MORE THREATENED THAN SAFE: WHAT AFRICAN, CARIBBEAN AND BLACK YOUTH LIVING IN SOUTHERN ONTARIO SAY ABOUT THEIR INTERACTIONS WITH LAW ENFORCEMENT

Imran Mohamed Syed[*], Ciann L. Wilson[**], Raymond McKie[**], Ashley-Anne Marcotte[**], and Robb Travers[*]

This study investigates the perspectives of African, Caribbean, and Black (ACB) youth living in Windsor, Ontario regarding their interactions with police. Twelve ACB youth were recruited using various methods through the Promoting and Owning Empowerment and Resilience among African, Caribbean, and Black Youth in Windsor (POWER) project to take part in focus group interviews. Interview transcripts were analyzed using a thematic analysis in NVIVO 10 software. Themes included a belief that police have positive effects on society, and that only a certain minority of officers are responsible for misconduct; many interactions with youth are not the fault of the officer(s) involved and that police institutions play an important role in society. However, youth also expressed reasons for their displeasure with these institutions, such as: the lack of diversity within the police force, and that police sometimes abuse power and can be aggressive. Moreover, police have obstructed justice, profiled, and treated ACB people differently, according to participants. These results come at a time when community advocacy groups, such as Black Lives Matter, are mobilizing to improve the experiences of African diasporic people in Canadian society.

Keywords: *African Black and Caribbean Canadians, Black Lives Matter, Police Discrimination, Profiling, Criminal Justice System*

1.   Introduction

The mistreatment of Black people by White law enforcement has received much overdue media attention in recent years. Gone are the days when police misconduct was done in the privacy of a cop car or a jail cell, individualized in its impact, and silenced. The advent of

---

[*] Department of Health Sciences, Wilfrid Laurier University, Waterloo, Canada ✉
[**] Department of Psychology, Wilfrid Laurier University, Waterloo, Canada

smartphones and social media has made these incidences subject for mass conversation and critique. High profile cases include the 2012 shooting of Trayvon Martin by George Zimmerman, who referred to himself as a member of the 'neighbourhood watch' (Dahl, 2013), the 2014 shooting of Michael Brown, a young Black man from Ferguson, Missouri by a White officer (Moyer, 2014), and the 2015 death of Sandra Bland, a Black woman whose body was discovered in her jail cell just days after being arrested (Dart, 2015). Police brutality and violence towards Black-embodied people is not strictly a 21st century phenomenon, as demonstrated by the killing of Arthur McDuffie in 1980 (Smiley, 2015), the battering of Rodney King in 1992 (Balko, 2014), and the horrifying lynching of 14 year old Emmett Till in 1955 (Hope, 2017). In many of these cases, the assailants who were White (or White-passing in the case of Zimmerman) civilians and police officers, were exonerated despite their crimes.

Responses to such events have included peaceful civil protest and unrest in major urban centres, including on Yonge Street in Toronto, Ontario, Canada in 1992, when thousands of activist congregated for a protest following the acquittal of officers that shot and killed a 22-year old visibly Black man (Paradkar, 2017). Organized responses targeted at systematic change have included the civil rights movement, the Black Power Movement, and more recently the Black Lives Matter (BLM) movement, which strive to address the factors that perpetuate anti-Black racism and bolster the aims of Black liberation and investment in the social, economic and political empowerment of Black people ("About," n.d.). The political and social plight of Black peoples has also been captured in Black cultural referents, such as music (Brooks, 2016), and recently, on social media platforms. For instance, BLM blossomed from an internet hashtag (Guynn, 2015).

The Black Panther Party (BPP) originated in 1966 as a protective counter-force and response to racial profiling, police brutality and systematic inequities within the justice system. The BPP was a community-based response among African Americans that resulted in wide-scale community initiatives including free health clinics (Bassett, 2016), breakfast programs for low-income youth, and armed protection for communities under heavy surveillance by police and para-military forces (Cleaver & Katsiaficas, 2001). The BPP also taught principles of self-defence and Black empowerment (Cleaver & Katsiaficas, 2001). After clashing with police during several demonstrations, many BPP organizers were targeted and killed by police during the 1960s and 1970s. The Federal Bureau of Investigation explicitly targeted leaders of the BPP (Cleaver & Katsiaficas, 2001). Currently, BLM, like the BPP, continues to root itself in the protest of many acts of police brutality, but also systemic injustice and anti-Black racism ("About," n.d.).

BLM demonstrations in Canada, such as that carried out during Toronto's 2016 Pride Parade, have brought attention to the many ways Pride has and continues to exclude queer bodies of colour (Gollom, 2016). Notably, BLM protestors problematized the inclusion of the police float in the annual parade, which has led to broader discussions about human rights and the nature of the relationship between the police and the Black, queer community in Canada (Gollom, 2016). However, these conversations are not new within the Canadian context. The Black Action Defence Committee was founded in Toronto in the late 1980s to address the violence against young, unarmed, visibly Black men by the local police force. They were given the responsibility of forming a special investigations unit to examine acts of racial profiling and to improve the relationship between law enforcement and Black Canadians (Winsa, 2011).

In the fall of 2015, Ontario forbade random and arbitrary carding by police forces after much public outrage for the policy. A practice that dates back to 1957 (Rankin, 2015), carding involves

the freedom on the part of officers to stop civilians on the street. Police are then able to collect and store their personal information in a police database without any specified grounds to do so (Grewal, Ranskin, & Winsa, 2015). Reports demonstrate that visibly Black people in Canada are three times as likely as Whites to be carded by municipal police forces (Grewal et al., 2015). This is yet another manifestation of the surveillance of Black-embodied people that harkens on historic practices that aimed to monitor and keep Indigenous, Black, and communities of colour out of the bounds of white settler societies (Mawani, 2002). Following decades of police disproportionately profiling people of colour, the Ontario government replaced the existing policy with one that has a stricter set of guidelines to prevent racial profiling (Grewal et al., 2015). These guidelines have been criticized by members of the Black community who argue that the guidelines "[fail] to fully and finally provide adequate protection for the fundamental rights… of African Canadians," (Morgan, 2016) and further do not require police to delete archived data derived from previous carding incidents (Miller, 2016).

Police profiling and differential treatment of Black people has been well documented in Canada. In the past, Toronto researchers have reported that Black males are more likely to be stopped by police than their White counterparts (Hayle, Wortley, & Tanner, 2016; Wortley & Owusu-Bempah, 2011). In one survey, half of Black high-school students reported being stopped by police compared to just 23% of White students, 11% of East Asian students, and 8% of South Asian respondents of the same age (Wortley & Marshall, 2005). Further, a significantly higher amount of Black students (40%) reported being physically searched by police when compared to students of other races (Wortley & Marshall, 2005). A 2003 report from police services in Kingston, Ontario, Canada found that Black individuals were three times more likely to be stopped by police than their White counterparts (Wortley & Marshall, 2005). Similarly, Black people are more likely to report being unjustifiably stopped and having excessive force used against them compared to other ethno-racial groups (Weitzer & Tuch, 2004). Along the intersections of race and age, Black males aged 15-24 in the Kingston report were more likely to report being stopped by police than any other demographic group, including Black men in older age ranges (Wortley & Marshall, 2005). This implies that police may view young Black men in Canada as inherently 'dangerous' or 'criminal'. To date, no evidence has been found to attribute the differential treatment by police to increased involvement in crime on the part of youth (Fitzgerald & Carrington, 2011). While Statistics Canada reported in 2014 that accusations of crime for those aged 12-25 were substantially higher than those among adults aged 25 and over (Government of Canada, 2014), the Kingston report contextualizes this by showing that age, sex, and self-identified Black racial identity impact police profiling and increase interactions with the criminal justice system.

In the United States, urban communities with a higher proportion of African American people experience higher rates of surveillance, discrimination, and excessive force by police (Smith & Holmes, 2014). The same can be said for predominantly racialized communities such as the Jane-Finch, Malvern, and Regent Park communities in Toronto. Studies have demonstrated higher rates of police misconduct and discrimination in predominantly Black neighbourhoods (e.g. Brunson & Weitzer, 2009). Interestingly however, African Americans have reported some of the highest levels of police discrimination in affluent White, and racially-mixed neighbourhoods (e.g. Stewart, Baumer, Brunson, & Simons, 2009). Stewart and colleagues (2009) contextualize these findings with evidence demonstrating that discrimination is most likely to occur in White neighbourhoods where the Black population is visible but growing. They cite a theory: that this phenomenon is exacerbated by racist stereotypes that African Americans

bring social problems to 'good neighbourhoods'(e.g. Quillian & Pager, 2001). Many of these practices can be attributed to Anti-Black cultural attitudes developed during colonialism and the slave trade (Crenshaw, 1991).

Negative police interactions can have adverse health effects on Black communities. Black males who have been stopped by police, or have been subjected to intrusiveness during their interactions, were at greater risk of experiencing trauma (Geller, Fagan, Tyler, & Link, 2014), poor mental health, and a multitude of chronic conditions (such as diabetes), personal stress, anxiety, and depression (Brown et al., 2000). They were also more likely to use drugs as a coping mechanism (Pascoe & Smart Richman, 2009). Besides being more likely than their White counterparts to report negative interactions with police, they were also more likely to leave an interaction with police upset, and with longer lasting negative perceptions of police (Weitzer & Tuch, 2004). Further, A Canadian study found that African diasporic youth who had either direct or indirect contact with police were 2 - 3 times more likely to feel they had been discriminated against by the police or court system than those without said particular type of impact (Peirone, Maticka-Tyndale, Gbadebo, & Kerr, 2017). Therefore, there is evidence of police interactions leaving greater risk of negative feelings, discrimination, and adverse health consequences for said youth.

It is important to note that when discussing African diasporic communities, we are examining diverse and heterogeneous ethno-cultural groups. For our purposes, in the Canadian context we have categorized African diasporic communities into African-, Caribbean- and Black-Canadians. Black-Canadian communities, much like African American communities, primarily trace their ancestry to the trans-Atlantic slave trade (Peirone et al., 2017). Blacks were brought to the former colonies that are now called Canada as enslaved property as early as the 1600s. A surge in the number of Black people occurred through passage in the Underground Railroad. Meanwhile, Caribbean-Canadian communities are first, second and third generation African diasporic peoples who migrated to Canada from the Caribbean region (Peirone et al., 2017). Migration from the Caribbean began as early as the 1920s, when many skilled Caribbean people migrated under the domestic worker programs that were popular at the time. Many also came to to work in Nova Scotian steel factories (Colley, 2016). These skilled workers were the domestic labour force for White families across Canada. By the early 1990s, these domestic labourer programs all but cut-off acceptance to Black people, and therefore people from this region had to migrate through the usual immigration routes. The most recent group of African diasporic migrants to Canada consists of "African-Canadian" communities, who are first and second generation continental African migrants. This paper will use the collective term African, Caribbean and Black (ACB) to refer to these three diverse groups of people within the larger African diaspora.

This paper draws upon data from the larger African, Caribbean and Black Youth study (ACBY), a community-based research project exploring HIV/AIDS vulnerability among African, Caribbean and Black youth in Windsor and Essex County, Ontario, Canada. Phase I involved surveys completed by 529 African, Caribbean and Black (ACB) youth, while Phase II involved focus groups and interviews with youth, service providers, community leaders, and other stakeholders. In this paper, we use Phase II data to report on what ACB youth had to say about their interactions with police.

2.   Methods

2.1. Participants

Local community partners and the project's Youth Advisory Committee (YAC) helped to recruit 57 ACB youth for a total of 10 focus groups, comprised of five to eight participants in each. Eight of these focus groups were grouped by similarities in gender identity and sexual orientation, or ethnic identification. Each of the ten focus groups lasted 60-90 minutes and were moderated by a researcher.

For the current study, participants included 12 ACB youth between 16 and 25 years of age from two of the focus groups, where issues related to police and the ACB community were discussed. The first focus group was comprised of three males and three females, four of whom were African, and two were Caribbean. The other group was comprised of four male and two female participants of undisclosed ethnic origin. ACB youth are anonymously quoted in this paper, with only gender identification disclosed in their acronyms (i.e. FACB1 refers to a female ACB youth, MACB1 refers to a male ACB youth, and *ACB refers to an ACB youth with undisclosed gender).

2.2. Data Analysis

Focus group interview transcripts were coded using NVIVO 10 software. Thematic analysis strategies, as outlined by Braun & Clarke (2006), were used for the present study. The analysis began with authors self-familiarizing with the focus group transcripts. All relevant data were then sorted into codes (a single excerpt from the text of the transcript) with the aim of reaching thematic saturation. Coding was strictly based on semantic content (only analyzing for verbatim textual information in lieu of interpretation), and was then grouped in themes. Deletion and amalgamation occurred to ensure data saturation, relevance, and coherency of themes. Additionally, no theme or subtheme consisted of less than five separate codes to ensure data validity. These themes were then re-evaluated in terms of how well they accommodated their individual codes, and how consistent they were with the entire transcript. This process of re-evaluating themes continued until researchers working with the thematic analysis, the coauthors of this paper, agreed that appropriate themes were established. The final thematic structure is comprised of three meta-themes composed of seven subthemes overall.

3. Results

Participants had many experiences and complex opinions concerning law enforcement, distilling into three distinct themes: that law-enforcement has a positive effect on society, that police institutions lack diversity, and that officers sometimes abuse their power.

3.1. Positive Perceptions of Police

While many youth held negative views about police, they also asserted the need to have police in society and defended police actions. Youth did this in one of three ways: First, they

defended police organizations by problematizing the popular assumption that police officers are a homogenous group, stating that many negative interactions involve a minority of police officers. For example, youth stated that "there's bad and good [officers]" (MACB5). Others regarded female officers as less aggressive, "there were good police, female ones, nice ones, very patient, very respectful women" (FACB15).

Second, participants justified police actions by attributing negative interactions to the individuals involved in altercations with police. Many participants criticized those not strictly abiding by the law, "okay like if you're over speeding you'll definitely get pulled over" (*ACB6). Lastly, youth justified the need for a continued police presence in society. Participants directly defended the police, stating that "they save lives" (MACB10) and that "they do their job" (FACB7). They regarded police as serving the community well in certain ways. One participant cited a violence against women workshop as an example of the importance of police in protecting people, "they were telling about the whole dating and violence against women and how if something happens to call the police and go to the hospital and stuff like that" (FACB15). One participant, although critical of the police, still admitted that their role was necessary in controlling for crime and in protecting society:

> The only thing that's good about them is the fact that they're cops and if it wasn't for them then the crime rates would be a lot higher…. People think they are going to get caught [i.e. committing an offense]…cuts crime down (MACB12).

While participants held the role of police in a positive regard, they also identified key problems that are outlined in the next sections.

3.2.   Homogeneity among Police

ACB youth felt that police forces were homogeneous, and lacking representation from diverse ethno-racial groups, resulting in White Eurocentric thinking and stereotyping by officers. Youth regarded police forces as characterized by White and male privilege, "I feel like, especially when you're White and you're a White male you're at the top of the totem pole you have all of that White and male privilege" (FACB21). This is exacerbated by an over-representation of young officers, "they're very young you know, they're still very young, so they're, I don't know, they're not mature and caring" (FACB11). They suggest younger age could be associated with aggression on the part of officers, "the younger you are in the same age group you feel like you have to be very rude and aggressive to be respected" (FACB11).

One participant criticized the hierarchy of police organizations in terms of White privilege, adding that police diversification is actually a form of tokenism intended to mask the racism inherent to the institution.

> They want to recruit more people of colour … [like Black people]… it's just to cover their racism, because if you … go to the police office … the people who are actually have high power … they're all, most of them are Irish, British men, there's no Lebanese, there's no Arabs, there's no Asians, they're all White (FACB15).

3.2.1. Police Reliance on Stereotypes

Youth recounted incidents where police drew upon problematic stereotypes of ACB communities, leading to biased conduct, "there is this whole stereotype about Black people that is very negative and if something happens they automatically point the finger at the Black person" (FACB15). Participants also argue that a lack of education among police officers fuelled such stereotypes, "there's a communication barrier and most of their knowledge about people is, I have to say it must be driven by stereotypes or something which comes from a lack of education or … understanding" (FACB7).

3.2.2. Poor Communication

Participants explain that many conflicts with police result from a lack of adequate communication between police and ACB youth during their interactions, and an excess of miscommunication and malicious insinuation by police. Participants also explained that these miscommunications disproportionately affected ACB communities. "There is miscommunication, and Black people are targeted in the community, and it's not fair and it's definitely not equal," (FACB21) said a participant, inferring that this miscommunication aggravated existing inequalities. Further, some participants inferred that the police exacerbated these conflicts by insinuating harmful ideas when miscommunication occurs, "we knew our laws and some people didn't;… they don't know how to communicate with them… [and they're] suddenly a threat … base[d on] … things that [police] insinuate" (FACB7). Another participant added that ACB people should comprehend their rights to prepare for when situations of miscommunication occur. They reason that otherwise, officers will take advantage of one's ignorance of the law:

> If cops approach somebody who doesn't know their law like the bad one will obviously take advantage of the individual but if a person knows their law … then the cops would not; he won't be able to do anything (MACB5).

3.2.3. Insufficient Cultural Training

Many participants expressed the need for diversity training for law enforcement agencies to aid in better policing with regard to the relationship with ACB communities. In particular, they mentioned Windsor's diversity, and the need for police to understand its multicultural constituent communities, "[Windsor is] a diverse community and they can't afford to have any kind of misunderstandings or misjudgements about people in hindsight" (FACB7). Other participants referred to a need for training due to the amount of power police have: "I think with that kind of position and power I think you need some kind of cultural competence training" (FACB4).

3.3. Abuse of Power

Many participants also felt that some individual officers abused their powers at a cost to ACB communities. They described police engaging in racial profiling, obstructing justice, differential treatment, being overly aggressive, and abusing their role.

3.3.1. Police Aggression

Many of the participants focused on the aggressive attitudes evident in interactions with police officers, "if you like talk to them even calmly there's, they have this attitude of aggression" (FACB15). Similarly, some participants referred to aggression that was physical, "[the police are] very aggressive towards not just Black people but there's been some many cases of even White people getting really beat up…" (MACB13). This participant implied that this treatment was not exclusively directed towards ACB people, while also not contradicting the fact that ACB people usually received harsher treatment.

3.3.2. Profiling

ACB youth believed that police engaged in racial profiling during their interactions with them, "they don't want to show it as racism but they are racist with fact of asking you know a Black youth questions like automatically… from the crowd of people … they're questioning maybe this Black person did something" (FACB15). Additionally, many youth felt that targeting was both deliberate and unjustified, "they just target Black people and you're not even doing anything wrong but you still feel like, oh there's cops what did I do" (FACB4). Youth reported that factors, such as "appearance" (FACB7) or "… if they feel like you're suspicious," (FACB4) could result in them being stopped by police officers. Clothing was also a factor that could determine whether an officer might engage them; "[if one is] …all raggedity up," (MACB1), referring to an untidy or tattered selection of clothing ("Ragged," n.d.), or have a "sag [in] their pants," (MACB10) then profiling is more likely to occur. Further, having dreadlocks increased racial profiling. One participant recalled how "[his father] has dreadlocks... and he's a big man, so they automatically suspect him of being some kind of criminal or drug dealer" (FACB7).

3.3.3. Differential Treatment

Many ACB youth felt that their experiences with police differed from those of White people. They felt that the intersections of race and ethnicity, neighbourhood (and therefore class), and gender influenced the nature of police interactions.

3.3.3.1 Race

In addition to feeling racially profiled by police, ACB youth also felt more unjust and harsher treatment, compared to White people, during interactions with police. One participant, for example, mentioned that "a lot of people who are Black will [say] 'oh I just passed a yellow light and the other lady did it but I got the ticket'" (*ACB6).

Youth were affected by this differential treatment, with one participant mentioning that they "get a little bit timid" (FACB4) around law enforcement, and another saying that this results in feelings of shared insecurity among ACB youth, "Black people specifically and they're saying usually they feel more threatened [than safe] when they see cops" (FACB4). Youth recounted feeling anxious when police were near, "lots of people …are kind of uncomfortable or act

sketchy around like when they see police cars" (MACB16). Youth directly acknowledged a stigma that police carry, mentioning that "they have a very bad reputation in the city for being who they are" (FACB15). Others elaborated on the stigma itself, maintaining that police were out to target ACB youth, "you're driving around, you don't need the cops; they're looking for you," (MACB12) and that they tried to oppress rather than help others, "in Windsor we have such police, such people; who are working in order to represent the community they do not represent, the community [where] they only oppress people" (FACB15).

Some of the complaints of racial bias among police were more subtle, alluding generally to police ineffectiveness; participants recounted that "they don't really take into effect that they're supposed to be serving us" (MACB13). While some others generally noted that "when you call the cops when you need them they're nowhere to be found, it takes them a long time to show up" (MACB12).

3.3.3.2. Gendered Experiences

Young Black males were thought to be particularly vulnerable to poor treatment by police, "when they see our males especially Black males, like in the middle of the night, they think, 'oh this Black male is up to something, this Black male or even Black woman is no good'" (FACB14). Here the participant inferred that being ACB and male subjects one to particularly adverse treatment from police.

ACB women were less likely to be racially profiled by police officers than ACB men according to youth, and female participants focused on personal experiences of sexual harassment by police perpetrators instead. One participant described how "one of [the police officers] started hitting on [us]" (FACB14). Victim blaming by police in intimate partner violence cases was noted by another participant, "those people who actually are sexually assaulted, when they go to the police to say you know this guy did this to me, most of the time the blame goes on the girl" (FACB15). When a sexual-harassment course was praised by certain participants, others argued that police did not abide by what they preached, "police don't do anything in favour of women who are being sexually victimized... so basically they in one way do a presentation about it and the other way they don't do anything if something happens" (FACB15).

3.3.4. Neighbourhood

ACB youth participants acknowledged that "better" (more affluent) neighbourhoods were better served by police; socio-economic class and neighbourhood, in their opinion, were differentiators for police attitude and action. One participant stated that "a lot of our community lives in poor areas; I don't think that they'd respond in the same way if they got a call from an affluent area" (FACB14). ACB youth also reported being profiled in these "better" neighbourhoods, and they felt that this was more likely to occur if they were in such neighbourhoods. One stated that "if you're in a nice neighborhood and if you just look like you know... all raggidity up, they'll stop you like what are you doing?" (MACB1).

3.3.5   Obstruction of Justice

Lastly, participants referred to police "abusing their power," by obstructing justice. These quotes related, generally, to the lack of confidence that ACB youth have in law enforcement. The obstruction of "power" and "justice" was mentioned several times by youth, "I mean obstruction of justice or something to get their way, so they're very good at that too, of obstructing power" (MACB13).

When asked how the police force could improve, many participants suggested that police should not "abuse the power" (MACB12). Another referred to this in more detail, referring to a tendency on the part of police to exhibit hierarchal thinking where they are on top, and only truly serve those they regard as equal to them:

> They use their badge you know … they feel like they should be more powerful than we are … like friends you know protecting each other … I don't feel like they use the friendship being community… 'oh you're lower than me because I am here and you're here because you're society and I'm protecting you, so I should be mean to you' (FACB11).

4.   Discussion

This study specifically adds to the current Canadian body of knowledge about racial discrimination by law enforcement officials, while also contributing to larger policing literature from the American context and beyond. Many of the youth participants considered racial profiling by police officers as a regularly occurring and normalized phenomenon in their daily lives. This is consistent with literature demonstrating the greater surveillance by police of African American and ACB communities, higher rates of racial profiling, and excessive force used by officers towards these groups (Weitzer & Tuch, 2004). ACB youth in this study highlighted the covert and more subtle forms of racism and racial profiling they face from police, such as being pulled over for running a red light when a White person is not penalized for the same behaviour. Survey data from the same study indicated that ACB youth were 2.5 times more likely to report discrimination following interactions with police and the criminal justice system than their White counterparts (Peirone et al., 2017). Peirone and colleagues (2017) elaborated that Black Canadian participants were more likely than their African or Caribbean peers to have experienced contact with police and report police discrimination.

Youth described battery as a potential and likely outcome of engagement with police. While they reported instances where police batter White people, particularly those individuals of lower socioeconomic class, participants suggested that ACB people were disproportionately targeted in instances of police brutality. In this, youth perceived police brutality as not something exclusively experienced by ACB people, but an issue they disproportionately experience.

In terms of gender-specific differences, youth reported that young Black men were more likely to be profiled and treated with aggression by police than young Black women. This is consistent with ACBY survey data demonstrating ACB men are more likely than ACB women to experience police contact and report discrimination by police (Peirone et al., 2017). Importantly however, compared to women in other ethno-racial groups, ACB women are more likely to report being stopped and searched (e.g. Wortley & Owusu-Bempah, 2011). In fact, Black women's bodies have been the target of violence by police both historically and contemporarily. Examples include the recently reported in the cases of Tanisha Anderson in Ohio in 2014, whose

death was treated as "wrongful death" rather than a more serious offense by the officers, Darnisha Harris in Louisiana in 2012, who died at the hands of an officer that was not indicted by a grand jury, and countless other women who have died during interactions with police (Abbey-Lambertz, 2015). These incidents have often gone underreported and unacknowledged by the justice system (Abbey-Lambertz, 2015).

Furthermore, some young ACB female participants in the present study shared their experiences of sexual harassment by police officers. Similar findings have been reported in previous research showing that African American women working in the police forces were subject to racialized sexual harassment by male officers (Texeira, 2002). Police workplaces are not the only places where ACB women are at risk; female African American firefighters, for example, also report increased sexual harassment, inferring that this is a very systemic issue (Yoder & Aniakudo, 1995). This being noted, while a majority of policewomen (68%) have reported workplace sexual harassment (Janus, Janus, Lord, & Power, 1988), non-White women in particular, experience greater social discrimination than White women and non-White men by police in one city (Felkenes & Schroedel, 1993). This study extends this analysis to include similar experiences by young ACB women in Canada. The literature highlighting the colonial-entrenched history of White men taking advantage of Black women can help to contextualize these experiences (e.g. Buchanan & Ormerod, 2002; Crenshaw, 1991; Donovan & Williams, 2002). Much of this harassment manifested historically as sexual abuse by slave owners, and subsequently, by White employers in the years following the abolishment of slavery – the Jim Crow era (Buchanan & Ormerod, 2002; Crenshaw, 1991). The exploitation of Black women's bodies has been justified by likening Black women to hyper-sexual animals, who are unchaste, sexually promiscuous, and thus sexually complicit and open to violence that when inflicted on any other woman's body would be deemed harassment (Buchanan & Ormerod, 2002; Crenshaw, 1991). In this, there is an enactment of racialized sexism and misogynoir in the way Black women are exotified, animalized and treated as less 'feminine' than women in other ethno-racial groups. This view of Black women informs the way in which their persons are viewed when they come in contact with the legal system (Crenshaw, 1991; Donovan & Williams, 2002). Black women are very rarely conceptualized as victims; as such, violence directed towards their bodies is investigated with less regard for detail compared to women from other ethno-racial backgrounds (Abbey-Lambertz, 2015; Crenshaw, 1991). Police officers are not perceived to serve and protect, by Black women or Black communities.

Social class was another factor that youth believed affected police behaviour. Participants believed that affluent neighbourhoods were better served by police officers. This finding may be influenced by the fact that being Black is also associated with socio-economic disenfranchisement and so these youth may be speaking pointedly about racialized and impoverished neighbourhoods which are over-surveyed but underserved by police (Block & Galabuzi, 2011). Relatedly, youth reported that being visibly Black in affluent neighbourhoods led to increased incidence of racial profiling. These findings relate to American research that shows how discrimination against Black people is more common in affluent, predominantly White neighbourhoods (e.g. Stewart et al., 2009), and research demonstrating that African Americans are more likely to notice neighbourhood injustice (e.g. Weitzer & Tuch, 2004).

This current study adds more depth and nuance to the conclusion that African diasporic people do not trust police as a result of their interactions with police and the criminal justice system. Participants reported police abuse of power, and they felt that police failed in their role to "serve and protect" ACB communities. This is consistent with research that has found that

racialized people in Canada have a lower level of confidence in Canada's police force than White Canadians (Cao, 2011). Many of the past negative experiences participants in this study reported when interacting with police, affect their perceptions of police, resulting in feelings of intimidation when police are near. In short, youth felt more threatened than safe around police. Traumatic experiences with police can be linked to certain health implications. Studies have shown that as discrimination, and perceptions of discrimination increase, stress, anxiety, and subsequent re-living of trauma also increase (Brown et al., 2000). Weitzer and Tuch (2004) report that African Americans are more likely to leave a confrontation with police feeling discriminated against, angry, and with a lower opinion of officers. Participants in our study connected intimidation by police to the reputation that police institutions have within ACB communities. Perceptions of police are influenced by personal experiences, in as much as they are influenced by cultural and media representations (Weitzer & Tuch, 2004). The fact that youth felt threatened by police is problematic and indicates a dire need to build better and more trusting relationships between law enforcement and ACB communities. This may entail measures such as the demilitarization of police forces and police divestment from the over-surveillance of Black communities (The Movement For Black Lives, n.d.).

Importantly, many youth were fair in their assessment and felt that police played an important role in society, attending to crime, and saving lives. These participants did not believe all police were the same, nor should they be represented by their worst examples. Rather, youth believed that there were existing biases in larger society that were mirrored in institutions like the police force.

As mentioned, many of the findings of this study are rooted in colonial pre-text (Turner, Giacopassi, & Vandiver, 2006). This includes the mass-incarceration rates of African Americans in the latter half of the 20th century (Roberts, 2007). This context is important for understanding the experiences of ACB people in Canada, as these youth report more interactions with police than their counterparts in other ethno-racial groups (Wortley & Marshall, 2005). These youth also feel discriminated against during their interactions (Peirone et al., 2017). Many interactions are the result of contemporary policies such as carding (Rankin, 2015), an underrepresentation of ethno-racially diverse officers on police forces across the country (Marcoux, Nicholson, Kubinec, & Moore, 2016), and the war on drugs, which has led to the disproportionate incarceration of African diasporic peoples for non-violent drug offences (Kerr & Jackson, 2016).

In discussing the multitude of historical routes by which African diasporic peoples come to the nation-state of Canada, it is important to note that colonial violence is the ever-present backdrop of this movement and migration (e.g. Turner, Giacopassi, & Vandiver, 2006). As such, while police brutality against African diasporic peoples has gained international attention over the past seven decades, it is important to understand that these issues are rooted in the socially accepted forms of violence inflicted on Black-embodied people for over 400 years, beginning with the trans-Atlantic slave trade (e.g. Buchanan & Ormerod, 2002; Crenshaw, 1991; Turner et al., 2006). The violence of police brutality and racial injustice in the criminal justice system are modern manifestations of colonial violence informed by a history of White supremacist logic, which continues to shape the relationships between Black people and White settler nation-states, their authority figures, and culture.

The findings and implications of this study support the arguments made by groups such as BLM, which has advocated for equality and the well-being of Black-embodied people. BLM has demanded that police take leadership in repairing their relationship with Black communities ("About", n.d.). One strategy to address this issue is diversifying the police force (e.g. Stenning,

2004), as in their current form, police institutions face considerable and uphill challenges in dealing with institutionalized racism. For example, another focus group study of police officers in nearby Hamilton, Ontario, led authors to conclude that police profiling activities can be attributed to police subculture, even in the absence of officers who were deemed most likely to harbor prejudice or actively discriminate (Satzewich & Shaffir, 2009). Similarly, youth in this study felt the local police force was overrepresented by aggressive, young, White, male officers who may rely on negative stereotypes when interacting with Black people; this has previously resulted in police misconduct (e.g. Quillian & Pager, 2001). People of colour are grossly underrepresented in police forces across Canada. In the country's most ethno-racially diverse city, Toronto, people of colour comprise 50% of the city's inhabitants, but less than 30% of the Toronto Police (Marcoux et al., 2016). However, in recent years, attempts have been made to recruit and promote members of visible ethnic and religious minority groups to the police force (Stenning, 2004). While officers in the study by Satzewich and Shaffir (2009) praised this effort toward diversification, authors have suggested that this may have been a way of deflecting the larger systemic issue involving their sub-culture. Therefore, this is a step in the right direction; but, on its own could still be insufficient in acknowledging many of the issues that participants raise.

It is possible that this issue goes beyond hiring more officers of colour, especially if the culture of the police force is indicative of White supremacy. In this regard, proponents have argued for better diversity training for officers (e.g. Stenning, 2004). In fact, this was the argument of some of the participants in this study. Participants argued that much of their grievances with profiling and aggression occurred because of poor training. Importantly, cultural sensitivity and diversity training has been implemented as a means of reducing or preventing racial discrimination (Stenning, 2004). In Canada, the majority of major police services began to adopt this training in the early 1980s, at which time police were brought together with members of marginalized groups so they could better understand each other, and so that the minority groups could advise police management (Stenning, 2004). When evaluating these programs, it was found that training was seen as supplementary, that maintaining adequate representation of minority groups was 'troublesome,' that police concerns dominated such meetings, and that police were unwilling to compromise anything that did not match their priorities (Stenning, 2004). As a result, these programs have had limited success in reaching their original objectives (Stenning, 2004). We need to go beyond the scope of training to engender a cultural shift within police institutions.

5. Limitations

While this study conveys new information, it also has limitations that should be noted. Due to the fact that the study focused on ACB youth living in Windsor, the results should be cautiously used in their application to other settings. There may be nuanced differences for ACB people living in other Canadian cities or in other parts of North America. It is important to note that due to Windsor's proximity to the Canada-US border, it is common for youth from Windsor to frequently travel to Detroit. As such, some of the police interactions the youth described and spoke about, may have occurred during trips to Detroit, and further, because participants rarely referred directly to Windsor's police force, there is little to convince us that any particular quote

refers to an experience in Windsor. However, if this was a salient factor for youth, it is likely that they would have brought it up.

Due to the way in which youth were grouped into designated focus groups for this study, it proved difficult to disaggregate the contributions of African, vs. Caribbean vs. Black-Canadian youth. However, these groups may have nuanced and different interactions with-, and perceptions of-, law enforcement. For instance, the Phase I survey date showed that while African and Caribbean youth reported less direct contact with police, Caribbean youth were more likely to perceive this contact as discriminatory compared to Black youth (Peirone et al., 2017). Reasons for such disparities were not probed by their survey, and unfortunately could not be assessed here, as focus groups were not stratified by ethnicity. Therefore, future investigation of ethnic differences between African, Caribbean and Black youth is needed. This survey study also found that first generation ACB youth were more likely to report discrimination than those born in Canada (Peirone et al., 2017).

The experiences of ACB youth reported here may be affected by the many negative feelings toward North American police institutions especially publicized in the media in recent years (e.g. Cao, 2011). Additionally, youth social networks between Windsor and neighbouring cities such as Detroit may complicate the findings reported.

6.   Future Directions

There is a dearth of literature about police interactions with ACB populations in Canada, and while this current study builds on the small but growing body of literature in the area, more can be done to investigate this issue. Considering the many positive perceptions of police articulated by ACB youth, additional qualitative research that investigates the complexity of the relationship between police and ACB communities is important for complicating the discussion.

Given the different experiences highlighted by female and male-identified ACB youth, future research could draw attention to the sexual harassment of ACB women by police officers. Abuses of power by police and the way in which officers of the law respond to sexual harassment policies that concern the public should be an area of focus. Additionally, research evaluating diversity representation, diversity training initiatives, and the culture of the police force within Canada is needed, as there is much evidence for the importance of investment in approaches to address these areas within law enforcement institutions. Importantly, with growing incidence of Islamophobia, xenophobia, and intersectional oppression, as indicated by the rising national rate of hate crimes (Ciolfe, 2017), youth of different religious, cultural, and ethnic backgrounds are also at risk of being racially profiled. There is a need to explore police interactions with these differentially marginalized groups in Canada, for instance, the experiences of Muslim youth, Indigenous youth, and youth of colour from South Asian, Middle-Eastern and other communities of colour.

References

Abbey-Lambertz, K. (2015, February 13). 15 Black Women Whose Lives Mattered, Too. *Huffington Canada*. Retrieved from http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2015/02/13/black-womens-lives-matter-police-shootings_n_6644276.html

About. (n.d.). Retrieved February 24, 2017, from http://blacklivesmatter.com/about/

Balko, R. (2014, November 18). As Ferguson waits, some lessons from the Rodney King riots. Retrieved July 15, 2016, from https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/the-watch/wp/2014/11/18/as-ferguson-waits-some-lessons-from-the-rodney-king-riots/

Bassett, M. T. (2016). Beyond Berets: The Black Panthers as Health Activists. *American Journal of Public Health*, *106*(10), 1741–1743. https://doi.org/10.2105/AJPH.2016.303412

Block, S., & Galabuzi, G.-E. (2011). *CANADA'S COLOUR CODED LABOUR MARKET: The gap for racialized workers*. Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives, The Wellesley Institute. Retrieved from http://www.wellesleyinstitute.com/wp-content/uploads/2011/03/Colour_Coded_Labour_MarketFINAL.pdf

Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2006). Using thematic analysis in psychology. *Qualitative Research in Psychology*, *3*(2), 77–101. https://doi.org/10.1191/1478088706qp063oa

Brooks, D. A. (2016, March 13). How #BlackLivesMatter started a musical revolution. *The Guardian*. Retrieved from https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2016/mar/13/black-lives-matter-beyonce-kendrick-lamar-protest

Brown, T. N., Williams, D. R., Jackson, J. S., Neighbors, H. W., Torres, M., Sellers, S. L., & Brown, K. T. (2000). "Being black and feeling blue": the mental health consequences of racial discrimination. *Race and Society*, *2*(2), 117–131. https://doi.org/10.1016/S1090-9524(00)00010-3

Brunson, R. K., & Weitzer, R. (2009). Police Relations with Black and White Youths in Different Urban Neighborhoods. *Urban Affairs Review*, *44*(6), 858–885. https://doi.org/10.1177/1078087408326973

Buchanan, N. T., & Ormerod, A. J. (2002). Racialized Sexual Harassment in the Lives of African American Women. *Women & Therapy*, *25*(3–4), 107–124. https://doi.org/10.1300/J015v25n03_08

Cao, L. (2011). Visible Minorities and Confidence in the Police [1]. *Canadian Journal of Criminology and Criminal Justice*, *53*(1), 1–26. https://doi.org/10.3138/cjccj.53.1.1

Ciolfe, T. (2017, June 13). A closer look at the rise in hate crimes in Canada. *Maclean's*. Retrieved from https://www.macleans.ca/news/canada/a-closer-look-at-the-rise-in-hate-crimes-in-canada/

Cleaver, K., & Katsiaficas, G. (2001). *Liberation, Imagination and the Black Panther Party: A New Look at the Black Panthers and Their Legacy* (1st ed.). New York, NY: Routledge. Retrieved from https://books.google.ca/books/about/Liberation_Imagination_and_the_Black_Pan.html?id=KFk4bHPFN5AC&redir_esc=y

Colley, S. B. (2016, December 20). Nova Scotia black history course a first in Dal's 198-year history. *CBC News*. Retrieved from http://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/nova-scotia/dalhousie-university-black-history-nova-scotia-1.3905078

Crenshaw, K. (1991). Race, Gender, and Sexual Harassment Gender, Race, and the Politics of Supreme Court Appointments: The Import of the Anita Hill/Clarence Thomas Hearings: Anita Hill One Month Later: Remarks Before the National Forum for Women State Legislators. *Southern California Law Review*, *65*, 1467–1476.

Dahl, J. (2013, July 12). Trayvon Martin shooting: A timeline of events [News website]. Retrieved February 24, 2017, from http://www.cbsnews.com/news/trayvon-martin-shooting-a-timeline-of-events/

Dart, T. (2015, July 18). "What happened to Sandy?": protesters tie Sandra Bland case to US race tensions. *The Guardian*. Retrieved from https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2015/jul/17/sandra-bland-texas-protest-racial-tensions

Donovan, R., & Williams, M. W. (2002). Living at the Intersection. *Women & Therapy*, *25*(3–4), 95–105. https://doi.org/10.1300/J015v25n03_07

Felkenes, G. T., & Schroedel, J. R. (1993). A Case Study of Minority Women in Policing. *Women & Criminal Justice*, *4*(2), 65–89. https://doi.org/10.1300/J012v04n02_05

Fitzgerald, R. T., & Carrington, P. J. (2011). Disproportionate Minority Contact in Canada: Police and Visible Minority Youth. *Canadian Journal of Criminology and Criminal Justice*, *53*(4), 449–486. https://doi.org/10.3138/cjccj.53.4.449

Geller, A., Fagan, J., Tyler, T., & Link, B. G. (2014). Aggressive Policing and the Mental Health of Young Urban Men. *American Journal of Public Health*, *104*(12), 2321–2327. https://doi.org/10.2105/AJPH.2014.302046

Gollom, M. (2016, July 5). "They overplayed their hand": Experts weigh in on Black Lives Matter's Pride protest. *CBC News*. Retrieved from http://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/toronto/black-lives-matter-toronto-pride-parade-1.3663659

Government of Canada, S. C. (2014). Youth crime in Canada, 2014. Retrieved April 2, 2017, from http://www.statcan.gc.ca/pub/85-002-x/2016001/article/14309-eng.htm

Grewal, S., Ranskin, J., & Winsa, P. (2015, October 23). Random or arbitrary police carding will stop, province says | Toronto Star. *Toronto Star*. Retrieved from https://www.thestar.com/news/canada/2015/10/23/random-or-arbitrary-police-carding-will-stop-province-says.html

Guynn, J. (2015, March 5). Meet the woman who coined #BlackLivesMatter. *USA Today*. Retrieved from http://srogers.carto.com/viz/3ecef0b4-7cae-11e4-8bbb-0e9d821ea90d/embed_map

Hayle, S., Wortley, S., & Tanner, J. (2016). Race, Street Life, and Policing: Implications for Racial Profiling. *Canadian Journal of Criminology & Criminal Justice*, *58*(3), 322–353. https://doi.org/10.3138/cjccj.2014.E32

Hope, L. (2017, February 17). Emmett Till's family calls for Justice Department to reopen murder case. *ABC7 Eyewitness News*. Retrieved from http://abc7chicago.com/1760441/

Janus, S. S., Janus, C., Lord, L. K., & Power, T. (1988). Women in Police Work - Annie Oakley or Little Orphan Annie. *Police Studies: The International Review of Police Development*, *11*, 124.

Kerr, J., & Jackson, T. (2016). Stigma, sexual risks, and the war on drugs: Examining drug policy and HIV/AIDS inequities among African Americans using the Drug War HIV/AIDS Inequities Model. *International Journal of Drug Policy*, *37*, 31–41.

Marcoux, J., Nicholson, K., Kubinec, V.-L., & Moore, H. (2016, July 14). CBC Investigates: Police diversity fails to keep pace with Canadian populations. *CBC News*. Retrieved from http://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/police-diversity-canada-1.3677952

Mawani, R. (2002). In Between and Out of Place: Mixed-Race Identity, Liquor and the Law in British Columbia, 1850 – 1913. In *Race, Space and the Law: Unmapping a White Setteler Society* (pp. 47–69). Toronto, ON: Between the Lines.

Miller, A. (2016, November 17). New carding rules approved by Toronto police board, historic data will still be retained. *Global News*. Retrieved from https://globalnews.ca/news/3073439/new-carding-rules-approved-by-toronto-police-services-board-will-retain-old-data/

Morgan, A. (2016, March 24). Ontario chooses band-aid instead of banning carding. *African Canadian Legal Clinic*. Retrieved from http://ocasi.org/sites/default/files/ACLC_Press_Release_Carding_Regulations_A_Band_Aid_March_24_2016_0.pdf

Moyer, J. (2014, August 18). Autopsy: Michael Brown shot six times, twice in the head. *The Washington Post*. Retrieved from https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/morning-mix/wp/2014/08/18/autopsy-michael-brown-shot-six-times-twice-in-the-head/

Paradkar, S. (2017, May 5). The Yonge St. riot of 1992 … or was it an uprising?: Paradkar. *The Toronto Star*. Retrieved from https://www.thestar.com/news/gta/2017/05/05/the-yonge-street-riot-of-1992-or-was-it-an-uprising-paradkar.html

Pascoe, E. A., & Smart Richman, L. (2009). Perceived discrimination and health: A meta-analytic review. *Psychological Bulletin*, *135*(4), 531–554. https://doi.org/10.1037/a0016059

Peirone, A., Maticka-Tyndale, E., Gbadebo, K., & Kerr, J. (2017). The Social Environment of Daily Life and Perceptions of Police and/or Court Discrimination among African, Caribbean, and Black Youth. *Canadian Journal of Criminology and Criminal Justice*, *59*(3), 346–372. https://doi.org/10.3138/cjccj.2017.0003

Quillian, L., & Pager, D. (2001). Black Neighbors, Higher Crime? The Role of Racial Stereotypes in Evaluations of Neighborhood Crime. *American Journal of Sociology*, *107*(3), 717–767. https://doi.org/10.1086/338938

Ragged. (n.d.). *Miriam-Webster*. Retrieved from https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/ragged

Rankin, J. (2015, May 26). How the cards have played out since 1957. *Toronto Star*. Retrieved from https://www.thestar.com/news/gta/2015/05/26/how-the-cards-have-played-out-since-1957.html

Roberts, D. E. (2007). Constructing a Criminal Justice System Free of Racial Bias: An Abolitionist Framework. *Columbia Human Rights Law Review*, *39*, 261.

Satzewich, V., & Shaffir, W. (2009). Racism versus Professionalism: Claims and Counter-claims about Racial Profiling. *Canadian Journal of Criminology and Criminal Justice*, *51*(2), 199–226.

Smiley, D. (2015, May 16). McDuffie riots: revisiting, retelling story — 35 years later. *Miami Herald*. Retrieved from http://www.miamiherald.com/news/local/community/miami-dade/article21178995.html

Smith, B. W., & Holmes, M. D. (2014). Police Use of Excessive Force in Minority Communities: A Test of the Minority Threat, Place, and Community Accountability Hypotheses. *Social Problems*, *61*(1), 83–104. https://doi.org/10.1525/sp.2013.12056

Stenning, P. C. (2004). Policing the Cultural Kaleidoscope: Recent Canadian Experience. *The Canadian Review of Policing Research*, *1*(0). Retrieved from http://crpr.icaap.org/index.php/crpr/article/view/27

Stewart, E. A., Baumer, E. P., Brunson, R. K., & Simons, R. L. (2009). Neighborhood Racial Context and Perceptions of Police-Based Racial Discrimination Among Black Youth*. *Criminology*, *47*(3), 847–887. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1745-9125.2009.00159.x

Texeira, M. T. (2002). "Who Protects and Serves Me?" A Case Study of Sexual Harassment of African American Women in One U.S. Law Enforcement Agency. *Gender & Society*, *16*(4), 524–545. https://doi.org/10.1177/0891243202016004007

The Movement For Black Lives. (n.d.). *A Vision For Black Lives: Policy Dmeands For Black Power, Freedom, & Justice*. The Movement For Black Lives. Retrieved from https://policy.m4bl.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/07/20160726-m4bl-Vision-Booklet-V3.pdf

Turner, K. B., Giacopassi, D., & Vandiver, M. (2006). Ignoring the Past: Coverage of Slavery and Slave Patrols in Criminal Justice Texts. *Journal of Criminal Justice Education*, *17*(1), 181–195. https://doi.org/10.1080/10511250500335627

Weitzer, R., & Tuch, S. A. (2004). Race and Perceptions of Police Misconduct. *Social Problems*, *51*(3), 305–325. https://doi.org/10.1525/sp.2004.51.3.305

Winsa, P. (2011, March 24). 'Fearless' black activist Dudley Laws dies at age 76. *Toronto Star*. Retrieved from https://www.thestar.com/news/gta/2011/03/24/fearless_black_activist_dudley_laws_dies_at_age_76.html

Wortley, S., & Marshall, L. (2005). Bias Free Policing: The Kingston Data Collection Project Final Results. Retrieved from http://qspace.library.queensu.ca/handle/1974/8655

Wortley, S., & Owusu-Bempah, A. (2011). The usual suspects: police stop and search practices in Canada. *Policing and Society*, *21*(4), 395–407. https://doi.org/10.1080/10439463.2011.610198

Yoder, J. D., & Aniakudo, P. (1995). The responses of African American women firefighters to gender harassment at work. *Sex Roles*, *32*(3–4), 125–137. https://doi.org/10.1007/BF01544784