



‘Stop the Spread’: Criminalizing Physical Recreation During the COVID-19 Pandemic

Hannah J. Walsh¹ · Liam Kennedy² · Derek Silva² · Mark Norman³

Received: 2 June 2025 / Accepted: 23 November 2025 / Published online: 28 January 2026
© The Author(s) 2026

Abstract

This study expounds on the media’s role in legitimating criminalization, lateral surveillance, and stigmatization as the appropriate response to violating public health restrictions in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic in Canada. Specifically, our qualitative content analysis of news articles ($n=66$) reveals how media echoed politicians’ calls to “stop the spread” of the virus by making personal sacrifices, relied heavily on law enforcement sources when telling stories relating to non-compliance, and routinely excluded the voices of those disproportionately impacted by public health restrictions and the concomitant expansion of social control. At times, news media stories failed to name violations explicitly or employed ambiguous phrasing to downplay the structural problems associated with pandemic conditions. Taken together, we suggest news media coverage of pandemic sport violations upholds punitive ideologies, conceals the social determinants of health and structural barriers to physical recreation opportunities, and legitimates the amorphous expansion and diffusion of social control.

✉ Liam Kennedy
Lkenne56@uwo.ca

Hannah J. Walsh
h.walsh@queensu.ca

Derek Silva
Dsilva28@uwo.ca

Mark Norman
mnorman@stfx.ca

¹ Queen’s University, Kingston, Canada

² King’s University College at Western University Canada, London, Canada

³ St. Francis Xavier University, Antigonish, Canada

Introduction

Over the last several years, scholars (e.g., Capurro et al. 2022; Georgeou et al. 2023; Jiang and Hyland 2022; Loreto 2021) have examined how news media discourses concerning the COVID-19 pandemic shaped public perceptions about risk and responsibility. Generally, these studies offer a window into the rhetorical strategies employed by key claims-makers (e.g., politicians, police officials, civil servants) during public health crises. In the current study, we expound on the media's role in shaping our understanding of the creep of social control into sport and physical recreation spaces (e.g., parks, walking trails, basketball courts, soccer fields, ice rinks) during the COVID-19 pandemic. We contend that mapping this discursive field provides us with a better understanding of the social construction of deviance, the ways punitive ideologies are safeguarded and reinforced, and the emergence of new forms of inequality, shaming, and stigmatization during the COVID-19 pandemic.

In this article, we highlight how news media echoed politicians' calls to "stop the spread" of the virus via personal sacrifice and uncritically accepted that criminalization and shaming were the appropriate responses to individuals who did not comply with emerging public health restrictions. In their coverage, journalists relied heavily on government and police sources and parroted their calls for all of us to engage in "lateral surveillance" of neighbours, acquaintances, and peers (see Andrejevic 2006). At times, news media stories that chronicled the issuing of tickets or charges were phrased ambiguously and/or failed to name the violations explicitly. This legitimated the amorphous nature of pandemic policing of sport and physical recreation (hereafter 'physical recreation') and the parallel expansion of social control. On those rare occasions wherein news media included the voices of those who had encountered agents of social control, they typically employed episodic framing and neglected to engage in substantive discussions about structural barriers to physical recreation. As others (Kohm and Maier 2023) have astutely observed, analyzing media constructions of social problems reveals much about the anxieties and priorities of powerful groups. In this case, we argue that news media promoted a law-and-order ideology that espouses criminalization, surveillance, and shaming, while failing to discuss how access to physical recreation opportunities is itself tied to the social determinants of health.

Media Framing and Crime

Claims-makers (i.e., those with the ability and inclination to persuade others of their ideological positions) set the parameters of a social problem as well as its plausible solutions (Best 1987). Typically, however, claims-makers are not inclined to examine the root causes of those social problems and are instead more likely to individualize issues (Best 1987; Chagnon 2015; Jewkes and Linnemann 2018). With this kind of episodic framing, complex social issues are presented absent important context (Chagnon 2015). Claims-makers working in news media favor clarity, concision, and certainty. Notably, constructing and presenting social problems is an ideological process (Jewkes and Linnemann 2018). That is, if news media simplify, for example, the crime problem and locate responsibility for it within the individual, then audiences can more easily disregard the need for structural change. More than that, this way of framing readies audiences to regard those responsible for crime as fundamentally different from 'us' (i.e., an 'other') and/or morally bankrupt. This lens impedes

empathy and understanding and elicits fear. Simplifying social problems—and particularly the crime issue—in this manner helps generate support for the status quo. In this context, that means additional policing, punishment, and social control are typically considered the logical response to the ‘scary’ crime issue (Chagnon 2015; Jewkes and Linnemann 2018). For their part, Kort-Butler (2023) observes that crime news during the pandemic followed this formula: it was typically devoid of discussion of the changing socio-political context, sought to engender fear, and promoted criminalization and policing.

In their reporting on crime issues, news media routinely rely on police officials (Doyle 2006). Their status as trusted sources on crime stories is not happenstance or some convenient accident, but rather a choice to uphold a law-and-order ideology (Chagnon 2015; Jewkes and Linnemann 2018). For instance, police were primary definers of a ‘wave’ of “brazen” liquor store thefts in Winnipeg, Canada beginning in 2018 (Kohm and Maier 2023: 178; see also Hall et al. 1978). In this role, police lamented the lax security at liquor stores and emphasized the danger these thefts posed to the public. In this way, police helped frame the problem and its solution(s): the fix would be more crime prevention and securitization rather than any substantive examination of how these crimes were tied to settler colonialism in the Canadian prairies or any push to address its ongoing impacts on Indigenous peoples (Kohm and Maier 2023). Despite their role as primary definers, media outlets are not simply a mouthpiece for police agencies or a united group relaying the wishes of the ruling class in a grand conspiracy. Like other relationships, the one between media and police can be complex and, at times, adversarial (Doyle 2006; Hall et al. 1978). However, the media’s “structured relationship” to power means they “help to reproduce and sustain the definitions of the situation which favor the powerful” (Hall et al. 1978: 59, 65). In short, this body of work forces scholars to be attuned to how crime news is produced and disseminated and how framing the crime issue is an ideological process (Hall et al. 1978; Jewkes and Linnemann 2018).

COVID Metaphors and the Policing of Physical Recreation

Unsurprisingly, there has been considerable global research examining media coverage of the COVID-19 pandemic (e.g., Jiang and Hyland 2022; Montiel et al. 2021; Schwarz et al. 2024). Like with crime, media framing of COVID-19 informed how citizens came to understand the causes, nature, and appropriate responses to this public health emergency (Georgiou et al. 2023). Generally, news media failed to explore how the risk of COVID-19 was tied to broader social determinants of health like social class, race, gender, and geography (Mikkonen and Raphael 2010; Whitham 2022; see also Link and Phelan 1995; Frankish et al. 1998). Indeed, in stark contrast, we heard repeatedly that we were “all in this together” (Whitham 2022). Whitham (2022: 74) suggests this messaging was an “instrument of governmentality” that indicated how people should behave (i.e., wear a mask, isolate, quarantine, refrain from interacting with loved ones, vaccinate). For his part, Lyon (2022: 49) contends that “many self-discipline” in the “Coronopticon” for “fear of disease and death.” Those who followed guidelines were framed as making a “selfless sacrifice for the protection of the wider community” (Capurro et al. 2022: 5). Notably, news media contributed to the stigmatization of individuals who did not comply with public health guidelines—these “covidiot” were shamed, described as irresponsible and immoral, and framed as a threat to

the rest of us (Capurro et al. 2022). Any stigma they experienced was warranted, we were told, because they purportedly brought it on themselves through their (in)action (Georgeou et al. 2023). These widespread calls to do one's part to stop the spread of the virus ignored broader structural constraints on the actions of individuals (Hier 2023).

Many of these critiques of COVID-19 reporting are relevant to Canada, the focus of the current article. The “lie of personal responsibility”—sanitizing your hands and downloading a contact tracing app were not the keys to stopping transmission of COVID-19—perpetuated by Canadian politicians and news media, Loreto (2021: 110) argues in *Spin Doctors*, ensured minimal disruption to the status quo. News media routinely presented individual stories that were decontextualized, that is, removed from broader social contexts and social processes. Again, much like the crime framing discussed in the previous section, this approach to storytelling discourages critical reflection about the way that COVID-19 transmission was tied to patterns of marginalization. For instance, while public health messaging consistently stated that washing your hands was pivotal to preventing transmission of the virus, handwashing could do little to stop the spread since it did not ameliorate the precarious working conditions of those, for instance, growing and preparing food or staffing long-term care homes and the concomitant outbreaks that would occur in those facilities (Loreto 2021). In other words, focusing on the importance of washing one's hands (among other individual behaviors) minimized the need to consider wide-ranging changes to Canadian society or an alternative approach to tackling the virus by political leaders. Loreto's work (2021) compels us to sincerely confront if outbreaks in factories that are/were staffed by low-wage, racialized workers *actually* occurred because these people touched their faces more or did not wash their hands appropriately. This rhetorical approach—one that emphasized personal sacrifice and responsibility, focused on the moral failings of those who fell ill or did not comply with restrictions, and ignored how one's social position shaped their pandemic experiences and risks—was employed elsewhere across the globe (see, for example, Alnahed 2022; Whitham 2022).

Media and politicians often reminded us that this was a collective emergency and that we all had a personal responsibility to tolerate and abide by public health restrictions. They routinely used war metaphors when discussing the virus in furtherance of these objectives (see Musolff et al. 2022). Just like during wartime, they would state, it was everyone's obligation to protect themselves, their family, their community, and their country from their common viral enemy (Gui 2021, 2023; Papamanoli and Kaniklidou 2022; Semino 2021). Along these lines, we were told that we should value and applaud all ‘frontline’ healthcare workers and vaccine volunteers who would help us achieve victory in this struggle (Alnahed 2022; Gui 2023; Treichler 2022). In this way, compliance was created as the good, responsible, moral, and patriotic course of action (Papamanoli and Kaniklidou 2022). The idea that we were “all in this together” persisted despite resounding evidence that the everyday experience and effects of the pandemic were not distributed equally (Whitham 2022).

In the earliest days and weeks of the pandemic, Loreto (2021) reports, Canadian news media notified the public that police agencies would be enforcing public health orders and only rarely were the implications of or alternatives to this approach scrutinized. In this project, we examine precisely how news media framed the policing of physical recreation during the pandemic. Why physical recreation? As we have outlined elsewhere (see Norman, Silva, Kennedy, and Cipolli III 2024), in Canada sport and physical recreation became a major point of discussion about the policing and surveillance of individuals, organiza-

tions, spaces, and activities, as well as a key site for resistance to public health measures. As provincial lockdowns restricted access to recreation spaces and activities, law enforcement was called to outdoor basketball courts and ice rinks, playgrounds and hiking trails were roped off, golf courses were shuttered, and at least one skateboard park had fences and security cameras installed (e.g., Carruthers 2020; Carty 2021; CTV News 2020; Dryden 2020; McClelland and Luscombe 2020; Miller 2020; Stanley 2021). Some Canadians openly challenged public health orders by continuing to practice sport—as in the prominent instance of an Ontario golf course that defied provincial orders to close (e.g., Miller 2020). Other Canadians reported community members perceived to be partaking in illegal forms of physical recreation to law enforcement (e.g., Rodrigues 2020)—an example of the increased citizen-to-citizen surveillance of public space during the pandemic, which often disproportionately impacts racialized or socioeconomically marginalized persons (Monahan 2006). Below, we interrogate how Canadian news media framed the expansion and diffusion of social control, contributed to stigmatization of physical recreation-seekers, and failed to recognize that “deep, intersecting social inequalities and tensions structure our experiences of the pandemic” (Whitham 2022: 73).

Data and Methods

In the first phase of this project, we collected data using the *Policing the Pandemic* database (McClelland and Luscombe 2020) that catalogued offences related to COVID-19 rules and regulations in Canada between April 2020 and March 2021. Launched in early April of 2020, the database used media reporting, police communications, and social media posts to map and identify patterns of police intervention. We reviewed all 1209 offences catalogued in the database for any incident relating to physical recreation. We defined physical recreation broadly to include incidents involving recreational activities such as walking, running, using park equipment, and participating in sport. We recorded these cases and retrieved the news articles hyperlinked to the corresponding offences in the database.

In the second phase of the project, we conducted a search using Factiva, an international news database, for news articles relating to the criminalization of physical recreation in Canada between March 1, 2021, and December 31, 2022 (see “Appendix” 1 for key terms and search parameters). We employed this latter search strategy to capture the period subsequent to the timeframe covered in the *Policing the Pandemic* database and until the lifting of mask mandates, vaccine certificate systems, and travel restrictions, as well as the end of all lockdowns in Canada. As such, our sample includes news articles published throughout the various stages of COVID-19 restrictions in Canada. Initially, we gathered a total of 91 articles. After removing exact duplicates (i.e., articles that contained the same number of words and/or characters and sometimes the same timestamp, but were published in different outlets), 66 articles remained (see Table 1 for a breakdown of the final sample). Removing these 25 verbatim duplicates ensured that we did not double-count incidents.

Some incidents may have been reported on by multiple outlets but only captured once during a search. While this is a possible limitation of our search strategy and these data, we sought to mitigate any potential impact by logging the political leaning associated with each news source (see Table 2) using a media bias-checking website provided by the University of Toronto’s Centre for Industrial Relations and Human Resources (University of Toronto

Table 1 News source ($n=66$)

News Source	Frequency
Ancaster News	1
Barrie Advance	1
Brampton Guardian	2
Cape Breton Post	1
Calgary Herald	1
Canadian Press	1
CBC	8
City of Toronto News	7
CP24	1
CTV	9
Global News	7
In Brampton	1
La Presse	2
Le Journal de Montréal	1
Mississauga News	2
Montreal Gazette	1
Newmarket Today	1
Northumberland News	1
Postmedia	4
Richmond News	1
Sarnia Observer	1
St. Thomas Times Journal	1
Strathroy Age Dispatch	1
The Globe and Mail	1
The Hamilton Spectator	2
The London Free Press	1
Toronto Star	2
Vancouver Province	1
Vernon Morning Star	1
Vulcan Advocate	1
York Region News	1
Total	66

Table 2 News coverage political leaning ($n=66$)

Political Leaning	Frequency	Percentage
Left leaning	30	45.5%
Right leaning	14	21.2%
Neutral	18	27.3%
Not listed	4	6%
Totals	66	100%

n.d.). Delineating the political leaning of our sources allowed us to ensure that there was a wide distribution of political and/or ideological perspectives and informed our analysis of the different ways in which discourses of crime, punishment, social control, and deviance are constructed by various claims-makers. Notably, Kohm's (2025) recent examination of Canadian news media coverage of protests against perceived government overreach during COVID-19 and the invocation of *The Emergencies Act* revealed an "ideological inversion,"

Table 3 Source ($n=66$)

Source	Frequency	Percentage
Advocacy group	1	1.5%
Athlete	4	6%
Business owner	8	12.1%
City correspondence	10	15.2%
Community worker	5	7.6%
Emergency operations official	6	9.1%
Expert source	3	4.5%
Judge	1	1.5%
Lawyer	3	4.5%
Medical/health official	5	7.6%
Online source	6	9.1%
Parent	4	6%
Police	26	39.4%
Politician	21	31.8%
Sport organizer	2	3%

with conservative and liberal outlets framing matters in ways we usually link with the other. In this way, we were not entirely surprised to find that, especially early on, there was widespread endorsement of increased surveillance and social control despite over 70% of the outlets in our sample being left leaning or neutral.

Next, we conducted a qualitative content analysis (QCA) of these 66 articles to understand how Canadian news media framed the policing of pandemic physical recreation. We were interested in examining which and whose stories were told as well as which sources were used. QCA is the systematic study and interpretation of cultural artifacts—in this case, news articles. This qualitative method of analysis allows researchers to answer questions of “who says what, to whom, why, how, and with what effect?” (Babbie, Edgerton, and Roberts 2020: 242).

Using Dedoose, a qualitative coding software, we employed inductive coding practices to record emergent themes (Babbie et al. 2020). Inductive coding involves detailed readings of raw data to identify concepts and themes without predefined categories; this allows insights to emerge organically from the information (Thomas 2006). Initially, we engaged in line-by-line coding to gather longer open codes and then these codes were uploaded into Microsoft Excel. In Microsoft Excel, we recorded codes dichotomously, with 0 reflecting no code presence in the article and 1 reflecting code presence in the article. The first and second authors read each article multiple times to ensure consistency in the analysis (see Silcox 2022).

We coded for activity types (e.g., basketball, cricket, golf, hockey, and frequenting a park) and ‘offence type’ (e.g., failure to comply with COVID-19 distancing measures, failure to comply with the COVID-19 curfew rules, and ambiguous phrasing used when describing the offence). We also recorded the sources used by journalists to understand which social actors’ voices were represented in news media reports (see Table 3).

Findings

Enforcement Only “Where Necessary” (Juha 2020)

Early in the pandemic, news media reporting emphasized that the guiding principle when dealing with public health violations was education. Specifically, police officers (O'Reilly 2020a), bylaw officers (Champion 2020), and health inspectors (Patterson 2020) were said to be out benevolently educating folks about municipalities' current protocols. The Regulatory Services Manager in Newmarket, Ontario, for instance, noted that bylaw officers were “taking an education-first approach and simply want to ensure everyone can feel safe enjoying the fresh air and nice weather while following the health guidelines to stop the spread” of COVID-19. For their part, a corporate communications coordinator with the Barrie, Ontario Police Service said their strategy was to “deal with these matters where and when we can through education and awareness” (Goldfinger 2020). Individuals were only fined, we learn, when they disregarded or dismissed those attempts to educate (Champion 2020). On this matter, the manager of Winnipeg, Manitoba's Emergency Operations Centre observed that bylaw officers “don't want to hand out tickets, they don't want to hand out fines. They want to be able to provide information” (Thompson 2020). Emphasizing this point, just weeks later it was confirmed that an adult male who went to a Winnipeg skate park became “aggressive and defiant” after he was informed that the park was closed (Lefebvre 2020).

A version of this story—good-natured, patient, compassionate social control agents essentially compelled to issue fines or make arrests by boorish, belligerent recreation enthusiasts—was repeated over and over. For instance, readers were informed that the “vast majority of Londoners are trying hard, they're making sacrifices and they're adhering to these provincial emergency orders” (CBC News 2020a). London, Ontario's then-Mayor, Ed Holder, supposed “if we can't provide education or people aren't prepared to be educated, we have to educate their bank accounts” (CBC News 2020a). Indeed, for Holder, bylaw officers exercised “thoughtful restraint” in doling out warnings instead of tickets (LeBel 2020). Elsewhere Barrie, Ontario's community and corporate services general manager let readers know that in “over 99.5% of interactions” law enforcement officers were “able to achieve compliance without laying charges” (Simon 2020). A city spokesperson in Richmond, B.C. summed up this philosophy by proclaiming that “the issuing of a ticket is truly a last resort” (Rantanen 2020).

We argue that in these and other instances, news media repositioned these early pandemic-era interactions with state agents of social control as well-meaning educational encounters and, in so doing, obscured the structural violence perpetuated by policing. On this topic, city officials in Calgary, Alberta “repeatedly said they favor education over enforcement”—officers there issued the City's first pandemic fines to three men who had gathered in a local park and refused to disperse for “*flagrantly* ignoring social distancing orders” (Smith 2020; emphasis added). Similarly, after two individuals jumped over a fence to play soccer in Burlington, Ontario, the Director of Building and Bylaw complained about their “*blatant* disregard of everything we've tried to do to protect the health and safety of residents” (Cilliers 2020; emphasis added). Along these lines, a Richmond, B.C. RCMP Corporal expressed disappointment that “people still aren't getting the message. Whenever possible, we will take an educational approach” but will consider issuing tickets

for those businesses “operating in *blatant* disregard” of public health regulations (Kotyk 2020; emphasis added). The word choices here indicate that non-compliance is particularly offensive to our moral sensibilities. Acknowledging the growing frustration with ongoing restrictions (but also concealing the harms associated with criminalization), Calgary Police Services issued a notice that “there are no officers within the force that enjoy limiting the normal activities of Calgarians” (Franklin 2020).

We already know from existing scholarship (e.g., Capurro et al. 2022; Papamanoli and Kaniklidou 2022) that non-compliance with public health restrictions was routinely framed as the immoral and irresponsible course of action. Our study validates these earlier findings and elucidates precisely how these moralizing discourses were employed. For instance, in a press conference about parking lot parties in Brampton, Ontario, City Councillor Harkirat Singh added that three charges were laid for using equipment at a park. Singh implored “everyone to think of one another, to think of your own family and to think of your community to stop the spread of COVID-19” (Mazzucco 2020), while Brampton Mayor Patrick Brown added the following week, “you may not appreciate the severity of this virus, but you are spreading it in our community (and) putting loved ones—parents, grandparents—at risk and this reckless behavior must stop. If the financial penalty of these fines isn’t significant enough, you must recognize you are putting your loved ones’ lives at risk” (Frisque 2020a). Elsewhere, a West Vancouver Police Constable is quoted reminding individuals to “be responsible” in a story about an individual breaking their quarantine and travelling to Whistler, B.C. to snowboard (Hurst 2020). While a Waterloo, Ontario Regional Police Constable made appeals “to the community that they use good common sense” and stay home, it was clear that “some people still aren’t getting the message” (Baker 2020). In suggesting that those who violated public health restrictions were selfish, reckless, and lacked common sense, we argue that news media contributed to the stigmatization of those pursuing physical recreation during the pandemic. Moreover, this framing failed to recognize the structural barriers to physical recreation encountered by certain groups of people—not everyone has a backyard playset or basketball hoop in their driveway—and located blame with individual rule breakers rather than the governing bodies that failed to protect the public from the virus (e.g., Capurro et al. 2022; Hier 2023; Loreto 2021).

Further leaning into the “covidiot” frame (see Capurro et al. 2022), Hamilton, Ontario’s Director of Emergency Operations admonished three people who chose to golf on a closed municipal course in early April of 2020. Specifically, he was unsure “how anybody could confuse the fact that they didn’t pay a green fee” and served notice that public health restrictions were “not a joke” (Mann 2020). At that same time, an email from then-Mississauga, Ontario Mayor Bonnie Crombie’s office disclosed that two individuals were fined for “using a clearly signed skateboard park.” The individuals “admitted they were aware of the park closure but chose to use it anyways” (Cornwell 2020). In sum, news media reporting in the earliest days of the COVID-19 pandemic regularly framed law enforcement as easy-going, tolerant educators who issued fines and made arrests only when self-interested “covidiot” refused to listen to reason or make sacrifices. We contend that, not only does this framing conceal the potential harms of criminalization, it contributes to shaming and stigmatization of recreation-seekers whose behavior was characterized as morally offensive.

Police Sources and Carceral Logics

Stories about non-compliance among those pursuing physical recreation were framed as crime stories rather than public health stories. For instance, Hamilton-based reporter O'Reilly (2020a, b) was assigned to cover a story about the 19 tickets handed out to people violating the *Emergency Management and Civil Protection Act*. O'Reilly is described as a journalist “specializing in covering police, crime and the justice system.” We assert that this is one way to establish the parameters of the discussion: these are criminal matters to be covered by crime reporters. This closes off other ways of understanding non-compliance (e.g., inequitable access to health and wellness opportunities).

Police and politicians remained primary definers (see Hall et al. 1978) of pandemic-era policing. Existing literature suggests that police and politicians are viewed by the public as ‘legitimate sources’ and play a role in constructing what constitutes crime and deviance (Dowler et al. 2006). Table 3 highlights how journalists most frequently cite police (39.4%) and politicians (31.8%) as sources when discussing these infractions. This is an additional sign to readers that pursuing physical recreation opportunities could and should be conceived of as an individual criminal matter rather than as connected to public health and well-being. As we illuminate below, this sets the stage for adopting a crime control model premised on deterrence and the expansion of surveillance and social control.

In some cases, claims-makers confirm their belief that the criminal legal system has the capacity, and should aim, to deter individuals. Then-Toronto, Ontario Mayor, John Tory, for instance, anticipated that “steep fines [will] encourage people to maintain a two-metre distance from other people” (Aguilar 2020). Along these lines, the City of Burlington’s director of building and bylaw believed that proactive patrols would discourage people from violating COVID-19 restrictions (Cilliers 2020). However, scholars (e.g., De Haan and Vos 2003) observe that presuming the legal system can deter would-be lawbreakers is grounded in an “over-rationalized conception” of individuals and disregards the emotions they experience. These examples make it clear that, despite the stated focus on educating individuals about the restrictions in place, coercion and control underpin the response to this public health crisis.

News media coverage encouraged the expansion of social control in other ways, most notably by promoting the importance of lateral surveillance for stopping the spread of COVID-19 (see, for instance, Andrejevic 2006). Reporting peers for suspected non-compliance was justifiable given the tenor of overall coverage. Remember, news media stories routinely suggested these were people unwilling to make sacrifices and whose obvious selfishness posed a risk to the rest of us. This is in stark contrast to those who did their moral and civic duty by keeping their distance and reporting those who refused to do the same. For example, London’s Mayor, Ed Holder, characterized those who made reports to the city’s information line as “well-meaning people” (CBC News 2020a). This “tipline”—like one might use to provide information to a local Crime Stoppers program—was set up by the City of London alongside the London Police Service and Middlesex-London Health Unit to “crack down on those flouting provincial orders and municipal closures” (LeBel 2020). Similarly, a Halton Regional Police representative advised that folks should call the “hotline” to report non-compliance with distancing rules (Cilliers 2020). Readers in Nova Scotia were encouraged to report violations to Halifax Regional Police (CBC News 2020c) and Cape Breton Regional Police (Macinnis 2000). Here, all of us are urged to take

on responsibility for surveillance and social control, which, for a period, expanded and diffused unfettered. In sum, news media coverage relied heavily on police sources to frame the issue of non-compliance and echoed—thereby legitimating—the calls from politicians and bureaucrats to surveil peers and then report and stigmatize suspected wrongdoers.

Ambiguity and the Expansion of Social Control

In some circumstances, news media reporting about violations was clear and specific. In these instances, there were fulsome descriptions of the individuals involved with and/or activities that constituted public health violations. For example, fines were issued to a group of cricket players (Frisque 2020a), people playing soccer in a park (Frisque 2020b), and to two Manitoba Junior Hockey League teams for travelling outside of Winnipeg for unsanctioned practices (McKendrick 2020).

At other times, it was difficult to decipher what exactly constituted an infraction. For example, a City of Toronto (2020a) news release relayed information about “complaints involving people using outdoor amenities or not practicing physical distancing in parks,” while a subsequent release (2020b) chronicled the “notable increase” of “complaints related to parks use and physical distancing.” Along these lines, the Cape Breton Regional Police were reported to have doled out tickets for “entering prohibited areas such as closed beaches and parks” (Macinnis 2000). Meanwhile, most of the charges filed in the first weeks of the pandemic in Barrie, Ontario were “connected to violations involving parks and park amenities” (Simon 2020). In one story, a city spokesperson noted two fines were handed out for “entering a park that had no admittance” (Goldfinger 2020). Finally, in Brampton, Ontario, a city councillor notified reporters that there had been three charges “for using equipment at a park” (Mazzucco 2020). These media narratives left pertinent questions unanswered: What kind of park? Which amenities? Which equipment? Were the individuals fined alone or with others? In all, 36.4% of articles contained this kind of ambiguous phrasing when discussing offences related to physical recreation activities. We argue that this ambiguity contributed to, rather than remedied, the confusion about what constituted an infraction and left much open to interpretation. This facilitated the expansion of social control. Oftentimes, the voices of those who had been fined or charged were not included in the articles. As Kohm and Maier (2023) contend, silences are ideologically significant. In these cases, police, politicians, and public officials narrate crime stories with no dissenting views (see Doyle 2006).

As the pandemic dragged on, we identified a shift in the news media coverage we analyzed. Specifically, there was more skepticism regarding the efficacy of public health restrictions. Here, the voices of those frustrated with restrictions and/or their uneven application and enforcement were amplified by news media (see Table 3). Specifically, business owners chronicled their dissatisfaction with public health restrictions. One gym owner in Montreal, Quebec, for instance, complained that his facility was visited 16 times by police and three times in one day. Firas Zahabi acknowledged that he refused to open the door to his gym despite an officer “yelling and banging, trying to intimidate us” (Dunlevy 2021). Other gym owners expressed frustration with public health restrictions and some articulated a belief in the connection between physical fitness and mental health that, in their view, made gyms essential (e.g., Patterson 2020; Wilhelm 2021).

At other times, news media reporting spotlighted particularly remarkable instances of pandemic policing. Here, they employed episodic framing and quoted the person who had

been fined at length. Yet, this reporting failed to consider what the expansion of social control might mean for marginalized groups or the possibility that structural barriers might impede physical recreation opportunities. These were just peculiar happenings in strange times. In one case, reporters quoted a parent who planned to fight the \$1000 fine he received for playing baseball with his son who had “been pretty cooped up.” As the dad observed, “no one was around and I don’t recall anyone ever using the field in recent years except us” (Macinnis 2000). For his part, a 19-year-old fined \$750 for playing basketball confessed that he knew about the restrictions but believed there would be little risk given he and his roommate had already been isolated together for over two weeks and no one else was present (Baker 2020). A Waterloo Police Constable hoped this particular fine reaffirmed the message that it was necessary to stay home (Baker 2020). Meanwhile, police intervened during a large outdoor hockey game in Alberta. Police there alleged that 21-year-old Ocean Wiesblatt, whose family is “active in the hockey community” and whose sibling had recently been drafted by the National Hockey League’s San Jose Sharks, was asked “multiple times” to comply with public health restrictions and refused. Wiesblatt purportedly resisted arrest and this resulted in “a physical altercation during which one of the arresting officers pulled out her Taser.” Wiesblatt is quoted as saying “the rules are getting ridiculous,” while officers acknowledged growing frustration with restrictions and held that they “do their best to gain voluntary compliance” (Franklin 2020).

Elsewhere, an Aurora, Ontario mom was issued an \$880 ticket for “standing too long” in a park when out for a walk with her young child and family dog. This story is unique in our sample in that it gives space for this mom to chronicle the trauma of the interaction: “I feel paranoid and afraid to leave my house. I have lost sleep over this issue. My anxiety is running rampant. I am stressed and upset.” However, this same article quotes Ontario Premier, Doug Ford, who allowed that sometimes officers can “get overzealous,” but noted “I love our police, love our bylaw officers” and expressed his belief that they are “doing an incredible, incredible job” (Queen 2020).

The expansion of peer surveillance and social control may provide an outlet for pre-existing fears regarding the perceived threat posed by racialized and other marginalized populations (e.g., Brayne et al. 2023). It is thus important to trace out the consequences of pandemic policing in a variety of contexts. In only two articles, however, do reporters consider these structural inequities. In one article, readers learn that the City of Ottawa, Ontario fired a bylaw officer for using excessive force in responding to Obi Ifedi, a Black man, who was in a park in violation of COVID-19 restrictions. The city’s general manager of emergency and protective services referred to the “scuffle” as an “isolated incident” and asserted that their policies, procedures, and training programs “were validated” by the outcome. Moreover, a local city councillor acknowledged the incident “created a lot of anger” and found it particularly concerning that it involved a Black man. However, this councillor failed to interrogate the racial violence associated with policing and instead seemed more concerned with publicity and perception: “it hurt our reputation, and I think we need to work to build it back” (Kupfer 2020). Thus, even when the efficacy and rationality of criminalizing physical recreation was questioned and harms of this approach acknowledged, news media coverage helped sustain carceral logics: law enforcement officers were still overwhelmingly characterized as selfless, patient community problem-solvers and existing oversight and accountability mechanisms were said to be sufficient.

A CBC News (2020b) article about nine young Black men fined for playing basketball in a park in Repentigny, Quebec goes a critical step further. One of the young men who was fined returned to the park later that day and observed a group of white teenagers playing basketball. However, this group was only warned and not fined. The journalist reports that the Repentigny police have repeatedly been accused of racial profiling over the last decade and a spokesperson for the Center for Research-Action on Race Relations emphasized this was a "systemic problem" and "not an isolated case." The Repentigny police force countered by arguing that this incident did not qualify as racial profiling since "officers simply applied the rules" and noted the police force had launched pilot projects involving dashboard cameras and body microphones as ways to improve its relationship with the Black community. The reporter does not allow for the possibility that police cameras and microphones fail to truly capture the racial and colonial violence perpetuated by policing and may instead legitimate police declarations about professionalism, accountability, and transparency, thereby sustaining the institution (e.g., Glasbeek et al. 2020; Henne et al. 2022). The CBC story (CBC News 2020b) proceeds to quote another Black youth and his mother who discuss feeling targeted in the community and deemed suspicious as he navigates his daily life. This is the only article we located that conceded that policing pandemic physical recreation could disproportionately harm racialized groups in a systemic manner.

Discussion and Conclusion

If we make personal sacrifices and abide by the public health restrictions, Toronto's then-Mayor, John Tory, asserted in 2020, it would help restore "normal life in the city" (Aguilar 2020). This is, indeed, the central objective of news media reporting on pandemic policing: maintenance of the status quo. While likely not an exhaustive account of the media landscape, our sample illustrates how news media reporting about pandemic policing of physical recreation constructed law enforcement personnel as altruistic community problem-solvers who seek to protect life, health, and well-being in times of crisis and states of exception. And this should be of little surprise since police typically provide critical information to news media that enables reporters to do their work (see also Ferrell 1999). We illuminate precisely how this transpired and explore the ideological implications of these choices.

News media constructed pandemic physical recreation that did not comply with public health restrictions as a crime problem. In this way, they set the terms for the debate. Through relying heavily on police and municipal bureaucrats as sources, assigning crime reporters to these beats, and promoting lateral surveillance, news media reporting during the COVID-19 pandemic not only sustained the status quo, but provided ideological support for the expansion of social control into new modalities—thereby contributing to constructing recreation as exceptional spaces. Recall, too, that relying on police as primary definers of social problems is a conscious choice. In this case, these journalistic practices help sustain carceral logics that uphold criminalization and coercion as the appropriate response to a range of social issues, including this public health crisis. On the other hand, the relative absence of the voices of those who had been fined, charged, or victimized particularly in those earliest days helped to disqualify other ways of understanding these events (see also Hall et al. 1978; Kohm and Maier 2023). Moreover, a failure to routinely engage directly with experts

on the social determinants of health and structural barriers to physical recreation closed off alternate readings of these incidents.

Especially early on, these were crime stories about ignorant and/or selfish people making bad choices who needed to be educated by police officers. Violators were shamed and shunned. While the voices of those who challenged the efficacy of restrictions on outdoor activity were amplified as time passed and moods shifted, there was a failure to consider how these restrictions and the concomitant expansion of social control impacted racialized and socioeconomically marginalized groups. There was no push to consider overpolicing of communities, equitable access to green spaces and physical recreation opportunities, or any other alterations to the existing power structure.

We imagine an alternative where articles about Black youths playing basketball at a local park, a parent and child playing baseball, and a group of people playing cricket are not crime stories, but rather stories about public health and access to health and wellness opportunities. The closest we found to this in the 66 news articles we analyzed was a short discussion at the end of a story about the large number of tickets doled out at Ottawa's Britannia Park. Here, the president of the Britannia Village Community Association posited that the park might be a proverbial hotspot for bylaw infractions because the neighborhood contains several apartment buildings and residents do not have access to backyards or front lawns (Pritchard 2020). The episodic, individualistic framing that persists elsewhere in this news coverage disregards how structural barriers to physical recreation opportunities and spaces might be directly tied to vulnerability to shaming, surveillance, and social control that we chronicle in this manuscript.

Despite the limitations of these data, the media sources we analyzed privilege official voices and may underrepresent resistance or community perspectives. Offence data, while useful, cannot capture discretionary decisions, informal warnings, or demographic disparities in enforcement. While qualitative analysis of news media provides depth, it also cannot capture the full scale or diversity of experiences of those targeted by pandemic policing. These limitations also point to directions for future research. Interviews with those fined or charged would shed light on lived experiences of surveillance and coercion. Comparative work across provinces and municipalities could highlight how local political cultures shaped enforcement. Further analysis of demographic disparities would clarify how pandemic policing intersected with racial and class inequality.

Our findings contribute to literature on media, policing, and social control by showing how health crises can become vehicles for the expansion of carceral logics. The COVID-19 pandemic offered an opportunity to consider structural determinants of health and access to public space, but news media largely defaulted to criminalization. This reflects and reinforces broader patterns of acquiescence to expanding surveillance and coercion. Recognizing these dynamics is essential for scholars examining the intersections of health, policing, and media, and for imagining non-carceral responses to public health crises.

The robust state of exception literature provides a powerful framework for understanding how news media framed restrictions during COVID-19 as part of broader projects of governmentality. Giorgio Agamben's (2005) concept of the state of exception highlights how emergencies can be used to suspend 'normal' or established legal orders and extend extraordinary powers under the guise of protecting human life. During COVID-19, governments enacted sweeping restrictions on movement, gathering, and recreation that would have been unimaginable in putatively ordinary times. These measures were frequently justi-

fied through appeals to necessity and urgency, echoing the logics of the state of exception (Gorby 2023). News media, in turn, often play a central role in legitimating these measures by framing them as common sense responses to so-called 'crises.' Reports on the policing of physical recreation often emphasized the importance of compliance and protection of community health, while marginalizing concerns about rights and the immediate as well as long-term consequences of criminalization. In doing so, media outlets helped normalize the suspension of ordinary liberties as part of everyday governance.

As Gorby (2023) argues, however, Agamben's analysis of the pandemic as a pure instantiation of the state of exception risks overstating the rupture with normal governance. Instead, Gorby shows that pandemic measures reflected not only emergency suspension but also the biopolitical management of fear, where states mobilized public health discourses to encourage compliance. Applying this insight to media framing suggests that news coverage did not simply reflect a moment of legal suspension but actively reproduced a biopolitical logic of fear and necessity. By portraying enforcement actions as altruistic, educational, and/or protective, media narratives contributed to a form of governance in which citizens internalized both the risk of disease and the legitimacy of carceral responses to public health. In these ways, media discourses justified extraordinary restrictions and sustained broader governmental projects of control. The state of exception is not presented as temporary or extraordinary in these narratives but as an ordinary and necessary feature of responsible governance, reinforcing the normalization of surveillance and punitive practices in everyday life.

Appendix

Keywords	Covid, sport, park, recreation, golf, hiking, fitness, gym, skateboard
Region	Canada
Language	English
News filters: inclusions	Crime/Legal Action
News filters: exclusions	Industries: pharmaceuticals, mining/quarrying Subjects: homicides, sex crimes, assault, burglary, theft, traffic violations, fraud Regions: United Kingdom, United States

Funding This research was supported in part by funding from the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada's Insight Grant Program 435-2023-0291

Open Access This article is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-NoDerivatives 4.0 International License, which permits any non-commercial use, sharing, distribution and reproduction in any medium or format, as long as you give appropriate credit to the original author(s) and the source, provide a link to the Creative Commons licence, and indicate if you modified the licensed material. You do not have permission under this licence to share adapted material derived from this article or parts of it. The images or other third party material in this article are included in the article's Creative Commons licence, unless indicated otherwise in a credit line to the material. If material is not included in the article's Creative Commons licence and your intended use is not permitted by statutory regulation or exceeds the permitted use, you will need to obtain permission directly from the copyright holder. To view a copy of this licence, visit <http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/4.0/>.

References

- Agamben, Giorgio. 2005. *State of Exception* (K. Attell, Trans.). University of Chicago Press.
- Aguilar, Bryann. 2020. "City Ramps Up Enforcement Blitz at Parks as Toronto Reaches 1,000 cases of COVID-19." 4 April. Retrieved from: <https://www.cp24.com/news/city-ramps-up-enforcement-blitz-at-parks-as-toronto-reaches-1-000-cases-of-covid-19-1.4882749>
- Alnahed, Sumaya. 2022. "The BBC and COVID-19: The politicisation of a pandemic?" pp. 193–205 in Price, Stuart and Ben Harbisher, eds. *Power, Media and the COVID-19 Pandemic*. New York: Routledge.
- Andrejevic, Mark. 2006. "The Discipline of Watching: Detection, Risk, and Lateral Surveillance." *Critical Studies in Media Communication* 23(5): 391–407.
- Babbie, Earl, Jason D. Edgerton and Lance W. Roberts. 2020. *Fundamentals of Social Research*. 5th ed. Nelson.
- Baker, Jennifer K. 2020. "\$750 Ticket for Basketball Player who Refused to Leave McLennan Park." *CTV News*, 5 April. Retrieved from: <https://www.ctvnews.ca/kitchener/article/750-ticket-for-basketball-player-who-refused-to-leave-mclennan-park/>
- Best, Joel. 1987. "Rhetoric in Claims-Making: Constructing the Missing Children Problem." *Social Problems* 34(2): 101–121.
- Brayne, Sarah, Sarah Lageson, and Karen Levy. 2023. "Surveillance Deputies: When Ordinary People Surveillance for the State." *Law & Society Review* 57(4): 462–488.
- Capurro, Gabriela, Cynthia G. Jardine, Jordan Tustin, and Michelle Driedger. 2022. "Moral Panic about 'Covidiot's' in Canadian Newspaper Coverage of COVID-19." *PLoS ONE* 17(1): e0261942.
- Carruthers, Dale. 2020. "COVID-19: Fines Fly, Tip Lines Swamped as City of London Battles Social-distancing Scofflaws." *London Free Press*, 6 April. Available at: <https://lfpres.com/news/local-news/covid-19-city-hall-issues-nearly-two-dozen-fines-at-off-limits-skateboard-parks-soccer-fields>
- Carty, Matt. 2021. "COVID-19: Fences, security cameras installed at Guelph skate parks." *Global News*, April 22. Available at <https://globalnews.ca/news/7780896/covid-19-guelph-skate-parks/>.
- CBC News. 2020a. "21 Londoners Fined for Breaking Emergency Measures Rules." 6 April. Retrieved from: <https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/london/21-londoners-fined-for-breaking-emergency-measures-rules-1.5523036#:~:text=Twenty%2Done%20Londoners%20were%20hit,issued%20numerous%20warning%20to%20people>.
- CBC News. 2020b. "Hefty Fines for Black Teens Playing Basketball Prompt Questions About Racism in Montreal Suburb." 26 July. Retrieved from <https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/montreal/hefty-fines-for-black-teens-playing-basketball-prompt-questions-about-racism-in-montreal-suburb-1.5663617>
- CBC News. 2020c. "Police Issue 12 Tickets at \$1,000 Each to Group Exceeding Gathering Limit." 2 December. Retrieved from: <https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/nova-scotia/halifax-police-health-protection-ac-t-violation-tickets-1.5824701>
- Chagnon, Nick. 2015. "Reverberate, Resonate, Reproduce: A Reconsideration of Ideological Influence in Crime News Production." *Critical Criminology* 23: 105–123.
- Champion, Kim. 2020. "House Parties, Social Gatherings Top Concerns for Newmarket Bylaw." *Newmarket Today*, 28 April. Retrieved from: <https://www.newmarkettoday.ca/coronavirus-covid-19-local-news/house-parties-top-concerns-for-newmarket-bylaw-2289833#:~:text=House%20parties%20and%20other%20social,conduct%20amid%20the%20coronavirus%20crisis>.
- Cilliers, Rol. 2020. "Burlington Responds to More than 2,000 calls Reporting Coronavirus Rule Violators." *Toronto Star*, 9 May. Retrieved from: https://www.thestar.com/news/gta/burlington-responds-to-more-than-2-000-calls-reporting-coronavirus-rule-violators/article_3f2c720c-c881-566c-9294-9066b6880a33.html
- City of Toronto. 2020a. "City of Toronto Update on COVID-19 Enforcement." 3 May.
- City of Toronto. 2020b. "City of Toronto Update on COVID-19." 23 May.
- Cornwell, Steve. 2020. "Mississauga Skateboarders Issued First Tickets for Violating COVID-19 Emergency Park Closure." *Mississauga News*, 7 April. Retrieved from: https://www.mississauga.com/news/chose-to-use-it-anyways-mississauga-skateboarders-issued-first-tickets-for-violating-covid-19-emergency/article_7c3be221-f306-5a09-b85e-131b31e275c9.html
- CTV News. 2020. "Airdrie Man calls RCMP to Report Pick-up Basketball Game." 7 April. Retrieved from: <https://calgary.ctvnews.ca/airdrie-man-calls-rcmp-to-report-pick-up-basketball-game-1.4886047>
- De Haan, Willem and Jaco Vos. 2003. "A Crying Shame: The Over-Rationalized Conception of Man in the Rational Choice Perspective." *Theoretical Criminology* 7(1): 29–54.
- Dowler, Ken, Thomas Fleming, and Stephen L. Muzzatti. 2006. "Constructing Crime: Media, Crime, and Popular Culture." *Canadian Journal of Criminology and Criminal Justice* 48(6): 837–50. doi: <https://doi.org/10.3138/cjccj.48.6.837>.

- Doyle, Aaron. 2006. "How Not to Think About Crime in the Media." *Canadian Journal of Criminology and Criminal Justice* 48(6): 867–885.
- Dryden, Joel. 2020. "Police Arrest 21-year-old at Skating Rink after Bylaw Officers Say Crowd Violated COVID-19 Regulations." *CBC News*, December 20. Retrieved from: <https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/calgary/calgary-skating-rink-arrest-1.5848904>
- Dunlevy, T'Cha. 2021. "Montreal Gym Owner Tired of Police Visits During Pandemic." *Montreal Gazette*, 22 April. Retrieved from: <https://www.montrealgazette.com/news/article97209.html>
- Ferrell, Jeff. 1999. "Cultural Criminology." *Annual Review of Sociology* 25: 395–418.
- Frankish, C. James, C. Dwayne Milligan, and Colleen Reid. 1998. "A Review of Relationships Between Active Living and Determinants of Health." *Social Science & Medicine* 47(3): 287–301.
- Franklin, Michael. 2020. "Man Accused of Defying COVID-19 Restrictions on Calgary Rink Upset by Arrest." *CTV News*, 19 December. Retrieved from: <https://www.ctvnews.ca/calgary/article/man-accuse-d-of-defying-covid-19-restrictions-on-calgary-rink-upset-by-arrest/>
- Frisque, Graeme. 2020a. "City Gets 470 Complaints for Residential Parties in Brampton in Two Weeks in Spite of Physical Distancing Laws." *Brampton Guardian*, 4 June. Retrieved from: https://www.toronto.com/news/council/city-gets-470-complaints-for-residential-parties-in-brampton-in-two-weeks-in-spite-of/article_faa77d4a-2628-5816-8523-1391934f9bb0.html
- Frisque, Graeme. 2020b. "Soccer Players, Parking Lot Partiers Fined While Brampton Stuck in First Phase of COVID-19 Reopening." *Brampton Guardian*, 18 June. Retrieved from: https://www.bramptonguardian.com/news/council/soccer-players-parking-lot-partiers-fined-while-brampton-stuck-in-first-phase-of-covid-19/article_97121d71-f24d-538a-85ec-e0f0f23c89e.html
- Georgeou, Nichole, Cymbeline Buhler King, Lillian Tame, Christina Ergler, and Robert Huish. 2023. "COVID-19 Stigma, Australia and Slow Violence: An Analysis of 21 Months of COVID News Reporting." *Australian Journal of Social Issues* 58: 787–804.
- Glasbeek, Amanda, Mariful Alam, and Katrin Roots. 2020. "Seeing and Not-Seeing: Race and Body-Worn Cameras in Canada." *Surveillance & Society* 18(3): 328–342.
- Goldfinger, Daina. 2020. "City of Barrie, Ont., Reports More than 100 Complaints Related to Coronavirus Last Week." *Global News*, 4 May. Retrieved from: <https://globalnews.ca/news/6903850/barrie-over-100-coronavirus-complaints/>
- Gorby, Paul. 2023. "The biopolitics of fear: assessing Agamben's analysis of the COVID-19 lockdowns." *Distinktion: Journal of Social Theory*: 1–17.
- Gui, Lili. 2021. "Media Framing of Fighting COVID-19 in China." *Sociology of Health & Illness* 43: 966–970.
- Gui, Lili. 2023. "Media Framing and Public Perception: The Use of War Metaphor in Times of COVID-19." *Journal of Multicultural Discourses* 18(2): 140–153.
- Hall, Stuart, Chas Critcher, Tony Jefferson, John Clarke, and Brian Roberts. 1978. *Policing the Crisis: Mugging, the State, and Law and Order*. New York: Holmes & Meier Publishers, Inc.
- Henne, Kathryn, Krystle Shore, and Jenna Imad Harb. 2022. "Body-Worn Cameras, Police Violence and the Politics of Evidence: A Case of Ontological Gerrymandering." *Critical Social Policy* 42(3): 388–407.
- Hier, Sean P. 2023. "Suppressing the Crisis: Moral Panics, Emerging Infectious Diseases, and the COVID-19 Conjunction." *Canadian Journal of Communication* 48(2): 205–222.
- Hurst, Allison. 2020. "Snowboarder with California Plates Fined for Breaking COVID-19 Quarantine to go to Whistler." *CTV News*, 4 December. Retrieved from: <https://www.ctvnews.ca/vancouver/article/snow-boarder-with-california-plates-fined-for-breaking-covid-19-quarantine-to-go-to-whistler/>
- Jewkes, Yvonne and Travis Linnemann. 2018. *Media and Crime in the U.S.* Thousand Oaks, California: Sage Publications, Inc.
- Jiang, Feng Kevin and Ken Hyland. 2022. "COVID-19 in the News: The First 12 Months." *International Journal of Applied Linguistics* 32: 241–258.
- Juha, Jonathan. 2020. "London Bylaw Officers Help Businesses Safely Reopen as City Enters 'Stage 3'." *The London Free Press*, 15 July. Retrieved from: <https://lfpres.com/news/local-news/covid-19-london-byla-w-officers-help-businesses-safely-reopen-as-city-readies-for-stage-3>
- Kohm, Steven. 2025. "Outlaw Heroes or Extremists: Canada's "Freedom Convoy" and the Social Construction of a National Emergency." *Critical Criminology* <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10612-025-09839-y>
- Kohm, Steven and Katharina Maier. 2023. "The Darkest Time in Our History": An Analysis of News Media Constructions of Liquor Theft in Canada's Settler Colonial Context." *Crime Media Culture* 19(2): 171–190.
- Kort-Butler, Lisa A. 2023. "Tweeting about crime in pandemic times: US legacy news media and crime reporting during the COVID-19 pandemic" pp.123–139 in Deflem, Mathieu, ed. 2023. *Crime and Social Control in Pandemic Times*. Leeds: Emerald Publishing.

- Kotyk, Alyse. 2020. "COVID-19 Fines: Richmond 'Sports Centre' Ordered to Pay \$2,300 for Breaking Health Rules." *CTV News*, 24 August. Retrieved from: <https://www.ctvnews.ca/vancouver/article/covid-19-fines-richmond-sports-centre-ordered-to-pay-2300-for-breaking-health-rules/>
- Kupfer, Matthew. 2020. "City Fires Bylaw Officer Who Hit Man in Park." *CBC News*, 15 Aug. Retrieved from: <https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/ottawa/ottawa-bylaw-officer-covid-19-punch-1.5687266#:~:text=Social%20Sharing,-The%20City%20of%20Ottawa%20has%20fired%20a%20bylaw%20officer%20for,Catterall%20Park%20on%20April%204.>
- LeBel, Jacquelyn. 2020. "132 Warnings, 1 Charged as Sunny Weekend Sees More Residents Flout Emergency Act Restrictions in London." *Global News*, 4 May. Retrieved from: <https://globalnews.ca/news/6903253/coronavirus-london-ontario-social-distancing-restrictions-fines/>
- Lefebvre, Charles. 2020. "Second Ticket Handed Out in Winnipeg for Not Following Physical Distancing." *CTV News*, 5 May. Retrieved from: <https://www.ctvnews.ca/winnipeg/article/second-ticket-handed-out-in-winnipeg-for-not-following-physical-distancing/>
- Link, Bruce G. and Jo C. Phelan. 1995. "Social Conditions as Fundamental Causes of Disease." *Journal of Health and Social Behavior*: 80–94.
- Loreto, Nora. 2021. *Spin Doctors: How Media and Politicians Misdiagnosed the COVID-19 Pandemic*. Halifax & Winnipeg: Fernwood Publishing.
- Lyon, David. 2022. *Pandemic Surveillance*. Cambridge, UK: Polity Press.
- Macinnis, Steve. 2000. "Cape Breton Regional Police Issue Nearly 100 Tickets for Isolation and Distancing Violations." *Cape Breton Post*, 3 May. Retrieved from: <https://www.saltwire.com/cape-breton/cape-breton-regional-police-issue-nearly-100-tickets-for-isolation-and-distancing-violations-445195>
- Mann, Ken. 2020. "Three Fined Under COVID-19 Emergency Orders for Golfing on Closed Chedoke Golf Course." *Global News*, 4 April. Retrieved from: <https://globalnews.ca/news/6776857/three-fined-golfing-chedoke-covid-19/>
- Mazzucco, Lucy. 2020. "Brampton Issues 56 Additional Physical Distancing Fines Amid COVID-19 Outbreak." *inBrampton*, 27 May. Retrieved from: <https://www.insauga.com/brampton-issues-56-additional-physical-distancing-fines-amid-covid-19-outbreak/>
- McClelland, Alex and Alex Luscombe. 2020. *Policing the Pandemic: Tracking the Policing of COVID-19 Across Canada*. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.5683/SP2/KNJLWS>, Scholars Portal Dataserve.
- McKendrick, Devon. 2020. "'A Regretful Choice': Hockey Manitoba Fines Two MJHL Teams That Travelled Outside Winnipeg for Practice." *CTV News*, 18 November. Retrieved from: <https://www.ctvnews.ca/winnipeg/article/a-regretful-choice-hockey-manitoba-fines-two-mjhl-teams-that-travelled-outside-winnipeg-for-practice/>
- Mikkonen, Juha, and Dennis Raphael. 2010. *Social Determinants of Health: The Canadian Facts*. Toronto: York University School of Health Policy and Management.
- Miller, Scott. 2020. "Bruce County Closes Trails due to COVID-19 Concerns." *CTV News*, 25 March. Available at: <https://london.ctvnews.ca/bruce-county-closes-trails-due-to-covid-19-concerns-1.4868022>
- Monahan, Torin. 2006. *Surveillance and Security: Technological Politics and Power in Everyday Life*. New York: Routledge.
- Montiel, Cristina Jayme, Joshua Uyheng, and Erwine Dela Paz. 2021. "The Language of Pandemic Leaderships: Mapping Political Rhetoric During the COVID-19 Outbreak." *Political Psychology* 42(5): 747–766.
- Musolff, Andreas, Ruth Breeze, Kayo Kondo, and Sara Vilar-Lluch, eds. 2022. *Pandemic and Crisis Discourse: Communicating COVID-19 and Public Health Strategy*. London: Bloomsbury Academic.
- Norman, Mark, Derek Silva, Liam Kennedy, and William Cipolli III. 2024. "'Essential for the Soul': Leisure as a Flashpoint During COVID-19 Lockdowns in Ontario, Canada." *Annals of Leisure Research* 27(1): 167–186. <https://doi.org/10.1080/11745398.2022.2055586>
- O'Reilly, Nicole. 2020a. "COVID-19: Hamilton Bylaw Hands Out 19 Tickets for People Caught at Waterfalls, Golf Course and Escarpment Stairs." *Hamilton Spectator* 4 April. Retrieved from: https://www.thespec.com/news/hamilton-region/covid-19-hamilton-bylaw-hands-out-19-tickets-for-people-caught-at-waterfalls-golf-course/article_dbce8f9a-6240-590f-bc6c-9239c030ed4f.html
- O'Reilly, Nicole. 2020b. "How the Hamilton Police Marine Unit is Policing the Water During COVID-19." *Hamilton Spectator*, 30 May. Retrieved from: https://www.thespec.com/news/hamilton-region/how-the-hamilton-police-marine-unit-is-policing-the-water-during-covid-19/article_13b30bbc-16b6-51b3-a29f-e379b58b3083.html
- Papamanolis, Alexandra-Angeliki and Themis Kaniklidou. 2022. "Covid-19 Representations in Political statements: A Corpus-Based Analysis" pp. 47–60 in Musolff, Andreas, Ruth Breeze, Kayo Kondo, and Sara Vilar-Lluch, eds. *Pandemic and Crisis Discourse: Communicating COVID-19 and Public Health Strategy*. London: Bloomsbury Academic.

- Patterson, Dayne. 2020. "Alberta's Chief Health Officer Says COVID-19 Compliance High, Only a Handful of Ordered Business Closings." *The Globe and Mail*, 16 April. Retrieved from: <https://www.theglobeandmail.com/canada/alberta/article-albertas-chief-health-officer-says-covid-19-compliance-high-only-a/>
- Price, Stuart and Ben Harbisher, eds. 2022. *Power, Media and the COVID-19 Pandemic*. New York: Routledge.
- Pritchard, Trevor. 2020. "Here's Where Ottawans are being Fined for Hanging Out in Parks." *CBC News*, 24 April. Retrieved from: <https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/ottawa/here-s-where-ottawans-are-being-fined-for-hanging-out-in-parks-1.5541552>
- Queen, Lisa. 2020. "'Shocked, Embarrassed and Scared': Aurora Mom Shaken by Coronavirus Ticket." *Aurora Banner*, 1 May. Retrieved from: https://www.yorkregion.com/news/shocked-embarrassed-and-scared-aurora-mom-shaken-by-coronavirus-ticket/article_06967749-874b-5dc9-af58-9538ebcfad7d.html
- Rantanen, Maria. 2020. "First Ticket in Richmond Issued for Breaking Physical Distancing Rules." *Richmond News*, 30 June. Retrieved from: <https://www.richmond-news.com/local-news/first-ticket-in-richmond-issued-for-breaking-physical-distancing-rules-3124470>
- Rodrigues, Gabby. 2020. "Coronavirus: City of Toronto Receives 141 Complaints About Gatherings, Unsafe Behaviour in Parks." *Global News*, April 6. Available at <https://globalnews.ca/news/6782620/coronavirus-toronto-city-parks-complaints-tickets-enforcement/>
- Schwarz, Andreas, Francis Alpers, Elisabeth Wagner-Olfermann, and Audra Diers-Lawson. 2024. "The Global Study of COVID News: Scope, Findings, and Implications of Quantitative Content Analyses of the COVID-19 News Coverage in the First Two Years of the Pandemic." *Health Communication* 39(8): 1568–1581. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10410236.2023.2226932>
- Semino, Elena. 2021. "'Not Soldiers but Fire-Fighters' – Metaphors and Covid-19." *Health Communication* 36(1): 50–58.
- Silcox, Jennifer. 2022. "Youth Crime and Depictions of Youth Crime in Canada: Are News Depictions Purely Moral Panic?" *The Canadian Review of Sociology* 59(1): 96–114.
- Simon, Chris. 2020. "Barrie Bylaw Officers Have Charged 20 People with COVID-19-Related Offences, City Says." *Barrie Advance*, 12 May. Retrieved from: } } [https://www.simcoe.com/news/council/barrie-by-law-officers-have-charged-20-people-with-covid-19-related-offences-city-says/article_b8f3a7a4-3bfd-569c-80e7-bfc6e760682e.html?}](https://www.simcoe.com/news/council/barrie-by-law-officers-have-charged-20-people-with-covid-19-related-offences-city-says/article_b8f3a7a4-3bfd-569c-80e7-bfc6e760682e.html?)
- Simon, Chris. 2020. "Barrie bylaw officers have charged 20 people with COVID-19-related offences, city says." *Barrie Advance*, 12 May. Retrieved from: https://www.simcoe.com/news/council/barrie-by-law-officers-have-charged-20-people-with-covid-19-related-offences-city-says/article_b8f3a7a4-3bfd-569c-80e7-bfc6e760682e.html? https://www.simcoe.com/news/council/barrie-by-law-officers-have-charged-20-people-with-covid-19-related-offences-city-says/article_b8f3a7a4-3bfd-569c-80e7-bfc6e760682e.html?
- Smith, Madeline. 2020. "City Doles Out First Fines for Breaking COVID-19 Physical Distancing Rules." *Calgary Herald*, 28 April. Retrieved from: <https://calgaryherald.com/news/city-doles-out-first-fines-for-breaking-covid-19-physical-distancing-rules>
- Stanley, Adam. 2021. "A Southwestern Ontario Golf course is Fully Booked for Saturday in Defiance of Ontario Lockdown: 'We're Just Doing What We Think is Right'." *Toronto Star*, 23 April. Available at <https://www.thestar.com/sports/golf/2021/04/23/a-london-area-golf-course-is-fully-booked-for-saturday-in-defiance-of-ontario-lockdown-were-just-doing-what-we-think-is-right.html>.
- Thomas, David R. 2006. "A General Inductive Approach for Analyzing Qualitative Evaluation Data" *The American Journal of Evaluation* 27(2): 237–246.
- Thompson, Sam. 2020. "First Winnipeg Public Health Ticket Handed Out to Scofflaw Skateboarder." *Global News*, 1 May. Retrieved from: <https://globalnews.ca/news/6895000/first-winnipeg-public-health-scofflaw-skateboarder/>
- Treichler, Paula A. 2022. "COVID: A Pandemic of Metaphor." *Communication and Critical/Cultural Studies* 19(1): 8–14.
- University of Toronto. n.d. "News Resources" Centre for Industrial Relations and Human Resources Library. Retrieved May 21, 2025 from: <https://cirhr.library.utoronto.ca/research/news-resources>
- Whitham, Ben. 2022. "The Cultural Politics of Crisis in the UK" pp. 71–85 in Price, Stuart and Ben Harbisher, eds. *Power, Media and the COVID-19 Pandemic*. New York: Routledge.
- Wilhelm, Trevor. 2021. "Windsor Gym Owner Sent to Court After Opening for 'Essential' Service." *Windsor Star*, 22 May. Retrieved from: <https://windsorstar.com/news/local-news/windsor-gym-owner-sent-to-court-after-opening-for-essential-service>