

Seeing & Resisting the Stigma System in Sudbury

Dec. 7, 2023 - Sudbury

Scott D. Neufeld - Lecturer, Community Psychology
Brock University | sneufeld@brocku.ca |  @neufeldsd

Why should we care about ending stigma towards people who use drugs?



Not (just) because people are dying!



Stigma:

Worsens health outcomes

Exacerbates health inequities

It's morally wrong to dehumanize & exclude people!

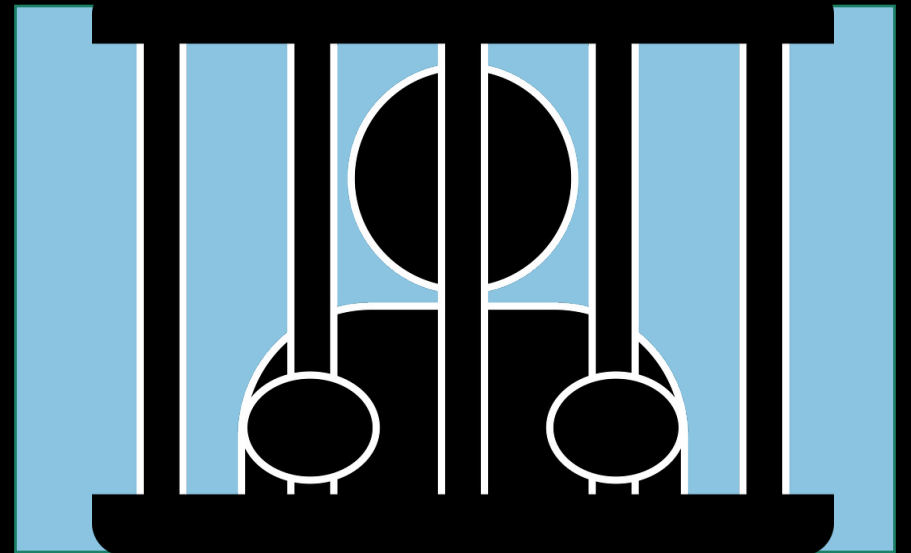


Stigma

“A discrediting mark”



Negative



Different

Stigma

Towards People Who Use Drugs



A person

Who uses a substance

Marked as

A bad person

**Structural
Stigma**

**The
Stigma
System**

**Public
Stigma**



**How does this
marking work?
Who benefits?**

Criminalization of People Who Use Drugs



Stigma Tattoo Machine

But who
or what
are the
markers?

Dr. Imogen Tyler, 2020

STIGMA MACHINES



<https://stigmamachine.com/2020/04/15/stigma-the-machinery-of-inequality-a-short-animated-film/>

How do our systems of “care” work
to...

Mark



Surveil



Identify



Control



Exclude



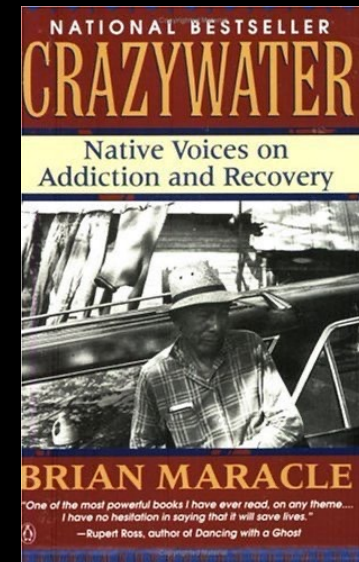
People Who Use Drugs?

Examples...

- Prescription Drug Monitoring Programs (Allen, et al., 2020)
- Flagging ER clients as “drug-seeking” automatically based on stereotypes
- Abstinence-only and punishment oriented policies (e.g. no smoking!)
- Redlining PWUD out of their neighborhoods
- NIMBY campaigns & neighborhood vigilantism
- Public perceptions prioritized over evidence, best practice, or public health goals (e.g. harm reduction site locations)

STIGMA

Is a tool used by the powerful to mark others as different, and worse in order to **maintain social power and control marginalized communities**



How we define stigma...

SHAPES

...how we address stigma

How we define stigma...

Wrong ideas inside the minds of individual members of the public?

Mass media anti-stigma campaigns!

A tool used by those with power to enact social control over marginalized communities?

Organized resistance and strategically targeted policy change!

...how we address stigma

STIGMA MACHINES



<https://stigmamachine.com/2020/04/15/stigma-the-machinery-of-inequality-a-short-animated-film/>



Stigma Machine Breaking



Upstream

Downstream



Don't call us names!

We're real people!

Be compassionate!

Person first!

Think nicer thoughts!

Trump can execute drug dealers already

CRIME

Under a capital punishment statute signed by Bill Clinton, drug dealers can be executed. But federal prosecutors have never used it.

By ARTHUR ALLEN | 03/20/2018 06:03 PM EDT



Nixon's war on drug addicts

From RICHARD SCOTT

Washington, June 17

President Nixon told Congress today that the drug problem in the United States had assumed the dimensions of a national emergency. He asked for an additional \$64 million to provide emergency measures for dealing with it.

Globe investigation: The Ford family's history with drug dealing

GREG MCARTHUR > SECURITIES REGULATION REPORTER
SHANNON KARI
PUBLISHED MAY 25, 2013

This article was published more than 8 years ago. Some information may no longer be current.



Doug Ford says he's 'dead against' supervised injection sites



Ontario PC leader says focus should be on drug rehabilitation instead

The Canadian Press · Posted: Apr 20, 2018 12:34 PM ET | Last Updated: April 20, 2018



Political Campaigns



This article is more

ANALYSIS

The BC Liberals Have an Election Campaign Strategy to Regain Power: Spread Fear About the Homeless

BC Liberal leader Andrew Wilkinson begins campaign by stoking fears of a "street phenomenon of people who are out of control"

杜魯多的自由黨計劃要將硬性毒品合法化! JUSTIN TRUDEAU HAS A PLAN TO LEGALIZE HARD DRUGS!

在黨領法語辯論中，杜魯多被問及會否將硬性毒品合法化。他說：「不會馬上進行。」

During the Leaders debate in French, Justin Trudeau was asked if he would legalize hard drugs. He said "Not right away."

杜魯多的自由黨計劃要將硬性毒品合法化，就像當年把大麻合法化一樣。

Justin Trudeau's Liberals have a plan to legalize hard drugs just like they legalized marijuana.

只有熙爾的保守黨能夠阻止杜魯多的硬性毒品合法化計劃。
ONLY ANDREW SCHEER'S CONSERVATIVES WILL STOP TRUDEAU'S HARD DRUG LEGALIZATION PLAN AND KEEP OUR KIDS SAFE.

為確保我們的孩子安全，請在10月21日投票給你的保守黨候選人。



PLEASE VOTE FOR YOUR CONSERVATIVE CANDIDATES ON OCT 21.

AUTHORIZED BY THE OFFICIAL AGENT FOR THE CONSERVATIVE PARTY OF CANADA



C-SPAN/1993

U.S. SENATE
CRIME BILL

CSPAN2
LIVE

SOON ON CNN
EX-TRUMP CAMPAIGN CHAIR
MANAFORT SENTENCING

2020 RACE

BIDEN IN A 1993 SPEECH PUSHING TOUGH CRIME BILL WARNED OF "PREDATORS ON OUR STREETS" WHO WERE "BEYOND THE PALE"

LIVE
CNN
10:11 AM PT

URGES SAUDI ARABIA TO RELEASE HUMAN RIGHTS ACTIVISTS AND WOMEN CNN RIGHT NOW





This is second spike in overdoses this year in Timmins, with the first being in early March. (Sergio Arangio/CTV News)

Mushkegowuk Council expanding Fire Keeper Patrol with City of Timmins

Year long pilot program to start at the end of the month



[Clement Goh](#) · CBC News · Posted: Aug 22, 2023 5:00 AM EDT | Last Updated: August 22



A new pilot program with support from the City of Timmins will let Mushkegowuk Council expand its outreach services, including its Fire Keeper Patrol to offer help to people facing addictions and homelessness. (Spencer Platt/Getty Images)

Media Reporting

Seeing the Stigma System

Housing?

Child

City

Protection

Planning?

Schools?

Services?

Local

Treatment

BIAs?

Drug Prevention?

Industry?

Policing?

Three Ways To Fight Structural Stigma



System Navigators



- Nat Kominski
- The lens of lived experience to identify stigma in the system
- Drug user organizing

Mind Changers

- Christianne Blain
- Strategic stigma reduction with key community figures
- Targeted stigma change



Rule Breakers



- Seamus O'Murphy
- Breaking the rules to break the stigma machine
- Lead by example with bravery

What Should We Do?



It really depends!

Focus your definition of the problem

Investigate how stigma is showing up

Reach out to people who use(d) drugs

Strategize collaboratively with PWUD

Tailor your intervention(s) to your context

One Last Point

Self-Reflection

- Stigma is not just “out there somewhere”
- Stigma systems with no stigmatizers?
- Need for reflection on how our systems have stigma baked in
- Change begins with you!



It's me

Questions to Leave With

What is the shape
of the “stigma
system” targeting
PWUD in our
context?

How could we work
collaboratively in
partnership with PWUD
to better understand and
dismantle this system?

What would
effective stigma
RESISTANCE feel
like for those worst
affected?

Acknowledgements

Sarah Negrin (RA)

Dr. Michael T. Schmitt

Dr. Ryan McNeil

Email: sneufeld@brocku.ca

Twitter: [@neufeldsd](https://twitter.com/neufeldsd)

Thank you to the many activists and folks with living experience I've been privileged to work with in the last five years for continually teaching me and sharing hard-won expertise and insights: Al Fowler, Samona Marsh, Earl Grey Eyes, Laura Shaver, Boomer Bundy & Sandra Czechaczek, Karen Ward, and many more.

Thank you to the study's peer research assistants for assistance with participant recruitment, focus group facilitation and study guidance: Sandra Czechaczek, Al Fowler, Laural Gaudette, Haleigh Anderson, Scarlett Nelson

Funding & Support:

- Simon Fraser University
- Brock University
- Vancouver Area Network of Drug Users
- National Institutes of Health
- BC Centre on Substance Use
- Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council (SSHRC)
- Vanier Scholarship
- Mitacs Accelerate internship

Student & Community Collaborators

Hamnah Shahid, Tia Greto, Kevin Vo, Raechel Hamill, Julia Jarvis, Megan Vlahiotis, Michael Hinderyckx, Julianne Sheppit, Xiaoyang Xia, Emily Spanton, Talia Storm, Gord Garner, Ashleigh Hyland, CAPSA, VANDU, WAHRS, NALE and too many others to count!

**Much of this research took place on the unceded, ancestral territories of the Coast Salish peoples, including the (xʷməθkʷəy̓əm) Musqueam, (skw̓xwú7mesh) Squamish, and (sel̓ilwitulh) Tsleil-Waututh First Nations.*

Questions?

sneufeld@brocku.ca