



“Why I Can’t Stand Out in Front of My House?”: Street-Identified Black Youth and Young Adult’s Negative Encounters With Police

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This street participatory action research (Street PAR) study organized 15 residents to document street-identified Black youth and adult’s negative experiences with police in Wilmington, Delaware. Data were collected on mostly street-identified Black men and women aged 18–35 in the forms of (1) 520 surveys, (2) 24 individual interviews, (3) four dual interviews, (4) three group interviews, and (5) extensive field observations. Forty-two percent of survey participants reported being stopped by police in the last year. However, with the exception of being “stopped,” participants overall reported little negative contact with police at least within the past year. Chi-square and ANOVA analyses suggest an interactional relationship exists between race, gender, and age on experiences with police. Younger Black men (18–21) were found to have the most negative contact with police. Analysis suggests a smaller, more hardened mostly male variant of the larger street community has had repeated contact with police. Qualitative analysis reveals at least two major themes: (1) disrespect and disdain for residents and (2) low motivation for working with police. Street PAR methodology was also found to be instrumental in working with local residents and the Wilmington Police Department to improve conditions between residents and police.

KEY WORDS: community; low-income Black residents; police encounters; street ethnography; street-identified Black youth; street participatory action research (Street PAR).

INTRODUCTION

Negative encounters with police in low-income Black⁴ communities are shocking the country’s collective consciousness in ways the United States has never experienced before. Tragic death after tragic death at the hands of police are shaking the country’s alleged moral center and disrupting the presumed ethical superiority claimed by American exceptionalism (Hirschfield 2015). Poignantly, most civic and political leadership have been unable to advance major structural change to reduce the tension between law enforcement and low-income Black communities

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⁴ We capitalize the *B* in *Black* or *Black American* because Black represents a racial-ethnic group as opposed to the color of a person, place, or thing. Black people are the only racial-ethnic group in the United States that are not able to identify themselves vis-à-vis a nation-state. Also, we choose not to use *African American* because this racial designation is generally perceived by low-income Black communities to be troublesome and/or highly assimilated language that is not representative of their racial-ethnic experience. Many in the community and academia believe this intellectual shift is leading to the erasure of Black American culture. For more information, please see Tharps (2014), Pitner (2014), and Visconti (2009).

(Vargas 2016; Venkatesh 2008). Additionally, there are relatively few large-scale on-the-ground community-based studies that focus on the complex experiences low-income Black residents, and more specifically, street-identified Black youth and young adults have with police. It is imperative that we advance more rigorous analysis on the policing experiences of street-identified Black youth and adults in low-income urban Black neighborhoods.

This article presents a multimethod street ethnographic study that examined how negative experiences with police impacted a large street-identified Black community sample. In addition, this project trained and worked with 15 residents formerly of the streets and/or criminal justice system to collect and analyze survey, interview, and field observation data in the Eastside and Southbridge neighborhoods of Wilmington, Delaware.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Sites of resilience (SOR) theory frames the illegal activity exhibited by street-identified Black populations as an adaptive response to structural inequality (Hitchens and Payne 2017; Payne 2011). Criminal involvement as a way of life is a “site of resilience” and form of coping with extreme economic poverty. “Street life,” “the streets,” or a “street” identity is phenomenological language used by persons active in crime as an ideology centered on personal, social, and economic survival. SOR theory conceptualizes a street identity (e.g., drug dealer) as an ideology that informs physical spaces (e.g., street corner) to produce notions of resilience and/or resiliency. Street life is also a system of behaviors maintained through *bonding* and *illegal* activities. Bonding activities include socializing in physical spaces (e.g., street corners) perceived to be nurturing, empowering, and resilient (Payne and Hamdi 2009). Street-identified Black men and women have also been found to organize community events (e.g., barbecues, basketball tournaments, or Christmas parties) and provide financial support and physical protection inside neighborhoods rife with violence. A street identity is complicated in that Black men and women concurrently engage in disruptive and constructive behavior.

Further, SOR theory is an intersectional argument developed for street-identified Black populations (Hitchens and Payne 2017; Payne 2011, 2013). SOR theory offers a phenomenologically based seven-point matrix (i.e., racial-ethnic identity, gender, class, primary hustle, street status, geographic region, and developmental stage) to conceptualize a street identity (Payne 2011). A nimble street identity cleverly evolves across these seven locations as a way to ensure survival. This intersectional matrix is grounded in and developed from the worldview of street-identified Black Americans and used by them to understand and evaluate one another’s street identity. Our intersectional argument is informed by Crenshaw and colleagues’ (2015) work. Crenshaw et al. (2015) call for the intersectional analysis of victims of police misconduct and they specifically reject the homogenization of Black victims by underscoring how Black girls and women uniquely experience police brutality. Homogenizing the Black experience dangerously ignores how particular Black populations adapt to police misconduct as a function of gender, class, age or developmental phase, and geographic location.

Sites of resilience theory is also reinforced by structural violence theory (Galtung 1969:170), which describes how structural institutions and systems prevent individuals, groups, and communities from meeting their basic needs and “realizing their potentialities” through policies, laws, and other regulations. Street life emerges in low-income Black communities, as a racial-ethnic- and sociocultural-based site of resilience in response to structural violence. SOR and structural violence theories are also used in this study to understand the experiences of street-identified Black Americans with policing in local neighborhoods. Law enforcement is an integral dimension of society’s broader structural system; hence, policing from our theoretical perspective is presumed to be a particular expression of structural violence. We are deeply concerned with how experiences with policing contribute to the emergence of street culture in low-income Black neighborhoods.

Furthermore, we do not ignore the rich literature established by radical or critical criminology in the 1960s (Lynch and Grover 1986; Lynch and Michalowski 2006). Based on Marxist theory, radical criminology argues the “ruling elite” ensures their material dominance by maintaining the structural oppression of a segment of society. Also, crime is argued to derive from insidiously established social controls (i.e., police, court system) that were established or institutionalized to situate structural inequality. We draw from radical criminology theory its discussions on race, gender, crime, structural inequality, and its argument towards resistance (Lynch and Michalowski 2006). We contribute to its legacy the concept of a racialized and ethnic-based street identity. This heavily culturized street identity and/or involvement in crime as a lifestyle are explicitly “resilient” acts and not expressions of “delinquency” or “deviance.” Also, SOR theory squarely focuses on the resilient experiences of street-identified Black Americans who are descendants of the slave South—a racial-ethnic group that have uniquely adapted to structural violence.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Black Americans are more likely than any other racial-ethnic group to report negative encounters with police (Brunson and Miller 2006a; Fine et al. 2003; Gabbidon, Higgins, and Potter 2011) and Black male youth ages 10–24 are the most likely to be stopped and frisked (Brunson 2007; Gabbidon et al. 2011; NYCLU 2016; Suddler 2016). Two-thirds of Black youth and young adults reported either personal experiences with or observations of others who have unnecessarily experienced police harassment or violence (Suddler 2016). Studies find that these direct and vicarious experiences with racially biased policing not only have the greatest effect on Blacks, but these experiences play a dual role in shaping negative attitudes toward law enforcement (Brunson 2007; Feagin and Sikes 1994; Rosenbaum et al. 2005).

According to the New York Civil Liberties Union (2016), approximately 90% of persons stopped and frisked in New York City (NYC) from 2002 to 2015 were determined to be “innocent.” A record number of stops and frisks in NYC occurred in 2011 when approximately 686,000 people were stopped and frisked, 88% of whom were never arrested, and many of whom were youth between the ages of 14–24. That year, Blacks accounted for 53% of stops, Latinos accounted for

34%, and Whites accounted for merely 9% of all stops. Ironically, White stops yielded far more drugs and guns than stops of Blacks or Latinos (RT TV 2013). Analysis of the New York Police Department's 2012 data revealed police found weapons among Whites after 49 stops on average, Latinos after 71 stops, and Blacks after 93 stops. Furthermore, of the 23,000 stops recorded in 2015 in NYC, 80% of those stopped were deemed "innocent," yet Blacks were still more likely to be targeted and accounted for approximately 54% of all stops.

Similar findings were determined for the Philadelphia Police Department (ACLU 2010; Clampet-Lundquist, Carr, and Kefalas 2015; Hitchens, Carr, and Clampet-Lundquist 2017), Baltimore Police Department (BPD) (USDJ-Civil Rights Division 2016), and Chicago Police Department (USDJ-Civil Rights Division 2017). For instance, the Justice Department found that between 2010 and 2016, the BPD actively engaged in (1) unconstitutional stops, searches, and arrests; (2) enforcement strategies to produce severe and unjustified racial disparities; (3) excessive force; and (4) retaliation against local residents participating in constitutionally protected forms of activism or protest. Blacks in Baltimore accounted for 82% of all stops and 91% of all arrests. Yet of the 82% of Blacks stopped, only 3% of these stopped actually led to an arrest.

Another challenge is quality data on fatalities and other forms of brutality committed by police. Law enforcement agencies are not required to report these data (Kindy 2015; Nordberg et al. 2016). Fewer than 3% of the country's 18,000 police departments reported fatal shootings to the Federal Bureau of Investigation since 2011, and those data are largely unreliable and inaccurate (Comey 2015; Kindy 2015). Also, available data strongly suggest fatalities committed by police occurs at an alarmingly disproportionate rate in low-income Black communities (Smith and Holmes 2003; Weitzer and Tuch 2002, 2004). Blacks are three times more likely than Whites to be killed by police when adjusting for population rates (The Guardian 2017; Kindy 2015; Lowery 2016). Police killed 1,092 people in 2016 (The Guardian 2017). Blacks accounted for 266 murders, and Black men totaled 253 deaths.

Black men across class and identity orientation are much more likely to be harassed and racially profiled by police than any other group (Boyles 2015; Feagin and Sikes 1994; Skolnick 1966) especially low-income and/or street-identified Black men (see, e.g., Brunson 2007; Brunson and Miller 2006b; Maclin 1998). An overrepresentation of Black men have been stopped, frisked, pulled over in cars, detained without arrest, and/or arrested for mostly minor crimes (Alexander 2010; Miller 1996). Black women are also disproportionately targeted by police (Crenshaw et al. 2015; Gabbidon, et al. 2011; Nordberg et al. 2016). Black women per capita have the highest arrest and incarceration rates and are more vulnerable to state-sanctioned police violence than other women (Crenshaw et al. 2015; Sentencing Project 2015). These women are disproportionately more likely than other women to experience police sexual harassment and misconduct, particularly low-income Black women (Crenshaw et al. 2015; Richie 2012).

Extraordinary arrests and incarceration rates have nearly shattered the possibility for trust to emerge between police and in low-income Black communities. Residents in these neighborhoods are the most likely to experience inadequate

service and complain about poor police responsiveness to 911 calls (Nordberg et al. 2016; USDJ-Civil Rights Division 2016; Wilmington Public Safety Strategies Commission 2015). Although low-income Black people are the most likely to experience negative encounters with police, they concurrently desire reliable policing of their local neighborhoods (Carr, Napolitano, and Keating 2007).

Racial composition of police departments have been linked to overpolicing and stop-and-frisk practices in low-income Black and Brown neighborhoods. Duran's (2009:149) study of Latino gang members and police in Denver, Colorado and Ogden, Utah found not only were police in these two cities mostly deployed to low-income Latino and Black neighborhoods, but the "diversity" of these two cities' police forces "paled in comparison to these neighborhoods." Ferguson and Baltimore are also examples of cities with police forces that do not reflect the racial compositions of their cities and these two cities concurrently struggle with stop-and-frisk practices as well. The Ferguson Police Department (FPD) is 87% White, although Blacks comprise 67% of the city's population (USDJ-Civil Rights Division 2015). Black residents in Ferguson accounted for 85% of vehicle stops, 90% of citations, and 93% of arrests between 2012-2014 (USDJ-Civil Rights Division 2015). Similarly, the BPD reported 301,000 stops between 2010-2014, and half were conducted in two predominantly Black neighborhoods (USDJ-Civil Rights Division 2016). Most stops were not formally documented, which suggest far more people were stopped, frisked, and detained than were officially reported. Likewise, the BPD's racial composition does not reflect the City of Baltimore, as 48% of officers are White in a city that is 63% Black (Ashkenas and Park 2015; USDJ-Civil Rights Division 2016).

Excessive force is a dominant theme noted in street ethnographer's work on policing in low-income Black and Brown communities (Bourgeois 1995; Brunson 2007; Carr et al. 2007; Duran 2009; Nordberg et al. 2016; Rios 2011; Venkatesh 2008). Carr et al. (2007) interviewed a sample of 147 "delinquent" and "nondelinquent" Black, Latino and White youth ages 12-23 who lived in three respective high-crime neighborhoods in Philadelphia. The theme of "crooked" policing juxtaposed with "idealized" notions of fair policing emerged in their sample's framing of law enforcement. Negative activities of "crooked" officers varied from extortion to physical brutality, and these activities were more prevalent than publicly acknowledged. Similarly, Rios (2011:121) reported how police in Oakland periodically brutalized street-identified male adolescents of color by roughing them up, punching them unconscious or "knocking them out," and "almost breaking their limbs." According to Rios (2011:116) street-identified youth enacted their own forms of resistance in response to officer's treatment by spitting on officers or being disrespectful. Getting physically assaulted or jailed for their actions was perceived by youth as worth it as such actions were expressions of resilience and "infrapolitics" or everyday enactments of resistance. Aggravating police was an adaptive way to deter police in the future from unnecessarily harassing them (Rios 2011). Police generally avoided residents they perceived to be too difficult.

Vicarious experiences of police brutality have also had a negative impact on low-income neighborhoods of color (Anderson 1999; Brunson 2007; Flores 2016; Rios 2011; Venkatesh 2008). The compounding effect of observing and hearing

about incidents of police brutality involving loved ones and other residents affects the psychological, emotional, and social equilibrium of communities. Additionally, the proliferation and visibility of police misconduct through the use of cell phones raises questions about the impact of public deaths on low-income Black communities.

This study is guided by the following two research questions: (1) *How frequent does negative contact take place between police and street-identified Black youth and young adults?*; and (2) *How do street-identified Black youth and young adults frame negative encounters with police?*

METHODS

Community Site

This study was conducted in the Eastside and Southbridge neighborhoods of Wilmington, Delaware. Wilmington has approximately 71,000 people, and Blacks account for nearly 60% or about 40,000 of the city's total population (U.S. Census Bureau 2010). There are about 6,000 Blacks in the Eastside and 2,000 Blacks in Southbridge. According to the 2010 U.S. Census, there were approximately 1,500 Blacks between the ages of 18–39 living in these two neighborhoods. Both communities are historically and presently challenged with unemployment, poor educational outcomes, and poor living and environmental conditions, as well as high rates of crime, arrests, and incarceration (Garrison and Kervick 2005).

At the time of the study, Wilmington was the third most violent city of its size (Center for Drug and Health Studies 2016; Chalmers and Parra 2011; Jones 2014; Parenting 2012; Wilmington Public Safety Strategies Commission 2015). In 2010, Wilmington recorded 1,986 violent crimes per 100,000 people, a 6.3% overall increase in violent crime, and a 17% increase in property crime from the prior year (USDJ-FBI 2012). Wilmington accounts for 25% of all crime in the state of Delaware, although comprising only 8% of the population of Delaware (Watson 2013). In 2011, Wilmington was described as the most dangerous city in the United States, particularly as a function of its rates for violence and sex offenses (Parenting 2012; Staub 2012). Sadly, there was a 14% homicide clearance rate in Wilmington in 2014 although this rate improved to about 50% in 2015 (Vella and Nark 2015; Wilmington Public Safety Strategies Commission 2015).

The Wilmington Police Department (WPD) consists of 320 sworn personnel and 64 civilian support staff with only 286 dispatchable officers (Wilmington Public Safety Strategies Commission 2015). Typically, a city of this size requires 20 police officers per 10,000 people, or about 140 officers (Governing Data 2015). However, due to extenuating circumstances such as the prevalence of violence, the authorized strength of the WPD has been deemed an appropriate size (Wilmington Public Safety Strategies Commission 2015). In 2014, the WPD made 4,100 arrests, and 2,000 people were apprehended on warrants (Wilmington Public Safety Strategies Commission 2015).

The strained relationship between Black residents and police is partly attributable to the fact that the WPD is 70% White and only 21% Black in a

predominantly Black city (Jones 2014). Many citizens have complained about police harassment, physical brutality, unnecessary arrests, late arrivals, or no response to 911 calls. The Wilmington Public Safety Strategies Commission's (2015) strongly recommended improvement of police responsiveness to low-income neighborhoods. However, outside of noting this recommendation, the report provided no suggestions on how to systematically improve police responsiveness. Additionally, most residents were concerned about the hypermilitarization and hypersurveillance of their communities. Tensions nearly spilled over to riotous conditions after the very public police shooting and murder of wheelchair-bound 28-year-old Jeremy "Bam Bam" McDole on September 23, 2015 (Parra, Duvernay, and Reyes 2016). Residents remained distrustful after witnessing or hearing about this murder, and these feelings were exacerbated when no charges were filed by the state against the officers who shot and killed McDole. The U.S. Department of Justice on Friday, January 6, 2017 also declined to pursue civil charges (Parra 2017). They found insufficient evidence to prove police officers used "excessive violence." However, McDole's family won a \$1.5 million civil suit against the City of Wilmington for his murder.

Street Participatory Action Research

This study was a street participatory action research (Street PAR) project that organized 15 residents ages 20–48 and formerly involved with the streets and/or criminal justice system to document the lived experiences of street-identified Black youth and young adults in Wilmington (Bryant and Payne 2013; Payne 2013). Street PAR extends out of the traditional participatory action research (PAR) literature (Baum, MacDougall, and Smith 2006). Street PAR members were included in all phases of the research project, up to and including development of (1) research questions and hypotheses, (2) theoretical frameworks, (3) methodological designs, (4) data collection and analysis, (5) formal publications, (6) formal presentations, and (7) training in sociopolitical organizing in response to data outcomes. Street PAR members were also monetarily compensated for all efforts contributed to the project.

Survey Sample

The survey sample consists of 520 mostly street-identified Black Americans, 210 men (40.4%) and 310 women (59.6%), ages 18–35. Survey sampling was guided by a quota sample based on 2000 Census data on the Eastside and Southbridge sections of Wilmington. More specifically, six subsamples were developed as a function of street identity, race, gender, and age group (Table I). Each survey subsample represented the same percentage in our sample size as this demographic group represented in the Eastside and Southbridge neighborhoods. Sixty-four percent of those surveyed lived on the Eastside and 23% in Southbridge. Thirteen percent of respondents lived outside of, but reported frequenting, these two neighborhoods. Also, three age cohorts were derived from Census data grouping of populations across

Table I. Survey Quotas (N = 495)

Age Cohort	Male	Female
18–21	65 (13%)	85 (17%)
22–29	85 (17%)	120 (24%)
30–34	55 (11%)	85 (17%)

age: (1) 173 participants ages 18–21 (33.3%), (2) 205 participants ages 22–29 (39.4%), and (3) 142 participants ages 30–35 years (27.3%).

Exposure to Police Index

This composite variable consists of seven dichotomous items (e.g., stopped, frisked) designed to explore contact with police (Fine et al. 2003; Payne 2013). This measure ranges between 1–7 points, and the sample's mean score was 1.7 (N = 512), with a 2.3 standard deviation. Higher scores suggest participants were in more physical contact with police.

Qualitative Design

Qualitative data were collected on mostly street-identified Black men and women ages 18–35 in the forms of (1) 24 individual interviews, (2) four dual interviews, (3) three group interviews, and (4) extensive field observations. A total of 48 participants (31 men and 17 women) were interviewed, and the average age for interviewees was 27.4 years. Twenty-four individual interviews were conducted, and the average age for this sample was 26.3 years. Dual interviews are single interviews with two participants. Four dual interviews were conducted (N = 8), and mostly women opted to hold dual interviews. Originally, these female participants were scheduled for individual interviews but later decided to conduct their interview with a friend. Three dual interviews were with women, and one dual interview consisted of a male and female participant. The average age for this sample was 33.1 years. Three group interviews were conducted (N = 15). One group interview included all males (N = 3), one group interview was all female (N = 4), and a final group had both male and females (N = 4). The average age for this sample was 30.9 years.

Community Sampling

We identified social environments with a concentration of street-identified Black youth and young adults by mapping out street communities into (1) cool sites—low street activity, (2) warm sites—moderate street activity, and (3) hot sites—high street activity. Next, we organized a snowball sample and then entered street communities to collect data. We asked no participant if they were street identified. Given where and how we collected data, we determined that it would be unethical to ask large numbers of people in public spaces if they were street identified. Third,

we screened participants by listening to language and observing behaviors particularly in cool, warm, and hot sites. Last, most Street PAR members were recently released from prison, and as a result, they were generally aware of residents who met our sample criteria. Our selection criteria included identifying as (1) Black American, (2) male or female, (3) ages 18–35, (4) a resident of the Eastside and Southbridge communities, (5) low income, and (6) active or formerly street identified and/or formerly incarcerated. In short, participants were observed, identified, approached, and (if consented) given a survey to complete or asked for their contact information to conduct an interview with them later. All participants received a consent form, \$5 per completed survey, and a resource package that highlighted employment, educational, and counseling opportunities. Surveys took approximately 30–45 minutes to complete. Also, interviewees received a consent form, \$10 per completed interview, and a resource package that highlighted employment, educational, and counseling opportunities. Interviews took approximately one to two hours to complete. All interviews were video recorded, and most interviews were held in an office located in the Southbridge Housing Project. Two individual interviews were conducted in private homes, four were conducted in a local business, and two in a park.

Procedure: Data Coding Process

The first author and four members of the Wilmington Street PAR team coded interview transcripts in relation to the study's theories: sites of resilience (Payne 2011) and structural violence (Galtung 1969). Two graduate students were selected to be raters for qualitative analysis. Each rater was given a total of five transcripts—ranging between five to eight pages. Raters were instructed to highlight all passages congruent with defined codes. Each rater's transcript was scored against a master copy. Raters generated two core codes or major themes. *Negative Contact* (1.0) yielded three subcodes: (1) Police Harassment (1.0), (2) Police Brutality (.75), and (3) Poor Police Responsiveness (.70). The second theme is *Low Motivation for Working With Police* (.85) (Table II).

RESULTS

A coarse relationship existed between police and low-income Black neighborhoods in Wilmington, Delaware. Scores of street tales were shared ranging from pithy iterations of corrupt officers “shaking them down for money” as a type of

Table II. Interrater Reliability Coding Process

Core Code	Alpha	Subcodes	Alpha
<i>Negative Contact</i>	1.0	Police Harassment	1.0
		Police Brutality	.75
		Poor Police Responsiveness	.70
<i>Low Motivation for Working With Police</i>	.85	N/A	N/A

“rites of passage” experience in the streets to more mundane and even positive experiences with police. Still, most characterizations were negative and, in some instances, horrifying, as several reported witnessing and/or personally experiencing physical abuse at the hands of police. Results were profoundly intersectional in that they suggested race, gender, class, and unequal access to power textured this tense police-citizen relationship.

Negative Contact With Police

With the exception of being “stopped,” relatively few reported negative contact with police at least within the 12 months prior to completing this study’s survey. Descriptive analysis suggests a smaller variant of the larger street community—perhaps a more hardened strain of mostly young men is in more negative contact with police. Younger street-identified Black men are much more likely than Black girls and women or older Black men in the streets to be engaged in illegal activities in public spaces. Once again, with the exception of being stopped, only 12%–29% of a mostly street-identified Black male subsample noted any negative contact with police during the previous year.

Stopped by Police

Forty-two percent reported being “stopped by police.” On average, participants ($N = 211$) were stopped four times, and responses for this item ranged from 1–50 police stops ($SD = 5$). Chi-square analysis suggests a significant relationship exists between being stopped by police and gender ($\chi^2 (1) = 51.64, p = .000$) (Table III). Sixty-one percent of men and 29% of women reported they were stopped.

Table III. Gender by “Stopped by Police” Cross-Tabulation

Gender		“Stopped by the Police”		Total
		No	Yes	
Male	Count	81	128	209
	% Within Gender	38.8	61.2	100
	% Within Stopped by Police	27.1	58.4	40.3
	% of Total	15.6	24.7	40.3
Female	Count	218	91	309
	% Within Gender	70.6	29.4	100
	% Within Stopped by Police	72.9	41.6	59.7
	% of Total	42.1	17.6	59.7
Total	Count	299	219	518
	% Within Gender	57.7	42.3	100
	% Within Stopped by Police	100	100	100
	% of Total	57.7	42.3	100
Chi-square 51.64***				

*** $p < .000$.

Frisked by Police

Twenty-nine percent of participants reported being “frisked by police” in the last 12 months. Participants (N = 147) on average were frisked four times with a range spanning 1–50 police frisks (SD = 6.5). Chi-square analysis revealed a significant relationship between being frisked by police and gender ($\chi^2 (1) = 91.66, p = .000$) (Table IV). Men made up 70% of those who were frisked. Women accounted for 28%, and only 13% within their gender.

Given a Summons

A significant relationship exists between “given a summons” and gender ($\chi^2 (1) = 22.94, p = .000$) (Table V). Twenty-two percent reported they were “given a summons” in the last 12 months, 60% of whom were men and 40% of whom were women. Participants (N = 106) received three summonses on average with responses ranging 1–20 summonses (SD = 3).

Picked Up in a Sweep

Twelve percent were “picked up in a sweep” or raided by police in the last 12 months. Participants (N = 211) who reported being “picked up” were picked up about three times last year with a range spanning 1–15 pickups (SD = 3). Chi-square analysis suggests a significant relationship between being caught in a “sweep” and age group ($\chi^2 (1) = 10.9, p = .004$) (Table VI). The 18- to 21-year-old group accounted for nearly 50% of all those “picked up in a sweep,” the 22- to 29-year-old group made up 36%, and the 30- to 35-year-old group accounted for 14%.

Table IV. Gender by “Frisked by Police” Cross-Tabulation

Gender	“Frisked by Police”			Total
		No	Yes	
Male	Count	99	110	209
	% Within Gender	47.4	52.6	100
	% Within Frisked by Police	27	72.4	40.3
	% of Total	19.1	21.2	40.3
Female	Count	267	42	309
	% Within Gender	86.4	13.6	100
	% Within Frisked by Police	73	27.6	59.7
	% of Total	51.5	8.1	59.7
Total	Count	366	152	518
	% Within Gender	70.7	29.3	100
	% Within Frisked by Police	100	100	100
	% of Total	70.7	29.3	100
Chi-square 91.66***				

*** $p < .000$.

Table V. Gender by “Summoned by police” Cross-Tabulation

Gender		“Summoned by Police”		Total
		No	Yes	
Male	Count	140	67	207
	% Within Gender	67.6	32.4	100
	% Within Summoned by Police	34.7	59.8	40.2
	% of Total	27.2	13	40.2
Female	Count	263	45	308
	% Within Gender	85.4	14.6	100
	% Within Summoned by Police	65.3	40.2	59.8
	% of Total	51.1	8.7	59.8
Total	Count	403	112	515
	% Within Gender	78.3	21.7	100
	% Within Summoned by Police	100	100	100
	% of Total	78.3	21.7	100

Chi-square 22.94***

*** $p < .000$.**Table VI.** Age Groups by “Sweep by Police” Cross-Tabulation

Age Group		“Sweep by the Police”		Total
		No	Yes	
18–21	Count	141	32	207
	% Within Gender	85.1	18.5	100
	% Within Sweep by Police	31.1	50	33.4
	% of Total	27.2	6.2	33.4
22–29	Count	181	23	204
	% Within Gender	88.7	11.3	100
	% Within Sweep by Police	39.9	35.9	39.4
	% of Total	34.9	4.4	39.4
30–35	Count	132	9	141
	% Within Gender	93.6	6.4	100
	% Within Sweep by Police	29.1	14.1	27.2
	% of Total	25.5	1.7	27.2
Total	Count	454	64	518
	% Within Gender	87.6	12.4	100
	% Within Sweep by Police	100	100	100
	% of Total	87.6	12.4	100

Chi-square 10.9***

*** $p < .004$.*Convicted*

Eighty-three percent hadn't been convicted in the last year. Convicted participants ($N = 82$) reported 2.2 “convictions,” with a range spanning 1–10 “convictions” ($SD = 2.4$) (Table VII). Chi-square analysis revealed a significant relationship between conviction and gender ($\chi^2(2) = 20.54, p = 000$). Seventy-three percent of men and 89% of women within gender noted they were not “convicted” of an offense.

Exposure to Police Index

Negative contact with police on this index was largely accounted for by three of the seven items: being “stopped,” “frisked,” and/or given a “summons” by police (Fine et al. 2003; Payne 2013). A univariate analysis of variance (ANOVA) revealed gender and age was significant for the Exposure to Police Index, $F(5, 1) = 13.45$, $p = .000$. Although the interactional model was significant, gender (.000) drove this result. The men’s mean score on the measure is 2.6, with a standard deviation of 2.5, and the women’s mean score is 1.1, with a standard deviation of 1.8. A least significant difference (LSD) post hoc analysis determined 18- to 21-year-old men scored significantly different from 30-to 35-year-old men. Physical contact with police both for men and women declined significantly for older age cohorts.

Voices Born Out of Negative Contact With Police

Most reported they were unfairly targeted, stopped, harassed, frisked, arrested, and convicted for minor crimes, as well as for crimes they did not commit. Voices that shook with egregious tales of being mishandled and ultimately dehumanized by police, begged for persons and institutions of authority to listen to the concerns of a people. Residents felt consumed by surveillance practices and ultimately described their communities as being poorly, unethically, and excessively policed. Law enforcement was often equated to an “occupying army” or a militarized police force perceived to be disengaged from and desensitized to the palpable suffering experienced by structural violence.

Leondrei and Erica argued overpolicing created a social dynamic that made residents feel uncomfortable with socializing in public or even in front of their homes. A ubiquitous fear of harassment strangely hung in most public spaces. Leondrei declared overpolicing was deployed in a racialized and classed way. He

Table VII. Gender by “Convicted After Being Stopped by Police” Cross-Tabulation

Gender	“Convicted After Being Stopped by Police”			Total
		No	Yes	
Male	Count	154	55	209
	% Within Gender	73.7	26.3	100
	% Within Convicted by Police	35.9	61.8	40.3
	% of Total	29.7	10.6	40.3
Female	Count	275	34	309
	% Within Gender	89	11	100
	% Within Convicted by Police	64.1	38.2	59.7
	% of Total	53.1	6.6	59.7
Total	Count	429	89	518
	% Within Gender	82.8	17.2	100
	% Within Convicted by Police	100	100	100
	% of Total	82.2	17.2	100

Chi-square 20.54***

*** $p < .000$.

and other low-income Black men were defensive when police poorly engaged or were irrationally suspicious of law-abiding residents in their communities.

Leondrei (age 35): They're locking you up in the streets [public spaces], meaning, "IT'S SUMMERTIME! WHY I CAN'T STAND OUT IN FRONT OF MY HOUSE? You ain't riding out in Greenville [Whiter and higher-income Wilmington neighborhood]" talking about, "what y'all doing out here [outside]?" It don't matter what I'm doing out here! "Did you hear any gunshots? Is any bottles being busted? Did any of these neighbors around here call you and say it was a ruckus out here?"

Leondrei's voice represented the resentment and mistreatment that participants generally felt and reported. His frustration was exacerbated by the fact he was a structurally powerless low-income Black man fighting back against a more dominant institution. More frighteningly, this is the lens he believes police views him through, which adds to his anger toward police. Leondrei was unemployed, formerly incarcerated, and has struggled with addiction like so many other Black men in Wilmington. Dignity is the one thing he and others like him have some control over, but even that is seemingly compromised by police. It was also believed that the look and feel of their deeply impoverished neighborhoods lulled police into developing and reinforcing a subtle disdain for them. Leondrei emphasized neighborhoods like "Greenville" were more respectfully policed precisely because they were Whiter and wealthier sections of Wilmington. Aggressive and detached surveillance of the Eastside and Southbridge neighborhoods signaled to Leondrei that police were mostly there to marshal and manage as opposed to protect and empower them. More generally, participants thought police did not have much of a structural analysis and could care less about the structural factors leading to crime. The hardship of economic poverty or educational inequality, for example, was perceived to be irrelevant to police, which for participants, prevented any opportunity to develop a meaningful connection. Instead, street-identified Black youth and adults understood police to instinctually assume residents were up to no good for which it was their duty as police to hold them accountable.

Frustrated, some salvaged some degree of integrity by openly calling out or challenging police for their perceived indiscretions. In this spirit, Leondrei mimicked for us how one day he loudly questioned police for "harassing" him and friends in front of his home in the Eastside. He adamantly yelled, "IT'S SUMMER TIME! WHY I CAN'T STAND OUT IN FRONT OF MY HOUSE? . . . It don't matter what I'm doing out here!" Leondrei's response to police demonstrated to us in the interview and his friends on that day how he maintained his respect in a neighborhood where respect rarely comes easily for Black men. This moment with police was not only an opportunity and cathartic platform for Leondrei to grandstand in the community, but it was also a way for him to restore dignity and receive validation as a structurally powerlessness low-income Black man.

Erica never observed police do anything positive beyond shaking a resident's hand, and she berated them for not respecting low-income Black residents. She contended the lack of a cultural understanding of poor Black people clouded and misguided the judgment of police. A distorted cultural perspective, according to Erica, has clumsily led to knee-jerk reactionary responses by police like "jump-out

squads” or preventing residents from congregating in public spaces or comfortably sitting in front of their homes.

Melodie (Street PAR member):
What does law enforcement look like in Southbridge?

Erica (age 22):
You can't sit on the step and talk to nobody without them [police] telling you that “You got to move!”; “[Do you] live here?”; “What's your name?”; “You got ID?” It's horrible!

Melodie: How does that make you feel?

Erica: It's uncomfortable. Their [police's] attitude is ignorant. It's not like you see every day [that] somebody is selling drugs or playing dice. You could just be chilling [relaxing]. . . . With all the violence and stuff going on, I can understand. It's just how you [police] go about stuff.

Furthermore, only women complained about the police's late arrivals and failure to respond to their calls for help. Men and women generally spoke about contact with police in the same way, although no male interviewee admitted to ever calling police for assistance. Street culture is harder on Black men than it was for Black women for reaching out to police for support. Any cooperation with police could be interpreted as “snitching” or sharing information about illegal activity. Also, the strain was so severe between them that most street-identified Black men were unable to conceive police would want to sincerely help them. Men in our study stayed away from police, for right or for wrong. The men's reported interactions with police, however, were described as a random set of mostly negative occurrences that took place inside neighborhoods. Street culture tolerates women speaking with or requesting support from police, primarily because women cared for children and were anchors of families. Angel, a 24-year-old Black woman and mother from the Eastside, blamed police for the poor relationship and argued that police have fostered a climate of mistrust by not promptly and respectfully responding to calls for assistance. Angel angrily noted it was common for police to arrive late even if they were notified of a “fight” or gun violence.

Darryl (Street PAR member):
What kind of relationship does the police have with residents?

Angel (age 24):
Around here, *none!*

Darryl: No relationship?

Angel: Say you fighting or somebody got shot, you call the cops, they be here in like 20 minutes or half an hour if they really want to come over here.

Kendre and Michelle in their dual interview also asserted police poorly served or responded late to emergencies in Southbridge. Both women reached out to police in times of distress but to no avail. They shared they were ignored by police—even after reporting their car was broken into, and gun-toting residents chased their children. Kendre also said “30 minutes” was the quickest time police arrived in Southbridge after being called for assistance.

Kendre (age 27):

My car got robbed. . . right in broad daylight. . . I called Wilmington's finest [police], they told me, "[I] have to have a cop call you back to take a report over the phone." I'm like, "Don't y'all need to come out here to do fingerprints and something like that? Someone was all in my car." [We] sat there [waiting]. The cop didn't call me until 6:00 p.m. that night. [And] I called them at 1:00 p.m. . . They don't care about Southbridge. . . They don't care; they just don't care.

Michelle (age 31):

At least you got a call; they ain't never show up when I said I got robbed. They ain't show up till hours later after my son and his friends got chased by the guy with the gun. . . No Wilmington's finest. [And] I called them twice.

Kendre and Michelle felt they and other residents were valued less than other citizens. They believed their neighborhoods were not a priority for police and also believed negative interactions with residents was systemic or more prevalent than acknowledged. In lieu of a healthy relationship with police, Kendre and Michelle endured by remaining strong and optimistic that favorable change will eventually take place. Until then, they intend to be vocal advocates for better policing in their community.

Leondrei shared his younger brother once ran to a parked police car with two officers inside to report he was shot at by an unseen person. His brother was unable to discern whether the shooter was actively trying to harm him or if he was at the center of a practical joke. Leondrei exclaimed that police, without explanation, refused to investigate and instead "pulled off." According to Leondrei, his brother was never street-identified and he was never arrested for any crime. He added his brother was also well educated and employed, thus making it doubly perplexing as to why they decided against assisting him.

Leondrei (age 35):

My brother Ty just got shot at. My brother got two degrees, [and] ain't never been a criminal in his life. He [screamed to the police], "YO! These motherfuckers shot at me!" [Police responded] "Ain't nobody was shooting at you," and he pulled off.

Louis shared that police repeatedly "harassed" customers in his store located in the downtown section of the Eastside. Louis presumed police believed he was conducting illegal activity inside his store, given his previous felony conviction and "the company" he sometimes kept or patrons who frequented his place of business. Police once raided his store during work hours, and according to Louis, neither he nor anyone else was arrested. Also, it was during this same police raid that Louis was "shot at by cops" because they mistakenly believed he had a firearm.

Louis (age 31):

I was harassed for a long time [by police]. For a long time! Maybe it was 'cause of the company I was keepin', but. . . I wasn't doin' nothin' wrong and they were still harassing me. . . They would come to my place of business and do raids and not find nothin' and embarrass the crap outta me. . . I have even been shot at by the cops before. . . They supposedly thought I had a gun on me. . . They're very. . . disrespectful. I mean, they do help the community by keepin' order, but at the same time, they're just on a mission. They think everybody's a criminal. They think everybody's doin' wrong. And it's a lotta friction [between the community and police].

Ashley (Street PAR member):

Would you say that they don't see residents as humans?

Louis: Yes! [Police] see wrong every time they drive up and down these streets. And they're very abusive out here in these streets. I've seen them beat a lotta people up. . . . I've seen them. . . hurt a lotta people. And they get away with it.

Humiliated and physically abused, Louis concluded the “disrespectful” treatment of his community by police was systemic or institutionalized so much so that their negative behavior was tolerated by police overall. Louis however, refused to sit by and simply accept the *carte blanche* approach of harassment, detainment, and embarrassment. He responded to police indiscretions by being publicly vocal. Also, he slighted police by welcoming even more of his street-identified friends to his store as a way to fight back or show up police.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

A complicated and abrasive relationship existed between police and low-income Black residents in the Eastside and Southbridge neighborhoods in Wilmington, Delaware. This strain was intensified even more when specifically examining the relationship between police and those who were street-identified. However, we found street-identified Black men and women achieved resilience, at least from their perspective, by openly challenging police indiscretions.

Generally, police were perceived to not be concerned with the structural challenges of low-income Black neighborhoods, and as a result, it was believed the lens of race, racism, gender, and economic poverty informed why and how police treated residents poorly. Most characterizations of police were negative, and surprisingly men and women gave similar descriptions. Still, survey analyses suggest men in this study experienced more negative police encounters. Those reporting more negative contact were possibly among a smaller more-hardened male and younger street-identified variant. This variant was repeatedly frisked, given summonses, picked up in a sweep, arrested, and convicted. Although 42% reported they were stopped, only 12%–29% reported additional negative contact with police. Also, of the 42% stopped, only 18% reported their arrest led to a conviction. Results revealed less than moderate contact with police on our Exposure to Police Index. Variance for this index was mostly accounted for by three of its seven items, (i.e., “stopped,” “frisked,” and “summons”). Gender and age as interactional variables, however, were found to be significant for the Exposure to Police Index ($p = .000$) with gender driving this result. Men scored significantly higher than women on this index. Further analysis suggests 18- to 21-year-old Black men scored differently than older Black men with respect to negative contact with police. Contact with police both for men and women declined significantly for older age cohorts.

Qualitative perspectives on negative police encounters were often filled with deep-seated resentment. No one was at a loss for sharing a story about either observing and/or personally experiencing negative police encounters. There were countless testimonies on being unfairly harassed and brutalized by police as well as receiving poor service or responses to 911 calls. It was also difficult for us to ignore the community-police tension swelling inside these two neighborhoods. We observed a small city that teetered on the edge of an uprising. Tensions were high

and a segment was fiercely angry toward police. Whispers of “killing” a police officer fueled the neighborhood grapevines especially after police shot and murdered Jeremy McDole (Parra et al. 2016).

“Action” and Policing

Our Street PAR project took “action” seriously by working hard to improve the relationship between police and local residents through community-level programming. Prior to data collection, we developed a working relationship with the City of Wilmington by presenting our project to the WPD, Public and Safety Office, city council, and mayor’s office. Also, we requested and received the opportunity for the chief of police and one captain to conduct a two-hour session on community policing during our Street PAR methods training. At the conclusion of the study, we submitted a documentary and formal report to the City of Wilmington with 17 recommendations, one of which called for the implementation of a Cease Violence Program (Payne 2013). With the support of our project and other advocates and institutions, Wilmington now has a thriving Cease Violence Program (Chambers 2016). Cease Violence’s national office, which is based in Chicago, works with low-income neighborhoods across the country to develop Cease Violence chapters. Each chapter consists of paid “violence interrupters,” most of whom were formerly incarcerated but are now hired to reduce violence and other forms of crime.

Wilmington Cease Violence has been staffed by four Street PAR members. Street PAR member Patrice Gibbs was the first operational director and Street PAR member, Derrick Chambers was hired as a “violence interrupter” and received the 2016 Inaugural Willis Young Memorial Award on August 23, 2016 from the National Network of Hospital-Based Violence Intervention Programs in Baltimore, Maryland. Also, the third author was one of nine people selected by Governor Jack Markell to sit on the Wilmington Public Safety Strategies Commission—a commission developed in 2014 to examine and make key recommendations for police reform in Wilmington (Wilmington Public Safety Strategies Commission 2015).

Last, our “action” agenda on policing involved conducting a set of community programs with key stakeholders across a two-year period, which included a set of diversity, culture, and implicit bias trainings for the WPD, Youth Rehabilitative Services, the Division of Prevention and Behavioral Health Services, and administrators of Delaware’s Juvenile Justice System and Red Clay School District. Additionally, we organized dozens of widely attended events with residents on policing and violence, which included the first author sitting with the chief of police for an hour-long two-person panel in Wilmington. Another example of “action” involved organizing a tour with Governor Jack Markell and Mayor Dennis Williams to visit and speak with residents in two of the most structurally impoverished neighborhoods in the Eastside. These widely attended community meetings were held in two esteemed local Black barbershops, and in the tradition of local Black barbershops, the conversation sometimes became energetic and challenging.

Translational research on policing is more necessary now than ever before. We call for more scholars to aggressively but constructively engage neighborhoods

prior to, during, and after the completion of data collection. Scholars must work harder to earn their way into communities. Street PAR is a methodological framework that offers a mechanism and platform to achieve respect, trust, and a partnership between residents and police by constructing the research-activism process into a reciprocal exchange of ideas and goals.

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