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Respect and policing refugee young people

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Abstract

Racialised policing, and substance use are major issues faced by African young people in Australia. In-depth interviews with 18 refugee young people who use alcohol and/or drugs examined interactions with police. Status respect and human respect played important roles in

interactions with police. Participants felt unfairly targeted by police and reported that they were disrespected by police through the use of discriminatory language, failing to differentiate between individuals leading to a sense of loss of self-identity, and stereotyping. Development and implementation of programs focusing on building mutual understanding and respect is needed to improve relations between refugee-background youth and police.

Keywords

Alcohol, policing, refugees, Africa, young people, qualitative research

Introduction

African refugee young people in Australia

Australia is home to approximately 290,000 Sub-Saharan African-born residents, roughly half of whom migrated from countries of Southern Africa and the Horn of Africa in the early-mid 2000s under Australia's humanitarian migration program (Australian Government Department of Immigration and Border Protection, 2014; Hugo, 2009). A growing body of research has examined the resettlement experiences of African refugee communities in Australia, commonly documenting experiences of unemployment, social disadvantage, marginalisation and discrimination (e.g. Colic-Peisker & Tilbury, 2007; Correa-Velez, Spaaij, & Upham, 2012; Fozdar & Hartley, 2013; Fozdar & Torezani, 2008; Polonsky, Brijnath, & Renzaho, 2011; Wille, 2011).

Young people comprise a significant portion of Australia's refugee communities. According to the 2011 census, 48,000 people aged 12-24 identified as refugee-born (based on being born in a country where the majority came to Australia through the humanitarian migration program) (Hugo, McDougall, Tan, & Feist, 2014), and among the African-born population in Australia, 23% were aged 10-24 years (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2016). Among African refugee young people, resettlement challenges have included English language acquisition, difficulties adapting to the Australian education system and gaining meaningful employment, and experiences of racism and discrimination (Australian Human Rights Commission, 2010; Brown, Miller, & Mitchell, 2006; Centre for Multicultural Youth, 2014; Correa-Velez, Gifford, & Barnett, 2010; Nunn, McMichael, Gifford, & Correa-Velez, 2014; Poppitt & Frey, 2007; Windle, 2008).

Racialised policing has been identified as a particularlyimportant challenge faced by African-background young people, with the small body of available evidence indicating that their interactions with police in Australia have been overwhelmingly negative. African young people, particularly young men, report being repeatedly stopped and searched by police (Australian Human Rights Commission, 2010; Dawes, 2013; Grossman & Sharples, 2010; Smith & Reside, 2010), a claim that has been substantiated by independent analysis of Victorian police data (Gordon, 2012). To some extent, this has been driven by the fact that African young people (in particular, those of Sudanese ethnicity, many of whom are from the Dinka tribe and are particularly visible in public spaces due to their height and dark striking features (Colic-Peisker & Tilbury, 2008)) have been characterised in public discourse as violent, gang-involved and a 'problem group' (Australian Human Rights Commission, 2010; Nolan, Farquharson, Politoff, & Marjoribanks, 2011; Nunn, 2010; Windle, 2008). In a landmark case in 2013, six young men reached settlement in a five-year fight against Victoria Police for racial profiling, including being subjected to racial taunts and regularly stopped and searched in circumstances in which a non-African would not have been (Green, 2013, November 25). Despite a commitment to reviewing procedures following this case (Grossman, Bruck, Stephenson, Dwyer, & Roose, 2013), reports of racial discrimination by police towards African refugee young people continue to occur (Flemington and Kensington Community Legal Centre, 2015); in a recent incident, three police officers from Sunshine, in Melbourne's West, were terminated from their jobs for producing and distributing beer holders featuring remarks which denigrated African communities (Gough, 2013, August 10).

In recent years, concerns have also been raised within refugee communities, and African communities in particular, about the use of alcohol and illicit drugs among young people, particularly those who are disengaged from education and employment (Ahmed, 2006; Ethnic Communities Council of Victoria, 2007; Foundation House and Centre for Multicultural Youth, 2013; Khawar & Rowe, 2013; Lee, Sulaiman-Hill, & Thompson, 2013). In the Western region of Melbourne, Victoria, a major African community hub, recent studies of public drinking have identified African young people as a key group of concern, with reports of groups of young people gathering in public spaces and consuming large amounts of alcohol (Dwyer, Horyniak, Aitken, Higgs, & Dietze, 2007; Manton, Pennay, & Savic, 2014; Papanastasiou, Higgs, & Dietze, 2012). Our recent work with African refugee young people in the region identified coping with trauma, coping with boredom, frustration and marginalisation, and social connectedness as key motivations for engaging in heavy drinking (Horyniak, Higgs, Cogger, Dietze, & Bofu, 2016a). This is an issue of concern, not only because of the potential morbidity associated with heavy alcohol consumption (Rehm et al., 2009), but also because of potential for bringing young people into contact with police. Laws governing public alcohol consumption have been implemented across Melbourne in a bid to improve community safety and public amenity (although specific laws vary at the local level) (Pennay et al., 2014). In the Western region City of Maribyrnong, local government laws are enforced by state police, with consumption of alcohol or possession of an open container of alcohol within the exclusion zone subject to a fine of $200 - $2000 (Pennay et al., 2014). A recent review of evaluations of public drinking laws in three countries including Australia found that they have negative impacts on marginalised populations, including young people, and have led to over-policing including

targeting of certain groups (Pennay & Room, 2012). Findings regarding the effectiveness of such laws in reducing public alcohol consumption and alcohol-related crime are mixed.

Theoretical and cultural understandings of (dis)respect

The Oxford English Dictionary defines respect as "deferential regard or esteem felt or shown towards a person, thing, or quality" (Oxford English Dictionary, 2015). German philosopher Immanuel Kant argued that respect is a fundamental moral obligation; that is, respect is owed to all individuals on the basis of being rational beings and is not dependent on social standing, achievements or personal character (Cranor, 1980; Dillon, 2007). More recent research has however moved away from such an egalitarian notion of respect, acknowledging the impact of social inequality and hierarchy on respect and the inherent links between respect, social status and power (Bird, 2004; Ridgeway, 2014).

In academic literature, although the nature of respect remains contested, and different definitions and understandings of respect are used in different disciplines, three consistent domains of respect have been identified: achieved respect (based on one's skills and abilities), status respect (dependent on one's standing in a social hierarchy) and human respect (the universal respect given to one another) (Darwall, 1977; Dillon, 2007; Hudson, 1980; Sennett, 2003).

There are two important characteristics of all types of respect that must be acknowledged. First, respect is recognised as both an attitude or feeling (having respect) and a way of behaving (showing respect). One can have feelings of respect and not portray them; conversely, one can behave in a respectful manner without having feelings of respect. Respect is performed by conforming to social norms, conventions and expectations; ways of displaying respect extend

from everyday politeness to refraining from devaluing, demeaning or otherwise treating a person in a lesser manner, to displaying deference (Bird, 2004; Dillon, 2007). Second, respect is a reciprocal process in which a display of respect is commonly met with a demonstration of respect in return. In this context, it is also important to consider disrespect, which beyond simply a failure to display respect (for example, in the ways noted above), can also include active expressions of insult and degradation which deprive a person of their dignity. Importantly, respect has varied meanings in different social and cultural settings, and challenges to communicating respect may occur in interactions where parties have differing understandings of respect.

In many African cultures respect is considered to be a core value, which is tied to self-identity and self-worth (Awoniyi, 2015). Both human respect and status respect are considered of utmost importance. Status respect is afforded to community elders and men, who are traditionally seen as the breadwinners and leaders of families (Fisher, 2013; Losoncz, 2011; Marlowe, 2010; Muchoki, 2013; Wa Mungai & Pease, 2009). In his seminal work on respect and inequality, sociologist Richard Sennett noted that in environments where resources are scarce and approval from outside sources is lacking, asserting social honour and seeking respect is considered important (Sennett, 2003). The experiences of marginalisation and discrimination experienced by African refugee-background communities in Australia outlined above, combined with cultural beliefs that strongly value respect, makes seeking respect extremely important, particularly for young people. Although little research has focused specifically on perceptions or experiences of (dis)respect in resettlement experiences of African refugees concerns regarding respect have been raised in several studies of resettlement experiences more broadly. For example, challenges

to masculinity (related to status respect) have been identified as a key concern for refugee-background men, and have been linked to experiences of psychological distress (Warfa et al., 2012), family conflict, and perpetration of domestic violence (Fisher, 2013; Rees & Pease, 2007). Importantly, interactions with authorities have been identified as a place in which challenges to respect, particularly status respect, have occurred (Grossman & Sharples, 2010; Losoncz, 2011).

Respect, policing and ethnic minority communities

Alongside human respect, respect can also be displayed towards social institutions and the people who represent them (e.g. law enforcement). Again, institutional respect is demonstrated by conforming to conventions, often involving an element of deference and adherence to authoritative directives (Bird, 2004; Hudson, 1980).

Procedural justice, the process by which police and other actors within the criminal justice system act fairly in their treatment of people and the decisions they make, is integral to maintaining trust, giving authority a sense of legitimacy, and promoting cooperation between authorities and the community (Roberts & Herrington, 2013; Tyler, 2008). The notion of procedural justice is multidimensional, incorporating elements of quality of treatment, including dignity, fairness and respect, as well as quality of decision-making, including neutrality and transparency (Sargeant, Murphy, & Cherney, 2014; Tyler, 2008). Communicating human respect has been noted as a particularly important component of procedural justice.

Policing culturally and ethnically diverse communities can pose unique challenges for law enforcement practitioners (Antonopoulos, 2003; Murphy, 2013). Evidence of racialised policing

has been documented in a range of settings including Australia, North America, and Europe (e.g. Gelman, Fagan, & Kiss, 2007; Millings, 2013; Peterson, 2008; Sharp & Atherton, 2007; Weitzer, 2000; Weitzer & Tuch, 2002; White, 2009), and it has been suggested that ethnic minorities are less trustful of police as a result of these interactions (Antonopoulos, 2003; McKernan & Weber, 2014; Murphy, 2013; Myrstol & Hawk-Tourtelot, 2011; Sargeant et al., 2014). Racialised policing, procedural justice and respect are closely linked; studies suggest that people are more likely to perceive that they have been racially profiled when they are treated without respect (Tyler, 2008), and may refuse to show respect to police because they anticipate unfair treatment (Sharp & Atherton, 2007; Weitzer, 2000). Examples of policing practices considered disrespectful by ethnic minority communities include stereotyping, using belittling or racialised language, demeaning suspects and violating personal space (Peterson, 2008; Stoutland, 2001; White, 2009), while behaviours perceived as disrespectful from a police perspective include being uncooperative and verbally or physically resisting authority (Giwa, James, Anucha, & Schwartz, 2014; Mastrofski, Reisig, & McCluskey, 2002)

Study rationale and aims

Research among marginalised young men in international settings has found that disproportionate policing practices can deprive young people of respect, pushing them towards further acts of criminality (Brunson & Miller, 2006; Oeur, 2016; Rios, 2009, 2012). In turn, this may impact young peoples' opportunities to succeed in education and employment, beginning a cycle of criminal activity, incarceration, and recidivism. Additionally, robust evidence supports an association between experiencing racism or discrimination and physical and mental health outcomes (Paradies et al., 2015; Pascoe & Richman, 2009; Priest et al., 2013). Early intervention

with at-risk young people is essential to disrupt cycles of marginalisation, criminalisation and poor health and social outcomes.

There is currently only limited literature examining interactions between refugee-background young people and police in Australia. Importantly, issues around crime committed by African refugee-background young people has received significant (negative) attention in mainstream Australian media in recent years (Horyniak, Lim, & Higgs, 2016b; Nunn, 2010; Windle, 2008), with potentially damaging results for the communities involved. In response, calls have been made for research into the underlying causes of offending behaviour among youth from culturally diverse communities who may be overrepresented in the justice system, in order to inform effective responses (Centre for Multicultural Youth, 2014).This research aimed to fill this gap in the literature and generate evidence to inform good policing and criminal justice practice, as well as the development of policies and interventions that promote social inclusion and successful resettlement for refugee-background young people. This research also serves to give voice to young people themselves, who are commonly excluded from public discourse.

In this paper, we describe the nature and context of interactions between police and marginalised African refugee-background young people who consume alcohol and/or illicit drugs, an especially vulnerable population who often come into contact with police (Horyniak et al., 2016a) and whose interactions with police may be impacted by their level of intoxication (Reisig, McCluskey, Mastrofski, & Terrill, 2004). Given the importance of respect in African cultures, we employ the notion of respect as the lens through which these interactions are analysed and interpreted.

Methods

Study design and participant recruitment

This paper draws on data from an exploratory study conducted in 2012-2013 examining alcohol and illicit drug use among marginalised young African migrants and refugees from Melbourne's western suburbs (Horyniak et al., 2016a; Horyniak et al., 2014). Eligible participants were those aged 16 years or older who were born in any part of East Africa or Sudan, who lived, worked or studied in the City of Maribyrnong or City of Brimbank (two local government areas in Melbourne's inner west where public alcohol and illicit drug consumption have been documented; population ~275,000), and reported ever having used any illicit drugs.

Recruitment largely involved field-based opportunistic sampling in the Footscray central business district (City of Maribyrnong), the major transport and business hub for the region, and advertisement through local health and welfare service providers with young African clientele. Our team spent several months in the field, conversing and engaging with young people of interest in the spaces they frequented. Key young people with whom we developed strong relationships acted as 'brokers', introducing us to other members of their social group. Young people who expressed an interest in the study and were available to complete an interview at the time of contact or who were willing to schedule an interview, were invited to participate. The aim was to recruit a diverse sample in relation to country of birth, age, migration experiences and experiences of substance use, rather than a representative sample. Detailed information regarding participant engagement and recruitment methods has been previously published (Horyniak et al., 2014).

Data collection and management

Data were collected through field notes and in-depth interviews with participants (conducted by the first author). Interviews were facilitated by a semi-structured interview guide developed in consultation with community workers of African background. Key areas of discussion included migration to and integration within Australia, patterns, contexts of and motivations for alcohol and illicit drug use, and health and social consequences of alcohol and illicit drug use. Participants were also prompted to comment on whether they had ever had any contact with police, the kinds of interactions they had experienced, and whether they felt they had been unfairly targeted by police because of their ethnicity.

Interviews took place in a mobile study van or office space located adjacent to the field site, and lasted between 15 and 80 minutes. All participants provided written informed consent. Participants were reimbursed AU$30 at the completion of the interview. Interviews were audio-recorded and transcribed verbatim. Pseudonyms were assigned to all transcripts as well as community members referred to in field-notes. Any potentially identifying information was deleted from the interview transcripts. Interview transcripts and field notes were managed using Nvivo Version 10 (QSR International, Doncaster, Australia). Approval for the study was obtained from the Monash University Human Research Ethics Committee.

Data analysis

For this paper, data were drawn from fieldnotes and transcripts of interviews with 16 participants aged below 30 years who identified as refugees when describing their migration experiences. Analysis employed a thematic approach using inductive coding, with the aim of understanding

emic interpretations of individual participant's experiences. All coding was conducted by DH. DH communicated frequently with co-authors PH and SC throughout the processes of participant engagement, data collection, and data analysis, reflecting on the interview content and coding of key themes, thereby limiting the potential impacts of assumptions and prejudices that any individual researcher may have had during any phase of the study. As it was not the primary aim of data collection and due to the sensitivity of the issue, interactions with police were not discussed in detail with all participants. Selected participant quotes used in this manuscript are drawn from the interviews which discussed these issues most in-depth.

Results

Participant characteristics

Sixteen males aged 18-30 years (median: 24 years) participated in the study. Twelve participants were born in Sudan (including nine from areas which are now part of the Republic of South Sudan), two in Eritrea, and one each in Kenya and Somalia. Most had spent significant amounts of time in countries of first asylum (including in refugee camps) prior to migration to Australia. Participants had resided in Australia for between six and 14 years at the time of interview (median: 10.5 years). Post-migration experiences commonly included family separation, disengagement from education and employment, and periods of homelessness.

Participants gathered in public spaces to socialise and consume alcohol, with most reporting daily or near daily drinking. As detailed in our previous work, young people reported drinking with the intention of becoming intoxicated, and experienced a range of serious health and social

consequences from heavy drinking (Horyniak et al., 2016a). Participants also commonly reported regular cannabis consumption but use of other illicit drugs was uncommon.

Nature and context of interactions with police

Participants regularly came into contact with police, and predominantly described these interactions as negative experiences. Although few participants explicitly described police behaviours as racist or discriminatory, participants generally perceived that police '*have problems with black people*'. In particular, as the following quotes demonstrate, participants felt that they were under constant surveillance because of their ethnicity and that their right to gather in public space was challenged:

> *When they [the police] see us walking like five of us, ten of us, they pull us over and they say "Where are you guys going? Are you guys planning something?", you know? But we told them we like to walk like friends, you know what I mean? Yeah, it's not because we're going to do trouble.*

> (Abuk, age 24)

> Daniel: *There's a park there [where young people gather], but now we can't go there…*
>
> Interviewer: *Oh, how come?*
>
> Daniel: *Too much cops come around. Every five minutes, come around… They just come, check out what's happening. They tell us you can't sit here, this is a public area.*

> (Daniel, age 20)

Alcohol played a central role in creating circumstances that resulted in contact between study participants and police. Participants commonly reported being stopped and searched by police, with the presence (or suspected presence) of alcohol seen as the main reason used by police to initiate these interactions. In one neighbourhood park where young people frequently gathered, targeted walk-throughs by police, seemingly with the explicit purpose of monitoring drinking behaviour, were a regular occurrence:

> *The police officer, an older man who I'd never seen before parked in front of our van, got out and headed straight towards us* [myself and two young men I had been sitting and conversing with]. *He picked up the bottle the boys had been drinking from and asked if it was ours. When we replied no, he picked it up, binned it, got back in the car and drove off. "You scare him away" one of the young men told me -- if I wasn't there he was sure that he* [the officer] *would've asked for his name and grilled him. When I asked him if he had trouble with the cops he told me he was asked for his name by police "three, four times a day."*

(DH Fieldnotes, 31 January 2013)

These 'stop-and-searches' commonly led to participants being charged by police for alcohol-related offenses, including public drunkenness and possessing an open container of alcohol in a public place where alcohol consumption is prohibited.

Alcohol was also reported to play a role in crime and violence, which was another avenue through which young people reported coming into contact with police and the justice system. Participants reported becoming easily angered or upset when under the influence of alcohol,

which led to disagreements and physical altercations between friends, as well as opportunistic crime.

The role of respect in interactions with police

Issues of respect arose often in participant narratives, in the contexts of family relationships, social relationships and in particular, in the context of interactions with police. Throughout these narratives, respect was highly valued.

Participants expressed varied feelings about the place of status respect in interactions with police, both as individuals and as an institution. Girma (age 26) recognised that although the law enforcement system is imperfect, it was necessary to respect the legitimacy and authority of the system, noting that 'e*ven though its broken, its still there'.* He emphasised the role of each individual citizen in abiding by the system, stating that '*its just up to you -- you've got to stay away from the things that can get you in trouble.'* By contrast, Abuk differentiated between affording status respect to the police as an institution, and affording status and human respect to individual police officers in the context of specific interpersonal interactions. He described an incident where he was racially taunted and physically assaulted by police in front of his girlfriend and child, but felt that his capacity to respond was constrained by status and power relationships: *'I told them because of their uniform, you think you're the man. With no uniform, me and you, I think you cannot do anything'.* This quote speaks strongly to the notion of status respect; Abuk acknowledges that the police officer has expected him to display respect because of his position as a representative of an institution with power and authority, signified by the wearing of a police uniform. Abuk, clearly feels that without this

uniform, the officer is not deserving of respect given he has already disrespected Abuk through his actions and words. Furthermore, in this quote Abuk also alludes to the gendered nature of respect, where being 'the man' is associated with power and the right to demand respect.

Violations of human respect were a common cause of frustration and anger for participants. Participants reported observing and experiencing a range of behaviours engaged in by police, which they saw as attacks against their human respect and described police behaviour as '*baiting'*, '*harassing', 'provoking', and 'getting in your face'*. In particular, this included the use of racialised and discriminatory language and making generalisations about African communities. For example, Gabriel described how disrespect was portrayed through acts which deidentified individuals and attacked their dignity and sense of self:

> *Coppers come see us drinking, you know, we haven't started shit. You know we're black - - OK, we understand - there's heaps of black boys in Footscray. OK, so it doesn't mean because we're sitting here and we're drinking and we're black - there's robbery happening at the station, it's one of you boys… Come with us, let's go and identify you and see if it's you or not. See they're not even one hundred per cent sure, they're just guessing, you know? They don't have the right to guess.*

(Gabriel, age 19)

As Hakim (age 21) explained, these kinds of interactions seemed to suggest that the entire community of African young people was collectively held responsible for the crimes or misbehaviours of individuals or a subset of the community: *'There's a lot of Sudanese now*

getting in trouble, and they're kind-of putting everybody in that… but not everybody's like that.'

For Malual (age 27), respect was a key element of procedural justice, which he conceptualised by differentiating between 'good cops' and 'bad cops'. He explained that a '*bad cop'* would immediately fine you if they see you drinking, whereas a '*good cop'* may tell you to throw the alcohol away. In doing so, a good cop engages with a young person on an equal footing, treating him or her with human respect, rather than taking a punitive course of action for what is, in reality, a minor offense.

Although participants recognised that respect was a bi-directional process, many felt that displaying respect towards police was futile and unlikely to be reciprocated. For example, Girma described an incident in which he was accused of a property crime, and he cooperated with police by providing his identification card, however the officer involved responded aggressively, snatching the card from him. This interaction left Girma feeling disappointed and frustrated: *'I sort of felt, I don't know, you feel wrong, when you're trying to cooperate…'* Alcohol was attributed as playing an important role in potentially exacerbating these types of situations. For example, Malual explained that when he was under the influence of alcohol he would respond to disrespect from police in a more aggressive and less cooperative manner, which in turn, could influence how police addressed the situation.

Among those who were more resilient to what they interpreted as disrespectful behaviours, showing deference was a way to avoid confrontation and prevent punitive action from police. Khaled, a 22-year old from North Sudan came from a politically active family and was educated

within the Catholic school system in Australia. He was highly assimilated, spoke English with a strong Australian accent and was looked up to by many of the other young men we spoke with. Although he also experienced frequent contact with police, he felt he was treated differently from other young Africans, with police affording him some level of achieved respect. As such, he was able to respond differently:

> *Every time the law looks at them, they look at them the wrong way. Even me, I get looked at the wrong way. I get pulled over, and they look in my bag and there's nothing, and I smile and walk away… It happens whenever they see me. But me, I don't put myself down, or try to swear at them. I smile and walk away because I'm proud of what I am. They [the police] do get terrified as soon as they talk to me, and like I've got an Aussie accent, and they're like "hang on, what's wrong with this one?"*

In this way, Khaled was not only able to demonstrate his respect for the police, but was also able to preserve his own dignity, by not allowing himself to be disrespected by being made to feel guilty for offenses he had not committed. The impact of assimilation in this interaction is also important. Khaled notes that the law enforcement officers he has interacted with have been taken aback by his Australian accent, through which he is positioned as someone who 'belongs' and is thus deserving of respect, rather than the 'ethnic other' (Essed, 2001; Hatoss, 2012). Importantly, some participants did share narratives of positive interactions with police. For example, 19-year old Gabriel described the police facilitating contact with social workers for him after he became homeless following a disagreement with his mother and stepfather at age 14. Several participants also described

attending a camp arranged by local community organisations that facilitated interactions between young people and police outside their usual power-imbalanced setting. As James' narrative suggests, displaying human respect without the demands and expectations of status respect was integral to building more harmonious relationships:

> *The sheriff came there [to the camp] as well, and we had a meeting and we're talking about what we really find hard on the street, with the police and stuff like that. So we actually talked more about it… It's nice -- a little bit quiet down, they don't hassle us like before, like "show me your ID", "where are you off to?" "where you live?"… We actually knew some other officers, and some of them they know us, like actually by personality. Some of them they think we're just animals, man, they just don't think… coz every human being is a human being.*

(James, age 22)

Discussion

Findings from this qualitative study of African refugee-background youth are consistent with previous research which has described poor relationships between ethnic minority young people (including migrant and refugee-background young people, and Indigenous young people) and police in Australia (Collins & Reid, 2009; Dawes, 2013; Gifford, Correa-Velez, & Sampson, 2009; Grossman & Sharples, 2010; Ogwang, Cox, & Saldanha, 2006; Smith & Reside, 2010; White, 2009), and in international settings (Brunson & Miller, 2006; Oeur, 2016; Rios, 2009). Importantly, we provide the first explicit examination of the roles of status respect, human respect and achieved respect in these interactions.

Our study participants described a range of experiences in which they felt disrespected by police. In these interactions, disrespect was more than a simple failure to display respect, but included both indirect (e.g. constant surveillance in public spaces) and overt actions (e.g. physical assaults) which participants felt were attacks against their dignity. In particular, young people reported that acts of disrespect commonly included racialised elements including discriminatory language and stereotyping African young people, particularly regarding their perceived criminal involvement. Although participants acknowledged that police represent a legitimate system of authority, their day-to-day interactions with individual police officers, who were seen to demand status respect without displaying human respect in return, appears to have led to a mistrust of the entire police system. Importantly, positive interactions discussed by participants occurred in unique circumstances where interactions were not defined by the power imbalance present in usual street interactions, and were underpinned by displays of human respect by police towards young people. Our findings are consistent with previous work which has identified human respect as a key component of fair policing and procedural justice, particularly among ethnic minority communities (Myrstol & Hawk-Tourtelot, 2011; Sharp & Atherton, 2007; Stoutland, 2001).

In this study, participants demonstrated fairly low levels of resilience against violations of human respect. This contrasts with research conducted among South Sudanese adults, where participants demonstrated high levels of resilience towards acts of disrespect (Losoncz, 2011). It is likely alcohol played an important role in this. Alcohol use (often in public spaces where it was illegal) was an underlying contributor to interaction between young people and police, and participants were often under the influence of alcohol during these interactions. Alcohol may impair

judgement, and young people under the influence of alcohol may disregard the consequences of acting disrespectfully towards police. Previous studies of police-civilian interactions have found being under the influence of alcohol or other drugs is significantly associated with responding to police provocation (Reisig et al., 2004).

Interestingly, the ways in which racialised policing were discussed by participants more commonly referred to skin colour, rather than ethnic or racial identity, and it seems as though our participants believed this to be the defining characteristic which made them a target for police. 'Blackness' has been acknowledged as symbolising exclusion from the mainstream whiteness of Australia (Colic-Peisker & Tilbury, 2008), and has been used as a common descriptor used to identify African young people, linking them to African-American gang culture (Windle, 2008). It is has been noted that African migrants in Australia are yet to positively claim the black identity, in the way that has been done by communities in the US (Phillips, 2011). More research is necessary to understand the fundamental role of black identity in challenges to multiculturalism in the Australian context.

More broadly, our findings speak to the need to develop and implement programs which aim to improve relations between culturally diverse young people and police. Our findings suggest such programs should emphasise mutual understanding and respect. Although participants in this study commonly reported incidents of disrespect occurring at the individual level, it is necessary for change to be implemented at the systemic level due to turnover of police staff and movement between different local stations (Chan & Doran, 2009). Since the fieldwork for this study was conducted there have been several promising developments. In a recent evaluation of Victoria Police cross-cultural training practices the need to strengthen cross-cultural police education and

training has been acknowledged (Grossman et al., 2013). The evaluation authors recommended a focus on the development of knowledge, values and ethics that recognise and promote community diversity for all police at all career stages. They also emphasised the need to directly address implicit bias, racism and racial and ethnic profiling. In addition to addressing cross-cultural training across the police force, there is a need for increased recruitment of culturally and linguistically diverse police who may serve as role models and help to develop mutually respectful relationships between refugee-background young people and local police (McMurray, Karim, & Fisher, 2010). In another groundbreaking move, in September 2015, Victoria Police officially updated their policing manual to clearly and formally define racial profiling, declaring it an illegal practice (Green, 2015, September 27). Monitoring and evaluating how this policy is translated into practice, and assessing whether this change is effective in combating racial profiling, especially as it is related to marginalised African young people, is essential.

The young people participating in our study were consuming alcohol at hazardous levels, and were experiencing a range of alcohol-related health harms, including often drinking to the point of losing consciousness (Horyniak et al., 2016a). This is an important reminder to consider the impacts law enforcement practice can have on health. Heavy law enforcement of substance users has been shown to prevent health and social welfare organisations from reaching communities in need, potentially exacerbating substance use issues and increasing the risk of adverse health consequences (Kerr, Small, & Wood, 2005). Rather than undertaking punitive measures such as fining young people, police could play an essential role in linkage to treatment and support services. Such approaches have been shown to be effective, for example, police in Vancouver, Canada have played an important role in referring illicit drug users to the safe injecting facility,

enabling them to access vital health services (DeBeck et al., 2008). Moving beyond simply initiating referral pathways, a feasibility study of alcohol screening and brief intervention in England found that police were willing and able to deliver the program effectively, and that a high proportion of arrestees who screened positive were willing to receive the brief intervention (Brown, Newbury-Birch, McGovern, Phinn, & Kaner, 2010).

It is important to recognise some limitations of this study. As the primary purpose of the study was to examine contexts and consequences of alcohol and illicit drug use, participants were only briefly prompted to discuss law enforcement and justice issues. Future research should explore in more detail the role of cultural understandings of respect in interactions with police, particularly in relation to gender. Future research should also examine factors which promote resilience among ethnically diverse young people in their interactions with police. Importantly, participants provided accounts of their past interactions with law enforcement. Such accounts may be influenced not only by the interviewer's co-construction of the account, but also by the ways in which participants may 'narrate' their experiences by selecting to emphasise certain details or construct a particular identity (Bernays, Rhodes, & Jankovic Terzic, 2014; Manderson, Bennett, & Andajani-Sutjahjo, 2006). Furthermore, interactions are in their very nature a reciprocal process; our findings may be limited by the fact that we included only the perspective of the young people and not the law enforcement officers involved in these interactions.

Conclusion

In this study we examined interactions with police among a sample of marginalised refugee-background young people who use alcohol or other drugs. Findings show that respect is highly valued and that young people are willing to demonstrate respect towards police if the same

courtesy is extended towards them. Development and implementation of programs focusing on building mutual understanding and respect may improve these relations.

Acknowledgements

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