

**Conflicting Narratives and Frames in Media Reporting on Deaths of Racialized Men with
Mental Health Issues at the Hands of the Criminal Justice System**

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Abstract

Death in custody elicits accusations and emotional outbursts by the victims' families, community activists and the general public. These controversial cases have become a regular feature in the news. Using thematic analysis, I examine news reporting on the deaths of two racialized individuals with mental illness at the hands of law enforcement officers in Ontario in 2016. This study draws on the concepts of framing and narratives to examine how news media reporting of law enforcement deaths involving racialized men suffering from mental illnesses may produce conflicting narratives and frames. The news media's coverage of such incidents presents various narratives and frames in an attempt to assist the general public in making sense of the incident. Journalists' quoted sources and their messages resulted in the frames that were found in this study. These frames included opposing views on the use of force, the influence of race and mental illness, injustice, and uniqueness of the event. Similarly, the narratives included comments and discourses on the event, how people make sense of what happened and why it happened the way it did, and what can be done to prevent these issues from recurring. Narratives about the identities of both victims and law enforcement agents, the nature of law enforcement work, and system change were also included. The different narratives and frames that appear in news reports of law enforcement brutality cases may create a polarized community with a section of the citizenry agreeing with and supporting these frames while the other section opposes them. The use of force, a contentious issue, is visible to the public and frequently elicits competing claims that serve to frame it as a necessary part of law enforcement work or as brutality that primarily targets the vulnerable in society. This study is significant because it investigates narratives and frames in order to fully comprehend and appreciate the contrasting discourses surrounding the use of deadly force by law enforcement against racialized men with mental health issues in Ontario.

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Introduction

In-custody deaths include those that occur during police officers' arrests and those that occur while the subject is detained or incarcerated in a state facility (Sathyavagiswaran, Rogers, & Noguchi, 2007). The use of force by law enforcement officials that results in the death of people, particularly unarmed citizens, is highly contentious and is subject to a range of interpretations by interested parties who are frequently surprised and upset by the act. According to Sathyavagiswaran et al. (2007), these circumstances frequently result in allegations and emotional outbursts from family members and community activists, as well as lawsuits and brings into question the use of excessive force, illegal procedures or those that have a risk of inflicting injury or death; therefore, the investigation looks into the potential of the police department's misconduct in restraining the alleged offender, causing death. The most recent arguments have been generated by the murders of young people of colour as a result of police use of force, regardless of legal justification (Stroshine & Brandl, 2020).

When an accused person resists during an arrest, the most common approach is to use force (Terrill, Leinfelt, & Kwak, 2008). Generally, if officers discharge a firearm or utilize other forms of potentially deadly force, it is in an attempt to effectively incapacitate a potential threat to themselves or others (Parent, 2006). As a result, deadly force is usually presented as a lawful and appropriate, albeit regrettable, operational response to a grave threat (Lawrence, 2000). Although the nature of policing sometimes necessitates the use of physical force against citizens to maintain law and order, police use of force is frequently contentious due to its ambiguity (Lawrence, 2020). Given the controversy surrounding police use of force, a substantial amount of study has been

conducted on the subject. This has raised numerous issues and concerns among citizens, academics, government leaders, and law enforcement officials (Friedrich, 1980).

Frankham (2020) has noted that the role of race and mental illness have become critical components of the debate over the legality and morality of use of force incidents. Research has indicated that in terms of race and ethnicity, serious racial differences exist in civilian deaths during citizen-police contacts (Edwards, Esposito, & Lee, 2018; Ross, 2015). Regarding mental illness, available evidence suggests that people with mental illnesses are overrepresented among those killed during altercations between civilians and law enforcement officers, despite the paucity of systematic data (Saleh, Applebaum, Liu, Stroup & Wall, 2018). African Americans with mental illness had the greatest death rates, followed by non-Hispanic Whites with mental disease (Saleh et al., 2018). The disagreements that use of force incidents generate between institutional and lay discourses can be attributed to differences in the ways key stakeholders define the issue. For instance, police agencies analyze the appropriateness of the level of force used based on technical assessments and risk management procedures. On the other hand, the critical stance that the deceased's relatives and friends take are influenced by personal reasons, such as their emotional reaction to the loss of a loved one (Clifford, 2021).

Civilian deaths at the hands of law enforcement officers are newsworthy events which often make headlines in crime news and as a result, it is common for the public to perceive and form their opinions about the case through how the media frames it. Following contentious use of force cases, people express lower levels of approval and trust for police, as well as growing scepticism about the extent to which the police uphold people's rights and worry about whether the police make decisions that are in the best interests of citizens (Mullinix, Bolsen, & Norris, 2021). The killing of a civilian by a police officer(s) is normally not considered a crime unless the officer is at the

very least proven to have been careless (Frankham, 2020). However, because these news articles feature both the police, whom the public identifies with crime, and the death of someone, readers may interpret them as crime news (Frankham, 2020). As a social problem, limited research exists on how the deaths of individuals who possess the identities of race and mental illness at the hands of law enforcement officials are framed and portrayed in the media.

In recent years, the increase in the frequency of contacts between law enforcement agencies and racialized people as well as those suffering from mental illness has made it important to analyze the media's role in presenting these issues to the public and how this may impact public opinions and perceptions. The media may have an impact on public perceptions of law enforcement agents (Dowler, 2002; Callanan & Rosenberger, 2011), race/ethnicity (Gilliam & Iyengar, 2000), and mental illness (Lewison, Roe, Wentworth & Szmukler, 2012). Because the media is the primary source of information for most of the public on current topics, the frames selected by the media have a tremendous potential to affect popular knowledge, opinion, and attitudes (Kesic, Ducat & Thomas, 2012). The media frames used to convey information about fatalities caused by civilian-law enforcement interactions generally have a substantial impact on people's perceptions.

According to framing, the way an issue is presented in news stories affects how audiences perceive it (Scheufele & Tewksbury, 2007). Entman (1993) defined framing as, "To frame is to select some aspects of perceived reality and make them more salient in a communicating text, in such a way as to promote a particular problem definition, causal interpretation, moral evaluation, and/or treatment recommendation for the item described" (p. 52). When it comes to public opinion, framing effects occur "when (often small) changes in the presentation of an issue or an event produce (sometimes large) changes of opinion", according to Chong and Druckman (2007b, p. 104).

Thus, this thesis contributes to the discourse by exploring the frames and narratives that might emerge when the news media reports on law enforcement use of force that results in the death of racialized people with mental illnesses. News coverage of two deaths at the hands of law enforcement officials during arrest and detention are used to examine media reporting of such cases and the kinds of narratives and frames that are produced. Attention is paid to how journalistic news-gathering practices and norms (such as choice and use of sources) affect framing.

Following this introduction, Chapter 1 reviews the criminological literature on race and mental illness in the context of crime and the criminal justice system. I also review the literature on media reporting on race and mental illness and the use of force by law enforcement officers. The literature reveals the tensed relationship between racial minorities as well as persons suffering from mental illness and officers of the criminal justice system which often impact their interactions. The first part of the chapter discusses how race and mental illness are policed and punished. I discuss the experiences of racialized individuals and persons suffering from mental illness during their interactions with law enforcement officers and how they are treated in the criminal justice system. The second part discusses media reporting of policing and punishment of race and mental illness. I discuss the way race and mental illness are portrayed in the media in the context of crime. I also discuss how the media reports on the criminal justice system and its influence on public opinions. I conclude by establishing the primary research question of this thesis.

Chapter 2 outlines the theoretical framework employed in this study. To better understand how use of force incidents that lead to death are made sense of and represented in news media reporting, I explored concepts such as framing, narratives, journalistic practices, and use of sources. I begin the chapter by defining the concept of framing and its usefulness in pointing the news audience to certain aspects of the news and what to think about in trying to make sense of issues. I then explore

how journalistic practices, particularly, use of sources helps to frame the news for the audience. Finally, I explore the concept of narratives to enable me to understand the stories and discourses that opposing parties in disputes arising from incidents such as police use of force deaths may use to make sense of and use to defend or criticize actions of law enforcement officials. I also explain how I apply frames and narratives in my thesis to achieve my research goal.

In Chapter 3, I describe the methodological considerations and decisions made in this research. I begin by stating the guiding research questions and goal of this thesis. This is followed by an explanation of my ontological and epistemological perspective as a researcher. I then present the two law enforcement death cases chosen and used in this research and provide a justification for them. The next section outlines my data collection procedures. This is followed by a description of my data analysis techniques as well as why I chose a qualitative approach. I then provide a discussion of the methodological limitations of my study. This chapter concludes by providing an overview of the ethical considerations as it applies to this research.

Chapter 4 presents the first part of my analysis. Here, I describe and present the various narratives and contradictions that parties to the cases used to advance their arguments and make sense of the deaths of the two gentlemen.

In the final Chapter, I present and analyze the contradicting frames identified in this study which was mainly sponsored by quoted sources - officials and non officials (or friends, families, and advocacy groups).

The conclusion presents an overview of the findings of this study and briefly suggests some future lines of research.

Chapter 1: Literature review

1.1. Introduction

The following chapter provides an overview and discussion of criminological discourses around race, mental illness, and the criminal justice system. This thesis aims to understand the frames and narratives that may be produced when the news media report on the law enforcement deaths of racialized individuals with mental illness and its impact on public perception. The thesis focuses on two cases of law enforcement deaths involving racialized men in Ottawa, who struggled with mental illness.

In the first part of the chapter, I begin by looking at the criminological literature on racialized men and their relationship with the criminal justice system especially when evidence available suggests that crime has been racialized (Welch, 2009). Next, I look at the literature on mental illness in the context of the criminal justice system. Increasingly, mentally ill patients have become involved in the criminal justice system primarily due to their illness which may put them at risk of offending behaviour for which they may be arrested by law enforcement officials. The relationship existing between the criminal justice system, racial minorities and the mentally ill could produce tensions during their encounters. As such, I also look at the use of force which is an important part of law enforcement work and its implications.

The last part of the literature review focuses on media reporting. I explore how race and crime are represented in the media as well as the representation of crime and mental illness in the media. The chapter ends with a section on the media-justice system relationship, how the media reports on the activities of the criminal justice system, and the likely influence of such reports.

1.2. Policing and punishing race and mental illness

1.2.1. Crime, criminal Justice System, and racialized men

One of the most contentious issues in Western societies is the inextricable relationship between race and crime – the racialization of crime (Welch, 2009). The notion that crime is an issue unjustly attributed to Blacks/African Americans is not a new phenomenon (Welch, 2007). One of the widespread messages is that ‘people commit crimes because “they” are not like “us”’ (Greer and Jewkes, 2005, p. 20). In Canada, Blacks are framed and constructed as foreigners within, in discourses of crime that concerns them (Lawson, 2012). Thus, by conceptualizing Black men or racialized groups as “others” or “outsiders” who pose a threat to the norms of society, the criminal justice system and particularly the police become an instrument used to manage and regulate them (Williams, 2015; Jiwani, 2002). Williams (2015) further contends that, “othering” is used as a tool to discriminate and exclude individuals belonging to marginalized populations and is as such linked to culture and politics in society. In addition, it has been found that “the centuries-old message has been consistent: people of colour, especially Black men, ought to be feared” (Berenguer, 2017, p. 733). The stigmatization of Black men as violent and dangerous has led to a situation where they are viewed with suspicious lenses in a wide variety of social encounters (Teasley, Schiele, Adams & Okilwa, 2018). Consequently, Black individuals have a higher chance of being identified as threatening as opposed to the non-threatening identity of the White man.

Kumah-Abiwu (2020) maintains that the representation of Black men as inherently dangerous and a threat to law and order, is deep-seated in the culture and history of the United States and Canada (Maynard, 2017). Indeed, Quillian and Pager's (2001) argument that the notion of Black criminality is widespread and ingrained in the minds of Americans shows how sensitive reports of

crime and race is to the populace. Consequently, Hurwitz & Peffley's (1997) study has supported this argument with the assertion that Whites typically consider Blacks as hostile, violent and criminal. Further, race-based ideas about crime have become so embedded in the public awareness that it is no longer necessary to specify the racial identification of suspects for race to be associated with crime (Welch, 2009). Exploiting pre-existing ideas of young Black men being involved in crime, false accusations of crime involvement may be leveled against a fabricated violent and threatening Black perpetrator (Welch, 2007). This further confirms the existing notions of Blacks being inherently criminal and constructs them as criminals.

An examination of historical perceptions of race from the time of slavery to the present reveals that Whites have long regarded criminal behaviour as an inherent trait of Blacks (Welch, 2009) and as such tend to deal more punitively with Black offenders than White offenders even if the crimes committed are of the same weight (Hurwitz & Peffley, 1997; Dukes & Gaither, 2017). According to studies, the public connection between Blackness and crime dates back to the seventeenth century, when runaway Blacks were advertised and portrayed as thieves and criminals. The association between Blackness and criminality became fully synonymous throughout the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries (Maynard, 2017). In addition, the connection between crime and Blackness have functioned socially, economically, and culturally to keep the racial order after the abolishment of slavery (Maynard, 2017) and throughout history, political leaders, and key decision makers in society in conjunction with the media have cooperated to pathologize Black families in the eyes of American and Canadians in pursuance for a justification of slavery, mass incarceration, widespread economic inequity – including gaining and maintaining political and social order (Dixon, 2017; Maynard, 2017).

Moreover, Brooms and Perry's (2016) study argued that, "Black men, especially young Black men, face the social, economic, and political realities that they do precisely because they are problematized across wider society" (p. 178). Brooms and Perry add that, it does not matter what they do, they are problematized, surveilled, and stereotyped because the Africa American man's most offensive crime is being Black and male. In the US and Canada, Blackness is condemned such that the idea of Blacks being criminals has been used to legitimize racial violence and neglect (Brooms & Perry, 2016; Maynard, 2017). Such representation of Black Americans as social deviants may be a retaliation against imagined threats of the Black male physique (Brooms and Perry, 2016). This reality African Americans face affects how Black families and communities socialize their children with research suggesting that as early as five years old, Black American women start teaching their kids about race and its implications for them (Brooms & Perry, 2016). Presently, the fear of Blackness is indirectly expressed through a fear of crime and treated as such by the state and its law enforcement agencies (Maynard, 2017).

1.2.1.1. Policing and racialized men

Existing research has found that racial and ethnic disparities are many in policing outcomes such as arrest, stops and searches, and use of force (Headley & Blount-Hill, 2021; Kahn & Martin, 2016). Discussions on race and policing often focus on the shared experience of Black people. However, Muslim communities, who are frequently racialized and linked to Arab or Black people, Native American, Latino, and East Asian communities also have a troubled past with the police (Headley & Blount-Hill, 2021). Because of the intensive crime-control measures they are subjected to, studies have shown that residents of underprivileged communities - which typically include racialized minorities - have a significant risk of coming into contact with police both directly and indirectly (Brunson, 2007).

Racial profiling is a longstanding problem in many communities (Mauer, 1997) and is said to exist when people of a certain race are scrutinized by the criminal justice system more intensely than other people (Wortley, 2003). Wortley defines racial profiling as the “racial disparity in police stop and search practices, racial differences in customs searches at airports and border-crossings, increased police patrols in racial minority neighbourhoods, and undercover activities or sting operations which selectively target specific ethnic groups” (p. 103).

Additionally, according to Maynard (2017), racial profiling is a type of aggression that violates Black people's freedom of movement in public settings. She claims that the identity checks, seizures, searches, and car stops are the result of Blacks being associated with criminality. Henry and Tator (2014) have attributed racial profiling to the nature of police culture. They contend that police training in criminal profiling promotes stereotypical thinking about racial groups and their proclivity to commit crime. Studies have demonstrated that police training, socialization, and work experience all influence how they perceive criminal activity (MacAlister, 2011). This signifies that, how they interpret situations depends on their developed worldviews. Thus, in the course of their duty, even when police officers are well trained and seem unbiased, they may still have their perceptions clouded by race and the constructed knowledge of Black men as deviant and likely to engage in violence and crime (Berenguer, 2017).

According to Wortley and Owusu-Bempah (2011), Black men in Canada are three times more likely than Whites or Asians to be pulled over multiple times by the police for traffic and other infractions (Mauer, 1997), and three times as likely to be searched during these stops. Wortley and Owusu-Bempah (2011) further note that because they are frequently the usual and likely suspects, [young] Black men tend to be the most targeted by the police. The police are frequently perceived as racially biased by Black people, and as a result, they always discriminate against them in their

interactions with them. This creates a climate of suspicion among Black people toward the police, which often manifests itself in their behaviour during confrontations with officers. Such behaviours have the potential to result in unfavourable police treatment, reinforcing public perceptions of police bias. Overall, the perceived criminality of Black people and the resulting criminalization is demonstrated through police violence against them (Ogden, Fulambarker, & Haggerty, 2020). Although the tendency is to assume broadly that Blacks are unfairly profiled and represented because of their colour, Maynard (2017) argues that it is rather an issue of the perceived likelihood of Black men to break laws than their White counterparts. Nonetheless, inaccurate, and discriminatory information peddled about Blacks play a key role in legitimizing how they are policed (Welch, 2007). Black men, their families and communities have been found to be adversely affected by racial profiling and the other tough penal policies they are subjected to (Khenti, 2013; Welch, 2007; Maynard, 2017).

Research on racial profiling in USA and Canada have been linked to the 'war on drugs' (Maynard, 2017; Warde, 2013; Welch, 2007; Khenti, 2013). The framing of the drug problem as peculiar to poor Black urban communities, has led to law enforcement agencies focusing on enforcing draconian tough on crime policing in Black communities even though statistically research has indicated that five times as many Whites used drugs as Blacks (Warde, 2013). Welch (2007) argues that the law enforcement practice of racial profiling targets racial minorities (including Blacks) during investigations to presumably increase their chances of revealing criminal activity and confirming their criminality.

Officials in law enforcement may justify racial profiling by claiming that individuals of a specific race are overrepresented in certain categories of crime (Welch, 2009). Subjecting racial minorities to substantially higher levels of police surveillance, makes them much more likely to be

apprehended when they break the law than White people who commit the same types of crimes and not necessarily because crime is more common among minorities (Wortley, 2003; Welch 2009). The frequency with which Black men have been the focus of erroneous police violence demonstrates the clear role that race plays in inaccurate conceptions of risk and criminality (Oliver, 2003).

1.2.1.2. Prisons and racialized men

It has been established from the foregoing discussion that issues of racial disparity abound at all stages of the criminal justice system. Racial and ethnic inequalities continue in Canada and the United States, and no discrepancy is more visible than in criminal justice outcomes (Mauer, 1997; Wortley & Owusu-Bempah, 2012). Studies have indicated that While Blacks and other ethnic minorities make up a small percentage of the general population, they account for a significant portion of the federal and state prison populations in the U.S. (Bridges & Crutchfield, 1988). The situation is no different in Canada where Roberts and Doob (1997) have concluded that racial and ethnic minorities are overrepresented in the prison system. Moreover, available evidence suggests that Blacks are more likely to be arrested for crimes, convicted at higher rates, and sentenced to jail for longer periods of time than Whites (Wortley & Owusu-Bempah, 2012; Mauer, 1997). According to Mauer (1997), currently Black people are incarcerated at far higher rates than White people. Brewer & Heitzeg (2008) further argue that more than a quarter of a million Black men are currently incarcerated in the U.S. with another two million under some type of supervision, with some studies (Vogel & Porter, 2016; Owusu-Bempah, Jung, Sbaï, Wilton, & Kouyoumdjian, 2021) also implying that Black men are imprisoned at roughly seven times the rate of White men.

However, the reasons for this extraordinary rise in the incarceration of racialized minorities are up for debate. Colour-blind racism's rhetoric would want us to believe that this is the unfortunate result of a greater Black and Latino criminal participation (Brewer & Heitzeg, 2008). Thus, this inequality is attributed to variations in criminal activity between Blacks and Whites, according to normative views which argue that sanctions are only applied in response to criminal activities, and that disproportionate minority involvement in crime, particularly serious and violent crime, is the source of high minority imprisonment rates (Bridges & Crutchfield, 1988; Wortley & Owusu-Bempah, 2012; Vogel & Porter, 2016). On the other hand, another school of thought and stratification theories believe that punishment is an institutional technique employed by ruling social classes to control and regulate people that challenge their political or economic dominance. According to these views, unequal treatment of White and minority defendants by the legal system accounts for differences in incarceration rates (Bridges & Crutchfield, 1988; Vogel & Porter, 2016; Wortley & Owusu-Bempah, 2012; Mauer, 1997; Pettit & Western, 2004).

Further, criminal justice policies including the war on drugs, as well as the growth in mandatory minimum terms for drug offences and some other felonies, are to blame for much of this surge in the massive increase in criminalization and incarceration that has occurred in the United States (Brewer & Heitzeg, 2008; Hetey & Eberhardt, 2014). In the Canadian context, Maynard (2017) and Roberts and Doob (1997) have acknowledged this surge and have found similar reasons for it. The war on crime, like the drug war, may have disproportionately impacted poor populations (Pettit & Western, 2004).

Very few Canadian studies have looked at how racial minorities are treated in the correctional system, as it has in other stages of the criminal justice system. However, the research available reveals that some types of racial bias do occur in prison, which is consistent with police and

criminal court investigations (Wortley & Owusu-Bempah, 2012). Research suggests that minority detainees make up a disproportionately large percentage of those facing misconduct charges, especially where correctional staff have more discretion (Wortley & Owusu-Bempah, 2012). Because Blacks and Hispanics are significantly more likely than Whites to be incarcerated, the repercussions of incarceration are borne disproportionately by members of these groups (Vogel & Porter, 2016; Oliver, 2001).

1.2.2. Crime, Criminal Justice System, and mental illness

The possibility of a link between crime and mental illness has long piqued the public's interest (Wessely, & Taylor, 1991). Ahonen (2019b) has noted that a substantial amount of literature emphasizing the link between violence and certain mental health diseases exists, particularly when it comes to psychosis-related disorders like schizophrenia, although research also shows that majority of serious mental health conditions do not raise the likelihood of violence and that those suffering from mental illnesses are only accountable for a small proportion of all acts of violence (Ahonen, Loeber & Brent, 2019). Nonetheless, research has found that more people with serious mental disorders are being criminalized and falling under the purview of law enforcement than the mental health system and are being criminalized as compared to persons without mental illness (Abramson, 1972; Teplin, 1984; Regier, Farmer, Rae, Locke, Keith, Judd, & Goodwin, 1990). There is a criminalization of mental illness, with increasing numbers of people who were formerly treated in the mental health system now being discovered in the criminal justice system (Anderson, 1997). Over the years, the number of mentally ill people in prisons and jails has risen dramatically, and there are now more people with mental illnesses in prison than in mental institutions (Vogel, Stephens, & Siebels, 2014).

At every level of the criminal justice system, including arrest, conviction, and jail, people with mental illnesses are overrepresented (Vogel et al., 2014). Deinstitutionalization and a regime of punitive drug laws have made mentally ill individuals vulnerable to criminal justice processing (Vogel et al., 2014). Studies have found that law enforcement officers frequently serve as initial responders to mental health issues, especially violent crises (DeGue, Fowler, & Calkins, 2016; Vermette, Pinals, & Appelbaum, 2005) and are tasked with the responsibility of determining whether the person should be referred for mental health treatment, yet their knowledge of mental illness is lacking (Vermette, et al., 2005). Research has indicated that although police officers can recognize mental disease based on limited information (Engel & Silver, 2001), “they are not clinicians and may not be able to identify the full range of symptoms that could accompany mental illness” (Morabito, Socia, Wik & Fisher, 2017, p. 33), thus making them likely to use arrest rather than referral to community services, especially for minor offences (Vogel et al., 2014). Further, patrol officers frequently face persons with mental illness without having received any additional specific training beyond the training they received in school (Vermette, et al., 2005) and frequently report feeling undertrained and underprepared to evaluate and respond as gatekeepers for the criminal justice and mental health systems, raising concerns about the safety of citizens experiencing mental health crises who frequently encounter and depend on law enforcement (Degue et al., 2016; Johnson, 2011).

Teplin (1985) has argued that the typical interaction between police and the mentally ill was less likely to entail a deranged suspect committing a horrible crime and more likely to involve a person engaging in self-destructive conduct. However, several studies have found that patients with active psychotic symptoms (Link, Andrews & Cullen, 1992) or multiple psychiatric diagnoses (Swanson, Holzer, Ganju & Jono, 1990) are more likely to engage in aggressive behaviour, which may lead

to increased police interaction. Because of society's low tolerance for mentally ill people, citizens frequently turn to the criminal justice system to address problems regarding the mentally ill, especially when they exhibit the more terrifying and troubling signs of mental illness (Teplin, 1984).

Additionally, many homeless people with mental illnesses run a higher risk of encountering law enforcement and being detained for less serious offences like assault as well as offences like public indecency, intoxication, or disorderly conduct due to a lack of community treatment programs, staffing, personal resources, and social supports (Markowitz, 2011). Moreover, research suggest that the failure of the mental health system to offer proper treatment is the most frequently acknowledged cause for police engagement with people who have mental illnesses. Accordingly, when those with serious mental illness are left untreated, they may deteriorate over time, increasing the likelihood of aggressive and unlawful behaviour. It is stated that the individual's subsequent aberrant activity can lead to interactions with the criminal justice system (Wolff, Diamond, & Helminiak, 1997; MacDonald, Hucker, & Hébert, 2010).

1.2.2.1 Crime and mental illness

The public fears violence by mentally ill people more than perhaps any other sort of violence (Marzuk, 1996). People are mostly afraid of the arbitrary, senseless, and unpredictable violence, which they link with mental illness (Stuart, 2003). The link between mental illness and criminal behaviour is a source of much dispute and debate (Anderson, 1997) and for years, academics as well as mental health professionals have discussed and investigated the potential correlation between violence, criminal behaviour/activity, and mental illness (Marzuk, 1996; Anderson, 1997; Ahonen, 2019a). As public awareness of mental illness appears to have grown, so has there been

an increase in the percentage of people who believe that mental illness is dangerous, violent, unpredictable, as well as the general perception of people with psychotic disorders as dangerous. One possible explanation is that the media visuals and widespread coverage of certain violent events have led to a misconception of the actual risk of violence (Markowitz, 2011).

Much research has examined the direct relationship between mental disorder and the likelihood of violent and criminal behavior (Markowitz, 2011). On one hand, according to Stuart (2003), mental illnesses do not constitute sufficient or required justification for violence. Ahonen (2019b) adds that, the link between mental illness and violence is frequently assumed rather than established. On the other hand, as pointed out by Marzuk (1996), scholars have argued that there exists a real correlation between mental illness, crime, and violence. The association appears to be highest for serious mental diseases (especially if it involves psychosis), and it is made worse by the use of alcohol and other psychoactive substances in those who do not have a recognized mental illness (Marzuk, 1996). According to studies, those who struggled with both drug abuse and mental illness were more likely to become violent. This suggests that mental illness influences violence indirectly by raising the likelihood of substance abuse (Markowitz, 2011). Ahonen (2019b) found in a study that there was broad consensus that substance abuse, in particular alcoholism, posed the greatest risk of any sort of violence. All experts in Ahonen's study mentioned the link between drug and alcohol addiction and psychotic conditions, with one expert asserting that, unless a person additionally has a substance use disorder, there is no link between mental illness and violence.

While it is tempting to believe that psychotic symptoms induce people to become violent, it has been suggested that the attempts to coerce or control the disturbed person which may result from the public's fearful or enraged response to psychotic symptoms, is what frequently results in violence (Marzuk, 1996). Further, research has found that psychotic symptoms can lead to

aggression in people with severe mental illnesses, and unusual or unpleasant behaviour can be stressful for others. Years of deviant behaviour, on the other hand, may make a mentally ill person the target of bullying, prompting them to engage in violent behaviours in order to protect themselves (Hiday, 1997). When the mentally ill are provoked, their history of abuse and bullying may lead them to react violently (Stuart, 2003). In addition, violence is also a result of difficult social conditions on some occasions (Hiday, 1997). According to recent research, the state of a person's social life as well as the type and quality of their social ties are factors that contribute to violent incidents among those with significant mental illnesses (Stuart, 2003). Marzuk (1996) argues that the majority of individuals with mental problems are not criminals, and those who are, are not violent. They are certainly more likely to become victims of violence than to commit acts of violence. In addition, their family members are more likely than uninvited guests on the street or in any other situation to become victims of their aggression.

People are more likely to condone forced legal action and enforced treatment when violence is involved, making public perceptions of the link between mental illness and violence crucial to stigma and prejudice (Stuart, 2003). Furthermore, the presumption of violence may be used to justify bullying and other forms of victimization of mentally ill people. Victimization is common among the mentally ill, but clinical records usually lack documentation of it and are commonly overlooked by practitioners (Stuart, 2003). Also, individuals who link mental disease with psychosis are less eager to live near them, socialize with them, work with them, have a group home for the mentally ill nearby, or have someone with mental illness marry into their family, i.e., they distance themselves from them (Markowitz, 2011). Without help, people with difficult but potentially controllable medical diseases such schizophrenia, mood and anxiety disorders

aggravated by abuse, neglect, or ignorance might act out in ways that society finds undesirable, causing them to become criminalized (Munro, 2010).

1.2.2.2 Policing and mental illness

Scholars have noted with grave concern the significant increase in the number of severely mentally ill people in the criminal justice system designating it as a serious issue (Lamb, Weinberger, & Gross, 2004). Several mental health professionals have reacted to what Abramson (1992) termed “criminalization of mentally disordered behavior” and have speculated that persons who in the past were treated within the mental health system are increasingly being pushed into the criminal justice system (Teplin, 1984).

More recently, a number of legislative changes have led to an increase in police engagement with mentally ill people (Engel & Silver, 2001). These changes include deinstitutionalization (i.e., the downsizing or closure of state and county psychiatric hospitals), stricter civil commitment conditions, and underfunded community-based treatment and support programs (Engel & Silver, 2001; Lamb et al., 2004). The argument that deinstitutionalization leads to the placement of mentally ill people in the criminal justice system is widely believed and supported by evidence (Lamb et al., 2004). For starters, deinstitutionalization led in the release of a huge number of people who would have otherwise been held in a state or county facility, resulting in jails and prisons serving as the long-term holding facilities for such people (Teplin, 1984). According to Durham (1989), the goal of deinstitutionalization was to get mentally ill persons out of institutions and into community-based treatment programs.

As a result, the mentally ill have become a more prominent presence in society with law enforcement playing an increasingly crucial role in the management of people who are

experiencing psychiatric problems (Lamb et al., 2004; Lamb, Weinberger, & DeCuir, 2002). Unfortunately, these changes have not been matched by an increase in community acceptance of those with mental illnesses (Teplin, 1984). Consequently, residents frequently turn to the criminal justice system to deal with issues involving the mentally ill, particularly when people openly display the more terrifying and troubling symptoms of mental illness which they may find unacceptable (Mulvey & White, 2014; Teplin, 1984; Engel & Silver, 2001). Thus, the policing of this group has resulted from symptoms that were earlier addressed in hidden institutions becoming public and conspicuous (Wondemaghen, 2021).

Police officers can assume a range of responsibilities in the community as part of their duties, including acting as a de facto mental health agent (Thompson, Kahn, McMahon, & O'Neil, 2016). Responding to mental health emergencies and locating suitable safe havens for sufferers are all part of modern police work (Wondemaghen, 2021). Even before deinstitutionalization, police officers had to deal with mentally ill people on a regular basis. Their call has however become more frequent to control unruly people with mental illnesses after deinstitutionalization (Hiday & Burns, 2010). Police officers are increasingly being called upon to be first responders to a growing number of mentally ill people stemming from the new legislative changes (Thompson et al., 2016; Markowitz, 2011). Because responsibility has been pushed to the justice system due to inadequacies in the health sector, the behaviours of mentally ill people and the visibility of their symptoms, whether a danger to themselves or others, bring them to the notice of law enforcement (Wondemaghen, 2021; Wolff, Diamond, & Helminiak, 1997). The criminal justice system may have become the institution that “cannot say no” due to a lack of exclusionary criteria (Teplin, 1984, p. 795). The criminal justice system readily accepts those who have been rejected by the mental health system (Teplin, 1984).

The police's authority to intervene in the lives of people with mental illnesses stems from two common-law principles: the police's power and authority to protect the community's safety and welfare, and the state's paternalistic or *parens patriae* authority, which mandates protection for citizens with disabilities who are unable to care for themselves, such as the acutely mentally ill (Lamb et al., 2004, 2002). According to (Engel & Silver, 2001) regardless of the suspect's mental condition, police must arrest suspects who commit felony charges in order to safeguard the public. *Parens patriae*, on the other hand, mandates that police assist residents in distress. Because the primary obligation for officers is to safeguard the public, *parens patriae* concerns are significantly more likely to arise when a mentally ill person is involved in a less serious (i.e., misdemeanor) offence. Scholars have suggested that the greater arrest rate among mentally ill people could be explained by one of two factors. First and foremost, police may utilize arrest as a means of managing mentally ill people through criminalization. Alternatively, the police may fail to recognize people as mentally ill, leading to an arrest because of the officer's lack of awareness about the signs and symptoms of mental illness (Teplin, 1984; Lamb et al., 2002). It has even been noted that in some cases, mental illness may come across to the police as drug or alcohol intoxication, particularly if at the time of arrest the suspects had been found to be using these substances (Lamb et al., 2002). Further, the police are in charge of determining if an individual with mental illness needs treatment and linking them to the appropriate treatment options, or determining whether the individual's criminal activity is the primary issue and therefore the person should be detained (Lamb et al., 2004). This responsibility according to Lamb et al. places them in the position of primary gatekeepers, deciding whether a person will be admitted to the mental health or criminal justice system. In the following circumstances, police may use arrest even when treatment is preferable: When suspects are uncooperative, hostile, or engage in physical conflict

with officers, when deviant behaviour is serious or so obvious as to go beyond what is tolerable, when deviant behaviour is likely to spiral out of control and require later police intervention, or when officers fail to recognize signs of mental illness (Hiday & Burns, 2010; Engel & Silver, 2001; Lamb et al., 2002). It is reasonable to anticipate hostility between these two groups given the lack of police training on the one hand and the rising likelihood of mentally ill persons having to deal with the law on the other (Thompson et al., 2016).

1.2.2.3 Prisons and mental illness

Studies have shown that there are exceptional numbers of mentally ill people currently being held in many parts of the world and in the USA (Haney, 2017; Prins, 2014). According to a recent Canadian research, correctional facilities house three times as many people with significant mental illnesses as the general population (Munro, 2010). Prisons and jails have recently replaced public psychiatric hospitals as institutions of social control for the mentally ill because of deinstitutionalization (Markowitz, 2011).

Being incarcerated is a stressful experience, and prisons are stressful institutions (Simpson, McMaster, & Cohen, 2013). Existing research argues that rather than receiving treatment from the most qualified mental health professionals, mentally ill inmates are much too frequently treated by understaffed, overburdened, inexperienced, and insufficiently skilled mental health staff many of whom are only “fit” to work in the prison and not elsewhere (Haney, 2017). In addition, prisons are full of danger, dehumanization, and deprivation, as well as all of the unpleasant feelings that come with them (Haney, 2017; Markowitz, 2011; Arrigo & Bullock, 2008). Mentally ill inmates, including those with severe mental illness (Simpson et al., 2013), are more likely to be held in jail and less likely to be freed on bond than others after being arrested, are more likely to be abused by

guards and other inmates, and are more likely to commit suicide (Markowitz, 2011; Simpson et al., 2013). Despite the fact that many jails and prisons offer mental health treatments and that many towns have programmes to redirect mentally ill offenders from jail to treatment facilities, the availability of these services and programs is limited relative to the need for them (Markowitz, 2011).

Further, studies have also revealed that mental illnesses are a predictor of solitary confinement placement in several jurisdictions (Dellazizzo, Luigi, Giguère, Goulet, & Dumais, 2020). It is common for mental illness to be used as grounds to place inmates in solitary confinement (Arrigo & Bullock, 2008). Worryingly, mentally ill inmates may be overrepresented among inmates who are initially assigned to solitary confinement (Siennick, Picon, Brown, & Mears, 2022). Siennick et al., (2022) observed that mentally ill inmates were ordered to solitary confinement for a number of reasons, implying that the mental illness-solitary confinement link is more than just about aggressive behaviour among mentally ill inmates. They argue that instead, mentally ill inmates might have a harder time adjusting to prison and following a multitude of restrictions, which could lead to solitary confinement. When mental symptoms lead to rule violations, officials will see a security danger (Dellazizzo et al., 2020).

It has been well established that solitary confinement can cause psychopathology in otherwise healthy prisoners due to their intense isolation and harsh confinement circumstances (Arrigo & Bullock, 2008). This makes mentally ill inmates even more prone to degenerate and decompensate when they are subjected to the punitive harshness and cruelty that characterizes the standard prison isolation unit (Haney, 2017). Mentally ill inmates assigned to segregation units of prisons and jails are likely to self-harm (Kaba et al., 2014) and may face even more terrible consequences in some cases, including the loss of their sanity or even their life (Haney, 2017).

Due to the lack of knowledge and confidence to employ strategies like dialogue and communicating orders effectively (Rossler & Terrill, 2017), interactions with people suffering from mental illnesses have the potential to escalate, leading officers to use a greater level of force (Mulvey & White, 2014; Kesic et al., 2012). Additionally, Thompson & Kahn (2016) pointed out that one's race influences their risk of encountering police use of force.

1.2.3. Law enforcement misconduct and the use of force

According to Holmes, Painter, and Smith (2019), modern democracies entrust the domestic exercise of coercive control to the police, with the essence of their duty being the legal ability to employ force, even if lethal, to protect citizens and property. Reinka and Leach (2017) opine that it has long been maintained in the social sciences that a disproportionate level of violence directed at disadvantaged ethnic minorities is a sign of systematic racism in a society.

Police-caused homicides are especially troubling in terms of racial and ethnic disadvantage at the hands of police officers because of the seriousness and finality of the action (Holmes et al., 2019). Conflicting claims about the legality of police actions are frequently raised in the wake of police killings of minority citizens. These claims worsen racial and ethnic tensions, cast doubt on the credibility of the police, deplete government funds for settling civil lawsuits, and, in some cases, trigger civil unrest (Holmes et al., 2019). Thus, the police cannot openly use coercive power without attracting public criticism and maybe legal sanctions (Smith & Holmes, 2003).

While not all [officer] wrongdoing is necessarily unlawful (Headley & Blount-Hill, 2021), the public has begun to question if an officer's use of fatal force was justified and whether the officer's actions were affected by the suspect or the officer's characteristics, either consciously or unconsciously (Pica, Sheahan, Pozzulo & Bennell, 2020). Due to the politically frustrating nature

of police brutality claims, political leaders and police officials at the local and national levels often aim to keep police violence off the political agenda (Lawrence, 1996).

In recent high-profile cases involving fatal force, the link between use of force and police legitimacy has been underlined (Terrill, Paoline & Gau, 2016). The use of police force, or the perception that it has been used, even in a few but extensively publicized confrontations, has a terrible effect on the police's overall legitimacy (Marenin, 2016). According to Terrill et al. (2016) these cases show how, even when it is lawful, police use of force may incite outrage from people and communities who think the issue should have been handled differently by the officers. The use of "deadly force" by police is frequently justified as a necessary and required, albeit unfortunate, procedural reaction to a serious threat (Lawrence, 2000). As a result, depending on whether using force is necessary and justified to perform a proper police function, it may be regarded as either suitable or excessive (Smith & Holmes, 2003).

Headley and Blount-Hill (2021) have noted that, police wrongdoing has always been viewed as an individual issue - the "bad apple" problem (p. 5). Public debates occasionally arise when police work comes under scrutiny, but they are usually focused on individual failures (rotten apples), such as claims of law infractions and omissions by police officers, but rarely on systemic issues (rotten barrels) (Pollack & Allern, 2014).

Research has also found that in instances where the police use force, their responses seek to justify and defend their actions (Marenin, 2016). Marenin stated that the police seek impunity by employing excessive legal arguments and technicalities, exaggerating the risks of police work, blaming victims for the force used against them, and widening the legal and professional justifications for fatal force to cover instances in which people are resisting arrest. In the police

department's closed society, where the world is split into us versus them, informal norms do not only support the use of excessive force, but they also dictate that officers stay loyal and keep quiet when a fellow officer uses excessive force (Smith & Holmes, 2003). According to research, organizational rules and training can safely minimize the use of lethal force (Degue et al., 2016). In many circumstances, the use of fatal force reflects both the inherent hazards of policing and the need to reduce immediate threat to the public and police officers (Degue et al., 2016). Many cities indirectly admit officers' wrongdoing by paying huge sums of money in response to civil lawsuits claiming unlawful police killings, even if officers involved are not criminally charged (Holmes et al., 2019).

Considering the frequency of interactions between law enforcement officers and racialized minorities and those who are mentally ill that have the potential to result in the use of force, it is crucial to look at how the media portrays these populations in relation to crime and law enforcement.

1.3. Media reporting of policing and punishment of race and mental illness

1.3.1. Media reporting on race and crime

It has been argued that the media perpetuates the misconception that African Americans or Blacks commit more crimes than Whites (Robinson, 2000). Research has suggested that favourable media portrayals of racial minorities are weak, and the majority of news stories about minorities are about African Americans (Robinson, 2000). Images of racism, crime, and violence frequently appear in crime related news, which could have a more extensive and cumulative effect on public opinion (Peffley, Shields, & Williams, 1996). Mastro (2015) asserts that, the quality of racial/ethnic portrayals in the media has historically been subpar, whether it be in primetime television,

newspapers, TV news, advertising, movies, sports, or videogames. Mastro further argues that, while representation of African Americans in primetime entertainment television have improved over time, this is not the case in print and television news, where they are frequently depicted as aggressive and frightening criminals. According to Dowler (2004b), although there has been conflicting evidence on how racialized minorities are represented in the news media, there is enough evidence to show that race is a significant factor in the presentation of crime news in print and on television newscasts and the media clearly contributes to the creation and perpetuation of stereotypical representations of crime. Entman (1994) argued that for Blacks, network news seems to communicate more stereotyped impressions than for Whites.

Several studies have recently been undertaken to investigate how local news programming portrays persons of colour as criminals (Dixon & Linz, 2000a, 2000b; Entman, 1992). These studies suggest that local news shows in the United States frequently portray Blacks as the principal offenders of criminal behaviour. In a content analysis to examine depictions of Blacks, Latinos, and Whites as lawbreakers and law defenders in local television news programming in Los Angeles and Orange counties, Dixon and Linz (2000a) found that on television news, Black and Latinos were more likely than Whites to be shown as criminals (Dixon & Linz, 2000a, 2000b; Entman, 1992, 1994). They also found that, Blacks and Latinos were more likely to be depicted as culprits than police officers. Whites, on the other hand, were less likely to be depicted as perpetrators than officers (Dixon & Linz, 2000a).

Further, Dixon and Linz (2000b) investigated racial portrayals of victimization in television news coverage in Los Angeles and Orange Counties. They also discovered that Whites are more likely than African Americans and Latinos to be portrayed as victims. According to Dowler (2004b), non-White victims do not receive the same level of coverage as White victims. Similarly, a study

by Dixon, Azocar, and Casas (2003) which analyzed the portrayal of race and criminal behaviour on television network news found that Whites were overrepresented as victims and officers or role models (Chiricos & Eschholz, 2002) while African Americans, on the other hand, were underrepresented in these same roles (Dixon et al., 2003). Conversely, existing evidence suggest that Whites were more likely than African Americans to appear as criminals, victims, and officers, in television news and both African Americans and Whites were more likely to appear as perpetrators than victims and officers which may debunk the notion that crime on television news is presented in terms that disproportionately identify crime with Blacks (Dixon et al., 2003; Chiricos & Eschholz, 2002).

Local news tends to portray Blacks as more dangerous than Whites accused of the same offences in crime reports (Entman, 1994). Research also reveals that Black criminal suspects are more frequently presented on television news in "threatening" contexts than White suspects (Chiricos & Eschholz, 2002). When compared with official records, it was discovered that Whites were overrepresented as police officers and victims on television news, while Blacks were overrepresented as perpetrators (Dixon & Linz, 2000a, 2000b). Dixon and Linz found that, as criminals, victims, and officers, Latinos were underrepresented leading to the conclusion that Whites are more likely to play beneficent crime roles, whereas Blacks and Latinos are either ignored or portrayed negatively on local news broadcasts (Dixon et al., 2003).

Research also suggests that due to a variety of production biases, Black suspects were more likely to be unidentified, appear in handcuffs, be in physical custody, and be less likely to talk for themselves (Peffley et al., 1996). According to Entman's (1992) research, in comparison to White people, African Americans were more likely to have their mug shots displayed on local television news and to be seen in handcuffs.

By providing the viewer with a myriad of examples in which criminals, particularly violent criminals, are more likely to be Black than White, such biased representations or images of minorities in crime-related stories in the news media may create or cause cognitive associations between Blacks and crime (Oliver & Fonash, 2002; Dixon & Linz, 2000a; Dixon et al., 2003). According to Peffley et al. (1996), even a fleeting glimpse of an African American male suspect in a crime story on television could activate racial misconceptions, which strongly clouded Whites' evaluations of the suspect along racial lines. Further, even if crime news is free of racial identifiers, the constant associations of Blacks to criminality in news programming may generate negative feelings toward Black people (Dixon & Linz, 2000a). This frequent association and negative portrayals of Blacks and crime may cause viewers of news programs to conclude that people of colour are criminals or evil doers who need to be controlled (Dixon & Linz, 2000a), call for a harsher response to crime and may even be used to justify covert and overt racism today (Dowler, 2004b). Generally, the way Black people are portrayed on television news may promote the notion that they are a "social threat," leading to their marginalization (Chiricos & Eschholz, 2002).

1.3.2. Media reporting on mental illness and crime

Existing studies have shown that the news media is the most common source of public information regarding mental illnesses (Wahl, 2003; Whitley & Wang, 2017). Portrayals of people with mental illnesses in the news media usually include stigmatizing language and focus on negative aspects such as danger, criminality, and violence (Whitley & Wang, 2017) with dangerousness being by far the most common theme in all newspaper articles on mental illness, both individually and collectively (Wahl, 2003). In a study conducted by Whitley & Berry (2013) almost half of Canadian newspaper articles negatively associated danger, violence, and criminality with mental illness. According to Knifton & Quinn (2008), several studies in the United Kingdom and other

parts of the world have yielded similar findings of negative images and representations in the media suggesting that overall negative reporting patterns are more prevalent with dangerousness being the most common negative category. According to Wahl (2003), even if the articles were not about violence or crime, they tended to focus on dysfunction which coupled with a lack of recovery tales are likely to contribute to popular scepticism about the possibility of recovery.

Further, it has been argued that these negative coverage of mental health issues has the possibility to negatively impact public thinking and legislation (Lewison et al., 2012; Wahl, 2003). The linkage between mental illness and criminality or dangerousness and negative representations may also reinforce stigma, social distance and public fear of people who suffer from mental diseases (Wahl, 2003; Whitley & Wang, 2017; Whitley & Berry, 2013). Thus, media stories, popular media, and a general lack of public information about mental illness contribute to the public's fear of homicides committed by mentally ill persons by stressing that an offender's mental health state may lead to violence (Ahonen, 2019a). According to Whitley & Berry (2013), the lack of the views and experiences of persons who suffer from mental illness as well as professionals in news reporting may represent missed opportunities for media reporting to be balanced and fair and have the capacity to affect public opinion and policy (Wahl, 2003).

While more positive public views toward people with mental illnesses may be promoted by the media, accurate portrayals of mental illness in the media are more often the exception than the rule (Whitley & Berry, 2013). It therefore holds that people with mental illnesses may be perceived as dangerous if the media continually equates them with danger and the public may be more accepting if the media frequently reports that people with mental illnesses can recover (Whitley & Berry, 2013).

1.3.3. Media reporting on Criminal Justice System and its influence

Most of the public's understanding of crime and justice comes from media consumption (Dowler & Zawilski, 2007; Colburn & Melander, 2018; Pollack & Allern, 2014). Considering that most individuals have limited contact with the police, it is possible that the media significantly affects how the public views law enforcement, especially given the dramatic rise in crime-related media over the past three decades (Callanan & Rosenberger, 2011). As a result, how the media portrays victims, offenders, and law enforcement authorities greatly influences how people view them (Dowler & Zawilski, 2007; Callanan & Rosenberger, 2011).

Scholars have argued that there exists a mutually beneficial relationship between the media and the police although it has become an increasingly tensed one (Gest, 2019; Pollack & Allern, 2014). The media relies on the police for timely, accurate crime reports, and the police have a vested interest in maintaining a positive public image (Hall, Critcher, Jefferson, Clarke, & Roberts, 1978; Gest, 2019). In particular, during the initial stages of a police investigation, reports on crime, criminal patterns, and court responses usually rely on information from police personnel, and the frames used are frequently influenced by open or anonymous police sources (Pollack & Allern, 2014). This shows how journalists frequently assume the legitimacy of officials while treating nonofficial players with more caution (Lawrence, 1996). Lawrence further argued that journalists establish routines for reporting police use of force news that safeguard their connections to the organizations they cover. In news reports, police account of alleged instances of brutality typically prevails but later in the legal process, lawyers would usually act as alternative media sources, supported by victims, witnesses, and possibly criminologists and other experts (Pollack & Allern, 2014).

Generally, the focus of news media and their coverage of police activity is mostly limited to reporting on crimes, criminals, and law enforcement, except in instances of police misconduct and brutality (Pollack & Allern, 2014). These situations frequently garner a lot of media attention, which contributes to the 'bad policeman frame' and an unfavourable perception of policing (Pollack & Allern, 2014). Due to the high-profile killings of persons of colour at the hands of law enforcement agents in recent years, policing has gotten a lot of attention. While situations that result in death receive a lot of media attention and scrutiny, they have also generated bigger discussions about systemic racism, police use and abuse of discretion, and the use of force (Headley & Blount-Hill, 2021).

Further, studies have established that the news media may shape the public's understanding of events in different ways (Fridkin, Wintersieck, Courey, & Thompson, 2017). Thus, citizens' perceptions of law enforcement officers are heavily influenced by the media (Dowler, 2002; Dowler & Zawilski, 2007) with the news media likely being the primary source of citizens' perceptions of police legitimacy (Chermak, McGarrell, & Gruenewald, 2006). According to Dowler & Zawilski, (2007) there are both positive and negative images of policing portrayed in the media which has resulted in a twisted relationship between media consumption and public attitudes of law enforcement.

According to the literature, crime-themed reality shows have the most positive portrayals of law enforcement and because police enforcement agencies have almost complete control over what is broadcast to the public, researchers have discovered that these programs frequently portray officers in heroic light and, like television news, inflate the number of arrests they make (Callanan & Rosenberger, 2011; Eschholz, Blackwell, Gertz, & Chiricos, 2002). In a study to examine the influence of crime-related media consumption on individuals' opinions of the police, Callanan &

Rosenberger (2011) found that television news and crime-reality shows dramatically enhanced positive attitudes toward police officers, particularly by instilling trust in law enforcement. The emphasis these shows place on crime scenes, police pursuits, investigations, and arrests may encourage viewers to trust law enforcement's capacity to solve crimes. Conversely, other researchers have argued that the news media typically focus on failed police measures to reduce crime while failing to cover beneficial crime control operations (Chermak et al., 2006). Gest (2019) also argues that the rise of investigative reporting focusing on law enforcement is a major factor in the deterioration of the media's relationship with the police.

In cases of police misconduct, public perception of the officers involved in the case was influenced by media coverage (Chermak et al., 2006). Consequently, the more a citizen read about the case in the newspapers, the more likely he/she was to believe that the officers were guilty (Chermak et al., 2006), leading to a significant drop in people's confidence in the police (Fridkin et al., 2017). Due to the prevalence of police use of force and police-caused homicides in disadvantaged minority neighbourhoods (Holmes et al., 2019), many Black and Hispanic individuals, believe that police officers treat them unfairly, and that police violence is at the root of their grievances (Brunson 2007). A combination of involuntary police interaction and a perception of inadequate treatment during such contacts results in an accumulation of negative experiences that affects minority's perceptions about police (Brunson 2007). In addition, as argued by Brunson (2007), the majority of research on how Black people perceive the police has depended on survey data or government statistics on citizen complaints, and have tended to emphasize discrete, one-time events rather than cumulative evaluations of police contacts. At worst, the police may receive little credit for doing a good job, while an unpleasant encounter might have a significant impact on people's perceptions of their performance and legitimacy (Skogan, 2006). While Black Americans

believe that police use of lethal force and the government's handling of such situations are racially biased, White Americans tend to believe that the police and courts are impartial, and that any racial disparities are attributable to other causes, such as unequal criminal activity (Reinka & Leach, 2017).

1.4. Conclusion

This literature review has highlighted specific areas of inquiry relevant to this research. The literature on race and the criminal justice system demonstrated how racialized individuals are problematized across different aspects of social life. We see how their over policing, overrepresentation in the criminal justice system as well as their portrayal in the media space continue to perpetuate myths of their dangerousness and construct them as evil which further serves to justify their regulation, oppression, and marginalization in society. Thus, some studies have found that race may influence law enforcement interaction with racialized minorities leading to a bias in how they are dealt with in comparison to their White counterparts. In addition, the literature on mental health has given us insights into their increasing contact with law enforcement officials and the criminal justice system. The literature explains their increasing presence in society as resulting from new policies such as deinstitutionalization which moved majority of patients from institutions to be treated within communities. This has been identified as a situation which puts them at risk of arrest especially when most members of society have limited tolerance for them, and the symptoms of their illness could lead to aggressive and offending behaviour which ultimately brings them into contact with the justice system since the police have become the first point of call during crisis involving mental illness.

Given what is known about how racial minorities and those suffering from mental illnesses are treated within the criminal justice system and how these same populations are portrayed in the media, I am interested in answering the question, “Does the media reporting of law enforcement deaths involving race and mental illness produce and relay differing narratives and frames?”

The next chapter discusses the theoretical framework that will be deployed to think through and answer my research question.

Chapter 2: Theoretical Framework

2.1. Introduction

Racialized individuals and those suffering from mental illness have been represented in various ways by the media. From the review of the literature in Chapter 1, we have come to appreciate the relationship that exists between the two categories of individuals - racialized and mentally ill - and the criminal justice system as far as their management in relation to crime is concerned. We have also discussed their representation in the media whether it is in news media reports or the entertainment media. However, this study seeks to explore the narratives and frames that may emerge from news media reporting of law enforcement deaths involving racialized men suffering from mental illness. Concepts like framing, narrative, and news sourcing provides us with a way to understand the perspectives, meanings, and understandings of law enforcement related deaths for different social actors, as well as how news reporting of these deaths may produce conflicting information for the audience. These concepts were chosen because framing scholars argue that (news) frames enable journalists to present news stories to the audience in a way that will help them to understand and make judgements about the event being presented. As part of journalistic practices and routines, journalists seek out sources who will assist them to present the facts of the case or even provide opinions and perspectives with an aim of enabling the public to understand the case being reported on. During the news media's reporting on social issues such as lethal law enforcement brutality, actors, or parties in the case (victim, families, advocates, law enforcement officials, public officials, etc.) may seek to influence the news reports when they get the opportunity to share their opinions or perspectives on the issue. As such, they may present claims and arguments which may influence public opinions in favour of their cause. Consequently, these concepts should be useful in highlighting how through news reports the news media, journalists

and their quoted sources may contribute to defining reality for their audience which may influence how they perceive issues or which truth they accept.

2.2. Framing

The concept of framing allows us to better understand how news coverage of social concerns such as law enforcement brutality, which result in death, can produce contradicting or divergent narratives and frames, which can contribute to community division and preservation of the status quo. Entman (1993) defined framing as, “To frame is to select some aspects of perceived reality and make them more salient in a communicating text, in such a way as to promote a particular problem definition, causal interpretation, moral evaluation, and/or treatment recommendation for the item described” (p. 52). According to Chong and Druckman (2007b), framing works by “making new beliefs available about an issue, making certain available beliefs accessible, or making beliefs applicable or “strong” in people’s evaluations” (p. 111). Frames draw attention to certain details about an object that is the focus of a communication, boosting their “salience” and increasing the likelihood that recipients will perceive the information, identify its significance, process it, and remember it (Entman, 1993). The frame is an offer or stimulant to interpret the news in a particular way so that the recipient can more easily understand a particular definition of an event, the cause and responsibility for a social issue, and a moral assessment of a person (Van Gorp, 2007). Thus, by emphasizing some aspects of reality while hiding others, audiences are potentially caused to react differently (Entman, 1993). When used properly, frames increase our ability to know and comprehend the world (Durham, 1998). Thus, the concept of framing enables me to analyze how the lethal use of force cases chosen for this research were presented to the public. I am also able to understand better how the reporting of the cases by the news media may influence how the audience may perceive and interpret these unfortunate events.

2.3. News media content, Framing and Influencing Public Opinions

How the media frames a message can influence how the subjects or issues in a given story are perceived (Entman, 1992; Iyengar, 1990). For instance, Iyengar (1990) argued that when poverty is defined as a general outcome in the news, the blame is placed on society, but when poverty is defined as an individual case of a poor person, the blame is placed on the individual. Frames can be found in a variety of places throughout the communication process, including in the thoughts of communicators and audiences, media content, and culture (Entman, 1993). Various framing strategies, such as choice of words, metaphors, exemplars, descriptions, and visual representations, manifest the frame in media content (Pan & Kosicki, 1993). According to a constructionist perspective, the power of frames to affect the public stems from their close association with well-known cultural frames (Van Gorp, 2007). According to Edelman (1993), "What we know about the nature of the social world depends upon how we frame and interpret the cues we receive about the world" (p. 231).

Political [and social] issues are essentially determined by news reporting, and because news coverage is invariably expressed in specific frames, the media's influence on public opinion can be substantial (Iyengar, 1990). In a newspaper article or a television news show, frames structure the presentation of facts and opinions (Nelson, Clawson & Oxley, 1997). On the one hand, framing refers to how journalists often shape news information within a recognizable frame of reference and according to some hidden structure of meaning, and on the other, it refers to the public who adopts these frames and views the world in a similar manner to the journalists (Van Gorp, 2007). As a result, framing allows journalists and the public to observe how the same events can make various sorts of sense depending on the frame used (Van Gorp, 2007). The way the media portrays difficult political issues may influence how people think about them (Nelson et al., 1997). Frames

influence opinions by making certain aspects appear more important than others, which in turn gives these concerns more weight in the end (Nelson et al., 1997). It is assumed that in the reporting of law enforcement deaths involving racialized individuals, the news media would use different frames to describe the incidents which could in turn influence the perceptions of the audience about the incident. In effect, framing these law enforcement deaths used in this research with reference to law and order and the need to protect citizens from harm would inspire support for the actions of officers. Conversely, framing these deaths in terms of race and discrimination could lead to meaningful reforms in police interactions with members belonging to the racial minority.

News organizations announce the underlying causes and anticipated repercussions of a problem and provide criteria for evaluating alternative solutions by framing social and political issues in certain ways (Nelson et al., 1997). “The choices journalists make about how to cover a story - from the words, phrases, and images they convey to the broader "angle" they take on a controversy - can result in significantly different portrayals of the same event and the broader controversy it represents” (Nelson et al., 1997, p. 576). While the media may suggest to us how we should think about issues, at the same time, already established meaning structures or schemas influence people's information processing and interpretation (Scheufele, 1999). Individual frames are described as “mentally stored clusters of ideas that guide individuals’ processing of information” (Entman, 1993, p. 53).

Frames can come from both inside and outside the news organization. Because journalists frequently rely on elite sources for quotes, insight, analysis, and information, the media frequently function as channels for persons seeking to spread a certain viewpoint to a larger audience (Nelson et al., 1997). Source cues play an equally essential function in improving framing effects. Frames do not occur in a vacuum in the actual world. Instead, frames are linked to a variety of sources

with varying degrees of trustworthiness (Callaghan & Schnell, 2009). All senders of media messages should be seen as sponsors of frames, whether they are journalists or sources (Gamson, 1989). Accordingly, I think of the journalists who produced the news reports collected for this study, and the sources quoted as sponsoring the frames identified in this research particularly because the messages emanating from each of them contributed to the understanding of the issue under review. While many frames and framing devices are created by elites, news organizations can easily create them on their own to convey the core of a story in a simple manner (Nelson et al., 1997). In the lead and closing, the reporter recommends a storyline; sources cited suggest frames in the soundbites or interviews utilized in the program (Gamson, 1989). “Source credibility alters the priority people assign to various arguments and emphasizes a certain line of interpretation as valid, relevant, salient, and believable” (Callaghan & Schnell, 2009, p. 13). Credible sources greatly enhance the consequences of a frame, whereas spokespersons with a perceived bias tend to undermine the frame's arguments and effectiveness (Callaghan & Schnell, 2009). As a result, a source's credibility reflects both the source's knowledge about the topic and the communicator's trustworthiness, that is, the extent to which a source has 'right' information and the extent to which he or she is willing to express that perspective without bias (Callaghan & Schnell, 2009). Furthermore, to establish an impression of objectivity and enhance a story's believability, journalistic rules of fairness and balance necessitate source-oriented reporting (Callaghan & Schnell, 2009). In some circumstances, a particular frame may support the interests of the source's client, assisting it in furthering its projects or neutralizing its adversaries (Gamson, 1989). Depending on how an issue is framed, and who presents the message, social issues may receive public support (Callaghan & Schnell, 2009). Thus, “an issue frame can change what citizens think about an issue and their policy support” (Callaghan & Schnell, 2009, p. 13). Support

for a social policy issue, on the other hand, is contingent not only on how the issue is framed, but also on the source associated with it (Callaghan & Schnell, 2009).

Individual perceptions and opinions on an issue are shaped by frames, which emphasize specific components of the larger debate, reducing a typically complicated problem to one or two major points (Nelson et al., 1997). In political contexts, people may not be exposed to just one frame of an issue or problem; rather, they are usually exposed to opposing frames (Chong & Druckman, 2007b). When citizens are presented with opposing viewpoints on an issue, it is suggested that they will choose the option that is most compatible with their values or ideals (Chong & Druckman, 2007b). Thus, in the reporting of deaths resulting from law enforcement brutality, the way news agencies and their journalists present the issue to the public, and their selection of sources and quotes may influence public opinions depending on how credible these sources are perceived to be.

2.4. Journalistic routines, news sources and news frames

The primary goal of journalism is to inform. Journalists must do so by scouring the internet for the most up-to-date and trustworthy material to share with the public. Journalists can usually get this information through eyewitnesses to the events they are covering, in the event that they were not present to witness the event by themselves, as well as doing independent searches and gathering data from a variety of sources (Dimitrova & Strömbäck, 2009). The use of sources which is one of the various ways in which journalists' texts constructs news, plays an important role in structuring the news content (Harp, Loke and Bachmann, 2010).

News framing is the journalistic practice of selecting certain facts, events, or sources over others to support a particular view and explanation (Pan & Kosicki, 1993). The design of news frames

and the choice of news sources are intricately intertwined (Kim & Jahng, 2016). According to Entman (2007), political actors shape the text that defines how people think about specific themes through framing. If this is the case, then understanding how frames are constructed demands that we know and acknowledge those "whose" voices and viewpoints are represented in the presentation of such frames and those whose voices are kept out.

Hence, the use of sources cannot be avoided in modern day journalism. Taking a quick glance at most news reports will almost always uncover a quotation or paraphrasing attributed to a news source. Gans (2004) defined sources as "the actors whom journalists observe or interview, including interviewees who appear on the air or who are quoted in ... articles, and those who only supply background information or story suggestions" (p. 80). According to Dimitrova & Strömbäck (2009), sources may hold more authority during the news finding and news gathering phases, but journalists may have a bigger influence on news substance. Journalists, in the end, are the ones who chose their sources, considering the socio-political and organizational context. As a result, journalists typically have complete discretion over how their pieces are written. Understanding the relationship that exists between journalists, sources and news frames is therefore important in this study because it helps to analyze who gets to speak, at what time, and the meaning that these sources may be trying to send across and how this may impact the way the audience perceives and interprets the story.

"Journalists see people mainly as potential sources, but sources see themselves as people with a chance to provide information that promotes their interests, to publicize their ideas, or in some cases, just to get their names and faces into the news" (Gans, 2004, p. 117). One of the facts on which journalists rely in order to publish the material in a certain style in order to promote their point of view is the news source (Kim & Jahng, 2016). When sources are quoted in news reports,

they paint the event they are talking about in a certain light, encouraging the recipient to notice the issue's relevance through the source's perspective. Thus, in the news stories sampled for use in this study, quoted sources offered different explanations and perspectives about the events and advanced their arguments from a specific standpoint while mostly taking sides. When journalists employ such sources, they organize news stories in a way that emphasizes the perspectives taken by these sources (Reese, 2007). The deceit inherent in journalists' use of sources as ostensibly independent and expert commentators allows the journalist to appear as a simple messenger for others' perspectives while also advocating a certain position through speaker and quote selection (Ross, 2007). Reporters do not have to be concerned about validity or trustworthiness when they can directly credit material to a source, as it is assumed that once a story is "sourced," the audience will be the ones to judge whether the source is reliable (Gans, 2004). The notion that journalists select news sources who fit and helps to advance the journalist's own point of view may also be beneficial in understanding how through discretionary selection and use of sources, a journalist indirectly or directly frames a news story around using the perspectives and arguments of their source. Thus, I assume it is safe to say that journalists do not arbitrarily choose news sources for their stories but rather make a conscious effort to select those who may contribute to advancing certain frames that they may wish to include in their stories.

Further, in journalistic norms, maintaining journalistic integrity is critical for journalists and their articles to avoid being criticized and distrusted (Gans, 2004). It is therefore important to provide different opinions on themes or subjects that are of interest to different groups of audiences when reporting on topics that are of interest to these audiences. Citing sources or offering quotations from eyewitnesses to the occurrence may help to present conflicting viewpoints and might also be seen as a way of confirming the news narrative (Dimitrova & Strömbäck, 2009). Journalists hold

the ability to publish contradicting statements in order to claim that both sides of the story have been represented (Dimitrova & Strömbäck, 2009). More crucially, given the wide range of sources and opinions on which journalists must rely when generating news, journalistic impartiality becomes essential. Because story selectors are unable to include all points of view and sources, their decisions to include or omit must be made without regard for political considerations in order to be trustworthy (Gans, 2004). During the construction of the news, journalists have been found to utilize official sources the most (Gans, 2004). “Sources with less power can normally gain access only with an unusually dramatic story; on the other hand, as power decreases, so does the ability to bar access” (Gans, 2004, p. 121). Although there may be a negative association between official sources and ordinary citizens and grassroots organizations, news coverage may contain both official and nonofficial sources (Dimitrova & Strömbäck, 2009). One type of source that is frequently used in news reports is academic experts. Using academic sources to back up a news report provides credibility to the story (Dimitrova & Strömbäck, 2009). Who gets representation or is given a voice in the news reflects who is influential in society and whose opinions are genuine or trustworthy (Ross, 2007). In my study, these analytical tools allow me to pay attention to how journalists report on lethal law enforcement deaths, how they frame their stories for their audience, the sources they obtain information from or quote, and how these sources may promote their interests and influence the news frames.

Some of the existing studies have used framing theory in the news media’s coverage of a variety of issues and events including the coverage of sex trafficking (Johnston, Friedman & Shafer, 2014); the representation of race (Caliendo & Mellwain, 2006); coverage of fatal motor vehicle crashes (Connor & Wesolowski, 2004); domestic violence fatalities (Bullock, 2007; Gillespie, Richards, Givens, & Smith, 2013); coverage of deaths of people of colour at the hands of law

enforcement (Koepke, Thomas, & Manning, 2019); the coverage of civil liberties conflict (Nelson et al., 1997); and the portrayal of mental illness (Sieff, 2003). Koepke et al.'s (2019) study revealed that local media coverage of these deaths differs significantly from national media coverage of the same stories, particularly because they use different terminology and concepts to describe and characterize incidents involving the deaths of unarmed people of colour and the ensuing legal proceedings. Their analysis further suggested that compared to national publications, local newspapers tend to focus more on the victim's death and less about the shooting itself. These findings show that different audiences may interpret these events differently due, at least in part, to the different coverage. In addition, Spratt, Bullock, Baldasty, Clark, Halavais, McCluskey & Schrenk's (2007) study of a key event sparking the civil rights movement - the 1955 murder of Emmett Till, found that the African American Chicago Defender covered the Till case more extensively than the three mainstream daily newspapers (the Grenada Sentinel-Star, Greenwood Commonwealth, and Chicago Tribune), providing signals about the story's gravity and possibly increasing awareness. Furthermore, the Defender presented news in the Till case in a totally different light than the mainstream media. While the African American Defender defended Till's reputation, addressed bigger civil rights issues, and argued for social reform, the three mainstream daily papers represented the case as one where the victim invited his own death and offered little or no support for reform. Spratt et al. (2007) argued that the contrasting views were a result of different news gathering and production processes of the newspapers. Also, Entman's (1991) study of the KAL and Iran air incidents found that, in the first, the frame stressed the perpetrator nation's moral bankruptcy and guilt while in the second, the frame de-emphasized guilt and stressed the complex challenges of running high military technology.

Different approaches have been used to identify and analyze media frames. According to research, the communication literature has explored a wide range of media framing devices (D'Angelo, 2002). Several framing researchers such as Pan and Kosicki (1993) have focused their analysis on news texts, scripts, syntactical, thematic, and rhetorical structures. Entman's (1991) study incorporated size (or how an event is prominently displayed in the news), which he argued is critical for the texts in the production of frames. Given the extensive usage of the concept of framing in mass media research, I believe that following how this concept has been used in understanding several issues and events in other studies, this concept will allow me to understand better how journalistic practices, conventions and their choice or use of sources help produce conflicting themes or frames in news stories and what these may mean for the news audience.

Although it is not the focus of this study, it is important to recognize the role that other factors in and outside the newsroom may play in influencing journalistic routines and practices, and thus the content of the news they produce. The work of journalists and the way news is produced are influenced by political, economic, and social considerations (Guyot, 2008) as well as other considerations including those that are organizational and procedural (Peruško, Čuvalo & Vozab, 2020). Elites in business and politics routinely collaborate (Peruško, Čuvalo, & Vozab, 2020) and their association may promote trade interests that are often negotiated in the political sphere and may have an impact on the news organization and its journalists (Hanitzsch, Anikina, Berganza, Cangoz, Coman, Hamada, Hanusch, Karadjov, Mellado, Moreira, Mwesige, Plaisance, Reich, Seethaler, Skewes, Noor, & Yuen, 2010). Thus, when journalists are required to report on controversial or sensitive topics, ownership structures and market forces influence the content of the news (Guyot, 2008). There have been suggestions that media owners' political affiliations do influence the media's political stance, which frequently raises concerns about the possible impact

that media owners who are politicians, political supporters, or holders of public office may have on the newsroom and the public at large (Ekayanti and Xiaoming, 2018). Once more, the type of setting or neighbourhood in which a media outlet operates has an impact on the news it generates because the news media is a part of the community and its marketplace. Consequently, the culture and economy of the neighbourhood have an impact on the news media's operations (Shoemaker & Reese, 1996). It is possible that the way the incidents examined in this study were reported, the angles they took, and the frames that were used and even whether or not they were biased could have been influenced by the news outlets' politics, media ownership as well as economic and market influences.

In the next section, I turn to the concept of narrative to understand the nature of arguments that arise from controversial issues such as lethal law enforcement brutality and how they are used by actors to the case or interested parties to make meaning of the event.

2.5. The Concept of Narrative

Narratives are essential to the human sense-making process (Squire, 2012). People can make sense of their experiences and identity by using narratives to tell stories (Shen, Ahern & Baker, 2014). According to Riessman (2008) telling stories accomplishes a number of objectives because narratives are strategic, practical, and purposeful. They help people remember, argue, justify, persuade, engage, entertain, and even mislead others. In times of transition or crisis, telling stories is one way of producing and conveying meaning and making sense of events or potentially disturbing phenomena (Sandberg & Tollefsen, 2010; Polletta, 1998) but they also comprise relatively broad and covert messages about future objectives, perceived interests, and action concerning the event under review (Coticchia, & De Simone, 2016). According to Riessman,

(2008), narratives can also inspire others to act in support of progressive change. When working with narratives, events that the speaker considers important are chosen, organized, connected, and judged as meaningful for a specific audience. In a typical narrative, there is a plot, which is "the ordering of the incidents," and this plot is enacted by characters (Riessman, 2008, p. 4).

Bamberg (2012) argues that the goal of narratives is to attempt to normalize or explain events; they also provide explanations for why events have taken place in the manner they have. The sequence of events and the parts which make up these stories and how they are presented help us understand the bigger story more clearly, so they must be viewed in the context of the whole. According to Earthy & Cronin (2008), a narrative's content may include both surface content and underlying or latent content. The former explains what happened, who was present, and how various parties reacted whereas the latter explains the participants' motivations or intentions, what certain items mean for narrators or others, and what the story means and how important it is to the narrator. In terms of narrative form, the focus may be on the structure of the plot, the order of the events, and the language used (Earthy & Cronin, 2008). The use of narratives in this study may thus enable me to understand what actors believe happened and why things happened the way they did, allowing me to gain a broader understanding of these unfortunate incidents.

A narrative is a text in which two (or more) events are depicted as temporally ordered and meaningfully connected, with various types of meaningful relationships between the events (Köppe, 2014). Narratives can be filmed and watched, read, and written, or told and heard (Habermas & Diel, 2010). A depiction of events is a narrative if each event's inclusion and the manner it is depicted can be justified by their contribution to the explanation or evaluation of the final event, or to both the explanation and evaluation of the last event (Barwell, 2009). A narrative may also be a kind of narration or storytelling, the result of such an act, and sometimes the order

of events depicted by such an act (Barwell, 2009). When delivering a story about what happened, it is important to emphasize both how it happened and why it is noteworthy. It is also important that the distinct understanding that narratives convey of the events they describe in order to comprehend narratives is recognized (Barwell, 2009). The understanding of narratives as stories told by people to construct meaning and make sense of difficult events resonates with how the actors in this research provided explanations of the incidents from their own point of view and what that contributes to the broad understanding of the two incidents involving civilians and law enforcement officials that resulted in their deaths. Understanding the narratives that emerged from the news will enable me to better understand how the different actors - official and nonofficial - in these cases of law enforcement brutality construct events in order to convey a certain level of explanation and the covert or overt messages and interests that these narratives may contain and its likely implications.

In the existing literature, narratives have been used by researchers in the domain of disability studies (Smith & Sparkes, 2008); organisations and public administration (Feldman, Sköldbberg, Brown & Horner, 2004); public disputes and controversies (Lejano & Leong, 2012) and the domain of aging studies (Phoenix, Smith, & Sparkes, 2009). According to Lejano and Leong (2012), "It is possible that no one source, whether a respondent or a text, ever gives us a complete narrative in toto or that the source provides only one particular account of a larger narrative, and it is the analyst's role to assemble the different aspects of the issue in a coherent way" (p. 795). I believe that the concept of narrative will allow me to identify and understand the various conflicting conversations and arguments that spring forth when critical issues like police brutality arises. Existing studies of narratives point to the difficulty in establishing a clear definition of narrative. For the sake of this research, the term narrative is used to refer to the comments,

discourses, arguments, and perspectives which surround the law enforcement brutality cases in this research. These discourses are often sponsored by victims' family, friends, and sympathizers on one hand, and official or state sources on the other. The validity of these narratives is not examined in this paper. Instead, I seek to present the opposing arguments and conversations of different actors in these tragic events. Thus, following what Lejano & Leong (2012) described as "primary narrative" I represent the commentary, perspectives, and interpretation of the events by the various actors involved using the immediate text from the news articles which will provide an initial interpretation of how various actors perceived the events.

2.6. Conclusion

The conceptual underpinnings that guide this research and analysis were presented in this chapter. My thesis seeks to examine the frames and narratives that the news media's reporting of law enforcement deaths involving racialized men suffering from mental health illness may produce and how this may have an overall impact on the audience. Framing theory enables me to understand how journalists and their selected sources contribute to framing the law enforcement death cases used for this research and how their perspectives and focus of parts of the story and not others frame the events in certain ways while ignoring others.

The routine journalistic practices of using news sources, as well as the relationship that exists between journalists and their sources, are critical to the process of producing the news (Kitzinger, 1999). Professional journalists may have to make decisions about how to balance the news, including how to include messages from competing camps as well as which messages are important or worth conveying (Hänggli, 2020). Thus, journalists are responsible for providing accurate information in their news stories that is free of partisanship or special interests (Hänggli,

2020). Because news sources are so important in the media production process (see Lecheler & Kruikemeier, 2016; Gans, 2004), I concentrated on the journalistic routine practice of sourcing (rather than other journalistic practices) in order to understand and analyze how journalists included viewpoints of opposing sides in this study, which has implications for a balanced or biased reporting and whose viewpoints were worth conveying.

In an effort to appear to be credible and to be seen as balancing the news, journalists give voice and representation to different actors and parties involved in controversial events to put across their opinions, perspectives, and explanations. As suggested by the framing scholarship explored in this chapter, I believe giving voice and representation to these individuals in the news stories to a large extent mean that they are credible and perhaps hold valuable views on the subject under contention.

The concept of narratives is beneficial to this research because it offers me an opportunity to understand the different narratives told by interested parties trying to explain and make sense of such tragic law enforcement death events and their implication for understanding the genesis of the fatal interactions between law enforcement officers and the victims. It is important also because it shows how in such unfortunate cases, interested parties try to create a narrative that put them in a favourable light while blaming and demonizing their opponents.

The next chapter will provide an overview of the methodological approaches considered in this research.

Chapter 3: Methodological Considerations

3.1. Introduction

To understand the nature of media reporting on the deaths of racialized men with mental illness at the hands of law enforcement, I conducted an analysis of news reports of two cases of civilian deaths resulting from law enforcement interactions in Ontario. This chapter considers the approaches to data collection and analysis used in this research. This research, which is qualitative, focuses on news media reporting of law enforcement deaths involving racialized individuals who suffer from mental illness. Hence the following chapter begins by establishing my research questions and goal followed by a discussion of the epistemological and ontological assumptions of this research. This is followed by a presentation of the two cases of law enforcement deaths selected for this research. Next is a discussion of the data collection procedures used. I also discuss the data analysis and explain the rationale for the use of thematic analysis method. Finally, I outline the limitations of this research and I discuss the issue of ethics.

3.2. Research goal and questions

The goal of this research is to understand the frames and narratives that may be produced through the media reporting of law enforcement deaths involving racialized men suffering from mental illness. I am interested in answering the research question, “How does the media reporting of law enforcement deaths involving race and mental illness produce and relay differing narratives and frames?” To answer my research question, I must also answer the following sub questions to enable me to understand the nature of such media reporting.

1. What are the narratives present in the news coverage of law enforcement deaths?

2. How are deaths caused by law enforcement use of force conceptualized and understood by actors and stakeholders?
3. How do the perspectives of quoted news sources contribute to the framing of events in the news reports?

To answer these questions, I draw on concepts of framing, narratives, journalistic routines/practices, and news sources which are already discussed in the previous chapter.

3.3. Ontology and Epistemology

I situate this qualitative study within a constructivist paradigm, which has also been referred to as “interpretivism” by Glesne (2010). This paradigm asserts that there is no material world that exists independently of the knower’s interpretation but rather, the social world is socially constructed and interpreted by the realities of social actors (Glesne, 2010; Guba & Lincoln, 2003). In line with these assertions, this thesis aims to understand the narratives and frames which are often produced during news media reporting of law enforcement deaths involving racialized men with mental health illness.

This study adopts a subjectivist epistemological approach in line with the constructivist paradigm, which argues that knowledge is produced as the research proceeds through the interactive relationship between researcher and the object of investigation (Guba & Lincoln, 2003). As such I acknowledge that my position as a researcher and the status of the online news articles, will influence the knowledge produced from this research. This also means that I am describing the perspectives, realities, and experiences of the authors of the news articles and their information sources (Guba & Lincoln, 2003). As such, previously held assumptions that media reporting on controversial issues are fair and objective may give way to newer constructions which suggest that

a lack of critical reporting may only lead to polarization of community and sustain the status quo. These reconstructions could facilitate change when society acts on them (Guba & Lincoln, 2003).

3.4. Presentation and justification of cases

Two cases of law enforcement deaths were chosen for this research. In both cases, the victims were racialized men who also suffered from mental illness. These cases which occurred in 2016 in Ontario generated a huge public outcry and sparked protests in parts of Canada with people calling for accountability and justice for the victims involved. Interestingly however, no one had been held accountable for these deaths as of the time of writing this thesis. In Abdirahman's case, one of the two officers involved was charged by the Special Investigations Unit, but he was acquitted of all charges when the case went to trial. However, in Soleiman's case, none of the about 20-30 correctional officers involved was charged after two separate investigations by the Kawartha Lakes Police Service and the Ontario Provincial Police. The following section presents briefly the two cases.

Case A: *Abdirahman Abdi*

In July 2016, Ottawa police officers arrested Abdirahman Abdi in a brutal manner in the neighbourhood of Hintonburg. He died in hospital the next day. Alleged to have been involved in an incident of groping at a nearby coffee shop and the police having received multiple calls reporting the incident, Abdirahman was outside the Bridgehead café when a police officer arrived to effect his arrest. Abdirahman did not comply with the officer's demands and turned to run across the street towards his apartment. The officer chased him, kicked him in the back of his knee, and used a baton and pepper spray on him all in an attempt to get him under control. He had physical force used on him until he was physically taken down and handcuffed about 270 meters away on

the steps of his home after a second officer showed up to the scene. Abdirahman became unresponsive from the beating of the officers and was taken to the hospital after paramedics arrived some 15 minutes after he lost vitals and began CPR. He died the next day.

Abdirahman was a Somali Canadian man who suffered from mental illness but lived in harmony with his neighbours according to reports. He had no criminal record and was unarmed at the time of the altercation with police. The force used on Abdirahman was justified by the Ottawa police Chief and association president who accused him of being “assaultive”. The second officer to arrive at the scene was charged with manslaughter, assault, and assault with a weapon after an SIU investigation. Later in the trial, Abdirahman’s death was linked to his preexisting conditions including clogged arteries which made his cardiac arrest and death pending and inevitable. In October 2020, the police officer was acquitted of all charges.

Case B: Soleiman Faqiri

In December 2016, Soleiman Faqiri was beaten to death by about 20-30 correctional officers of the Central East Correctional Centre in Lindsay, Ontario. He was alleged to have refused to go into his segregation cell after throwing bottles and water at officers while in the shower earlier. Soleiman did not have a criminal record but had been taken into custody several times under Ontario’s Mental Health Act. This time around, he had been taken into custody for allegedly threatening and assaulting a neighbour. At some point during the altercation, guards placed a spit hood over his head, with his hands at his back as they repeatedly hit, kicked, punched, and stomped on him. A guard also pressed his knee on the back of Soleiman’s neck in the process. At some point he became unresponsive and was dead. His death came three days before his transfer to a mental health facility for assessment as ordered by a judge.

No one was charged with his death despite a coroner's report listing several injuries (more than 50) in relation to the struggle. The coroner's report indicated that none of these injuries were a sufficient cause of death. It however did not rule out asphyxiation or an irregular heartbeat as possible causes of death. The arrhythmia, the report states, could have been triggered by the combination of a physical struggle, emotional agitation, pain, and the presence of an antipsychotic medication called olanzapine in his system" (White, 2017, p. A. 1). Two police investigations, first by the Kawartha Lakes Police Service and the second by the Ontario Provincial Police failed to lay criminal charges against any of the officers involved in the fatal altercation as they found no probable grounds to lay charges. His family have been fighting for accountability since 2016 and demanding to know what killed him.

Despite the lack of comprehensive statistics on mental illness, available evidence suggests that people with mental illnesses are overrepresented among those killed during civilian-police interactions (Saleh et al., 2018). As a result, the selection of these cases is beneficial in understanding the features of these situations and how they are portrayed in the media.

Both Abdirahman and Soleiman's cases reveal similar patterns of injustices, brutality, and justification of officers' actions in lethal use of force cases. The cases also exemplify the patterns of discrimination and excessive use of force that racialized individuals and those suffering from mental illness continue to face across Canada and elsewhere. Regarding mental illness, these cases reflect broader issues of officers' lack of mental illness training and the lack of appropriate response in dealing with those suffering with mental illness in our community.

3.5. Data Collection

For this study, a purposive sampling technique was employed to gather news articles. To achieve my research objective, I used both online news articles and online versions of newspaper articles about the two cases. The purposive sampling technique is appropriate in this research because it allows the researcher to identify and select information-rich news articles well suited for the study. As a type of non-probability sampling technique, the units of analysis selected to be investigated are based on the researcher's judgements (Neuendorf, 2002; Laerd dissertation., n.d.). The term purposive sampling refers to a group of sampling strategies whose underlying principle is to select best cases rich with information which will assist the researcher to answer the research question (Schreier, 2018; Creswell, 2009). The meaning of what kind of information is rich will be dependent on the aims of the research the researcher is embarking on. It may be assumed that the researcher dealing with documents has a particular argument in mind and then carefully selects documents that can help present that argument (Rapley & Rees, 2018). Since it is a non-probability sampling technique, the sample being studied will not be representative of the population (Laerd dissertation, n.d.).

For this study, online news articles published by Canadian media organizations about the deaths of Abdirahman and Soleiman between 2016 and 2020 were sampled. To begin, a search was conducted via the University of Ottawa's Canadian major dailies database as well as via keyword searching in the Google search engine for news stories on the deaths of Abdirahman Abdi and Soleiman Faqiri. The plan was to examine only online versions of newspaper articles that had been published by the Ottawa citizen concerning these deaths. I realized that I could not gather enough articles from only the Ottawa citizen and so I included a search of the cases in Google's search engine. For Abdirahman's case, only articles published between July 25th, 2016, and October 21st,

2020, were considered. Similarly, for Soleiman, only articles published between December 21st, 2016, to December 14th, 2020, were considered. The time frame chosen was to allow me to be able to build a sample which covered several stages of the cases particularly as the criminal trial of the police officer in Abdirahman's case only ended in 2020 and Soleiman's case, which has not seen any charges yet, has yet to reach a conclusion. Thus, I chose not to select articles that went beyond the year 2020.

Secondly, only Canadian online news articles were examined. Although some news organizations in the USA reported on the deaths, only Canadian articles were specifically examined. These articles came from both local (e.g., Ottawa Citizen, Toronto Star, Calgary Herald) and national sources (e.g., CBC news, The Globe and Mail, Global news, National post, and CTV news). Finally, only news articles written by an author identified as a journalist/staff of the publishing news organization were considered for this analysis. This means that opinion pieces and letters to the editor which allow the public to share their views on social issues in the news were excluded. Thus, the focus was on news articles which primarily provide information or seek to present facts (and not the journalist's own views) about a given topic in the news as compared to opinion pieces and letters to the editor which may have a broad and explicit agenda to project the adopted stance of the writer and seek to persuade the audience to adopt a specific position in relation to the topic under discussion. Newspaper editorials are written expressions of a newspaper's stated position (Afzal & Harun, 2020) and differ from other news discourse in that they are expected to offer assessments and commentary on the news events that have already been covered by the newspapers (Bonyadi & Samuel, 2013). Opinion pieces are purely subjective and are not intended to be objective or impartial like "hard news" because they frequently reflect the opinions of a person who works for the newspaper or another affiliated news organization (Greenberg, 2000). These

pieces' subjectivity makes them likely to be biased and support one side in a dispute over the other. Also, letters to the editor offer a platform for the general public to interact and express their views on crucial issues. This might represent how the general public feels about a controversial topic (McCluskey & Hmielowski, 2012). Again, McCluskey and Hmielowski (2012) opine that opinions expressed in letters to the editor may also affect the news's coverage. As a result, these letters have the potential to be very biased.

Ultimately, 72 articles were collected for this study. Those that could be saved into a pdf format were saved and basic descriptions such as the article's title, date of publication, author, URL link, were captured in a Microsoft excel document and grouped according to case. A list of newspapers accessed for this study may be found in Appendix A.

Data type	Case A (n)	Case B (n)	Total (n)
Online news articles	21	17	38
Online versions of print newspaper articles	22	12	34
Total (n)	43	29	72

Table 3.1. Summary of data collected

Data Source	Case A	Case B	Total (n)
The Ottawa Citizen	25	0	25
CBC news	11	13	24
Toronto star	0	10	10
The Globe and Mail	1	2	3
CTV news	1	0	1
National post	3	0	3
Calgary herald	1	0	1
Global news	1	4	5

Total (n)	43	29	72
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Table 3.2. Summary of data sources

3.6. Data Analysis

3.6.1. Qualitative Research

I have adopted a qualitative methodology because it provides the best way to understand the frames and narratives that may emerge from media coverage of law enforcement deaths involving racialized men suffering from mental illness. As a method of analysis, qualitative research seeks to give a comprehensive and in-depth account of the topic being investigated (Vaismoradi, Jones, Turunen, & Snelgrove, 2016). In qualitative research, the idea of meaning is crucial (Ezzy, 2002; Jensen, 2002), and media are frequently seen as means of representation or as carriers of meaning (Jensen, 2002). Unlike quantitative research, it has been argued that what can be discovered about the interpretations that participants make of events is limited by quantitative description (Sandelowski, 2000).

While qualitative research requires a thick description of the data as well as a high level of rigour, it also allows the researcher and the participants to be subjective (Ezzy, 2002). Ezzy (2002) argued that qualitative researchers are encouraged “to be skeptical of quality of common sense and quantitative understandings of social life” (p.54). As a qualitative researcher, I believe that the media's coverage of these events should not be quantifiable or about numbers. Rather, I think that in order to comprehend social reality, the media's reporting of these events needs to be subjectively assessed by the researcher in the framework of existing social and historical knowledge. As a result, I am able to explain what occurs when law enforcement-related killings are covered by the news media as a whole, as well as what that means for the actors and the news audience, using this approach. I am also better able to understand the meaning of the news texts on use of force cases.

3.6.2. Thematic Analysis

This research employs a thematic analysis approach (Braun & Clarke, 2006) to examine the proposed research question(s). Qualitative research calls for understanding and collecting data from a variety of sources (Alhojailan, 2012). The ability to do a thematic analysis allows the researcher to have a deeper understanding of any problem. Thus, thematic analysis is thought to be the best method for any study that attempts to uncover through interpretations (Alhojailan, 2012). Braun and Clarke argue that this method of analysis is an accessible and flexible method (Braun & Clarke, 2012) used “for identifying, analyzing, and reporting patterns (themes) within data” (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 79). They argue that the accessibility and flexibility of this method lies in the fact that new and inexperienced qualitative researchers can follow their proposed guidelines of doing thematic analysis without any difficulty as well as conduct the analysis in a variety of ways using different theoretical and epistemological approaches, respectively (Braun & Clarke, 2006, 2012).

Thematic analysis can report experiences, meanings, and reality of participants as well as probe the various ways in which events, realities, meanings, experiences are the result of a variety of discourses occurring within society (Braun & Clarke, 2006) for instance as indicated by news media reporting. Thus, a thematic analysis method can both reflect reality and help to unpack or unravel the surface of ‘reality’.

Two main terms are central to understanding how this method of analysis is employed. These are a “code” and a “theme”. First, a code identifies a feature of the data, be it semantic content or latent, that appears interesting to the analyst (Braun & Clarke, 2006). “Codes identify and provide a label for a feature of the data that is potentially relevant to the research question” (Braun &

Clarke, 2012, p. 61). A code can be manifest in that it can describe a statement said by a participant (e.g., news source) or written by an author (e.g., journalist) or go beyond the meanings of the participants and provide an understanding of the data content. Secondly, a theme “captures something important about the data in relation to the research question, and represents some level of patterned response or meaning within the data set” (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 82). As such constructing a theme is an active process, putting similar codes together to form broad topics or concepts which will contribute to answering the research question(s).

Braun & Clarke’s (2006) thematic analysis involves a six-phase approach. The following points illustrate how I employed these guidelines in this research.

Phase 1: Familiarizing yourself with your data

In the first phase, I read all 72 articles several times to understand them very well. This familiarization of the sample led to the identification of aspects of interest which had the potential to address the research question(s). I did not simply read the articles but read them thoroughly to make sense of the individual articles as well as together as a collective. Here, I identified segments of the data that were relevant to this study and took some notes which would later guide the analysis.

Phase 2: Generating initial codes

In the second phase, I re-read the articles and generated initial codes. Every potential piece of data that seemed relevant to my research goal was coded line-by-line. I looked through the data to identify concepts, themes, and arguments that were prominent in cases of law enforcement deaths involving racialized men who also suffered from mental illness. These codes consisted of any

words or phrases that provided knowledge or made a claim about the topic under study. Like Braun and Clarke (2006) advised, I coded for a lot of potential patterns as found in the text. This was to ensure that I included all potential codes which may be useful in the analysis. During this coding process, I engaged back and forth with the data, modifying existing codes and renaming codes where necessary.

Phase 3: *Searching for themes*

In the third phase, I began to put codes together, to form broader categories or themes. These codes were constructed and did not simply “emerge” from the data. Similar codes were combined to form themes. As argued by Braun and Clarke (2006), the generation of themes is more of a subjective process which involves the researcher making critical and conscious choices. Themes derived from the data were identified inductively as compared to a deductive approach to theme identification. I ended this phase with a collation of all data extracts applicable to each theme as advised by Braun and Clarke (2012). Journalists’ texts and explanations, claims and arguments by sources and actors in the cases were focused on and made the unit of analysis. I aggregated claims or perspectives of the actors involved to identify the common themes or threads within them. For example, I gathered all the quotes or statements attributed to the families of the victims in order to identify the basic arguments or claims. The themes identified include:

a) “Law enforcement use of force and brutality”

Describes the actions of law enforcement agents during the arrest or detention of suspects/offenders. The techniques and strategies used to win compliance or protect themselves and others from danger are highlighted. Officers' approaches and training are assessed when it appears that they were not the greatest during the time they were used.

b) “Injustice”

This theme captures the feelings of injustice, lack of accountability and denial of wrongdoing that characterized the incidents. Family members of victims, friends and advocates emphasized the lack of accountability and justice. They bemoaned the lack of transparency and the lack of answers to their questions and why officers involved were not being held accountable.

c) “Inadequate response to mental illness”

This discusses the treatment of the mentally ill in our society. It outlines the lack of support systems and resources to deal with this vulnerable population. It also shows a lack of compassion on the part of the public as well as law enforcement officers when dealing with people who are obviously not in control of their actions and behaviors.

d) “Inadequate law enforcement training”

This focuses on the training officers receive to handle difficult situations in the course of their duties. Questions of whether law enforcement officers receive proper or adequate training and whether they even follow their training arise. It discusses issues related to de-escalation of the situation to ensure safety of suspects especially when suspects display abnormal behavior or resist arrest as officers usually say.

e) “Systemic problems in law enforcement-civilian interactions”

This outlined concerns about a systemic problem where law enforcement officers act with impunity during interactions with civilians, especially, non whites and Blacks. There is also the concern of how those with mental illness are treated during their interactions with officers and their general treatment within the criminal justice system. The continuous abuse and discrimination by law enforcement officers and a refusal to hold officers accountable were deemed major concerns.

f) “Racial discrimination in law enforcement”

This questions the role the race of the victims could have played in these fatal incidents and in the subsequent fight for justice. People express their doubts that things would have been this awful if the victims had been White.

Phase 4: Reviewing themes

During this phase, created themes were reviewed to be sure they all fitted together meaningfully and worked in relation to the data (Braun & Clarke, 2012). In cases where the extracted data did not appear clear, they were assigned under a different theme or entirely discarded. This is in line with Braun and Clarke’s (2006) argument that “there should be clear and identifiable distinctions between themes” (p. 91).

Phase 5: Defining and naming Themes

For this phase, each theme was defined and named. Braun and Clarke (2006) advised that these definitions and names should be clear, concise and identify the “essence of what the theme is about” (p. 92). This includes identifying what the themes are and what they are not about in relation to other themes. These themes should address the research question and as such should be seen to be linked to the original purpose of the research.

Phase 6: Producing the report

This final phase involves producing the report. It involves the analysis which says something about the overall data and makes an argument in relation to the research questions and the existing literature. Only the relevant data extracts were used to demonstrate a theme and used in the discussion.

3.7. Limitations of Study

Like all other studies, this study is not without limitations. I would like to acknowledge the bias that maybe inherent in the sampled population because only free and publicly accessible news articles were sampled for this research. This study also excluded French newspapers because I am not bilingual. This limits the findings, given that Canada is a bilingual country with newspapers published in both English and French, which could have been useful to the overall goal of this study. Further, the way the study sample was constructed does not capture all the news reports about both cases published between the period described earlier. This flaw does not guarantee a representative sample. On the contrary, this study does not aim to generalize its findings to the wider phenomenon under study. Instead, findings are specific to the specific events, time and actors involved. This study did not look at the variations and similarities in how different news media covered the topic, nor did it organize frames or compare them by news organization, which could have influenced the results. Additionally, this research is largely limited to news texts as well as sources and quotes used by journalists and thus excluded images/videos and their captions.

3.8. Ethical Considerations

This research involves unobtrusive and non-intrusive research methods. The methods used in this research did not interfere with study subjects since this research did not include human participants and all articles used in the study are publicly available and as such anonymity and confidentiality concerns were not applicable here. Because there were no human participants, the researcher cannot visit any direct or indirect harms on the event and actors under study. In light of the absence of ethical considerations and inapplicability of ethics guidelines, policies and procedures, there

was no requirement of an approval or assessment from University of Ottawa's Research Ethics Boards (REB).

3.9. Conclusion

This chapter outlined the methodological considerations for this research. Specifically, it discussed the qualitative nature of this study, situated this study in the appropriate research paradigm and outlined the sampling of data (online news stories and online versions of print newspapers) used for this study. In this chapter, I also presented the two cases which were the focus of this research and discussed ethical concerns as well as identified some limitations of this research. The next two chapters present the findings and analysis from my data. Specifically, the next chapter presents the narratives that I found to have been produced during the media reporting of my two cases of law enforcement deaths.

Chapter 4: Conflicting Narratives

4.1. Introduction

News reporting on issues may include different voices providing narratives which may sometimes conflict. These narratives told through news reports may help us understand and make meaning of the incidents being reported on from the perspectives of the actors involved however unreliable. Research has found that, news reporting on crime or any pertinent issue frequently feature and may rely on the voices of what Hall et al. (1978) refers to as “primary definers”. These primary definers provide the lenses through which readers will view the story because these individuals are usually those who are the “experts” or “authorities” in the issue that is in contention. News stories or reports constructed based on differing perspectives have the tendency to be skewed in favor of the “narrators” or actors involved to make them appear good or to justify their actions. In this chapter, I present the conflicting narratives as they appeared in the two cases of the deaths of racialized men who died at the hands of the Canadian criminal justice system’s law enforcement officers. The first case, Case A, presents the different narratives that emerged from news reporting on the death of Abdirahman Abdi, a Somali Canadian during an “altercation” with two Ottawa Police officers in July 2016. The next case, Case B, also presents the different narratives that emerged from news reporting on the death of Soleiman Faqiri, an Afghan Canadian who died at the hands of jail guards of the Central East Correctional Centre in Lindsay, Ontario in December 2016.

4.2. Case A - Abdirahman Abdi and Ottawa Police Officers, July 24, 2016

"From a total layperson perspective, it appeared that it escalated way too quickly for the type of resistance being put up by Mr. Abdi. It went from

zero to 100 very, very, very fast. And it wasn't really clear to us why that happened." – Ross McGhie, witness. (Nease & Kupfer, 2016)

Date	Event
July 24, 2016, at 9.20am	Police are called to Wellington Street West and Fairmont Avenue after receiving reports of groping.
July 24, 2016	Const. Weir pursues Abdirahman to his apartment building at 55 Hilda Street where a bloody arrest takes place with the help of Cont. Montsion which leaves Abdirahman with no vital signs.
July 24, 2016	The SIU begins an investigation into Abdirahman's fatal arrest.
July 25, 2016	Abdirahman is officially reported dead in hospital where he had been on life support.
March 06, 2017	SIU lays charges against Const. Montsion in relation to Abdirahman's death.
July 17, 2018	Abdirahman's family sue the police service board, the two officers involved in his fatal arrest and police Chief Charles Bordeleau for \$1.5 million.
February 4, 2019	Official court trial of Montsion begins.
October, 2020	Const. Daniel Montsion is acquitted of all charges levelled against him in the death of Abdirahman.

Figure 4.1. Timeline of Abdirahman's case

On July 24, 2016, Abdirahman died in the neighbourhood of Hintonburg in Ottawa, Ontario. He lost his life after a fatal arrest by Ottawa police officers Constable Daniel Montsion and Constable

Dave Weir when the police responded to multiple 911 calls reporting an incident of “groping” at a nearby coffee shop.

The way Abdirahman’s death is represented in news reports of the event has ramifications for how consumers of these news articles think of the main actors including Abdirahman, Constable Daniel Montsion, Constable Dave Weir, and the Ottawa Police Service, as well as how they perceive the issue of police use of excessive force in Canada when it involves racialized individuals with mental illness. The early news stories on the event showed a conflict between commentary from nonofficial sources (mostly eyewitnesses and advocates) and official sources. Community members, civil rights organizations/social movements and witnesses disputed police narrative and called for an “open and transparent” investigation into Abdirahman’s death. This call was based on all too familiar cases of people of colour and police brutality as well as knowledge of who Abdirahman was as an individual.

The news media did not cover much of the family members’ frustrations of how state officials had handled Abdirahman’s death. This is possibly due to their request for space and an indication that they will not be making any further comments on the tragedy during his funeral (Crawford, 2016a). They often directed all commentary on the case to their family lawyer or through a spokesperson. The family of Abdirahman however felt that he was not treated fairly at all especially as he was an innocent, and an amazing person (Crawford, 2016a). They demanded answers but also tried to be patient while awaiting the findings of an “open and transparent” investigation into his death.

In line with Lawrence’s (2000) claim, “critical citizen voices are not completely absent from the news about policing, but they are generally not granted the same place in the news” (p. 31), these news stories were replete with varied perspectives. Despite the presence of family and witnesses’

perspectives, most news stories often included police perspectives throughout the story. The position of the officers and police service was that Abdi was assaultive and continued to be even after officers located him. This position was referenced in almost all the news stories examined. Even in the face of perspectives and reactions of community members, some media stories found the need to repeatedly include the perspectives of official sources such as the police Chief, police union and officers. Officials like Jeff Leiper, the area's city councillor, made comments that urged calm and cautioned against rushing to judgement about the conduct of the police (CTV news, 2016).

Unlike government officials and leaders of social movements whose actions may have an impact on political processes in cases such as this, the family of Abdirahman's position as an invisible actor seemed to have little or no impact on decisions, policies, media coverage, and even outcomes associated with his death. Their decision to be less vocal or take a back seat and let the law take its course did not make them contributors of factual understanding of the fatal arrest except to add to the narrative with information about the character of Abdirahman and what he stood for as an individual.

4.2.1. The different narratives in Abdirahman's case

To begin with, it is important to establish that by the end of the trial, conflicting narratives of Abdirahman had emerged. These different narratives are seen through the news reports retrieved for this study. The different narratives were told by witnesses, community members, advocates and state actors presenting information to the media about what happened between Abdirahman and the arresting officers as well as people providing testimonies during the trial of Const. Daniel Montsion.

The first narrative published in the media include the version of events told by witnesses and neighbours of a gentle and mentally unstable man brutalized by the police. The narrative told by this group was different from the narrative of official sources including the Ottawa police Chief and Police Association president. By the close of the trial, the final narrative portrayed Abdirahman as a dangerous man who was diseased and noncompliant with his medication and portrayed Const. Weir as an officer who was rightly discharging his duties according to the law. This change is not surprising especially since the creation and presentation of specific identities is part of state talk which conceals the victim's vulnerability and the extent of police misbehaviour while attempting to win back the public's trust in the criminal justice system and its legitimacy. This is accomplished by attributing the victim's death to violent behavior and physical, biological, or genetic flaws that led to the victim's passing (Pemberton, 2008). These practices, which can be attributed to state power, benefit the system by putting the blame on a diseased body rather than the coercive state apparatus, while also subtly constructing the black body as a problematic body.

It is also worthy to establish that while the public generally viewed with disgust the conduct of police which subsequently led to Abdirahman's death, the police had a different view of the whole incident. This resulted in a situation which portrayed a community divide. The community stood with and supported its members – in this case the family of Abdirahman, and the police authorities also supported their men with nobody crossing the line.

4.3. Conflicting narratives about who Abdirahman Abdi was

4.3.1. Abdi: A peaceful and gentle man

Abdirahman Abdi was described by the *Globe and Mail's* Stone (2016) as a 37-year-old Somalian man who had moved to Canada with his family from Ethiopia in 2009. According to Stone (2016),

Abdirahman was known in his neighbourhood as a “quiet but friendly person who was often seen walking the streets” (p. A.7.). His neighbours and those who knew him, did not consider him as a troublemaker nor a threat but rather a peaceful guy who was good with kids and his neighbours (Nease, 2016a) although some people noticed a behavioral change in him in recent months (Stone, 2016). Nimao Ali, a family friend and neighbour, told *CBC news* in an interview that:

I don't know what to say. It's devastating. We know him, the gentleman. He has a mental illness, a very peaceful guy. I have children in the building, and he walks around, he's good with the kids, he's good with all the neighbours, never a problem. (Nease, 2016a, para. 9)

A *CTV* news publication on the day Abdirahman was pronounced dead, also stated that Ali told *CTV* Ottawa that “the family has asked for prayers” while also stating: “I’m speechless right now. We’re devastated by the loss of such a decent, nice, gentle young man in our community. I can’t find the words right now” (*CTV news*, 2016, para. 10). The *CTV* journalist also wrote that a “neighbour, Shukri Samater described Abdi as pleasant and non-violent” (para. 11).

Through witness accounts of neighbours such as Nimao Ali and Vicky Durand (a receptionist at a nearby services centre), news stories sought to portray Abdirahman as non-violent and someone who only wanted help (Stone, 2016). About Abdirahman needing help, Ms. Durand who was used to Abdirahman’s presence stated days after his death, that “Mr. Abdi would drop by up to 10 times a day, asking to speak to a counsellor - although he never had an appointment”. She said that Abdirahman stopped coming when his family was informed about his frequent visits. In addition, Ms. Durand stated that she would remember Abdirahman as a “teddy bear” who only wanted help. "He would put his hands like this, looking at me," Ms. Durand said, “grasping her hands in front of her chest” in a prayer and "I'd say, 'Don't worry. I don't forget you' " (Stone, 2016, p. A.7.). During his burial, Abdirahman was extoled for his good-natured personality as his family and

community struggled to understand what went wrong on that fateful day. Crawford (2016) reported that in a statement read on behalf of Abdirahman's family at his burial, Imam Sikander Hashmi from the Kanata Muslim Association said,

He was such a kind-hearted person. What occurred to him that Sunday wasn't fair at all. It shouldn't be justified by any means. No human being, especially someone as innocent as him, deserved to pass away like that. (p. A.1.)

Nease quoted Ali, who did not know Abdi closely but visited his neighbourhood frequently as describing Abdi as: "He's never bothered anybody, that I know of. I've been to this community many times, I've seen him, he's never bothered anybody. He's just another person like you and I, he's a human being, he did not deserve to be killed, to die the way he did" (Nease, 2016b, para. 28).

In her article published in the *Global news* titled, "*Abdi wasn't violent or threatening, community centre witness says*," Britneff (2019) wrote that during cross-examination, Caolan Cullum, a customer service representative at the community centre on Wellington Street West told the court that "Abdi never came off as violent, menacing or threatening during that 10- to 12-minute interaction. Cullum said he didn't consider Abdi's behaviour "out of the ordinary" or concerning because of his experience interacting with people with mental health issues at his workplace" (para. 12). Britneff further wrote that "In an incident report he filed four days later with the community centre, Cullum wrote that it was "clear" to him that Abdi was "not in control of his mental health," according to an excerpt of the report read out by defence counsel Michael Edelson" (para. 13).

4.3.2. Abdi: A Dangerous man

Contrary to testimonies of Abdirahman's calm and good nature in news stories, there was another narrative of a dangerous and assaultive Abdi being told by police authorities indicating that he was a threat to arresting officers and the larger public. In an interview with *CBC radio* on Abdirahman's arrest, Matt Skof, president of the Ottawa Police Association, presented Abdirahman as disruptive and threatening such that his actions led to a physical altercation with police (Nease, 2016b). As Nease (2016b) reported, Skof claimed that "The officers were experiencing a male that was assaultive in behaviour. So they are required, they're bound to react to that, they have to react to that, they have to contain that" (para. 14). Likewise, speaking on Abdirahman's arrest the day after the arrest, Yogaretnam (2016a, p. A.3.) also reported the Ottawa police Chief, Charles Bordeleau saying, "the man continued to be assaultive" once the police arrived, and found Abdirahman. This, Reevely (2017, p. A.2.) describes as the police Chief coming "cautiously to his officers' defence".

Similarly, news reports of court proceedings also portrayed the "dangerous" Abdirahman. For instance, he was portrayed by a witness [Michael Rowe] and Const. Weir as a dangerous man who possessed an unnatural and super-human strength (Osman, 2019b; Osman, 2020) suggesting that he could be capable of unleashing violence. This depiction of Abdi is consistent with the literature on the stigmatization of Black men. This stigmatization of Black men as violent and dangerous likely results in them being viewed suspiciously in a wide range of social interactions (Teasley et al., 2018) which influences how they are policed. Thus, police violence against Black individuals demonstrates their perceived criminality and criminalization (Ogden et al., 2020). It was not surprising when Const. Weir told the court, "I feel like I'm in the middle of an impossible situation, [...] I'm very glad that Dan showed up when he did, because I believe he saved my life" (Osman 2019b, para. 5 - 6). Const. Weir further testified that after failing to bring Abdirahman under arrest

by pepper spraying him twice in his eyes, kicking him and hitting his legs with a baton, "I didn't want to get within arm's reach. This guy would have destroyed me" (Osman, 2019b, para. 18). Studies have established that when someone dies at the hands of law enforcement officers, the official viewpoint strives to link the victim to "danger" and "disorder" in order to legitimize their deaths. It will be maintained that the purpose of official discussion is to establish particular identities for persons involved in a police custody death. As a result, images of police officers being threatened with violence are used to diminish empathy for the victim (Pemberton, 2008).

In Helmer's (2019h, p. D.1.) article for *the Ottawa Citizen*, she narrated that Michael Rowe [a witness], who was enjoying his cup of coffee at the Bridgehead Café when the incident unfolded and tried to restrain Abdirahman from further harassing a woman, would later describe him to the police as "strong as an ox" and said Abdi had the woman in a headlock. Providing his testimony, Rowe also told the court that: "He didn't budge. He was like a rock. He didn't even flinch". These portrayals of Abdirahman are inaccurate and likely influenced by negative perceptions of Black men as strong and frightening. According to Berenguer (2017, p. 733), "the centuries-old message has been consistent: people of colour, especially Black men, ought to be feared". As a result, Black people have a higher chance of being labelled as threatening as opposed to the non-threatening identity of the White man. The depiction of Black males as inherently dangerous and a threat to law and order, according to Kumah-Abiwu (2020), is deeply rooted in the culture and history of the United States and Canada (Maynard, 2017). The White man's view of criminal activity as an inherent quality of Blacks (Welch, 2007), results in their treatment of Black offenders harshly more than White offenders, even when the offences are of equal severity (Hurwitz & Peffley, 1997; Dukes & Gaither, 2017).

Still asserting Abdirahman's dangerousness, in an *Ottawa Citizen* (2019) article titled, "*Montsion defence suggests that Abdi showed signs of 'excited delirium' during arrest*" the author wrote that, "It was suggested for the first time at trial that Abdi might have been exhibiting symptoms of "excited delirium syndrome" - a condition characterized by extreme agitated behaviour, sweating, high pain tolerance and unexpected bursts of strength" (para. 4) but went on later to state that as at the time of writing, "no evidence had yet been present at trial that Abdi was in the throes of excited delirium or any other condition" when he fled the Bridgehead Café and prompted Const. Dave Weir to chase him. This "excited delirium," which has potentially dangerous symptoms, was reported to have been used as one of the two key theories by Const. Montsion's defence lawyers in proving his innocence (Osman, 2020). According to Fiscella, Pinals, and Shields (2022), the term "excited delirium" may generate stigmatizing and racial assumptions that dehumanize the individual, reinforcing the notion that they are dangerous rather than persons in need of immediate assistance. The characteristics of "excited delirium" justify law enforcement's use of tasers and potentially fatal force. Fiscella et al. further argue that this term shields police from accountability in these deaths, which disproportionately involve Black men by supporting police actions such as excessive use of force in the face of ostensibly uncontrollable violence.

In their closing arguments, the *Ottawa Citizen's* Helmer (2020a, p. A.3.) shared that the Crown admitted that Abdi was off his medication - prescribed to treat the onset of mental health issues - months before his arrest, but argued he was not "malicious, violent or dangerous." The Crown instead characterized Abdi as "a slow, awkward and at times unwelcome nuisance" (Helmer, 2020a, p. A.3.; Osman 2020, para. 22). She also wrote that "Crown prosecutors concede Abdi was engaged in "assaultive" conduct that led police to respond to a disturbance in which six women

were sexually assaulted in and around a Wellington Street West Bridgehead café, and prosecutors agreed Abdi's arrest was "justified" (Helmer, 2020a, p. A.3.; Osman, 2020).

4.3.3. Medical emergency waiting to happen

Like the narrative above, starting from February 2019 when the criminal trial of Constable Daniel Montsion began, a diseased Abdirahman was presented in news reports to shift the responsibility of death away from the officers and to downplay the events of July 24, 2016. In some news reports focused on court proceedings, Abdirahman was described as a medical emergency waiting to happen. Although Abdirahman had already been mentioned in the news as a person living with a "mental illness," this condition hardly became a topic during the trial of Const. Montsion. Instead of his mental illness, his other existing medical conditions and pending ones were highlighted apparently to refute claims by the Crown that Const. Montsion's actions were responsible for his death.

According to Helmer (2019i), Dr. Christopher Milroy, the forensic pathologist who presided over Abdi's autopsy, walked the court through 22 injuries he examined on Abdirahman's body on July 25, 2016, a day after his death, when he took the stand in court. He testified that Abdirahman's injuries to his face were "more extensive" than typically inflicted by a punch (Helmer, 2019i, p. A.8.) and that it would be difficult to prove that blows from an officer wearing reinforced gloves killed Abdirahman (Miller, 2019). Miller wrote that, "Milroy concluded that Abdirahman died of homicide by heart attack, and that the gloves did extensive damage to his face" (para. 8). In addition, Dr. Milroy revealed that Abdirahman had coronary artery atheroma, a condition which hardens the arteries that are the main blood supply to the heart, and as it turned out after examination, Abdirahman had two major arteries being 80 per cent clogged (Helmer, 2019i;

Miller, 2019). "That is sufficient to cause sudden and unexpected death," Milroy is reported to have said citing the condition as most common cause of sudden death in North America (Helmer, 2019i, p. A.8.). Miller (2019) published that, Dr. Milroy explained that it was not the only possible explanation for Abdirahman's death or injuries citing several other factors including, "physical exertion, emotional stress, a struggle involving physical restraint and facial injuries" (Helmer, 2019i, p. A.8.; Miller, 2019). "He could have dropped dead anytime" Dr. Milroy said, and added that, "if Abdi had reached a point where he was certainly going to have a cardiac arrest, additional blows wouldn't make a difference" (Miller, 2019, para. 15). According to Pemberton (2008), the physiology of the victim is a common method employed by government officials to explain deaths. These physiological flaws are regularly claimed as contributing causes of fatalities, which serves to divert attention away from routinely discriminating police acts. Thus, important contributors to death have been found to be physical, physiological, or genetic flaws. Official debate attempts to place the victim's death in the context of a pre-existing condition that was made worse by the stress of being arrested.

Other aspects of Abdirahman's medical history further reported by Helmer (2019i, p. A.8.) included his non-compliance with his anti-psychotic medication of which Dr. Milroy said, "Abdi's erratic behaviour that morning, including reports he had sexually assaulted six women in and around a Wellington Street West café, "would support that he was not compliant with his medication." Regarding Abdirahman being off his medication, Dr. Milroy testified that Abdirahman's family took him off his medication to determine if he could live without it (Miller, 2019). According to medical records tendered into evidence, Abdirahman "became increasingly disorganized and psychotic" and occasionally was "aggressive toward family members" (Miller, 2019, para. 19). Finally, Abdirahman's medical history also indicated that "he had hypertension

(high blood pressure) that would typically contribute to heart disease” and he also was “borderline” diabetic and may have developed diabetes later in life, according to Dr Milroy (Helmer, 2019i, p. A.8.).

The preceding narratives represented Abdi, the victim in this case, either positively or poorly depending on who is conducting the description and their position in relation to the person involved. As expected, different people also characterized the police involved differently in respect to the situation under consideration.

4.4. Conflicting narratives about the police officers involved

From the perspectives of some colleagues of the officers involved and some community members, they were responsible officers whose actions were being misrepresented. It is interesting to note that the two constables enjoyed some level of support from not just their colleagues, but also a section of the community. Surprisingly however, a 2016 article in *the Ottawa Citizen*, faulted Const Montsion in a vicious arrest of another Somali Canadian which showed his bias in dealing with people of colour.

4.4.1. Constables Weir and Montsion as Good Cops supported by their peers

The Ottawa Citizen's Yogaretnam (2017a, p. A.1.) and *the Globe and Mail*'s Stone (2016), reported Const. Daniel Montsion as “an anti-gang officer who responded to 911 calls about a man groping women at the Bridgehead coffee shop on Fairmont Avenue on the Sunday morning of Abdi's arrest.” It is however unclear why an officer of the anti-gang unit which primarily tracks the activities of gangs with the aim of cracking down on and eliminating these unlawful groups of criminals was the one to respond to the incident at Bridgehead.

When the SIU designated Const. Montsion and Const. Weir as subject officers in its investigations, sources [within the polices service] told *Postmedia* that “both are experienced officers who are well respected by their peers, many of whom feel for their colleagues who are currently the subject of public and watchdog scrutiny for actions that individual officers and the police union fear are being prematurely taken out of context” (Yogaretnam, 2016a, p. A.3.). Yogaretnam even wrote that, “Neither Montsion nor Weir has any discipline on record, according to *Postmedia* archives of police disciplinary hearings”. In fact, Yogaretnam went on to discuss the noble works and positive ratings of the two Constables. It was reported that, while Montsion was recognized in 2008 for giving 514 hours with other police recruits to aid a women’s charity while still in police academy, Weir was also recognized by his supervisor in 2013 for exhibiting skill, good judgement, and dedication, as well as a high standard of police conduct or humanitarianism (Yogaretnam, 2016a). Further, a 2005 letter of commendation from staff at a downtown homeless shelter named Weir and other officers as earning the gratitude and respect of staff when they were assigned to manage different kinds of difficult issues that resulted from handling the homeless population, a population that included people with mental health issues. The letter writer expressed “worry” at the many criticisms that police face and opined that, “I think that they are so criticized so much at times by people who don’t understand the situations that these devoted officers have to deal with day in day out” (Yogaretnam, 2016a, p. A.3.).

As if to say by virtue of being a police officer and an agent of the state, Montsion was better than the ordinary citizen, Reevely (2017) reported that after Montsion was charged by the SIU and processed at the Kanata OPP detachment, he was released without a hearing. A move that smacks of bias and abuse of authority for someone who has been accused of homicide and other assaults. According to Fischer (2017), although Const. Montsion’s name had appeared on a list of people

scheduled to appear before an Ottawa Courthouse in relation to his charges, - charges which were more serious than any other being dealt with that day -, Const Montsion made no appearance in court on his first day. It was revealed that he was neither in the holding cells of the court nor in the cells of the Kanata OPP station when Justice of Peace Loissette Girault asked of his whereabouts.

Postmedia news (2017) also reported that, in support of their colleague Const. Montsion who had been charged with the violent death of Abdirahman, several Ottawa's police officers produced rubber wristbands with the inscription "United We Stand #1998" which were sold for \$2. The "#1998" printed on the band represented Montsion's badge number. This initiative aimed at supporting their colleague officer was claimed to have been ordered by individual officers and not the police union, "However, the union said it stands in support of its officers" (*Postmedia news*, 2017, para. 4). This behaviour and action by some of the cops is consistent with research on the "blue code" of police conduct, which directs police conduct and "instructs" officers to always have each other's backs, no matter the circumstance (Westmarland, 2005). Officers who spoke to *Postmedia news* indicated that they were not interested in sides of the case but were rather only supporting one of their members. Insp. Pat Flanagan said, "We understand how serious this really is. But it's not about interfering with the judicial process. It's about providing support to one of our members and not taking away from the fact that there should also be support mechanisms in place for the Abdi family" (*Postmedia news*, 2017, para. 8). Finding it difficult to grasp the charges against their colleague officer, Flanagan further said, "We go to work everyday with the mindset of helping people in need with positive outcomes. Anyone of us could find ourselves in a similar situation" (para. 12). These acts and testimonies call into doubt the officers' and their union's regard for the agony and plight of the Abdi family. In addition, the narratives concerning the work ethics and professionalism of Const. Weir and Const. Montsion stated earlier and the actions of colleague

officers seemed to be a conscious attempt to absolve the two Constables in Abdirahman's death of all blame and portray them as good people who would not do something so terrible. This is supported by Zamperini, Siracusa and Menegatto's (2017) argument that portraying police officers in a positive light attempt to remove the negative from the circumstance by stating that the victim's poor behaviour caused the "good cops" to behave in the manner they did.

Speaking to *Postmedia* on the day of the incident, Kitchissippi ward Coun. Jeff Leiper also claimed that Abdirahman's neighbourhood had a very good relationship with the police and that he was looking forward to the results of the investigation because he thought Abdirahman's case was a fairly isolated case (Harford, 2016a). According to Harford (2016a), there is a section of the Ottawa police which deals with diversity and race relations and does outreach with communities in the city when instances like Abdirahman's occur. Further painting a good image of the Ottawa police force and its officers, Const. Chuck Benoit maintained that the community does a lot of outreaches with the Somali population in Ottawa (Harford, 2016a).

Journalists also noted how the police Chief and Police Association president tried to court affection for the embattled Constable. Police Chief Bordeleau, in a 2017 statement after the SIU announced its charges against Const. Montsion, said, "What I can say is that the officer involved, like any member of the community going through a similar process, deserves to be treated fairly." Similarly, Ottawa Police Association president Matt Skof said it will be a difficult time for Montsion (Yogaretnam 2017b, p. N.4.). Trying to somewhat sympathize with Abdirahman's family, Bordeleau acknowledged the difficulty of the death for Abdi's family and "our entire community," but quickly seized the opportunity to also paint a good picture of his men, by saying that, "Our members are professional, and they care about this community. They respond to calls

for service from the community with the goal of helping those involved" (Yogaretnam, 2017a, p. A.1.).

4.4.2. Constables Weir and Montsion as Bad Cops

One journalist made note of how embattled Const. Montsion once violently took down another Somali Canadian man during a raid. In an article by Dimmock (2016) published by *the Ottawa Citizen* titled, "*Abdi officer rapped in gun trial; Constable says he 'panicked' in 2014 arrest of Somali-Canadian,*" it was revealed that Const. Montsion had taken to the ground, face down, a Somali Canadian man during a 2014 police raid where the man was later acquitted on gun charges. According to Dimmock, Montsion was one of seven Ottawa police officers who raided an apartment after gang members had reportedly taken over it. Montsion's testimony - which included him panicking because the suspect, Abdullah Adoyta had reached for his waist to pull a handgun - was rejected by the judge who "had a problem with Montsion's version of events. His story conflicted with the testimony of seasoned Sgt. Mark MacMillan" (Dimmock, 2016, p. A.1.). The judge noted that the "manner in which (Adoyta) was taken down, with Const. Montsion raising Mr. Adoyta's arms in the air and seeing the handgun in Mr. Adoyta's waistline is difficult to both understand and accept." It was reported that, in his ruling the judge said, "Adoyta did not see a gun on the floor before the police came calling and noted that the accused testified that he was "not suggesting that it was planted by police."

Although Const. Montsion's incidence of "panic" in the violent arrest of Adoyta, another Somali Canadian, was published as part of a court decision acquitting Adoyta on gun charges, the news was not widely published in relation to his fatal arrest of Abdirahman. It is worthy to note that of the 72 articles sampled for this study, only one article reported on this unfortunate incident

involving Const. Montsion and another Black man. The refusal to publish widely or link the prior violent incident involving Montsion to Abdi's case stands in contradiction to how the media quickly "digs" up previous charges on a suspect's record (if any) and negatively represents them while discussing the honourable service of the police in police violence or brutality cases. This may give credence to the impression that the media helps to shield the dishonourable conduct of police officers by not giving enough space to the narrative of bad officers.

The nature of police work and how it is regarded by those who are familiar with the reality of police work and others who are not familiar with it are brought up by these stories of the good and bad officer. Below, we discuss the accounts of what police job includes.

4.5. Narratives about the nature of police work

In the wake of Abdirahman's death, different discourses arose between the nature of police work and what officers can and cannot do. While some community members and police officers commended police officers and argued that policing entails a lot and that difficult decisions often need to be made within a very little time to ensure officer and public safety, others argued that no matter the threat Abdirahman posed on that fateful day, the level of force that was employed and the whole situation could and should have been handled differently.

4.5.1. Narratives of a difficult police work and the legal and acceptable use of force and intervention tools

In some of the news articles published by *CBC news*, officials mentioned the difficult nature of police work and the legality of the use of force to protect citizens and officers alike in the face of a threat. Comments submitted to the radio host of *CBC radio's All in a day* by Matt Skof indicated

the reality of police work demanded that the officers contained the “violent incident” to which they were called. He clearly pointed out that, “we were called to a violent incident where we had to attend, and part of our mandate, as difficult as it is, is to ensure the safety of public, the accused, or the victim and/or the officers” (Nease, 2016b, para. 15), which suggested that the level of force employed to bring Abdirahman under arrest was essential and acceptable. An article from Mussa (2020) reported Montsion’s defence lawyer, Solomon Friedman arguing that, “Montsion was thrust into a dynamic and unpredictable situation and he behaved in a deliberate manner to control Abdi who was "assaultive" and resisting arrest” (para. 11). The article went on further to quote another statement of Friedman which said, “What police officers are called upon to do is sometimes to make very difficult decisions in a very limited amount of time” (para. 12). According to Friedman, "Police officers don't have to wait to be assaulted. Police officers don't have to wait for others to be assaulted. They have to act reasonably" (para. 13). The Police Association president Matt Skof also suggested that the determination of whether a suspect’s behavior may be because of mental illness does not lie with the police and as such no different reaction is employed in responding to such situation. He was reported in a *CBC news* story as saying that “as for whether police knew Abdi had mental health issues during the arrest, it's not the job of officers to diagnose people and that "assaultive behaviour" requires action regardless” (Nease, 2016b, para. 18). Skof continued that, “There still has to be action, there still has to be safety, there still has to be containment. ... If the person's exhibiting assaultive behaviour towards officers or other people, no, there's no different reaction [if the person has a mental issue]” (Nease, 2016b, para. 19). As if to further express how the public is not really experienced with the essentials of police work, Skof bemoaned how public action in situations like this make their mandate difficult to discharge. He said, "Our experience with the SIU has been unfortunately politicized and paralyzing the

profession of police outside the mandate of what's provided to us by the public and the government" (Trihn, 2017, para. 11).

Before the final 3-day hearing of the case by Ontario Court Justice Robert Kelly, *the Ottawa Citizen's* Helmer (2020a, p. A.3.) noted that "Montsion's defence team of Michael Edelson and Solomon Friedman made the case for acquittal in writing, arguing their client was "thrust into a dynamic, violent and unpredictable situation" as he helped in the takedown of an "actively psychotic" suspect who was resisting arrest. The journalist continued: "Montsion made "a legal arrest," his lawyers argue, and he "made reasonable decisions and acted proportionately, based on the information available to him at the time". These statements underscored the legitimacy of the force used as reasonable and necessary in line with the testimony of former Toronto deputy police chief Michael Federico, an expert in the use of force by police, that "Police officers have authority to use as much force as necessary to carry out their duty, but there are caveats: "It has to be reasonable; it has to be necessary" (Osman, 2019a, para. 14). In fact, Helmer (2020a, p. A.3.) quoted Montsion's defence lawyers as saying, "Every piece of information that he received while enroute to 55 Hilda would have led to the same conclusion: Mr. Abdi was difficult to control and dangerous; Const. Weir was in need of immediate assistance."

Related to the use of force was the contention of whether the 'assault gloves' worn by Const. Montsion when he delivered heavy blows to Abdirahman's head and groin, were approved by the Ministry. Resorting to technicalities, the police and Montsion's defence lawyers tried to create the impression that the gloves (hardened with carbon-fibre plates) with which he was accused of assaulting Abdirahman, were not classified as "a weapon" used to equip the police. Reevely's (2017, p. A.2.) article published in *the Ottawa Citizen* cites Police Chief Bordeleau as saying, "Gloves are not part of any listed equipment that the (Ministry of Community Safety) regulates,

nor are boots, nor are pants. They're not treated like handguns or batons, which are tightly controlled as weapons for the purposes of equipping police". This was at a time when he had ordered for an audit into all gloves worn by sworn officers. Further, Osman (2019a) echoed Frederico's testimony regarding what were approved police gears. Although Frederico indicated that all sworn police officers in Ontario are authorized to carry a firearm, pepper spray, a baton and a Taser, Osman also noted that, "Some units use more specialized items, Frederico said, but none list reinforced gloves as weapons" (para. 5). This could mean that while the reinforced gloves may be a focus in the case, it is not or cannot be classified as a weapon with which Abdi was assaulted.

4.5.2. Narratives of a bad police work and unacceptable use of force

Most of the early news stories carried statements that showed a disapproval of police conduct which led to Abdirahman's death. Importantly, this narrative which seemed to suggest that what occurred was nothing short of violence and murder, emanated mostly from actors without special knowledge and experience in police work. While there have been arguments about the complexities that police work entails, witnesses like Nimao Ali indicated an appreciation of the job of the police but believed the situation surrounding Abdirahman's arrest could have been managed differently (Nease, 2016a). According to her:

I understand that police officers have a really hard job ... but there's times people have to use their common sense, and there's times people have to be sensitive to other people, and there's times that police officers — or anybody with guns and weapons — have to really consider, is this person OK? Are they mentally ill? Are they running away, are they threatening me? ... all the blood that he lost could have been saved for a matter of just really taking this calmly. Because everybody in the [neighbourhood knows him] and we never felt threatened by him. (Nease, 2016a, para. 13)

An article from Nease and Kupfer (2016), in the *CBC news*, also reported McGhie admitting that although he was not a professional, and while Abdirahman was non-compliant, the level of force used on him did not equate his resistance and therefore called the action of the officer [Const. Montsion] “extremely violent and extremely excessive”. He was quoted saying, "I think the both of us were really surprised when the second officer arrived and immediately started beating the suspect with his fists in the face and head. I mean, Mr. Abdi was not compliant, for whatever reason, but it seemed that that degree of force for the type of resistance Mr. Abdi was putting up, to us — again we're not professionals — it seemed extremely violent and extremely excessive” (Nease and Kupfer, 2016, para. 15). McGhie also reiterated that while he did not witness what prompted police to be called in the first place, and though he has no knowledge of how police make decisions about use of force, the police response seemed to be "excessive." He stated, "So it was kind of confusing, seeing it all start, because it really didn't look like what was about to transpire was likely to happen. It really kind of looked like an officer just approaching somebody who had posed a minor disturbance, so it was really surprising to see what happened happen” (para. 13). He again felt that, “From a total layperson perspective, it appeared that it escalated way too quickly for the type of resistance being put up by Mr. Abdi. It went from zero to 100 very, very, very fast. And it wasn't really clear to us why that happened" (Nease and Kupfer, 2016, para. 16).

McGhie’s sentiments were shared by most of the witnesses who gave statements to the media concerning the incident. Stone (2016) reported of another witness, who asked not to be named out of respect for the family and averred that police treatment of Mr. Abdi was "excessive" and described it as, "It was the most gruesome thing I ever saw in my life. And everyone needs to remember that. He was a human being" (Stone, 2016, p. A.7.). Stone’s report touched on the

worrisome nature of unarmed individuals losing their lives in law enforcement interactions, prompting the Ontario Ombudsman Paul Dubé to say that, "Whenever an unarmed individual comes into contact with police and ends up dead a very short time later, we have to ask serious questions," in an interview (Stone, 2016, p. A.7.). No matter what the reports were on that fateful morning, Yamikani Msosa of the Sexual Assault Support Centre of Ottawa was of the view that, "If Abdi was assaulting someone, as multiple people said he was that Sunday morning, of course that needed to be stopped. He still shouldn't have died" (Reevely, 2016, p. A1). Similarly, Heather Badenoch, a communications consultant who watched the video more than seven months ago with a handful of staff members from the Ottawa Community Immigrant Services Organization (Operators of Abdirahman's apartment) as they prepared their community response to Abdi's death recounted to *CBC news* that, "The video is incredibly violent. You can't unsee someone's death and his mother's distress" (Trihn, 2017, para. 5). Her views were particularly in opposition to the Ottawa Police Association's assertion that SIU's charges against Const. Montsion was only because of public pressure. In a statement after the charges were laid, Skof was reported to have said, "Unfortunately, we're not surprised that the SIU (is laying) these charges given the amount of attention this case has garnered" (Yogaretnam, 2017, p. N.4.). However, Msosa believed that the contents of the video warranted SIU's charges when she stated that, "From what I've seen, the level of violence we saw had to lead to charges" (Trihn, 2017, para. 13). In their final written arguments to the court, the Crown attorneys argued that "[Montsion's] conduct demonstrated a wanton or reckless disregard for Mr. Abdi's life and safety and was a marked and substantial departure from the standard of care of a reasonably prudent, similarly situated police officer" (Osman, 2020, para. 6). Osman went on to write that, "Lethal force is only justified when the officer believes that someone will suffer grievous bodily harm, they argue (Osman, 2020, para. 7).

The foregoing arguments on the differing representations of Abdi and the officers as well as the nature of police work make it obvious that something went wrong. Therefore, individuals who claimed that the way the officers interacted with Abdi was not right promoted this narrative and made calls for a system change.

4.6. Narratives about what went wrong and what should be done

Abdirahman's death resulted in a huge public outcry. Most of the community members, witnesses and advocates underscored systemic issues which relate to how people of colour and those with mental illness are policed in our society. There were a lot of calls to improve the system because to them what happened to Abdi should never have happened.

4.6.1. Calls to improve the system

Within days of Abdi's death, a group named Justice for Abdirahman Coalition was formed. The Coalition's goals included: to promote transparency, combat racial inequity, increase assistance for mental health needs, and bring good change to our law enforcement institutions to secure justice for the late Abdirahman and his family. Some other civil rights advocacy groups and protesters also called for reforms in how race and mental illness are policed and especially bemoaned the lack of training of police officers in mental health issues. Politicians were also charged to do better in instances of police brutality. The Justice for Abdirahman coalition made up of the Somali Resource and Heritage Centre, Canadian Friends of Somalia, the Canadian Somali Mothers Association, and the Somali Centre for Family Services, and with supporters ranging from Amnesty International to Jewish Family Services, outlined 10 "recommendations" (see Appendix B) for averting future deaths.

Among these recommendations was a charge for the Ottawa Police Service to acknowledge its shortcomings in terms of how officers "interact with members of racialized communities, and specifically, with those with mental health issues" (Reevely, 2016, p. A.1.). Further it was recommended that the OPS needs to examine and update its de-escalation training so that it considers potential vulnerabilities like race, mental health, language barriers, and others. In addition, to stop the spread of stories and images that denigrate racialized populations, the OPS should refrain from sensationalizing arrests, attributing crimes to suspects' racial backgrounds, and disclosing unneeded information about the police records of the deceased to the media. Together with their supporters, the Justice for Abdirahman Coalition called for justice and accountability as well as "systemic change."

Years after Abdirahman's brutal killing by the Ottawa police, the Wellington Street West Bridgehead café where the whole incident with police begun, issued a statement regarding the arrest and called for systemic change. Helmer (2020b) noted that the Justice for Abdirahman Coalition described Bridgehead's apology as "an important acknowledgement, according to the Justice for Abdirahman Coalition, of the need for a more "compassionate" response in dealing with cases involving mental health" (para. 1). She further wrote that, "The call for "systemic change" supports many of the initiatives that have been amplified by widespread Black Lives Matter demonstrations [...] and supports growing demands for increased screening and training "for those called to serve and protect our community, as well as the reallocation of funds to assist with mental health emergencies" (para. 6). Farhia Ahmed, chair of the Justice for Abdirahman Coalition, indicated that, "Our coalition has been calling for supports for mental health, and we made public recommendations to the Ottawa Police Service from day one when we met in August 2016 with a list of tabled, and publicly available recommendations that we gave to (then-Chief

Charles Bordeleau),”... “Indicating that police not only are not trained and equipped to respond to these types of calls — so to increase training supports for mental health — but there should be a separate co-ordinated means, where the city looks at partnering with other services and exploring different options” (Helmer, 2020b, para. 8). Ahmed also told Helmer (2020b) in an interview that Bridgehead’s acknowledgement that Abdi was a “regular customer” suggests the situation that unfolded in the café that morning could have been handled differently. Helmer quoted her as saying,

There was an acknowledgement that (Abdi) was a man who frequented their store, which tells us he was known to them, and that speaks to the fact that someone is known and ... it was clear this man was suffering from a mental illness.

It’s an acknowledgement that these were not the actions of a man in his right sense, and so rather than a compassionate response, which would have looked at trying their best to de-escalate the situation ... It seems it escalated very quickly. (para. 13-14)

Protesters’ calls also included the need of accountability and recognition of systemic racism in Canada. According to Harford (2016c), in one of many protests of Abdirahman’s death Black Lives Matter members in Toronto blocked off the SIU building entrance and parking lot, demanding more police accountability starting with the two Ottawa Constables, Dave Weir and Daniel Montsion. It was reported that police looked on while the protesters chanted, "No justice, no peace. No racist police!" Harford (2016c) quoted Bilan Arte of Ottawa Black Diaspora Coalition as saying, “We know that it is not an isolated case, and we could be the next one”. This was buttressed with and Leila Moumouni-Tchouassi’s point that, “it is time for Ottawa and Canada to recognize that there is systemic racism” (p. A.5.). According to Yogaretnam (2017a), “Bordeleau said the force is listening, particularly to the Justice for Abdirahman Coalition, and other voices” (p. A.1.).

Margaret Parsons, the executive director of the Toronto-based African Canadian Legal Clinic, reportedly claimed that, “The group's 10 demands are not small. Some, like "respond(ing) to the Ontario Human Rights Commission's assertion that there is 'no effective mechanism to hold police accountable for systemic discrimination' and (providing) a remedy for this gap" could take years all by themselves.” She stated that, “That might take 10 years, another 20 years. But it will happen.” Although she said she might not be patient to receive justice, she won’t give up on it. At a city news conference, Parsons insisted that, “politicians stop denying the significance of Abdi's death”. This was at a time where unanimously, politicians decided to wait for the SIU’s response on Abdirahman’s death before deciding what to do. "We see a clear pattern. A Black man in distress, the police are called, the Black man ends up dead," Parsons said. Their cases have been studied, both specifically and collectively, and we have numerous sets of recommendations we could act on now to keep any more from being added to the list (Reevely, 2016, p. A.1.).

Coroner			X					
Police		X		X		X		
Defense		X		X		X		
Prosecution							X	
Advocates					X		X	X

	Family	Community	Witnesses
Abdi: A peaceful and gentleman	X	X	X
Abdi: A dangerous man			
Medical Emergency waiting to happen			
Constables Weir and Montsion as Good Cops supported by their peers			
Constables Weir and Montsion as Bad Cops		X	X
Difficult police work and legal and acceptable use of force and intervention tools			
Bad police work and unacceptable use of force	X	X	X
Improve the system	X	X	

Table 4.1. Narratives and proponents – Case A

4.7. Case B – Soleiman Faqiri and Central East Correctional Centre Guards, December 15, 2016

"We want to know why my brother died. Why did Soleiman die? How did Soleiman die? That's what we're looking for." -Yusuf Faqiri (Nasser, 2016a)

Date	Event
December 4, 2016	Soleiman Faqiri was arrested on charges of assault and uttering threats.
December 12, 2016	A mental health assessment was ordered for Soleiman by a judge.
December 15, 2016	Soleiman dies in his cell following a "physical altercation" with multiple guards.

December 19, 2016	All charges against Faqiri were dropped.
July 11, 2017	A Coroner's report into the death of Soleiman (which gave no clear cause of death) was released.
October 30, 2017	After its investigation, the Kawartha Lakes Police Service decided that there was no need for anyone to be criminally charged with Soleiman's death.
November 3, 2017	The coroner announced an inquest on November 3, 2017.
December 8, 2017	Family's request for information denied.
January 28, 2019	Soleiman's family filed a \$14.3m lawsuit against the province.
May 18, 2021	Ontario's top pathologist announces review of Soleiman's death.
August, 2021	Ontario's Chief forensic pathologist determines that Soleiman's injuries (caused by jail guards' actions) were a significant contributing factor in his death.

Figure 4.2. Timeline of Soleiman's case

Soleiman Faqiri died in what official documents described as a “physical altercation” with correctional officers when they entered his segregation cell in the Central East Correctional Centre in Lindsay, Ontario on December 15, 2016. The jail guards were escorting him from the showers to his cell when the “altercation” began.

Soleiman's death may suggest how racialized men with mental illness are treated with disdain, brutalized, and killed with impunity by law enforcement officers (jail guards) while their families are denied information and accountability by the criminal justice system. Like Case A-Abdirahman's case, the media reporting of Soleiman's case produced multiple narratives which could influence how the audience perceive the actors involved including how they think about the criminal justice system and people with mental illness. As to be expected, the dominant position of officials presented in the news was that Soleiman was unruly and assaulted jail guards and thus

needed to be controlled as well as a denial of wrongdoing. Unlike Abdirahman's case, the news media also gave a lot of space for the family of Soleiman to drive their narrative of unfair treatment and to demand accountability from state authorities. The family's active position in the media made them a factual source of understanding Soleiman's death and the impunity of the criminal justice system and its actors.

4.7.1. The different narratives in Soleiman Faqiri's case

Soleiman's case is an example of how news media reporting give way to different narratives and frames. This case shows how the criminal justice system conceal information and fails to provide answers in cases of deaths caused by law enforcement agents.

In the wake of Soleiman's death and in pursuit of answers, his family carried a narrative that extolled the good nature of Soleiman. They described the emptiness going to be felt in his absence and blamed the government/system for failing them. But on the contrary and as always, law enforcement officials absolved themselves from blame and laid it solely on the victim who was said to be "unruly" leading to the altercation that killed him.

Although some jail guards were sacked because of an internal investigation conducted by the correctional centre, two police investigations – the first by the Kawartha Lakes Police Service and a reinvestigation by the Ontario Provincial Police – failed to lay criminal charges against any of the 20-30 guards the coroner's report said took part in the altercation with Soleiman. The reports from both police investigations found no probable grounds to lay charges.

In an interesting twist of events, two fired jail officials and the province denied responsibility and blamed each other for Soleiman's death. The province in a statement of response to a \$14.3m

lawsuit by his family blamed the jail officials saying that they “acted out of scope of their duties” in the incident. The fired officials responded with a countersuit blaming the province for their failure to deploy its institutional crisis intervention team (ICIT) when they asked for it and their lack in training when it comes to dealing with people with mental health.

Soleiman’s death at the hands of law enforcement officers like others before it, sparked public outrage with activists and high-ranking societal members calling for changes into how law enforcement officers treat people with mental illnesses. There were calls for better training of officers in responding to issues regarding inmates and/or people with mental illness. Finally, there were calls for justice and accountability for the Faqiris.

4.8. Conflicting narratives about who Soleiman Faqiri was

4.8.1. Soleiman: A gentle man

Soleiman Faqiri was described in news stories as a gentle and brilliant young man. This narrative was mainly told by his family who were still trying to come to terms with why a man who had serious mental illness ended up dead in a jail cell just 11 days after being admitted to the Central East Correctional Centre in Lindsay, Ontario. In one of the early news articles published by *CBC news*, the author wrote, “The man whose loss the Faqiri family is grieving was gentle and personable, they say. He spoke three languages, was a straight-A student at Pine Ridge Secondary School in Pickering, and the captain of its rugby team who half-jokingly spoke of dreams of becoming a professional athlete” (Nasser, 2016a, para. 11). The author went on to quote his older brother Yusuf Faqiri as saying, “He had mental health issues, but he was an amazing and incredible figure in our family” (para. 18). In Syed’s (2017b) news article in the *Toronto star*, she wrote, “His older brother, Yusuf, said Soleiman, who had suffered with schizophrenia for the past 11 years,

was the Faqiri family's "gentle giant." He was his mother's best friend, his father's helper, his two younger brothers' mentor, his sister's protector, his own idol. Soleiman wanted to be the greatest scholar in the world” (p. GT. 1).

It was noted from the news reports gathered that, mention of Soleiman’s affable personality came from his family. Not much were reported to have come from his community and those who had encountered him prior to his death. The family intimated that Soleiman was a vulnerable man because of his mental illness and only needed help but instead he was not shown compassion by jail guards (Miller & Stevens, 2017). The Faqiri family was heavily represented in almost all news reportage on the death of their member. The vocal and critical voice of the family and their resolve to seek justice and accountability in Soleiman’s death positioned them as powerful political actors engaging in activities that have yielded some outcomes in the area of police brutality and accountability.

4.8.2. Soleiman: An unruly man

Some news articles identified Soleiman’s previous interactions with the law (Nasser 2016a; Syed, 2018a; May, 2019; Nasser, 2019c; & Ignatenko, 2020) with Syed, May & Ignatenko explicitly stating that he did not have a criminal record. One such example: “He had been taken into custody about 10 times under Ontario's Mental Health Act....” Also, “In September 2012 came a brush with the law. He was convicted in April 2014 of theft under \$5,000 and ordered to pay a restitution of \$980” (Nasser, 2016a, para. 17). Aside these, most of his “unruly” nature was presented in the context of his interaction with jail guards on the day he died.

Contrary to the Soleiman described by his family, official sources presented an assaultive and unruly Soleiman in their narrative. The dominant narrative told by official sources that was

circulated in news stories purportedly to explain why he got into an “altercation” with jail guards was that he was assaultive towards the officers and resisted when they tried to bring him under control in his cell. Shedding more light on the “altercation”, Nasser’s (2017a) *CBC news* article highlighted this claim as captured in the coroner’s report. She wrote that, “Faqiri, according to the report, displayed behaviour problems while in custody and had been placed in segregation” (para. 8). She continued that “At about 1:15 p.m. on the day that would be his last, Faqiri was taken to the shower, where he remained for almost two hours, refusing to come out and spraying water and throwing shampoo bottles at the guards, the report says” (para. 9). By and by, Soleiman was said to have been escorted down a hallway to his cell while he resisted. A quote from the report said, “There appeared to be an episode when one of the correctional officers seemed to strike out at the inmate” (Nasser, 2017a, para. 11). While it was indicated that what happened in Soleiman’s cell was not captured on camera, the report stated that, “he was pepper sprayed two separate times as he was told repeatedly to “stop resisting”. It was revealed that a few minutes later, a “code blue” was called, which indicates that staff are either in trouble, or inmates are fighting or being aggressive, and several more guards entered the cell. Giving another dimension as to why a “code blue” was issued and to probably support arguments that Soleiman was indeed rebellious and dangerous or could be, the author of a *Globe and Mail* article highlighted his physical strength when he wrote, “Mr. Faqiri, who was an avid weight-lifter according to his family, continued to raise himself off the floor, prompting staff to issue a “code blue,” a facilitywide request indicating an officer in need of immediate assistance” (White, 2017, p. A.1.). News reports (White, 2017; Nasser, 2017a) also referred to the exhaustion guards experienced resulting from their struggle with Soleiman such that they required assistance. According to Nasser (2017a, para. 14), the coroner’s report stated that, “Several of the guards describe exhaustion after attempting to restrain

Soleiman". The report stated that these new officers started to "tap out" the officers "who were exhausting themselves in the struggle" (Syed, 2018a, p. A.1.). "With guards holding down his limbs, a spit hood was placed over his head and leg irons put on his legs. Soon after, his arms were cuffed behind his back and the guards began to leave. The second shift of guards lasted approximately five to 10 minutes. Shortly after, Faqiri was seen no longer moving and had stopped breathing. He was pronounced dead at about 3:45 p.m." (Nasser, 2017a, para. 14-16).

4.9. Narratives about cause of death

4.9.1. Narratives of a bad correctional work and improper use of tactics: death by beating

It was initially reported to be unclear how many jail guards were with Soleiman at the time of his death because the police statement said that, "multiple correctional officers" took part in the "physical altercation" (Fraser, 2017, para. 19). In due time, according to documents obtained by *The Star* through a freedom of information request, 20 to 30 officers were involved in subduing him, he was pepper sprayed twice, had his face covered with a spit hood, and his body was held down with leg irons during his arrest (Ignatenko, 2020). Considering the number of guards involved, Hasan, the family's lawyer said, "So many guards were involved in this, what I'll describe as – I'm not going to mince words – a beating" (Westoll, 2017, para. 8). It is quite unthinkable that an unarmed Soleiman, would be taken down by 20 to 30 jail guards. In keeping with the literature on race and crime, this may be an instance of systematic bias towards coloured people due to the belief that they are inherently undesirable and disproportionately powerful.

Reporting on the findings of the long-awaited Coroner's report which took almost seven months to be ready, Nasser (2017a) wrote that, "Almost seven months to the day his family learned Soleiman Faqiri died inside a small Ontario prison cell, a coroner's report has been released listing

a litany of injuries the 30-year-old suffered in the final minutes of his life” (para. 1). She further wrote that while “None of the injuries listed in the report are deemed by the coroner to be a sufficient cause of death” adding that, "Many of the injuries would be in keeping with the story of attempts to restrain this man, but falls, or blows or other impacts to these regions cannot be excluded," the report states” (Nasser, 2017a, para. 17 & 19). According to Westoll (2017, para. 4) the family lawyer indicated that, “Only one of those injuries, the pathologist says, was consistent with life-saving resuscitation efforts. The rest are consistent with blunt-force trauma.” One would assume that given this evidence of an assault it was only right that people would be held accountable for those injuries that resulted from the said attempts to restrain him according to the coroner’s report.

While the coroner’s report did not say who caused Faqiri's injuries, the family's lawyers believed it validates their darkest fears, which according to Nader Hasan, is that the death was caused by “a beating” (Nasser, 2017a). Westoll (2017) further noted that Hassan said, “What the report confirms is that the autopsy found that Soleiman had more than 50 visible injuries all over his body.” Hasan also told *CBC Toronto* that, "In my respectful view, there is certainly more than reasonable, probable grounds that serious criminal offences have been committed. And I am hopeful that the police and the Crown attorney's office will take a similar view and hopeful that if they do, that they will lay charges" (Nasser, 2017a, para. 27). According to Nasser’s (2019b) *CBC news* article, the Faqiri family brought up a \$14m (or \$14.3 as reported by others) lawsuit against the province, including the Ministry of Community Safety and Correctional Services, the superintendent of the Central East Correctional Centre and seven individual correctional staff members over the "excessive force" they believe killed him.

It was further revealed that, “Neither a genetic mutation affecting Faqiri's heart and blood vessels nor any disease was determined to be the cause of death. However, the coroner couldn't rule out asphyxia, which may or may not have resulted from the use of the spit hood.” Accordingly, the author of the news article also quoted the report as saying, "It is clear from the history that this man was involved in a physical struggle with probable emotional agitation and pain prior to death which ... may have promoted a pro-arrhythmic state" (Nasser, 2017a, para. 20-21). The report also said, “the coroner found a quantity of the antipsychotic drug olanzapine in Faqiri's system. That drug can lead to fatal arrhythmia, but the investigation found the levels weren't high enough to have caused death” (Nasser, 2017a, para. 22). White (2017) put it better when he wrote, “In summarizing, the coroner could not rule out asphyxiation or an irregular heartbeat as possible causes of death. The arrhythmia, the report states, could have been triggered by the combination of a physical struggle, emotional agitation, pain and the presence of an antipsychotic medication called olanzapine in his system” (p. A.1.).

Four years after the fatal death of Soleiman and after two police investigations refused to lay criminal charges against the correctional officers who supposedly tried to restrain him leading to his death, Nasser wrote in one of her published *CBC news* articles that, “Shackled, pepper-sprayed, face down wearing a spit hood. Nearly four years to the day that Soleiman Faqiri died on the floor of a jail cell, newly filed court documents suggest the guards who restrained him in the final moments of his life violated the use-of-force rules set out in their training” (Nasser, 2020b, para. 1). In addition, she went on to indicate that, “new court documents obtained by *CBC news* feature an interview with a jail sergeant at the scene that day who acknowledges the combination of tactics used against Faqiri was a "triple threat" for asphyxia — in other words, cutting off his oxygen supply” (para. 3). While initially in 2019, the province in a statement of defence stated that

no unauthorized force was used or that staff were not aware of the possible consequences of their actions, in a dramatic turn of events, it was reported that when the province was asked if it still stood by the claim made in the previous year, the Ministry of the Solicitor General declined to comment, saying the case remains before the courts (Nasser, 2020b).

It was further reported that in a formal examination under oath early in 2020, Dawn Roselle, one of two jail managers fired following Faqiri's death, argued that guards should have been aware that their actions could cut off his [Soleiman] air supply. Excerpts of the examination as published by *CBC's* Nasser is found below

"You would never combine the use of pepper spray with a spit hood [while] on one's stomach, right?" the family's lawyer Edward Marrocco asks Roselle in the examination.

"I would never combine that," Roselle responds, indicating she wasn't aware Faqiri was in a spit hood or that he'd been pepper-sprayed.

"OK, and the reason you don't do that is because that would be basically a triple threat of asphyxia," Marrocco continues.

"Absolutely," replies Roselle. (Nasser, 2020b, para. 18-21)

In addition, Nasser (2020b) reported the opinion of a use of force expert and former Ontario Police College instructor, Michael Burgess who believed the combination of lying face down, wearing a spit hood, and possibly vomiting could produce "the perfect storm" of variables leading to death. He said,

There's a number of things that we've learned over the last 40 or 50 years about asphyxia. One of the major lessons initially learned is never to leave a prisoner face down on the ground in handcuffs any longer than you absolutely have to.

Any amount of weight that this person is carrying up front is going to end up inside the body cavity, compressing the diaphragm, the lungs, and restricting his ability to breathe.

Add to that guards on top of someone and vomit accumulating in a spit hood, and the risk is that much greater. (para. 31-33)

It was again reported that a new motion filed as part of the family's \$14.3 million lawsuit against Ontario's Ministry of Community Safety and Correctional Services and seven individual staff members, suggested that what happened that day violated Ontario's policies on the use of spit hoods — a secure fabric covering used to keep inmates from spitting or biting. A copy of Ontario's policy and procedures manual for jail staff contained in the documents suggested that, "Staff must ensure that an inmate is not placed on his/her stomach or in any position that could result in positional asphyxia while wearing the spit hood" (Nasser, 2020b, para. 9). It also said an inmate must be "properly decontaminated" when pepper spray is used, and staff must ensure an inmate "is never left unattended while wearing the spit hood" (para, 10). In her article, Nasser expressed that at least two of those policies appear to have been violated in Faqiri's case. The documents also identified the brand of spit hood that was used on Faqiri before he died, which has the following warning label on the packaging: "Warning: Improper use of TranZport Hood can cause injury or death. Improper use may cause asphyxiation, suffocation or drowning in one's own fluids" (Nasser, 2020b, para. 14).

The argument of "unascertained" cause of Soleiman's death and refusal to lay charges became questionable when during an investigation by *CBC's* The Fifth Estate, they secured almost 1,500 pages of paperwork related to Faqiri's death and tracked down one inmate whose cell was immediately across from his (Nasser, 2019c). The witness' arguments challenged the initial argument that suggested that Soleiman was just being unruly for no apparent reason.

While it was reported from the outset of this tragedy that the police investigation claimed that Soleiman was belligerent and had gotten into a fight with guards while in the shower, spraying

them with water and throwing shampoo bottles at them, John Thibeault, who had been across the hall from Faqiri's cell, gave The Fifth Estate a different story. Thibeault would later tell *CBC's* The Fifth Estate that one of the guards whispered something to Faqiri along the way, agitating him (Nasser, 2019d). Thibeault said he was reluctant to tell police what he saw on the day Faqiri died because he still had time to serve and was concerned about what would happen if guards found out (Nasser, 2019c). Thibeault told The Fifth Estate that after his release, he attempted to contact police to report what he had seen. He was never questioned about it (2019b Nasser).

Thibeault was quoted as "Blood flying, limbs — it was brutal" in his description of the altercation between Soleiman and the guards and recounted how four guards punched him in the face, with one yelling at him to "stop resisting" (Nasser, 2019c, para. 16). Nasser wrote that, "Thibeault said he watched as Faqiri was pepper-sprayed in his face, taken into his cell out of the range of security cameras. He was dead within minutes" (para. 18).

The Faqiri family's claim was that, "The plaintiffs understand that the information that eluded the [Kawartha police] was, in fact, the evidence of an eyewitness to Soleiman's death whom police neglected to interview despite being aware of him" the family's claim reads (Nasser 2019b, para. 22).

4.9.2. Narratives of difficult correctional work and non-liability

An investigation into Soleiman's death was reported to be carried out by the coroner and Kawartha Lakes Police Service (Nasser, 2016a) as well as the Ministry of Community Safety and Correctional Services (Nasser, 2016b). Fifteen guards along with the jail's deputy superintendent were suspended following Faqiri's death, though the length of those suspensions and whether they were paid were unknown (Nasser, 2019b). It was reported that after an internal investigation, two

managers were dismissed (Nasser, 2019d) although police investigations found no guard liable for the death.

According to news reports, in a Kawartha Lakes Police Service's news release, it indicated that upon conclusion of its investigations there were no viable grounds for criminal charges to be laid in connection to Soleiman's death (Nasser, 2017b; Davis 2017). Parts of the release as published in a *CBC news* article read

Following a thorough analysis of all the evidence and witness statements, and after consulting with the Office of the Crown Attorney and the Office of the Chief Coroner and Ontario Forensic Pathology Services, we have concluded that no grounds exist to process criminal charges against anyone who was involved with Mr. Faqiri prior to his death on Dec. 15, 2016. (Nasser, 2017b, para. 9)

This conclusion came as a shocker to Soleiman's family with his brother Yusuf stating that, "We were told initially that the KLPS was taking as long as they were taking because they were waiting for the results of the autopsy report. And then that came out in the summer and it was shocking.... We know that he died after those assaults. What has changed between the summer when the report came out and now?" (Nasser, 2017b, para. 22). Reporting their pain, frustration, and disgust at the outcome of the investigation, Nasser wrote that, "The family also said they've lost faith in Kawartha police and are raising questions about whether the force was far enough removed from the correctional centre to carry out their investigation fairly. They're calling on the Ontario Provincial Police or another similar agency to reinvestigate" (Nasser, 2017b, para. 33). Journalists also reported that a mandatory inquest was going to be called into the death of Soleiman by the province.

While attempts to gain further information by the family and its lawyers proved futile, a *Toronto star* publication indicated that a threshold for laying criminal charges was not met. The author of

the article wrote, “In an email to the Star's inquiry for further explanation, Sgt. Tom Hickey of the Kawartha Lakes Police Service said that "the threshold for the laying of criminal charges is very high. In this case, after a thorough investigation, that threshold was not met" (Syed, 2017c, p. GT. 1). The author continued that, “Hickey said that the Office of the Crown Attorney, who is responsible for prosecuting cases such as this, agreed that this threshold was not met” (Syed, 2017c, p. GT. 1).

Meanwhile, some other articles also reported a reinvestigation was agreed to be undertaken by the Ontario Provincial Police (OPP) after a great outcry from the public. The conclusion of OPP’s investigation on July 07, 2020, however, also ruled out the laying of criminal charges against the guards, with the author of a *Toronto star* article writing that, “This is the second time police investigators have decided against charging any of the jail staff involved in Faqiri's death” (Toronto star, 2020a, p. A.3.). Expressing disappointment once again in the system, the Faqiri family through their lawyer, Nader Hasan reacted that

The OPP says that they can't lay charges because they don't know which of the guards put their knee on Soleiman's neck, which of the guards put the spit hood on his head, or which of the guards delivered the fatal blow. This is a profoundly troubling interpretation of the criminal law and one that is completely unfamiliar to me and every lawyer I know. If you're participating in a group beating, you're liable for the acts of your accomplices. That's always been the law in this country. (Toronto star, 2020a, p. A.3.)

Even without a technical knowledge of the law, it is quite reasonable to assume that charges could be laid against a mob when they commit a criminal act together. This decision by the OPP perhaps was an endorsement of group criminality or perhaps a desperate attempt to shield their colleagues within the criminal justice system.

Further, it was reported that when the OPP's spokesperson Gosia Puzio's said that, "In consultation with the Crown and after a thorough assessment of available evidence, it has been determined that there is no reasonable prospect of conviction on any criminal offences", Yusuf Faqiri "questioned the independence of the OPP investigation, asking why the police force consulted with Crown attorneys who had been involved in the earlier Kawartha Lakes investigation that came to the same conclusion" in a conversation with the *Star* (Toronto star, 2020a, p. A.3.).

4.10. Denial of responsibility & Blame game

In what seemed to be one of the clearest indications that something went horribly wrong on the day Soleiman died, another interesting narrative included a denial of responsibility and laying of blame. According to Nasser (2019d) in response to the family's lawsuit, the province issued a statement of defence in which it defended the Ministry of Community Safety and Correctional Services, claiming that none of its employees used "unauthorised force" on Faqiri in December 2016. The Government of Ontario further denied that it "breached any duty of care that it owed to Mr. Faqiri" in its defence statement (White, 2019, p. A.9.). It was revealed by Nasser (2019d) that in its statement of defence filed in October with the Ontario Superior Court of Justice, the province denied its "servants or agents were aware that their actions would lead to Mr. Faqiri's injuries" (para. 14). Surprisingly, it was reported the government claimed that those [sacked] managers, John Thompson and Dawn Roselle, "had not behaved in the course and scope of their duties," according to court filings (Nasser, 2019d, para. 16).

However, in a crossclaim submitted in response to the province's statement of defence, Thompson and Roselle claimed that their firings were "scapegoating," and that on the day of Faqiri's death, they were simply following their training (Nasser, 2019d, para. 17). They asserted that the province

was "deliberately and maliciously" refusing to defend them in a lawsuit filed by the mentally ill man's family (May, 2019, p. GT. 1) and accused the province of trying to "shift blame and attention from its failings" — failings they claim "contributed directly" to Faqiri's death (Nasser, 2019d, para. 2). According to May (2019), the counter claim stated that, "The ministry's refusal to protect and defend its managers is at all times intended to deflect blame from themselves and scapegoat the defendants" (p. GT. 1). The journalist further wrote, "They also contend that, if there was any negligence, which they deny, it was the fault of the province for not providing adequate training and staff" (May, 2019, p. GT. 1). This back and forth between the dismissed officials and the Ministry meant that somehow, someone refused to follow due procedure leading to the death of Soleiman.

According to Nasser (2019d), Thompson and Roselle note the ministry refused to send in its institutional crisis intervention team (ICIT) — stationed "steps away" from Faqiri's cell — that day. She quoted the crossclaim as, "This failure endangered the lives of the [defendants] and contributed directly to the fatal consequences of Faqiri." She also wrote that "The pair claim the ministry failed to properly assess Faqiri's risk to himself or staff and did not provide sufficient training on the use of handcuffs, spit hoods and use of force on mentally ill inmates" and went on to write that, "The province claims the training provided was "reasonable" and says it stands by the decision not to deploy the crisis team. It also denies it "acted with malice" in firing Thompson and Roselle" (Nasser, 2019d, para. 18-23).

4.11. Calls to improve the system

The way Soleiman's death was managed by state officials ignited calls for justice and accountability as well as a change of the system. These calls followed narratives of needs of

responsibility and accountability, inadequate training for officers and systemic problems similar to what pertained in Case A. One of the indicators of these calls for change in the area of training for officers was established in one of the initial new stories which mentioned the training received by correctional officers. Notably, in a *CBC news* article, Monte Vieselmeyer, a representative for correctional workers with the Ontario Public Service Employees Union was reported to have disclosed that correctional officers and managerial staff needed better training on how to deal with inmates with mental health issues. He said, "I have said repeatedly that we don't have appropriate training" (Nasser, 2016b, para. 23). Vieselmeyer's concern was affirmed by Dr Sandy Simpson chief of forensic psychiatry at the Centre for Addiction and Mental Health who was reported to have said, "If the person is being agitated on the basis of a mental illness then often what they're feeling more predominantly is fear rather than anger. If you respond very firmly and overly authoritatively to someone who's already very fearful you'll escalate, rather than contain, the problem" (Nasser, 2016a, para. 23). Dr. Simpson who also touched on the devastating effects of the use of segregation within corrections intimated that its cyclical and compound effects could lead to the use of force. He was quoted to have said, "But force needs to be the last thing that you do with a whole range of skillful interventions that come before" (Nasser, 2016a, para. 29).

The narrative of systemic issues was also seen in the Ontario Human Rights Commission's response to the incident. When it was learned that criminal charges were not going to be laid in Soleiman's death, Renu Mandhane, chief commissioner of the Ontario Human Rights Commission (OHRC), indicated that the Faqiri case is part of a wider systemic problem in Ontario's correctional services. She was quoted as saying, "This is a system that has not had independent oversight for a very long time". She also said, "There's a culture where people don't live and breathe accountability" (Syed, 2017b, p. GT.1.).

Pertaining to the narrative of needs of accountability, on the third anniversary of Soleiman's fatal death, his family was joined at a vigil in Toronto, one of seven held across the country, by hundreds of people in the freezing weather, demanding accountability for Faqiri's death and reform in a criminal justice system that fails to effectively treat mental health issues far too often (Nasser, 2019c). Several mental health, legal, prisoner, faith-based, and national advocacy groups also publicly criticized the OPP's decision not to bring charges. Many of these supporters posited that the case exemplified how the legal system fails the most vulnerable and disenfranchised, and it highlighted how persons suffering from mental illness are often left unsupported, leading to arrest, detention, and, in some cases, death (Toronto star, 2020b).

According to an article by Ignatenko (2020) in the *Toronto star*, over a hundred Canadian doctors, attorneys, academics, and politicians signed an open letter demanding accountability in the 2016 death of Soleiman by Ontario prison guards. A portion of the letter, which was written by supporters of Justice for Soli movement read, "Ontarians need answers as to what really happened to Mr. Faqiri, so that such a tragedy never happens again" (Ignatenko 2020, p. A.21.). Sen. Kim Pate, one of the prominent supporters and signatories of the letter, was quoted saying, "Given all we know about the inability of prisons to respond appropriately to individuals with mental health issues, it would be preferable for the government to invest in mental health services in the community and focus on decarcerating those with mental health issues" (Ignatenko 2020, p. A.21.). According to Yasin Dwyer, executive director of the Muslim Chaplaincy of Toronto and former Federal Prison Chaplain, Faqiri's death is "a witness to our failure to live up to our claim of being a society built on the values of justice and accountability" (Ignatenko 2020, p. A.21.). Ignatenko (2020) also reported that over 17,000 people have signed a Change.org petition started by the

Justice for Soli organization in 2019 demanding responsibility for Faqiri's death, a formal apology to the Faqiri family, and reform to the prison system's mental health training.

Similarly, another *Toronto star* (2020a) publication reported Anita Szigeti, a lawyer who frequently represents clients with mental health issues saying that, “a decision not to charge anyone involved in a group assault because it was unclear who dealt a fatal blow is bizarre from a legal standpoint”. She said, “There is no basis for that approach in law, so I am puzzled by it” (p. A.3.). She further indicated that, “We need a culture shift within corrections and the ill-treatment of mentally ill people in corrections has long been identified as a huge problem,” and pointed to similar cases in the past, including the death of Ashley Smith, a 19-year-old woman with serious mental illness, in a Kitchener prison, noting that, “These are all terrible tragedies and they are all preventable” (Toronto star, 2020a, p. A.3.). It was also reported that, the decision to conclude the inquiry with no charges, according to Justin Piché, an associate professor of criminology at the University of Ottawa and a prison abolitionist, “demonstrates a persistent failure to hold prisoners and prisons accountable.” Justin Piche was quoted as,

The situation is fundamentally unjust but unsurprising given that we have an injustice system that normalizes state violence and lets it continue on with impunity. The Faqiri family continues to grieve and they need a measure of healing. For them and for us all, we must do better. (Toronto star, 2020a, p. A.3.).

The Schizophrenia Society of Canada also stated in a news release that “We are profoundly saddened that justice has been delayed and denied for the Faqiri family,” adding that people with serious mental illness should not be imprisoned in prisons but rather receive proper care and help in a forensic hospital (Toronto star, 2020b, p. A.26.).

	Family	Witness	Advocacy groups/ Experts	Ministry	Jail guards	Dismissed guards/officials
Gentle Soleiman	X					
Unruly Soleiman					X	
Bad correctional work and improper use of tactics: death by beating	X	X	X			
Difficult correctional work and non liability						X
Denial of responsibility and blame game				X		X
Improve the system	X		X			

Table 4.2. Narratives and proponents – Case B

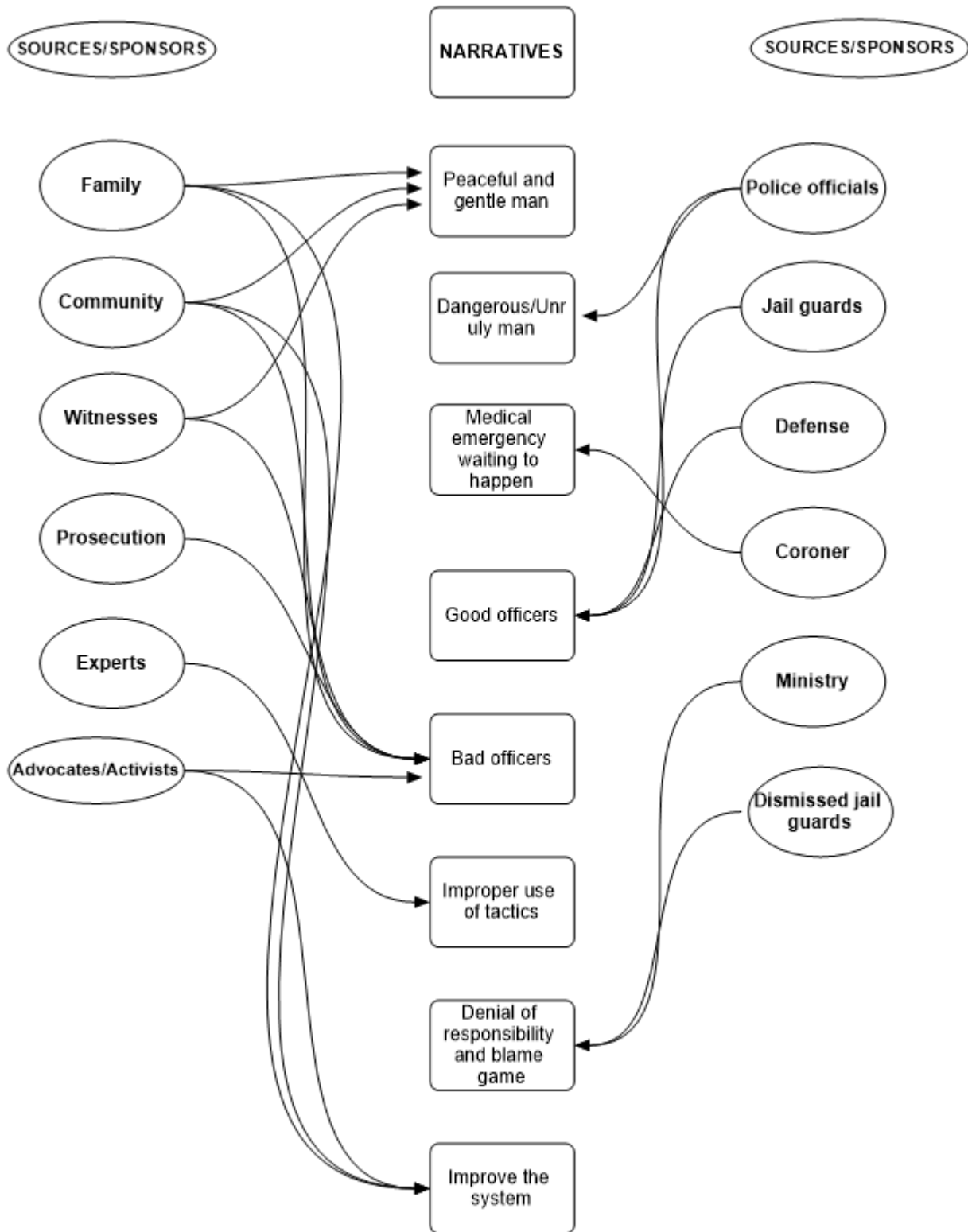


Figure 4.3. Mind map of narratives and their sponsors/sources

4.12. Conclusion

The narratives that emerged from the fatal deaths of Abdirahman and Soleiman at the hands of law enforcement agents (Ottawa police officers and Central East Correctional officers respectively) indicate a sharp divide between the public and law enforcement officials in instances of law enforcement misconduct or brutality. These narratives emerged from quoted sources in the media reports made up of witnesses, families of the victims, law enforcement officers and officials as well as other sources. In Abdirahman Abdi's case, it was observed that his supporters – mainly his family, community, and sympathizers – presented a picture of a gentle, peaceful, and vulnerable man who was treated unfairly by Ottawa officers leading to his death. This sharply contradicts the story told by Ottawa police officials, colleagues, and supporters of the officers. A similar thing can be observed from the case of Soleiman Faqiri. The narratives above lead to the conclusion that, there is usually a sharp divide between community and officials when cases of police violence or brutality occur. Community members come together and stand with other community members who experience police violence while law enforcement officials who are accused of misconduct enjoy high levels of support from their peers, superiors, and unions.

The concept of narrative has been operationalized differently in studies because there is no single definition of narrative that is acknowledged by researchers (Hinyard & Kreuter, 2007; Fadlallah, El-Jardali, Nomier, Hemadi, Arif, Langlois, & Akl, 2019). Nevertheless, it is generally agreed that it should include a description of an experience, feature characters, some sort of plot, and provide an interesting detail (Fadlallah et al., 2019; Dahlstrom, 2014). Patterson and Monroe (1998) assert that not all features of a situation are described, but those that are typically notable because they raise issues. They further contend that because narratives aim to restore equilibrium by resolving

the current problem, they all convey an idea of how the world should be by establishing the norm and what constitutes a departure from it.

It is possible that interpreting a narrative will not require as much expertise as language analysis (Patterson & Monroe, 1998). Since different people may interpret and process an event differently, the use of narratives in this study focuses on comments and discourses on the events, how people make sense of what happened and why it happened the way it did, and what can be done to prevent these issues from recurring. We see that the narratives in this study are concerned with identifying how actors in these incidents are characterized, how the deaths are explained by various parties, the cause of these deaths or what went wrong, and what people proposed as a way forward. Thus, by connecting the dots between the various parts, the narratives in this chapter help us to understand the entire event. This improves our understanding of law enforcement brutality cases, its causes, and consequences.

The narratives in this study also in a way tell stories through the characters involved. These stories depict a conflict that represents an unfortunate event. For instance, there is a story which suggests that the deaths of these gentlemen resulted from a system characterized by systemic racism, and which does not effectively support those who are mentally ill. Here, the characters are Abdirahman, Soleiman, police officers, and correctional guards. The plot of this story revolves around the murder of the two gentlemen by criminal justice agents, and the moral is that no correctional officer was charged (in Soleiman's case) and the police officer was found not guilty by the court (in Abdirahman's case), despite calls for systemic changes. We can deduce another story from these same narratives. According to this story, Abdirahman, a dangerous individual, caused his death by refusing to comply and resisting arrest. The characters are the dangerous Abdi, the good police officer who is scared and in need of “saving” from Abdi, and the coroner, who

provides an alternative cause of death. The plot revolves around police officers simply doing their jobs, and the moral of the story is that people should obey police orders and that more support and resources should be provided to police officers who are doing difficult jobs.

Thus, the narratives discovered in this study are useful in assisting us in identifying important issues with law enforcement interactions with citizens, particularly those of colour and those suffering from mental illness, pointing to problems with how brutality issues are handled and causing people to think critically about these issues (Fadlallah et al., 2019). As argued by Patterson and Monroe (1998), the narrative's account of the events may be used to explain and defend why they occurred in the manner they did, causally and morally. It has been observed that when questions of police brutality come up, there are significant differences of opinion and contradictory stories that seem to frame and reinterpret events to support a specific perspective (Canevez, Karabelnik, & Winter, 2022). These narratives or stories may feed into how society is structured and what values are present in a society, as well as reveal inequalities in society (Patterson & Monroe, 1998).

Chapter 5: Conflicting Frames

5.1. Introduction

The news media has the ability to influence how people think about an issue or occurrence by affecting "the importance individuals attach to particular beliefs" (Nelson & Oxley, 1999, p. 1041). For instance, if the media frame the issue of teenage pregnancy as a personal moral failing, its responsibility is assigned to the individual but when it is framed as a weakness in parenting style and upbringing, responsibility for teenage pregnancy is assigned to the individual's parents. Media framing may not always be an automatic process as argued by Entman (1993) but may rather be dependent on a set of people's existing information or biases, competition among media frames, and the news media source's trustworthiness (Fridkin et al., 2017). This chapter explores how the different frames presented in the news reporting of Abdirahman and Soleiman's deaths at the hands of law enforcement officers vary and may present conflicting perspectives of the incident for consumers of the news.

According to this study, the news reports used a variety of frames when reporting on the incidents. These included frames related to the role of racism, the use of force, the role of mental illness, and injustice which mainly arose from the nature of arguments between law enforcement officials and the families and sympathizers of the victims. These frames were thus discovered to have opposing sides, or those who were for them and those who were against them. As such, in the following sections, these frames were analyzed within the literature to determine how different actors shaped these frames through their differing perspectives and opinions. This may affect audience attitudes and perceptions of the events between these racialized individuals and law enforcement.

5.2. The frame of race

Framing studies have shown that the media does not provide a favourable portrayal of race (Poindexter, Smith & Heider, 2003; Entman, 1994, 1992). When law enforcement brutalities involving racialized men are reported, it is common for newspapers to portray the opposition or conflict between family/community/advocates and law enforcement authorities (Bowen, 2015). This may manifest in family/community/advocates claims of race being a factor in these fatal encounters and the denial of same by law enforcement authorities. This section outlines how race was presented in the media coverage of the incidents.

5.2.1. Deaths framed as race-related

The dynamics of race and use of force was one of the frames that emerged in news reporting of both Abdirahman and Soleiman's death. Some articles were framed around race with a discussion of how most police violence cases involve people belonging to the racial minority. The excessive use of lethal force against unarmed citizens is the most obvious manifestation of systemic racism in a culture, and it has long been recognized that the degree of violence employed disproportionately against disadvantaged ethnic minorities reflects this prejudice (Reinka and Leach, 2017).

A key argument taken up in the media regarding race and law enforcement use of force is that would events have played out the way they did had Abdirahman (Somali Canadian) and Soleiman (Afghan Canadian) been White individuals. The provision of space for community actors and activists to express concerns of race and question actions of law enforcement officers was likely to influence people's perceptions of racism in policing as a problem in their community (Fridkin et al., 2017). There was no evidence of overt racism or bias in the reporting. The media reports

consistently brought up race in relation to both victims' background as well as in relation to arguments put forth by supporters of the families of the victims. I found that the victims' and their families' dignity was not undermined by this mention of race. Further, the mention of the race of the victims seemed to add a racial twist to the story – suggesting that “a racialized man was killed by [white] officers”. For the most part, the perception of racism and its influence was established by quotes from members of the Somali community and activists including the Justice for Abdirahman Coalition who work to eliminate racism and social inequality. A few of the articles reported on the doubts people had concerning race influencing the conduct of officers arresting Abdirahman. For instance, one of the articles reported a neighbour and spokesperson for the Abdi family’s doubts about the role of race in the conduct of officers when asked about the role race played in the altercation if any: It is the “first thing that comes to mind” (Harford, 2016a, A .8.). In another article, the author reported on Charles, a neighbour of Abdi, who thought: “You can't help thinking if the guy was White, it wouldn't have happened like that” (Stone, 2016, p. A.7.).

Similarly, an *Ottawa Citizen* article also reported the reservations of Somali communities in Ottawa and the Muslim communities to which Abdirahman belonged which suggested that they could not comprehend why such a tragedy should befall their member and even strongly held the view that prejudice (based on his association with the above-named groups) could have played a role. Ihsaan Gardee, executive director of the National Council of Canadian Muslims said:

Many members of the Ottawa Muslim and Somali communities have serious concerns about how this tragic incident unfolded, including whether prejudice had something to do with Mr. Abdi's treatment. (Harford, 2016a, p. A.8.)

Similarly, another article reporting on Abdirahman’s death quoted a Somali Canadian and Black Lives Matter supporter who said, “although “we don’t know anything” about what happened, “at the same time, we do know that the man who was beaten up by police was a black man, was a

Muslim man, was a Somali man and was a mentally ill man. That should be enough to know that [what] happened to him was messed up” (CTV, 2016, para. 19-20).

In the above scenarios, community residents expressed their sentiments following the death of Abdirahman and wondered how events would have turned out if he had been a White man. This perception is not unfounded because the literature on race and policing has established that there are racial inequities in policing, with racial minorities more likely than Whites to think that police are biased and use racial profiling (Kahn & Martin, 2016).

Again, negative racial stereotypical depictions of race which framed both Abdirahman and Soleiman as extraordinarily strong appeared in some articles. Such articles represented the victims as being dangerous and difficult to control by officers due to their size and supernatural strength. This appeared to legitimize the misconduct of law enforcement agents towards them. For instance, a *CBC news* report stated, “At one point, Weir told the court he felt Abdi possessed "super-human strength" and credited Montsion with saving his life” (Osman,2020, para. 18). Further, another *CBC* article quoted Const. Weir saying: "I didn't want to get within arm's reach. This guy would have destroyed me" (Osman, 2019b, para. 18). According to Weir who was armed with a baton, pepper spray and probably a side firearm, it was Abdirahman who was unarmed, being pursued, and grabbed a construction foam panel at a point to fend off attacks from Weir according to eyewitnesses was the one who would have “destroyed” him. Further, an *Ottawa Citizen* news report quoted a witness’ perceptions before the police arrived. The report stated, “He later described Abdi to police as "strong as an ox" and said Abdi had the woman in a headlock” (Helmer, 2019h, p. D.1.). Similarly, in a *CBC news* report regarding Soleiman, the news article described how “Several of the guards describe exhaustion after attempting to restrain Soleiman" which led to them calling “code blue” (Nasser, 2017a, para. 14). These negative descriptions of both men in

the media reports are consistent with the literature on race stereotypes which suggests that racialized men and particularly Black males are perceived to be taller, heavier, more muscular, more physically fearsome, and more capable of physical harm than young White men of the same size; a perception that can impact the decision to use force and to support same against them (Wilson, Hugenberg, & Rule, 2017). Despite both men being unarmed, framing the victims as threatening may further entrench in people's minds the very negative racial stereotypes which causes racialized men to experience differential treatment in law enforcement encounters. It is however worthy of note that there was no tangible evidence found in news reports that framed either Abdirahman or Soleiman as "criminals". A few news reports on Soleiman explicitly stated that "he did not have a criminal record" but had had several run-ins with the law due to his mental illness.

Additionally, some reports in the *Ottawa Citizen* revealed that activists condemned politicians' lack of a swift response or action to Abdirahman's death, which they said indicated the poor views they have about racialized individuals. For instance, one activist, Yamikani Msosa of the Sexual Assault Support Centre of Ottawa was quoted as: "It's clear the mayor's response is sending a message to Black individuals living in Ottawa that our lives are not as valuable as others". She said Black Ottawans face a perverse problem: they're both "overpoliced" - monitored, harassed, subjected to street checks - and underprotected, because they're reluctant to call the police when they're really needed (Reevely, 2016, p. A.1.). This statement, which also refers to police maltreatment of racial minorities, is consistent with research indicating that racial minorities fear police because they do not do an excellent job of protecting them (Pickett, Graham & Cullen, 2022). In another instance to depict the race frame, an *Ottawa Citizen* article had the headline,

“When will our lives matter?': Pain and heartbreak follow Ottawa officer's full acquittal in Abdirahman Abdi manslaughter trial”.

Again, Abdirahman’s case was linked to another case that involved another Somali Canadian who was violently arrested by Const. Montsion, the same officer charged with Abdirahman’s death. Although it was not explicitly indicated why that ‘linkage’ was reported, in the opening paragraph of the *Ottawa Citizen* report, the author wrote “Const. Daniel Montsion, one of the Ottawa police officers under SIU investigation in the deadly arrest of Abdirahman Abdi, once panicked in a violent takedown of another Somali Canadian man” (Dimmock, 2016, p. A.1.). The linkage of these two cases is assumed to demonstrate Const. Montsion’s racial bias when dealing with racialized individuals or that prejudice may play a role in how law enforcement officers deal with racialized individuals.

5.2.2. Denial of the influence of race in those deaths

In a “not about race” frame, this research identified that in news reports of law enforcement brutality, law enforcement sources, officials and their unions may deny racism, its impact or racial bias as well as any wrongdoing in their operations even when it may be clear for all to see. In this instance, Matt Skof, the president of Ottawa Police Association at the time of Abdirahman’s death stated on a *CBC radio* show that:

To suggest that race was an issue in this, it's inappropriate. The officers were called to the scene. The officers had to attend. Race, in this case, is a fact, just like your age, your gender, your height. It doesn't have anything to do with our ... decision-making. Our decision-making is based on our training, and our training has nothing to do with race.

That's unfortunate that we're seeing the bleeding of that very difficult rhetoric into Canada now. And I'm very live to it, I can obviously be sensitive to it, I'm aware that it's occurring, but it's two separate

conversations and not one that's applicable here. (Nease, 2016b, para. 11-12)

In the above comments, Matt Skof denies the influence of racism on the decisions of police officers effecting the arrest of Abdirahman and how the “rhetoric” of racism is “inappropriate” and does not even fit the discussion. This portrayal of the case stood clearly in contrast with the discourse that the arrest seemed race related. Skof’s words are therefore consistent with Van Dijk’s (1992) argument that many White people may follow positive self-presentation and negative other-presentation strategies when they deny racism while talking about ethnic or racial minorities. Dijk argues that the act of denial may be done in different ways and is part of a defence strategy in the face of accusations of wrongdoing related to racism. Further, Van Dijk argues that justification which is closely related to denials may be used instead of outright denial. This means a negative act directed at a member of a minority group can be justified as a justifiable defence, or by demonstrating that the other person was culpable and thus merited a harsh reaction, even if an unfavourable result was achieved. Accordingly, both Abdirahman and Soleiman’s actions were blamed for triggering the reactions or conduct of officers which led to their deaths, thereby excusing the officers’ excessive force. The denial of racism and justification or excusal of the negative acts towards Abdirahman also emphasized the police officers’ compliance with the law in discharging their mandate of providing peace and security which stressed their role as competent and decent citizens (Djik, 1992).

To Skof, the minority concerns of prejudice and racism are “unwarranted and ridiculous accusations” (Dijk, 1992, p. 101). This also means that if racism is denied, minority groups and their protests or other forms of resistance may find it difficult to be taken seriously because the public will be led to believe that racism has no bearing on how law enforcement functions. Therefore, there will not be a public discussion, a change in the general public's opinion, or a

change in the structure of power if politicians, government officials, and agencies - including law enforcement and the media - refuse to accept that racism exists and is a serious problem. In sum, “denial is a major management strategy” (Djik, 1992, p. 97) which may serve to control resistance or marginalize reform and maintain things the way they are (Spratt et al., 2007).

Still denying racism, Margaret Parsons, executive director of the Toronto-based African Canadian Legal Clinic, was quoted in the *Ottawa Citizen* as saying that politicians should cease denying the significance of Abdirahman's killing. She indicated that, “Mentally ill men with dark skin have died in confrontations with the police across Canada for decades, and it's absurd for an investigation to exclude racism as a possible factor in Abdi's death” (Reevelly, 2016, p. A.1.). The SIU's decision not to investigate the role of racism in Abdirahman's death is perhaps a covert strategy to not acknowledge that racism is institutionalized, thus extinguishing any public debate about racism that may arise from such an investigation. This lends support to Lawrence's (2020) argument that notwithstanding the persistence of police brutality complaints, groups (like racialized people) that believe police brutality is a big public problem have a hard time gaining authority for their reality due to rhetorical and other constraints that affect the public's understanding of police brutality. The dismissal of racism concerns misses the whole point.

5.3. The frame of use of force

Although research has demonstrated that the use of force is an unavoidable and necessary component of policing, its application is fraught with controversy. Given the ambiguity surrounding the matter, Lawrence (2020) contends that whether police use of force is portrayed as brutality and whether brutality is viewed as a problem is highly impacted by whose voices and perspectives the media emphasizes. Thus, the problem of police brutality is frequently the subject

of highly diverse viewpoints, reflecting the ambiguity of individual use of force situations (Lawrence, 2000). This section examines how the media represented the incidents using the "use of force frame."

5.3.1. Legitimate/Necessary use of force

A rival framing of the events centred on law and order was found in most news stories. From the angle of this frame, it would seem that the level of force employed by officers to bring Abdirahman and Soleiman under arrest/control was appropriate or legitimate. Lawrence (1996) argued that, when compelling evidence of excessive force appears, officials or their sympathizers often promote individualizing frames. He maintained that one viewpoint is that police officers use force because suspects make them feel threatened. Lawrence's argument applies to the negative racial stereotypical depictions of the men - as extraordinarily strong - already described in the preceding section. Most of the news articles reported or cited officials' claims about the danger that the victim or suspect posed to law enforcement officers or the public which necessitated the force that was applied by officers. In this case, several reports of Abdirahman's death claimed that:

The officers were experiencing a male that was assaultive in behaviour. So they are required, they're bound to react to that, they have to react to that, they have to contain that. (Nease, 2016b, para. 14)

Similarly, one of the articles reporting on Soleiman's death quoted the president of the local union representing correctional officers at Central East as saying:

From what I know of what happened, staff acted professionally to subdue a rebellious inmate. I don't know the exact cause of death and it sounds like neither does anybody. I do know that a lot of staff advocated for him to go to a mental-health unit, to get extra help. (White, 2017, p. A.1.)

The above statements explained the incident from the perspective of law enforcement signifying the necessity of bringing both gentlemen under control by any means possible because they posed

a threat to arresting officers and even people nearby. It also characterized the difficult nature of police work to the extent that sometimes officers themselves may be at risk. Given this, the exposure to the law enforcement frame has been found to extensively affect how people rated the officers involved and the victim or suspect (Fridkin et al., 2017) which is likely to be positive given that they may consider law enforcement officials to be doing a good job to keep the public safe, denying the inappropriateness of the officers' conduct. In essence, the law enforcement frame of the good cop (Pollack & Allern, 2014) was projected in such reports. Because crime is a topic that dominates the news and the public consciousness, framing law enforcement agents' use of force or brutality incidents in terms of law and order has the propensity to establish and maintain the police's credibility (Lawrence, 2000). This, when contrasted with minority communities' assertion that they are consistently and continually targets of police violence or brutality, the practice may be difficult to classify as an issue not only because many of the White middle class do not perceive it as a threat, but also because it disproportionately affects the exact people that the White middle class perceive as a threat (Lawrence, 2020). Further, the depiction of the use of force as a necessary response to violent criminals and deviants, or as a result of incompetent officers who lose control, can help to prevent the construction of policing problems in the news (Lawrence, 2000).

The legitimacy of law enforcement's use of force was further strengthened when Const. Montsion was acquitted of the charges of manslaughter, aggravated assault, and assault with a weapon brought against him. News reports that reported the ruling indicated the Judge's support for Montsion's use of force which he explained was based on the kind of information he [Montsion] had received prior to arriving at the scene. A *CBC news* report indicated that, Justice Kelly upheld that Montsion's use of force was justified based on the kind of radio information he had received on his way to the scene about a man who had resisted arrest and fled especially when the radio

communication had raised an issue of mental health dimension to the arrest. He stated that Montsion's actions suggested he was trying to assist a colleague officer in an arrest, in agreement with a testimony given by a police training expert (CBC news, 2020).

This suggested that perhaps what the first officer (Const. Weir) had told Const. Montsion before his arrival indicated that a higher level of force was needed to subdue Abdirahman - who experienced mental illness - which was not out of the norm. The presiding judge Justice Robert Kelly ruled that he was left with reasonable doubt that the officer's actions led to Abdirahman's death, and the Crown failed to prove beyond reasonable doubt that Montsion's actions caused Abdirahman's death.

5.3.2. Illegitimate/Excessive use of force

News reports simultaneously represented arguments that suggested that the actions of law enforcement officers were questionable, particularly the level of force used in their interactions with both men. In this different angle of reporting on actions taken by law enforcement agents, some news reports dwelled on the perspectives of the family of the victims, witnesses, community members and activists. Testimonies and reactions of the above-named groups which featured quite prominently in news reports during the first phase of the Abdirahman's case and the final phase of the case projected a bad cop frame which created a negative impression of policing and portrayed the criminal justice system and its agents as corrupt and incompetent (Pollack & Allern, 2014). For example, opposing Matt Skof's assertion that charges laid against Const. Montsion's were unwarranted and were laid due to public pressure, Heather Badenoch, a community consultant with Ottawa Community Immigrant Services Organization told *CBC news* that "the charges against Const. Montsion were warranted given the level of violence seen in the video stating that

"the video is real, it's not a television show. Someone's life ends" (Trinh, 2017, para. 19). She added that , "From what I've seen, the level of violence we saw had to lead to charges" (para. 13).

An aunt of Abdirahman in expressing the suffering of the family likened the violence that Abdirahman experienced at the hands of the Ottawa police officers to the kind that they were fleeing from in the unstable country of Somalia. She said, "with the situation that happened with Abdirahman, (we) came to Canada from Somali to get refuge from violence; we are just being greeted with this violence here" (Harford, 2016c, p. A.5.).

During the trial of Abdirahman's death, the Crown faulted Const. Montsion for his excessive use of force on Abdirahman which led to his death. They argued that lethal force is only justified when the officer believes that someone will suffer grievous bodily harm but that was never the case with Abdirahman. In one of their arguments, crown attorneys stated that, "Montsion punched Abdi eight times in the head and face while wearing gloves with reinforced, "plated" knuckles — five times while both were standing, and three more while Abdi was face down on the ground" (Osman, 2020, para. 10).

For McGhie and his wife, both witnesses, they were shocked by Const. Montsion's actions which they found to be too extreme even though they were not professionals who could judge the appropriateness of the level of force used. An *Ottawa Citizen* report quoted McGhie as saying:

I think the both of us were really surprised when the second officer arrived and immediately started beating the suspect with his fists in the face and head. I mean, Mr. Abdi was not compliant, for whatever reason, but it seemed that that degree of force for the type of resistance Mr. Abdi was putting up, to us — again we're not professionals — it seemed extremely violent and extremely excessive. (Nease & Kupfer, 2016, para. 15)

Witnessing the event from the street, Zainab who lived in the same building with Abdirahman said the officers hit him together and they hit him until he passed away, while an anonymous witness

indicated that, "It was the most gruesome thing I ever saw in my life. And everyone needs to remember that. He was a human being" (Stone, 2016. p. A.7.). Others attributed the misconduct of Const. Montsion to systemic shortcomings. For example, an *Ottawa Citizen* report quoted David Onyalo, the director of anti-racism and human-rights work for the Canadian Labour Congress, saying, "We want mayors to take responsibility for how police behave". He further intimated that "Voters have to make it clear to mayors such as Jim Watson that if Ottawa's police misbehave, Ottawa's mayor will pay the price at the polls" (Reeveley, 2016, p. A.1.).

5.4. The frame of mental illness

Despite evidence to the contrary, conventional media representations of mental illness have always portrayed mentally ill people as "deviants" and "dangerous others," maintaining the stereotypical and incorrect idea that mental illness, violence and criminality are somehow related (Clifford, 2021). It is normal for people to jump to conclusions and assign blame after a deadly law enforcement intervention with a mentally ill person.

The news media's reporting of such occurrences reflects the tensions between the opposing claims of key stakeholders in their effort to understand the incident. According to Lawrence (2000), these allegations may be "individualizing," wherein authorities assert that people who were the targets of use-of-force incidents had done it to themselves, or "systemic," whereby nonofficials assert that there had been a misuse of force. In this section, I describe the kind of claims made regarding the victims' mental condition and how it may have affected how their deadly encounter with law enforcement officials turned out.

5.4.1. Mental health should be considered

Both Abdirahman and Soleiman's deaths ignited calls to take mental health issues seriously. Several news articles contained frames that presented the issue of mental illness as one that required a compassionate response especially when mental illness patients fall foul of the law or come into contact with law enforcement. This compassion frame assumes the innocence of suspects with mental health issues since they may not be fully in control of their mental health which made them "victims of mental illness" (Frankham, 2020). For example, Farhia Ahmed, chair of the Justice for Abdirahman Coalition was quoted in an *Ottawa Citizen* report as saying: "It's an acknowledgement that these were not the actions of a man in his right sense, and so rather than a compassionate response, which would have looked at trying their best to de-escalate the situation ... It seems it escalated very quickly" (Helmer, 2020b, para. 14). Ahmed was reacting to Bridgehead Café's apology over its initial response to the death of Abdirahman which was issued almost 4 years after Abdirahman's death and acknowledged that Abdirahman was a "regular customer" who suffered from mental illness. In another *Ottawa Citizen* report, the executive director of Ottawa Community Immigrant Services Organization, Leslie Emory stated that: "We have a vulnerable individual; he's a member of a visible minority, he's known to have mental health issues and somehow something escalated to the point at which there was an altercation and he died. Any way we look at that, that shouldn't be the outcome" (Yogaretnam, 2016b, p. A.3.). Similarly, Yusuf Faqiri, Soleiman's brother was actively captured in most news reports saying how vulnerable people living with mental illness are and how they needed help instead of being criminalized. For example, in a *Global news* article, he indicated that, "This is a man that had a mental illness. This is a man that was vulnerable. This is a man that needed compassion. People

needed to understand that he needed help and they never gave that to him” (Miller & Stevens, 2017a, para. 40-41).

Complementing the compassion frame was the frame of “lack of support and awareness of mental illness”. Several news stories also cited and quoted mental health experts and advocates who emphasized systemic challenges in dealing with mental illness and what may be done to resolve some of these challenges. Such representation of these expert and advocate voices in the news became a way of legitimizing concerns of mental illness. Both cases were used as an appeal to support mental health by linking it to a systemwide issue where resources for dealing with mental health are lacking. Ayan Yusuf, 29, a schizophrenic and an outspoken mental health advocate in Ottawa's Somali community was reported to have said in one of *Ottawa Citizen's* reports: “She adds that a lack of resources catering to her community is a compounding problem. The Somali Centre for Family Services had a one-year pilot mental health project that provided counselling through its centre, but interest was low, and funding ran out. The program stopped in May of this year. Since then, the centre has directed those seeking help to another youth centre” (Harford, 2016b, p. A.3.). Ahmed further spoke on the stigma of mental illness which prevented people [from the Somali community] from seeking help: “You'll see kids with autism and stuff and their parents don't bring them out into the community because a lot of people will start talking about them, they'll put them down. There's a big stigma (in the Somali community), it's a taboo. People don't talk about it. They don't bring it up. They hide their condition” (Harford, 2016b, p. A.3.). Yusuf Faqiri also bemoaned how a vulnerable man suffering from mental illness was “brutalized” by jail guards with none of the guards being charged and the family consistently denied answers. He argued that there was a systematic problem where the lives of people with mental illness are viewed as “cheap” especially when they were also people of colour. In a *CBC news* report, Yusuf said:

"Mental illness does not discriminate on race or ethnicity, but people from vulnerable communities who suffer from mental illness are disproportionately subjected to violent use of force that often lead to death" (Nasser, 2020a, para. 35). In the trial of Const. Montsion, news articles used in this research omitted discussions of mental illness during the trial.

5.4.2. Mental illness does not matter during law enforcement intervention

News reports also made space for the representation of mental illness as an insignificant issue which does not need to influence the decisions and actions of law enforcement agents like the police. This frame was championed by the Ottawa Police Association president, Matt Skof, when questioned in a *CBC radio* program if arresting officers of Abdirahman knew of his struggle with mental illness. He said:

There still has to be action, there still has to be safety, there still has to be containment. ... If the person's exhibiting assaultive behaviour towards officers or other people, no, there's no different reaction [if the person has a mental issue].

It may be mental illness, it may be from an intoxicant, it could be from just a state ... at that moment, where they're incredibly upset. So to dissect it at that point, or try to diagnose, is not something that's the officer's priority. You can't sit there and say, 'Well, I'm going to diagnose this person in this second and say they're mentally ill. (Nease, 2016b, para. 19-20)

This seemed to suggest that no compassion needs to be shown to people suffering from mental illness and that when they are found to have flouted the law, they are to be apprehended and treated just like any other person denying the fact that they are not as "healthy" as anyone else. When asked in a separate interview, Police Chief Bordeleau stated: "I'm not going to comment on the mental health issue. That's up to the SIU to determine exactly what the officers knew and when, and what they did about that. What I can tell you is that our officers do receive and need ongoing training to deal with use of force and mental health issues. We're also getting a lot more

[training] now on de-escalation and ensuring that we use proper techniques. So our officers do get that training. They're asking for it, and they're getting it" (Nease, 2016b, para. 22-23). The earlier suggestion by the Police Association president is in line with Lawrence's (2020) assertion that use of force incidents usually require police and officials to frame their public definitions by offering reporters explanations that justify them. In addition, denying that the presence of mental illness does not influence arrest decisions is misleading especially when evidence available suggests that increasingly, law enforcement and mental health departments are collaborating to find the best approaches (such as CIT training) to deal with those suffering from mental illness so that such encounters do not end in fatalities (Browning, Van Hasselt, Tucker, & Vecchi, 2011; Morabito et al., 2017).

5.5. The frame of Injustice

When police violence results in death, demonstrators and community people who are startled by the event characterize the situation as an injustice based on their ingrained moral convictions about justice and fairness. Mikula (2003) conceptualized injustice as a recognition that someone's entitlement has been violated, the assignment of blame for the violation to someone who is not the victim, and the apparent lack of a sufficient reason for the violation of the entitlement. The term "unjust" typically indicates the placement of blame to an actor for breaching the entitlement of another person (Mikula, 2003).

Researchers in social movements have long acknowledged the importance of injustice as a meta-frame for mobilizing grievances (Wang & Liu, 2021). Activists pick "victims" of injustice and highlight their victimization in their statements (Benford & Snow, 2000). Messages containing ethical principles may indicate an expression of outrage, allowing allegiances or supportive action

to be mobilized around shared ethical principles (Wang & Liu, 2021). In this section, I look at how the media reports framed the incidents as an injustice to the victims and their families.

5.5.1. Two injustices part of a trend

Some news reports provided injustice frames in their reporting suggesting that something grave - going beyond these two events, which are not isolated occurrences - had happened that needed to be corrected. The inclusion of talk about protests in the news helped to establish narratives which argued the innocence of the individuals killed by officers, while references to protests induced a sense of injustice in response to police actions (see Frankham, 2020). Families, community members and civil society organizations were given space in news reports to express their concerns or misgivings on the events as they happened. These actions and mobilizations sought to convince the public of the injustice that these gentlemen have suffered at the hands of the state and its law enforcement agents and possibly to change the existing status quo. Members of the above-named groups often referred to the incidents as grave injustice to the individuals and families involved. This injustice they argued was a systemic issue that affected people belonging to the minorities. At a rally attended by more than a hundred people outside the Ottawa police headquarters, protesters chanted, "No justice, no peace. No racist police!" they shouted as police looked on" (Harford, 2016c, p. A.5.). Further in their fight for justice, it was observed that families and communities may often do everything possible to ensure that they get redress. For example, Yusuf Faqiri and other supporters of Soleiman indicated their resolve to fight for justice till the end. He was quoted saying, "We are not going away, we will continue to fight until we achieve justice for Soleiman, even though the OPP failed to have the courage to do their job" (Toronto Star, 2020b, p. A.26.).

The framing of the events as injustice is also demonstrated through the mobilization of groups to hold vigils and protests to demand accountability from authorities. In some news articles, mention was made of these vigils and protests including special coalitions that were formed in the wake of the deaths of Abdirahman and Soleiman, namely, the Justice for Abdirahman Coalition and Justice for Soli respectively. No news report analyzed was found to have demonized the protests of social movements calling for accountability and reforms. Even though these rallies and vigils were mentioned by the media reports, there was no focus on a confrontation between protestors and law enforcement officers as a result of the events.

Even though calls were made to serve justice and actions taken in that same regard of seeking justice, there was still some distrust in the state institutions and government to ensure justice was served. For example, after Const. Montsion was acquitted in the trial of Abdirahman's death, the lawyer, and spokesperson for the Abdi family was quoted in one news report saying: "They [the family of Abdirahman] did not expect that the criminal justice system was the means to affecting change. That said, despite the verdict, there is still a very real need for meaningful change to take place" (Helmer, 2020c, para. 37). This shows that although people belonging to the minorities like racial minorities have been fighting to get redress for wrongs done them by state agents, they may not be fully convinced that they may get the justice that they deserve.

Considered as part of the injustice frame, was a different framing of the incidents by some reports indicating that they were part of a trend and not isolated events. This portrayed the incidents as part of a systemwide problem of injustice. The reliance on accounts of family, friends, civil rights leaders, and other sympathizers - sources who were likely to suggest that these were not isolated events - contributed to the establishment of this frame (see Spratt et al., 2007). For example, an advocate argued, "We see a clear pattern. A Black man in distress, the police are called, the Black

man ends up dead" (Reeveley, 2016, p. A1). Another advocate said, "We know that it is not an isolated case, and we could be the next one" (Harford, 2016c, p. A.5.). Protesters registered their distrust in the SIU with Arte saying, "We know that the SIU has had a history of a 90-per-cent clearance rate for police officers" (Harford, 2016c, p. A.5.).

5.5.2. Two accidents or isolated events

Sometimes situations involving the use of force that result in the death of individuals are characterized as an "accident" or an "arrest gone wrong," usually to defend the cruel conduct of law enforcement agents who, I suppose, are aware that a combination of techniques may result in lethal consequences. For example, it was reported in a *CBC news* article that during a formal examination under oath Dawn Roselle, one of two jail managers fired following Soleiman Faqiri's death, suggested "guards should have known they might be cutting off his air supply" (Nasser, 2020b, para. 17). The news report further quoted a use of force expert and former Ontario Police College instructor Michael Burgess saying, "There's a number of things that we've learned over the last 40 or 50 years about asphyxia. One of the major lessons initially learned is never to leave a prisoner face down on the ground in handcuffs any longer than you absolutely have to" (para. 31). A combination of being face down, wearing a spit hood and potentially vomiting he said, could create "the perfect storm" of factors leading to death. Michael Burgess' quote alludes to the fact that law enforcement officials do receive education regarding restraint tactics and how employing them safely may avert fatal injuries or even death of citizens because anyone who is in charge of applying restraint is also in charge of doing it in a way that does not cause injury or death from Restraint Asphyxia (Miller, 1998). Thus, it is disingenuous and unjust when officers frame these deaths as accidents when they somewhat know the potential outcome of their actions.

One article used a frame that suggested that these law enforcement deaths were isolated or unique incidents and not tied to a wider social problem that people suffering from mental illness and belonging to racial minorities face. Consequently, it was identified that some community leaders were granted space in the news reports to make comments of an “isolated event” rather than a systemic issue facing law enforcement agencies and people belonging to racial minorities. For example, Kitchissippi ward Coun. Jeff Leiper, speaking to *Postmedia* on the day of Abdirahman’s death claimed that, "You know I am looking forward to finding out what happened from the investigation, but I do trust that this is a fairly isolated incident" (Harford, 2016a, p. A.8.). In addition, the police-neighbourhood dynamics were referenced to back up the claim that it was an "isolated event." For example, the author of the article wrote, “Ottawa police have a diversity and race relations section dedicated to outreach with communities across the city when instances like Abdi's arrest arise. Part of the section's mandate is to "develop appropriate responses to issues arising within racialized communities." Further, One Const. Chuck Benoit argued that “the community does a lot of outreaches with the Somali population in Ottawa” (Harford, 2016a, p. A.8.).

I have primarily discussed the frames of the sources in this chapter. The frames that appeared in this chapter have mainly been about the views and arguments of sources quoted or given voice. However, framing scholars have recognized the significance of journalists in the frame-building process and how journalists and their news organizations actively take part in the process of establishing frames (de Vreese, 2010; Baden & Tenenboim-Weinblatt, 2018). Journalistic news framing highlights some parts of the topic while relegating others to a supporting role (de Vreese, 2014, 2010). Journalists can frame issues or news by selecting, adopting, or contrasting sources' frames, or by renegotiating and reframing them into a different frame in accordance with

journalism rules and the logic of news organization (de Vreese, 2014). For example, by citing the arguments of Abdirahman and Soleiman's families, neighbours, and sympathizers that they were gentle, nice, and nonviolent people, they frame police actions as unnecessary brutality, and counter opposing views that they were dangerous. These and other arguments heighten the unpredictability of those suffering from mental illness as nice people until they are not, and we never know when that will happen. This could then be used to reinforce a different message. Many of the news stories used in this study contained multiple source interpretations, which caused journalists' framing of the issue to be a bit lost. Journalistic framing tends to be subtle and can be observed in overemphasizing or dismissing alternative frames rather than providing an alternative frame to one proposed by a source (de Vreese, 2012).

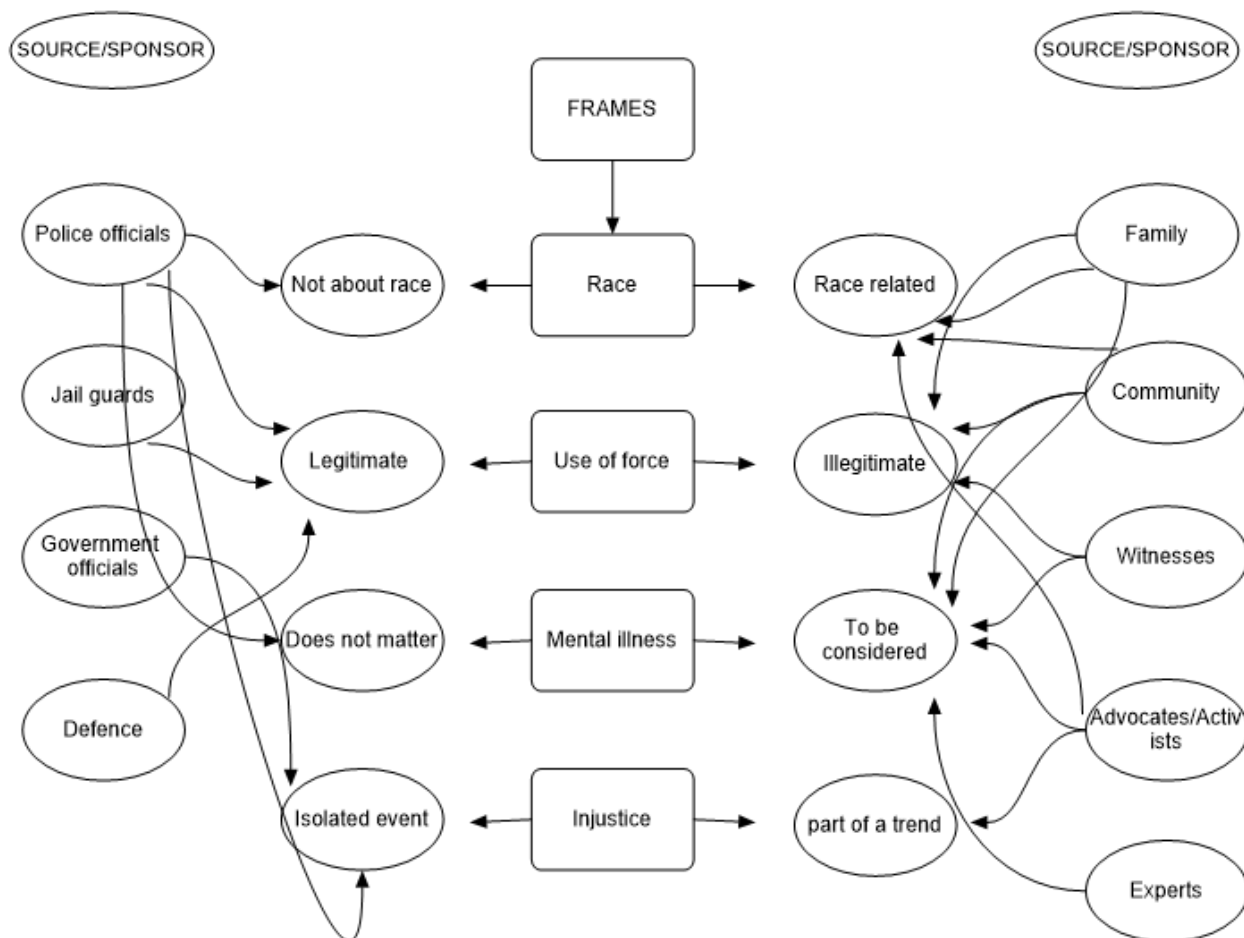


Figure 5.1. Mind map of frames and their sponsors/sources

5.6. Conclusion

Victimization of people of colour by law enforcement agents is not a new phenomenon. The existing literature has established that Blacks, migrants, refugees, and other ethnic minorities experience disproportionate amounts of force relative to Whites (Dukes & Kahn, 2017). As a result, the subject of race and its impact on deaths resulting from civilian-officer contacts, as well as how they are reported in the media, has been researched. In understanding and making sense of such fatal interactions in the media, it is not uncommon for nonofficial sources made up of families, friends, faith-based organizations, activists, civil rights leaders, and sympathizers to condemn and ask questions about the conduct and tactics of law enforcement officials, as well as what would be the case if the victim was White. Nonofficial sources who believed the officers could have taken different measures may have based their comments on officers' racial bias or prejudice while interacting with racialized individuals and mentally ill individuals who are in the minority and vulnerable. Official sources in both cases studied, in this case, police authorities, prison authorities, and government appointees/officials, on the other hand, make individualizing arguments that portray the victim as accountable for his death because of his actions or inaction, or deny the significance of the violent interaction. While nonofficial sources were generally cited or referenced for their non-expert opinions on what happened or commentary on the dynamics of the incidents, official sources were sometimes cited for their technical opinions or comments on the incidents.

Furthermore, in such incidents law enforcement officers and their supporters may portray coloured men who are victims of their acts in negative and humiliating terms based on beliefs that link them to deviance (Tolliver, Hadden, Snowden, & Brown-Manning, 2016; Pratt-Harris, Sinclair, Bragg,

Williams, Ture, Smith, Marshall & Brown, 2016). This misrepresentation may have a negative influence on the individual and his community. According to the literature on policing and race, Black men are viewed as aggressive, violent, and disproportionately participating in criminal behaviour, and the perceived/real threat they offer is a key aspect of the defence of officers charged with killing unarmed Black males (Pratt-Harris et al., 2016).

In addition, framing the occurrences in terms of race may imply that minority groups are aware of their reality as people of colour and believe that racial disparities/bias exist in policing, or that systemic racism must be addressed by authorities. Giving space or representation to talks about racism in the news media may indicate that the media is aware of the problem and wants to support calls for systemic change. In contrast, an Ottawa police official's rejection of racism, as published in the news, portrays the police service as an organization that does not tolerate prejudice. Denial of racism may also imply that minority groups and their demonstrations should be rejected as "overreacting" and hence dismissed because "racism is not real" (see Djik, 1992). This undermines efforts to effect systemic change.

When law enforcement brutality occurs, the situation may be portrayed as an injustice to the victim. The claims of families, friends, and activists, as well as their protests or gatherings aimed at demanding accountability from the government and its actors, revealed frames of injustice. These justice movements and protests may highlight systemic injustice based on race and mental illness. Additionally, in the news, families and activists portrayed these fatal occurrences as acts of brutality, whilst police and some community members framed it as law enforcement personnel following out their constitutional role of maintaining peace and security. Officers are regarded as "professional" and "law-abiding" in their confrontation with the "deviant individual" who is required to be subdued. This legitimizes the officers' acts, especially when they are perceived as

persons who are mandated to protect us from harm and would do everything in their line of duty to do so. According to the literature, in such cases, state and law enforcement portray victims in negative and stigmatizing ways in order to justify their actions, absolve themselves from blame, and shift their attention away from the inherent flaws of the criminal justice system and its agents while emphasizing the dangerous nature of police work.

Concerning the frame of mental illness, contending assertions depended on whether the mental illness of suspects/victims should be taken into account during civilian-law enforcement responses. Those in favour of its consideration used a compassion frame, appealing for pity and understanding for this demographic since they are "victims" of their mental illnesses and do not have complete control over their acts (see Frankham, 2020). Furthermore, this group of people requested services and assistance for mental illness. Law enforcement officials, on the other hand, argued that mental illness is unimportant and hence has no place in law enforcement interventions, despite contrary evidence in the form of CIT training and intervention to prevent tragic confrontations with the mentally ill. This viewpoint may be related to the risky and dangerous frame that is frequently connected with news coverage of mental illness (see Kesic et al., 2012). Finally, additional themes showed that deadly civilian-law enforcement contacts were regrettable and one-time occurrences, whilst others suggested that they were events with predictable outcomes and not isolated incidents.

These contrasting frames and themes attempt to make sense of the same issues in different ways based on actors' goals and views. The allocation of responsibility and the rationalization of actions offer a critical concern that should be addressed. Different frames of the topic of deadly civilian-law enforcement contacts have been proven to influence support for victims and law enforcement officials when used in media reporting of an issue (see Fridkin et al., 2017). These frames have the ability to divide portions of the community along the lines of supporters or critics of the criminal

justice system and their agents, as well as to minimize the severity of racism and issues verging on mental illness, potentially affecting legislative actions in this respect.

Conclusion

Overview

In the light of the death of two male racialized Ontario citizens at the hands of law enforcement officers, this research examines the news reporting of their deaths and how they may produce conflicting narratives and frames for consumers of the news. This study, which provides an insight into the narratives and frames that were used in the news reporting of the deaths is particularly important because of the attention that law enforcement use of force incidents resulting in deaths of citizens has garnered in recent times. These narratives and frames used by the media are likely to influence the citizenry on what to make of the frosty relationship that exists between minority communities and the criminal justice system since the news media has the ability to influence the perceptions of their audience.

Overall, the news articles used in this research did not appear that they were biased and thus focused prominently on reporting the claims of either the families of Abdirahman and Soleiman or law enforcement and state officials. This is believed to be in line with the literature on journalistic objectivity, which instructs reporters to report the facts, use neutral language, and refrain from describing individuals or groups favourably or unfavourably in order to uphold objectivity and fairness and appear credible (Gans, 2004). Journalists may also apply their more fundamental professional standards when covering sensitive subjects, making sure to present both sides of the issue fairly, respect opposing points of view, and keep the audience in mind to avoid offending their sensibilities given the politico-economic influences at work when contentious issues arise (Guyot, 2008). Thus, these news articles gave an equal space and value to actors to make their claims in the ensuing dispute by quoting or giving voice to sources belonging to both

sides of the divide. Although this caused varied or contradictory information to be presented to the public, it nevertheless enables journalists to assert objectivity and equal treatment of all sides of the story (see Dimitrova & Strömbäck, 2009).

Additionally, the news reports consulted a range of sources, including those from the government, law enforcement, lawyers, medical experts, activists, advocates, and victims' families as well as witnesses and members of the public. To produce the news, journalists mostly relied on information or opinions from these sources. There was no excessive dependence on the so-called "elite" or "official" sources to offer commentary, make assertions, or express opinions. To balance the story and give the audience enough information about the events, it was found that news stories regularly quoted or cited other sources (families, advocates, witnesses, etc.) with conflicting perspectives. It is interesting to note that most of the sources cited or quoted appeared to be nonofficial ones. This refutes the argument that official sources predominate in news coverage of instances involving the use of force (Hirschfield & Simon, 2010).

Consequently, journalists' quoted sources and actors' messages culminated into the frames that emerged in this research. The frames identified included opposing views on the use force, the influence of race, the influence of mental illness, injustice, and uniqueness of the event. Regarding the frames, it was observed that news accounts of Soleiman's case tended to place a higher priority on the mental illness frame followed by the use of force and frames of injustice. On the other hand, the use of force frame was highlighted in news accounts of Abdirahman's case the most, followed by the injustice and racial frames. Furthermore, the narratives identified also included narratives of the identities of both victims and law enforcement agents, nature of law enforcement work and system change. According to research (Hinyard & Kreuter, 2007; Fadlallah, El-Jardali, Nomier, Hemadi, Arif, Langlois, & Akl, 2019), the concept of narrative has been operationalized differently

in studies because there is no single acceptable definition of narrative. Thus, the use of narratives in this study focused on comments and discourses on the event, how people make sense of what happened and why it happened the way it did, and what can be done to prevent these issues from recurring. The narratives aimed at discovering how the characters in these incidents are characterized, how the deaths are explained by various parties, the cause of these deaths, and what people proposed as a way forward. Through the characters involved, the narratives in this study also serve to convey stories in a sense, and by tying the many components together, they aid in our comprehension of the overall event. This advances our knowledge of law enforcement brutality cases, its causes, and effects especially when it involves race and mental illness.

As argued by Carragee and Roefs (2004), multiple social and political actors, or sponsors, influence frames through the sponsorship of their preferred definitions of topics in news coverage. As Druckman (2009) has pointed out, opposing parties regularly attempt to present alternative frames for understanding issues and events. Consequently, the various sources quoted in the news reports analyzed were found to have helped to shape these frames and narratives. The explanations of these official and nonofficial sources played a fundamental role in how these frames were constructed in the reports. I find this to be in line with research that attributes frames to specific sponsors and their ability to shape conflicting frames in news stories (see Carragee and Roefs, 2004). According to Kee, Ahmad, Ibrahim and Khiang (2012), frame sponsors are news sources that try to frame information in news reports and usually ensure that the messages are framed in accordance with their desired framing. Although it seems as though these sources sponsored the frames themselves, we discover that if journalists had not chosen them and conveyed their statements or phrases, the frames would not have shown. Accordingly, sources might not be as independent and competent commentators as journalists might lead us to assume. Journalists

promote a particular stance in their stories by choosing and presenting the opinions of particular sources in accordance with Ross (2007), despite the fact that they may have no intention of promoting any particular policy or political purpose (Entman, Matthes, and Pellicano, 2009).

Thus, journalists' news gathering process accounted for contrasting views and perspectives quoted sources in the news provided. As emphasized by Gans (2004), sources are important in studies regarding news reporting since both journalists and their sources rely on each other to ensure their needs are met. While sources see themselves as people who can supply information that advances their interests or supports their opinions, journalists view people primarily as potential sources (Gans, 2004).

Official sources including police and prison officials presented the victims as dangerous, uncompliant, and even deserving of the treatment meted out to them because of their actions which made them unpredictable. This amounted to shifting blame from law enforcement agents who were defended as only doing their work which they often describe as being extremely risky (Marenin, 2016) and blaming victims for displaying behaviours or actions that caused officers to use force on them. This is consistent with Marenin's (2016) argument that law enforcement responses seek to justify their actions when force is involved and seek impunity by overstating the dangers of their work and relying on technicalities and legal rationales to deny blame and guilt. On the contrary, relying on nonofficial sources made up of the family, neighbours, friends, sympathizers and advocates, these news articles crafted narratives that presented Abdirahman and Soleiman as good and vulnerable men who never had to die the way they did while blaming law enforcement officials for their lack of training and bias which led to the death of these men. These sources had their criticisms of law enforcement actions and protests of the deaths captured by most news stories. Thus, this more balanced reporting and inclusion of nonofficial sources to challenge official

positions may also mean that journalists found the nonofficial news sources they often quoted in their reports just as credible (see Callaghan & Schnell, 2009) as the official sources and needed them to sponsor the different frames that were found in this research. As such, this research supports research that argue the important relationship between journalists and news sources in framing the news and the important role played by the latter (see Gans, 2004; Kee et al., 2012) in the production of the news and subsequently developing news frames.

Although this research did not explicitly examine the framing effects or how these narratives and frames may actually shape audience perceptions, this research has identified that the different narratives and frames that appear in news reports of law enforcement brutality cases may create a polarized community with a section of the citizenry agreeing with and supporting these frames while the other section opposes them. Research indicates that frames depicting conflict or disagreement between two parties lead to a perception of an increased polarization between the entities, which can lead to increased personal attitude polarization (Han & Yzer, 2020). Thus, people who identify more with victims and protesters may believe that law enforcement officers were at fault and their actions unwarranted. Conversely, supporters of law enforcement officers may believe that their actions are lawful, and victims are to be blamed for their misfortune. Again, the framing of use of force incidents differently, may stifle social change efforts. This is because for instance, supporters of law enforcement work will likely defend actions of officers as executing their mandate of providing peace and security to the citizenry while critics of law enforcement work will see officers' actions as morally wrong and harsh for some of the offences that lead to these fatal arrests.

As Fridkin et al. (2017) argued the power of framing has far-reaching policy consequences. Thus, if the news media favours certain frames over others, the public's policy priorities will be

influenced, and policy actions will be taken by political actors. In the case where different frames are being highlighted in the reportage of the same event, it may lead the public to clamour for different policy initiatives depending on the frame they subscribe to the most. For example, the frames the news media relies on to present issues of mental illness and police use of force or brutality could have a negative impact on the creation of proper police and mental health policy for dealing with police contact with people who are mentally ill (Kesic et al., 2012).

This study advances the framing literature on lethal law enforcement use of force or misconduct. Police use of force, which is a controversial issue, is noticeable to the public and often evokes competing claims which serve to frame it as necessary and part of law enforcement work or as brutality which mostly targets the vulnerable in society. This study is significant because it explores narratives and frames in order to fully understand and appreciate the contrasting discourses surrounding the use of deadly force by law enforcement against racialized men who are suffering from mental health concerns in Ontario.

Future lines of research

Future research is needed to examine how the intersecting identities of race and mental illness shape media reporting in lethal use of force cases against such people. In addition, future framing researchers could examine the reporting of law enforcement deaths involving racialized women who suffer mental illness. It may be important to examine if incidents in which the sex of the victim is different will see a more critical approach by journalists and news media. Further, the actual effects of frames that are used by the media to organize and present the deaths of Black men with mental illness and its broader effects for society could be explored to determine empirically whether competing frames nullify each other and helps to maintain existing structures.

Finally, other researchers of media reporting of deaths at the hands of law enforcement agents may examine the news texts and arguments as it appears in the letters to the editor, opinion pieces and editorials where many journalists and citizens are given the space to express their opinions (Reese, 1990) without the necessary need to follow journalistic principles of objective and balanced reporting. Future studies should also consider examining how the television reports civilian-law enforcement interactions that lead to death and the kinds of frames journalists rely on to present the issue to the public.

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Appendix A

I. News articles selected for Abdirahman's Case

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Appendix B

Recommendations to the Ottawa Police Services and Police Services Board

- 1) Commit to the temporary reassignment of police officers who are under investigation for causing death or serious injury to administrative duty and prohibiting any form of interfacing with community members until the investigation is complete.
- 2) The Chief, as the leader of the OPS should make a public acknowledgement that there is a crisis within the OPS and authority's interactions with members of racialized communities and citizens suffering from mental health issues publicly and internally.
- 3) The OPS should avoid tokenism in its outreach efforts and apply more meaningful consultation methods with the Somali community.
- 4) The OPS should commit to meetings in the near future as appropriate with interested stakeholders namely; The Justice for Abdirahman Coalition, organizations representing Ottawa's Black communities and mental health advocacy groups. It is recommended that an open door policy remain for all those interested in engaging the OPS in these matters.
- 5) The OPS should commit to the ongoing collection and publication of race-based data for all police interactions. Moreover, as a means to oppose the perpetuation of degrading images/narratives of racialized communities. The OPS should avoid:
 - a. associating crime with the ethnic origin of the individual suspect;
 - b. sensationalizing arrests;
 - c. leaking unnecessary police history of deceased individuals to the media.
- 6) The OPS should commit to a pilot program, targeting a specific community to be determined. That pilot program, in conjunction with comprehensive data collection, will serve as a precursor to a wider body-cam program when fiscally feasible. This localized pilot program will also prove significantly more affordably than an immediate move to a city wide body-cam initiative.
- 7) The OPS should dismantle COMPAC and explore a more effective feedback mechanism that allows on-going opportunity for the community to provide feedback and oversight of initiatives that effect racialized community in general and the Somali community in particular. Regarding the Somali community, quarterly meetings with stakeholders would be an excellent means to assess the community's satisfaction with relevant policing initiatives.
- 8) The OPS should review and revamp its de-escalation training take into account race, mental health, language barriers, and other potential vulnerabilities
- 9) The OPS should conduct an audit of its current hiring process and remove systemic barriers to ensure the OPS is reflective of the diverse community it serves. In addition, the OPS should

commit to disclosing reasons for rejection of job applications to prospective candidates and archive data on hiring, particularly with respect to the Somali community.

10) The OPS should conduct a public review of the Guns and Gangs Unit's gang suppression strategy and provide opportunity for community resource leaders and experts in youth criminal behavior to offer input on developing updated strategies and protocols.

11) The OPS should clearly define "gang associate" and create mechanisms for youth wrongly identified as gang associates be removed from that database. As for those youth who have disengaged from criminal activity, the OPS should provide reform opportunities and means to remove their names from the database.