity to obtain, understand and act upon health information and services" (Canadian Council on Learning, 2008, p. 5). Health literacy also influences mental health outcomes (Arocha & Hoffman-Goetz, 2017) and, theoretically, individual resilience. It is also known that health literacy is an important predictor of attitudes people have towards help-seeking behaviour, even among the highly educated (Cheng et al., 2018; Jung et al., 2017). This study examines the health literacy and help-seeking preferences of members of police services with the aim of identifying patterns that support timely utilization of mental health information and services that could prevent PTSI.

Perceived Wellness

As in other populations, police officers' self-perception of their mental health has been an important and consistent indicator of mental wellness, but there are also additional proactive contributing factors (Regehr et al., 2021; Richards et al., 2021). To obtain a reliable and wide-ranging picture of self-perceived wellness, the following five variables, used to determine the self-perceived wellness and general health in the Community Health Survey in Canada (Statistics Canada, 2018), were selected as indicators of wellness: self-rated physical health, mental health, life stress, life satisfaction, and sense of community belonging.

METHODS

This cross-sectional study used an online survey design and purposeful sampling strategies to recruit current and former members of police services in Ontario. Following a collaborative approach to survey design (Flicker et al., 2010), an advisory committee informed the research team on the suitability of the survey questions and the data collection strategies. The study used structural equation analysis, which allowed for

the estimation of simultaneous reciprocal effects in a multivariable setting. The covariance matrix was analyzed using Mplus and the maximum likelihood method was used to estimate and test the magnitude of such relationships. Model fit was carried out in a two-step process recommended by James and colleagues (1982). The goodness-of-fit index (GFI), adjusted goodness-of-fit index (AGFI), and the root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA) were used to assess the goodness of fit of the model. A model is considered a good fit when GFI and AGFI are higher than 0.90 and the RMSEA is around 0.05 or less (Goffin & MacLennan, 1997; Steiger, 1990)

Participants

Participants were recruited primarily from police services that collaborated with the researchers to promote the survey to their members. Direct outreach was conducted with 35 police services, including the Ontario Chiefs of Police Office, police associations and educational programs. Some police units declined to advertise to their members, while some did not respond to the request. The final sample included representation from more than ten different police services from across Ontario. Participants were invited to complete an online survey between October 2019 and February 2020. For participants' time, a nominal coffee shop gift card was offered via a separate web link to protect confidentiality. Ethics approval was obtained from Wilfrid Laurier University (April 30, 2019).

A total of $N = 241$ police officers completed our survey (see Table I for sample demographics). Five were missing data on all predictors in our proposed model, reducing the analytic sample to $N = 236$.

Measures

Attitudes Towards Mental Health Treatment

Attitudes towards mental health treatment (ATMHT) were measured using a scale developed by Conner et al. (2018) comprising 20 items measured on a 4-point Likert scale of 1 (Strongly disagree) to 4 (Strongly agree). Scores of each item were summed, with higher scores indicating a more positive attitude. The mean in our sample was 59.472 (standard deviation [SD] = 7.078). Cronbach's alpha was calculated for this sample at .838

Resilience

Resilience was measured using the Connor-Davidson Resilience Scale (CD-RISC), a 25-item self-report scale, scored from 0 (Not true at all) to 4 (True nearly all the time). In agreement with a social ecological framework, the CD-RISC defines resilience as "a measure of stress-coping ability that varies with context, age, gender, time, and culture, as well as with different types of adversity" (Connor & Davidson, 2003). Scores for all 25 items are summed to give a maximum total of 100, with a higher score indicating higher resilience. The mean for our sample was 72.83 (SD = 12.36), which is slightly lower than general population samples and slightly higher than PTSD-exposed samples (Connor & Davidson, 2003). Cronbach's alpha was calculated for this sample at .914.

Health Literacy

The 4-item Brief Health Literacy screening tool (Baker et al., 1999) was used to examine health literacy skills. Three items ask about the frequency of difficulties with health-related materials (1 = Always, 5 = Never) and the fourth measures confidence completing medical forms independently (1 = Not at all, 5 = Extremely). The measure has been assessed as reliable and valid in multiple studies (Haun et al., 2012).

Self-Rated Wellness

Self-rated wellness indicators were measured with single items and included general physical health and mental health (1 = Excellent, 5 = Poor), life stress on most days (1 = Not at all stressful, 5 = Extremely stressful), life satisfaction (0 = Very dissatisfied, 10 = Very satisfied) and sense of belonging to one's local community (1 = Very strong, 4 = Very weak). All five items are from the "General Health" section of the Canadian Community Health Survey (Statistics Canada, 2018).

Data Analysis

Using Mplus v8.4, we first tested measurement models for CD–RISC, ATMHT, and health literacy (see Supplemental materials) and then assessed the path analysis. To evaluate overall model fit, we examined the chi–square test, with a significant p–value suggesting the model should be closely examined for potential errors (Ropovik, 2015). We assessed incremental fit (i.e., above a baseline model with uncorrelated variables; Worthington & Whittaker, 2006), with the comparative fit index (CFI) and Tucker Lewis index (TLI). We used the RMSEA with 90% confidence intervals (CIs) and the standardized root mean square residual (SMSR) indices to evaluate how well our a priori model fit our sample (Hooper et al., 2008). While cut–off values for model fit indices are not absolute, we adopted the conventional values of > 0.90 for the CFI and TLI and < 0.08 for RMSEA and SRMR.

Because we collected data with a difficult-to-reach population, we sought to collect the largest sample possible. Post hoc power analyses determined that we would require a minimum sample of 88 to discover a small effect (0.10) at standard power (0.80) and probability ($p < 0.05$) in a model with one latent and seven observed variables, with a minimum sample of 400 suggested for the model structure. Accordingly, we are well powered to detect our desired effect while underpowered for our model structure. To mitigate the lack of power for our model structure, we computed composites of each measure and tested our path analysis without latent variables.

RESULTS

Path Analysis

As seen in Table II, our data violated normality assumptions, so we tested the model using maximum likelihood with robust standard errors (MLR) (Muthén & Muthén, 2017). Considering nonparametric correlation coefficients (see Table III), resilience, life satisfaction, and belonging correlated strongly with almost all variables. Health literacy did not correlate with markers of health and stress, and ATMHT correlated only with health literacy and belonging.

Our proposed model (see Figure 1) fit the data well; $x^2(3) = 4.31$, $p = .230$, CFI = .996, TLI = .971, RMSEA = .04 [.00, .13], SRMR = .03. The model accounted for 56.8% of the variance in resilience, 47.6% of the variance in life satisfaction, and 16.8% of the variance in community belonging. Controlling for the effects of marital status, participant sex, age, parental status,

TABLE I Descriptive statistics of sample (n = 241)

Participant–Level		
	n	(%)
Gender		
Woman	87	36.1
Man	147	61.0
Missing	7	2.9
Education		
<High school	2	0.8
High school/equiv.	9	3.7
Diploma	62	25.7
Some university	45	18.7
Undergraduate degree	101	41.9
Graduate degree	17	7.1
Birthplace		
Ontario	203	84.2
Outside Ontario	33	13.7
Missing	5	2.1
Have children		
Yes	181	75.1
No	55	22.8
Missing	5	2.1
Have pets		
Yes	164	68.0
No	72	29.9
Missing	5	2.1
Person of colour		
Yes	12	5.0
No	224	92.9
Missing	5	2.1
Indigenous		
Yes	10	4.1
No	225	93.4
Missing	6	2.5
Have disability		
Yes	17	7.1
No	219	90.9
Missing	5	2.1
Mother tongue		
English	225	93.4
French	3	1.2
Other	8	3.3
Missing	5	2.1
Marital Status		
Married	175	72.6
Common law	23	9.5
Unpartnered	38	15.7
Missing	5	2.1
	Mdn	(*SD*)
Age	44	9.8

Institution–Level		
	n	(%)
Work Location		
Town/First Nation	11	4.6
Small city	29	12.0
Medium city	81	33.6
Large city	120	49.8
Main assignment		
Frontline	109	45.2
Admin/support	54	22.4
Investigative	52	21.6
Other	26	10.8
Member status		
Active	213	88.4
Former member	27	11.2
Missing	1	0.4
Member type		
Sworn member	193	80.1
Civilian member	45	18.7
Member tenure		
<4 years	23	9.5
4–9 years	29	12.0
10–15 years	48	19.9
>15 years	141	58.5
PS support services		
Yes	232	96.3
No	2	0.8
Unsure	7	2.9

PS Support Services = participant's police service offers mental health support services.

TABLE II Descriptive data and reliabilities of model variables

	a	N	Min – Max	M	Med	SD	Skewness	Kurtosis
Resilience	.90	236	0 – 5	2.91	2.91	0.48	–4.16	4.24
Life satisfaction	—	229	0 – 10	7.31	8.00	1.77	–7.74	8.40
Belonging	—	236	–1.5 – 1.5	0.13	0.50	0.77	–1.51	–0.85
ATMHT	.70	236	–1.5 – 1.5	0.46	0.42	0.34	–0.38	1.55
Physical health	—	236	1 – 5	3.50	4.00	0.86	–1.76	0.49
Mental health	—	236	1 – 5	3.28	3.00	0.96	–2.18	–1.11
Stress	—	236	0 – 4	2.31	2.00	0.79	–2.22	–0.09
Health literacy	.80	236	1 – 5	4.62	4.75	0.59	–15.94	26.66

ATMHT = attitudes toward mental health treatment; SD = standard deviation.

TABLE III Parametric and non-parametric bivariate correlations among model variables

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
1. Resilience	—	.61	.47	.07	.27	.62	–.32	.17
2. Life satisfaction	.68	—	.38	–.01	.32	.63	–.43	.15
3. Belonging	**.46**	**.38**	—	.18	.13	.40	–.17	.14
4. ATMHT	.10	.02	**.15**	—	.03	.03	–.02	.19
5. Physical health	**.32**	**.35**	**.14**	.01	—	.34	–.19	.12
6. Mental health	**.65**	**.65**	**.38**	.02	**.35**	—	–.41	.12
7. Stress	**–.33**	**–.42**	**–.15**	–.05	**–.24**	**–.43**	—	–.06
8. Health literacy	**.20**	**.19**	.11	.13	.10	.10	–.10	—

ATMHT = attitudes toward mental health treatment. Bolded values are significant at $p < .05$. Coefficients below the diagonal are parametric (Pearson's correlation) and above the diagonal are non-parametric (Spearman's rho).

pet ownership, member type, work location, and main work assignment on resilience ($.079 < p < .868$) did not appreciably change the results, so we report the results without them.

As seen in Figure 2 and Table IV, police service members who reported better mental health, higher life satisfaction, and a greater sense of community belonging tended to report higher resilience. Having better physical and mental health, experiencing less stress, and having a stronger sense of belonging to their local community were associated with reporting higher life satisfaction. Finally, reporting more positive attitudes towards mental health treatment and having better mental health were associated with having a stronger sense of community belonging. Health literacy was only marginally associated with life satisfaction, p = .052. We ran

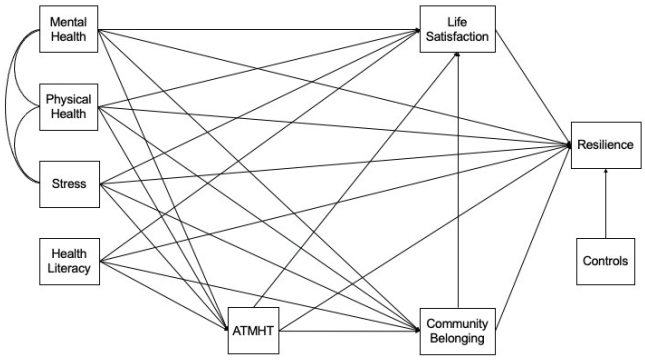

FIGURE 1 Proposed model predicting resilience among Ontario police officers. ATMHT = Attitudes toward mental health treatment. Controls is comprised of personal demographics (e.g., age, marital status) and police service characteristics (e.g., member type, work location).

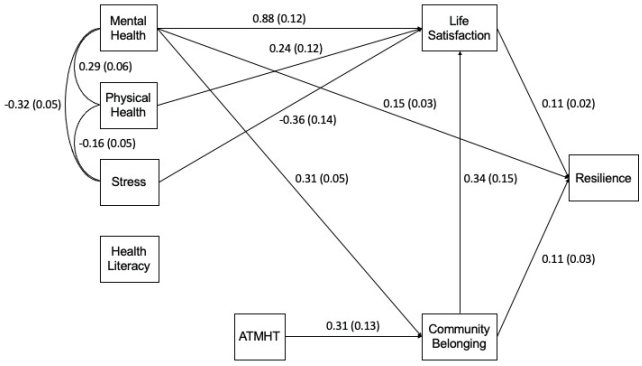

FIGURE 2 Final model results predicting resilience among Ontario police officers. ATMHT = attitudes toward mental health treatment. We present only significant ($p < .05$) unstandardized path coefficients and *SE*s. Standardized coefficients and SEs can be found in Table IV.

TABLE IV Direct and indirect effect path coefficients for model predicting resilience (n = 236)

Variables	Standardized [a] Coefficients (*SE*)	[95% CI]
	Direct Effects	
Resilience		
Attitudes Toward Mental Health Treatment	0.06 (0.04)	[–0.02, 0.13]
Physical health	0.05 (0.05)	[–0.04, 0.14]
Mental health	0.31 (0.06) ***	[0.19, 0.43]
Life satisfaction	0.39 (0.07) ***	[0.25, 0.53]
Stress	0.02 (0.05)	[–0.09, 0.12]
Community belonging	0.18 (0.05) ***	[0.09, 0.27]
Health literacy	0.06 (0.05)	[–0.03, 0.15]
Life satisfaction		
Attitudes Toward Mental Health Treatment	–0.03 (0.05)	[–0.13, 0.07]
Physical health	0.12 (0.06) *	[0.01, 0.22]
Mental health	0.48 (0.06) ***	[0.36, 0.59]
Stress	–0.16 (0.06) **	[–0.27, –0.04]
Community belonging	0.15 (0.07) *	[0.02, 0.28]
Health literacy	0.11 (0.06)	[0.003, 0.22]
Community belonging		
Attitudes Toward Mental Health Treatment	0.14 (0.06) *	[0.03, 0.25]
Physical health	0.003 (0.07)	[–0.12, 0.13]
Mental health	0.39 (0.06) ***	[0.27, 0.51]
Stress	0.03 (0.06)	[–0.10, 0.15]
Health literacy	0.06 (0.06)	[–0.07, 0.18]
Attitudes Toward Mental Health Treatment		
Physical health	–0.01 (0.07)	[–0.16, 0.13]
Mental health	–0.01 (0.07)	[–0.15, 0.14]
Stress	–0.05 (0.07)	[–0.18, 0.09]
Health literacy	0.12 (0.08)	[–0.03, 0.28]
	Indirect Effects	
	Unstandardized Coefficients (*SE*)	**[95% CI]**
Resilience		
ATMHT > CB > RES	0.04 (0.02) *	[0.00, 0.07]
MH > LS > RES	0.09 (0.02) ***	[0.05, 0.14]
MH > CB > RES	0.04 (0.01) **	[0.01, 0.06]
MH > CB > LS > RES	0.01 (0.01) *	[0.001, 0.02]
STR > LS > RES	–0.04 (0.02) *	[–0.07, –0.01]
CB > LS > RES	0.04 (0.02) *	[0.01, 0.07]
Life satisfaction		
MH > CB > LS	0.11 (0.05) *	[0.01, 0.21]

ATMHT = attitudes toward mental health treatment; CI =confidence interval; CB = sense of community belonging; RES = resilience; MH = mental health; LS = life satisfaction; STR = stress.

The model was estimated using MLR, so no bootstrap calculations were performed. Variable names for indirect effects are abbreviated for ease of display and arrows depict the path of each indirect effect.

[a] Standardized coefficients represent the change in *y SD*s when *x* changes 1 *SD*.

*p < .05. **p < .01. ***p < .001.

a subsequent model excluding health literacy's direct effect on life satisfaction, but it did not significantly improve model fit, TRd = 3.43 < = 3.84 (Jang & Muthén, 2011; Mplus, n.d.), so we retained health literacy in our model.

Several indirect effects predicting resilience and life satisfaction also emerged. More positive attitudes toward mental health treatment predicted a stronger sense of community belonging, which in turn predicted higher resilience. Mental health affected resilience indirectly through life satisfaction and community belonging, and serially through community belonging and then life satisfaction. Better mental health predicted higher life satisfaction and a stronger sense of community belonging, both of which predicted higher resilience. In the serial mediation path, better mental health predicted a stronger sense of community belonging, which predicted more life satisfaction and, in turn, higher resilience. Higher levels of stress predicted less life satisfaction, while a stronger sense of community belonging predicted more; in turn, the two predicted lower and higher resilience, respectively. Finally, better mental health predicted a stronger sense of community belonging, which in turn predicted higher life satisfaction.

While not significantly associated with resilience in this model, help-seeking preferences were also ranked by participants. By far the top two preferred methods were having help from a trusted colleague (n = 142; 59%) and searching the internet (n = 102; 42%). Peer support groups were selected by far fewer participants (n = 44; 18%), indicating a preference for informal relationships with peers rather than formalized peer support groups.

DISCUSSION

This study provides a specific view into the complexities of resilience among police members in an Ontario sample. A predictive model of resilience was built with many factors, some of which were linked to each other and multi-directional. Life satisfaction and sense of community belonging directly predict resilience.

The triple predictive value of self-rated mental health in resilience outcomes is a revealing finding of this study. Self-appraised mental health influenced resilience directly and also indirectly through its association with life satisfaction and sense of community belonging and this action as triple predictor deserves further exploration. Most previous research has approached mental health in policing with a focus on a list of symptoms or difficulties (Carleton et al., 2018a; 2018b; Wagner et al., 2019) but rarely as a self-rated appraisal as in this study. As discussed by Newell and colleagues (2021), perhaps this questioning approach has opened the door to the input from police officers as "problem solvers" of their own mental health difficulties rather than as "problem holders." As these findings pointed out, the problem solving of participant officers is likely connected to how sense of community belonging and overall life satisfaction is experienced. This is consistent with the study's conceptual framework of resilience as determined by social ecologies impacting individual abilities to survive well (Ungar, 2018). The cross-sectional nature of the study precludes any temporal directionality of these associations, but the triple prediction shows clearly how mental health, resilience, life satisfaction, and sense of community belonging impact each

other, and how resilience building programming can be based on these interactions.

To address community belonging and life satisfaction, there is a need for a more holistic approach to promoting resilience in an ongoing way and ideally before traumatic exposure. Sense of community belonging may include feelings of belonging within one's workplace or within one's community. When police services look at building relationships with the community, the focus is usually on building trust with the "service users." Prior limited evidence indicates that police may have a good relationship with the community in which they live, but that they often live in neighbourhoods outside the communities they serve, with which their relationship may not be as good (Allen & Parker, 2013; Miles-Johnson et al., 2021). Our study supports an approach of building relationships with the community not because the community will be the service users, but because the police members also become community members by virtue of working within that community, regardless of where they reside. The stronger their sense of belonging to the community, the better equipped they will be to handle the stressors of the job. Further, and perhaps paradoxically, if police members felt a stronger sense of belonging to the communities they serve, they would be more invested in making those communities healthier and safer, thus reducing the need for them to even be resilient in the first place. Lastly, it should be considered whether police members ought to be residents of the communities they serve to foster a sense of belonging to the community. While the implications of such an approach are not fully clear, Falcone et al. (2002) point out that police who serve and live in small cities (i.e., <250,000 residents) report a stronger sense of belonging to the community and, because of the relationships they build within their community, are more effective in solving crime than their urban counterparts (FBI, 2019).

Peer support and other mental health programming have been considered primarily reactive ways of dealing with effects of high traumatic exposure within policing and first responders overall (Allen & Parker, 2013). In the final report of the OPP's independent review panel (2021), several of the recommendations are explicitly around strengthening peer support and mental health programming, although it also highlighted the need for holistic interventions, work culture change, and new options in mental health services. Although the study highlights the relative importance of peer support, our study finds that participants preferred *informal* peer supports rather than formalized peer support programs. This is consistent with our findings of the importance of social capital. Consistent with our overall findings is also the reported need of considering supports in the long term for mental health distress arising in the aftermath of exposure to traumatic events (Richards et al., 2021; Regehr et al., 2021). The role of stigma in attitudes towards mental health treatment and its potential solutions has been examined widely (Drew & Martin, 2021; Richards et al., 2021; Rinkoff, 2022). Indeed, the direct association of ATMHT with sense of community belonging and indirect association with resilience in this study appears to suggest and confirm that mental health stigma can affect ATMHT and therefore overall resilience.

Similarly, life satisfaction includes factors within the direct control of the policing bodies as well as indirect factors. Policing employers have control over aspects related to life satisfaction, especially as it relates to conditions of employment such as job satisfaction and work–life balance (Alden et al., 2020). Police services should view these work conditions as building blocks for a mentally well workforce. As illustrated by Viegas and Henriques (2021), job stress in policing appears to be reinforced by a low level of job satisfaction but also separately by work–family conflict. Holistic interventions to lessen job stressors will ultimately impact overall life satisfaction and positive mental health.

Limitations and Future Research

Our study makes several useful contributions to the discourse on resilience and mental wellness in policing. However, as it used purposive convenience sampling, the sample is not representative, and further research should be done to establish similar results across a larger sample. Another important limitation is that this research was designed to identify the factors predicting resilience and the strength of these associations. Further research and evaluation is needed to specifically determine how to practically address and improve each of those factors.

Additionally, this research was completed prior to the declaration of COVID-19 as a pandemic, the murder of George Floyd by a Minneapolis police officer in the United States, and the subsequent social uprising around racial justice and police brutality. Survey responses were collected prior to the release of recent reports from Indigenous and racialized communities about police violence in Canada (Dixon & Dundes, 2020; Howard et al., 2022). The results of this survey, had they been completed a handful of months later, may have been different. A repeat of a similar survey now, or post-pandemic, would be useful to reassess predictors of resilience and/or assess how the above events may have impacted resilience. Additionally, it would be interesting to reassess sense of community belonging in light of the national and international conversations about the role of police/policing in communities.

While sense of community belonging emerged as an important predictor of resilience, this study took an individual approach to this concept. We did not ask in our questionnaire whether the individual lived in the community in which they worked, and we did not clarify whether their "belonging" should be in relationship to their resident community or service community. When Carpiano and Hystad (2011) analyzed what aspects the General Social Survey community belonging measure was capturing, they found it was linked to social capital, such as having relatives, friends, or relationships with others in one's neighbourhood. This adds some complexity to our findings, especially when considering how one's (geographic) work neighbourhood may not be the same as one's residential neighbourhood, or whether it would hold true when considering one's workplace "community" in a broader sense. Fostering a sense of belonging would still be important at an individual level—that is, social capital or social support is often supportive of resilience. Further research is needed to determine the impact of sense of belonging across these different types of communities (i.e., home, work location, and workplace more expansively) and any differences in resilience depending on whether individuals live and work in the same community.

Another area that requires further investigation is the lack of effect of gender on resilience or ATMHT. Previous

research (Chitra & Karunanidhi, 2021) indicated that women in policing tended to be more likely than men to seek help, and therefore the expectation was that gender would have a significant effect on the outcome variables. In this case, we saw no significant effect of gender. This could be because of self-selection bias, in that the culture of policing is still heavily male-dominated and steeped in traditional masculinity. The women who choose to become police members may have traits that "fit in" more seamlessly in such an environment, rendering the attitudes, beliefs, and behaviours about mental health and resilience more homogenous than would typically be expected (Shelley et al., 2011). Yet, the systemic variables that affect women in the police forces differentially also need to be considered carefully (Menard & Arter, 2014), as well as male patterns of help seeking (Hoy, 2012).

Further research should be done on existing peer support programs, as recommended by the final report of the OPP's independent review panel (2021). Our results highlight the need for more in-depth evaluation of current peer support programs, with an eye to ensuring that resources are spent on supports that are desired by members. It may be relatively easier and more cost-effective to foster better social connections among peers than to make members aware of, trust, and use formal organizational programming, which may be of variable quality and efficacy across services. Further, reimagining such programs aligns with the OPP report's recommendation to explore options beyond existing peer support models.

CONCLUSION

This study offers initial evidence of the pathways that influence resilience among members of police services. In particular, better understanding of contributors to life satisfaction and sense of community belonging suggests avenues to supporting resilience in this population. Also clear in the findings is the importance of understanding how self-appraisal of mental health can be supported. Further research is required in order to understand what aspects of work environment and community and individual factors are important in the process of developing a positive self-appraisal of mental health that influences overall resilience. As previous research indicated (Chitra & Karunanidhi, 2021; Thompson, 2022), resilience-focused training in policing mental wellness programming is effective and can support members of police services as well as the communities they serve. Practical changes in the delivery of mental health services will benefit from service users' direct input. The OPP's (2021) recent recommendations include constant involvement of members and their families in supporting wellness and new options for mental health services.

This project views police services as a community that not only shares a workplace but also a social and professional identity (Regehr & Bober, 2005). The positive outcomes of the Montreal police program on suicide prevention, offered in 2000 and 2006, which reduced the suicide rate among police members in Montreal by 78%, were partly explained by the involvement of all levels of the police workforce in that location, which made it possible to engage in persistent efforts and influence the workplace culture of the entire milieu (Mishara & Martin, 2012). The equitable leadership of all levels of members of local police services and community members will be key elements for ensuring both individual and collective resilience. Future studies may assess how negatively altered attitudes and beliefs about police may impact officers' resilience, mental health, and willingness to seek help. As calls to reimagine policing in Canada grow (Bear, 2022; Stelkia, 2020; Palmater, 2016; Ruddell & Kiedrowski, 2020; Wortley, 2021), organizational changes in policing can be informed with this study as it reveals the importance of the intersection of individual, community, and occupational factors as well as supports prioritizing relationship building—among peers and with the community.

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CONFLICT OF INTEREST DISCLOSURES

The authors declare that there are no conflicts of interest.

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SUPPLEMENTAL MATERIAL

Supplemental material linked to the online version of the paper at journacswb.ca:

- Detailed data analysis and results

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ORIGINAL RESEARCH

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COMMUNITY SAFETY & WELL-BEING

Agent Bankers and Customer Victimization in Ado City, Nigeria

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ABSTRACT

Criminal victimization against agent bankers and their customers has recently been on the increase, and the multiplier effect is a major socio-economic problem that could cause a downturn in the economy. This study examines the exposure of agent bankers and their customers to criminal victimization in Ado city, Nigeria. Specifically, the study explores the forms of criminal victimization against agent bankers and their customers, examines the consequences of criminal victimization, looks into the cases of agent bankers and customer victimization, and determines the preventive measures adopted by agent bankers and their customers against victimization. Lifestyle-routine activity theory was deployed as the conceptual framework. An exploratory research design and snowball and purposive sampling with key informant and in-depth interviews were used to interview 12 victimized and non-victimized agent bankers and their customers. Interviews were conducted in Fayose market, King market, Bisi market, and Irona market. Findings reveal that agents' bankers and their customers were being targeted by criminals who use non-violent tactics. The eagerness of the agent bankers to transact business brings a measure of carelessness to their business dealings. This carelessness and lack of security measures exposes them to motivated offenders. Victimization through fake alert, fraudulent transfer, withdrawal under false pretense, fraudulent alteration, intentional criminal patronage, fake identity, and urgent withdrawal under duress represent the themes found. It is imperative for agent bankers and their customers to set up security measures that could protect them against being victimized.

Key Words Agent bankers' customers; lifestyle-exposure theory; crime.

INTRODUCTION

The quest for financial inclusion and cashless policy has brought about the popularity of agent banking in Nigeria, and this has made it easier for individuals and businesses to have affordable, appropriate, and timely access to financial products and services. Agent banking services are geared to those who are unbanked and underbanked by directing and making available to them sustainable financial services. Through the provision of financial services to the unbanked, agent banking has positioned the economy of Nigeria for sustainable growth by reducing the exposure to financial risk among a significant number of women and poor people residing in rural areas and semi-urban centres, who face discrimination and are vulnerable or marginalized due to their exclusion from financial institutions. Agent banking has solved the barrier of supply and demand of financial services. The supply barrier stems from financial institutions and includes lack of nearby financial institutions and documentation requirement while the demand barrier includes individuals seeking quick access to financial services, poor financial literacy, and lack of financial capability ("Financial Inclusion," n.d.).

Agent banking delivers limited and essential banking services to customers through a third-party agent who makes use of their own resources (Buchi, 2020). Third-party agents are non-traditional bankers who sign a mutual agreement with the financial institution that licenses them to provide services such as account opening, issuance of mini-statements, account balance enquires, cheque book requests, bill payments, collection of bank mails, cash deposits, withdrawals, fund transfers, and payment of salaries among many others (Business Highlights, 2020). Agent banking activities in Nigeria include third-party financial services such as cash transfers, money deposits, and cash withdrawals to customers through Point of Sale (PoS) terminals. These agent bankers, who are referred to as PoS agents, together with their customers, form the main focus of this study.

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Agent banking came into prominence in Nigeria in 2013, following the release of guidelines by the Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN), on its operation and management. In 2015, CBN documented and acknowledged the role played by agent banking, which includes, in addition to financial inclusion, a reduction in the level of unemployment. As posited by Ayegbeni (2020), agent bankers have taken advantage of existing assets to reduce customers' transaction costs by ensuring a one-on-one relationship with customers. This has assisted in achieving the expansion of the customer base goals of domestic banks from 2013 to 2018.

Since the advent of agent banking in Nigeria, there has been a rise in the number of agent bankers. The 2019 report of the National Financial Inclusion Strategy (NFIS) confirmed that the number of agent bankers across the country has consistently been on the increase since 2017. This is despite the low capital requirement and the high level of unemployment in the country coupled with the present economic condition of the nation, which is grievous. Agent banking has been a lucrative form of entrepreneurial activity that solves some societal problems by creating value for Nigerians (Aruleba et al., 2022), both those who are looking for extra work to supplement their income and the unemployed whose main source of income is agent banking. The severe situation of the Nigerian economy has given rise to different forms of criminal activities, some of which have exposed agent bankers and their customers to an increased variety of criminal victimization. These victimizations include becoming a target for thieves, fraudsters and armed robbers, agents robbing agents, agent bankers defrauding their customers, agent employees defrauding agents, and customers defrauding agent bankers. Compounding this, Mudiri (2013) explains that agents can criminally victimize their customers through unauthorized access to customers' transaction PINs, unauthorized use of customer transaction codes, unauthorized withdrawals, and imposing unauthorized customer charges. A customer can defraud an agent through scam and fake transfers, while an agent employee can defraud agents through theft of funds, underreporting of cash balances, copycat fraud, and instant commission fraud. For instance, Okon and Ayodele (2021) describe the case of an agent who reported being a victim of fake transactions through another PoS agent, another who reported that he escaped a robbery attack twice at the Ikorodu Allison market, while yet another said that he lost 50,000 naira to a fake alert.

In 2021, Yekini reported on the police arrest of two PoS fraudsters in Kogi. The fraudsters, who specialize in attacking PoS attendants, robbed a PoS agent by deceiving the victim under the guise of performing a delivery. Likewise, Nwokoji (2021) stated that the residents of Lekki, Ajah and environs, Ogombo, Akasha, along the Lekki-Epe Express way, and Sangotedo and environs, reported cases of robbers raiding their communities using PoS machines in 2016. In 2019, Johnson tells the tale of a 28-year-old PoS service banker who was murdered in Akure, Ondo State, over the refusal by the bank she worked with to issue a PoS machine to a big business woman due to her location. Furthermore, Asabor (2021) reported on the arraignment of a suspect who worked alongside three other suspects arrested by the Economic and Financial Crime Commission (EFCC) who defrauded PoS customers under false pretense of over 900 million naira using the PoS terminal allocated to him.

A new scheme of victimization went viral on social media on January 15, 2022, where a customer visits an agent banker and claims to have transferred 1000 naira to the agent's account. After about ten minutes with no alert, the agent's employees tell the customer that an alert has not been received regarding the claimed transfer. The employee then calls the agent in order to enquire about the claimed transfer. During this time, the customer asks to place a call to the PoS agent using the employee's phone while the employee attends to other customers. Unbeknownst to the employee, the customer who has claimed to transfer 1000 naira deletes the agent's number from the employee's phone and replaces it with his own phone number, saving it with the agent's name. After about ten minutes, the customer leaves the agent's shop, the employee receives a message from the agent stating that he had seen an alert of 1,500 naira and also instructs the employee to transfer a sum of 200,000 naira to three different accounts. The employee, unaware of the operation that had earlier been performed on his phone, follows the instruction. This kind of criminal victimization has been on the increase in Nigeria since the beginning of the COVID-19 lockdown, with a rise in different innovative schemes of victimization.

The ongoing criminal attacks on agent bankers and their customers lead to diverse socio-economic consequences, such as possible loss of life and reversal of the cashless policy and financial inclusion achieved by CBN through agent banking. Some victims might be pressured to relinquish their business due to the loss of their equity while others might quit out of fear. Moreover, potential customers might see the constant victimization as a red flag and decide to stop patronizing agent bankers, which this can negatively impact the turnover of agent bankers or totally put an end to PoS agent economic activities in Nigeria. The overall consequences of criminal victimization are the multiplier effect it has on the economy in such a way that people who achieve their livelihood through agent banking might go jobless, thereby further increasing unemployment and also leading to other forms of criminal activities in the country.

Generally, businesses that are most likely to experience high rates of criminal victimization are those that engage the public directly, are small, and lack resources to protect themselves against criminal activities (Alvazzi del Frate, 2004; Mawby, 2003). As submitted by Truman and Langton (2013), criminal attacks against such businesses often represent a natural consequence of profit generation. Due to their inability to protect themselves, attacks against these businesses are often repeated. Despite the increasing criminal attacks on agent bankers and their customers in Nigeria and the new cases reported daily, there is paucity of empirical research focused in this area. Previous studies have focused on agent banking and financial inclusion in relation to economic growth (Ayegbeni, 2020; Kingangai et al., 2016; Okoye et al., 2016; Ogbehor, 2015; Waihenya, 2012), the challenges agent banking face in Kenya (Atandi, 2013), agent banking and customer retention in Kenya (Muoria & Moronge, 2018), factors militating against agent banking services and customers in rural areas in Kenya (Githae et al., 2018), and the impact of violence on business activities (Fe & Sanfelice, 2022; Greenbaum & Tita, 2004; Taylor & Mayhew, 2002). Only Ojedokun and Ilori (2022) conducted a study on the victimization of the agent banking business, focusing on Ibadan. It is against this backdrop that

this study examines the exposure of agent bankers and their customers to criminal victimization in Ado city.

OBJECTIVE OF THE STUDY

The central objective of this study is to examine the exposure of agent bankers and their customers to criminal victimization in Ado. The specific objectives are to:

i. explore the forms of criminal victimization against agent bankers and their customers in Ado.
ii. examine the consequences of criminal victimization against agent bankers and their customers in Ado.
iii. look into the cases of agent bankers and customer victimization in Ado.
iv. determine the preventive measures of criminal victimization against agent bankers and their customers in Ado.

Lifestyle-Routine Activity Theory, Agent Bankers and Customers

The lifestyles of business owners generally make them prime targets by criminals due to the ways in which they are perceived. Agent bankers and their customers maintain a routine lifestyle pertaining to other business owners. This lifestyle, which entails daily money transactions, lacks a capable guardian. Agent banking businesses in Nigeria are often small businesses that transact money on a daily basis. Agent bankers, who are also PoS agents, borrow different amounts of money as their trading capital, transfer money to their customers in exchange for cash, give customers cash in exchange for a transfer, and transfer to a third party on behalf of their customers at a profitable rate. Agent bankers' inability to protect themselves against exposure to criminal victimization, coupled with a routine lifestyle and activities, forms the central premise of lifestyle-routine activity theory put forward by Hindelang et al. in 1978 and Cohen and Felson in 1979. The theory essentially posits that criminal activities hinge around the routine lifestyle of a population and that crime is likely to occur with the interplay of a motivated offender, a suitable target, and the absence of a capable guardian. The absence of a capable guardian often motivates an offender when he meets with a suitable target, creating an opportunity for crime. Engstrom (2021) views a motivated offender as someone who has criminal inclinations. He explains further that qualities such as values, accessibility, and capability to resist make a target suitable, while a capable guardian refers to a third party with the capacity to intervene and could either be formal or informal.

Exposure and association with a victim's lifestyle and activities also make the victim a suitable target. The financial values held by agent bankers and their customers, coupled with their physical accessibility, visibility, and inability to afford a capable guardian, expose them as suitable targets to motivated offenders. Motivated offenders do not often constitute a representative sample of the general population and are often those who might have observed or been in contact with the agent bankers and their customers and might have observed their high-risk places and schedules. The exposure of agent bankers and their customers (suitable target) occurs across different places and times and is a direct consequence of their lifestyles and activities, which, according to Alvazzi del Frate (2004), position them for criminal attack because of their direct dealings with members of the public.

Agent bankers and their customers often experience common forms of customer-driven fraud such as fake message alerts, fraudulent perpetration, unauthorized possession of customers' card PIN, unauthorized withdrawal on behalf of customers, impersonating law enforcement officials, etc. (Ojedokun & Ilori, 2022; Ojedokun, 2020; Mudiri, 2013). Such fraud results in a direct and indirect burden on agent bankers (who are small business owners) and their customers, often increasing the cost of conducting business. In addition, such attacks often result in business and financial setback and psychological repercussions (Fe & Sanfelice, 2022; Greenbaum & Tita, 2004; Taylor & Mayhew, 2002). Fisher and Looye (2000) posit that crime psychologically impairs business owners in diverse ways and compels them to take measures to protect themselves. Such measures may be extreme and may result in closing down the business. It is therefore important for agent bankers and their customers to exercise some caution while transacting business.

RESEARCH SETTING AND METHODOLOGY

Ado Ekiti, in southwest Nigeria, was selected as the study area. Ado Ekiti is the capital of Ekiti State. According to the world Gazetteer, the population of the city was 423,430 in 2012. The city comprises mostly civil servants who own other forms of business to supplement their income, farmers, and entrepreneurs. For the most part, agent banking is a popular and lucrative business in the city, undertaken mostly by entrepreneurs and civil servants, for whom agent banking is the main source of income along with other occupations. The choice of Ado city was informed by the fact that it hosts people who are struggling to meet their expenses due to the expensive state of the city and the economic recession, and if criminal victimization persists against agent banking and their customers in the city, it might trigger other forms of criminal activity by citizens who are already stressed financially. Also, Ado city consists of people who engage in one line of business with stiff competition. The markets covered in this study include Fayose market, King market, Bisi market, and Irona market, chosen for their high patronage.

This study is exploratory and cross-sectional in design. It is exploratory because it covers an area not previously studied in agent banking and cross-sectional because it does not check the trend of events. Purposive sampling techniques and in-depth interviews were used to interview five agent bankers who had experienced criminal victimization and five of their customers who had not experienced victimization, while a snowball sampling technique and key-informant interviews were employed to interview two agent bankers who had not experienced any form of victimization. The choice of this method hinges on the fact that during the interview, it was discovered that agent bankers are commonly prone to victimization while their customers are generally not prone to victimization. Agent bankers who have not experienced any form of victimization are rare. The study made use of 12 interview participants because a saturation point was reached with this number while gathering the data. Besides, the participants possess a homogenous characteristic to the extent that their responses were consistent with one another during

the interviews. Townsend (2013) and Cresswell (2007) encourage researchers to go above the saturation point only in the case where participants possess heterogenous characteristics, because they believe data run-offs would be useful in such a situation. The study made use of open-ended questions in order to enable the interview participants to freely express themselves and to avoid any form of manipulation. Interview times were not scheduled with the participants. Rather, the researcher visited the markets during normal business hours and approached the participants. The elicited data was analyzed using thematic analysis. The data was collected in accordance with the international ethical standard guiding the conduct of social research. The consent of agent bankers and their customers was sought and obtained, and they were informed of their right to voluntarily participate in the study.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

In the course of the interviews, it was discovered that the majority of the agent bankers had been victimized at different points in their business while the majority of their customers had never been victimized. Therefore, we analyzed five responses from agent bankers who had been victimized, and two responses from agent bankers and five responses from their customer who had not been victimized. The number of agent bankers who had not been victimized was limited to two because of the repetition in their responses.

Forms of Criminal Victimization Against Agent Bankers and their Customers

In exploring the extent of the problem, information was sought from respondents on the forms of victimization they often experienced. Findings reveal that agent bankers suffered different forms of victimization. A participant at King's market responded thus:

> There are some people that will intentionally come in the evening just to victimize you. Such people often come in the evening whenever we are balancing our account. They often operate at this time because they know everybody is in haste to get home and they have at least 50% chance of not being caught. They will come requesting a cash withdrawal. Most of the time, they send a fake credit or debit alert and because of the hour, there might not be enough time to verify the alert sent and you give them the money. There are also times people will make a transfer and their transfer will be declined without your knowledge after you have given them the amount they requested. Notwithstanding the situation, what I used to experience is fake transfers and alerts from customers. I have never experienced armed robbers pointing a gun at me or people trailing me. (IDI/Agent Banker/Victim/Male/King's Market).

Another interviewee described the situation thus:

> This business is challenging for several reasons. […] For instance, some will come for an urgent withdrawal simply because they want to send fake debit and credit alerts. Some will ask you to help them send money to a third party. After you have sent the money, they will deny it by claiming that they never asked you to send money to anybody or they will say that they don't know the person they earlier requested the transfer for. Some will even deny the earlier agreed amount they requested you to transfer to a third party. Most of the time, those requesting you to send money to a third party on their behalf do not request a small amount. It often ranges between ₦30,000 ($72.30) and ₦100,000 ($241) and at times it goes beyond that. Some will request money under duress while some will stay on a bike and request an urgent cash withdrawal claiming that someone close to them is at the point of death and needs urgent attention. After you have given them the money, they will zoom off without transferring the money you gave them. The most common of all is fake transfers and I have fallen victim of that severally. (IDI/Agent Banker/Victim/Female/Fayose Market).

Another victim had this to say,

> Since I have been working with my boss for the past two years, I have seen different kinds of victimization, ranging from fake credit or debit alert, request for withdrawal under duress and urgent withdrawal. The most shocking form I have ever seen is fake identity. Someone has come to us for a cash withdrawal before wearing a soldier uniform. He even showed us his identity card so that we could trust him. We gave a sum of ₦60,000 ($144.40) only for the alert he sent to bounce back after he left. (IDI/Agent Banker/Victim/Male/Bisi Market).

The narratives above reveal that the common forms of business-related victimization experienced by agent bankers in Ado city were fake credit and debit alerts, collection of money under duress, fraudulent third-party transfers, fraudulent alteration of mutually agreed transaction amounts to a third party, urgent withdrawals under false pretense, and intentional criminal patronage. However, all the respondents interviewed identified victimization through fake alert and fraudulent urgent withdrawal as the most common form of victimization. It is clear from these findings that the criminal attacks on agent bankers are purely financially motivated and the victimization through fake alert and fraudulent urgent withdrawal, which has been identified as the most common form of victimization, stems from the fact that it is the easiest to perpetrate and also the most difficult to detect. The implication of this finding is that victimization through fake credit and debit alert has the tendency to negatively impact on the cashless policy and financial inclusion already achieved by CBN, as the essence of commercial banks' online money transfer services is increasingly being jeopardized by criminals using it for fraudulent purpose. This result corroborates the findings of Ojedokun and Ilori (2022) and Mudiri (2013), who identified fake SMS debit and credit alerts and fraudulent perpetration as the most common forms of customer-driven fraud. It is also mconsistent with the study of Alvazzi del Frate (2004) which found that businesses that deal directly with the public are most likely to experience high rates of criminal victimization. Furthermore, the exposure of agent bankers to different forms of criminal victimization confirms their status as a suitable target by motivated offenders (criminals) because

of their lifestyle and their inability to protect themselves (lack of a capable guardian) against the motivated offenders.

Consequences of Criminal Victimization Against Agent Bankers and Their Customers

Respondents were also probed on the consequences of victimization on their businesses. The answers reveal considerable psychological, as well as financial, impacts. One respondent at Irona market stated:

> The effect of victimization I have experienced is the psychological effect on me due to the setback my business often experiences. At times, I often feel like ending the business, but there is nothing I can do because this is my only means of survival. Besides, I often incur debt because I borrow from people and credit companies (LAPO) so that my business can bounce back. Also, bouncing back takes time but it often depends on the amount I borrowed to invest back in the business. (IDI/Agent Banker/Victim/Male/Irona Market)

The sales representative of an agent banker interviewed echoes some of these sentiments:

> I often experience sleepless nights whenever I experience criminal victimization. This is because I often pay back with my salary and this can cut across months, depending on the amount involved. At times, my boss will deduct the money at once from my salary if the amount is small, and if it is larger, I might have to pay it twice or three times. I am a student, and there is nothing I can do and paying back with my salary is the way the business bounces back. Therefore, I am the one feeling the negative consequence of the victimization. (IDI/Agent Banker/Victim/Female/Fayose Market)

Another participant has this to say: "The effect of this victimization on my business has been costly. I often work hard again to get back on track and at times I borrow money in order to keep the business moving" (IDI/Agent Banker/Victim/Male/Bisi Market).

Finally, another interviewee explains the problem of trying to pass on the cost:

> Factually, it has not been easy. The effect of the victimization on my business has been a great loss. My capital has been reduced and it often takes a lot of time before I recover from the loss. I often bounce back by drawing on my inner strength by hustling more in order to keep the business going. Also, I increase my charges in order to bounce back but due to the nature of the city and business, some customers might agree to the charges while others might reject them. In addition, I neglect my personal needs and well-being by injecting the money I ought to use for myself into the business. (IDI/Agent Banker/Victim/Female/King Market)

It can be inferred from the responses above that psychological effects, such as sleepless nights, struggling, debts, increased costs, and setbacks have been the consequences of criminal victimization on agent bankers. This could be partly attributed to the hardship currently experienced in Nigeria as a result of the recession. The recession has led to an increase in criminal activities, which has been felt mostly by agent bankers due to their line of business, and if care is not taken, the multiplier effect could be more hardship, increased social vices and a reverse in the financial inclusion achieved by CBN through agent bankers. The finding is in tandem with that of Fe and Sanfelice (2022), who asserted that crimes can cause both direct and indirect burdens on business owners. Also, Greenbaum and Tita (2004) and Taylor and Mayhew (2002) explicitly stated that crime increases the cost of conducting business in a locality, which often hampers development and causes psychological effects.

Cases of Agent Bankers and Customer Victimization

Due to the increased nationwide cases of victimization against agent bankers and their customers aired daily in the newspapers, on television and on radio, it was considered important to inquire into the cases of criminal victimization experienced in Ado city. Responding to the cases, one interviewee has this to say:

> I can remember this case that happened sometime back. A customer walked up to me and told me to assist him to make a deposit to the tune of ₦50,000 ($120.30) to a third party. He also wanted to withdraw cash from me at the same time. He brought out his phone for me to speak to the person to whom he wanted to make the deposit. After I made the transaction and requested my money, the customer said the person I spoke with would be the one to pay me. In the long run, I was able to collect half of the money and I paid the other half from my personal money. (IDI/Agent Banker/Victim/Female/King Market)

Similarly, another participant at Irona market expressed the following:

> About a month ago, I lost a sum of ₦40,000 ($96.24) to victimization. The customer involved came in to do a transfer. I saw the debit alert on their phone but couldn't see the credit alert. We both waited for the credit alert and they promised to drop their phone and come for it the following day. I never knew that the phone that was dropped did not have a sim card and that it was only a picture showing the debit alert. Until now I have yet to see them. Also, about two weeks ago, I fell victim of ₦10,000 ($24.06) to a woman who came for an urgent withdrawal stating that her baby was sick and in the hospital. Due to the risk of life involved, I gave her the money but I didn't see the alert. I told her but she insisted that she had done the transfer. (IDI/Agent Banker/Victim/Female/Irona Market)

Furthermore, another participant gave a shocking case, saying,

> On a Monday morning, a customer walked up to me and requested a sum of ₦1,000,000 ($2,406.07) and promised to do a transfer. I did the transfer directly to Opay, a fintech company where I got the PoS terminal. About three months later, I got a call from civil defense that a fraudulent transaction was done to my account. Prior

> to the call, our PoS terminal had been blocked. I had to visit the civil defense office to settle the matter by paying the money back. It was there that I discovered that the transfer had been fraudulent. I informed the fintech where I got my PoS terminal and explained to them before the terminal was re-opened for business transactions. I also experienced another case where I lost the sum of ₦60,000 ($144.55) to a soldier on a Sunday afternoon. He came with his uniform on, showed me is ID and requested a cash withdrawal. After he left, the transfer he did bounced back. (IDI/Agent Banker/Victim/Male/Bisi Market)

A case similar to this recorded by Sunday (2021) involved a naval officer who was apprehended by Nigeria Police Force personnel for defrauding an agent banker in Nasarawa State in July. This supports Ojedokun's (2020) observation that the rate at which criminals are impersonating law enforcement officials for criminal activities has been on the increase in Nigeria.

The above examples reveal some of the common themes in criminal attacks against agent bankers in Ado city, such as the transfer to a third party, a fake alert using personal property as collateral in order to prove innocence, urgent withdrawal with the claim of a life being at risk, and the use of a military uniform to lend authenticity. A major inference that can be made from these findings is that agent bankers in Ado city are being targeted by lone criminals due to their lifestyle, which constitutes a motivation for the attack because the criminals (motivated offenders) are certain that agent bankers and their customers (suitable targets) are always in possession of financial valuables. This reveals how dire the situation has become.

Preventive Measures Against Victimization for Agent Bankers and Their Customers

The agent bankers interviewed clearly know that their line of business is increasingly targeted for criminal victimization. Thus, it seemed pertinent to examine the preventive measures agent bankers and their customers set up to protect themselves. The responses from victimized and non-victimized agent bankers and their customers are presented below. One participant stated:

> I don't have any security measures to protect myself. If I report at the police station, all I often get is advice to be careful and not stay long outside. All I do is to be careful whenever I transact business with people. Another thing is that I don't hold huge amounts at the same time. I often keep some somewhere and hold a small amount just to protect myself from victimization. I don't make huge transactions at once, and if people come to make a transfer, I make sure I scrutinize it carefully and also make sure that they are not in a hurry. (IDI/Agent Banker/Victim/Male/Fayose Market)

Corroborating this, another participant expressed the following:

> I don't have any security measure set up. As a matter of fact, I believe none of us in this line of business in this vicinity has the ability to set up a security measure. However, I believe that carefulness will work. What I do now is that, whenever I don't see the alert, I don't give my money out. That is all I can do for now. I also use SMS and an app to confirm the money customers transfer. If you show me your debit alert, I will not release my money to you until I have personally confirmed it and I don't give room for customer familiarization. (IDI/Agent Banker/Victim/Female/Bisi Market)

In addition, another participant had this to say:

> After the issue of the ₦1,000,000 ($2,406.07), I employed personal security. Before we do transactions of ₦50,000 ($120.68) and above, I often collect the person's phone number, ID card, and picture, but I don't take such measure on any money under ₦40,000 ($96.54). (IDI/Agent Banker/Victim/King Market).

Continuing with the inquiry into security measures put in place by the agent bankers, non-victimized agent bankers stated that they were not aware of being a target for victimization. However, they had set up some security measures which prevented them from being victimized. One non-victimized agent banker stated,

> The security measures I take are proper record of the customer before a business transaction, taking their phone number and pictures without their knowledge. This has enabled me to trace any customer whenever there is an error. (IDI/Agent Banker/Non-Victim/Male/Bisi Market)

Likewise, another expressed the following:

> I have been smart, and that is the security measure I have been taking. I check my balance before and after transacting business, and I don't release my terminal to customers. (IDI/Agent Banker/Non-Victim/Female/Irona market)

Customers of agent bankers are totally unaware of the possibility of being victimized. However, they have been taking security measures in transacting business with the agent bankers. One participant had this to say:

> I have been patronizing PoS agents for the past five years. Whenever I come to Ado, I often transact with the agent I trust. Agent bankers have deposited different large amounts of money into my account on several occasions and I have not been victimized. I am not aware that PoS agents and their customers are a target for different kinds of victimization, but I protect myself by transacting with people I trust and I make use of a single PoS agent. (KII/Customer/Non-Victim/Male/Fayose Market)

On a similar note, another interviewee stipulated:

> I am aware that PoS agents have been a target for victimization, but I am unaware of that of their customers. I believe it is not my responsibility to take protective measures, but that the bank should protect their customers by

making sure that all the PoS agents are registered with the bank or under a traceable platform. This is because if you asked other customers that have been victimized and who have taken the case to the bank, the banks often tell them that the PoS agents are not registered with them and there is no way they can trace them. If they are all registered with the banks, it will be easier for them to be traced through their details. (KII/Customer/Non-Victim/Male/King Market)

These findings clearly establish that only a few agent bankers and their customers who have never experienced any form of victimization are unaware of being targeted by criminals. The non-victimized agent bankers and their customers understand the possibility of being a victim, and in response, both victimized and non-victimized agent bankers and their customers have devised some preventive measures to protect themselves. The major preventive measures adopted by most respondents are carefulness, being vigilant, transacting business with a trusted agent banker, awareness, and smartness. Other special preventive measures taken include employing personal security, setting rules such as customer documentation for transactions of ₦50,000 ($120.68) and above, limiting the cash held, not permitting customer familiarity, not engaging in huge transactions at once, and recording customers' documentation without their knowledge. Clearly, the fear of being victimized negatively impacts agent bankers, their customers, and their business, since agent bankers feel obliged to document their customers without their knowledge and customers feel they must only transact with agent bankers they trust. The measures taken by the customers could even limit the level of patronage of the agent bankers, thereby limiting their profit. Besides, Ado city is a city where people engage in one line of business and competition is always stiff. Competition already impacts the profit made and further reduction in the profit due to criminal attacks can be burdensome on the agent bankers. These findings conform with the study of Fisher and Looye (2000), which state that crime has the tendency to negatively impact businesses' operations in diverse ways as it compels business owners to take different measures to protect themselves. Another outcome of these findings is that, despite the lifestyle of agent bankers and their customers (suitable targets), they have been unable to invest in physical means of crime prevention, such as a security guards or crime-deterring devices (capable guardians) which could protect them against criminals (motivated offenders). These findings conform to the lifestyle-routine activity theory, which posits that a lifestyle without a capable guardian is prone to motivate offenders when they meet with a suitable target.

CONCLUSION

This study examined the exposure of agent bankers and their customers to criminal victimization in Ado city. It was revealed that agent bankers and their customers are being targeted by criminals who use non-violent tactics. Forms and cases of criminal victimization against agent bankers and their customers include fake alerts, fraudulent transfers, withdrawals under false pretenses, withdrawals under duress, fraudulent alterations, intentional criminal patronage with fake collateral in order to look innocent, fake identity, and urgent withdrawals using manipulative emotional appeals. Consequences of criminal victimization against agent bankers and their customers include psychological effects, financial setbacks, struggling to keep going, increased costs, and debts. Preventive measures include carefulness, being vigilant, transacting business with a trusted agent banker, awareness, smartness, employing personal security, setting rules such as customer's documentation for transactions of ₦50,000 ($120.68) and above, limiting the cash held, not permitting customer familiarity, not engaging in huge transactions at once, and recording customers' documentation without their knowledge.

In addition, it was made known that laws and penalties that could aid in reducing crime of this nature do not exist in Nigeria. The only laws that guides business of this nature in Nigeria are to protect customers against agent bankers (Oduola, 2020) and CBN regulation to prevent money laundering through this type of business. This negligence and inability of the government to provide security measures to agent bankers has led to their increased victimization. The negligence could be excused as an oversight by the government in foreseeing any such victimization on agent bankers. It was concluded that agent bankers and their customers were exposed to criminal victimization as a result of their lifestyle, which leads lone criminals to perceive them as always having huge sums of money. In addition, agent bankers are always eager to transact business. This implies some measure of carelessness in their business dealings and, coupled with their lack of security measures, exposes them to criminal attacks.

Recommendations

The study recommends that financial institutions and financial technology companies, who often give agent bankers their PoS terminals and also license them for business, should properly document their details for security reasons and regularly organize training for them on strategies they could adopt to prevent criminal activities. Agent bankers in Ado city are often situated within close proximity to one another. This means they could jointly invest in physical security measures such as security alarm devices, security guards, CCTV surveillance systems, and protective barriers. Joint investment in these physical security measures would reduce the cost of individual investment and discourage motivated offenders from viewing them as a suitable target. It is equally important for CBN to collaborate with deposit banks, financial institutions, and financial technology companies in developing frameworks that could put an end to fraudulent practices associated with fake alerts. Furthermore, agent bankers could create an association or social media platforms where they could regularly discuss victimization cases, strategies adopted by the criminals, and safety tips. This could serve as an awareness platform which could enable them to always operate with a sense of alertness and also prevent further victimization. It would also create a form of awareness and carefulness amidst non-victimized agent bankers and their customers. In addition, there is an urgent need for Nigerian Law Enforcement Agencies to develop a solution to stop the use of their uniforms to perpetrate fraud.

Suggestion for Further Studies

Agent bankers and customer victimization is a new research area in Nigeria. Further studies can be conducted on the

same issue in other cities in Nigeria. Also, during the data gathering stage, it was discovered that the business is not as profitable as generally thought. Therefore, the profitability of agent bankers is another research area that could be explored.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST

The authors declare that there are no conflicts of interest.

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SOCIAL INNOVATION NARRATIVES

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Defunding the police: Reflecting on the US experience and lessons learned for Canada

Mark Reber,* MA, and Cal Corley,* MBA

ABSTRACT

"Defund the police" became a rallying cry for change in the aftermath of the May 2020 death of George Floyd—at the hands of the police—in Minneapolis. What is meant by "defunding," how has it evolved in the United States and in Canada, and what are the implications for Canadian municipalities going forward? Canadian community and civic leaders, police and other human service providers, and policymakers will benefit from an informed understanding of these issues as the discourse on the future of policing—and community safety and well-being more broadly—deepens.

Key Words Budgets; police financing; alternative service delivery models.

INTRODUCTION

In May 2020, the death of George Floyd at the hands of a Minneapolis Police Department officer sparked a new wave of protests and anti-police demonstrations around the world. In parallel with the Black Lives Matter movement, "Defund the Police" became a widespread theme among protesters focused on exposing police brutality and fighting racism of minority communities.

In the most extreme sense, defunding was seen as a way of punishing intractable police agencies and perhaps exposing what is often perceived as a broken criminal justice system. Others looked at defunding as an expression of a broader social movement towards both greater accountability and legitimacy in policing. Still others viewed it as an opportunity to create alternatives for delivering community safety services, shifting funds away from the police towards more appropriate municipal or community-based service providers.

Over the course of our work in the past few years, it has become apparent that there are some deeply entrenched ideologically driven perspectives among some politicians and policymakers on matters of police funding—and the appropriate roles of the police—that may be grounded in a lack of understanding. The intent of this paper is to discuss what is meant by "defunding"; to examine how nine US cities—Austin, Baltimore, Berkeley, Charlotte, Cincinnati, Denver, Minneapolis, New York, and Seattle—responded to calls to defund police budgets; and to consider the responses to calls for defunding and their implications for longer-term change and reform to policing in Canada.

We undertook a thorough examination of publicly available municipal budget data for these nine US cities. This included a detailed analysis of certified financial records and estimates of all nine cities for the period 2018–2022. Furthermore, we reviewed the relevant literature to better understand public perceptions of the defund movement—both how the concept was interpreted and how attitudes have shifted over time—as well as outcomes and innovations from the experiences of the sample cities and here in Canada.[1]

Background of the Defunding Movement

While the death of George Floyd served as the tipping point for anti-racism protests in the United States, it was only one of many incidents where African Americans and members of other minority groups died at the hands of the police. Michael Brown (Missouri), Tamir Rice (Cleveland), Eric Garner (New York City), Freddie Gray (Baltimore), Jamar Clark (Minneapolis), Tony Timpa (Dallas), Elijah McClain (Aurora, Colorado), and Breonna Taylor (Louisville, Kentucky) were among many who were killed by police in the years prior to Floyd's death

[1]This study was not intended to assess the merits or shortcomings of police defunding, nor to evaluate any one city's or police department's ability to provide for community safety and well-being. As complex and evolving notions that are subject to historic shifts, changes in operating parameters (Murphy & Corley, 2022; Kempa, 2014), and the unique challenges of communities, these concepts do not lend themselves to easy definition or assessment. Nevertheless, they are under greater scrutiny and re-evaluation than ever, both in Canada (City of Edmonton, 2021) and in the United States (Shared Safety, n.d.).

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and whose deaths contributed to growing mistrust, frustration, and tension between the police and the communities they served.

The defunding movement was further fuelled by the fact that every reliable indicator shows that the criminal justice system has a significantly disproportionate effect on members of minority communities, and African Americans in particular (Hernandez, 2020; Weichselbaum & Lewis, 2020). Data shows that by almost any measure—including arrest rates, conviction rates, incarceration rates, and particularly in the number killed by police—African Americans and other minorities are disproportionately represented when compared with the population as a whole (Police Scorecard, n.d.).

For example, in Seattle, as depicted in Table I (Police Scorecard, n.d.), African Americans make up less than 7% of the population but account for 34% of those arrested and 25% of those killed by police. In Minneapolis, African Americans are just under 19% of the population, but account for over 60% of arrests and a staggering 70% of people killed by police.

Each of the cities selected for this study shows a marked disparity between the percentage of African Americans who live there and the proportion who are drawn into or affected by the criminal justice system. Reflecting on these results, it is easy to see why so many protests, both before and after George Floyd's death, focused on messages of anti-racism and the over-policing of minority communities. It also becomes much clearer why so much of the defunding movement has pushed for the removal of police officers from minority communities, even if only in certain roles. In this light, some view police defunding not just as a *potential* solution, but as a *necessary* one to address what is widely perceived as a biased and oppressive justice system, with police officers being its most visible and immediate aspects.

What Does "Defund" Actually Mean?

"Defund the police" was one of the more straightforward catchphrases to emerge from the George Floyd protests, with the slogan having the virtue of being both a symbolic call to affirm the value of African American lives and a policy proposal as to how that might be achieved (Eaglin, 2021, p. 136; Lopez et al., 2020).

TABLE I Percentage of African American Arrests and Deaths by Police in USA

CITY	Local Population % (African American)	Arrest % (African American)	Killed by Police % (African American)
Austin	7.7	32	23
Baltimore	61.6	84	87
Berkeley	7.5	50	0
Charlotte	35.2	73	61
Cincinnati	40.3	76	67
Denver	9.0	28	14
Minneapolis	18.4	61	70
New York	23.4	49	62
Seattle	6.8	34	25

However, the practical application of "defunding" means very different things to different people. Some support the radical notion of complete dismantlement of police structures while for others it amounts to nothing more than a budgetary exercise in fiscal probity. A recent paper by Eaglin (2021) classified the spectrum of views into four distinct categories:

1) **Police abolitionists,** who believe that police "reform" is doomed and that the police are an institution designed to surveil and control minorities, adhere to a long-term goal to replace police with alternative means of ensuring public safety.
2) **Police recalibration** involves the reprioritization of existing public resources to create healthier communities. In this view, public safety can be transformed by altering police responsibilities, which in turn can only occur through a reduction of police funding.
3) **Police oversight** refers to a more "managerialist" approach, reallocating scarce public resources towards developing better oversight and accountability mechanisms—and thus greater police legitimacy—to shape the behaviour of police agencies and individual officers.
4) Finally, **fiscal constraint** perspectives look not to transform the police institution but to reduce costs. In this interpretation, defunding the police is exactly that: reducing spending in the administration of the criminal justice system without necessarily committing to any changes in police practice or policy.

In the context of this study, as well as the overall portrayal of defunding in the media and emerging academic literature, "police recalibration" is the most practical definition, particularly when considering the longer-term impacts of police defunding and change.

Public Opinion

Even at the height of the George Floyd protests in 2020, public opinion on police defunding was mixed. While clear support for better policing was evident, responses regarding defunding the police were more nuanced. Polling data at the time shows a clear divergence of opinion regarding the merits of defunding, which in many respects continues to this day.

For example, an ABC News/Ipsos survey conducted in June 2020 showed that only 34% of US adults supported movements to defund the police, while 64% opposed it. Support was higher among African Americans (57%), but considerably lower among white respondents (26%) (Merrefield, 2021). More radical reforms also found little broad-based support. A Reuters/Ipsos poll conducted in June 2020 found that while 76% of respondents supported moving some money from police budgets into other local programs, only 39% supported completely dismantling police departments and giving more money to other programs. In addition, rather than Floyd's death having completely alienated African American communities from the police, a Gallup poll conducted in July 2020 found that 81% of African American respondents wanted police to spend more—or at least the same amount of time—in their neighborhoods (Kahn, 2020).

By early 2021, however, attitudes around the perceived benefits and disadvantages of defunding appeared to have

shifted. A survey by USA Today/Ipsos in March 2021 showed that while 28% of African American respondents still supported defunding, 37% were now against it (Elbeshbishi & Quarshie, 2021). A poll conducted by Morning Consult/Politico in February 2022 showed that 49% of respondents now blamed defunding police for rising violent crime rates in the United States, while 69% believed that increasing police budgets would reduce crime "a lot" or "some" (Morning Consult/Politico, 2020). A survey of Baltimore residents in May 2022 showed that 41% of African American respondents wanted police funding to increase and 33% wanted it kept the same; only 16% wanted the budget to be decreased (Williams, 2022). Thus, even in Baltimore, a city familiar with high rates of crime and allegations of police corruption, respondents seemed to shy away from defunding and did not perceive it as a solution to their community safety concerns.

Although these polling results represent just a small sample of the surveys that took place at the time, they nonetheless provide a snapshot of public views on defunding over that 2-year period. Taken together, the survey results illustrate the complexity and diversity of views on the topic, as well as how these views evolved over time. At the very least, they indicate shifting public views on the efficacy of defunding and of the ongoing tensions between notions of police reform and evolving perspectives on public safety.

THE RESPONSE TO DEFUNDING THE POLICE

As the protest movement following George Floyd's killing grew, so did calls to defund police. Proposals to defund the police were initially met with scepticism, with most politicians and commentators from both sides of the political aisle and at all levels of government dismissing the idea as impractical. Others, however, looked at defunding as an expression of a broader social trend (Eaglin, 2021, p. 123). Irrespective of which interpretation was adopted, the very act of defunding was perceived as somehow a central tenet to meaningful policing reform, as well as crucial to any reimagining of local community safety.

Police Budgets

In response to calls for defunding, many city authorities across the United States debated and agreed to reduce their local policing budgets. Although no city police agencies were abolished, budget reductions in some cities were quite dramatic and might have wiped years of cumulative gains from police department budgets. In other cases, the reductions were small, short-lived, or reflected existing budget trends in municipalities, with changes to police funding having as much to do with overall budget shifts as anything else. Many other cities committed to considering alternative means of providing public safety services, with an emphasis on homelessness, substance abuse, and mental health crises. West Hollywood, California, for example, chose to reduce its policing budget and reallocate funding from the sheriff's department to the city's Block by Block program. This program would provide up to 30 unarmed Security Ambassadors to take over patrol duties from the sheriff's department. According to the acting mayor at the time: "Reimagining policing means reallocating funding. You can't just say it without doing it. Period." (Murillo, 2022).

The cities considered in this study also had varying responses to calls to defund the police. Of the nine cities, only two, New York and Seattle, had an overall reduction in policing budgets between 2018 and 2022. In Seattle's case the 2021 budget reduction seen after George Floyd's death was not maintained into 2022, and its proposed 2023 policing budget will see another increase. In the case of New York City, the overall downward trend following 2020 continues with an approximate 3.6% reduction into 2023.

In other cities—namely Austin, Baltimore, Berkeley, Denver, and Minneapolis—respective policing budgets were reduced in 2020, in some instances, dramatically. For example, Austin's budget was reduced by over 28% from 2020 to 2021, while Denver's and Minneapolis's budgets were reduced by 2.5% and just over 7%, respectively. However, the change was short-lived and the majority of these cities raised their policing budgets again the following year, in some instances, equally dramatically. Austin's budget rebounded by over 43% from 2021 to 2022, while Denver's budget rose by over 10% and Minneapolis' by 13% over the same period. In Charlotte, the policing budget was barely reduced following Floyd's death, and in Cincinnati not at all; both communities saw significant increases in subsequent years.

These results align to the broader trend: in an analysis of over 400 municipal budgets in the United States, data showed that police agencies received the same amount of money in 2021 as they did for the previous 3 years (Henderson & Yisrael, 2021; Kummerer, 2022). In one sense, the defunding movement might be seen as a reflection of the failure of previous attempts to reform policing in the United States (Quan, 2020). However, existing research would seem to indicate that defunding may not represent the hoped-for solution either.

Alternative Service Delivery and Policing Reform

Another revealing aspect of the data is how many cities are piloting new or alternative means of addressing some of their public safety pressures. For example, Denver and Minneapolis have adopted new ways of addressing mental health crises, in both cases with the express purpose of reducing the need for police officers to respond (Hampton, 2022; Erdahl, 2022). The City of Berkeley is experimenting with the removal of low-level traffic violation stops from police responsibilities as part of a wider package of policing reforms passed in 2021 (Robinson & Gerhardstein, 2021).

Initiatives such as these reflect efforts to change how policing and community safety more broadly are being delivered and are consistent with much of what has been encouraged by the defunding movement. However, they are not the only means of reforming police agencies in the United States: four of the nine cities studied have been, are currently, or may soon be under some type of federal Consent Decree, a process of mandated reform that is reserved for more problematic agencies (Ibrahim, 2022; Carter, 2022; US Department of Justice, 2022).

Alternative Responses to Mental Health Crises

The defund movement also accelerated the uptake of alternative modes of response to persons experiencing mental health crises. Often referred to as Police and Crisis Teams (PACT) or Mobile Crisis Teams, police officers are paired with mental health professionals and jointly respond to these calls for service.

The police are there primarily to ensure everyone's safety while the mental health professionals are able to assess and stabilize situations and determine ongoing support requirements.

Might such multi-disciplinary responses have saved the lives of Sammy Yatim in Toronto in 2013 and Abdirahman Abdi in Ottawa in 2016? In both cases, these men were suffering mental health crises when police responded. A recent systemic review of such incidents in Ontario found that police-only responses can serve to aggravate—rather than de-escalate—incidents such as these, often contributing to the deaths of individuals (Office of the Independent Police Review Director, 2017).

OUTCOMES OF THE US EXPERIENCE

While this study was intended to be informative and illustrative only, even a cursory review of the US experience shows that "defunding" as a means of driving policing reform was both short-lived and ineffective.

Rising Crime Rates

In the wake of defunding initiatives, some critics argue that communities become less safe and experience spikes in violent crime. This was indeed the case in some cities, including Chicago and New York, where subsequent rises in homicides and gun crime led city councils to ultimately maintain or incrementally raise levels of police funding in following years. Los Angeles also saw a surge in violent crime in 2020 and 2021, prompting the city, which had initially agreed to remove $150 million (approximately 8%) from the LAPD budget, to essentially restore the budget to pre-protest levels within a year (Arango, 2021). Houston, San Diego, Durham, Nashville, and others also reversed defunding decisions (McEvoy, 2020). In addition to rising crime rates, critics also cite rising numbers of police resignations and the increasing difficulty in hiring new officers (Merrefield, 2021) as disincentives to defunding.

Re-Funding the Police

Eight of the nine jurisdictions examined have experienced steady growth in their police budgets since 2020. Even in Minneapolis, the site of George Floyd's murder by one of their own police officers, the decision to severely defund the police was soon reversed. This is consistent with academic literature on police budgeting in the United States, which shows a prevailing tendency for budgets to grow incrementally. This is the case even during the most challenging financial times; while other municipal departments experience budget cuts, police budgets are seldom reduced. There are several reasons for this, including the nature of police collective agreements (Zhao et al., 2010). Moreover, even public support for the more progressive aspects of police reform proposed following Floyd's killing soon waned (Sepic, 2021).

Greater spending by a city on policing does not always translate into greater community safety. For example, among the cities sampled in this study, Baltimore spends the most on policing (US$911 per capita) yet is consistently ranked among the more violent and crime-prone cities in the United States (Hamaji & Rao, 2017). By comparison, New York City spends the second most on policing (US$722 per capita) and is consistently ranked among the safest cities in the country. Nor does the number of police officers appear to account for the discrepancy; using the same cities as examples, New York has the highest police-to-population ratio of the nine cities at 420 officers for every 100,000 residents, while Baltimore has the second highest number of police officers (410 per 100,000 residents) yet remains among the least safe cities in that country. By contrast, as depicted in Table II, Canadian cities have much lower police-to-population ratios and lower cost structures (Statistics Canada, 2022).

Driving Innovations in Community Safety

But the defunding movement did have a positive impact on how policing and community safety is organized and delivered in the United States and elsewhere. The movement contributed to broad-based calls for social change that have intensified expectations that the police give greater attention to issues of social inclusion and social justice while improving transparency, responsiveness, and accountability.

There is also a growing recognition that more traditional approaches have shown themselves to be either ineffective or actively driving a wedge between the police and communities. This is as true in Canada as it is in the United States. Innovative, multi-disciplinary approaches to reducing recidivism, applying restorative justice, reducing homelessness, and responding more effectively to mental health crises are among the many new ways in which the police and other human service providers are coming together to improve community safety and well-being.

DEFUNDING IN THE CANADIAN CONTEXT

Following George Floyd's death, anti-racism protests and marches against police violence also took place in every major city in Canada. Like their American counterparts, Canadian activists pointed to a history of racism and resistance to reform in Canadian policing. They also brought focus to an already tense debate about police legitimacy and the loss of public trust, especially within Indigenous communities, whose members are disproportionately represented in the Canadian criminal justice system (Clark, 2019). In July 2020, an Ipsos survey (2020) showed that 51% of Canadians supported the notion of "defunding," but this quickly waned.

Though protests and media coverage were widespread, the demands to defund police agencies in Canada were arguably less impactful than in the United States (Ipsos, 2020). This does not mean the defunding movement had no effect in Canada, but in many respects, the movement towards the practice of collaborative community safety and well-being was already well underway in many locations across the country. During the early-to-mid 2010s, police services across Canada

TABLE II Police Costs to Population Ratios in Canadian Cities (2020)

Police Service	Police officers per 100,000 pop	Per capita cost of policing (Cdn $)
Calgary	157	$357
Winnipeg	173	$360
Ottawa	165	$317
Peel Regional	143	$292
Regina	152	$354

began to adapt and respond to demands to look at rising costs of policing. These efforts were largely driven by the period of government austerity, brought on by the 2007 to 2009 global financial crisis, that affected all levels of government. Some police leaders leveraged these opportunities and, with other sector leaders, developed more multi-disciplinary, multi-agency efforts to improve community safety outcomes. During this period, there was also a growing recognition that integrated multi-disciplinary perspectives and responses were necessary—that the efforts of organizations focusing only on their perceived part of the problem were ineffective and often counter-productive (Nilson, 2018). This made sense to progressive police leaders. After all, much day-to-day policing in Canada relates to social problems, not crime. Furthermore, many of these problems cross the mandates of multiple human service agencies. They are *adaptive problems*, wherein fixing one part of the problem won't make much difference unless there are corresponding changes in other related areas.

Some agencies, like Peel Regional Police Service and Edmonton Police Service (EPS), have restructured to support a greater focus on improving community safety and well-being outcomes. In establishing their respective Community Safety and Well-Being Bureaus, they are balancing the focus on law enforcement and investigation with prevention and the multi-agency partnerships that are essential to successfully addressing adaptive problems. As the EPS explained, a central purpose of their Community Safety and Well-Being Bureau is "to move vulnerable citizens away from the criminal justice system and towards community agencies that can provide the necessary support for everything from addictions counseling and housing to employment, basic life skills and health care." (Edmonton Police Service, 2020).

Some communities also looked at other ways to respond to direct calls for defunding. A comprehensive review by the Halifax Board of Police Commissioners (Ajadi et al., 2021), which considered defunding from Indigenous, African Nova Scotian, and health and disability perspectives (Ajadi et al., 2021, pp. 15–18), proposed diverting certain types of calls for service from the police as primary responders. Beyond mobile mental health crisis teams, recommendations also addressed incidents involving:

- unhoused persons
- young persons
- gender-based and intimate-partner violence
- overdoses, and
- noise complaints (Ajadi et al., 2021, p. 106).

Furthermore, the Halifax report questioned the need for police officers to enforce motor vehicle offences and ultimately recommended that a civilian team be developed to enforce motor vehicle offences and traffic-related bylaws and to handle road closures for street events, protests, and parades (Ajadi et al., 2021, p. 135). In June 2022, the Board of Police Commissioners established a working group to review the report's conclusions and 36 recommendations (Halifax Board of Police Commissioners, 2022).

A continued interest in defunding and its implications for policing and communities alike prompted St. Thomas University in New Brunswick to establish a course entitled, *Defunding the Police: Rhetoric vs. Reality* (Hartai, 2022).

CONCLUSION

Most people now define "defunding" as the reprioritization and redistribution of public resources to improve community safety. To that end, the defund movement is likely to remain a part of the Canadian discourse on improving policing and, more broadly speaking, community safety and well-being.

While calls for defunding in both the United States and Canada may not have achieved immediate reforms, important and progressive changes are well underway in many cities and towns across Canada as to how policing and community safety are organized and delivered. The direct impact of the defund movement on many of these reforms is hard to pin down. But while some proponents of a system recalibration seek immediate solutions to complex issues, progressive communities and their human service agencies are taking carefully considered approaches to get to much the same place. In other words, most stakeholders are not against a recalibration. But these are complex systems. The capacities of alternative service providers must be developed and stress-tested operationally before making wholesale changes in how community safety services are delivered and how corresponding budgets are re-distributed. Recent observations by Micki Ruth, the former president of the Canadian Association of Police Governance and former chair of the Edmonton Police Commission, are on point:

> Yes, they [the police] take the bulk of the money because they're the only players in the field [responding to these calls]… Until we get other people—health, social services, education, a bunch of the standalone non-profits and charities who are all sort of all playing in their own ballpark—until there are those people coordinated and at the table, then when you call somebody at 3 o'clock in the morning, the only number you have [is] the police. (Cardoso & Hayes, 2020)

There are no silver bullets, but progressive change to policing and community safety and well-being are well underway in many centres across Canada. Our communities will continue to benefit from informed dialogue and debate on these important issues, with common language and terminology as centre points.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST DISCLOSURES

The authors have no conflicts of interest to declare.

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SOCIAL INNOVATION NARRATIVES

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Ethical images and storytelling amidst differing expectations

Oluchi G. Ogbu*

ABSTRACT

Non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and non-profit organizations (NPOs) seek creative ways to raise awareness about issues and connect with donors to raise the resources required to address the needs of the communities they work with. This paper highlights ethical challenges and lessons learned in using images and storytelling in the development sector. This article resulted from a capacity-building event on the ethical use of images from development projects. It draws from the event itself, which was organized by the Manitoba Council for International Cooperation (MCIC) in 2022, and from conversations leading up to and following the event between the author, guest speakers, and additional stakeholders.

The workshop was led by two representatives from MCIC member organizations. These two guest speakers shared experiences of using images and storytelling in their work in the Global South. Based on these conversations, this article highlights unequal power relations around the use of images from development projects, emphasizing organizations' ethical challenges and how storytelling is (re)constructed amidst competing needs and expectations. The paper contributes to the ongoing discourse on ethical storytelling in fundraising and the need for decolonial storytelling.

Key Words Fundraising; authentic participation; decolonization; human rights; consent; dignified storytelling; international development.

INTRODUCTION

Many non-governmental organizations (NGOs) rely on storytelling for advocacy and to meet their fundraising goals. NGOs' ability to communicate with donors effectively is critical as they need to tell compelling and emotional stories that raise awareness of issues, invite people to buy into their objectives, and support intervention strategies. In this article, I discuss how competing needs and expectations can influence storytelling, impact the dynamics between stakeholders, and sometimes even empower or disempower project participants. I also highlight how structures must be negotiated to ensure stories are told authentically and in empowering ways. This article evolved from a capacity-building workshop facilitated by the author and organized by the Manitoba Council for International Cooperation (MCIC), a council of 41 organizations working in international cooperation worldwide. The workshop was led by two representatives from MCIC member organizations who shared their experiences of using images and storytelling in their work in the Global South. MCIC supports and amplifies the work of its members and partners, and directly engages with Manitobans for global sustainability. MCIC is also responsible for distributing government funds designated for international development and humanitarian projects.

MCIC supports connections and capacity development with members and their international partners for greater impact by providing valued resources for members and other partners, contributing to local, provincial, and national networks, and generating and sharing good practices and lessons learned. This paper draws upon the Dignified Storytelling Principles[1] (DSPs), which inspire everyone to tell stories with human dignity, it contributes to the ongoing debate on ethical storytelling in advocacy and fundraising, and it demonstrates how meaning-making in storytelling is constructed and negotiated within varied expectations.

Storytelling Amid Competing Needs

NGOs and other community service organizations aim to promote the well-being of the communities they serve.

[1] See, Dignified Storytelling: https://dignifiedstorytelling.com/dignified-storytelling/

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Storytelling is an important tool that these organizations[2] use to achieve their goals. When developing communication strategies, which include storytelling and choosing/selecting images to create content, there are different expectations and competing needs that NGOs must consider. First, there are the participants[3] who engage in the project. Second, there is the NGO seeking to raise funds and awareness to meet the participants' needs by sharing their stories. Finally, there is the donor who wishes to get a clearer picture of the situation—to hear, see, and feel enough to be moved to donate to the cause. The storyteller must put all these perspectives together and may struggle to construct them into one image that addresses all needs. Not every stakeholder in this scenario may like how the story is being told, and some may want it changed to fit their needs and agenda. Here lies another challenge, which may require changing, or adapting, an image or story to fit a narrative. This story may end up incomparable with the participants' experience and raise questions about representation and authenticity.

Today, many organizations working to address global issues struggle with the ability to use storytelling to raise awareness and meet multiple expectations without compromising the dignity of project participants. Stories promote communication across cultures (Stevenson, 2019) and have cultural relevance that is often used to preserve communities' ethics. Importantly, stories provide opportunities to build resilience in the face of hardships (East et al., 2010). In this sense, storytelling can be a form of power that evokes curiosity, influences behaviour, and inspires action and awareness raising on social and political issues (Ogbu, 2020). For many, the lessons learned from stories can linger for a lifetime. It is no wonder that when used constructively, empowering storytelling can be a tool for social transformation (Senehi, 2002).

Arguably, storytellers have "narrator potency," as they are in a position of power and play a critical role in the social construction of meaning (Bauman, 1986, cited in Senehi, 2002). Several issues have been raised concerning how storytelling and imagery reproduction can embody power inequity (Plewes & Stuart, 2007), particularly when the experiences of others are narrated by someone else, potentially stripping away agency and the authenticity of experiences. Hence, despite the benefits of storytelling, it can cause more harm than good to project participants. In the bid to appeal to specific stakeholders, some images used by NGOs may not tell participants' authentic stories. Some images may lack context, portray participants as powerless, reinforce stereotypes, and can challenge ongoing efforts to create awareness of the root causes of global issues and how to address them (Plewes & Stuart, 2007). For example, social media platforms have become a useful means through which many organizations increase awareness of issues globally. However, for NGOs, visual storytelling is a considerable ethical concern. Instagram, for example, prefers images with human faces, so an organization that uses non-identifying images and actively avoids showing the faces of their participants would probably not be as successful on Instagram as it is on traditional media in raising awareness of problems and seeking resources to address issues.

Likewise, emotions play an essential role in storytelling. Organizations appeal to donors through a range of emotions (Paxton et al., 2020) and depend on compelling storytelling to fundraise (Merchant et al., 2010). A well-structured, artistic, skillfully designed narrative will attract interest (Akgün et al., 2015). Further, some donors are drawn to authentic projects, especially when they reflect the organization's mission (De Bock & Tine, 2017), while others have been known to have interests in projects beyond donations, such as wanting to be included in the intervention process (Cluff, 2009). This may result in a situation described by Susan Ostrander (2007) as "donor-controlled philanthropy." In this sense, donors "inevitably seem to have relatively more power than recipients who express demands for those funds" (p. 357).

In some fundraising campaigns, participants may lack "narrator potency"[4] when their voices and experiences are subverted. For example, participants are usually not consulted or not allowed to decide whether their images will be used on social media platforms, websites, or annual reports of organizations. The power imbalance often prevalent in fundraising stories is due to the inequity between the participants and other stakeholders, leading to stereotyping, objectification, and portrayals of powerless "beneficiaries" (Bhatti & Eikenberry, 2016). More worrisome for others is the construction of human hopelessness as a persuasive technique to evoke empathy in fundraising campaigns (Musarò, 2011). Inherent in structuring appealing stories lies an ethical risk that participants are misrepresented and objectified.

Further, organizations aim to build long-term relationships with donors to increase the likelihood of funding retention; at the same time, they also want to increase awareness of issues that need to be resolved (Musarò, 2011). However, the potential exists for fundraising needs to overshadow the need to educate as "visual power" (Musaro, 2011) dominates other needs in storytelling. These situations constrain the ability of project participants to question how they are represented in storytelling (Breeze & Dean, 2012).

Lessons Learned from MCIC Workshop

Power Over and Language

Power and language were central themes in this workshop. Organizations and donors have significant power over those they fund and influence aspects of projects, including language and narratives. According to one of the guest speakers, the terms organizations use in the humanitarian sector reflect the image they most often want to portray. For example, "beneficiary" as used to describe participants may reinforce power inequality and imply that those being served lack a sense of agency and cannot control their lives. Hence, some organizations may prefer using terms such as "participants" and or "constituents" instead of "beneficiaries." Many organizations are becoming conscious of the need to use a decolonizing strategy in storytelling and fundraising. However, many still struggle with this aspect, and storytelling frameworks are still colonial, often emphasizing organizations' support and

[2] "Organizations," as used throughout this paper refers to NGOs, NPOs, and other community service organizations that provide aid and work with marginalized groups.

[3] Throughout this article, the word "participants" is used rather than "beneficiaries."

[4] For details on narrator potency in storytelling, see Senehi (2002).

donations to participants and largely leaving out participants' resilience and voices. Therefore, organizations need to critically analyze the values that guide their fundraising framework; doing so will involve asking questions about representations, how stories are told, and those (unconscious) biases that guide projects and fundraising.

Consent and the Use of Images

The use of images can have negative consequences for project participants; some find it embarrassing to "not give" consent for their images to be used because of the benefits they enjoy. One member representative highlighted that their organization was initially comfortable using participants' images on their website and social media platforms but noticed that participants always felt uncomfortable even when they had provided "consent." Upon further probing and discussions with the participants, it was discovered that they were uncomfortable with their images being used and only gave consent to receive services from the organization. According to the representative, this organization also discovered that many children and youth were being trafficked through images found on websites and social media platforms. The organization started a campaign to sensitize others to these issues and use webinars to share findings with other NGOs. As an institution, they developed a policy of not using identifiable images of those they assist. This policy was respectful and considerate of the needs of participants, even though these organizations felt a huge pressure from their donors to show the participants' faces. Organizations need to consider how their needs may affect the lives of the people they are working with, analyze their practices, and ensure the approaches used in storytelling and fundraising are dignifying. One lesson learned is that *informed* consent is important to tell dignified stories of participants. Consent must go beyond simply signing forms; organizations must ensure that participants genuinely give consent and know how their images will be used. Participants should be aware that they can give or withdraw their consent without any penalty.

Ultimately, it is the responsibility of the organizations to protect their participants and ensure their information and images are not exploited. We learned that organizations and funders could capture meaningful themes and tell impactful stories without using identifiable images. Additionally, NPOs, NGOs, and other community-serving organizations should build partnerships with government agencies and other organizations to help protect the well-being of those they serve and raise awareness of dehumanizing issues.

Whose Story?

One of the ethical challenges considered during the workshop was how to manage varied stakeholders' expectations during storytelling. For example, an NGO needed to project the story of a young participant in the Global South, and the planning team had their perspectives on how best to "capture the story from the participant." As a filmmaker, the team lead had specific ideas about how best to create the story in a way that would be appealing, the local team had their ideas, and the donors also had their version of how they would like to present the participant's stories to the people they work with. There were also differing views on the language (French/English) that the participant could use to best captivate the audience. The team lead wanted the participant to speak French, which was her first language, because they considered it "authentic." However, the participant wanted to share her story in English, a language she was proud to have learned. This is an example of a real-life experience with conflicting interests in storytelling.

NGOs understand the power of persuasive language in creating appealing stories. Research further points out that the intention to persuade may enhance increased emotional connections using words/language (Rocklage et al., 2018) in a way that "appeals" to the desired audience. One can also argue that the participant's unrelenting wish to speak in a language of her choice embodies the idea of storytelling as resistance (Senehi, 2002); it is a reminder of the ways that language can be a tool that participants use to negotiate power (Ogbu, 2021, p. 58). We learned that participants have a sense of agency irrespective of their financial and social circumstances. The scenario above reflects the notion of human dignity and agency in storytelling embedded in the DSPs.

Dignified Storytelling Principles: A Decolonizing Practice

One of the guest speakers at the MCIC workshop drew from the DSPs to highlight how his awareness of these principles has enabled him to address some ethical challenges in storytelling, although this was not without its challenges. Most often, organizations still prioritize donor expectations, which may impact telling stories constructively and ethically. When storytelling is constructive, it not only raises awareness about issues in transparent ways but also promotes inclusion and amplifies voice (Senehi, 2002). Constructive storytelling is central to the DSPs, which seek to foster an inclusive atmosphere where constructive dialogue between all stakeholders can lead to honest education about issues while protecting the dignity of participants in storytelling.

The DSPs are foundational in ethical storytelling, founded on "transparency," accountability, and respect for all persons; these encourage collaboration and highlight the need to safeguard human dignity in storytelling.[5] Hence, constructive storytelling is an ethical practice, a decolonial praxis, and a call to action. Decolonizing storytelling means decentralizing power, focusing on collaboration and relationship building, and emphasizing participants' voices and lived experiences (Caxaj, 2015). Adopting a storytelling framework that does not consider the context and lived experiences of the participants, particularly in formerly colonized countries, reinforces colonial power, stereotypes, and power over those who are marginalized. Of central importance here is that decolonizing storytelling is an intentional practice because storytelling is not innately decolonizing (Samuel & Ortiz, 2021).

The first principle of DSPs, "It's not my story,"[6] encourages relationship building through genuine connection with participants as equal partners and co-creators. Most importantly, it prioritizes centering participants' voices and perspectives on how their stories are told using their preferred language. We learned that ethical challenges in storytelling provide opportunities to use the DSPs.

[5] See, Dignified Storytelling: https://dignifiedstorytelling.com/dignified-storytelling/

[6] The Principles: https://dignifiedstorytelling.com/the-principles/

The DSPs encourage organizations to recognize that participants can tell their stories authentically. While technical and other forms of expertise are important, authenticity, as it relates to participants' experiences and how they want to tell them, is essential. For example, NGOs may fundraise on stories drawn from a perspective that might be more appealing and impactful. However, this may raise ethical questions about representation, authentic participation, and voice. What an NGO and its team of professional storytellers and marketers might envision to be a great storytelling idea, with all the right elements to engage donors successfully, could be destructive and disempowering to participants.

Destructive storytelling (Senehi, 2002) does not foster representation and authenticity nor allow collaboration and dignity. Crafting narratives embedded in the DSPs celebrates human dignity, rights, and agency because it focuses on the perspectives and experiences of those we assist. The DSPs are about reflecting on the inherent power imbalance in how stories are being told, particularly the voice given to the story; it is necessary to constantly ask questions such as "Whose voice is prioritized in this story? Within what framework and context were these stories constructed? Will this story empower the participants?" It is also important to reflect on whose story we want to tell and how participants wish their stories to be told.

Stories must be told authentically through the perspectives of those whose experiences are being told. As with the DSPs, ethical use of images and storytelling imposes the duty of ensuring an atmosphere of equality that honours the participant's voice. This is not to limit or devalue the collective engagement and participation of stakeholders in the storytelling process but to ensure dignity in how the story was constructed and that the participant feels empowered and included in the process.

CONCLUSION

The organization of this workshop came from a place of deep reflection, lessons learned from past projects, and the need to learn more about emerging issues to be better equipped to address them. There is a great deal to reflect on and learn from the issues raised in this article. As with constructive storytelling, the DSPs ask us to engage in reflective practice and consider how power imbalance influences the way stories are told and whose "voice" becomes central in creating project stories. Storytelling through a decolonial lens can help honour experiences, create meaningful connections between partners/stakeholders, and provide true-life lessons about the participants. Creating stories through a decolonial lens can be educational and help stakeholders become aware of unconscious biases. When stories are told with filters, the authenticity of the participants is removed; with a decolonial lens, they are validated. Using images and telling stories ethically is a decolonial praxis (Pedri-Spade, 2017) that is inclusive (Dunford, 2017). This practice asks the storytellers and organizations, including donors, to be mindful of whose story it is and the impacts of stories that reinforce stereotypes.

It is important for organizations that wish to create awareness about global issues and fundraising using participants' stories to consider whose story is being told and how it is being told. As much as donors want to be part of a project beyond providing funds, the needs of participants and their desire for inclusion in the process also deserve recognition. Participants can tell their stories within an atmosphere of inclusion if given the opportunity.

An important element of storytelling is its ability to allow us to conceive of others as "fully human" (Freire, 2005). This quality, however, is lost when stories designed to evoke support for specific individuals do not include the active participation of those they are supposed to be helping. Active involvement in telling their stories could provide participants with a sense of satisfaction and serve as a means of giving a voice to those who are already experiencing oppression instead of reinforcing said oppression (Sepinuck, 2014). Hence, it behooves NGOs and other organizations to always endeavour to expend the effort required to ensure participants take an active part in telling their stories. This will not always be easy but is critical to ensure that participants are empowered and not dehumanized through processes that are supposed to help them. Moreover, participants' genuine participation in telling their stories may even evoke a greater and more positive response or engagement.

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CONFLICT OF INTEREST DISCLOSURES

The author has no conflicts of interest to declare.

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CORRECTION

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Correction to: An evaluation of SimVoice mental health de-escalation training

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The publisher would like to correct a figure and table reference within the article. Both errors appeared on page 152.

- Figure 5 was incorrect, it has updated.
- Table III was incorrectly referenced in the 2nd column, and it should state Table IV.

The online version was updated to reflect these changes on March 9, 2023.

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