

"They're supposed to be public servants, not public killers": A Discourse Analysis of African and Caribbean male's constructions of the Police.

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### **ABSTRACT**

The present study provides bottom-up insight into police relations with young African and Caribbean males. In doing so, the study adopts a critical realist approach by employing a discourse analysis, challenging traditional social psychology. The research focused on six young males of African and Caribbean descent from the city of Manchester in the UK. Using semi-structured interviews to capture participant's accounts, three significant discourses emerged from their constructions of the police and their relationship with young African and Caribbean males. This included, the Jekll and Hyde duality, where participants characterise the police as having a 'supposed' (good) and 'real' (bad) identity. 'Black boys' and accountability, where participants held their own community as responsible for their stigmatisation, and the individualising discourse where participants argued that the police were individuals and blamed the generalisation of the police as prejudice on the 'rotten apples' (Scarman, 1981:6-74)-in the force.

DISCOURSE ANALYSIS	POLICE	AFRICAN CARIBBEAN MALES	PREJUDICE	POLICE- COMMUNITY RELATIONS
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#### Introduction

Police prejudice is an ongoing issue within the western criminal justice system (American Sociological Association, 2007) and has soured relations between the police and ethnic minority groups. A substantial amount of literature has researched this tense relationship in order to gain insight into prejudice and police-community relations (Potter and Reicher, 1987). 'Prejudice' refers to a dislike towards another group based upon a faulty generalisation about that specific group (Allport, 1954:99). Considering this, research has shown that the police profile (O'Reilly, 2002), or in other words, characterise specific groups based on biased representations (Gau and Brunson, 2009). For instance, racially profiling young racial minorities negatively is one form of prejudice that appears evident in the 'unloved history' of police-community relations (Fryer, 2016:1). For instance, Cavender et al. (2012:96) argues that police relations particularly with the African and Caribbean community have become tense because of the racial prejudice 'embedded in the social structures of the police organisation'. In effect, racial policing has caused many members of 'Black minority ethnic' groups to regard the legal system as 'illegitimate, unresponsive, and illequipped to ensure public safety' (Kirk and Matsuda, 2011:443), or what Sampson and Bartusch (1998:782) refer to as 'legal cynicism'.

The display of legal cynicism from 'Black minority ethnic groups' (Kirk and Matsuda, 2011:443) could be a result of the substantial police misconduct cases, which Kenneth (2014) discusses as a contemporary issue. 'Police misconduct' is regarded as either corruption within the police force or abuse to an individual outside of that group (Cox et al., 2015:online). Considering this, cases regarding police misconduct have often been overlooked by the criminal justice system (CJS), highlighting an injustice for African and Caribbean individuals. For example, seventeen-year-old, Trayvon Martin, was shot dead in 2012 by neighbourhood watch co-ordinator, George Zimmerman. This particular fatal instance highlighted the criminal justice systems biases against young 'Black' lives, causing the birth of the prosocial movement, 'Black Lives Matters' in the African-American community. However, the UK is no exception to police misconduct cases (Viki et al., 2006) which can be seen evidently from the shooting of Mark Duggan by London's Metropolitan police in 2011. Unfortunately, this case was not an isolated occurrence in the UK. Prior to Duggan's death, the racially motivated death of Stephen Lawrence in 1991, led to the MacPherson report (1999) that concluded the British police were 'institutionally racist'. This striking conclusion challenged Lord Scarman's (1981:64-74) former arguments that the British police could not be accused as racist based on 'a few rotten apples'. The debates surrounding the institutional racism have been addressed by psychological research, which can be seen in Wotley and Hommel's (1995) study on police prejudice.

Wotley and Hommel (1995:305) sought to address relations between the New South Wales police and the 'aboriginal' community of Australia (Cohen and Marcus, 2002). This was due to the soured police-community relations that arouse after the controversial amount of 'aboriginal' deaths in police custody. Therefore, the research involved studying 412 newly police force recruits. As such, the researchers hypothesised that when the recruits were in a natural police setting, prejudice would develop due to their exposure to prejudice within that environment. In addition, they also believed that prejudice would increase with exposure to geographical areas that were highly populated with the 'aboriginal' community. These hypotheses were furthered by the prediction that academic training would cause prejudice attitudes to

decrease. Thus, in order to test these predictions, participants were administered three scales before and after police training. Firstly, The Beswick and Hills (1972) Australian Ethnocentrism scale (E) was administered to measure police prejudice. Secondly. Rays (1972) 28-item Balanced (bf) scale, which was concerned with conservatism, was employed to measure traditional attitudes. Thirdly, a shortened version of the Marlowe Crowne Social Desirability (SD) scale was employed as a control for favourable responses. Findings revealed that the academic training was not significant enough to reduce prejudice amongst the recruits. However, as predicted, prejudice attitudes were developed and maintained when recruits were working in a policing environment, and in areas that were highly populated with the 'aboriginal' community. From these findings, Wortley and Homel (1995:307) aligned their findings with a traditional social psychological (TSP) perspective arguing that 'prejudice is likely to develop when [the relationship between two groups] is characterised by conflict' and/or when the out-group's behaviour is characterised as undesirable (Brown and Turner, 1981). In other words, it is likely that the 'aboriginal' community were perceived as outsiders by the police, and therefore treated in this way. As such, the researchers went onto to suggest that this attitude might have been maintained by the new recruits because they strived for in-group acceptance (Wortley and Hommel, 1995).

At this point, it seems necessary to explore the underpinnings of traditional social psychology's (TSP) perspective on prejudice. From this perspective, people naturally categorise others as similar or dissimilar to themselves (Tajfel and Billig, 1973) to increase simplicity in cognition and make sense of their environment (Abrams and Hogg, 1988; Festinger, 1954; Tajfel and Turner, 1979). In turn, those who are seen as dissimilar are categorised as an out-group member and treated stereotypically. This means forming a 'widely shared and simplified evaluative image of a social group and it's members' (Hogg & Vaughan, 2011:584). As such, the human brain distinguishes between humans in the same way it distinguishes between other objects in the world (McArthur, 1982). These cognitive groupings, such as racial groupings, are seen as reflecting the individual's external reality and therefore, can be measured (McGuire, 1995). For instance, Wortley and Homell (1995) employed scale data to measure the cognitive process of police prejudice. However, it could be argued that studying police prejudice in this way may maintain the phenomenon, rather than overcome it (Condor, 1988; Hopkins et al., 1997). This approach may excuse prejudice as an inevitable part of human cognition by presenting prejudice as bound to cognition (Billig, 1985). In other words, the researchers conceptualise that it is likely that the recruits perceived undesirable behaviour in their environment, which lead them to categorise the 'aboriginal' community as an out-group. As such, it is assumed that the recruits' attitude towards the 'real' category can be physically measured because this reflects the external environment. Moreover, it is inferred that the category 'aboriginal' is a natural category that exists independently of an observer (Condor, 1988; Hopkins et al., 1997). In other words, the researchers take the category for granted as they assume that it is a real and distinct entity that exists independently from their own background and cultural influences that allow them to construct a group as 'aboriginal'. It seems that rather than investigating prejudice as a real cognitive entity that can be measured, critical social psychologists (CSP) view the phenomenon as socially constructed through discourse (Potter and Wetherell, 1987). As such, critical psychologists employ techniques such as discourse analysis to research prejudice. This type of analysis looks at 'language and [the various contexts] in which it is used' (Paltridge, 2012:2). Thus, as a challenge to mainstream approaches, which suggest

that psychology as a science can measure real entities that are not influenced by time or culture, discourse analysts argue that what is considered as truth is based on context (Edwards et al., 1995). Therefore, as opposed to treating prejudice as a fixed, cognitive phenomenon that can be measured, analysts would benefit from taking into account the context and social actions being performed in race talk.

Glover (2007) analysed the discourse of a Texas police force in order to explore racial profiling, which he defined as the 'association of ethnic minorities with criminality' (Glover, 2007:239). The research involved interviewing twenty-seven police officers and findings revealed the ways in which the police officers used language to excuse racial profiling. This was excused by police officers by talking about targeting members of their own race in criminal matters. However, although this type of research is beneficial to understanding the discourse of police prejudice, it could be argued that there are still issues that both traditional and critical social psychology may need to address. Perkins (2016) notes that research on prejudice tends to employ a 'top down' approach where there is a focus on exploring prejudice through the discourse of the dominant or majority group (Perkins, 2016:329). Therefore, it could be argued that researchers run the risk of maintaining prejudice as opposed to overcoming it by limiting the perspectives of the minority group.

Although Glover highlights police constructions, showing top-down insight, there are studies that are an exception (Sharp and Atherton, 2007). For instance, Brunson (2007) adopted a mix methods approach to understand participants experiences of police contact. Using surveys and interviews: aggressive policing, police misconduct, police violence, and the witnessing of police violence, were common themes highlighted in the data. Therefore, the study demonstrates insight into police prejudice from the voices of the minority group. Although, it should be stressed that Brunson's study was mixed methods and therefore incorporates aspects of a TSP approach to interpret survey data. In doing so, the study runs the risk of using survey data as an external reflection of participant's cognition.

Despite this, prejudice research has taken a bottom-up approach from a CSP standpoint. Potter and Reicher (1986:27) carried out a discourse analysis into community and conflict, based on the St Pauls Riot in 1980; an event mainly concerned with the police's relations with the 'Black' community. In this study, researchers examined the way participants produced social categories such as 'community' and 'community relations' within their accounts (Potter and Reicher, 1986: 25). One particularly interesting theme was that of 'Race and community' (Potter and Reicher, 1986: 29). The researchers examined the variability in the participant's use of the term 'community'. For example, one way in which the notion of community was used was to 'categorise conflict with the police as an intragroup phenomenon' (Potter and Reicher, 1986: 35).

Therefore, the current study will build on the previous literature surrounding the police-community, but solely from a bottom-up perspective. In doing so, the research will explore the perspective of African and Caribbean males and provide novel insight into their relations with the police.

## Methodology

# Design

This research implemented a qualitative focus. This involved conducting six face-to-face semi-structured interviews (Colbran, 2016) to ensure flexibility (Miles and Gilbert, 2005) and probing opportunities (Noor, 2008) throughout. Six young males from Manchester of African and Caribbean descent were recruited through a purposive sample (May et al., 2010). Their accounts were analysed using a discourse analysis (DA; Potter and Wetherell, 1987), based on the researcher's critical social epistemological position (Parker, 2002). This involved analysis of participants language constructions and the reasons behind such constructions i.e. function and variability (Potter and Wetherell, 1987). Furthermore, discursive psychology (DP) as a form of DA that is concerned with psychological themes, attitudes, and motives in language (Potter and Edwards, 1992), was implemented into the analysis process.

### The Researcher

A female student of Caribbean ethnicity, with experience of the African and Caribbean community.

### Recruitment

A purposive sampling method (Almutairi, 2013) was adopted; the researcher interviewed individuals who could provide information that was fitting for the aims and objectives of the research (Lewis and Sheppard, 2006). Seeking young African and Caribbean males aged 18-24 was of interest as previous literature suggests males of these ethnicities have particularly negative attitudes towards the police (Flexon, 2009). Whilst implementing a sampling method such as this hinders the external validity of the research (Barrat et al., 2014), it creates detailed understanding from a focused perspective (Palinkas et al., 2013).

### Advertising via Whatsapp

In order to recruit participants, the researcher used one of the proposed advertising methods (Appendix 2- Social media post). The researcher's contacts with committee members of the Manchester Metropolitan University's (MMU) African-Caribbean Society (ACS) provided a gateway for this advertisement to be posted in the ACS 'WhatsApp' group chat. Previous literature highlights the effectiveness of advertisement for sensitive topics (Holloway and Glavin, 2016). Advertising using this method ensured appropriate members could be addressed with free will and autonomy to partake. Moreover, using advertising as a method of recruitment is argued as highly useful for qualitative research (Willig and Stainton Rogers, 2008).

### **Data Collection**

Semi-structured interviews were employed in order to capture the language constructions by participants; a method used by discursive psychologists such as Tucker (2009). This allowed the researcher to explore the topic more openly (Schuch et al., 2011). After ethical approval, participants were issued a participant information sheet (Appendix 3) and provided their informed consent (Appendix 4) via email. Using a participant information sheet is effective because it informs participants about the research expectations and purpose, whilst a consent form is evidence that the

participant has agreed to take part (Hickson, 2013). Once the participant provided active consent, the researcher made suitable arrangements to conduct the interview based on the participant's schedule. All interviews took place in a booked university lab at the MMU Brooks building as a form of safeguarding. Each interview lasted between twenty-five to fifty minutes. Despite the initial planning for interviews to be at least forty-five minutes long, Brace (2008) notes how interview length can vary based on respondent's answers and interaction within the setting.

An interview schedule (Appendix 5; Innes et al., 2009) was used to guide data collection however; these items were not entirely predetermined based on the interviews semi-structured nature (Grinnell et al., 2010). In other words, more flexibility was ensured when questioning participants (Richard et al., 2010). Each interview was recorded using a Dictaphone (Dahm, 2015) to increase recording efficiency, accuracy, spontaneity and recording quality (Norwood, 2012). For instance, Sharp and Atherton (2007) note the lack of recording devices limited the accuracy and spontaneity of responses in their research, thus this was avoided. At the end of the interviews participants were debriefed (Appendix 6); during this process, they created a pseudonym for anonymity purposes (Brunson, 2007) and asked any further questions regarding the research process.

All recordings were stored on the researcher's password protected MMU H-drive for transcription that incorporated aspects of the Jeffersonian transcription method (1984; Appendix 8), a common method in DA (Willig and Stainton-Rogers, 2008). Once transcribed the data was permanently deleted for safeguarding purposes.

# **Data Analysis**

The research employed a discourse analysis, where there is a concern with how speakers make sense of the world, or in other words, construct the world and it's objects through discourse (Potter and Wetherell, 1987). These constructions facilitate certain functions for the speaker. For instance, Potter and Wetherell (1987:32) argue that language is oriented 'to do things'; i.e. request, excuse and persuade. Thus, the researcher explored the participant's constructions of the police, and their relations with young males from the African and Caribbean community. It is also important to note that a discourse analyst values the context in which the language is produced (Gordon, 2009). For them, accounts are 'situated and occasioned constructions' (Edwards and Potter, 1992:2). This means that when analysing participant's talk, the researcher understands the discourse through not only the historical context in which it occurred, but also the immediate environment i.e. a semi-structured interview. The researcher also considered discursive psychology (Edwards and Potter, 1992) during the analysis process. In this area of psychology, researchers are interested in the ways in which participants discuss psychological concepts during talk (Edwards and Potter, 1992). For example, social actors may employ psychological terms such as depression or anxiety in order to minimise a person's accountability for their actions (Wetherell, 2003).

Billig (1985) argued for a discursive approach rather than a traditional approach to prejudice research which previous police-community literature has commonly undertaken (Sharp and Atherton, 2007). TSP does not account for variations that can occur in speech i.e. on what occasions do individuals construct discourses. In addition, TSP regards the brain in a mechanical format. That is, inferring the brain naturally

categorises an object. Lastly, TSP states human cognition incorporates the identification of unique characteristics amongst objects. Considering this, using DA appears logical in approach.

During the process of data analysis, the ten-step guide outlined by Wetherell and Potter (1987:175) was used as a 'springboard'. After data collection and transcription, transcripts were systematically coded. This process involved the data that reflected research questions, being squeezed into manageable chunks' (Potter and Wetherell, 1987:167). Therefore, all occurrence whereby the participants spoke about the police and their experiences with the African and Caribbean community were categorised. Afterwards, the researcher re-read the transcripts to find occurrences within the transcript that fit within these recognised groupings, which were then reorganised specifically. Once these groups were reorganised and labelled, a detailed analysis began. This involved a concern over patterns, function, and variation within accounts (Potter and Wetherell, 1987) and analysis of psychological concepts (Potter and Edwards, 1992).

### **Ethics**

All research was conducted with approval of the MMU ethics team, in accordance to the BPS guidelines (Appendix 1). All participants were fully informed of the research process, and provided active consent to participate within an audio-recorded interview (Hickson, 2013). After data collection, participants were debriefed, and created a unique pseudonym for anonymity purposes (Brunson, 2007). All audio recordings were destroyed once transcribed then stored on the researchers protected university hard drive.

# **Analysis**

The analysis explored the ways in which speakers talked about the police and constructed relations between the police and ethnic minorities. In particular, there was focus on the ways in which speakers made sense of encounters between the police and young males from the African and Caribbean community. In total, six participants discussed police-community relations. From this sample, four participants characterised the police as having both a 'supposed' (good) and 'real' (bad) identity, which was coded as the Jekyll and Hyde duality. In this way of accounting, participants expressed forms of legal cynicism (Sampson and Bartusch, 1988) by expressing distrust or having a lack of faith in the police's ability to enforce the law and serve the young African and Caribbean community morally. As such, the participants regarded this as an issue deep-rooted in prejudice. Another pattern that became apparent (five participants) across the transcripts was the argument that young African and Caribbean boys have to take responsibility for their own actions, in order to reduce racial profiling. This was coded as 'Black boys' and accountability. Alternatively, other participants positioned ethnic minorities as having a responsibility to refrain from stereotyping the police. For instance, whilst all participants either covertly or overtly argued that the police do target males of their age and racial identity, two of these participants went on to explain that the police are individuals and that ethnic minorities have a responsibility to evaluate the police in this way. However, two other participants, despite explaining that the police were individuals, argued that there are 'certain ones [police officers] that ruin it' for the police who are responsible for the generalisation of the police as prejudiced. As a whole, four participants discussed individualising discourse. In all, three themes emerged in the analysis. For instance, Extract 1 follows a section of talk where Marcus, explains that he would have a more positive outlook on relations between the police and 'black people' (line 214) if police officers had harsher consequences for their misconduct. He explains:

# Jekyll and Hyde duality

## **Extract 1 (Marcus)**

- they're supposed to be public servants, not public killers, you know. If- Public abusers.
- 241 If they know that if I do this, that, that. If I do something wrong. If I act as a criminal
- when I am supposed to be the anti-criminal, if I am supposed to be the justice, then I
- am going to go down like a criminal, then it might become positive, you know. That-
- 244 that

Marcus formulates a series of juxtaposed categories (Gau and Brunson, 2009) in order to stress the extremity between the police's 'supposed' and 'real' conduct. The first of these categories (Edwards & Potter, 1992) can be seen on line 240 in the statement, 'they're supposed to be public servants, not public killers.' Here, the participant uses 'anaphora', which can be defined as the 'repetition of a term' (Pons-sanz, 2014:227). i.e. 'public' (line 240), at the opening of consecutive clauses or phrases. This is used to emphasise the stark contrast between how the police are 'supposed to be', which involves the conduct of a 'servant' (the Jekyll identity), and their 'actual' conduct of a 'killer' (the Hyde identity). The category 'servant' (line 240) connotes characteristics of dutifulness and suggests that the category member is a personal attendant. As such. the formulation of a persona that infers obligation and support to each member of the public is far-removed from the construction of a 'public killer' (line 240). It could be said that the latter is reminiscent of the phrase 'public enemy'. Therefore, the police are characterised as a threat to particular members of the community (which the participant identifies as 'young black men' or 'black people' on lines 214 and 252), rather than having a responsibility to all individuals. Through formulating the category 'public killers', using common nouns without any words that specify the noun i.e. a determiner (Guillemin, 2011), the participant provides for a swift expression that may work symbolically to reflect a crudeness in their conduct towards 'black people' i.e. they are killed instantly by the police. In addition, the participant allows the connotations of the category 'public killers' to resonate further with the listener by situating the group as the second, rather than the first category in the construction. In all, it seems that the participant is formulating extreme dimensions (Pomerantz, 1986) or identities in order to stress the gap between how the police should be conducting themselves, and how they are conducting themselves.

This is furthered when the participant repeats this juxtaposition (Gau and Brunson, 2009) with the categories 'criminal' and 'anti-criminal' on lines 241 to 243. Again, this not only works to strengthen their arguments that there are times where the police may not behave 'accordingly' (line 239), but also suggests that the police can be aligned with the very group that they are assumed to be policing. It seems that the police are characterised as the lawbreaker rather than the antonym or the 'anti' of this identity. It should also be noted that these categories are framed within an if-then statement (Hayes et al., 2007; 241-243) with 'if I act as a criminal when I am supposed to be the anti-criminal [...] then I am going to go down like a criminal'. This strengthens the

participant's arguments of the police as a 'criminal' or deviant category, as conditional statements (Burrell, 1998) can be associated with situations involving law or rule breaking. This therefore presents the police as needing conditions or consequences. Again, such formulations can be contrasted with their 'supposed' role of enforcing justice rather than needing to be brought to justice. Overall, it can be said that the ifthen construction works together with the extremities drawn by the participant in order to explain why he is cynical about relations between the police and his community.

Other participants argued that 'black guys' (line 214) have a responsibility to prevent police officers from 'pointing the finger' (lines 618 to 635) at their community in general. For example, participant one discussed strategies that 'black guys' can employ during their encounters with the police, in order to prevent their community from being seen as blameworthy. As such, when asked why the police were targeting his community in this way, Jermaine responds:

# 'Black boys' and accountability

## **Extract 2 (Jermaine)**

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627 628 P: Erm, several things. Number one because like I say we don't help ourselves to a certain extent so a lot of black guys will retaliate in the wrong way and then the police will just be like see they are violent I told you blah blah blah blah. And wherewhere do you go from there because you've done that to yourself. If you just shut your mouth, yeah and that at will- that will be- I'm not- I'm being serious like you don't have to rare off, you don't have to go on bad, you get me. Like, sometimes be elegant and eloquent

It could be said that the participant is framing encounters with the police as a puzzle or problem that has to be approached in a particular way by 'black guys', so that their community are less likely to be seen as blameworthy. For example, on lines 623 to 624, the participant explains that 'a lot of black guys will retaliate in the wrong way and then the police will just be like see they are violent I told you blah blah blah blah blah. Here, the term 'just' infers that there is one, exact response that the police have towards 'black guys' that 'retaliate'. As such, the word 'then' works up a sense of immediacy around this single or inflexible response to suggest that it subsequently follows after the retaliation i.e. the police do not waste any time in 'pointing the finger' at 'black guys' or labelling them as 'violent'. In addition, the expression 'see they are violent' adds to this immediacy by suggesting that a 'violent' response is a reaction that the police want to identify. It is also important to consider the description of 'black guys' as having an approach that is the 'wrong way'. This implies that unlike the police, who are presented as having an immediate and singular response, they can choose their reaction. It can be said that by stating that there is a 'wrong way' for 'black guys' to act, the speaker implies that 'black guys' have the option to act in the right way. In other words, 'black guys' do not have to 'retaliate'; they do not have to match the harm caused to them by the immediate and singular response provided by the police. The participant goes on to explicitly convey how much control 'black guys' have in avoiding being seen as blameworthy with the expression 'where do you go from there because you've done that to yourself' (lines 624 to 625). This is furthered with the rhetorical question (McGuigan, 2011), which is a question that is asked for dramatic effect, rather than to facilitate an answer, 'where do you go from there'. This works rhetorically in order to emphasise the importance of 'black guys' reflecting on their decisions that have got them 'there' i.e. being seen as 'violent', which is reinforced with the explicit

statement that 'you've done that to yourself'. Again, this also strengthens their argument that the police are constant or rigid in the way in which they want to respond to 'black boys' and because of this constant factor in encounters between the police and 'black boys', only 'black boys' can steer the situation away from them being treated as blameworthy. As such, the participant uses the 'Black boys' and accountability repertoire in order to explain that 'black guys' have a responsibility to avoid negative encounters with the police, so they are not reinforcing the stigmatisation of their community as blameworthy.

Another discourse that became apparent when participants were making sense of interactions between the police and ethnic minorities was the individualising discourse. Some participants argued that the police are individuals and because of this, 'Black people' (Jordan, line 228) have a responsibility not to generalise the police as acting in a discriminatory manner during interactions. However, other participants deviated (Potter and Wetherell, 1987) from this discourse. These participants having argued that the police are individuals, and explained that the 'rotton apples' (Scarman,1981:64-74) are responsible for any generalisations that ethnic minorities make about the police. The latter theme can be seen in Extract 3 where participant three is asked 'what comes to mind when you see them [the police]?' and he responds:

## Individualising discourse

## **Extract 3 (Riley)**

P: Yeah yeah (.) erm negative things (.) obviously not every police officer's the same cause some of them (.) just (.) it's just a job to them they're not (.) ↓they've got families and that to care of themselves (.) it's just there's certain ones that ruin it and they're the ones that are getting targeted but (.) <yeah that kind of thing> (.) so it's just as a whole you just end up stereotyping every police officer

It can be said that the participant constructs a network of terms to convey a sense of

empathy between 'some' (line 45) police officers and ethnic minorities. This can be seen in lines 45 to 46 with 'they've got families and that to care of themselves'. If the participant said 'they've got families and that to care of', then this description would solely be a description of 'some' police officers. However, the closing of this phrase with the term 'themselves' works comparatively. It seems that the speaker is aligning their community's circumstances with the circumstances of 'some' (line 45) police officers. The understanding that is drawn between ethnic minorities and 'some' police officers can be seen as humanising as the two groups, are not only positioned as similar, but described with terms that convey them as having feelings or compassion. For example, the use of the category 'families' alongside 'take care of' (line 46) not only stresses that ethnic minorities have a sense of belonging and have people who they are responsible for who would be affected by any incident of police prejudice, but how 'some' police officers can empathise with this. In other words, 'some' (line 45) police officers can empathise with the African and Caribbean community because the have 'families and that to care of themselves' (line 46). This works together with the expression 'it's just a job' (line 45) to convey that 'some' police officers do not use their position to do anything outside their job; their sole purpose is to do their work without

bringing their own beliefs to the role. However, despite explaining how police officers are not the same, the participant goes on to suggest that 'stereotyping every police officer' (line 48) is an inevitable way of thinking because 'there's certain ones that ruin it' (line 46) for all police officers. This can be seen when the participant argues that it

is a phenomenon that 'you just end up' (line 47) doing. This not only excuses generalisations of the police as a normative action (Urbina, 2012), but also constructs it as a cognition that the 'certain ones that ruin it' are responsible for.

### **Discussion**

In the present study, participants drew on several discourses in order to make sense of the police and their relations with young African and Caribbean males, and ethnic minorities more broadly. These included the 'Jekyll and Hyde duality', "Black boys" and accountability', and the 'Individualising discourse'. One thing that is particularly interesting within the analysis can be seen in the individualising discourse. In this pattern, some participants constructed the police as individuals and blamed negative stereotypes of the police on the police officers that engage in misconduct towards ethnic minorities. This can be seen in Extract 3 where Riley constructs police officers as individuals and blames negative stereotypes on 'certain [police officers] (line 46) that ruin it' for police officers in general. This type of account can be seen as unusual as traditionally in prejudice research, generalisations about the minority group are the topic of discussion as opposed to generalisations about the majority group (Wortley and Homel, 1995). However, what is striking about Riley's account in particular is that he excuses this type of generalising as a normal or natural way of thinking. For instance, Riley infers that 'you just end up stereotyping every police officer' because 'some' police officers 'ruin' (lines 46-48) the overall view of the police. Although only one participant demonstrates this, the points raised are potentially promising when discussing the theoretical implications of the present research.

When discussing Riley's account, it is important to refer to Allport's (1954) early discussions on prejudice from a TSP perspective. He discusses prejudice as an inevitable cognitive process as humans naturally categorise others as either similar or dissimilar to the self, in order to maintain simplicity in their thinking. It could be said that drawing the similarities between Riley's formulation and TSP's conceptualisation potentially highlights new ways for future research to explore relations between the police and young males from the African and Caribbean community. As oppose to seeing prejudice as a normative cognition, researchers may find it fruitful to explore how participants construct generalising as a normative action and whether this is a common way of explaining generalisations about the majority group. In other words, it may be worth investigating whether it is common for young males from the African and Caribbean community to construct the generalisation of the police as prejudice as an inevitable cognition when discussing their experiences with the police. For instance, Riley draws on this discourse to explain that this generalisation inevitably 'comes to mind' (line 43) when he thinks about the police. This aligns with Billig's (1985) discussion on the move to language. Considering this, rather than focusing on stereotyping as an inevitable process that is built into to the human brain structure, researchers may gain further insight into police and community relations by turning to the content of prejudice i.e. by investigating how participants construct generalisations as an inevitable action. In all, the participants discourse of inevitability is a reminiscent of TSP's discussions, however, it is grounded in the minority groups discourse i.e. bottom-up approach (Perkins, 2016), as oppose to the conceptualisation of the majority groups responses in a qualitative study. This is particularly interesting as previous research into police-community relations typically discusses inevitability as a phenomenon that is grounded in top-down psychology (Wortley and Hommel, 1995), creating novel insight.

The findings of the research also align with previous literature on police-community relations with African and Caribbean males concerning legal cynicism (Sampson and Bartusch, 1998). Brunson (2007) used a TSP approach to find that; aggressive policing, police misconduct, police violence, and the witnessing of police violence were common themes highlighted in participant's responses. Whilst this study differs to Brunson's in its approach, the participants constructed the police as being unable to serve and protect young African and Caribbean males due to their immoral conduct towards this community. For instance, in Marcus's extract (extract 1), he constructs the police as having a dual identity in that the police do not act as civil servants who serve and protect the African and Caribbean community as they are supposed to. Although Brunson's research incorporated aspects of a TSP approach, the present study also found constructions of legal cynicism in young African and Caribbean males' constructions of police-community relations.

## **Concluding remarks**

Participants employed several discourses to construct the police and their relations with young males from the African and Caribbean community. This included the Jekyll and Hyde duality, where participants framed the police as having a 'supposed' (good) identity, and a 'real' (bad) identity, in order to explain why they were cynical about improved relations between their community and the police. Aside from this, participants also argued that 'black boys' have a responsibility to avoid negative encounters with the police so they are not reinforcing the stigmatisation of their community as blameworthy. Finally, in the individualising discourse, participants constructed the police as individuals and blamed either ethnic minorities themselves or the 'rotten apples' (Scarman, 1981:64-74) in the police force as responsible for the generalisation of the police as prejudice.

Although there was only one participant that constructed prejudice as inevitable, this opened up considerations for future research. It was argued that researchers might find it beneficial to investigate whether this is a common way of explaining generalisations about the majority group. As such, this finding encourages further research into how generalisations are constructed as inevitable, rather than conceptualised as an inevitable part of human cognition. The present research also built upon previous research (Brunson, 2007) that investigated explanations of racial profiling and in addition to this, furthered research that had also found legal cynicism as a way of explaining police-community relations.

# Reflexivity

Finlay and Gough (2008) outline two forms of reflexivity - epistemological and personal. From an epistemological perspective, reflexivity is important to a discourse analyst (Potter and Wetherell, 1987) because the meaning of language is situated within context (Salzmann et al., 1992), thus it is important to reflect on the context in which the data was produced (Gee, 2005). Within the research, the participant's accounts were constructed within an interview setting; therefore, it is likely that their responses would have been governed by this situational context. For instance, Potter and Wetherell (1987:185) note that participants discourse 'varies according to subtle cues in the wording or sentencing of questions [in research settings]'.

From a personal perspective, it should also be noted that my shared attributes with participants may have influenced the type of talk produced within the interviews (Willig, 2013; Finlay and Gough, 2008). For instance, Grigorenko (2012:447) found that

individuals are more likely to talk about 'race' with other members of their racial group. With this being said, participants may have felt more comfortable speaking about the racial tensions between police and African and Caribbean males. Thus, conducting research may have caused participants to talk about racial tensions as the police force tends to be populated by 'white' police officers (Townes, 2015:online). Discourse around police-community relations during a time of high misconduct cases may have encouraged participants to speak about the police negatively to me in particular, because we are a part of the same racial group. Considering this, I acknowledge the study's racial bias and understand that this could possibly run the risk of maintaining this soured police-community relation.

Furthermore, my decision to research this topic was based on my own cultural influences and assumptions (Finlay, 2002). These assumptions, which were biased and stereotypical in format, were therefore in favour of the bottom-up perspective employed in the research. Despite this, the assumptions that I came to were apparent within participant's accounts and theoretical arguments, and therefore justified.

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