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Internalising Crime as Racial Identity: A Study of Black and Native Young Offenders

by

Monetta Marissa Bailey

A THESIS

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The undersigned certify that they have read, and recommend to the Faculty of Graduate Studies for acceptance, a thesis entitled "Internalising Crime as Racial Identity: A Study of Black and Native Young Offenders" submitted by Monetta Bailey in partial fulfilment of the requirements of the degree of Master of Arts.

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Abstract

While working in group homes for young offenders and troubled youth, it was observed that many of the Native and Black youth had a specific slant to the common adolescent need to be defiant in asserting their individualism. In particular, much of their defiant attitudes conformed to stereotypical ideas of young Black and Native people. This study went further into this phenomenon to discover the correlates to this attitude, using colonial theory, neo-colonial theory, social construction theory and cultural transmission theory. A total of 17 youth serving time in correctional institutions participated in semi-structured, in-depth interviews. Analysis done on the interviews identified common themes both within and across racial groups. Results showed that for Native youth, ideas of the “drunken Indian” and that Natives were more prone to commit crime were common place. Likewise, Black youth seemed to have internalised the ideas of Blacks being criminal and “gangsta-like”. In most cases, the influence of popular culture, most notably rap music, as well as other social institutions, for example the police, served to reinforce their behaviour. However, it was found that although these youth all reported incidences of racism in society, they did not see themselves as socially or economically oppressed, as was suggested by neo-colonial theory as a mediating effect. In most cases, the youth seemed to use ideas about their race that were common in society not only to influence their behaviour, but also as excuses for their actions, deferring responsibility from themselves to society.

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It seems like nothing in this whole process came easily, but that makes my final product so much sweeter. It also makes the support from those who helped me much more valuable. I would like to thank my supervisor Dr. John Manzo for your guidance. This wasn't easy since it was new for both of us, but we made it through, and I'm happy with the final product. Thanks. I would also like to thank the other members on my thesis committee, Dr. Augustine Brannigan for his input and assistance during my project, and Dr. Kim Zaft who turned out to be the best choice for an external committee member, I appreciated your comments and support. I would also like to thank Kevin Kieser, Al Gordon, Jim Cook, and Jodene Shepardson for allowing me to conduct my research at your facilities.

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CHAPTER ONE: Introduction

The Canadian Context

In Canada, there is an apparent association between certain racial/ethnic groups and criminal behaviour. It is hard to fully appreciate this relationship, as racial statistics are not normally collected on prison populations as in the United States. There has been a debate as to whether or not this information should be collected with social scientists, lawyers and others arguing both sides of the debate. (e.g. Gabor, 1994; Hatt, 1994; Johnston, 1994; Roberts, 1994; and Wortley, 1999) Despite this lack of statistics, some estimations have been made that allow us to substantiate the fact that over-representation of certain racial groups is occurring.

Wortley (1999) notes that in 1997 in Canada, Natives represented about four percent of the population but comprised fourteen percent of federal prison inmates. Likewise, Blacks accounted for roughly two percent of the population while representing over six percent of those on federal correctional institutions. This meant that Natives had the highest incarceration rate (184.85 per 100, 000), followed by Blacks (146.37). (Wortley, 1999: 261) Smandych et. al. (1993) noted that in Canada, Natives are arrested at a greater rate than others in the population- up to twenty-nine times as much, and that they compose seven percent and up to seventy percent respectively, of federal and provincial corrections institutions.

This association between race and crime has led many in society to develop negative stereotypes of Blackⁱ and Nativeⁱⁱ people. In Canada these negative stereotypes stem both from an exaggeration of what is thought to be factual and from images common to North American society. Although Blacks and Natives represent a small

proportion of the Canadian population- two and four percent respectively- Canadians are familiar with both the image of the “drunken Indian” and that of the “Black gangsta.” For members of these racial groups, societal images of who they are and what their culture represents have influenced their development of a racial identity. Popular conceptions of “Blackness” or “Nativity” have an impact on the creation of a racial identity, especially for youth, who are arguably more easily influenced by the mass media and societal images.

This association at a societal structural level is reflected in many of our institutions, and reinforced by structures such as the media and the justice system. Singer (1982) found that the images of minorities, especially Native people, in Canada were overwhelmingly negative. He noted that,

It is by now a sociological axiom that the way in which members of minority groups learn to perceive themselves and the way in which they are perceived by members of the larger society affects their self-images and future development. Once such images become established and maintained in the larger society, they become self-fulfilling prophecies (Singer, 1982: 349).

In his study of Canadian newspapers, Singer found that Native people were portrayed in a negative way, where negative and conflict words such as “charges,” “kill,” “death,” and “liquor,” occurred in conjunction with the word “Indian” a number of times (Singer, 1982: 356). Social construction theories propose that such public images of minority groups not only influence the societal definitions of their race, but they also become included in the individual’s racial identity.

Another force that influences societal images of Black and Native people is the police. Racial minorities receive differential treatment from the police, where minority youth from both underprivileged and middle or upper class neighbourhoods are “over-

policed” (e.g. James in Satzewich, 1998; Neugebauer-Visano, 1996; Jackson and Penrose, 1993). This focus on minority youth stems from the predetermined expectations that the police have of members of these groups.

For these reasons, it is useful to investigate whether or not youth are influenced by these representations to become involved in crime. The question arises, however, if this kind of research is relevant in Canada, specifically in Western Canada. First, some may argue that Native Canadians have been over-studied, and that has made their justice issues appear more salient than they actually are. Likewise, opposition to a focus on Blacks stems from the fact that their numbers, especially in Western Canada are small and do not warrant such attention. While it is true that there has been much emphasis placed on Native Canadians, not much research has been found that links their colonial heritage to their present situation as I propose to do, and as has been done with Blacks in both the United States and Great Britain. With respect to the arguments against focusing on Blacks due to their low numbers, I agree with many who argue that the percentage of Blacks in the major Canadian cities, including Calgary and Edmonton, is increasing (e.g. Jackson and Penrose, 1993; Roberts and Doob, 1997; Kelly, 1998; and Petrunik and Manyoni, 1991). Moreover, the ideas of “Blackness” held by both the larger society and by individual Blacks is highly influenced by the American culture and their stereotypes. These ideas are often thought to portray a more negative representation of Blacks than is normally seen in Canada, which has an influence on identity formation of Black Canadian youth (e.g. Kelly, 1998; and Roberts and Doob, 1997; and Petrunik and Manyoni, 1991). Furthermore, whether the numbers are large or not, this is an interesting phenomenon that is worth investigating, especially since more and more Natives are

living in cities, and immigration is bringing Blacks into Canadian cities, in large numbers (Roberts and Doob, 1997).

The majority of the research in Canada on the connection between race and crime focuses on structural factors, most notably socio-economic factors (e.g. Hagan, 1985; Roberts and Doob, 1997; Wortley, 1999). The problem with such research is, firstly, it treats the individual as passive since he/she are not seen as a actor in society, but rather he/she are considered acted upon by external forces. Secondly, it cannot explain crime among Blacks and Natives that are not disadvantaged socially and economically. In addition, in Canada, much of this research is carried out in Ontario and Quebec, where the racial composition differs from the rest of the country. However, increasing immigration from the West Indies and Africa, as well as the movement of many Native people from reserves into Canadian cities requires that more research be done on this phenomenon. My study aims to address this lack of research.

According to social constructionists (e. g. Holdaway, 1997; Blakey, 1999; Rodkin, 1993; and Schiele, 1998), most social theories about race and crime tend to reify race and ignore the social process that is involved in the creation of racial categories. They do so by treating race as something that is simply assigned at birth, and not something that is learned through social interaction. Many theorists who hold the social construction of race view see a need to acknowledge the process of "racialisation." The term "racialisation" is based in the belief that race is socially constructed. It refers to the process by which meanings and definitions become associated with different racial categories. It is the way in which races are constructed in everyday life, and become "real" to society.

Holdaway (1997) argues that there is a tendency for race to be treated as a discrete variable in the case of statistical analysis when explaining the relationship between race and crime. This results in the separation and removal from the social world and social processes in which the racial action occurs. Therefore, only interpreting the relationship between race and crime in terms of police arrests, police stops, the socio-economic status of the offender and other variables, objectifies the term "race," which is a social phenomena. The fact that race is an ongoing social creation prevents many theories about race and crime from being adequate.

According to Holdaway, because a theorist sees race as a social process that develops meaning through discourse does not mean that it provides an adequate explanation of the race and crime relationship. One of the main problems with this approach is that it tends to move from one extreme of reifying race, to the other where race is seen as absolutely subjective, and thus terms used to refer to racial categories become meaningless. One example of the arbitrary nature that these theories can take is seen in their use of the term the "criminalised other."

Theorists who speak of the "criminalised other" (e. g. Jefferson, 1993 and Murji, 1999) tend to give an unclear definition of "the other." Holdaway's problem with the use of this term is that there is a tendency to over-theorise.

Rather than understand social structures and related processes of criminalisation and racialisation as a framework for criminological analysis a virtual straight jacket is created. A slippery concept, "other," is placed centre stage, which means that we cannot falsify the analysis adopted because there are no criteria to decide whether or not social exclusion is in any context practised on radicalised grounds (Holdaway, 1997: 384).

While I agree with Holdaway that the use of the term the “other” is sometimes unclear and problematic, I find the ways in which it will be used by some of the authors that I will discuss helpful in terms of understanding the ways that certain minority groups are made to feel “other” than the norm. Grounded in a colonial theory frame work, the use of the term the “other” in this paper will refer to the fact that the minority groups being discussed are not made to feel as part of the society, but, through excessive police targeting, negative depiction of their race, stereotyping and other processes, they are made to feel as “other.”

As a result, studies need to address the belief that race is a process, which is continually being defined by society. Since the individual draws on his/her surroundings for the information that is relevant for his/her racial identification, this process will be influenced by the larger social context in which that individual forms his/her racial identity. Race then becomes something real and concrete for society and for the individual. The following studies run the spectrum from seeing race as a social phenomenon (e. g. Rodkin, 1993 and Blakey, 1999), to treating it as a concrete variable (e. g. Roberts and Doob, 1997).

Studies that see race as a social phenomenon tend to have a specific methodological approach to the study of race and crime. They focus more closely on the subjective meanings of race and crime to the individuals, to see what these terms mean to the individual rather than only their meanings in society (e. g. Schiele, 1998; King, 1997; Staples, 1975; and Neugebauer-Visano, 1996). On the other hand, researchers who see race as a concrete variable tend to look more at the correlation between certain variables, race and crime. For example, they focus on structural variables such as socio-economic

factors, or crime statistics and their relationship to race. Here, race is seen as something that precedes the individual (e. g. Roberts and Doob, 1997; Singer, 1982). In addition, whether looking at the structural or cultural elements that lead to the over-representation of certain racial groups in the justice system, most authors conclude that the stereotypes and attitudes of the police have an influence. In particular, the police represent the views of society on the whole, and are an ideal place to look for the ways in which these groups are viewed by society (Holdaway, 1997; Roberts and Doob, 1997; Murji, 1999; Petrunik and Manyoni, 1991).

Holdaway (1997) notes that in order to understand the relationship between race and crime, it is necessary to use the concept of racialisation, which prevents us from asking questions such as: "What is the relationship between race and crime?" and leads us to asking questions like:

How do some crimes, the contexts within which they have occurred and the people who have or are said to have committed them come to be associated with, directly or indirectly, the category of race? What are the social processes that have led these events and people to be connoted and, or denoted with the meaning "racial?" (Holdaway, 1997: 386)

Personal Interest

Before proceeding with my review of the literature, I think it is important for me to note my interest in this topic. Norum (2000) states that researchers are always biased in their research - from choosing a topic, choosing a sample, the issues in the topic they choose to address, and the things they choose to hear. These are all influenced by the researcher's personal experience with that topic. According to Norum, "it is both sociologically good sense and an ethical obligation to disclose our biases." (Norum, 2000: 320) Thus, I am

obligated to state my interest in this study. My interest in the topic stems from two main sources. The first of these sources was my encounter with young offenders while working in group homes for young offenders and teenagers with behavioural problems. These youth had been ordered, either by the courts or by child welfare, to reside in these homes. Both Black and Native youth took pride in their culture, to which they attributed actions that were delinquent. When questioned about their lifestyle and the actions that caused them to be apprehended, many of the responses included the fact that all of their families and friends, who were often of the same heritage, had the same lifestyle. It was natural for them to expect that a Native drinks alcohol and breaks the law or that Blacks smoke “weed”ⁱⁱⁱ and are defiant towards authority. They had come to equate delinquency with their culture.

Furthermore, it was striking to me the popularity of “gangsta rap”^{iv} music, where rappers, who, having grown up in the “hood”^v in the United States, reflected their tough lives through rap music. I believe that for Black and Native youth who identify with many of the hardships put forth in this music, rap music became a source of racial identification for them. This, in addition to the societal ideas of who they were and what they were supposed to represent, caused these teens to internalise the discourse embedded in music and culture, resulting in a racial identity that included delinquency. I find this form of adaptation to this alienation a fascinating strategy. In order to discover if this process does occur with Canadian youth, I believe that it is necessary to question and listen to the youth who may experience this phenomenon.

My second source of interest stems from the fact that, being a Black young adult, I am taken back by the attitudes of many of the Black youth that I encountered. I was able

to develop a bond with many of the Black and Native residents at the group homes due to my race. My rapport with the Black residents was not surprising, but the fact that the Native youth identified so easily with me, as opposed to with other workers, intrigued me. I was surprised to learn how much Native youth identified with what they perceived as similar negative stereotyping of Blacks that they faced. It appeared that both the Black and Native youth, while feeling a connection to me, found it strange that I was an authority figure, since to them, being young and Black was synonymous with being delinquent. Furthermore, I was able to achieve this position while still maintaining and reflecting my ethnic identity. My conversations with these youth lead me to suspect that for them, being Black or being Native meant being delinquent. It is for these reasons that I am driven to pursue this connection further.

CHAPTER TWO: Previous Research

Race-Crime Research Focusing on Blacks

Previous research on the relationship between race and crime focuses largely on structural factors to the exclusion of the subjective interpretations of the individual. Furthermore, these studies treat race as a concrete phenomenon, ignoring the fact that it is better understood as an ongoing social construction. Structural forces such as levels of drug and substance abuse, high unemployment rates, low standards of living and discrimination in regards to policing, bail, and sentencing, were found by many to be linked to the over-representation of Blacks and Natives in the Canadian justice system (e. g. Roberts and Doob, 1997; Smandych et. al., 1993, Satzewich (ed.), 1998; Jackson and Penrose, 1993). The following studies include those that treat race as a concrete variable versus those that see it as a social process, and those that look at objective structural factors as causes as opposed to those that focus on the subjective opinions and meanings of individual minority group members. They all have in common the fact that they see societal factors as influencing the phenomenon being studied. Although the majority of studies and articles reported are based on Blacks, I believe that the separate colonial histories that Blacks and Natives experienced allows me to relate many theories of the effect of colonisation on present reality about Blacks to Natives as well. This does not mean that I am equating the experiences or cultures of these two groups, nor does it exclude other groups that also experienced colonial domination.

In his study of the structural factors that contribute to the over-representation of Native people in the justice system, Hagan (1985) predicted that effects would differ

based on the gender of the individual. Focusing on Native versus non-Native groups, Hagan's findings looked at structural forces to account for the differences between male and female crime in both groups. He concluded that Native women's social position put them at a greater disadvantage than Native males and non-Native males and females, which was reflected in the higher crime rate ratio of Native women when compared to other groups.

Roberts and Doob (1997) looked at the over-representation of Natives and Blacks in the Canadian Justice System. According to these authors, the changing ethnic mosaic of Canadian society, as well as increasing fear of crime, is causing the issue of crime committed by ethnic minorities to become an increasing concern for society. Looking at Native over-representation in crime, the authors focused on a number of studies that took into account such structures as the legal relationship between Natives and the Canadian government, the socio-economic status of Natives, and their trust or distrust of the Canadian government and Canadian authorities. In particular, they focus on a study done by the Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics (1993). This study reports three Western Canadian cities- Calgary, Regina, and Saskatoon - where Native people are especially over-reported in off-reserve crimes, although crime on reserves is thought to reflect these trends as well. The statistics are even stronger for Natives when compared to non-Natives, to be involved in all kinds of crime, both as victims and offenders. Alcohol was found to have been a major factor in most of the cases in the study.

Roberts and Doob maintain that although they can not say for certain what the causes of the over-representation of Natives in Canadian prisons are, some statements can be made with certainty. First, they note that treatment of Native people by the police

differs from non-Native people. For example, inadequate community policing on Native reserves means that police are often called to reserves to deal with issues that they would not be called on to handle in cities. In addition, the fact that much of Native crime involves alcohol results in more confrontation between the police and Natives, many times resulting in the use of jail cells for overnight lodging where intoxicated Natives “sleep it off.” The authors quote other authors who state that:

...the relations between the police and Natives are often characterised by mutual hostility and distrust, increasing the likelihood of conflict and high arrest rates (Griffins and Verdun-Jones, 1994: 641 in Roberts and Doob, 1997:495).

In addition to differential treatment by the police, Natives also receive different treatment by the courts. In most cases, problems arise when the same standards are applied to Native offenders and non-Native offenders, in terms of having the structural factors, such as employment, education and family, that are considered by judges when deciding on bail and sentencing. Applying similar standards to different populations results in the unfair treatment of the disadvantaged population. For example, a study looking at 1,500 cases involving Native youth in youth court in Edmonton (Schissel, 1993) showed that they were less likely than non-Natives to receive unconditional release. This was in large part because release is based on the presence of family and social networks, which many Native youth lack when compared to their non-Native counterparts.

In looking at the over-representation of Blacks in the criminal justice system, Roberts and Doob (1997) looked at a study that compared 821 Black and 832 White offenders. They found that Blacks were more likely to be detained and less likely to be released on bail. This was the case even though Black offenders typically had less serious

criminal records, and were more likely to have been charged with a first offence. The results of a multivariate analysis conducted to predict the likelihood of release on bail showed that the accused person's race was the most significant predictor, among fourteen variables, of the decision to grant or deny bail. In conclusion, the authors suggest that discrimination in Canadian policies is implicit rather than explicit, and that it occurs strongest at the policing stage.

Neugebauer-Visano (1996) incorporated a more micro-level look at the impact of policing on the over-representation of Blacks in the justice system. Interviewing a number of Black and White youth from Vancouver, she concluded that both Black and White youth believe that the police discriminate on the basis of skin colour, and use race as a resource. They believe that the police make generalisations based on the racial stereotypes that exist in society and popular culture. Her study looked at the effect of the larger culture on the perceptions of both the police and the youth. Her findings revealed that the police's interpretations of the youth's actions are influenced by societal beliefs, and the youth's feelings towards the police are based on their past treatment.

According to Neugebauer-Visano, both street culture and a police culture are constructed within a larger society, and are therefore influenced by such. The sense of "us against them," or "the otherness" created by this division is reinforced by stereotypes that these groups have about each other. For example, she notes the frequent stopping of Black motorists in expensive cars by the police under the assumption, common to both police and popular culture, that it is suspicious for Black men to own expensive cars. Acts such as these reinforce hostility of Blacks to the police, which in turn reinforces the

police categorisation of Blacks as hostile and aggressive. Thus, race becomes linked to deviant and defiant behaviour in the eyes of the police.

Neugebauer-Visano (1996) notes that “police-minority youth relations exist within wider social contexts” (Neugebauer-Visano, 1996: 296), implying a societal influence. The result is both the misguided attitudes of the police towards minority youth, as well as a feeling of marginalisation and cultural distance of the youth from the larger society, including the police. The influence of popular culture extends beyond the expected actions of the police and the youth. Viewing the police as a primary institution of a culture that historically teaches young Blacks that they are different and do not belong, Neugebauer-Visano (1996) sees the Canadian criminal justice system as one of the structures of dominance in Canadian society. As a result of Blacks being taught by society that they are separate, different, less informed, and more delinquent than the dominant culture, their encounters with the police demonstrate a sense of “cultural distance.” Here, “cultural distance” refers to the separation between the dominant culture, represented by the police, and the sub-culture of the Black youth. This “cultural distance” serves to justify the police’s opinions of minority youth, and explains why Black youth in Canada, the United States and the United Kingdom are often seen as fragmented, dysfunctional, or delinquent by many police officers.

The cultural distance that minority youth feel from the society can cause the youth to act with mistrust and to be less committed to societal values. This is compounded by the fact that these youth may live in communities that do not have good relationships with the police. As a result, these cultures become further marginalised from the dominant culture. This results in various consequences. In cases where these minority

groups are concentrated in disadvantaged communities, racial and economic inequality, as well as the viewing of minority groups as dangerous and criminal, results in the over-representation of Black youth in the criminal justice system. Furthermore, these labels

...generate new definitions of 'self' for the particular person, his or his reference group, and the larger societal audience...when these individuals fail to shed the designation, they often 'personalise' or internalise their labels by organising their lifestyles around the assumptions associated with the labels. A 'master status' emerges that overshadows all other aspects of identity (Neugebauer-Visano, 1996: 301).

Many theorists hold that the influence of media expectations linking race and crime in Canada is largely due to the amount of American media that Canadians witness. Petrunik and Manyoni (1991) hypothesise that the popular association between race and crime is in fact fuelled by portrayals of crime and certain racial groups in the media. Furthermore, because of Canadians' exposure to American media, it is reasonable to assume that Canadians' perceptions have been significantly shaped by American culture. However, they caution that while this influx of American media does influence Canadians' views, Canadian media are also guilty of perpetuating the race-crime association. They cite an article in *Maclean's* that links gang involvement to visible minority groups as an example of this fact. This article links increased gang activity in Vancouver and Calgary to the influx of Asian immigrants, and implies that gangs in Montreal and Toronto originate with the Haitian and Jamaican communities.

When investigating the possible reasons why Blacks are over-represented in the justice system, Petrunik and Manyoni discount biological factors as a possible explanation. Instead, they looked at the possible issue of Blacks being targeted and surveyed by police, as well as the fact that since different minority groups are over-

represented only in certain types of crimes, there might be some form of socialisation into crime. This would support the idea that certain minority group members are socialised into a lifestyle that results in criminal involvement. For instance, Blacks are overwhelmingly represented in drug crimes while Natives are mostly involved in crimes relating to alcohol.

A complication that arises from the combination of media influence, the targeting of minority youth by the police, and the expectation that they are involved in certain crimes may be that these youth act how they believe they are expected to act. They also use possible racism within the system and society as justifications for their illegal actions, blaming their situations on others, rather than taking responsibility for them. This leads to them victimising others in their community as well as themselves, as these youth lose respect for their community and themselves. Once again, Petrunik and Manyoni point to societal stereotypes, which become reflected and also perpetuated by the police force as a source of these problems. However, they went beyond the stereotypes held by the police about minority youth and also looked at the perceptions of the police by minorities. So that while the police, influenced by society's views, believed minorities to be more criminal than other groups, these minority groups also saw themselves as targeted by the police.

The distance created between the police and minority groups by the media was also the focus of Jackson and Penrose (1993), where he reports on four interviews with people holding differing views about the race-crime association in Toronto, and how it relates to the minority-police dynamic in the city. First, the Chair of the Police Service Board, Susan Eng, acknowledged that there is a problem with the relationship between

the police and Blacks in particular. According to Eng, while many aspects in society have changed, police culture and policing strategies have been slow to change, therefore, instead of seeing the problem as racist police, she believes that it is an institutional problem, perpetuated by idea of White power and privilege, which causes the police to speak of a "Black crime" problem.

Another viewpoint is that of Dudley Laws, a Jamaican-born immigrant and one of Toronto's most prominent Black activists. For Laws, problems with the policing of minorities stem, not only from institutional racism, but also from the covering up of the actions of specific racist police, who are influenced by a racist society at large. Laws' comments are strongly denied by Art Lamert, president of the Police Association in Toronto. Lamer blames activists such as Laws, for the problems with police-minority relations. However, while claiming that he has never witnessed behaviour that he would consider racist on the police force, he also states that

...some of the people that have come over here from Jamaica...are prone to violence, they are very violent. They have very little respect, you know, for life...And of the Blacks, I think about 90 per cent of them are from Jamaica (Jackson and Penrose, 1993: 189).

A final evaluation of the police-minority situation in Toronto is provided by Sergeant Karl Oliver, a Black police officer, who states that both sides must take responsibility for the problems. He acknowledges that many Blacks are apathetic towards the police because they believe that the police are not doing enough to solve problems within the Black community. In addition, he states that the Black community has a right to be outraged with comments and views expressed that, much like Lamert, argue that there is no problem, while associating crime with a certain ethnic group. Sergeant Oliver

ends by stating that while he cannot identify any specific racist policies, he also cannot recall a Black supervisor in the police force for the 30 years that he has served.

Jackson notes that these interviews demonstrate the extent to which perceptions of the situation differ. In essence, the police, individual Blacks, and society are all influenced by the portrayal of Blacks in the media. He refers to articles in Maclean's magazine (May 18, 1992) which pictured a Black man with the caption "Young, Black and Angry," and to another picture, in the same issue of Maclean's, of a group of Black youth with the caption "Black and Angry," as ways in which Blacks are often portrayed. In addition, views such as the one quoted in the same issue of Maclean's by a columnist who states that "Canadians know themselves, and they know Canadian society is not racist," (Jackson and Penrose, 1993: 194) support the idea that, while stating that they are not racist, many Canadians may hold views of minority groups that are influenced by the negative depiction of these groups in the media.

When looking at how societal ideas about certain groups are linked to the over-representation of these groups in the legal system, Henry, Hastings and Freer (1996), state that while there is no unambiguous evidence that Blacks commit more crimes than other groups in Canada, the belief that they do may result in different treatment of Blacks in courts. They state that much publicised cases such as the "Just Deserts" killing where an individual was shot and killed by a Jamaican who was waiting to be deported in Toronto, can influence the ways that the public views Blacks in general, and Jamaicans specifically.

Conley (1994) further focused on minority groups' interaction with the police. Her quantitative results supported other research reported thus far. The author found that

African and Native Americans are over-represented in the juvenile justice system at all stages including arrests, detainment, charges, confinements, and other stages. Her article also incorporated qualitative research, which spoke of the nature of the police minority youth relationship during what Conley refers to as informal contact between the two, that is, what occurs before the actual arrests. According to Conley, different definitions to the situation contribute to the actions of both parties, this is developed before they actually meet. Negative feelings of the youth towards the police, as well as stereotypical expectations of the police towards the youth are examples of the different definitions of the situation. In addition, information gathered on "ride-alongs" with the police- where it was witnessed that minority youth were often stopped while walking through affluent neighbourhoods, as well as the surveillance of youth in shopping malls in White communities- shed some more light on the dynamics of such interactions.

These actions prior to actual interactions help dictate how both parties will react once encounters are initiated. According to Conley, the arrest stage is the first point of formal contact between the police and the youth, which leads to over-representation of the youth in the justice system at all other levels. It is the informal levels of contact that leads to the reactions of both parties in this formal encounter. The information gathered prior to formal contact often lead minority youth to play out the expectations placed on them by the police, and society at large. Conley acknowledges that the expectations of both the youth and the police, are largely influenced by media and the depiction of both parties in popular culture. Conley states that it is only through the use of qualitative data that these expectations can be uncovered and understood.

In her look at the formation of “Black criminality,” specifically the categorisation of West Indians, especially Jamaicans, as “yardies” in Britain, Karim Murji (1999) uses similar ideas when evaluating the representation of Blacks in the United Kingdom. She states that “racist discourses are seen as generating, and seeking to fix or essentialize, ‘race differences’ as the principal marker of boundaries between groups of people” (Murji 1999: 179). Accordingly, cultural differences are seen to be associated with racial differences, which becomes the basis of division and cultural hierarchy. According to Murji, this construction of “otherness” is common in the way that minority groups are treated in Britain, Canada, and the United States. Moreover, this construction is represented not only in police reports and court documents, but also in news reports so that in society, representation and reality become confused. In Britain, this is seen in the ways that the increasing use of crack cocaine was associated with the increasing immigration of “yardies”- Jamaican immigrants. The link between reggae culture and drugs was made, as drugs were seen to be reflective of certain cultures, music and clubs. In addition, as Jamaicans settle into certain neighbourhoods, this association extended to place as well as to culture. As the police targeted and policed yardies, they were unable to distinguish between them and other law-abiding Blacks, they therefore were forced to police entire neighbourhoods and communities. As a result, Black culture is equated with a culture of crime.

Race-Crime Research Focusing on Natives

The histories of Blacks and Natives both include a colonial experience. Although the processes were vastly different for these two groups, both cultures acquired many negative connotations during the colonial period, many of which are still present in

today's society. Much of the research thus far has focused on the situation of Blacks in North America, however, since Natives have had different experiences, it is necessary to look at some studies that focus primarily on Natives and the justice system.

Jensen, Stauss, and Harris (1977) note that in the United States, Blacks and Natives are both over-represented in the justice system in proportion to their populations. However, this fact is only true with respect to particular offences. For instance, Black and Native arrest rates are similar when looking at crimes against the person, and crimes against property in urban areas. However, American Indians are over-represented in crimes that involve fighting, drinking and the use of illegal drugs. This leads the authors to conclude that:

[W]ith the possible exceptions of fighting, vandalism, and robbery, the differences by race are not nearly as obvious and consistent for other types of offences...Indian youth are fairly similar to other adolescents except for notable deviations in the areas of drinking and drug usage (Jensen et. al., 1977: 254).

Smamych, Lincoln and Wilson (1993) also looked at the phenomena of Natives in the justice system, comparing Canada with Australia. According to these authors, it is useful to compare these two countries because they both experience similar circumstance in regards to their Native populations, in that Natives in both countries are experiencing high rates of incarceration. They present some findings of a number of studies on Natives done in both of these countries. These include the following:

- Native people tend to commit less serious crimes, such as petty theft, resisting arrest, and drunk and disorderly conduct.

- In Canada Natives comprise seven percent and up to seventy percent of federal and provincial prisons respectively, while in Australia the proportion is around seventeen percent.
- Native people are arrested at a greater rate, roughly twenty-nine times as great, as others in the population.
- There is a higher rate of recidivism among Native groups, estimated at up to 80 percent in some regions.
- Native women are over-represented in police and prison statistics and can constitute up to seventy percent of admissions in some states and provinces, and this disproportion appears to be increasing.
- The age of incarceration of Native youth appears to be declining, and they are also over-represented in the juvenile justice system.
- Alcohol use is present in a high percentage of crimes committed by Native people, reaching ninety percent in some jurisdictions.
- A high proportion of Native violent crimes is directed against family or community members.
- There has been a trend toward more serious violence within communities and groups in recent years (Smandych et. al., 1993: 7).

The authors then offered some possible explanations for these facts. They stated that they could be the result of systematic bias and racism in the justice system, where Natives are discriminated against by members in the system, especially police. In addition, they argued that the visibility of drunk Natives, coupled with the well-known stereotypes regarding their alcohol use, may contribute to targeting by the police.

The authors also proposed that cultural differences may result in this over-representation. For example, they claim that

Natives are particularly vulnerable to police interrogation techniques... police treat Natives differently and... Natives experience greater difficulty than other members of the community in exercising the right to refuse to answer questions (Smandych et. al., 1993: 9).

In addition to these cultural differences, they also proposed some legal factors, in which the laws of both Canada and Australia have a far-reaching impact on the everyday lives of Natives. In addition to discrimination and legal factors, they also proposed some extralegal factors, such as limited success on probation for Natives and assessment of the demeanour of the offender, into account when interacting with Natives. Finally, they proposed that, much like is argued in the case of Blacks, Natives are over-policed. These factors are thought to be in part due to the over-representation of Natives in the justice systems in Canada and Australia.

Race and Racialisation in Alberta

In her look at the racialisation process in Alberta, Jennifer Kelly (1998) looks at how Black high school students in two Edmonton high schools functioned in a “White world.” According to Kelly, Black students growing up in a society where the norm is Whiteness see themselves as highly visible to others. This intensifies their feelings of “otherness” and puts them “under the gaze” of Whites and those in authority. This has consequences for the formation of a racial identity, as evidenced by the narratives provided by the students that the construction of their racial identity is effected by the ways in which others in society perceive them, as well as the ways they perceive themselves. What Kelly refers to as the “controlling gaze” is a means by which the

dominant group controls the activities and interactions of all other groups. Being visible and under the gaze, Blacks' sense of control by the dominant group is felt through a mere look. In turn, their identity is created based on the gaze and reflection of others. The following response by one of the respondents in Kelly's study portrays this point.

They [White people] look at you... the way you dress, and that stuff that... Black people dress different from White people...and the way we dress they always looks at us and say that we are in a gang... It's like we walk around as friends but they take it the wrong way (Kelly, 1998: 20).

This opinion was verified by the response of a teacher.

We had a group of kids... and they would hang around together, almost an intimidatory [group]... I don't know if they were trying to intimidate other people, but just they way they were posturing was as intimidating kind of thing (Kelly, 1998: 20).

Carl James (1998) also discusses the kind of control that a dominant group can assert on other groups in society. James notes that what is determined as legal and allowable on streets and in shopping malls is done by those who represent the majority of society. For middle class Whites, who are mostly employed, the streets serve as a means to get to and from work, they are for cars, pedestrians and those in commute to their daily routine activities, while the malls serve as a place to consume goods and purchase items. However, for working class or unemployed youth, the streets and malls serve a different purpose. They are free, available spaces for recreation and entertainment, for those who cannot afford others. Malls can also serve as protection from bad weather or an indoor haven. For James, the streets and shopping malls hold different cultural representations depending on the individual.

The problem arises where the laws are determined by one group based on their cultural ideas. Not understanding the meaning of the streets for young working class

individuals, the dominant group in society comes to see them as up to no good when they are “hanging out” on the street. When this idea of hanging out becomes a cultural practice for certain groups, members in these groups who engage in this activity are stereotyped and viewed negatively. The focus becomes less on what they are actually doing, and more on what they are perceived to be doing. These perceptions are largely based on misunderstandings, miscommunications, and stereotypes. Thus many Blacks and Natives who are seen hanging out are assumed to be engaging in deviant activities and are targeted by the police. This kind of targeting reinforces the experiences between the police and minority youth discussed earlier. As James adds that:

In an economically and racially stratified society where stereotyping, classism, sexism, racism and discrimination inform institutional policies and practices, it is quite easy to attribute negative police-youth encounters to those questioned, arrested and otherwise singled out by the law enforcement officers (James, 1998: 164).

Focusing on the sources for Black identities, Kelly (1996) notes that for the students she interviewed, their images were overwhelmingly drawn from the media. Excerpts from narratives provided supported the idea that these Black students were largely influenced by the images of Blacks in music, sports and on television when forming their identities. One respondent indicated:

Everyone wants a rough “gangsta look”... a serious guy who nobody wants to mess with... A lot of Jamaican songs talk about “gangster”... and all that (Kelly, 1996: 63).

Another stated:

Most of them [rappers] make sense, you learn about stuff, talk about Black and White... They’ll sing racist songs, but that’s the way they feel (Kelly, 1996: 65).

Finally, another respondent shows the importance of sports when they comment that:

If you cut down phys. ed. a lot of Black kids are going to stop coming to school 'cause they got a lot of basketball talent... want to play football... [and run] track (Kelly, 1996: 71).

However, these students were also influenced by their communities and by society at large. Family and friends, as well as institutions such as the church and schools were very influential in determining an identity. Therefore, it can easily be seen how the ways that others see them would influence the way they see themselves. This was reinforced by students who indicated that the formation of a group identity is affected by both the self-ascription of the group members, and also by the ways in which that group is viewed by society. The feelings and importance behind self-ascription into a group are reflected in the following comment:

[When you're] with Whites you are always Black, they refer to your Blackness... with other Blacks you are just another person (Kelly, 1996: 78).

The significance of this fact in a society where White is the norm and what is considered right is determined by the dominant group is of much significance. Kelly notes that although this internalisation of stereotypes may have positive implications in the cases where Blacks are viewed as athletic for example, it may also have negative implications. Thus, saying that Blacks males are good at sports also implies their inability at academia, which when internalised, becomes a self-fulfilling prophecy.

Furthermore, negative stereotypes, such as the perception that Blacks who dress a certain way are "rough and tough" can also be destructive. She cites the commonly held notion of "dressing Black" as being an indication of this so-called toughness as an example. Intermingled in this stereotype is the idea that Blacks are "cool" in a defiant way. This "coolness" is attributed to the Black subculture, which has always had ideas

about a criminal world associated with defiance of the dominant White culture. Once again, Kelly notes that this image is largely supported by the media.

CHAPTER THREE: THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVES

Theoretical Perspective

The theoretical perspective of this study combines social construction theory, colonial theory and cultural transmission theory, with the underlying assumption that both race and crime are socially constructed. In a colonial society, the popular construction of both of these phenomena is based on the views put forth by the dominant group, in this case European Whites. However, I am more interested in the subjective constructions that are done by individual Black and Native young offenders. I believe that if they do incorporate crime into their racial identity, both social construction theory and colonial theory can shed some light on this process. In addition, during this process the influence of society, for example, the depiction of that individual's racial group in the media may influence this construction. It is here in explaining this process that cultural transmission theory is helpful as it suggests a possible way that popular culture may influence individual action.

Social construction theory speaks of the individual's tendency to intentionally focus on those actions that reinforce their already existing reality and knowledge. For these youth, it is likely that they become aware of those actions and ideas in society that reinforce their already existing stereotypes. For example in police-minority relations, many youth might interpret their treatment by the police in ways that support their pre-existing ideas of the police. In addition, media may serve to reinforce their existing reality. Likewise, they also reinforce the youth's expectations of police-minority relations, as suggested by the literature. The consequences of this in a post-colonial

society are that these youth become convinced of the inadequacy of their race, and further interactions in society serve to reinforce these beliefs.

In addition, as social construction theory states, the basis for subjective reality is the social world. There is no objective human reality determined solely by human nature. Rather, the self is created through a dialectical relationship between the individual and his/her social world. When that individual's social world is filled with negative images of that individual, the self incorporates these images as part of its identity. Therefore, as colonial theory suggests, the individual sees him/herself in the same negative terms as society views them, in this case having a greater propensity to engage in criminal behaviour.

The value of neo-colonial theory is that it suggests why this process occurs with some individuals and not others. It states that those with fewer social networks and social support systems are those who are more likely to experience one of five forms of alienation, some of which are characterised by violence. Cultural transmission theory, through their discussion of vocabularies of motive, explain how it is that people come to justify their actions, drawing upon motives that are rooted in their culture. According to this theory, individuals express motives, to make their undesirable actions socially accepted. My theoretical perspective combines elements of these theories to suggest how social influence in a post-colonial society, may be associated with the ethnic identity formation of certain members in minority groups, thus leading to their criminal behaviour.

Social Construction Theory

Berger and Luckmann (1966) contend that reality is socially created. Therefore, what is real and what is knowledge depends on what a person has constructed as reality based on his/her social interactions. Accordingly, they state that:

[e]veryday life presents itself as a reality interpreted by men and subjectively meaningful to them as a coherent world...The world of everyday life is not only taken for granted as reality by the ordinary members of society in the subjectively meaningful conduct of their lives. It is a world that originates in their thoughts and actions, and is maintained as real by these (Berger and Luckmann, 1966: 20).

Social interactions appear to us as inter-subjective realities, where we share some common realities with those with whom we interact. This, as well as our own subjective realities, is seen as the reality of the everyday world. The basis for our subjective reality is in our social world or society. During development, interactions with a specific cultural and social order mean that our formation of self is socially determined. Humans are therefore created and exist within a specific cultural and social environment, which becomes their reality.

While genetic predisposition for the formation of self is assigned at birth, the self that is developed in life is done through these interactions with the environment, mediated through ongoing developments and social processes that are determined through continued interactions with significant others. It is for this reason that the self cannot be understood unless it is placed in the social and cultural context in which it was developed.

Internalisation of Reality

The process by which the social world is transmitted to us through significant others is through socialisation, which starts as soon as an individual is born. This process starts with internalisation, which is the process by which we assume other's reality as our own, and where we see the outside world as meaningful and a social reality. It is this degree of socialisation that initiates a person as a member of society.

The initial apprehension of another individual's reality that occurs during childhood is called primary socialisation. It is also at this stage that the child's sense of self in the world is developed and the time of the formation of an identity in the world. As the child encounters more people, he/she abstracts certain actions from these interactions and rather than equating common actions to the specific individual, they interpret these common actions as general actions. This formation of the generalised other allows the individual to form a consciousness that permits them to interact and identify not only with specific people, but also with others in general.

One primary vehicle of socialisation is that of language and conversation. This will be significant in this context when we look at the fact that rap music is a proposed influence on the youth. According to the authors, "the great part, if not all, of everyday conversation maintains subjective reality" (Berger and Luckmann, 1966: 153). In addition, language common to a specific group reinforces group membership through the use of that language, and helps to strengthen the "us" versus "them" division. It is intricate to the reality of that group, and serves to create the feelings of being the "other."

As mentioned before, socialisation occurs in a social structure, therefore, the micro internalisation of reality always takes place in a macro-sociological structured

environment. Thus, the subjective reality and identity of the individual is influenced by the social environment in which it occurs. It is the social process and social relation between the individual and his/her social world that forms his/her identity. Identity is then the result of the interaction between the individual and their social environment. Once again we can see that the individual's identity cannot be taken out of the context of the social structure and context in which it is created. With this in mind, we can look at how race is one such reality that is grounded in the social context in which it is created.

Race as a Social Construct

Two terms that refer to the distinction of humans based in their heritage are race and ethnicity. Quite often these terms are used interchangeably, although race refers to what we consider to be biological distinctions, while ethnicity refers to culture. Regardless, many authors propose that both the terms race and ethnicity are social constructs. According to social constructionists, the term race has no biological basis, but rather, it is socially constructed. Blakey (1999) states that:

The convenient lumping and splitting of human groups into different divisions based on a combination of several traits will produce what are being called races. But those "races" are created by the scientist, not by nature (Blakey, 1999: 1).

The categories by which racial distinctions are drawn are seen as arbitrary and not based on science. According to Blakey, the classifications that races are built on could be different so that our current conceptions of race could be based on other characteristics, such as eye colour rather than skin colour, if it had been advantageous for those in power to do so.

Looking at the origin of racial categories demonstrates how these concepts are constructed. Blakey points out that in developing racial categories, Johann Friedreich

Blumenbach and Carl von Linne divided groups based on their continents. These groups, as well as the names given to them remain real even now. For example, Caucasian was named to refer to an original or pure race from which Europeans originated. Furthermore, not only do the names and categories hold true, but so do the attributes assigned to these groups when they were developed. For example, Africans and their descendants were seen as “lethargic and governed by caprice.” While indigenous Americans were seen as “content-free, obstinate, and governed by custom” (Blakey, 1999: 2-3). Thus, from the very development of racial categories, the names assigned to them and the characteristics attributed to them, they were constructed based on the social order of the time. Not only have these names remained true through out time, but the characteristics associated with these groups have also been maintained. It can be easily seen how these traits are reflected in society today, and they continue to reflect the power structure of society.

Blakey goes on to demonstrate the arbitrariness of these categorisations. First, he points out that variation within the racial categories are more pronounced than variations between the separate racial categories. Thus showing the narrowness of these constructions, and that what we define as racial traits specific to races are nothing more than adaptations made by groups to ensure their survival based in their environment. Blakey goes on to say that the races are then based more on political and social divisions rather than biological ones. This is to facilitate the distribution of goods in society to those in power, this he refers to as “implied racism.” Accordingly, this racism feeds

...the ideology of White supremacy and institutionalised discrimination. Individuals, particularly of the subordinated groups, have become representatives of the entire biological classification to which they belong. Where negative images in the media are concerned, racial

stereotyping of a class of people is encouraged when a biological member is exposed (Blakey, 1999: 8).

Thus, from the beginning, races were constructed not only based on racist views of different groups of people, but also in order to maintain the system of domination that was already in place. These categories and perceived characteristics have persisted, and today, these distinctions are seen as real. However, he points out many reasons why these differences are arbitrary and based on social constructions rather than biology.

In looking at the social creation of ethnicity, Jenkins (1994) considers the views put forth by Barth (1969). Barth states that there are two kinds of processes involved in the nature of ethnicity. The first of these is the process of internal definition, which is the actor's self-definition of his/her identity as part of a group that is communicated to other members of that group. The second of these processes is external definition. In this process, a person, or a group of persons, defines another person or other people as "X" or "Y." This action is embedded in social interaction and social relationships. The mere fact that one possesses the ability to label another and have it impact on his/her life presupposes some sort of power, derived from social structure and social interaction. Each of the processes of transaction is implied by the other in everyday interactions, and therefore, the creation of ethnicity is the result of these internal and external processes that takes place within and across boundaries of "us" and "them." This means that while groups define their boundaries and what composes them, their boundaries are also defined by others outside of the group.

According to Jenkins, embedded in our ethnic identity are both a self-image and a public-image. Jenkins draws on the symbolic interaction ideas, such as Goffman's presentation of self, to explain the link between self-image and ethnic identity. Here we

see that self is developed not only based on our ideas, but also on the ways we wish to be seen by others, and it is adjusted based on the reaction others have towards us. The idea of the generalised other, comes into play. As Black or Native youth see how others treat them, and as they take in images of their race that are popular in society, this not only affects their self-image and identity as a Black or Native person, but also affects how they would like others to see them.

Based on the discussion on internal definition, a youth would be eager to fit the projected view of their race to “fit into” the group. This is where the concept of public image is used; it is the way that others see us. Here, the identity is influenced by the ways that we believe others see us, that are communicated to us through social interaction. This public image, in turn leads the individual to adjust his/her self-image. Therefore, a society that views and portrays certain ethnic groups in a negative light can impact the development of a self-image and an ethnic identity for the individual members of that group. In this way, ethnicity and racial groups are recognised both by those internal to that group and those outside of that group. Each step in creating a self-image based on the public image helps to make the terms and image being portrayed reality for the individual and the society.

Jenkins proposes that ethnic categorisation is usually negative and stigmatising. In addition, there are no social situations where some kind of categorisation based on ethnicity is irrelevant. The impact that categorisations have on the individual's identity is strong. The strongest impact is that of internalisation. Jenkins offers five scenarios where internalisation takes place. The first is where the external and internal classifications are similar and serve to reinforce each other. The second is where the cultures that exist

within an ethnic group and between ethnic groups are similar. Third, the categorisation may be imposed by a group that those being classified see as having the authority to do so based on some sort of superiority. The fourth case is one where the categorisation is imposed on a group through the use of force or the use of threat. Finally, there is the case where the group being classified sees itself as being oppressed and they resist the identity that is imposed on them. In all of these cases, the labels placed on the ethnic group become reality, and ethnic group classification is evident in the daily interactions of individuals, and impacts on the formation of an ethnic identity. This makes these classifications, no matter how arbitrary, real.

According to Rodkin (1993) constructions of racial groups are necessary and helpful in that there is a need for people to form categories in life in order to filter new information. These categories grow as people encounter new experiences, and are based on the information that is available to the individual. Given the fact that many images and opinions of minority racial groups are based on limited and often inaccurate information, it can be seen why much of the construction of racial categories is negative and also likely to be inaccurate. Accordingly, he argues that a person's categorisation of someone from a different ethnic group is selective, consistent, evaluative, and ethnocentric.

It is selective in that the attributes tend to be based on biases and broad assumptions rather than reflect a representative set of information, using the most convenient and simple categorisations rather than complex dimensions. Classification schemes are consistent in that people tend to form opinions of individuals and groups based on the knowledge that they believe they already have about that individual or group. The characteristics that we attribute to another group or individual are also

evaluative. Rarely are our opinions value-free and neutral. Instead, associated with our opinions are judgements as to whether certain characteristics are positive or negative. Finally, we are ethnocentric in assigning attributes to others. Rodkin notes some studies which show that individuals form in-group feelings even if they are told that their groups have been determined randomly. They look for ways to classify themselves that differ from others not in the group, assigning favourable characteristics to their group, excluding others. Thus, while classification schemes are useful in filtering information, they also serve to create strong feelings of “us” and “them.”

For Rodkin, race is one of these classification schemes that we have developed, and that guides our interaction with those from other races. Thus, Rodkin denies that:

...races, ethnicities, or genders possess any intrinsic traits, and instead...meaning becomes imputed to distinctions that otherwise- to borrow a cliché- are only skin deep...social constructions are thus seen as empty constructions: race, ethnicity and gender are defined by society (Rodkin, 1993: 634).

The depiction of race in society influences the individual's construction of their racial identity. Rodkin notes that “the macro-level has sway over the micro-level, people's mind-states can influence their physiology, and society can affect the content of people's thoughts” (Rodkin, 1993: 643). This being true, the negative depiction of Native and Black racial groups can affect the forming of racial identities for them.

The image of the drunken Indian is one of the stereotypes that:

can become self-fulfilling prophecies. That is, some First Nations individuals, feeling that they have a certain degree of license to imbibe to excess because it is expected of them by non-Natives, give themselves permission to conform to the stereotype (Ponting, 1999: 280).

In addition, Silberman (1990) notes that:

the anti-social and violent behaviour that characterises the lives of...African American male adolescents and young adults is a symptom of the extent to which they have become emotionally and socially disconnected from themselves, their cultural and historical heritage, and their communities (Silberman, 1978 in King, 1997).

To the extent that Canadian youth experience similar situations, they experience similar feelings of alienation and disconnectedness from their culture.

Jefferson (1993) also draws on the idea that race has no meaning of its own and relates this to the policing of racial groups. Since both race and crime are socially defined, he states that they are also associated to benefit those in power in society. Therefore racism arises when a group defines race in a way that serves to "legitimate the placement of self and other on a social hierarchy characterised by domination and subordination according to some mythical scheme or origins" (Jefferson, 1993: 27). Likewise, he sees what is criminal as being created by a society, usually by those who are dominant in society. In the same way, police racism consists of the reproduction of a "criminalised other," making use of a discourse of criminality that is based on ideas of the different propensities for groups to engage in criminal acts. According to Jefferson, the construction of crime has varied throughout time, at different times focusing on specific groups.

Colonial Theory

Based on the writings of Franz Fanon, colonial theory provides an explanation for race relations in countries with a colonial history. Tatum (2000) provides a summary of the colonial model when she states that:

[Colonial theory] describes how the process of colonisation affects the structural and cultural status of minority individuals. In colonial societies, the economic and

political dominance of European Whites enables them to create a social structure in which their culture and values are more salient than those of the minority people. Minority culture is relegated to a lower status, systematically destroyed, and redefined in negative terms. Because of racism, the stratification of minority group members is caste-like: members of the dominant group enjoy economic, political and social privileges while minority individuals have little access to society's rewards. Moreover, the primacy of race causes minority individuals of any social class to have lower social status than members of the dominant group. Representatives of the power structure [e.g., soldiers, police] help to maintain this system of superordinate/subordinate relations (Tatum, 2000: 6).

According to Fanon (1967) this colonial system was implemented with the intention of stripping the colonised people of their dignity and their self worth. They were made to feel as if every aspect of their culture was inferior to that of the Western Europeans, who came to "rescue" them. He states that:

[w]hen we consider the efforts made to carry out the cultural estrangement so characteristic of the colonial epoch, we realise that nothing has been left to chance and that the total result looked for by colonial domination was indeed to convince the Natives that colonialism came to lighten their darkness (Fanon, 1967: 210).

Both Blacks and Native people have this history of the systematic destruction of their culture, their way of life, and their self worth in common. Not only were these things destroyed, but they also experienced the idea that the very people who destroyed their way of life are also those who were sent to rescue them and modernise their primitive ways.

For Fanon and those who promote the colonial theory, culture is a means by which people define their self and their identity. Who a person is as an individual is deeply rooted in his/her culture and their society. Cultural domination therefore leads to self domination in that the very things that define the dominated people - their culture,

their way of life, the things they eat, drink, watch, wear, their entertainment, what they read, write, the music they listen to, and so on – are all dominated by the colonial power. When the things by which an individual identifies him/herself are dominated, so too does that individual become dominated.

According to Smaje (1997) the idea that the past has influence on the formation of a group's ethnic identity means that history serves as the basis on which the present categorisation and racial meanings and identities are grounded. Although Smaje cautions against reading the actions of people in the present directly from past experiences, he states that there is some relationship between how we see racial groups today, and the histories of race relations. Thus, we can trace the current relations between groups to their historical relations. Instead of seeing past experiences as explicitly guiding the ways in which racial groups now interact, it is seen as "a historical echo providing motifs by which people make sense of the contemporary world" (Smaje, 1997: 321). Present day racial relations therefore have an implicit rather than explicit historical base, as historical relations have determined the ways in which we interact through things such as defining races and their social position. One of these interactions that is based in historical relations is the interaction between the police and ethnic minorities.

Feuchtwang (1985) states that this past history is important in understanding the present situation of race relations. For colonial model proponents, self-recognition in the present is tied to the past in that an individual defines who they are based on what their people have been through. In this way, the past serves two purposes. It can prevent individuals from fulfilling their human potential, or it can guide their actions and aid them in achieving their goals. Either way, it serves as sort of a blueprint by which an

individual can develop an identity and life goals. As a blueprint, the colonial situation provides the materials of the denial of self and the exclusion of a group from the norm, which results in a split of self-recognition, and self-identification by members of that group. Furthermore, to understand the present behaviour and actions of a people, it is necessary to look at their past for explanations. Once again, Feuchtwang states about Fanon's writings that:

...in asking 'How does an oppressing people behave?' he is driven to consider the destruction of a people and thus to consider what is the construction of a people. The colonial situation becomes the starting point of his analysis (Feuchtwang, 1985: 457).

Acknowledging that colonialism did not end with the abolition of slavery, Allahar (1998) notes that colonialism can be seen as a process. It is an ongoing method of discrimination that was put in place by colonial powers, which has become rooted in Western institutions and culture. This system was a method by which the colonial power implemented its power, and a means by which it maintains its power today. Racism is therefore ingrained in the actions, systems, institutions, and culture of Western society, and serves to continually separate the coloniser from the colonised and creates a divide whereby the colonised becomes the "other."

The Colonial Model, Race, and Crime

Applying the colonial model to the United States in the 1970s, Staples (1975) sees the Black community as being similar to a colony whose economics and politics remain under the control of the leaders of the racially dominant group. He therefore proposes that race be viewed as a political and cultural identity rather than referring to genetic and biological characteristics. As a political identity, race denotes the interaction between the

group and the political structure, as well as the conditions of the group's oppression. As a cultural identity, race separates the values of the racial group from that of the dominant culture, so that what is considered good or bad and legal or criminal is determined by, and favourable to, the dominant culture. In this sense, history provides evidence that the law was established to guide and maintain the colonial relationship between Blacks and Whites in the United States. Remnants of this remain in the ways that Blacks have no real power over the creation or implementation of the law; thus the law continues to reflect the relationship of the historically colonised to their colonisers. This system is reinforced by the police who serve as agents of the colonial system.

King (1997) also uses the colonial model to understand violence among African-American males. He states that the history of America is filled with violence in reference to how Europeans "stole" the land from the Native Americans and to their treatment of Blacks during slavery. King states that the enslavement of human beings is one of the most, if not the most, extreme case of violence in human history. In addition, he states that, in line with the colonial theory, this enslavement was designed to strip the cultural and human dignity of the enslaved, and reduce them to a childlike state of dependence on the colonial power.

Focusing mostly on Black males, King proposes that this treatment has never ceased in the United States, and that Whites, especially those with power, specifically the police, have continued this process of stripping the dignity of Black men throughout history. The lack of value that is placed on the lives of African-American men in particular, is not only rooted in the past, but is also internalised by Black young males who come to devalue their own lives as well as the lives of others. This, coupled with the

disadvantaged economic and social position that Blacks are in, leads to violence among Black male youth. This violence is rooted in “self-destructive attitudes, perceptions and psychological states” that are tied to colonialism (King, 1997:92-93).

In his cultural alignment framework, Schiele (1998) takes into account political and economic exploitation, cultural oppression and cultural alienation, explaining African American crime in the United States. According to Schiele, cultural oppression is where a dominant group imposes its culture upon oppressed and powerless groups to the extent that the culture of the oppressed groups becomes seen as marginal, illegitimate, or non-existent. This dominance means that the dominant group not only determines the current social structure, but also the history and future of that society. To do this, they maintain control over the political and economic spheres of that society. The control is highly institutionalised in order for it to be effective, since, according to Schiele, if it were done by force, there would be much protest. Therefore, it can be seen as institutionalised oppression, where institutions in society, such as the media, educational system, family and other formalised institutions reflect this cultural domination. As the gatekeepers of what information is distributed to society, the dominant group regulates the ideologies and values of that society.

In regulating the society's knowledge, this system is also one of cultural alienation as other cultures are not only alienated from the dominant culture, but most importantly, members of these racial groups become alienated from their own culture. Schiele points out that cultural alienation occurs when an individual is forced to deny their culture and accept the dominant culture's interpretation of their culture as their own. This cultural alienation is manifested as cultural amnesia. This occurs for the culturally

oppressed so that the group breaks all ties to their history and cultural traditions (Martin and Martin, 1995 in Schiele, 1998). The result of this cultural alienation for a minority group in a society that is dominated by a European culture is that the minority group accepts the definitions and interpretations of reality that are projected by European American culture, having little or no regard for or knowledge of a view of reality that is based on their specific cultural location. Thus, the dominant societal view of the group, in this case Black or Native people, becomes internalised by members of that group.

Furthermore, Schiele states that:

...without knowledge of their indigenous cultural heritage, and the accompanying suppression of it through Eurocentric cultural oppression, African Americans... are very likely to overly internalise the cultural values of European Americans (Schiele, 1998: 171).

Thus, without their own culture to draw upon, these groups are likely to turn to the mainstream for justification and acknowledgement. The problem occurs because these mainstream values are often in opposition to the remaining values that these groups have from their heritage. He also notes that when the European cultural values of aggression, individualism, and emotional inexpressiveness are combined with cultural oppression and economic and political oppression that the result is likely to be extreme anger and violence for the culturally oppressed.

Neo-Colonial Model

The above discussion provides examples of how the colonial model had been applied to the study of race and crime. However, some authors who support the colonial model believe that it is not completely adequate. One such author, Becky Tatum (2000) attempts to address what she considers to be three shortcomings of the colonial model in

her neo-colonial model. She identifies these shortcomings as; first the failure to consider the different forms of alienation; second, that the perspective does not look at different reactions to oppression; and finally, the failure to consider how class might influence the reaction of an individual to racial oppression.

According to Tatum, colonial theory proposes that the relationship between the dominant and minority groups has an effect on the personalities of the members of the minority group. They experience one of five forms of alienation. The first of these is self-alienation where the individual develops a self-hatred and disassociates him/herself from his/her own personal identity. The second form of alienation involves an attempt by the individual to alienate themselves from their own racial or ethnic group. An attempt to alienate oneself from other ethnic or racial groups is the third kind of alienation. This alienation from the “general other” is characterised by a separation of superordinate/subordinate group, which can be marked by violence and aggression. The fourth form of alienation is the rejection by the individual of his/her history, language and culture, and the adoption of the dominant culture. The final form, “alienation of the social praxis,” is the lack of self-determination and drive towards maximising one’s human potential (Tatum, 2000: 6).

The focus of the neo-colonial model is to address the third shortcoming by incorporating class into the traditional colonial model. Neo-colonial theory states that there is a diversity of responses to the colonial order by minority group members. Tatum points to the social support network of individuals as determining their response to the colonial power. These supports can affect the intensity of the alienation felt by the individual and thereby influences his/her response. In this model, the concepts of class

and race are not separate. For Tatum, the historical legacy of colonial rule includes the economic marginalisation of minority groups, which is perceived as structural oppression for minority individuals, especially youth. Thus, lower class youth suffer the most from the colonial oppression.

According to the causal model, both race and class affect structural oppression...High amounts of structural oppression result in high levels of perceived oppression. Perceived oppression, however, does not directly influence feelings of alienation. One's degree of alienation depends on the presence or absence of support systems in the environment (Tatum, 2000).

In testing the premise of this theory, Tatum performs a statistical analysis on White, Mexican American and African American youth ages sixteen to eighteen. The model contained the following variables: race, class, perceived economic oppression, family support, alienation- measured as self alienation, alienation from the racial or social group, alienation from the general other, cultural alienation, and alienation from the social praxis, assimilation, and serious delinquency. While results did not support all aspects of the neo-colonial model, Tatum did find support for the interaction of race and class on perceived oppression and a positive relationship between oppression and delinquency. She concluded that:

...the data for the combined sample repeatedly revealed an inverse association between the alienation measures and assimilation and a positive association between alienation and serious delinquency (Tatum, 2000: 97).

Cultural Transmission Theory

A focus of this study is the process by which the respondents internalise popular cultural depictions of their race as their own. Cultural transmission theory speaks to the process by which individuals justify their actions, based on their roots in popular

culture. In particular, the idea of vocabularies of motives, first proposed by Mills (1940), sheds some light on this process. According to Mills, motives are justifications for actions given by the individual actor that they call upon prior to as well as after their action. In this sense, an actor judges the possible consequences of their actions, and calls upon the motives as means to explain their action. This is an especially useful technique when the actor anticipates that the consequences of their actions will be negative. When looking at the vocabularies of motives used by convicted rapists, Scully and Marolla (1996) state that:

Sociologists have long noted that people can, and do, commit acts they define as wrong and, having done so, engage various techniques to disavow deviance and present themselves as normal. Through the concept of “vocabularies of motives” [we see that] wrong-doers attempt to reinterpret their actions through the use of a linguistic device by which norm breaking conduct is socially interpreted. That is, anticipating the negative consequences of their behaviour, wrong-doers attempt to present the act on terms that are culturally appropriate and acceptable (Kelly, 1996: 97).

As these authors indicate, developing vocabularies of motives is a social phenomenon. First, the individual must have a sense of the generalised other to anticipate the negative outcome and reaction to their actions. Second, they draw on motives that are presented to them from their culture, to justify their actions. Thus, they defer blame from them as an individual, and place it on some socially accepted aspect of society. This is done in an attempt to make their actions socially acceptable as well. In this way, the action becomes justified not only to society, but also to the individual actor him/herself. Mills (1963) sums this up when he states that:

Rather than fixed elements “in” an individual, motives are the terms with which interpretation of conduct by social actors proceeds. This imputation and avowal of motives by

actors are special phenomena to be explained (Mills, 1963: 440).

The social character of vocabularies of motives implies that the actor, sensing that others in society would disapprove of their actions, engages in verbal justifications for their actions that are socially acceptable. In addition, Mills believed that motives are not inner forces compelling a person to engage in an act, rather, they are the justifications for actions, based on the social resources and context in which it takes place. Thus vocabularies of motive are located in time and place.

This concept can be used to help understand the process by which the respondents in this study may excuse their actions. Located in a society that portrays their racial groups in a negative light, these respondents can easily call upon the socially acceptable stereotypes to justify their actions. For example, by justifying their actions based on the depiction of their racial group in the media, they are appealing to a socially acceptable institution as the source of motives for their actions. The culture in which these institutions exist is used to justify the actions of the respondents. Most significantly is the appeal to rap music, which depicts individuals who the respondents associate with, in a socially acceptable art form. The youth may then use this as a means to justify their own actions.

CHAPTER FOUR: Methodology

Research Questions

In line with my theoretical perspective, I propose the following research questions. 1) How do Black and Native young offenders define their racial category? I will try to discover if Black and Native young offenders in Alberta internalise societal discourse and the representation of their race in the society. In addition, if they believe there to be negative images in society, and if so whether or not they have impacted their racialisation. Furthermore, have they also included a criminal aspect to their identity? 2) If this association has in fact occurred, how do the individual respondents perceive their attitudes to have been influenced by popular cultural discourse? In other words, what is it in society that they see as having influenced their development of a racial identity? Here I will focus on the influence of music, specifically, rap music. This focus was influenced by observations I made while working with young offenders. In addition, I will investigate how the youth believe society views them, and whether or not this has influenced their racialisation.

In addition to the role of the media and popular culture, I also want to uncover the what the respondents believe the role of the police is in this process. This will be addressed by the third research focus, which is: 3) What attitudes do the youth hold towards the police, and what they believe the police think of them. 4) Finally, I am interested in whether these influences have been mediated through social support systems or networks, as Tatum (2000) proposes. For this, I will need to discover whether or not these youth believe that there are support systems in place for them to turn to.

Since both criminality and race are social constructs, it is ultimately the individual that defines these terms for him/herself, being influenced by society. I believe that in tapping the above questions, I can gain some insight into whether or not this process occurred. For some young offenders in these racial groups, it is assumed that in the construction of their racial identities, they have incorporated the negative stereotypes from society, and come to include a criminal or delinquent element into their racial identity.

Research Design

Sample

Mason (1996) notes that instead of having a representation of the population, as in the case with most quantitative studies, qualitative research has an alternative logic in sample selection. This study is aimed at getting an in-depth understanding into the ways that certain adolescents from Black and Native heritage adopt a delinquent definition as their cultural identity. The sample is intended to be a selection of typical cases that provide a close view of the phenomenon. The nature of the study does not permit a large sample size, only seventeen youth were interviewed, ten from Native heritage and seven Blacks. Respondents included Black and Native young offenders between the ages of fourteen and twenty-one, who are currently involved in the justice system. It is important that the respondents have had some history with the justice system since it is assumed that they would have gone through the process of associating crime with their racial identity.

I gained access to this population by first contacting various group homes throughout Calgary and Edmonton by telephone. A package containing my research proposal and other information was then sent out to those agencies that were interested. The majority of agencies I contacted were not interested in having me conduct my research in their facilities. Most notably, the Calgary Young Offender's Centre stated that due to a number of research projects already in progress in their facility, at least one of which was focusing on the population that I was targeting, I would not be able to gain access to their residents. A number of group homes were willing, but lacked a sizeable population of the groups that I was interested in. A total of three agencies in Edmonton, which must remain nameless due to confidentiality issues, were willing to allow me to conduct my interviews and also had the number of residents from Black or Native heritage that I was interested in.

In group home A, I approached the respondents personally. They were not told of my intentions or even my visit prior to my introduction. I informed them of my study and the purpose. Of the residents, four were of Native heritage, one resident refused to participate, and one who was Metis did not identify with his Native heritage. Two respondents were interviewed from this home. In group home B the residents were not told of my research agenda prior to my visit. After my arrival, I met with eligible residents and informed them of my intentions. Those who were interested were then interviewed. Three of my respondents were from this agency, two of Mulatto heritage and one Native. In both of these agencies, all eligible residents agreed to be interviewed with the exception of one.

The majority of my respondents came from agency C. Here, the residents were informed by staff of my intentions prior to my visit, and those that were interested were then referred to me. Thus, I do not know how many of those who were approached actually agreed to be interviewed. Upon arrival of my first visit, I was informed that due to the welfare status of the residents, the staff was not able to give consent on their behalf as in the previous homes. I then decided to interview four individuals who were over eighteen and able to give consent. This was an amendment to my original intention to only interview youth ages sixteen to eighteen. However, since three of these four were eighteen and the other was twenty-one, and since they were all residents of the facility from the time they were under eighteen years old, I did not believe this to be of great concern.

A total of seven Black and ten Native young offenders agreed to conduct interviews with me. In addition to the age, ethnic and delinquent requirements of the respondent, it was also imperative that they identified with the racial heritage that I was interested in. This meant the respondents who were of mixed racial heritage were included if they identified as either Black or Native, and if they could be identified as such by the public. There were a total of ten respondents of mixed racial heritage, five of which identified as Native/Metis and five as Black/Mulatto. In total, sixteen of the seventeen respondents were male, and one was female. I was unable to interview any other female respondents due to many facts ranging from their unwillingness to be interviewed, to the fact that another female who was eligible and willing was unable to be interviewed due to behavioural problems.

One notable complication in interviewing a sample from a population such as this is the instability of the residents. For example, prior to my visit to the first group home I was told that there was a large number of eligible respondents, however, prior to my visit there was an incident at the group home which meant that a number of the residents had to be sent to a more secure facility. In addition, it also occurred that a number of the eligible respondents from the third agency were having "behavioural problems" at the time of my visit which meant that it was not safe for me to interview them. The bias in sampling that results from this is evident as only those who were stable and had no recent behavioural problems were interviewed. These respondents may differ in their thoughts and responses from the entire population. However, noting the purpose of my study and the logic behind my sampling, mentioned previously, this should not pose a substantial problem although I need to be aware of it. In essence, my sample selection was heavily influenced by the availability of the possible respondents.

Method and Data Collection

The method of data collection for this study was semi-structured one-on-one interviews. Semi-structured interviews are a means by which the interviewer uses conversation to generate data on the experiences of the respondents, which allows the respondent to have more of an opportunity to aid in the process of generating knowledge about the subject area. Here, the respondent has more control in the process of generating knowledge and is not merely a vessel of knowledge waiting to be tapped. Their experiences give them some authority on the subject area that the interviewer does not have (Holstein and Gubrium, 1997; Mason, 1996; Bryman, 1988; Flick, 1998).

Aspects of both the creative and active interview outlined by Holstein and Gubrium (1997) were used. The idea behind creative interviewing is to emphasize mutual disclosure on both the parts of the interviewer and the respondent. The purpose of this mutual disclosure is to go beyond the mere words that are said during the interviews, to discover the meanings and significance the experiences have on the lives and thoughts of both participants. An interviewer's willingness to do this is believed to encourage the same on the part of the respondent. This requires a friendly, open and comforting disposition for the interviewer; that the interviewer know him/herself and is able and willing to articulate their feelings as they are asking the respondent to do; and finally that the interviewer be willing to work at obtaining the information that they desire since there is no formal script to follow. It is in this manner that I incorporated aspects of the creative interviewing process which involve mutual disclosure. I shared my feelings, thoughts, and experiences in order to establish a trust and aid in the creation of knowledge. However, to avoid treating the respondent as a vessel waiting to be tapped, as Holstein and Gubrium warn that creative interviews do, I also incorporated aspects of the active interview.

According to these authors, the most valuable feature of the active interview is the opportunity it gives the respondent to aid in the production of knowledge in the interview process. Seeing race and crime both as social constructions, the meanings of which are constantly being defined during the course of conversation, both the interviewer and the respondent should have freedom to engage in this process of assigning meaning to the terms. This aspect is usually lost during structured interviews, where the meanings of words and ideas have been determined prior to the interview. Thus, I attempted to give

the respondent as much agency as possible to create his/her knowledge. I did this by constantly asking the respondent to tell me why they feel the way they do, or why they give me the responses that they do. The idea is that by doing this, I am not only getting their thoughts in their own words without having to interpret them, but also I am allowing them to theorise about their behaviour and experiences as we create our reality together.

Attempts to make the respondent feel comfortable and able to disclose sensitive issues were made, especially considering the sensitivity of the subject. I was also aware of the fact that these teens were not likely to be friendly and open with me initially. This is especially true considering their histories and the fact that, as I am suggesting, they have come to identify themselves in terms of a defiant attitude. This is where I had to draw on the skills that I developed while working as a counsellor with teens in similar situations to make the respondents feel at ease and able to open up to me.

Following Flick's (1998) guidelines for conducting interviews, the interviews began with simple non-threatening questions intended to stimulate thought on the part of the respondent about the subject area. These first questions ask the respondent to identify what race he/she classifies him/herself as, and why. They were then asked about their culture and the knowledge of their history. The purpose of these questions is not only to generate data for me, and to get the respondent thinking about the topic under investigation, but also to provide confidence and comfort on the part of the respondent as these questions are simple and easily answered.

As suggested about semi-structured interviews, I needed to be flexible while conducting these interviews. Following Mason (1996), I implemented the skills of listening carefully to what was said and remembering it, this is especially since I wanted

to make sure that a number of topics were covered and certain questions answered, but not in a structured manner. Thus, I needed to pay attention in the process of the respondent providing their narrative, that they gave me the information I needed, and also had to recall what they said later in the interview so as not to ask a question that was already discussed. Since I was engaging in self disclosure, I also had to achieve a good balance between listening and speaking, this was to ensure that I did not take over the interview as Mason argues can happen. Finally, I needed to pay attention to non-verbal cues. This was not only to aid in my interpretation and analysis of the data, but also since my interview had the potential of stirring up uncomfortable memories or experiences. Being observant of non-verbal cues allowed me to identify when a respondent was uncomfortable and to adjust my questions and demeanour accordingly. As the interview progressed, the more abstract themes that arose were narrowed down into specifics, as the questions and discussion became more personal required the respondent to recall specific incidences.

Analysis

According to Mason (1996), the analysis of interview data must be tied to the objective of the study. My research questions are aimed at developing and tracing whether there is an internalisation of crime as a definition of race from the larger society on the part of individual minority youths. An interpretative analysis of the transcribed interviews was essential in understanding this process, therefore, of the three suggested readings of transcribed interview- literal, interpretative and reflexive- I adopted both an interpretative and a reflexive reading. Thus, as Mason suggests, I constructed meanings from the information provided by the respondents, however, as I spoke about my

experiences and thoughts, I also had to adopt a reflexive attitude in that I had to realise my contribution to the interview process and to the production of knowledge and information. In addition, my personal interest and experience was reflected in my interpretation and analysis of the data.

The analysis of the interviews was a cross-sectional analysis whereby I addressed topics that directly relate to my research questions as well as identify themes and topics that arose. According to Mason (1996), a cross-sectional analysis is useful for a number of reasons. First, it provides a means by which themes and topics can be systematically created, and data can be interpreted. It also aids in focusing the scope and analysis of the data. Finally, it allows the researcher to know what information they have gathered and what information remains untapped. In addition, cross-sectional analysis allows the researcher to index the data in a way that permits an analysis of complex processes. In doing this, I was able to arrange ideas and thoughts based on topics and themes, rather than simply variables. Considering the dialectical nature of my research process, this strategy was useful.

The Role of Theory

My sample prohibited me from constructing a general theoretical explanation based on the research. Rather, I had to draw on existing theory regarding the connection between race and crime, as well as attempt to add to this literature from an Albertan perspective. Thus, the use of theory was in a dialectic process between the theory and the data. Thus, though it was used to inform the study before hand, I also attempted to add to the existing theory during my data collection and data analysis.

Colonial theory, neo-colonial theory, social construction theory and cultural transmission theory all influenced the types of questions I asked as well as what I expected to observe. However, in line with most qualitative research, I used the ideas and concepts in these theories as sensitising agents to guide my line of questioning rather than develop hypothesis based on the theories to be tested. In addition, these theories were only put in use after my original observations were made while working in the field. This is reflective of an inductive approach where observation and theory testing occur prior to and simultaneously with data collection. I also used theory in the data analysis process to help me interpret the responses provided. Thus, the major role of theory in my study was to guide my questioning and sensitise me to the field, while my research sought to add to the existing theory.

Ethics

Two factors made ethical approval in this study difficult, these are the criminal history of the respondents and their minor status. Due to these factors, the population was deemed to be vulnerable, and my project was seen to pose "more than a minimal risk" to the respondents. As a result, the Conjoint Faculties Research Ethics Board at the University of Calgary required that they hold a board meeting before my project could be approved. According to the Young Offender's Act (YOA), records can be made available for research or statistical analysis under the instruction of a judge. However, the YOA makes no direct reference to the interviewing of minors. It is however understandable that even though the names of the respondents will not be disclosed in this project, their records, including their names must be made available to me for the purpose of the interview. Thus, in order for me to gain access to this information, I had to apply to the

Alberta Solicitor General for permission to enter the group homes. Once this approval was given, I then had to sign an agreement outlining the precautions that I was taking to ensure the confidentiality of the respondents.

An additional ethical issue that arose was my responsibility should a respondent choose to disclose a crime for which they had not yet been charged. My first precaution against this was to not ask any questions about specific crimes. Since this was not the focus of my study, this would not compromise my research. Moreover, I was required to sign an agreement with the Alberta Solicitor General which prohibited me from revealing such information. In essence, my allegiance was with the respondent not the courts. I also included the following in the consent forms "Be aware that if the respondent is currently involved in legal proceedings, there is a slight possibility that these interviews may be subpoenaed by the court". This served as both a caution to the respondent as well as informed them of the possible consequences of their admittance of any criminal involvement.

The minor status of the respondents meant that I had to obtain consent from their parent or guardian. This was also a special case in this situation since some of the youth were potentially wards of the state. I therefore had to get permission from their group home workers in order to conduct the interviews. In addition, I had to get the consent of the youth involved. Due to their age and the fact that many of these youth potentially were not able to comprehend to language included in the original consent form, I was advised to read a script of consent to the youth prior to the interviews, and then have them sign a consent form stating that they understood what was required of them and that they agreed to be interviewed.

The sensitive nature of the subject required that I made it clear that the respondents were free to withdraw their consent at any time throughout the interview with no consequences and that all information collected thus far would be destroyed. They were also informed that they could refuse to answer any questions that they deemed too disturbing. Finally, they were also encouraged to speak to their key worker at their respective group homes if they felt the need to speak to a therapist after our interview. As I realised that this was a sensitive area, I made every attempt to pose the questions in a non-threatening manner. I also tried to make the respondents feel comfortable by relaying a number of personal experiences, while making sure not to overwhelm them with too much information.

Issues of confidentiality and anonymity also arose, and resulted in the revision of my original proposal. It was originally intended that I conduct both individual interviews as well as focus groups. The focus groups were to be divided by racial group, with the logic that, since I was proposing that race is a social construction, this would be most appropriately observed in a group setting with peers of a similar racial group. However, this posed problems as these interviews would have to be videotaped in order for me to associate the comment with the respondent during analysis. The main problem here was the responsibility of the researcher should the police want to seize possession of these videotapes. I was forced to contemplate whether I wanted to face such a decision and decided to only conduct the individual interviews, which were recorded on audio tape.

Confidentiality was assured by my not disclosing any personal information, such as names of individuals, any identifying characteristics, or the group homes where the respondents reside, in my final product. I was unable to make the same guarantee of

anonymity since I could not ensure that someone reading the final product, such as a group home worker or a social worker, could not identify an individual based on their responses. Although I made every effort to make this information unidentifiable in the final project, I could not ensure that someone who has had close contact with the respondent would be unable to identify them. This is especially true since I assured the agencies involved that they could receive a copy of my final project. Original data was secured at my residence where only I had access to it. In addition, only myself, my thesis supervisor and an individual hired to transcribe the interviews, who was asked to sign a letter of confidentiality, were permitted to see original data. All information was disposed of at the completion of the project.

A main ethical consideration for me is my place as a researcher in my research, especially since, as I indicated above, this area is one of great importance to me and one that I am very much interested in. In line with Norum's (2000) argument that "disclosing the researcher's place in the research is an ethical obligation, not simply a consideration", I made every attempt to do this in my research. Specifically, some self-disclosure throughout the interview, as well as disclosing my biases during the analysis of the data, was necessary. Tied into this argument, Norum notes that a researcher is asking the respondent to reveal a great deal of personal information and in this aspect the researcher has considerable power. Mason's (1996) concerns about what a researcher asks, how they ask it and what they allow the respondent to tell also addresses this issue. The power that the researcher has also places the ethical responsibility on them to ensure that the respondent is not revealing too much information, especially since a trust has been

established between the two. This issue holds great significance in this case as the revelation of too much information could be detrimental to the respondent.

Implications

The possible implications of this study for Canadians are many. This is especially true since the major Canadian cities are becoming increasingly diverse, with the representation of both Natives and Blacks increasing. One use of this research is that it can serve to identify the extent to which youth of these racial groups actually do identify crime as part of their culture. Many authors already have written about this phenomenon, but few have based their research in Canada. The idea that society's conception of a group can influence that group in such a manner can have implications for youth that become involved in crime. Specifically, societal stereotypes of an ethnic group can impact on members in that group in a negative manner. The need for positive images of certain groups has already been embraced by some in society.

For example, group homes, schools and other agencies dealing with Native youth have implemented courses to educate these youth on their history and the significance of their culture. Likewise, workers with Native youth are required in many agencies to take Native awareness courses, and cultural sensitivity courses. In the United States, the education of Blacks on their history is seen as an important preventative measure, as well as a rehabilitative aspect for Black youth that are in trouble.

William Oliver (1989) proposed an Afro-centric perspective as a solution to the social problems faced by many African American males. Among many things this view incorporates a structural-cultural perspective that is unique to African Americans, and advances more positive images of African Americans, especially males. The assumption

of these programs is that in providing positive images to combat the existing negative stereotypes of these cultures, these youth will be given the opportunity to form self images and ethnic identities that encompass a variety of historical and modern accomplishments of members of their ethnic group, which will replace criminality as a source of ethnic identification. In addition, these views will serve to replace the ideal of a European image as the only desirable culture.

CHAPTER FIVE: Native Self-Identity

The “Thug-Like” Image

In dealing with the individual identities that the Native respondents held, I found a wide variety of responses; from those who readily admitted to being Native and displayed great pride in it, to at least one respondent who held very little Native identification. It seems that in all of the cases, the respondents were aware of, and had been influenced by the negative stereotypes that exist about their race in society. For example, the image of being “thug-like” was one that some of the respondents aspired to achieve, while others shunned it. This served as evidence that the respondents have gone through the process of identifying that image with their race since they must do so in order to either reject or accept it.

One of the most apparent cases of the attempted internalization of a negative Native identity was the case of Timothy, a 16 year old boy whose mother is Native and father is White. Timothy identified himself as Metis despite the fact that his mother, who “looks” Native “tries to pass for White because she has got White in her,” while his brothers and sisters all “think they are White.” Timothy’s justification for choosing to identify as Native was based on a number of reasons. He stated he thought it was cool to be different. When asked why he chose to see himself as Native when he could pass for White, he replied, “...it’s neat and different, something different.” He then added that “...if I had a chance, I’d practice like Buddhism and all that and stuff; it’s like religion, I guess. Just to be different.” However, Timothy was aware that along with the positive

things that came along with identifying as Native, there were also some negative images associated with that culture.

Timothy's decision to identify as Native was an interesting one, not only because his family did not identify that way, but because he could easily pass for a White person based on his physical characteristics. Timothy gave two main attractions of the Native culture, both of which were influenced by stereotypes. The first of these was that it is important that people see him as Native so that he could get along with Natives better and be accepted by them. When asked why it was important for him to let people know that he had Native blood although he could easily pass for White, he responded "I don't know, it's just popular with all us Native guys to get along with--- if somebody sees you are Native, you get along with Natives better or something."

Because of his desire to get along with Natives, Timothy was bothered by the fact that people looked at him and thought that he was White. He commented that he was not happy because "[e]verybody thinks of me, I'm a White person, I'm always White, I don't care nothing about Natives, but I do." According to Timothy, Natives act in ways that are different from Whites, the way he talks and acts was considered "normal" as opposed to Native, which was one of the reasons he is identified by others as White. In his words:

I act like a regular person. I don't try and act Native or anything. I act like a White person, regular. I don't act like- the different talking- like the kind of accent Natives have, you know... I'm a regular person. That's how I act.

This idea that "acting White" as considered normal, and acting in accordance with another ethnic group is considered a deviation from the norm was echoed by a number of the respondents. I believe that it is this that caused Timothy to act more "thug-like" to be perceived as Native.

The second main reason that Timothy chose to identify himself as Native was the attraction of some of the Native traditions. However, his knowledge of Native traditions, culture, and history was limited, although not vastly different from other respondents who grew up in "Native" homes. His desire to learn about the culture however, was more than expressed by some of the other respondents. He mentioned that he participated in sweat lodges and other Native practices, as well, he was attempting to get into a Native history class at the time of the interview. Regardless, the appeal that the Native culture had to Timothy seemed superficial. For example, when asked about the positive aspects of the culture, he responded "...I like how they scream around and stuff. I don't know why but I do... running around the house screaming like an Indian. I don't know- I just like it."

According to Timothy, being perceived as Native would help him avoid being picked on. In his words, an advantage in appearing Native is that "I don't get picked on much." This belief might be attributed to the fact that Timothy believes that Natives appear more "thug-like" which is one of the reasons he desires to be considered as one. He thought that Natives had the image of being more "thug-like" than Whites. This afforded him the advantage of not being picked upon, and earning some respect from the street. His definition of being a "thug" included being rich and powerful, and of course being feared. According to Timothy, a thug was easily identified by his style of dress. Specifically a thug was known by his baggy clothes and "ice"^{vi} dangling from everywhere." He admitted to committing a crime to help himself achieve this image. "Well actually, I did, I did a crime- broke into a convenience store and everything so I could have all the people and be cool and be bad." When asked if he equated such actions

with being Native he said no, but he was quick to add that Natives did have more of a thug-like image than White people did.

This idea of being thug-like was echoed by another respondent, Jess, who said that it was important that people see him as Native, but also as an individual. When asked what it meant to him to be Native he explained how he considered his actions to be influenced by his heritage.

I got a bunch of friends that are hard core, you know, they talk shit and crap or hang out and stuff.... I don't know, just do whatever kind of thing, party and stuff and beat other people up. Hang out with the ladies and stuff... It's just a bunch of guys and just do whatever, you know. Just fool around and get in shit with other people...just because they are drunk or... just whatever. Standing on the street corner doing drugs and go jack somebody, somebody says it and we all go follow him.

Although he admitted that these actions were not a result of being Native, a number of times when asked what it meant to him to be Native, he responded with similar responses.

According to Jess, a lot of kids act tough because they are Native and that is what they associate with being Native. This is especially true of the kids who were in the facility that he was in. He states "A lot of people act tough though... They think they are all big and shit... They think they can run jail and stuff." This was attributed to the fact that the Native population of the facility was rather high and some "people are pretty proud of that." When asked if he took pride in that fact, Jess responded that he did not, although he admitted to feeling stronger because of the number of Natives in the facility. The large number of Natives gave Jess confidence because, "[w]ell they got my back. You got buddies in here. You don't have to worry about other people. If you get in trouble they'll just take care of you." This idea is similar to that expressed by Timothy that Natives stick

up for each other. Their “thug-like” image coupled with the numbers gave these youth more confidence in themselves.

This need for respect was mirrored by another respondent. Keith stated that his parents had a habit of living in “White neighbourhoods” because they believed that they were offering their children better lives in these neighbourhoods. However, usually within a week or two of moving to these neighbourhoods, Keith and his older brother usually got involved in at least one fight. According to Keith:

They [his parents] always tell us that they want more opportunities for us to better ourselves. But every time they do that [move to a White neighbourhood] we always have to pick a fight. Every place we move there’s always a fight the first week we move there... My brother really likes to fight, so he would usually pick the fight, so anybody come walking in, a group of Natives come walking by or whatever... If you fight and you beat them up they show you respect, they respect you.

This quest for respect is something that was present in a number of the responses. It seems likely that the respondents search for respect and even fear by achieving a “thug-like” image because they feel disrespected in other aspects of their lives. All three of these respondents reported cases where they felt disrespected because of their race. Moreover, they all expressed the belief that society saw Natives in negative terms. Indeed, Keith noted that “the kids in the [all White] neighbourhoods usually taunt me. They don’t think you can stand up for yourself, not until you snap and prove them wrong, like otherwise.” In addition, Timothy’s desire to appear “thug-like” could be linked to his need to get along with Natives better and be accepted by them more. This is especially true since he seems to be bothered by the fact that, being Metis, he looks more White than Native.

The idea that Natives act tough to gain respect is supported by the response of another respondent. Todd readily admitted that he was Metis, however, he continued to state that he did not like hanging out with Natives because he considered them “dumb and stupid.” According to Todd, “I just don’t like hanging around with [Natives] because I don’t like their mentality and how they present themselves and the whole- always trying to prove something.” Todd could be referring to the “thug-like” image that many of these youth present. His reference to “trying to prove something” may in fact be the respect that these kids are striving to get from others in society.

In response to the question of self-image and self-identity as a Native, it is interesting that some of the respondents mentioned that one thing that makes them different from other Natives is that they do not drink. This is interesting because in order for them to consider this as something that made them different from other Natives, they must have internalized the common stereotype of the “drunken Indian.” Indeed, both of them mentioned this image as a common stereotypical image of Natives in society.

The first of these, Keith, insisted that he wanted to be seen as an individual, who was unique and different from other Natives. Although he stated that he was not ashamed of his Native heritage, and in fact proud of it, he also stated that he wanted to be seen as a “person who wants to be an individual. I’m unique.” When asked what made him unique from other Natives, he replied “I don’t drink, I don’t do drugs. I don’t want to be placed as an alcoholic or as a stoner.” In addition, he wanted to go to school and get a job, again implying that other Natives did not do these things. Leonard’s response showed a similar mentality. When discussing what he thought of Natives he responded: “Well, I know a lot of Native people that drink and stuff and do drugs. But I don’t. That’s not all that I think

[of Natives] but...” For Leonard, this was one of the images that came to mind when thinking about Native people. For him, it was a part of his culture that he did not identify with.

The Effects of History on Native Identity

One of the premises of colonial theory is that the history of a colonised people has an impact of the conscience of the people in modern society. It proposes that myths about the past are highly available in modern society and often replace reality. In order to test for this possibility, it was necessary to identify the extent of knowledge that these respondents have of the myths and realities of their past. In addition, I thought it useful to discover if these youth knew the significance behind Native traditions. I found that knowledge about the past and the significance of tradition was superficial. Most respondents knew some of their past history, but lacked a deep understanding of their traditions. Of the ten respondents of Native heritage, four of them reported having no knowledge of their history.

The most striking observation was that the majority of respondents, when asked about their knowledge of history, included their knowledge of Native traditions. Thus indicating that they largely thought of these traditions as something that was mostly rooted in the past, despite the fact that some of them stated that they currently participate in them. This is a problem that stems mostly from the fact that many of the respondents reported that their knowledge of their history was gained from people and stories. A few of them did indicate that they had either taken, were taking or intended to take some form of Native studies in order to deepen their knowledge of their culture, but in large part, they lacked familiarity with their history.

A few of the responses included knowledge about how Natives lived in the past, which incorporated much of their traditions. For example, James had the following comment:

I know that the culture a long time ago how we used to be, we used to live in the bush and stuff like that. I know what they used to do for trap lines and hunting and stuff like that. Family rights and stuff.

Other respondents also mentioned hunting, trapping and “how they used to live back in the day” as an important part of their history. Richard responded that he “just [knew] we used to live in tepees and stuff like that. I guess they used to, when they killed, they used to kill for the whole thing, eat the whole animal, not just like got the hide or something.” As far as his knowledge of colonisation, his account was that “back in the day they [Whites] got these chiefs drunk and get them to sign this treaty thing or something.” This knowledge he gained from stories, people and a little bit in school.

James’ knowledge of his history, which he got from a Native school, was more detailed. In his words:

I know that we were here a long time ago and a bunch of people put them on reserves and stuff. Europeans, French and stuff, like Reds and stuff. If you left the reserve you... lost your Indian status, because they couldn’t roam freely... They probably thought they were like savages or something.

Mike too displayed knowledge learned at school. He stated that “the Europeans and French and whatever came and... they had smallpox and stuff. Something like that, and it killed us all. The rest they put on reserves.” For Mike, this knowledge was enough since he stated that “[Native history] has never been of any interest to me.”

Fred also displayed similar knowledge gained from school. Although his attitude towards it was much more detached than others. According to him, "back in the day" his people were farmers, but:

...people came, this was an uncharted planet or place so new people came because there's more resources, more room, more things to make money... there was nothing here except for people and all this other stuff... White people came over the sea and came and chilled here, and they just started to bring more people over, started expanding with the railroad then boom, we're here now.

It is interesting that Fred could state that there was nothing here, except for people, as though people were not that important. Keith relayed the same amount and type of knowledge of his history as the other respondents. Interestingly, his knowledge was mostly based on independent studies that he was doing on Native studies. Keith's account of the past was the following:

My understanding is that they [Natives] were always here. They were pushed off, and they got their piece of land outside the city, and the government spent their money the way they thought it should be spent... I didn't think it was right, but it's changed now. The band can do whatever they want.

Much like Fred, he too saw the past as something that had little bearing on the present. Both of these respondents indicate that while they are aware of the history of their people and consider what was done to them wrong, that it had little bearing on present society.

Todd also displayed some knowledge of history and what Native people went through, and his reaction was similar to Fred's and Keith's. According to Todd, he had come to terms with the events of the past.

Actually, I don't really have any problem, I just see it as, I don't know, that's the past. I look to the future, what happened in the past is the past. I mean, I can't change it. We can't change that, we're not going to be able to take our

land back, you know, stuff like move out and get our country back, you know, cause everything has already been built right.

However, despite his thoughts that the past is the past and we cannot change it, Todd was not as forgiving of the past events as he initially seems. He remains unconvinced that what happened in the past was just. Speaking about how the ways that the Europeans made Native people feel inferior during the colonial period and still make them feel inferior, he had this to say:

They put everything on us because if you are not in a group of anybody it's just you and five people and those all five people agree, it doesn't matter what you say, no matter what it's going to be put on you in that group. If that person stole something and then they're all friends, it's on you. Same thing with the majority of the White people, and a minority of Native people and Black people, you know.

Todd's comments not only speak to the history but he related how he sees the past as having bearing on the present.

Only one respondent expressed any knowledge of residential schools. Richard, who was one of the most informed about his history, had this to say:

...back in the day [Whites] put [Natives] in what do they call those schools? Residential schools, put them in there, tell them that, well my grandma told me that they told her that her language is like the devil talking or something, they told her to cut her hair because it's no good or something like that and she kind of lost her language and she was in that school for a couple of years.

Knowledge and Impact of Native Traditions

Todd was an interesting case because not only did he display a high level of knowledge about society, which indicated that he has often thought about these issues,

but his responses included a combination of being proud of his Native heritage and being ashamed of the ways that Natives often portrayed themselves, while still holding society accountable for perpetuating a negative stereotype of his race. In addition to the negative comments that Todd stated earlier, he had some things to say about Natives, he even went as far as to imply that their problems stemmed from a biological trait:

They're distrusting, a lot of them. I don't know, it's just weird, I don't know. A lot of them are distrusting and backstabbing, maybe it's in their genes or something. I don't know, in their genes like how diseased can be passed on right, like traits and personality.

Todd speculated that the problems with Natives, such as their distrust of people, their troubles with the law and their excessive drinking was possibly rooted in their genes.

However, amidst his obvious frustration, Todd also expressed some pride in his culture, although he was careful to explain that it was more of a hobby and interest to him than something he did out of cultural obligation. When talking about the traditions and customs often associated with his culture and that were mentioned by other respondents as a part of their self-identity, Todd notes:

Yeah I enjoy it. I don't take it into my own culture like, you know, I know the culture's there but I'm not going to expressively believe in it... I won't go to that extent. I'm doing it more for like an extra circular activity.

James' response in regards to Native tradition was that he was familiar with their language.

I speak a lot of the culture, like I speak Cree. I grew up with my family and I just learned... yeah most of my family they all speak Cree or they speak English, so I used to speak Cree and stuff like that.

He also indicated that he participated in pow wows, round dances, drumming and hunting as part of his tradition. Other respondents indicated traditions such as sweet grass, owls,

and Native art as part of their identification with Native culture and traditions. For example Timothy remarked that he usually goes to “sweat and stuff... I try and do pipe ceremonies and stuff.” Keith and James both stated that they usually draw Native art, both mentioning the eagle as a common Native image. Jesse and Leonard noted that they take part in sweat lodges and showed knowledge of sweet grass and dream catchers.

How Society Sees Natives

One of the main premises of this research is that in the formation of a self identity, these respondents will have incorporated negative stereotypes and images of their culture that are present in society into their own individual identities. Inasmuch as we have seen how the respondents see themselves, it is also helpful to look at how they believe society sees them individually as well as their race on a whole. It becomes evident that all of the respondents are aware of the negative images present in society about their races. The vast majority responded very passionately when asked how they felt about this fact. Most of them expressed that it did bother them. However, a few did agree with the societal assessment of their racial group.

The Stereotypical View of Natives

Many of the respondents reported that they felt that society still held many stereotypical views of Natives in general, and them specifically because they were Native. One respondent stated that he believed that others thought this: “They just think that we are drunks and always ending up in the pen and in all the jails”. Another respondent, Leonard, stated “... some just think that we are drunks and all that... most people think bad.” He then went on to add:

I don't know, well, it's hard to say. They just think we drink and stuff, well that's what I think they think. That that's what we should do, well not what we should do but that's how people think about us and stuff. Just that we are drunks, with a lot of Natives drinking, that's how they look at us. They are like: "Yeah you are just Native drunks."

Another example of this came from Timothy, who thought that society stereotyped all Natives as drunks and bums:

... they see bums are mostly Natives that are hanging out downtown, drinking beer and stuff, and they label everybody else as bad or whatever. Just because they see like a Native person doing something, all Natives, they stereotype all Natives.

Some youth also identified other stereotypes that they believed society held of Natives. For example, many of them mentioned that they believe people generally think that most Natives are from reserves. This was also associated with the belief that they were not able to function in the city, both due to the fact that they had grown up on reserves, and also based on their incompetence to cope in a city. As Keith put it:

They think we live on reserves and the old ways. Without the technology and all that... but we got more money. We, well my parents got a nice house. We got more opportunities.

Some of the respondents indicated that they had bought into many of these stereotypes. One of the most often heard arguments in society against Natives is that they have many opportunities that they do not make use of. James expressed these same sentiments. When asked what he believed others thought of Natives, he said that he believed they thought Natives were "up to no good and bums and stuff." When asked why he thought this way he responded:

Because we're Native, we are- I don't know from just the colour of our skin and stuff... Because we probably got more opportunities than them and we screw them up.

'Cause we don't have to pay taxes and stuff, and like the opportunity to go to school and it's paid for and other people have to pay for it. [Natives] don't take the opportunities to do that stuff. They just think that we take the money, we just go drinking and stuff like that.

The respondents also offered some possible explanations as to why they believed some of these stereotypes to be true. For example, when asked if he believed the stereotype that Natives drink more than other races to be reality or just merely a stereotype, Jesse admitted that he thought it to be true. However, he also added why he believed that this situation occurred. "I see like more Native people drink, more Natives are drunk, but maybe I mean other people are... I don't know, maybe they [Natives] do it to get away from trouble or problems they have, they just drink." When asked if he believed that Natives experienced more problems than others, he responded "Yes." The root of these problems, he believed, was:

... well cause [Natives'] homes aren't stable. You know, people like to chill or there's people that drink all the time so they drink too and all that crap. Then they won't stop because their mom doesn't, you know, pressure them to go to school, she's probably drunk herself. They do their own thing.

This idea, that the source of many of the problems Natives experience comes from their home structure, was echoed by Richard. When asked why he believed Natives are seen the way they are he responded that "... they [Natives] choose the wrong ways to go, like you end up in jail and stuff like that." When questioned as to why they ended up this way, he responded

... I mean they're brought up in prairies for like... let's see, they grew up in broken homes and they want to live the bad life, make money, stuff like that... I don't know if more Natives do [grow up in broken homes] but it's like most of the Natives I know and have been around have been grown up in broken homes.

Fred, who stated above that he believed Natives to be “scrubby people” explained why he thought that was the case. “There’s just sometimes some Natives like, they’re not that well paid in jobs.” Fred also added that he believed that a number of people saw Natives negatively because Natives were over-represented in jails. He commented that most people think that Natives were bad people because, “...years ago half the population in jail were Natives, and like in Prince Albert [where he grew up], like ninety percent of the population are Natives.” He went onto speculate as to why this is:

Well, a lot of the Natives live in like the real crappy, rundown houses, and they’ve got to do things to get their money, so they steal, break in, sell drugs.

Many of the respondents made reference to the high population of Natives in prisons. For the most part, their view of how society sees them also included a criminal element. It is true that their opinion was clouded by the fact that these youth had all had experiences with the law, but they all believe that society saw them in a criminal light. Whether or not this is a result or cause of their delinquency could not be assessed here. For example, one respondent stated that: “When you go to the pen you don’t see too many White people there, you see more Natives. For drugs, alcohol, stealing. We’re bad... That’s how people see it, but that’s also how it is, pretty much.” Another, Keith, stated that “[people mostly think] that we are low class... because we mostly live on the reserves, and our houses aren’t that great. They think we are thieves.” This respondent also went on to add that he believed that society considered Natives to be more criminal than other racial groups because “A lot of the people in here [jail] are Native.”

At least one of the respondents incorporated this into his identity. He stated that he thought people thought this of him. “[That] I’m a criminal and a bad guy. Some guy who’s looking for trouble... just because of the way I am I guess.” Another respondent,

Jesse, was more conflicted about the subject. He stated that he believed that others think that Natives are “poor and shit.” In addition, he agreed with society that Natives must commit more crimes than other races since they are over-represented in prisons. “Like... there are more [Natives] in [this prison] who are criminals... cause they just commit more crimes.” When asked why, he responded:

Well because- I don't know. A lot of them with the peer pressure will be selling [drugs] just because they need the money or something. I don't know. To jack a car or something. I don't know, I know that a lot of people have that opinion. But I see a lot of Native people in jail too so I guess they just commit more crimes, or get caught easier... but I do know a lot of people who do crimes, and they are White.

Jesse seemed to be conflicted with the societal belief and the evidence he has seen that supports the fact that Native people are more prone to commit crimes than other races. However, he did mention that he sees other races, White people, who commit crimes as well. He noted that it might be a case of Native people getting caught more easily.

The question as to whether Natives commit more crimes or if they are just “caught easier” was also addressed by Timothy. He stated that he thought he was not targeted because he appeared more White than Native, so even though he wished to be identified as Native, the fact that he was not afforded him the privilege of not being often suspected as being criminal. However, like has been mentioned above, Timothy gave some possible explanations about the situation, and much like Jesse, he seemed confused as to whether he believed that Natives committed more crimes or whether they just got caught more often:

...it's mostly Natives that get caught in crime. I don't know how it works that way, but if you hear maybe ten Black guys, seven Black guys, they don't get caught. I don't know if it's that they are good at crime or not. The thing is

that most Natives, they're not rich and they do more crime, and if they get caught then... but I think White people commit just as many crimes... well, but the Natives probably do more crime cause they get caught more often, mostly Natives that do crime.

The Portrayal of Natives in the Media

In response to how the respondents believed that Natives were viewed in the media, the majority were of the opinion that apart from the television show *North of 60*, which was mentioned a number of times, Natives were very seldom seen in the media. While some respondents believed that they were portrayed negatively, some also admitted that they thought the portrayal of Natives was getting better. Timothy, for example, noted that he sometimes saw Native "culture and dance and stuff" portrayed, but most often, he saw "Natives doing lots of crime. They [the media] stereotype them and show that." Todd had similar comments. "Actually, I see the change on TV and stuff. Like Native people are coming up more... now they are being presented in the newspapers and on TV more... But a lot of it is still negative."

Both Paul and Richard stated that they did not see enough representations of Natives in the media to have an opinion on their representation. Fred, on the other hand, thought that often Natives are "not well respected" in the media, "because some movies... just kind of make fun of them... and make fun of their religion and their traditions." Leonard admitted that he thought that it really depended on the type of media and the person presenting it in order to determine whether the portrayal was positive or negative. James admitted that he thought that the overall portrayal of Natives was more positive than negative, although he too agreed that they were not portrayed sufficiently.

White-Native Relations

A number of respondents also had opinions on the relationship between Whites and Natives in this society. This is important in this research because of the focus of colonial theory on the relationship between the colonisers and the colonised. It is true that in this theory, society on the whole reflects the views of the majority group, however, the specific remarks to White-Native relations is also of much interest. This is also an interesting topic in this study since five of the ten Native respondents are of Metis heritage. The overwhelming response to the issue of Whites' opinion about Natives could be summed up in the response given by Paul: "They don't think too much of them."

The most striking evaluation of White-Native relations came from Timothy, the respondent of Metis heritage who was often identified as White, who stated that his entire family chose to pass for White, but desired to be seen as Native. As Timothy sees it, there is a mutual dislike between Whites and Natives. According to him, Native people dislike White people because they believe that White people consider themselves superior to them. This can be seen by the many references to acting White as acting "normal," while every cultural deviation from the European culture is seen as "abnormal." In Timothy's words:

... lots of Natives don't like White people, and White people don't like Natives. It's a colour thing, I'm sure there's lots of reasons people don't like each other, I can't really explain. White people think they are so perfect or something, the way they are or something. But nobody's perfect... but they think they are, 'cause they are White not Brown or Black or anything else.

The idea that Whites consider themselves "perfect" was repeated by Jesse who stated that he thought "a lot of White people always think they are too good or

something, I don't know. The way they talk. Perfect. And they call you down sometimes." This opinion of White people influences how Jesse reports interacting with them. In his account he is not very friendly to Whites when he initially meets them. He stated: "When I meet a Native person I am more friendly, it's like 'What's up?' Black people are OK. White people... I don't like them too much." Similar to Timothy's account, Jesse considers that Whites think of themselves as better than Natives, as a result he is not overly interested in befriending them.

Leonard also believed that not only the way that he interacts with Whites is influenced by his race, but that the way they interact with him is highly due to the fact that he is Native. He put it like this when asked how he believes race influences interactions, specifically, his race and interactions with White people.

It's like the way you see them [White people] act. It's like they want to talk to you but... You have to act kinda different to them if you are not White they act different to you. I mean, I just act how I act, but they treat you kinda different. It's like you try and talk or something and they don't want to talk to you, they kinda of ignore what you have to say. They think you're kinda gonna hurt them or something.

Another account was given by Richard who stated that he did not like how Natives were stereotypically referred to as chiefs, "...they call them like chief and shit. We're not all chiefs you know... I think they think we're dirty and a bunch of alcoholics and we're bad. That's about it... there's a lot of racism that I put up with." When asked where he believe this racism stems from, Richard related this story:

Like a lot of people don't like Natives out there and stuff. I don't know why. Actually I think I know why, because back in the day there's a story, it's a true story. There's these White people that are coming to these reserves out there, it's around Cold Lake and Hunting Lake. And these White people promised to give them meat. This is a long

time ago, when they first put us on reserves. And they gave us stale meat and rotten food and stuff and then so they got sick because they gave them stale meat and stuff. So they put up a big festival, all these Native groups, and they hunted, they did all this stuff for a bunch of White people that were giving them their food, the stale food, to show their appreciation. Like they all gathered up this one reserves and did all this hunting and put up a big feast for the White people and the White people came and killed them all. They slaughtered them, yeah it was called the Cold Lake massacres... they were giving them the come here by saying this feast is for our thanks for giving us the stale meat, stuff like that. They weren't really celebrating nothing, they were just going to get them together and kill them all.

For Richard, this story symbolises relations between the two races. As he saw it, White people have historically benefited at the expense of Native people, the retaliation that was shown here by the Natives reflects how they feel today about White-Native relations.

Another common stereotype that was referred to earlier was that of the "drunken Indian." In his account of how Whites see Natives, James echoed frustration with this particular stereotype. He stated that they:

...call us down and stuff. Like calling us '*Natives*', like they make fun of us man... They act like... they're just acting like an Indian and stuff and they're just saying 'Oh, let's go get drunk and shit', you know what I mean? They think that we're just a bunch of drunks man.

In addition, Richard thought their dislike for Natives stemmed from another source. Richard stated that:

There are so many of them [Whites] who are mad at us because we're fighting—well, not me, but Natives are fighting all over for land back and so White people don't like that because we have... we don't pay taxes and they do and they're mad at us because we don't pay taxes and stuff like that.

Todd summed up how he believed Whites and Natives related to each other in society. He believed that the relationship is marked by an inequality that left Natives disadvantaged due to the fact that this society was dominated by Whites. "Most people, like the majority people, they just travel through like society... you know and whatever the majority says will effect the smaller minority of people." Referring back to his comment dealing with the fact that in the past, the Europeans were able to conquer the Native people because they were the majority, Todd believes that they majority status still affords them the opportunity to rule over groups that are in the minority.

Perceived Structural Oppression of Natives

The neo-colonial model proposes that the race of the individual leads to certain levels of structural oppression, which in turn is perceived as oppression by the individual. This perceived oppression is moderated by the amount of social support systems available to the individual which in turn affects the levels of alienation experienced and the level that the individual assimilates to the society. One form of alienation is seen in the level of crime and deviance in the individual. This premise was the justification for looking at the affect of perceived oppression on the respondents, and will be discussed using the entire sample later; however, since structural and perceived oppression for the two groups varies, it is useful to discuss these before hand, using the divided samples. These accounts will be separated into two categories, The first will be the perceived social status of Natives in society, this will reflect the respondents' ideas of structural oppression of their race in society. Secondly, I will look at the individual accounts of racism that these youth reported. This also should speak to whether or not the respondents feel socially alienated from society.

Social Oppression of Natives

The main issue discussed dealing with the oppression of Native people was whether or not the respondents felt that they had the same opportunities available to the rest of society. Questions were asked to tap their views as to whether or not they have the same opportunities as Whites and if they saw their race as having fewer privileges than other races. One main outcome that is unique to Natives was that their levels of perceived oppression in terms of opportunities was not very high. They acknowledged the possibility that racism could hinder their progress, but due to the fact that they were afforded many privileges in Canada, they did not view themselves as disadvantaged as was proposed. However, some respondents noted that these privileges, while intended to be a positive step, could also have damaging affects on Native people.

The majority of respondents stated that they believed that Whites had more privileges in Canadian society. Todd thought that Natives have more privileges on the reserves, but in mainstream society, Whites held the majority of privileges. He believed Natives to be disadvantaged because of “the way people treat them and stuff, like they’re nothing...’cause those people that have problems and stuff, they’re mostly all Natives and poor.” Fred agreed that Whites held the majority of privileges and that Natives held the least. For him, it was the fact that Natives lived on reserves that limited their options in society, while other races were more integrated into society and afforded the privileges that came along with what he considered to be more freedom. In addition, he thought that the fact that some people held racist views of Natives limited their opportunities.

Another example of limited freedom that infringed on the privileges of Native people was given by Jesse. He believed that one of the most obvious displays of the

privileges that Whites had over Natives was their freedom to not be watched by others. In his words:

Well like White people, they go to stores and stuff and can walk around. Like you go to a store, like I was going there to buy something and a couple buddies and some guy'll be watching us and see some other White guy walking by and they don't get followed or anything. Think we'd be the most likely to steal. We get pulled over a lot too, just, I don't know, looking suspicious because we're Natives hanging out with each other.

Paul held a similar opinion based on the treatment that Natives often received. His belief that they had fewer privileges was based on the following example:

It's like if you go to a White school or something, and you look Native there, it seems like you get treated different, by the teachers and students. Like you do something wrong and you'll get consequenced for it but if the White person does something wrong they don't get, he won't get consequenced. They let it slide I guess.

Keith agreed that generally, Natives were judged harsher than Whites because, according to him: "They [Whites] are supposed to be the good ones, being European". However, he also thought that Natives were judged largely in accordance to how they behaved. According to him: "If they act like idiots, they will be judged like idiots." However, he also acknowledged that much of the time, Native people are misjudged. Keith's response indicated that he thought that the way people were treated was more due to their personal characteristics than their race, but, people from a certain race were often seen to have more similar characteristics.

This is similar to James who thought that as far as privileges were concerned, society did not leave Natives at a disadvantage. For him, individuals were disadvantaged, and not the entire race. So while certain people have more privileges than others, it is not necessary that certain races do. However, he did acknowledge that it appeared that more

White individuals had more opportunities than Native individuals. This caused him to sometimes wish that he were White.

Well, I used to always think that I wish I wasn't Native because then- I wished I was White or something because all these White people have these nice houses and stuff, they've got more things than I do. I used to think that way too, but I just realised that I'm a Native, I'm proud of being Native now. I just looked into it and I started looking into it again and I like it.

While Leonard agreed that Whites had the most privileges in society, he thought that there were other groups with fewer privileges than them, namely Blacks. Mike echoed the belief that Natives were not totally disadvantaged, in fact he did not consider them disadvantaged at all. This is because, for treaty Natives, they had opportunities such as free education and health care. However, while this was the case, he still noticed that Whites seemed to be living better lives than Natives. When asked why he thought that was the case, he responded: "They get lots of stuff given to them, handed to them... and it probably just screws them over."

Many of the respondents agreed that free schooling was an opportunity available to Natives that other races did not have. Why they failed to make use of this opportunity was a more interesting discussion. For example, Keith thought that free schooling was an opportunity that Natives could take advantage of in order to be more equal in society. However, he believed that because they were simply given the money, this gave Native people a disincentive to go to school, while causing them to not appreciate the value and hard work required to earn money. Similarly, Jesse believed that giving Native people money caused them to want to get things the easy way without working hard for it. For this reason, they have no need to go to school and earn money.

Likewise, Todd thought that the privileges that Natives received put them in a better position than certain groups, but not quite to the level of Whites. Todd offered a reason why this was the case:

I think other groups have more privileged than Natives. Actually, Natives in Canada have actually more privileges than Blacks. They get trust funds and stuff, they don't have to pay taxes... but then again they actually deserve that because almost every other race have had their own country except for the Native people.

Personal Accounts of Perceived Racism

Of course, many of the youth had their own personal accounts with what they perceive as racism that they believe has been incorporated into their self-identity as a Native. Fred reported that he believed the overall portrayal and opinion of Natives in society to be negative. When asked for an example of a personal experience that would lead to such an opinion, he stated:

I don't know, like, my friend's grandma, she always hated me for some strange reason... Because I was Native and she was brought up to hate Natives... She wouldn't talk to me, she wouldn't say nothing, she'd always be quiet, right. If my friend Victor [who is White] was over there with me she'd talk to him and it was real different".

While Fred insisted that this attitude did not bother him and that he was not affected by it, he still referred to his friend's grandma in such strong negative terms that indicated that he was in fact affected.

Another case came from Leonard who believed that he was refused employment because of his race. He gave this answer when asked if he believed that he was ever treated unfairly due to his race.

Yeah. Well, I was working at this one job and I was kinda doing it for two weeks and I was doing good. I learned all

this stuff and started doing it on my own. And I don't know what their excuse was, they were like 'Oh, he doesn't have enough experience, he wasn't here long enough'. I don't know... I think it was because I was Native because of the way I looked... they kind of talked mean and stuff and said things like 'Oh, you can't get here on time?' Then he was reluctant to pay me... Well, I wasn't getting paid because I was going to a program and they were paying me, but then that program ended and they didn't want to hire me. Even though I was doing good.

Todd's accounts of racism came in one of the institutions that he was residing in, not the one that he was presently in. He stated that the staff at that institution, who were almost exclusively White, often "called down" other races.

It's just like remarks, you know, towards Pakis, and stuff like that, you know, and other cultures. Like they'll say something like 'Oh, you drunken Indian, get here'. Stuff like that, you know. After a while that can get on your nerves... if it's once in a while, you know- but it's like chu chu chu, then you know gradually they're eating away at your body and they're stressing you.

Keith had an incident where he was accused of robbing a store that he claims he did not. He admitted that the fact that he had a "rap" sheet made him suspicious. However, his argument was that the police would not have suspected him and therefore accessed his rap sheet had he not been Native living in a "White neighbourhood." According to him "I don't know why my family does it but they always choose to live in White neighbourhoods. We were the only Natives living there. I think that made a big difference."

Richard gave this example of racism.

This lady was carrying her child, not carrying but in a shopping cart. I was shopping for my dad. The mother was holding the kid and the kid just looked at me and said "Hi," and went to shake my hand or something. And the mother just grabbed her hand, like touching me was dirty or something... It's just the way people talk about Natives and

maybe who she knows or the way she was brought up. I guess she just thought that Natives are dirty. That's probably why [she did that].

Jesse's account of racism was relaying the situation at school, where his friends were often the target of racial slurs or picked upon.

Conclusion and Discussion

As far as colonial theory proposes, in former colonial societies, the influence of the past is reflected in the present and this is incorporated into the present depiction of a formerly colonised people. Social construction theory states that in constructing one's identity, in this case racial identity, the images of one's race in society will be incorporated into the individual self-identity. These two theories combined propose that the self-identity of Natives should therefore be not favourable. These have also been used to explain their over-representation in the justice system. Thus, this study sought to discover if these theories could be used to explain the cases of a number of Native young offenders.

I believe that rather than having an overwhelmingly negative self-image, these youth lack a strong Native identity. Where a Native identity is present, many of the negative stereotypes in society are included in that identity regardless of if the respondents internalise the stereotypes or not. Indeed, it has been shown that many of the stereotypes that are associated with Natives in society are known to these respondents and in some cases they have incorporated these ideas into their identity. For example, many spoke of the image of the "drunken Indian", the belief that Natives are involved in crime more than other races, and the portrayal of Natives as backwards and not

sophisticated, all images that are rooted in this society's colonial past. However, this is not sufficient information to develop a complete identity.

The majority of respondents displayed what I see as confusion about their race. Most notably evidenced by four respondents on particular. Timothy and his quest to be seen as Native even though his family identified more with the European heritage, including his Native mother. This quest is despite the fact that he acknowledged that if he looked fully Native he would experience more discrimination. It appears that he wanted to be seen as Native to gain respect. Secondly, Keith, whose parents insisted on living in what he described as "White neighbourhoods" in order to afford their children more opportunities. Yet, these boys were known to pick fights within weeks of moving into a new neighbourhood in order to gain respect. Keith was often back and forth between defending Natives and their situation, while stating that he believed that they often portrayed themselves and their culture in a negative light.

Likewise, Todd also went from extremes of condemning the actions of Natives, choosing not to hang out with them because their behaviour irritated him. He even went as far as to propose that their problems stemmed from a genetic source. Yet, he often jumped to their defence, placing blame of their situation on the colonial past and the remnants of racism that remain. Finally, Mike who chose not to identify with his Native heritage beyond a superficial level because it never interested him.

These respondent displayed confusion as far as a Native self- identity is concerned. This is also apparent when they discussed Native role models. Few of them could name any famous Native people who they aspired to be like. Apart from actors on the television show *North of 60*, no other famous Natives were spoken of. After much

thought, a few of the respondents were able to name one role model, often their Native teacher in jail, rarely was it someone who they looked up to outside of jail. This, along with the limited knowledge of their history and little knowledge of the significance behind the traditions and customs they participated in, showed little commitment to their racial identity.

Instead, it appears that in lacking a strong Native self image that was portrayed in a positive light, these respondents drew on other sources of identity that were available to them. While Mike chose to identify with his White heritage, mostly because it was assessable, he grew up with White parents, most of the other respondents choose to identify with the culture that they saw as most similar to their, namely Blacks, more specifically, Black Americans. This can be seen in the almost obsessive manner that the majority of respondents associate with the rap lyrics that speak of not only oppression and gaining respect, something that seemed important to the respondents, but also their “thug-like” ways that are expressed in their style, another thing that the respondents mentioned.

For these Native respondents, Native people were seen as criminals and in a negative light, however, their representation in society is lacking in such a way that even these images are scarce. In addition, their value is so diminished, that they are not even seen as good thugs. As stated by Mike when speaking about Native gangs, “The are not very well organised, they just jack anybody.” This idea is also reflected when a few of the respondents state that maybe the problem that leads to Native over-representation in jails is that they get caught, while other races manage to escape. Even as criminals they fail. So, Natives look to others to develop an identity. I believe that they look at Black

Americans because they consider their circumstances to be similar. This is supported by one of the respondents. Todd stated when speaking of the relationship with Whites: "You know, Blacks are against Whites too right, because they were involved in their slavery. Well, it's the same thing with Natives like in Canada...we are very similar."

CHAPTER SIX: Black Self Identity

The "Gangsta" Image

The Black respondents all agreed that there were two common images of Blacks; they believed that Blacks were either "normal", which means they looked and acted like White people, or they were "gangstas" and "thugs." For them, looking and acting like White people is not a desirable characteristic for Blacks to have. One way of identifying whether a Black person was a "gangsta" or "normal" was to look at their style of dress. According to one respondent, if you were not dressed in baggy clothes then you were dressed like a White guy. Another respondent, referring to wearing tight jeans and boots said: "Black people just don't dress like that." This idea was expressed by Ricky, who put it this way:

I just think of White people, like they're just, I consider them normal... and Black people that are not gangstas, they're normal too.

According to Dale, Black people were either "gangstas and thugged out, or normal... like White people." Carl agreed with this comment. He noted that:

... not all Black people are like that but the ones I hang out with, the ones I look up to... they're hard- we chill and do what we gotta do.

While Daniel also believed that not all Blacks conformed to one image, he did believe that most represented the gangsta look:

They just try to act like gangstas and stuff, like all the rappers and stuff... That's what most Black people are like, like Black people- like teenagers and stuff, they try to be gangstas.

Despite this belief, the respondents also stated that they did not believe that all Blacks that dressed like gangstas broke the law. As will be discussed later, they believed society often identified them as such, but for many, it was simply a style of dress and a way to portray their Black identity. They believed this image to be based on the reflection of Blacks in the media and in society. However, these respondents chose to identify with the “thug-like,” “gangsta” image rather than the “normal” image.

This gangsta image, which was one that all of the respondents identified with, is an image that was easily identified by style of dress, language and attitude. The style of dress was flashy, their language was marked by profanity and swears, and their attitude reflected that they were generally carefree until crossed, at which point they could then become violent.

Ricky described this gangsta image in the following way:

...[others] don't swear as much as we do, they don't use profanity or whatever as much as we do. They don't use slang as much as us, they're like, “Hey, how are you?” we are like “Whass up man?” or something like that. I don't know, to [others] our language or our slang, our gangsta language to them is hard.

The dominant image that came to mind when Dale thought of Blacks was that of “...a thug, like a hard core gangsta and stuff.” For Simone, the image that came to mind when she thought of Black people was “gangstas... with lots of cash, lots of cash.”

The carefree attitude that the majority of Black respondents mentioned is a combination of being laid back, but yet hard; easy going, yet tough. Most of the youth seemed to take pride in the fact that Blacks were known in these terms: people who were easy to get along with but if you crossed them, they reacted harshly. Kobe interpreted the carefree attitude of Blacks the following way:

White people are more snotty. Black people are I think, are more relaxed, you know. 'Cause I have- some of my friends are Black friends and they're just, like, into chillin' and all that... basically I think White people are more snotty and more rude.

Dale, characterised a typical Black male as acting like he did not care:

He would act like he didn't care... Like [he] knew everything... act like he thought he was tough, like pick fights all the time.

For Dale, Blacks were known for having a carefree attitude that reflected their lack of interest in their social surroundings. Yet, they had an attitude that was meant to instil fear in others. They acted tough and picked fights in order to give off the appearance of being tough. This juxtaposition was echoed by another respondent. Carl described Black people the following way:

I just think Black people are more like relaxed, more like chilling out. But when something goes down they get rowdy, and want to fight- they talk about war and all that stuff, they scrap and stuff.

Ricky also agreed that Black people had a carefree attitude. It was this attitude that he thought allowed them to have more fun than other races. As he put it "... in some ways... like Black people get involved in more things... they have more fun." However, he too believed that they had another side to them when crossed. Ricky went even further to show that he had incorporated this belief into his identity and actions. When speaking about one of his friends he referred to him as his "White nigga" because his actions closely resembled the ways that Ricky believed Blacks acted. He had this to say about his friend and himself.

I consider him as my White nigga... 'cause he's like "hard", like he doesn't care what he does, like me. I can do something, I don't care what you do, but if you cross me

you wouldn't expect me to hit you or something like that,
but I'll pop you without even caring.

Daniel also held this belief. He stated that Blacks:

...gotta act hard... acting like a gangsta, a thug or something... Just talk like it; walk like it- with a limp, you know. All that stuff, like they don't care...like if someone ticks them off they'll go beat them up or whatever, you know. That's how acting hard is like, like you don't care man.

Another characteristic of the gangsta image that was suggested was that Blacks presented themselves in a flashy style of dress, reminiscent of a mobster image, often referred to as "pimped out" or a "player" image. Simone, the one female respondent, said it like this: "[They] dress baggy, got the money, got the cars, got the girls. And the girls, they got the booty shorts and all that." Dale remarked that Blacks wear "...cool clothes and expensive jewellery and stuff." Ricky proved to have bought into this image when he described himself as always walking around in "ice dangling." Kobe stated that Blacks dress "in baggy clothes, stuff like that, Black clothes, like gear^{vii} and all that stuff." As Daniel put it, the Black style is:

the hip-hop style...like the gangsta look or whatever, you know. Like wearing hip-hop clothes and stuff, you know, and jewellery, lots of jewellery and gold chains and whatever.

Finally, the gangsta image was marked by the prevalence of smoking weed, which most of the respondents admitted to doing, and closely associated it with their identity of a Black gangsta. According to Dale: "[Black] thugs mostly sell drugs and do drugs."

When asked about his experience with drugs he admitted the following:

Sometimes it's fun doing drugs... but sometimes you regret the things you do to get the drugs. I did bad stuff that I regret to get drugs... but sometimes the fun stuff is more

than the bad stuff... I felt bad sometimes about the stuff I've done, but I didn't think about it then, not 'til now.

For Simone, getting high with "her girls" was something that she admitted to doing often. The following excerpt from our interview illustrates her views on this topic.

I ... Do you get high with your girls a lot?

R Yeah

I How come?

R I don't know, just for fun mostly.

I Is that something that you associate with Black people?

R Yeah... I don't know, just because most of the people I hang around with and look up to- every Black person that I know. Like they all smoke weed, including my grandma... everybody smokes weed around me.

Kobe stated that: "I started smoking weed 'cause I was hanging out with a lot of Black people." Ricky too admitted to smoking a lot of weed, and he took pride in the fact that many people often approached him on the streets asking for drugs, which he attributed to the fact that he was Black. He stated that his mother, who often smoked weed as well, probably influenced him. Ricky had this to say about his mother:

I drink, I do the same things that she did, that she does... like I'm not saying this as you need to drink and smoke weed to bond with a parent, but I don't know, like at some point, like my mom found out I smoked pot, I thought it was going to be a big struggle, and then my mom was like "You smoke weed? Hook it up." Like I think my mom is cool.

Influenced by his mother to smoke weed, Ricky related experiences that occurred when he was high. He put it in these terms:

Like I love pot... like, that's part of my daily life; morning, go to school high- whatever- I get high before all my

classes...and like I'd always be high after school...it's like a kid asks me what do I do after school. I go out, I drink, I wait for people to call me so I can go sell them drugs... I don't care man. Have a good time, you want to smoke weed or something, I'm here.

Identification with the "Gangsta" Image

It was obvious that the majority of respondents identified with the gangsta image that they associated with Black people. Not only did their identification show itself in their style of dress, but also in the "hard" attitude they portrayed to others. Kobe stated that when he thought of Black people, the image that came to mind was "the way they are, the way they dress and stuff like that... Usually, I think of gangs... as thug-like image." When asked if he liked that image, Kobe responded: "Yeah I like that image, I want to be exactly like Tupac, a lot of people look up to that kind of stuff... and you get respect from your other boys."

Dale's experience with this image was when he was part of a gang before getting arrested. The attraction of the gang was the image of "lots of drugs and girls and stuff." In addition, it was useful to "have somebody to hang out with and stuff, and like watch your back" from other gangs. Daniel admitted that when others saw him, he wanted them to see him in terms of "the good hip-hop look, not the bad one." Yet, he still wanted people to see him as a thug so they would like him and respect him. Ricky described his attitude the following way:

Like if you mess with me, like I'll kill you... like I don't care, that's my attitude, I don't care... In my mind what I think of it is if you do something to me, I think of it as this; a nigga never forgets.

His attitude was further displayed when talking about the person who he believes "ratted" him out to the police. He spoke of how he was going to seek revenge on him/her:

Somebody ratted me out and I know who it is and that's the thing I'm trying to get over. Like this person, [he/she] like- I don't want to say this but it's something I want to do to [him/her] when I get out. Like, it's in my head, like as I said, a nigga never forgets. Like it's in my head, it won't get out until [my] time is over... I'm still going to try doing something to this [person].

This use of the word “nigga”^{viii} to refer to themselves as “hard core” was something that a number of the respondents did as a means of identification. While Ricky associated this image with a gangsta and was proud to do so, Carl saw it differently. He referred to himself as “... not a gangsta, just a nigga, just a Black man.” However, when asked to clarify what that meant, his answer seemed to be filled with contradictions of who he was.

I may dress Black, I think dressing Black is a nice style... When I'm dressed up, yeah, I think I'm a down kid, maybe a little thugged out, maybe I'm dressed like a pimp, a gangsta with my boys and all that stuff. But I don't think of myself like that... I'm not going around being a thug and all that... I'm just a Black guy, a nigga.

Carl saw a distinction between being a “thug” or a “gangsta” and a “nigga.” This distinction could be explained by Ricky who suggested that a “gangsta” just goes around “and causes trouble, or jacks somebody for no reason,” on the other hand, a “nigga” “beats up somebody, but there is a reason.”

The Female Perspective

As the only female respondent, Simone had a unique perspective on the image of Blacks. Like her male counterparts, she admitted that not all Black people were gangsta and drug dealers, but her “opinion is that I think that there are a lot of Black drug dealers and gangstas.” However, she differed from the males in that the males all thought of the gangsta image in terms of violence and getting respect with little emphasis on the girls

associated with their image; Simone chose to focus on the fact that, also associated with the gangsta image was the idea of having a number of different girls. In her words, "... the guys, how they always have the girls, like so many girls... I don't like that. They should stick to one."

Her opinion of Black females was also interesting. She did not like the image Black girls portrayed because "they just put themselves down by looking like hoes [prostitutes]." She stated that she thought that Black girls did this by sleeping with many guys:

I'm not saying all of them, but most of them give it up to anybody... because they want people to think highly of them in a way, but inside they're feeling low so they just don't really care.

Simone's image of Black people included the disrespect of Black women, both by Black men and by themselves. According to her view, Black women seemed to be willing to be used by Black men to enhance the male's gangsta image.

The Effects of History on Black Identity

Much of the history that the respondents reported knowledge of was gained from television. As suggested previously, the fact that much of Canadian media is from the United States means that knowledge of Black history outside of the United States is limited. This is important to this study since a number of the respondents' Black ancestors were from the Caribbean, mostly Jamaica, rather than from the United States. Thus the history of Black Americans is not necessarily their history. Nevertheless, the respondents all reported having some ideas on the history of race relations in North America, although, for most this knowledge was not very extensive.

Dale, whose dad is from Jamaica, stated that he knew nothing of the history of that country. He did, however, know "that Black people were slaves back in the time, and they had to pick cotton and stuff." This knowledge, he said, was gained from school.

Simone displayed similar knowledge:

...there were slaves a long, long time ago and the people didn't like Blacks, people were racist towards them... just called them down, make them feel like they were nothing.

Kobe's knowledge consisted of knowing about "how there used to be slaves and stuff like that, and I know about Malcolm X and all that stuff... same with Mohammed Ali." This knowledge was gained primarily by watching movies about these individuals.

Ricky also stated that his primary source of education about Black history came from television and movies. An example of one of the movies that educated him was the following:

In this movie I watched...like back in the day...there's this lady, you had to ride in the back of the bus, and one time she sat up in the front of the bus and a White guy told her to move. She didn't move, then the bus driver showed her a gun or whatever and he said you have to move or you will get thrown in jail... she didn't move... and got arrested.

Then as the days came up, like we were all servants to people, like for a job we couldn't have certain things that White people can, and like we used to work for White people more than they ever worked for us. Like I don't think I've ever seen anybody work for a Black person, except nowadays... still some people like work for White people though.

Similarly, Daniel stated that the majority of his education on Black history was gained from television:

I know something about Martin Luther King and all that stuff. I know that back in the day there were slaves and stuff and then they got rights, whatever. Black people like moved up, you know. Like other people don't like disgrace

them. They might still think they are lower than them, you know. But they're all the same level, most of them, you know.

When asked about his knowledge of Black history, Carl reported information that was similarly influenced by American media. He stated that he knew:

...all about those guys like Malcolm X and Martin Luther King Jr.; they tried to do everything to help Black people... Martin Luther King was trying to set an example peace and saying that we should all coexist and stuff like that.

However, Carl admitted that his knowledge was limited because of the American influence, since "all that stuff you hear about is stuff like that is American stuff." For this reason, he stated that he really did not care to learn about Black history. However, if he had the opportunity to learn Black history in Canada he would.

I would [learn about it] like if it was there. The school I go to, there hasn't been any opportunities for me to find out about stuff like that. So I don't learn. I'm not saying I don't want to know. I'm just saying I don't know.

What was also interesting about Carl's response was that he was the only respondent to state that he regularly discussed Black history with his mother. According to him, he would often watch television shows, which would arouse his curiosity. He would then approach his mother with questions, she would explain what she knew about history to him. No other respondent stated that they often had such discussions with others.

Desmond indicated that he was significantly more knowledgeable about Black history than many of the other respondents. Relating knowledge that he gained at school, from his mother, and from his grandfather, whom he stated often talked about his life in Africa, Desmond stated the following:

I know that we originated from Africa and we were like stolen or taken, whatever you say, and we were brought to America or France or whatever, and England and stuff, and

made slaves.... In school they tell us how we originated there and that slavery wasn't what they really wanted, but they did it and it went all over the world... [My grandfather] taught me that slavery was not the best thing and we should have just stayed in our own land...they shouldn't have made decisions 'cause the way we looked, we're different than everybody else.

His knowledge of history seemed to have an impact on his present way of thinking. When asked if he had any Black role models, rather than naming entertainers or actors, Desmond said that he admired Nelson Mandela and Mohammed Ali.

How Society Views Blacks

Much like the Native respondents, the Black youth also felt that society held some stereotypical ideas of who Blacks were and what they did. Again like their Native counterparts, these youth felt that the societal image of them was largely influenced by misrepresentations depicted in the media and in culture. Most of the respondents showed some sort of internalisation of these stereotypes, some more than others. In addition, their ideas of the relationship between Blacks and Whites can also help to understand their views of present day society.

The Stereotypical View of Blacks

The majority of respondents seemed to believe that society's view of Blacks was divided into two categories. They stated that people in society either saw Blacks in terms of having a criminal or defiant attitude, or they saw them as entertainers, that is as athletes, actors, musical performers and so on. Much like how the individual respondents only saw Blacks as two dimensional, they also believed that this was how society saw them. Similarly, much like how they defined the two categories in terms of how the

individual dressed, they believed that society identified gangstas by their style of dress. Although the respondents showed some sort of internalisation of this stereotype in that they too stated that the style of dress influences how they judge Blacks, they expressed some anger that society did this. They were quite vocal in their objection to others placing Blacks into categories, and determining membership into a category on the basis style of dress. This objection was largely based on the fact that the respondents believed that when others placed them into the gangsta category, they also associated criminal behaviour with them.

Carl was very passionate when he spoke about this topic:

...because I'm Black, everybody looks at you like...a gangsta, playa, baller right. I don't look at myself like that but everyone else calls me that, like "What's up thug?", you know, like a gangsta...because you are Black you gotta be a thug, you gotta be a gangsta, that's how they all think. They look at you and if you're not that then you are not popular, you are not really Black. I think that's all wrong though.

As Carl saw it, society often judged Blacks based on their style of dress. Dale echoed these thoughts. To the question of what he thought others in society thought of Blacks, he responded: "Probably bad things, like you are, I don't know, in gangs... like we are going to steal or something." Dale expressed that he believed this to be a view that was almost exclusively held about Black males, and that it was in large part due to their style of dress. He noted that people probably would not think this way of Black guys who were dressed normal, like White guys, but of Black guys in their baggy clothes.

Kobe also thought that society held negative views of Blacks, primarily based on their style of dress:

I'm not being racist or anything, you know, but a lot of them, not all of them, but a lot... if they see a carload full

of Black guys wearing bandannas and they're not even like bad or anything like that, they just dressed nice, people probably think "Oh yeah, that's a gang for sure."

Desmond agreed that society often held stereotypical views of Blacks:

...some people think that Black people are always bad, they're always in gangs, this and that, right. But not always. It's not like every Black person is in a gang or very Black person steals. It's not like that, it's just some.

However, Desmond seemed to have been influenced by this stereotype in his own thinking:

It's just a big stereotype, because lots of Black people are in gangs, but not all. Because there are lots of people, Black people that are in gangs and that steal and stuff, but not every Black person is in a gang or stealing or doing something bad. It's just that some of them are. Most of them are.

Moreover, he believed that by getting arrested and being in jail, he was perpetuating this stereotype:

People assume that I am in a gang when I'm walking around with all my friends. Like that's a straight up stereotype right there. And then, like coming in here, they think "Oh he's Black, he did this", so it's the same thing that everybody else is thinking. Stereotype.

Daniel too believed that society held stereotypical views of Blacks, that were influenced by the media:

...lots of people think of Black people as thugs and robbing people and stuff, you know...Like some people think that a Black person's not normal. They just think- like how there's a lot of crime and stuff because of movies and stuff, you know, and how Black people that are in the movies, they all live in ghettos and stuff and all do crime and stuff like that. I just think that that's how people see us.

Simone's thoughts of other's opinions of Blacks were closely in line with the previous respondents. She stated that she believed:

Some people think that Black people--- like when they have an image of a Black person it's like they dress baggy, they walk with a limp, you know? Some people just see them as--- like some people just think that Black people are bad, are gangstas, always doing drive-bys and stuff like that. But some [Black] people try, they go to school and stuff like that.

Ricky expressed similar views when he stated:

... how I dress on the outs [outside of jail]... people think like, yeah, that guy's a gangsta or whatever, eh, he's just hard-core or whatever, like he doesn't care. Like he walks down the street in style and everybody knows him.

Ricky seemed to take pride in the fact that people associated him so closely with the gangsta image. Unlike other respondents, like Dale or Carl, he liked the negative attention that came along with his style of dress. Dale, who expressed that he had changed in jail and that once he got out he was going to "hang with a different crowd" in an effort to avoid trouble, did not appreciate the fact that others judged him by his style of dress. Likewise, Carl stated that he was an individual and did not appreciate being judged by his appearance. As he put it:

When I'm dressing like that it doesn't mean that I am a gangsta. That's just my style, but I'm not going around being a thug and all that.

The fact that society saw Blacks in these terms was used as an excuse to justify their actions, as suggested by cultural transmission theory and the concept of vocabularies of motives. This is exemplified by a comment made by Dale. He indicated that:

A lot of people think I'm bad so why would I care... Before they even know me, if you are hanging out with somebody or dressed a certain way they think they know you.

For Dale, because others in society looked at him and judged him negatively based on his style of dress not only angered him, but gave him justification to act the way he was expected to act and despite the possible consequences.

Ricky, on the other hand, enjoyed the fact that as he walked down the street dressed in his baggy clothes, people looked at him like he was a gangsta:

If I walk down the street in style and everybody's like "Whass up? Cool fro [afro] man" or whatever.... Everywhere I go there's always a crowd around me, it's just a thing. Like you know, I go to school or something... I'd just be sitting in class... and everyone is just like "Hi, whass up?" and stuff like that, just all eyes hanging on me... and the girls. Most people are like that but the girls. That's another thing that gives you the image, the style and the girls.

Ricky's pride in the reaction he got from others can be explained in the way Simone believed people looked at Blacks. While she agreed that others judged them negatively based on their style of dress, she, like Ricky, thought that others found this style attractive and took pride in that fact. According to her, when others in society see Blacks:

Sometimes they're like "That's cool" and sometimes they're like... we're higher than them. Like oh, we have our own style, our own music... Like White boys, they try to dress all fucked up to look like us and they just look funny.

From this point of view, there is something desirable about the gangsta image that is attributed to the Black style of dress.

The pride that is expressed by the above respondents in the "Black style" can be attributed to the fact that the image these youth believe others hold of Blacks in society is either that they are gangstas, or entertainers. This idea that Blacks were "cool" and had a style of their own that others sought to imitate was common throughout the interviews.

While some thought that this was mainly based on the gangsta image, others extended this image to other aspects of society.

For example, Desmond, Daniel and Carl all spoke about the stereotype that Blacks are better at sports. Desmond made comments that implied that he agreed with this generalisation. When asked what characteristics distinguished Blacks from other racial groups, he stated:

Some physical characteristics, 'cause when—like we're more built than other people and we're more physical, can do things better, some things. Like we're quicker in running, like athletes. We're more athletic and stuff like that.

Likewise, Daniel's remarks indicated that he was influenced by this stereotype to some extent:

[Being Black] helped me 'cause like- say I'm trying out for a basketball team, you know, the coach- you know there's a lot of Blacks like in the NBA, a lot of Black people are good at basketball, so well- that's an advantage, that's how it can help 'cause everyone knows that.

Carl had similar thoughts:

People look at you like because you are Black you can do that. Like in here, at this place, they are like, "Good, you can play ball right?" But I can't play ball right, but they just think that all Black people can play ball. They always want me on their teams... not for hockey though or for volleyball- but for basketball or baseball. 'Cause I'm Black I automatically play... just 'cause I'm Black I should be athletic, not for like the joy of the game.

Dale indicated that he too had bought into this stereotype that Blacks were more likely to participate in sports than other races. When explaining why it was that he associated primarily with other Blacks, he stated: "'cause that's my kind, most Black people like sports, play basketball, and they like music and stuff." Another common

belief in society is that Blacks are good entertainers. When asked what his image of Black people was, Carl indicated that he thought of “good actors...really funny... or the action type, stuff like that... or rappers” when he thought of Black people.

The flip side of seeing Blacks as athletes and entertainers is the belief that they are not good at school. Ricky seemed to have internalised both of stereotypes of Blacks being good in sports and poor students. When speaking about how his dad was upset because he quit playing sports, he notes: “...because I used to run and play basketball, like most Black people.” In addition, when I asked Ricky about going to college he stated that when he was older he would like to, but he would not expect to be accepted:

...people would just look at me, like if I, if I was to go to college, they would all look at me and be like “Yo man, what are you doing here... cause I’m not being as I’m supposed to be.

Furthermore, he had this to say about Blacks: “But us, I don’t know, like we just don’t care. We don’t care about school.”

How Blacks are Portrayed in the Media

The respondents saw the overall portrayal of Blacks in the media as mixed, but still conforming to existing stereotypes. One way that they believe Blacks are portrayed is as being talented in terms of being athletic or good entertainers, being able to sing, rap, act and being comedic. The other way they are seen was as criminals. The interesting thing about the criminal portrayal was the judgement associated with it depending on the media outlet. Some respondents noted that usually in the news and mainstream media, the criminal image that Blacks had was seen as negative, while in the underground media, intended mostly for Black audiences, this image had more positive connotations associated with it.

Simone expressed the two views that she believed Blacks had in terms of media representation. According to her, the representation was “in the middle...not all good and not all bad.” To the question of how she thought Blacks were portrayed, she responded:

[Blacks are portrayed], very talented I think, because there's mostly Black rappers, Black singers, more than there is anything else... the bad way is when it's on the news or something they'll say, like, “little thugs” you know.

Kobe too stated that he knew of two main views of Blacks in the media.

They usually put them in the magazines, like basketball players and stuff like that. Big stars and stuff, you know, funny actors and stuff...but sometimes they put not like good things, bad things... More bad probably because like “Menace II Society” that Black movie, they're all like drinking and drugs and that kind of stuff.

Likewise, Dale indicated that the way he saw Blacks portrayed was both good and bad. He acknowledged that most of the good actors seemed to be Black, especially in comedy and actions films. Likewise, most of the good singers were Black, as are the best athletes. However, he stated that Blacks are often portrayed in a negative light in the news, when they do “bad things, like doing drugs and crime and stuff.” He also stated that he noticed that in Black magazines, they sometimes “make the bad stuff seem good” in terms of the way they portray Blacks.

Carl had similar sentiments as noted above. He too believed that they were two main ways that Blacks were portrayed:

Usually when I see a Black person on TV they are like a rapper or something, or they are like thieves or get caught with drugs.

However, Carl also added a story which suggested that one of the problems with how he saw Blacks being represented was that if they did not fit the stereotypes of entertainers or criminals, there was little coverage compared to other groups:

One time, on Entertainment Tonight, they had an old time show on shows from back in the day and like the Cosby Show was on or something like that right- with Black people and stuff. Then they had all these White shows. So each of the White families from the shows, they talked to the people and they interviewed all the people and they all came on. But then, the Cosby Show came on and boom, it lasted 30 seconds- nothing special. They didn't talk to the people that watched it or that were on it... It's just like the Cosby Show, they didn't think that it was important. That's how they are, they don't think it's important until somebody does something bad, then it's like every Black person does it. I was so pissed off.

While Daniel seemed to recognise that the portrayal of Blacks in the media was mixed in the ways expressed by the other respondents, he implied that the negative representations were more common than positive ones:

They [Black] look like- like criminals and stuff like that. Only some, only some 'cause some Black people are talented and positive people, you know, sometimes. But sometimes they just, I don't know, sometimes they look bad. Like I know like when you're sitting watching TV and stuff, they make them look like people from the ghetto and stuff like that all the time. Like every Black person's from the ghetto and stuff, and do a lot of crime and stuff like that.

White-Black Relations

As opposed to the Native respondents, the Black respondents did not display as much frustration with Whites. Perhaps rooted in the pride that they take in their "cool" appearance, these respondents expressed that they are more proud of their race than the Native respondents seemed to be. This was despite the fact that they still believe that

Whites hold especially negative images of Black people, and young Black males in particular.

Desmond's thoughts were that White people had more advantages because of their numbers. "Whites have more power 'cause there's more of them. If there's more of something. That's more power for that race." For Ricky, the major difference between Blacks and Whites is that he considers White people as the "norm," while other races are deviations from the normal standards that are determined by Whites. According to him, "I don't know, but I just think of White people, like I consider them normal...it's kind of like White people are the base and everything else – they differ from White people." As the norm, Ricky believed that Whites had a better image than Blacks:

Like White people have the good image, right. Black people have like not so good image, right. Like you know, they cause trouble, like they're up to no good all the time. I don't know, like they always try to do bad things or something like that.

Ricky also believed that Whites have more advantages in society, which reinforced their position of defining the norm. One such advantage was that he believed that Whites grew up in more stable homes than Blacks. He summed up his thoughts on Whites this way:

...I couldn't even imagine the White person's life 'cause I've never had that...I don't think [they] ever had their mom get high when they're little or something, or all the alcohol, or getting thrown in a foster home when you're like six or something because their parents aren't getting along, or the police always at your house or something like that...Like their culture is God and they believe in Christianity and stuff like that. But Blacks do the same thing, but we just have different points of views, I guess. Like some people don't grow up as good as White people do, like some Black people grow up in like a bad family or something like that, and that influences them in like the way they grow up. Like what if you hear your parents

swearing when you're young, you're going to learn that language and like little White kids, when they're young, they don't hear swearing like that... Like little White kids with their nice little lives, like they don't drink or whatever...but us, I don't know, like we just don't care, we don't care about anything.

Ricky's conception of the two different races is that while they do share some similarities, for example he expressed that both believe in Christianity, they have different points of views that keep them from relating to each other. In addition, since he believes that Whites grow up with different values and lifestyles than Blacks, this broadens the gap between the two.

Dale's assessment of the difference between Whites and Blacks was mainly geared towards the treatment that each group received. According to Dale, Whites and Blacks received different treatment in society:

They treat them bad, like they are all doing drugs or stealing or something. They see them as something bad... It's like if you ever walk into a store they are always watching you or something... Like people are like "No, that's OK, we don't mind you." But when you are in a store or something there's always a person watching you or something.

Another view of Whites was that they are not as "cool" as Blacks. The belief that Whites were the norm, and every race that differs from it was more interesting seemed to have created a sense of pride among some of the respondents. For example, Carl relayed a story about a party he went to where there were both White and Black people. The distance between the two cultures that he saw could be seen in the way he talked about the two groups:

This may sound a bit racist but this is the way I look at it. There were all the White girls there and they were like church girls or something, surrounded by White boys, jocks and all that stuff, all the White people were like that right.

And they were all listening to Tupac and stuff, Black music... and getting high and stuff. But they were talking in this sophisticated way... They were doing Black stuff, but they were getting it wrong.... And they were trying to imitate us right, thinking they were cool... I was just real pissed man.

For Carl, the attempt of Whites, who he saw as different to him, to be “cool” and to associate with Black culture was not something that he appreciated. Simone’s ideas on Whites were similar in that she saw Blacks as being “cooler” than Whites. Once again, the idea of Whites being normal and Blacks having characteristics that distinguished them was her main focus. “...Like White people all have money, but I just see them as plain, there’s nothing to them. Like they have no colour, they’re not cool or nothing.”

The respondents’ view of Whites was that they were definitely more advantaged than Blacks. Most of them commented about the fact that Whites generally had more money or more advantages than Blacks. However, the respondents did not view Whites in a manner that they envied their social position. They saw them as lacking the excitement and intrigue that is commonly attributed to Blacks. For these respondents, being poor but having an exciting life is preferable to having money and social status, but not being “cool.”

Daniel believed that Whites “think that they are more powerful ‘cause they got more people.” He thought there were a number of cases where Whites are given the advantage by other Whites in society over Blacks. For example, in terms of how people believed the two groups performed on the job. According to him, Whites are seen as better workers than Blacks. “White people, they think the work better or something if they are White, or you think that Black people are worse workers.”

Despite this fact, the majority of respondents admitted that they had close relations with Whites. While making it clear that they preferred to hang out with other Blacks, they also noted that for them, skin colour was not the major determinant of their relationships. For example, Ricky was very appreciative of his stepfather, who is White, for raising him despite the fact that his mother was not in their lives that much. Dale and Carl both made it clear that their group of friends included Whites, although they stated that these were Whites who were into "Black things," for example sports and rap music. Carl also stated that he believed that "there is all kinds of people in a race, you really can't say that all one race is this or that." Simone summed it up best in this statement:

Just from all the troubles I've been through and the way people see me, I don't really care because I know that I'm a human being and that the colour of me shouldn't matter... just like how their colour doesn't matter.

Perceived Structural Oppression of Blacks

A similar analysis was done on the Black respondents to the earlier discussion of how Natives saw themselves and their race in society, and the extent to which they believed they fit in. Looking at whether they considered themselves disadvantaged or not, as well as their reports of racism in society, it was concluded the Black respondents seemed to believe there was more racism in society, but stated that they were less affected by it than the Native respondents. The reason behind this may lie in the fact that the Black respondents seemed to have more images in society that they could take pride in. These images include the stereotypical assumption that Blacks are good at entertaining, for example in sports, acting, and rapping, but also when looking at the negative images such as "gangstas" and "thugs," some of the Black respondents took

more pride in this image. In addition, the fact that many respondents thought that Blacks had an attitude where they did not care about what others think may influence how these respondents interpret other's actions towards them.

Social Oppression of Blacks

All of the Black respondents seemed to be proud of their Black identity, however, most of them admitted that there was some sort of disadvantage associated with their race. Whether or not they felt socially oppressed was more difficult to discern. All of the respondents stated that Blacks received more unfair treatment, not only from Whites, but also from society at large.

Kobe believed that much of the unfair treatment that Blacks received was due to stereotypes that others associate with them:

Some of them just don't get jobs because when they go into a job, they wouldn't get a job because people see them wearing their clothes and stuff. They'll go "Oh, he's a gangsta or something like that.

Daniel's example of how Blacks are treated unfairly was his implication of a constant surveillance. He relayed a situation where he believed that Blacks were always being watched:

Just some people like see you just walking on the street, or like when you walk in the store going shopping or something, the clerks or whatever are always watching you, think you're going to steal stuff.

While Dale agreed that Blacks were generally scrutinised more than other races, he did not believe that being Black would stop him from achieving the goals he desired, although he admitted that he would probably have to try harder to achieve them. Carl had similar thoughts. He had this to say about society:

I think it's a lot better than others. I don't know, I think we're trying- always trying to grow. But there's still a lot of unfair wrong stuff going down, that you don't really hear about... We all have the same opportunities, but it goes like this. It may be harder for some races, like us. That's just the way it is. I believe if you want to go and do that, go be that, put your mind to it, nobody can stop you right. But if you believe all that stuff, like because I'm Black and it's because of my race they put me down... like I used to think like that... cause they did that to me just cause I'm Black. And they did because of my race and my beliefs. But, I mean I know it's harder and I don't think that all race are up there, some races, like us, we have to work harder. There's a double standard still. But if you want it... then do it.

Simone had this to say:

Well some people just see us as one whole racial group. Like everybody, they see them as human beings. But some are still racist, they think that all people of colour should just leave... Like in the past they couldn't work at certain places, they couldn't go to certain places. Now they are allowed to go where ever, work where ever. But not all the time, because some people are still racist and they might stare somebody down and make them feel real uncomfortable. That's how they do it now.

For Simone, although Blacks are legally allowed to work and go anywhere, unlike the past, she believed that it is the level of discomfort that might prevent them from accomplishing what they wanted. Rather than ban them from being places, the way "they do it now" was to make them feel uncomfortable in certain places.

Desmond thought that as far as opportunities for Blacks are concerned, they have equal access to them as other races:

...it's not because of your race or the way you think that determines your job. It's your education that determines the job right. How much you can do, and if you know everything about that job, so everybody has the same opportunity for that. If you actually really think about it, it's not that your race stopped you, it's your mind stops you, but you just think that it's your race, but it's not.

Personal Accounts of Racism

All of the respondents also had their own experiences with what they perceive as racism or racially motivated actions. While most of these accounts included examples commonly heard of, such as the following of an individual in a store, some of the accounts were more dramatic and more detailed, and thus negatively impacted the respondents. Carl's story was about his perception of the reaction of parents to a group of young Black males:

OK, we go into this hockey rink with all these White people with their hockey gear and all that stuff. Me and my boys were walking in, and we weren't really paying attention right. There was this wall here and this desk here, but we were there to watch the game right. We couldn't see so we all get up on chairs and desks and stuff right. Then after we start walking towards the front doors. All of a sudden all the parents started grabbing their kids. Everybody starts grabbing their kids, picking them up and stuff. I was like, "What's wrong dude? They're treating us like they should cause we're fucking demons."

For Ricky, his experience with racism was at the institution in which he resided:

Like me and Daniel [his Black roommate], when we asked to do something and they [the staff] would always say no. Or like me and Carl, we are asking to be roommates but they are like "No." But when two White guys ask they are like "All right" and we are both level fours [the highest level for behaviour], but when White level threes ask, they are like "All right." Or like David and me, once he was looking out the window and they were like "Ricky, if your roommate doesn't stop looking out the window you are going to get consequenced." But I was like, "What does that have to do with me?" They don't consequence others for what their roommates so, and like they don't consequence others for looking out the window, what harm can that do? What's wrong with looking out the window? I see it in my way, they don't treat us the same...and like every time when you get to a point where it comes to colour or something like that it's just like "Get to your room." Like I guess that's how they get away from it, they

don't want to discuss it anymore or hear it when it comes to colour.

Daniel's story also took place at the institution where he resides.

Like a while ago, Ricky and Carl, right. They beat up this kid that calls them a nigga, and then I got consequenced by the staff and everything. They thought that I was going to beat him up next. So I couldn't go to school. We had to split our free time and stuff. 'Cause they just thought that I was going to beat him up next... just because of the colour of my skin, because I'm Black.

Conclusion and Discussion

One observation that was made in regards to the identity of the Black respondents is that in general, they seem to hold the idea that Whites set the norm or the standard by which they judge other groups. This is supportive of colonial theory, which suggests that the dominant way of life in a former colonial country is that of the colonisers, in this case, Europeans. These feelings of Whites setting the norm were expressed on a number of times, the most obvious being when a number of the youth stated that they see White as normal, while those of colour have more excitement. Simone expressed it when she stated that she sees White people as boring, while Blacks have more "flavour." Ricky stated that he believed that Blacks have more fun while Whites "do not do much to enjoy themselves." Kobe illustrated this point with a comment he made about the difference between the normal way of dressing for Black and Whites:

This is normal, that's just normal for Black people, how they normally dress... normal for Black people is not the same as normal for Whites.

One of the ways that the respondents seem to suggest that they, as Blacks, distinguish themselves from Whites, is by embracing the stereotypes that are common in

society about Blacks. Not only to do they admire and in some cases aspire to the “gangsta” image that they believe Blacks have, but they also take pride in the other stereotypes, for example that Blacks are good athletes, good actors, and singers. In some cases, while these youth expressed frustration with the stereotypes when they were directed at them, they also reflected these stereotypes in their responses. For example, Carl stated that he gets upset when people assume he is a good athlete because he is Black, yet one of the ways he characterised Black people was as being good actors and good singers.

Meanwhile, all of the youth stated that they associated the “gangsta” image with Black people. This image, seen as living the high life, brings with it many actions and attitudes that the youth claimed to have, suggesting that they had internalised not only the stereotype, but also all that is associated with it. In essence, they believe that society saw them as different from the norm; by virtue of being Black, they do not fit in or conform to the normal European standards. In addition to being different, there is some sort of deviant element associated with being Black. These youth seemed to buy into this belief rather than reject it. Moreover, some took pride in it, using their “gangsta” image as a way to differentiate them from the dominant culture, which they saw as boring, and to give them a something to take pride in.

Another observation that I made was that the respondents had a two dimensional view of what it meant to be Black. They either saw Black as “gangstas” or as “White”, which is not a desirable way to be if you are Black. This was emphasised by the depiction of Blacks in the media, for example, the portrayal of Blacks as either “gangstas” or entertainers leaves few options for Black youth. Those who are not talented may believe

that they have to resort to violence to reinforce their "Blackness." This lack of options may result in these youth associating with what they consider to be the most desirable image available to them, in this case, the image of a "gangsta."

CHAPTER SEVEN: The Police, Rap Music and Perceived Personal Oppression

Interactions With The Police

According to the cultural transmission theory and its concept of vocabularies of motive, youth seek justification for their actions by appealing to society and placing responsibility on others rather than on themselves. One suggested influence on the identity of minority youth is that of the police, especially how they believe that the police view them. The majority of respondents expressed that they were distrustful of the police, mostly stating that they thought the police held negative views of them. While some acknowledged that they believed the police view them in such a way because of their criminal history, the majority of respondents attributed what they interpret as a distrust of them to either their race, or the manner in which they carried themselves, including style of dress. However, there were a few respondents who had no problems with how the police treated them.

Whether Native or Black, most respondents stated that their distrust of the police was at least in part due to their belief that the police perceived them as criminal due to their race. Although some of the respondents acknowledged that they were known to many police in their neighbourhood because of their repeated involvement with the justice system, they still attributed some of the treatment they received to their race.

Paul's distrust for the police stems from his belief that they see Natives as more criminal than other racial groups, and often target them. Daniel stated that he thought that cops sometimes targeted Blacks because "[t]hey just want them all in jail, you know... they

think Black people are bad, you know. Scum of the earth or whatever.” James expressed the following thoughts about the police:

When they arrest me they treat me like shit man, they beat me up and--- not totally beat me up but just like they like treating me like shit. Like smashing my face on the ground and stuff... I always think because I'm Native or something like that...I don't think they like us at all because we're Native I guess. Because they think we're just a bunch of thieves or something just trying to make a living off other people.

Jesse had similar comments:

White cops are--- I don't know they just think we're a bunch of things and criminals and stuff. I just get pulled over a lot. I'll just be walking and they pull us over. Check us out, write our names down. What's that for? Just beat up on us, you know. They just think we are bad and shit... Maybe because they think we're most likely to do crime than other races I guess.

Ricky and Carl both relayed stories about incidences where they believe they were mistreated because they were Black. Both respondents admitted that at the time they were in the company of individuals who were either breaking the law or had a warrant issued for them at the time. However, they both insisted that they, along with some of the people they were with, were not involved in any criminal activity at the time, and that the treatment they received was unjustified.

Ricky stated:

Like if I see cops like I always think that they think I'm up to no good. I think they think I'm up to no good because I'm coloured, Black...That's what I think. Like if you're in a group or something like that... most times for no reason cops come over and, I don't know, like it's not saying like we're doing nothing bad, be like yeah, we're just chilling.

He then went on to relay a story where he was out with some of his friends on a Friday night. According to Ricky, none of the guys that he was with were involved in any crimes

at the time. He and his friends were walking from a recreation centre when they saw a police car approaching them. They thought nothing of it until they saw another car approaching them from the back. Since one of the individuals has a warrant issued for him, they got nervous and started to run and scatter, even though the police had no way of knowing this information before hand.

Like there's a lot of us right, and we were just walking and one cop car seen us just walking down this path right, and then we all stopped and just a whole bunch of cop cars are pulling up and then we just like scatter and stuff, and then we all ended up getting arrested anyway... but the guy that had the warrant out he stayed in jail...but we all got arrested and like there was more Blacks guys there right, and like we had no reason why we got arrested. We are all pretty mad about it, but we joke that we got arrested for being Black on a Friday night... we all got arrested but there's only one guy that has a warrant right, but we all get arrested and off on a warning of suspicion of doing something.

Carl had a similar story to relate, where he believed that he and his friends were targeted by the police because they are Black. According to Carl, he was waiting for a bus with some friends when a group of other guys came up and started harassing a couple that was also waiting for a bus. A bus driver saw the crowd and called the police. When they came, they immediately approached Carl and his friends without asking any questions. After insisting that they were not involved, Carl and his friends were thrown to the ground and searched for weapons. Seeing this, the couple that was attacked informed the police that it was not Carl and his friends, but rather a group of White guys, that was harassing them. These guys, who were still there when the police arrived, had the opportunity to run after they saw the police cars since they were not focused on by the police. According to Carl, when the police realised their mistake they casually apologised and left.

Kobe also had an experience that he wanted to relate:

Four of my friends, we were in a Toyota Celica, it was my friend's car, and there was this cop car that just drove by me and pulled us over for no reason. We were in the back and we were—I was just wearing a jeans suit—well maybe two of them were wearing bandannas... but they still pulled us over for no reason, searched the car and everything.

In Kobe's opinion, the reason why minority youth were so often mistreated by police was in part due to the fact that there are few minority police:

OK, this is not racism or anything but like, you know, I have only seen one Black cop in Edmonton. That's why I think it's so because I always get arrested by White cops. You know, they're obviously like everyone else in what they think 'bout us. They probably beat them up and they don't do nothing much about it... 'cause lots of my friends got beaten up by cops.

In trying to offer an explanation why they believed Black and Native youth were more likely to be suspected of wrongdoing than Whites, Dale and Timothy gave similar responses. According to Dale, the police:

...think bad stuff of me, like for the first impression, it's probably more bad than good... 'cause I'm a kid and they think all kids are bad, well Black kids. Well not all Black kids, but teenagers and stuff, dressed Black, wearing baggy clothes and stuff.

Timothy expressed similar thoughts. In response to what he thought the police thought of him, he stated:

They would probably see the way I'm dress and think I'm bad. All baggy clothes and all that, I don't know, and think like I'm trying to be a thug or something... they think that more of Natives and Blacks than White kids.

The "thugged out" image some of these youth strive to achieve, and that is often associated with their race, is considered by some to be why they are targeted by the police. However, even for these youth, it seems to be a combination of race and dress that

causes suspicion, since they believe that White youth do not appear as suspicious despite how they are dressed.

Leonard agreed that appearing more Native than White usually causes the police to be more suspicious of you. He too spoke of his experiences with the police:

Like just getting beat up and stuff. Sometimes I think they just turn on Natives when they see us when they drive by, One time they checked us out, we all had to get out the car for nothing. Like my brother when he drives around he puts on a hat cause he has long hair, he says that if I were White and if I didn't look Native they won't bug me so he tries not to look Native.

Todd relayed an experience with the police that he attributed to his race where he believed that he was suspected of shoplifting because he is Native. Todd stated that he was shopping when he got into an altercation with one of the store clerks, who requested that he leave the store. After he refused to leave, she called the police. Upon arrival, the police insisted that Todd was drunk and causing public disturbance. They then insisted that he empty out his backpack, convinced that he had stolen something from the store. Todd admitted that he was not being co-operative with the police insisting that he was not drunk, and had not stolen anything from the store. As a result of him not co-operating, the police proceeded to assault him, throwing him against the wall and causing him to strike his head against a phone which left him cut and bleeding. In the end, Todd was escorted home and given a ticket for public intoxication and disturbing the peace, despite claiming that he only swore at the store clerk and was cocky toward the police. Todd believed that he was treated the way he was because of his race. He did not report the incident because according to him: "I'm a Native kid with a criminal record. They're the police. Who are they gonna believe?"

These comments provided by some of the respondents about the treatment they receive at the hands of the police, which in turn led to their opinions of the police, affects the relationship between minority youth and the police. It is true that not all of the respondents reported they believe the police saw them in a negative light because of their race. Three respondents stated that they did not like the police, but their opinion was due to the fact that they are often arrested and treated badly during the arrest. They stated that they believe the police trick them into confession, not because of their race, but due to the fact that they are known criminals. In addition, two respondents also stated that they have no problems with the police, because in arresting them, the police are doing their job and protecting the public from criminals.

However, the opinions and experiences mentioned above cannot be ignored. The majority of respondents were distrustful of the police, and attributed at least part of the distrust between the two groups to the race of the respondents. Thus, while admitting that they engage in criminal behaviour, they also have stories where they were suspected of wrongdoing, when they stated they were not. This distrust influenced how these youth interact with the police once an encounter begins. As Todd admitted, they tend to approach the police with a cocky demeanour, to which the police react. In addition, what these youth consider to be preconceived beliefs the police have of them based on their style of dress, further influences the interaction. Both parties, acting from preconceptions and stereotypes, cause encounters between the police and minority youth, especially those with histories with the law, to be more likely to end negatively.

The Influence of Rap Music

It was suggested by theories, studies, and personal observations, that music, specifically “gangsta rap,” has a negative influence on some youth, and is in some way associated with those who are more likely to be involved in crime. This proposal was the reason behind the discussions regarding the types of music that the respondents listened to. Support for this relationship was gained since only one of the respondents reported that their favourite type of music was something other than rap music. While there was almost a consensus on the favourite type of music across both racial groups, the reasons given for listening to rap music, and the level of connection and identification the respondents had to the music varied. In addition, the majority of the youth who stated that they enjoyed rap music also named the late Tupac Shakur as one of their favourite rap artists. It is interesting to note that the violence that Tupac^{ix} rapped about played out in his life as he was shot and killed at a young age.

Among the reasons for listening to rap music, Fred stated: “[they] talk about problems in the world, [their] songs are true.” While admitting that these were problems he rarely faced in his life, Fred still found this music and the problems the artists spoke about fascinating. When asked what problems he was referring to specifically, he had this to say:

Like problems with other people, shooting up people, killing people... [They’ve] done it all, drugs, alcohol, been drug dealers, you know. It’s just really cool, and it’s pretty funny too.

Kobe admitted that he idolises Tupac because he has “always wanted to be like him”, and that he identifies with and has done “most of the stuff he raps about.” Simone had similar comments when she spoke of why she liked to listen to Tupac. As she saw it:

...his lyrics, they just mean so much. Like just the words, you like listen to the words closely and he's actually saying something.

However, for Simone, the level of identification with the lyrics and message in the music was deeper than for Fred. She credits Tupac with helping her through times in her life:

You know that song by Tupac, Changes? Like that song, because I was very very very very low when I was 13. I like didn't care, I just wanted to give up, you know. And I don't know, it got rough and I just started listening to his music and that's like- like I always listened to it, but I started like really listening to it and then I was like well he sounds like he's been through a lot of it too. So I don't know, I just kind of relate to the music.

The song that Simone is referring to is one where the artist spoke of growing up in a poor neighbourhood, and living a life of crime, but brought himself through all of his struggles. Simone identified with both the negative and positive aspects of the song, suggesting that she too had been through a hard life.

Todd too admitted that his favourite artist was Tupac, and like Simone, he connected with the lyrics that Tupac rapped about. According to Todd, these lyrics were not only poetic, but they were "deep" and made him "feel good inside." This feeling was only due to the fact that Tupac was rapping about things that Todd identified with in his own life. While admitting that much of his music was negative, he also stated that he could relate to it:

He may have negative stuff but then again he used his brain to tell it like it is on the street, he just put it plain and truthful... It's hard to explain. It's just the adrenaline rush, it makes you feel—different, you know... Some does reflect my life, you know. I've dealt with drugs and crime, I've held grenades in my hand, I never threw one but I had one, you know. A lot of it does reflect the way I live and the way my life is structured.

Daniel too admitted that “some of the stuff Ice Cube [his favourite rapper] raps about reflects around me, like stuff I do...like selling drugs and stuff like that...I used to do that.”

Carl's level of association with this music was quite similar:

Basically most of the stuff is like talking about burglary and like hurting people and stuff and just that other stuff like with girls and fucking and stuff...I don't know, I like that because I can relate to some of the stuff they say. I've done that all... I don't know, it all just gets me hyped.

However, Carl's identification included more than just a connection with the criminal element of the songs:

Basically, they talk about how they get cheated and stuff. For example, it just reminds me of business where you can get pointed out just because you're a Black person and at that time that the authorities will think that because you're a Black person there at that time that you did it. I don't know, just like the White person is there but okay, it doesn't matter to them, because I've had experiences with that too, and sometimes they rap about that.

For Carl, the message in the music that he listened to was not only about violence and crime, but the experiences that he had with racial issues was also expressed in this music and attracted him to it.

Ricky probably expressed the highest level of connection between this music and his life. While he saw similarities between his life and the lyrics in rap music in terms of violence, he also associated this music with his race and culture:

I always listen to rap, NWA, Tupac, Easy E and stuff like that...like the music we listen to, like White people are like, “I can't stand that music. You don't even know what they're saying.” But I don't know, like you can understand what they are saying if you lived it...at some point where some people are talking about everything that's happening, like happened to them or something, like it related to me in some way. Like when I was little I used to go and do bad

things, with my parents and stuff, drinking and stuff like that. I don't know, it was never a good life...like when I listen to some music, like it just relates to me.

The case for Ricky does not seem to be so much that he is influenced by this music, but that he can relate to what they are rapping about. While other forms of music don't speak about a life that he has experienced, rap music does.

While the above respondents seemed to be more influenced by the messages that these lyrics get across, other respondents were less impressed by the messages and more attracted to the images that the artist portrayed. This image is most often characterised by a "thug-like attitude," many girls and plenty money and jewellery, and appealed to both the Black and Native respondents. Timothy expressed this when he stated that the draw of this music for him was "everything they talk about, drugs, money, violence...I always wanted to be like that, a thug or something." Kobe stated that "lots of people want jewellery, people want cash, right, people want girls too... they rap about this stuff."

Jesse held similar views. He was very much taken by the image that rappers held:

They talk about macking some girls or beating up somebody or something... I never said it was good, I just like when they talk about that stuff... and just the message they have, like "Who gives", I don't know, if you do something bad or something, you're like "Who gives". But I just like the lyrics, I don't think of anything reality or going to do it or anything... when I listen to it... I only listen to it to get hyped so I could go beating somebody up...and I like the power and making money and stuff. Living the high life and stuff.

James stated that while he did not desire to live a similar life as the rappers he idealises in terms of the violence they spoke about, he did like the image they portrayed. Which is why he and his friends often rapped and "free-styled."^x For him, rapping made him feel "like a rapper man, like gangsta style." James displayed a near obsession with

Tupac, stating that he knew almost everything about his life, how he grew up, and all of his songs. He indicated that his walls were covered with Tupac paraphernalia, gained from intensive research that he had done on him. However, while he admitted that he did not desire to live a life like Tupac's, he described his lyrics as "rough, straight up... [and] cool." Keith, another respondent who also free-styles with his friends, echoed these feelings. He too thought that the rappers he looked up to had an image that he wished to attain. However, this was because for him, many of these artists talked about growing up "in a hard place" and coming through a lot. Keith expressed that he too "grew up in a hard place, getting into fights and stuff," much of which was reflected in the music he loved.

A number of respondents mentioned that they were impressed by the image rap artist portrayed, which included the glamour of having many "pretty girls and expensive things" in their videos. Fred stated that he enjoyed watching the videos because of all the women in them. Keith stated that the jewellery and the women were two of the main attractions of the rap culture. Similarly, Ricky and Timothy both stated that they also enjoy the image presented in these videos with "all the women and the nice cars." Daniel stated that one of the reasons he considers some rappers to be his role models was the attraction of their "money, drugs, guns and stuff." Simone indicated she too was caught up with the image presented in rap videos. She aspired to be like the women in the videos, while desiring to "have a man like Tupac." This crucial part of being a "gangsta" or "thug"- the women and the money- is something that caught the attention of these respondents as much as the violence. For them, violence and living the high life, with girls, money and all the benefits associated with it, come hand in hand.

It cannot be denied that there is some association between these youth and the lyrics and images portrayed by rap artists. The youth believe that violence and hard times that they rap about is often reflected in their lives. While I am not implying any form of causation, I find this connection interesting. I do not state that rap music, the lyrics it contains or the image it promotes leads these youth to commit crimes. I am however stating that there is some attraction that these young offenders have demonstrated towards this kind of music.

Perceived Personal Oppression

In addition to the perception of structural oppression that a racial group receives, neo-colonial theory suggests three other variables that could influence whether youth from minority groups engage in criminal behaviour. These three variables- perceived economic oppression, family support, and alienation- were investigated in this study. Since these occur at the individual level rather than at the group level, they were analysed as individual cases rather than as racial categories. It was found that generally, these youth did not feel oppressed economically, in addition, they felt that they had many social support systems in place including, but not limited to, their families. However, evidence of some forms of alienation discussed by Tatum (2000) was found.

Perceived Economic Oppression and Social Support Networks

Overall, the respondents did not seem to express very strong feelings of perceiving themselves to be economically disadvantaged. In addition, when questioned about their social support networks, they listed both the traditional networks, such as immediate and distant family, as well as friends and in some cases members of “gangs”

to which they belonged. They did not seem to perceive themselves as disadvantaged in this aspect. One possible reason for this finding, which is contradictory to what is proposed by neo-colonial theory, could be that neo-colonial theory is based on an American model. It could be that while minority youth in the United States suffer from the perception of being both economically and socially disadvantaged, that minority youth in Canada do not suffer from this to the same extent.

Most of the respondents stated that they considered their families to be middle class. The most notable exceptions were Keith, Todd and Timothy who categorised their families as upper class. In addition, none of these respondents saw a connection with their families' socio-economic status and their race. It is interesting to note, however, that Timothy and Todd, who both identified themselves as upper class, also attributed their families' economic success to the contribution of their White fathers.

The only respondent who indicated that they considered themselves to be lower class was Ricky. However, rather than attributing this to his race, he stated that his mother was lower class because she often spent her money on drugs, alcohol and partying. Ricky also made note that he lived with his stepfather, who was White, and whom he stated had a good job. In addition, most of the youth expressed that they did not feel socially disadvantaged. Daniel was the only respondent to name only one person as social support. In response to whether or not they felt they had adequate human resources to rely on, many listed immediate and extended family, in addition to a network of friends. The idea presented here is that none of these youth saw themselves as deeply disadvantaged neither economically nor socially. This is in contrast to what was suggested by Tatum in neo-colonial theory.

Forms of Alienation

In her account of neo-colonial theory, Tatum (2000) suggested five forms of alienation that minority youth in formerly colonised countries could develop. These were, alienation from self, marked by self-hatred and disassociation from personal identity; alienation from the ethnic/racial group; alienation from the generalised other; rejection of history language and culture and the adaptation of the dominant culture; and alienation from the social praxis marked by a lack of self-determination. Evidence supporting the second, third and fourth forms of alienation was found among the respondents. In particular, a number of respondents displayed characteristics of alienation from the generalised other, which Tatum noted is marked by violence, aggression, and delinquency.

Todd and Keith were the most obvious examples of alienation from the ethnic/racial group, both expressing negative views of other members of their racial group. While at some points Todd expressed that he had pride in some aspects of this racial heritage, he still stated negative comments about them:

I don't really go by my race, I don't really like hanging around Native people myself...It's because most of the Natives are dumb and stupid...It's weird, they just don't think man, I just can't explain it.

Keith also had some negative things to say about Natives. For example, in response to the question of how others view Native people, he stated: "If they act like idiots then people treat them like idiots, and most of the time they act like idiots." It should be noted that these respondents still showed some pride in their race, and some level of racial connection so that they did not appear to be completely alienated from their racial group.

While the above respondents had negative views of their race and chose to identify with other racial groups, they did not reject their race nor did they accept the dominant culture. Mike, on the other hand, displayed a complete rejection of his racial group and an adaptation to the dominant culture. Mike showed no connection, either negative or positive, to his racial group. He stated that he had no knowledge about their history, beliefs, traditions or practices. In fact he had no opinion about many of the questions asked. In addition, he stated that he usually associated with White guys, rather than Native, since he thought he had more in common with them.

The most common form of alienation was alienation from the generalised other, which is most often marked by violence. Evidence was found to suggest that most of the respondents held negative opinions of the dominant group. This evidence was summarised in the sections on Native and White relations, and Black and White relations. The negative opinions that the respondents held towards White people, especially the Black respondents, demonstrates some sort of rejection of the dominant culture. In particular, the ideas expressed by the Black respondents about how they considered their racial group to be different, and in their estimation preferable to, the dominant group can be interpreted as a rejection of the dominant order, and the development of a subculture.

CHAPTER EIGHT: Conclusion and Discussion

At the beginning of this study four main questions were proposed to guide the research. The first is whether or not these youth believe there to be negative images of their racial groups in society, and if so, whether or not they have internalised these images as part of their own racial identity. It appeared that the majority of the respondents displayed knowledge of the stereotypes that exist about their race in society. From images of the “drunken Indian” to the idea of the “Black gangsta”, these youth were familiar with these images that are commonly seen in Canadian society. Both of these groups believed that society saw them as thug-like and prone to commit more crime than the general population. While some were opposed to these images, others bought into them and even took pride in them. Some individuals tried to project this image, while others rejected their race because of these negative images. For the most part, these respondents all showed some form of internalisation of these images. However, the Black respondents were not only aware of the negative images, but also of the positive stereotypes, such as the assumption that Black men are athletic. The Native respondents did not appear to have a similar positive stereotype to which they adhered.

While some respondents mentioned that the portrayal of their racial group in the media helped to perpetuate stereotypes, it was suggested that this is mostly the case for Blacks. Many of the respondents noted that there were two main images that they can recall of Blacks in the media, while the Native respondents had trouble thinking of many Native images in the media. For both groups, it seems that the lack of education in the schools about their racial groups played a part in their lack of knowledge about their past.

Therefore influence of history on their identity formation was mixed. The Native respondents did show evidence of knowledge about their traditions, but, many saw these as extra-curricular activities rather than culturally important. Blacks, on the other hand, displayed little knowledge of a history that was specific to them. However, the assertion that history has influenced present society seems to have been supported. The idea that the former colonial powers determine what is normal in society was supported by the respondents. Black respondents especially interpreted this norm as boring when compared to their culture. However, this still created the feelings of “us” against “them” for both of these groups.

Another source was the influence of rap music on the identities of the respondents. Many youth stated that they admired both the lifestyle and the image that their favourite rappers portrayed. In addition, they also identified with some of the lyrics that spoke of violence and living the life of a gangsta. Here, it cannot be stated whether the music influenced these youth to behave in certain ways, or if they identified with the music because it reflected a similar reality as their own. However, it cannot be denied that rap music and the culture from which it emerges, has an attraction for these youth.

The role of the police in the formation of an identity also seemed to be important. As suggested by other authors, the stereotypes held by both parties in the interactions appeared to influence the nature of interaction between police and the youth. While a minority of youth stated that they had no negative feelings towards the police, it seemed as though the majority of individuals believe that the police have no respect for them because of their race. Therefore, when they encounter the police, they too show no respect, resulting in negative interactions for both parties.

The influence of music, the police and society at large on the identity formation of the youth can be explained in many ways. An explanation proposed by cultural transmission theory and the concept of vocabularies of motive is that these youth internalise the ideas of their race that exist in popular culture, and use these as justification for their actions. Evidence of this can be seen when some of the youth related stories of encounters with police and with others. In their stories, the youth seemed to hold the other participants more responsible for their actions than they were. They thus removed blame from themselves, and placed it on the other individual, or on society, as cultural transmission theory suggested. This is not to say that these experiences were not interpreted as reality for the youth. As stated by social construction theory, once ideas and opinions about others have been formed, future interactions with similar individuals go to reinforce these opinions. Since these youth grew up in a society where the norm is decided by those who have different values than their racial groups, it is likely that their encounters only supported the negative ideas that they have of both their race, and other races in society. Furthermore, these youth then drew on socially acceptable stereotypes and expectations to justify their actions.

The final question that was addressed is the proposal of neo-colonial theory, which states that the effects of history and society are mediated through perceived oppression. It was concluded that the respondents did not report extensive forms of economic oppression; although, some admitted that they grew up in lower class homes, they did not state that they felt oppressed. Moreover, the majority stated that their homes were either middle or upper class. In addition, while most of the respondents indicated that they believed society was unequal, with Whites receiving more advantages than their

respective races, and although many of them reported incidences with racism, none of them seemed to interpret this as oppression. Most admitted that Blacks or Natives had to work harder to achieve similar status as Whites, however, it was not impossible. In fact, the majority noted that society had improved a great deal from the past, and that it was increasingly becoming equal. Thus, the effect of perceived oppression did not seem to be as great as it is in the United States where Tatum (2000) found support for her propositions.

In conclusion, I would like to offer my opinion of these youth, and whether or not I believe they have internalised crime as part of their racial identity. I believe that many of these youth are in fact influenced by the media, and popular conceptions of what it means to be Black or to be Native. I can only speculate as to why the Native youth are so similar in terms of their lifestyle to the Black youth I observed. This is because, as suggested by a number of the respondents, they see themselves as having commonly discriminated against and seen in negative lights. It seems like these youth see few options in society to achieve success. As they stated, Blacks and Natives have to try harder to achieve what other races have. This, coupled with the allure of the “gangsta life,” as portrayed by media and in rap videos, can influence the youth towards a life where they see respect and success as more attainable. Add to this the lack of education about their history as a source of pride in their race, and these youth are more likely to turn to other sources for respect. In my estimation, a major problem seems to be the lack of choices that these youth believe they have in society. They lack a variety of role models of their race that portray a desirable lifestyle. It is true that youth will always be influenced by popular culture, and that media will always be a major part of their culture.

However, I believe a problem occurs when the influence of popular culture is the main source of identity formation for the individual identity.

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APPENDIX

Questionnaire

Based on pre-tests, these interviews are expected to last approximately 45 minutes to an hour.

1. What ethnic/racial group do you identify yourself as?
2. What makes you *black/aboriginal*? (i.e. parents' heritage, skin colour, etc)
3. What are the unique characteristics about being *black/aboriginal* that makes you different from other ethnic groups, such as whites or Oriental?
4. What do you know about the history of *blacks/aborigines*?
5. Where did you get most of this knowledge? (school, parents, TV etc)
6. When you think of *black/aboriginal* people, do any images/stories/ideas come to mind? (Is there any criminal element to this?) Do you associate anyone with these images? (i.e. family members, famous people, friends)
7. Do you identify with any of these images personally? (i.e. Do you see yourself, or want to be seen by others as one of these images?)
8. What black/aboriginal role models do you have (famous or not)?
9. Do you believe that you act differently from members of other racial groups because you are *black/aboriginal*? If so, in what ways?
10. How many of your actions, as a/an *black/aboriginal*, are influenced by the history that you know about *blacks/aborigines* vs. present society? In what ways is it influenced?

Now for some questions that are more focused on your opinions about society...

11. Do you believe that racial groups are organized from best to worst in society, so that some racial groups have more privileges and advantages than others? If so where do *blacks/aborigines*?
12. What do you think other races think of *blacks/aborigines*?
13. How are *blacks/aborigines* viewed by the media, church, educational system and the justice? Do you believe that there is a criminal element to this?
14. How are *blacks/aborigines* portrayed in the media? I.e. on TV/ movies/ magazines/ music?
15. Is this portrayal mostly negative or positive?
16. Do you have any personal experiences with these institutions that you believe were influenced by being *black/aboriginal*?
17. How do you believe that other racial groups expect *blacks/aborigines* to act? Do you have any examples of your experiences with this in the past?
18. Do you believe that *blacks/aborigines* have equal access to opportunities in society as *the dominant group*? In what ways, if any, are your options limited?

Now back to some more personal questions that deal with your family...

19. How would you describe your personal or your family's social class i.e. economic and social position? Do you believe that this is in any way linked to you being *black/aboriginal*? If so, how?
20. Do you believe that being (*social class*) has influenced your attitude towards people in (*other social classes*)?
21. Have you had experiences in the past where being (*social class*) has helped you to or prevented you from achieving some goal?
22. Do you believe that being *black/aboriginal* has influenced your attitude towards other racial groups?
23. Have you had experiences in the past where being *black/aboriginal* has helped you to or prevented you from achieving some goal?
24. What kinds of help do you have available for you if you were in trouble? (e.g. family, school, community, police)
25. Do you think that you would have more or less places to go to for help if you were in a *different social class/racial group*?
26. Do you believe that people in society consider certain racial groups more deviant/criminal than others? How deviant/criminal do you believe others see *blacks/aborigines*? How do you feel about this?
27. I assume that you have had some experience with the police and the justice system in general. What have your experiences with the police been specifically?
28. How do you feel about the police? What do you think their opinion of you and your racial group is?

As I said before, I wanted to look at the ways in which youth like yourself think about their race, and if you believe that yourself image was influenced by the negative ways that people see you. I believe that North American society portrays *blacks/aborigines* negatively and that members of these groups aren't told enough about the positive aspects of their race. This causes some *blacks/aborigines*, especially the young ones, to think of themselves in many different negative ways. Do you understand what I was trying to do? Do you have any questions? Do you have anything else to add to what you have said so far?

ⁱ The use of the term “Black” as opposed to other common terms such as “African-Canadian” or “West-Indian Canadian” is preferable since it refers to all those of African heritage. I use this term to refer to both Blacks and Mulattos, since they all self identify as Black.

ⁱⁱ I chose to use the term Native over others, such as First Nation or Aboriginal since the youth refer to themselves as such. I use this term to refer to both Native and Metis since the respondents from both of these categories self identify as such.

ⁱⁱⁱ Slang for marijuana

^{iv} Rap that is raw, angry and “from the streets”. Often laden with anti-police, anti-society, and sexist messages.

^v Marginalised predominately African-American neighbourhoods

^{vi} Expensive jewellery

^{vii} Brand name clothing

^{viii} As a Black female I am aware of the negative feelings associated with the words “nigger” and “nigga”. While I do not appreciate these words, many Blacks do choose to use them, in particular “nigga” as a term of affection towards other Blacks. It is in this context that these youth used this word.

^{ix} The rapper Tupac Shakur is commonly known as Tupac.

^x A style of rapping that is spontaneous and ad libed.