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Bridging police and communities through relationship: the importance of a theoretical foundation for restorative policing

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ABSTRACT

Various models of policing have been studied in the past, but have primarily focused on practice. The current paper applies Llewellyn’s integration of relational theory and restorative justice to the notion of restorative policing. The paper explores how several demographic factors, police organisational support and theoretical constructs associated with relational theory influence the willingness of police officers (\(n = 296\)) to engage in practices associated with a restorative approach to policing. The current analytic results evidence relational theory as providing a previously absent and untested theoretical foundation within the discussion of restorative policing.

KEYWORDS Restorative policing; community; relational theory

1. Introduction

There has been a long, gradual shift in the policing profession to increasingly include the community in issues of justice (Nicholl, 1999); however, research has been scant on officer willingness to be involved in community matters beyond those directly related to criminal justice. The current research empirically assessed officer willingness to be involved in the community, drawing on the importance of restorative justice in terms of relationship and community, as rooted in the work of Llewellyn (2008, 2012a, 2012b). This assessment seeks to explore the gap between community-oriented and restorative policing. Indeed, while restorative-policing literature accentuates the importance of community (Bazemore & Griffiths, 2003; Hines & Bazemore, 2003), there is little direct focus on how community can be fostered. In other words, previous literature on restorative policing has lacked a theoretical foundation. The current research was designed to transverse that gap and supports reciprocal
relationships between police and the community as critical for advancing a restorative model of policing.

Restorative justice is characterised by the importance of relationships, respect and responsibility (Zehr, 2002). Rather than considering offenders as bad people, there is an inherent understanding that offenders are people who have made mistakes (Braithwaite, 1989). Moreover, crime is considered as directly impacting and harming real people and their relationships, rather than the state (Christie, 1977). Christie (1977) also argued that those most impacted by crime should be involved in resolutions, highlighting how crime would be responded to differently if the focus were on relationship. The different focus underscores the importance of fostering relationships between police and the communities they serve.

Community is a central, yet problematic, concept in the realm of restorative justice because community transcends geographical space by describing a set of interpersonal relationships. The term ‘communities of care’ has gained attention within restorative justice literature, referring to family, friends and other supporters, joined by relationships rooted in trust and respect (Baze-Becmore, 1998; Boyes-Watson, 2000). The notion of communities of care is central to understanding community in relation to narrow, explanatory theories of restorative justice. In the context of the current study, and for a more normative theoretical foundation, community importance must be considered more broadly; specifically, community does equate to the geographical area that police oversee. Community includes the individuals residing within a particular jurisdiction, persons who come into contact with police, as well as all other members of a self-identified community.

Many justice theories, such as procedural justice, pertain to the individual on a micro level and, in particular, individuals in direct contact with the justice system; however, research has been limited on the impacts of community involvement in justice at the macro level, beyond the practical postulates put forth in the literature on restorative policing. If police involve the community to a greater degree in justice matters there is potential to foster responsibility and respect, all of which may then lead to the ability and willingness for the community to handle their own conflicts.

Including the community in justice could foster social responsibility, cohesion and control. Where there are strong relationships between people in a community, there will also be a stronger sense of responsibility for one another, leading to a willingness and agential capacity to resolve their own conflicts (Nicholl, 1999; Paterson & Clamp, 2012). When police actively work to build community capacity, there is greater possibility of shifting towards a restorative policing model. Such shifts lend legitimacy to police derived from stronger relationships with those they serve. Restorative policing can also improve community experiences of justice and the perceptions of their police. Restorative policing could potentially reduce the number of...
incidents officers have to deal with, as the community may be more active and effective in addressing their own conflicts.

This study is situated in the context of Saskatchewan, a prairie Canadian province, with a population of approximately 1,098,352 (Government of Saskatchewan, 2017). Saskatchewan has one of the highest populations of Indigenous people in the country, representing 16 per cent of the total population (Statistics Canada, 2016a). Of note, research suggests Indigenous peoples are more likely to have police contacts than other populations (Jones, Ruddell, Nestor, Quinn & Phillips, 2013). At the time of data collection, Saskatchewan was primarily policed by twelve municipal police services employing approximately 1,100 officers, as well as the Royal Canadian Mounted Police employing approximately 1,200 officers. Saskatchewan faces a crime severity index well above the national average, suggesting this province faces a higher volume of more serious crimes than other provinces do (Statistics Canada, 2016b).

Not unlike many other countries, policing and the economy are closely linked in Canada (Ruddell & Jones, 2014). Austerity policing has led to discussions about innovative ways to police on limited budgets, which often involves using the community as a resource and joining forces with other public sectors to target problems in the community before they escalate (McFee & Taylor, 2014). Policing in Saskatchewan could be described as a combination of problem-oriented and community policing, while maintaining success measures rooted in professional policing outcomes. While Saskatchewan has been a leader in policing when it comes to collaborative approaches to crime, certainly impacting community–police relations on a micro level, there still remains a persistent tension and constant divide between police and communities at the larger social level. This study aims to theoretically examine police–community relations at the social level. While acknowledging the small-scale nature of the study, situated in a specific geographic location, this can be a starting point for future research into macro-level research on restorative policing as theoretically grounded in relational theory.

2. The evolution of policing

Policing as a profession can be traced to the Metropolitan Police of London founded in 1829, with the primary objective of preventing crime (Emsley, 1996). Reiner (2010) explains that while the Metropolitan or ‘new police’ have traditionally been framed as being accountable, democratic and representative of the people, in reality, police were ‘becoming a large, disciplined, legally empowered, and technologically advanced organisation, clearly distinct from the ordinary citizen’ (52). These earliest formal models of policing, known as professional policing, provided order and formal social control through the clear delineation of an officer on duty (notably through a
specialised uniform) and other members of the public, creating a clear divide between those who police and those who are policed (Emsley, 1996). Indeed, Emsley (1996) explains that it was preferable to hire men from outside of the community as police, so there would be no concern around ‘conflicting loyalties’ when dealing with the public (197). Thus, the professional model of policing was historically premised on hierarchical structures and standardised practices, further creating a formal and militant police structure.

The primary objective of police agencies worldwide has shifted minimally over time (i.e. fighting/preventing crime); however, models of policing have evolved. For example, Goldstein (1979) explains in the mid-1900s problem-oriented policing gained momentum as a model of policing less concerned with internal, structural organisation of police bodies and more concerned with the outcome of police efforts. The aim of problem-oriented policing is to define and operationalise the police role or function within society, and, indeed, within any given community. Typically this entails ‘[…] deal[ing] with a wide range of behavioral and social problems that arise in a community […] the end product of policing consists of dealing with these problems’ (Goldstein, 1979: 242). What results is often a variety of responses such as referring to other governmental agencies, crafting new community resources for specific needs, training officers to deal with certain types of crime such as family/domestic violence, and the ability of officers to convey relevant information to clients. Essentially, problem-oriented policing pays attention to what the community needs.

Around the same time problem-oriented policing was emerging, another model, known as community policing, was being developed. Premised on criticisms of professional policing including but not limited to tension between police and communities, the community-policing model evolved in the 1960s and 1970s (Goldstein, 1987; Winfree, 2004). Other goals of community policing are to bolster accountability and transparency of the police, improve the allocation and use of resources, and involve the community to a greater extent in justice (Goldstein, 1987; Martin, 2006). Goldstein (1987) further describes community policing as increasing community involvement in justice (e.g. community-watch programmes), more input by communities as to which problems require attention, greater interaction between police and communities (a deteriorated aspect of policing with the advent of the telephone and automobile), and public education delivered by the police to raise awareness on crime and victimisation. While community policing makes great efforts to be transparent and incorporate the community in justice to a greater extent, it still leaves the community relatively powerless when it comes to effectual involvement in their own justice issues, leaving the ultimate decision-making capacity in the hands of police. Furthermore, there still remains a divide between police and the public.
Professional policing, as rooted in early English policing forms, has been cited as being democratic via government mechanisms and as providing accountability to the public (Rogers & Coliandris, 2015). In contrast to that common historical narrative, there was a contentious relationship between police and the public, with the police more accurately representing and protecting the elites and exerting control over the working class (Reiner, 2010). Police agencies have since made substantial efforts to improve their relationships and connections with the public through problem-oriented and community-policing practices. Problem-oriented policing was designed to democratise policing by responding directly to the needs of the community (Goldstein, 1979). Community policing was designed to increase community involvement for addressing crime by increasing transparency and therein democracy (Goldstein, 1987). Despite such efforts the police and the public remain divided based on an inherent power imbalance.

The inherent power imbalance creates tension in the relationships between police and the public undermining police legitimacy. Procedural justice possibly provides one explanation behind police–community relations, stressing the importance therefore of trust, respect, dignity and fairness in the interactions between police and the public in fostering police legitimacy (see, for example: Blader & Tyler, 2003; Sunshine & Tyler, 2003; Tyler, 2001; Tyler, 2006). McCarthy and O’Neill (2014) discuss the numerous benefits of partnership-working, wherein police liaise with community organisations to better address community problems or problem offenders holistically. One example of such work in Saskatchewan is the Hub and COR initiatives, in which police become part of a team including professionals from other public sectors and community agencies to prevent and effectively address crime (McFee & Taylor, 2014). Rogers and Coliandris (2015) discuss the potential benefits of using key community members as ‘expert citizens’ who help to bridge police and the community. While this strategy attempts to change the relationship between police and the public (a goal of community policing; Rogers & Coliandris, 2015), it fails to truly enhance community engagement in justice or police involvement in the community by only including particular individuals, not the public themselves.

3. Community justice and community capacity

Scholars have extensively discussed the concept of community justice, which entails directly involving the community in justice to foster community capacity in crime prevention and in responding to crime and conflict (Karp & Clear, 2002). More recently, Clear, Hamilton, and Cadora (2011) identified four archetypes of community justice including the involvement model (premised on problem-oriented policing), the partnership model (closely aligned with partnership-policing), the mobilisation model (where communities...
organise to address their own issues, often aligned with initiatives such as neighbourhood watch programmes), and the intermediary model (typically, reinvesting in existent services). Crawford and Clear (2001) caution the over-reliance on community involvement in justice, given geographical communities are diverse and may subscribe to harmful value sets for the larger ‘social’ collective.

Divided communities are less able to be positively involved with justice and more likely to denigrate police–community relations (Weitzer, 1995). For example, police–community relations in Northern Ireland have long been strained by insufficient consensus regarding the role and function of police, as well as perceptions of power imbalances, power abuses, oppression and human-rights infringements (Ellison, 2007). The 1999 Patten Report underscored absent reciprocal trust between the police and the community as hindering community policing by stifling the active role community members play in justice processes through working partnerships or community mobilisation (Topping, 2008a, 2008b). Crawford and Clear (2001) suggest such over-active influence of the state on communities can cause implicit harm; instead, restorative community justice acknowledges crime originates outside of the realm of professionalised justice and requires socially holistic solutions based on informal social control (Crawford & Clear, 2001).

4. Restorative policing

Scholars have long discussed possible connections between restorative justice and community policing in framing an alternative approach to ‘traditional policing’ (Watson, 2009) often referred to as ‘restorative policing’ (McCold & Wachtel, 1998; Nicholl, 1999). Clamp and Paterson (2017) posit three factors as facilitating restorative policing: (1) the evolution of policing to include problem-oriented and community models; (2) Braithwaite’s (1989) reintegrative shaming suggesting interpersonal relationships foster greater accountability; and (3) the momentum of restorative justice in providing an avenue to harmonise the efforts of problem-oriented and community policing with reintegrative shaming theory. Parker (2013: 133) notes that restorative policing reflects ‘the use of RJ [restorative justice] by the police in the management of low-level offending within a neighbourhood’. Indeed, most of the literature on restorative policing has focused on if, when and how police should engage in restorative justice practices within a community-policing framework (Moor, Peters, Ponsaers, Shapland & van Stokkom, 2009; Nicholl, 1999). We contend there is a conceptual and essential difference between police using restorative justice practices, and a restorative policing model. Clamp and Paterson (2017) support such distinctions, emphasising the need to alter the policing environment and function, as well as the difficulties in starting community or restorative policing (i.e. primarily police mentalities,
rigid organisational culture and ambiguity of the overarching goals); nevertheless, most of the literature focuses on restorative policing and practices (Clamp & Paterson, 2017; Nicholl, 1999).

Restorative justice and community policing both promote civic engagement and social responsibility to achieve collaborative problem-solving with the aim to cultivate understanding, accountability and respect (Clamp & Paterson, 2017; Nicholl, 1999). The mandate of community policing is arguably compatible with restorative justice; however, police organisations have raised several concerns therein. For example, there have been concerns regarding the ability to mobilise communities and the capacity of communities themselves to become fully engaged in community policing, which by extension raises concerns about restorative policing (McLeod, 2003; Nicholl, 1999). As Clamp and Paterson (2017) explained, there is an inherent power imbalance between police and communities, potentially limiting the full capacity of communities to be fully engaged in justice. In addition, community policing has focused on the incident at hand, leaving the capacity for decision-making primarily with the police instead of with a partnership-oriented framework (Bazemore & Griffiths, 2003). Even within the context of community policing, typical police practices focus on swiftly addressing disputes rather than resolving underlying issues that drove the conflict (Hines & Bazemore, 2003). Indeed, police tend to view such thorough dispute resolution as too time consuming (Meyer, Paul & Grant, 2009) and beyond their job description, deferring such efforts to persons in social work (Martin, 2006). Police may address some underlying issues leading to crime; however, most of the policing practices remain reactive. Restorative policing offers a way to foster positive relations that can produce innovative behind-the-scenes opportunities for preventing crime.

A shift to restorative policing would require three comprehensive changes to policing. First, a change is required in how police and communities define crime (as causing harm rather than just a violation of law), and, subsequently, addressing crime (Clamp & Paterson, 2017). Under a restorative policing model, focus would shift from punitive measures to assisting those harmed by an offence to address the matter themselves through a restorative approach (Bazemore & Griffiths, 2003). Second, the police role must be expanded from peace-keepers and peace-makers by including police as community-builders. Community-building requires active participation by the police to encourage the community in crime prevention and conflict resolution (Clamp & Paterson, 2017; Hines & Bazemore, 2003). Clamp and Paterson (2013) suggest that inverting the inherent police hierarchy might be particularly useful; for example, the abilities of front-line officers to effectively deal with community issues could be recognised and supported across all ranks, rather than challenged based on preferences for authoritative police roles. Despite the aforementioned issue regarding community capacity, as reported by Nicholl
‘communities may be seen as having the capacity for self-strengthening and self-building, if given strong service institutions, including the police’ (4). Third, change requires police to allow the community to take on a greater role in handling disputes, making decisions regarding their justice issues (Bazemore & Griffiths, 2003). In allowing greater involvement, community residents will become more responsible, respectful of each other, trusting of the police and willing to embrace conflict and resolve matters on their own, therein fostering social control and social cohesion (Bazemore & Griffiths, 2003; Clamp & Paterson, 2017; Dzur, 2011; Meyer et al., 2009).

Restorative policing can be achieved through greater relations and partnerships with the community, addressing root causes of crime and greater community responsibility (Hines & Bazemore, 2003); however, there are also organisational factors impacting police acceptance of restorative-type policing models (Clamp & Paterson, 2017). The structures and organisation of police services have a significant impact on policing model implementations (Bazemore & Griffiths, 2003). Dzur (2011) explored the challenges of traditional police culture and norms, such that punitive mentalities are often influential and pressing in terms of policy application for those working as justice professionals. The main measures of police performance continue to include crime rate, arrest, response time and rate of clearance, none of which assess community-building, but rather reinforce the aforementioned punitive approach (Ruddell & Jones, 2013). According to McLeod (2003), organisational resistance and a lack of support from direct supervisors can also have an impact on officer willingness to embrace restorative approaches and, thus, restorative policing. However, an organisational orientation focused on community policing favourably situates the police in engaging in restorative processes as it is officers working within a particular neighbourhood that have the best insights regarding what is transpiring in that area (Shapland, 2009). Additionally, “keeping the peace” might be more important than “fighting crime” (Shapland, 2009: 119). The shift to community policing was not ‘a denial of the hard core of police work’ (Moor et al., 2009: 9), such as investigating crimes, enforcing the law and responding to emergencies (Nicholl, 1999); nevertheless, the shift required recognition that police needed to be more responsive to the needs of citizens. Furthermore, restorative policing could be argued as a return to, and a recognition of, the originating philosophy of policing based on ‘Peel’s principles’ wherein citizens have a responsibility to police themselves and that public safety requires that they fulfill this responsibility’ (Hines & Bazemore, 2003: 413).

1 Sir Robert Peel is often wrongly cited as having said ‘the police are the public and the public are the police’ (Lentz & Chaires, 2007). As outlined in the summary of professional policing here, officers were originally drawn from populations outside of where they were to police to maintain professionalism and consistency.
Clamp and Paterson (2017) provide a detailed account of what might be required to implement restorative policing successfully as a mainstream framework that guides professional policing. The socio-political climate of police organisations and their communities must be supporting of a restorative policing model. In addition, the change has to bridge conceptualisations of restorative justice as a process, a practice and a philosophy for organisational evolution to occur. Congruent leadership based on inclusivity and democratic mechanisms within the police organisations and the community is critical for the transition. Such leadership can mediate the tensions and pitfalls associated with top-down and bottom-up approaches, particularly within police organisations.

Initiating top-down changes towards restorative policing can be perilous because demands are made without fully understanding police and community capacity for such mechanisms of justice. Such initiatives are often programmes recycled from other locations and applied with insufficient consideration given to contextual differences. Initiating bottom-up changes towards restorative policing can also be perilous because existing police structures and individual differences in officer capacities are insufficiently considered. In all cases, the relationships between the policing organisation and the community will be critical for police legitimacy. Given the potential pitfalls, Clamp and Paterson (2017) recommend a hybrid approach, ‘whereby particular policy directions might be devised at the top, but the implementation strategy for those policy directions are informed by advice and further contextualisation from the bottom-up’ (148). The specific mechanisms of change should be based on analyses vis-à-vis social capital and include ‘leadership, organisational structure, training and education, and empowering the frontline’ (Clamp & Paterson, 2017: 153). For example, training and education to increase empathy and appropriate discretion can be modelled and supported by police leaders, therein expanding the role of police from peacekeepers, to peace-makers, to community facilitators of restorative justice. The transition is founded on Llewellyn’s (2012a) relational theory.

5. Relational theory

Llewellyn (2012a) offers a normative theory of restorative justice, based on the importance of relationship. Normative theories build a framework, postulating how the world ought to be, and focusing on broad philosophical assumptions (Danermark, Ekström, Jakobsen & Karlsson, 2002). Indeed, Llewellyn (2012a) suggests that to conceptualise restorative justice as simply an alternative method of justice limits the potential of restorative justice in its ability to reframe the purpose and functioning of justice.

Llewellyn (2012a) postulates that interdependence and unavoidable connections to others should be the starting point when conceptualising
wrongdoing and justice. Relationships are an inherent part of humanity (Llewellyn, 2008). Llewellyn (2012b) conceptualises relationships not as just ‘good’ ways to exist, but as an inescapable part of social reality. Llewellyn (2012a) extends Zehr’s (1990) contention that restorative justice provides a new lens through which to understand justice by recognising the need to widen the lens through which justice is considered. The wider lens requires individuals to recognise the ‘relational conception of the self and its implications for how we are in the world’ (Llewellyn, 2012a: 90). To understand the relational conception of the self requires acknowledging the relationships that are integral at not just the interpersonal level, but also at the social level. Acknowledging the importance of the self as a relational being at the social level is the first step in fostering genuine respect, concern and dignity, elements that are essential in conceptualising and handling conflict and crime at the individual level and in a social context. Relationships predicate the nature of societies, including the nature of justice systems that are essential for dealing with conflict. Llewellyn (2012a) states the goal of justice ‘is the establishment of relationships that enable and promote the well-being and flourishing of the parties involved’ (91).

6. Applying relational theory to restorative policing

By examining social conditions as a creation through an intricate, historical and social process, normative theories allow for the questioning of the validity of such social conditions, rather than accepting them as the only possible reality (Danermark et al., 2002). Llewellyn’s theoretical framework for understanding restorative policing encourages questioning of current models of policing. In a time of persistent tension between police and the communities they serve, questioning what is missing may improve the relationship between police and communities. Applying Llewellyn’s theory suggests it is relationship itself that needs to be the focus to foster community-building.

Llewellyn (2012a) contends that ‘justice is our response to the powerful moral intuition that something is wrong and begs response and redress’ (90). Restorative justice naturally promotes relationship as the key in working toward and achieving justice. A relational approach to justice takes as a starting assumption the tenet of connection and, subsequently, interdependence. In thinking about restorative policing, interdependence pertains to the reliance that exists between the police and the communities they serve. Communities rely on police to solve various types of conflict, while every individual officer is more than their component part of the justice system; each officer is also a part of the community in which they serve, relying on the inevitable relationships in which they exist. Even within the capacity of officer, police rely on the community to assist in resolving conflict to varying degrees.
As recognised by scholars (Clamp & Paterson, 2017; Hines & Bazemore, 2003), community-building is central to restorative policing. While it has been suggested that community-building requires police to encourage community participation in crime prevention and conflict resolution, we contend that community-building needs to go further. Rather than understanding restorative justice as a practice, rooted in approaches to crime and specific actions, justice is better understood at its base, as healthy relationships. Establishing healthier relationships composed of respect, concern and dignity, as well as relational equality and restorative policing, is part of the goal for justice (Llewellyn, 2012a); therein, justice should promote community-building through the fostering of relational equality and building relationships rooted in well-being.

As Llewellyn (2012a) proposes, relational equality involves more than just equal treatments or outcomes. Achieving relational equality means being committed to nurturing healthy connections amongst individuals and groups. Llewellyn (2012a) goes on to state, ‘relational justice problematises the issue of what set of practices can or should be employed toward the goal of restoring equality in the context of the relationships involved’ (92). Examining police practices based on a relational approach encourages the adoption of previous suggestions such as those made by Hines and Bazemore (2003) that police should be encouraging community engagement in justice where possible. Nurturing relationships, a central tenet of Llewellyn’s (2012a) theory in relation to restorative policing, allows for new questions to be posed, such as which policing practices can achieve this desired outcome of relational equality.

The main components of Llewellyn’s (2012a) theory include respect, concern and dignity. Each of these constructs is considered by Llewellyn as unique; however, they are not mutually exclusive. Respect entails acknowledging and upholding the rights and needs of other people. Respect is rooted in concern, which demands one have an interest in the well-being of others that is not self-serving. Dignity is observed through a concerted effort to recognise the inherent value of human beings.

Based on the underlying principles of restorative justice in relation to policing as well as the existing data, we contend that variables pertaining to individuals’ rights to own their own conflicts, and be involved in the resolution of those conflicts, would capture the notions of respect and concern. Llewellyn (2012a) also discusses how respect is not premised on protection from others, which we have interpreted to mean an open and trusting policing environment. On one front, we contend that a lack of separation from others means police are accountable to and a part of the communities they police captured in the data by items suggesting the police are open to public input. Secondly, internal support for officers from their organisation facilitates an open environment. The available data spoke to this construct
through organisational factors measuring officers’ perceptions of organisational support. With regard specifically to ‘concern’, we surveyed the data and created a factor based on relationship-building, encompassing those practices that suggest officers go out of their way to get to know the community and build relationships. We contend that building relationships demonstrates concern for others, regardless if the relationship-building activities meet officers’ self-interests.

Dignity is demonstrated via treatment of citizens by police premised on the intrinsic value individuals have in and of themselves. To treat someone as having dignity means to take their interests into consideration and acknowledge how those interests give meaning to relationships. Based on the available data, we contend that affording others dignity aligns with interdependence. Interdependence, in practical terms, means to be open to input and involvement from the community, thus recognising the inherent value of others.

7. Study design

7.1. Data and participants

Between 1 May 2013 and 19 July 2013 an online survey was provided to most of the 2,300 sworn police officers in Saskatchewan, including both federal (Royal Canadian Mounted Police, RCMP) and municipal officers to assess police perceptions of justice paradigms and ascertain how such perceptions impacted the use of discretionary decision-making. The original survey instrument consisted of approximately 60 closed-ended questions, employing a 5-point Likert scale. These questions were compiled from previously tested survey items examining police attitudes about justice paradigms (Crocker, 2012; Gill, Clairmont, Redmond & Legault, 2008; Government of Saskatchewan, 2009; Katz & Bonham, 2008). A response rate of 13 per cent of the target population (n = 296) was attained.

7.1.1. Dependent variable

Based on the desired integration of relational theory in the context of restorative policing and the available data, a single item was identified to act as the dependent variable. The item states: To be effective the police should be involved in all community problems, not just crime-related problems, and responses were originally captured using a Likert scale (1 = strongly agree, 2 = agree, 3 = neither agree nor disagree, 4 = disagree, 5 = strongly disagree). We contend that by using this item as the dependent variable we may begin to measure relational equality as an overarching construct within Llewellyn’s (2012a) relational theory. Since the true sense of justice, as

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2 Two services did not deal with youth offences, and one small municipal service did not respond to the research request.
conceptualised by Llewellyn (2012a), goes beyond justice as conflict, and rather aims to understand justice through relationship, this item attempts to capture the importance of community involvement beyond crime from the perspective of police. Furthermore, this item is consistent with Bazemore and Griffiths’s (2003) contention that restorative policing goes beyond peace-making and peace-keeping to include community-building as a desired additional role for police. At the same time, we acknowledge the limitations of this item. The item does not capture the inherent power imbalance imbedded in the nature of police authority compared to community capacity. Indeed, being involved in a community and having the authority and obligation to exercise control over a community are drastically different. While an important limitation to acknowledge for future research, the relevance of the dependent variable remains essential as a starting point in the conceptualisation of Llewellyn’s relational equality.

7.1.2. Main test concept (independent variables)
Understanding relational equality from a police perspective encourages the exploration of police practices and paradigms of justice. Following an examination of the survey questions, we identified all items relevant to the concepts of respect, concern and dignity, as outlined by Llewellyn (2012a). ‘Respect’ was operationalised as the rights and needs of individuals to be involved in their own conflict, and the police being amenable to such rights. The tenet of ‘concern’ was operationalised as relationship-building, encompassing community-building. ‘Dignity’ was operationalised as the interdependence between police and the communities they serve. Based on previous literature, a fourth independent variable, ‘Organizational Support’, which included variables pertaining to protection from external pressures and freedom to conduct police work within a respectful environment, was also included in the study design. A factor analysis was conducted on the fourteen survey items, deemed relevant, to test how well they held together as factors (Garson, 2013). An iterative process was used to assessing all items; specifically, items were dropped one at a time based on communalities, correlations, overall contribution to the factor, scree plot evaluation or cross loading.

The first factor analysis, with the Eigenvalue set at one for factor extraction, created a sound model of five factors (KMO = .712; Bartlett’s test of Sphericity = 835.30; \( p = .000 \)), which accounted for 62.45 per cent of variance in the factors. After review, and based on theoretical considerations, a second factor analysis was conducted that forced four factors retaining all fourteen items. At this point, it became readily apparent that ‘the victim of a crime should have a say in what sentence the court should impose in a case’, was statistically insignificant to the model and was removed. The next iteration produced four factors accounting for 58.83 per cent of variance, set at an Eigenvalue of one (KMO = .718, Bartlett’s test of Sphericity = 827.64; \( p \)
Following this iteration, two more items were dropped one at a time from further analysis; specifically, ‘To be effective police should be involved in all community matters’; and ‘Maintaining peace and order between people is just as important as catching criminals’, both of which were insufficiently statistically related to the extant factors. This decision was made to ensure a statistically sound model, despite the potential theoretical importance of these items. The final iteration produced four factors accounting for 66.06 per cent of variance (KMO = .708; Bartlett’s test of Sphericity = 741.97; p = .000). Additive indices were created from these items following the calculation of Cronbach’s Alpha. The four final factors include ‘Relationship Building’ ($\alpha = .732$) including three items, ‘Interdependence’ ($\alpha = .739$) including three items, ‘The Right to Participate’ ($\alpha = .631$) including three items and ‘Organizational Support’ ($\alpha = .594$) including two items.

### 7.1.3. Control variables
The control variables (see Table 1) included years of policing, geographical location (rural/urban), police service, sex and family member incarcerated. The average number of years in policing was 13.5 (range 1 to 44.5 years). When assessing the different geographical location of the officers, 67.7 per cent were from rural locations and 32.3 per cent policed in urban centres. RCMP officers made up 43.5 per cent of the respondents, 56.5 per cent were from a municipal service. Males made up 80 per cent of the sample. A significant minority of officers reported having had a family member incarcerated (22 per cent). These items comprise the control variables included in the analyses.

### 7.2. Analytic strategy
Once appropriate main and control independent variables were tested through bivariate analyses, a two-step multiple regression was conducted to

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3 Relationship-building includes: I spend a lot of time getting to know people in the community; I get a lot of assistance and collaboration from community residents; I work a lot with community agencies and services.

4 Interdependence includes: I believe that nowadays there is too much community direction in my police organisation; I believe that nowadays there is too much community input in my police organisation; I would not support restorative justice because criminal justice interventions should be left to professionals.

5 Right to participate includes: In minor offences, offenders should be given the opportunity to attempt to repair the harm they have caused; In major offences, offenders should be given the opportunity to attempt to repair the harm they have caused; Victims and offenders should be allowed to meet in a supervised setting to discuss the harm that has been caused by the offender’s crime.

6 Organisational factors include: My organisation protects its members from external pressures and criticisms; There is a positive working relationship between officers and managers in our office.

7 These figures are consistent with the national figures indicating that women represent 20 per cent of police officers as reported by Statistics Canada (2015).
**Table 1.** Descriptive statistics for control variables.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Values</th>
<th>Count</th>
<th>Total %</th>
<th>N valid</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Median</th>
<th>Std. Deviation</th>
<th>Skewness</th>
<th>Kurtosis</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Years in policing</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>286</td>
<td>13.54</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>8.95</td>
<td>.901</td>
<td>.104</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>280</td>
<td>39.14</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>8.78</td>
<td>.348</td>
<td>−.433</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rural area</td>
<td>Yes (1)</td>
<td>195</td>
<td>67.7</td>
<td>296</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>.761</td>
<td>−1.43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>No</td>
<td>93</td>
<td>32.3</td>
<td></td>
<td>–</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>−.761</td>
<td>1.43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Police service</td>
<td>RCMP (1)</td>
<td>128</td>
<td>43.5</td>
<td>294</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>−.262</td>
<td>−1.95</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Municipal</td>
<td>166</td>
<td>56.5</td>
<td></td>
<td>–</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>1.524</td>
<td>.326</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sex</td>
<td>Male (1)</td>
<td>231</td>
<td>80.2</td>
<td>288</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>1.524</td>
<td>.326</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>19.8</td>
<td></td>
<td>–</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>1.349</td>
<td>−.181</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family member incarcerated</td>
<td>Yes (1)</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>22.1</td>
<td>280</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>1.349</td>
<td>−.181</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>No</td>
<td>218</td>
<td>77.9</td>
<td></td>
<td>–</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>–</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
assess the relationship these items have to the dependent variable.\textsuperscript{8} Multiple regression was chosen as the appropriate statistical tool, since the dependent variable is a continuous factor\textsuperscript{9} (Garson, 2014). Two-step, sequential regression was conducted in order to test the combined and solitary effect of the control variables and the main concepts against the dependent variable. The assumptions of multiple regression have been met for this study, including: the dependent variable is continuous and normally distributed; the control variables have been properly modelled; there is near proper specification of the model; the model has not been over-fitted (better than 15:1 cases to variable ratio); there is close to homoscedastic error; there is a lack of near or perfect multicollinearity between variables; the relationships are linear between the dependent and independent variables; the sample has been taken randomly; there is a level of reliability to the model; and there is nearly an absence of outliers (Garson, 2014).

\section*{8. Results}
\subsection*{8.1. Multiple regression}

The multiple regression analyses indicated that model one was marginally significant ($F = 2.208$, $p = .054$) and model two was statistically significant ($F = 6.064$, $p = .000$). The first model explains 2.3 per cent of the overall variance in the dependent variable ‘police should be involved in all community problems, not just those related to crime.’ The second model, with the main independent variables added to the regression analysis, explains 15.3 per cent of the overall variance in the dependent variable. Based on the $R^2$ change, model one is 4.3 per cent better at predicting the variance in the dependent variable than the null model. From model one to model two, the ability of the model to explain the variance in the dependent variable increased by 14 per cent. See Table 2 for the regression model summaries.

In the first model examining the control variables alone, one item emerged as a statistically significant predictor; specifically, \textit{number of years in police work} was significant ($b = .021$, $SE = .008$) with a beta value of .174 ($p = .006$). The significant result suggests the more years spent in policing, the more likely officers are to agree that police should be involved in all

\footnotesize{\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{8} Additionally, the data were checked for missing values. All variables have a missing value rate well below 10 per cent, indicating the missing cases are missing completely at random and will not affect the overall nature of the analyses.
  \item \textsuperscript{9} While there has long been contention about how many categories must be present in a categorical variable to constitute a ‘continuous’ variable for the purposes of multiple regression analysis, according to Rhemtulla, Brousseau-Liard, and Savalei (2012), there is little difference between using a five-point categorical variable from a seven-point categorical variable in a multiple regression, when all other main assumptions have been met. For this reason, we have chosen to proceed with a five-point item as the dependent variable.
\end{itemize}}
community matters, beyond justice. This was the most impactful variable in model one. Police service was found to be marginally significant (b = −.254, SE = .152) with a beta value of −.115 (p = .095). The results also indicate, perhaps counter intuitively, that officers serving as RCMP are somewhat less likely to agree that police should be involved in all community matters.

In model two, police service remained the only statistically significant control variable (b = −.297, SE = .143) with a beta value of −.135 (p = .039). The results again indicated that officers in the RCMP are less likely to agree that police should be involved in all community matters. All but one of the main independent variables emerged as statistically significant in model two. The most impactful factor was interdependence (b = .286, SE = .092) with a beta value of .206 (p = .002). The significant result suggests that officers who recognise the importance of interdependence between police and the communities they serve also agree that police should be involved in all community matters, beyond just those issues related to justice. The second most statistically significant variable was the right to participate (b = .299, SE = .095) with a beta value of .196 (p = .002). In other words, officers who agree that people should have a right to participate in their own conflicts also agree that police should be involved in all community problems. The final statistically significant factor was relationship-building (b = .194, SE = .093) with a beta value of .134 (p = .038). The results indicate that officers who spend time building relationships with the community they serve also feel police should be involved in all community matters. See Table 3 for full regression results.

### Table 2. Multiple regression model summary.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>ANOVA F Value</th>
<th>ANOVA p-value</th>
<th>Adjusted $R^2$</th>
<th>$\Delta R^2$</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Model 1 (control variables)</td>
<td>2.208</td>
<td>.054</td>
<td>.023</td>
<td>.043</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Model 2 (main IVs added)</td>
<td>6.064</td>
<td>.000</td>
<td>.153</td>
<td>.140</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Table 3. Multiple regression results.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Model 1</th>
<th>Model 2</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>$\beta$ (SE)</td>
<td>$\beta$ (SE)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Years in police work</td>
<td>.174 (.008)**</td>
<td>.047 (.008)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rural</td>
<td>.043 (.164)</td>
<td>.057 (.154)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Police service</td>
<td>−.115 (.152)*</td>
<td>−.135 (.143)*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sex</td>
<td>−.058 (.178)</td>
<td>−.029 (.167)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family member incarcerated</td>
<td>−.336 (.172)</td>
<td>−.047 (.161)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relationship-building</td>
<td>.134 (.093)*</td>
<td>.196 (.095)**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interdependence</td>
<td>.206 (.092)**</td>
<td>.153</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Right to participate</td>
<td>.196 (.095)**</td>
<td>.153</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organisational protection</td>
<td>.012 (.072)</td>
<td>.023</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Notes: *p < .05, **p < .010, †p < .10 (marginally significant).
9. Discussion

In applying a theoretical foundation to policing models researchers and leaders can better identify why and how police practices become especially effective, as opposed to simply asserting that such practices or models work. The addition of a theoretically sound foundation provides a vehicle for praxis, wherein a restorative policing framework can be successfully adopted within a given service, due to the theoretical foundation. The current results complement and build on the detailed discussions of implementation proffered by Clamp and Paterson (2017); specifically, community policing appears effectively able to increase community involvement in justice. The current results also support the importance of police work as informed by relational equality for facilitating greater community capacity, stronger relationships between police and communities, and practical, beneficial outcomes for all frontline justice professionals.

The current research evidenced municipal officers as more likely to be involved in all community matters, not only those related to justice, than officers with the RCMP. Considering municipal officers tend to police larger urban centres, the result was somewhat surprising, but not illogical. For example, officers working in rural areas are likely to have fewer resources in regard to time and personnel readily available than larger policing organisations in urban areas (Page & Jacobs, 2011). Insufficient resources may explain why rural police appear less willing to allow the community to be involved in justice issues, as there are typically fewer officers available to deal with crime and justice matters. As such, there is perhaps a limited amount of time for these officers to engage in community-building. Moreover, as Ruddell (2014) suggested, police in urban centres are much less likely to know the people they interact personally with while on duty. The difference in the rural urban police–citizen relationships may mean urban officers could consider it more important to strive toward being involved in all community matters in order to get to know people.

Municipal officers are much more likely than RCMP officers to spend their entire career in one place, given the somewhat transient nature of RCMP work. RCMP officers can be moved whenever needed by the federal policing service; as such, RCMP may not feel as connected to the communities in which they are posted. Officers often do not know how long they will be in any given post and might not feel compelled to set roots and be involved in all community matters. Furthermore, there are structural constraints on how police work is laid out at the federal level. For example, a single RCMP officer may police a vast geographical jurisdiction including many small towns and rural municipalities. As such, the officer in charge only resides in one location and may not travel to other locations for extended
periods of time. Residence and large geographical jurisdictions undoubtedly create barriers to being involved in all community matters beyond justice.

Municipal officers being more likely to be involved in all community matters aligns with the current theory. As Llewellyn (2012a) asserts, social relationships are integral to the fabric that holds a society together. On the one hand, municipal officers work in larger centres where there are more likely to be social relationships (the inescapable reality that people exist in relation to one another) than interpersonal relationships with clients and the community. The reality does not help to inform the nature of such social relationships, whether they are premised on respect, concern and dignity. On the other hand, the associated results were unexpected because, despite the importance of social relationships, interpersonal relations may have to be fostered first and foremost in order to achieve stronger, more meaningful social relationships premised on respect, concern and dignity, similar to suggestions made by Clamp and Paterson (2017) regarding the need to empower front-line officers.

For the current results, the most statistically impactful independent factor was interdependence. The significance of interdependence indicates that officers who recognise the importance of interdependence are more likely to be involved in all community matters. Based on the items included in this factor, the results indicate that officers who are open to community input and direction are also more willing to give control back to the community, perhaps seeing the inherent value of the individuals who create the community. Aligned with Llewellyn’s (2012a) theory, the results suggest such officers afford dignity to the community. By hearing what the community has to say, officers send the message that community members have value and that such value adds to justice in a meaningful way. The result builds on existent literature on restorative policing, by extending a theoretical foundation to the previously suggested changes to policing functions and roles (e.g. Bazemore & Griffiths, 2003; Clamp & Paterson, 2017).

Officers who appreciated interdependence believed the community contributions and input into the justice processes were also more likely to be involved in all community issues, not just those related to conflict. Presumably the relationship works both ways such that police with better community relationships are more likely to involve the community members in the justice process. At a glance, this statistically significant relationship may seem to be obvious, and that perhaps the dependent and independent constructs are measuring the same thing; however, there is an important distinction between the police caring for and inserting themselves into the community, and the police being willing to allow greater community involvement in justice matters. The results underscore the importance of inherent power imbalances between police and communities, as well as community capacity...
for self-regulation; nevertheless, substantially more research remains to be done to truly assess such issues.

Police willingness to allow greater community involvement in decision-making demonstrates the importance of the inherent quality of reciprocity in relationships. Healthy relationships are built on respect and responsibility (Llewellyn, 2012a; Zehr, 2002). A one-sided relationship, wherein the police are willing to be involved in all community matters but do not allow the community to be involved in justice, would not be characterised by respect. Furthermore, such a relationship would not provide the community the opportunity to take responsibility for their own conflicts, undermining the development of greater informal social control and social cohesion. Often reciprocal negative perceptions between police and communities may be a contributing factor (Wooden & Rogers, 2014); however, the community appears quite capable of social control and cohesion if provided with strong public services, including policing (Clamp & Paterson, 2017; Nicholl, 1999).

The right to participate was also statistically significant, suggesting officers who feel people should have the right to own (participate in the resolution of) their own conflicts are also more likely to be involved in all community matters. The result aligns with Llewellyn’s (2012a) theory by way of respect: specifically, respecting the right of community members to be involved in and solve personal conflicts. Under a restorative policing framework, respect vis-à-vis the right to own one’s conflict is fostered to a greater extent. Police have long worked in a framework of community-oriented policing; however, much of the community involvement excludes those involved in a conflict from the actual decision-making process and rather leaves decisions to police officers. Furthermore, there is a tension between officers’ willingness to give people the right to participate and the communities’ capacity to solve their own conflicts. We contend that a reciprocal and mutually beneficial cycle of respectful police–community relations has to start with police respecting the right to own conflict but also with communities stepping up to do so. Again, police have to be the drivers of this movement. Just as the shift to community policing was not meant to undermine the principles of preventative and traditional police work, but rather shift attention to citizen needs, restorative policing requires a similar shift such that police not only attend to citizen needs but help to build relationship and conflict-handling capacities. Simultaneously, as traditional policing under the Peel model suggests, citizens have not only a right but also a responsibility to self-regulate.

Aligned with Llewellyn’s (2012a) theory, affording citizens greater rights to their own conflicts would garner greater respect. Such respect would likely be associated with individual officers and with policing as an institution. Respect should become reciprocal in nature, where greater respect for policing as an institution would foster greater self-regulation, and subsequently greater
respect for the self and others at an interpersonal and social level, as supported by suggestions from Clamp and Paterson (2017). The propagation of respect could begin with recognition of the inherent value and dignity of the self and others—recognising the social conception of the self and subsequently how that social self impacts others on an individual and social level.

Finally, relationship-building was statistically significant, such that officers who spend time building relationships within their community appear more likely to be involved in all community matters, not just those directly related to crime. The current research was conducted based on the theoretical importance of relationship as a significant aspect of restorative justice and restorative policing (Llewellyn, 2012a; Zehr, 2015). In order to build relationships, a latent community must be acknowledged and fostered among people; in the current research context, that means relationships between police and the communities they serve. Community policing requires police to play the roles of peace-keeper and peace-maker; however, community-building itself also requires attention. Police involvement in the community must extend beyond their primary role as justice authorities to include areas other than conflict or crime.

The current results emphasise the importance of reciprocal relationships between police and community, highlighting the interconnectedness of the theoretical tenets under investigation. For example, officers who spend time fostering relationships (even if they are in part self-serving in regard to gaining public assistance in resolving conflict and crime) are likely to be more concerned about community matters beyond those that relate to crime. Building relationships with others on an individual and professional basis is likely to lead to officers having a better personal connection to others in the community. Accordingly, officers engaged in the community might have concern for others and be willing to be involved in all community matters, knowing that such community matters impact those people they know and perhaps care about, as well as themselves.

10. Limitations

The current research includes several limitations that suggest caution when engaging the potentially important empirical and theoretical contributions, but also provide directions for future research. First, the current study was relatively small-scale and in a geographically distinct location; as such, generalisations could be problematic beyond the collection site. Second, data used for the current study were not specifically designed to capture restorative policing or relational theory, but rather police attitudes. The dependent variable was selected based on available data but should be further developed in future studies to address the inherent power imbalance between police and communities, paying particular attention to ways of policing as opposed to
police practices. In addition, items for the main independent constructs were identified after reducing the theory to component parts. The measures were derived from within the existing survey to test the importance of relationships with regard to restorative policing. Further assessment and refinement of the derived measures may be needed for future research. Third, Llewellyn (2012a) provides a normative theory and, as such, defined measures for assessing related constructs did not previously exist; moreover, as exemplified in the results and discussion, Llewellyn’s theoretical tenets substantially overlap. Future researchers should continue developing assessment measures, integrating explanatory theories into a normative framework, separating and operationalising the assumptions underlying relational theory, and designing dedicated research tools. In honing the measures used to assess relational theory as underpinning restorative policing, practical application can be pinpointed, facilitating adaptations of increasingly innovative and successful policing models.

11. Conclusions and recommendations

The current study was conducted to examine the theoretical importance of relationships in the context of restorative policing. A theoretical gap in the restorative policing literature was identified, which led to postulating that theory was central to praxis, and therein to the underlying question of how policing can shift. The current restorative-policing literature clarifies that while community-building is discussed extensively, there has been limited mention of how community-building can be achieved. Moreover, the current review identified a gap in the literature on relational theory; specifically, Llewellyn (2012a) contends wellbeing is pivotal in achieving relational equality, but wellbeing was never operationalised. Accordingly, the current study offers a description for wellbeing in the context of restorative policing. The result has been an exercise in bridging gaps in literature, identifying a body of literature premised on practice, another primarily theoretical and hopefully emerging with something resembling praxis. By way of praxis, the underlying mechanisms of how restorative policing can be achieved are identified and can be adapted to varying contexts and locations.

Based on the empirical findings and theoretical framework in the current study, the original intentions and guidelines behind modern-day policing should be revisited. Peel’s philosophy suggests that individuals and communities have an obligation to self-regulate (Hines & Bazemore, 2003); however, community self-regulation requires police officer support (Nicholl, 1999). Officers must be willing to relent some discretion in conflict resolution to those directly involved, trusting that the community has the capacity to handle conflict, even if that capacity has yet to be demonstrated. Police officers need to facilitate community engagement inclusive of
interdependence, allowing citizens to become integrated into decision-making processes with regard to their participation in resolving their own conflicts.

Many police organisations are already engaging in community-building activities such as initiatives that encourage community input, community involvement and promote transparency; that said, such activities are not singularly sufficient for achieving a restorative policing framework. Police officers need to engage in more restorative justice practices (not to be read as synonymous with restorative policing), to foster better understandings of restorative justice, and to understand that justice is first and foremost about relationships. Restorative policing requires officers to go beyond partaking in restorative justice processes by shifting how they approach their entire praxis. The officers must also extend their focus beyond the mandate of community policing to include becoming community-builders who are aware of, and contributing to, all matters of concern in their community. Crime control is certainly an integral aspect of police work; nevertheless, prevention strategies offer a good starting place for fostering relationships and community capacity. Prevention strategies typically focus on fostering goodwill between police and communities, stressing the idea that the police are there to help. Such an approach may serve as a solid starting point in which to build community. When attention is drawn away from justice as law, as hard codified and rational facts, focus can be directed to justice in terms of relationships: as harm between people at an interpersonal and social level requiring relational equality to be at its most effective.

Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the authors.

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