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Black Mixed-Race Men's Perceptions and Experiences of the Police

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ABSTRACT

For black people in Britain, policing has long been a site of oppression and resistance. Whilst substantive change has been lacking, institutional racism within the British police has at least been acknowledged. Concomitantly, Critical Mixed Race Studies (CMRS) has shown that much of the race and ethnicity literature ignores the experiences of mixed-race populations.

In this article, we utilise two studies to consider black mixed-race men's perceptions and experience of policing in Britain. In total, we draw upon interviews with 17 black mixed-race men. Whilst we recognise that their experiences are often homogenised with blackness, in the context of police contact, we show that many black mixed-race men believe they are seen as part of a black monolith. We conclude that, in this context, mixedness does not bring about clearly differentiated experiences from that of black men. The absence of clear particularities to mixedness is of significance to CMRS.

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Race, Racism, Policing, Black Masculinity, Black mixed-race men, Critical Mixed Race Studies.

In this article, we consider black mixed-race men's experiences of policing. In so doing, we centre the accounts of black mixed-race men as we extend the theoretical terrain of policing research and that of Critical Mixed Race Studies (CMRS). We begin the article with a brief overview of policing and the UK's black communities, we then discuss the growth of the mixed-race population, and the emergence of CMRS. After outlining the methods, we offer the findings of our research. We first show how double consciousness means that black mixed-race men know they will often be viewed as monoracially black. We then discuss black mixed-race men's perceptions of and interactions with policing, as well as the a/effects that those encounters have. We conclude by discussing what it means to bring CMRS into conversation with theories of race and policing; the absence of particularities in the experience of black mixed-race men is a significant contribution to the field.

Policing and the Black Community

Whilst unjust and racist policing has a much longer genealogy, policing emerged as a key site of tension for Britain’s black communities following the migration of the Windrush generation (Warmington, 2014). These tensions have been well documented (Gilroy, 1982; Hall et al., 1978; Howe, 1988; Keith, 1993; Pryce, 1979) and, continue to be a concern of scholars and activists today (Hall et al., 2009; Long, 2016). Black people are disproportionally represented across all areas of police data reporting including stop and search (Keeling, 2017), vehicle stops (HMIC 2015), arrests (Hargreaves et al., 2016), use of taser (Dearden, 2017; Hargeaves et al 2016), and deaths in custody (as reported on Inquests website, accessed 21st August 2017). It is therefore understandable that black people report lower levels of trust and confidence in the police and are less likely to report a crime (Yarrow, 2005; Long, 2016).

The criminalisation of black youth through the pervasive image of the black mugger in the 1970s (Hall et al., 1978), is a defining point in the history of the relationship between the police and black communities. The race-crime nexus led to intensive over-policing of black men, and the discriminatory use of stop and search has been one of the most damaging factors in the relationship between black people and the police (Williams, 2015). Following his inquiry into the Brixton ‘riots, Lord Scarman’s (1981) recommendations led to the introduction of *The Police and Criminal Evidence Act (PACE) 1984* to provide accountability through specific codes of practice. More than three decades on from its implementation PACE has failed to reduce disproportionality in stop and search.

Black people are eight times more likely, and mixed-race people are almost two and a half times more likely to be stopped and searched than whites (Hargreaves et al., 2017). Revealing as it is, this statistic is occlusive in at least two ways. Firstly, many of those who are born to black and white parents, self-identify as black, and are identified by others as black. This is especially true for men (Sims, 2016; Joseph-Salisbury, forthcoming). Therefore, mixed-race men may be recorded as black due to their own preferred identity, or through the 6+1 IC recording classification used if the police officer is unable to obtain self-defined ethnicity. This does not have a mixed category. Secondly, the conflation of mixed-race groups obscures differences between those groups. This is significant given evidence to suggest that black mixed-race men are more likely to be identified through their monoracial minority identity than are other mixed-race groups (Aspinall and Song, 2013).

Whilst use of stop and search has declined significantly, following the introduction of the Best Use of Stop and Search Scheme in 2016, disproportionality continues to rise. The benefits of a reduction in stop and search appears only to be felt by white people (Hargreaves et al., 2016). Almost two decades after Macpherson's (1999) report concluded that the Metropolitan Police were institutionally racist, and following wholesale reforms to policing, very little has changed in the experiences of black people in their contact with the police (Rollock, 2009). The continuing disproportionality in stop and search would suggest that PACE is ineffective in providing accountability for the use of police discretion. Stereotypes continue to shape police decision making and the legal framework is ineffective in regulating their discretion to do so (Quinton, 2011). The police are the gateway to the Criminal Justice System; there continues to be significant disproportionality in arrest, bail application, and sentencing which results in greater racial disproportionality in the UK prison population than in the US (Lammy, 2017).

Duggan, Mixedness and CMRS

Mark Duggan became a household name after he was shot dead by the police in 2011. His death sparked protest across the country. A notable point about the death of Mark Duggan was the way in which he was racialised, and the ways in which skin is attributed meanings in social contexts. Coverage and analysis referred almost unanimously to the death of a *black* man. Almost no attention was paid to the fact that Mark Duggan had a white mother and white extended sociality, and might have self-identified as mixed-race. As Aspinall and Song (2013: 79) note, 'the process of category identification happens without the consent of the observed'. It is this that leads Allwood (2015) to argue, 'the story of Mark Duggan gets bent to a familiar narrative, one of violent black masculinity, gangs and drugs' (as of 7th May 2015, article available from www.dazeddigital.com). In this sense, Duggan's racialisation as black is reminiscent of the way in which hypodescent, or 'the one-drop rule', racialised mixed-race populations as black in order to maintain the system of slavery. The legitimacy of the state is dependent upon clear demarcations of racial boundaries. The shooting of a black mixed-race man came to (re)signify the enduring problematic relationship between the police and black residents in Tottenham, a symbolic location for police/black community relation since the 1980s (Elliot-Cooper, 2017).

In 2011 (the same year Duggan was killed), and ten years after the first inclusion of ‘mixed-race’ categories on the census of England and Wales, over one million people chose to self-identify as mixed-race. That census inclusion, and the significant increase in mixed-race identifications, is reflective of apparent shifts in British racial discourse. It is these shifts that have seen CMRS grow into a notable field of academic inquiry (Daniel, 2014). CMRS has urged scholars to consider what is specific and particular to the experiences of mixed-race populations. Urging scholars to revisit and rethink analyses that occlude mixedness, CMRS has shown that mixed-race populations have a plethora of experiences that are directly related to their mixed-race identities, and cannot be understood through a monoracial lens.

Despite this burgeoning area of research there is a prescient absence of empirical work on black mixed-race men’s experiences of police contact, in the UK. The limited research attends to the experiences of ‘BAME’ communities more broadly (Sharp and Atherton, 2007; Britton, 2000). In this paper, we offer an empirical intervention that expands the scope of CMRS; despite evidence of mixedness producing particular experiences in many areas, in the context of policing, Black mixed-race men’s experiences parallel those of black men. Further, this finding expands criminological scholarship on race and policing.

Methods

This study utilises findings from two studies. Both studies were approved by the research ethics committee at the University of Leeds.

Conducted by Long, study A is based upon semi-structured interviews with twenty black and black mixed-race men and women across all adult age groups in the UK. The study focused upon experiences of policing over the life course. The experiences of three black mixed-race men from the study will be the focus of this analysis. All three are degree level educated and two were engaged in professional vocations at the time of interview, whilst the third was engaged in further study. Participants were recruited for the study through leafleting, social media pages and contact with community organisations. Interviews were conducted in a public place of the participant’s choice. There are some challenges posed by the researcher’s position as a white, female; ‘the most unsympathetic thing you can do is think you have empathized with those of a radically different background. You can easily end up hurting them’ (Delgado, 1996:13). She engaged in reflexive practice in relation to her positionality throughout the research. As a working-class woman some of the intersectional oppressions that participants faced were familiar; choosing to work in a ‘self-revelatory’ (Ladson-Billings,

2000) manner helped to establish trust. As the study drew on an adapted form of grounded theory (Malagon et al., 2009), purposive sampling strategy was utilised. When there is some homogeneity within the research sample (i.e. ethnic group) data saturation is reached more quickly (Guest et al., 2006). The analysis was carried out using Nvivo software and supplemented with manual coding and analysis. In study A, no significant new codes emerged after the thirteenth interview, data saturation occurred to the extent that it is possible to make some theoretical claims.

For study B, Joseph-Salisbury conducted in-depth, semi-structured interviews with twenty-eight black mixed-race men, fourteen living in the UK and fourteen living in the US. For the purposes of this article, we focus on the fourteen Black mixed-race men who lived in the UK. The participants were recruited through poster placement, social media, and snowball sampling. At the time of interview – between late 2014 and early 2015 – all of the men were aged between sixteen and twenty-one. The men came from a range of social-class backgrounds, with a slight middle-class majority. The majority of interviews were conducted face-to-face, in cafes and public spaces, with two exceptions: one interview was conducted via an online instant messaging site, and the other using Skype. The study was analysed using NVivo software. The interviews primarily focused on the men's experiences of secondary schooling but it became clear that it was impossible to abstract school experiences from the men's wider experiences, and that policing was a significant concern in the lives of the participants.

Both studies are underpinned by Critical Race Theoretical approaches that strive to recognise the normalized ways in which racisms structure societies. It is this shared theoretical orientation, as well as similarities in the participant demographic, that made it possible (and useful) to bring these studies together. Whilst the data is limited by the relatively small sample size, particularly the number of mixed-race participants in study A and the combination of data from two studies with different research focus (A-policing and B-education), this combined study offers an empirically informed insight into an under-theorised area and should encourage further research.

Findings

Black mixed-race men's identity: double consciousness

Whilst the men in the sample self-identified in ways that were fluid and multi-dimensional, in the majority of cases they identified with or through blackness. One (but not the only) reason for this was a shared sense that white interlocutors saw them solely as black. Reflecting on his identity, Anton said,

> I'd say I'm mixed-race but I'd say I'm black also; I'd say that's due to past experiences… but I think certain experiences, I've had [anti-black] racist experiences and I think just the way society views me. And my mum told me that I was black as well. So, I'd say I'm black but then mixed-race, black.

Whilst Anton recognises the multiplicity of his identity, and identifies as mixed-race, he is also conscious of his blackness. This, he argues, is a consequence of lived experiences of racism as well as guidance from his mother. For Anton, this parental guidance was borne out of an awareness that, under the white gaze, 'Blackness is undifferentiated' (Tate, 2005: 85). Thus, in order to avoid a mismatch between how he self-identifies and how he is identified by others, Anton's mother reasons he should identify as black (Joseph-Salisbury, 2017). Anton's account demonstrates his sense of double consciousness (Du Bois, 2007); he knows how he is constructed under the white gaze.

To varying extents, the sense of double consciousness Anton displays was prevalent in all of the black mixed-race men's accounts. It is this that Reece conveys as he suggests,

> I walk down the street and society thinks I'm black… the general average Joe doesn't go 'his nose is a bit thin, maybe he's half white'… I'm accepting of the fact that, you know, society and a white individual is going to view me as black.

In both Reece and Anton's accounts, society and the 'average Joe' is coded as white: this is indicative of white supremacist conditions in which the black mixed-race subject is always already named. The racialised power dynamics of white supremacy make it important for men like Reece to know how they are interpellated under the white gaze (Yancy, 2017). It bares emphasising that knowing one is interpellated as black does not occlude the possibility of identifying as mixed-race. Indeed, to varying extents, all of the men in the studies recognized and celebrated their mixedness. That said, particularly in the context of policing, understanding how one is interpellated can be about staying alive. For black mixed-race men, knowing how one's body is construed under the white gaze is not only to know that one will be seen as a black man, but to know that - in a white supremacist society that degrades black masculinities - to be seen as a black man is to be seen as a black monster: an 'indistinguishable, amorphous, black seething mass, a token of danger, a threat, a criminal, a burden, a rapacious animal incapable of delayed gratification' (Ibid:19). Showing a sense of double consciousness that is cognisant of black masculinity's attendant stereotypes, Nathan reflected,

> I think some people just judged me straight away. Thinking I might be thuggish, maybe, or a gangsta of some sort.

The white gaze places Nathan under erasure. In place of Nathan, the white gazer sees only a phantasm: a black monster who is a 'thuggish' 'gangsta'. Like the mugger of the 1970s, both thug and gangsta are racialised and gendered terms that evoke stereotypes of black masculine criminality. Literally referring to a 'thief' or 'swindler' (Garber, 2015), the terms 'thug' and 'gangsta' indicate that the white gaze sees somebody who is in need of surveillance and control. Asked about the problems he faces, Anton concurred, 'I think we're seen as more of a target… I think that's where it starts'.

What these accounts show us is that through double consciousness, many black mixed-race men have a sense that, under the white gaze, they are monstrous blacks. This is a sense that endures even despite ever-increasing mixed-race self-identifications. It seems that identifying as mixed-race does not occlude the possibility of identifying as black, and/or recognising that one may well be interpellated as a monstrous black man. Robert, another black mixed-race man, self-defined as 'either mixed-race Caribbean, black Caribbean and white or just black British … so on the census form I would tick mixed black Caribbean and white British'. When asked the context in which he would identify as black British, Robert elaborated; 'in terms of the politics of the word I guess I would describe myself as black'. The perception that their experiences of police racism are in common with black men strengthens the black identity of black mixed-race men in the context of police contact. This sense of double consciousness – knowing how one is constructed, and how one must act in particular situations – is part of what Yancy (2017) refers to as the *episteme of blackness:* an episteme that has been cultivated in black communities collectively and inter-generationally, and has been a matter of survival. Given that black mixed-race populations have long since been a part of black communities, it is unsurprising that they may share in this episteme. This is an episteme that is shaped by a collective awareness of a long lineage of black deaths at the hands of UK police.

As we noted earlier, the 2011 murder of Mark Duggan emerged as a seminal and contemporary case in the discourse on race and policing. Showing that mixedness does not negate the potential for the white gaze to reduce black mixed-race men to the black monster, this landmark case undoubtedly impacts upon the black British episteme. As one community organiser remarked in relation to Study B, '*when the National Front come running around the corner, they aint stopping to see who is mixed'*. The contention that we are making here is that black mixed-race men's sense that they are read as black has implications for their perceptions of and interactions with, white people generally, and the police particularly. Let us now turn to consider black mixed-raced men's perceptions of and interactions with the police more closely.

Black mixed-race men's perceptions of and interactions with the police

Having shown that black mixed-race men believe they are commonly interpellated as part of an undifferentiated black monolith, it is unsurprising that black mixed-race men believe that they experience policing in the same or similar ways to black men (but in different ways to some black and mixed-race women - see Long, forthcoming 2018). Black mixed-race men expect the police to treat them in racially discriminatory ways on the basis of visibility of black origin. There is some argument that mixed-race people experience racial privilege in relation to 'monoracial minorities' (Bonilla-Silva, 2004; Yancy, 2017). However, in relation to their encounters with the police, it is posited here that black mixed-race men's attributed race acts as a 'symbol of inferiorization' (Anthias, 1999), and that this prevents the access to white privilege that is so often stereotypically assumed (Small, 2002). This is evident in the men's perceptions of how the police see them.

As exemplified by the following account, none of the black mixed-race participants perceived that they had any significant privilege in their dealings with the police,

> phenotypically my skins quite light but a lot of time people would refer to me as black. … When I played football, when I was younger, people would describe me as the black lad so, I guess there's no reason that would be any different with the police (Lee).

In these remarks, we explicitly see the connections between how black mixed-race men believe they are interpellated generally and how black mixed-race men understand their interactions with the police: '*there's no reason that would be any different with the police*'. Thus, in terms of policing, as a participant in Joseph-Salisbury's (2013) previous research puts it, '*mixed-race people and black people are in the same boat, they're both discriminated, both stereotyped'*. The men's reflections on policing suggest a shared sense that any notion of mixed-race privilege is insignificant or non-existent. As Robert argues,

> I'm not sure they would treat a mixed-race person any better than a black person… I mean there is a slight difference in how they treat Asians and black people for instance

> I think its 4 times as many Asian people and 7 times [referring to S&S] as many black people so I wouldn't be surprised if it was nearer the Asian statistic than the black statistic. I also wouldn't be surprised if it was exactly the same because they think they kind of lump us all together.

Again, there is the notion that under the white gaze, blackness is undifferentiated (Tate, 2005). This is echoed in the following account;

> I think in terms of me not being white, it would have an impact [on police initiated encounters]. I don't know the statistics but I would imagine that mixed-race, mixed-race males, I say would be treated nearly as negatively by the police as black males … certain crimes, say drug dealing are often associated with males. I think there's a stigma attached to mixed-race and black males (Lee)

As well as re-emphasising the point that black mixed-race men believe they experience policing in ways similar to monoracial black men, these two accounts remind us of the importance of the intersection of gender. It is well known that for black men, race and gender intersect to evoke the stereotype of the black criminal (Yancy, 2017), and that these stereotypes impact upon the policing of black men (Quinton, 2011). What is less known are the particular ways in which race and gender intersect for black mixed-race people. Whilst the field of CMRS is largely made up of studies with disproportionately female samples (c.f. Aspinall and Song, 2013), Sims and Joseph-Salisbury (forthcoming) have argued there is a need to further interrogate how gender produces differentiated experiences. The racialized criminal stereotypes attributed to black masculinity limits the flexibility black mixed-race men have in the negotiation of their identities in the police encounter, both in proximity to whiteness and in notions of respectability/non-criminality. It is perhaps this that leads to the shared stigma that Lee refers to.

As they sought to understand and articulate their own racial positionalities in the context of policing, black mixed-race men drew comparisons between themselves and their white, and black, peers. As Robert recalls,

> I've got white friends who've never ever been stopped and questioned by the police that look a lot sort of more dodgy than I do I guess. It just does make me think that's the only reason why.

As he compares his own experiences with those of his white peers, Robert is left to conclude that his racial identity is the 'only reason why' he has experienced stop and search and his ‘*more dodgy’* looking white friends have not. Lee grew up living in a predominantly white area. In the following account, he echoes Robert’s sentiment that race is the primary reason for differential experiences,

> It’s not everywhere they stop and search us every night by no stretch of the imagination. In the area I think if I went around now and asked people how many times they’ve been stopped and searched living in that area, the majority 99%, wouldn’t have been stopped at all (Lee).

Lee contends that, although he grew up in a predominantly white area that was not particularly over policed, within that context he still experienced disproportionate levels of police stop and search. Whilst he was not stopped every night, as he infers black men in racially stigmatised areas might be, the (white) majority of people in his area would not have ‘been stopped at all’. Andrew also drew a comparison with his peers,

> I had that one [stop] and one a year later. My friend had three, my friend that I mentioned, the black friend, …that compares to none for my white friends. (Andrew)

For Andrew, whilst he recalled two stop and searches, and his black friend had three, his white friends had none. Whilst Andrew’s account is an individual experience, it is demonstrative of the kinds of patterns that lead black mixed-race men to understand their racialised positionalities in a white supremacist society. Moreover, these are the perceptions that inform black mixed-race men’s perceptions of and perspectives on the police.

Notwithstanding evidence of some mixed-race specific microaggressions (Joseph-Salisbury; 2018; Johnston and Nadal, 2010), the men’s sense that they were subject to an anti-black white gaze supports Aspinall and Song’s (2013: 124) findings that their participants did not experience racism because they were mixed-race but because they were non-white. Similarly, Yancy (2017) argues that as long as an association is made with blackness, the white gaze imposes the black monster stereotype on even the lightest skinned black man.

In the context of policing, the white gaze continues to produce the black body as the suspect. Stereotypes that associate the black male body with criminality proliferate and contemporarily link black men to criminality, in particular gang, gun and knife, sexual and drug supply crimes (Donnor and Brown, 2011; Williams, 2015). Further, representations of black masculinity are characterised by excessive sexuality and super-human strength. As argued by bell hooks, the ‘*black male body continues to be perceived as the embodiment of* *bestial, violent, penis-as-weapon, masculine assertion' (2004:79).* It is this bestial embodiment of masculinity that, under the white gaze, requires monitoring, surveillance and containment.

Andrew reflects upon an occasion when he was stopped whilst driving twice in the same night, this, he suggests, is a consequence of his racial and racist interpellation;

> The first time it was about 9oclock, half past 9 and then [the second time] it were half past one in the morning. I was stopped again. …I was asked to get out of the car.,I was asked what I were doing and it was apparent through the kind of questioning that the officer didn't believe me and was suspicious of me. I was seen as a young black lad… it leaves that undertone of it's them and us. The other guys that were in the car were black guys as well. So I was a little bit peeved off … just kind of wasting my time…I was a bit taken aback, that's twice in one evening. Whoa what's going on here? (Andrew)

This disproportionality was recollected not only in relation to vehicle stops: in the context of foot stops, Lee reflects upon the police justification for the stop;

> The first time they actually said that they were stopping people in the area without me asking. The second time… I was stopped with my friend. They said that they were looking for two lads who'd done a burglary or something, not sure I believed it. It was my area, I think if there was a burglary I would have heard about it and asking around after no one had heard about it ... they would have had to have had a description of two guys, 6ft 4, one black, one mixed-race, I don't think there's that many pairs going round like that in the area (Lee).

In the context of encounters with the police, black mixed-race men switched between the language of internal identification (their own) and an external identification that sees them as black through the white gaze (Yancy, 2017). When there is limited evidence of the police having 'reasonable grounds' to suspect that stopping an individual will lead to them finding a prohibited item, whether on car or on foot, black mixed-race men recourse to the episteme of blackness as the only possible explanation.

As Long (2016) argues, the black body is collectively 'known' to the police. Stereotypes of black masculinity which construct black men as threatening, lead to aggressive policing in response to the imagined threat. Andrew reflected on the aggressive way in which he was searched when he was pulled over, despite his partner and young child being present in the car. He had driven between neighbouring cities to visit his mother-in-law. When he arrived at his destination an unmarked police car pulled up behind him;

> … four, what can be described as burly white men jumped out and grabbed me and dragged me out of the car and told me to get over the car and put my hands over the car, padded me down, checked all under my car, tyres, checked in my car, checked in the back, asked me who was in the car with me. So proper full interrogation and they were a bit rough and heavy handed with it (Andrew)

Andrew holds a professional position and he does not have an offending history; a position that would generally, for a white person, occlude the possibility of experiencing unwarranted police suspicion. In this encounter, which Andrew describes as ‘*harrowing*’, he does not understand the recourse to aggressive policing. He explains this aggressive search with reference to his physical presence and the narratives attributed to his physicality through the white gaze;

> …There’s no [criminal] history whatsoever and I’m just approaching you as me. But then the fact is I’m mindful as well that I’m a big guy as well, 6 foot 2, 6 foot 3 you know [sighs]. So, there’s all that default stuff about, you know, black people are aggressive, they’re physical, they’re violent (Andrew)

Andrew’s reflection is supported in the justification for use of force against black men. In the prosecution case of Sergeant Kitching and PC Ellerker in 1969, following the death of homeless Nigerian immigrant David Oluwale in Leeds, the defence claimed that ‘*Oluwale would leap up like a miniature Mr Universe and have hold of you, scratching and biting you, with a mouthful of the biggest, dirtiest teeth*…” (Aspden, 2007:213). Similar racialising and criminalising narratives are contemporarily utilised to justify the use of force towards black bodies (Yancy, 2017). This ‘state talk’ justifies the use of force, which discursively constructs subjects as either ‘victim’ or ‘villain’ (Pemberton 2008). Discourses, which construct black and black mixed-race bodies in these ways have significant consequences for police interactions. This can be seen in many cases of death in police custody, including Joy Gardner, Brian, Douglas, Christopher Alder and indeed Mark Duggan.

Racisms a/effects on black mixed-race men

The fear that black mixed-race men feel when they encounter the police is located both in their own prior experience, the experiences of other black people who they know and, more broadly, high profile cases (Long, 2016). This is evident in Andrew’s reflections on how his experience of being stopped by the police, discussed above, could have ended if he had been alone;

> being part of the black community, I just know that this could have got really messy. I could have been battered by those guys, but thank god she [partner] was in the car …(Andrew)

In the context of police contact Andrew recourses to his black identity. It is through his connection to the black community that he understands how his interpellation as the black monstrous threatening figure places him at risk of police brutality.

These racial affects, which the black episteme exposes, are no longer only manifest in overt police racism, for example in the use of racist language, as they once were (Smith and Gray, 1982; Holdaway 1983). They are subtle and felt rather than seen. As Reece states, *'it's embedded, its institutional, but more than that, its covered up and harder to call out…'.* Here Reece's perception speaks to the experience that Tate (2016) refers to as *racism's invisible touch.*

Through the myth of post raciality, the language of race and racism has been erased in favour of an agenda focused on diversity and inclusion, as Reece argues;

> they'll take pictures of police at carnival, where things are going okay and the police are enjoying themselves, and that's fine. I don't know, most carnivals, somebody gets injured. Know what I mean? But where was that picture?... You can't take a snapshot and then blow it up… cos that's what it is they go UK police, great. But what it'll be is a picture of MET [Metropolitan] police on a good day, with a black person, or with whoever looking happy and they go, yeah MET police are great. Okay, one their police are awful and two, MET police are just London and the country is predominantly white.

Here Reece points to Carnival as an example of how the police use a community event to further a diversity agenda. Carnival is a space for black communities to assert a positive cultural identity and resist oppression (Spooner, 1996). Positive representation of police attendance and participation results in reputational gains for the police, but has little impact upon relations between the police and the community beyond the event.

The awareness that Reece displays – namely, that contact with the police is likely to have negative racial affects – leads black mixed-race men to develop strategies to avoid police contact. For instance, Robert disclosed that he maintains an awareness of spaces where he is most likely to encounter the police;

> you see lots of police around the train station and things like that, which sometimes makes me think I want to get the coach instead of the train [laughter]

The laughter to follow may suggest that Robert may not literally change his mode of travel to avoid the police; however, his statement reveals an enhanced awareness of police presence in public spaces. Using spaces where the police have a known presence is viewed as risky by those who, under the white gaze, embody the monstrous threat posed by blackness.

Black mixed-race men recognise that criminalisation changes over the life course and avoiding this risk was an important strategy for the men in this research. Even when they were not involved in illegal activity the potential for police contact to escalate, resulting in a criminal record, was of concern;

> In my eyes, the police force is just as racist as it was how long ago, so that's another thing you've gotta be wary of. If you get in to an incident, although you might have been fighting to protect yourself, or defend yourself, like will the incident be recorded that way when it goes to court? And even if it does, you could potentially go to court and you can't get a job. You're closing doors. It's leaving you more open to do things that you don't wanna do, or stupid things (Shaun, UK).

With increased age and family responsibility this becomes even more important. Demonstrating an episteme of blackness and the agency to act upon his awareness, Shaun continued;

> now that I'm older they're like you need to be careful cos like police can get involved and things like that. So, you need to be smarter about it cos then it's affecting your life and career (Shaun, UK).

This sense of double consciousness and necessary reaction is also reflected in Andrew's explanation for avoiding contact with the police*;*

> I'd rather just keep away. I've got too much to lose with, you know, house, investments, family, kids. I don't want police beating down my door … being part black is just one part of my identity. I'm also a father, I'm also a husband, I'm also a son. I'm not willing to take them risks, I've got a function in society with lots of professionals including police so, it's lessened my contact with them as I've got older (Andrew).

Altering behaviour in order to appeal to notions of respectability is one way in which participants perceived that they may be able to negotiate racialised stereotypes in the police encounter;

> If I see someone kind of suspicious of me, maybe my body language will change. I'll try and come across more gentle and maybe be softer in the way that I speak (Alex)

> If I needed to, not that I should have to or that I want to, If I needed to speak in a more middle-class kind of language then I could do that. I could engage with them on their white middle-class level. But if I'd never moved out of a working-class area and never, continued in education, then I guess the way that I talked, the way that I'd act would [shape police contact] (Lee)

In the US context, Harris and Khanna (2010) have shown that class intersects with race in the construction of blackness to such an extent that working-class black mixed-race people are oftentimes considered closer to the regulatory ideal of blackness than are middle-class blacks. However, research in the UK context finds that race disrupts forms of capital (Rollock, 2014), which may be relied upon to confer respectability. This is reflected in Donnor and Brown's (2011: 2) observation that, 'being 'Black' and 'male' irrespective of societal position recapitulates the historically and ideologically informed racial imaginary of Black male deviance and criminality'. In the context of policing it appears that race, class and gender intersect to produce particular outcomes for black mixed-race men.

One of the significant consequences of the black episteme in the context of police contact is that black and black mixed-race people are less likely to contact the police to report experiences of victimisation than other groups and when they do they report lower levels of satisfaction (Yarrow, 2005; Jannson, 2006; MoJ, 2013). This is reflected in the expressed reluctance by participants to avail themselves to the protection of the police, as Robert explains,

> If someone had burgled my house or, you know, if I got seriously attacked or something then I probably would go to the police but if it was just a minor thing I'd probably think actually … I can't be bothered with the hassle of dealing with the police. But, if it was anything more serious then I would just because I'd be more annoyed at the person getting away with it than I would be with the police …It would be the lesser of two evils.

Robert's sense that police contact is a last resort is demonstrative of a lack of confidence in the police but also a level of pragmatism and agency. This is also evident in Lee's interview,

> Lee: there's not many situations where I'd take that option I don't think. Or maybe I would now but a couple of years ago… no. I can't think of a situation where you'd do that.
>
> Lisa: So, if you were the victim of crime you wouldn't approach the police
>
> Lee: No, I think I'd try and resolve it myself in whatever way… if I couldn't resolve it myself I'd probably, I'd have more faith in myself sorting it out than I would the police.

Both Robert and Lee reflect a pattern of non-reporting that is common amongst black communities (Long, 2016). This would suggest that the perception that they will be treated in the same way as those who are interpellated as monoracially black, excludes black mixed-race men from state protection when they are the victim of crime.

Conclusion

This article has suggested that, despite CMRS quite rightly emphasising the nuances and particularities of mixed-race experiences, many black mixed-race men believe that they share the challenges of monoracial black men. This would seem particularly acute in their dealings with the police. Thus far, scant attention has been paid to the experiences of black mixed-race men (and women's) experiences of policing. This is significant in the context of the growth of the mixed-race population, and CMRS highlighting particularities of mixedness. We have shown that many black mixed-race men feel that, under the white gaze, they are interpellated as part of a monstrous black monolith. This certainly extends to the white gaze of the police where – given the dynamics of power – the consequences can be particularly severe. Several of the participants were able to recall negative interactions with the police, and, alongside a general awareness of police racism, this resulted in negative perceptions of the police. These perceptions mean that, to ensure their safety and wellbeing, black mixed-race men respond in particular ways to negate the threat of racist policing. This is demonstrative of black mixed-race men's agency amidst the pernicious threat of white supremacy.

The accounts of black mixed-race men offer important insight into how they experience policing. Despite the insistence on particularities to mixed-race experience within the field of CMRS, we contend that there are no clear particularities which can be understood outside of the institutional context. The findings highlighted in the paper are in contrast to the evident erasure of race and mixedness in education institutions (Joseph-Salisbury, 2016). Despite stereotypes to the contrary (Small, 2002) - black mixed-race men do not experience any privilege on the basis of their proximity to whiteness and extended white sociality, in the context of police contact. Within a global system of white supremacy 'power is kept pure milky white' (Rodney, 1995: 182).

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