Police>Youth Relations in Disadvantaged Toronto Neighbourhoods
1 December 2016

1. Rationale: Why is this research important?

The nature of police-citizen interactions with racialized and marginalized youth within disadvantaged communities is of considerable importance to academics, policy-makers, the police, and the general public. Conventional wisdom on this topic holds that instrumental concerns, such as the ability of the police to apprehend criminals and deter crime, are the key factors in determining public evaluations of police performance. However, more recent scholarship has determined that the perceived fairness of police behaviour – often referred to as procedural justice – is by far the strongest determinant of public perceptions of police efficacy (Lind and Tyler 1988; Tyler 2001; Tyler and Huo 2002). Indeed, research consistently indicates that public perceptions of police procedural justice is a key predictor of several justice-related outcomes including willingness to defer to the decisions of the police, willingness to report crime to the authorities, cooperation with police investigations and compliance with the law (see Tyler and Huo 2002; Sunshine and Tyler 2003; Tyler 2006; Tyler and Fagan 2008; Jackson et al. 2013). Moreover, procedural justice has been linked to anticipatory justice, the expectation of poor treatment from the police based on shared community experiences (Tyler and Wakslak 2004). Perceptions of procedural justice are of additional concern as research has shown that negative perceptions of the police can directly contribute to alienation, defiance and negative perceptions of other major social institutions (Sunshine and Tyler 2003; Wortley and Owusu-Bempah 2011). Importantly, a growing body of research suggests that proactive policing – which typically involves police “stop and account” or “stop and frisk” interactions – has a very strong impact on civilian perceptions of procedural justice (Wortley et al. 1996; Rosenbaum et al. 2005; Wortley and Owusu-Bempah 2011).

The focus of the current research proposal is to further investigate the complex relationship between police engagement with disadvantaged youth and subsequent perceptions of fairness within the Canadian criminal justice system and other social institutions. The proposed research will also focus on the impact perceptions of fairness have on a variety of social outcomes.

Research suggests that young black males are consistently overrepresented in criminal justice statistics in both Canada and the United States – including arrest statistics, remand statistics, correctional statistics and statistics on police-initiated discretionary stops (see Kellough and Wortley 2002; Meehan and Ponder 2002; Hartney and Vuong 2009; Rankin 2010; Wortley and Owusu-Bempah 2011; Fitzgerald and Carrington 2011; Rankin and Winsa 2012; Owusu-Bempah and Wortley 2014). In fact, a significant proportion of black overrepresentation in the justice system has been attributed to the phenomena of racial profiling: the use race as a proxy or risk factor associated with criminal behavior (Tator and Henry 2006). As such, the nature of interactions between the police and young black males are of particular concern. This is especially true within socially and economically disadvantaged neighbourhoods marked by high levels of crime and aggressive, proactive policing strategies.

In Toronto, racial profiling by the Toronto Police Service (TPS) has come to be represented by the practice
of ‘carding’ whereby the police stop, question and document otherwise law-abiding citizens in situations that do not involve the investigation of a specific criminal incident. Many civilians who have been the target of carding allege that these stops are illegal forms of detention and that often involve unreasonable and aggressive questioning, requests for identification and illegal searches (Rankin and Winsa 2012). Consistent with allegations of racial bias, research reveals that the TPS carded young Black males at a much higher rate than other racial groups.

Recently, an emerging body of scholarship has also found that young men and women from Arab and Muslim backgrounds have been subject to profiling by Canadian police and security-intelligence agencies. Such profiling is widely viewed as justified by security agents as members of the Muslim community are viewed as “high risk” for radicalization and violent-extremism (see Badhi 2003; Canadian Council on American-Islamic Relations 2004; Jamil and Rousseau 2012). Specifically, concern has been raised over the threat of domestic radicalization, whereby persons living in Western nations are converted to extreme social, political and religious beliefs that justify and compel violence. Indeed, reports issued by the Royal Canadian Mounted Police (2009), the Canadian Security Intelligence Service (2014), and Public Safety Canada (2013) all identify the primary terror threat to Canada as Islamic-inspired extremism.

To date, the majority of research on racial profiling and youth interactions with police has been quantitative nature. By contrast, few studies have examined the lived experiences of young black males and how they are impacted by their interactions with police and other security agents. This is of particular concern as prior research, including a limited body of Canadian scholarship, has found that young urban black males are disproportionately the targets of aggressive order-maintenance policing including stop-and-frisk activities and street interrogations (Hurst et al. 2000; Wortley and Tanner 2002; Gau and Brunson 2010; Fitzgerald and Carrington 2011; Wortley and Owusu-Bempah 2011). A disproportionate level of police surveillance, coupled with the use of aggressive police tactics, including searches, has led to a widespread climate of distrust between blacks and police in Toronto (Rankin and Winsa 2013). Prior research has found that young black males feel that they are subject to undue suspicion from the police, including excessive stops, harassment, illegal searches and police brutality, and that their law abiding status does not insulate them from suspicion (Wortley and Owusu-Bempah 2011; Owusu-Bempah 2014). This finding is consistent with the analysis of contact cards issued by TAVIS, of which 83% were found to be for ‘general investigative purposes’ and not linked to a traffic violation, criminal investigation, or suspect description (Rankin and Winsa 2013).

Similarly, there is a paucity of Canadian research examining the experiences of young people from Arab and Muslim backgrounds and their interactions with police. This of particular concern as counter-terrorism policing, including police-led community engagement initiatives, is a primary policy objective for the Federal government (Public Safety Canada 2014). To this end, Public Safety Canada has identified police-community partnerships as being a key element in preventing violent extremism, as indicators of radicalization may be indiscernible to law enforcement. Law enforcement is relying on the social network of potential radicals to recognize and respond to indicators of radicalization and to report those indicators to the police (2014).

An important aspect of these youth’s experiences with the police is the effect of vicarious experience, whereby direct experiences with the police are socially transmitted to other persons in the community. Prior research in Canada and the U.S. has found that a high percentage of young black males reported knowing someone who had experienced racial profiling, harassment and other forms of police misconduct and that blacks were more likely report experiences of police conduct than persons from other ‘racial’ groups (Rosenbaum et al. 2005; Wortley and Owusu-Bempah 2011). Similarly, prior research in the U.K. (Kundnani 2009), Australia (Cherney and Murphy 2015) and Canada (Canadian Council on American-Islamic Relations 2004; Jamil and Rousseau 2012) has found vicarious experiences of profiling were common amongst Arab and Muslim youth. The effect of vicarious experiences can serve to amplify one’s personal experiences and a combination of negative personal and vicarious experiences can then accumulate, leading to an overall belief that the police do not act in a manner consistent with procedural
justice, undermining trust in the police and willingness to comply with police directives (Rosenbaum et al. 2005; Skogan 2006; Brunson and Miller 2006; Brunson 2007).

As noted above, perceptions of procedural justice and legitimacy also play a key role in determining compliance with the police and compliance with the law (Tyler and Fagan 2008). In recent years, it has been alleged that within marginalized and racialized communities there exists a cultural norm against compliance with the police or “snitching” (Anderson 1999; Wortley and Tanner 2002; Rosenfeld et al. 2003; Topalli 2005; Woldoff and Weiss 2010; Clampet-Lundquist et al. 2015; Downing and Copeland 2015). While non-compliance with the police is by no means a new phenomenon, it has taken on additional importance in Toronto in the wake of the perceived rise in serious violent crime involving youth in Toronto, including gun-related violence (Powell 2008). To date, there is relatively little research examining the nature of anti-snitching codes in Canada, or how those who are most frequently cited as adhering to them perceive them.

Research has also suggested that overly broad counter-terror policing strategies that target the entire community, regardless of objective risk or involvement with deviance, have contribute to wide-spread perceptions of injustice amongst Muslim diaspora communities and the erosion of police legitimacy. In particular, policing tactics that lack procedural fairness have been linked to the criminalization and alienation of Muslims, especially young males, and may actually contribute to the appeal of radical ideologies (Choudhury and Fenwick 2011; Hickman, Thomas, Silvestri and Nickels 2011; Murray, Mueller-Johnson and Sherman 2015).

The vast majority of prior research regarding police-citizen contacts with black males has been focused on the United States, with only a limited body of available Canadian scholarship. Similarly, the vast majority of research examining police-citizen contacts with young people from Arab and Muslim backgrounds has been focused on the U.K. and the United States. A significant proportion of this scholarship relies on the analysis of official sources, such as police complaint data, police records and large-scale surveys. While surveys and official data are useful in understanding the prevalence of racially discriminatory policing practices, a significant portion of police-citizen encounters are not captured in these datasets. The use of interviews allows for researchers to address this concern by capturing incidents not contained in official records. Interviews also allow for a better understanding of the lived-experiences of those involved in these interactions, including the meanings the subjects ascribe to these interactions and how these interactions come to affect them and their community (Phillips and Bowling 2003).

Canada has its own history with adversarial relations between police and racialized minority groups, including blacks (Tator and Henry 2006). More recently, the September 11th terror attacks on the United States have contributed to increased negative stereotyping, discrimination and othering of Muslim and Arab Canadians (Jamal 2012). Scholarship on this topic remains relatively underdeveloped in Canada. Negative experiences with the police and the CJS can lead to negative perceptions of other social institutions, contributing to alienation and marginalization, which have been found to be contributing factors in involvement with youth gang activity and, in some cases, radicalization and radicalization into violent extremism. It is essential to better understand these experiences in order to inform evidence based policy interventions related to policing strategies, neighbourhood equity, and the individual and community level resilience and resistance to gang involvement and radicalization.

### 2. Potential Policy Relevance: Who will use and/or benefit from this research?

Recent events, including high-profile incidents of police violence and the killings of young black men by police, have come to represent a wider crisis of accountability and mistrust between the police and racialized communities. In response to the issues, the Ontario government has implemented a series of policies designed to improve accountability and address issues of systemic racism in the criminal justice system. These policies include an independent review of police oversight agencies, the formation of the Ontario Anti-Racism Directorate, the implementation of a human rights based ‘carding’ policy and cutting funding to the controversial TAVIS program. This project’s research will serve to better inform the
discourse surrounding these initiatives, by drawing on the perspectives of young people who have come to represent the focus of aggressive policing tactics. The resultant data will also be of importance to community agencies in determining best practices for crime prevention and intervention and in demonstrating need for focused, evidenced-based policy interventions. Furthermore, as data collection will take place after the implementation of a number of new government initiatives – including the Province’s new police ‘carding’ policy – this project may be in a position to explore the impact of these reforms and explore their effectiveness.

In addition to the provincial initiatives discussed above, the federal Liberal government has recently moved to implement a more centralized approach to counter-radicalization programming and research. In 2016, the government launched the Office of the Community Outreach and Counter-Radicalization (OCOCR), a national organization charged with coordinating the Canadian response to radicalization, including research outreach and international coordination. The formation of the OOCR can be seen as a response to the criticism that, while the Canadian government has publicly acknowledged the importance of counter-radicalization, it lacked a cohesive policy to address the issue (Thompson, Hiebert and Brooks 2016). This project’s research findings will be of particular relevance in informing this emerging body of Canadian scholarship examining both the social and structural antecedents of radicalization and the factors related to community and individual resilience and resistance to radical ideologies.

Overall, we feel that the information stemming from this project will help our community partners and other youth-focussed organizations better understand the challenges and obstacles faced by disadvantaged Black and Muslim youth. This information could help them develop social programming that could improve police-youth relations and life trajectories.

3. Research Questions

1. What are the youth’s lived experiences with the public police?
   • To what extent have they experienced both positive and negative interactions with law enforcement officials? How would they describe these interactions? Do they perceive that they have been treated fairly by the police or do they report Police-related harassment and/or abuse?

2. What are the youth’s vicarious experiences with the police?
   • How do their friends and family describe their interactions with the police? Have they witnessed police brutality, harassment or abuse? Have they witnessed the police helping people in their community?

3. Overall, do youth believe that the police do a good job of keeping their community safe?
   • What impact does policing have on their community? What do youth feel are the best strategies for reducing crime and improving public safety?

4. To what extent do youth report criminal activity – including crimes they witness and their own experiences with criminal victimization – to the police?
   • Why won’t they report crimes to the police or cooperate with police investigations? To what extent are decisions with respect to police noncompliance linked to personal and vicarious experiences with the police?

5. What are the youth’s experiences with other forms of policing, including private security, border patrol, transit police and school resource officers?
   • How do these experiences impact their perceptions of the public police? Have their experiences with the public police impacted their willingness to engage with these other forms of policing?

6. Do experiences with the police contribute to delinquency and involvement with criminal behaviour or engagement with radical beliefs?

4. Specific Fit with the NCRP Objectives & Research Questions

Growing socio-spatial inequality at the neighbourhood level is a global phenomenon, which Canada is not immune to. Youth crime and violence in communities characterized by large immigrant populations and high levels of disadvantaged, including low-income families, single parent households and low levels of
5. Research Design & Methods

The project will conduct a series of semi-structured interviews (SSI) with racialized youth from Toronto’s Neighbourhood Improvement Areas (NIAs) or ‘priority neighbourhoods’ along with youth from more affluent neighbourhoods. SSI presents a number of methodological advantages compared to other research approaches – especially when it comes to under-studied, highly sensitive topics like youth experiences with security agents, youth gangs and youth radicalization. (Harrell and Bradley 2009).

Sampling will follow a purposive strategy, consistent with similarly situated studies in the U.S., which will allow for the identification of young men and women in the targeted communities. This approach is consistent with established research designs for qualitative research (Ritchey and Lewis 2003). Recruitment will focus on youth from Afro-Caribbean and Arab and Muslim backgrounds, along with a control group of white youth.

Recruitment will be facilitated through the pre-existing strong connections the researchers have with community organizations and community centres in the communities of study and through targeted community outreach and referral (snowball) sampling. Prior contact with the police or delinquency will not be a pre-condition for involvement in the study. The sample will be composed of the following groups:

- 30 socio-economically marginalized youth from Afro-Caribbean backgrounds.
- 30 affluent youth from Afro-Caribbean backgrounds.
- 30 socio-economically marginalized youth from Arab / Muslim backgrounds.
- 30 affluent marginalized youth from Arab / Muslim backgrounds.
- 15 socio-economically marginalized youth from white backgrounds.
- 15 affluent marginalized youth from white backgrounds.

The sample will be split between youth from the aforementioned racial, ethnic and religious groups and from both higher and lower socio-economic backgrounds to allow for the development of themes in the data and the comparison of the experiences of youths not only from similarly situated backgrounds, but also from more diverse socio-economic standings. In order to maintain a variety of perspectives, a balance of youth from each of the selected neighbourhoods will be asked to participate. However, in the event that this is not possible, additional participants will be sought out in the other communities of study.

In order to identify respondents for the various groups, the researcher team will employ multiple outreach strategies. To identify youth from socio-economically marginalized backgrounds, the researcher will conduct outreach in various NIA communities that have been identified as being ‘at-risk’, based on several socio-economic indicators, crime rates and access to services (City of Toronto 2014). The research team anticipates sampling in the communities of Weston-Mt. Dennis, Jane-Finch (York University Heights), Regent Park and Elms Old-Rexdale. Outreach will proceed through contact with community organizations and youth outreach workers in these communities. The research team will meet with individuals and organizations to explain the project and to seek permission to recruit through the respective agencies and individuals, and to obtain assistance in identifying suitable youth for the project.

Sampling of the more affluent subject groups will be facilitated through outreach to a variety of groups and organizations, including student groups at the University of Toronto and York University, along with other
community organizations. The research team will outreach to these groups in order to present the project and solicit participation. The research team anticipates that these groups will primarily be drawn from University students and, as such, the outreach will focus on groups and individuals in this network.

Prior to engaging in an interview, the researcher will ask screening questions related the socio-economic background and self-reported racial and ethnic identity of the youth. This question will be used to help ensure that the sample conforms to the parameters outlined in this proposal.

The interview process will be one-on-one and employ a semi-structured design with a schedule of closed and open-ended questions. Open-ended questions will comprise the majority of the interview. The structure of the interview will ensure that similar concepts are being explored with each respondent, but will also allow the researcher considerable latitude in exploring points of interest that arise during the course of the interview process. Closed-ended questions will be used to obtain demographic data on the respondents and baseline measures of both attitudes towards and experiences with police.

The interview schedule for this study will consist of approximately 30 questions, including items related to the respondents’ general background and demographic information, self-reported contact with the police, vicarious experiences with the police, perceptions of community safety and criminal activity, police efficacy, willingness to comply with the police and the criminal justice system, perceptions of major social institutions, and suggested policy responses with respect to preventing youth crime and youth gangs. The researcher anticipates that these interviews will take between 60 and 90 minutes to complete, depending on the engagement of the respondent and the level of detail provided.

The collection and analysis of the data will follow an inductive grounded theory approach, employing a concept-indictor model of analysis. Through this approach, the collected data will be continually analyzed and compared in order to develop concepts and to then refine those concepts as the data collection progresses. Theories will then be developed through a comparison of the concepts and these theories will then be used as a guide in directing the ongoing sampling of cases. This approach is consistent with the established research design for purposive theoretical sampling and grounded theory methodology (Corbin and Strauss 1990).

6. **Role of Community Partner/s**

- Community partners include the African Canadian Legal Clinic, The San Romanoway Revitalization Association, the Jamaican Canadian Association and Peacekeepers International.
- Community partners will be enlisted to assist with the identification and introduction of potential respondents for study.
- Community partners will also be consulted on the relevance of the research questions. Pre-testing with selected partners will assist in the refinement of the final research instrument.
- Following the analysis and dissemination of the data, community partners will be offered presentations on the research findings and a plain language bulletin summarizing the findings. The will also have access to the final report and any peer-reviewed academic publications that stem from the project.

7. **Role of Students / Research Assistants and Contributions to Training**

- Graduate Research assistants from the University of Toronto will assist in the identification and recruitment of potential respondents, semi-structured interviewing, transcription, data analysis and the presentation of results.
- Graduate students will also be involved, as co-authors, in all peer reviewed publications that stem from this project and as co-presenters on all papers presented at academic conferences.

8. **Schedule**

Data Collection: respondent recruitment and interviews, February to October 2017.
Interview transcription and database creation, March to November 2017.
Data analysis and report preparation, December 2017 to June 2018.
Final Report and Community Report Submission; begin to submit articles to peer-reviewed journals, July 2018.

9. Outcomes / Deliverables

Community deliverable: One major community forum to be hosted by the Centre for Criminology and Sociolegal Studies, University of Toronto; Individual presentations for each community partner; A plain language, condensed research bulletin; Detailed (plain language) community report.

Academic deliverables: Final research report to the NCRP; Academic articles to be submitted to various academic journals including Race and Justice, Canadian Journal of Criminology and Criminal Justice, British Journal of Criminology, and Criminology & Public Policy.

10. Budget Explanation

Graduate Researcher Budget = $35,000.
• Doctoral research assistants will be paid $28.00 per hour plus 4% vacation/benefits (Total hourly wage = $29.12 per hour).
• It is estimated that it will take approximately six hours to complete each youth interview. This estimate includes time for community outreach, respondent engagement and recruitment activities, interview scheduling and interviews. Six hours times 150 interviews times $29.12 per hour = $26,200.
• It is estimated that it will take approximately two hours to transcribe interviews and enter data into a qualitative database. Two hours times 150 interviews times $29.12 per hour = $8,700.

Youth respondent $25 honorariums for participation: 150 interviews times $25 = $3,750.

Equipment & supplies: $1,000.
• (1) One dedicated project voice recorder for youth interviews ($70); (2) One project laptop for transcribing interviews, storing encrypted project-related data, conducting data analysis and developing project-related deliverables ($450); (3) One transcription pedal/transcription software kit ($150); and (4) paper ($250.00).
### SSHRC Budget Worksheet

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<th>Total Project Cost</th>
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☐ Sent to the NCRP’s Research Advisory Board for comment: date ________________ deadline: ________________

☐ Funding approved by the NCRP’s Board: $______________ date ________________

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**11. Works Cited**


