EDITORIAL

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Towards a holistic approach to policing, community health, and public safety

Isabelle Bartkowiak-Théron*

It is a privilege for me to open this issue, as incoming contributing editor to the journal. As a policing scholar, the role police play as part of community safety and well-being is one that I continuously scrutinize and interrogate with my Australian police students, as well as in my research. The point has been made in previous issues of the journal that the language around policing is shifting from strict law enforcement to more sophisticated, multi-faceted policing, crime prevention through social investment, and public health intervention.

This special issue continues this discussion and brings about new knowledge and insights about the evolving landscape of policing and public safety. Today, we bring together a diverse range of articles that reflect on policing structures and processes, with a particular focus on trauma-informed practices. As we explore these themes, it appears that the future of law enforcement lies in a holistic approach that not only prioritizes public safety but also recognizes the complexities of individual and societal vulnerabilities. And if you know me, this issue of vulnerability is one topic about which I am particularly passionate in my policing work.

But as I was saying before, the policing landscape is undeniably changing. The first contributions to this issue highlight some profound reshaping of policing structures and connection to communities. Christopher O'Connor and Ian Pepper's commentary on volunteering within Canadian policing highlights the potential for community engagement to strengthen policing efforts. Volunteering offers pathways for members of the public to actively and meaningfully participate in public safety, fostering trust and collaboration between law enforcement and communities. This piece serves as a reminder that policing is not a solitary endeavour, and instead, one that benefits from collective effort. Connor Fraser, Sarah Feutl, and Tala Ismaeil delve into the impacts of cannabis legalization on organized crime in Ontario and British Columbia. Their research provides a nuanced understanding of how policy changes can reshape criminal activities and influence law enforcement strategies, and their piece provides critical insights into some unintended consequences and necessary adjustments for law enforcement. The first section of this issue finishes with an article by Rosina Mete, Brandon Djukic, and Christine Nielsen on the needs of medical laboratory professionals through the CSMLS Mental Health Toolkit. The article addresses the unique challenges faced by this often-overlooked group of practitioners. Their work underscores the importance of providing mental health support across various areas of specialization, recognizing that the well-being of those who work behind the scenes is just as crucial as that of those on the front-line. The toolkit they propose offers practical solutions for addressing the mental health needs of medical laboratory professionals, contributing to a more comprehensive approach to workplace wellness.

In February 2024, it was my privilege to help organize the Trauma Informed Policing and Law Enforcement Conference in Melbourne, Australia. It was spearheaded by Professor Peter Miller's extraordinary team at Deakin University. The conference was hosted by the Deakin University Centre for Drug use, Addictive and Anti-social behaviour Research (CEDAAR), alongside the Global Law Enforcement & Public Health Association Inc. (GLEPHA), and the Tasmanian Institute of Law Enforcement Studies (TILES) at the University of Tasmania.

For a few years now, police have increasingly looked at becoming trauma-informed, and some have done so haphazardly. While some jurisdictions globally have started training their staff in it, some have started to include trauma-informed practice in their operating protocols and policies. The conference acknowledged that trauma-informed practice is of relevance to police, in a variety of ways, and was a first effort to consolidate and disseminate trauma-informed practice knowledge to police (and other) organizations about its application in the context of law enforcement and criminal justice. The second part of this special issue features contributions from some of the conference participants.

Ranjeeta Basu's article features her research on POWER training. The program is designed to improve officers' autonomic health, mindfulness, and social connection. In a profession marked by high stress and exposure to traumatic events, such training is essential for enhancing officers' resilience and overall effectiveness. Basu's work showcases the importance of supporting the mental and physical health

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of officers to ensure they are equipped to serve communities with compassion and competence.

In a similar vein, the article that I contributed with one of my TILES colleagues, Cameron Atkinson, showcases our evaluation of trauma-informed policing from recruit training onward. Tasmania Police has embarked on a strong trauma-informed trajectory, and is pioneering an organization-wide series of training and professional development events to equip its entire membership with trauma-informed skills. Our study demonstrates the transformative potential of integrating trauma-informed principles early in an officer's career, preparing them to better understand and respond to the needs of vulnerable people. This approach benefits the public and also promotes a healthier work environment for officers, fostering a culture of self-care within law enforcement.

Katherine J. McLachlan's social innovation narrative on the ABCs of trauma-informed policing provides a compelling and comprehensive overview of its principles and practices. McLachlan's work serves as an essential primer for law enforcement professionals asking the "but how?" question, especially those who are seeking to implement trauma-informed practices in their work.

Kelly-Anne M. Humphries, Cher J. McGillivray, and R. A. Line Christophersen propose trauma-informed practice and response in policing as a means to reform how law enforcement addresses child sexual abuse and exploitation. Their article rethinks traditional policing methods and advocates for a trauma-informed response to survivors. Their work highlights the importance of protecting our most vulnerable and calls for systemic changes in how police are trained and supported.

Tebeje Molla's article, "Policing at the Speed of Trust," examines the interactions between police and trauma-impacted youth. It recognizes that effective policing requires patience, empathy, and a deep understanding of the challenges these individuals face. By fostering trust, police can play a pivotal role in supporting the healing and development of trauma-impacted youth.

A good issue of our journal would naturally finish on a book review. The one by Tirelo Modie-Moroka, Musa Dube, and Tumani Malinga presents an ecological system and eco-feminist perspective on the associations between violence against the Earth and violence against women's bodies. The article challenges us to think beyond traditional boundaries of criminology and public safety, urging us to consider the broader environmental and societal contexts in which violence occurs. The authors offer what I thought is a powerful framework for understanding the interconnectedness of various forms of harm and the need for integrated responses.

Upon reading this extraordinary compilation of articles, I am pondering the systems landscape that they present. Policing is certainly becoming more sophisticated, but not necessarily complicated. What is certainly happening is that policing is increasingly on the right trajectory. It is learning from its past mistakes and adapting to societal change. The articles featured in this special issue certainly reflect this: a growing recognition of a more holistic approach to policing and public safety. One that is informed by a better, more acute understanding of trauma, of diverse social and environmental contexts, and of the importance of mental health and well-being for all. As law enforcement continues to evolve, it is embracing these insights and working towards a more compassionate and inclusive model of policing. The contributions to this issue offer valuable perspectives and practical solutions for advancing a new shaping of law enforcement, and provide a roadmap towards the future of community safety and well-being.

I am excited to join the impressive Contributing Editor Community as JCSWB prepares to enter its 10th year of publication. I encourage my worldwide colleagues in scholarship and practice to continue to add to our body of knowledge in LEPH and CSWB and to stay tuned for an intriguing new theme for 2025 in our open call for papers.

Happy reading!

CONFLICT OF INTEREST DISCLOSURES

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COMMENTARY

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Opportunities for volunteering within Canadian policing: Insights from England and Wales

Christopher D. O'Connor*, Ian Pepper†

As policing in Canada evolves to tackle complex challenges such as changes in crime, connecting with communities, improving public trust and legitimacy in the service, and recruiting and retaining quality police personnel, resources and budgets continue to be restricted. At the same time, the evidence base of "what works" within policing continues to grow and be utilized to inform decisions. Our ongoing research on volunteer police, training, and education, and working collaboratively with colleagues across different countries, has motivated us to write this commentary as it has helped highlight for us the variety of ways policing differs in similar economic, political, and social environments. It has also highlighted that we have much to learn by comparing across locales and when we take a more global approach to understanding policing and the evidence base on which it is built.

Given this, by comparing and contrasting the role of uniformed volunteers in Canada (known mostly as auxiliary members or reserve constables) with uniformed volunteers in England and Wales (known as special constables, not to be confused with Canada's Special Constables who are sworn Peace Officers, paid employees, and who work in particular locales such as university campuses, court security, and public transit, and not the focus of this commentary), we want to highlight the important role served by volunteers, the opportunities and possible benefits associated with engaging them, and the need for more research on volunteers in Canadian policing to assist in growing the evidence base to inform both decisions and practice. Research to inform decisions and practice in relation to unpaid volunteers within policing is still in its infancy. Volunteers have played a large part in policing since its inception and their role is likely to expand in coming years as the police are asked to do more with less, but there is a need to ensure that the decisions made about volunteers are the best-informed ones.

England and Wales has a more established volunteer framework than Canada under a national agenda of Citizens in Policing (CiP), championed by a Chief Police Officer with a national strategy. In 1831, the Special Constables Act formally established the voluntary role of special constables to support policing in times of civil unrest. Today, slightly over 147,000 full-time equivalent regular police officers serving in forces across England and Wales have the frontline boosted by slightly over 6,300 volunteer uniformed special constables (Home Office, 2024), who as unpaid volunteers agree to donate a number of hours each month. In addition, over 7,300 police support volunteers (Home Office, 2024) also formally donate their time to use their existing skills and expertise in support of policing in non-operational roles such as staffing police station front counters, administration, or monitoring CCTV.

Canada has no such framework or national strategy, and historical information on volunteers in policing is limited. Although in comparison to England and Wales, some of Canada's largest police services (e.g., Royal Canadian Mounted Police and Ontario Provincial Police) only initiated their auxiliary programs in the 1960s (Parent, 2017). Canada has approximately 70,114 full-time officers (Statistics Canada, 2023), but it is unclear how many unpaid uniformed volunteers support these officers and in what roles; this is despite most major police services having formal volunteer policing programs.

While the specific requirements for becoming a uniformed volunteer vary by country and police service, there are several common requirements for appointment such as citizenship or permanent residence in the country, being 18 years of age or older, and being able to pass a criminal background check and medical assessment (Parent, 2017).

In England and Wales, special constables wear the same uniform as their regular police officer colleagues, have similar equipment, and when on duty have the same warranted powers and authority, whereas police support volunteers often wear corporate clothing rather than a uniform and do not have warranted powers. Canada differs in that auxiliary members often wear uniforms that attempt to overtly distinguish them from regular officers (e.g., different colours and insignia) and have limited police powers when volunteering (O'Connor et al., 2022a).

Regardless of the country, upon recruitment, volunteers usually complete an initial programme of learning, which requires a return on this initial investment to make such an approach economically viable. It is important to note that many volunteers often donate significant time each month in support of policing (O'Connor et al., 2022b; Pepper and

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Wolf, 2015), and importantly, the use of such volunteers should not be seen only in economic terms, but also having broader social, cultural, and community impacts (Pepper and Rogers, 2022).

The opportunities presented to policing and society for using volunteers are many and varied. Their role is to supplement mainstream policing; this is often on the front-line performing patrols, responding to calls for service, supporting victims, taking part in crime reduction initiatives, community events, neighbourhood policing, or policing large-scale events.

Across England and Wales, the number of volunteers has declined in recent years; this in part may be due to the competitiveness of volunteering opportunities with other agencies, perceptions by the public of the police and people re-evaluating their work-life balance after the COVID-19 emergency. Despite reducing numbers, in 2021, volunteer special constables in total donated an average of 186,000 hours a month (Police Federation, 2023), a significant number of additional resources. There is, however, an opportunity for growth across both nations in the wider attraction, use, and retention of volunteers. For example, some special constables in England and Wales are approved to use their existing specialist knowledge, skills, and qualifications to support policing in other ways, such as investigating cybercrimes, being crew members in marine units, or piloting drones. Having access to these specialized transferable skills from volunteers benefits policing, but at the same time, the volunteers gain valuable transferrable experiences and new knowledge and skills to take away with them.

Over the last few years in England and Wales, many special constables have also moved to become regular police officers. One of the great opportunities presented by a standardized special constables learning programme designed by the professional body for policing across England and Wales, the College of Policing, is that if special constables have completed their formal learning and then apply to be a regular police constable, there is an opportunity for their learning to be recognized and transferred to their new regular officer learning programme, shortening the duration to become a fully-fledged regular police officer (College of Policing, 2020). We are not aware of such a national streamlined process existing within Canada; however, there are calls for the establishment of provincial professional bodies in Canada to aid a move to the recognition of policing as a profession, including greater standardization of learning (Sundberg et al., 2021).

Volunteers are also seen as a bridge between local communities and policing, enhancing the services' local legitimacy by enabling special constables and auxiliary members to volunteer where they care most about their community. In England and Wales, the representativeness of ethnic minority groups across the ranks of the special constabulary is traditionally higher than their regular police colleagues, although it must be acknowledged that the proportion of female volunteer special constables is often less than their regular police colleagues. Unfortunately, there are no such longer-term trend data available in Canada.

With increasing demands on policing, reduced budgets, and the hope to reconnect and gain the trust of the public, there is growth in the use of volunteers across England and Wales under the banner of CiP. These include additionality achieved through the recruitment, training, and deployment of relatively new volunteer roles such as uniformed Volunteer Police Community Support Officers, who donate their time to provide community reassurance, and Volunteer Police Cadet (VPC) leaders, who engage young people in a uniformed youth scheme learning about policing, citizenship, and participating in community initiatives, the indications from which suggest that the economic and wider societal benefits of VPC leaders could be significant (Pepper and Rogers, 2022). However, researchers have only begun to scratch the surface of the impacts of calls for reduced budgets and their impact on the use of volunteers and the service.

The need for a better understanding of volunteers within policing in Canada is critical. In comparison to England and Wales, there is so much we still do not know, but we can still learn from each other. There is a lack of research on volunteers in Canadian policing to build the evidence base to inform national, regional, and local policy decisions and practices. There is great potential for volunteers to help influence the changes in policing that so many have called for, but as it stands, understanding and evolving this potential in the Canadian context is in its infancy.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST DISCLOSURES

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ORIGINAL RESEARCH

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The impacts of cannabis legalization on organized crime in Ontario and British Columbia

Connor Fraser*, Sarah Feutl*, Tala Ismaeil*

ABSTRACT

This article presents a qualitative study of the impacts of cannabis legalization on organized crime in two of Canada's largest provinces – Ontario and British Columbia. Utilizing a modified snowball sampling methodology, we conducted semi-structured interviews with 23 subject matter experts in law enforcement, journalism, law, public service, and the private sector. Our findings are complex and reflect a sophisticated, rational response by organized crime to a key legislative event. First, Health Canada's personal/designated production registrations remain in place, which since 2001 have played a crucial role for allowing some patients access to medical cannabis. However, according to nearly every law enforcement officer interviewed, criminal entities continue to abuse this unique system by obtaining licences under false premises and diverting surplus product into the illicit market. Second, while the domestic market for illicit cannabis has likely declined, many interviewees claimed that organized crime groups adjusted operations by maintaining production levels and diverting shipments into the United States, and also by exploiting relationships with some Indigenous communities. This has contributed to deteriorating public health and safety outcomes within some Indigenous communities. Finally, we registered the belief of many interviewees that the most sophisticated criminal groups have begun shifting attention toward opiate production and distribution – potentially in response to both a smaller domestic market for cannabis, and also the skyrocketing demand for opioids. Our results reflect the unique character of Canadian geography, institutions and electoral politics, notably close proximity to the United States, federal-provincial division of powers, the evolving legacy of colonialism, and a unique series of legal precedents.

Key Words Illicit economies; institutional comparative advantage; contested jurisdictions; truth and reconciliation; performance legitimacy; violent entrepreneurship; Canadian Federalism.

INTRODUCTION

On 17 October 2018, Canada took the momentous step of fully legalizing recreational cannabis. The *Cannabis Act* gave Canadians the ability to possess up to 30 g of cannabis product, and purchase the same at provincially licensed retailers (Department of Justice Canada, 2021). The purpose of this study is to assess how cannabis legalization has impacted organized crime groups (OCGs) with Canadian operations in two Canadian provinces, and by extension their insidious impacts on public safety and public health. Our intent is to further the body of evidence on OCGs' response to an important legislative milestone in Canada, not provide a comprehensive and exhaustive account.

Legalization of recreational cannabis emerged as a leading platform commitment made during the 2015 Canadian Federal Election by the Liberal Party. After the latter's victory, it became central to the government's legislative agenda, with three notable policy objectives: keeping cannabis out of the hands of youth, protecting public safety by allowing adults access to legal cannabis, and keeping profits out of the hands of criminals (Department of Justice Canada, 2021). To our knowledge, this study is the first to qualitatively assess the effectiveness of Canada's policy in achieving the third cited objective – keeping profits out of the hands of criminals. It thus provides a valuable benchmark for the public and policymakers alike as the *Cannabis Act* undergoes its periodic mandatory review process (Health Canada, 2023a).

Consistent with the division of powers established in the Canada's *Constitution Act* (1867), the federal government oversees licensing and regulation of cannabis producers, marketing, medical cannabis, and matters related to criminal

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justice. Contrastingly, provincial governments oversee aspects concerning distribution and retail of cannabis (Alati, 2022). In this respect, we begin to contemplate the institutional origins of resource allocation decisions, and their impacts upon illicit economies. Work by Obradovic (2021) is indispensable for connecting different outcomes of cannabis legalization across Colorado, Washington, and Uruguay to the specific dynamics of reform and structure of government in each jurisdiction. Similarly, our paper seeks to draw connections between the observed behaviours of organized crime and Canada's unique institutional and geographic arrangements.

Illicit economies do not operate in isolation, nor do fundamental laws of economics cease to apply to illicit entrepreneurs (Fiorentini, 1997; Fiorentini & Peltzman, 1997; Polo, 1997). Contemporary studies of organized crime emphasize the tenacity of entrepreneurs to harness the forces of globalization to expand operations and exploit comparative advantages and lower monitoring costs in free-trade zones and border jurisdictions (Holden, 2017). Research suggests multiple reasons for the illicit market's persistence: lower costs and easier access (Hathaway et al., 2021), convenience (Goodman et al., 2022), and higher labelled potency (Mahamad et al., 2020). Mirroring the legitimate economy, the transnational nature of modern organized crime encourages aggressive cost reductions and provision of goods and services at attractive price points, imposing great costs on societies and law enforcement.

In Canada, the presence of a long, undefended border and several Indigenous communities with unique jurisdictional heritage, stemming from Canada's history of colonialism, has been posited to further create an environment conducive to illicit cross-border smuggling (Jamieson, 1999). Our results and discussion have been framed in a manner consistent with established literature on the institutional and geographic origins of comparative advantage, the economics of organized crime, and its evolving transnational character.

METHODS

The study employs a qualitative, modified snowball sampling methodology (Statistics Canada, 2021). To capture a more authentic portrait of the impacts of cannabis legalization on OCGs, we zero-in on two of Canada's largest provinces, Ontario and British Columbia (BC). In two instances, our sampling process led us to out-of-province individuals whom we interviewed for their valuable expertise on cannabis legalization in Ontario and BC. While we remain optimistic about the prospects of generalizing these results across Canada, the heterogeneity of provincial approaches to cannabis legalization (Alati, 2022; Cunningham, 2021) suggests interpolating results with some measure of caution.

An exhaustive list of stakeholder groups was compiled for inclusion, consisting of academia, government, journalism, Indigenous groups, law enforcement, and private sector stakeholders. While our sample contains leaders within each field, we placed an emphasis on law enforcement as the stakeholders operating closest to organized crime. From these high-level categories, lists of organizations and individuals were identified for contact using open-source search techniques. Specific individuals were invited to complete interviews based on the researcher's collective assessment of various factors such as their organization's mandate, or the significance of a community according to size and geographic location. Our academic supervisor, possessing word-leading expertise in the field of illicit economies and transnational organized crime, also played a critical role by providing advice and facilitating introductions with subject matter experts. All participants were provided a written overview of the study and confirmed their informed consent before the interview, either in writing or verbally. The study was conducted in partial fulfilment of the authors' degree requirements for the Master's of Global Affairs program within the Munk School of Global Affairs & Public Policy at the University of Toronto, and was granted an exemption from requiring ethics approval as it was completed within the confines of supervised academic coursework. Research was closely monitored by faculty members and strict procedures were followed regarding obtaining informed consent of all participants and maintaining their anonymity.

Semi-structured interviews were conducted both in-person and virtually, for durations lasting between 60 and 90 minutes. Participants were asked a common set of high-level questions regarding the behaviour of organized crime pre- and post-cannabis legalization. Additional questions were provided to each interviewee dependent upon their unique background. Finally, all participants were asked to provide recommendations for individuals to include as additional study participants. We justify our use of the snowball sampling methodology for "its cultural competence and the inherent trust it engenders among potential participants" (Sadler et al., 2010). As suggested by Sadler et al. (2010), it is also an appropriate, time- and cost-effective methodology given the large number of potential participants under consideration, relative to the smaller and harder to reach subset of individuals possessing genuine familiarity with our research questions. Leveraging the networks of previous participants was crucial to access key individuals especially in law enforcement, where contact details and identities may be withheld for reasons of personal safety. In accordance with best practice, the identities of participants are withheld to protect personal and professional security (Naderifar et al., 2017). The sampling process was continued until representation of at least one informant had been achieved across all entities and professional categories identified during the initial stakeholder mapping.

The principal contribution of our study emerges from the results of 21 qualitative, semi-structured interviews completed with 23 participants, between February 2023 and April 2023. Approximately 50% of our sample consisted of law enforcement officers, with the remainder roughly evenly drawn from academia, journalism, public service (both provincial and federal), law, and the private sector. Twenty-five percent of the interviewees are from BC, 65% from Ontario, and 10% elsewhere. Approximately 50% of the sample was uncovered via recommendations of previous study participants, while 50% were recruited directly by the researchers. Fifteen percent of the interviewees were members of Indigenous communities. Interview notes and transcripts were coded on a common spreadsheet to facilitate identification of key modalities by which OCGs were impacted by cannabis legalization. Features of the legalization process in Canada, Ontario, and BC (the independent variables) were distin-

guished from changes in OCG behaviour (the dependent variables) during the coding procedure.

RESULTS

This section is prefaced by noting that we did not observe substantial divergences in the results or perspectives of interviewees from Ontario and BC. The below themes were equally common across stakeholders from each province. This may have emerged due to the federally administered nature of key programs from Health Canada, the presence of many Indigenous communities across Canada that continue to experience fallout from the legacy of colonialism, and the proximity of both provinces to the United States.

Ongoing Abuse of Health Canada's Personal/ Designated Production Registrations

Across multiple interviewees, there is a consistent body of evidence indicating major abuse of Health Canada's medical licences by criminal groups, in particular the personal/ designated production registrations. These are a special category of licences administered by Health Canada since 2001 which allow patients or a designated caregiver to produce cannabis for their own medical purposes (Health Canada, 2016). Several of those interviewed claim that abuse of these licences has increased since pre-legalization, both in terms of the number of illicit production sites having licences and the size of the production sites. Publicly available data confirm the average authorized daily dose associated with personal/ designated registrations has increased dramatically since legalization to ~30 g/day in Ontario and over 60 g/day in BC (Health Canada, 2023f). For reference, Health Canada's fact sheet states that across "a limited number of small and short-term clinical studies of cannabis for medical purposes" the maximum daily dose applied was equivalent to 3.2 g/day (Health Canada, 2016). This suggests that, in some instances, these licences may be used to divert surplus cannabis to the illicit market. Annual inspection rates of personal/designated registration sites averaged below 0.05% between 2018 and 2022 (Health Canada, 2023b, 2023c, 2023d, 2023e): they are effectively unmonitored. There was acknowledgement from participants in government and law enforcement that adequate monitoring of such a large number of licences was extremely challenging, especially given that many are on private property. Officers spoke to abuses by large, traditional OCGs and smaller, decentralized networks, both of which meet the definition of organized crime in Canada. Observed methods which OCGs use to obtain licences include having one of their own members with a legitimate medical ailment apply for and obtain a medical licence, or exploiting a connection with someone with a legitimate ailment who can obtain a medical licence, and paying them a portion of proceeds to grow above their limit.

> People are getting legal cannabis authorizations to grow their own cannabis for their own medical purposes. They are getting very high amounts of cannabis prescriptions so they can grow large numbers of plants - but then they grow more, and they move their cannabis into the illegal market. OCGs are using legal means and legal avenues to do illegal activity. (Law Enforcement Officer, Ontario)

> The vast majority of OCG cannabis production sites are protected under Health Canada licences, and there has been continuity since pre-2018. Production levels have not changed. Licences have been manipulated, playing with the addresses, number of plants, and using names of deceased persons. Law enforcement is not authorized to inspect medical grow operations. Licensees are often notified of Health Canada inspections in advance, prompting OCGs to reduce their plant quantities and hide industrial growing equipment. (Law Enforcement Officer, Ontario)

Study participants familiar with the government's administration of these licences confirmed the validity of law enforcement perspectives regarding ongoing abuse, with the qualifier that law enforcement possessed greater authority from Health Canada to interdict these sites than officers believed or acknowledged. They noted how through a series of legal cases, beginning with *R. v. Parker* (2000), the right to access medical cannabis had been established within Canada by the judiciary, by way of *Section 7* of The *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms* (1982) and outside of traditional channels. Typically, according to one interviewee from the federal government, introducing a medical treatment to the market would require close collaboration between Health Canada and pharmaceutical companies. These participants further expressed concern and doubts about removing the personal/designated registrations in the near future, believing it may motivate subsequent legal challenges that could render broader aspects of the *Cannabis Act* unconstitutional.

> Governments have been, I think, cautious about even talking about removing the personal/designated registrations. Because of the history of litigation, there is worry that by removing it, we might trigger more court activity and more adverse decisions. The threshold for winning that argument is really, really high. It's not going to be about organized crime and its impacts. It's going to be about your mom who has been using a designated licence to let your dad grow 12 plants for your mom who needs it for end of life care. And then we're going to have to prove in court that the scenario where your mom is growing 12 plants with your dad's help is so dangerous that we have to pull this away from everybody. (Federal Government Official, Ontario)

Heterogeneity of Impacts Across Indigenous Communities

Our study revealed that experiences of Indigenous communities vary widely depending upon the geography, history, and other unique circumstances of each community. Some interviewees were themselves members of Indigenous communities and simultaneously operating cannabis dispensaries fully within the federal and provincial frameworks. Other examples were cited of communities that established their own, internal regime to regulate cannabis, separate

from, and outside the legal framework of, the *Cannabis Act*. This self-regulation can fall into what one Indigenous interviewee referred to as the "grey market," a cannabis market that is illicit, but limited in scope solely to the production or sale of cannabis. It is without the violence or other criminal enterprises, such as money laundering or sales of more potent drugs, that are often associated with organized crime.

Finally, some communities in both provinces were found to contain significant cannabis production and distribution attributable to organized crime, both with and without the broader consent of community members. In one instance, a participant cited examples of OCGs establishing retail operations and either paying a fee or providing public goods such as housing to gain broader acceptance or dissuade community members from taking countermeasures. This pattern was confirmed across multiple interviews:

> Illicit stores on indigenous lands have steadily increased since legalization. Once the ones outside of Indigenous lands were closed down, we saw them pop up there. Organized crime is associated with some of those stores, and the Indigenous governments have said they are. When Indigenous communities don't want the stores they reach out to Canadian law enforcement to get rid of them. (Law Enforcement Officer, BC)

> Illicit cannabis was not on the radar before legalization. There were some grow operations in houses, but nothing substantial. Now there are both illegal and legal storefronts for selling/distribution. (Indigenous community member, Ontario)

In another instance, certain individual members of a community were said to have invited OCGs to establish several retail locations on their properties in exchange for a fee, without the consent of the broader community. These stores were associated by an interviewee with notable increases in violence such as armed robberies. The traditional council of this community had not made a public statement condemning the illicit stores, contributing to the perception by some that their actions were permitted. Owners of illicit stores were said to have become increasingly violent toward any law enforcement actions. Nearly identical to the situation detailed by Celentani et al. (1997), a delicate equilibrium had been reached whereby law enforcement officers did not intervene as long as the illicit stores refrained from retailing other illicit substances beyond cannabis.

Government officials familiar with the matter claimed that the *Cannabis Act* was designed to create room for Indigenous businesses, both at the federal level, via production and manufacturing, and at the provincial level through retail. It was noted that many provincial governments, including Ontario, have not yet used their powers to create room in their systems for Indigenous entrepreneurs:

> And the Cannabis Act was designed so that provinces and territories could design the retail frameworks. And we strongly encouraged them to design them in a way to accommodate Indigenous interests. BC did it, they have a tailored First Nations cannabis framework. Ontario, and possibly Saskatchewan, gave themselves the legislative authority to do it, but they've never used it. And so the easiest and clearest solution to the problem is if provinces actually create room in their retail systems for Indigenous communities. (Federal Government Official, Ontario)

Changes in Product and Geographic Markets

While noting the history of OCGs exporting cannabis from Ontario and BC (primarily dried product) prior to legalization, several interviewees see evidence that exports of domestically produced cannabis have increased post-legalization, mainly toward the United States. Many participants, especially those in law enforcement, further admitted that in the wake of legalization, scarce resources have often been directed toward higher-priority files such as illicit fentanyl, creating an environment conducive to producing and transporting illicit cannabis. Regarding changes in product markets, two trends were evident from several informants. First, some OCGs operating primarily out of BC had significantly increased the production of psychedelic mushrooms. Second, certain sophisticated transnational groups operating in both Ontario and BC that were previously involved in cannabis had begun shifting toward opiate production and distribution.

> Prior to legalization, you would see examples of large-scale trafficking and distribution within Canada. We don't see that anymore. Instead, most examples of sophisticated trafficking are destined for the United States. (Law Enforcement Officer, Ontario)

> One of the negative impacts [of legalization] is that police have not been as invested as they used to in cannabis investigations and/or prosecutions. (Law Enforcement Officer, BC)

We did not find consistent evidence among our sample to confirm whether legalization had motivated OCGs to target niche cannabis market segments (such as markets for underage individuals or higher potency cannabis products) nor shift resources into the legitimate, regulated cannabis economy.

DISCUSSION

First and apart from the qualitative findings of interviews, Statistics Canada's (2023a, 2023b) detailed household final consumption expenditure data tables and Health Canada's (2022a) Canadian Cannabis Survey provide initial evidence that domestic illicit cannabis sales have steadily declined since 2018 across all provinces and territories, including Ontario and BC. Statistics Canada employs an amalgamated process to derive estimates, making use of multiple surveys and also high-quality legal data from Health Canada to back out estimates of illicit market size.

Separate from domestic demand, cited abuse of Health Canada's personal/designated production registrations is best categorized as evidence of continuity in illicit production and supply from the pre-legalization era. Illicit producers are continuing to exploit a loophole which was not closed in 2018, for reasons unique to Canada's judicial and constitutional heritage. There is also a possibility that first establishing a robust legal market, where medical users can purchase

preferred quantities at affordable price points, is a precondition for phasing out personal/designated registrations.

In parallel, our interviews cautiously suggest that the surplus illicit supply no longer being consumed domestically has now been directed abroad, notably toward the United States. This would be consistent with the existing literature that provides examples of producers and smugglers rapidly adjusting their destinations in response to a legalization event, by continuing to supply jurisdictions where the commodity remains interdicted (Cheekes, 2022; Dudley et al., 2022; Lacey, 2021). In this way, the ongoing trend toward recreational cannabis legalization in the United States may have a great impact upon illicit cannabis producers within Canada (Auriol et al., 2023; Dudley et al., 2022).

Simultaneously, we find preliminary evidence that some criminal groups may have begun transitions away from cannabis and toward the production and distribution of opiates and psychedelic mushrooms – with the former reserved in our evidence for the most complex, transnational organizations. While some studies propose that criminal agents could respond to cannabis legalization by transitioning toward other illicit substances including opioids (Meinhofer & Rubli, 2021; Xiong, 2021), the transnational nature and decades-long history of North America's present opioid epidemic suggests that the transition toward opiates may be an independent event (Keefe, 2021). Skyrocketing demand for opiates and a smaller market for illicit cannabis may have both factored into the decisions of illicit entrepreneurs, a dynamic which merits further investigation.

The contested jurisdictional status of Indigenous communities – emerging from the history of settler colonialism – adds a final feature unique to the Canadian context (Holden, 2017; Jamieson, 1999). There is widespread sentiment that Indigenous voices have not been incorporated into Canada's process of cannabis legalization, a fact acknowledged within the government's own publications (Health Canada, 2022b; Ivers, 2022). We found that each community has experienced cannabis legalization separately, with some members actively participating in the frameworks established by the *Cannabis Act*. However, some communities have seen public health and safety deteriorate as a result of cannabis legalization, with a proliferation of illicit stores and increases in violence. In some instances, relationships with organized crime have brought money and benefits to communities through rent payments and the provision of goods such as housing. This is a manifestation of a common behaviour described by Fiorentini and Peltzman (1997) whereby organized crime competes for legitimacy with established authorities.

Multiple solutions have been proposed by Indigenous communities, such as transferring control over tax revenues received from on-reserve retail locations (Health Canada, 2022b). Nonetheless, inconsistent actions of provincial governments to exercise their authority under the *Cannabis Act*, combined with federal unwillingness to supersede provincial governments, may have prolonged the status-quo in some communities across Ontario and BC. This is an important case that outlines the dynamics and ongoing challenges of Canadian federalism.

We also stress that interviewees spoke to the ongoing presence of a diverse range of actors within Ontario and BC including smaller opportunistic networks, and large, sophisticated groups – all of whom meet the definition of organized crime. Our findings were not able to distinguish meaningfully between the impacts cannabis legalization may have had on each group. Existing scholarship might suggest that larger groups possessing wider-ranging expertise and the ability to spread fixed investments in deterrence and production equipment over multiple illicit substances have experienced greater success in the post-legalization landscape (Meinhofer & Rubli, 2021; Fiorentini and Peltzman, 1997).

CONCLUSIONS

Emerging as a key platform commitment made during the 2015 Federal Election by the eventually victorious Liberal Party, timely implementation of recreational cannabis legalization in 2018 came to be viewed by the government as crucial to maintaining performance legitimacy (Alati, 2022). Unique Canadian institutions and challenges – especially the personal/designated production registrations and negotiating win–win solutions with Indigenous communities and provincial governments – were predestined to remain unresolved within the same timeframe. The continuity of cost-effective illicit production channels, contested jurisdictions, and uneven provincial implementation of retail frameworks (Cunningham, 2021) have had the effect of placing a ceiling on prices and profitability in legal markets, and prolonging the presence of OCGs.

Our findings are complex and indicate Ontario, BC, and Canada are endowed with relative comparative advantages in illicit cannabis cultivation and distribution. There is preliminary evidence pointing to reduced markets for illicit cannabis, especially domestically but also within the United States (Auriol et al., 2023). Our interviews suggest OCGs may have responded by gradually entering new markets, such as opiates. In parallel, production of cannabis has been more or less maintained, with points of sale shifting to new geographic markets, especially within contested domestic jurisdictions, and abroad to the United States, where full-scale interdiction remains in many states. We suggest that future research can investigate the mechanisms that may have influenced certain OCGs to enter new markets, such as opiates and psychedelic mushrooms. A more detailed survey focusing on Indigenous communities and their diverse experiences with cannabis legalization could help advance dialogue and inform win–win policy solutions.

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CONFLICT OF INTEREST DISCLOSURES

The authors declare that there are no conflict of interest disclosures.

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ORIGINAL RESEARCH

Journal of
COMMUNITY SAFETY & WELL-BEING

POWER training improves officer autonomic health, mindfulness and social connection

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ABSTRACT

In the profession of policing, the accumulation of stressful incidents over the course of a career can lead to a host of adverse health outcomes: increased incidence of injury and illness, diminished cognitive performance, mental health impacts (including anxiety, depression, addiction and elevated risk of suicide), increased risk of cardiovascular disease and early mortality. The toxic climate of dysfunctional agency culture, local community resistance and distrust, and the national political discourse around policing all serve to increase the stress that first responders bear, contributing to erosion of police-community relationships. Beyond Us & Them partnered with California State University San Marcos to offer the Peace Officer Wellness, Empathy & Resilience (POWER) training to university police officers. POWER is a nationally certified 12-week training program, which teaches skills and practices that promote well-being, mindfulness and relationality, and improve police-community relations. Based on survey data from prior cohorts, we realized the potential benefit of adding biometric measurements to look for improvement in autonomic health. Other studies have demonstrated an inverse correlation between heart rate variability (HRV) and cardiovascular disease, cognitive decline and risk of all-cause mortality. Of the 17 participants, 15 completed pre- and post-intervention surveys, and HRV was obtained from 13 of these participants: findings demonstrated improved autonomic health, as well as statistically significant changes in empathy, mindfulness and social connection. Additionally, we noted increased HRV coherence, which may be a physiologic marker of enhanced social connection. Future studies offer the possibility of utilizing HRV coherence as a marker of group connection and performance.

Key Words HRV; empathy; resilience; well-being; biometric.

INTRODUCTION

Policing is one of the most stressful occupations in the world (Maguen et al., 2009; Violanti et al., 2017). Police officers, both sworn and non-sworn, routinely face dangerous, unpredictable, traumatic and potentially life-threatening situations, which lead to higher rates of depression (Hartley et al., 2007), anxiety (Berg et al., 2006) and burnout (McCarty & Skogan, 2013) compared to other professions. Data from the National Occupational Mortality Surveillance reveal that police death from suicide is 2.4 times higher than police death from homicide. Equally startling is the increased incidence of cardiovascular disease and death from all causes in police officers (Hartley et al., 2011), in some areas as much as 20 years younger than the general population. Officers who are stressed and unhealthy are also prone to increased racial bias and use of excessive force (Ma et al., 2013). According to President Obama's taskforce report on 21st century policing (2015), the police cannot do their jobs responsibly and safely unless they are emotionally and psychologically stable. To that end, one of the six pillars of 21st century policing articulated in the taskforce report focuses on police officer mental, emotional and physical wellness. According to the taskforce report (2015), "Support for wellness and safety should permeate all practices and be expressed through changes in procedures, requirements, attitudes, and behaviors." The report recommends that police departments partner with other agencies and wellness experts to review best practices and offer tailored wellness support services to police officers.

To that end, California State University San Marcos (CSUSM) invited Beyond Us & Them, a non-profit organization based in Los Angeles, to offer the Peace Officer Wellness, Empathy & Resilience (POWER) training to a cohort of sworn and non-sworn participants culled from the police

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departments of four local universities in Southern California. Beyond Us & Them designed the POWER training program in 2019 to bring a rigorous approach to officer well-being and improve police-community relations utilizing a four-quadrant approach that incorporates mindfulness activities, breathing practices, education in contemplative neuroscience and a dialogic practice known as council. The program is designed for cohorts of 20–25 participants to foster communication within the whole group as well as in sub-cohorts of 4–5 participants who meet weekly in council huddles. The POWER training has received California state certification from California Peace Officer Standards and Training (C-POST) and national certification from the International Association of Directors of Law Enforcement Standards and Training (IADLEST). Distinct from other mindfulness-based interventions, the POWER program emphasizes social connection by introducing the peer-facilitated dialogic practice of council. Quantitative and qualitative survey results from previous POWER training cohorts with the Los Angeles Police Department (LAPD) and Jacksonville (Florida) Sheriff's Office (JSO) suggested beneficial health effects in officers. Participants reported impacts in all four quadrants of health: weight loss, blood pressure reduction, recognition of mental bias and negative self-talk, improved relationships with both their families and their coworkers, and an expanded situational awareness that led to improved police-community relations.

Recent studies have demonstrated that mindfulness-based practices can reduce stress and increase emotional self-regulation and resilience (Schuman-Olivier et al., 2020). More specifically, recent studies demonstrate that mindfulness training can improve well-being and reduce depression among police officers (Stevenson, 2022; Trombka et al., 2021). Mindfulness and self-compassion practices cannot change the stressors, but they can moderate the impact of these stressors on the mental health of police officers (Fleischmann et al., 2021). Beyond Us & Them, in partnership with the Center for Contemplative Practices, decided to use a mixed-methods research protocol to test whether mindfulness practices, compassion-based communication exercises, council huddles and training in wellness-related areas such as stress management and self-care can improve wellness and resilience of police officers. In addition to the pre- and post-intervention psychosocial surveys, we measured heart rate variability (HRV) as a biometric index of autonomic health. Previous studies (McCraty & Atkinson, 2012; Ramey et al., 2017) have established the inter-user reliability of HRV testing. Our study sought to assess whether the reported improved health benefits might correlate with increases in quantitative HRV. Physiologic evidence of improved health brought about by the POWER program coupled with the growing literature on the positive impact of mindfulness practices on police officer well-being and stress levels could be a powerful contribution to the discourse on the need to prioritize officer wellness as a prerequisite for improved 21st century policing.

METHODS

In this study, we used a mixed-methods research protocol. Participants in the 12-week POWER training cohort completed pre- and post-intervention surveys using several psychosocial scales that measured stress levels, emotional regulation and interpersonal reactivity, mindfulness, anger, loneliness, connectedness to others and awareness of positive emotions. They provided qualitative feedback on their experience throughout the intervention period. HRV was measured pre- and post-intervention using HeartMath® technology. We hypothesized that participants undergoing this program would show improved quantitative HRV, experience reduction in stress levels and improve their capacity for emotional regulation and interpersonal connection. The authors obtained approval from the Institutional Review Board committee at CSUSM to conduct this research.

The POWER curriculum consists of 32 hours of in-person training, along with 24 hours of asynchronous online assignments and weekly council huddles self-facilitated by participants over 12 weeks. Two consecutive 8-hour instructional days, led by two trainers, were offered at the beginning of the training, with the trainers returning for two more 8-hour training sessions at weeks 6 and 12. The program is built on four quadrants of health: physical, mental, emotional and energetic/spiritual; each was covered for 3 weeks and reiterated during the in-person trainings. Participants also received intensive training in the practice of council and were provided with tools to self-facilitate weekly small-group council huddles among their peers.

Psychosocial Surveys

We used the following psychosocial scales to measure the variables of interest:

1. Perceived Stress Scale (PSS-4) is a 4-item measure of perception of stress derived from the full version of the PSS (Cohen et al., 1983). Participants indicate how often they have felt a certain way within the past month. Higher scores indicate higher levels of perceived stress.
2. Interpersonal Reactivity Index (IRI) is designed to measure both cognitive and affective empathy (Davis, 1983). The Perspective-Taking (PT) subscale was used for this evaluation. The PT subscale assesses the tendency to spontaneously adopt the psychological point of view of others. Responses are based on a Likert-type scale ranging from 0 to 28 with higher scores representing greater levels of empathy.
3. Difficulties in Emotional Regulation Scale (DERS) is designed to measure emotion dysregulation. DERS is a multidimensional self-report measure assessing individuals' characteristic patterns of emotional regulation (Gratz & Roemer, 2004). The 18-item short version was used for this evaluation (Victor & Klonsky, 2016) with higher scores reflecting greater difficulty in emotion regulation.
4. Five Facet Mindfulness Questionnaire Short Form (FFMQ-SF) is a 24-item scale derived from the full version of the FFMQ (Baer et al., 2006). The FFMQ measures five facets of mindfulness: observing, describing, acting with awareness, non-judging of inner experience and non-reactivity to inner experience. Responses are based on a Likert-type scale with higher scores representing greater levels of mindfulness.
5. PROMIS®-ANGER is a 5-item scale measuring the anger response and has shown acceptable internal

consistency (Cella et al., 2010). Higher scores indicate higher levels of anger.

6. A Connectedness Measurement tool was developed to capture the intended impact of this program, as existing scales did not adequately address this aspect. Questions ask participants to rate how often they felt connected to others in the last 7 days with higher scores indicating higher levels of connectedness.

Biometric Testing

On the afternoon prior to beginning the POWER program, we measured in each participant a 5-minute resting HRV followed by a 1-minute deep breathing assessment (DBA). Upon completion of the 12-week program, participants underwent the same 5-minute/DBA protocol. The 5-minute assessment is the minimum time needed to obtain frequency domain indices, while the 1-minute DBA allows for assessment of the maximal autonomic variability achievable at a given point in time. Of the 15 participants who completed the surveys, 13 had usable HRV measurements. (One was excluded due to frequent premature atrial contractions (PACs), whereas the other had an exacerbation of Raynaud's phenomenon during post-testing, which prevented accurate plethysmography.)

RESULTS

Psychosocial Survey Findings

Out of 17 participants in this program, 15 completed both pre- and post-surveys. Of the 15 respondents, 10 were men and 5 were women. The average age of the sample was 40.8 years. The age breakdown is provided in Table I.

Paired *t* tests were conducted on all the scales to determine whether the difference in pre-test scores and post-test scores was statistically significant (see Table II). The survey results were compared with comparable survey results from the LAPD and Jacksonville Sheriff's Office (JSO). There were three scores where the change was statistically significant. The IRI score increased from 16.47 to 18.4 indicating higher levels of empathy, and it was statistically significant. The FFMQ score increased from 71.6 to 74.13 indicating higher levels of mindfulness, and it was statistically significant. The connectedness to others scores increased from 3.93 to 4.4 and it was statistically significant. The other results were not statistically significant. The mean PSS score did decrease from 3.53 to 2.93 indicating lower levels of stress, but the decrease was not statistically significant. The mean PSS pre-test score for this sample was already low (3.5) compared to the mean PSS pre-test score for the LAPD (4.4) and for the JSO (6.4). The mean DERS score went down from 27.47 to 27.13 indicating lower difficulty regulating emotions, but the decrease was not statistically significant. The mean DERS pre-test score was also lower for this sample (27.5) compared to the mean DERS score for the LAPD (29.6) and for the JSO (38.1). Finally, the mean ANGER score did decrease from 10.2 to 9.8, but the decrease was not statistically significant. The mean ANGER pre-test score was also lower for this sample (10.2) compared to the mean ANGER pre-test score for the JSO (15.4).

TABLE I Age distribution of respondents

Age Distribution (Years)	Number of Respondents
21–30	5
31–40	2
41–50	3
51–60	4
61–70	1

Biometric Findings

The 5-minute HRV measurement was used to obtain the power-domain indices (Very Low Frequency (VLF), Low Frequency (LF), High Frequency (HF) and Total Power(TP)). Scores were averaged and then the natural log was calculated for standard reporting. Additional information gathered with this measurement included mean resting heart rate (MHR), standard deviation of the N-N ratio (SDNN) and normalized coherence. Standard two-tailed *t* tests were calculated on all indices, and while none achieved statistical significance, positive trends in all the power-domain indices listed above, that is, VLF, LF, HF and TP (Figures 1–4), MHR (Figure 5), SDNN (Figure 6) and normalized coherence (Figure 7) were noted. The 1-minute DBA results were similarly averaged, and two-tailed *t* tests were performed on MHR (Figure 8), SDNN (Figure 9) and normalized coherence (Figure 10). As with the 5-minute assessments, none achieved statistical significance, but several showed interesting trends. Although one participant's HRV recordings could not be included in data analysis

TABLE II Results from paired *t*-test analysis

Scales	Pre-Test Score		Post-Test Score		Paired *t* Test	
	Mean	Variance	Mean	Variance	T-Statistic	*p* Value
IRI[a]	16.47	6.12	18.40	3.83	−3.24	0.003
PSS	3.53	12.41	2.93	5.50	0.75	0.23
DERS overall	27.47	67.98	27.13	94.55	0.20	0.42
FFMQ[a]	71.60	29.11	74.13	40.98	−1.92	0.04
ANGER	10.20	26.31	9.80	14.17	0.27	0.40
Connectedness[a]	3.93	1.35	4.40	0.40	−2.43	0.01

[a]Statistically significant.

DERS, Difficulties in Emotional Regulation Scale; FFMQ, Five Facet Mindfulness Questionnaire; IRI, Interpersonal Reactivity Index; PSS, Perceived Stress Scale.

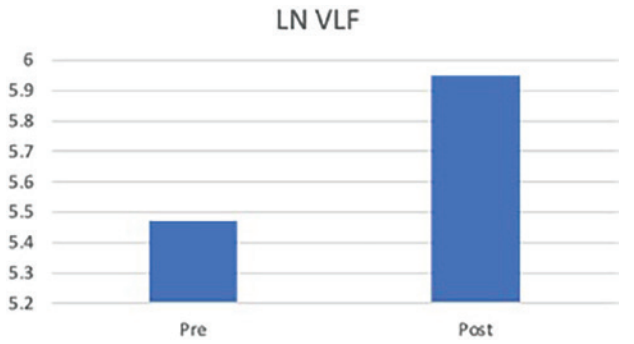

FIGURE 1 Average LN VLF Index based on 5-minute HRV measurement. HRV, heart rate variability; LN VLF, natural log of the very low frequency power

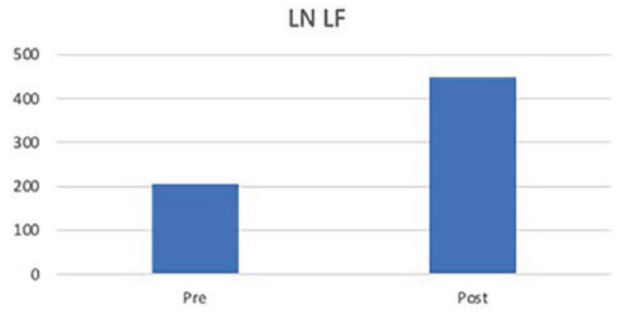

FIGURE 2 Average LN LF Index based on 5-minute HRV measurement. HRV, heart rate variability; LN LF, natural log of the low frequency power

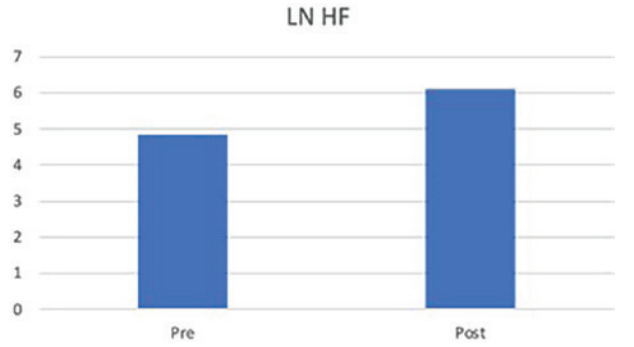

FIGURE 3 Average LN HF Index based on 5-minute HRV measurement. HRV, heart rate variability; LN HF, natural log of the high frequency power

due to frequent PACs, we include their tracings before and after the training in Figures 11 and 12.

DISCUSSION

Significant changes in mindfulness, empathy and connectedness over a 12-week period are not readily accomplished. It is remarkable to note that we observed a significant increase in quantitative measures of mindfulness, empathy and connectedness. Studies have shown that organizational stressors

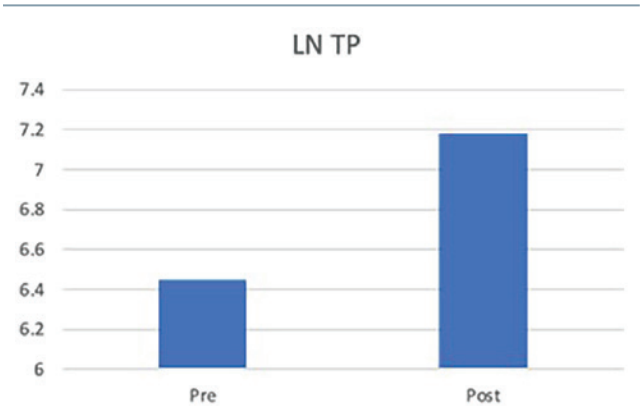

FIGURE 4 Average LN TP Index based on 5-minute HRV measurement. HRV, heart rate variability; LN TP, natural log of the total power

such as lack of social support contribute to poor physical and mental health among police officers (Goh et al., 2015). Police departments have often been resistant to offering or accepting emotional support interventions (Evans et al., 2013). Yet police officers show a preference for discussing difficult events with other police officers who understand what they are experiencing on a daily basis (Waters & Ussery, 2007). Our study points to the importance of the weekly council huddles, where officers discuss their emotions and reactions to daily stressors with each other. Providing such opportunities increases empathy and connectedness to others, which contributes to improved mental health and well-being and improved job performance.

The significant increase in mindfulness that we found indicates that the participants took the training very seriously and practised the activities on a regular basis. The qualitative comments indicate that participants were able to bring greater awareness to their own emotional and physical selves. They frequently mentioned learning to cultivate a pause before reacting, which is one of the main emphases of the POWER training program. They also commented that they were able to be more patient with themselves and others and were able to provide themselves and others more space and grace to process their emotions. Many participants said that they learned to listen better to themselves and others, which helped build trust and empathy. They also talked about self-care and the importance of taking a break when they were feeling overwhelmed. It is important to note that the pre-intervention test was conducted in July when the university was experiencing its summer semester, which tends to be a quieter and less stressful time for the police department. The post-intervention test was conducted in October when the university is in the middle of the fall semester, which is often a very busy time for the police department. This difference might explain why CSUSM and LAPD/JSO differed in certain measurements.

Previous studies have called for further investigation of within-subject HRV changes (Corrigan et al., 2021), which our study addresses. The POWER training was developed with the intention of mitigating the increased incidence of heart disease, hypertension, stroke and shortened lifespan seen in law enforcement personnel. Low VLF has been correlated

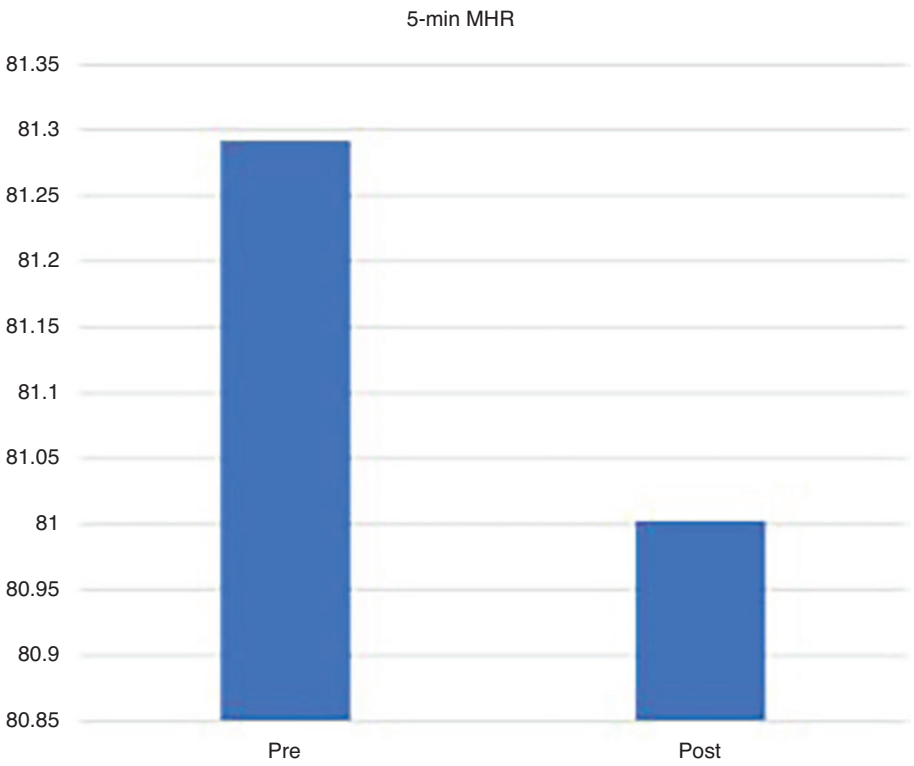

FIGURE 5 Mean resting heart rate (MHR) based on 5-minute HRV measurement. HRV, heart rate variability

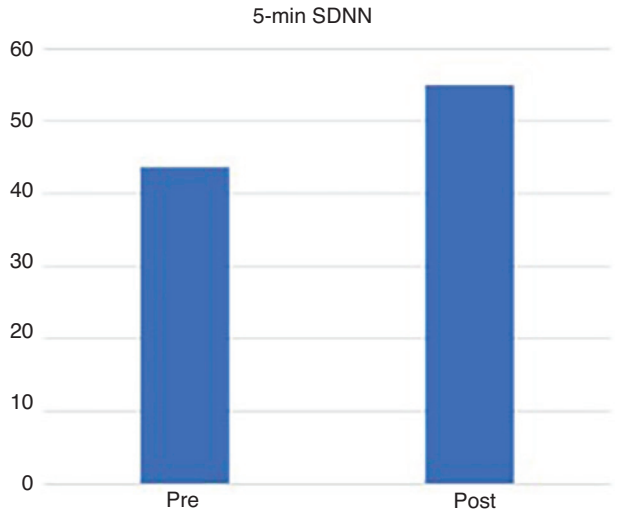

FIGURE 6 Standard deviation of the N-N ratio (SDNN) based on 5-minute HRV measurement. HRV, heart rate variability

with increased risk of these same conditions. Although it did not reach statistical significance, we think the increase seen in VLF is noteworthy. Increases and decreases in VLF have the strongest correlation with health, and increases in VLF translate to a decreased risk for cardiovascular disease and all-cause mortality (McCraty et al., 2009). That our findings showed an increase in VLF over 3 months' time is notable, as this is a relatively short time frame. We acknowledge the limitations of our small sample size, which makes the HRV results particularly sensitive to outliers. Factors that contribute to the small sample size include the intentional limitation to 20–25 participants per cohort as well as the understaffing that agencies across the country experience. Departments are challenged to fill trainings of any type due to lack of personnel to backfill duty shifts. The limitations of our small sample size could be overcome by pooling measurements from participants in concurrent future cohorts. Additionally, we hope to repeat testing at later dates after the completion of the POWER program to look for persistence of benefit.

Aside from the analysis of the group, one remarkable outcome was the resolution of PACs noted in a single participant (see Figures 11 and 12). In Figure 11, each deep spike represents a PAC. These were quite frequent and prevented quantitative analysis of the data. The participant was queried about caffeine or other stimulant intake and denied any consumption in the preceding hours prior to testing. Such frequent PACs may be indicative of underlying heart rhythm abnormalities. After assuring the participant was asymptomatic, we decided to wait the full 3 months and reassess their HRV. To our surprise, the PACs were gone at subsequent testing, as demonstrated in Figure 12. What was additionally notable were the comments from this participant (linked by the same anonymous identifier) who found the weekly practices—particularly the breathing and mindfulness ones—to be highly effective. The participant noted upon completion that "I realize now that in order to take care of others I have to first care for myself."

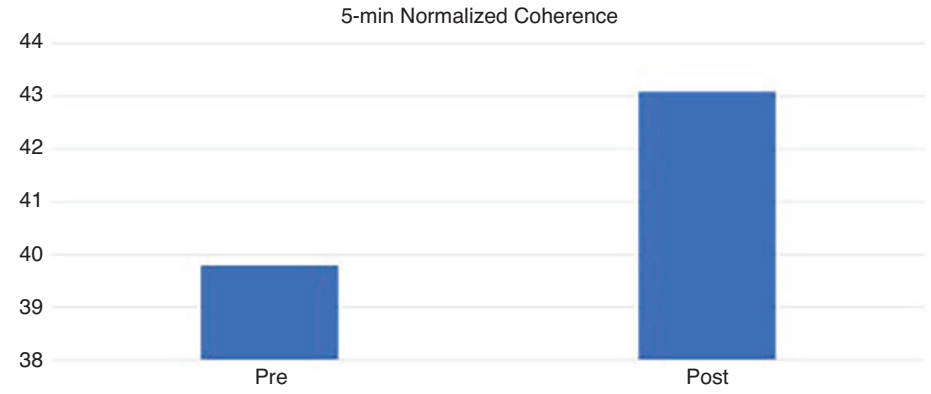

FIGURE 7 Normalized coherence based on 5-minute HRV measurement. HRV, heart rate variability

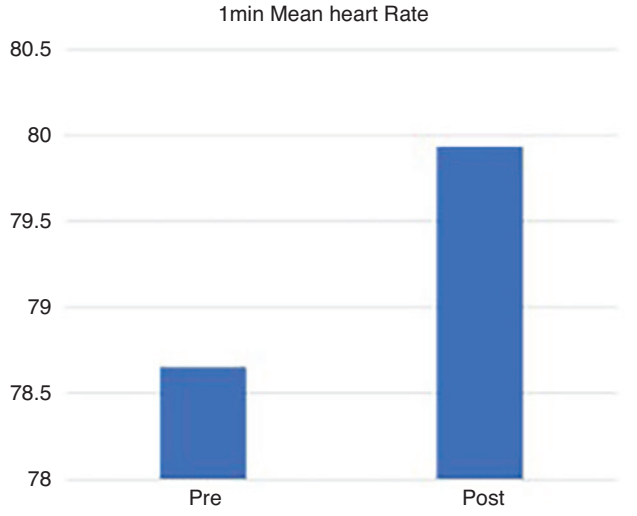

FIGURE 8 Mean resting heart rate based on 1-minute HRV measurement. HRV, heart rate variability

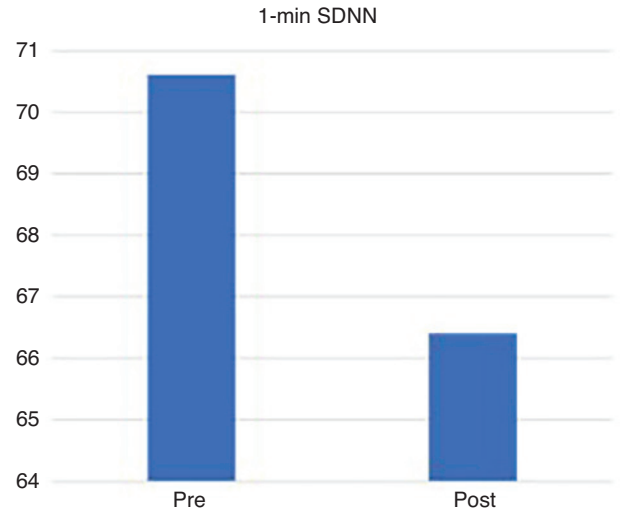

FIGURE 9 Standard deviation of the N-N ratio (SDNN) based on 1-minute HRV measurement. HRV, heart rate variability

Another surprising outcome was the increase seen in normalized coherence, both in the 1- and 5-min measurements. In a yet-to-be published study on tight-knit communities in New Zealand and Saudi Arabia, participants are found to have high degrees of coherence and synchronicity in their HRV patterns (Rollin McCraty, personal communication, November 10, 2023). It is unusual to see such an increase in coherence after a 3-month intervention such as POWER, but we think that the weekly huddles and emphasis on council training create conditions where an increase in participant coherence reflects an increase in social connection. Indeed, surveys showed statistically significant increases in social connection. Anecdotally, in another POWER training with the JSO, we saw a coherent HRV pattern emerge in an individual who was being recorded simply while sitting in a council huddle. In future studies, we hope to simultaneously measure quantitative HRV coherence in participants sitting in council to see whether increased coherence emerges as a function of council participation. Additionally, individual HRV measurement could be adopted by agencies as a method of biofeedback during and after POWER training (Stephenson et al., 2021).

CONCLUSION

Our findings demonstrate quantitative and qualitative changes in biometric indices and psychosocial surveys that suggest improved autonomic health, as well as statistically significant changes in empathy, mindfulness and social connection among officers participating in the POWER program. The measurement of HRV is an easily attained assessment of autonomic health. The finding of increased VLF power across the 12 weeks suggests that the POWER program may lead to decreased risk of early mortality and cardiovascular disease risk. Additionally, statistically significant changes in mindfulness, empathy and social connection indicate that POWER training helps police officers expand their capacity for awareness of themselves and others. The self-facilitated council huddles offer structured opportunities for police officers to listen to and share with each other, which is critical for building empathy and connectedness while reducing feelings of isolation. All these factors work together to improve the physical, emotional and mental health of police officers, equipping them to be more effective and less reactive in stressful situations. These

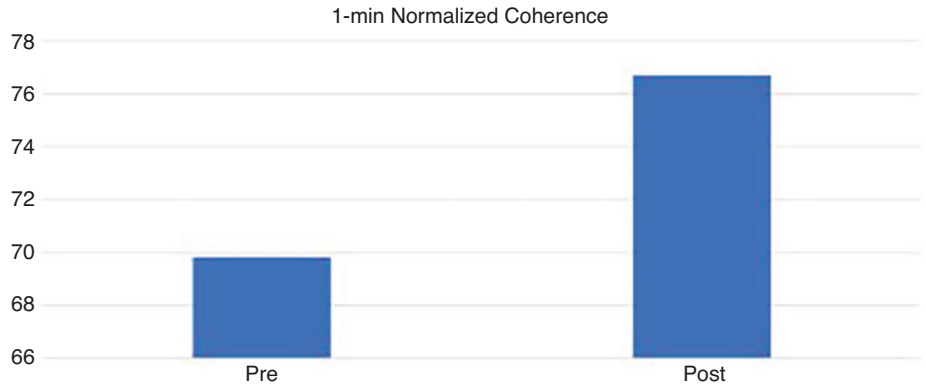

FIGURE 10 Normalized coherence based on 1-minute HRV measurement. HRV, heart rate variability

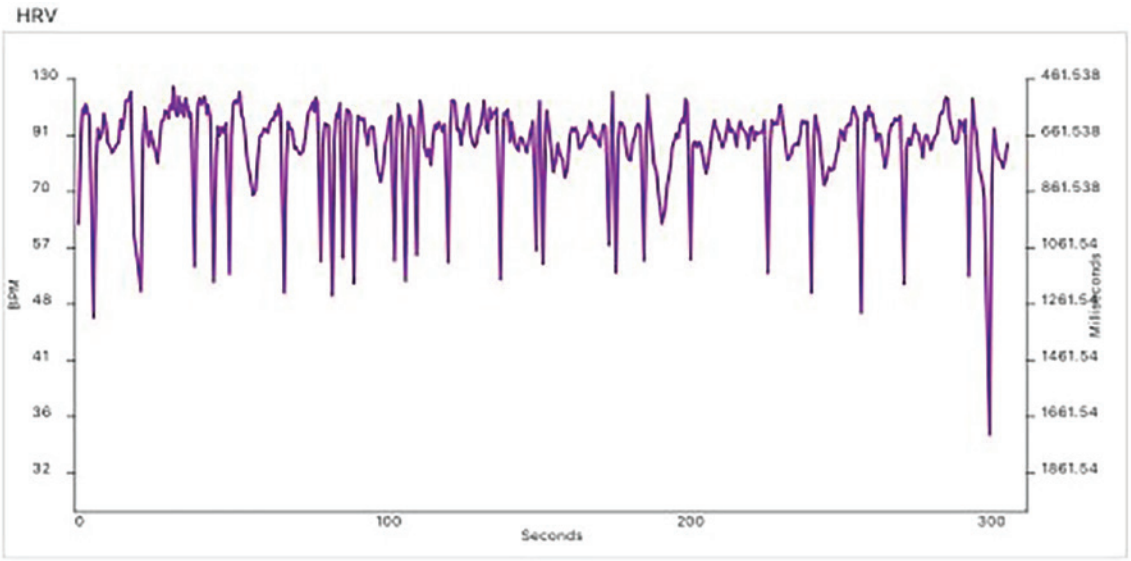

FIGURE 11 One participant's pre-HRV recording. HRV, heart rate variability

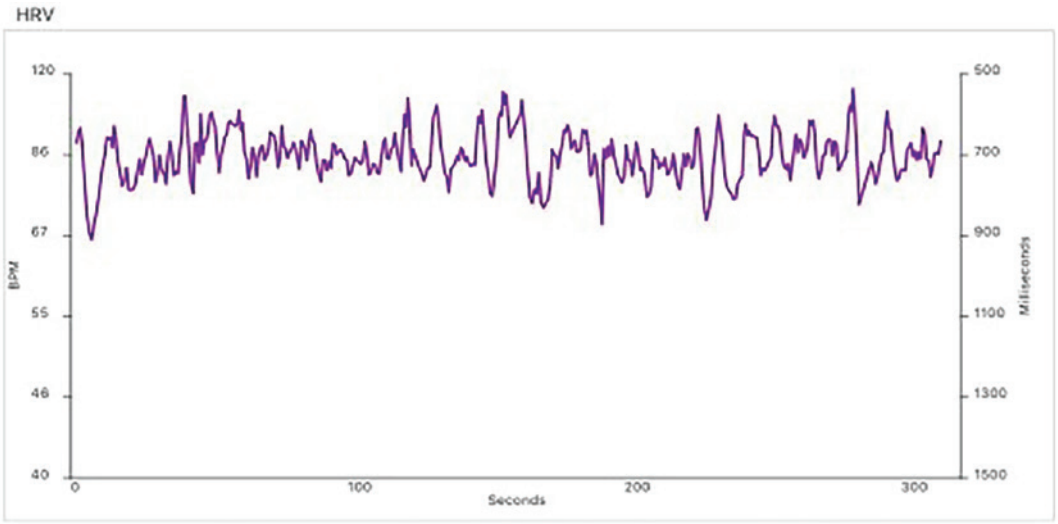

FIGURE 12 One participant's post-HRV recording. HRV, heart rate variability

interventions directly support the 21st century policing model recommendations. We hope that our findings provide more evidence and support for police departments to offer robust training for their officers that encompasses all four quadrants of wellness, as well as recognizing the importance of social connection fostered by council practice.

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CONFLICT OF INTEREST DISCLOSURES

Dr. Ann Seide is a trainer with Beyond Us & Them and helped develop the POWER training.

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ORIGINAL RESEARCH

Journal of
COMMUNITY SAFETY & WELL-BEING

Foundations of empathy and resilience: Integrating trauma-informed policing from recruit training onward

Isabelle Bartkowiak-Théron* and Cameron Atkinson*

This article is directly related to the first global Trauma Informed Policing and Law Enforcement Conference held in Melbourne, Australia in February 2024.

ABSTRACT

In this article, the authors explore the early integration of trauma-informed policing into the training of police recruits in Tasmania since 2023. Trauma-informed policing is an approach that recognizes the psychological, emotional, and physical impact of trauma on individuals and supports a more compassionate and empathetic response from law enforcement at various stages of the policing process. Additionally, it emphasizes the importance of mental health and well-being for officers themselves. A quick perusal of scholarly and grey literature seemed to identify a gap in training materials specifically designed for police recruits. This preliminary exercise led to a more thorough systematic literature review, which revealed the same. With a lack of consolidated materials for police training, a tailored curriculum was co-designed between the University of Tasmania, Tasmania Police, and experts in the field. The training aims to equip recruits with knowledge to recognize signs of trauma, understand its effects on behaviour, and respond appropriately. The survey evaluation of all training conducted in 2023 received a 70.8% response rate and indicated significant satisfaction with the training. After presenting the results of this evaluation, the authors discussed the benefits of trauma-informed policing training while acknowledging the challenges of implementation. However, in the Tasmanian context, strong police leadership support, a long-standing academic partnership, and a whole-of-government endorsement of trauma-informed practices provide a conducive environment for this initiative. Overall, the integration of trauma-informed principles into police training in Tasmania represents a significant step towards more empathetic, effective, and resilient policing, with potential for broader application and ongoing development.

Key Words Trauma-informed; policing; police training; recruits; trauma; well-being.

INTRODUCTION

Trauma-informed policing (TIP) has been mentioned in scholarly and grey literature since the mid-2010s (Thornton et al., 2021). However, it has recently become an approach to law enforcement hailed as the new operational and strategic pathway to formally embrace and recognize the potential impact of trauma on individuals who come into contact with police. TIP advances that to foster caring, productive, and effective interactions with vulnerable individuals, police must grasp the basic psychological, emotional, and physical impacts of trauma on people, especially crime victims and witnesses (Goodall et al., 2023; Lathan et al., 2019). A further argument has been made that the approach is also beneficial for even police officers' own mental health (Alvarez et al., 2022; Blumberg et al., 2020).

This article, presented at the 2024 Trauma-Informed Policing and Law Enforcement Conference (February 2024, Melbourne, Australia), considers the core reasons for supporting the implementation and evaluation of the early integration of TIP into the training of police recruits in Tasmania since 2023. In this article, we argue that incorporating

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trauma-informed principles during the formative stages of recruit training should be front and centre of ongoing professional development on vulnerability issues. Additionally, this article emphasizes that a TIP approach promotes a transformative framework that establishes the foundation for more empathetic, community-focused, and resilient police organizations. By incorporating TIP principles early in training curricula, young officers are prepared to understand the prevalence and impact of trauma on individuals and in communities (Turney et al., 2023). Furthermore, introducing TIP at the recruit stage also establishes a foundation for officers to better care for themselves and their colleagues, normalizing awareness of mental health issues among police officers, as well as adopting precautionary measures to protect their well-being (Alvarez et al., 2022; Blumberg et al., 2020).

BACKGROUND

TIP aims to reduce the likelihood of re-traumatizing people during their encounters with police by considering their past experiences and creating a safe environment for them to interact with law enforcement (Lathan et al., 2019). It implies the training of police officers to recognize signs of trauma and respond in a way that is compassionate, respectful, and non-threatening and the creation of safe environments for community members and staff (Skinner-Osei et al., 2019; Turney et al., 2023).

Research has long advocated for different police procedural approaches to victims, particularly in the investigative interrogation of survivors of sexual assault (Campbell, 2022; Lathan et al., 2019; Murphy-Oikonen et al., 2023; Rich, 2019), and when behaviour has been heavily influenced by adverse childhood experiences (Bateson et al., 2020; Brodie et al., 2023; Goodall et al., 2023; Marans, 2023; Skinner-Osei et al., 2019). However, some of the most recent discourse surrounding effective law enforcement increasingly centres on the need for officers to possess a broader, yet nuanced, understanding of vulnerability ((Bartkowiak-Théron & Asquith, 2017), including appropriate tools to evaluate such vulnerability (Bateson et al., 2020). Work has also become more prominent across many democratic policing jurisdictions in considering the generational trauma suffered within communities, such as ethnic, indigenous, or disadvantaged communities, as well as those communities that have suffered common traumatic events (Government of Canada, 2019; Janetta et al., 2019; Turney et al., 2023).

TIP recognizes that trauma can have a significant impact on an individual's behaviour and interactions with others, including law enforcement (Rich, 2019). It acknowledges and responds to trauma in a sensitive and supportive way, and the approach suggests that by employing a trauma-informed approach to their interaction with members of the public, police officers can improve their relationships with the communities they serve, promote greater trust and cooperation with law enforcement, and improve their collaborative work with public health agencies (Ford et al., 2019). The literature also proposes that trauma-informed approaches to policing can slowly chip at the significant stigma that is attached to police officer mental health and well-being (Alvarez et al., 2022; Blumberg et al., 2020), therefore promoting a cultural shift and a wrap-around approach to trauma in the community, as well as trauma and vicarious trauma in the organization (Alvarez et al., 2022; Lathan et al., 2019; Thornton et al., 2021).

Recent efforts to increase officers' knowledge on TIP have not been systematically applied to police recruit training, and there is currently no such thing as "universal knowledge" about TIP (Ford et al., 2019). However, despite a lack of consistency across jurisdictions (Grewcock & Sentas, 2019; Janetta et al., 2019), in the case of Tasmania (which interests us specifically in this article), there is a marked effort to promote the critical analysis and assessment of vulnerabilities from recruit levels onwards.

Literature Review

Early engagement in 2021–2022 with colleagues from Deakin University, the Edinburgh Napier University, and the Violence Reduction Unit of Lancashire Constabulary (via Trauma-Informed Lancashire) highlighted three things:

1. There exists a significant amount of training material surrounding trauma-informed care and general practice.
2. There is a lack of material dedicated to specifically train police in TIP (by which we mean the deployment of trauma-informed practices within the confined and very structured operational requirement of law enforcement).
3. There exist even fewer resources specifically dedicated to training for police recruits (i.e., the training at the police academy, which prepares recruits for their first 12 months in their general duties functions).

In order to address 2 and 3, a systematic literature review (SLR, which will be published in full elsewhere) is being conducted to establish the current state of knowledge and research specifically pertaining to police training. The SLR began by searching for articles from Scopus and Web of Science, targeting literature related to "trauma-informed policing" and "train*." As very few results were returned through these two databases, the search was extended to include Google Scholar. Each search was meticulously carried out to ensure a broad capture of relevant articles, with search parameters set in Scopus and Web of Science to only include peer-reviewed academic articles. Through this process, 2 articles were identified in Scopus, 2 in Web of Science, and 110 results in Google Scholar. Following data collection, a screening process was employed to ensure that the results were appropriate for the review. Result titles were manually reviewed and edited to remove any special characters, and duplicates were then identified and removed. The refined list of articles was recorded in a new spreadsheet, consolidating the cleaned data for further screening. Following duplicate removal, 111 results remained. To ensure the collected data aligned with our specific research objectives, a keyword filtering stage was utilized to review the titles and abstracts of results for specific keywords relevant to "trauma-informed policing" and "train*". Once keyword screening was completed, 36 articles remained. Further screening was required to ensure that the included results from Google Scholar were peer-reviewed journal articles. Sixteen remaining articles form the foundation of our SLR into TIP and training.

As a brief overview of the SLR preliminary findings, the reviewed articles indicate that the adoption of trauma-informed training in police organization is in its early stages and that training programmes are different across all jurisdictions (Campbell, 2022; de la Fontaine et al., 2022). The evaluation of these training packages remains reactive, justifying a call for a thorough assessment of their impact on police attitudes towards trauma and overall practice. This is particularly important, as early evaluations of training programs to date indicate "promising results for improving officer knowledge, perception of survivors, and survivor engagement with investigators" (Campbell, 2022, p. 323; see also de la Fontaine, 2021; Ingarfield, 2021; Murphy-Oikonen et al., 2023). Furthermore, evaluations of the impact of short trauma awareness training sessions for police in Scotland indicate that these sessions considerably influence police officers' attitudes towards trauma, including more positive attitudes towards victims and witnesses (Brodie et al., 2023).

Training Development and Evaluation Methods

In response to an initial brief perusal of literature and in collaboration with the aforementioned academic and practitioner colleagues, Tasmania Police instructors, and with the endorsement of the Police Commissioner, work commenced with the Department of Police, Fire and Emergency Management (DPFEM) People and Wellbeing Unit to develop the initial introduction to TIP for police recruits in February 2023. The training had to be tailored to the Intended Learning Outcomes of the recruit course and done in the spirit of delivering, in a very short amount of time, sufficient knowledge of trauma-informed practice so the recruits, as part of their encounters with members of the public, would:

- understand the effects of trauma on the brain,
- expect and understand behaviour in the aftermath of a traumatic event,
- recognize signs of trauma and respond in a trauma-informed manner,
- be familiar with the ways to use TIP, and
- apply these to good mental health and daily well-being habits.

As a result of these considerations, a short introduction to TIP was added to the university curriculum that Tasmania Police recruits receive as part of their Associate Degree in Social Sciences. This training is hosted in the Unit that explores the subject of law enforcement and public health and the specific interaction of police with vulnerable people. The training is composed of four elements: (1) the deconstruction of five prominent myths in trauma-informed practice,[1] (2) a potted introduction to neurobiology, (3) how trauma impacts encounters in the field (and needs to be considered in communication and procedures), and (4) how to recognize the signs that someone may have encountered a (or a series of) traumatic event(s).

[1]These five myths are as follows: trauma as ACEs only; trauma only applies to victims (offenders can have experience of traumatic events too, first responders as well); trauma-informed practice only needs to occur in cases of domestic violence, child abuse or sexual assault; trauma only happens to women; a trauma-informed approach is an excuse for crime.

The training sessions are accompanied by an evaluation of teaching and learning co-run by the University of Tasmania and Tasmania Police; all evaluations of teaching and learning programs are covered under an umbrella ethics protocol (#29655). Two weeks after the end of the training, all attendees received a follow-up email inviting them to answer a very short, anonymous survey. The survey offered attendees the possibility to reflect on their training and their expectations of it using a Likert scale questionnaire accompanied by two free-text boxes, which allowed for further expression of their thoughts. Overall, it was intended for the survey to take no more than 3 minutes to complete.

At the time the Trauma-Informed Policing and Law Enforcement conference took place, three recruit courses and a one-off police mentor course had received the training and were asked their opinion about it.[2] Out of a total of one hundred and forty-four (n = 144) trained officers, 102 elected to respond to the evaluation survey.

Such a high response rate (70.8%) is not surprising in police education research, especially when evaluations are co-run or sponsored by the police organization. This is due to the perception that the evaluation is an exercise mandated by the hierarchy. In this case, all public documents (invitation email, information sheet, and survey link) sent to research participants were co-signed by the Commander of the Police Academy.

RESULTS

Responses to the evaluation survey indicated that 72%[3] (n = 71) of training attendees responding to the survey were satisfied or very satisfied with the session, 15% (n = 15) of respondents indicated that they were neither satisfied nor dissatisfied, and the remaining respondents (13%; n = 13) either did not respond to the question or ticked N/A (not applicable). There were only three (n = 3) "dissatisfied" responses recorded.

The qualitative responses provided further information as to how the training, or portions of it, was received by some participants, particularly when these individuals already had a preliminary understanding of trauma. This qualitative feedback was either entered into the survey free-text boxes or sent spontaneously to lecturers or the police sponsor. In preparation for the February 2024 conference, all feedback was collated and pooled for further analysis. Some of the qualitative feedback is as follows.

> "Thank you for your lecture today on Trauma-informed Policing. Most recently I have been employed in the health industry where trauma-informed care has become very topical. It has been my experience that training centred around the ACE scoring and victimising of 'trauma affected people' (…). [this never sat well with me, as] I feel they have the right to not be considered 'trauma-affected' until they are 'trauma-affected'. I thought your presentation today was excellent. It was the first time I had seen trauma informed education delivered with empathy on what the person is experiencing and actual tools for how

[2]Since then, another 300 police officers have been trained in trauma-informed policing in Tasmania.

[3]All percentages are rounded up to the closest denominator.

we as Police Officers can help support the person, be it victim or offender. It was also the first time the explanation had centred around the effect trauma has on the brain and the analogy of the hand made it easier to understand. Thank you!" (Recruit, by email, November 2023)

"I believe today I have enhanced my abilities surrounding how well informed I am in regards to trauma and the impact that it can have on members of the organisation. This will enable me to potential be more able to identify what is occurring and how I am able to interact and intervene if required. Whilst also acknowledging and engaging other support services as required to assist with the wellbeing of myself and the recruit." (Mentor, survey response, September 2023)

"Trauma-informed training has enabled me to be aware of and accept all facets of an individual's story and provide them as much time as they need to provide their account, even if this is over a number of occasions and in a location that is comfortable to them. The ability to be open, non-judgemental, compassionate, and patient is something I have learnt through this training and experience in working cases, which is an asset to both my professional and personal life. I firmly believe that trauma-informed training should be offered to all members of Tasmania Police, at all ranks and areas of workplace." (Mentor, survey response, September 2023)

"To be trauma-informed provides an acute sense of empathy and understanding to be better prepared while working with victims, either children or vulnerable people, through something that has been often an extremely traumatic experience in their life, whether recent or historical in their reporting." (Recruit, survey response, November 2023)

"I got a lot out of the Trauma Informed Policing and Well Being module as well as the CISM component. I think that these aspects will be important for the recruit throughout their career." (Mentor, survey response, September 2023)

"The one main aspect that resonated with myself today would have been around the trauma informed police and the information and discussions it generated." (Mentor, survey response, September 2023)

"Trauma should not be part of police training, doesn't apply to the job." (Recruit, survey response, November 2023)

DISCUSSION

Research already indicates that trauma-informed training is beneficial to police operational duties, either in general duties work or in areas of specialization (sexual assault, child protection, youth justice, etc.; Gill et al., 2016; Ingarfield, 2021; Turney et al., 2023). Responses to the evaluation of the first iterations of the training for Tasmania Police confirm the professional development benefits of delivering such training to recruits as well as serving police officers.

There remain some attitudinal, organizational, and cultural obstacles to the full deployment of trauma-informed knowledge in the policing profession, however. Resistance to new procedures and training is well explored in the policing literature that mentions the relative police "inertia" to emerging evidence-based practices (Kim et al., 2021; Rich, 2019). In Tasmania, however, cultural and organizational unwillingness to evolve according to the evidence-based recommendations is tempered by several factors.

First of all, a new, dynamic higher leadership in the police organization provides the imprimatur to develop and implement new evidence-led educational initiatives, which support the long-standing leadership position of Tasmania Police in the professionalization of policing. The fact that the partnership with the University of Tasmania is in its 28th year also fosters an environment of trust and curriculum co-design that is attentive to the needs of the organization (Bartkowiak-Théron et al., 2020).

Second, the training was delivered after feedback that the initial training that had been delivered by other organizations was "too generic" and not specific enough for police operations. The training that was developed by the team at TILES in partnership with the DPFEM was geared at taking into account the prescriptive police operational environment (police policy, legislation, powers, arrest, custody, etc.).

Third, the political conditions in which the training took place have emphasized trauma-informed practice as a blanket approach to vulnerability (particularly young people; Ford et al., 2019; Gill et al., 2016) as a whole-of-government practice throughout the state. This is the result of the recommendations of the 2020 Commission of Inquiry into the Tasmanian Government's Responses to Child Sexual Abuse. The expression "trauma-informed practice(s)" appears 41 times in Volume 1 of the Inquiry report, which contains all recommendations to the government (Naeve et al., 2023). In May 2024, the Tasmanian Government endorsed all 191 of these recommendations (Rockliffe, 2024). Therefore, the recommendations of the Commission of Inquiry into the Tasmanian Government's Responses to Child Sexual Abuse (Naeve et al., 2023) paved the way for first responders to reconsider the harmful practices that were unveiled as part of the Commission's investigation. The fact that the Inquiry was heavily prominent in the media also helped sensitize community members and practitioners to the effects of iatrogenic vulnerabilities, which were known before, but less prominently displayed than other vulnerabilities.

CONCLUSION

The early integration of TIP into police recruit training in Tasmania marks a significant step forward for the wide adoption of trauma-informed practices across the organization. The support from leadership and the "stamp of approval" that was given by the Commissioner at the beginning of 2023 demonstrate a noticeable forward-thinking shift in law enforcement practices in the state. The training and its evaluation, to date, have demonstrated promising results, both in terms of enhancing the understanding and sensitivity of police recruits towards trauma and in providing a new level of sophistication

to their interactions with vulnerable people. High satisfaction rates indicate a successful reception and an appreciation for the approach's depth and practicality. Since the February 2024 Trauma-Informed Policing Conference, an additional 300 members have been trained through a new iteration of the program, which has been further developed in light of the feedback and now involves delivery by both a policing scholar and a psychologist specialized in sexual assault, child protection, and violence. Evaluation of the new iteration of that training is underway.

Further research needs to be conducted to evaluate the extent to which the introduction of this training also addresses the mental health and well-being of the officers themselves, as argued in the literature (Janetta et al., 2019). At this early stage of deployment, it is too early to assess the psychological impacts of the training on vicarious trauma awareness and the impact on mental health self-reporting behaviours. However, we could expect that the training contributes to a normalization of discussions of the psychological impacts of police work, especially since the new iteration of the training insists on practitioner self-care and processing (which will be the subject of another paper).

The implementation of TIP is not without challenges, however (Goodall et al., 2023; Kim et al., 2021). In addition to already packed training and professional development schedules, cultural resistance to 'anything new', the ingrained cultural attitudes within police organizations, and the need for ongoing adaptation of training programs pose significant hurdles (Ford et al., 2019), regardless of how conducive the Tasmanian context remains. The support from higher leadership, the long-standing partnership with the University of Tasmania, and the broader governmental endorsement of trauma-informed practices provide a robust foundation to overcome these obstacles. To date, though, the early integration of trauma-informed principles into police training represents a transformative step towards a more compassionate and effective policing model (Thornton et al., 2021). Continued efforts to refine and expand training and professional development as part of the continuing implementation of the Commission recommendations and alongside a commitment to addressing organizational and cultural barriers will be essential in sustaining and enhancing the benefits observed so far in Tasmania.

LIMITATIONS

The context in which this training and evaluation took place needs consideration. The long-standing educational and research partnership between the University and Tasmania Police(Bartkowiak-Théron et al., 2020) provides a relatively stable environment of trust and confidence in education and research that stands out in the usual cultural distrust of academia and is well documented by others. In our case, although no educator involved in the training administered the research (avoiding conflict of interest or a possible perception of coercion), the research team is usually made up of well-known police and academic staff. The evaluation was therefore conducted in conditions that are difficult to reproduce elsewhere.

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CONFLICTS OF INTEREST DISCLOSURE

The Tasmanian Institute of Law Enforcement Studies (University of Tasmania) and Tasmania Police work in partnership to provide higher education to police in Tasmania.

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REVIEW

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Environmental degradation and climate change as violence against the Earth: Associations with violence against women's bodies

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ABSTRACT

Violence against women (VAW) and violence against the Earth (VAE) have always shared a unique and complex association yet to be explored. The fields of VAW and VAE have evolved in separate routes, with divergent theoretical foundations but with little integration. While the impact of VAW has received much attention over the years, relatively little thought has gone into the intersections. Drawing parallels between society's treatment of the physical and natural environment and its treatment of women, this paper will pull in insights to broaden and clarify the way VAW has been conceptualized, its association with the physical and natural environment (Mother Earth), and the constructs and the commitments that flow from them. In this paper, we formulate, cast, and present an expanded understanding of the relationship between violence against the physical and the natural environment and VAW. The article, an offshoot of our conceptualization on the inter-linkages between VAW and VAE, is being submitted for interpretation and application.

Key Words: Violence against women; violence against the Earth; physical and the natural environment.

INTRODUCTION

Violence against women (henceforth VAW) and climate change, often referred to as violence against Mother Earth, are pressing global threats and critical launching pads for ending the violence against nature and VAW, placing them at the centre of theorizing and knowledge development (Arora-Jonsson, 2014; Bulkeley & Kern, 2006). Increasingly, studies have analyzed the parallel effects of such relationships with the natural environment or even the built environment and VAW and violence against girls (Ćorić, 2014; Fairbanks, 2010). These two issues are perceived to have unique and complex drivers that affect the security and well-being of nations, communities, and individuals. There have been attempts to understand, measure, and seek solutions to the twin problems across societies. The impact and intersections of these problems has received much attention and traction over the years. Emerging thinking in VAW and violence against the Earth (VAE) suggest that women and the Earth have always shared a unique and complex association (Cook, 2003; Ćorić, 2014; Fairbanks, 2010). Drawing parallels between society's treatment of the physical and natural environment and women, this paper will examine VAW's leading issues and characteristics within the context of environmental and sustainable development. In this paper, we formulate, cast, and present an expanded understanding of the relationship between violence against the physical and natural environment and VAW using the ecological/systems ecofeminism approach. The paper will spot the drivers and inter-linkages between the two factors to enhance our understanding and conceptualization. Taking a different approach, we describe and understand the effects of violence on the climate and determine how the rehabilitation of nature and Mother Earth could be instigated and strengthened in VAW.

BACKGROUND ON VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

Violence is the intentional use of physical force or authority against another person, group, or community. VAW persists worldwide despite efforts to end it (World Health Organization, 2013a, 2013b). Violence affects entire populations, families, and communities (Ellsberg et al., 2008). Discriminatory

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gender norms and legislation justify violence. VAW reinforces gender inequality by exercising authority, dominance, and exploitation. In 2018, over 30% of women who have been in a relationship experienced physical and sexual assault, according to the World Health Organization. Studies show that intimate partner violence harms women's emotional and physical health. Based on age, gender, colour, and ethnicity, intimate partner violence (IPV) – including physical, sexual, and psychological abuse – varies widely within and between nations. Despite a surge in complaints of violence against men and boys, women remain the main victims and survivors. Different measurement methods in study cause prevalence data to vary greatly. Disparities in the criteria of violence, abuse, maltreatment, victimization, and harassment prevent many survivors from reporting violence. Flexibility in concept use has also reduced data reliability and accuracy. Additionally, most intimate partner violence (IPV) perpetrators are men. Rape, assault, and homicide data on women have been consistent. Women are most often murdered by intimate partners. Most gender-based violence victims know their abusers. Girls are more vulnerable to sexual violence from teachers, family, boyfriends, and neighbours. A romantic partner kills women more often than an unfamiliar person.

Patriarchy and the belief that women are inferior and oppressed drive VAW. Gendered systems target women in predictable ways that differ from other socio-demographic groupings, resulting in VAW. VAW is common in every clan, caste, kinship group, and culture, suggesting gender-based social structures. In understanding VAW, Brownmiller (1975) used the patriarchal system to evaluate men's power and women's subjection. Power dynamics and systems that support dominance are called patriarchy. According to Onwutuebe (2019), patriarchy underlies gender power disparities. "Patriarchy maintains gender inequality by favouring men" (p. 1). According to Sen and Östlin (2008), gender roles and prescriptions are socially constructed and shaped by power dynamics and authority between men and women. VAW may be normalized in societies that encourage it. Men use this violence to dominate women, dehumanize their victims, and justify their conduct (Breines & Gordon, 1983). Das (2006) states that households, schools, religious organizations, and community activities teach and promote violence, making it normal. Culture portrays women as meek and wanting to be ruled (Das, 2006). Several academic fields have used structured social movements to raise awareness of gender-based violence (Renzetti et al., 2001; Yllo, 1993). The normalization of violence allows men to control women's lives and bodies overtly and covertly (Bervian et al., 2019). Following Setswana "mantwane" (playing house) traditions and age-based customs, boys can fight and use weapons to build strength. Girls are urged to collect firewood, soil, and pots while pretending to "cook" for male "hunters" during these games. Thus, patriarchy is maintained by several interdependent and interconnected institutions that work seamlessly as a well-oiled system.

BACKGROUND ON VIOLENCE AGAINST THE NATURAL ENVIRONMENT – THE EARTH

Climate change which affects mostly the natural environment refers to human-induced or human-caused climate change, which results in earthquakes, tornados, flooding, and droughts – the increasingly extreme variation of long-term average weather conditions worldwide. Climate change is increasing in frequency and intensity of natural disasters around the world. The impact of global warming is also accelerating. The "natural environment" refers to several spheres, including the atmosphere, geosphere, hydrosphere, biosphere, and noosphere (Berry, 1988). The United Nations Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (UNIPCC) has defined climate change as "any change in climate over time, whether due to natural variability or as a result of human activity" (UNIPCC, 2007, p. 30). The United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (2022) defines climate change as "…a change of climate which is attributed directly or indirectly to human activity that alters the composition of the global atmosphere and which is in addition to natural climate variability observed over comparable time periods" (Article 1.2). The climate crisis has been associated with inconsiderate human action. The first kind of climate change is natural climate cycles, which have caused wet and dry years and hot and cold seasons. Throughout our history on this planet, these natural cycles have caused us to experience flooding and droughts. The second type of climate change is anthropogenic climate change, which means human-induced or human-caused climate change. The anthropogenic type interacts with the natural cycles of the climates. Human-led activities on this planet are affecting the environment. Climate change, therefore, includes the continued growth and changes in atmospheric concentrations of greenhouse gases which ultimately result in disruptions of global biogeochemical, ecological, economic, and social systems (UN, 2020). Human activities are considered a major driving important force driving climate change by altering the atmosphere (Gifford, 2008). Climate change results from the cumulative effects of greenhouse gas emissions, caused by more than a century and a half of burning fossil fuels like coal, oil, and gas resulting from industrialization, as well as increased deforestation, fertilizer use, and livestock production (Lindsey & Dahlman, 2020; UN, 2020). The gases then absorb and discharge the sun's energy, leading the Earth's temperature to rise steadily. Climate change occurs because extreme weather patterns have adverse impacts, leading to widespread natural disasters and emergencies (Blaikie et al., 1994). Climate change alters weather patterns, resulting in heavier rainfalls, floods, prolonged droughts and higher temperatures, crop failure, livestock and wildlife loss, and food insecurity. When the atmosphere has warmed up, it collects and preserves more water, negatively affecting weather conditions, such that dry areas become drier and wet areas become wetter (Lindsey & Dahlman, 2020). Higher temperatures cause the Earth to become hotter, so oceans become warm and expand. Snow and ice melt and diminish. Sea levels rise, leading to a feedback loop that exacerbates the readily existing adverse effects (Denchak, 2017; Lindsey & Dahlman, 2020; UN, 2020). The adverse effects of climate change are natural disasters, including storms, floods, hurricanes, wildfires, droughts and sea level rise, heat waves, and rising insect-borne diseases. Climate change affects virtually everyone on Earth, both directly and indirectly (Denchak, 2017; UN, 2020).

Natural disasters result from natural hazards. There is currently considerable scientific evidence suggesting the

existence of human-induced global warming, leading to rising sea levels (Flannery, 2009). The global climate is changing, with negative consequences (Flannery, 2009). The world has experienced rising temperatures and extended periods of delayed rains (especially in areas that depend on rain-fed arable agriculture) due to climatic changes and global warming, leading to poor yields for farmers (Rao et al., 2019). Drastic shifts in climate patterns and seasons manifest in prolonged dry spells and delayed rainfall. Livestock survival is threatened, as grazing land cannot sustain current herds until the next rainy and grazing season. Overgrazing is a real threat to livelihoods due to increased herd size (of both domestic and wild animals), prolonged dry spells, hot temperatures, increased soil erosion, inadequate water availability and general depletion of natural resources (Anderson & Bausch, 2006). Tacey (2009a, 2009b) and Lant et al. (2019) suggest that economically driven human activities are instrumental to carbon, water, nitrogen, phosphorus, and other critical cycles. The imbalances increase international air and water temperatures, rising sea levels, rising global temperatures and sea ice melting (Arora-Jonsson, 2011; IPCC, 2007). Changing weather patterns negatively affect people and the environment (Chinsinga & Chasukwa, 2018).

The UNIPCC conducted a study and recommended that global greenhouse gas emissions be cut in half by 2030 and entirely by 2040 to prevent the most catastrophic effects of climate change. The UNIPCC worked jointly with the United States Agency for International Development and the International Union for Conservation of Nature and gathered experiences from worldwide to provide environmental policymakers and practitioners with evidence of the multiple inter-linkages between VAW and environmental issues. The study, entitled Gender-based violence and environment linkages: The violence of inequality, reviewed over 1,000 sources of information, 100 case study submissions, and surveyed over 300 expert informant interviews (Castañeda et al., 2020). The study found that the VAW-environment linkages present barriers to proper, adequate, rights-based conservation and sustainable development. Until recently, climate change was separated from humanitarian responses. The commitment to taking a nexus approach is reflected in several global initiatives.

THE CONNECTION BETWEEN WOMEN, EARTH, AND VIOLENCE

Since time immemorial, women and Earth have been seen to share a caring bond, whose existence is critical for all humankind. Emerging research indicates that vulnerabilities related to climate change and its impacts on communities are gendered (Dankelman & Davidson, 2008; MacGregor, 2010). Patriarchal relationships between men and women have existed since time immemorial. These relationships, in their distorted interpretations, have consequently affected women who live with men and also the natural and physical environments where they live.

Gender Inequalities and Access to and Control over Natural Resources

Climate change has gendered impacts. Social inequality along the lines of gender, race, socioeconomic class, and all the ways that people in our society are either privileged or disadvantaged means that those different groups of people will be affected differently by climate change, and we need to prepare for that as well. Environmental degradation and natural resource scarcity pose significant threats to ecosystems and livelihoods, resulting in or exacerbating biodiversity loss, food insecurity, poverty, displacement, violence, and loss of traditional and cultural knowledge.

VAW has been employed as a method of quelling resistance from local communities during disputes and forceful evictions because of large-scale developments (Rustad et al., 2016). VAW is often employed to maintain these power imbalances, violently reinforcing sociocultural expectations and norms and exacerbating gender inequality. For example, when attempting to enter agricultural markets, women can experience partner violence as their partners seek to control finances and maintain economic dependencies. Armed military and security forces involved in large-scale infrastructure developments, extractive work, and protected area rangers have also deployed VAW to pressure local communities (primarily women) or exploit them.

Women are likely to be more affected when crops fail because they often have limited land ownership and less access to productive resources to improve yield. Because of poor yields in crop production, men may be forced to leave rural areas to search for greener pastures and better jobs, leaving behind wives, mothers, sisters, and dependent children. The burden of tending livestock, caring for dependent children, and crop production may fall entirely on rural women with limited resources to support their children. Women are therefore vulnerable to abuse from male employees on the farms and maybe to contracting HIV. Women are more likely to experience IPV if they have inadequate education, exposure to mothers being abused by a partner, abuse during childhood, attitudes toward accepting violence, male privilege, and women's subordinate status (Conroy, 2014; Devereux, 1999). Women are responsible for water collection, and a decrease in the availability of freshwater means women and girls will spend more time collecting water for their families. Additionally, the responsibility for caring for those who fall ill due to the increased water-borne diseases associated with the inevitable decrease in water quality will also fall on women and girls. The workload increase results in women and girls having less time to earn an income and education or contribute to community-level decision-making processes, including climate change and disaster risk reduction. An increasing population and demand for water from residential, commercial, and industrial sources, including mining, will interact with declining rainfall, rising temperatures, and increased evapotranspiration rates which exacerbate drought and water scarcity and high mortality among livestock and wildlife.

Harvesting of Natural Products and Violence Against Women

Gender roles such as gathering firewood and water collection activities are indirectly associated with VAW (Sommer et al., 2015; Wan et al., 2011). Women have been harvesting sand, thatching grass, phane (*Imbrasia belina*), insects (nyeza), veld vegetables (nyevi, mowa, delele) and fruits (swanja, zwigwa, phuzu, wakwa, thewa, etc.), veld roots (bande, nyingwe,

bari, tenda, tjibu, etc.), firewood, and fish as sources of livelihood. Edible insects and phane are economically significant natural products and constitute animal protein sources in most African countries (Akpalu et al., 2009; Banjo et al., 2006; Chavunduka, 1975).

Since time immemorial, phane has been a reliable source of livelihood for Botswana, especially in the northeast, and other neighbouring countries. The ethnic groups that have depended on it have their systems of ensuring that some of the mature phane goes underground (referred to as sombe) to undergo a period of diapause, and then butterflies would lay eggs for the next harvest. A study conducted in Botswana found that most of the harvesting and processing of phane is done by women and children, giving the community a source of protein and an opportunity to make money. About 95% of harvesters were poor, rural women; of these, 73% lived within 50 km of the harvesting areas (Illgner & Nel, 2000).

Women are often responsible for most of the unpaid care tasks in the household, such as fetching firewood, water, and vegetables and fruits in the wild. Resource scarcity increases the risk that women will be victims of violence. Violence occurs during typically gendered tasks such as collecting water, sand, fish, wild fruits and other veld products, and fuel wood. The risk of sexual assault also increases, especially in regions characterized by armed gangs. Increasing drought and deforestation lead to the development of arid areas, making gathering firewood precarious (Kgathi & Mlotshwa, 1997; Kgathi & Motsholapheko, 2002). Their lives are directly affected by reduced water availability for drinking, cooking, and hygiene; food insecurity; and health consequences of nutritional deficiencies (Arora-Jonsson, 2011; Dankelman & Jansen, 2010; Denton, 2002; Kgathi, 1992). There is also an added burden of travelling long distances looking for firewood and water when nearby sources become depleted (Kakota et al., 2011). Policies designed to develop and strengthen local communities' resilience have been seen as the gendered nature of climate change and its effects (Alston, 2013; Terry, 2009), wholly either overlook or incorrectly formulate gender issues in policy development (Arora-Jonsson, 2011).

This shift takes time from focusing on educational or economic activities outside the home, thus reinforcing economic dependence on men as well as exposing women to risk of being sexually violated by men who waylay them on their paths. Low educational attainment can increase the long-term vulnerability of girls who cannot learn skills that might better help them adapt. Women also tend not to have financial resources to adapt to climate impacts, like the ability to afford drought-resistant crops. Consequently, impoverished women and girls (and also impoverished men and boys) may be forced to engage in unsustainable environmental practices to maintain a livelihood, such as deforestation (Röhr, 2007; UN Women, 2009). In combination with terrorism and communal conflicts, climate events have acted as a "threat multiplier," exacerbating and causing widespread insecurity, migration, and increasing levels of IPV, sexual violence, and child marriage. In East Africa, slow-onset adverse events such as drought and famine are directly linked to the risk of IPV, sexual violence, and early marriages for women and girls (Epstein et al., 2020; National Crime Research Centre, 2014). Also, a study found that during drought in Mozambique, transactional sex was high, and girls reported receiving gifts from older men in exchange for sex as they went to fetch water far away from home (IFRC, 2015). As fish has become scarce, women who live on Africa's coasts and lakes have suffered under the Jaboya System in the eastern African region around Lake Victoria (Asiki et al., 2011). Male fishers peddling their wares may expect payment but sometimes demand a sex-for-fish transaction (Asiki et al., 2011; Béné & Merten, 2008). Male supervisors in natural resource industries such as fisheries and coffee picking abuse non-consenting women by consigning them to dangerous work or limiting hours if their sexual advances are denied (UN Women, 2018).

SYMBOLIZATION OF THE EARTH AND THE BODY AS VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

In Earth-centred mythologies, the relationship between the female body and the land is sacred for the well-being of all living beings. The connection between women and the Earth is also depicted in cultural symbolic narratives that link the womb to the soil. Symbolization is associated with symbolic interactionism by George Herbert Mead (1863–1931), who looked at how people assemble a sense of "self" over time based on social experience. Hence, through the human process of finding meaning in surroundings, people define their identities, bodies, and feelings and come to socially construct the world around them.

Women are viewed as nature, and some connections drawn between nature and women are menstruation and the moon, childbirth and creation, virgin earth, fertile land, and the reference to the soil as barren. Conflating productive and reproductive qualities of women and environment demonizes them (Barry, 2015). Sometimes, women are seen as nurturing mothers; but in other cases, they are viewed as harsh, uncontrollable, and wild. The earth, as symbolized by women, is viewed as the supporter of life and also the cause of disorder with natural disasters, storms, and droughts (Plant, 1989).

Cook (2003) contends that in their Mohawk language, the word for midwife is *iewirokwas*, to describe that women who are midwives are actually, "…pulling the baby out of the Earth," from water (read placenta in the mother's women, which is depicted as a dark wet place. Cook (2003) suggests that human life begins, in the womb. Cook (2003) suggests that in their Native American belief system, the waters of the Earth and the waters of our bodies are considered to be the same kind of water, with no distinction. Cook (2003) explains that women are connected to Mother Earth through the waters of the female womb and the breast milk. That being the case, one could see the first ecological connection between Mother Earth, VAE and VAW as cemented (Maracle, 2002).

Barrenness and "Cervical Hostility"

Barrenness and "cervical hostility" are applied to women perceived as delaying getting pregnant or having difficulty conceiving. Sperm has always been considered potent, with a never-ending ability to fertilize the women's womb (land/ground) until it reaches a hostile environment inside the woman. At the cervix, it dies before fertilizing the woman. Women are accused of killing sperm with their cervix. Such a ground is considered thorny, dry, or rocky, poisonous enough to kill the potent sperm. Such narratives have led to violence

where the woman is perceived as having a weapon inside her that kills a man's seed. Such narratives assume that only women can have reproductive difficulty, hence being labelled as barren. A womb (read land/ground) is expected to bear fruit without fail upon fertilization and watering. Symbolically, sperm is a seed planted for the womb to produce. The womb is considered a place where fertilization and fruition occur. Women are referred to as barren and not having the "fruit of the womb" when they have no children.

Rape Against Women's Bodies During War and Conflict Situations

The connection between environmental degradation through globalized capitalistic economic policies and VAW is made more poignant through the violation of women's bodies through rape and sexual assault of girls during war and conflict situations (Mies & Shiva, 2014; Saidero, 2017; Shiva, 1998; Vakoch, 2012). Rape is increasingly used as a weapon of war. Women experience more violence during environmental conflicts such as theft, physical abuse and assault, psychological abuse, sexual harassment and sexual assault, including rape, forced reproduction, unwanted pregnancies, and unsafe abortion, leading to high-risk pregnancies and sexually transmitted infections (Le Masson et al., 2016). Gender inequalities and violence are found in all places affected by environmental change and disasters.

In the case of illegal migrant women, rape may be seen as the payment for penetrating a foreign land and the subjugation of men. Narratives embody aspects of male dominance, presented as "the forced penetration of the virgin land"; conquest of the land also mirrors the mastery over the women who occupy the ground; hence, nature is seen as feminine (Sharkey, 1994, p. 18). Sexual abuse is faulted as a weapon of suppression and defeat, used to impose gender power inequalities (women on men and men on men), and dehumanizing, desecrating, and establishing the dominance of certain males and the possession over the foreign women's bodies in the absence of those women's desire. Such acts may lead to conflicts, estrangement, and erasure of passion, as the couple sits under the historical weight of the sexual violence, leading to rejection of one's body and self-hatred and avoidance of the partner. Belittled by the other powerful men, the men may resort to violence against their women. Maracle (2015) states that violent behaviours within the community arise from the historical legacy of colonialism due to the loss of lands, culture, health, and sense of nationhood. Deer (2004), therefore, suggests "rape as an unlawful 'invasion' of the body, mind and spirit […] as a violation of a person's humanity" (p. 137). As such, healing can come from restoring the land-body-spirit connection by recognizing our mutual interdependence with the land (Deer, 2004, 2009) and embodying a feminine "ethos of partnership" (Eisler, 1987, p. xvii).

Culturally-based references to the male organ (penis) as "machine," "rod," "dick," "hammer," and "family knobkerrie" (*molamo wa lelwapa*) is common practice in many African cultures. The reference exemplifies a family-based blunt object, a knobkerrie to be specific, that has piercing power enough to penetrate the female reproductive organs and silence her. The *molamo wa lelwapa* is depicted, as a infiltratory weapon of discipline, on that is not necessarily for pleasure and vengeance. In this case, a woman may be raped continuously by her husband or male partner where she is suspected to be unfaithful. The rape is metaphorically viewed as the conquest of unoccupied virgin land, and the sexual penetration is used to justify subjugation, expansion, and undermining of the local men. The female body and the land are believed to have a connection that is critical for the health of living beings (Saidero, 2017). Generations are produced through women's bodies (Cook, 2003).

DISCUSSION

This paper integrates multiple streams of thought, such as integrated person-in-environment perspective (ecological systems), ecofeminism to gain traction on understanding the effects of VAW and VAE. The importance of making these connections has implications for epistemological, conceptual, theoretical analysis and contribution. This paper maintains that VAW is a form of gendered power and control relations, used to maintain unequal relations between men and women.

Person-in-Environment Perspective (Ecological Systems)

Ecological/systems frameworks have their origins in the works of Gordon (1969) and Bartlett (1970) with the "goodness-of-fit model." Germain (1978) asserted, "People and their environments are viewed as interdependent, complementary parts of a whole in which person and environment are constantly changing and shaping the other" (p. 539). The ecological model to examine human development as nested within their interaction with the environment and the interaction between the two (Bronfenbrenner, 1974, 1977, 1979, 1995). The model states that individuals develop within "nested" levels of the environment or the ecology that interact with one another and shape attitudes, beliefs, and behaviours. A nested ecological model could advance the understanding of behaviours around climate change and VAW. The various systems are the individual (intrapersonal), microsystem (interpersonal), meso/exosystem (social networks/community), macrosystem (society), and chronosystem. Ecological models should be tailored to specific rather than general behaviours so that the potential risk and protective factors may be clearly articulated at each level. Finally, multi-level interventions should be most effective in changing behaviour at each level, depending on the potency of protective factors in suppressing the effects of risk (Sallis et al., 2008). The ecological model underscores the fact that in order to develop strategies for reducing or eliminating the risk of violence, it is critical to develop an understanding of the interplay of biological, psychological, social, cultural, economic, and political factors that exacerbate women's and girls' risk of exposure to violence as well as men's likelihood of perpetrating violence (Heise et al., 1999).

Understanding VAW and environmental degradation requires consideration of the ecological patterns, their risks and vulnerabilities. Women bear the adverse effects of climate change, but are also better placed to create a clean, healthy, and sustainable planet. These risk factors would make women vulnerable and prone to poor health outcomes due to climate change. Risk factors could influence some vulnerability, and protective factors protect populations from risk factors. Researchers have examined the degree to which hypothesized protective factors moderate the relationship between

a risk factor and an outcome (Aiken & West, 1991; Jenson & Fraser, 2006; Small & Memmo, 2004). Protective factors reduce women's interpersonal and environmental challenges and build a network of protective or supportive factors that can help them cope with risks. We contend that built within the ecological settings lie various risk factors that may increase the likelihood of violence.

Existing ecological systems have relied on personal or "adaptive processes" as the cornerstone of functioning by looking at "environmental demands," while predominantly concentrating on individual "adaptation" (Fook, 1993; Gould, 1987; Kemp, 1994). Saleebey (1990) states that the essential focus of most ecological/system models is on how individuals adapt to environmental demands and that "the realities of power, conflict, oppression, and violence, so central to the survival of many groups, are given a curious and unreal patina by the adaptation perspective" (p. 11). A transpersonal understanding of one's identity with the natural environment, including the Earth, once known as the *anima mundi*, is absent from the discourse. Humans and nature cannot be separated because they are intertwined, independent, and mutually reinforcing (Besthorn, 1997; Besthorn & Tegtmeier, 1999).

Ecofeminist Approaches

The intersection of feminist theory and environmental protection is one topical issue that has gained traction, notable being the theoretical contribution of Wangari Maathai, a Kenyan scientist, feminist, and ecological and political activist and winner of the Nobel Peace Prize in 2004 (Maathai, 2006). This paper reflects on her contribution from a philosophical perspective and focuses particularly on the system of ethical values which Maathai developed in her practical work for environmental protection and poverty reduction in the rural areas of Kenya, as well as in the concept of ecofeminism.

Hudson-Weems (1993) opted for the term "Africana Womanism," which is grounded in the African culture and "necessarily focuses on the unique experiences, needs and desires of Africana women" (p. 6). African women are concerned with surviving famine, hunger, drought, disease, and war, which oftentimes are an offshoot of climate change and environmental degradation. Ecofeminism grew out of various fields of feminist inquiry and activism and draws from ecology, feminism, and socialist (Gaard, 1993). Ecofeminism converges the ecology and feminism (Birkeland, 1993; Mies & Shiva, 2014; Ruether, 1992; Saidero, 2017; Shiva, 1998; Vakoch, 2012). Ecofeminism presuppositions social transformation, survival, and justice, calling for reassessment and reconstructing of values and relations for equality, cultural diversity, and nonviolence (Birkeland, 1993).

Ecofeminists explain the connection women's oppression and the violence against Mother Earth experience are intertwined (Sultana, 2014). Bee et al. (2015) argue for a challenge of masculine technical and expert knowledge about climate change and the tendency to reinforce gendered polarities and Global North and South divides that "portray women as vulnerable." Shiva (1998) illustrates that the exclusion of women in participating in development results from the transformation of nature into raw materials, and the destructive attitudes that have normalized violence against women's bodies and against the land. Similarities have been drawn between the way society treats the environment, the animals, or the resources and the way women are treated. Firstly, ecofeminism calls for eradication of power-based relationships and having relationships based on reciprocity and mutuality as we strive for survival and justice. The second one is social transformation – intellectual transformation. Ecofeminism urges non-dualistic and non-hierarchical forms of thought as these negatively associate women with nature, hence validating devaluation and domination (Howell, 1997). Third, ecofeminism calls for reforming nature to transform human relationships with nature. The argument is that nature should not be viewed as a commodity and an object, but should be respected (Birkeland, 1993). Since ecofeminism focuses on the ecology, it encourages that there should be interconnectedness and interdependence between woman and nature. Lastly, ecofeminism argues that what ecology teaches about nature is equally relevant to humans. There is a need to understand human diversity and avoid domination and exploitation of humans, which can be a threat to human and ecological survival and justice (Howell, 1997).

Ecofeminism explores both the connection of women and nature and domination of one over the other. It argues that the ideology that permits oppression from gender, class, race, sexuality, and physical abilities is same as the one that endorses the oppression of nature (Gaard, 1993). In her article, Is female to male as nature is to culture?, Ortner (1974) argues that when women are closer to nature, they are then subjected to subordination. Ecofeminism contends that there are parallels between the treatment of women and that of nature, and they both serve instrumental roles and are valued for their worth to others (Plumwood, 1986). Ecofeminism, therefore, links women and the earth through the experience of patriarchal oppression. Ecofeminism calls for an understanding of oppression of women and nature, and both dominations must be eradicated to do away with systems that subordinate women and nature (Birkeland, 1993; Ruether, 1992). Ecofeminism describes the framework that allows these forms of oppression as patriarchy (Gaard, 1993). The premise of ecofeminism is to end all forms of oppression (Adam, 1991). Ecofeminists have alluded to the negative implications of feminization of nature. Ecofeminism suggests a historical connection between women and nature and compares the exploitation of women with that of nature or the environment.

CONCLUSION

Emerging issues in VAW and VAE suggests that women and the Earth have always shared a unique and complex association worth investigating. The relationship between the female body and the land is sacred for the well-being of all living beings. The unique knowledge held by women should be respected and effectively utilized in responding to and managing climate and disaster risks. On one hand, the paper expounded that ecofeminism seeks to heal this dulling of our sentient capacities by reweaving the inherent interconnectedness in all of the universe through a revitalization of each person's direct, lived, and sensual experience with the complex whole of nature. On the other hand, the ecological theory has done an excellent job defining the external environment as familial, built, organizational, and social dimensions. All these point to the significance that individuals should not

view nature as Other, unlike something upon which they must depend, but rather as something to be managed, controlled, or adapted.

Most of the literature on climate change has been predominantly focusing on the experiences of women, and the environmental shifts, largely driven by climate change defenders, non-governmental organizations, and interventions that operate in places affected by climate change. We have expounded on how violence risks are exacerbated by different types of climate hazards. Future efforts should go into preparedness work, the development of early warning systems for both climate change hazards and gender-based violence, anticipatory action, and forecast-based financing. There is a need for a coordination and collaboration on climate change and violence prevention, risk mitigation, and response that integrates the natural and social environments, adopts ecofeminism approaches, and consolidates approaches in the intervention.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST DISCLOSURES

The authors have no conflicts of interest to declare.

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SOCIAL INNOVATION NARRATIVE

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Responding to the needs of medical laboratory professionals: The CSMLS Mental Health Toolkit

Rosina Mete*, Brandon Djukic*, Christine Nielsen*

ABSTRACT

Canadian Society for Medical Laboratory Science (CSMLS) is Canada's national certifying body and professional society for medical laboratory professionals. Their research revealed increasing levels of workplace stress among their membership and concerns regarding burnout. The implications of ignoring this trend could have led to significant workplace issues and concerns with medical laboratory testing and analysis. Consequently, CSMLS developed the Mental Health Toolkit, a dynamic website featuring mental health concepts, self-assessment tools, coping skills, and strategies to better manage stress. The Mental Health Toolkit is available free to CSMLS members. It was used as a resource for mental health by medical laboratory professionals during the height of the COVID pandemic. CSMLS continues to embrace education and awareness regarding mental health to help address stigma among medical laboratory professionals.

Key Words Medical laboratory; healthcare; mental health; stress; burnout.

INTRODUCTION

The Canadian Society for Medical Laboratory Science (CSMLS) is the national certifying body for medical laboratory technologists and medical laboratory assistants, and the national professional society for Canada's medical laboratory professionals. Medical laboratory technologists "scope of practice involves procuring and testing patient samples while employing and interpreting appropriate quality control measures" (VanSpronsen et al., 2022, p.480). Medical laboratory assistants' roles feature "collection, labelling, and sorting along with preparing blood, tissue and other patient samples" (Government of Canada, 2021, para. 2).

CSMLS has over 14,000 members in Canada and worldwide. Their website's purpose includes "to promote, maintain and protect the professional identity and interests of the medical laboratory professional and of the profession" (CSMLS, n.d.). As a result, CSMLS engages in advocacy and research regarding the medical laboratory profession. Information was provided anecdotally from their members who reported increased stress levels and difficulty managing stress within the workplace. Consequently, a research project to examine stress, mental health, and burnout within medical laboratory professionals was developed, the first of its kind in Canada. The 2016 research project, approved by the CSMLS Research Ethics Board, examined stress levels of medical laboratory professionals with a representative focus group and determined that over 30% of the participants experience "high levels of stress on a daily basis" (Grant et al., 2016, p.3). Additionally, 76% of participants noted they "felt burnt out at least weekly; if not daily, because of work stressors" (Grant et al., 2016, p.4). The research outlined significant concerns with managing stress and experiencing burnout with the people on the front lines of healthcare. The implications of ignoring this trend could have led to significant workplace issues and concerns with medical laboratory testing and analysis.

Consequently, due to their national position, CSMLS engaged in further research to develop an innovative platform to address mental health concerns among its members: the CSMLS Mental Health Toolkit. The following article will outline the CSMLS Mental Health Toolkit as the first of its kind for a regulated national profession to provide awareness and education regarding mental health and wellbeing, encourage an empowering stance for mental health engagement, and provide resources and strategies to address mental health and wellbeing.

The article's three authors are employees with CSMLS or hired as a mental health consultant with the organization.

CSMLS (2017) is a forward-thinking organization which designed its own Mental Health Initiative and includes

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the Mental Health Toolkit. They also continue to develop evidence-based initiatives for their members (Mete et al., 2024). Furthermore, their commitment to promoting mental health in the workplace is evident in their participation in the *By Health for Health Collaborative of Canada*. It is a commitment developed with the Mental Health Commission and features a Declaration of Commitment to Psychological Safety and Healthcare.

MENTAL HEALTH OF MEDICAL LABORATORY PROFESSIONALS

Medical laboratory professionals are on the frontlines of healthcare, and their duties require strong skills in critical thinking, time management, attention to detail, and problem-solving, along with specific laboratory skills such as specimen handling. The demands of their workload have grown, especially with recent events such as COVID-19, which can impact their mental health.

While CSMLS focuses on information, advocacy, and support for Canadian medical laboratory professionals, globally individuals within the field also encountered similar stressors before and during the COVID-19 pandemic. Medical laboratory professionals' traits may lead them to more perfectionist tendencies which can lead to burnout. This phenomenon was described in a Polish study by Robakowska et al. (2018), where participants with higher levels of specific perfectionist tendencies experienced more significant levels of exhaustion and disengagement from their work. Post-pandemic studies by Ouyang et al. (2023) revealed that medical laboratory professionals who dealt with the COVID-19 pandemic in China experienced increased psychological symptoms. Their research noted participants over 40 were more likely to report symptoms of anger, worry, and sleep issues. The authors hypothesized that "older participants have poorer physical fitness than younger colleagues and are prone to some psychiatric discomfort under continuous high-intensity coronavirus nucleic acid detection work" (Ouyang et al., 2023, p.8). Swaray et al. (2021) found similar results among a Ghanaian population of medical laboratory professionals. Medical laboratory professionals involved in addressing the COVID-19 pandemic reported levels of psychological distress, specifically symptoms of depression. It is evident from the literature that medical laboratory professionals worldwide have experienced similar stressors as those within Canada.

IMPLEMENTATION AND DEVELOPMENT OF THE CSMLS MENTAL HEALTH TOOLKIT

In 2016, CSMLS designed and launched a mental health study using both a survey (the National Mental Health Survey) questionnaire and focus groups. Individuals also submitted their "mental health stories" and how it impacted their work. The individuals who shared their stories were board members who helped reduce perceived stigma and encouraged participation. Analysis of this mental health data collected allowed CSMLS to form the basis of future action. CSMLS then engaged its board of directors to implement policy changes throughout the organization. These changes supported a positive culture, internally and externally, for healthy work environments and resulted in formal recognition of mental health awareness campaigns by the society, a Whistle Blower position statement and an updated Quality of Work-life position statement. Consequently, the Mental Health Toolkit website was then designed and built based on the mental health study findings. Additional information subsections, tools, and interactive components such as videos and online surveys or written information can be found within each section of the website. This multimedia format was used to help break down complex concepts into digestible pieces in ways that would suit different learning styles.

Within its initial promotion from 2016 to 2017, roughly 2,200 unique users visited the toolkit. Seventy-three percent of the traffic was directed through internal communications, the CSMLS website, or our biweekly e-mail news (e-News). The external promotion began in 2017 to CSMLS' partners and other associations, including the Canadian Mental Health Association, Canadian Society of Association Executives, Organizations for Health Action, Sonography Canada, and The Canadian Association of Medical Radiation Technologists. Since its inception, the Mental Health Toolkit has been promoted and discussed at each of CSMLS's annual conferences, Labcon, and periodically at seminars, symposiums, and open forum events to remind members that it is available for them.

MENTAL HEALTH TOOLKIT

The CSMLS Mental Health Toolkit is a dynamic website that provides various information and resources in English and French to medical laboratory professionals. While CSMLS requires paid membership for certification and access to free learning opportunities, their journal as well as other benefits, the Toolkit is accessible for free to allow for full open access at https://mentalhealth.csmls.org.

Six current pathways are accessible via the website which are outlined for individuals, students, managers, employees, educators, and organizations. Each section begins with relevant information regarding mental health and the current field. For an individual, it describes the difference between mental wellbeing, mental health, and mental illness. For an employee, it outlines the CSMLS Standards of Practice, Code of Ethics, and Code of Professional Conduct. Relevant videos are included within each section to further explain concepts as applicable. Resource videos feature concepts like workplace wellbeing, reducing mental health stigma, coping strategies, and relevant workplace legislation concepts for Canadians.

Each section was created with specific resources for medical laboratory professionals. There are tailored videos from medical laboratory professionals who articulate their experiences with mental health in the field and their challenges. CSMLS continued to develop the initial Mental Health Toolkit in 2016 and in 2018, the website included the Faces of Mental Health where four CSMLS members outline their story with mental health, mental illness, and the importance of addressing mental health concerns as a medical laboratory professional.

To further enhance the visitor experience and enhance browsing, the CSMLS Mental Health Toolkit has four tabs at the top of the website. From left to right, visitors can select Take Charge and review the outline of the entire site (individual, student, employee, manager, organization, and educator). This

ability allows them to choose sections if they are looking for a specific term or resource. The second tab is Learn and features information and resources such as definitions and relevant legislation. Additionally, there is a featured section entitled Your Voice which contains videos from members regarding their mental health, advice for students and new graduates, and a mental health awareness gallery. The third tab is Search, allowing visitors to search for specific terms or phrases within the website. The final tab is Emergency Help and provides information on contacting 911 or their local distress line if the visitor is in crisis or experiencing an emergency. The four tabs of the Mental Health Toolkit provide a great overview of the site, further relevant resources, the ability to search, and crisis resources as required.

OUTCOMES AND IMPACT

CSMLS members have provided various feedback on the Mental Health Toolkit and its impact. Qualitative feedback and testimonials are outlined below which highlight the toolkit's impact especially in providing accessible resources and reducing mental health stigma:

- "I am proud that you are addressing workplace mental wellness. Very stressful occupation riddled with potential for anxiety and even PTSD."
- "I am discovering that stopping to think about the stressors in my workplace in a constructive manner like this survey is helping to lessen the stress."
- "I am finding this discussion very helpful. As much as each of us feels we work in our environment – reading the same responses from across the country reinforces that this is a national issue…"

CSMLS maintained statistics on the use of the Mental Health Toolkit and noted increased visits during the COVID-19 pandemic. Table I outlines the total page visits per year from 2017 to July 2024 and contrasts this with the number of unique visitors to the site. Unique visitors were identified through their internet protocol (IP) addresses. Each distinct IP address was counted as a "unique visitor." To help us compare the total and unique visitors the "return visitor ratio" was calculated by dividing the total page visits by the number of unique visitors.

Our preliminary data from 2017 showed that 86% of website visitors found the toolkit by either first visiting the CSMLS homepage or clicking on a link in an e-mail or e-News publication. This statistic supports that the use was likely member-driven due to their familiarity with CSMLS.

For subsequent years, CSMLS did not track website access to that same capacity, being content in providing the information to whoever may benefit from it. The 2018 access and usage patterns were very similar to those in 2017, though a slight increase in return visitors was found. In 2019, a rise in visitors over the previous 2 years was noted, but they were also less likely to be returning toolkit users. We attribute this rise and use pattern to our external promotion efforts, in combination with sustained CSMLS member use. In 2020, a sharp spike in site visits occurred, far surpassing the numbers expected from CSMLS members' past use and any promotional efforts when compared to 2019. We attribute this spike and the lingering tail into 2022 as a COVID-19-related artifact. The returning visitor ratio was also a little lower than what we observed in 2017–2018, with single-use visits becoming more common. By 2023 the usage patterns appeared to be most similar to what they were in 2017, suggesting a baseline demand level. We also note that it is likely at least some users may visit the toolkit for several consecutive years; however, we are limited by our analytics in defining unique visitors as per annum.

TABLE I Total page visits per year from 2017 to July 2024

Year	Page Visits	Unique Visitors	Return Visitor Ratio
2017	6,214	2,200	2.8
2018	6,497	1,910	3.4
2019	20,438	12,427	1.6
2020	78,101	43,779	1.8
2021	14,941	7,437	2.0
2022	11,032	8,193	1.3
2023	5,689	2,114	2.7
2024	1,996	1,023	2.0

The current year, 2024, is still ongoing but we expect the total visits, unique visitors, and returning visitors will continue to rise for the remainder of the year. We have also examined the traffic in a similar way to our preliminary analysis from 2017. We found that direct access to the toolkit, rather than through the CSMLS homepage, has now become the most common access method (52%). This is followed by inputting "https://mentalhealth.csmls.org" into a search engine (36%). Referral links such as e-News, e-mail, or social media make up an additional 12% of the traffic to the toolkit.

After reviewing the access data, it is evident that the Mental Health Toolkit supported medical laboratory professionals before and throughout the COVID-19 pandemic. The decrease in access may be related to familiarization with the tool, integration of strategies, or perhaps a return to a demand that is more representative of the CSMLS members' regular needs. However, it remains apparent that medical laboratory professionals regularly access the Mental Health Toolkit.

IMPLICATIONS AND FUTURE DIRECTIONS

There are many implications of the Mental Health Toolkit and its preliminary data findings. Content focused on specific relationship and financial stressors along with mental health videos provide further information on topics which may be helpful for medical laboratory professionals. The Mental Health Toolkit is an excellent example of a readily available resource for healthcare professionals to address mental health stigma, promote awareness and education, and develop strategies. As for future directions, CSMLS has conducted further research on stress and coping levels of new graduates in the field. Additionally, CSMLS regularly features mental health topics within their research journal, the Canadian Journal for Medical Laboratory Science and at their annual conference for members, Labcon. In 2022,

CSMLS conducted a pilot project regarding peer support among medical laboratory professionals and will be providing further initiatives to their members. In 2023, CSMLS partnered with *Beyond Silence*, which is a specific app to support healthcare workers and their mental health. ***Beyond Silence*** was developed by McMaster University and the School of Rehabilitation Science. CSMLS is completing a pilot test with *Beyond Silence* to gauge its utility with its members and the medical laboratory profession.

CONCLUSIONS

To conclude, the Mental Health Toolkit is an innovative and dynamic web-based tool that empowers medical laboratory professionals to take charge of their mental health. It was developed due to increasing trends in stress levels and burnout among medical laboratory professionals in Canada. The website is bilingual, easily accessible, and free. The website also has led to further mental health initiatives and research by CSMLS, the national association for medical laboratory professionals (Mete et al., 2024). CSMLS remains committed to understanding the stress and burnout situation with members. This initiative ensures continued prioritization of medical laboratory professionals' mental wellbeing and will further prepare them to face the challenges of a dynamic, ever-changing profession.

FUNDING

CSMLS (n.d.) is a not-for-profit organization funded entirely by membership dues and revenues from goods and services. They do not receive operational funding from governments or other organizations.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST DISCLOSURES

Christine Nielsen is the CEO and Brandon Djukic is the Research Manager at CSMLS. Rosina Mete worked as a mental health consultant with CSMLS and completed a review of the toolkit before it was published.

AUTHOR AFFILIATION

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SOCIAL INNOVATION NARRATIVE

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The ABCs of trauma-informed policing

Katherine J. McLachlan*,†

This article is directly related to the first global Trauma Informed Policing and Law Enforcement Conference held in Melbourne, Australia in February 2024.

ABSTRACT

Trauma-informed care and practice was developed over 20 years ago and is emerging as a way of working for the police, in corrections and courts, and broader contexts such as health and education services. I started my criminal justice career with South Australia Police in 2001. It was not until 2014 that I first heard the term "trauma-informed," which was regarding victim services. Back then, it was unclear how it might be applied in practice. Soon after, I was appointed to the Parole Board of South Australia in 2015. As a Parole Board member, I have interviewed more than 1,000 adults, many with chronic offending histories and most with trauma histories. In this paper, I draw from local case studies and apply the SAMHSA (2014) trauma-informed practice framework to explore "trauma-informed" policing. Trauma is understood to mean the impact of adversity (i.e., potentially traumatic events and experiences) on an individual's functioning and well-being. I outline the ABCs of a trauma-informed policing response: (A) trauma-informed policing requires an agenda, (B) trauma-informed policing is broad, and (C) trauma-informed policing is compassionate. Without the ABCs of trauma-informed policing, police responses may be, at best, well-intentioned good practice, but they should not be considered to be trauma-informed.

Key Words Trauma-informed practice; trauma-informed criminal justice; trauma-responsive; compassionate justice; trauma-informed policing.

INTRODUCTION

Three weeks ago, my father had a cardiac arrest. He was staying alone in a beachside caravan park about an hour's drive from home in Adelaide. That morning, he drove into town to buy a newspaper and collapsed on the footpath. Luckily, it happened across the road from a medical centre, meaning he got immediate medical attention. He was revived, taken by ambulance to the local hospital, and then airlifted to Adelaide. I know this because three and a half hours after the cardiac arrest, I spoke to the local police officer. He had spent a couple of hours identifying my mum and her phone number through family medical records. He had called her, and she had asked him to call me. Over the next couple of days, Senior Constable First Class Andrew Francis rang me. He asked whether we would like the caravan power turned off and the fridge emptied. He took possession of Dad's car until we could arrange to collect it. He also located and secured Dad's mobile phone and laptop for us. He kept the local community members informed of Dad's progress so that they were aware that their actions had genuinely saved his life.

So, what is the point of this story? Aside from trying to garner your sympathy, the point is that SC Francis's actions might be regarded as trauma-informed policing. In many ways, they reflect a trauma-informed response. SC Francis was patient and compassionate. He built trust and made me feel safer by answering all my questions (sometimes more than once). He offered choices and solutions and was flexible. He gave us control over the small things when a lot was out of our control.

However, while his actions contain many elements of a trauma-informed policing response, SC Francis has probably never heard of trauma-informed practice. He was just being a good cop and a decent person. In fact, trauma-informed practice is not about simply being "sweet, nice, and kind" (Treisman, 2022). Trauma-informed practice requires a structured approach. Thus, we come to the "A" in the ABCs of trauma-informed policing: A is for Agenda.

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A: TRAUMA-INFORMED POLICING HAS AN AGENDA

To be trauma-informed, a service or sector must:

- **Realize** what trauma is and the potential impacts of adversity,
- **Recognize** trauma symptoms experienced by the individual accessing the service,
- **Respond** appropriately to the individual's unique trauma, and
- **Resist re-traumatization** to avoid exacerbating an individual's trauma or causing secondary trauma through insensitive or inappropriate responses when providing services (SAMHSA, 2014).

This agenda has been articulated as four steps (the 4Rs) by the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA, 2014), as illustrated in Figure 1.

So, how is this model of trauma-informed practice relevant to police work? A trauma-informed police response must strive to achieve all four Rs, such that police:

- **realize** how trauma is relevant in their work (first R),
- **recognize** how trauma may impact someone's criminal behaviour or the different ways victims of crime may present or when a co-worker appears to be overwhelmed with policing work (second R),
- seek to **respond** (third R) in terms of policies, procedures, and practices to promote the trauma-informed principles outlined above, and
- actively **resist re-traumatization** (fourth R) – the most important of the SAMHSA's "Rs" – by avoiding responses that exacerbate or compound existing trauma (Gillespie-Smith et al., 2020).

A trauma-informed police response (the third R) requires the application of specific principles that characterize a trauma-informed response: safety, trustworthiness, choice, collaboration, and empowerment (Kezelman & Stavropoulos, 2012, p. 12). Specifically:

- Safety relates to physical and emotional safety,
- Trustworthiness refers to establishing mutually understood, clear, and consistent expectations and boundaries for workers and service users,
- Choice involves prioritising users' service preferences through information, options, and an awareness of their rights and responsibilities,
- Collaboration encourages the involvement of users in the planning and shared decision-making around activities and service settings, and
- Empowerment aims to promote the service users' skills through a strength-based approach.

The SAMHSA (2014) model also prioritizes peer support and historical, cultural, and gender issues.

In recognizing how trauma is relevant for police (second R), it is important to acknowledge that trauma does not cause crime, but crime may traumatize victims. Many people who offend have trauma. Trauma symptoms and manifestations may be risk factors for criminality. Most significantly, the criminal justice system is inherently traumatic (Cullen et al., 2011; McLachlan, 2024). Let me give you an example.

Fifteen years ago, I interviewed victims of sexual assault about their experiences reporting to South Australia Police (McLachlan, 2007). One woman is unforgettable. I called her "Charlotte." Charlotte was 16 years old. She had never had sex, and she was asleep in her bedroom when someone broke into her house, restrained her, and sexually assaulted her. Her father interrupted the assault; the perpetrator escaped, and the police were called.

Charlotte said:

> *A policewoman arrived and she said, "Look, we need you to give your description of what he looks like straight away so we can try to find him if we are able."*

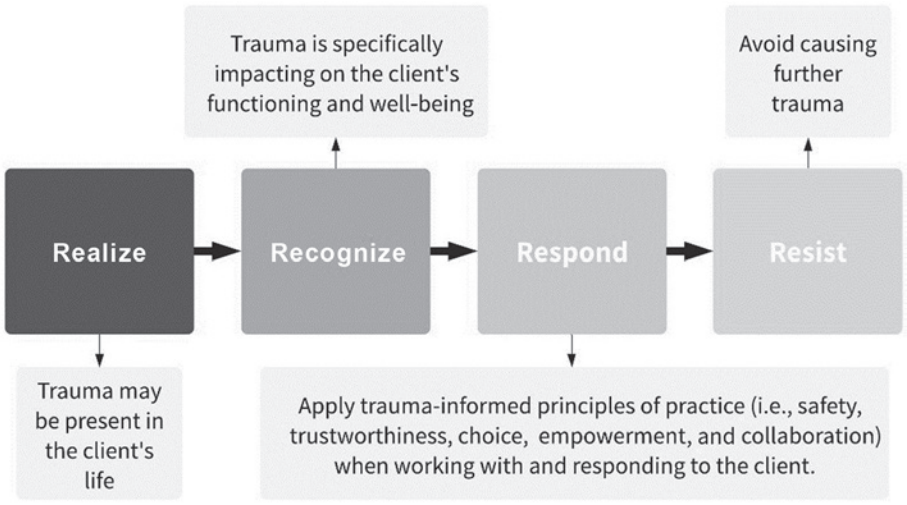

FIGURE 1 The 4Rs of trauma-informed practice (McLachlan, 2022, based on SAMHSA, 2014).

And so, I started giving this description and while he was in my room. I deliberately tried to remember everything I possibly could about him … And this policewoman said, "You remember so much it's as if you've made the story up."

That was the first thing that she said to me. And I felt really, really bad… (McLachlan, 2007, p. 153)

Charlotte was required to give a statement the same night she had been assaulted after she had undergone a forensic medical. She was not advised that she could have a support person present, nor were counsellors contacted.

A police woman gave me a cup of coffee and she asked me if I'd like a cigarette. And I said no.

And she said, "Well, often women like to have a cigarette after they've been raped." (McLachlan, 2007, p. 120)

The same night, a policewoman said to Charlotte:

"Now that this has happened to you, you're going to probably want to have counselling or they'll offer counselling to you."

And she said, "Be really wary of it … There are groups around but they are feminist groups."

And I didn't know much about feminists, and she said that "most of them are lesbians", and she said that, "They'll try and make you into a lesbian."

And I didn't even know what a lesbian was. I was going through puberty and I was … just too self-conscious about sexuality and sex to even, you know, to have thought about any of this.

…And so that is actually why I was really dead against counselling at the time. (McLachlan, 2007, p. 148)

Nothing about that experience was ok. As a result of her experience both as a crime victim and with police, her life trajectory completely changed. She moved away and, like many victims of crime, was re-victimized years later. This is not the police achieving its goal of community protection – it is the very opposite.

Suppose all police officers acted in a way that promoted safety, trust, empowerment, and choice for crime victims. Research relating to procedural fairness tells us that such responses will likely leave a positive legacy that does not re-traumatize (CVWEW, 2011). Police should always reassure victims of a crime that they are respected and not blamed for what has happened to them, and that their concerns have been heard. Police should answer victims' questions and offer time and space to process what has happened.

Yet, individual officers' responses are sometimes influenced by myths and stereotypes about "real" victims (Rich, 2019). Police officers often work shifts and are not always available or able to visit or call a victim of crime promptly. Victims may not understand that sometimes operational demands may prevent timely and thoughtful police responses. However, police officers have a responsibility to consider how their responses, delays, comments, or actions might be misinterpreted or misunderstood by victims of crime. Police should consider how a throw-away comment might potentially change someone's life. Trauma-informed responses and effective communication are vital to minimize the trauma caused by the criminal justice system.

However, reducing the traumatic impact of the criminal justice system is not just about supporting victims of crime. Thus, we come to the "B" in the ABCs of trauma-informed policing: B is for Broad.

B: TRAUMA-INFORMED POLICING IS BROAD

Trauma-informed policing should be universal and systemic (NES, 2021); embedded in policies, procedures, and practices; and the responsibility of both individual police officers and policing organizations (Senker et al., 2023). Most examples of trauma-informed policing focus on small elements of a trauma-informed approach, such as acknowledging and applying victims' rights. True trauma-informed responses (third R) are provided to victims of crime, people who have offended, and workers too, because a true trauma-informed policing response focuses not just on victims or alleged offenders but on peers and colleagues as well. This brings me to the "C" in the ABCs of trauma-informed policing (and my final story): C is for Compassionate.

C: TRAUMA-INFORMED POLICING IS COMPASSIONATE

Compassion centres around a collective and empathic understanding of human suffering. It is an intentional response aimed at relieving the suffering of others. Hopkins et al. (2022) focus on humanizing the people who offend "to understand the individual and systemic causes of their criminality…" (p. 2). So, let us consider the humanity of someone who has offended, "Max" (McLachlan, 2021). Max was convicted of drug trafficking. His story illustrates why people who offend should always be treated with compassion – because you do not know the depths of adversity some people have experienced. Max's story is told through the words of the sentencing judge.

Your mother was 16 years of age when she gave birth to you. Unfortunately, at that time, she was consuming drugs and was charged and sentenced for drug trafficking not long after your birth.

Your mother only returned to you when you were about six months old. You have never known your father…

Your mother began a relationship when you were about four years of age, and this relationship was marred with alcohol abuse and violence against your mother.

You recall your childhood as not being particularly happy or stable. You were often left to fend for yourself. You remember occasions when you were left seemingly forgotten by your carers in the bush, at parks or at a beach and at times for days. These experiences fostered a sense of abandonment that has followed you throughout your life.

Your younger brother was born when you were six years of age. This was a particularly difficult time for you as you remember the violence within your household escalating. You remember your mother being covered in blood on several occasions. You also remember how you were the victim of severe beatings by your mother's partner. This was done with a stick that had nails attached to it.

While your family was living [interstate], you were beaten so severely that your kneecap was broken, and you spent two months in hospital. You recall this time in hospital feeling quite like you were on holiday as you were treated well, fed well and there was no violence.

Not long after returning home from hospital, you made friends with a person …[who] molested you.

… Your stepfather began molesting you from the age of nine to 13 years.

While a lot of this was happening in your life, you managed to thrive at school. You were well liked by other students and teachers and were always at or near the top of class… However, you left school at 14 years and began working in an effort to support your mother financially.

… When you were aged 15, your brother's father re-appeared and took your brother away to live with him. This devastated yourself and your mother.

… Aged around 28 years, you were the victim of a home invasion. You were with a friend at the time and while you managed to escape over a balcony, your friend was severely beaten and this ended your friendship and you have carried the burden of guilt ever since.

… At this time you began using methamphetamines to cope with the trauma of the home invasion and your depression. By the time the court case ended, you were heavily addicted to methamphetamines.

… you were sentenced for trafficking in methamphetamines… during this incarceration your mother passed away… from lung cancer.

… your brother moved from [interstate] to join you in Adelaide. He had a severe drug problem… you also lost your brother to suicide in July 2016.

He was unable to cope with the drug debts he had accumulated… a gang that alleged your brother owed them $100,000 threatened you and made you take responsibility for your brother's debts. You have submitted that it was for this reason that you turned to selling drugs. You knew you should have gone to the police, but from your past experience as a Crown witness, it was too traumatic for you. (R v MAK, 2019; cited in McLachlan, 2021, p. 147).

Max experienced extensive adversity in childhood (i.e., parental substance abuse, absent father, domestic abuse, childhood physical and sexual abuse) and adulthood (i.e., physical assault, death of a parent, suicide of brother). These life experiences make Max a victim of crime. They also help contextualize Max's offending.

Traditionally, trauma-informed policing would focus on Max as an "offender." As such, policing organizations might not see Max as worthy of a trauma-informed response. Often when police officers and agencies talk about trauma-informed policing, they are focused on victims of crime (e.g., Lathan et al., 2019). However, if we, as a society and as a criminal justice system, want to stop Max from offending, we must realize and recognize him as a human being and the significance of the past adversity that has led to his trauma and criminality. Taking a tough-on-crime approach and focusing on punishment and specific deterrence just compounds his trauma. It increases the risk of him offending further (Cullen et al., 2011). Focusing on Max as a citizen allows the justice system to formulate a plan for his rehabilitation and reintegration tailored to his specific risks and criminogenic needs to promote community safety (and his safety).

Although this case study is not a policing example, police had interacted with Max in a non-trauma-informed way. Max had contact with police as both a victim and someone who committed offences. He "knew [he] should have gone to the police, but from [his] experience as a Crown witness, it was too traumatic…" *(R v MAK*, 2019; cited in McLachlan, 2021, p. 147). Max's life undermines the false dichotomies that underpin policing: victims and offenders, goodies and baddies. These dichotomies make it easier to do the job. It is an honourable purpose to catch crooks. However, when responding to the many people who offend who are also victims of crime, or who have mental health issues or disabilities, police should offer compassion. It is possible – indeed imperative – for trauma-informed policing to be compassionate.

CONCLUSION

This paper has proposed the ABCs of trauma-informed policing: Trauma-informed policing has an Agenda, it is Broad, and it is Compassionate. First, trauma-informed policing requires the conscious application of an agenda that reflects SAMHSA's (2014) 4Rs. Many police officers, judges, and other practitioners – such as SC Francis – strive to respond in a way that promotes safety, trust, choice, collaboration, and empowerment for the people they interact with in their professional lives. But to be truly trauma-informed, police responses must reflect a conscious application of a trauma-informed agenda. It is not sufficient to strive to be "sweet, nice, and kind" (Treisman, 2022). Second, trauma-informed policing is broad. It applies to how police work and respond to victims, and people who offend, as well as civilians and other coppers. Finally, trauma-informed policing is about the compassionate acknowledgement of the humanity of all people caught up in the justice system.

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CONFLICTS OF INTEREST DISCLOSURES

The author has no conflicts of interest to declare.

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SOCIAL INNOVATION NARRATIVE

Journal of
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"Policing at the speed of trust": Interacting with trauma-impacted youth

Tebeje Molla*

This article is directly related to the first global Trauma Informed Policing and Law Enforcement Conference held in Melbourne, Australia in February 2024.

ABSTRACT

Young people living on the fringes of society face heightened vulnerability and trauma that profoundly impact their ability to trust others. When trauma-impacted youth, such as those exposed to pervasive racism or with refugee backgrounds, have faced unfair treatment by authorities in the past, they often develop a deep distrust towards law enforcement officers. Consequently, interactions with police can become fraught with fear and aggression as past experiences of injustice resurface, triggering defensive and adverse reactions. Bearing these dynamics in mind, the article underscores that socially just policing requires a commitment to trauma-responsive engagement that nurtures trust by prioritizing safe interactional environments based on *tactfulness* and *co-regulation*. Trustful engagement prevents re-traumatization, promotes effective communication and addresses disparities in policing outcomes.

Key Words Trauma; policing; trust; refugees; racialized youth.

INTRODUCTION

Trauma refers to a person's emotional and psychological response to a deeply distressing or threatening event (Herman, 1992/2015; Levine, 2015; van der Kolk, 2015). A wide range of adverse life experiences, such as abuse, neglect, violence and household dysfunction, can cause it. Renowned psychiatrist Dr Bessel van der Kolk characterizes trauma as a profound shock with lasting effects on people's psyche, brain and body (van der Kolk, 2015). Trauma-impacted individuals may struggle to regulate their emotional responses to stressful situations such as policing interactions. Not only do they experience distressing recollections of unpleasant memories associated with traumatic experiences, but they also tend to avoid thoughts, feelings, conversations, activities and places associated with the traumatic event experienced in the past (Levine, 2015). Trauma can deeply erode an individual's sense of trust in themselves and others, leaving them feeling vulnerable and uncertain about their own abilities and the intentions of those around them.

Trust is a fundamental element of social life (Reemtsma, 2012). It is the glue that makes mutual understanding and social cooperation possible. Trust is the silent assurance that empowers us to cross a busy street when the pedestrian light turns green, confidently place our orders in a restaurant, attend meetings with defined agendas, engage in contractual agreements, willingly adhere to the directives of law enforcement agencies or step onto an aeroplane for that eagerly anticipated vacation. In their book *The Speed of Trust*, Covey and Merrill (2006) wrote:

> There is one thing that is common to every individual, relationship, team, family, organization, nation, economy and civilization throughout the world—one thing which, if removed, will destroy the most powerful government, the most successful business, the most thriving economy, the most influential leadership, the greatest friendship, the strongest character, the deepest love. On the other hand, if developed and leveraged, that one thing has the potential to create unparalleled

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> success and prosperity in every dimension of life. That one thing is trust. (p. 5)

Nevertheless, not everyone finds it easy to place trust in others. For instance, trauma affects trust by erasing a sense of safety and security. The slightest hint of danger triggers anxiety in traumatized young people. Individuals whose formative years are characterized by physical and emotional abuse could be robbed of the ability to trust others both at home and in public. Young people who experienced abuse and violence perpetrated by figures of authority in the past may often find themselves in a dysregulated state when engaging with teachers or law enforcement officers. Without trust, traumatized young people find it challenging to engage in learning processes and social interactions.

Trust is also a bedrock of policing work. The notion of "policing by consent" underscores that the legitimacy of the police comes from the consent of the public, rather than coercion or the use of force (Greener, 2021). The extent to which individuals trust law enforcement agencies is intricately connected to their lived experiences and perceptions of procedural justice (Fridell, 2017). Notably, those with heightened perceptions of injustice in policing practices tend to be mistrustful towards law enforcement agencies. Likewise, traumatized young individuals often harbour anxiety regarding policing interactions. Therefore, to achieve socially just policing, it is imperative to adopt a trauma-responsive approach that acknowledges and addresses the unique needs and experiences of trauma-impacted individuals. Bearing this in mind, this article asks:

> *How does trauma-responsive engagement inspire trust in the context of policing interactions with racialized young people from refugee backgrounds?*

In response to this question, the article makes three points: (a) visibly distinct refugee youth face the double trauma of racism and displacement, (b) trauma diminishes trust and (c) trauma-responsive policing engagement "moves at the speed of trust" in that it prioritizes tactfulness and co-regulation and is guided by such values as respect and fairness.

THE DOUBLE TRAUMA OF DISPLACEMENT AND RACISM

In two successive research projects, I investigated the educational experiences and integration outcomes of African heritage Australian youth with refugee experiences (Molla, 2021, 2022, 2023, 2024). I interviewed over 120 African heritage youth, focusing on their educational journeys and settlement outcomes. The findings highlight inspirational achievements and showcase their immense resilience in the face of formidable life-course trajectories. The research has also provided valuable insights into the intersectional factors of disadvantage affecting the group. African heritage children and young people with refugee experiences encounter what I call the double trauma of displacement and racism. The vast majority encountered racial stigma and discrimination across diverse public spaces and institutions. Additionally, over half of them revealed experiencing the adverse effects of intergenerational trauma.

Refugee trauma

Forced displacement is characterized by *loss and violence*. Refugees leave their homes in immense distress and arrive in host countries with considerable material losses and emotional scars. Refugee trauma refers to the psychological wound resulting from forced displacement and exposure to war, abuse and torture. According to the Forum of Australian Services for Survivors of Torture and Trauma (FASSTT, 2018), about 25% of refugees have been physically tortured or subjected to severe psychological abuse prior to their arrival in Australia.

Trauma-impacted parents can also pass the wounds of trauma to their children through stories that recount painful experiences and events. Psychiatrist and refugee trauma expert Richard Mollica (2014) noted that intergenerational refugee trauma occurs when the directly traumatized generation passes the trauma to their offspring through stories that recount "distressing and painful personal and social events" (p. 4). Storytelling can help traumatized people cope with their emotions of humiliation, anger and despair. For the listener, trauma stories can be developmentally important. The stories connect the listener to their family history. In fact, identity development depends on sufficient access to parental *memories and narratives*.

However, factual recounts of traumatic events can usually be graphic and disturbing. After repeatedly listening to trauma stories of loss, grief, shame and humiliation, children of traumatized refugees might start unconsciously reliving their parents' experiences. Not only does the fear of the parent become the fear of the child, but also the stories that children hear from their parents and families shape their worldviews and mediate how they carry themselves through life.

The young participants in my study, who shared accounts of trauma relayed by their parents and family members, were significantly impacted by the received narratives. It is evident in their accounts that *received trauma stories* influence their perceptions of self and others, complicating their acculturation process.

Racial trauma

Black migrant youth also face chronic racial stress, a state of emotional distress (manifested in feelings of sadness, fear and anger) arising from intense and persistent exposure to racial prejudice and discrimination that overwhelm their ordinary coping abilities.

Dealing with the daily *stress of racism can be taxing*. Racial stereotype threat (i.e., the awareness of being part of a community subjected to unjust race-based scrutiny or prejudice) has psychological and behavioural effects on individuals (Harrell, 2000; Steele, 2010). The fear of being treated with less respect, ignored or discriminated against because of one's perceived racial identity places a significant psychological burden on individuals. People subjected to pervasive racism tend to create low self-image, feel anxious in public, resort to substance abuse, become alienated and disengage from educational and social activities (Reynolds et al., 2010). Chronic racial stress can result in shame and anxiety and diminish trust. In contexts where young people perceive a pervasive level of racial profiling (the practice of disproportionately stopping and searching individuals from racialized groups based on stereotypes rather than valid grounds (Hopkins, 2017)), policing interactions can trigger fear and stress.

Racism permeates the experiences of African heritage Australian youth at every juncture. In my study, accounts of young African heritage people from refugee backgrounds in Australia shed light on the pervasive and distressing nature of the chronic racial stress they endure. As the "African gang" narrative takes root in public discourse, the weight of racial stress becomes increasingly burdensome. The fear of being treated with less respect, ignored or discriminated against because of one's perceived racial identity has placed a significant psychological burden on Black youth. The experience of racial stereotype threat has elicited feelings of anxiety, alienation and shame in them.

"POLICING AT THE SPEED OF TRUST"

Trust is the foundation of effective policing (Mehmi et al., 2021; Tyler, 2006). We trust others partly based on our knowledge of their past behaviour. Young people who have experienced unfair or biased treatment by law enforcement officers in the past are likely to be distrustful of this group now and in the future. The implication is that effective and socially just policing practices rest on nurturing trust in young people at risk of disengaging. In *Why People Obey the Law*, professor of Law and Psychology Tom Tyler (2006) argued:

> The obligation to obey is based on the trust of authorities. Only if people can trust authorities, rules, and institutions can they believe that their own long-term interests are served by loyalty toward the organization. In other words, the social contract is based on expectations about how authorities will act. If authorities violate these expectations, the social contract is disrupted. (p. 172).

People trust law enforcement authorities based mainly on their perceptions of or interactions with them. In a *Police Chief Magazine* article entitled "Policing at the Speed of Trust," Stephen M. R. Covey noted: "I contend that the first job of policing is to inspire trust. And the second job is to extend trust—that is, to give it to others" (Covey, 2011). The notion of policing at the speed of trust underscores the importance of instilling confidence during policing interactions through respectful engagement and transparent communication. Policing at the speed of trust is trauma-responsive in the sense that it acknowledges the vulnerabilities of young people, respects their experiences and actively works towards rebuilding trust and fostering positive outcomes.

The link between trauma and trust has significant implications for policing. For traumatized young people, the slightest hint of danger triggers anxiety and disruptive behaviours. Trauma affects trust by erasing a sense of safety and security. In the context of policing, this hypervigilance can result in tense interactions where the young person anticipates harm, impacting their ability to trust that law enforcement will act in their best interest. People who suffered at the hands of authority figures in the past are likely to distrust other adults. This initial lack of trust can set the tone for *fearful* interactions with law enforcement officers. If policing encounters lack understanding or inadvertently retraumatize refugee youth, it can further diminish trust and perpetuate a cycle of apprehension and distrust.

Effective policing interactions with potentially traumatized young people need to be trauma-responsive; that is, it needs to be guided by a framework of action "that is grounded in an understanding of and responsiveness to the impact of trauma, that emphasizes physical, psychological, and emotional safety for both providers and survivors, and that creates opportunities for survivors to rebuild a sense of control and empowerment" (Hopper et al., 2010, p. 82). Effective policing interactions with potentially traumatized young people can nurture trust by creating safe interactional environments that identify vulnerabilities and develop supportive and preventive interventions.

It is imperative to note that trauma-responsive policing and trauma-informed policing, while related, are distinct approaches. Trauma-informed policing adopts a holistic perspective, aiming to prevent and mitigate the effects of trauma through systemic changes in law enforcement practices. On the other hand, trauma-responsive policing focuses on immediate and individual responses to trauma, emphasizing the importance of attentiveness to the impact of trauma on individuals' behaviour during law enforcement interactions. Focusing on trauma-responsive policing is crucial due to the pivotal role individual law enforcement agents and police officers play in mitigating the immediate impact of trauma during interactions with individuals. Trauma-responsive policing recognizes that these officers are at the forefront of community engagement, often encountering trauma-impacted individuals in high-stress situations. Although trauma-informed policing is valuable in addressing systemic issues, it often requires time and extensive coordination to implement widespread changes. In contrast, trauma-responsive policing empowers individual officers to make a difference in their day-to-day interactions, ensuring that immediate support and understanding are provided to those who need it most.

Trauma-responsive policing engagement that moves at the speed of trust may take various forms. In the context of interacting with potentially traumatized young people, policing at the speed of trust creates safe interactional environments through (a) tactfulness and (b) co-regulation.

Tactfulness

Establishing trustful relationships is critical for people living in constant fear and mistrust. In this respect, trauma-responsive policing engagement creates safe interactional environments – *nonjudgmental spaces* of respect and trustful interactions that provide security and predictability. In policing interactions with trauma-impacted young people, safe and empathetic environments require tactfulness, which is about noticing sensitive circumstances and navigating those situations with heightened thoughtfulness and care. Tactful actors are mindful that people's perceptions, choices and actions are profoundly shaped by what they have experienced since childhood (Sapolsky, 2023). As Canadian educator Max van Manen noted:

> To exercise tact means to *see* a situation calling for sensitivity, to *understand* the meaning of what is seen, to *sense the significance* of this situation, to *know how and what to do*, and to actually *do* something right. (van Manen, 1991, p. 146, emphasis in original)

For law enforcement professionals, to be tactful is to be attuned to the emotional states of the people they interact with, display care, demonstrate trustworthiness through the communication of honourable intentions and afford individuals a voice by allowing them to express their perspectives (Fridell, 2017). Tactfulness enables law enforcement professionals to capitalize on what Desautels (2020) refers to as "touch points" or moments of intentional connection and relationship with trauma-impacted youth.

In trauma-responsive policing, tactfulness involves (a) acknowledging that individuals engaged in police interactions may have endured adverse life experiences shaping how they interact; (b) prioritizing sensitivity, dignity, fairness and patience; and (c) capitalizing on moments of intentional connections and relationships. As Jones (2021) noted, while trauma does not necessarily cause crime, many individuals involved in criminal activities often have histories of trauma. Trauma-responsive policing encourages agents to become tactful and shift their thinking from "What's wrong with you?" to "What happened to you?" (Perry and Winfrey, 2021). Tactfulness needs time, patient listening, observing bodily reactions and empathy. In policing interactions, verbal and nonverbal communication should reassure trauma-impacted young people: "You're safe with me." As Desautels (2020) put it: "Young people who are carrying in pain-based behaviour have a brain that is wired for fight, flight, and shutdown, and this brain has a desperate need for connection!" (p. 45). A tactful police officer uses moments of crisis and clues of dysregulation to interpret inner thoughts, feelings and desires.

Co-regulation

Trauma-impacted young people carry "pain-based behaviours" that show up in disrespectful, defiant or shutdown ways (Desautels, 2020). However, it is critical to realize that traumatized youth's disruptive behaviours often start as "frustrated attempts to communicate distress and as misguided attempts to survive" (van der Kolk, 2015, p. 354). In other words, adapting a heightened sense of alertness and distrust as a coping mechanism is not often wilful; traumatized youth have a limited capacity for emotional self-regulation.

In this respect, the call for trauma-responsive policing and safe interactional environments is underpinned by a belief that coercive regulation of "pain-based behaviours" is likely to re-traumatize or exacerbate dysregulation. Penalizing surface behaviours does not address deep-seated senses of fear and anxiety. What is instead needed is the co-regulation of trauma-based emotional and cognitive responses. Co-regulation aims to model the behaviours we wish to see in others. In essence, coercive regulation seeks to suppress behaviours driven by distress, whereas co-regulation entails actively exemplifying desired behaviours by maintaining a state of calmness and absorbing others' negative emotions (van der Kolk, 2015). It involves being attuned to the emotional cues of trauma, avoiding triggers that may push individuals beyond their window of tolerance, and providing clear and predictable communication.

Co-regulation helps expand people's window of tolerance to stress by creating safe interactional environments. Trauma-impacted individuals have a narrow window of tolerance to stress – they can easily slide into the states of hyperarousal or hypo-arousal. A window of tolerance represents the optimal range of emotional states an individual can comfortably experience without becoming overwhelmed or dissociated (van der Kolk, 2015). An expanded window of tolerance to stress enables law enforcement officers to reach the "thinking brain" and establish effective communication. In dealing with the disruptive behaviours of traumatized young people, seeking logical explanations for emotional outbursts is futile. It is critical to calm the emotional brain before trying to rationalize what is happening. Once a trauma-impacted person is calmed down enough, they can access the part of the brain that allows them to regain control over their behaviours. In other words, co-regulation helps them reach and activate the rational brain, which makes effective communication possible.

CONCLUSION

Trauma undermines the sense of safety, induces hypervigilance and inhibits positive relationships. For young people whose trust has been fractured by traumatic experiences, interactions with law enforcement can quickly escalate into hostility and violence. Similarly, policing encounters characterized by misguided aggression, racial profiling or other discriminatory practices can trigger traumatic memories and further deepen their mistrust.

Over the past decade, in Australia's state of Victoria, significant efforts have been undertaken to address the issue of racial profiling, with a specific focus on strengthening community trust and confidence in law enforcement. Initiatives ranging from policy reforms and diversifying the police force to community engagement programs have been instrumental in acknowledging and rectifying racial disparities in policing practices. This commendable progress notwithstanding, more work is needed to inspire trust among racialized and potentially traumatized young people.

This article underscores the importance of co-regulation and tactfulness in policing interactions with trauma-impacted youth. Trauma-responsive policing moves at the speed of trust, creating safe interactional environments that nurture a sense of safety, security and confidence. Using tactfulness and co-regulation techniques, law enforcement officers can expand youths' window of tolerance to stress, enabling more effective communication and reducing the likelihood of re-traumatization during interactions. In the long run, policing at the speed of trust can support both individual healing and community resilience.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST DISCLOSURES

The authors have no conflicts of interest to declare.

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Proposing trauma-informed practice and response in policing: A social innovation narrative for reforming responses to child sexual abuse and exploitation

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This article is directly related to the first global Trauma Informed Policing and Law Enforcement Conference held in Melbourne, Australia in February 2024.

ABSTRACT

Shifting towards trauma-informed practice and response (TIPAR) in law enforcement is crucial for reforming policing practices to reduce re-victimization among survivors of child sexual abuse and exploitation (CSA&E). Studies show that one in four Australians experience childhood sexual abuse (Haslam et al., 2023) highlighting the urgent need for effective law enforcement interventions. Police, as primary responders for children in the criminal justice system, experience significantly higher rates of stress and post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) compared to the general population. Current policing cultures often use ad hoc procedures that struggle to meet the unique needs of CSA&E victims. TIPAR advocates for comprehensive police training and trauma-informed policies to address these gaps. By integrating TIPAR consistently across law enforcement agencies (LEAs), this approach aims to enhance case progression, build police legitimacy, foster trust, and increase victims' engagement with justice processes. Implementing TIPAR is expected to enhance compassion satisfaction among officers, improve staff retention, reduce organizational costs, and create a justice system that better supports CSA&E survivors and their families. This holistic approach is crucial for addressing the significant under-reporting of sexual offences, where over 85% fail to progress to prosecution (Attorney Generals Department, 2023). Piloting TIPAR is essential to gather empirical data supporting government adoption of minimum standards for trauma-informed practices in legislation, ensuring that TIPAR principles are embedded in all LEA activities. This Social Innovative Narrative aims to explain the benefits of implementing TIPAR within LEAs, advocating for a more compassionate and effective response to trauma within law enforcement.

Key Words Trauma-informed policing; child sexual abuse and exploitation; investigative processes; compassion satisfaction; attrition; police; law enforcement; trauma.

INTRODUCTION

> I tried to report the abuse I experienced on numerous occasions, each time feeling like I was not heard and wondered if I was believed. Whilst some police were kind and tried to make it ok for me to speak, the process still felt out of my control, with limited communication and feared for my safety disclosing information not knowing who had access to it. (Survivor of Child Sexual Abuse & Exploitation, personal communication, 2024)

Child sexual abuse and exploitation (CSA&E) is a significant global public health issue and the primary preventable cause of death, disability, and illness within Australian households (World Health Organization, 2018). There is an anomalous amount of maltreatment facing our communities,

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which can hardly be addressed in this article. In 2021, the Australian Centre to Counter Child Exploitation received more than 33,000 reports of online child sexual exploitation (Cale et al., 2021). The Australian Child Maltreatment Study (Higgins et al., 2023) tells us 28.5% of Australians will experience CSA before the age of 18, which is one in three girls and one in five boys (Haslam et al., 2023). This implies finding ways to respond in a way that addresses the future implications of a community who will be living with the repercussions of complex trauma. A growing body of research indicates adverse childhood experiences are associated with increased risks of a range of poor psychosocial outcomes in adult life (Rokach & Clayton, 2023). Largely, resources currently cannot service the demand and support the needs of these vulnerable communities.

As awareness of CSA&E increases, it is crucial for Australian law enforcement agencies (LEAs) to review policies and procedures thoroughly to avoid practices that could harm trauma survivors (Rich, 2024). One suggestion is a trauma-informed practice and response (TIPAR), which aims to mitigate the health consequences of trauma by integrating responses that include an understanding of how trauma's effects, various paths to recovery, and the risks of re-traumatization (Tebes et al., 2019). The TIPAR framework aligns with the Victims' Charter Act 2006, mandating investigatory agencies understand impacts of crime on victims, families, and communities. This alignment aims to reduce the likelihood of secondary victimization within the criminal justice system.

Police affected by their experiences within the justice system also struggle with responses to traumatic situations encountering approximately 900 traumatic events throughout their careers (Papazoglou, 2013; Tuttle et al., 2019) and up to 19.6% of police report some form of childhood trauma themselves, subsequently being at greater risk of suicidal ideation than the general population (Talavera-Velasco et al., 2024). Given exposure to abused children is one of the highest stressors; there is a pressing need for enhanced support as only 9% of officers report their tertiary education adequately prepared them with the necessary skills and knowledge surrounding CSA&E, harmful sexual behaviour, or the impacts of trauma across the lifespan (The National Centre for Action on Child Sexual Abuse, 2023).

> My panic attacks, insomnia and anxiety all increased significantly during the reporting process. It was long, with silence between updates. This made my anxiety increase until I eventually decided not to pursue my case. At the time, the cost was greater than any potential outcome. (Survivor of Child Sexual Abuse & Exploitation, personal communication, 2024)

Responses by LEAs to survivors of CSA&E internationally have been criticized for their dismissive approach to trauma-informed practices due to job-related stress and trauma (Eikenberry et al., 2023). Many survivors who do report often regret this decision due to re-victimizing responses, which can significantly hinder recovery, especially when survivors already experience self-blame and post-traumatic stress (Lorenz et al., 2019). Survivors have reported these negative responses can be as traumatizing, if not more so, than the initial assault (Shaw et al., 2016). Victims who report their experiences often encounter scepticism, denial of assistance, judgment, and unwarranted victim-blaming (Shaw et al., 2016).

This undoubtedly accounts for the significant under-reporting with only 5–13% of sexual abuse survivors reporting to police (Fischer, 2013). The Attorney Generals Department (2023) The NSW Bureau of Crime Statistics and Research (2024) indicates that over 85% of reported sexual offences do not proceed to prosecution. Many survivors choose not to disclose due to feelings of shame, guilt, and self-blame (Alaggia, 2004; Dorahy & Clearwater, 2012), as well as anxiety about the consequences of disclosure (Dorahy & Clearwater, 2012). When trauma intervention strategies are not properly implemented, police may also inadvertently re-victimize survivors through boundary violations, enforced secrecy, silencing, feelings of powerlessness, manipulated realities, and event distortion to protect perpetrators, exacerbating trauma symptoms and perpetuating victim-blaming (Butler et al., 2011; Greeson et al., 2016; Harris & Fallot, 2001).

LEA processes often emphasize emotional detachment, quick decision-making in uncertain situations, prioritization of factual evidence over subjective impressions, and swift resolution (Davies et al., 2022). This can create organizational pressures for rapid case closure, sometimes pressuring victims to withdraw complaints prematurely when they struggle to provide comprehensive disclosures (Bikos, 2021; Ricciardelli et al., 2020). Initial police response significantly influences a survivor's willingness to engage, highlighting the critical role of trauma-informed support during the early stages of police investigation (Dewald & Lorenz, 2022). When survivors do attempt to report a second time, they often encounter judgment based on their previous withdrawal, which can diminish credibility or discourage further legal action. Statistics show survivors are more likely to report cases involving physical injuries or unknown perpetrators (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2021-2022). Moreover, Police behaviour significantly influences community perceptions of police legitimacy and their relationships within the community (Greeson et al., 2016).

To truly serve and protect, LEAs must integrate TIPAR, ensuring consistent, compassionate, and effective support for all survivors of abuse. This shift is crucial for rebuilding trust and fostering a justice system that upholds survivors' rights and well-being while proactively reducing and repairing harm and re-victimization. This requires a proactive response, such as TIPAR.

ADDRESSING COMPLEXITY IN CSA&E THROUGH TIPAR

Addressing complexity in CSA&E through TIPAR involves grappling with the most prevalent form of sexual trauma, familial abuse (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2021–2022), which often leaves lifelong effects (Koçtürk & Yüksel, 2019). Cognitive dissonance, arising from inconsistencies in one's beliefs or knowledge, drives discomfort and motivates individuals to resolve this state (Festinger, 1957; Vaidis & Bran, 2014), sometimes leading to withdrawal of complaints and high attrition rates. Victims of familial CSA&E frequently delay disclosure due to fears of family upheaval, loyalty conflicts, and attachment issues (Dorahy & Clearwater,

2012). Victims may exhibit behaviours such as forgetting the abuse, with memory impairment more pronounced in cases of familial abuse compared to non-incestuous abuse (DePrince & Freyd, 1999). Grooming, a critical aspect of CSA&E, involves a systematic process aimed at gaining trust, access, rapport, compliance, and secrecy from the victim (Bennett & O'Donohue, 2014; Whittle et al., 2015; Zinzow et al., 2010). This process extends to the broader community as perpetrators seek opportunities to exploit vulnerabilities and gain access to children (Di Gioia & Beslay, 2023). It is important for LEAs to understand these complex nuances to respond with appropriate actions, language, and demeanour, influenced by their training and awareness of their impact, which has been shown to lead to varying satisfaction ratings from community members (Gagnon & Fox, 2021).

TIPAR MODEL

TIPAR is a proposed trauma-informed theoretical framework designed to provide developmental trauma-informed training, as well as support policy changes to shift organizational culture and reduce re-traumatization of survivors of CSA&E. Research has found that implementing models such as TIPAR as an advocacy effort has shown to decrease the experience of institutional betrayal by survivors (Smith & Freyd, 2014).

Developmental trauma theory (DTT) underpins TIPAR; emphasizes recognition of interpersonal trauma, including emotion regulation, impulse control, attention and cognition, dissociation, interpersonal relationships, and self and relational schemas (van der Kolk, 2014); and underscores the profound impact of DTT shown to be associated with adult neurocognitive function, indicating the importance of understanding how early developmental risk factors impact working memory (Vargas, 2009). The TIPAR model integrates LEA strategies, survivor insights, and trauma-informed clinical practices aimed at supporting victims of CSA&E, empowering clients with compassionate interactions, minimizing triggers, understanding trauma responses, and utilizing trauma-informed interview techniques, collaboration, and gender balancing. The TIPAR model will provide LEAs with more psychological support through training that prevents compassion fatigue and improves compassion satisfaction, both of which have been shown to prevent burnout (Wagaman et al., 2015). Implementing trauma-informed approaches in vulnerable Australian communities has led to significant cost savings and better outcomes, including reducing hospitalizations, crisis interventions, improving service delivery, enhancing collaboration, boosting staff morale and retention, and reducing turnover costs (Benjamin et al., 2019).

The TIPAR model (see Figure 1) proposes six pillars of trauma-informed police response, including containment, choice, connection, compassion, accountability, and continuity. Within the model, the focus lies on the colleagues, survivors and their families, offenders and their families, and "you." All these components will be discussed in the following sections. We propose that all elements of the TIPAR model are interconnected and support the functions of the others.

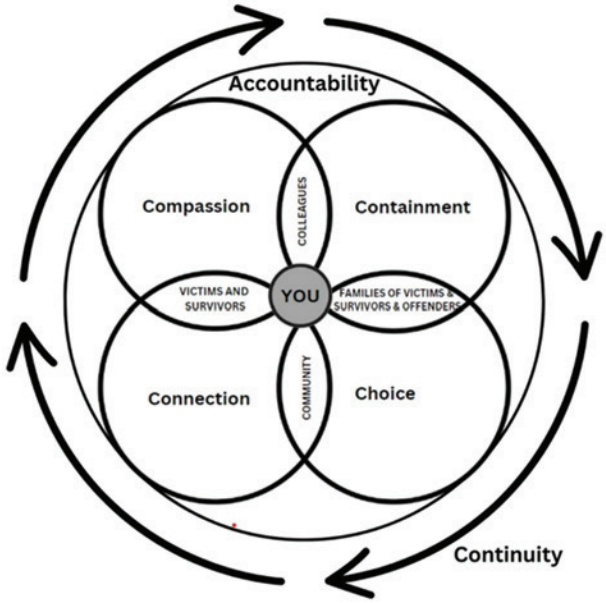

FIGURE 1 Trauma-informed practice and response model created by the two primary authors

KEY PILLARS UNDERPINNING TRAUMA RESPONSIVENESS

Containment

Containment, as defined in psychoanalytic practice, encompasses psychological, emotional, physical, and operational aspects (Bion & Mawson, 2014). This concept describes how a "container" absorbs and processes emotional distress, returning it in a more manageable form, facilitating emotional coping and understanding (Bion & Mawson, 2014). The concept aligns with Siegel's (1999) notion of the Window of Tolerance, which suggests trauma survivors may experience heightened hypervigilance, pushing them beyond their optimal zone for emotional regulation within the autonomic nervous system, often leading to fight, flight, freeze, or fawn responses. TIPAR acknowledges childhood trauma can narrow this Window of Tolerance, making it challenging to manage stress and access cognitive functions necessary for effective disclosure. For police, exposure to traumatic events, including their own adverse childhood experiences, can lead to maladaptive behaviours that hinder their ability to remain within their own Window of Tolerance. Negative interactions between officers and survivors can deter future reporting of assaults (Anders & Christopher, 2011). The demeanour and response of the LEAs significantly influence a survivor's comfort, trust in the justice system, and willingness to pursue a case (Maddox et al., 2011). Thus, integrating containment within the TIPAR model not only supports officers in managing their own trauma responses but also fosters an environment where survivors feel emotionally contained and supported throughout their interactions with LEAs.

Choice

Choice is a critical component in the healing process of trauma survivors empowering and restoring autonomy and control, often lost during traumatic experiences (Ford & Courtois, 2021). By integrating the concept of choice into police

procedures, as demonstrated in the TIPAR model, police can offer more personalized and trauma-informed responses that acknowledge the survivor's needs and actively work to prevent re-traumatization. Providing choices affirms survivors' experiences and conveys belief and acceptance. LEAs should prioritize autonomy and choice, ensuring that survivors feel safe in all interactions throughout the justice process. Without adequate infrastructure to support survivors and the staff assisting them, the power of choice and validation is limited, undermining opportunities for empowerment and autonomy, risking the perpetuation of harmful practices and systemic abuse. Choice, within the TIPAR model, promotes open and secure communication, mitigates fears, and fosters a supportive environment for disclosures.

Connection

Connection promotes compassion and empowers survivors in their decision-making processes, thereby enhancing the effectiveness of trauma-informed practices. By emphasizing the concept of "safe telling and disclosing," LEAs can establish a framework that prioritizes the physical, emotional, and psychological safety necessary to alleviate survivors' profound fears surrounding reporting and engaging with the justice system. To create safety and support emotional containment, there must be a level of connection, and an environment to facilitate the process of disclosure, which is recognizant of the distress experienced by victim survivors in disclosing. Disclosure is made possible through building a trusting relationship, which allows for vulnerable and painful areas of the disclosure to be shared without hindrance (Brennan & McElvaney, 2020; Podolan & Gelo, 2023).

Extended legal processes associated with CSA&E often amplify survivors' feelings of danger when disclosing their experiences. Children particularly will suffer varying degrees while awaiting trial, leading to an exacerbation of trauma symptoms (Cossins, 2020). Indeed, factfinders (such as LEA and legal professionals) are likely to interpret the type of evidence and emotions associated with re-traumatization negatively, particularly where inconsistencies and confusion arise out of trauma and poor recall (Cossins, 2020). According to Porges' Polyvagal Theory (Porges, 2007), the autonomic nervous system's survival responses may fail to resolve perceived threats, prompting survivors to withdraw from social connections and prioritize self-protection (Ugwu et al., 2024). Understanding these perceived dangers enables police to comprehend survivors' post-disclosure experiences and adaptive survival strategies (Bailey & Brown, 2020; Foley, 2023).

The TIPAR approach underscores the importance of keeping survivors informed and involved throughout the investigation process. Effective communication plays a pivotal role; without it, survivors may feel overlooked, fostering fear and anxiety instead of fostering trust and reassurance. By establishing closer connections with survivors, police gain insights into their unique needs and can offer tailored support accordingly.

Compassion

Compassion, as defined by Neff (2003), entails achieving a balance of more positive than negative responses during challenging times. It acknowledges the possibility of experiencing both positive and negative psychological well-being simultaneously (Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000). Within LEAs, however, current processes, cultural norms, operational demands, and a lack of TIPAR training often relegate compassion to a secondary consideration. Infrastructure and systems are not adequately designed to support compassion as a primary approach. The psychological toll inherent in police work, often referred to as compassion fatigue (Figley, 1995), stresses the indirect consequences of repeated exposure to trauma. This exposure can lead to conditions such as post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), work dissatisfaction, depression, burnout, self-criticism, and maladaptive coping mechanisms (Zani & Cicognani, 2009). Enhancing compassion satisfaction among police officers, while simultaneously minimizing compassion fatigue, should therefore be central objectives for LEAs and their administration (Tuttle et al., 2019).

Accountability

Accountability should serve as foundational principles in the implementation of TIPAR within LEAs. The current inconsistency and lack of accountability in TIPAR practices highlight the need for uniformity and a focus on positive outcomes when interacting with those affected by CSA&E. It is imperative individuals within the system are held accountable for their actions and behaviours while maintaining a trauma-responsive approach that enhances, rather than replaces, accountability. Emphasizing accountability and transparency can establish a default position of safety, fostering trust and confidence among survivors. This approach ensures that LEAs create a supportive environment that upholds the principles of TIPAR, ultimately improving outcomes.

Notably, no change can occur without training being embedded within an organization, and while training is an integral first step in trauma-informed care (TIC) (Harris & Fallot, 2001; SAMHSA's Trauma and Justice Strategic Initiative, 2014), follow-up supports such as refresher training, coaching, supervision, and feedback are also integral to successful implementation (Gustafson et al., 2013; Mahon, 2022a,b; Miller et al., 2004). We also note that successful implementation requires accountability measures for all within the TIPAR to ensure effective and consistent approaches to practice and the needs of victim survivors and those represented within the framework are met. This includes being accountable to staff, as Bloom and Farragher (2011) describe the impact of organizational stress as permeating across the entire system of an organization, impacting all stakeholders and levels of service delivery, care, and outcomes.

Continuity

Continuity is a trauma-informed approach that provides consistency, engagement, and support and continues throughout the period of time the victim survivor has cause to engage with the justice system. Continuous support from trained professionals is essential for reducing symptoms of PTSD, depression, and anxiety among trauma survivors (Han et al., 2021).

Consistency in approach not only facilitates cultural shifts within the organization but minimizes re-traumatization, bolsters the well-being of officers, reduces moral injury and boosts job satisfaction. Predictable and supportive

encounters are crucial for effective trauma response and community engagement (Stevenson, 2022). Establishing a steadfast standard of practice in LEAs is essential, guiding decision-making at all levels within law enforcement agencies. This standard should be accountable and shape police culture, influencing how officers interact with and serve their community. Maintaining these standards over time is critical for successfully embedding cultural shifts that permeate the entire organization. Active engagement with community stakeholders and flexibility to adapt to the evolving nature of trauma are vital components of this approach (Serrata et al., 2020).

Given the diverse experiences and needs of CSA&E survivors, which vary across social, cultural, and economic backgrounds, continuity of practice ensures that every individual interacting with LEAs receives consistent, holistic support. This not only reduces service calls and the risk of re-victimization but also supports the well-being of police officers by mitigating the challenges of their demanding work and addressing post-service vulnerabilities. Adequate systems must be in place to promote officers' well-being throughout their careers and beyond, recognizing the inherent stresses and responsibilities of their roles.

THE PEOPLE WITHIN THE TIPAR MODEL

Staff and Colleagues (LEAs)

LEAs play a critical role in the TIPAR model, supporting both survivors of CSA&E and the staff who work with them. A TIPAR lens is essential for addressing the 28.5% of Australians affected by CSA&E (Higgins et al., 2023) and recognizing the fluidity of trauma responses in police, particularly those with adverse childhood experiences. Consistent leadership within LEAs that prioritizes safety and staff well-being fosters a productive workforce and enables employees to confidently express their needs. This supportive environment is crucial for effective trauma-informed practices and enhances trust in law enforcement. It promotes empathy, reduces burnout, and improves job satisfaction among police. Incorporating LEAs into the TIPAR model is vital for a holistic support system, benefiting both survivors and officers, and improving outcomes for individuals and the community.

Police culture has traditionally been resistant to accepting emotional support, even viewing it as risky and interfering with the officer's reputation and job duties (Evans et al., 2013). Organizational stressors that include the organizational setting or design (e.g., management-autonomy, flexibility, participation in decision-making, etc.) may be a greater source of stress for police. Police showed that two specific organizational stressors – "fellow officers not doing their job" and having "inadequate or poor-quality equipment" – were among the top 5 of 60 most frequently occurring stressors (Violanti et al., 2016). Furthermore, repeated exposure to the psychologically adverse events unfortunately makes police more susceptible to an increased risk of depression and suicide (Violanti, 2022).

Families of Survivors

We recognize families of victim survivors experience a profound and pervasive ripple effect of abuse, especially when the perpetrator is a family member, or someone known to them. This often leads to betrayal trauma, families feeling neglected, excluded, and further harmed and can also endanger the survivors.

Cultural understanding is paramount, as the concept of family varies widely across communities. Trauma-informed resources and training must centre on the intersectionality of experiences and reflect how trauma impacts individuals differently, ensuring approaches are culturally safe and sensitive (Australian Human Rights Commission, 2021). For example, First Nations families often have extensive kinship networks, and disclosure within these communities requires specific care, strategy, and implementation. Barriers to disclosure among ethnic minorities, such as the need to preserve family honour, present significant challenges. Training for first responders can facilitate culturally appropriate encouragement of disclosure within these communities, supported by a well-developed national research agenda (Sawrikar & Katz, 2018). This ensures that all responses are informed, sensitive, and effective in addressing the unique needs of diverse cultural backgrounds.

Offenders and Their Families

Partners and families of offenders can be considered secondary victims, experiencing vicarious trauma and other negative outcomes due to the distressing knowledge of their loved one's offending (Fuller & Goldsmid, 2016). This group remains largely unsupported and vulnerable (Shannon et al., 2013). Families are often unaware of the abuse until a search warrant is executed or police become involved, at which point there is minimal support available to them. Recognizing the potential for unaddressed trauma to lead to future offending, and the victim–offender overlap of people being both victims and offenders of crime, is also essential for a trauma-informed approach. This understanding can lead to the development of more effective strategies for addressing intergenerational trauma and enhancing child abuse prevention efforts (Berg & Rogers, 2017). By acknowledging and supporting the unique needs of offenders' families, LEAs can help mitigate the broader impacts of trauma and contribute to a more holistic and compassionate system of care.

Community

We view the community as a diverse group encompassing those directly affected by CSA&E, such as witnesses, bystanders, practitioners, and the wider general public. CSA&E extends through every aspect of our communities, influencing media and social media, interactions with support networks, the health system, and leaving lasting consequences of trauma. Recognizing the far-reaching ripple effects of CSA&E is essential, especially within LEAs as this has shown to initiate and build resilient, trauma-informed communities, which include the establishment of stronger inter-agency and collaborative service systems (Matlin et al., 2019). By addressing these widespread impacts, LEAs can foster a more supportive and informed community response, ensuring that all interactions with survivors and affected individuals are handled with sensitivity and care because of collaborative efforts (Faller & Henry, 2000).

We must acknowledge preventing and protecting children from CSA&E is a whole of community responsibility. Truly successful intervention in the reduction of trauma

TABLE I Through a trauma-informed practice and response (TIPAR) lens: an integration with the PEACE.model

P	E	A	C	E
Planning and Preparation	**Engage and Explain**	**Account Clarification and Challenge**	**Closure**	**Evaluation**
Effective planning is crucial throughout the entire investigation, especially in the context of investigative interviews. Timely interviews are vital as memories can fade or become unreliable over time for victims and witnesses.	Building rapport and explaining the interview process and why the interview needs to occur. People typically fear the unexpected, and by describing the interview process this fear can be reduced.	In the process, accounts must be developed, probing the topic thoroughly, introducing investigative topics, and rigorously clarifying and challenging them. This ensures that information obtained from the interviewee aligns with existing knowledge or can be substantiated.	The aim is for witnesses to leave the interview on a positive note. Beyond the formal aspects, revisiting neutral topics from earlier can aid in achieving this goal. A well-conducted interview can also enhance community relations, as witnesses often share their impressions of both the interviewer and the overall interview experience with others.	Evaluation in investigative interviewing ensures accuracy and relevance. It involves assessing witness statements and victim accounts for consistency and cross-referencing with evidence. Interviewers maintain empathy while objectively assessing information to uncover essential details crucial to resolving cases.
TIPAR Applied (Continuity)	**TIPAR Applied (Choice)**	**TIPAR Applied (Containment)**	**TIPAR Applied (Compassion & Connection)**	**TIPAR Applied (Continuity)**
Continuity is crucial, with the same officers handling the case from start to finish to minimize the need for the victim to repeat their story. This approach should also consider the interviewee's demographic, gender, and cultural and linguistic diversity. Planning should include selecting a suitable location that takes into account potential triggers, aiming to prevent emotional shutdown by addressing these concerns in advance.	While the interview is formal, rapport-building begins beforehand, allowing for connection-building. Clearly explain the process and give the victim survivor time to process and respond. Ensure they understand their rights and provide choices on how to proceed. Reassure them about confidentiality and the interview's purpose. Mention that challenging questions may arise to ensure thoroughness. Understanding triggers helps suggest breaks during disclosure to maintain their comfort level.	Officers use trauma-informed techniques during interviews to ensure emotional support and containment. This includes offering breaks, using non-judgmental language, and being patient with emotional responses. They create a safe space where victims' emotions are respected and validated throughout.	At the interview's end, officers summarize with compassion, ensuring the victim feels their account was accurately captured. They outline next steps, allowing questions or concerns, fostering connection. Recognizing trauma's impact on understanding, officers offer follow-up choices to support the victim's healing journey.	Interviewers ensure accuracy by assessing witness and victim accounts for consistency and cross-referencing with evidence. They allow interviewees to provide feedback for ongoing support and gauge their comfort levels. Officers reflect on interviews, noting successes and areas for improvement, discussing strategies with supervisors to maintain trauma-informed practices and support their well-being.

associated with disclosure, investigation, and attitudes about CSA&E is dependent on a community, their beliefs, attitudes, and engagement. Child abuse cases between law enforcement and child protective services and professionals that demonstrate a collective responsibility have shown to reduce intervention-induced trauma and increase criminal convictions (Faller & Henry, 2000). Individuals often feel vulnerable alone, but in community have the power of numbers and shared meaning to provide strength (Mohr Carney et al., 2022).

Among the many ripple effects of CSA&E on the community is the financial impact consisting of health care costs and lost productivity costs, which varies across the lifespan of every victim survivor. In 2016–2017, the estimated annual burden of violence against children and young people in Australia was $34.2 billion; the lifetime cost was $78.4 billion (Deloitte Access Economics, 2019). This further attests to the need for a TIPAR approach to ensure cost reduction efforts are prioritized in focussing on early intervention and safe pathways for reporting as the number of victims and survivors increases.

The Victim Survivor

> I spent 12 hours in total talking to the police about explicit details of my abuse. Each time I had to stop, get on with life, and continue with my story the next time they were able to meet with me. It was exhausting … (Survivor of Child Sexual Abuse & Exploitation, personal communication, 2024)

Within the criminal justice system, the term "victim" describes a person who has been subjected to a crime, while "survivor" is used to refer to someone who is actively going through the recovery process (Alexenko et al., 2015). It is important to recognize that many individuals affected by CSA&E may switch between these terms based on their current stage in the recovery journey. Acknowledging and respecting these preferences is crucial for providing appropriate support and fostering a trauma-informed approach within LEAs. Understanding and using the preferred terminology of those affected not only validates their experiences but also supports their empowerment and healing process.

You

The final person within the TIPAR model is you. You are at the heart of your decision-making, but for decisions to be meaningful, they must align with organizational goals. The TIPAR model provides a necessary framework for this alignment and facilitates empowered responses. Consistent performance relies heavily on the availability of resources and tools. It is the organization's responsibility to provide these, fostering decision-making that enhances well-being, job satisfaction, and achievement, benefiting the community served. This alignment ensures that individual actions support broader objectives, creating a cohesive and supportive environment within LEAs, leading to better outcomes for both officers and the community.

TRAUMA-INFORMED APPROACHES GLOBALLY

TIC is increasingly recognized globally as a crucial framework for police organizations aiming to better understand and respond to trauma. Based on the premise that trauma affects everyone, from staff to clients, TIC integrates this understanding into organizational policies, procedures, and practices to meet the specific needs of individuals affected by trauma (Fallot & Harris, 2008; SAMHSA's Trauma and Justice Strategic Initiative, 2014). Internationally, LEAs are adopting trauma-informed approaches to enhance support for vulnerable community members. The Scottish Government, for instance, has implemented trauma-informed awareness training across its police force, aimed at improving interactions with vulnerable individuals (Barton et al., 2019; Bellis et al., 2015; Boulton et al., 2021). In Alabama, a comprehensive trauma-informed approach to sexual assault police training involved 331 officers (Lathan et al., 2019). This initiative assessed officers' exposure to trauma-informed training, their acceptance of rape myths, and awareness of local and national sexual assault movements. The findings indicated officers trained in trauma awareness showed greater personal engagement in learning about sexual assault and demonstrated a deeper understanding of trauma dynamics, contrasting with untrained counterparts (Lathan et al., 2019). Moreover, training was associated with a reduced acceptance of rape myths among officers, despite those handling more sexual assault cases being initially more likely to hold such beliefs. Overall, integrating trauma-informed principles into police training has been shown to enhance responses to sexual assault cases, improving empathy and effectiveness in handling sensitive situations (SAMHSA's Trauma and Justice Strategic Initiative, 2014). These efforts underscore a global trend towards more empathetic and informed policing practices that prioritize understanding and supporting individuals affected by trauma. Such can be seen through a TIPAR lens, when reviewing already valuable policing models such as the PEACE model for investigative interviewing.

PEACE MODEL INTEGRATION WITH TIPAR

The non-accusatory, information gathering approach to investigative interviewing known as the PEACE model is widely regarded as a policing best practice, suitable for any type of interviewee, whether victim, witness, or suspect (Forensic Interview Solutions, n.d.). By embedding the TIPAR model within the PEACE framework, the investigative interviewing process can be better tailored to the needs of trauma survivors. This integration aims to create a safer and more supportive environment that encourages survivors to disclose their experiences with confidence and trust in the process demonstrating the potential for TIPAR approaches to be integrated seamlessly (see Table I).

CONCLUSION

This social innovation narrative introduces TIPAR, a trauma-informed framework rooted in DTT, clinical practice, and neurobiological science. TIPAR aims to enhance police responses to survivors of CSA&E and their supporters, fostering police legitimacy and improved outcomes. TIPAR is designed to mitigate the traumatic effects of CSA&E by creating a supportive environment for disclosure (Ahrens & Aldana, 2012; Ullman & Peter-Hagene, 2014). Trauma-informed practices, including eliminating triggers, empowering clients

with choice and agency, clarifying procedures, tailoring approaches, educating staff, ensuring privacy, dignity, and managing vicarious trauma, have shown efficacy (Butler et al., 2011). Implementing TIC faces challenges such as institutional resistance, entrenched practices, cost barriers, and concerns about staff and client emotional well-being (Butler et al., 2011). Further research on TIPAR is recommended, beginning with trauma-awareness training for all officers and staff to pilot and evaluate its impact on LEA operations, including attrition rates, officer well-being, staff retention, re-traumatization risks, and disclosure outcomes. Adopting a trauma-informed approach equips police to recognize and respond to vulnerability early, facilitating timely interventions and referrals (Rogers & Smith, 2018). TIPAR's potential extends beyond CSA&E to support other vulnerable groups and reform outdated systems hindering survivor disclosures. TIPAR suggests a transformative shift towards a trauma-informed culture within law enforcement, promising significant societal benefits.

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CONFLICTS OF INTEREST DISCLOSURES

The authors have no conflicts of interest to declare.

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