

Analysis of “Yes” Responses to Uniformed Police Marching in Pride: Perspectives From LGBTQ+ Communities in St. John’s, Newfoundland and Labrador, Canada

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Abstract

Recently, a number of Canadian police forces have been banned from Pride parades. A ban on uniformed police in these parades has proven to be contentious; the general public and lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, and plus (LGBTQ+) communities have been split on the issue. Limited research has examined the perspectives of the general population or, until now, LGBTQ+ people on this matter. Using an online survey designed to gather ideas or opinions of LGBTQ+ community members regarding their hopes, aspirations, and vision for the St. John’s Pride board, 181 LGBTQ+ respondents responded to this question: Should the police be allowed to march in uniform at the St. John’s Pride parade? In total, 92 (51%) said “Yes.” A critical analysis of their qualitative responses revealed four interrelated themes: (a) power of Pride, (b) “they are we and we are they,” (c) “the police are on our side,” and (d) taking back Pride. Implications of the findings for police-LGBTQ+ community relations are discussed.

Keywords

St. John’s pride, pride parade, police uniform ban, LGBTQ+, color-blind racism, intersectionality, Canada

Research focusing on the lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, and plus (LGBTQ+) communities’ relationship with police has generally examined LGBTQ+ people’s perceptions of police legitimacy, hate crimes—reporting among LGBTQ+ people, and workplace experiences of LGBTQ+ police officers (e.g., Angeles & Robertson, 2020; Couto, 2014, 2018; Dario et al., 2020; Gillespie, 2008; Miles-Johnson, 2013, 2015). However, one of the most controversial issues facing LGBTQ+ communities today is whether police should be allowed to march in uniform at Pride parades. The issue is being led chiefly by LGBTQ+ Indigenous and people of color (Greedy, 2018; Holmes, 2019, 2021; Lamusse, 2016) and has received extensive media coverage (“Black Lives Matter Toronto Stalls Pride Parade,” 2016; Earley, 2018; Khan, 2017; Omand, 2017; Pfaff, 2016; Stack, 2019; Walcott, 2017).

Yet, despite research on police-LGBTQ+ relations generally, knowledge about police participation in Pride parades has been little researched (Holmes, 2019, 2021; Lamusse, 2016). Understanding the issue is significant, when the state’s involvement in the social control of LGBTQ+ people

in the global North and global South is considered (Nicol et al., 2018; Wieringa & Sívori, 2013). In both regions, police have been important social actors in enforcing morality laws undermining the dignity and rights of LGBTQ+ people to life, liberty, and security of the person (Carroll & Mendos, 2017; Mendos, 2019). In parts of the global South (e.g., Uganda), Pride parades are held at great risk to organizers and LGBTQ+ individuals, who face the real threat of a violent police crackdown (Biryabarema, 2016; Human Rights Watch, 2016; Nyanzi, 2014). Conversely, in the global North,

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concerns have centered on historical and ongoing police mistreatment of members of LGBTQ+ communities who are not White, including calls for uniformed police ban at Pride parades (Greey, 2018; Holmes, 2019, 2021; Lamusse, 2016). Of course, it would be erroneous to suggest that views are shared within and across social groups on this matter. For example, among LGBTQ+ White, Indigenous, and people of color, there is no consensus on uniformed police participation at Pride parades (Holmes, 2021). The lack of consensus, however, does not make the demand of those calling for the ban any less important. In fact, it is by examining divergent perspectives that Pride and police organizations can integrate available research evidence into their decision-making process.

To inform future decisions of the St. John's Pride board regarding the police, the authors investigated the responses of LGBTQ+ community members in Newfoundland and Labrador who were in favor of uniformed police participation at Pride parades. An online qualitative survey of anonymous respondents allowed access to subjective experiences (Braun et al., 2020). Color-blind racism (Bonilla-Silva, 2017; Burke, 2019) and intersectionality (Crenshaw, 1989, 1991) theories were applied to capture a diversity of perspectives on the topic.

We begin by providing a background literature review of contextual factors that may help to explicate the ban against uniformed police at Pride parades. We then present the theoretical and methodological orientation of the research, before reporting the findings of the study. A discussion of the key findings follows, ahead of the limitations of the study and the conclusion.

Background Literature Review

Police Incivility and History of Anti-LGBTQ+ Abuse in Canada and Beyond

There is a long history of police violence, surveillance, and criminalization of same-sex sexual activity in both public and private spaces. In Canada, same-sex sexual activity was illegal until 1969 (Simpson, 2018). Before that, in the 1950s and 1960s, police arrested gay men in parks, public washrooms, and even private homes (Nash, 2014). The Royal Canadian Mounted Police also conducted a campaign to purge gay men and lesbian employees from the federal civil service (Kinsman, 1995), based on the premise that homosexuality was a character weakness that foreign agents might exploit to threaten national security. The so-called fruit machine, a pseudo-scientific device designed to ascertain whether someone was homosexual, was used. Hundreds of people lost their jobs or were demoted. In November 2017, Prime Minister Justin Trudeau apologized to the victims of this campaign on behalf of the federal government (Harris, 2017).

Bathhouse raids were a common occurrence. In December 1978, police raided the Barracks Bathhouse in Toronto and charged the owners and employees with “keeping a common bawdy house,” and the patrons with “moral offenses” (Grozelle, 2017, p. 2; see also Bruner, 1981; Nash, 2014). In 1981, more Toronto gay bathhouses were raided, as was the Pussy Palace in 2000 (C. Gallant & Gillis, 2001). Similar raids were conducted in Edmonton in 1981 (Ross, 2018), Montreal in 1990 (Crawford & Herland, 2014), and Calgary in 2002 (“Bathhouse Raid Angers Calgary Gay Community,” 2002). Although police have apologized for these raids in recent years, in at least one case, the apology seems short-lived: the Toronto Police Service (TPS) publicly apologized for the 1981 bathhouse raids in June 2016 (Winsa & Powell, 2016). However, in November 2016, a TPS undercover operation in Marie Curtis Park, Toronto, resulted in 71 people, mostly men, receiving citations for engaging in consensual sex (Hooper, 2017).

The Supreme Court of Canada ruling in *R. v. Cuerrier* (1998) established that people living with HIV in Canada could be charged with a crime for failing to disclose their positive HIV status to sexual partners. More recently, the court refined this ruling in *R. v. Mabior* (2012), when it named three criteria that had to be met for someone to be convicted:

- The HIV-positive person must fail to disclose their status, knowing they are infected and at risk of transmission;
- The nature of their sexual activity must pose risk of serious bodily harm; and
- The HIV-negative person would not have consented to the sexual activity had they known the HIV-positive status of their sexual partner.

In the past, Canadian police have published the names, photos, and HIV status of accused people in press releases (Bell, 2017) and have used people's HIV status as justification for excessive use of force (McClelland, 2017). In December 2017, the Ontario government, in response to a federal report on the criminal justice system's response to nondisclosure of HIV, announced that it would “no longer prosecute cases of HIV-positive people who don't disclose their status to their sexual partner when the person who is HIV-positive has had a suppressed viral load for six months” (J. Gallant, 2017, para. 1). A year later, the Attorney General of Canada issued a directive prohibiting the prosecution of HIV nondisclosure cases where the person used condoms, engaged only in oral sex, or had a suppressed viral load or a lower level of HIV in the blood (Public Prosecution Service Canada, 2018).

The experience of police incivility and history of anti-LGBTQ+ abuse is not unique to Canada. Similar situations have been documented in other countries. For example,

police “profiling, entrapment, discrimination, and harassment” (Mallory et al., 2015, p. 1) of LGBTQ+ people in the United States before and after Stonewall have been frequent and widespread. American police have continued to ignore crimes committed against LGBTQ+ people (Owen et al., 2018) and have been complicit in cases of physical and sexual violence against them (Brown, 2008; Clendinen & Nagourney, 1999) during searches and while in custody (Amnesty International, 2005; Pasulka, 2014). In China, police have used laws against loitering and vagrancy to justify harassment of gay men and transgender sex workers in public places (Sanders, 2015). Sri Lankan police have subjected transgender sex workers to verbal, physical, and sexual abuse (Nichols, 2014). In Nepal, although efforts have been made to sensitize police forces so that they do not engage in violence against LGBTQ+ communities, incidents of sexual harassment, taunting, blackmail, extortion, rape, and attempted murder have been widely reported (The New Humanitarian, 2006; United Nations Development Programme & United States Agency for International Development, 2014). Also, in many African countries, LGBTQ+ activists are not able to do their work publicly for fear of arrest (Currier & Cruz, 2014), and anti-sodomy laws exert a powerful influence on police work. In Kampala, Uganda, for example, police raided the 2016 Pride event, unlawfully detaining, brutalizing, and humiliating hundreds of participants (Biryabarema, 2016; Human Rights Watch, 2016).

Police Racism and Discrimination Against LGBTQ+ People of Color

Research exploring police racism and discrimination against LGBTQ+ people has generally examined the American experience (e.g., Mallory et al., 2015; Mountz, 2016; Nadal et al., 2015; Owen et al., 2018; Parker et al., 2018; Serpe & Nadal, 2017; Tiffe, 2015). In Canada, very little research has explored police racism and discrimination against LGBTQ+ people of color (Giwa & Jackman, 2020) outside of anecdotal accounts and the case of Chevranna Abdi, a 26-year-old Black transgender woman who died in police custody after being dragged facedown seven flights of stairs. Her death was ruled accidental (Maynard, 2017). Indeed, in Toronto, one study found that racial profiling and related discriminatory practices contributed to the perception of police as perpetrators of harassment among LGBTQ+ people of color (Angeles & Robertson, 2020). These participants often referenced multiple police shootings of unarmed Black men in the city as evidence of racism and discrimination.

In contrast, American research exploring police racism and discrimination against LGBTQ+ people has shown that LGBTQ+ people of color are more likely than their White counterparts to be targeted through stops, arrests, frisks, and

raids (Mallory et al., 2015; Mountz, 2016; Nadal et al., 2015; Owen et al., 2018; Parker et al., 2018; Serpe & Nadal, 2017; Tiffe, 2015). In Jackson Heights, New York, 54% of LGBTQ people of color in one survey reported having been stopped by police for no reason (Make the Road New York, 2012). In a nationally representative probability sample of 489 LGBTQ adults in the United States, 30% of the 207 people in the sample who self-identified as people of color said they avoided calling police for help because they feared being discriminated against (National Public Radio, Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, & Harvard T. H. Chan School of Public Health, 2017). In another study, 28% of LGBT people of color reported being falsely accused of a crime compared with 20% of all respondents who had police contact (Lambda Legal, 2012). Transgender people of color, in particular, have a heightened vulnerability to police abuse and discrimination (Galvan & Bazargan, 2012). Unfairly profiled as sex workers, they are subjected to unfounded questions about their reasons for being on the street (Mogul et al., 2011). They have reported high rates of harassment, physical assault, and sexual assault by police (Grant et al., 2011).

Distrust of the Police to Serve and Protect Members of LGBTQ+ Communities

The pervasiveness of anti-LGBTQ+ discrimination contributes to the distrust of police by members of these groups. American and other international research suggest that these groups have significantly less favorable perceptions of police than their heterosexual counterparts and are less comfortable reporting crimes to police (Dario et al., 2020; Hodge & Sexton, 2020; Mallory et al., 2015; Miles-Johnson, 2013, 2015; Nadal et al., 2015; Nichols, 2014; Nyanzi, 2014; Owen et al., 2018; Sanders, 2015; Serpe & Nadal, 2017; Tiffe, 2015). In Canada, where the research is scant, Lyons et al. (2017) investigated the social-structural contexts shaping 33 transgender sex workers’ experiences of violence in Vancouver. Some respondents explained that they chose not to report violence perpetrated against them by clients to the police because they did not believe the police would do anything about it, citing stigma related to sex work and gender nonconformity. Another study found that LGBTQ2+ people in Toronto underreported incidents of hate crimes, violence, and discrimination to police (Angeles & Robertson, 2020). They reported not feeling safe in the presence of police and having widespread mistrust of police. Instead, participants relied on friends, went online, reported to service agencies, or chose to do nothing. These findings corroborate a 2014 Statistics Canada survey, which found that 85% of bisexuals did not report instances of violent victimization to the police, compared with 64% of heterosexuals. Reasons given for not reporting were the hassle of interacting with police and concern that the perpetrator would not be adequately punished (Simpson, 2018).

The case of Bruce McArthur, a White serial killer convicted in January 2019, perhaps most exemplifies LGBTQ+ communities' distrust of police in Canada (Giwa & Jackman, 2020). Between 2010 and 2017, McArthur killed eight gay men, mostly men of color, in Toronto (Goffin, 2018). Calls for police to investigate the men's disappearance and their subsequent deaths went unanswered (Germano, 2018). The police may only have intensified their investigation when a White victim was discovered (Larocque, 2018).

The literature reviewed here paints a picture of turbulence in the relationship between police and LGBTQ+ people. In Canada and the United States, evidence of police attempts to right historical wrongs can be seen in the issuing of apologies by police chiefs or commissioners (Andrew & Ahmed, 2019; Hooper, 2017). Despite this gesture of reconciliation, some LGBTQ+ people continue to hold unfavorable impressions of police, and call for a ban on uniformed police from Pride parades (Holmes, 2019, 2021; Lamusse, 2016), perhaps for the reasons discussed above. Nevertheless, this study examines LGBTQ+ people's support for uniformed police at Pride parades. This line of enquiry is important because differences in police treatment based on intersecting factors such as race, ethnicity, gender identity, and victimization may shape LGBTQ+ people's attitude toward uniformed police participation at Pride parades (Angeles & Robertson, 2020; Dario et al., 2020; Hodge & Sexton, 2020; Miles-Johnson, 2015; Owen et al., 2018; Serpe & Nadal, 2017).

Theoretical Frameworks and Methodology

Color-Blind Racism and Intersectionality

This study is informed by a color-blind racial ideology (Bonilla-Silva, 2017) and theoretical underpinnings of intersectionality (Crenshaw, 1989, 1991). Color-blind situations, where race-based outcomes are explained as being unrelated to race (Bonilla-Silva, 2017), deny the plausibility of race as an explanation for differential treatment (Burke, 2019)—thus preserving the status quo. Proponents of color-blind racism assert that not seeing race avoids a kind of nativism, which can exacerbate social problems along racial lines. Belief in equal opportunity as having replaced institutional racism and discrimination supports the view of racism as an individual rather than an institutional or collective problem (Burke, 2019), minimizing the adverse impacts of systemic racism and preventing solutions to racial inequities.

Four central frames characterize color-blind racism: abstract liberalism, naturalization, cultural racism, and minimization of racism (Bonilla-Silva, 2017). These strategic and tactical frames are central to how White people defend, deflect, and deny their complicity with the status quo of racism. In abstract racism, White people use a language of equal

opportunity, choice, and individualism, to appear perceptive about social justice matters while simultaneously opposing measures to deal with racial inequality. Naturalization is the idea that certain phenomena are natural occurrences that cut across all racial groups, and thus are nonracial in reality. Cultural racism relies on culture-specific arguments to suggest that individuals from racialized communities experience predicaments caused by their cultural heritage. Minimization of racism involves underestimating racial discrimination as a continuing force of oppression for members of racialized communities (Bonilla-Silva, 2017).

Intersectionality emphasizes the simultaneous effects of systems of oppression to illuminate the interactive impacts of various oppressions and privileges along the lines of race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, gender identity, class, and other social categories of difference. Different aspects of one's identity can, therefore, engender unique challenges and vulnerabilities (Bowleg, 2008; McCall, 2005). Intersectionality establishes a bridge between critical praxis and social justice for understanding social reality: "intersectionality challenges the pull of prevailing mindsets, in part by drawing from political expectations, lived experiences, and analytical positions not crafted solely within the bound of dominant imaginaries" (May, 2014, p. 96). Also, it contests the notion of a singular LGBTQ+ community, whose members share the same interests and concerns, as exemplified by coverage of the activism of Black Lives Matter ("Black Lives Matter Toronto Stalls Pride Parade," 2016; Greey, 2018). Marginalized social groups such as Indigenous and people of color encounter exclusion in predominantly White LGBTQ+ communities, which may silence their voices and render their experiences of racism and discrimination invisible (Giwa & Greensmith, 2012; Han, 2007; Morgensen, 2012).

The current issue of whether to allow uniformed police to participate in Pride parades underlines the need for a broader, intersectional analysis rooted in an understanding of the racial, ethnic, sexual, gender, and class dimensions of oppression and privilege. To do otherwise risks perpetuating the view of these intersectional differences as separate from institutional power structures behind discriminatory policing practices that uniquely shape the lives of LGBTQ+ White, Indigenous, and people of color (Giwa & Jackman, 2020). Therefore, our use of *intersectionality* stresses the overlapping and interactive role that social categories of difference play in understanding LGBTQ+ people's experiences of oppression and privilege (Crenshaw, 1989, 1991). This, in turn, might shape their view about uniformed police participation in Pride parades.

Method

In 2018, a crisis of confidence arose among LGBTQ+ community members concerning the St. John's Pride board, an elected group of individuals who oversaw the operation of

St. John's Pride, a nonprofit, volunteer-run organization that supported LGBTQ+ communities in the Canadian province of Newfoundland and Labrador. Former and current board representatives were perceived as out of touch with members' needs or concerns (Giwa et al., 2018). Among the list of concerns was the perceived arbitrary decision made by the board in 2016 to ban uniformed police from marching in the local Pride parade (Chin, 2016). Perhaps acting in solidarity with the Black Lives Matter movement ("Black Lives Matter Toronto Stalls Pride Parade," 2016), the board's decision was made without formal consultation with Black and Indigenous community members. The decision drew immediate push-back, with the result that uniformed police officers were welcomed back at the following year's Pride parade (Bresge, 2017).

The board's judgment to set aside its earlier decision did not automatically mean that the issue had been solved. To explore this issue and others, a crisis management team (CMT) was struck consisting of six LGBTQ+ volunteers, of whom the first author was one. (Other issues and concerns addressed by the CMT are beyond the scope of this article; see Giwa et al., 2018 for more.) Wanting to hear from membership about the way forward, the CMT conducted a community consultation and online survey between March 7 and 22, 2018, with LGBTQ+ community members and allies. The current article is limited to an analysis of the English-only online survey, which addressed the question of whether uniformed police officers should be allowed to march in Pride parades.

Procedure

Respondents were selected via the St. John's Pride mailing list. List members were emailed an invitation with a link to a secure, self-administered, web-based survey, which was also accessible on the St. John's website. Respondents were also reached through the St. John's Pride Facebook, blog post, and emails sent to community partners. Before the survey was launched, it was piloted among CMT members to see that it performed well under normal conditions (Cox, 2020). To prevent respondents from completing the survey more than once, the collector option to track internet protocol (IP) addresses was enabled, and unique computer-generated random numbers were issued to respondents.

Respondents

The main research question for purposes of this article was the following: Should the police be allowed to march in uniform in the St. John's Pride parade? Response options were "Yes," "No," and "Unsure." Respondents were able to qualify their answers to each option (O'Cathain & Thomas, 2004), thus facilitating the determination of categories of comments. A total of 275 people responded to the survey; 212 of these answered this question and qualified their answer.

To focus on the perspectives of LGBTQ+ community members, data from 31 non-LGBTQ+ allies were excluded from analysis. The final sample consisted of 181 self-identified LGBTQ+ respondents, of whom 92 (51%) said "Yes" or were in favor of uniformed police marching in the Pride parade: 27 women (29%), 50 men (54%), 11 trans/nonbinary (12%), and one genderqueer (1%). Three respondents (3%) chose not to disclose their gender identity. A total of 87 respondents were between 18 and 54 years of age (95%); those aged 25–34 (35%) represented the sample's majority. By far, the largest number of respondents, 63 (68%), self-identified as White; five (5%) were of Indigenous or Indigenous and European ancestry; and two (2%) were of color and mixed race. Seven (8%) other respondents mentioned their ethnicity and not race; 15 (16%) respondents skipped the question entirely.

Respondents were informed on the survey that participation was voluntary and that returned or submitted surveys implied consent. No remuneration was offered for participation. Because data were collected as part of a community consultation process for quality improvement purposes, to help the St. John's Pride board better serve the LGBTQ+ community, it did not fall within the scope of a research ethics review (Government of Canada, 2019).

Data Analysis

To increase our familiarity with the data, the authors analyzed 92 responses about police participation at Pride, using thematic analysis for the purpose (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Nowell et al., 2017). Codes were assigned to textual data at a semantic level, based on observed patterns. Using the method of abstraction (Smith et al., 2009), related text segments and codes were grouped together. The resulting list was used to reexamine the data and confirm the validity of the codes, which were then used to develop themes that accurately expressed the data.

Findings

Our analysis of the qualitative data for the "Yes" responses revealed four interrelated, commonly identified themes: (a) power of Pride, (b) "they are we and we are they," (c) "the police are on our side," and (d) taking back Pride. (See Table 1.)

Power of Pride

This theme encapsulates 17 respondents' beliefs about why Pride exists and its intended purpose. These are reflected in the idea of inclusion: Pride was seen to belong to everyone regardless of their profession or place in life. Respondents queried the logic of banning police or anyone from Pride when LGBTQ+ community members themselves knew the evils of exclusion:

Table 1. Respondents' Commonly Identified Themes and Subthemes in Favor of Uniformed Police Marching at Pride Parades.

Themes	Total count	Percentage (%)
1. Power of Pride		
• The medium is the message	14	15
• Inclusion not exclusion	17	18
Total	31	33
2. "They are we and we are they"		
• They are part of the community and one of us	8	9
• Representation matters	4	4
Total	12	13
3. The police are on our side		
• One bad apple should not spoil the whole barrel	5	5
• Police as supportive allies	9	10
• Police as symbol of safety and protection	8	9
Total	22	24
4. Taking back Pride		
• Pride hijacked with sensationalism/political correctness/hidden motive	9	10
• Don't forget the past but move forward	12	13
• Police at future Pride events	6	7
Total	27	30
Total responses	92	100

Everyone, and I mean absolutely everyone, should be welcome at the parade. By discriminating (or ultimately banning) or placing restrictions on certain groups, it's going against that fundamental value of equality and the open welcoming inclusion. (Female community member, White, #29)

While I respect the position of [people of color] in the community I do not believe in the exclusion of any group of people based upon profession. If we all come together in civility the more the merrier. (Male community member, White, #90)

For these respondents, the language of "everyone" and "any group of people" shifted the conversation away from uniformed police to the broader public, signaling the possible danger of excluding people in general from Pride. This broader language may be thought to provide sober second thought, and promote the value of equality and inclusion. Creating a welcoming environment at Pride was suggested to mean accepting everyone—including uniformed police officers. However, asserting the legitimacy of all people and groups to participate in Pride, without restriction or condition, thereby dismissed, negated, or minimized the concerns of LGBTQ+ people of color—despite respondents' stated views regarding "respect" for LGBTQ+ people of color. The impact that past and present actions of police might have on LGBTQ+ people of color was disregarded.

In the eyes of some, such absence of a critical engagement with the root causes of the problem might possibly reinforce the view that LGBTQ+ people of color were the ones looking to create division and denying equality to others, namely, uniformed police officers. The solution, according to the second respondent, was for everyone to come together. Given

that the police were not the ones asking to be banned from Pride, and presumably would have no issue in participating in it, the message appeared intended for LGBTQ+ people of color: get over your problems.

For 14 participants, the presence of uniformed police officers would communicate the progress made over time by police toward a renewed relationship with members of LGBTQ+ communities. The display of institutional solidarity shown by police participation in Pride was seen to carry a positive and powerful message about the state of relationship between police and LGBTQ+ communities in St. John's:

Members of law enforcement participate on a voluntary basis. Those participating are either members of the [LGBTQ+] community or are supporters of the community. If they choose to wear their uniforms, so much the better. The presence of uniformed officers makes a statement about the changing attitudes and support that has evolved over the years. (Male community member, White, #154)

The understanding that police would attend Pride voluntarily and on their own time was significant for these respondents. For them, it would indicate the officers' deep commitment to and support of LGBTQ+ communities. They imagined two groups of police officers attending Pride: those who identified as LGBTQ+ themselves, and those who supported LGBTQ+ communities. Regardless, the general sentiment was that their participation counted, and their volunteer participation implied that they could be somewhere else but had chosen Pride instead. Such selfless dedication to LGBTQ+ communities would be interpreted as a sign of the police's good faith and positive attitude. Not dwelling on

whether police were in uniform could ensure that the focus would remain on the forest and not on the trees. And if police did wear their uniforms, that should be seen as a value statement about change. Uniformed police officers in the parade would symbolize a course correction in police and LGBTQ+ communities' relationship—movement in a forward direction. A ban on uniformed police would leave this possible course correction unachieved.

Connected to this message of evolution and progress was the idea that excluding uniformed officers would send a negative message to members of LGBTQ+ communities who might be interested in policing as a career; that an LGBTQ+ identity would be incompatible with the police profession:

At one time LGBTQ+ people had to choose: identify with their gender and sexual orientation, or identify as law enforcement. They could not choose both. We have reached a day and age where it is finally accepted and celebrated to have LGBTQ+ member of law enforcement organizations. We should not be reverting to having people be forced to choose only one part of their identity. There are deeper issues at play between the community and law enforcement that should be addressed in such a way that excludes no one. (Female community member, White, #126)

Others shared the sentiment of this respondent, especially in their implicit understanding of intersectionality. They observed that the time had come and gone when LGBTQ+ police officers would have to keep their sexual orientation or gender identity separate from their professional identity—to hide. Many respondents seemed to express feelings of sympathy for the situation of LGBTQ+ police officers who had, in the past, possibly been denied the opportunity to be their whole self. Respondents were, therefore, of the opinion that banning uniformed police from Pride was founded in a regressive way of thinking. They feared it might reinforce the idea that being LGBTQ+ meant that one could not be a police officer when the opposite was true. Those in favor of a ban on uniformed police at Pride were constructed as lacking enlightenment and wanting to turn back the clock of progress, forcing LGBTQ+ police officers back into the closet or into hiding aspects of themselves.

Unnamed, unexpressed, deeper issues were included in the discussion, delegitimizing the concerns of those interested in seeing uniformed police banned from Pride parades. Given the province's predominantly White police force, the findings gave the impression that the concerns of LGBTQ+ people of color were of less importance than those of White LGBTQ+ police officers. Instead of trying to exclude uniformed police from Pride, these findings seemed to say, LGBTQ+ people of color should try to empathize with their situation.

“They Are We and We Are They”

A major concern expressed by respondents was that those advocating for a uniformed police ban had somehow forgotten that those officers were also members of LGBTQ+

communities. For eight respondents, the ban would, in effect, bar members of LGBTQ+ communities who were also police officers. As LGBTQ+ people existed in all professions, they said, LGBTQ+ communities should welcome and celebrate LGBTQ+ police officers who wished to wear their uniforms at Pride. A ban would achieve nothing except to fan the flames of division, at a time when these communities should be coming together as one:

It really pisses me off that we are considering this. Unbelievable . . . fighting to be included over 30 years . . . now we want to exclude from our community [those] who proudly wear the uniform. (Community member of undisclosed gender, White, #48)

I understand the history, I understand the controversy, but these people are just as much a part of the LGBTQ+ community. We need to bring people together, not divide. (Female community member, White, #109)

Respondents seemed to conflate a uniformed police ban with a ban on LGBTQ+ police officers. This framing of the issue set up a false logic, diverting attention away from the real issue of uniformed police ban, which was not concerned with whether or not a police officer was LGBTQ+. By making it appear that this was what was at stake, ban advocates were made to look more interested in sowing division and discord rather than focusing on things that would unite all members of these communities.

A few respondents saw the suggestion of a police ban as an attempt to invalidate aspects of who they were: partners or siblings of LGBTQ+ police officers:

My boyfriend is an RNC [Royal Newfoundland Constabulary] officer do I need to say any more. (Male community member, of undisclosed race/ethnicity, #80)

Some of them (including my brother) are a proud part of both communities and that needs to be acknowledged. (Undisclosed gender and race/ethnicity of community member, #259)

The argument in respondents' quotes emphasizing an intimate or familial relationship with LGBTQ+ police officers seemed to be that such officers had a place in Pride. Excluding LGBTQ+ police officers would serve to deny respondents the opportunity to participate in Pride with their romantic partners or family members who were both police officers and LGBTQ+ community members, increasing the possibility that respondents would experience themselves as invisible. In this way, the casualties of a uniformed police ban would not be just the police officers, but their loved ones, too.

For four respondents, representation mattered. The diversity of LGBTQ+ communities needed to be shown to the broader public, to showcase LGBTQ+ people and their important contributions to society, especially in the area of

public safety and security. They felt this could have a positive effect on their public image:

Show that we are in all aspects of society; one time, police forces were antigay. (Male community member, White, #69)

Many law enforcement officers are members of our community and are proud to wear the uniform. It boosts our profile in the community at large. (Female community member, mixed race, #130)

Critical for respondents was that having uniformed police at Pride would help to enhance the general public's image of LGBTQ+ people. Seeing LGBTQ+ people in police uniform would support the view that they were full citizens, important members of society who the public could rely on when they were at their most vulnerable. This kind of exposure could solidify the presence of LGBTQ+ officers and normalize their visibility in the broader society and in important areas of public administration. An unstated, but implicit, understanding seemed to be that the general public had an incomplete or negative view of LGBTQ+ people that police participation at Pride—in uniform—could help to change.

“The Police Are on Our Side”

For five respondents, the institution of policing was not the problem; one bad apple did not ruin the whole bunch. For these respondents, the actions of a few bad officers were being relied upon to cast police in a negative light. The actions of questionable officers should be addressed; the issue should not be framed as a police-wide concern. The efforts of those who wanted to be part of the solution needed to be recognized and supported:

It sickens me that we would exclude an entire community of people based on the actions of a few. If we are to do that, how are we any better than them? (Female community member, White, #31)

This is part of progress. To recognize that the organization and some members are still part of the problem should not deny the presence of those who wish to be part of the solution. (Male community member, White, #181)

Respondents such as these recognized that individuals who created problems for others were not unique to policing as a profession, but existed in all fields. The respondents' often repeated phrases, “few” and “some,” suggested that the actions of problem officers were isolated, out of the ordinary, and should, therefore, not be taken to represent the actions of the fair and decent police officers who they assumed made up the majority of police services, and who were on the side of LGBTQ+ communities. Indeed, respondents feared that the issue of a uniformed police ban missed the point, imagining good and bad police officers to be one and the same. The attention, they opined, should be placed on bad police

officers and not on the police in general. Respondents seemed to imply that those advocating for a uniformed police ban would be wiser to differentiate between good and bad police officers.

Yet, this view seemed to negate the fact that individual police officers were part of a larger system that oppressed LGBTQ+ people of color and other marginalized groups. The responsibility for policing the actions of individual officers should be borne by these police services themselves, not by LGBTQ+ people of color or marginalized groups. If this were to happen, existing racial hierarchies and relations of power, which had resulted in the police singling out people of color and marginalized groups for greater scrutiny or negative treatment in the first place, could be negated.

Nine respondents considered police participation and interest in Pride as the ultimate sign of support and allyship. They did not want to be influenced by historical police transgressions. Rather, police support should be nurtured. A solid police-community relationship would give LGBTQ+ communities a voice in shaping police policies and practices. For this to happen, LGBTQ+ communities needed to envision the police as allies and not as enemies. This included encouraging visible police activism in Pride:

While we must remember and respect our history, . . . allowing the police officers to march in uniform will show how far we as a society have come. They are no longer our enemies, but our allies and members of our community are openly a part of law enforcement. (Female community member, White, #67)

There are a lot of queer people in uniform, police and others like military, [and] inclusion is required. The past political plays of exclusion divide the community and distance us from allies. As well, building trust and a greater community means we reach out to groups like the police. We can't effect change in their policy and perspectives unless we are engaged with them. (Female community member, White, #96)

Part of being an ally, according to respondents, was knowing that the police would be there when you needed them. For eight more respondents, the police provided protection in and out of Pride; the respondents felt comfortable approaching them more now than before for help, either as witnesses or victims of crime. Recognizing that not all community members would feel safe at Pride if police were present, they felt that the visibility of uniformed officers provided a measure of safety and security for others; the police should not be limited to the role of spectator. For people who felt unsafe at Pride, the police could be asked to march out of uniform, as a gesture of good faith. Ultimately, however, respondents were unanimous about the importance of police in ensuring the safety and protection of LGBTQ+ people:

To feel protected, we need the police to stand with us and not just on the sidelines without their uniforms. (Trans male and nonbinary community member, Latin American, #30)

Though I am behind Black Lives Matter, . . . I think having them [the police] around is good protection for Pride. However, if it makes more people feel uncomfortable than safe, it's understandable to ask them to march in nonuniform. (Nonbinary community member, White, #178)

Seeing that the police are “on our side” makes me feel more comfortable, more likely to be believed and have action taken, should I have to report a crime of any kind against me or witnessed by me. (Female community member, Canadian, #248)

Concerns about safety and security, as described by respondents in these quotes, were top of mind. These respondents emphasized the importance of uniformed police at Pride as a safeguard for their well-being. They wished to facilitate their ability to report crimes or cooperate in police investigations in general. However, the wish for uniformed police at Pride conflicted somewhat with the demands of groups such as Black Lives Matter, who had been vocal about banning uniformed police from Pride precisely because their presence created feelings of unsafety among LGBTQ+ people of color. The appeal for uniformed police at Pride seemed to prioritize the needs and interests of mostly White LGBTQ+ people, whose experience with police might be substantially different from people of color. Even were the concerns of LGBTQ+ people of color or social movement groups such as Black Lives Matter taken into consideration, the effort could be undercut by using “more people” to suggest that not enough LGBTQ+ people of color had been negatively impacted by police treatment, or not enough White people had complained about the same, to justify banning uniformed police from Pride.

The same respondent left it up to the police to decide how they would respond to a request to not wear their uniforms at Pride, empowering them to dictate the nature of their participation. The impression given was that once the police had been asked to not wear their uniforms, their decision whether to abide by this request should be respected. However, were the police to demand that they be allowed to wear their uniform after being asked not to, whose interest should take precedence? Although it appeared that Pride organizers and LGBTQ+ people of color were afforded a voice in this matter, a more accurate portrayal was that the balance of power was in the hands of the police.

Taking Back Pride

Central to this theme was the concern that political correctness combined with sensational tropes and imported ideas from other provinces had infiltrated the St. John's Pride festival and been allowed to muddy the relationship between police and LGBTQ+ communities. Respondents felt that the situation unfolding in other parts of the country should be seen in its geographical and historical context and not uncritically absorbed into the cultural narrative

of Newfoundland and Labrador. For nine respondents, the Newfoundland and Labrador experience was unstained by racial hostility and minimal conflict between police and LGBTQ+ communities. The respondents were, therefore, skeptical of the call to ban uniformed police from Pride, a move they saw as an encroachment on Pride from individuals and groups with a political axe to grind. They wanted to take back Pride from those perceived to be stirring up dissension and controversy:

I may identify as gay, but the Pride board does not speak for me. Stop trying to adopt narratives that don't apply to us and pulling at straws to find historical examples of police discrimination just so we can be like Toronto and Montreal. Stop the cattiness, the pettiness and the relentless politicization. It's hypocritical, it's counterproductive and it's pathetic. (Male community member, White, #60)

I know everyone has their opinions and should be respected, but the extreme PC [politically correct] culture of excluding anyone who “has privilege” has been a huge detriment to the community. It doesn't help your cause or make people want to understand us. (Male community member, White, #169)

Here, these respondents offered a strong criticism of Pride organizers and, by extension, LGBTQ+ people of color who might support uniformed police ban. Other respondents echoed similar sentiments that expressly negated police privilege. Both groups were admonished for their so-called relentless, politicized demonization of the police in Newfoundland and Labrador, when the police had not given cause to warrant them being banned from Pride. Reflected in respondents' accounts was a feeling of pride in the local police relationships with LGBTQ+ communities, which they perceived as being beyond reproach. An air of superiority—that the police in St. John's were better than the police in other major Canadian cities—was perceptible.

Although respondents were quick to point out the situations unfolding in other provinces, they took personal offense to any suggestion that the police in Newfoundland and Labrador might behave in the same bad way toward marginalized members of LGBTQ+ communities, such as people of color. This understanding served to reject any notion of police racism and discrimination as a possible reality in Newfoundland and Labrador, despite racism being a central feature of the history of police in Canada generally. The obvious irony was that, in an attempt to deny or discount police racism and discrimination, people who may have had—or continued to have—negative experiences with the police were silenced from speaking up, for fear of negative outcomes such as public shaming in person or on social media. Yet, the voices of these individuals were central to the debate at hand. The myth of racial color-blindness was a powerful force in denying police differential treatment and in ignoring institutional racism against LGBTQ+ people of color.

Taking back Pride, for 12 additional respondents, was also about not forgetting the errors of the past. Police historical wrongdoings needed to be acknowledged, but efforts needed to be made to forge a different path for the future. Fixating on past events could negate the gains that had been made to improve relations between police and LGBTQ+ communities, thereby getting in the way of community healing and growth. In these respondents' eyes, the way to improve public relations with and accountability by the police was to not exclude them from Pride. To do so was a regressive approach that would make change hard to come by:

We need to be progressive [and] not keep looking at the past. Move forward and try and work on mending tension between police and certain groups within our community. We need to start healing or there will always be fighting. (Female community member, Canadian, #51)

While police and the LGBTQ+ community certainly do not have a flawless past (Stonewall riots for example) I don't think banning uniformed police officers from Pride is helping anyone move forward from that, if anything I think it may be damaging the improving relationship with police and the LGBTQ+ community. (Female community member, White, #225)

For these respondents, the future of police-LGBTQ+ community relations hinged on the latter group's ability to move past historical police transgressions, such as the events of the Stonewall riots in the United States. The reference to this historical moment is interesting. Respondent #60 openly criticized Pride organizers for attempting to import problems from other Canadian provinces to represent the situation in Newfoundland and Labrador, thereby indirectly lambasting LGBTQ+ people of color as members of the group who protested during Toronto's Pride parade. Respondent #225 did something similar by drawing on the American experience. This was slightly self-serving, as other Pride organizers were being held to a different set of standards. At the same time, these respondents seemed to recognize the transnational nature of the issues surrounding Pride and uniformed police ban.

Moreover, respondents equating discussions about a uniformed police ban as being unprogressive suggested that the conditions of LGBTQ+ people of color were not seen as important. Also raised was a practical question: how to mend police relationships with LGBTQ+ people of color so that everyone could heal, if the experiences of LGBTQ+ people of color had not been validated to begin with. In fact, the impression given by respondents was that any discussion of a uniformed police ban could set back change already in progress in police and LGBTQ+ community relationships. Respondents seemed to use this argument to imply that LGBTQ+ people of color should waive their concerns for the common good. These respondents seemed oblivious to the negative impacts that police actions might have on those around them who did not benefit from the privileges of Whiteness.

Finally, for six respondents, the process of taking back Pride demanded a discussion about police deportment. They found this topic more productive than the debate about a ban. They all agreed that the police should march in Pride in uniform, but differed on the conditions under which this should happen. There were those who said they should do so only if marching or working; others remarked that only LGBTQ+ officers be allowed to march in the actual parade. Still, some respondents mentioned that the police should come to Pride unarmed and off duty. Ultimately, for these respondents, there could be no Pride without the police in it. At least for one respondent, the need for police to acknowledge their mistreatment of Indigenous and LGBTQ+ people of color was paramount. The question of how the police should present themselves at Pride, however, seemed unresolved:

Only in uniform if marching/working during the event. Only queer/LGBTQ+ officers should be in the parade. (Male community member, White, #71)

On the condition that they be unarmed, off duty, and understand that they are in a space where they historically have caused intense suffering to members of our community. When police are ready to acknowledge that their continued attacks on members of our community (esp. Indigenous and POC) and are ACTIVELY ready to stand with us in advocating for change, I will welcome them with open arms. Until that day, they represent generations of trauma and violence to me. (Male community member, Indigenous, #160)

As these respondents seemed to suggest, the future of uniformed police at Pride rested on a workable solution being found to the current logjam. Respondents were unanimous in the view that options other than a ban should be considered. This perspective was matched by the understanding of Pride as a celebratory affair, one that would include uniformed police officers and be free from the political activism and protests. The second respondent quoted here provided an exception to the latter point. Despite his support for uniformed police officers at Pride, he expressed a cautious, wait-and-see attitude. For him, the police still had work to do, to distinguish themselves as advocates committed to bringing about systemic change in their relationships with LGBTQ+ Indigenous and people of color. Until such time, he reserved the right to not embrace the police fully; he might support them only for a limited time.

Discussion

The goal of this study was to hear from LGBTQ+ communities in the Canadian province of Newfoundland and Labrador on whether uniformed police should be allowed to march in the local Pride parade. The majority (51%) of the respondents were in favor of uniformed police officers marching in the Pride parade. Four related themes, discussed below, were found to influence LGBTQ+ communities support for uniformed police officers marching in the St. John's Pride parade.

Power of Pride

The significance of the power of Pride was reflected in the vision and aspirations of respondents for a community-wide, forward-looking celebration that was not mired in the past or divisive politics (Gillespie, 2008; Greey, 2018; Holmes, 2019, 2021; Russell, 2017, 2020). Respondents said Pride must seek to be inclusive—and not exclude any individual, group, or profession. Pride represented an important marketing and communication tool (Russell, 2017) for the critical task of building coalitions with key allies, including the police. Respondents also saw police visibility in Pride as conveying a powerful message of letting go of timeworn grudges and bitterness. Allowing police to march in their uniforms at Pride said that their—and, by extension, the general public's—perception of LGBTQ+ communities mattered. It mattered also that the antiquated idea of the police as enemy should be replaced with positive and affirming images (Greey, 2018; Holmes, 2019, 2021; Lamusse, 2016; Russell, 2017, 2020).

Importantly, framing Pride as an inclusive affair set up a false dichotomy. Those who supported uniformed police marching in Pride were construed as progressive, while those who opposed it were construed as narrow-minded. The language of inclusion invoked the color-blind frame of abstract liberalism, which was then used to ignore the fact that Pride had not always been inclusive of everyone, especially members of racial and ethnic minority groups who were also subjected to disproportionate police violence (Dukes & Kahn, 2017). This simplistic and reductionist division served to direct attention away from concerns about policing experienced by Indigenous and people of color, focusing instead on how Pride could be more responsive to police who wanted to march in the parade. In this way, respondents seemed willing to achieve the goal of a strong police-LGBTQ+ community relationship at any cost, even if having uniformed police at Pride would make some people feel unsafe (“Black Lives Matter Toronto Stalls Pride Parade,” 2016; Holmes, 2019, 2021; Lamusse, 2016; Te, 2018). Full inclusion, then, was not the goal, given the lack of attention paid to the effect that a uniformed police presence would have on Indigenous and people of color. For these “progressive” respondents, there would be no Pride without the police in it.

“They Are We and We Are They”

The sentiment expressed by respondents was that the visibility of LGBTQ+ people as police officers made a crucial and much-needed statement about how far LGBTQ+ communities had come in securing rights for their members, and underscored the point that they were now an essential part of society (Colvin, 2015; Couto, 2014, 2018; Sklansky, 2006). This perspective connects to the theory of intersectionality, emphasizing that the identity of “police officer” being claimed by some members of the LGBTQ+ community overlapped with their unique experiences of discrimination

and oppression as sexual and gender minorities. Indeed, respondents believed that attempts to ban uniformed police officers from marching in the Pride parade amounted to an attack on these officers—shaming them back into the proverbial closet for their career choice, at a time when the entire community should be uniting in support of these officers proudly marching in their uniforms.

Representation is undoubtedly an important issue, but how it was deployed in response to the question of uniformed police being banned from Pride served to undermine the central arguments of those who did not support police involvement in the parade. Proponents (those in favor of the ban) were not seen as individuals or groups with legitimate claims and concerns (Holmes, 2019, 2021) but were portrayed as agitators—stuck in the past, incapable of looking to the future and motivated by anger, their actions stoking fears of regression (Bascaramurty & Andrew-Gee, 2017). Opponents (those against the ban) interpreted their concerns and arguments to mean that they resisted the presence of LGBTQ+ people in law enforcement and were impervious to the fact that people's family members or romantic partners could be LGBTQ+ police officers. Police were “one of us.”

This reading of the situation belied the truth of the matter, which was that the relationship between the police and certain segments of LGBTQ+ communities—especially their interactions with Indigenous and people of color—in general had, indeed, been strained (Angeles & Robertson, 2020; Giwa & Jackman, 2020; Greey, 2018; Holmes, 2019, 2021; Lamusse, 2016; Mallory et al., 2015; Mogul et al., 2011; Parker et al., 2018). Arguments by those opposed to the ban were consistent with the color-blind frame wherein the racism and police violence experienced by ban proponents—most of whom (but not all) were Indigenous and people of color—were minimized. The suggestion that relations between LGBTQ+ communities and police were better now than before ignored evidence about the depth and pervasiveness of racism toward Indigenous and people of color, raising the following question: better for whom? Police relations with the White majority had perhaps, for the most part, remained constructive because Whites had not been subjected to the same level of enforcement and criminalization (Dryden & Lenon, 2016; Stewart-Winter, 2015).

Underneath the thin veneer of a future in which Pride would celebrate the diversity of LGBTQ+ communities was a destructive us-and-them mind-set, a type of in-group and out-group bias (Molenberghs, 2013) that found expression in the ideas or feelings articulated about people with a differing viewpoint. For example, while it is true that LGBTQ+ people are employed as police officers, as they are in other professions, a ban on uniformed police marching in the parade is not an injunction against individual LGBTQ+ officers. What proponents in Newfoundland and Labrador decried was the participation of the police as an institution, because their involvement might be construed as an endorsement of their continued negative treatment of marginalized and vulnerable members of LGBTQ+ communities (Khan, 2017; Lamusse,

2016; Russell, 2017, 2020), for whom there had been no sustained effort at reconciliation.

“The Police Are on Our Side”

Banning uniformed police at Pride, for many respondents, defied logic. Proponents were seen to be using the inappropriate actions of a “few bad apples” (Tator & Henry, 2006) to denounce the entire institution of the police, potentially driving away venerable and established allies. Also, allowing police to march in uniform at Pride would reflect the important, practical nature of police work: the need for safety and protection (Dunham & Alpert, 2015). For ban opponents, police were no longer enemies; they could be trusted to ensure their safety and security (Holmes, 2019, 2021). Their presence in the Pride parade would publicly show they were on the side of LGBTQ+ communities, protecting them like any other citizens, in a win-win situation for LGBTQ+ communities and the police as institution alike.

The desire among respondents for equal treatment by the police, especially in times of need, is understandable. But framing this interest as a reasonable expectation on the part of a group that has historically been overpoliced and underprotected exemplifies the color-blind logic of abstract liberalism (Giwa & Jackman, 2020): lesbian, gay, and bisexual Canadians have a higher likelihood of violent victimization than their heterosexual counterparts (Simpson, 2018). However, the deeply mistaken belief that members of LGBTQ+ communities experienced the benefits of uniformed police *equally*, at and outside of Pride, was an exaggeration at best, and problematic at worst, serving to discount the activism of Black Lives Matter chapter groups, who have been vocal about the uneven and biased treatment of Indigenous and people of color in many Canadian cities (Greedy, 2018; Holmes, 2019, 2021; Wahab, 2020; Walcott, 2017).

Black Lives Matter activism raises the question of whose safety the police seek to protect. Thus, the opponents’ focus on uniformed police at Pride as individual bad-apple officers versus the police as institution is suspect. Negative racial and stereotypical views about Indigenous and people of color are not limited to just a few bad apples. These views are deeply ingrained in the institutions and structures of Canadian society (Comack, 2012; Giwa & Jackman, 2020; Maynard, 2017; Tator & Henry, 2006), so that racism becomes routine and taken for granted—it is simply the way of doing business. Clearly, there are costs associated with continuing business as usual, which need to be considered in making the decision about whether uniformed police should be allowed to march in the parade.

Taking Back Pride

The groundswell of support for taking back Pride was in reaction to what opponents saw as political correctness run amok. In their view, proponents attempted to capitalize on the sensationalism of the recent demand by a former St. John’s Pride

board member that police apologize for the arrest of gay men alleged to have engaged in explicit sexual acts in a public washroom (Maher, 2018). The 2016 Black Lives Matter Toronto Pride sit-in, which effectively halted that city’s parade for 30 minutes (“Black Lives Matter Toronto Stalls Pride Parade,” 2016), also did not escape their attention. They viewed this incident as bolstering local demand for a police ban.

However, opponents said, conditions in Newfoundland and Labrador were different (Endres & Senda-Cook, 2011; Holmes, 2019, 2021)—so they saw no justification for banning uniformed police from Pride. To argue otherwise was understood as counterproductive to the goal of inclusion. How could proponents argue, under the principle of a safe space, for including some people while being comfortable excluding others? Opponents argued for an approach grounded in a remembrance of the past and an awareness of the future. Whatever mistakes the police might have made in the past, LGBTQ+ communities should in good faith engage them in a way that helped everyone to move forward. This notion of forgiveness for historical wrongdoings demonstrated an instance of naturalization in color-blind racism, through its appeal to human fallibility. Police were imperfect beings—much like those advocating their ban from Pride—and should be shown compassion.

Interestingly, wrapped in these respondents’ reaction was a feeling of nostalgia for a time and place immune from the happenings in Toronto or elsewhere. Newfoundland and Labrador’s demographic is changing, albeit slowly, due to interprovincial migration and the arrival of new immigrants and refugees. It is reasonable to think that a spillover effect might occur; that is, emotional and psychological stress might be carried over from a previous negative police contact to one in a current context. To expect that newcomers and Indigenous and people of color, for example, would not carry with them memories of past negative police encounters to their new country or province would be shortsighted.

Newfoundland and Labrador may not yet have experienced the same fate as Toronto, but the show of support seen across many parts of Canada for a uniformed Pride police ban recognizes the mistreatment of Indigenous and people of color by police institutions and is a clarion call for change in police relations with these groups (Greedy, 2018; Holmes, 2019, 2021; Walcott, 2017). Undermining the legitimacy of the demand for a police ban could perpetuate the exclusion and silencing of marginalized LGBTQ+ members and allies as if their voice did not matter.

Limitations

At the time of the survey, the financial standing of the St. John’s Pride board prevented the CMT from including more questions in the survey, which might have given further nuance to an understanding of the research problem. For example, St. John’s is a metropolis—most of the people in the province live there. However, because respondents were not asked to indicate the type of community they lived in (e.g., rural area, town, large city, or suburb), the current study

cannot speak to issue-specific differences across community types. Second, the ability to administer an anonymous survey online permitted access to LGBTQ+ people across the province, yet potential respondents without an internet connection might have been left out. Future research may consider other (albeit more expensive) approaches, such as pencil-and-paper surveys or face-to-face interviews. Third, the present study examined the perspectives of LGBTQ+ community members, providing a partial understanding of the research problem. Future studies could include insights from the police, as these might offer new perspective on the issue. And because the respondent sample was predominantly White, our findings may not be transferable to contexts in which the population is racially and ethnically diverse.

Conclusion

The significance of our findings suggests a future in which primarily White LGBTQ+ people see police as an integral part of LGBTQ+ communities in Newfoundland and Labrador. For them, police participation at Pride is, by all evidence, a welcomed sign of changing times. Color-blind racial attitudes, coded in language of social progress for LGBTQ+ people, were central to the logic of arguments they advanced. Yet it is LGBTQ+ Indigenous and people of color who are subject to police violence, while White LGBTQ+ people are increasingly less so. They feel protected by police. It is worth noting that the broader concern of police discrimination raised by LGBTQ+ Indigenous and people of color (as well as social movement groups such as the Black Lives Matter Toronto) has been sidelined. As such, the present study's finding of support for uniformed police at Pride should not be construed as the last word on the issue. In the absence of a concerted effort by White LGBTQ+ community members and the police to understand, beyond a surface level, the concerns and decisions behind uniformed police ban, Pride is likely to be mired in the same controversy in future.

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