Wilfrid Laurier University

Scholars Commons @ Laurier

Social Justice and Community Engagement Major Research Papers

Social Justice and Community Engagement

8-2023

What We Build In Its Place: Police Abolition and Alternative Responses to Drug Overdoses and Mental Health Crises in Canada and the United States

Sean Coady

Follow this and additional works at: https://scholars.wlu.ca/sjce_mrp

Recommended Citation

Coady, Sean, "What We Build In Its Place: Police Abolition and Alternative Responses to Drug Overdoses and Mental Health Crises in Canada and the United States" (2023). *Social Justice and Community Engagement Major Research Papers*. 9.
https://scholars.wlu.ca/sjce_mrp/9

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by the Social Justice and Community Engagement at Scholars Commons @ Laurier. It has been accepted for inclusion in Social Justice and Community Engagement Major Research Papers by an authorized administrator of Scholars Commons @ Laurier. For more information, please contact scholarscommons@wlu.ca.

What We Build In Its Place:

Police Abolition and Alternative Responses to Drug Overdoses and Mental Health Crises in Canada and the United States

Sean Coady

Major Research Project

Submitted to the Faculty of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies

in partial fulfilment of the requirements for

Master of Arts in Social Justice and Community Engagement

Wilfrid Laurier University

2023

Under the supervision of Dr. Todd Gordon and committee member Dr. Marcia Oliver

ABSTRACT

This project examines the idea of police abolition and presents tangible alternative responses that more comprehensively address the complex issues arising from drug overdoses and mental health crises. Through secondary data analysis, this major research project explores police resource allocation, history, and theories of abolition, drawing parallels between initiatives in both Canada and the United States that present alternative responses to police involvement. This research helps to demonstrate the feasibility of non-police solutions to drug overdoses and mental health crises, highlighting their effectiveness in delivering compassionate, non-violent responses that prioritize the health and well-being of those in need of help and their communities. By examining existing police alternatives arising out of the communities that live with these challenges, this project adds to the ongoing dialogue on police abolition, inspiring readers to begin questioning the purpose of the police and considering what alternative means of creating public safety can look like.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

With reverence and gratitude, I acknowledge the shared traditional lands of the Neutral, Anishinaabe and Haudenosaunee peoples, as well as the ancestral and unceded territories of the xʷməθkʷəy̓əm (Musqueam), Sḵwx̱wú7mesh (Squamish), and səlilwətaɬ (Tsleil-Waututh) Nations, on which this journey has unfolded. My presence here as an uninvited guest is the foundation upon which this work stands.

My heartfelt appreciation goes to my friends and family, whose unwavering support has heartened my path. Your encouragement has been my constant companion throughout.

I extend my thanks to my esteemed committee, Todd and Marcia, for your invaluable guidance and insights that have shaped this exploration.

To my cohort, your friendship has made this academic pursuit all the more meaningful, and it has been a privilege to grow with you.

I am indebted to the professors who have nurtured my development, planting the seeds of inquiry that have grown throughout this project and this degree.

Acknowledging the voices of abolitionist scholars and activists, whose work has illuminated my own, I am grateful for their transformative insights.

To you, the reader, I offer my appreciation for exploring these pages. May this work contribute to the ongoing discourse and imagining of change and justice, as we navigate the path ahead.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS……………………………………………………………..3

1 INTRODUCTION…………………………………………………………….....5

2 METHODOLOGY…………………………………………………...……...11

2.1 Conceptual Framework……………………………………………….....11

2.2 Methods………………………………………………………………….12

3 DEMYSTIFYING THE POLICE…………………………………………………..16

4 THE CREATION AND EVOLUTION OF THE POLICE………………………….27

5 CRITICISM OF THE POLICE……………………………………...…..37

6 HISTORY OF POLICE ABOLITION………………………………….….46

7 CURRENT INITIATIVES……………………………………………….….56

7.1 CAHOOTS…………………………………………………...…..56

7.2 Insite……………………………………………………………..….58

7.3 ACCESS Open Minds…………………………………………...….60

7.4 Oakland Power Projects…………………………………………...…..62

7.5 Discussion……………………………………………………….….64

8 CONCLUSION:

VIOLENCE, RACISM, AND THE LIMITS OF POLICE REFORM……….……..70

9 REFERENCES…………………………………………………………….....74

1 INTRODUCTION

This MRP explores the concept of police abolition and practical possibilities for alternatives to the police in responding to drug overdoses and mental health crises. By abolishing the police, I refer to the desire to disband, disarm and defund police services in light of mounting evidence that reforms to the police do little to protect the public from police brutality and abuse of power (Kaba, 2021). The ideology behind police abolition is to render the police obsolete by investing in services and infrastructure that reduce the need for police in the first place, such as resources for drug addiction and mental wellness (Kaba, 2021). The idea of police abolition is as interesting as it is important; its realization would necessitate changes and improvements to several intersecting institutions central to our society’s functioning. Although the scope of this project is limited to alternative responses to drug overdoses and mental health crises, true realization of police abolition would require, among other changes, enhancements to social services that focus upon underlying issues which lead to policing situations, addressing economic disparities, and improving access to quality education, employment and affordable housing.

There is much confusion outside of academic and activist communities—and indeed, within them—about what abolishing the police means in practical terms (Kaba, 2021). This confusion arises from the abstract nature of the idea of police abolition, as well as a perceived understanding of what the police do with most of its time and of possible alternative responses to situations the police responds to. This project helps to reduce this confusion by exploring concrete possibilities for reducing police mandates and the benefits to public safety from pursuing these strategies.

One seed of inspiration for this project came from the introduction to *Take Back The Economy* (Gibson-Graham et al., 2013, pp. xiv):

> Take Back the Economy is for individuals and communities who want their decisions and their commitments to each other and the earth to shape the economies we live in. The book is not a pie-in-the-sky program for revolution, nor is it a step-by-step guide to reforming what we have. It is a simple but radical set of thinking tools for people who want to start where they are to take back their economies—in countries rich or poor, in neighborhoods or in nations, as groups or as individuals.

Motivated by a critical reading of the history of policing and the movement for police abolition, this MRP explores some of the concrete, tangible possibilities there are for responding to drug overdoses and mental health crises. Informed by the experiences of some of the most policed communities in Canada and the United States, this project explores four initiatives that could reduce dependence upon police services, leading to partially defunding the police in the short term and police abolition in the long term. It is in the spirit of creating a toolkit for those who have not considered police abolition that this MRP is written. This project allows those new to the idea of police abolition to begin to question the purpose, efficacy and existence of the police, as well as to consider alternative structures by examining organizations which provide non-police responses to drug overdoses and mental health crises.

The challenges upon which this project focuses—drug overdoses and mental health crises—are two problems in which police involvement is strongly correlated with the lethal use of force (Nicholson & Marcoux, 2018). This project examines two initiatives in each of Canada and the United States that offer alternative models to what are unnecessary, and often harmful, police interventions. All of the initiatives explored offer models for non-police responses with

strong community connections. While my interests in police abolition lie within the Canadian context, much of the scholarship and activism regarding police abolition upon which this project draws has emerged from the United States. As examined in Section 4, the development of the police institution in the colonial contexts of Canada and the United States share intriguing similarities, and exploring these parallels offers valuable insights into the potential for abolition.

Several high-profile murders of unarmed African Americans by police officers over the past decade, and the ensuing protests, have brought into the mainstream public consciousness the idea of abolishing the police as an institution (Taylor, 2021). It is within this broader social context of the movement to abolish the police that this MRP is situated. Police abolition is not only about dismantling the police as an institution but also about creating alternative systems of community safety and justice that address the root causes of harm and promote healing and restoration, about what we build in the absence of the police (Kaba, 2021; Davis et al., 2022).

This MRP makes the case that, to address drug overdoses and mental health crises, a police response is neither necessary nor effective. Police forces in Canada and the United States were neither designed to answer these calls for service nor are they equipped to safely respond in ways that benefit those in need of aid or the public at large. Rather, the communities that live with challenges associated with mental illness and drug addiction are best suited to create their own responses to these crises. This project demonstrates that there is a need for alternative approaches to mental health crises and drug overdoses that do not involve police. There are initiatives with strong grassroots bases that have demonstrated success in providing effective responses to these events by collaborating with healthcare providers and other community organizations, which represent examples of non-police responses with the potential for wider adoption and replacement of the police.

I draw on anticolonial, Marxist, anarchist and Black feminist frameworks to explore practical alternatives to police services with the potential to completely replace the police response to these occurrences. This project relies principally upon secondary sources, including research and data collected by scholars and activists, and explores initiatives in Canada and the United States that offer non-police responses to drug overdoses and mental health crises. Although the research does not involve collaborating with community partners in participatory research, it is relevant to policymakers, communities, and individuals interested in reimagining community safety. While secondary data analysis has its limitations, including limited access to data collected specifically for this project, it allows this project to benefit from decades of insights from scholars and activists and connect them to criticisms of the police institution and non-punitive community approaches to drug overdoses and mental health crises.

Part of the motivation behind this MRP is to bring into conversation the work of well-known scholars and activists, who have contributed to the police abolition movement for decades, and lesser-known, emerging voices in this area. I take care to balance the inclusion of these voices, as well as to draw upon and include information that is made available directly by the organizations examined in this MRP. Additionally, I intentionally draw upon the work of scholars and activists of colour, who are most affected by police presence and possibilities for its abolition, and whose efforts are essential to envisioning a future without police.

Section 2, Methodology, explains the conceptual framework for this project, which largely draws upon antiracist, anticolonial and Black feminist analyses, Marxist and anarchist scholars where relevant, and the work of activists who are not scholars. Relying upon secondary data analysis to examine allocations of police resources, police history, and theories of abolition

allows this project to focus on well-structured research from reputable sources, and to benefit from the knowledge of scholars and activists who have been doing abolitionist work for years.

Section 3, Demystifying the Police, debunks commonly held beliefs about the police, arguing that police do not keep most of us safe, nor is this its purpose. Rather than preventing crime or addressing the social conditions that generate it, the primary role of the police is to restore order through largely reactionary responses.

Section 4, The Creation and Evolution of the Police, explores the origins and development of the police institution and its connection to the military. Beginning with the emergence of the concept of policing in the fifteenth century before moving to the creation of the London Metropolitan Police Force in 1829, this section traces the history of the police through to the development of police power in the colonial contexts of Canada and the United States.

Section 5, Criticism of the Police, offers a criticism of the police institution, discussing police violence in North America, the disproportionate targeting of Black and Indigenous peoples by police forces and the over-representation of mentally ill and intoxicated individuals involved in encounters with lethal use of force. The section also explores how the police's paramilitary culture and incorporation of military protocol, equipment, and tactics can lead to disastrous results when deployed in delicate situations, such as mental health crises.

Section 6, History of Police Abolition, examines the history of the police abolition movement, tracing its roots from the movement to abolish slavery in the United States through subsequent initiatives, from securing dependable emergency responses to healthcare crises in the mid-twentieth century to recent efforts emerging in the wake of the 2020 protests in Minneapolis, Minnesota. These programs emphasize collective community engagement and reframing moments of crisis as affairs for the community to handle, strengthening community

ties and creating a robust network of supportive relationships necessary for effective and compassionate crisis responses.

Section 7, Current Initiatives, explores four community initiatives responding to drug overdoses and mental health crises in North America, representing potential replacements for the police response. Discussing organizations that prevent or reduce the harm associated with mental health crises and drug overdoses, I note that all of these initiatives have strong community connections, treat overdoses and mental health crises as health issues rather than criminal behaviour, provide a compassionate and judgement-free response, and work to destigmatize addiction and mental illness.

2 METHODOLOGY

2.1 Conceptual Framework:

Much of the research on police abolition, what police do, and why police forces were created, has come out of frameworks which center antiracist and anticolonial analyses. This MRP builds upon this critical work by drawing upon Marxist and anarchist scholars where relevant, as well as Black feminist analysis. As this MRP specifically examines the possibility of police abolition in Canada and the United States, the scholars and activists used to inform my analysis principally focus on police abolition in North American contexts. One notable exception is Mark Neocleous's work on police power, which is largely rooted in the British context. As this project is undertaken while pursuing a Master of Arts degree, it is by nature a scholarly project and one which draws upon the secondary analysis of other scholars' research. However, the topic explored is an endeavour of utmost importance to grassroots activists and community organizers outside of universities, and as such I feel it is important to highlight that this project also draws upon the work of activists who are not scholars, such as Mariame Kaba, as well as scholars with a strong affinity to activism, such as Robyn Maynard and Jaskiran Dhillon. It would not be possible to explore alternatives to police responses to drug overdoses and mental health crises without people on the ground doing the work of imagining and putting into practice alternatives to police.

Because this MRP is meant as an exploration of practical alternatives to police services, and not principally as an exploration of abolitionist theory, it does not go in-depth into the intricacies of the debates in Marxism, abolitionism, or any other framework. Rather, it draws upon the relevant aspects of Marxism, abolitionism, anarchism and Black feminism which speak to and inform this project's focus. Additionally, because this project explores options and

pathways for police abolition in material terms, the historical materialism offered by Marxist scholars has proven helpful in exploring police abolition as praxis, rather than simply as a conceptual experiment.

An important limitation of relying heavily upon a materialist analysis in a project of this sort is that psychological or ideological questions relevant to the study of policing or police abolition cannot be adequately addressed. Understanding why so many people subscribe to the idea that a person who has caused harm should be imprisoned or that heavily armed police are needed to keep order, for example, are important questions. However, they are beyond the scope of this project.

2.2 Methods:

This project relies principally upon secondary sources for analysis of the allocation of police resources, police history, and theories of abolition in Canada and the United States. There is now a growing literature in this field whose important insights offer solid ground upon which to base this MRP. Drawing primarily on secondary sources has the benefit of not requiring the completion of an ethics review to conduct research. Additionally, this method enables me to avoid large amounts of raw data irrelevant to this MRP's limited scope by focusing on well-structured research and shining a light on important insights within police abolition by putting the writing of scholars and activists in conversation with organizations that present an alternative to the police in responding to these events. This method lends itself well to examining the creation of police forces and tracing their historical role, as well as scrutinizing the possibilities for reducing the police mandate in the areas of drug policy and responses to mental health crises.

This project examines two initiatives in each of Canada and the U.S. that offer alternative models to what are unnecessary, and often harmful, police interventions. As this project is

dedicated specifically to exploring police abolition in Canada and the United States, I examine one initiative from each country that addresses drug overdoses, and one that addresses mental health crises, totalling four initiatives. By narrowing down the number of initiatives to four, this project aims to showcase an appropriate range of existing police alternatives while considering the limitations of its scope. The abundance of community-driven solutions for these challenges presents a valuable resource in the search for police alternatives. Relying upon secondary data analysis, this project prioritizes projects about which much has been published, selecting a different response model for each organization to enable a comprehensive examination and meaningful dialogue between the merits and shortcomings of different models. All of the initiatives explored offer alternative models for non-police responses to drug overdoses and mental health crises with strong community ties; the impacts of their alternative approaches on the communities they serve are explored and put into conversation with one another.

Any research on community initiatives for police abolition must center the voices of the activists and abolitionists of colour who have been doing this work for so long, and who stand to gain the most from reimagining community safety. This project benefits from the knowledge and experience of community organizers with whom I am in contact to help guide my research efforts, and whom I will consult again for the most appropriate paths of knowledge mobilization beyond this MRP. While this approach to research does not involve collaborating with community partners in participatory research, this project's questions address issues faced by individuals, communities and policymakers, and the research and results of this project will be of relevance to those interested in reimagining community safety within their respective spheres of influence.

Conducting secondary data analysis allows me to sort through a wealth of information considered quite reliable, as it comes from reputable sources including academics specializing in the field and respected activists. Relying upon the work of those who have researched and collected data on police use of resources allows this project to benefit from decades of insights from scholars and activists, and to connect their insights to the criticisms of the police institution and the non-punitive approaches taken by community organizations in responding to drug overdoses and mental health crises in ways which benefit the community. One of the most obvious and important limitations of relying upon secondary data analysis is access only to the data and information studied and published by others, rather than to data collected specifically for this project. This includes, for example, data regarding police use of resources, as well as the outcomes of non-police responses to drug overdoses and mental health crises. The potential for bias and blatant inaccuracies in data that relies upon self-reporting by the police can also not be ignored. Another important limitation to this approach in researching community-led alternatives to calling the police is that all the information gathered has come from published sources. As a result, this project does not investigate the developments nor impacts of community organizations about which nothing has been published, nor the most recent developments of the more well-known organizations this project has explored.

This MRP explores the history of the development of police and criticism of their role in Canada and the United States, as well as alternative structures that respond to drug overdoses and mental health crises, two of the calls for police service which result in some of the most frequent police shootings (de Tribolet-Hardy et al., 2014; Campbell, 2019; Rogers et al., 2019). In exploring some of the safer, more effective alternatives to calling the police to address overdoses and mental health crises these organizations present, secondary analysis has the benefit of

drawing on the knowledge of scholars and activists who have been doing abolitionist work for years, and in some cases decades. Additionally, the focus of this project is on bringing together well-known initiatives in North America that currently respond to drug overdoses and mental health crises as they arise, rather than writing a project about the various aspects of police abolition theory, and this is reflected in this project's conceptual framework by drawing upon scholars and activists with a material analysis in their criticisms of police power.

There are no ethical issues involving confidentiality or informed consent raised by my research. It does not require an ethics review. There are also no logistical challenges, such as specialized software or access to participants, in need of addressing. However, as this project explores the possibilities for policy changes to structures that create public safety, it must strive to make the data and potential for beneficial changes as clear as possible. An important consideration for this project is my positionality as a white man doing work in an area of social justice scholarship and activism whose preeminent work is and has been done by Black women. The sorts of data about the police that I notice and impress upon me are different than what registers from the standpoint of a Black woman. This important reality speaks to the significance of this project's community engagement strategy, as well as the proposed knowledge mobilization strategy. My hope for this project is that it will encourage those who have questioned neither the purpose nor the existence of the police to begin to ask these questions and to provide them with a set of tools to begin considering alternatives to police services. I intend to consult the activists and scholars with whom I am connected for their input into how to make the most useful impact of the research, including editing the MRP to be published in part, developing the research into workshops that do not require me specifically to run, and reworking the material to be presented in public school events.

3 DEMYSTIFYING THE POLICE

This section demystifies the police by challenging common misconceptions about what functions it performs and how its time and resources are spent. The police, it demonstrates, does not keep most of us safe nor is that its purpose.

Perhaps the most commonly-held misconception about police is they exist to prevent crime and to keep the public safe. To date, there exists no evidence correlating a reduction in crime rates with an increased number of police officers, nor an increase in crime rates with a reduction in police officers, despite repeated studies of this subject over several decades (Bayley, 1994). In fact, Bayley notes that there exists no evidence correlating crime rates with numbers of police officers whatsoever. Following the logic that more police officers leads to lower crime rates, one would expect a city with a higher number of police officers per capita to have less crime than a city with a lower number of police officers. To illustrate that this logic has no basis in material reality, in 1990, for example, the cities of Seattle and Houston had “one third fewer police officers per capita than Los Angeles…but one fourth to one third less violent crime per capita,” while violent crime in Los Angeles was “twice that in Houston and two thirds higher than that in Seattle” (Bayley, 1994, pp. 4). Despite having more police officers per capita, Los Angeles still had higher violent crime rates than cities with fewer police officers per capita; more cops did not translate into less crime, nor did fewer cops translate into more crime. The lack of correspondence between the number of police officers and crime rates is not a secret to the government; it has been noted, for example, in an American report, the President’s Commission on Law Enforcement and the Administration of Justice in 1967 (Bayley, 1994). Despite this, the police “pretend that they are society’s best defense against crime and continually argue that if

they are given more resources, especially personnel, they will be able to protect communities against crime" (Vitale, 2021, pp. 68).

The practice in many North American communities since the Second World War has been to respond to increasing crime rates by hiring more police officers (Bayley, 1994). A comprehensive examination of crime rates, however, demonstrates that their increase is not even temporarily reduced by the presence of more cops (Bayley, 1994). For example, in Canada, between 1970 and 1990, police departments across the country expanded their forces such that the rate of police per capita rose by 16% over these two decades (Bayley, 1994). While the number of officers employed by police departments to respond to crime increased, however, the crime rate, rather than decreasing as the number of police officers rose, saw a significant 34% increase over this same period (Bayley, 1994). This study is just one of many that demonstrate no correlation between more cops and less crime; this finding was also observed in the United States (Marvell & Moody, 1996), Britain (Draco & Langella, 2020) and Australia (Carcach, 2005). While one who subscribes to the notion that police officers prevent crime and that more police officers results in lower crime rates would expect a reduction in crime rates with greater numbers of cops in service, this idea is not held up by any evidence collected in real-world studies.

There has even been research that examines the lack of effects on crime rates of police strikes and budgetary cuts leading to significant layoffs. Geo Maher offers the example of the New York Police Department's (NYPD) job action against Mayor Bill de Blasio in late-2014, in response to de Blasio's disappointment at the lack of an indictment of the police officers involved in the murder of Eric Garner (Maher, 2021). Arguing that they were put at risk by the demand for accountability, the officers hoped that by striking and working to rule communities

would cry out for the police to come back to work after realizing how essential police services are (Maher, 2021). Instead, researchers have shown that during the work to rule, "complaints of serious crimes dropped some 3 to 6 percent," while arrests declined by half (Maher, 2021, pp. 112). Through the combined efforts of "Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) requests and complex statistical analysis," conducted on this period of slowdown in policing activity, researchers found that the strategies of police "'inadvertently contribute to serious criminal activity' by establishing a 'vicious feedback between proactive policing and major crime' that can 'exacerbate political and economic inequality across communities'" (Maher, 2021, pp. 112). It is the lack of evidence linking a decline in crime rates with an increase in police officers, and a decrease in complaints of serious crimes during a period when police took job action, that led scholars like Bayley and Maher to conclude that the number of police officers does not influence crime statistics. Bayley himself is "no abolitionist, and no opponent of the police;" he has simply found no evidence to connect the number of officers with crime rates through his evaluation of several studies (Maher, 2021, pp. 111). Furthermore, Bayley is not the only one to arrive at this realization; looking at the available evidence on the United Kingdom, the 1991 UK Audit Commission wrote that "The terms of public debate need to move off the assumption that more police officers and more police expenditures lead to a commensurate increase in the quantity and quality of police outputs" (Bayley, 1994, pp. 5).

Not only does the number of police officers in service not affect crime rates, but the primary tactics employed by modern police departments—street patrols, emergency response, and crime investigation—are also proven to be useless in preventing crime (Maher, 2021). Regarding patrols, research has consistently shown that "the number of patrols in an area may be doubled, halved, or even removed altogether" with no effect on crime rates, victimization, or

even public satisfaction (Bayley, 1994, pp. 5). Responding quickly to emergency calls is meant to prevent crime by boosting the likelihood of apprehension during or shortly after an offence, and to deter crime through subsequent punishment. However, unless the response time to such a call can be reduced to less than one minute—a rare occurrence—the chances of apprehension are likely less than one in ten (Bayley, 1994). And, despite the pervasive belief that future crime can be prevented through arrests and convictions, a 2020 study conducted by the University of Utah concluded that only two percent of serious crimes reported result in arrest and conviction (Maher, 2021). Nevertheless, these are still the strategies that the police argue will prevent crime, and which they say they are uniquely qualified to perform.

That the police do not prevent crime will be a surprising revelation for many. Even more surprising, however, is that in the United States, the police "aren't even required to try—or, for that matter, to protect the public at all" (Maher, 2021, pp. 114). During the 2018 mass shooting at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School in Parkland, Florida, the armed sheriff's deputy based at the school hid for forty-five minutes while seventeen students were murdered (Maher, 2021). In what represents a recent example of federal courts preserving this "no duty to protect" rule, the legal proceedings following the mass shooting found that "the Sheriff's Office had no legal duty to protect students during the shooting at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School" (Maher, 2021, pp. 114). Previous to this decision, in both a case involving child abuse (DeShaney v. Winnebago County in 1989) and a case involving domestic violence (Castle Rock v. Gonzales in 2005) the Supreme Court of the United States ruled that "police and other public agencies could not be held liable for not protecting the public from a private, third-party actor," unless expressly in police custody (Maher, 2021, pp. 114-15). The impacts of the Marjory Stoneman Douglas decision continued to reverberate into the summer of 2022, with the legal standard set by the no

duty to protect rule preventing lawsuits against the officers involved in the response—or lack thereof—to the mass shooting at an elementary school in Uvalde, Texas ("Texas shooting", 2022), (Asgarian, 2022).

In Canada, similar principles apply regarding the duty of police officers to protect the public. In the landmark 2007 case of Hill v. Hamilton-Wentworth Regional Police Services Board, the decision handed down by the Supreme Court of Canada created a new tort of "negligent investigation" (Bronitt & Stenning, 2011, pp. 327). While Canadian courts generally follow the rule that "a common law duty of care cannot be imposed on public authorities based on the words of the enabling statutes alone" (Feldthusen, 2017, pp. 172), the Hill ruling creates an ad hoc "unique duty" in which, under certain circumstances, police officers owe a duty of care to certain specific individuals; for example, those involved in an ongoing investigation (Feldthusen, 2017). This legal framework reflects the understanding that police are primarily tasked with maintaining public order and responding to criminal activity, focusing on broader societal interests rather than individual welfare. This parallels the American "no duty to protect," as both of these examples show that the police is not generally obligated to protect people, due to the legal frameworks in both countries favouring societal interests over public protection.

What I wish to stress is the chasm that exists between commonly held assumptions about what the police exists to do, and what it actually does and is required to do. Maher argues that there is "zero evidence" that the police have ever stopped a mass shooting, an argument underscored by the Parkland ruling which reaffirmed that the police officer on duty at the school is not legally required to protect the students, despite being hired to do just that (Maher, 2021, pp. 115). The idea that the police exist "to protect and serve" the public is a fairy tale. This ubiquitous motto was adopted by the LAPD in 1963 to help improve public perception of the

police at a time when racial tensions were high and the police department was "actively recruiting white officers from the Jim Crow South" (Maher, 2021, pp. 108). It is a slogan, not a policy, designed to mask the racist police practices of the time and to obscure the fact that police do not serve to protect the majority of the public (Maher, 2021).

When police do engage with criminal activity, it is largely with crimes that have already transpired (Bayley, 1994). If the police do not prevent crime and crime informs little of what they spend their time addressing, what do the police do? The vast majority of officers are assigned to patrol work, with 64% of police assigned to this task in Canada and 65% in the United States (Bayley, 1994). Research throughout the past five decades continues to affirm that much of the time dedicated to patrolling is not attached to any particular endeavour, not even to responding to calls for service (Lum et al., 2022). Instead, the majority of police officers assigned to patrol duty "take reports, engage in random patrol, address parking and driving violations and noise complaints, issue tickets, and make misdemeanor arrests for drinking in public, possession of small amounts of drugs, or the vague 'disorderly conduct'" (Vitale, 2021, pp. 66). If it ever occurs, arresting someone amid violent criminal activity is a significant event in an officer's career; for most officers in the United States, this happens less than once per year (Vitale, 2021).

The police, then, do not prevent crime; they are unable to prevent crime. Many experts agree that different communities' crime rates are governed by "social conditions outside the control of the police, as well as outside the control of the criminal justice system as a whole" (Bayley, 1994, pp. 10). Employment status, income, education levels, gender, age, ethnic mix, and family composition are acknowledged as the most accurate forecasters of community crime rates, with Cohen, Felson, and Land (1983) finding that, between 1947 and 1977, "such factors

could account for 96.5% of the differences in robbery rates, 99% of the differences in burglary rates, and 99.3% of the differences in auto-theft rates throughout the United States" (Bayley, 1994, pp. 10). Influencing the circumstances that generate crime is beyond the command of the police, and has little to do with what the police do in practice. What police officers primarily achieve is the restoration of order, largely through reactionary responses, with almost no attempt made to "correct underlying conditions that have led to the need for police intervention" (Bayley, 1994, pp. 34).

In Canada, former president of the Canadian Association of Chiefs of Police, Dale McFee, indicated police calls for service unrelated to criminal activity ranged from 70-80% (Wuschke et al., 2018), a figure affirmed by the 24.1% of calls involving crime detailed by Demers et al. (2007) (in Wuschke et al., 2018). These figures are corroborated by British and American studies that demonstrate how very little crime has to do with the work of patrol officers, consistently showing that "not more than 25% of all calls to the police are about crime; more often the figure is 15-20%" (Bayley, 1994, pp. 17). Bayley suggests that the real number may be closer to 7-10%, as "what is initially reported by the public as crime is often found not to be crime by the police who respond," as with cases involving lonely senior citizens reporting a crime for officers to come and speak with them (1994, pp. 17). In short, the majority of police officers are not actively engaged in fighting crime, but rather in interrupting "situations of potential or ongoing conflict," such as public intoxication, noise complaints, or sleeping in public (Bayley, 1994). With the little time the police do deal with crime, it is after it has already been committed; even sexual assaults and murders are ignored before they happen (Bayley, 1994). As for the fifteen percent of police that are detectives, the majority of their time is spent "taking reports of crimes that they will never solve—and in many cases will never even investigate"

(Vitale, 2021, pp. 66). Most of the crimes that are investigated are never solved; homicide investigations "can be brought to a quick conclusion if no clear suspect is identified within two days" and other crimes, such as burglaries and larcenies, "are even less likely to be investigated thoroughly, or at all" (Vitale, 2021, pp. 66).

Calls to the police for service are commonplace, and reflect a vast array of matters that the public presumes the police should manage. In a nine-agency study of police response to calls for service in the United States, Lum et al. (2022) identify over a dozen call types responded to by officers of each agency, including traffic-related calls, disorders, "suspicions," property, and domestic. Not only does this array of call types reflect the public's beliefs about what the police should do, but also the "absence of other public or private agencies that people can call for these daily concerns," which may be "even more salient in poorer communities that may already lack high quality social services or may not be able to provide for them privately" (Lum et al., 2022, pp. 17). An analysis of the outcome of the police calls for service later confirmed that "the vast majority of calls for police service are for events that are likely not immediately violent or life-threatening emergencies," even though some more serious events may come from or be obscured by these minor calls (Lum et al., 2022, pp. 11). It is essential, however, to note that "community members are requesting the police for many minor and non-serious concerns because no other agency exists that they could call" (Lum et al., 2022, pp. 11).

Much of the conversation about defunding or abolishing the police has not involved a great deal of research into the nature of the matters that police are called upon to handle, the motivations behind police calls for service, or the resources behind the responses to those calls (Lum et al., 2022). What literature does exist paints a clear picture that police respond to several issues—many of them non-emergencies—for which they are neither trained nor equipped and, as

the next section explores, were not created to handle in the first place. Police have become the de facto first responders to mental health crises, for example, as mental health facilities close, leaving the public with few options for adequate assistance (Vitale, 2017).

The picture painted by the available data, then, presents the police as a force that does not prevent crime, is not required by law to protect the public, assigns two-thirds of its personnel to unstructured patrol time in which they make misdemeanor arrests for public drunkenness and disorderly conduct, and are as a whole unequipped to address the conditions that produce crime in the first place or the reasons for which they are often called. Instead, modern policing, writes Alex Vitale, is "largely a war on the poor that does little to make people safer or communities stronger, and even when it does, this is accomplished through the most coercive forms of state power that destroy the lives of millions" (2017, pp. 108). Policing is a class- and racially-based system of social control, which subordinates people through processes of criminalization (Vitale, 2017). Robyn Maynard's work (2017) exposes the reality of how racialized and impoverished communities become victims of discriminatory policing practices, further cementing predominant power dynamics and facilitating social control. The War on Drugs, for example, has targeted Black and Indigenous communities, perpetuating a fabricated narrative of criminality associated with race (Maynard, 2017). The "carding" practice in Toronto is also part of this pattern, where police officers randomly subject overwhelmingly racialized individuals to stops and documentation under the pretext of suspicion (Maynard, 2017). This form of policing not only creates fear and mistrust but also maintains a fabricated link between race and criminal behaviour, placing these communities under constant surveillance and scrutiny (Maynard, 2017).

In this sense, our current iteration of crime control is not unlike the colonial structure from which it was inherited, in that various forms of oppression, such as racial oppression, are

reinforced by nurturing inequality through a matrix of laws designed for this purpose (Vitale, 2017). Wendy Chan and Dorothy Chunn (2014) examine how such forms of oppression contribute to “the over-incarceration of Aboriginal people, the dismissal and/or minimization of criminal victimization involving racialized people, the use of racial profiling by police…and…the view that certain racialized groups in Canada are more prone to crime” (pp. xiv). Not only are racialized people stigmatized by these policies, they are also “branded as the ‘enemy’ for failing to rise above their predicament” (Chan & Chunn, 2014, pp. xvii). After fabricating an image that contributes to these communities’ social exclusion, the state manages them “not by increasing efforts to integrate them into the mainstream, or by restoring rights, but instead by constructing them as risks that need to be managed either through incapacitation or until they are able to self-regulate and reintegrate into the community” (Chan & Chunn, 2014, pp. 21). Whether it is the “War on Crime” or the “War on Drugs,” racialized groups “bear the brunt of the policies implemented by states in the name of public safety” (Chan & Chunn, 2014, pp. 22). Transitioning from colonial precursors to the modern police force has largely been an exercise in “engineering greater public acceptance of the social-control functions of the state,” in which “the police’s concern with crime makes their social control functions more palatable” (Vitale, 2017, pp. 105).

This system of justice, then, masks its social control functions by labelling workers, the poor and unemployed, especially those of colour, as “dangerous”, their activities as “criminal”, and their control as “punishment” (Vitale, 2017). Those at the bottom of the economic and political order—the non-white and the poor—are targeted by the physical hands of this system, the police, as a means of “managing and even producing inequality by suppressing social movements and tightly managing the behaviors of…those on the losing end of economic and

political arrangements" (Vitale, 2017, pp. 70). This role in controlling the poor, foreign, and non-white "on behalf of a system of economic and political inequality" has been in place from the earliest formations of the modern police and remains to this day, even as the manners of resisting this system, whether in the form of slave revolts, general strikes, or riots, change throughout time (Vitale, 2017, pp. 72). In this context, the police exist to "fabricate social order," representing the "point of contact between the coercive apparatus of the state and the lives of its citizens" (Vitale, 2017, pp. 71-2). The police primarily serve and protect the interests of those of great wealth and property who feel threatened as a result of their privileged position in this fabricated social order (Maher, 2021).

4 THE CREATION AND EVOLUTION OF THE POLICE

While the contemporary police's beginnings are usually identified with Sir Robert Peel's establishment of the London Metropolitan Police Force (the Met) in 1829, several significant events preceded the Met's creation, such as the emergence of "the concept of police itself as a political discourse of social regulation" (Bell & Schreiner, 2018, pp. 15). The idea of policing, as distinct from the institution, surfaced in the fifteenth century, referring to the "administrative regulation of the internal life of a community to promote general welfare and the conditions of good order…and the regimenting of social life" (Bell & Schreiner, 2018, pp. 15). With capitalism expanding across Britain, older structures of authority began to wane as people left estates in favour of growing towns, allowing for new ways of life, which included increased "gambling, drinking, adultery, blasphemy and, more generally, the opportunity to 'wander,'" as well as other forms of consumption which were previously less possible (Neocleous, 2021, pp. 120). Issues traditionally governed by the church and other such power structures of the feudal world increasingly fell under the purview of urban authorities (Neocleous, 2021).

Enter the police force: a system created to manage "social disorders" said to endanger the state as the previous ordering structures collapsed (Neocleous, 2021, pp. 121). As British society increasingly became comprised of independent, masterless "individuals," unrestrained by traditional power structures, their "social, economic and political condition appeared to undermine social order: as masterless men, they were considered disorderly" (Neocleous, 2021, pp. 122). Policing thus expanded with the transition to the capitalist mode of production to manage activities seen to endanger the social order that accompanied patterns of consumption, as well as the movement of masterless individuals to and between cities in search of work, associated with the expansion of wage labour (Bell & Schreiner, 2018). Imposing capitalist

market relations upon labour involved criminalizing traditions which impaired efforts to expand privatization and establish wage relations (Dafnos, 2014). To illustrate how the criminalization of such traditions was enforced, the Thames River Police, for example, was created in 1798 to guard the docks along the River Thames and end the traditional cargo privileges of dock- and ship-workers, such as entitlements to spilled cargo and the sweepings of sugar, coffee, and other goods from the holds of ships. Once an "important form of additional subsistence for workers" (Neocleous, 2021), police reconstituted these practices as theft by idle criminals (Bell & Schreiner, 2018). The Thames River Police was an example of "the protection that a public police could offer in securing the bourgeoisie's means of accumulation," and was instrumental in paving the way for the Met's development (Dafnos, 2014, pp. 63).

This concern with ending practices now viewed by the capitalist state as criminal and disruptive to the public order, both in Britain and the colonies, gave rise in the nineteenth century to the police as an institution for carrying out "pacification techniques" essential for controlling an empire (Bell & Schreiner, 2018, pp. 117). Alongside the development of this view of the institution grew another idea: that of "civilization," referring to "an act tending to make man and society more *policé* [orderly]" (Neocleous, 2021, pp. 152). Civilization was styled as "a regime of rules promoting orderliness and good conduct, to which all societies should aspire;" and populations "deemed to lack comparable legal regimes came to be regarded as uncivilized, and potentially destabilizing, if not dangerous" (Bell & Schreiner, 2018, pp. 116). In the domestic context of Britain, police were associated with managing threatening social disorders related to the imposition of market relations upon workers. The concept of civilization allowed police power to extend and "connect…to the international realm" (Bell & Schreiner, 2018, pp. 116).

Before establishing the Met, Sir Robert Peel began his police enterprise during his tenure as Chief Secretary for Ireland, Britain's first colony, where his Peace Preservation Act of 1814 paved the way for the creation of the colony's first police force, the Peace Preservation Force (PPF), which was replaced by the Royal Irish Constabulary (RIC) in 1822 (Bell & Schreiner, 2018). These early police forces served to create the standard for coercive colonial policing through their systemic treatment of non-British peoples as "inherently different and inferior" and their racialization of the colonial subject (Bell & Schreiner, 2018, pp. 117). With its hierarchical rank structure, "army-style, bottle-green uniforms," barracks, short-barrelled carbines and strict discipline (Lowe & Malcolm, 1992), the RIC was a quasi-military force intended to "pacify the colony and the 'uncivilized' Irish in order to secure this population for exploitation by the imperial metropole" (Bell & Schreiner, 2018, pp. 117). Mark Neocleous highlights the connections between the "key institutions of the war power and the police power," with many of the Met's first officers and commissioner being former military men, and the structure and hierarchy of the Met deriving from the British Armed Forces (Neocleous, 2021, pp. 17). Peel's experience as Chief Secretary for Ireland informed the formation of the Met when the organizational structure of the RIC was brought back to London during Peel's term as Home Secretary. Upon its export to the colonies, including Canada, Peel's police force began to be described as "semi-military" or "paramilitary" (Neocleous, 2021).

The Irish Peace Preservation Act of 1814 and the Metropolitan Police Act of 1829 had influence beyond the British Empire; the police forces which these acts enabled the creation of in Britain and Ireland also informed the arrangements of urban police structures in the United States. The Met model, in particular, was imported to Boston, New York and Chicago, where it was adjusted to suppress "riots and the widespread social disorder" associated with rapid

industrialization and vast waves of working-class immigration (Vitale, 2017, pp. 76). The effects of the imposed industrial labour relations upon recent immigrants produced "social upheaval and immiseration that was expressed as crime, racial and ethnic strife, and labor unrest," with riots during this period at times occurring monthly (Vitale, 2017, pp. 77). In addition to helping to manufacture an orderly modern labour force by acting to "protect property, quell riots, put down strikes and other industrial actions," police forces "attempted to discipline and control this population by restricting drinking, gambling, and prostitution, as well as much more mundane behaviors like how women wore their hair, the lengths of bathing suits, and public kissing" (Vitale, 2017, pp. 78).

While many narratives locate the origins of modern policing in these urban models, police power in the United States nevertheless predates these models, and "shares a colonial genealogy with other nation-states that created a racialized social order through enforcement of the color line" (Castle, 2020, pp. 218). Colonial militias in 17th and 18th century Virginia, for example, were responsible for overseeing enslaved peoples and preventing collaboration between English indentured servants and enslaved Africans for mutual freedom by creating a "racialized hierarchy of social relations…to formalize distinctions between the labor groups" (Castle, 2020, pp. 218). The growing urban population leading up to the American Civil War led to the growth of urban patrols, and the disorder during and after the war "gave Southern police forces an excuse to continue aggressive surveillance by 'checking suspicious persons' and 'limiting nighttime movement'" (Castle, 2020, pp. 218). Colonial militias, slave patrols, and successive urban and rural patrols, all share the "racialized organizing logic of order maintenance" that white supremacy provides as the chief purpose of police power, an ideology which continues to vitalize modern policing (Castle, 2020, pp. 230).

A further shift away from the overt rhetoric of race in police power came with the labour strikes and the Civil Rights movement of the mid-twentieth century. The role of the police in upholding the "racialized capitalist social order" involves the use of both explicit force and pacifying tactics, and this period saw a shift away from the model of paramilitary efficiency towards an "emphasis on community pacification" through "colour-blind" policies and frameworks of "legal equality" (Castle, 2020, pp. 216). At a time when riots in Black communities, often against police violence, were frequent and required little to get started, an emphasis on "community relations" and "public service" served to maintain the desired order more efficiently than an overt emphasis on the rhetoric of race (Castle, 2020, pp. 216). Violence and pacification, however, work in tandem to maintain the power of the state through the police, and by extension the military, as the consent created for the presence of the police through community pacification enables the use of violence by the police as a tool of repression (Castle, 2020). The apparently "colourblind" criminal justice system, with its frameworks of legal equality, is the contemporary mechanism for "racialized social control" as policing and mass incarceration are how Black captivity is sustained (Castle, 2020, pp. 221). While the "myth of political neutrality persists in narratives locating the origins of modern policing in the development of urban patrols" to address increasing crime resulting from industrialization and the shift to the wage economy, these narratives serve to obfuscate the white supremacist underpinnings inherent in the purpose of police as a means of social control along class and race lines (Castle, 2020).

The development of police power in Canada, while distinct, shares many features in common with its development in other colonial contexts. In Britain, police forces were employed to impose market relations upon workers and manage behaviours seen to threaten the new social

order. In the colonial context, police were also used to fabricate and impose a new social order along market lines, upon both settlers and Indigenous peoples, but this project was more distinctly influenced by ideas of "civilization". Originally attached to "quelling working class discord in relation to the emergence of capitalism in England," these notions were employed to dramatic effect in British colonies to enlarge the empire (Bell & Schreiner, 2018, pp. 114). Policing in the colonial context became associated not only with managing "social disorders," but also with the solidification of state power and the "ordering of empire" through "pacification techniques" attached to civilization (Bell & Schreiner, 2018, pp. 117). The model for police in Canada included a variety of tactics for "the imposition of a new political order and the destruction of Indigenous political orders which were seen to be an impediment to progress," with a heavy emphasis on controlling access to resources and land (Bell & Schreiner, 2018, pp. 118).

This task of uprooting existing social orders and manufacturing a new society was sustained through "a civilizing and paternalistic set of discourses that treated Indigenous peoples and their ways of life as primitive and lacking in civility" (Bell & Schreiner, 2018, pp. 119). Policing Indigenous peoples in Canada thus involved an "elaborate array" of "civilizing" techniques of which several are still currently employed in seizing Indigenous land and quelling behaviours deemed criminal or against the national interest (Bell & Schreiner, 2018, pp. 126). Drawing heavily upon the structure of the RIC, the North-West Mounted Police (NWMP)—the precursor organization to the Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP)—was a "quasi-military" force created in 1873 to promote an "internal" form of colonialism (Bell & Schreiner, 2018, pp. 118). This internal colonialism was distinct from the colonial project imposed by Britain in that its focus was not only upon maintaining "order" and controlling Indigenous populations but also

on facilitating the "transfer of Indigenous territory to the federal government" and establishing the new domain of Canadian governmental authority proceeding from Ottawa instead of London (Bell & Schreiner, 2018). In addition to this mission, following John A. MacDonald's instructions that this project "should be styled Police, and have…military bearing," the distinctive element of the NWMP was to function militarily as a disciplinary and regulatory system (Bell & Schreiner, 2018, pp. 118). After the RCMP succeeded the NWMP, this included enforcing the attendance of Indigenous children at residential schools once attendance became compulsory in 1920 (Dhillon, 2015).

As established above, the violent impositions of capitalism and the colonial project's new social order, and the perceived disorder associated with resistance to it led to the development of the police as a colonial institution designed to execute policing duties, inclusive of military structure, function and philosophy (Bell & Schreiner, 2018). In Canada, although in the strict sense of the word the RCMP are a domestic force, in reality, its roles are unclear and not easily discernable between military and police, and even suggest some "points of intersection between colonial policing and international policing" (Bell & Schreiner, 2018, pp. 117).

There is also an important connection between the role of enforcing the settler colonial project and the RCMP's role in colonialism internationally; the latter is an extension of the former. It is telling, for instance, that many NWMP officers thought of their mission as "an international encounter with Indigenous peoples who understood themselves then, like now, as autonomous nations" (Bell & Schreiner, 2018, pp. 125). In the twentieth century, the bellicose role of the RCMP has also been on stark display in Africa and the Caribbean, where it has actively repressed anti-colonial struggles (Maynard, 2017). The Canadian government's involvement in the 2004 coup against Jean-Bertrand Aristide, Haiti's first democratically elected

president, offers one such example. The RCMP joined United Nations troops in imposing order after the coup, and "both are seen by many Haitians as occupiers" (Maynard, 2017, pp. 173). The RCMP maintains a presence in Haiti as part of the ongoing U.N. Stabilization Mission, along with other Canadian forces (Maynard, 2017).

Part of why the activity of the contemporary RCMP occupies a nebulous grey area between military and police is because it has historically been "as much about securing the 'inside' as it was about establishing the sovereign status of Canada itself" (Bell & Schreiner, 2018, pp. 125). Rather than working from the received inference that the politics of colonialism are a thing of the past, police power needs to be examined with the understanding that colonial relations are ongoing if policing is to be grasped accurately (Bell & Schreiner, 2018). This interpretation also "contributes to contextualization of settler colonialism as a set of international occurrences" (Bell & Schreiner, 2018, pp. 125).

The perspective of settler colonialism also helps to corroborate the relationship between the dynamics of police power and the lived experiences of Indigenous women and girls. As Jaskiran K. Dhillon argues, because policing is "an essential state vehicle through which conquest becomes inscribed on the ground," Indigenous people thus "experience policing itself as a colonial force, an apparatus of capture imposed externally by a government they have not authorized and do not have effective participation within;" an indicator of militarized surveillance and discipline (2015, pp. 8). Seen through this lens, the NWMP and the RCMP, instructed by the Canadian government's policy of forced assimilation, can be understood as "a constitutive entity designed to carry out genocidal extermination, subjugation, and physical containment of Indigenous communities" (Dhillon, 2015, pp. 8). With the authority to use lethal force to neutralize the threat posed by the existence of Indigenous peoples to the security of

white Canadian settler society, the state largely uses criminalization, policing and incarceration that "function as both regulators and producers of socially constructed notions of normativity and deviance against which Indigenous youth sociality can be measured" (Dhillon, 2015, pp. 19). This situation, in which the police see Indigenous peoples as undeserving of protection and from which white society must be kept safe, has often been described as one in which Indigenous communities are over-policed, but under-protected (Dhillon, 2015).

In addition to the growth of police power coinciding with the emergence of European imperial expansion, the police project corresponded with the rise of capitalism and the shift to the wage economy, becoming intrinsically linked to "managing a set of perceived social problems that accompanied the onset of capitalist political economy and the consolidation of modern state power" (Bell & Schreiner, 2018, pp. 116). Despite the prevalent misunderstandings about police work discussed in the previous section, modern police work is still deeply influenced by this older idea of police power, or police science, as a "paternalistic enterprise to minimize social disorder" (Bell & Schreiner, 2018, pp. 116). Ruth Wilson Gilmore has argued that police and prisons are "partial geographical solutions to political economic crises, organized by the state, which is itself in crisis," where crisis means "instability that can be fixed only through radical measures, which include developing new relationships and new or renovated institutions out of what already exists" (2007, pp. 26). While this section has already laid out some of the institutions which were renovated to form the institution of the police, the instability that followed the end of the post-war capitalist boom produced "surpluses of land, labor, finance, capital, and state capacity," leading to larger and more numerous crises for the state to solve with these renovated institutions (Gilmore, 2007, pp. 129).

Christopher Tiedeman (1886) examines the “army of discontents” within the population, with the most important division of this army being the labouring class, so much so that a crucial role of the police is the management of “industrial warfare” (Neocleous, 2021, pp. 19), in yet another reference to militarism within policing. Similarly, Theodore Roosevelt, in his time as New York City Police Commissioner, unequivocally expressed that he thought “the ‘industrial warfare’ between capital and labour and the unending ‘war against crime’ requires police officers operating as ‘soldiers on the field of battle’” (Neocleous, 2021, pp. 20). Indeed, transforming common rights into private property necessitated transforming customs into crimes (Neocleous, 2021). In this way, the “consolidation of the wage form and the development of police power went hand in hand,” as this process required an enormous scope of police power mobilization, and was essential to establishing the wage form (Neocleous, 2021, pp. 37). In this sense, one of the most important elements of police power is the manufacture of “bourgeois order” and the establishment of wage labour and, indeed, the market (Neocleous, 2021).

5 CRITICISM OF THE POLICE

Part of the inspiration behind this MRP is the alarming use of force by police in North America, particularly towards Black and Indigenous peoples. Due to the disproportionate targeting of Black and Indigenous people by North American police forces, these communities are overrepresented among those incarcerated, as well as among those injured and killed in police encounters involving the use of force. According to the Yellowhead Institute, between 2007 and 2017, "Indigenous peoples represented one third of people shot to death by RCMP police officers," despite representing only 4.1% of Canada's population, and the Ontario Human Rights Commission found that "a Black person was more than 20 times more likely to be shot and killed by the police compared to a white person" (Stelkia, 2020, pp. 1). The latter statistic is similar to what has been found in the United States, where "black teens are up to twenty-one times more likely than white teens to be killed by police" (Vitale, 2017, pp. 11). In some places, such as New York City, 80 to 90 percent of those targeted for "low-level police interactions, from traffic tickets to searches to arrests for minor infractions" are racialized minorities, who "frequently report being treated in a hostile and degrading manner despite having done nothing wrong" (Vitale, 2017, pp. 11).

This police violence is frequently permitted without any form of accountability for the officers involved, much less for police departments or the institution as a whole. While there have been some exceptional cases of individual officers caught on film who have been tried and found guilty of murder, as with Derek Chauvin, the officer convicted of murdering George Floyd in Minneapolis in 2020, the pursuit of this outcome allows the accused officer's "employers and supervisors to disavow him, describing him as a rogue cop who had abandoned his training" (Taylor, 2021, para. 2). This is achieved through the police administration's "response to

oversight as an effort to offload responsibility onto individual officers, thereby diminishing organizational liability" (Campeau, 2015, pp. 681). In Chauvin's case, a reference was made by Minneapolis Police Chief Medaria Arradondo to the training received in applying the neck restraint used against Floyd. Arradondo was the first law enforcement authority to describe Chauvin's actions as murder (Forliti, 2020), and Chauvin's use of restraint was broadly condemned as "excessive" by other police officials (Hauck & Wagner, 2020). Prosecutor Steven Schleicher clarified that Chauvin's trial was "not a prosecution of the police—it [was] a prosecution of the defendant. And there's nothing worse for good police than bad police" (Taylor, 2021, para. 2). Furthermore, individual prosecutions of officers have not led to changes in the conditions that lead to civilians being murdered by the police. While the officers who killed Daunte Wright in suburban Minneapolis in 2021 after stopping his car and threatening him with arrest because of an existing warrant – a minor technicality often used as a pretext for racial profiling – quickly resigned and were arrested, police continue to pull racialized people over because of minor violations that mask racial profiling (Taylor, 2021).

Chauvin's murder of George Floyd, as well as several other high-profile instances of police brutality recorded in the past decade which highlight the failures of police reform, has played a crucial role in amplifying the influence of the idea of police abolition in mainstream popular consciousness. After Officer Darren Wilson killed Michael Brown in 2014, the resulting call from the African American community was "to indict Darren Wilson, and for body cameras" to be implemented by police forces (Taylor, 2021, para. 17). According to Kaba, a grand jury's inability to charge Darren Wilson allowed the young people who had been set in motion in the resulting movement against police violence to "see the futility of the demands that they were making and the limits of those demands," and became "ready to hear something new" (Taylor,

2021, para. 17). The idea behind police reform, including mandatory body cameras, is that more rules and more surveillance of the police will lead to less violence; however, as Kaba has also pointed out, “police officers break rules all the time” (Kaba, 2021, pp. 66). The New York Police Department (NYPD) officer who choked Eric Garner to death in 2014, Daniel Pantaleo, waved to the camera recording him in the act, knowing that the police union would support him; he remained on the force for another five years (Kaba, 2021). The protests that swept North America in the wake of George Floyd’s murder saw police officers slashing tires, shoving old men on camera, driving their vehicles into crowds of protesters, and arresting and injuring journalists and protesters without any outward signs of concern for accountability (Kaba, 2021).

The previous section established the history of the police as a technology of domination in controlling the movement of Black and Indigenous peoples across the Americas to secure land for the colonial project, as well as to manage working-class unrest. To this day, there are examples of historical practices that inform current policing policies; such as carding, the latest manifestation of the practice of coercively regulating the movement of racialized people under former pass laws (Walcott, 2021). These policing practices function both as a role in the racialized organization of the public, as well as to reproduce this racialization through the disparate treatment of subjects, based on the dominant system of racialized classification and its practices of governance (Bargu, 2019).

The long history of deeply entrenched stereotypes of Black and Brown bodies in North America has resulted in the skewed perception that these bodies are “threats to white people and their ideas of what is appropriate and even safe; threats that therefore must be subdued or policed” (Walcott, 2021, pp. 46). It is the violence of this flawed logic, which allowed for the “ranking and valuing human lives in a radically unequal fashion,” the enslavement of Black

people and the genocide and forced removal of Indigenous peoples from their territories, that continues to sanction policing "regardless of the community or country in which the policing is taking place" and "regardless of who is doing the policing" (Walcott, 2021, pp. 52). The consequence of the police's inability to break away from its roots in slave patrols, militias and paramilitary organizations is that the people historically targeted by it continue to bear the brunt of contemporary police violence (Walcott, 2021). In the North American context, the image of those who threaten the social order as enemies of the nation's security has continued to evolve alongside the capitalist economy; for example, in the United States, this has entailed a shift from the enslaved African-American to the sharecropper, to the Black proletarian of the manufacturing industry, to today's "heinous member of the inner-city 'underclass'" (Bargu, 2019, p. 292). The role the police have in constructing the "conflation of blackness and criminality and feeding the system of mass incarceration" demonstrates how "the function of policing is intimately related to the protection of the social order …[a]s bodies are selectively targeted through the production of norms and the definition of 'what is in or out of place'" (Bargu, 2019, pp. 292). The result is the "reification of 'boundaries, borders, and bodies along racial lines' and the 'often discriminatory treatment of those who are negatively racialized'" (Bargu, 2019, pp. 292).

This project of racial control has long been connected to the project of class rule in the United States, and the police has been a vital part of realizing these endeavours. The previous section explored the evolution of policing in the United States, out of the London model imported to northern cities and out of southern slave patrols. CLR James, writing about "how the logic of the plantation and of slavery shaped the segregated US," observed that lynching, a form of social control arising from this logic, is tied to "forms of agency and labour control," noting

that "when cotton was booming lynching decreased, and that when the economy became difficult for poor white people, lynching was left unchecked" (Walcott, 2021, pp. 40). Most historical lynchings, in other words, happened when the labour of Black people was not in demand (Walcott, 2021). Furthermore, because it so often went unpunished, lynching "helped to develop conscious and unconscious attitudes about the value of Black life," and also "to solidify the idea in white communities that Black people could not be trusted, and that the only way to control them was through a severe hand" (Walcott, 2021, pp. 41). These attitudes and ideas about African Americans inform the policing of their communities in the present day and may be observed in where the police are most active, the tactics used in managing "disorder" associated with Black communities, and the largely unpunished police murders of Black people. Drawing a through line between historical techniques of social control and our contemporary neoliberal times, Walcott observes that "policing is most active where the poor, the unemployed, the Black, and the disposable are segregated" (2021, pp. 40). Indeed, it has been found that U.S. counties where lynchings were more prevalent between 1877 and 1950 also have more prevalent deaths of Black people at the hands of law enforcement (Williams & Romer, 2020). The plantation logic which gave rise to lynchings lives on as a set of social relations which informs the policing of Black Americans to this day (Walcott, 2021).

Such horrendous instances of violence against African-Americans have "lesser known and only slightly less sensational counterparts elsewhere, especially in Canada" (Walcott, 2021, pp. 42). The history of policing and its deadly consequences for Black people, argues Walcott, is "not an issue bound in by national borders," and this understanding has "resulted in cross-national solidarities for Black people as they call for abolition in many different geopolitical contexts" (2021, pp. 43). In keeping with this MRP's focus on police both in the United States

and in Canada, I shall now turn to Canada's largest and oldest extant police institution, the RCMP. Much of the criticism garnered by the RCMP has its roots in the institution's culture, emanating from a paramilitary structure dating to the nineteenth century, as discussed in the previous section (Gerster, 2021). The resulting behaviours emanating from this culture have led to "class action suits seeking recompense for bullying, harassment, sexual abuse, sexual harassment, racism aimed at civilians, racism aimed at colleagues," and "decades of study and thousands of pages of reform proposals issued by a wide range of experts, almost none of which have led to substantive change" (Gerster, 2021, para. 23). The RCMP is hardly the only police force that operates as a paramilitary, with many forces across North America incorporating military protocol, equipment and tactics, leading to disastrous results when deployed in delicate circumstances such as a mental health crisis or a drug overdose (Gerster, 2021).

The realities of people experiencing mental illness offer a pertinent illustration of the results of such an approach. Cuts to welfare states have negatively impacted people with mental illnesses (World Health Organization [WHO], 2011). People suffering from mental illnesses are more likely to end up on the street, or in situations that lead to fatal encounters with the police, situations that would be more easily avoided if the proper supports were in place. There has been analysis, for example, of the "frequency and nature of contacts between police and people experiencing mental illness" for over fifty years, with research from Canada, the United States, Australia and the United Kingdom confirming the "over-representation of mentally ill or/and intoxicated people" involved in encounters with lethal use of force (de Tribolet-Hardy et al., 2014, pp. 294). The "authoritarian approach style" of the police frequently exacerbates these encounters, especially when those experiencing mental illness are themselves aggressive,

whether as "perpetrators, victims or people in need of assistance" (de Tribolet-Hardy et al., 2014, pp. 295). The police has been enlisted to manage the mentally unstable as one of its core functions, despite not having been developed to perform this role, which has resulted in a 16-fold increase in the likelihood of being shot by the police for those with untreated mental illness (Campbell, 2019), and a chance of approximately 25% of being shot by the police during an acute mental health crisis (Rogers et al., 2019). Furthermore, some studies indicate that "the presence of substance use is common in mental health crisis incidents and even considered to be the trigger of the incident by police in over one in five cases" (de Tribolet-Hardy et al., 2014, pp. 296). A person presenting in mental health crisis complicated by intoxication "increases police perceptions of their unpredictability" and are "more likely to report to having to resort to using force to resolve the situation" (de Tribolet-Hardy et al., 2014, pp. 296).

Beyond the risk of death and injury associated with police violence in interactions with people experiencing mental health challenges, there are also substantial associations with "a range of mental health problems, including anxiety, PTSD, psychotic experiences, psychological distress, depression, and suicidal ideation and attempts" arising from police interactions in the first place (Herd, 2020, pp. 1051). In addition to individual harm, research shows that "indirect exposure to police violence worsens the physical and mental health of communities," with invasive police encounters, such as those involving stop and frisk, contributing to "a widespread climate of fear in affected areas, which can activate psychological symptoms even in people not specifically targeted by police" (Herd, 2020, pp. 1053). It is within this context that available data indicate how poor and minority communities dealing with addiction and mental health challenges are far more likely than others to be killed or injured by police (Herd, 2020).

Furthermore, even though drug addiction is recognized as a complex public health issue, the predominant response from governments in both Canada and the United States has been to increase pervasive policing strategies, which have "increased the level of police violence experienced by poor communities and minority communities" (Herd, 2020, pp. 1059). Often involving invasive, discriminatory and traumatic elements, these strategies are "associated with a wide range of mental health problems and physical health problems both at the individual level and at the community level" (Herd, 2020, pp. 1060). In a study conducted in Vancouver, among people of Aboriginal ancestry who use drugs, fears of victimization due to racial profiling "were particularly pronounced and reflect distrust in law enforcement and legal systems stemming from punitive law enforcement practices and the ongoing legacy of colonialism and institutionalized racism against Aboriginal people in Canada" (Markwick et al. in Herd, 2020, pp. 1060). In the United States, War on Drugs police tactics are associated with "the repurposing and expansion of SWAT teams," with raids currently used to arrest suspects in residential communities (Herd, 2020, pp. 1060). Drug crackdowns are another tactic of War on Drugs policing, which often result in "physical, verbal, and sexual abuse of community residents…in areas labeled as drug 'hot spots' while engaged in mundane activities, such as shopping, going to school, or taking the subway" (Herd, 2020, pp. 1060).

Much of the criticism of police due to this "over-representation of people experiencing mental illness in police use of force incidents" has been leveled at police training (de Tribolet-Hardy et al., 2014, pp. 296). Police officers are "highly sensitive to behaviours that are considered to undermine their authority and legitimacy," and as such, observance of the version of order they are employed to maintain is accomplished by "adopting an authoritarian appearance and communication style" (de Tribolet-Hardy et al., 2014, pp. 297). In

confrontations, police officers enter such situations with the intent to resolve the matter at hand quickly, to complete all recorded jobs before their shift is over; in many cases opting to "go in hard" rather than "back off" (de Tribolet-Hardy et al., 2014, pp. 297). This approach frequently leads to "perceived risks when the encounter involves a person experiencing mental illness symptoms and/or behaviours that are associated with an increased propensity for aggression and/or substance intoxication" (de Tribolet-Hardy et al., 2014, pp. 297).

Going beyond these criticisms, abolitionists have widened their gaze to critique not only the approach taken by police in responding to crime but also the efficacy and purpose of the police responding to crime at all. In the context of four decades of neoliberalism, what the abolitionists offer to debates about policing is a "fundamental understanding that crime is a manifestation of social deprivation and the reverberating effects of racial discrimination, which locks poor and working-class communities of color out of schooling, meaningful jobs," and other ways of keeping up with the increasing cost of living (Taylor, 2021, para. 19). Angela Davis argues that the state's response to these problems through the criminal justice system and the police do not offer any meaningful solution to these problems, but rather creates more violence and harm, all the while absorbing billions of dollars (Davis et al., 2022). Deploying armed agents of the state to, for example, perform mental health checks and respond to people in crisis, is a tactic used by the police to add to its legitimacy and increase the reliance of the public upon the institution (Kaba, 2021). Our reliance upon the police for so many services that do not involve police work is in part responsible for the lack of mainstream popular imagination over what alternatives to the police can look like. The next section examines the history of some such alternatives, provided by organizations which arose to provide services commonly asked of the police, and the changes brought about as a result of alternatives to the police.

6 HISTORY OF POLICE ABOLITION

This section examines the development of the movement to abolish the police, tracing its roots to the abolition of chattel slavery in the United States. Following the abolition of slavery, this section tracks the abolition movement through struggles to secure more dependable emergency responses to healthcare crises in the mid-twentieth century, to some present-day initiatives arising from the wake of the 2020 protests in Minneapolis, Minnesota. In so doing, I wish to convey that central to the movement to abolish police is the project of creation: building an infrastructure to replace what the movement seeks to tear down. Through organizing for mutual aid, communities can build and practice the skills required for the future they are working towards. There is a long history of struggle against racist institutions, including the abolition of slavery. It is within this broader historical context that police abolition should be understood. Tying the contemporary abolition movement to the historical abolition movement to end slavery serves to demonstrate the long history of today's struggle to abolish the police and highlight that it is not a collection of hashtags arising in recent years. Activists have been organizing for abolition for centuries, with demonstrably reduced police mandates resulting from community-based projects—one of which is highlighted here—that show the possibility of replacing police services, used as a broad, general catch-all solution, with several specialized institutions designed with a specific mandate to address a limited range of concerns.

While "abolitionism" in the colonial context of the Americas has its roots in the struggles of the eighteenth century against the transatlantic slave trade, the word and the associated language was "resurrected for reversing the explosive rise in mass incarceration over the last half-century and most recently, concentrated policing and police power" (Chaudhary et al., 2021, pp. 3059). Key to the idea behind the movement is the awareness that the history of the police as

an institution—explored in the second section—makes the notion of reforming the police impossible, as the foundations of the institution lie upon a bedrock of regimes of control and repression (Chaudhary et al., 2021).

The prevailing mainstream narrative surrounding abolitionism often frames the current movement negatively, intending to fire officers and gut police department budgets, leading to controversy and fear-mongering in public opinion, news and politics (Chaudhary et al., 2021). Understood by the scholars and organizers drawn upon in this project, though, police abolition is a labour of creation, predicated upon a "'vision of a restructured society in a world where we have everything we need,' and addressing harm 'without relying on structural forms of oppression or the violent systems that increase it'" (Kaba in Chaudhary et al., 2021, pp. 3059). These destructive and constructive aspects of abolitionism were recognized by W.E.B. Du Bois in *Black Reconstruction in America* (1935). Du Bois makes clear that the creative endeavour of erecting a new "democratic paradigm"—which he calls "abolition democracy" and which Angela Davis expands upon for the twenty-first century in her 2005 book by this title—did not automatically accompany the end of chattel slavery (Chaudhary et al., 2021, pp. 3059). Abolition, then, signifies the "emergence of paradigms, institutions, and social and economic conditions that eliminate the need for state-sanctioned social control," and not only the end of unjust institutions (Chaudhary et al., 2021, pp. 3060).

Abolitionist organizing has gained traction in recent years following the high-profile murders of several African Americans, among them Breonna Taylor and George Floyd, with an increasing number of legal scholars acknowledging abolitionist frameworks in evaluating reform proposals (Yang, 2021). Still, vocal detractors persistently label police abolition as impractical, dismissing it as "'naïve,' nothing more than a 'snappy slogan' incapable of soliciting broad

support, or a ‘pie-in-the-sky imagining’ unrooted in reality” (Yang, 2021, pp. 1071). These criticisms, while representative of a belief that a world without police is not possible, also indicate “a misunderstanding of a demand thoughtfully crafted by the people most directly impacted by state violence, and ignore a rich history of successful abolitionist organizing that demonstrates the practical necessity and viability of this demand” (Yang, 2021, pp. 1071).

One case from the mid-twentieth century of a community-based endeavour that succeeded in significantly reducing the extent of police power is that of the Freedom House Ambulance Service (Yang, 2021). Following World War II, police departments in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania were authorized by the municipal government to offer emergency medical services (Edwards, 2021). By the late-1960s, “racialized violence and neglect that accompanied policing in Pittsburgh manifested into a Black public health crisis, and sustained investments in ambulance policing failed to remedy its well-established harms” (Yang, 2021, pp. 1072). With concern for medical support in emergencies as their motivation, the leadership of Freedom House Enterprises, a “Black-led non-profit organization that aimed to provide job training, develop Black-owned businesses and housing, and provide financial assistance to support…Black residents in the struggle for equality” (Yang, 2021, pp. 1089), contacted Dr. Peter Safar for assistance in preparing ambulances to take Black patients to and from medical facilities (Edwards, 2021). Dr. Safar was well-known for designing mobile intensive care units and demonstrating that “laypeople could learn principles of artificial respiration,” and agreed to “provide consultation on emergency vehicles” for the opportunity to instruct Black Pittsburghers to provide prehospital transport (Edwards, 2021, pp. 1387). The federal government’s newly established Office of Economic Opportunity assisted in recruiting African American staff to be trained (Edwards, 2021), and initial funding for acquiring ambulance vehicles was provided by

the Maurice Falk Medical Fund (Yang, 2021). Focused on racialized health inequalities, the Black population of Pittsburgh created a new, civilian ambulance service, called Freedom House, to provide their communities with more secure healthcare without dependence upon police services (Yang, 2021). The city of Pittsburgh contracted with Freedom House Enterprises in 1968 to offer ambulance services in Black neighbourhoods that lacked adequate medical assistance (Yang, 2021). From 1968 to 1975, the years during which it was allowed to operate, Freedom House was a tremendous success (Yang, 2021). The Black paramedics were "among the first in the country to deliver an electric shock to a patient's heart in the field, intubate a patient on the street, or use Narcan to reverse an overdose." They were also among the first to "be in continuous contact with a doctor over the radio during in-field treatment" over the course of transporting 45,000 patients to hospital (Yang, 2021, pp. 1090). Freedom House's medical director Dr. Nancy Caroline "connected with the paramedics personally while delivering rigorous training by regularly participating in ambulance rides and providing clinical oversight" (Edwards, 2021, pp. 1388). The ambulance service was an endeavour created and led by members of the local Black population, initiated in response to the racialized health crisis they faced, and aimed to provide medical support to their neighbourhoods. The initiative was established by a Black-led non-profit organization, not the government nor the police, to empower the local community and address its specific needs, rather than relying on the inadequate pre-existing structures. Despite operating mostly outside of police frameworks and facing severe opposition from the Pittsburgh Police, Freedom House became the "proving ground for a lot of the things that are standard today," and had an enormous influence upon emergency medicine (Yang, 2021, pp. 1090).

It is true that, as a non-profit organization, Freedom House was not a grassroots organization in the true sense of the word. This is an important distinction to make, as the non-profit sector has evolved into an industrial complex, resulting in "a tangled wreck of neoliberal ideologies, capitalist activism and cultural appropriation" (Carroll, 2015, pp. 2). There is no doubt that non-profit organizations and grassroots organizations are distinct; where a non-profit organization is a formally registered entity, the activities of which are subject to oversight, grassroots organizations are less encumbered by these obligations, operating with minimal formal structures (Toepler, 2003). In this instance, my object in drawing upon a non-profit organization like Freedom House is to illustrate the possibilities for alternative structures to replace police responses that arise from community-focused initiatives. Despite the structure of Freedom House as a non-profit organization, it was rooted in community involvement and engagement and valued the input of those it served in shaping its strategies (Yang, 2021). Freedom House also brought forth a creative way to address issues presented by ambulance policing and experimented with new ideas and strategies in ways to which a large, bureaucratic entity, such as the government, is less disposed. My argument is that communities are best suited to produce their own solutions to the challenges with which their members live, be they problems arising from ambulance policing, drug overdoses, or mental health crises. In this spirit, I draw upon this non-profit organization as an example of a novel response to challenges previously "handled" by the police.

Freedom House Ambulance Service is an example of a community-directed initiative that led to the abolition of ambulance policing, an impactful reduction in the police mandate now commonly taken for granted (Yang, 2021). In so doing, this example helped to undermine the narrative of the "impracticality" of police abolition and to highlight its rationality (Yang, 2021).

While debating the efficacy of ambulance policing in the not-so-distant past, “advocates of traditional reforms insisted that improved ambulance policing was possible—that additional training and resources would remedy the injustices” (Yang, 2021, pp. 1073). With the benefit of hindsight, one may recognize the perils of devoting resources to police ambulance reforms when compared with the civilian ambulances that emerged to replace them; ultimately, the abolition of ambulance policing was the logical solution (Yang, 2021). Significantly, ending ambulance policing was a demand that was “initially dismissed as unrealistic,” leading Tiffany Yang to query, “[what] abolitionist demands are ignored today as too radical but can, in the near future, be universally essential to our understanding of community care and safety?” (2021, pp. 1112).

Minneapolis, Minnesota has recently revealed itself as a sight where answers to this question are being explored. Directly following the police murder of George Floyd in 2020, communities created “an array of mechanisms to facilitate safety” outside of the police infrastructure for homes, businesses and people. These included “community fire brigades, a people’s ambulance, a transit support system, food banks and hot meal bars, and community safety and defense teams.” (Gramlich, 2021, pp. 3152). Alongside these initiatives, abolitionist organizations, including Black Visions and Reclaim The Block, promoted police divestment policies, with the money previously allocated to police budgets instead proposed for bolstering community resources (Gramlich, 2021).

Frequently employing the language of public health, these abolitionist organizers have influenced public discourse following the 2020 uprising. Mayoral candidate Sheila Nezhad, for example, who “received the most final round ranked-choice votes at the 2021 Democratic-Farmer-Labor Party convention” in Minneapolis, advocated for “abolitionist policies through public health messaging” (Gramlich, 2021, pp. 3153). Promising to move some funds from the

police budget into "community recovery from COVID-19," Nezhad also endorsed "mobile mental health teams" as an "alternative to policing" (Gramlich, 2021, pp. 3153).

One of the most noteworthy abolitionist campaigns coming out of the 2020 uprising is Yes 4 Minneapolis, which "supports a ballot initiative that would change the city charter, creating a city Department of Public Safety and, at least initially, retaining the police as one of the emergency response options" (Gramlich, 2021, pp. 3153). The oversight that the city would have over a Department of Public Safety, the campaign argues, would allow for more consideration in advancing public safety, as well as the ability to "balance competing interests such as the value of training, the significance of police officer jobs within communities of color, and the harms of racialized police violence" (Gramlich, 2021, pp. 3154). Rather than advocating for bolstered police resources, Yes 4 Minneapolis, abolitionist organizers and others who advocate for abolitionist policies, including Sheila Nezhad, place their support behind the project of creation. Building new infrastructures that address issues such as housing stability and mental health promotes public safety by addressing the root causes of harm (Gramlich, 2021). These mutual aid strategies "both meet immediate needs and mobilize people to participate in building an alternative infrastructure for crisis response that is controlled by people with shared commitments to ending racist police violence and medical neglect" (Spade, 2020, pp. 143). Such projects arise out of an environment of under-resourced public services, leading to police taking on additional roles, such as responding to drug overdoses and mental health crises. Police officers responding to issues for which they are neither adequately trained nor equipped to handle leads to a greater risk of harm, both to civilians and to responding officers (Canadian Mental Health Association [CMHA], 2005). In such an environment of worsening state violence, projects like these allow people to acquire and cultivate the essential qualities and experience

needed for the alternative structures they are trying to create while creating those structures (Spade, 2020).

By mutual aid, I refer to projects developed from a community's shared resources, skills and knowledge to address social injustices without relying upon formal institutions (Spade, 2020). Many such projects have limited resources compared to initiatives backed by an institution such as the state. In exploring initiatives which could replace police responses to drug overdoses and mental health crises, I argue that communities are well-positioned to develop responses to issues by which they are most affected. Mutual aid projects, especially long-standing initiatives with dedicated support bases and proven success, can provide the beginnings of effective solutions which, if expanded upon with government resources, could replace police services in providing a more effective response to these issues.

Part of what makes this "safety from below" mutual aid approach to police abolition effective as a method of destabilizing unjust policing institutions, as well as the power of the state as a whole, is its emphasis on collective community engagement as a path to creating the required alternative infrastructure (Provenzano, 2017). Rather than relying upon police services as crisis response, and thus inviting a "militant intrusion into our community to uphold a definition of 'safety' that safeguards normalcy rather than wellbeing," initiatives rooted in mutual aid practice reframe moments of crisis as affairs for the community to handle (Provenzano, 2017, pp. 3). This outlook helps to strengthen community ties and to create that "robust network of supportive relationships" necessary for an effective and compassionate crisis response, instead of an armed response to potentially criminal behaviour (Provenzano, 2017, pp. 3).

These programs are particularly effective for circumventing obstacles presented by the police in seeking help during mental health crises. Police officer involvement can, in many instances, serve to dissuade people from seeking the treatment they require, particularly the most marginalized populations (Provenzano, 2017). Furthermore, mandatory reporting laws which force licensed practitioners to involve the police if patients express "intent to harm themselves or others" have led to situations in which those treated for a mental health crisis in a hospital are escorted to a holding cell in handcuffs after an arrest warrant is found, in addition to more frequent interactions between the police and those experiencing a mental health crisis (Provenzano, 2017, pp. 3). The project embodied by the Freedom House Ambulance Service, an alternative to police arising out of communities in need of reliable healthcare, has continued to evolve, to this day, into a plethora of initiatives which provide healthcare in crisis situations.

Although usually an "avant-garde movement in both academia and reform activism," mainstream American policy agendas are beginning to reflect goals that are in line with those of the movement to abolish police (Duran, 2021, pp. 354). The Mental Health Justice Act of 2021, introduced by Representative Katie Porter of California, is one example. If passed, the Act would "direct the Secretary of the Department of Health and Human Services to award grants to states and their subdivisions 'to hire, employ, train, and dispatch mental health professionals to respond in lieu of law enforcement officers in emergencies' involving people with mental illnesses, intellectual disabilities, or developmental disabilities" (Duran, 2021, pp. 354). At the level of municipalities, several are contemplating establishing dedicated mental health services. In Lawrence, Kansas, former mayor Jennifer Ananda argued for creating a mental health and addiction crisis response team—with funds currently allocated to the police—and the possibility of decriminalizing specific non-violent crimes has also been taken up by the Lawrence City

Commission (Duran, 2021). The argument for allocating police funding to "social services and community welfare" (Duran, 2021, pp. 354) presents an opportunity to affect policy change in favour of abolitionist goals in this current environment of mainstream interest, especially drawing upon the current public health rhetoric employed by abolitionist activists and scholars.

This section offers context to the initiatives explored in the next section. Examining the history of the Freedom House Ambulance Service highlights the tangible results of a community-led alternative to police services decades after the initiative ended, showing at the very least that it is both practical and possible to replace police services with community initiatives. Activists frame the current movement in the language of public health and the principles of mutual aid, as indicated by the developments arising from Minneapolis in the past two years, a common thread in the initiatives explored in the following section.

7 CURRENT INITIATIVES

Having discussed the development of the abolition movement in the previous section, we will now turn our focus to four initiatives responding to drug overdoses and mental health crises in North America in nonviolent, non-police ways.

As this project is focused specifically on police abolition in Canada and the United States, I have selected one initiative from each country that addresses drug overdoses, and one that addresses mental health crises, totalling four initiatives. Limiting the number of initiatives explored to four allows this project to indicate the breadth of alternatives to police responses in existence while working within the constraints of its length.

The potential for communities to create solutions to the problems they live with is a rich resource for potential police alternatives, as the case of the Freedom House Ambulance Service demonstrates. After learning about the impact Freedom House had upon public policy and modern emergency medicine, as well as the nascent projects created to enable safety outside of the police structure in Minneapolis following George Floyd's murder, I grew interested in examining other organizations with the potential to replicate the success of Freedom House and replace the police response to these situations. Relying upon secondary data analysis, I focus on projects about which much had been published, and present four different response models, to put the strengths and weaknesses of each model in conversation with one another.

7.1 CAHOOTS

Crisis Assistance Helping Out On The Streets (CAHOOTS), based in Eugene, Oregon, is an example of an organization employing a mobile crisis team (MCT) model to respond to mental health emergencies in the field (Balfour et al., 2022). The program pairs a licenced mental health practitioner with "a nurse, paramedic, or emergency medical technician," and

dispatches MCTs to meet patients at home, on the street, or wherever they may be, resulting in reduced emergency department admittance, psychiatric hospitalization, and arrest (Balfour et al., 2022, pp. 660). The CAHOOTS model is an option for emergency dispatchers to send unarmed civilian team members trained in "trauma-informed, de-escalation, and harm-reduction strategies" into the field. Police presence was required on only 250 of 24,000 calls for service in 2019 (El Sabawi & Carroll, 2021, pp. 22).

CAHOOTS was started by White Bird Clinic in Eugene, Oregon, a non-profit social services center that began in 1969 as "the brainchild of some counterculture activists who'd felt the hole where a community health center should be" (Scottie, 2020, para. 7). Primarily serving unhoused people and those with mental health issues, the staff at White Bird recognized that most of their clients did not respond well to the police, and wanted to make their services mobile for those they had not yet been able to help (Scottie, 2020). While initial funding for White Bird came from grants and community donations, in 1989 the clinic's medics and mental health counsellors, along with community activists, successfully lobbied the city government to divert some of the police department's budget to fund a pilot program. The pilot paired a nurse or emergency medical technician (EMT) with a "crisis responder trained in behavioral health" to respond to crises in a used van for forty hours per week (Scottie, 2020, para. 13). Between Eugene and Springfield, Oregon, where CAHOOTS also operates, the program is "now funded at around $2 million annually—about 2 percent of their police departments' budgets" (Beck et al., 2020, para. 4).

CAHOOTS receives calls for service from police dispatchers when a call is made to 911 or the non-emergency police line (Tatem, 2021). Dispatchers are "trained to route certain types of police and EMS calls to CAHOOTS," and community members can also request CAHOOTS

for “problems related to situations such as mental health, substance abuse, homelessness, and more” (Tatem, 2021, pp. 45). The viability of the CAHOOTS model as a “nonpolice first response service for emergent behavioral health crises” may be glimpsed in the breadth of calls diverted from armed police responses (El Sabawi & Carroll, 2021, pp. 22). While there is some overlap in the types of calls received for service, welfare checks, transportation to social or medical services, and public assistance represent 32.5%, 34.8%, and 66.3% of diverted calls received by CAHOOTS respectively (El-Sabawi & Carroll, 2021). These diverted calls serve to decrease unnecessary, undesired interactions involving armed police officers (El-Sabawi & Carroll, 2021). Additionally, CAHOOTS estimates that the program saves Lane County taxpayers $8.5 million in “public safety” costs annually—partially owing to the program’s resolving of 17% of the Eugene Police Department’s total calls for service—and another $14 million annually in “ambulance transport fees and emergency department treatment costs” (El-Sabawi & Carroll, 2021, pp. 24). There is an increasingly vocal call among communities of colour in places such as Denver, Colorado; Sacramento, California; New York City, New York; Portland, Oregon (Holder & Harris, 2020); as well as Indianapolis, Indiana; Olympia, Washington; and Roseburg, Oregon (Samuel, 2020), to implement crisis response models similar to CAHOOTS and other “health-first or health-only” MCTs, and the CAHOOTS model has been replicated in several other American locales (Balfour et al., 2022, pp. 665).

7.2 Insite

In responding to drug overdoses, one model is the drug consumption room, or the safe injection site, which provides round-the-clock resources for detoxifying and sobering, an environment in which to use intravenous drugs, as well as the means to accept admission for criteria-meeting patient drop-offs (Balfour et al., 2022). This model for overdose crisis care

provides drug users with a safe, judgement-free space to inject and provides boarding for psychiatric patients. Such spaces are particularly beneficial for counteracting the "psychosocial precipitants of crises" and are associated with "reduced hospitalization rates" (Balfour et al., 2022, pp. 661). The ethos behind Insite's harm reduction model is "the recognition that social factors such as homelessness, poverty, gender inequality, colonialism and racism must be factored into the understanding of addiction" (Harati, 2015, pp. 7). As a result, the site centers "reducing the negative public health consequences of drug use by supporting approaches that allow for safer and more regulated drug activity" instead of contributing to the seclusion of intravenous drug users by upholding drug criminalization (Harati, 2015, pp. 6). Insite is open every day of the year, receives an average of 700-800 visits daily, and separates its three floors into a supervised injection site, a detox program, and a long-term drug recovery program (Harati, 2015).

Insite was founded by the Portland Hotel Society (PHS), a non-profit organization established in 1993 to provide supportive housing and other services to people experiencing homelessness, poverty, and addiction in Vancouver's Downtown Eastside (DTES) (Lawrence, 2017). Although Insite opened in 2003, during what Vancouver's chief medical officer declared a public health emergency due to increasing overdose, HIV and Hepatitis C infection rates (Harati, 2015), several informal drug consumption sites preceded its creation between 1995 and 2003, started by community members, human rights advocacy group Vancouver Area Network of Drug Users (VANDU) and, in one case, a church (Lawrence, 2017). Insite's first iteration was a collaboration between PHS, VANDU, and the Life Is Not Enough Society (LINES) which, in February 2003, also created a separate non-profit called Health Quest to operate the site. At the same time, these organizations asked Vancouver Coastal Health to "include the site in the

proposal being submitted to the federal government to approve the opening of a government-sanctioned supervised injection site" (Lawrence, 2017, pp. 39). Establishing Health Quest was a move intended to force the hand of the government by creating the infrastructure to run a safe injection site with or without their support (Portland Hotel Society [PHS], 2020). That summer, Health Canada approved Vancouver Coastal Health's application to open the site, which led to a $1.2 million renovation paid for by the provincial government, with Insite opening to the public in September 2003 (Lawrence, 2017).

The site has been featured in scores of studies published in peer-reviewed journals, several of which have highlighted the desire of those who live and work in the Downtown Eastside to "see the services expanded, retained, or modified," as they view Insite as "making a positive contribution to public order" (Harati, 2015, pp. 18). Insite and other dedicated consumption rooms prevent overdoses from happening in the first place, are well-suited to respond to drug overdoses when they occur on the premises, and many such sites are equipped to accept drop-offs for those experiencing a drug overdose (Balfour et al., 2022).

7.3 ACCESS Open Minds

Accessing mental health services is riddled with challenges for young people in Canada, including slow diagnoses, lengthy wait lists, and rushed care transitions; factors that are magnified in remote and Indigenous communities (Reaume-Zimmer et al., 2019). An initiative present across seven provinces and one territory, Adolescent/young adult Connections to Community-driven Early Strengths-based and Stigma-free Services Open Minds (ACCESS OM), was created to overcome these barriers, aiming to "transform and evaluate the way mental health services are delivered to youth" (Reaume-Zimmer et al., 2019, pp. 49). ACCESS OM comprises a network of youth, family/carer, community organization, service provider,

researcher, and policy and decision-maker stakeholder groups (Iyer et al., 2015). This network endeavours to transform the delivery of mental health services based upon locally-informed contexts, to navigate both local needs as well as provincially-administered healthcare systems (Iyer et al., 2015).

While ACCESS OM did not begin as a grassroots effort in and of itself, it is strongly influenced by and draws upon grassroots organizations present in each community it serves. ACCESS OM was started by Dr. Ashok Malla, a psychiatrist and researcher at the Douglas Research Centre in Montreal (Access open minds, 2023) Beginning as a research study in 2014 before expanding into the national network of youth mental health services it is today, the project was "originally a product of Transformational Research in Adolescent Mental Health (TRAM), an initiative of the Canadian Institutes of Health Research (CIHR) and the Graham Boeckh Foundation (GBF)" (Access open minds: Project overview [AOMPO], 2017, pp. 1). The project's initial funding totalled $25 million, with half coming from CIHR and half from GBF (AOMPO, 2017).

The five main goals ACCESS OM works to achieve are early case identification, rapid access to initial assessment, availability of appropriate services, engagement of youth and families, and elimination of transitions in service based on age (Hutt-MacLeod et al., 2019). Each ACCESS OM site, although part of the same project, is invited to take inspiration from distinct local circumstances and residents, and to tailor the project's realization accordingly (Hutt-MacLeod et al., 2019). As such, "both Indigenous- and Western-influenced methods of wellness and treatment are implemented and honoured, providing youth access to culturally appropriate and engaging mental health services" where appropriate (Hutt-MacLeod et al., 2019, pp. 45). ACCESS OM has enabled cooperation between volunteer organizations and community

services, families and youth, and mental health and addiction services, and serves as "inspiration for similar projects, particularly in similar geographic and organizational contexts" (Reaume-Zimmer et al., 2019, pp. 54).

7.4 Oakland Power Projects

With the unambiguous goal of "eroding the power" of the Oakland Police Department, Oakland Power Projects (OPP) was launched by the abolitionist collective Critical Resistance during a period of frequent, highly publicized police brutality against African Americans in Baltimore, Ferguson and the Bay Area (McDowell & Fernandez, 2018, pp. 386). Critical Resistance, founded by Angela Davis, Ruth Wilson Gilmore, and other local organizers in 1998 as "a national anti-prison organization that made abolition its central tenet" (Kushner, 2019, para. 26), mounted a campaign that successfully halted gang injunctions—restraining orders prohibiting certain activities meant to target gangs, but criticized for disproportionately infringing upon civil liberties of people of colour and low-income neighbourhoods (Hennigan & Sloane, 2013)—in Oakland in 2015 (Critical Resistance, 2015). Inspired by their success, Critical Resistance created OPP, taking a more concerted effort to empower their community to divest from the police. (Critical Resistance, 2015). OPP is funded by Critical Resistance which, in addition to receiving 78% of its funding from grassroots donors, receives funding from grants, event fees and merchandise (Ways to give, n.d.).

Seeking to "build capacity for Oakland residents to reject police" through "practices, relationships, and resources that build community power and wellbeing [by] identifying current harms, amplifying existing resources, and developing new practices that do not rely on policing solutions," the OPP was initially envisaged as an insurgent strategy, rather than as a reactionary tactic (McDowell & Fernandez, 2018, pp. 386). Rooted in "an abolitionist framework and the

explicit rejection of the criminal legal system," OPP works to create knowledge amongst community members and healthcare providers about the intensification of health and mental health crises associated with police practices (Jacobs et al., 2021, pp. 52). Involving Oakland residents and healthcare providers in creating answers that include the police as little as possible, OPP intervenes by both facilitating "community investigations when the police have entered communities during health or mental crises," as well as delivering health and mental health response workshops (Jacobs et al., 2021, pp. 54). These workshops allow healthcare providers and community members to "learn the social and political background of…health care policing, reflect on how the police manifest in their own workplaces, develop skills for assessing and supporting people in crisis, and learn how to support community members in becoming crisis interventionists" (Jacobs et al., 2021, pp. 54).

The workshops that OPP provides are a means for Oakland residents to divest from the police, allowing attendees to gain skills and knowledge to "provide health care for one another without relying on police" (Bernd, 2015, para. 8). The idea, according to Critical Resistance development director Jess Heaney, who helps coordinate OPP, is for residents to build the confidence, skills, resources and network necessary to rely upon one another as first responders as often as possible, rather than the police (Bernd, 2015). There are currently three workshops offered: "(1) behavioral health and de-escalation, (2) drug overdoses, and (3) acute injuries (e.g., vehicle crashes or gunshot/knife wounds)" (Jacobs et al., 2021, pp. 54). These workshops combine education about abolition with medical training, including mental health and de-escalation tactics, "preventative care for common issues like high blood pressure, diabetes and minor injuries," and "emergency skills, such as CPR and treating gun shot or stabbing wounds" (Bernd, 2015, para. 15). The trainers also provide medical kits for use in "first-response

emergencies to help prevent calls to 911" (Bernd, 2015, para. 15). Providing space to "practice ways to reduce…contact with policing," the project "creates alternatives to calling the police while questioning the logic of their involvement in health crises" (Akbar, 2020, para. 10).

7.5 Discussion

McDowell and Fernandez (2018), in their exploration of the theory and practice of police abolition, note that:

> At its core, building alternatives to the police is about changing how we respond to harm, replacing banishment, policing, and criminalization with healing, transformative justice, and new understandings of safety….the work of making law enforcement irrelevant requires the creation of a sustainable infrastructure in this moment that can respond to harm when it occurs, provide support, healing, and accountability for people in need, and enable people to confront the "cop in our own heads"; or, the common sense understanding that the only possible response to harm is punishment (pp. 386).

All of the organizations described provide easily accessible, nonviolent ways of preventing, responding to, or reducing the harm associated with mental health crises or drug overdoses. Instead of focusing on restoring order, as the police do, these organizations make use of healthcare professionals, trained and equipped specifically to respond to these situations in ways that center the needs of those in crisis. Importantly, as well, all of these initiatives have strong connections to grassroots origins, started by or drawing from community members who have sought to create their own solutions to their communities' unique challenges. These grassroots origins have in many cases been instrumental to the success and staying power of these initiatives. In the instance of CAHOOTS, much of its initial support from the community came as a result of the reputation and longevity of White Bird Clinic, which created the CAHOOTS

program (El-Sabawi & Carroll, 2021). Back Alley, a safe consumption site that preceded Insite, was operated by VANDU, and the organization continues to support Insite (Jozaghi & VANDU, 2014).

Along with the similarities these organizations share come several common strengths in addressing the harms associated with these events. All of these programs treat overdoses and mental health crises as health issues, rather than criminal behaviour, and prioritize the needs of those in crisis above the restoration of order according to the law. Not only do these organizations provide unarmed responses, excepting rare occasions when police accompany CAHOOTS, but they all focus on providing a compassionate, judgement-free response, with many seeking to prevent these crises from occurring by addressing underlying conditions that precede them. As part of a crisis response system which includes the healthcare system, alternative service providers and community organizations, these initiatives work in concert with nearby responders to provide more culturally sensitive answers than the police offer. In the course of doing so, and by not involving the cops, they are helping to destigmatize drug addiction and mental illness, reframing the view of those they help as human beings, neighbours and community members, rather than as criminals deserving of punishment.

Yet while sharing several similarities, each of these initiatives approaches these critical situations in distinct ways. CAHOOTS runs a mobile crisis response team that provides emergency on-site responses and de-escalation, working closely with local emergency medical services and, when necessary, the police, to provide a coordinated response. The staff at Insite, in contrast, do not act upon crises off site premises. OPP's attitude towards drug overdoses is multifaceted; through workshops and events, it fosters community empowerment and resilience, alleviating some of the underlying factors that lead to addiction and overdose. OPP also provides

education on overdose prevention and harm reduction strategies to community members, including drug users, such as training on administering naloxone (Nagel, 2020). ACCESS OM's services center on improving access to available mental healthcare, drawing upon resources and community organizations in each location they operate in to offer culturally appropriate answers to mental health crises.

Each of these organizations' different methods also provide benefits that are unique to each approach. The approach taken by ACCESS OM allows the program to draw upon varied networks of local organizations to fulfill the different needs of diverse youth and deliver culturally sensitive solutions in conjunction with the Canadian mental healthcare system. CAHOOTS's MCTs allow them to integrate with the local emergency response infrastructure and provide a rapid response which helps reduce the likelihood of escalation. Insite offers comprehensive resources for safer intravenous drug use, such as clean syringes and means of testing substances for unsafe additives, and has staff on-site trained to respond to overdoses at the moment they occur. OPP's focus is on creating bonds between community members and service providers, delivering education on minimizing police involvement and alternatives to police in crisis response, and empowering community members to create their own alternative responses. They provide information on accessing naloxone, and workshops on acute emergencies and opioid overdose prevention in places where drug use is prevalent, helping to reach those who may not otherwise seek help, such as undocumented people (Oakland Power Projects, 2018).

All of these organizations, however, operate with limited funding and government support, restricting their ability to sustain and expand their programs. The services they provide are in high demand, which at times leads to limited availability and long wait times, as is

frequently the case with Insite. The geographic coverage of these initiatives also limits their ability to reach those in need outside of the areas they serve, although ACCESS OM has successfully expanded across Canada by working within existing frameworks. Additionally, drug overdoses, mental health crises and the associated stigma are complex issues stemming from an enormously varied web of systemic root causes, and these organizations are limited in their scopes as to which root causes they can address.

In addition to these shared limitations, each of these organizations faces challenges unique to their methods. CAHOOTS does not have the same authority as the police, and as such is unable to intervene when the police determine that the use of force is necessary (Suwarno, 2021). Additionally, although CAHOOTS provides an invaluable service, it is not equipped to provide comprehensive mental healthcare and ongoing support, nor to influence the underlying causes of mental health crises. Similarly, although OPP provides naloxone and education to prevent and treat overdoses, the organization mainly focuses on harm reduction and outreach services and lacks the capacity to provide comprehensive medical treatment. In contrast to CAHOOTS, which responds to acute crises, a significant challenge faced by ACCESS OM in providing more comprehensive care comes from catering specifically to youths. One factor in Canadian mental healthcare systems that can harm patients is “the lack of coordination linking childhood to adult mental health systems and the consequent disruption of care for youth transitioning within this divide” (Abidi, 2017, pp. 388). This presents staffing challenges when it comes to bringing in “therapists, community social workers, and psychiatrists who can engage youth and appreciate the challenges that transitional age youth experience” (Reaume-Zimmer et al., 2019, pp. 54). Additionally, while it strives to promote awareness of mental illness in culturally sensitive manners, the associated stigma and confidentiality present challenges to

reaching those who hesitate to seek treatment, particularly in small communities (Etter et al., 2019). Insite, also in contrast to the mobile response of CAHOOTS, is limited as a brick-and-mortar site, making its services less accessible to people not within the vicinity. Due to its limited resources, wait times can be long, driving would-be service users to instead use drugs in public places (Small et al., 2012). Additionally, as Insite is allowed to operate under a legal exemption (Boyd, 2013), there exists the risk that a future government could nullify this immunity.

While there are challenges to overcoming these limits and expanding the best practices of these initiatives, both locally and further afield, there are also promising possibilities. Each of these organizations has demonstrated success in responding to particular aspects of mental health crises and drug overdoses and has developed effective models for crisis response and harm reduction. They have also shown the value of bringing healthcare professionals into a crisis response, rather than relying solely upon police, and have reduced the harm caused by criminalizing these conditions. By adopting a bottom-up approach, they identify the needs of those who experience these events and put community members, service providers and policymakers in conversation with one another to address them. This allows for the creation of more effective and appropriate responses to drug overdoses and mental health crises while building trust with the populations they serve.

These organizations have created more integrated responses by collaborating with healthcare providers, community organizations and, in some cases, police departments, dismantling barriers between different responses to the same events. CAHOOTS communicates closely with local police departments when responding to crises, and also lends its expertise to help others to write grants for funding to create similar organizations (El-Sabawi & Carroll,

2021). ACCESS OM brings healthcare providers, policymakers and community organizations together to provide culturally appropriate, comprehensive mental healthcare while minimizing bureaucratic hurdles and acting as a centralized point for patients to access services, information, and other resources. Similarly, OPP functions as an incubator for culturally sensitive, non-police crisis responses, providing education for community members and healthcare professionals on police alternatives and best practices to avoid police involvement, as well as a space to collaborate on implementing novel alternative approaches (Jacobs et al., 2021). Partnerships like these can influence the allocation of resources to create similar programs elsewhere, and these organizations can also provide training and support to other communities interested in adopting similar programs, including offering ongoing consultation, as CAHOOTS does. A coordinated approach also allows room for organizations that address other root causes of mental health crises and drug overdoses not explored in this MRP, such as homelessness.

While the success of expanding these models to other areas depends on funding and political support, CAHOOTS was successful in getting a portion of the Eugene Police Department’s budget diverted to fund its operations, a potential pathway to funding the expansion of the initiatives explored here and many others. In expanding their best practices, it is also necessary to consider local cultural climates, and how these differences affect the success of such programs, an awareness that is part of ACCESS OM’s model and which has helped them to expand. With proper funding and support, it is possible to overcome the limits faced by these organizations.

8 CONCLUSION:

VIOLENCE, RACISM, AND THE LIMITS OF POLICE REFORM

This MRP has brought together the work of both scholars and activists on police abolition and applied it to a small selection of non-police initiatives related to mental health and drug overdose. The organizations examined, if appropriately expanded, are viable candidates to replace the police response to drug overdoses and mental health crises, in much the same way as the Freedom House Ambulance Service replaced ambulance policing in the mid-twentieth century. This project has demonstrated that the idea of police abolition is neither particularly revolutionary nor impractical; rather, it is both practical and possible. While abolishing the police in its entirety is a topic that extends beyond the scope of this project, this MRP has explored practical, real-world alternative structures which address some of the issues the police responds to, and represent possibilities for reducing the police mandate as a step towards complete abolition. This project has also emphasized that the idea of police abolition is not recent, but a project with a long history that has been in development through the work of abolitionist scholars and activists of colour for generations.

I hope that this MRP will serve as an introduction to those who are new to the idea of police abolition, and to inspire them to ask their own questions related to the purpose and efficacy of the police and to alternative means of addressing issues for which the police were not created. Our reliance upon the police for a myriad of public services that need not involve police work is in part responsible for the lack of mainstream popular imagination over what alternatives to the police can look like. Above all, the project of abolition is one of creation, not destruction; it is about the structures we create to replace the police and render it obsolete. This project has offered a small glimpse into what part of this project of creation looks like.

This project has shown that the police provides an ineffective response to drug overdoses and mental health crises; these two calls for police services are strongly correlated with an increased risk of lethal use of force. This, in no small part, is because the police was not created to respond to these events, nor many others that it is called upon to handle, as demonstrated in the first half of this project. Influencing the circumstances that generate crime is beyond the control of the police, and has little to do with how police officers spend most of their time. Rather than preventing crime, policing is a class- and racially-based system of social control, which subordinates people through processes of criminalization to maintain a particular social order (Vitale, 2017).

In light of these realities, there is a need for different responses to drug overdoses and mental health crises, which prioritize the needs, safety and well-being of those suffering from addiction and mental illness, and treat these events as medical emergencies, rather than criminal behaviour. Organizations with strong ties with community origins are well-positioned to create effective responses to these critical situations and have produced several effective response models without police involvement. Just as the ambulance service Freedom House provided was expanded with government resources to replace ambulance policing in Pittsburgh, several other community initiatives are providing more effective responses to these events than that offered by the police which, if adequately resourced and supported with the appropriate public policy, could follow a trajectory similar to that of Freedom House, replacing parts of the police mandate with funds previously allocated to the police budget.

This project has added to the case for police abolition by discussing material possibilities for reducing the police mandate as a step towards complete police abolition. Many of the works this project has drawn upon, such as those by Angela Davis, Ruth Wilson Gilmore, Alex Vitale,

Robyn Maynard, Mariame Kaba, and Geo Maher, discuss police abolition in broad terms, criticizing not only the institution of police power but the criminal justice system and punitive justice as a whole. These works go into great depth in criticizing police institutions, investigating their histories, and debunking commonly held beliefs about the police, as this project has briefly done in the first sections. What is absent from these sources is a clear connection between arguments in favour of police abolition and material possibilities for structures which would replace police responses, as well as a discussion on their strengths, weaknesses and obstacles to wider adoption. The core project of police abolition is not about destroying current police institutions; it is about what we build in the absence of the police, and what structures we create to render the police obsolete. This project has further underlined the practicality of abolishing the police by using the example of the Freedom House Ambulance Service as a bridge to connect conversations about police abolition with current initiatives that could replicate the success of Freedom House by replacing certain police responses. Taking a focused approach to police abolition by examining two specific calls for police service, this MRP highlighted two areas with strong potential for the police mandate to be reduced. Tying the broader criticisms of the police and case for abolition to two particularly deadly sorts of police encounters, this project has offered alternative responses with the potential to expand to replace the police response.

Drug overdoses and mental health crises are complex issues stemming from a wide variety of systemic root causes, and much like the organizations this project has examined, this MRP was limited in the range of alternative responses that it could explore. Further inquiry into ways of addressing these critical situations might explore the conditions which produce addiction and mental illness. Additional investigation into organizations that address these conditions at

their roots, before they manifest into the crises to which the organizations this project examines respond, would undoubtedly lead to more effective ways of addressing these challenges.

The wide variety of calls to the police for services reflects the vast array of problems that the public presumes the police should handle. Not only do these calls reflect the public's beliefs about what the police should do, but they also illuminate the lack of other public services that people can turn to for everyday matters. While this project examined a small selection of community-level models with the potential to expand into fully-fledged, publicly funded services, it stops short of examining strategies for aligning mainstream policy agendas with the goals of such models, such as centring the needs of those in crisis and treating these matters as medical issues, rather than criminal behaviour. Further investigation could examine the results of decriminalizing certain non-violent offences at various levels of government, deploying mental health professionals as first responders instead of police officers, reallocating funds from police budgets, and identifying pathways for implementing such changes within the current environment of mainstream interest in abolitionist goals.

9 REFERENCES

Abidi S. (2017). Paving the way to change for youth at the gap between child and adolescent and adult mental health services. *Canadian Journal of Psychiatry*, *62*(6), 388–392. https://doi.org/10.1177/0706743717694166

Access open minds. The Douglas Research Centre. (2023, January 19). Retrieved August 4, 2023, from https://douglas.research.mcgill.ca/access-open-minds/

Access open minds: Project overview. ACCESS Open Minds. (2017, April). Retrieved August 4, 2023, from https://accessopenminds.ca/wp-content/uploads/2016/06/ACCESS-Open-Minds-Project-Overview.pdf

Akbar, A. A. (2020, October 26). From know your rights to know your options. *Abolition 13/13, Columbia University.* https://blogs.law.columbia.edu/abolition1313/amna-a-akbar-from-know-your-rights-to-know-your-options/

Asgarian, R. (2022, June 7). *School police don't stop shootings, so what are they for?* Slate. https://slate.com/news-and-politics/2022/06/uvalde-shooting-police-have-no-legal-duty-to-protect-students.html

Balfour, M. E., Hahn Stephenson, A., Delany-Brumsey, A., Winsky, J., & Goldman, M. L. (2022). Cops, clinicians, or both? collaborative approaches to responding to Behavioral Health Emergencies. *Psychiatric Services*, *73*(6), 658–669. https://doi.org/10.1176/appi.ps.202000721

Bargu, B. (2019). Police power: The biopolitical state apparatus and differential interpellations. *Rethinking Marxism*, *31*(3), 291–317. https://doi.org/10.1080/08935696.2019.1629196

Bayley, D. H. (1994). *Police for the future*. Oxford University Press.

Beck, J., Reuland, M., & Pope, L. (2020, November). *Case study: Cahoots*. Vera Institute of Justice. https://www.vera.org/behavioral-health-crisis-alternatives/cahoots

Bell, C., & Schreiner, K. (2018). The international relations of police power in settler colonialism: The "civilizing" mission of Canada's mounties. *International Journal: Canada's Journal of Global Policy Analysis*, *73*(1), 111–128. https://doi.org/10.1177/0020702018768480

Bernd, C. (2015, September 14). *Community groups work to provide emergency medical alternatives, separate from police*. Truthout. https://truthout.org/articles/community-groups-work-to-provide-emergency-medical-alternatives-separate-from-police/

Bronitt, S., & Stenning, P. (2011). Understanding discretion in modern policing. *Criminal Law Journal*, 35(6), 319–332. https://search.informit.org/doi/10.3316/agispt.20120520

Campbell, A. (2019). Failure on the front line: How the "Americans With Disabilities Act" should be interpreted to better protect persons in mental health crisis from fatal police shootings. *Columbia Human Rights Law Review*, 51(1), 313–377. https://heinonline.org/HOL/LandingPage?handle=hein.journals/colhr51&div=7&id=&page=

Campeau, H. (2015). "Police culture" at work: Making sense of police oversight. *British Journal of Criminology*, *55*(4), 669–687. https://doi.org/10.1093/bjc/azu093

Canadian Mental Health Association. (2005). *Police and mental illness: Increased interactions* [Fact sheet]. https://cmha.bc.ca/wp-content/uploads/2016/07/policesheets_all.pdf

Carcach, C. (2005). Crime and punishment in Australia, 1980-2000. *Crime and Justice*, *33*, 295–330. https://doi.org/10.1086/655368

Carroll, J. (2015). *Policing charities: A genealogy of the American nonprofit in the context of neoliberalism* (Publication No. 14) [Master's thesis, James Madison University]. JMU Scholarly Commons. https://commons.lib.jmu.edu/master201019/14

Castle, T. (2021). "Cops and the klan": Police disavowal of risk and minimization of threat from the far-right. *Critical Criminology (Richmond, B.C.)*, *29*(2), 215–235. https://doi.org/10.1007/s10612-020-09493-6

Chan, W., & Chunn, D. E. (2014). *Racialization, crime, and criminal justice in Canada*. University of Toronto Press.

Chaudhary, M., Prowse, G., & Weaver, V. M. (2021). A people's abolition: How policed communities describe and enact liberatory futures. *Social Science Quarterly*, *102*(7), 3058–3072. https://doi.org/10.1111/ssqu.13109

Critical Resistance. (2015, December). *Critical resistance 2015 year-end mailer*. https://criticalresistance.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/01/CR_2015YearEndMailer_PRINT.pdf

Dafnos, D. (2014). *Negotiating colonial encounters: (Un)mapping the policing of Indigenous Peoples' protests in Canada* [Dissertation]. York University, Toronto, ON. https://yorkspace.library.yorku.ca/server/api/core/bitstreams/60cd3f1c-6f54-4b3d-8318-8c23082256aa/content

Davis, A. Y., Dent, G., Meiners, E. R., & Richie, B. (2022). *Abolition. feminism. now*. Haymarket Books.

Dhillon, J. K. (2015). Indigenous girls and the violence of settler colonial policing. *Decolonization: Indigeneity, Education & Society*, *4*(2). https://jps.library.utoronto.ca/index.php/des/article/view/22826

Draca, M., & Langella, M. (2020). Law, order, and austerity: Police numbers and crime in the 2010s. *Advantage, 1*(9)*,* 12-15. https://warwick.ac.uk/fac/soc/economics/research/centres/cage/news/03-06-20-advantage_magazine__summer/article-3/3._law_order_and_austerity.pdf

Duran, T.A. (2021). College campus police abolition. *Kansas Journal of Law and Public Policy, 31*(2), 327-362. https://lawjournal.ku.edu/wp-content/uploads/2022/09/7_Duran_Final_v31_I2.pdf

Edwards, M.L. (2021). Race, policing, and history—Remembering the freedom house ambulance service. *The New England Journal of Medicine, 384*(15), 1386-1389. https://www.nejm.org/doi/full/10.1056/NEJMp2035467

El-Sabawi, T., & Carroll, J. J. (2021). A model for defunding: An evidence-based statute for behavioral health crisis response. *Temple Law Review, 94*(1), 1-47. https://heinonline.org/HOL/LandingPage?handle=hein.journals/temple94&div=3&id=&page=

Etter, M., Goose, A., Nossal, M., Chishom-Nelson, J., Heck, C., Joober, R., Boksa, P., Lal, S., Shah, J. L., Andersson, N., Iyer, S. N., & Malla, A. (2019). Improving youth mental wellness services in an Indigenous context in Ulukhaktok, Northwest Territories: ACCESS Open Minds Project. *Early Intervention in Psychiatry*, *13*(S1), 35–41. https://doi.org/10.1111/eip.12816

Feldthusen, B. (2017). Bungled police emergency calls and the problems with unique duties of care. *University of New Brunswick Law Journal*, *68*, 169–201.

Forliti, A. (2020, June 23). Minneapolis police chief says floyd's death was 'murder'. *Twin Cities Pioneer Press.* Retrieved August 4, 2023, from https://www.twincities.com/2020/06/23/minneapolis-police-chief-says-floyds-death-was-murder/

Gerster, J. (2021, October 27). The dark side of the rcmp. *The Walrus*. Retrieved August 4, 2023, from https://thewalrus.ca/can-the-rcmp-be-saved/

Gibson-Graham, J. K., Cameron, J., & Healy, S. (2013). *Take back the economy: An ethical guide for transforming our communities*. University of Minnesota Press.

Gilmore, R. W. (2007). *Golden gulag: Prisons, surplus, crisis, and opposition in globalizing California*. University of California Press.

Gramlich, J. P. (2021). Are police obsolete in Minneapolis? Racial capitalism and police abolition. *Social Science Quarterly*, *102*(7), 3149–3157. https://doi.org/10.1111/ssqu.13089

Harati, D. (2015). *Inside insite: How a localized social movement led the way for North America's first legal supervised injection site* [Irving Oberman Memorial Student Writing Prize: Law and Social Change, June 2015]. Harvard Law School. http://nrs.harvard.edu/urn-3:HUL.InstRepos:16386592

Hauck, G., & Wagner, D. (2020, May 29). *George floyd death: Experts say knee-to-neck restraint is dangerous, but Minneapolis allows it*. USA Today. Retrieved August 4, 2023, from https://www.usatoday.com/story/news/nation/2020/05/29/george-floyd-experts-say-neck-restraint-allowed-minneapolis-can-kill/5274334002/

Hennigan, K. M., & Sloane, D. (2013). Improving civil gang injunctions: How implementation can affect gang dynamics, crime, and violence. *Criminology & Public Policy*, *12*(1), 7–41. https://doi.org/10.1111/1745-9133.12000

Herd, D. (2020). Cycles of threat: Graham V. connor, police violence, and African American health inequities. *Boston University Law Review, 100*(3). 1047-1067. https://www.researchgate.net/publication/348201294_Cycles_of_threat_Graham_V_Connor_police_violence_and_African_American_health_inequities

Holder, S., & Harris, K. (2020, September 3). Where calling the police isn't the only option. *Bloomberg*. Retrieved August 4, 2023, from https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2020-09-03/alternative-policing-models-emerge-in-u-s-cities

Hutt-MacLeod, D., Rudderham, H., Sylliboy, A., Sylliboy-Denny, M., Liebenberg, L., Denny, J. F., Gould, M. R., Gould, N., Nossal, M., Iyer, S. N., Malla, A., & Boksa, P. (2019). Eskasoni First Nation's transformation of youth mental healthcare: Partnership between a Mi'kmaq community and the access open minds research project in implementing innovative practice and service evaluation. *Early Intervention in Psychiatry*, *13*(S1), 42–47. https://doi.org/10.1111/eip.12817

Iyer, S. N., Boksa, P., Lal, S., Shah, J., Marandola, G., Jordan, G., Doyle, M., Joober, R., & Malla, A. K. (2015). Transforming youth mental health: A Canadian perspective. *Irish Journal of Psychological Medicine*, *32*(1), 51–60. https://doi.org/10.1017/ipm.2014.89

Jacobs, L. A., Kim, M. E., Whitfield, D. L., Gartner, R. E., Panichelli, M., Kattari, S. K., Downey, M. M., McQueen, S. S., & Mountz, S. E. (2021). Defund the police: Moving towards an anti-carceral social work. *Journal of Progressive Human Services*, *32*(1), 37–62. https://doi.org/10.1080/10428232.2020.1852865

Jozaghi, E., & Vancouver Area Network of Drug Users (2014). A cost-benefit/cost-effectiveness analysis of an unsanctioned supervised smoking facility in the downtown eastside of Vancouver, Canada. *Harm Reduction Journal*, *11*(1), 30. https://doi.org/10.1186/1477-7517-11-30

Kaba, M. (2021). *We do this 'til we free us: Abolitionist organizing and transforming justice* (T. K. Nopper, Ed.). Haymarket Books.

Kushner, R. (2019, April 17). *Is prison necessary? Ruth wilson gilmore might change your mind*. The New York Times Magazine. Retrieved August 4, 2023, from https://www.nytimes.com/2019/04/17/magazine/prison-abolition-ruth-wilson-gilmore.html

Lawrence, T. B. (2017). High-stakes institutional translation: Establishing North America's first government-sanctioned supervised injection site. *Academy of Management Journal*, *60*(5), 1771–1800. https://doi.org/10.5465/amj.2015.0714

Lowe, W. J., & Malcolm, E. L. (1992). The domestication of the royal Irish constabulary, 1836–1922. *Irish Economic and Social History*, *19*(1), 27–48. https://doi.org/10.1177/033248939201900102

Lum, C., Koper, C. S., & Wu, X. (2022). Can we really defund the police? A nine-agency study of police response to calls for service. *Police Quarterly, 25*(3), 255–280. https://doi.org/10.1177/10986111211035002

Maher, G. (2021). *A world without police: How strong communities make cops obsolete*. Verso.

Marvell, T. B., & Moody, C. E. (1996). Specification problems, police levels, and crime rates. *Criminology*, *34*(4), 609–646. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1745-9125.1996.tb01221.x

Maynard, R. (2017). *Policing black lives*. Fernwood.

McDowell, M. G., & Fernandez, L. A. (2018). "Disband, disempower, and disarm": Amplifying the theory and practice of police abolition. *Critical Criminology (Richmond, B.C.)*, *26*(3), 373–391. https://doi.org/10.1007/s10612-018-9400-4

Nagel, M. (2020). Beyond survival: Strategies and stories from the transformative justice movement by Ejeris Dixon and Leah Lakshmi Piepzna-Samarasinha. *Transformative Justice Journal, 2*(2), 7-10. https://transformativejusticejournal.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/06/PDF-Volume-2-Issue-2-2020.pdf

Neocleous, M. (2021). *A critical theory of police power: The fabrication of social order*. Verso.

Nicholson, K., & Marcoux, J. (2018, April 5). *What an examination of every Canadian police-involved fatality since 2000 tells us*. CBC News. Retrieved August 4, 2023, from https://www.cbc.ca/news/investigates/most-canadians-killed-in-police-encounters-since-2000-had-mental-health-or-substance-abuse-issues-1.4602916

Oakland Power Projects. (2018, June). *Anti-policing health toolkit* [Booklet]. https://static1.squarespace.com/static/59ead8f9692ebee25b72f17f/t/5b6aab5e1ae6cfd4011275e2/1533717358865/OPP_booklet_Jun2018_v2-3.pdf

Portland Hotel Society. (2020, July 28). *The insite story*. PHS Community Services Society. https://www.phs.ca/the-insite-story/

Provenzano, P. (2017). Community-based alternatives for mental health crisis response: Past, present, and imagined. *UC Berkeley: Summer Undergraduate Research Fellowship Conference Proceedings*. https://escholarship.org/uc/item/46g8k3c5

Reaume-Zimmer, P., Chandrasena, R., Malla, A., Joober, R., Boksa, P., Shah, J. L., Iyer, S. N., & Lal, S. (2019). Transforming youth mental health care in a semi-urban and rural region of Canada: A service description of access open minds Chatham-Kent. *Early Intervention in Psychiatry*, *13*(S1), 48–55. https://doi.org/10.1111/eip.12818

Rogers, M. S., McNiel, D. E., & Binder, R. L. (2019). Effectiveness of police crisis intervention training programs. *The Journal of the American Academy of Psychiatry and the Law*, 47(4), 414–421. https://doi.org/10.29158/JAAPL.003863-19

Samuel, S. (2020, June 15). *Calling the cops on someone with mental illness can go terribly wrong. Here's a better idea*. Vox. Retrieved August 4, 2023, from https://www.vox.com/future-perfect/2019/7/1/20677523/mental-health-police-cahoots-oregon-oakland-sweden

Scottie, A. (2020, July 5). *This town of 170,000 replaced some cops with medics and mental health workers. It's worked for over 30 years.* CNN. Retrieved August 4, 2023, from https://www.cnn.com/2020/07/05/us/cahoots-replace-police-mental-health-trnd/index.html

Small, W., Moore, D., Shoveller, J., Wood, E., & Kerr, T. (2012). Perceptions of risk and safety within injection settings: Injection drug users' reasons for attending a supervised injecting facility in Vancouver, Canada. *Health, Risk & Society*, *14*(4), 307–324. https://doi.org/10.1080/13698575.2012.680950

Spade, D. (2020). Solidarity not charity: Mutual aid for mobilization and survival. *Social Text*, *38*(1), 131–151. https://doi.org/10.1215/01642472-7971139

Stelkia, K. (2020). *Police brutality in Canada: A symptom of structural racism and colonial violence* (Policy Brief No. 72). Yellowhead Institute. https://yellowheadinstitute.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/07/k-stelkia-police-brutality-in-canada-yi-brief.pdf

Suwarno, A. (2021). Mental distress calls: Should police be frontline responders? *Capstone Showcase, Arcadia University*. 1. https://scholarworks.arcadia.edu/showcase/2021/soc_anth_cj/1

Tatem, R. M. (2021). *Social work policing: An effective and exportable embedded autonomous model* [Master's thesis, Arizona State University]. ASU Electronic Theses and Dissertations. https://hdl.handle.net/2286/R.2.N.161474

Taylor, K. Y. (2021, May 7). The emerging movement for prison and police abolition. *The New Yorker*. Retrieved August 4, 2023, from https://www.newyorker.com/news/our-columnists/the-emerging-movement-for-police-and-prison-abolition

Texas shooting: *Police, guns and schools protected from lawsuits*. (2022, June 1). Al Jazeera. Retrieved August 4, 2023, from https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2022/6/1/analysis-police-guns-and-schools-protected-from-lawsuits-over-texas-shooting

Toepler, S. (2003). Grassroots associations versus larger nonprofits: New evidence from a community case study in arts and culture. *Nonprofit and Voluntary Sector Quarterly*, *32*(2), 236–251. https://doi.org/10.1177/0899764003032002004

de Tribolet-Hardy, F., Kesic, D., & Thomas, S. D. (2014). Police management of Mental Health Crisis Situations in the community: Status quo, current gaps and future directions. *Policing and Society*, *25*(3), 294–307. https://doi.org/10.1080/10439463.2013.865737

Vitale, A. S. (2017). *The end of policing*. Verso.

Walcott, R. (2021). *On property*. Biblioasis.

Ways to give. Critical Resistance. (n.d.). Retrieved August 4, 2023, from https://criticalresistance.org/ways-to-give/

Williams, J. & Romer, C. (2020). *Black deaths at the hands of law enforcement are linked to historical lynchings : U.S. counties where lynchings were more prevalent from 1877 to 1950 have more officer-involved killings*, Economic Policy Institute. https://policycommons.net/artifacts/1407784/black-deaths-at-the-hands-of-law-enforcement-are-linked-to-historical-lynchings/2022047/

World Health Organization. (2011). Impact of economic crises on mental health. *World Health Organization Regional Office for Europe*. https://apps.who.int/iris/handle/10665/370872

Wuschke, K. E., Andresen, M. A., Brantingham, P. J., Rattenbury, C., & Richards, A. (2018). What do police do and where do they do it? *International Journal of Police Science & Management, 20*(1), 19–27. https://doi.org/10.1177/1461355717748973

Yang, T. (2021). "Send freedom house!": A study in police abolition. *Washington Law Review*, *96*(3), 1067–1112.