The usual suspects and invisible victims: Exploring
homeless youths' experiences with policing in Ottawa

by

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Abstract

There is considerable research exploring the criminalization of homelessness in Canadian cities, yet scant research attention has been devoted to exploring homeless youths' experiences with police. This study prioritizes the experiences of homeless youth themselves, to examine how they make sense of and respond to policing in Ottawa. Using a phenomenological design, the study's analysis is informed by focus groups and walking interviews conducted with homeless youth between 16 and 25 who utilize services at a drop-in-center in Ottawa. The analysis revealed two findings. First, young people felt paradoxically over-controlled and under-served in their encounters with police because of their intersecting identities as young and homeless in the city. Second, when responding to their encounters young people resisted and accepted the disciplinary and regulatory practices attached to policing in the city. To make sense of their responses I draw upon the concepts of reflexive subjectivity, affect and symbolic violence. This study adds knowledge to how young people make sense of and respond to policing in their everyday lives.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

In *The Metropolis of the Mental Life* (1903) Georg Simmel argues that urban environments allow for an anonymity that is not possible in smaller towns.

There is perhaps no psychic phenomenon so unconditionally reserved to the city as the blasé outlook. It is at first the consequence of those rapidly shifting stimulations of the nerves which are thrown together in all their contrasts and from which it seems to us the intensification of metropolitan intellectuality seems to be derived... The essence of the blasé attitude is an indifference toward the distinctions between things ([1903], 2011, p. 79).

No longer subject to invasive surveillance structures found in close-knit communities, the overload of physical and sensory experiences which urban life brings promotes a desensitized response to things and people (Frisby, 2013). In contemporary cities, there are limitations to the metropolitan psychology that Simmel proposed. While some certainly experience anonymity and emancipation from the surveillance of small town life, this experience is partial and conditional. For the young people with experiences of homelessness in my study, their encounters with police and the public more generally did reflect desensitized responses to their social and economic conditions. But, when ‘read’ within urban spaces, rather than being ‘seen past’, they were consistently recalled to their bodies as young people and the ascriptions of homelessness as both disorderly and criminal. This differentiation challenges Simmel and reflects the unequal possibilities for security and indifference within cities for the visibly marginal.

This is not a new finding; post 9/11, extensive research, both theoretical and empirical, has explored policing practices in relation to the construction of ‘risky identities’ and the regulation of bodies. For example, strategies of racial and ethnic profiling used to target young Black males, Aboriginals as well as Muslims within a

counter terrorism context, is an example of how risk has been operationally transformed from a scattered minority of individuals to a concentrated ‘suspect population’ (Mythen, 2014). In recent years, research has also emerged exploring the criminalization of homelessness, in which the criminal justice system has become part of our response to homelessness. Studies in Toronto (Gaetz, O’Grady and Buccieri, 2011) and Vancouver (Kennelly, 2011) have found that young people experiencing homelessness face inordinate police attention because of their age, visible marginality and location in the city. The irony of homeless youths’ experience as the usual bearers of suspect status is that they are the disproportionate victims of crime in Canada (Gaetz, O’Grady and Buccieri, 2010). Yet, despite reporting high rates of violent crime and sexual assault, because of their position as homeless citizens, they are frequently dismissed as undeserving victims (Huey, 2012). Their experiences as both the usual suspects and invisible victims reflect their unequal and conditional access to security vis-à-vis policing in Canadian cities.

Together, these practices raise questions about the moral basis of policing, and more broadly what security, citizenship, social inclusion and justice mean in contemporary times. For the young people in my study, these questions are neither theoretical nor academic; rather, they are lived and felt everyday. As both the suspects and victims of crime, how do young people with lived experiences of homelessness make sense of their encounters with the police and what impact does this have on their everyday ways of thinking, being and doing?

To begin to answer these questions this qualitative study explores homeless youths’ experiences with police in the city of Ottawa, from the perspective of young

people themselves. Through focus groups and walking interviews I explored three research questions: What are homeless youths' experiences with law enforcement in Ottawa? (ii) How do participants position(s) as both young and homeless, interact with formulations of 'risk' attached to law enforcements' disciplinary and regulatory practices? (iii) Do youth perceive their interactions with law enforcement as attempts to regulate their identity, and if so do young people internalize or resist these attempts?

1.1 Motivations

The motivations for exploring this topic are two-fold, to build from my undergraduate thesis research and design a project which privileges the experiences of young people themselves. I entered the Master's degree in the Sociology program at Carleton University to pursue a research project that built on the findings of my undergraduate honours thesis. In this study, I conducted focus groups with local skate park youths to examine their experiences with, and perceptions of, the police, in order to better understand from youths' perspectives what characterizes youth-police relations in a small New Brunswick town. The analysis revealed themes of identity, inclusion/exclusion, power, and resistance and added knowledge of how youth understand themselves in relation to wider communities and society. Shortly into my Master's degree, I was connected to my supervisor Dr. Jacqueline Kennelly, whose current research focuses on homeless youth. Inspired by her research and commitment to participants, I shifted my focus from skatepark youth to exploring homeless youths' experiences with the police in Ottawa. Continuing to draw on findings from my undergraduate work, I developed a research study based on three observations. First, that young people and specifically marginalized youth continue to be constructed as problems

in need of management, especially within institutions and by disciplinary bodies like the police. Second, that in advanced liberal states, risk does not translate as neutral and objective, rendering unbiased inclusionary practices and reformation, but it more often employed as a politicized tool for social exclusion and regulation (Rose, 2009; Kelly, 2006). Third, that homeless youths' encounters with policing in the city has less to do with criminal negligence and more to do with their constructions as sources of risk and danger (Kelly, 2000; 2006).

My second motivation was to devise a research project that privileged the perspectives and experiences of young people. In the early stages of this project, it became evident that if I was going to explore homeless youths' experiences with law enforcement from the perspective of youth *themselves*, then a focus on the use of policing to regulate homeless youths' identities was not sufficient. The second, and arguably more important feature of the study should be an attempt to understand, from their perspective, whether homeless young people's ways of being, doing and thinking are relational to their experiences with the police. This consideration proved pertinent to both my research design and one of the shortcomings of existing research on policing, homelessness, and youth, that is, knowledge about how young people themselves understand and respond to their encounters with policing in the city.

Driven by these two motivations, in the five chapters to follow, I will examine homeless youths' encounters with policing in Ottawa, to better understand from the perspective of young people themselves, what they mean and how they respond to them within the contexts of risk and insecurity, neoliberal governance and contemporary cities. In chapter two, I provide a brief review of studies that have explored youth-police

relations as well as homeless youths' experiences of criminalization and victimization in Canada. In chapter three, I outline theoretical concepts and approaches from the fields of critical criminology, cultural, youth and urban studies that will be used to contextualize the broader socio-political context that frames why their encounters with the police take place and how participants understand and respond to these encounters. In chapter three, I outline the methodological process I undertook to empirically and theoretically analyze participants' encounters with the police, from their perspective. In chapters four and five, I situate participants' narratives within the socio-political milieu shaping how they make sense of and respond to their encounters with policing in Ottawa. In chapter six, I consider the implications of my analysis in terms of policing, homelessness, and youth, discuss the limitations of this study, and identify future sites for research on the topic.

2 Chapter: Literature review

This chapter, organized into three sections, outlines previous research on policing, youth, and homelessness. The first section provides an overview of research exploring youth-police relations in Canada, the United States and Europe, topics of interest and research designs. The second section focuses on the criminalization of homelessness in Canada's largest cities. This section includes a discussion of the use of laws and policing practices in the Canadian response to homelessness and briefly outlines research exploring homeless youths' encounters with policing in Canada. The third section focuses on the experiences of victimization among homeless persons in Western cities. Although homeless persons report high rates of victimization their experiences are frequently dismissed and discounted by the police and public more broadly.

2.1 Youth-police relations

There is a substantial body of literature exploring youth-police relations, however scant research attention has been devoted to exploring young people's attitudes toward the police in Canada (see Wright and Peglar, 1981; Amorso and Ware, 1983; Chow, 2011). This is surprising given that police play a key role in socialization and identity formation particularly for youth facing poverty, family conflict, bullying, and other challenges (Stewart, Morris, & Weir, 2013) and youth comprise a large portion of the population likely to have contact with the police (Snyder & Sickmund, 2006). Existing studies tend to approach young people as a population "at-risk" of police contacts and analyses almost exclusively informed by quantitative measurements (see Dirikx, Gelders, & Parmentier, 2012; Brunson & Weitzer, 2008 for exceptions). This literature focuses largely on attitude development related to demographic variables including age, gender, socioeconomic class, and neighborhood (Wright and Peglar, 1981; Amorso and Ware, 1983; Brandt et al., 1994; Leiber et al., 1998; Skogan, 2005; Hinds, 2007; Chow, 2011; Taylor et al., 2012). Some of the literature emphasizes the key role played by police in socialization and identity formation, particularly for youth facing poverty, family conflict, bullying, and other challenges (Stewart, Morris, & Weir, 2013).

Although pertinent to understanding young people's experiences, the research designs used in these studies present several limitations. First, they narrowly assume relations to be either positive or negative and use measurements that fail to capture the range of experiences among different categories of youth. Second, these studies suggest single-model approaches, which are useful for formulating hard data, but fail to answer many questions, including how young people characterize their relations and why they

feel the way they do.

2.2 The criminalization of homelessness

There is considerable research exploring the criminalization of youth homelessness in the three largest Canadian cities: Toronto (Esmonde, 2002; Hermer & Mosher, 2002; Parnaby, 2003; Gaetz, O'Grady, and Buccieri, 2011), Vancouver (Sommers, et al., 2005; Kennelly, 2011) and Montreal (Bellot & Sylvestre, 2011; Douglas, 2011; Sylvestre, 2010a, b). The general finding among researchers is that the criminalization of homelessness reflects a broader concern with making poverty less visible in contemporary cities.

The criminalization of homelessness includes the use of laws to target the homeless and limit their use of public space (Hermer & Mosher, 2002). In Ontario, research has focused on the social and financial implications of the Safe Streets (2000) for homeless populations, including youth (Esmonde, 2002; Parnaby, 2003). Enacted in to address 'aggressive' panhandling and other forms of solicitation, researchers have found that in effect, the Safe Streets Act grants police broad discretion to target and exclude persons experiencing homelessness because of their poverty. Celine Bellot (2011) and Marie-Eve Sylvestre (2010a, b, 2011) examine this topic in their research on policing and homelessness in Canadian cities. Following examinations of ticketing and discretionary practices among police officers in Montreal, Ottawa, Toronto and Vancouver, they argue that targeted policing measures are being used to control spaces used by homeless persons in Canada. Other research has focused specifically on homeless youths' encounters with policing in Toronto (Gaetz, O'Grady, and Buccieri, 2011) and Vancouver (Kennelly, 2011). In both studies researchers observed that homeless youths'

experience inordinate attention from the police because of who they are and where they rather than what it is they are doing.

A key feature of the criminalization of homelessness is the practice of social profiling (Gaetz, O’Grady, and Buccieri, 2011). The difference between social profiling and criminal profiling is that the former relies on stereotypical assumptions about an individual due to his or her characteristics and the latter is used to target individuals or groups based on “actual behavior or information and reasonable suspicion” (p. 30). Borrowing language from the Ontario Human Rights Commission’s (2011) definition of racial profiling and the description of social profiling provided in the Quebec Human Rights Commission, Gaetz, O’Grady, and Buccieri (2011, p. 22) define the social profiling of homeless persons as the

. . . range of actions undertaken for safety, security or public protection, or in response to public fear, that relies on stereotypes about the danger and criminality of people who are homeless and their uses of public space (for money making, sleeping or resting), rather than on a reasonable suspicion, to be singled out for greater scrutiny or differential treatment.

When police engage in social profiling they target individuals and groups of people not on the basis of rule of law, but explicit and implicit discriminatory practices which are likely to lead to an individual’s or group’s social exclusion (Gaetz, O’Grady, & Buccieri, 2011; Kauppi & Pallard, 2015). These actions expand the scope of policing so that poverty or homelessness becomes a marker for police attention. Based on the broad interpretation by police and society more generally that young people and homeless persons are risky populations, homeless youth and especially those who are ‘street-involved’ are doubly susceptible to profiling.

2.3 Homeless youth and victimization

Prior to publishing the report, “Can I see your ID? The policing of youth homelessness in Toronto” (2011), Gaetz, O’Grady, and Buccieri published the report, “Surviving crime and violence: Street youth and victimization in Toronto” (2010). Their analysis of interviews with 244 homeless youth in Toronto revealed three findings that are relevant to this study. First, homeless youth are more likely than other youth to be the victims of crime in Canada. Second, homeless youth are unlikely to report their experiences of victimization to authority figures, including the police. Third, as victims of crime, homeless youth are not receiving the attention that other Canadian citizens would receive should similar findings be established.

In her book, *Invisible victims: Homelessness and the growing security gap* (2012), Laura Huey presents similar findings. Drawing from qualitative and ethnographic research conducted with homeless persons in San Francisco, Vancouver, and Edinburgh, Huey categorizes homeless persons as ‘hidden’ and ‘undeserving’ victims (p. 24). Hidden because they are being victimized at a rate that would not be accepted amongst other groups in the public and undeserving because they are consistently made to feel like their victimization is of their own making, and therefore unworthy of police responses. In a similar way to how ‘suspect’ people do not have to (actually) commit crimes to be identified as criminal, these studies suggest that being victimized does not necessarily equate to being recognized as a victim, raising important question(s) about who is a victim and under what conditions.

2.4 Conclusions

From the empirical research reviewed above, this study will address three points. First, the need for more qualitative studies examining youth-police relations in Canada. Second, the conclusion that homeless youths' encounters with policing are based on their positions as young, visibly marginal, and frequent users of public space (Gaetz, O'Grady, and Buccieri, 2011; Kennelly, 2011). Third, the finding that despite high rates of criminal victimization, homeless persons are constructed as the invisible victims of crime in Canada because of their marginality (Gaetz, O'Grady, and Buccieri, 2010; Huey, 2012). The first point will be addressed through this study's qualitative design (see chapter four) and the second and third points will be incorporated in the findings and analysis sections outlined in chapters four and five.

3 Chapter: Theoretical framework

In chapter three, I will outline the theoretical framework that will be used to inform my analysis in chapters five and six. This framework will be used to answer two questions. First, what are the contexts shaping the policing of homeless youth in Ottawa? Second, how do young people themselves make sense of and respond to their policing?

To answer the above questions, I have organized my theoretical framework into three sections. In the first section, I draw upon theoretical concepts and frameworks found in risk discourses, governmentality scholarship, urban studies, as well as youth studies to examine policing in the broader socio-political contexts of risk and insecurity, neoliberal governance and contemporary cities. In the second section, I discuss some of the limitations of the frameworks reviewed in section one, namely that they tell us much about what is being done *to* participants, but offer little perspective into how young people themselves make sense of and respond to these practices as biographical events. In

the third section, I will address this gap by introducing the concept of reflexive subjectivity (Farrugia, 2016) and outlining how it will be used as an analytic to examine what young people's dialogue, narratives, and opinions reveal about how they make sense of and respond to their experiences with the police in Ottawa. More specifically, I will examine how young people both resist (Campbell, 2011) and take-up (Kennelly, 2017) the disciplinary and regulatory practices attached to policing in Ottawa.

3.1 Young and homeless in the metropolis: Rights, governance, and policing

Neoliberalism and contemporary cities

To understand participants' encounters with policing practices in Ottawa, it is necessary to examine the setting and context where their encounters take place, the city. To do so, I will return to the insights of Georg Simmel. Although homeless youths' unequal possibilities for security and indifference in contemporary cities challenges one of Simmel's formative concepts - the blasé outlook - his insights into spatiality, the money economy and urban life are relevant to this study.

Within the field of urban studies, Simmel was one of the first to study the relationship between social interaction and spatial effects. While some mistakenly believe that his seminal insight was that social interaction produce various spatial effects and forms (Fearon, 2004), like Shields (1992), I take the position that Simmel's argument was that space can be interpreted as both the condition and symbol of human relations.

Simmel argues that this is best exemplified in the city. In *The Metropolis and Mental Life* [1903] he writes,

The most significant characteristic of the metropolis is this functional extension beyond its physical boundaries [. . .] Man does not end with the limits of his body or the area comprising his immediate activity. Rather is the range of the person constituted by the sum of effects emanating from him temporally and spatially. In

the same way, a city consists of total effects which extend beyond its immediate confines. Only this range is the city's actual extent in which its existence is expressed ([1903] 2011, p. 114).

The extension of the metropolis beyond its physical confines transforms the calculable aspects of life into the qualitative traits of character (ibid.), shifting the problem of 'knowing' "from one of measurement, to one of experience" (Borden 1997, p. 324). Simmel characterized this spatial condition as 'modern urbanism'.

For Simmel, urbanism is shaped by the 'money economy', where "money is constitutive of the economy and itself becomes a form of life" (Aronowitz, 1994, p. 409) representative of all relations and measures of value. Through the "continuous quantification, rationalization and reckoning of the 'objective world'" (Simmel,[1900], 2011, p. 75), he issues that 'the calculating exactness of practical life' produced by the money economy, has transformed the world into "an arithmetical problem . . . fixing every one of its parts in a mathematical formula." (p. 133). In the city, this results in the extension of quantification processes from strictly economic domains to the social world, transforming what was previously appraised qualitatively into quantitative measures (ibid.).

Following the shift from industrialism to post-industrialism, in contemporary cities urbanism is shaped and propelled through the governing rationality of neoliberalism,

The theory of political economic practices that proposes that human well-being can best be advanced by liberating individual entrepreneurial freedoms and skills within an institutional framework characterized by strong private property rights, free markets and free trade (Harvey 2005, p. 9).

Although few have extended Simmel's insights to investigations of neoliberal rationality (see Dodd 2012; Lightfoot and Lilley 2014), at the core of both systems is the diffusion of economic rationalism into noneconomic domains of the social world. However, unlike

the monetization Simmel observed, which he limited to objects and the conversion of capital into social position, the dissemination of financialized market context within the contexts of neoliberalism, extends the market to everything and everyone. In a very specific way, “every field of activity is seen as a market, and every entity. . .is governed as a firm” (Shenk, 2015, pp. 10). Constructed as market actors, submitted to market metrics, and governed through market practices, individuals “must constantly tend to their own present and future value” (ibid., pp. 10). Within this context, cities operate as sites of circulation and exchange (see Sassen, 2005) and human bodies are rendered ‘fungible’, which, in theoretical terms, collapses both substance and function. This is evident in the criminalization of homelessness, where

Policing practices to ‘rid’ the city of visibly marginal persons become justified as necessary to the broader strategy of sanitizing modern cities; to help engender a much more positive image of the city and its ‘citizens,’ thus attracting industry, capital and creative persons in an increasingly competitive global market (O’Grady, Gaetz, and Buccieri 2011, p. 14).

In contrast to the “calculative exactness of practical life” ([1903], 2011, p. 26) that Simmel saw as an effect of the money economy in the early twentieth century, as sites of exchange and circulation, the permeation of neoliberalism in contemporary cities is better described as the “calculability of entrepreneurial life” (Lilley & Lightfoot, 2014, p. 75), operating through a self-reinforcing mechanism of increasing rates of production and consumption.

Citizenship and youth homelessness

Neoliberalism has also impacted how models of citizenship are defined and imagined. Existing models are exclusive and based on the understanding that rights are linked to whether an individual is exercising civic responsibilities. For those who deviate, either

because they refuse or cannot exercise these responsibilities, they come to face exclusionary practices. These practices might include unequal and conditional access to social and legal rights (Young 1999; Huey 2012), for example, whether a person is seen to be ‘worthy’ or ‘unworthy’ of the security and protection provided by policing. For homeless persons who are framed as symbols of urban disorder and face stereotypes which associate them with indolence and irresponsibility, they are deemed unworthy.

For the criminal justice system, and indeed many criminologists, the homeless citizen is a public risk that can no longer be rehabilitated but must instead be managed through actuarial, target-hardening, and other preventative and/or prophylactic measures (Huey, 2012, p. 22).

This is also true for homeless youth, whose age and marginality positions them as even more susceptible to social exclusion.

At-risk youth and policing

Drawing on the governmentality tradition, neoliberalism has brought about two important effects for individuals. First, the diffusion of financial and economic logics into social domains (Brown, 2015; Farrugia, 2016). Second, the reimagining of the ‘subject’ as an active, responsible, entrepreneurial and productive consumer (Rose, 1996; Jessop, 1996; Farrugia, 2016). Under these conditions individuals must manage their biographies as “choosing, deciding individual[s]. . . who can no longer just ‘be’, but must continuously produce themselves as a project to work upon” (Farrugia, 2016, p. 48). This form of probabilistic thinking is also being used as an assessment for whether young people’s behavior and dispositions are reflective of them becoming ‘ideal’ neoliberal subjects, and like citizenship models appear to be informing neoliberal institutional arrangements, like policing (Bauman, 2007; Huey, 2012).

Dovetailing with neoliberal assumptions, developmental discourses of youth position young people as moving on a trajectory from dependence and irrationality to a mature and independent adulthood. How this is determined is in large part by the markers Kelly (2006) identifies as ‘initiative’; ‘enterprise’ and ‘responsibility’. For ‘at-risk’ young people - like the homeless youth in this study- who fail to demonstrate these markers because of their visible marginality, unemployment and experiences of victimization, through the technology of risk and risk-factor analysis, these issues are seen as individual attributes rather than the consequences of institutional deficiencies or material inequalities (Kelly, 2006; Farrugia, 2016). Failing to demonstrate that they are on the pathway to ‘productive’ adulthood, homeless youth and other at-risk young people face resentment and intervention by institutions like policing. In effect, “[f]or young people, neoliberal governmentality is central to the emergence of risk as a means by which to govern disadvantage” (Farrugia, 2016, p. 22).

Policing homeless youth

In an age of security consciousness, the government has become increasingly concerned with developing connected, coherent, and efficient strategies to identify, standardize and manage risk conditions, behaviors, and groups. This includes risk assessment practices and trajectories which construct young people “. . . as repositories of risk factors with predetermined risk trajectories ripe for intervention” (Kemshall, 2008, p. 26).

Unfortunately, risk is harnessed as a politicized tool synonymous with social exclusion and moralized ways of governing tied to neoliberalism (Hannah-Moffat, 1999; Rose, 2000). The resulting circuits of inclusion and exclusion are based on neoliberal practices of ‘responsibilization’, ‘individualization’ and ‘standardization’ of groups, and are used

to encourage individuals as enterprises to conduct themselves in accordance with approved models of action (Kelly, 2006).

Operating through risk logics of identification and management as well as acting as the ‘gate keepers’ to the criminal justice system, they exercise disciplinary and regulatory effects explicitly through physical exclusion (e.g. arrest, detention) and less invasively through exclusionary practices used to identify and target the ‘usual suspects’. As young people with experiences of homelessness, participants in this study face intersecting identities as both homeless, an ‘undesirable’ group in society (Farrugia, 2016), and young people, a group who are thought to ‘naturally’ experiment and ‘take risks’ (Kelly, 2003). Perceived as potential threats to both citizens and the economy, police associate homeless youth with criminality and urban disorder, resulting in inordinate police attention provisional upon who they are and where they are, rather than what it is they are doing (Kennelly, 2011; Gaetz, O’Grady & Buccieri, 2011). Constructed as ‘at-risk’ and ‘dangerous’, their designation as the usual bearers of suspect status draws attention away from the issues that they face and results in ‘dividing practices’ that will be discussed in greater detail in chapter five.

3.2 Limitations

The theoretical perspectives outlined in section one “equip us with a camera to take snapshots of the world” (Mythen, 2014, p. 132), but fail to attend to the operationalization of disciplinary and regulatory policing practices in young peoples’ everyday lives. To begin to understand how young people understand and respond to their encounters with policing, it is necessary to measure the ‘bigger pictures’, framed by the socio-political contexts reviewed above, with the ‘fine-grain pictures’ provided by

young people in discussions. In the section to follow, I will describe how the concept of reflexive subjectivity will be used as an analytic site to examine how young people make sense of and respond to their encounters with policing in the city. I will also discuss possible attachments or detachments young people may feel towards the police and introduce responses young people revealed, resistance and incorporation.

3.3 Reflexive subjectivity: Policing symbols, resistance and symbolic violence

Reflexive subjectivity

David Farrugia (2016) uses the concept of reflexive subjectivity to understand homeless youths' responses to structural insecurity in late modernity. Reflexive subjectivity is the "site at which wider processes are played out at the level of individual biographies. . .[and] . . . signifying elements intersect to construct the thinking and feeling subject" (p. 49).

In chapter five, this concept is used to demonstrate that although participants understand their encounters with policing as 'biographical events', how they feel about and respond to these encounters is embedded in, and articulates the broader socio-political contexts of their encounters. More specifically, this concept will be used as an analytic site to examine the dynamics of power and privilege which help to construct homeless youth as sources of moral, social, and economic 'risk' requiring management, how this construction is reinforced and reproduced in participants' encounters with policing, as well as how young people themselves make sense of this dynamic. To analyze this dynamic, I will examine the forms of resistance and legitimization young people's narratives about their encounters with policing reveal.

Policing symbols

Preventing crime, identifying and managing offenders as well as maintaining order in the community, police officers are set apart from ‘civilians’ and other forms of law enforcement by their uniform and position. With the role of serving and protecting the security of citizens and order of communities, policing remains closely tied to people’s sense of ontological security and collective identity, and is capable of generating high, emotionally charged levels of identification among citizens.

Through their presence, performance, and voice, police institutions are able to evoke, affirm, reinforce, or (even) undermine the social relations and belief systems of political communities, serving, in particular, as a vehicle through which ‘recognition’ within such communities is claimed, accorded, or denied. Policing is, in short, closely bound up with how political order and identity are represented and ‘imagined’ (Loader and Mulchay 2003, p. 40).

For some, the symbol of policing evokes feelings of “order, authority, and protection; it makes it possible for people to believe that a powerful force for good stands between them and an anarchic world, that the state is willing and able to defend its citizens” (ibid., p. 44). But for others, especially groups likely to interact with the police (e.g. young people, racialized populations, the poor), symbols of policing may provoke feelings of fear and trepidation. Citing reoccurring experiences of being over-policed and under protected by the police in Ottawa, for participants in this study the symbols of policing in Ottawa conjured complex feelings and responses including resistance to and incorporation of the disciplinary and regulatory practices attached to policing practices.

Following Dillabough & Kennelly’s (2010) assertion that “young people need to be seen as both suffering and acting” (p. 40), when analyzing how participants negotiate and respond to the disciplinary and regulatory functions embedded within their encounters with the police, I cannot assume that they identify with police attempts to

impose dominant rhetorics and encourage participants to conduct themselves in accordance with *approved* models of action (Kelly, 2006) on “purely instrumental grounds” (Campbell, 2011, p. 35). Instead, as I will argue in chapter five, their responses reveal that young people both resist and legitimize the structures of policing.

Resistance

To examine participants’ resistance to policing in Ottawa, I look to Elaine Campbell’s (2010) theoretical piece exploring the emotional life of governmental power. In this article, Campbell challenges some of the precepts of the governmentality thesis, including assumptions made about rationality and processes of subjectification in relation to existing modes of governance. She argues that “questions of government, power and politics, morality and ethics can never be solely matter of cognition and reason” (p. 37) and encourages readers to consider how desire, affect and sensate life are “implicated in processes of subjectivities” as well as how “emotionalities of rule” shape how we feel about ourselves and others (p. 38). Pertinent to my study is Campbell’s discussion of the potential for individuals to lose confidence in the work of government and the effects this loss of confidence can provoke. Applying Campbell’s analysis, I will demonstrate that when young people lose confidence in the police, their loss of confidence may provoke accompanying feelings of distrust, anger, fear, frustration and confusion, or otherwise provoke the necessary affective conditions to underwrite and resist the deployment of liberal/illiberal modes of governance including law enforcement’s attempts to manage, monitor and regulate homeless youths’ identities. Participants’ forms of resistance were identified in their contempt for police officers and policing in the city as well as their

conscious and unconscious self-reflexive choices to opt out, ignore, and disassociate from the disciplinary and regulatory practices of policing in the city.

To examine why some young people legitimized and supported their experiences with the police, I will build from Jacqueline Kennelly's (2017) application of symbolic violence as it relates to marginalized young people. First defined by Pierre Bourdieu (2000), symbolic violence refers to mechanisms of domination which are exerted through symbolic forms rather than overt physical force (Bjorkert & Morgan, 2006). For researchers working with young people, the concept is useful when trying to understand and articulate how young people incorporate dominant state-led narratives into their sense of selves (Kennelly, 2017). Although Kennelly does not deny that young people may contest state-led discourses of the dominant field as neither 'common' nor reasonable, citing Bourdieu, she argues that they can never be "entirely free of the State nor of the field in which we are located" (p. 149). This means that even though some participants may challenge and/or resist the governance structures of policing, they will inevitably internalize, 'take-up', and legitimize the dominant narratives attached to policing in the city. Participants' experiences of symbolic violence were revealed by their feelings of inadequacy, legitimation, and acceptance of their encounters with policing in Ottawa.

3.4 Conclusions

In my findings and analysis chapters, I will use the theoretical framework outlined above, as well as a phenomenological approach to analysis detailed in Chapter 4, to examine how the contexts of risk and insecurity, neoliberal governance, and contemporary cities are shaping young people's encounters with policing in Ottawa.

Using a phenomenological approach (Chapter 4), my task as researcher will not only be to describe participants' experiences with the police, but to interpret what these experiences conceal about their social conditions (Poyntz & Kennelly, 2015). To do so, I will situate the dialogue, narratives, and reflections young people shared during focus groups and walking interviews within the socio-political contexts of risk and insecurity, neoliberal governance and contemporary cities reviewed in the first part of this chapter, to better understand their experiences with the police. In line with my phenomenological design, in Chapter 5, the concept of reflexive-subjectivity will be used as an analytic site to examine how young people make sense of and respond to their encounters with the police. This approach requires examining young people's responses to the police within a framework that considers historical as well as social context. Together these analyses will reveal three important conclusions about the possibilities for who homeless young people can be, how they position themselves, and how they respond vis-à-vis policing in Ottawa. First, homeless youths' encounters with policing help to reinforce, and reproduce their designation as sources of risk in contemporary cities. Second, this designation is harnessed as a tool to govern their disadvantage, including their behaviors, use of spaces in the city, and access to security. Third, young people respond to their encounters with policing through forms of resistance and experiences of symbolic violence.

4 Chapter: Methods and methodology

This phenomenological study utilized a qualitative research methodology to explore homeless youths' experiences with the police in Ottawa. This methodology was selected because I was interested in examining homeless youths' experiences with police, from

the perspective of youth themselves. Following Sarah Tracy's guide to qualitative research design (2013), this chapter outlines my study's qualitative design, phenomenology, data collection, analysis and limitations.

4.1 Qualitative design

Taking a 'phronetic approach'¹ to research (Flyvbjerg, 2001; Tracy, 2013), this study was designed to be qualitative. Qualitative research offers a means for studying contexts, people's lived experiences and the wider social world. Homeless youth are typically marginalized and unheard persons in society; the qualitative design of this study was used to capture participants' first hand experiences with the police. This approach supplements existing studies on the topic of youth-police relations, which are almost exclusively quantitative and approach youth narrowly as a population "at-risk" of police contacts and arrests.

4.2 Phenomenology

Phenomenology is an appropriate philosophic methodology to investigate homeless youths' experiences with the police because the "focus on meaning making" is based on the experiences of youth themselves (Poyntz & Kennelly, 2015). Youth homelessness is a manifestation of contemporary inequalities and a "site for the construction of moral distinctions between individuals and groups" (Farrugia 2016, p. 69). Rather than voice-centered interpretations void of historical and social contexts, phenomenological research designs prioritize youths' experiences within a much larger historical framework (Poyntz & Kennelly, 2015).

Phenomenology is a philosophical approach used to understand human relations. Phenomenology can be traced back to the works of Kant and Hegel, and as a method Edmund Husserl (1965; 2012), Maurice Merleau-Ponty (1964; 2004) and Paul Ricoeur (1975; 1996) are frequently cited. While some researchers offer ‘steps’ for undertaking phenomenological research (see Moustakas 1994), there is no single phenomenological method. Extending research designs found in Poyntz & Kennelly’s (2015) edited collection, my study is an empirical application of phenomenological thinking.

Young people’s lives are complex, unfolding along multiple trajectories which are far from absolute. Taking a “mediated reflexive and distantiated view” (Dillabough & Kennelly, 2010, p. 41), at the outset of my phenomenological design was the reading of young people’s contemporary expressive forms and what they reveal about participant’s “cultural formations” (p. 41). Central to this approach was an exploration of *intersubjectivity* within human experience, or put simply, the understanding that when we interact with each other we affect each other (Poyntz & Kennelly, 2015). This premise aligns with Habermas’s intersubjective approach to power and modernity demonstrated in his theory of communicative action and discourse². Habermas posits that all human social life is based upon processes for establishing reciprocal understandings which are universal (Flyvberg, 2001). Rather than exploring intersubjectivity in the idealist sense, viewing my participants as “universal thinkers”, I interpreted my participants’ experiences as, at once, individualized, situated and embodied and connected to the wider social world (Poyntz & Kennelly, 2015; Schwartz-Shea & Yanow, 2013; Ahmed, 2006).

4.3 Data collection

This qualitative study used phenomenological inquiry through focus groups and walking interviews to capture homeless youths' experiences with the police in Ottawa. This approach was used to explore the subjective aspects of homeless youths' experiences vis-à-vis police, from their frames of reference. Ricoeur (1996) sees the hermeneutic idea of subjectivity as a "dialectic between the self and mediated social meanings which have deep moral and political implications" (p. 30). Participants' discussions about police in Ottawa revealed these deeper social meanings, including ways participants make sense of their "complex cultural, spatial, moral and historical milieu" (p. 43) and represent themselves in contemporary urban imaginaries.

4.4 Sampling

Guided by my research questions, I recruited youth from a homeless youth drop-in centre in Ottawa. The inclusion criteria for the study was based on the drop-in center's service criteria, which is available to youth between the ages of 16 and 25 who are experiencing, have previously experienced or who are at risk of experiencing homelessness.

4.5 Recruitment

Staff at the organization were responsible for recruiting participants. Using the information sheet provided (Appendix B), staff explained the project to potential participants and posted the recruitment sign-up sheet (Appendix A). The letter introduced myself, stated the purpose of my study, described the research and clarified the procedures, confidentiality, as well as risks and benefits. The risks were minimal as participants chose whether they disclosed personal information and were informed that they could withdraw from the study at any time and have their data destroyed.

Participants signed up for the focus groups and were informed that they would receive a \$20 honorarium for approximately one hour of their time.

4.6 Consent

On dates determined by staff, I met interested participants in the upstairs of the drop-in space. Following the informed consent process, I verbally introduced myself, explained why participants were recruited, the purpose of the study, time commitment, potential risks and how they were managed, the voluntary nature of the study, confidentiality, and contacts and questions. Prior to beginning, participants were asked to review and sign the consent forms if they would like to participate. Participants were also reminded before and again throughout discussions, that they could opt out of the study at any time and would still receive compensation.

4.7 Focus groups

Two focus groups were conducted with a total of 16 participants. Seven youth participated in the first focus group; all identified as male. Seven youth were between the ages of 18 and 25. Only one participant was younger than 18; this participant was also the only visibly racialized participant. To account for potential gender differences and power imbalances, my intention was to have one focus group with young people who identified as male and the other focus group with young people who identified as female. Research shows that males make-up a large percentage of young people who identify as homeless and who utilize services (Gaetz, O'Grady, Kidd, Schwan, 2016). This finding was reiterated by staff at the drop-in centre prior to recruitment and again during focus groups, when only one female signed up to participate in the second focus group. Unable to conduct a focus group with only one person, I opted to open the focus group to young

males. Shortly after beginning the focus group, another female participant joined the discussion. In total, nine youth participated in the second focus group, consisting of two females and seven males. All but one were White, and all were between the ages of 18 and 24.

Focus groups were organized in three sections: thermometer activity, policing film and thought provoking questions. Using a semi-structured question guide, opinion statements, generative, and directive questions were devised to explore participants' feelings, beliefs and convictions regarding their experiences of police, construction of identity and whether these phenomena intersect (Groenewald, 2004). Statements and questions were phrased in a general and nondirective manner, allowing respondents to share unique experiences in their own terms. Although the questions were pre-determined, conversations were flexible and adaptable to investigate participants' individual and shared experiences.

In the first section, participants were given a series of opinion statements. Following each statement, young people were instructed to move along an imaginary 'thermometer' towards the sign that best reflects their opinion ('agree' or 'disagree' or anywhere in the middle, see Kennelly, 2017). Participants were informed that their response to statements was based on opinion and subsequently there were no right or wrong answers. Once participants settled, they were asked at random if they would be willing to explain why they positioned themselves as agreeing, disagreeing or being uncertain about the statement. This exercise allowed participants to engage with the theme of the focus group and share their knowledge without necessarily having to speak. In addition, the probes used following each statement gave participants the opportunity to reflect upon why they

agreed or disagreed with the statement. In the second section, participants returned to their seats and were shown a short film featuring homeless youth discussing their experiences with the police. This film is attached to Dr. Kennelly's research project "Encountering Democracy: Low Income Canadian Youths' Perspectives on Citizenship and Democratic Processes" and is freely available at www.jacquelinekennelly.ca/encountering-democracy. The film was used to prompt verbal reactions and influence the direction of discussions (Tracy, 2013). In the final section, participants were asked a series of open-ended and generative questions about their experiences with the police, perceptions of the police, and ways to improve the relationship between homeless youth and the police.

Why Focus Groups?

Defined by the dialogical process and social influences, focus groups are a useful tool for eliciting stories that help researchers gain access to participants' actual lived experience. They are an effective platform for participants to provide accounts; reveal specific vocabulary and language about their actions; as well as provide information and context for issues that cannot be observed or efficiently accessed (Tracy, 2013). Focus group discussions also help to strengthen and/or complicate other data, providing a forum for participants to verify, refute, or defend existing findings (ibid.)

Some researchers have argued that phenomenology and focus groups are incompatible, arguing that because the goal of phenomenological research is to advance the essential characteristics or "essences" of phenomena then a phenomenological approach must focus on an individual describing their experiences in an uncontaminated way (Webb and Kevern 2001, p. 800) . Like others (see Bradbury-Jones, Sambrook,

Irvine, 2009), I take the position that focus groups enhance rather than contaminate phenomenological research. Acknowledging that individual experiences are at the core of phenomenological research and that analytical emphasis is on subjective, idiosyncratic perceptions of the individual participant, this does not mean that individual accounts need to necessarily be sought by one researcher from one, single participant. Within a phenomenological framework, the primary advantages of focus groups are twofold: “the enrichment of data as a result of participants reflecting on and sharing their experiences, and clarification and checking for understanding both among participants and between participants and researcher” (Bradbury-Jones, Sambrook, Irvine 2009, p. 662). Moreover, it can be argued that such advantages combine to enhance rather than hinder methodological rigor (Côté-Arsenault & Morrison-Beedy 2001) and for my project are especially useful, because they help to reveal intersubjective experiences shaped in relation to one another.

Central to my phenomenological inquiry was the intent to understand the world from participants’ point of view, unfolding the meaning of their experience (Kvale, 1996). Given that risk of experiencing ‘homelessness’ was a social phenomenon shared among participants, focus groups were effective for exploring how youth reacted to and shared or differed in their experiences with the police (Tracy, 2013). Challenging positivist traditions of research that suppose the existence of an objective social world external from research, I did not conduct focus groups as a means of establishing explanatory and predictive theories or “what really happened. . .” (Shwartz & Yanow, 2012, p. 22). Instead, I examined participants’ narratives as co-constructed. Rather than producing a mirror or straightforward representation of participants’ realities, discussions revealed a

polyphony of voices and intersubjectively constructed ‘truths’. Phenomenological focus-groups are also useful for cross-checking and clarifications (Côté-Arsenault & Morrison-Beedy 2001; Bradbury-Jones, Sambrook, Irvine 2009), which is effective when findings appear contradictory.

4.8 Walking interviews

Following each focus group, participants were asked to participate in an optional walking interview for which they would receive an additional \$20 honorarium. Interviews were completed consecutively with two youth at a time for a duration of approximately thirty minutes each. In pairs and beginning at the drop-in centre, participants were instructed to lead a walk, keeping in mind the theme and discussions of the focus groups. During the walking interview, youth were asked about places they had encountered the police, their friends or people they knew who had encountered the police, and areas they would expect to see or not expect to see the police. Four walking interviews were conducted with a total of eight participants, two following the first focus group and two following the second group; of the eight participants, six were male and two were female.

The walking tour as a research tool offers a nuanced way of exploring “two aspects of everyday life experience: the constitutive role and the transcendent meaning of the physical environment, or place” (Kusenbach 2003, pp. 464). In contrast to focus groups which emphasize dialogue or field observations typically concentrated on solitary observations grounded by the researcher’s individual reference points, the method of the walking interview allows for an exploration of a participant’s physical environment and their membership in this environment. Walking interviews were an opportunity for participants to share information about themselves, their peers, their lifestyle, and the

city, both related and unrelated to policing. As frequent users of public space, young people shared how they used spaces in the city for everyday activities including sleeping and hanging out with peers as well as the relationship between policing and different areas and spaces in the city. For example, young people felt that some spaces in the city were more heavily policed than others. In addition, walking interviews enabled an exploration of young people's embodied knowledge, including how they carried themselves in particular spaces, how they interacted with other people on the street, and provided other avenues for participants to share their knowledge. For myself, walking interviews were a developmental exercise as a researcher. Although I had to re-direct conversations at times, for the most part I was being guided by young people themselves. Although this meant having much less control over the research environment (e.g. distractions, noise, interactions) than when conducting focus-groups in the drop-in-center, it provided an excellent platform for young people to contextualize their encounters with the police and city spaces more broadly.

Transcription and storage

All interviews were audio recorded to capture verbatim language and voice inflections. I transcribed digital recordings to ensure quality. To protect participants' identities, pseudonyms were assigned. Acts of naming are both political and personal (Allen & Wiles, 2015) and during focus groups and walking interviews participants were given the opportunity to negotiate how they were to be named and represented in the study. Participants were given the choice to choose their own names. If they elected not to, I assigned them a pseudonym. All collected data was stored and managed in a locked filing cabinet in my home office. In addition, audio recordings and their transcripts were

saved on a secured and password protected USB and backed up on a secure external hard drive.

4.9 Ethical research, power and reflexivity

Following Carleton University's Research Ethics Board protocols, this project underwent an ethical review, which required me to calculate the potential benefits and harms of my research. Although this process was valuable for both the research design and execution of my study, as David Farrugia (2016) contends, "[e]thical research cannot merely be designed in advance, but is an intersubjectively negotiated and embodied experience that takes place within the symbolic economy of youth homelessness" (p. 151). Sharing Farrugia's position, I opted to carry out a research design which, in addition to meeting the university's requirements, was reflexive, critically engaged with the social construction of youth inequalities and produced spaces to recognize youth identities as well as privilege their experiences (ibid).

For some participants, I felt I accomplished these feats during discussions. Following both focus groups and walking interviews, several participants were candid in their appreciation of being able to share their experiences with the police and have them heard. In Farrugia's (2016) reflections of his own interviewing experiences with homeless youth, he writes that "[w]hen young people were invested in the interview as a scene of recognition, interviews became encounters in which an empathic other could bear witness to experiences that are made invisible by the trope of the 'homeless person' that circulates within public representations" (p. 157). Like Farrugia, rather than providing a space for participants to simply rearticulate their suffering, I felt participants left focus group discussions with a greater acknowledgement for what they may have interpreted as

their ‘personal’ experiences with the police, as a ‘public concern’ with both meaning and value (ibid). Feeling as though I had succeeded in providing a space of recognition typically denied to the young people in my study as well as fulfilling my desire to be an ‘ethical researcher’, my own ‘moral worth’ was boosted.

Optimistic about the potential of my research to benefit participants’ lives - even if only marginally - I was not prepared for the experience of causing harm to a participant. Cairo, a young male accessing services at the drop-in-centre and participant in my second focus group, did not share other participants’ interest in my project. While others were eager to share their opinions, Cairo elected not to participate in discussions, spending the majority of the time on his phone. Wanting to respect his boundaries and avoid placing undue pressure to participate, I checked in with Cairo periodically to ask if he had anything to add to the discussion; each time he curtly responded “no”. Near the end of the focus group, Cairo entered the conversation to ask if we were done, I responded by informing him that he did not have to continue and would still receive compensation. Interrupting, Jimmy challenged Cairo, saying, “what’s your problem man, I know you hate the police...like... just chill-out”. Intervening, I assured the group that if he did not want to participate he did not have to. Cairo retorted, telling Jimmy to “fuck off”. Before storming out and not audible in the audio-recording, Cairo looked at me to say, “this is fucking bullshit”. Both support staff and participants quickly dismissed Cairo’s reaction as normal. Troubled by the encounter, but prompted by participants and staff to continue, I wrapped up the focus group.

Having conducted qualitative research with young people in the past, it is not uncommon to have participants who are quiet or disinterested in the topic being

discussed. Yet, Cairo's body language, including rolling his eyes, crossing his arms, and refusing to participate, in addition to his parting comments, suggest that he took issue with the focus group, the research process and perhaps me personally. While he offered little explicit insight into why he found the process to be "bullshit", it was evident that while other participants saw discussions as productive, for Cairo, the process had incited hostility and ultimately inflicted harm. Subsequently, in stark contrast to the feelings of validation I felt after my first focus group, Cairo's reaction troubled me, causing me to call into question not only the purpose of my research project but the qualitative research process more broadly.

Beyond the ethical concerns I was grappling with, I found myself acutely aware of focus groups as intersubjective encounters between both participants and myself. When young people responded positively to my research, I benefited. The recognition from most participants provided me with a moral boost. In contrast, Cairo's negative response left me feeling as though my efforts to produce meaningful spaces for young people to share their experiences had only further perpetuated the experience of suffering and conflict participants felt in their everyday lives. These feelings point to the nature of focus groups and interviews as intersubjective encounters between both participants and interviewee (Farrugia, 2016; Poyntz and Kennelly, 2015).

Consequently, although I engaged in careful consideration for ethical design both prior and during field work through reflexivity and attempting to balance my theoretical orientations, personal characteristics and the practical contingencies of the field, Cairo's experience was a powerful reminder that even the most careful research design can result in consequences that are outside the researcher's control.

4.10 Data analysis strategy

Focus groups were recorded and then transcribed. For each focus group, I produced two transcriptions: the first is verbatim transcription of exactly what was said. The second copy is an edited version that I refined so that the document reads more coherently. The editing process involved eliminating the majority of the non-lexical conversation sounds, such as “um,” “hm,” or “uh”. By employing thematic analysis, I was able to interpret what the themes meant in the context of my research question, as well as how they related to one another.

Using a phenomenological approach, I used a technique of constant comparison of emerging themes and properties. To code my data, I used thematic analysis that allowed me to identify relevant themes and categories within the data and how the themes related to each other. The analysis of data took place throughout the research process. I did not complete the literature review until after the data was collected. The use of thick description (Ponterotto, 2006) enabled me to contextualize participants’ stories and experiences, helping me to explain the significance of certain behaviors and attitudes that arose. I also drew on several theories to formulate my discussion and make sense of the data. In sum, the use of constant comparison of the data within a phenomenological framework allowed for themes specific to the research setting to emerge, while the use of existing theory allowed me to further explain the relevance of said themes to readers.

My findings section is divided into two chapters. The first chapter outlines participants’ encounters with policing in Ottawa and is divided into three themes: over-policing, under-protection, and us versus them. In the second findings chapter, I focus on participants’ subjective reflexivity as an analytical site to examine what their narratives

reveal about how they feel about and respond to policing in Ottawa. This chapter is also divided into three themes: affective intensities, resistance, and symbolic violence.

5 Chapter: “It’s us versus them”: Over policed and under protected

In this chapter, I outline participants’ encounters with policing in the city of Ottawa. In line with my phenomenological approach, I invoke a narrative form which makes space for participants’ experiences to become itself without treating these experiences as innocent or isolated (Dillabough and Kennelly, 2010). This requires that I situate participants’ encounters within the broader socio-political contexts of risk and insecurity, neoliberal governance, and contemporary cities. Discussions with participants revealed that like homeless youth in Toronto (Gaetz, O’Grady and Buccieri, 2011), participants reported feeling over-policed and under protected by police officers because of their age, appearance, manner, and location in the city. Their encounters helped to construct what young people understood as an ‘us versus them’ mentality. In the sections to follow, I organize their narratives under the following three headings: Over-policed: The usual suspects of crime in Ottawa; Under protected: The invisible victims of crime; and Dividing lines: Us versus them.

5.1 The usual suspects of crime

To open each focus group, I asked participants if they had encountered the police in the past twelve months as either the suspects or victims of crime. Every participant raised their hand to indicate yes. Their responses were not surprising. Previous studies have found that homeless youth receive more police attention than young people from the general public and are also more likely to be the victims of crime (Gaetz, O’Grady and

Buccieri, 2011). Despite high rates of victimization among homeless young people, there was consensus among participants in both focus groups, in that most of their encounters and interactions with police were as suspects of crimes. Sometimes, this was because they had committed a crime or offense e.g. violating their probation, consuming and/or selling drugs, fighting or shoplifting. But more frequently, they felt that their encounters were unwarranted. When probed, participants shared that they felt that police were suspicious of them because of a combination of their age, socioeconomic status, lifestyle, and/or location.

During one walking interview, myself and two other participants were walking along a fairly busy street in downtown Ottawa close to restaurants, shopping, residential living as well as the downtown shelters for homeless youth, when DJ stopped and pointed across the street to what appeared to be a parking lot of an auto-repair shop located at the corner of a busy intersection. As we proceeded to cross the street to the parking lot, DJ shared an incident he and a friend had with the police in this downtown space.

DJ: See that parking lot? A couple weeks ago me and my buddy were just hanging out and killing time. But this cruiser rolls up and two cops start interrogating us. We were seriously minding our own business, but they were accusing us saying “we know you’re doing something”, asking us what drugs we were on. Then, they pointed at the friend I was with, I won’t mention his name. But yeah, he’s from some middle eastern country and the police, no joke, look at me and are like “What about your friend? How do we know he’s not going to go blow something up?”.

DJ’s reflection was significant for two reasons. First, he had not brought this story up during focus group discussions; the walking interview had prompted him to remember or to share the incident. Second, DJ shared the encounter using his own reference points, pointing to where he and his friend were standing, where they had been approached by the police, allowing him to set the scene without having to describe it. As the interviewer,

I was exposed to details and contexts that are sometimes lost in focus groups or interviews that usually take place in locations removed from where young people encounter the police.

Billy similarly shared that he felt that his and his friends' encounters with policing in the city often had less to do with crimes they had committed and more to do with the discretion police use when patrolling the city.

Billy: That's true man, like no commands, they just come up to me and my friends and assume we are doing bad things, because we're young. I mean... sometimes we are. But, a lot of the times we aren't or just smoking a J. I know lots of adults who do worse stuff and I don't hear of them getting hauled or harassed.

Reiterating dominant youth developmental discourses, which position young people as moving on a trajectory from dependence and irrationality to a mature and independent adulthood, Billy shares that he feels police use discretion with young people based on the widely-held assumption that they are more likely than adults to engage in risk-behaviors. Others rationalized that discretion and ill-treatment of young people by the police is to be expected, especially for disadvantaged and deviant young people.

Reign: I think they may treat people unfair, like different young people unfair. Especially if you're known to the cop or have a record.

Dame: I agree that police treat young people unfairly. But, if you are some kid living in Rockcliffe [wealthy Ottawa neighborhood] who plays chess. . .or drives a nice car. . . they aren't going to accuse him of stuff.

Billy [in response to Dame]: Oh yeah, and he would probably cry to their mom if they did.

[laughter among group]

Although the conversation above was comedic to participants, their remarks were still very powerful. Reign, Dame, and Billy felt that certain features, including engaging in

‘desirable’ behaviors like chess, living in a particular area of the city, and not having previous interactions with the police determined how they and others were treated by the police.

Following neoliberal models of citizenship, individuals are expected to actively protect themselves against risks including poverty, criminality and victimization by taking individual responsibility, self-disciplining and contributing to the economy by both working and consuming goods (Sommers, 2011; Kennelly 2011, 2015). Those who refuse, or are unable to meet these expectations, face resentment and intervention by various institutions, including the police. Discussing youth citizenship, Kennelly (2011) divides youth into two categories: citizens-in-waiting and non-citizens. The difference between these two categories of young people is that the former has the potential for redemption while the latter does not and requires management. How this is determined is in large part by markers, which Kelly (2006) identifies as ‘initiative’, ‘enterprise’ and ‘responsibility’, and other appropriate citizenship virtues. This form of probabilistic thinking used to assess whether young people’s behavior and dispositions are reflective of them becoming ‘ideal’ citizens appears to be informing institutional practices, including policing.

Class and Appearance

Youth who participated in my study also felt that socioeconomic status was a marker for police discretion and their determinants of practice. They insisted that their clothing and bodily aesthetic affected whether they were approached by police, maintaining that ‘looking good’ was an indicator to the police of whether or not they were ‘being good’

Dame: If someone is rich or nice looking, they don’t go after them.

Mack: If you look like you live on the street they assume you are on drugs and harass or book you.

Danni: It definitely has to do with like what you're wearing. Like, if I am walking around in this tattered up jacket and like just looking like I got my clothes from the Salvation Army, then like they know I'm on the streets and they approach me. But, if I'm looking. . . I don't know . . . *good*. . . then they walk past me.

In individualized societies, bodies are subject to the logic of commodification and consumption and people are expected to consume and display the 'right' type of body for the visual consumption of others. Those who refuse or who are unable to demonstrate this hygiene and clothing face stigmatization (Bauman, 2007; Farrugia, 2016). Although Dame, Mack and Danni made broad statements about police discretion based on class markers, in focus groups they sported clothing that was noticeably worn (e.g. ripped, dirty, faded), displayed poor hygiene (e.g. matted hair, body odors), and it is likely that they themselves faced stigmatization and judgement from police and the public.

Billy: I feel like cops and just people in general look down on you, you know? Because I'm poor and they're rich. And that's usually how it is, it's a war between rich and poor . . . if you don't got this this or that, you're a loser, you know? That's how the system is.

Lifestyle

Rather than signaling the need for more effective housing and supports for marginalized populations, their appearance in public as 'poor' associated them with irresponsibility and disorder. This was frustrating for young people because, despite repeated efforts, many cited struggling to find employment in the city.

Reign: It's really hard to get a job in a bigger city.

Nicole: Man, I've been trying to get a job for months.

Marky: You gotta know someone, it's who you know.

For some, factors including not having a high school diploma or post-secondary education were barriers to gaining employment; but even those with post-secondary education struggled.

Reign: I just finished university, and I can't get a job because it's like really hard to get a job. Only one person who graduated from my program found a job.

Struggling to find work, participants engaged in illegal or alternative money-making activities for subsistence. During discussions and walking-interviews, panhandling was mentioned frequently and participants pointed out popular panhandling locations which they believed were also hot spots for police-youth interactions

Reign: Panhandling is like a magnet for cops.

Mack: If you're panhandling, you're gonna run into police officers.

Dani: [Pointing to storefronts along busy downtown street] All along here - especially the Tims, dollar store and this place - are popular panning spots for me and my friends.

For those who had experiences of panhandling, some cited negative experiences with the police, including harassment and sanctions. Others shared positive experiences including times when police had bought them coffee or given them spare change. Most maintained that their experiences with the police when panhandling were because police were in the area and wanted them to stop, or because business owners had called them.

Reign: If they see you panhandling, they'll ask you to move right away.

Drake: Yeah, there are certain stores that will get pissed if you're outside, so I avoid those. A few, like on [popular street in downtown Ottawa] are good about it. [Pointing to locally owned business] The owners of that store bring me food a lot and that spot [pointing to franchise restaurant] usually won't say anything.

Participants also shared that panhandling was not something they wanted to be doing and was often a last resort measure so that they could buy food, cigarettes, and/or support drug use.

Dani: No one wants to panhandle, you do it because you're desperate.

Mack: People look at you like your scum. . . but like, it's either beg to get food and a couple bucks or push drugs on the street.

Marky: People think that people who panhandle do it for drug money. I'm not gonna lie a lot of times it is for that. . . I mean I've panhandled for drug money. But drugs are an escape, you know? Most people using drugs have gone through some real shit and need to get away from it.

Despite expressing that they panhandled for survival reasons, Danni, Mack and Marky felt perceived by the public as 'desperate', 'scum' and 'drug users' when panhandling, fitting the stereotypical image of homeless persons in the media as indolent, irresponsible and hopeless. How young people make sense of and respond to these assumptions in the context of their encounters with the police will be discussed in Chapter Five.

Although no young person in this study shared that they had received a fine for panhandling, several cited that the experience of people they knew receiving fines was a deterrent.

Mack: I've thought about panhandling, but my friend was panhandling on [popular street in downtown Ottawa] and got a \$200 ticket from a cop.

Marky: Yeah, I've heard of that too. I can't afford that shit.

Dame: They [police] say it's for 'aggressive' panning, but I don't even know what that means. . . anyone I know who pans is not being aggressive. You can't get money that way.

The tickets participants are referring to are those being issued by police under the Safe Streets Act (2000) to address panhandling and other forms of solicitation being

undertaken in an ‘aggressive’ manner. When the Safe Streets Act first came into effect in 2000, Jim Flaherty, Attorney General (1999-2001) celebrated the measures as necessary to ensuring the ‘right’ of Ontario citizens to utilize public spaces without feeling intimidated.

Our government believes that all people in Ontario have the right to drive on the roads, walk down the street or go to public places without being or feeling intimidated” (Bourette, 2000, pp. 9). However, it has become increasingly clear that when Flaherty says ‘all people’ he is not referring to homeless populations. This has been noted by academics, public officials, and anti-poverty groups who continue to criticize the Act for granting police broad discretion to target and exclude homeless populations because of their poverty. In fact, earlier this year Michael Bryant, Attorney General (2003-2007) denounced the Act and called for its immediate repeal.

I’m guilty of hypocrisy and executive failure for not repealing this as attorney general. Panhandling has never been the “public safety” problem for which regulations are promulgated. The problem was concocted to seize upon fear (Bryant, 2017, pp. 10).

The fear Bryant is referring to, is the growing concern with containing and controlling visible forms of poverty in contemporary cities (Hermer and Mosher, 2002; Bellot & Sylvestre, 2011). When homelessness is made visible in certain public spaces, it is seen to threaten the image of the city as a safe and prosperous place to live. Participants felt that this was one of the reasons they were the subjects of police attention in Ottawa.

Reign: Yeah, the Prime Minister doesn’t want homeless people or dirty people in the city. . . they want it to look reasonable. Same with like fancy restaurants. That’s why like people on the streets go to an alley or places where there is no security.

Billy: Actually, I’ve heard that they [the police] want to make the streets look nicer, so they’re moving or like shipping all the homeless people to the outskirts of Ottawa.

Like in the accounts given by other participants, Billy and Reign seem to be speaking about homeless persons generally rather than individually. This is not surprising; had they situated themselves as a part of this group they may have reified themselves as ‘dirty’, ‘undesirable’, and ‘disposable’. Their narratives also are telling of the broader socio-political contexts shaping policing in Ottawa. As both the political center and symbolic heart of Canada (National Capital Commission, 2016), officials in the city are doubly tasked with attracting international capital in an increasingly competitive global market and maintaining the city’s function as an appropriate ‘showpiece’ for the nation (Hall, 2013). It is through this lens that homeless youth – a visibly marginal population who frequent public spaces – are seen to embody a disorder that threatens the image of Ottawa as a safe and prosperous city to live. In response, spatial cleansing strategies, including policing practices used to identify and remove forms of urban disorder, are being justified as necessary for sanitizing and cleansing urban environments (Walby & Lippert 2012).

5.2 Invisible victims

Through risk practice and normalization, governments and agencies pathologize individuals and subcultures “as a means of exercising sovereignty over dangerous individuals, and of disciplining youth” (Kelly 2003, p. 176). The practices draw attention away from macro problems and result in ‘dividing practices’ of both inclusion and exclusion. Those who are included are afforded protection and security, and those who are excluded are deemed as ‘other’ and dangerous. As discussed in the last section, participants felt that they were over-policed because of their age, class, lifestyle and location in the city of Ottawa. This is problematic for many reasons, but most notably

because, from their perspectives, the inordinate attention they received from police had less to do with criminal negligence and more to do with their personal characteristics and location in the city. This experience is even more disconcerting when we consider that homeless young people report incredibly high rates of criminal victimization.

[O]ver 76% reporting at least one incident in the previous 12 months. This figure is almost **three times greater** than is the case for the general population. In addition, the frequency of such victimization is also extremely high, with almost three quarters. (Gaetz, O'Grady and Buccieri, 2010, p. 17)

What makes matters worse, is that a very high percentage (23%) report that they do not tell anyone, even friends, when they have been victimized (ibid.).

Participants in my study cited similar responses when discussing their interactions with police as the victims of crime in Ottawa.

Kale: Sometimes I feel like when you're all, when you're in trouble, I feel like sometimes they just like, they turn it back on you. So like, oh, well why did you go to that, like, I don't know. Say for example like you're on a dating website or something and you're talking to a guy and then he starts like harassing you or something. Like you start trusting him or something and he starts harassing you and you call the cops and you show them the messages and phone calls or I don't know, anything. And they'll be like, oh, well why were you on the dating site in the first place? Oh, why did you start talking to him in the first place? You know? It's like – It's a judgment.

Despite transformations which have rebalanced the criminal justice system from focusing almost exclusively on combating crime and catching perpetrators, to giving greater rights to victims of crime, as Kale's experience suggests, whether those who report experiences of criminal victimization are considered to be victims and afforded these rights, is vitally connected to moral judgements, power relations, and dominant ideologies. As a population of young people associated with irrationality and unruliness (Farrugia, 2016), when at the receiving end of criminality, homeless youth are seen to have rendered themselves vulnerable through lax behavior, recklessness or a lack of vigilance (ibid.).

This point was reiterated by young people when sharing that police failed to follow through with investigations and made young people feel as though their victimization could be resolved through more cautious forms of personal management (Garland, 2001).

Marky: They just start an investigation, you know and it just keeps going.

Dame: Yeah, and they don't follow up.

Drake: Police are the same they just won't do anything. Like, I called the cops for a problem and they said "you should probably just move".

Huey (2012) employs the term 'security gap' to encompass two forms of interrelated lacunae homeless person's experience as the victims of crime. The first is evident when comparing the "wide array of security options available' to the general public" (p. 202) to those available to homeless citizens. This gap was explicitly addressed by participants who felt that the police were unlikely to assist them unless they were elderly, wealthy and/or perceived as maintaining non-criminality.

Scooter: Ha, police have never helped me..

Drake: The police haven't ever helped me. They help old women and rich people.

Reign: If you're good, respectable, and don't look like a criminal, they probably are pretty helpful. But I mean, that's not my experience.

Juxtaposing themselves against the members of the public who the police are likely to assist, including individuals who are 'good', 'respectable', and display the 'right' type of body (appear to be non-criminal) as well as the vulnerable (the elderly) and other deserving victims (individuals with money), both Reign and Drake reiterate the morally loaded markers that help to demarcate whether an individual is a deserving or undeserving and worth and unworthy of policing response.

The second lacunae identified in Huey's (2012) analysis is the subjective element of what she describes as the "affective distance between someone's lived reality and his or her ideal state of being" (p. 9). As her analysis shows, homeless individuals understood their situations as another manifestation of their degraded socio-economic status. Yet, many if not most also saw themselves as 'citizens' and felt that by virtue of their citizenship status they were entitled to the "right to live in a relative state of security regardless of the fact that they are homeless" (p. 10). This was revealed by participants in my study who felt that as Canadian citizens, their safety and security should be protected.

Johnny: I'm a Canadian, I was born here. I am entitled to my rights.

Nicole: At the end of the day we live in Ottawa and it's their job is to protect us. . . doesn't always happen, but that's technically their job.

Despite *feeling* that they should be afforded this right, their encounters suggest that for participants this was often an unattainable ideal and that police were more likely to dismiss their fear, pain, and suffering as somehow less than others (ibid.).

Billy: These guys are supposed to be here for fucking support, like to protect us. But instead, I'm seeing scary stuff, like my friends getting 'tased' and arrested for calling and asking for help.

Dame: You know, half the girls I know don't feel safe on the streets or anything because cops don't do their jobs. You know? Cops are supposed to protect us...

Macy: For over a year I was, I was terrified and they didn't do anything for me.

The accounts above are powerful and complex. On the one hand, participants suggest that police are using aggressive force as the suspects of crime despite whether they have *actually* committed crimes or not, and on the other hand when they are wronged, harmed, or hurt they feel as though police readily dismiss or refuse to help them. This experience was highlighted to me in an encounter following the second focus group and walking

interview. After packing up and thanking participants and staff at the drop-in center for their time, I walked out of the center to find a group of young people who had participated in my study. Several of them engaged with me to say that they had enjoyed the discussions, adding that it was nice to have someone listen to their side of the story. ‘Side’ I interpreted to mean being their experiences with the police. One of the more vocal participants, Scooter, said he too enjoyed the conversations but asked whether I had ever considered spending a night in a youth shelter. Engaging, I said that although I think that would be a great experience, my university and those in charge of ethics, would likely have a few objections. Challenging my response, he insisted that if I wanted to conduct ‘real’ research I needed to do two things. First, spend a night at a youth shelter and not tell the young people or staff that I was a researcher. Second, go to the “block”, a slang term used to describe a popular hangout spot for homeless and other young people in downtown Ottawa, and try to ‘pick-up’ drugs. If by chance I was identified by the police, then all the better for my research. He felt that both experiences would give me a ‘real’ understanding of the situations he and his peers experience every day. Chuckling, I acknowledged that he was right, but not wanting to bore him with the bureaucratic research processes enforced by Carleton, told him I would consider this when conducting research in the future.

On the walk home, I considered Scooter’s advice. What experiences would I have in a youth shelter? And more particular to this study, how would I be observed and surveilled by the police and public in this area of Ottawa? Like the participants in my study, I am a young adult; but, unlike participants, I was wearing clean clothing, I was in the process of obtaining a Master’s degree and had income that afforded me necessities as

well as certain luxuries. I am also not ‘known’ to police and was confident that should the police approach me in an area known for crime, it would not be with suspicion, but out of concern for my safety as a white, middle class, young female. In fact, the limited experience I have had with the police has been dramatically different than the experiences of my participants. As a teenager engaging in under aged drinking at parties and other public venues, when my friends and I did have encounters with the police they told us to move along or called our parents. As a young adult, I have witnessed and partaken in the use and buying of recreational drugs, and have seldom feared being caught by the police, let alone charged or imprisoned. It is not until conducting research that I found out that jay-walking and loitering are offences enforced by the police. Walking the streets, I have never been approached by an officer and if acknowledged at all, am usually greeted with a nod or smile. Similarly, should I feel the police have mistreated me, I have resources and supports to report and challenge them. Like my participants, I too am a citizen, but unlike them I am granted the security which comes with being perceived as a ‘contributing’ citizen. These contrasting experiences are reflective of the partial, conditional and contingent possibilities for security in the city, including the freedom that is achieved in being seen past by the police when in public. As

Laura Huey (2012, p. 127) writes

Security is a public good because it is necessary to the well functioning of individuals and collectives. However, it is a public good that has been subject to rationing and, through the creation of a private market, is now also treated as a positional good (Neocleous, 2006). The result of these processes has not only been the widening of already existing gaps between the haves and have-nots – a matter of little significance for the haves – but the entanglement of all in a zero-sum game that has the potential to ratchet up what security is meant to tame: insecurity.

By failing to maintain appropriate models of action enforced through neoliberal arrangements, including being productive and consuming citizens, as well as protecting themselves from experiencing crime, homeless young people are not only susceptible to over-policing used to manage as well as exclude them from particular areas of the city, their possibilities for security within contemporary cities are unequal, leading to intensified insecurity as both the usual suspects and what Huey labels ‘invisible victims’ of crime.

5.3 Dividing lines: “But who is going to believe us?”

Youth participants’ understandings of policing are suffused with messages about the condition of society, the position of people within it, and the relation between state and individual (Loader & Mulchay, 2003). A general theme that emerged from my discussions with young people was the divide that participants saw between themselves and police officers. Participants describe this divide as an ‘us versus them’ mentality, in which police hold considerable power, and are rarely, if ever, on their side. This did not mean that young people accepted this relationship without contention; in fact, this division prompted moments of resistance, which will be discussed in greater detail in the chapter to follow. It also did not mean that young people were not aware of the pressures and demands police officers face from their departments, the government and the public more generally.

Dame: I can’t say I like the police, but they have to deal with some crap. Not everyone I know is an angel. I have friends who are real dicks to the cops even when they are in the wrong... people don’t make their job easy.

Marky: Not gonna lie there are some really bad cops. But there are some good ones too, the ones. . . well. . . protecting and stopping real crimes.

Jay: There are cops who are going to waste your time, like have nothing better to do. But citizens do that too.

What the divide did signify for young people was the operation of unequal power relations between themselves and the police. As the gatekeepers of criminal justice, young people recognized that police were set apart from civilians and carried significant power within the city. Unfortunately, from their perspective, police exercised this power coercively rather than formatively. In response to Dr. Kennelly's short film featuring homeless youths' experiences with the police in Ottawa, participants made this point explicit.

Danni: Pretty much everyone was right on about how the cops are. They have all the power.

This point was also made implicitly when participants responded to the statement "I am respectful of police officers":

DJ: Obviously.

Reign: Yeah. You have to. . .

Interviewer: What happens if not?

DJ: If you swear at them or fight with them, they will find something to charge you with or give you a ticket.

DJ and Reign's responses suggest that the answer to this question goes without saying, that the power dynamics between themselves and the police was not something that should be questioned or challenged and if they did, the expected outcome would make matters worse. These feelings were not specific to those with first-hand experiences. For example, Billy notes that he lost trust in the police after witnessing a situation between his mentally ill friend, their service dog and the police. This experience is discussed in greater detail in the next chapter. Retelling this encounter, Billy shares that he and his

friends called 911 because they were worried that their friend was going to harm himself. Unfortunately for Billy and his friend, police were the first to respond to the call and rushed into his apartment hostilely and aggressively.

Billy: They shouldn't have come in, there was no reason. They verbally aggressed him, then this officer pulled the Taser and put it at the back of his brain – not his skull – back of brain. . .

In response to Billy, several participants nodded in frustration, and one male asked:

Reign: Wouldn't a cop be fired or discharged for that?

Billy: Man, right? You wanna know what happened after? There was like five other cops in the hall way talking. I could hear them saying "we can't bust him with this", "we can't bust him with that", "so, like what can we bust them with?" I don't know why, but they were all trying to put a charge to him.

The experiences with police shared above reify to young people that regardless of whether a cop is 'good' or 'bad' during their interactions with homeless young people, the police always begin and end in a winning position. This feeling was made explicit when participants responded to Dr. Kennelly's short film featuring homeless youth discussing their experiences with the police in Ottawa. Participants in both focus groups were quick to identify with the sentiments shared by young people. The comments made by a young male at the end of the film is particularly poignant:

[Film] I think there's a big us versus them mentality. No one in this building has felt protected by the police, rather, when we see a police we fear them.

Scooter: I agreed with the film. What that guy said, the us versus them? Or something like that?

Interviewer: The us versus them mentality?

Scooter: Yeah that. It's so true, it's always your word against theirs. But who's going to believe us?

Mack: Most of the policing in downtown is hurting the people

As Erikson (2007, p. 205) explains, as a public institution police agencies must attend to the demands of the dominant group and when,

...forced to make a hard decision and express authoritative certainty in doing so, law necessarily privileges one perspective on risk costs and benefits at the expense of others. . . [wielding] power that hurts, causes resentment, provokes a sense of injustice, produces insecurity, and poses again the problem of uncertainty (as quoted in Huey, 2012, p. 22)

For young people, the us versus them mentality between themselves reveals the dynamics of power and privilege between themselves and the police and further communicated to participants that policing was not only securing their pain and suffering, but reproducing it.

5.4 Conclusions

In this chapter I have outlined homeless youths' experiences with the police in Ottawa, from the perspective of young people themselves. Participants' narratives revealed that they felt simultaneously over-controlled and under protected by the police and suggest that they attributed these effects to a combination of their age, socioeconomic status, lifestyle, and/or location in the city. More broadly, participants' experiences prompted young people to characterize their relations as marked by antagonism, mutual suspicion and unequal power-relations.

Their narratives revealed that young people faced inordinate police attention as the perceived suspects of crime and that they were dismissed, ignored and blamed when interacting with the police as victims because they are young, visibly marginal, and frequent users of public spaces. Understood within the broader contexts of risk and insecurity, neoliberalism, and high modernity these positions are important for a few

reasons. First, following the developmental discourse of youth and adulthood, young people are supposed to be moving along a biographical pathway towards rationality, independence and a productive adulthood. As a state of material and moral deprivation, young people experiencing homelessness are seen to be disadvantaged and pre-disposed to a number of risks including criminalization and victimization as well as “abject to the terms of the entrepreneurial discourses” (Farrugia, 2016, p.44) which define successful personhood in the 21st century. Second, following the rhetoric of the neoliberal logic of individualization and responsabilization, the consequences of young people’s poverty and homelessness including unemployment and victimization are analyzed as individual variables rather than the consequences of inequalities. Constructed against the ideal youth subject, these personal ‘deficits’ position homeless youth as outside the normative boundaries of young people in the process of becoming ‘productive’ adults and excludes them from the right to security. Third, when their poverty is made visible by their appearance, hygiene, and behaviors, homeless youth are seen to embody disorder that is threatening to the general public’s feelings of security and the image of the city as a prosperous place to live. Rather than signaling the need for increased investment in housing and supports for marginalized populations, by failing to demonstrate appropriate neoliberal behavior, the ability to navigate and respond to risk, and display the ‘right’ type of body for the consumption of others in the city, homeless youth are problematized as sources of moral, physical and economic risk that can be contained, controlled and resolved through a law and order response.

6 Chapter: “If they cared about us they would help us . . .”: Homeless youths’ responses to policing in Ottawa

In the previous chapter participants' encounters with policing as both the usual suspects and invisible victims of crime, as well as how these positions propel a division between participants and the police, was explored. In this chapter, I examine how these experiences affect homeless young people's ways of being, doing and thinking. Viewing young people as both suffering and acting, this chapter will examine the biographical solutions which young people create in response to their denigration and misrecognition as both the usual suspects and invisible victims of crime by the police.

Before digging deeper into this question, it is useful to explore what role young people feel the police have in society. Without overstating the function of policing in identity formation, it is important to note that, like other social institutions, policing has the capacity to structure and shape social identities as well as regulate 'externally and internally' the subjectivities of individuals (Loader, 2006, p. 217).

[P]olicing also operates as a mediator of collective identity, a social institution through which recognition and misrecognition are relayed, a sender of resonant – sometimes coercive – signals about whose voices are heard or silenced, whose claims are to be judged legitimate, how and in what ways individuals and groups belong.

When asked what participants felt the role of the police to be, their responses were similar to what you might expect. In fact, most participants felt that the answer went without saying.

DJ: Uh, you mean what they are supposed to do? Serve and protect...

Johnny: Stop criminals and protect people.

Nicole: Their job is stop crime, put criminals in jail, and respond to people's calls.

These responses are reflective of the power that symbols of policing carry, which, following Bourdieu, shapes how people 'think about' and 'respond' to, policing in a

certain way (Loader and Mulchay, 2003, p. 23) including how they construe connections between “crime, social order, and policing as obvious, natural, something that goes without saying” (p. 23). Although participants felt little need to elaborate on this common knowledge, these feelings were reiterated both explicitly and implicitly in reflections revealing that whether, when and for whom this function was carried out was conditional and not guaranteed.

Dame: It’s kind of like this. There’s a lot of bad stuff going on in the world, especially in the downtown. But no one is going to have your back, that’s what I learned. Sure, some of my friends might, but at the end of the day, I am only going to rely on myself.

DJ: Honestly, I don’t think they give two shits about us. If they cared that much about us they would help us not make us feel like anything bad that happens to us is our own fault.

Marky: Listen, people don’t care about me and my friends. If someone murdered me, the media, the police probably aren’t going to care. Not much you can do about it really.

Scooter makes this point best, when he claims that police are more concerned with protecting the public from him and his friends than protecting them from dangers and insecurity they may face.

Whether participants were suspected to be in the wrong or had been wronged themselves, their identification as both homeless and young people solidified their positions as individuals in need of management. How young people responded to this position was complex. For example, some young people outwardly resisted policing practices, reflected in their conscious and unconscious contempt of, resistance to, and disassociation from the police in Ottawa. Others legitimated these practices - however unfair they felt them to be - as a consequence of their own individual failures. But most felt that these practices were simply a natural and expected fact of life that was not likely

to change in the near future. In the sections to follow, I examine these responses under the following two themes: resistance and symbolic violence.

6.1 Resistance

McNay (2013) suggests that one of the key analytical advantages to Foucault's concept of governmental power over disciplinary power is that it introduces the idea of an active subject who has the capacity to resist "the individualizing and totalizing forces of modern power structures" (p. 112). Endowed with the capacity for resistance, young people in this study revealed instances where their experiences with the police provoked the necessary affective conditions for them to challenge and subvert technologies and practices of policing in the city.

For some participants, their experiences with the police in Ottawa incited powerful feelings of anger, resentment and disappointment. Recalling a particularly heated experience with the police, Scooter shares that when contemplating self-harm, his friends called 911 and the police were the first to respond.

Scooter: We open the door and it's a police officer. I didn't want them to come in. I was not in a good state you know? And there was stuff I didn't want them to see. I tried to talk to them in the hallway but they just pushed past us. I told them that they can't come in without a warrant because I know my rights, but they weren't having any of it. I start freaking out so they pinned me to the wall. I'm resisting because it was just crazy. At that point my dog [support dog] is freaking out. All of a sudden, the fucking cop pulls out a tazer and puts in on the back of my neck. My friend is flipping, like I could have died you know? The buddy's partner, she pulls out some type of gun and is yelling that she is going to shoot the dog, saying he's dangerous...

In notes written following my field work, I flagged Scooter's experience and Billy's description of an aggressive encounter between his mentally-ill friend, their support dog and the police (described in the first finding chapter), as two accounts of the same incident. I also noted that both Billy and Scooter were visibly upset when retelling their

experience. Both reflected on the experience to say that it had changed or reaffirmed how they felt about policing in Ottawa.

Billy: After I saw that, I didn't trust them. Like after that ... I don't feel safe anymore. I understand the law and that police are the high power, but there are some things that they need to know. . . like what's right and what's wrong to do.

Scooter. Fuck the police.

Scooter: Man, I've never had good experiences with the police. But I'll tell you something. After that, fuck the police for real. They have never. . .not fucking once. . .assisted me or made me feel safe. And you know what, they probably never will?

No longer trusting or feeling confident in the capacity of police to either serve or protect them within the city, their accompanying feelings of distrust, anger and contempt for the police provoked intensities which caused them to resist and underwrite policing practices in the city. Responding to the question: "how would you feel if an officer said hi to you in the street?", Scooter reveals that he would actively resist and challenge the police.

Scooter: Ha! I would say fuck you.

Cora: Ok, but how would this make you feel?

Scooter: Listen, like, even eye contact with a cop is a bad sign. So, I'm going to be on guard and probably not the most polite dude.

The fact that Scooter laughed at the question and responded to my prompt by explaining his response in a manner I could understand, suggests that because of his previous encounters with the police, Scooter is very unlikely to work with the police in the future. When discussing whether participants would assist the police if they asked for their help, Billy shared that whether he could help or not he would not assist them.

Billy: I always just tell them I didn't see nothing.

Scooter and Billy were not alone, other participants revealed similar responses.

Mack: If a police officer is coming up to me it's not to say hi. I'm going to be nervous, like what's he got on me, you know? So, I just don't tell them shit.

Danielle: Some police officers are ok. I've had nice ones before. But, I'm not going to help them out. I've seen them hurt and book my friends way too many times. You know what is the worst part about it? There are times when I could help them, like point them in the direction of real shit that needs to be controlled.

Dani: I'm cool with them unless they get in my face. Then we have a problem.

In each account participants expressed different reactions. Mack is suspicious, Danielle is frustrated and confused, and Dani is defensive, but each of their reactions lent to moments of resistance including refusing to assist the police as well as challenging their authority. This suggests that the affective conditions which evoke various forms of resistance are far from homogeneous, but are dependent on a number of factors including young peoples' previous experiences, temperaments, and feelings about the police which could be explored more fully through in-depth interviews.

Other forms of resistance were less implicit and included ignoring and disassociating from the normative boundaries that police help to enforce, including their pathway to 'productive' adulthood, the lifestyles they lead, and their use of public space.

Reign: They always seem organized, know what they are doing. . . and are institutionalized. But, I'm not like that at all. I'm chaotic, I do art, I do what I love and I'm not going to change.

DJ: You could be wearing the most regular clothes and have the biggest heart, but you're a bum and the officer looks at you like you are bad and have no purpose. They like rich people. But, honestly, I don't care. I don't care what I wear or how much money is in my pocket or even if I'm broke, I'm happy, and breathing air. I'm alive, you know?

Dame: Businesses and the government don't want you hanging around nice places in the city so they call security or the cops. But, at some point you just stop caring.

From their experiences with the police, participants understood in failing to take protective measure including keeping a low profile, presenting the 'right' type of body through clothing and hygiene as well as avoiding certain areas in the city, they were likely to face police attention, harassment and possible arrest. However, as the above reflections reveal, some young people respond indifferently by refusing to change or care.

For other young people, these affective responses were more a problem to be avoided than a solution to their experiences with police in Ottawa. Like others, some young people revealed that their experiences with the police had prompted them to lose confidence in policing and incited the necessary conditions for them to resist and challenge police officers' exclusionary practices. However, unlike Scooter, these were affective responses which they would have liked to control but in the moment were unable to.

Danni: Before he was in jail, me and my fiancé were hanging out on a corner when two officers storm us and start accusing him of a bunch of stuff he didn't do. He got angry and the police started wailing on him. I knew I shouldn't do anything, like I should of stayed quiet, stayed seated. . . but I couldn't handle it. . . so I started screaming and went off on the officer which made the whole thing worse.

When reflecting on his experience with Scooter and the police, Billy shared a similar reflection.

The tazer was at the back of his skull. I don't know, I knew I should have stayed quiet, but I had to say something. . . they could have killed him! The officer just looked at me, he didn't care. After that the situation got worse. Despite the fear and anger they felt on behalf of their peers, when Danni and Billy reflect on their encounters they indicate that these responses went against their better judgment and from their perspective made the situation worse. This supports the claims made by Kennelly (2017) that while it is possible for young people to contest mechanisms and relations of power and domination, because they can never be entirely free of these relations they will inevitably come to accept their

domination. In the next section, I will examine how this point was revealed in young people's responses to their encounters with policing in Ottawa.

6.2 Symbolic violence

Prior to employing the concept of symbolic violence in her study examining the experiences of marginally housed and homeless youth in Olympic host cities, Kennelly (2017) argues that because Bourdieu's theoretical insights are best understood when read alongside each other, it is necessary to understand the connections between his concepts of doxa, habitus, and field in relation to dominant political views. Summarizing Kennelly's description, she issues that social institutions including policing and the criminal justice system, are harnessed by the State to help disseminate and harden narratives of "'common sense' against which all other viewpoints are measured, or what Bourdieu calls the doxa . . ." (Kennelly, 2017, 148). Once these narratives operate as preconscious perceptions, individuals incorporate a set of 'durable dispositions' into their physical and mental forms or 'habitus' (ibid, p. 148). The habitus is always developed in relation to the 'field' which operates as a space of structured, differentiated social positions. Social positions can be occupied by individuals and institutions. In the section to follow, I apply the concept of symbolic violence to better understand how young people make sense of and respond to their experiences with the police in Ottawa.

To what degree young people accepted their experiences with the police and took up the rhetoric that policing as a state institution helps to disseminate varied among participants. For some, as discussed in the section above, their frustration with policing practices prompted conscious and unconscious forms of resistance, making it more difficult to observe their experiences of symbolic violence. For others and for one

participant in particular, they internalized and took up the dominant views instrumentally, legitimating policing practices as both good and necessary.

Reviewing the transcriptions of focus group discussions and walking interviews, I was perplexed by Johnny's account. In his narratives, he acknowledged the negative experiences of other participants and shared that he had been let down by the police on several occasions. However, in the statement exercise, Johnny consistently positioned himself as favorable or neutral in response to statements about police performance, interaction and practices in Ottawa and was one of only a few participants to defend policing practices in Ottawa. His support for the police was made explicit in the following two claims.

They are there to do a job and are doing their jobs.

The cops, they're not ones to make mistakes. They like older people because they respect themselves and have jobs. They attack young people because they make poor decisions such as the drugs, violence and gangs they are into. It's just how society is. We all grow up learning what is good and bad, but it's our own choice what we do. We all have our own choices to make and we gotta live with them. I've made some bad choices and that's why I'm trying to do better. . .to be better. I'm staying out of trouble and avoiding the cops.

Johnny's surprising legitimization of police practices and work in the city of Ottawa, despite his extremely negative direct experiences with them, may be better understood when conceptualized as an instance of symbolic violence. Acknowledging and supporting the differential, regulatory, and disciplinary treatment of young people with the police as both appropriate and necessary, his claims also suggest that he does not believe security, protection and respect from police should be afforded to other young people, especially though who have made poor choices. This, as he rationalizes, is an outcome of the normal

functioning of society and a reflection of the job police are tasked with doing. In response to Johnny's claims, I asked how he avoided the police.

Cora: How do you avoid the police?

Johnny: I'm trying to get off probation, you know, and the cops they can mess that up. Once I'm off probation, I can get my life together, get a job, make something of myself. So, like, if I see cops, I avoid them like go somewhere else. I avoid people too, you know, keeping my head down and staying quiet.

Johnny's pursuit to 'do better', 'be better' as well as 'get his life together' and 'make something of himself' is significant. The metaphors he uses are revealing of being positioned outside the normative boundaries of the community of successful, respectful others who have their life together. He also stresses the importance of individual choices and personal responsibility in achieving these pursuits. In relation to this ideal biography, his experiences with the criminal justice system, including being on probation and other encounters with the police, whether warranted or not, becomes a personal biographical failure. Read together, Johnny's narratives provide concrete examples of the relationship between some of the harms young people in Ottawa encounter and how young people come to accept these harms in their everyday ways of being, doing and thinking.

Many young people were not as willing as Johnny to accept that their experiences with the police could be chalked up to their individual shortcomings or poor decisions and were also reluctant to resist the police in fear of repercussion. These young people were more likely to respond to their experiences of over-policing and under-protection apathetically, making the following claims: "That's how the system is"; "There's always going to be winners and losers"; and "There's not much you can do about it".

Along with these claims young people employed strategies to limit their interactions with the police and diffuse encounters when they did occur. To avoid

interactions as the suspects of crime, young people discussed maintaining a low profile, avoiding the police and avoiding locations where they were likely to encounter police.

Mack: Best to keep your head low and stay out of trouble.

Marky: Some people are stupid. If you don't want issues with the police don't go to Vanier, there's some scary shit going on there. I just stick to my spots and don't have too many problems.

Danielle: I try to avoid them and crime. In the long run, it's just not worth it.

However, their capacity to do this was limited by markers that signaled their risk and disadvantage including their age, socioeconomic status, lifestyle and frequent use of public spaces in the city. As a result, young people revealed strategies for diffusing situations when they did encounter the police, including staying quiet and complying with police officers.

Dame: Yeah, even if they are being a dick, you gotta bite your tongue and keep quiet.

Marky: Yeah, doesn't matter what the officer is doing to you, it's best to listen, stay quiet and respect them. If you fight back or resist, you're fucked.

Reign: When you're quiet and do what they say, it goes a lot better.

Young people revealed similar strategies when managing their experiences as the victims of crime. To avoid being dismissed or escalating the situation young people chose not to call the police.

Mack: I had this problem the other day when someone smashed me in the face – he said if I tell anyone he would hit me more. We apologized and the day went on. If I had called the police it would have gotten worse.. you know?

Danni: Unless someone is dead, I deal with problems myself and get my friends involved. Like if someone screws you, you get your friends together and deal with it.

Despite their distrust and reluctance to call the police for help, young people also shared that when in ‘real’ trouble they would call the police as a last resort.

Danni: It’s common law your first response is 911 in no matter what situation – but I dunno, fighting or getting arrested isn’t worth it. Go for a walk and chill off. But life or death then definitely.

Billy: It’s like the shows, but real life is like the shows. . . if you’re in real trouble call the cops.

When probed, participants cited life or death situations as times when they would call the police, but maintained that it was a last resort measure.

Nicole: If someone dies, you have to call the police.

Marky: Yeah, if someone was trying to kill me, I would call the police.

Reign: Last resort kind of thing, they could be somewhere else helping people with real problems.

Despite analyses which have positioned homeless youth as being at increased risk to what the public would consider to be very ‘real problems’, including violence and sexual assault, young people had different understandings of what constituted a ‘real’ problem. This contradicts the culture of fear perspective (Furedi, 2007), which argues that the concern for dangers and safety in Western societies has prompted a neurotic obsession with the potential for sensationalized harms, that are unlikely to occur. As the disproportionate victims of crime, homeless young people are much more likely than members of the public to experience crime victimization, yet frequently do not report these crimes. Their narratives support Mythen’s (2014) claims that the “‘risk society’ will be experienced, perceived, and navigated differently according to an individual’s social position and cultural place” (p. 80) and suggests that young people have internalized their suffering, pain and fear as somehow less than that of others.

Participants' responses to their experiences as both the perceived suspects and victims of crime are similar to those that Kennelly (2011) identified in her study examining youth activists and homeless or street-involved youths' encounters with the police.

. . .as young people encounter, either directly or through word-of-mouth, the governance structures of policing, they are left with two realistic options: one is to conform to neo-liberal ideals of the 'good citizen' and become suitably self-regulating, law-abiding and compliant; the other, if they are unable or unwilling to follow this route, is to avoid encounters with the police altogether. (p. 351).

My research participants' responses, including management strategies to both avoid and diffuse encounters with the police in Ottawa, suggest that they recognize at least to some degree that their position(s) as young and homeless vis-à-vis policing in Ottawa limits the possibilities for who they can be and where they are seen to belong in the city. For outliers like Johnny, this resulted in explicit attempts to conform and prescribe to neoliberal ideals that police help to enforce. Rather than view even the most volatile encounters he had with the police as related to poor policing practices or more broadly to the material and cultural inequalities shaping his life, he justified and legitimated these encounters as related to his own inadequacy and need to be 'better'. He also accepted that he could not expect security or protection from the police until he demonstrated that he was a member of the normative community of 'productive' adults, regardless of the structural barriers that prevented him from doing so, including poverty and unemployment. However, most young people recognized that while their encounters with the police were neither fair nor just, that they were not going to change anytime soon. Rather than waste energy resisting and challenging policing and risking repercussion and

further exclusion, they responded in ways that were both logical and safe within the context of their lives.

6.3 Conclusions

Together their experiences with the police revealed that, as people who are both young and homeless, their disadvantage constructed them as sources of risk that can be contained and controlled through a neoliberal law and order response. Through practices of ‘responsibilization’, ‘individualization’ and ‘standardization’, young people were over-controlled and under protected because of their deviation from the ‘pathway’ to ‘productive’ adulthood and their failure to display the ‘right’ type of consumption practices. Reinforcing and reproducing the feeling that participants are somehow less than and more undeserving than others, they affectively and reflexively responded to these experiences. Their response included both explicit, less subtle forms of resistance, like resisting police and refusing to assist in investigations. Conversely others responded by legitimating policing practices, accepting problems associated with structural inequalities e.g. poverty, unemployment and high rates of victimization as consequences of their own choices, personal management strategies and inability to negotiate and respond to risk. Many responded by accepting these experiences, however unjust they may be, as a simple fact of life.

7 Chapter: Conclusions, limitations and future research

At the outset of this thesis, I posed two questions about homeless youths' position(s) as both the usual suspects and victims of crime in Ottawa.

- 1) How do homeless youth in Ottawa make sense of their experiences?
- 2) What impact does this have on their ways of thinking, being and doing in the city?

To begin to answer these questions, I designed a qualitative study to examine homeless youths' encounters with policing in the city of Ottawa, from the perspective of young people themselves. The aim of this study was not to prescribe interventions but to offer a starting point for exploration into how young people conceptualize and are affected by policing in contemporary cities.

Many of the arguments I have presented in this thesis are not new. My participants' narratives echoed two substantive findings from the literature on youth, homelessness, and policing in Canada. First, the conflictual relationship between this population and the police, characterized by young people's frequent encounters with and unequal access to policing in cities. Second, young people's paradoxical experiences of being over-controlled and under protected by the police related to their age, visible marginality and location in the city.

I have provided a few new insights. Measuring the 'bigger pictures' or the broader socio-political contexts shaping homeless youths' encounters with policing in Ottawa, with the 'smaller' fine-grain' pictures provided through discussion about policing, I attempted to bridge the gap between theory and empirical inquiry by offering a foothold for how homeless young people make sense of, negotiate and respond to policing as a structure of governance in contemporary cities. In line with my phenomenological

approach, this involved connecting the meanings that young people themselves attached to their experiences with the police as biographical events, to the contexts of risk and insecurity, neoliberal governance, and contemporary cities.

In the 21st century, contemporary cities are sites of circulation and exchange and as market actors, people's bodies (appearance and manner) are reduced to substance and function. When young people's disadvantage is made visible by their age, appearance, subsistence strategies and frequent use of public spaces, they are assessed as valueless and potentially contaminating to the public space. Failing to display the 'right' type of body for the consumption of others, they are subject to strategies being used to 'sanitize' public spaces including tickets, forced removal, and arrest.

One of the indexes of neoliberalism in contemporary cities has been the expansion of policing as an arm of government in regulating behavior and use of public space among homeless and other marginalized people who are seen to symbolize disorder that is morally, physically and economically dangerous. As young people with experiences of homelessness, participants are positioned as the binary opposite of the rational, independent and responsible 'ideal' young person. This view helps to construct the consequences of poverty that young people must manage e.g. insecurity, unemployment, and dependence on the state, as individual variables associated with irrationality, irresponsibility, and moral inferiority. As a body tasked with regulating and encouraging neoliberal behaviors through the circuits of inclusion and exclusion, the police use disciplinary and regulatory practices such as social profiling, tickets, and arrest to contain and control this population.

When interacting with the police as the victims of crime, their experiences revealed that despite high rates of victimization among homeless persons, young people felt that when interacting with police as the victim of crimes they were likely to be dismissed, ignored or blamed because of assumptions about their behavior, lifestyle and friend group. Their experiences are revealing of neoliberal practices of individualization, responsabilization, and standardization. Rather than receiving supports for their victimization, young people were seen to have brought upon their victimization by failing to navigate and respond to risk(s) including poverty and victimization and therefore as being undeserving and unworthy of police response. In effect, their pain and suffering is dismissed as less than others.

These examples suggest that as both young and homeless participants are positioned outside the normative community of ideal young people on the pathway to 'productive' adulthood; are deviating from 'appropriate' citizen behaviors; and are threatening the image of a city as a safe and prosperous place to live, they come to face social exclusion in society. In relation to policing, their social exclusion is reflected in the disciplinary and regulatory policing practices used to contain their 'risk'; their conditional access to social and legal rights including the right to police protection and security; and their removal from public spaces which their bodies and poverty are seen to contaminate.

The second important insight outlined in this study is how young people affectively and reflexively respond to their experiences of being over-policed and under protected. Sharing experiences of feeling targeted as the usual suspects of crime as well as disregarded as the invisible victims of crime because of their age, appearance, lifestyle

and use of public space, young people felt denigrated and misrecognized vis-à-vis policing in the city. Compounded by dynamics of power and privilege, their experiences with the police rearticulated the power relations, cultural distinctions and moral hierarchies that shape their lives as young people with experiences of homelessness and reinforced their sense of moral worthlessness, non-belonging, and exclusion vis-à-vis their encounters with policing in the city.

How young people made sense of and responded to their experiences was complex. Using the concept of reflexive subjectivity to better understand the relationship between their encounters with policing as a structure of governance and their individual ways of thinking and acting, I analyzed their narratives by measuring them with the socio-political contexts shaping policing in Canadian cities: risk and insecurity, neoliberal governance, and urbanization. For some, their experiences provoked the necessary conditions for self-motivated or reflexive forms of resistance to policing in the city. For others, they evoked the necessary conditions for them to incorporate and legitimate their domination. However, most participants struggled with feelings of ambivalence and responded complacently and apathetically. These responses were significant because few studies have qualitatively examined how homeless youth make sense of their experiences with the police and what impacts this has on their ways of feeling about and responding to policing in cities.

More broadly, when measuring the macro contexts that frame their lives, including risk and insecurity, neoliberal governance and late modernity, against their experiences with the police from their individual perspectives, we see that the conditions for who homeless youth can be, how they position themselves in the world, and how they

come to know themselves and others are limited by their intersecting identities as both young and homeless.

7.1 Limitations and future research

Departing from prevailing criminological perspectives and developmental discourses dominant in youth research, I did not identify distinct causal factors for the relations between young people and the police, offer any interventions, or present solutions to homeless youths' relations with the police in Ottawa. Similarly, as an exploratory study with a small sample size, I am not able to generalize these findings beyond the group of young people that I worked with. What I have provided is a conceptual foothold into how young people make sense of and respond to their encounters with policing. Researchers seeking to address gaps from the limited body of work that has examined the topic of policing, youth, and homelessness in a Canadian context might look to these insights to develop studies that focus specifically on marginalized young peoples' understandings and responses to policing in Canada. This research could also be used as a starting point for studies that examine how young peoples' subjectivities are implicated in their encounters with governance structures.

In addition to not being generalizable, another limitation of this study was that I was not able to properly attend to young people's encounters with policing along the axes of gender, race, and sexuality. Indigenous youth, LGBTQ2S youth, and racialized youth are overrepresented in homelessness statistics and many are doubly or triply marginalized, not just because of their homelessness, but also due to racism, homophobia and transphobia in their encounters with policing as well as the public more generally. Although their over-representation in youth homelessness statistics are frequently cited,

they are rarely the focus of research studies. Similarly, because males report higher rates of homelessness and more frequent encounters with the police, research focusing on homeless youth tends to over-look the experiences of females. Given that both male and female participants cited having personal experiences or knowing females who had survived sexual assault and felt dismissed, ignored and made to feel responsible for their victimization by the police, future research should examine this topic.

Only a few studies have explored homeless youths' encounters with policing specifically and both have focused on homeless youth living in two of Canada's largest cities, Vancouver (Kennelly, 2011) and Toronto (Gaetz, O'Grady, and Buccieri, 2011), comparative studies examining how homeless youths' experiences with the police in Ottawa compare with the experiences of homeless youth living in other cities, rural and suburban areas, as well as the experiences of other youth populations who do not have lived experiences of homelessness would be great sites for future research into this topic.

Although focus groups and walking interviews were applicable qualitative methods for examining young people's encounters with policing, using semi-structured interviews to probe information collected during walking interviews and focus groups would be a great methodological addition.

Finally, another limitation to this study was labelling participants as 'homeless'. Participants were recruited from a drop-in center for young people that are homeless and at-risk of becoming or returning to homelessness. However, throughout discussions and then later when reviewing transcripts, I questioned whether participants would categorize themselves as homeless. Although their appearance and use of the drop-in center signaled their identification as such, participants rarely identified themselves as homeless and a

few participants made the point to tell me that they had never had to sleep or live on ‘the streets’. This may have to do with stereotypical assumptions that construct homeless persons as indolent, dirty, and inferior. In future work, I will address this limitation by critically examining how young people understand themselves in relation to their experiences of homelessness.

7.2 Final thoughts

Previous research has examined homeless youths’ experiences with policing as both the suspects and victims of crime in Canadian cities, but few researchers have examined how young people make sense of and respond to their experiences. Outside Canada, research examining youth-police relations has relied on quantitative measures and few studies have examined the topic qualitatively from the perspective of young people themselves. To begin to address these gaps, in this thesis I have qualitatively examined homeless youths’ encounters with policing in Ottawa from the perspectives of young people themselves. With the aim of better understanding how young people make sense of and respond to their encounters with policing in Ottawa, the chapters above have provided an empirical and theoretical examination of participants’ dialogue, narratives, and opinions shared during focus groups and walking interviews. In doing so, this research has drawn together theoretical insights about larger macro processes and theoretical concepts used to analyze how young people understand these processes in their everyday and provided insights about participants’ lived experiences with the police, how they understand and respond to policing at different times and under different conditions, as well as reveal some of the power relations reinforcing as well as reproducing their stratification and inequality. I think that these questions have been largely overlooked in the literature on

youth, homelessness and policing and hope to continue this research in the future to better understand how young people's relations with the police are helping to reinforce and reproduce conditions for who they can be, how they position themselves in the world, as well as how they come to know themselves and others (Farrugia, 2016)

Appendices

Appendix A: Recruitment posters

Female participants aged 16-25 wanted for

2 Hour Focus Group

Share your views on police in Ottawa.

Get \$20 for participating!

Snacks provided

[date] [time] [place]

Be early – we're only taking 10 people!

Sign up below.

Project title: "The Usual Suspects": Exploring homeless youths' experiences with police in the city of Ottawa

Researcher: Cora MacDonald,
Master of Art's Candidate,
Department of Sociology and Anthropology
Carleton University, Ottawa, Ontario, CANADA
Cora.macdonald@carleton.ca

Police Focus Group Sign Up

[date] [time]

	Name
1	
2	
3	
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5	
6	
7	
8	

The ethics protocol for this project has been reviewed and cleared by the Carleton University Research Ethics Board CUREB-A (clearance number: 106003). If you have any ethical concerns with the study, please contact Dr. Andy Adler, Chair, Carleton University Research Ethics Board-A (by phone at 613-520-2600 ext. 2517 or via email at ethics@carleton.ca).

Male participants aged 16-25 wanted for

2 Hour Focus Group

Share your views on police in Ottawa.

Get \$20 for participating!

Snacks provided

[date] [time] [place]

Be early – we're only taking 10 people!

Sign up below.

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Appendix B: Information sheet for organization

Project title: “The Usual Suspects”: Exploring homeless youths’ experiences with police in the city of Ottawa

Researcher: Cora MacDonald, Master of Art’s Candidate, Department of Sociology and Anthropology, Carleton University
e-mail: cora.macdonald@carleton.ca

Research Supervisor: Dr. Jacqueline Kennelly, Associate Professor, Department of Sociology and Anthropology, Carleton University
Ph: +1 613-520-2600 x8103 (Ottawa, ON, CANADA)e-mail:
jacqueline_kennelly@carleton.ca

About the project: As part of my Master's research, I will be exploring the relationship between homeless, and/or marginally housed youths’ experiences with police in the city of Ottawa, from the perspective of youth themselves. To do so, I will conduct two focus groups and two walking interviews with youth who identify as homeless. The focus groups are designed to be interesting and interactive, in the style of popular education workshops. At the end of the focus groups, youth will have the option of participating in a walking-tour of their community. Participants will receive \$20 honoraria for participating in the focus group and a \$20 honoraria for participating in a walking interview.

About the researcher: Cora MacDonald is a second year master’s student in the Department of Sociology at Carleton University. During her undergraduate degree she conducted qualitative research exploring skate park youths’ relations with the police in a small New Brunswick town. She has been active in youth-serving organizations for the past ten years, working with youth in a number of capacities. Her most recent position was with the South East Ottawa Community Health Centre (SEOCHC) organizing a leadership program for low-income youth between the ages of 14 and 18. Currently, Cora is working as a research assistant for her supervisor Dr. Jacqueline Kennelly who is involved with several research projects involving homeless youth in Ottawa.

The ethics protocol for this project has been reviewed and cleared by the Carleton University Research Ethics Board CUREB-A (clearance number: 106003). If you have any ethical concerns with the study, please contact Dr. Andy Adler, Chair, Carleton University Research Ethics Board-A (by phone at 613-520-2600 ext. 2517 or via email at ethics@carleton.ca).

Department of Sociology and Anthropology
B 750 Loeb. 1125 Colonel By Drive
Ottawa, Canada K1S 5B6
Tel: (613) 520-2582
Fax: (613) 520-4062

Appendix C: Parental consent form

Department of Sociology and Anthropology
B 750 Loeb, 1125 Colonel By Drive
Ottawa, Canada K1S 5B6
Tel: (613) 520-2582

Project title: "The Usual Suspects": Exploring homeless youths' experiences with police in the city of Ottawa

Researcher: Cora MacDonald, Master of Art's Candidate, Department of Sociology and Anthropology, Carleton University
e-mail: cora.macdonald@carleton.ca

Principal Investigator: Dr. Jacqueline Kennelly, Associate Professor, Department of Sociology and Anthropology, Carleton University, Ottawa, ON, Canada

Ph: +1 613-520-2600 x 8103

email: jacqueline_kennelly@carleton.ca

Date of ethics clearance: December 8th, 2016

Ethics Clearance for the Collection of Data Expires: December 30th, 2017

Purpose:

- Explore the relationship between homeless youth and police in the city of Ottawa, from the perspective of youth themselves.

Youth participants:

- The study involves low-income, homeless, and/or marginally housed youth in Ottawa.
- Youth participants will be between 16-25 years old.

Study procedures:

- Focus group: Researcher will facilitate a guided discussion encouraging participants to discuss the relationship between homeless youth and police in Ottawa.
- Walking interviews (optional): In pairs, participants will be asked to guide the researcher on 'walking tours' of the city as they live it and experience it. Interview probes will be based on topics discussed during the focus group as well as a range of other themes including personal history(s), experience(s) of local neighbourhood, and thoughts about belonging/exclusion.
- Both focus groups and walking interviews will be audio-recorded. If participants do not want to be audio-recorded, participants can choose to participate and their contributions will be omitted during the transcription process.
-

Time requested (youth):

- The combined total time for participating in both the focus group and walking interview is approximately 2-4 hours.

- Focus group: 1-2 hours
- Walking interview: 1-2 hours

Confidentiality:

- Youth may choose to participate in the focus group and the walking interview, space permitting.
- Youth are free to withdraw from the study at any time up to three months after [date] 2017. They are also entitled to leave the focus group or stop a walking interview at any point.
- Group discussion (focus group) and walking interviews will be audio recorded and transcribed.
- Recordings will be labeled with pseudonyms (false names) and real names will be deleted from any transcripts and replaced by pseudonyms. Recordings and transcripts will be kept in a secure location and will be available only to the researcher.
- Participants may refuse to answer specific questions, or request that the audio recorder be turned off at any time.

Withdrawal:

- Participants can withdraw from the research study at any time up to three months after [date], 2017.
- To withdraw, participants should research, principal investigator or Operation Come Home.
- If participants withdraw from the study, their discussion will be removed from transcripts and omitted in the researcher's master's thesis and/or any subsequent research materials.

Contact for information about the study: If you have any questions or concerns about the study at any time, you may contact the researcher, Cora MacDonald, or researcher supervisor, Dr. Jacqueline Kennelly.

Researcher contact information:

Cora MacDonald
Email: cora.macdonald@carleton.ca

Supervisor contact information:

Dr. Jacqueline Kennelly
Tel: +1 613-520-2600 x8103,
Email: jacqueline_kennelly@carleton.ca

The ethics protocol for this project was reviewed by the **Carleton University Research Ethics Board CUREB-A** (clearance number: 106003) which provided clearance to carry out the research. Should you have questions or concerns related to your involvement in this research, please contact: Dr. Andy Adler, Chair, Carleton University Research Ethics Board-A (by phone: 613-520-2600 ext. 2517 or by email: ethics@carleton.ca or in person 511 Tory building, Carleton University, 1125 Colonel By Drive, Ottawa, K1S5B6)

Consent:

Your participation in this study is entirely voluntary and you can leave the focus group or stop a walking interview at any point. You may also choose to withdraw from the study at any time up to three months after [date] 2017.

Your signature below indicates that you have received a copy of this consent form for your records, **and that you consent to participate in some or all phases of this research project.**

Do you agree to be audio-recorded: ____Yes ____No

Participant's signature

Date

Name (please print)

Appendix D: Assent form

Department of Sociology and Anthropology
B 750 Loeb. 1125 Colonel By Drive
Ottawa, Canada K1S 5B6
Tel: (613) 520-2582
Fax: (613) 520-4062

Project title: “The Usual Suspects”: Exploring homeless youths’ experiences with police in the city of Ottawa

Researcher: Cora MacDonald, Master of Art’s Candidate, Department of Sociology and Anthropology, Carleton University
e-mail: cora.macdonald@carleton.ca

Principal Investigator: Dr. Jacqueline Kennelly, Associate Professor, Department of Sociology and Anthropology, Carleton University, Ottawa, ON, Canada
Ph: +1 613-520-2600 x 8103 e-mail: jacqueline_kennelly@carleton.ca

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- Both focus groups and walking interviews will be audio-recorded. If participants do not want to be audio-recorded, participants can choose to participate and their contributions will be omitted during the transcription process.

Time requested (youth):

- The combined total time for participating in both the focus group and walking interview is approximately 2-4 hours.
- Focus group: 1-2 hours
- Walking interview: 1-2 hours

Confidentiality:

- Youth may choose to participate in the focus group and the walking interview, space permitting.
- Youth are free to withdraw from the study at any time up to three months after [date], 2017. They are also entitled to leave the focus group or stop a walking interview at any point.
- Group discussion (focus group) and walking interviews will be audio recorded and transcribed.
- Recordings will be labeled with pseudonyms (false names) and real names will be deleted from any transcripts and replaced by pseudonyms. Recordings and transcripts will be kept in a secure location and will be available only to the researcher.
- Participants may refuse to answer specific questions, or request that the audio recorder be turned off at any time.

Withdrawal:

- Participants can withdraw from the research study at any time up to three months after [date], 2017.
- To withdraw, participants should contact researcher, principal investigator or staff at Operation Come Home.
- If participants withdraw from the study, their discussion will be removed from transcripts and omitted in the researcher's master's thesis and/or any subsequent research materials.

Contact for information about the study: If you have any questions or concerns about the study at any time, you may contact the researcher, Cora MacDonald, or researcher supervisor, Dr. Jacqueline Kennelly.

Researcher contact information:

Cora MacDonald

Email: cora.macdonald@carleton.ca

Supervisor contact information:

Dr. Jacqueline Kennelly

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The ethics protocol for this project was reviewed by the **Carleton University Research Ethics Board CUREB-A** (clearance number: 106003), which provided clearance to carry out the research. Should you have questions or concerns related to

your involvement in this research, please contact: Dr. Andy Adler, Chair, Carleton University Research Ethics Board-A (by phone: 613-520-2600 ext. 2517 or by email: ethics@carleton.ca or in person 511 Tory building, Carleton University, 1125 Colonel By Drive, Ottawa, K1S5B6)

Your participation in this study is entirely voluntary and you can leave the focus group or stop a walking interview at any point. You may also choose to withdraw from the study at any time up to three months after [date] 2017.

Your signature below indicates that you have received a copy of this assent form for your records **and that you agree to participate in some or all phases of this research project.**

Do you agree to be audio-recorded: ____Yes ____No

Participant's signature

Date

Name (please print)

Appendix E: Focus group outline

Order:

- Round of names and icebreaker (10 minutes)
- Thermometer (15 minutes)
- Policing short film (5 minutes)
- Thought-provoking questions (30 minutes)
- Other activities, as time permits

1. Open discussion with thermometer activity: (active/standing exercise)

Thermometer: agree, disagree, unsure, align yourselves wherever you feel best suits your views. Feel free to move as others talk, if they change your opinion.

(Statements are read out by the researcher. Participants are directed to move along the imaginary 'thermometer' towards the sign that best reflects their opinion ('agree' or 'disagree' or anywhere in the middle). Participants are told that all statements are opinion statements and there are no right or wrong answers. Once the participants position themselves, the researcher follows up with questions to learn more about their thoughts on each statement.)

Issue Statements (may not read through all of them, and may change the order):

1. I see myself reflected in police
2. I feel safe when police are nearby
3. I like police officials in the city
4. I feel as though police officials protect me
5. I feel as though police treat people equally regardless of age, gender, race or ethnicity
6. Police officials are friendly
7. If I felt I was in danger I would call the police
8. Police contribute positively to my community
9. I am respectful of police officials
10. I feel like this is my city and that I belong in Ottawa **Policing film (Transition to sitting around a table)** Screen Dr. Jacqueline Kennelly's short film from the research project, "Encountering Democracy: Low Income Canadian Youths' Perspectives on Citizenship and Democratic Processes", featuring homeless youth discussing their experiences with police in Ottawa (freely available at www.jacquelinekennelly.ca/encountering-democracy)

Thought provoking questions

Film:

What were your thoughts on the film?

Do you agree/disagree with the opinions shared in the film?

Can you relate to any of the experiences shared by participants?

Have you had different experiences with the police?

General:

Do you feel safe in Ottawa? Why or why not?

What would you do if you felt you or your friends were in danger?

Would you call on police for protection?

How would you describe the relationship between yourself and police in the city of Ottawa? (*Positive, negative, neutral*)

Do police in Ottawa represent the best interests of you and your friends? Why or why not?

Have you engaged with police in Ottawa? If so, was the experience positive? Negative?

Can you recall any positive experiences you or your friends have had or have witnessed with the police? What about negative?

How would you compare the police in Ottawa to other cities in Canada? What about the U.S.?

In what areas of the city are you most likely to see police? What about least likely?

In general how do police officers make you feel? (Safe/unsafe)

If a police officer was to say “hi” to you on the street, what would you do?

What is the role of police in the city of Ottawa?

If a police officer mistreated you or your friends, what would you do?

How can the relationship between youth and the police be improved?

4. Follow up/sign up: who is interested in participating in walking interviews?

Appendix F: Walking interviews

Walking interviews are optional.

Walking interviews will depend on the weather. The researcher may opt to do them after the focus group, depending on people's interest or wait until a later day.

Walking interviews will be recorded via an audio recorder that the youth can clip to their collar, so that it moves with them as they walk. If participants choose not to be audio-recorded they can still participate and their contributions will be omitted in the transcription process.

Prior to participating, participants will be reminded of the consent forms they signed before the focus groups that also outlined the optional walking-interviews. The researcher will reiterate that their participation is voluntary, that they are in no way obligated to disclose information and they may withdraw from the study at any time without repercussion.

The researcher will ask the participants to provide oral consent to the following questions:

I have read and signed the consent form for research project: "The Usual Suspects": Exploring homeless youths' experiences with police in the city of Ottawa:

☐ Yes ☐ No

Do I have your permission to begin:

☐ Yes ☐ No (If no, thank them for their time.)

Do you agree to be audio-recorded:

☐ Yes ☐ No

Prior to conducting the walking-interview the researcher will discuss a tentative route for the walking-interview with participants.

Instructions to youth:

Take us on a walk to places you have encountered police? Were your experiences negative? Positive?

Are there areas in the city your friends have had encounters with the police, if so can you take us there? Were their experiences positive? Negative?

Are there areas of the city you would expect to see police, if so can you take us there? Have you witnessed situations involving the police in these areas? Were they positive? Negative?

Are there areas that you would not expect to see police, if so can you take us there? What would happen if police came to this area? How would you or your friends react?

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