

WHEN THEY SEE US: RACIAL CRIMINALIZATION, RACIAL STIGMA, AND  
IDENTITY IN A MIDWEST COLLEGE TOWN

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A MIDWEST COLLEGE TOWN

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## ABSTRACT

Racial stigma and racial criminalization have been centralizing pillars of the construction of Blackness in the United States. Taking such systemic injustice and racism as a given, then question then becomes how these macro-level injustices are reflected in micro-level processes. This project uses critical interactionism and stigma theory to explore the potential implications for racialized identity construction and the development of ‘criminalized subjectivity’ among Black undergraduate students at a predominately white institution of higher education in the Midwest. This study utilizes semi-structured interviews to not just gauge the implications of racial stigma and criminalization on micro-level identity construction but also how understandings of these issues can change across space and over the course of one’s life. This was rooted in a continual process of awakenings, reflection, and interactions with participants gaining more complex appreciation of their racial identities as they grew older.

Students also were increasingly aware of racial stigma and criminalization as a social fact but did not internalize it as a true reflection of who they were as people. Sensitivity to membership in a criminally stigmatized racial group was also shaped by perception and anticipation of navigating spaces. University life also became a site of these processes; college-aged peer groups served as important sites of collective identity-building and students juxtaposed space and region in ways that reinforced subjective sensitivity to being in a racially stigmatized group. This research contributes to scholarship that applies a critical lens to Goffmanian stigma rooted in Black sociology and from the perspectives of the stigmatized themselves.

## CHAPTER 1 - INTRODUCTION

“Did they prove anything scientifically about us before they killed us? No. They killed us first and then tried to get some scientific proof about why we should die.”- Toni Morrison; *Song of Solomon*

In his seminal ethnography, *Punished: Policing the lives of Black and Latino boys*, Rios (2011) asks “whether Slick [name of participant] and his homies had become the moral panics in this community, and if it was this attention to their perceived criminal behavior which had led to the intense policing and surveillance. . . that the youth spoke about more broadly.” (pg. 7). Rios illustrates that these incidents of criminalization are just one of many tangible consequences of the concept of racial stigma, a specific manifestation of stigma theory. Racial stigma has informed and formed concurrently alongside systems and institutional practices (Lenhardt, 2004). As Charles Mills has described this system, “white supremacy is a political system, a particular power structure of formal and informal rule, socioeconomic privilege, and norms for differential distribution of material wealth, and opportunities, benefits and burdens, rights and duties.” (1997; pg.3). This set of racialized social systems (Bonilla-Silva, 1997) then provides the context in which racial stigmas are created, reinforced, and/or destroyed.

As a result of these racial stigmas and the systems that they are enacted and reinforced in, we continue to see racial discrimination and disparities in a variety of areas ranging from racial profiling and police shootings (Yamatta-Taylor, 2016); to mass incarceration (Alexander, 2010; Wacquant, 2010); to health, poverty, food insecurity (Yamatta-Taylor, 2016; Desmond, 2010), and many other life chance indicators and social problems. What concerns this specific project is the criminalization of Blackness as



a specific form of white supremacist stigma in racialized interaction orders and its consequences for identity construction of Black college students.

### *Setting the Scene*

The criminalization of Blackness as deviant has been colloquially referenced for centuries (Welch, 2007) but only relatively recently has its development become attached to statistical analysis which in turn further institutionalized criminalization as not just ‘common sense’ but also a taken-for-granted ‘verifiable truth’. For example, conservative political commentator, Heather MacDonald had this to say about criminal statistics: “Street crime today is almost exclusively the province of ‘people of color’. . . Until those realities of crime change, any allegedly ‘stereotypical’ associations between blacks and crime in the public mind will remain justified and psychologically unavoidable” (MacDonald, 2018). In using a ‘statistical discourse’ concerning the overrepresentation of Black-Americans in incarceration and crime statistics, she is then able to rationalize the overrepresentation of Black-Americans as simply a reflection of more prevalent criminal activity and in a way that rationalizes larger discourses that oppose criminal justice reform.

This problematic and racist centering has been used by liberal commentators and politicians. In a speech on race relations at the University of Texas at Austin in October, 1995, President Bill Clinton implored white-Americans to understand the historical and contemporary reality of systemic discrimination but then said in a rather telling statement, “On the other hand, blacks must understand and acknowledge the roots of white fear in America. . . There is a legitimate fear of the violence that is too prevalent in our urban areas and often, by experience or at least what people see on the news at night,

violence for those white people often has a black face.” (Miller Center, 2019). This statement intimately centered the notions of criminality to Blackness and experiences of it in the white gaze.

Though Hirschfield (2008) argued that criminalization of young Black people has little negative effect on their sense of self and their social relationships, however, the underpinnings of Black identity construction still rest on how Black people understand themselves and in relation to white dominant societies. In Fanon’s *Black Skin, White Masks*, he explores this concept:

“The white gaze, the only valid one, is already dissecting me. Once their microtomes are sharpened, the Whites objectively cut sections of my reality. . . I sense, I see in this white gaze that it’s the arrival not of a new man, but of a new type of man, a new species. A Negro, in fact!” (1952; pg. 95)

Taking the concept of stigma into account, people acquire stigmas through their interactions with other people. It’s through these processes of socialization that an individual ideally understands and anticipates the standards against which they ‘fall short’ (Tyler, 2018). However, as will be explored, stigma theory as presented by Goffman (1963), was a debatably apolitical theory that did not explicitly tackle questions of power and their effect on the social interaction orders we navigate. To his credit, this was a limitation that Goffman acknowledged and that ‘small entities’ were deliberately his main concern (David, 1980). That said, even as Smith and Jacobsen (2020) argue that Goffman’s analysis of power is implicit rather than explicit, we can and must still consider that his research still didn’t engage with the stigmatized themselves as valid analysts in their own right. The perceptions of the stigmatized themselves constitutes a

valid avenue of extending research on such issues and in this direction that this dissertation pursues.

The title of this dissertation is derived not just from the title of the critically acclaimed Netflix series depicting the experiences of the Central Park Five in 1989 (Byfield, 2018; Duvernay, 2019), but also indicates awareness and perception of racial stigma and, specifically, racial criminalization. A series of racial profiling news stories from across the country especially involving confrontations between Black college students and campus police or white members of the student body highlight the role that such criminalization can play in everyday life for young Black people. For one such example, a Black graduate student was confronted by campus police at Yale University after taking a nap in her dorm's common room (Griggs, 2018). The material realities of these experiences are important to cover, but the perceptions and experiences of this sort of criminalization are also important to understand. This is especially the case considering that such racial discrimination can have distressing effects that negatively impact emotional health and stress (Solorzano, Cega, & Vasso, 2000)

To start, systemic racism is a feature of American social, political, and cultural life that carries many implications for the everyday well-being of its Black citizens (Feagin, 2006). Racial criminalization and racial stigma are notable examples of this systemic racism and have been centralizing pillars of the construction of Blackness in the United States (Smiley and Fakunle, 2016; Hund, 2015; Muhammad, 2010). Racism tends to influence such public opinion on criminalization and the criminal justice in two ways: as a strong predictor of harsher punishments and in the overestimation of offender rates for racial minorities. In one such study, white respondents tends to overestimate the

percentage of Black offenders in a variety of crimes by approximately 20 to 30 percent (Ghandnoosh, 2014) this stigmatizing association also affects perceptions of neighborhoods (Quillian & Pager, 2001; Pickett, Chiricos, Golden, and Gertz, 2012). These are the larger structures that reinforce stigma and in turn can influence identity construction.

But what exactly does “identity” mean? In what contexts does it arise or exist? There are several ways of developing an answer to the question. Stryker and Burke (2000) note that there are three general ways in which identity is discussed and used in the field of sociology. The first is as a common identity category, identification or solidarity with some common collectivity (Stryker & Burke, 2000; Hall, 2000) Examples can include: “I am a Republican” or “I am a lesbian” or “I am Black, etc.” All of these are built on the back of some shared characteristic with other people, groups, ideals; this is the most common-sense definition of identity (Hall, 2000). Other scholars have utilized identity much in the same way that symbolic interactionists do: composing of meanings that we attach to multiple roles that we play in highly differentiated societies; that it is a social process that doesn’t truly end. A symbolic interactionist perspective on identity construction places its process within interaction with ones’ peers and within larger institutions (Scott, 2017). As Holstein & Gubrium (2000) have discussed, the selves we live by are constructed through interacting with others.

This means adopting a view that is more consistent with contemporary sociology: that our society is made up of a mosaic of groups, organizations, relationships and institutions that cross-cut across boundaries of race, class, sex, gender, religion, etc. (Stryker & Burke, 2000; pg. 285). And it is within these larger systems that we enter into smaller

networks of social relationships that facilitate our entry. These larger systems of power shapes these smaller networks that in turn shape our interactions and our identities.

Dominant ideologies of society can also permeate face-to-face interactions. And if identity is built through interactions with fellows, then it stands that these larger systems also influence the construction of identities.

In the case of Black-Americans, racialized subjectivity and racial socialization are key to the construction and adoption of a Black racial identity. The navigation of racialized identity can be described as the process of figuring out the meanings attached to being a member of a particular racial group (Tatum, 1997). This can be made more difficult as Black people are also expected to build an identity against dominant notions and constructions of what it means to be Black (Allen, 2007). This process can lead to a positive effect such as higher self-esteem for those who identify closely with other Black people. However, we must also acknowledge that racial identity is a reflection of this racializing system, it's less of an essential innate characteristic and is rather the result of the imposition of a system upon bodies (Fanon 1986; Field and Fields, 2014). As Lewis (2004; 625) has described, "race as a set of identities, discursive practices, cultural forms, and ideological manifestations would not exist without racism". Similarly, Roberts (2014) states that it is racism that gives birth to race not the other way around. To state otherwise would be to treat race as natural and downplay the sociohistorical processes that create race. This remains true even as Black-Americans find empowerment in the label.

Considering Bonilla-Silva's (2019) work on racialized emotions, the expression and experience of emotions can run the gamut for both dominant and subordinate racialized groups; this lends itself to understanding the subjective experience of larger

objective realities but also how these subjective perspectives and experiences are collectively constructed to evoke and make sense of larger systemic injustices. This is part of a larger growing body of work that examines the subjective experiences of criminalized people and the communities they come from.

### *Questions and Structure of Dissertation*

Taking theoretical inspiration from a critical analysis of stigma theory, critical interactionism, and critical race theory, my research questions are two-fold: (1) How does racial stigma and criminalization of Blackness have an effect on the identity construction, life experiences, and stigma management of Black university students? (2) To what degree is that understanding changed by spatial/temporal/regional changes in their lives? The rest of this chapter sets up the previous literature and existing theory on racial criminalization and identity construction.

The larger setting of this dissertation in stigma and interaction order is Columbia, a predominately white college town in the middle of the predominately white Midwestern state of Missouri, anchored by a flagship university that is also predominately white. It is also worth noting that the racial history of this college town, and indeed the larger mid-Missouri area, included legally mandated Jim Crow segregation until the 1950s, and still wrestles with racist incidents (Roiger, 2019). The university itself also has had a recent history of antiracist student activism that has attracted national and even international attention in the autumn of 2015.

My first empirical chapter will consider perspectives on identity and its evolution among Black undergraduate students. The previous literature on Black perceptions and

experiences is varied and has ranged from the experience of paralegals and professionals (Wingfield, 2010; Pierce, 2003) to those of elite law school students (Moore, 2007), and university professors (Harlow, 2003). The literature on Black undergraduate college students and their experiences with racism and identity certainly exists but far less has been explored with their perceptions and experiences changing over time and across place. In a college town, how does a Black student's understanding of themselves and their stigma change if they're from out of town? Do they perceive/experience a different interaction order? How does stigma management change? How does it relate to the coterminous relationship of Blackness and criminality in the popular mind?

The next empirical chapter will consider this last relationship, how do Black college students understand racial criminalization and its implications for everyday life and identity construction. Predominately white college campuses are not immune to the stories of police harassment and criminalization that have filled our news feeds. For example, a report from the University of Iowa showed that its campus police force disproportionately used force against Black students and suspects. Even as use of force fell between 2017 to 2019 by 0.04 (from 0.10 to 0.06%), roughly 38% of those use of force incidents involved Black people (Smith, 2020). Of those incidents, 14% were against Black students and 86% against Black nonstudents. This is greatly out of proportion with the 3% of the UI student body that identifies as Black.

This research is pursued in the understanding that according to Mills (1997), white supremacy carries not only political dimensions but also moral and epistemological ones; essentially that white supremacy also structures which knowledges and perspectives are valid and objective. This has had a hand in developing a sort of narrative hierarchy

which the perspectives and insights of nonwhites are devalued or not pursued. Plummer (2020) has described stories like these as ‘subordinated standpoints’-narrative standpoints that come from subordinated groups within a socially stratified and hierarchical society. In terms of racial criminalization, certain knowledges about Black people and crime was taken for granted as objective while also simultaneously foreclosing any input from Blacks themselves that challenged such notions (Muhammad, 2010).

This has contributed to what Julian Go (2020) has called the epistemic structures of sociology. The roots of sociological thought were formed in a racialized binary of epistemic exclusion in which the true ‘Knowers’ were taken to be Anglo-Europeans and their descendants. This has the effect of foreclosing and excluding people of color not just from the halls of knowledge but also from agency. Goffman was certainly not malicious in his general lack of pursuit of perspectives from the stigmatized themselves, but his epistemological and methodological choices not only implicates the binary of epistemic exclusion that Go (2020) pointed out but also hold a great deal for how we can understand and build on his contributions to sociology. DuBois (1903) has provided one way of building on classical identity theory by discussing the double consciousness and racialized subjectivity of Black Americans. From here, we can consider the theoretical backings of this project and its components. If we aim to understand how Black college students understand identity and criminalization then it only makes sense to start with the construction of race as a social and political category.



## LITERATURE AND THEORIES

*Construction of race and criminalization of Blackness*

While it is commonly accepted that race is a social construct (McKee, 1993) it is also important to understand how we ascribe various meanings to racial categories. Race is a socio-historical category that is given meaning through the specific social relations and historical contexts in which it exists (Omi & Winant, 2015). Race-making is fundamentally about ‘making people’. Roberts (2011) traced this socio-historical process in the United States to its roots in the early colonial period as a series of legal measures were enacted to treat those of African descent as a distinct political population from their white European counterparts. As Barbara Fields (1990; 2014) has similarly noted, from anti-miscegenation laws to legal separation of Black from white, race was created to solidify the political status of various groups within a particular order. This was also reinforced by various discourses- a series of images, narratives, spectacles, knowledge and “truths” that construct what we know and how we know it (Lopez, 2013; Hall, 1997).

Of particular importance to my research interests with regards to race as a construct that people ascribe meaning and emotions to are ‘threat narratives’. Chavez (2013), for example, identified several threads that make up the “Latino Threat” narrative: (1) a demographic fertility threat (2) a criminal threat (tied to their ‘undocumented’ status and to violent crime(Delgado, 2018), and (3) a threat over lack of and/or refusal to assimilate to prevailing American cultural norms, languages, etc. This last thread is also tied to (4) a “Reconquista” narrative that Mexicans are going to reconquer the Southwestern United States and ultimately the rest of the country. Similar narratives can be observed and transposed to the experiences of other marginalized and

minoritized racial, ethnic, and religious groups in the United States. Asian-Americans, particularly the Chinese and Japanese, were subject to “yellow peril” threat narratives that culminated in pogroms, the 1882 Chinese Exclusion Act, the 1924 Immigration Act, and internment of Japanese-Americans during World War II (Ngai, 2004; Kurashige, 2008; Gonzalez & Torres, 2011; Chavez, 2013). Muslims, Arab-Americans, and other people who are read as either have been subject to similarly racialized narrative “truth” (criminal threat from both outside and inside, unassimilable threat, etc.) (Considine, 2017; Said, 1978; 1981). All of these narratives existed alongside and were reinforced by legal processes that created the political status of various groups.

This system of racialization was already long underway by the Reconstruction era, when the Black threat narrative began to crystalize into an early form of what we recognize today. Black people and Blackness as coterminous with criminality was already anecdotal, by the Civil War with various newspapers of the time only ever discussing Black people in terms of slavery and potential uprisings (Gonzalez & Torres, 2013). But the Black threat narrative of the late-19<sup>th</sup> century was different in that it coincided and was buoyed by the institutionalization of social sciences and statistics as a means of measurement and population control (Muhammad, 2010; Zuberi, 2001). Post-Emancipation, associations of criminality had begun a life of being embedded in what Muhammad (2010) describes as a ‘statistical discourse’; a statistical story connecting criminality, dysfunction, and Blackness.

Since the 1890s disproportionately high crime rates among blacks had been the starting point and linchpin of modern discourse on black criminality (Muhammad, 2010;234). Higginbotham (1992) has described race as like a metalanguage that colors

categories and objects that would otherwise exist outside of race. The symbolic construction of Blackness as not only Other, but also delinquent affected the discursive construction of other categories as well. For example, Black women were placed outside the discursive category of “woman” and/or “lady” (Higginbotham, 1992; Haley, 2016); likewise, Black girls, and Black children in general, were placed outside ‘girlhood’ and ‘childhood’ as it is understood, as groups of people that are culturally assumed to be vulnerable and in need of protection (Morris, 2015). This has implications for how Black children are continually aged up and for how institutions tasked with law enforcement describe and interact with Black children. In one January 2019 incident with the Rochester, New York police department, after responding to a domestic family disturbance. The 9-year old Black girl was placed in handcuffs and while being put in the back of the patrol car, an officer told the girl “You’re acting like a child!”, to which the 9-year old quickly replied “I AM a child!”

Calling back to Omi & Winant’s (1986[2015]) assertion that race-making is not just a matter of making people but is also intimately tied to an understanding of resource distribution; making material realities for the people that fit within a particular group’s boundaries. The statistical discourse on crime and its focus on Black communities meant that crime-fighting resources would necessarily be routed into poor Black communities. The undertaking of tackling crime and poverty since the 1960s also introduced a context of controlling rising crime primarily blamed on young Black people. This undertaking was based on criminal statistics in which Black people were overrepresented (Hinton, 2016; Suddler, 2019). Muhammad (2010) notes that these statistical discourses about Black criminality shaped not just urban resources to curb crime but urban areas.

Much of this specific condemnation of Blackness has been focused on the experiences and conditions of Black men. The bodies of young Black men have already been touched upon as a field upon which criminality is ascribed; this is also exacerbated by class distinctions (Hill-Collins, 2004). The mark of criminality for Black men was hypermasculine and hypersexual (McCann, 2017), Black men were discursively constructed as dangerous and predatory, a narrative that was not only continually discussed but also served as justification for the lynchings of thousands of Black men from 1880 through the 1960s. Black criminality in the South was the sanctions behind lynching, and in the North it was bombings of homes and discriminatory redlining; both of which described as measures of public safety.

This made Black-Americans a population that Cacho (2012) has described as ‘ineligible for personhood’-populations that are subject to laws but who are denied the legal means, political legitimacy, or moral credibility to question these laws. Since criminality can be written into the very existence of a person or group, their motives and criminal history are already assumed. In her essay on the 1991 police beating of motorist Rodney King, Judith Butler (1993) wondered how a Simi Valley jury could view the video as evidence that the police were in danger and subsequently acquit them of any wrongdoing. Using Fanon’s telling of a personal experience that marked him as scary and potentially dangerous without have done anything but exist, Butler connects this to what she described as a white racist paranoia in which the Black male body is understood as a site of danger and violence:

“According to this racist episteme, he is hit in exchange for blows he never delivered but by virtue of his blackness, always about to deliver. . . cultivating an identification with the white paranoia in which a white community is always and only

protected by the police, against a threat, which Rodney King's body emblemizes, quite apart from any action it can be said to perform. . . This is an action that the Black male body is always already performing within that white racist imaginary" (Butler, 1993; p. 18-19)

Bell (2017) describes the criminalization of Blackness as a 'systematic suspicion of black criminality in American society, culture, and jurisprudence, regardless of individual behavior on the part of Black people themselves" (p. 166). It can certainly operate on a micro-level scale, informing the ways in which non-Black, especially white-Americans, interact or don't interact with Black-Americans (St. John & Heald-Moore, 1995). But its operations on a macro-level through institutions makes it a systemic issue. Such criminalization has been a foundational pillar in the symbolic and material relationship of the United States to its Black people; race and the criminal justice system have been understood as mutually constitutive and informing each other (Van Cleeve & Mayes, 2015; Thompson, 2010; 2019; Hinton & Cook, 2021). This focus on Black criminality was further exacerbated through increasing popular references to 'black-on-black violence' post-1980. The social construction of black-on-black violence relied on the aforementioned Black male as violent and dangerous (Wilson, 2005).

The role of space in the discourse of criminalization has been implicated on both a symbolic and material level. One such example is the zip code 53206 in the city of Milwaukee, Wisconsin. This zip code has become, for Loyd and Bonds (2018), a spatial euphemism that works as a shorthand for understanding racialized crime and social and economic disadvantage in Milwaukee. Quillian and Pager (2001) also found that perceptions of the prevalence of neighborhood crime is affected by these processes of racialization; neighborhoods with higher percentages of Black men were presumed to

have higher rates of crime even when accounting for the actual rate of crime for a given area. The city is then marked as dangerous precisely through the presence of African-Americans (Leap, 2017). The contemporary manifestations of the criminalization of Blackness are articulated and reinforced through statistical discourses (Muhammad, 2010), crime-fighting resource distribution and the carceral state (Murakawa, 2014; Hinton, 2016, Hinton & Cook, 2021), and popular culture, imagery, and new media (Alexander, 2010; Hill-Collins, 2004; hooks, 1992; Wilson, 2005; Park S., Kim J., Park, H., & Cuadrado, 2018).

An intersectional approach is also necessary for understanding the myriad of ways that Blackness can be criminalized and stigmatized. As noted before, non-men, women, and girls have been consistently excluded from discursive meanings of what it has meant to be ‘woman’ or ‘girl’ while simultaneously being subject to criminalization that tied into notions of Black femininity (Gross, 2006; Agyepong, 2018; Haley 2016). The incarceration rate of Black women has, in general, decreased from 2000 to 2017 and is currently 92 per 100,000 but is still nearly twice that of their white counterparts (Prisoner Series, 2017).

Black women are subject to simultaneous structural and social disadvantages that cannot necessarily be explored by the singular axes of Blackness or sex (Arnold, 1990; Crenshaw, 1991; Hill-Collins, 2004; Davis, 1981). The subjective experiences and bodies of Black women and girls have historically and contemporarily been attached to notions of criminality and deviance (Haley, 2016; Young 2005). This racial stigma and its connection to criminality has had devastating and disrupting consequences for Black girls (Morris, 2015). Even though criminalization and its consequences are highly gendered

towards males (Wacquant, 2010; Mauer, 1999; Rome, 2004; Russell-Brown, 2008; Brooms & Clark, 2020), a full appreciation of racial stigmas of Blackness and their ties to criminality must include how Black women/non-men have experienced criminalization or associated with deviance. Understanding the construction of race, and especially the construction of “Black racial identity” as it relates to criminalization of racial categories leads into sociological understandings of identity and its relationship to stigma and to power relations in interaction orders.

### *Identity, Stigma, and Interactionism*

The concept of identity has been a defining pillar and source of contention in sociological thought. In a well-crafted piece, Brubaker and Cooper (2000) argue that ‘identity’ as a concept encompasses far too many contradictory ideas to be a reliable analytical category in the social sciences; they notably draw a distinction between self-identification and identification from external sources. Identity as a concept, they worry, invites reification as something that exists innately, while identification invites a look at the role of agency in identification, especially from external agents and factors.

This research takes a decidedly symbolic interactionist approach to the concept of identity. There are several key features of a symbolic approach to identity. First, that identity is not an intrinsic and static affair; it’s important to understand it as a dynamic social process (Holstein & Gubrium, 2000). The self is fundamentally a social self; an actively and narratively constructed object that we use to indicate to ourselves and others what we are and who we wish to convey that we are (Holstein & Gubrium, 2000). Individual agency combined with social feedback can create a dynamic/versatile self (pg.

5). At the center of constructing the self, lies narrating the self; how we interpret ourselves, our identity, in the context in the social worlds that we inhabit (p. 104). This points to the second and third features of a symbolic interactionist perspective on identity, that it is a performative and pragmatic concept: Not just existing on an abstract but can be strategically employed in a situation while that can be tangibly observed (Scott, 2015). Essentially, S.I. frames of identity focus on how identities can be shaped, maintained, created, destroyed, narrated, challenged, and reproduced. All of this can take place in what Goffman called the 'interaction order'. The social interaction order as described by Goffman (1983) is the social situation and all of its rules that dictate interaction among two or more people; this sets the stage for more of Goffman's other notable sociological contributions such as the presentations of self and dramaturgy (1959).

It is here that we can introduce and explore the sociological concept of stigma also discussed by Goffman (1963). In the dramaturgical sense, we are constantly performing; identity is a strategic resource to be utilized across different contexts of space and time (Goffman, 1959; 1963; Brekhus, 2003). But our performance and very identity can be "spoiled" through stigma; a classic definition of stigma is some 'discrediting' characteristic (Goffman, 1963). It is discrediting in the sense that it violates a society's definition of normal; it conveys a negative social identity. As a result, the ability of the stigmatized individual to be able to fully participate in the community unbothered is compromised. It is key to note that this imposed identity has nothing to do with a person's actual identity but has much to do with a 'virtual identity'; what we think a person is (Lenhardt, 2004).



Classical theorists of identity and symbolic interaction, outside of Blumer (1958; 1965), have had little to say on the racial order of the United States and its implications for identity and interaction; the same critique can be argued for Goffman. In their essay on 'feminist symbolic interactionism', Kleinman and Cabaniss (2020) argue that if symbolic interactionists are going to understand the mundane as being built through socialization and interaction, then researchers must recognize how systems of domination (such as patriarchy) and their standards are reproduced through interactions and expectations. We do make choices as we interact, but these actions and interactions continue to take place within the constraints of a social power hierarchy. Building on this specific critical strain of symbolic interactionist thought is the concept of a racialized interaction order.

Drawing on the racialized social system discussed by Bonilla-Silva (1997), the racialized interaction order considers how implicit and explicit racial assumptions and rules are expressed on a micro-level basis and plays a part in reproducing racial domination (Rosino, 2015). At its most basic core, the durability of white supremacist domination is in a dialogue with everyday social interactions and symbolic meanings. The racialized interaction order as described by Rosino (2015) had its roots in the highly exploitative and asymmetrical relations informed by institutionalized and sense of group position; as a result it defined the limits of acceptable interaction and punished violations often through physical violence. In contemporary times, the racialized interaction order and its racial domination is informed by various myths and logics that are mass mediated and can be reproduced through various interactions such as racial profiling in retail

businesses (Pittman, 2017), encounters in the workplace (Meghii, 2019) and the policing of specific neighborhoods (Rios, 2011; Boyles, 2015).

It is curious that for ideas being developed and published at the height of the civil rights revolution, that there is little further elaboration (or willingness) on Goffman's part to further contextualize the roles of interaction order and stigma in a racialized system like the United States; as influential as stigma theory is, in its original has been strikingly apolitical (Tyler, 2018). Since the publication of Erving Goffman's landmark *Stigma*, there have been several directions that stigma theory has taken in the aftermath. Müller (2020) noted several observations in the career of the theory. One particular avenue that stigma work has been taking is in a more critical analysis of stigma. In the first few pages, of *Stigma*, Goffman teases at power by noting that "Society establishes the means of categorizing persons and the complement of attributes felt to be ordinary and natural for members of these categories" (pg. 2).

There has been work since then to expand on this avenue of stigma studies and explicitly call into question how power functions. Tyler (2020) explicitly places 'stigma' as a mechanism of how the state exercises power. In the introduction to *Stigma: The Machinery of Inequality*, Tyler actively problematizes the divorce of stigma from its structural influences; a distinction that Hannem (2012) has described as the difference between 'symbolic/individual stigma' which is abstract and 'structural stigma' that actively acts as a means of social control. By recounting the branding of enslaved Africans in both antebellum America and colonial Britain (DuBois, 1935; Tyler, 2020), stigma operates as a form of necropolitics, how power structures and the state not only

determine which populations are subject to disposability and death but also how these institutions exercise that power (Mbembe, 2003). Therefore this work seeks to further the literature on the white supremacist racial order in the United States and its stigmatizing effects on Black life (Loury, 2003; Lamont et al., 2016; Loyd & Bonds, 2018; Tyler 2018).

One other similar direction that stigma research has taken is in actively centering the analysis of stigma power from the perspective of those stigmatized. For one example, Disability Studies has had a decades-long tradition of critically interrogating the ideas of Goffmanian stigma and its place in disability research. One critique of Goffman and traditional stigma studies is that it draws on experiences of stigmatized people but doesn't actually engage with them as believable 'knowers', as analysts in their own right. Howarth (2006) insists that we take the stigmatized as active agents who could contest and question the stigmatizing conditions that they are placed under. A racial stigma is a specific type of "tribal stigma"; a negative social meaning ascribed to racialized groups (Lenhardt, 2004; Loury, 2003). It is not necessarily racial slurs or even the denial of opportunity; the essence of a racial stigma comes from a general skepticism towards the humanity of those ascribed. The racial status overshadows other aspects of an individual's self, and concerns the issue that there is some essential commonality among members of the group that is discrediting (Lenhardt, 2004).

Much like the experience of racial stigmas and markedness can vary along axes of sex and gender or sexual orientation, region and place plays a role in the experience of marked identities and stigma. Place can be characterized by three features: geographic

location, material, and being imbued with some sort of meaning and value (Gieryn, 2000) Given these characteristics it's worth considering the role of space and place in stigma; social relations and perceptions can be realized through how space is structured or used (Lipsitz, 2011). Brown-Saracino (2015) and Barton (2012) both examine the experience of sexual minorities and how issues of region and place can trouble the notion of a homogenous experience among LGBTQ individuals. In her ethnographic interviews of lesbian women in four mid-sized cities, Brown-Saracino (2015) concludes that a variety of factors influence the place-specific identities of these women such as demographic profiles in age and race. Numerical, political, and social positions of LGBTQ women also played a role in the identity process.

For another example of some similar work of identity across place and time we can look towards Brekhus' research on identity categories (2003). Brekhus (2003) studied several identity categories of gay suburbanites (e.g.: lifestyler, commuter, intergrator) and how and when they expressed their identities relative to others. Social context and environment tended to shape the intensity and temporality of expression (eg: Lifestylers were high-intensity all the time while Commuters were largely high-intensity in certain environments). Changes in structural factors could intersect with changes in life in ways that affected the category they ended up being placed in. For example, moving from a Lifestyler community to a Commuter/Integrator position where the particular identity expression isn't as intense (pg. 123). These ideal types rely on identity as a strategic resource but with the caveat that due to structural factors and issues, such resources aren't equally available for everyone (Brekhus, 2015). In this case, sexual orientation, while socially marked and stigmatized, is a discreditable stigma or something that can be

hidden (Goffman, 1963). Now I will turn specifically to identity in the context of black identity formation in the United States.

*Racialized Subjectivity, Black Identity Formation, & Criminalized Subjectivity*

The works of Cooley (1902), James (1890), and Mead (1934), while important to the general field of identity work and interaction, had not taken on the issue of race and racialized subjectivity. What connects the macro-level of structures and policy to the micro-level of individual and group identities in this case is living as a racialized subject in American society (Renn, 2012). The literature on racial and ethnic identity has been shaped by a variety of factors including immigration, interracial marriage, and the growth of individuals who identify as multiracial (Pinderhughes, 1997). Theoretical conceptions of Black racial identity specifically have historically tended to stress the importance of awareness and consciousness of what it means to be a Black individual in a racialized society. It is here we can include the works of DuBois particularly in his concepts of the veil and double consciousness (1903). There are three components to the concept of double-consciousness: the veil, two-ness, and the second sight. The veil referring to the structural/social line between Black and whites. The sense of two-ness referring to the position of presence within two worlds: the Black social sphere and the White social sphere in which Blackness is constructed and distorted (Itzigsohn & Brown, 2017). The third and final component of this concept is second sight in which said racialized individual gains insight into the white world (Itzigsohn & Brown, 2017).

Critiques of double consciousness as a concept assert that what DuBois is describing is then-already established ideas surrounding alienation (Reed, 1997); other

critics have stated that DuBois is just describing the conflicts between his relatively privileged class position versus a stigmatized race position rather than a phenomenon that could be applied to Black Americans generally or the pains of ‘misrecognition’ (Mocombe, 2008; Allen, ). The concept of racial identity is further critiqued and contextualized in *Racecraft*, Fields & Fields (2014) argue that in the larger schema of racism in the United States, that we ascribe to race what should be more accurately described as racism. Offering an important caveat, “race as identity breaks down on the irreducible fact that any sense of self intrinsic to persons of African descent is subject to peremptory nullification by forcible extrinsic identification” (pg. 157). Like Brubaker and Cooper, they draw a difference between identity and identification, using the example of a white police officer accidentally shooting a fellow officer who happens to be Black, the former officer read his brother officer as a Black man-therefore, an acceptable target for lethal violence- which overrode any self-identification of the Black officer as a police officer. Another similar example is the case of Amadou Diallo, a Guinean immigrant gunned down by New York police officers in 1999; his identification by police officers as a Black suspect forcibly overrode any self-identification that Diallo may have had for himself.

These are important points and caveats, we can still look towards other works to see how racialized subjectivity and identity can evolve within a racialized hierarchy like the United States. Black people are still aware of some form of racial stigma, and how the white world by and large sees Black people (Fanon, 1952). Taking it to classical theories of Black Racial Identity, they have stressed the importance of awareness of what it means to be Black; epiphanies or encounters are often the key to such awareness (Cross, 1971).

Much like how DeGloma (2014) uses awakening narratives to discuss a bracketing of an identity, these encounters can be either positive and affirmative (Neville & Cross, 2017) or negative in the case of the ‘nigger moments’ (Anderson, 2011) that reinforce a specific symbolic relationship of the Black person to a white space (Feagin, 1991). Construction of the self for DuBois relied on a dialectic between participating in the white world and the Black world (Blau & Brown, 2001). Participation in the Black world, and construction of Blackness as identity is also marked by the concept of ‘linked fate’ (Dawson, 1994; Anderson, 1990; Cox, 1948) which is the perception that ties an individual’s wellbeing and fate to that of the larger group. Blackness serves as an assumed connection and shared history with other Black-Americans.

The implication of social inequities and power relations is evident in the key concept of ‘criminalized subjectivity’. Developed by Clair (2021), it describes the “unique understandings and visions attendant to being a person, or part of a community, routinely subject to legal control and exploitation sanctioned by criminal law (p. 9). So, what’s important here are the subjective perspectives and self-concepts that occur in relation to criminal law in the United States. Criminalized subjectivity relies on the collective attitudes, narratives, and self-concepts that result from both direct and indirect experiences with criminalization. Given that we’ve already established that the stigma of criminality is a central pillar of the racial stigma ascribed to Blackness, we should consider that criminalized subjectivities are (1) as already established, developed through interaction and socialization and a result (2) also dynamic processes that have the potential to change as contexts change across time and even place. It is part of a growing body of work that explores and examines the subjective experiences of criminalized

people and the communities they come from. Clair (2021) specifically connects this concept to DuBois' concept of double consciousness. Under double-consciousness, the Black person is both conscious of themselves as Black and the general society's perception of Blackness and how that affects how their fellows interact with them. In this case, the veil of double consciousness is essentially the social, material, and symbolic divisions between the criminalized and the non-criminalized.

### *Blackness and Identity on College Campuses*

The literature on the salience of racial and ethnic identities asserts that these are related to changes in social structure; these identities are embedded in social, ecological, and economic conditions (Pinderhughes, 1997). It is these conditions that have implications for interpersonal interactions. These matters of social cohesion and open verbal communication matter to the construction of a Black identity.

Sheldon Stryker (1980) is responsible for conceptualizing identity as a hierarchy of salience; that the more salient a particular identity category is to the individual, the more likely it would be utilized and called upon across social situations. Research suggests that racial and ethnic identity is incredibly important to African-Americans and Black-Americans in general. An analysis of the salience of racial-ethnic identity for Blacks, Whites, and Multiracials found that racial-ethnic identity was more important to Black people than their white counterparts. But that the salience still varied across social situations such as work or in other public places versus private spaces like the home (Jarrett & Reitz, 1999). When considering Black college students, they were not only far more likely than their white counterparts to use racial identifiers for themselves but also



to measure it as important to their concept of self (White & Hughes, 1987; Tatum, 1997). Of course, as Fields pointed out earlier, the centrality of a racial identity to ones conception of self can be tricky and must be carefully contextualized within a larger system of racialization and a racialized interaction order, even when someone finds such a label and identity to be an empowering thing.

For example, the lived experiences of a Black Muslim female student on a predominately white campus has been studied. How Black Muslim women on a college campus understand who they are and where they were was deeply implicated by larger ideas about the racialized place of Islam in the west, especially in a post-9/11 United States (McGuire, Casanova, and Davis, 2016; Considine, 2017; Said, 1978). Yasmin, the subject of this particular interview study narrated her identity as a transformation from a young girl newly immigrated to the United States that was ruptured by the attacks on September 11, 2001. Her narration understood her virtual identity as a security threat (McGuire et al., 2016). Her narration also included her own sense of alienation from the Black/African-American community on campus; said community often relied on cultural capital and language games that, as an immigrant Black Muslim, Yasmin was not especially privy to.

University life is already stressful for young adults who are coming into their own; that stress can be compounded for Black college students as they also have to navigate stress from racism on campus. Because many universities are ‘unmarked’ and tacitly orientated towards whiteness, the presence and experience of ‘marked’ populations is often characterized by alienation and stress (Lewis, 2019). Multiple studies

have discussed the connection between racism and psychological health for Black students at predominately white universities and colleges (Edmonds, 1984; Neville & Thompson, 1991). In one such study on racial microaggressions and their affects on Black students, it was noted that said microaggressions occurred in both academic spaces (e.g.: classrooms and lecture halls, labs, etc.) and in social spaces (Solorzano, Cesa, and Vasso, 2000). These experiences had an adverse effect on Black college students who described it as ‘tiring’ and stigmatizing, often being placed in a ‘spokeperson role’ (Anderson, 1995). Other research has pointed to not just how general college stressors are compounded by racial stress, but also tries to consider the types of stress compared to the level of racial identity development (Neville, Heppner, & Wang, 1997).

There has been research on the salience and development of Black racial identity in general amongst Black college students. But what has been less discussed is (1) racial criminalization as a particular stigma of the racialized interaction order and its relationship to identity construction and relatedly (2) the salience of that particular stigma to identity construction across time and place. A series of recent news stories over the past few years concerning racial profiling of Black undergraduate and graduate students demonstrates a necessity to confront how Black students understand their surroundings in this way. In May 2018, a Black graduate student was interrogated by police after a white fellow graduate student found her napping in the common room of her dormitory (Griggs, 2018). In July of that same year, a Black rising sophomore at Smith College was eating lunch in a common room. She was deemed suspicious by a Smith College employee and was then interrogated by campus police (Kanoute, 2018). In March 2019, a Black male student at Naropa University in Boulder, Colorado was confronted outside of his

apartment building by a police officer while picking up garbage, the situation ultimately escalating to the point where the officer withdrew his gun but did not fire (Murphy, 2019). These stories implicate a system of stigmas and a racialized interaction order that we must assume exists. The question then becomes how do Black undergraduate students themselves understand these larger macro and meso-level structures and their implications for micro-level interaction and identity building.

## METHODOLOGY

### *Type of Interview*

The chosen methods I have determined are primarily individual ‘semistandard interviews’. Through interviewing, we can learn about subjective perceptions and interpretations and what they have to say about our social world. We as social scientists cannot understand macro-level phenomena without making sense of how they operate on an individual level and vice versa (Rios, 2011). There are several reasons for undertaking qualitative interviewing as a method including: (1) developing detailed descriptions and (2) developing holistic descriptions of a phenomena (Weiss, 1994).

It is also because of these underlying assumptions that I chose to specifically use semi-structured or ‘semi-standard interviews’. This type of interview, much like the ‘structured’ or ‘standard’ interview, relies on a set of predetermined questions and special topics. But while questions are still asked in a consistent systematic manner, participants are allowed to digress within reason (Berg, 1995). For example, if a participant begins to open a new line of thought, the interviewer can decide whether to open that as a new line

of inquiry relevant to the topic at hand. This can allow for more thorough depths into how the participant relates to the interview subject.

Interviewing is certainly a way of gathering information about the material and social worlds among us, but traditional literature discusses interviewing as simply a pipeline of information rather than the active process that it is; a traditional interview ends up being analyzed and assessed in its closeness to the 'correct answers' (Holstein & Gubrium, 1995). The interview should be considered an active process in which the participant constructs and narrates their reality and lived experiences. This is important because a general trend in recent sociological research on identity is moving towards the recognition of multidimensionality and intersectionality; social locations as all-encompassing standpoints of knowledge can mask the various ways in which people may or may not experience a particular condition. This is reflected in some of the information on questions and coding that will be covered later.

My positionality as the researcher can have an impact on how recruits interact with me and the sort of information that they're willing to divulge in an interview. Rapport between an interviewer and interviewee is incredibly important and much of this rapport is based on the perceptions of the interviewer by the interviewee (Berg, 1995). If an interviewee or potential participant is skeptical of the role and motives of the researcher then it makes it incredibly unlikely that they'll participate fully if at all, and this is especially true for marginalized or racially minoritized populations. One way of accounting for this is through the development of *culturally responsive interviews*; these sorts of interviews strive to be aware of different cultural perspectives and how different people may experience the same phenomenon differently. In their application of these

practices with Hispanic families, education scholars, Elia Vasquez-Montilla, Maria Reyes-Blanes, Eunsook Hyun, and Brovelli (2000) develop what could be called a AAA-framework: authenticity, affinity, and accuracy.

Authenticity is characterized by establishing credentials of not just the research but also the researcher that the participant will take as authentic and meaningful such as a common understanding of meanings and contexts like community, cultural, language, etc (LeCompte and Preissle, 1993). Affinity is further developed as a sign of trust be it through active and reflexive listening, background knowledge about the participant's case. Matching and mirroring a participant's terminology and mannerism is also key to affinity. Highly sensitive processes must be as accurate as possible for how the participants understand the process and how they are communicating (Vasquez-Montilla et al., 2000). All of these practices can be conducive to data collection and to the participants themselves as they would feel more comfortable engaging, especially if the facilitator is also of that same group (Fallon & Brown, 2002).

Solorzano, Cega, and Vasso (2000) utilized such a method in their study on how microaggressions affected the academic and personal life of African-American college students; how they experience the racial climate of their campus. These methods were chosen as they allowed for students to explore and discover added context and depth to a phenomena. "Qualitative focus-group analysis examines these students' lived experiences and shows how they can provide a depth of understanding, afford outsiders with greater insight, and be a guide to further research on collegiate racial climate and the impact of racial microaggressions on African American college students" (pg. 64). Taking a page from feminist and critical race frameworks, these culturally responsive methods

recognize the subject positions of its interviewees and treats them as active participants in the interview process and co-creators of knowledge (Rodriguez et al., 2011). While I did not use focus groups, I used these practices in my own recruitment and interviewing, one such example is the emphasis of my own positionality as a Black male (the type of population that is most associated with the topic of racial criminalization as pointed out in the literature review). I also used these practices in specifically in who I utilized to help me get participants.

### *Sampling Recruitment and Target Population(s)*

Culturally responsive practices should also be considered in participant recruitment. The student population can be recruited through targeted snowball methods via class recruitment. According to Weiss (1994) 'vouching figures' are particularly useful in recruiting the targeted population for sampling. Vouching figures can have a variety of benefits but also drawbacks depending on nature of sponsorship. Potential vouching figures may come in the form of student organizations. As a result, my recruitment tactics were primarily through reaching out to a variety of student and university programs that not only have impressive and public roles but that also work primarily with Black students on the campus. I also involved colleagues and peers to distribute my recruitment material to their classes and to their Black students.

Participation was voluntary but compensated with a \$10 Starbucks gift card and interviews were usually no more than an hour.

My data relies on the interview content of a population of 25 Black undergraduate students at the University of Missouri in Columbia, ages 18-25; conducted November 2020 through December 2021. This population sample was comprised of 19 cis females,

five cis males, and one genderqueer student. The University of Missouri is no exception to the general fact that women make up a larger portion of the university student body compared to men; 53% of Mizzou's student body are women (National Center for Education Statistics, 2020). That said, this overrepresentation must be accounted for as something that could potentially shape and influence my data.

### *Theoretical Grounding/Backing*

My methodology and analysis are rooted in grounded theory that develops an emerging theory from inductive data. Developed by Glaser and Strauss (1967), grounded theory emphasizes a series of characteristics that includes simultaneous collection and analysis of data, constructing analytic codes and categories from the data itself and elaboration of categories that defined and enhances the relationships between them as well as different points within these categories. Much like my previous statements on how the active interview is less reliant on 'correct answers' than it is on active construction; grounded theory develops material from what it gathers. (MacDonald & Schreiber, 2001; Morse & Field, 1995). Charmaz (2014) has further developed grounded theory into 'constructive grounded theory' that emphasizes the researcher into account; how reflexivity is important for the researcher and how it makes itself known in the research process.

Charmaz's CGT also has congruence with certain elements of critical race theory as well as intersectionality as demonstrated by Kassam, Marcellus, Clark, and O'Mahony (2020). Reflexivity and positionality have long been held as integral to the conceptualization of research in critical race theory and intersectionality in particular (Crenshaw, 1991; Matsuda, 1995; Delgado & Stefancic, 2017). Human experiences are

diverse and complicated through contexts; these contexts are shaped through larger power imbalances and this elemental assumption forms a foundational pillar of critical research (Hill-Collins, 2019). Researchers are no exception to this. Kassam et al. (2020) discussed four units of analysis that helped clarify points of commonality between CGT and intersectionality: reflexivity, complexity, variability, and social justice. (Charmaz, 2009; 2017; Kassam et al., 2020) and it is these issues that guided my coding categories and questions. For example, variability captures how a person's identity or status or understanding change over time and context (Cho, 2013; Hulko, 2009).

For this reason, rather than ask standard 'yes/no' questions, questions were more open-ended to allow for further exploration. For example, one of my questions "Did your parents ever talk about the issue of criminalization with you? What sort of things did they emphasize?" is a question that allows for confirmation or denial of that type of racial socialization and also invites reflection about what was or wasn't discussed. Answers were coded as themes began to emerge sometimes explicitly and sometimes implicitly that linked to variability in interaction and experiences.

One other compatible tenet of CRT that informs this research is the importance of storytelling and narrative analysis. Our society constructs the world through a series of symbols, objects, messages, and narratives; many of them oppressive (Feagin, 2010). Critical Race Theorists view storytelling as one powerful way of how a society builds and views itself; counter-storytelling operates as a method to counteract and challenge prevailing narratives among the majority (Delgado & Stefancic, 2017; Solorzano & Vosso, 2001; Matsuda, 1995). Counter-storytelling falls well in line with a constructive



grounded theory that seeks to develop material from how subject populations talk about and understand these topics.

The complexity and variability aspects are necessary to understand the depth of the human experience. Constructivist grounded theory has not only commonality with intersectionality and certain aspects of critical race theory but has roots in symbolic interactionism as well (MacDonald & Schreiber, 2001; Aldiabat and Le Navenec, 2011). Constructivist Grounded Theory has several tenets and assumptions that are compatible with S.I., namely how theory and perceptions are developed through data and interactions. Both assume that people are active social actors that act towards things based on the meanings things have for them (Blumer, 1969; Stauss & Corbin, 1998). Both also assume the variability and complexity of phenomena and how these are developed.

My research should be constructed in a way that allows for more open-ended contestation and elaboration but is still guided by a set of theoretical understandings and acknowledgement of social facts. Namely that racial stigma and criminalization is a social fact; a historical and contemporary reality that has massive implications for individuals and aggregate life chances (Rios, 2011; Muhammad, 2010, Yamatta-Taylor, 2016) and is the result of larger discursive projects that give meanings to these categories (Chavez, 2013; Hall, 2000; Omi & Winant, 2015). This systemic racism is not just something that can be experienced or become a part of how we narrate and talk about ourselves, but they also exist independent whether we acknowledge them (Bhaskar, 1978). The question is then how does it play a role in the identity construction and stigma management of my subjects if at all? What role does it play in their interactions and

everyday life if at all? Potential questions to ask my participants can detail how participants came to understand their Blackness as well as their assessment of how Blackness is stigmatized and criminalized and whether they experienced that stigma.

There are limitations to these methods as there are with any other methods. As far as CGT and CRM go, the facilitator must be reflexive on their personal story and experiences and how it may affect data collection (Rios, 2011). Being the author of this study is a Black male, the issues being studied are not a matter of academic distance but can be rather immediate. Because these approaches may result in a relaxed atmosphere how will that affect a participant's willingness to share? Should a participant be friends with the facilitator and how will that affect data? Therefore, steps need to be taken to ensure not only genuine participation but also full understanding of the situation and how the data will be used. Such steps can include transcript review by participants and full explanation of data use.

#### TOWN AND GOWN SETTING

The University of Missouri is a university located in Columbia, Missouri and is the flagship of the University of Missouri system. Established in 1839, it like many other universities of its type operated as what Lewis (2019) has described, an institution that was built and operated by and for landed white men. Even after the attempted desegregation case brought by Lloyd Gaines in 1938, the university did not accept its first Black student(s) until 1950, and its first Black tenurable professor, Arvarh Strickland, until 1969 (Kim, 2013). The city of Columbia itself lies in the heart of mid-Missouri's historical "Little Dixie" region, so-named for early white settlers from slave-holding state

neighbors like Kentucky and Tennessee, and who also brought enslaved Black people with them.

Columbia, Missouri was also the site of the 1923 lynching of James T. Scott. On April 28, 1923, Scott, a Black janitor in the MU medical school, was arrested and falsely charged with the attempted rape of the 14-year-old daughter of a white university professor several days prior (Hunt, 2010; Roberts, 2018). On the night going into April 29, a mob forcibly took Scott from the county jail where he was held and hung from the bridge at Providence and Stewart roads in front a crowd of onlookers and participants numbering into the thousands (Huber, 1991). The scale of the lynching and its proximity to the university campus caught nationwide attention and scathing commentary. The New York Times reported, “Missouri students see Negro lynched; Co-eds join crowd which cheers the storming of the Columbia jail”. The Chicago Daily Tribune itself reported “College Town Mob Kills Negro, Missouri 'U' Students Join In Lynching.” (Huber, 1991)

W.E.B. DuBois himself sardonically commented in the NAACP’s *The Crisis*, “We are glad to note that the University of Missouri has opened a course in Applied Lynching. Many of our American Universities have long defended the institution, but they have not been frank or brave enough actually to arrange a mob murder so that students could see it in detail.” (Hunt, 2010, pg. 53). This visceral local episode of the larger use of lynching as racialized social control using criminalizing narratives had lived on in what Larsen and Johnson (2018) has described a ‘spectral turn’, the erasure of any indication happening there at all. Columbia continued to follow the Southern pattern of enforced de jure segregation and a period of urban development in the late 1950s and early 1960s which largely erased the Black community of Sharp End (Baalman, 2019).

Much like other parts of the country, protests and sit-ins to desegregate local businesses were organized by various civil rights organizations including the Columbia, Missouri branch of the Congress of Racial Equality (CORE) (Puckett, 2018)

In the midst and aftermath of protests that garnered nationwide attention in 2015 at the University of Missouri; a lecture series on the African-American community and experience in the Columbia area was established as a response to the protests. However, racial stigma and racial criminalization still make their presence known in both the everyday operations of various institutions and in interactions. For example, Black people made up 10.9% of Columbia's population in 2019, yet Black drivers were 38% of drivers pulled over by the Columbia police department, being overrepresented by 347% relative to their actual population (Lin & Dean, 2021). For another example, in 2018, a city manager garnered local rebuke and criticism for comments made at an annual community diversity breakfast. According to reports, Mike Matthes, during a presentation on racial bias and unemployment displayed several pictures of young Black adults that were posted during the social media campaign "#IfTheyShotMe" juxtaposing pictures of casual stereotypical clothing and mannerisms with pictures of the same people in more socially mainstream and acceptable position and clothing.

Matthes then proceeded to describe how the pictures made him uncomfortable: "“In the upper left, he's flashing a gang sign," Matthes said. "The guy in the middle looks like he's gonna rob a bank. The upper right, I'm not sure which gender he or she is; I'm befuddled. Lower left, why is he so angry? And the lower right, that's totally inappropriate dress in a professional environment if you're looking for a job." (Crowley, 2018; Reed, 2018) before switching to pictures featuring the same individuals in more

professional clothing, receiving applause from some members of the audience. The presentation garnered sharp criticism from local civil rights groups as culturally and racially illiterate. This incident was an example of the potential for racial criminalization, stigma, and its consequences for not only personal interactions but for their navigation of everyday life and media representation, even in an ostensibly “liberal” college town like Columbia. It is this set of contexts that students can be stepping into when they move to the university. But when they do, they are also entering with a set of ideas surrounding their own racialized identity that may also be subject to change. In the next chapter, we explore how these students understand their racial identity and more, specifically, consider how criminalization and stigma may or may not affect their sense of self and identity.

## CHAPTER 2- RACIALIZATION AND IDENTITY

“In every generation, ever since Negroes have been here, every Negro mother and father has had to face that child and try to create in that child some way of surviving this particular world, some way to make the child who will be despised not despise himself.” -James Baldwin (2011;60)

This chapter seeks to explore Black undergraduate students’ experiences with racial socialization and racialized identity. Racialized identity is consistently discussed as a highly important aspect of their sense of self for Black students in particular (White & Hughes, 1987). But what makes someone Black? What is understood is that practices of hypodescent means that Blackness is given a particular sort of weight that Whiteness is not subjected to. In terms of racialized identity and Blackness, there’s been a multitude of interpretations and ways of studying it. For example, Shelby (2002) has discussed two main conceptions that can frame racialized identity. The ‘thin’ conception treats Blackness as a socially imposed category of difference based mainly in physiological features and biological ancestry. The ‘thick’ conception treats Blackness as having a more rigid set of expectations and qualifications for who can and should qualify.

Similarly, the Multidimensional Model of Racial Identity (MMRI) offers an example of understanding racial identity for Black Americans across four dimensions of racial identity and the sense of self: (1) salience, (2) centrality, (3) regard, (4) ideology. Much like Stryker’s (1980) work on identity salience, this dimension along with the dimension of centrality concerns how this identity is a core part of an individual’s sense of self. The next two dimensions are about the qualitative meanings a person attaches to this particular identity. Regard referring to the extent a person attaches positive or negative feelings to that group and membership in it. Ideology being the collection of

beliefs, attitudes, and opinions about membership in the group and about how the group should act and relate to others.

In asking participants what comes to mind when they think about Blackness as an identity category, several students implicated a ‘thin’ conception of Blackness namely through skin pigment for example, students generally perceived Blackness and membership in the group in one of three related ways that often overlapped with each other: cultural, stigmatized, and as resilient.

### *Cultural meanings of Blackness*

Students who thought of Blackness through primarily cultural lens emphasized a variety of cultural artifacts and aspects of Black cultural capital. For example, Shaun, a sophomore from Ferguson, Missouri noted:

“I mean, the first thing that kind of comes to mind, just a sense of community. Definitely sense of community, sense of ... I don't know. Sense of identity. I know when we talk about Black people, Black people kind of got a soulfulness to them. They're not just cut and dried. Everything is expressive and emotional, and there are a lot of emotions tied behind a lot of your intentions. So, that's kind of what comes to my mind. . . . Yeah. I feel like in comparison to probably the White community, I would say Black people, even the way that they talk, they use a lot of soulful type of words. The expressiveness, they have a lot of expressiveness . . . I would say that the main that I would for sure say is different is the way that we dress. We definitely got our own type of style. I don't know. It's a lot of different stuff that's rooted off of Black culture and stuff, like music. A lot of their sampling for songs, all of that.”

Lily, a senior also from Ferguson, also expressed similar sentiments:

“So, being Black, it entails a lot of different things. You could start off on the cultural front, different music, hiphop, R&B, then different clothes, hairstyles, just be able to protect our hair and to express ourselves. Then, I guess you could get more political. Or no, along with culture, family, spending time with family, being family-oriented. A lot of African Americans, or a lot of Black people are Christian. Some are Muslim or different religions, but I know a lot of them are Christian, raised in the church, so there's a church mentality in the end, when you go to... We like to joke a lot.”

Both of these quotes indicated what Shelby (2002) defined as a ‘thick’ conceptualization of Blackness. When breaking down several sub-categories of ‘thick’ Blackness, Shelby (2002) points out that there is indeed a ‘cultural’ definition of Blackness. Here there’s a set of narrow and identifiable characteristics of beliefs, values, artifacts, and cultural capital. It is in fact this sort of ‘Black cultural capital’, that scholars like Carter (2003) have pointed out, that act as a sort of measurement to determine authentic membership in the group. Lily also mentioned in her sense of Blackness, a sense of family and being family-oriented. This has similarities to values of communalism that were described by Johnson and Carter (2020). Two students when detailing their primarily cultural capital definitions of Blackness noted the diversity of Black cultural origins. It’s worth noting that these students were second-generation Black ethnic-Americans so their conceptions of Blackness were indelibly shaped by not just their family socialization but also by interaction with American peers:

**Julien**: “Right. Did you observe or notice any differences in how your peers understood blackness or how they understood culture or black culture?”

**Gerard (freshman, second-generation Caribbean, Dacula, GA)**: “I would say the culture was different. For me, if we talk about music, music expectations were different.



To me black music was reggae, R&B, soul, for them it was rap, hip hop, pop. So it was like that was a disparity. How you dress, how you carry yourself was different.”

### *Blackness as Resilience*

Lily as well as several other students continued to connect a sense of resilience to oppression as central to her understanding of Blackness:

“... I think it's a coping mechanism, honestly, to laugh when we're kind of in pain or when we're dealing with something. I think being Black is resilience and trying to make it through things. I think it's just a different outlook on life, partially because we know that it could end at any moment. So, we try to make the best out of it.”

This is intimately tied into the cultural socialization of African-Americans; that racial socialization practices communicate certain cultural values which in turn offer a buffer of resilience against stigmatizing racism (Neblett et al., 2009). Johnson and Carter (2020) found that Communalism can be expressed through valuing family systems (beyond genetic ties and going into extended family ties and adopted family ties). This can be seen in the shared child rearing practices of multi-generational homes as well as ‘fictive kin’. Johnson and Carter (2020) contend that these sorts of values that are socialized help promote psychosocial wellbeing; they discuss this as Black Cultural Strength, a set of positive racial socialization, internalized racial identity, and communalism, as well as effective coping skills. The psychosocial effects of such cultural socialization have been demonstrated in the resiliency skills of Black young adults and are well documented (Brown and Tylka, 2011; Brown, 2008).

*Blackness as Stigmatized Identity*

Other students, when asked, notably mentioned Blackness as a stigmatized identity. Goffman (1963), Lenhardt (2004) have both discussed how the stigmatized are quite aware of what the larger society deems normal and unstigmatized. So, for some students this awareness of Blackness as stigmatized became a centralizing pillar in their understandings of group membership:

“I think being Black, it's not a burden but it's definitely like a weight on our shoulders. It's not like certain other races. We have certain weight that we carry, being Black people in America, at least. At least in my opinion, we have to work harder than some others do to get to the same level of success just because of our skin color.”- **Trey (sophomore, O'Fallon, MO)**

According to Neblett et al. (2009), ‘racial barrier’ messages emphasize awareness of racial inequality and strategies for coping with racial adversity. For a similar look at how a sense of collective identity is based in some shared sense of stigmatization, Prins, van Stecklenberg, Poletta, and Klandermans (2013) found similar group construction through narrative for second-generation Moroccan-Dutch young adults. They had consistently used pronouns and language to suggest that their experiences were less individual and more general experience that was relatable to all members of the ethnic group. For example, one such student in a focus group when talking about racial profiling would use the inclusive pronoun “we”. It was a collaborative effort that constructed a collective narrative about their position in Dutch society, and that injustice and stigma were central to their experiences. Trey similarly used such language that indicated a sort of collective narrative about racial stigma in everyday life; he noted that because racial stigma and its relationship to material disparities are so taken for granted that Black

Americans must work harder. The concept of “racialized ancestral hardship” (hardships and stigma experienced by one’s ancestors due to racism)(Roberts, Bareket-Shavit, & Wang, 2021). These ancestral hardships then play a key role in collective stories and collective memories (Hirst & Manier, 2002).

In an article on racialized self-identity categorization, Black-Americans had consistently associated Blackness with hardship across several studies. Black participants were far more likely to associate and categorize targets with Black ancestry if that individual could be conceivably connected to ancestral hardships (kidnapped from Africa and enslaved, etc.) (Roberts et al., 2021).

### RACIAL SOCIALIZATION OF BLACK STUDENTS

But of course, before a student steps foot onto a college campus, they are socialized within the family unit. Given that family is a primary social institution that performs the role of socializing an individual(s), we must consider how larger social forces have not only birthed the concepts of race but also how this affects the socialization of children into adopting a “race” as identity and the meanings that come with the category system of race in the United States. When it comes to the racial socialization of children, the parents’ racial identities and ideologies can have an influence on the degree to which parents consider race important, what they emphasize or don’t, and how the child will later identify. African-American parents, like any other parents, do racial socialization in a variety of ways. Some parents consider discussions of race to be central to the child’s upbringing (Bowman & Howard, 1985) while others only seem to bring it up in the event of a child asking or in the context of a major event.

When asked if their parents ever discussed Blackness, some students feel that they did not experience explicit racial socialization:

“No, interestingly enough, I did not have a lot of racial socialization from my parents, it was not talked about at all, actually. Of course, I knew I was black and I was aware of that, but it didn't play a very significant role in my life especially since I lived in a black community. So we really did not see other races. I went to school with black students, so although I was very centered around blackness and I was around people who were black, we didn't really have that dichotomy of other races, so it didn't really come up, it wasn't really talked about.”- **Sunny (Junior, St. Louis, MO)**

*Black Multiracial or Nonblack Parent(s)*

What must also be considered is how Black-multiracial students (having one Black parent) are socialized. The sociological literature on multiracial individuals is still relatively new. The increasing attention it's gotten can be traced to few notable trends including the increased population of multiracial individuals since the 1970s, the inclusion of a 'multiracial' category in the United States Census in 2000, and the increasing prominence of multiracial individuals in popular culture. Even as we recognize that social identities are a dynamic process, Brunnsma and Rockquemore (2001) ask that we also consider that racial identities are still subject to some degree of constraint; racial categories are imposed by systems (Fields and Fields, 2014). And this degree of constraint can be especially felt for those who have Black ancestry.

Nonwhiteness and especially Blackness have operated as a 'marked' social category compared to the 'unmarked' white category which has operated as an unassumed default by which others are measured. The ascription of Blackness to

individuals and groups has historically and currently been shaped by a 'vigilant framework' or a 'mental one-drop rule', a slight hint of markedness is enough to override all other potential statuses (Brekhus 1996). This affects how those who are Black-multiracial can be read as Black, albeit several factors can affect this such as skin color. This can also affect how multiracial individuals themselves identify in such that "multiracial individuals for the most part have accepted the racial status quo and have identified themselves as Black." (Daniel, 1992; Khanna & Johnson, 2010). This is still the case even as more and more Americans identify as multiracial.

If we accept that the racial socialization of Black parents depends on their race-relevant attitudes, beliefs, and awareness then this should also be the case for Black-multiracial individuals and Black individuals who also have been raised primarily by non-Black parents. Some non-Black parents compensated by relying on Black family members to provide the specific aspects of racial socialization that they themselves couldn't provide. Rose, a biracial (Black/White) freshman from St. Louis, MO stated as much: "I think that had a large part to do with growing up with a lot of white peers. I have two moms, and both of them are white, and would want me to experience black culture, but obviously they can't give that to me themselves. And since my dad isn't around, his family members would try and make sure I was able to."

Others considered whether political attitudes of the nonblack parent(s) affected the frequency and content of racial socialization from parents as Josephine, a freshman from Springfield, MO, noted:

"I mean, we've really never had a conversation about blackness, black identity. That's not really something that we've discussed. We've talked about it in politics, but it's

not very positive because she's conservative. And so we've bumped heads about lots of issues. And a lot of times she has some racist undertone remarks about black people. So we've had discussions, not good ones about blackness, I guess. But we've never really had... I don't know. Interesting question.”

### *Black Ethnics*

Complexity in Black racial socialization is not just limited to the increasing number and prominence of Black-multiracial/biracial individuals. Attention must also be turned to the increasing numbers of Black ethnic immigrants and their descendants. Voluntary immigration from Africa and the Caribbean has been one of the notable trends of immigration to the United States after the Immigration and Nationality Act of 1965 which officially did away with national quotas that were in place since 1924; as a result the Black immigrant population has increased fivefold since 1980 to a count of 4.2 million in 2016 (Anderson & Lopez, 2018). This large increase in Black immigrants has had enormous implications for intraracial matters including political mobilization, racial categorization, and identity formation. As far as the identity formation of second-generations were concerned, Waters (1994) noted in her studies on second-generation Haitian and West Indian-Americans that they gravitated towards one of three main identity-types: (1) identification as Black, (2) identification as an ethnic hyphenated-American (for example: Jamaican- or Nigerian-American), or (3) an immigrant identity that overtly distanced itself from American-Blackness. The identity that an individual took on themselves was strongly correlated with their perspective of the racial social order in the United States, as well as the parents' background, social class, and the social networks of peers and the parents.

Grace, a junior and second-generation Nigerian-American, mentioned this in her interview. Her ethnic heritage had carried greater salience than a larger group identity when she was younger because of her family socialization; this informed the meanings that she attached to Blackness as more diverse than the default American-Blackness that so many think of. But this also somewhat limited her ability to engage with Black-American peers:

**Julien**: “Sure, of course. You'd mentioned that, in your experiences growing up, that you were seen or said to not be as black because you were Nigerian and not American black, black American?”

**Grace**: “I don't want to say because, as if there was a direct correlation, because, growing up, I didn't tell people explicitly. . .”

**Julien**: “Mm-hmm” (affirmative).

**Grace**: “I guess it would play a bit of a factor because I wasn't as well versed in American pop culture, black things and stuff. And I didn't grow up around black Americans so I didn't talk like them, like the ones that went to my school.”

Parents aren't the only ones responsible for socialization in ones' life; friends and peer groups are also a powerful source of socialization. For example, Prudence Carter (2003) noted how racial authenticity was managed among African-American adolescents; utilizing Black cultural capital to determine and exercise 'authentic Blackness'. This was achieved through listening to appropriate music, wearing the appropriate clothing, or the use of African-American Vernacular English (AAVE). These sorts of cultural capital to determine authentic membership was also analyzed by Natasha Warikoo (2007) in her work with second-generation teenagers in New York; co-ethnic peers while having

multidimensional identities still relied on essentialist scripts that reinforced group membership

#### IDENTITY ACROSS TIME AND PLACE

All interviewed students described their conception of racialized identity changing as they grew older with a general thread that it wasn't quite as prominent or salient to them when they were children; they knew that they were Black or that there was something "different" about them, but through socialization and experience, their subjective perceptions of racial group membership grew more complex for a variety of reasons. Identity should be discussed as a dynamic process that occurs through socialization. Neville and Cross (2017) emphasized a stage-level process of racial identity development in Black people. This process would usually be sparked by some sort of triggering event such as a personal experience or observation, or stint of activism. This event would then lead to a "Racial Awakening"; this racial awakening was characterized by an increased awareness of membership and group identity that often led to further exploration. The stage of racial awakening then led to either continued exploration that led to further activism and pride or despair. Lily's experience is a good example of the former:

"So then, when Mike Brown happened, I started looking into more pro-Black pages, started taking more pride in the culture and learning more things about what's affecting Black people and what we are going through, and started protesting and really just being pro-Black. So, that was a huge shift for me. Also, trying to teach others about being pro-Black"

The shooting murder of Michael Brown by an officer of the Ferguson, Missouri police department on August 9, 2014 and the resulting explosion of Black Lives Matter



activism across the country served as a triggering event for Lily to delve further into pro-Black material and groups. This case and others like it served as a catalyst for individuals and their racial socialization whether it came from parents or friends. Neville & Cross (2017) also noted that education could be a catalyst for further exploration or as a consequence of racial awakening. While three students noted an awakening period as a result of high school or college courses that had a primarily Black student body, others delved into self-education. Ezra, a biracial (Black/White) senior from O'Fallon, MO noted that they compensated for a perceived lack of pro-Black socialization in their youth by reading Black feminist literature in high school.

The connection and concept that one has to their racialized identity is also definitely tied to neighborhood-level factors and the spaces that they navigate. Neighborhood-level factors might partially explain why Sunny, who we earlier mentioned, didn't feel as though she'd received much racial socialization in her all-Black neighborhood; according to Tatum (2000) racial socialization was a higher priority for those who'd lived in predominately white communities. However, as contrast, Kyle described a sense of community and socialization that was explicitly encouraged in his predominately Black social settings:

“Well it was kind of, since growing up, like my school, my elementary and middle school, and my neighborhood were predominantly black. It was kind of just like a village vibe. Whenever we see each other we used to say hey. They would look out for the neighborhood kids if we're out playing with each other. And about that too, everyone kind of knew each other and were familiar. . . Well, I got that, don't be afraid to express who you are. Know that you're every bit as capable as your white counterparts. Know that you have a culture and don't be afraid to hide that so that you can fit into certain places. Always be careful, don't be too quick to trust anyone because anything can

happen. Know that you can lean on your family and your neighborhood. What else? What else? I can't think of anything else right now.”

The communal aspect of Kyle’s upbringing can be reflective of a particular style of interaction order that reinforces a specific kind of reality for African-Americans. As discussed in chapter 1, the concept of ‘linked fate’ establishes a set of presumed characteristics in common; primarily shared common history and common membership in a racially minoritized and stigmatized group and this guides interactions within the order such as the ‘head nod’ as a form of civil inattention.

In a study of interactional norms on two Chicago train lines—one with a predominately white ridership and the other Black- Raudenbush (2012) consistently noted more open verbal communication and direct offers to help passengers in need on the lines with primarily Black ridership. Riders also used this interactional context to establish social cohesion and collective identity and messages about how Black people are perceived to act or supposed to act towards each other (for example in this case, how perceived or real mistreatment by Black CTA employees reflected poorly on intraracial solidarity). According to Rawls (2000) the sort of self that develops from these interaction orders is a sort of ‘teamwork self’ in which individuals subordinate and orient their own needs to the group. As a result, individuals are expected to treat each other as persons first regardless of role and status, being socialized into the common norms of the group (Raudenbush, 2012; Rawls, 2000). Kyle’s neighborhood was an example of a ‘neighborhood interaction order’, the interaction order and its rules that govern how people interact with each other within a specific neighborhood (Waverly & Duck, 2020)

In a study on the effects of neighborhood diversity on the racial socialization of Black youth, Stevenson and colleagues found that in neighborhoods with high cultural

diversity found that the types of racial socialization differed between Black boys and Black girls. Black boys were far more likely to receive socialization about hardships in high-culturally-diverse neighborhoods after a racist incident whereas Black girls received more messages of cultural pride from predominately Black low-cultural-diversity neighborhoods (Stevenson, McNeil, Herrero-Taylor, & Davis, 2005). Of course, not all the students interviewed lived in primarily Black neighborhoods as many also lived in suburban or otherwise predominately white neighborhoods.

For this context we can look towards Hagerman (2018) who explored the relatively underdiscussed field of racial socialization and white children; what must be considered is what white children take away from their peers and parents on the meanings of race and racism on a neighborhood-level context. Research has consistently found that white families are far less likely to discuss issues of race and racial tension; for example in the aftermath of the Michael Brown shooting in 2014, white parents did not discuss the tension in ways that emphasized power and inequalities (Roundhill, 2018). Similarly, in the aftermath of the death of George Floyd in 2020, white parents were far more likely to emphasize messages of colorblindness (Sullivan, 2021). Given that this is the predominate means of racial socialization in privileged white neighborhoods, this carries the potential for how Black and biracial children are themselves socialized about race when they grow up in these environments but also the potential of interracial interaction. The centrality, salience, and public and private regard for racialized identity was varied based on the neighborhoods these students experienced in their childhood and adolescence (Rivas-Drake & Witherspoon, 2013).

Ezra noted that growing up in a predominately white suburb of St. Louis had definitely affected their relationship with their identity and specifically with Blackness, this difficulty was also rooted in a sort of racialized interaction order, rooted in colorblindness:

**Ezra**: “Yeah. I think it was difficult, because I went to a predominantly white school, and grew up in a predominantly white area. And I don't know, it's not that race was not discussed in my house, because it was. I don't know, it just wasn't really thought of in those terms. It was just like, oh, yeah, you're mixed. And that's where things kind of stopped. . . And I got the talks of where it was like, people might look at us differently, or look at you differently. But it wasn't ever anything that it was just like, yeah. . . I think also, it was just like, when you're in school, especially like a predominantly white school, things are kind of defined in race neutral terms. You know what I mean? And that kind of extended to me. Kind of growing up in like the color-blind society. Like when Obama was elected, we thought that we were in a post racial moment. So, being in elementary school and middle school growing up in that, I think that definitely colored my struggles finding my identity.”

#### CRIMINALIZATION AND ITS EFFECTS

Just as the unstigmatized learn to attach negative characteristics to the stigmatized, so can the stigmatized internalize these messages. Internalized stigma occurs when a stigmatized individual(s) accepts and internalizes the negative stereotypes and stigma that are ascribed to them (Quinn & Earnshaw, 2013). Goffman (1963) discussed in his work that “shame becomes a central possibility, arising from the individual's perception of one of his own attributes as a defiling thing to possess, and one he can readily see himself as not possessing (pg. 7). The shame that Goffman describes can be an indicator of depreciated self-esteem that can come from being stigmatized.

One famous example of internalized racial stigma can be observed in the proceedings of the *Brown v. Board* case decided in 1954. Husband and wife psychologists, Kenneth and Mamie Clark conducted their famous doll test, which sought to explore the psychological impact of racism on Black children by recording their reactions to white dolls and black dolls. The children not only expressed preferences for the white dolls but also frequently described the black dolls with negative characteristics (Lenhardt, 2004). These results were submitted as testimony demonstrating the consequence of racial stigma operating in a white supremacist society amidst de jure segregation. The doll test was reproduced by child psychologist Margaret Beale Spencer, in 2010; the findings were largely similar to those found by the Clarks several decades prior.

As far as understanding the effects of criminalization as a form of stigma on the self-conception of the stigmatized, Paul Hirschfield (2008) utilized Labeling Theory to study the effects of criminalization in a low-income predominately African-American neighborhood. The basic premise of Labeling Theory is that both formal and informal sanctions after an act of deviance escalate to the point where an individual engages in further deviance, and internalizes that label as a part of themselves, making that labeling a self-fulfilling prophecy (Becker, 1963; Lemert, 1972). Hirschfield interviewed several Black and Latino teenagers and found that an arrest did not necessarily result in the sort of informal sanctions that Labeling Theory prescribed. And even when they did, the predicted shift in self-concept mostly didn't occur accordingly. In Hirschfield's study, he noted that the teenagers would insist that autonomous self-definition was more important than the labels that came with their arrest.

On the other hand, Rios (2011) found that because of the labeling processes that his shadowees were subjected to, a sort of self-blame was cultivated, “the boys were taught that poverty, victimization, criminalization, and neglect were products of their own actions. The boys internalized these messages, and in turn they all reported feeling personally responsible for their plight (pg. 72). But what is important to point out is that the prior pieces (and Labeling Theory proper) are based on the premise of some action being taken, albeit an action or behavior committed by a member of an already stigmatized group (the poor, Black, Latino, etc.) but actions nonetheless. As scholars like Goffman (1963), Lenhardt (2004), and Howarth (2006) have pointed out, a racialized stigma doesn’t just come from some sort of action but from simple membership within the stigmatized group. Recall that there is some shared sense of what meanings particular stigmatizing attributes can have attached to them.

To gauge our first research question, our students were asked whether such racial stigma and criminalization affected their sense of self or identity. Generally, most recognized that it was a matter of imposed stigma but even this was tempered by the potential to internalize said stigma of criminalization:

“I think it can mess with your mind a little bit. . . It makes me think like, "Oh, maybe I am this big bad wolf who everybody's afraid of. . . I'm a very approachable, nice person. I talk to everybody. But understanding that you're just looked at differently, for all the reasons I said before, athletic frame, kind of big. I'm not huge. But kind of big and being black, It makes you think like, "Oh, I might be somebody that other people are scared of."

I don't see myself like that. Usually when I'm out and about, I don't see myself as somebody people should be as afraid of.”- **E.J.**

Here we can refer back to Clair's discussion of 'criminalized subjectivity' from a DuBoisian lens. Recall that DuBois' concept of the veil refers to the structural, social, and symbolic separation between Black and White worlds; and more than simple separation, the veil actively distorts White perceptions of Black people. These perceptions come from the long history of negative stigmatizing imagery that characterize Black people and Black men especially, as untrustworthy, prone to violence, and criminally deviant (Bogle, 2001; Smiley & Fakunle, 2016). For those stigmatized and criminalized this veil can warp and even actively foreclose interactions between the stigmatized and the nonstigmatized, leading to a sense of frustration (Clair, 2021). The effects of this veil between the criminalized and non-criminalized can even normalize and perpetuate the criminal injustices that Black and Brown people are subjected to as Rios (2011) explored. So criminalized subjectivity in these university students primarily comes from an awareness of how others on the opposite side of the veil see them through stigmatizing lens. It develops in Black undergraduate students much like a form of double consciousness in as far as they understand that this particular stigma of criminal deviance is attached to Blackness. As EJ further recalled:

“As I got older and my parents constantly reminded me, it became ingrained in me that as black people, sometimes you have a target on your back, especially if you're a young black man. . . It was always just the message of just be careful. Be careful when you're out. Be careful when you're around other people. . . That was generally the message I got from what it meant to be black was that you just have to be more careful and more cautious in everything you do, because you have a target on your back already, that you can't remove.”

EJ alluded to what he described as the temporal angle of developing a criminalized subjectivity and tying it into the process of racial socialization. The development of a criminalized subjectivity was salient to several students in their understanding of their racial socialization. It also doesn't just come from racial socialization about racial profiling and criminalization but also from retrospective understanding of previous experiences of profiling or being singled out in particular situations, both of which will be further explored in the next chapter. Again, going back to Clair's conceptualization, an important aspect of criminalized subjectivity is a person/group's subjective perception of their position to criminal legal control and other criminalizing forces in American life, even if they themselves aren't actively being criminalized.

This perception and awareness can take the form of 'metastereotypes', Black peoples' perceptions of how white-Americans view and stereotype them (Siegelman and Tuch, 1996). A phone poll study of Black-Americans in 1991 about metastereotypes found that a significant majority of those polled at 82% thought that many white-Americans held the view that Black people were criminally deviant and more likely to commit violent crime. A similar study done years later found that this metastereotype was still prevalent amongst Black respondents (Torres and Charles, 2004). Because these criminalizing and stigmatizing narratives are deeply embedded in cultural and institutional practices and discourses, African-Americans must challenge that conversation within themselves to establish positive identities (Howard, Flenbaugh, & Terry, 2012).



Given that we've already established that several students looked back on their racial socialization and conceptions of Blackness and positioned a criminalized subjectivity as a salient part of it, then it's a degree of the extent to which that affects self-concept. There may be a host of factors that play into the development of a criminalized subjectivity, metastereotypes, and their varying centrality to an individual, particularly in the role of primary and secondary appraisals and response to stigma. Primary appraisal refers to the assessment of how relevant and harmful a subject finds the stigma to be to their self-concept (Hing, 2012). Being that several students mentioned inequality, hardship, and racial stigma in their interview responses to Blackness, we can make a conclusion that these perceptions were varying degrees of central to their understandings of Blackness; this sense of group identification could have the potential to influence the vulnerability of a person to stigmatization (Majors, McCoy, Kaiser, and Quinton, 2003). Anticipation of stigma in interactions with fellows or how pervasive it can also have the potential to make its negative effects worse (Schmitt and Branscombe, 2002).

This is where secondary appraisals-sense of resources to cope with stigmatization-can come in. These resources can be psychological (self-esteem, sense of control), personal (education, occupation, etc.), and social (positive ingroup evaluation, ingroup identification, etc.). We can specifically look at these social and psychological resources that can be used to mitigate stigmatization. Positive evaluation of ones' in-group can be associated with lower levels of anxiety and depression (Cassidy et al., 2004). For African-American youth, the lessening of stigma-induced stress was influenced by racial socialization, specifically the kind that emphasizes Black culture as a positive value, awareness of discrimination, and belief in racial equality (Neblett et al., 2008).

Of course, those subjected to stigma are able to are also active responders to those stigmas, stigmas aren't just things that just happen to people; as Tyler (2018) has mentioned we can "reconceptualize stigma as a political economy of devaluation. . . rooted. . . in people's struggles against the social structures that produce them as markedly inferior" (p. 753). In an application of Goffmanian stigma to John Edgar Wideman's *Brothers and Keeper*, Burston and his colleagues (2021) noted Wideman had similar struggles with a sense of shame that stemmed from not only his awareness as a racialized minority but the stigma of the neighborhood that came with it. As Wideman described it, "Fear marched along with guilt. Fear of acknowledging in myself any traces of the poverty, ignorance, and danger I'd find surrounding me when I returned to Pittsburgh. Fear that I was contaminated and would carry the poison with me wherever I ran. Fear that the evil would be rediscovered in me and I would be shunned like a leper" (1984; 27). It was a fear and stigma that was encapsulated by a visit from his brother, who at that point was a fugitive for attempted robbery and visited John at his home in Laramie, Wyoming. It was this visit that jumpstarted his process to actively overcoming his own complicity with racial stigma. Much like Wildman, the students in the interview are active respondents to these stigmas.

That resistance can be rooted in the self-concepts that these students are socialized with that operate as buffers against internalizing said stigma that were discussed earlier in the chapter.

**Ezra**: "I wouldn't say that it was always like that for me. I definitely think, specifically in high school, kind of like sophomore year, freshman year, before I got really heavy into the black feminists thought, and really got grounded politically, I definitely think I did internalize some of those things. And it's just like, well, maybe going back to like the

getting pulled over thing, or like... Not necessarily being like, I deserve that or whatever.

But just being like, oh, that's normal for a person like me. . . And now the way I understand it is like, oh, criminalization it's something that has been constructed to be used against black people, and it is used against me, to put people like me in jail, or make us think bad about ourselves. And all that type of stuff. So, kind of my understanding around it has changed.”

An awareness of such stigmas does not equal resignation to internalizing them as true. In a study on Black male identity and resistance to white supremacist controlling images, respondents’ resistance and meanings fell into one of two general categories: self-identity and resilience (Brooms, 2021). A criminalized subjectivity is like any other form of interactionist subjectivity in that it is best understood as a contextualized and dynamic process that has the ability to change and morph for a variety of reasons such as socialization and political education. Most students explicitly connected their understanding of racial stigma and criminalization to the systems of legal control, domination, and exploitation. Those stigmatized also regularly refuse, contest, and resist stigma (Tyler, 2013). In the next chapter, we tie in this understanding of criminalization on identity to criminalization in general.

## CHAPTER 3- RACIAL CRIMINALIZATION: EXPERIENCES AND UNDERSTANDINGS

“...in order to survive, (B)lack people have paradoxically had to witness their own murder and defilement and then pass along the epic tale of violation.”—Elizabeth Alexander (poet)

In the previous chapter, we explored the issue of racial identity for a variety of Black undergraduate students. Racial identity is a developmental process situated within interaction and communication of messages, cultural meanings, and psychosocial processes. The racial socialization of these young adults came from a variety of contextual factors and influences. The first question we sought to answer was to what degree does racial criminalization affect the identity construction and sense of self of these young Black adults; the criminalized subjectivity of these students came from two primary influences: (1) a metastereotype of criminalization (Siegelman & Tuch, 1996) as well as (2) a DuBoisian-Goffmanian awareness of criminalization as an exercise of racialized legal control and stigma but also as something that they can be subjected to. Reflection upon these experiences could be integral

### EXPERIENCING CRIMINALIZATION

Several of the students in question already mentioned in their interviews experiencing a sense of Othering or ‘being different’ in their school or school-peer groups; one of the ways that these incidents of Othering unfolded was in the criminalization of or singling out of these Black students in fights or escalation of a confrontation. Schools have often served as institutions of punishment for Black and Latino students, often in conjunction with other social institutions and community services (Rios, 2011; 2017; Hinton, 2016). The contemporary history of policing and

criminalization in schools grew alongside a post-Columbine focus on ‘zero-tolerance’ enforcement but that also occurred during an era of decreasing juvenile crime (King & Schindler, 2021). The adoption of ‘zero tolerance’ has similarities to the ‘Broken Windows’-style of policing. Broken Windows was an idea that visible signs of disarray and disorganization in a neighborhood—public drunkenness, vandalism, or “broken windows”—would encourage more serious criminal activity. Wilson & Kelling (1982) then proposed increased policing of such infractions as a means of promoting public safety. Despite its purported goals of promoting public safety for all, such enforcement was disproportionately done in poor, racially minoritized neighborhoods (Sampson & Raudenbush, 2004). Similar findings on ‘broken windows’ policing and stop-and-frisk report inequalities in which neighborhoods get subjected to this treatment. In these searches, Black and Brown individuals are stopped far more frequently for contraband and weapons, items that were found more frequently when their white counterparts were stopped. At the height of the New York City police’s stop-and-frisk program in 2011, over 685,000 individuals were recorded, stopped and frisked, with the vast majority being Black (53%) and Latinx (32%) (New York Civil Liberties Union, 2019).

In a similar vein, because so few cases of serious spectacular crime occur on school campuses, many school resource officers (SRO) and others entrusted with discipline end up investigating minor incidents which end up disproportionately affecting Black students:

**Julien:** “I see. You mentioned earlier that teachers would often be stricter on black students like punishing them more frequently?”

**Scooby (freshman, Columbia, MO):** “Yeah. I think that's something that I saw more obviously, when I was in elementary school because that's when, and children, they don't know how to handle those kinds of feelings. So they just act out a lot. And so the other few students that did look like me, were always being pulled out on lunch more often, they weren't allowed to sit with other people, they weren't allowed to talk to other people. It was very rare that you would see a white elementary school student getting pulled out aside like that. It was always the colored students that that was happening to. And then in high school. I didn't get in trouble a lot. But I know that disproportionately, it would be the black students that were in detention and those sorts of things.”

Black students are consistently sanctioned more frequently and severely than their white counterparts who committed similar actions (Morris & Perry, 2016, 2017; Rocque & Paternoster, 2011). These disparities are due in part to biases and use of controlling images among school staff and faculty. Black boys and Black girls alike were seen as more dangerous and adult-like (Ferguson, 2000; Morris, 2014; Goff et al., 2014) and this has guided discipline in school. Across contexts, Black children were more likely to be perceived as demonstrating aggression or negativity in their body language or actions when violations are miniscule or even when no clear rule was broken or to be labeled as troublemakers.

**Angela (soph.):** “I was in the first grade, and I had a white teacher. I don't know if you had the little agendas in there. They would write notes in it to show our parents, whatever. They did that at my school. She wrote a note to my mom asking if anybody in the house smoked weed because she smelled weed on me. And I think my mom wrote back, and was like, "It's just a hair product. That's what you're probably smelling," because no, my parents don't smoke weed in the house.”

It's important to keep in mind as well that the disciplining of Black children in schools is also intimately tied to larger controlling images about the Black family. The

Black family, especially those headed by Black mothers, have a long history of being discursively constructed as deviant and morally lacking (Hill-Collins, 2004; Haley, 2016). These controlling images are racialized, gendered, and classed and have enormous implications for how Black families navigate institutions and how institutions of authority respond to and interact with said families. In the process of social marking there may either be an abundance of evidence required for marking ('casual') or a single trace of something that could designate someone as deviant ('vigilant') (Brekhus, 1996). This vigilant framework erred on the side of suspicion; even something as innocuous as a haircare product was marked in a way that played into these marked controlling images of Black families. This anecdote by Angela is especially pertinent given the disproportionate impact that marijuana laws have had on Black-Americans. For example, an American Civil Liberties Union report found that prior to marijuana legalization in Illinois, from 2010 to 2018, Black citizens were seven times more likely to be arrested for marijuana possession than their white counterparts despite findings from various national surveys that both parties use marijuana at similar rates (Lassiter, 2015).

As the interviewees grew older, their experiences became reflective of more avenues through which common criminalization and profiling take place. One common example is the phenomenon described as "Driving while Black" defined as the racial profiling of Black drivers (Gates, 1995; Warren, Tomaskovic-Devey, Smith, Zingraff, and Mason, 2006). The proportion of African-Americans pulled over tends to vary between studies and states albeit with the consistent trend that African-Americans are pulled over relative to their actual population proportion (Baumgartner, Christiani, Epp, Roach, and Shoub, 2017). In one study, in North Carolina, Black people were 63% more likely to be

pulled over and 115% more likely to be searched despite contraband being more likely carried by white drivers (Baumgartner, Epp, and Schoub, 2018). One student, Josephine was pulled over several times, however I want to draw attention to one incident in particular:

**Josephine:** “I didn’t get pulled over and it was a friend that was driving . . . She messed up. Didn’t have the lights on. God! But lots of things. I mean, she messed up driving. We were both not wearing seatbelts. Because he ran her permit and my ID, and he was like, “I can’t just let you guys go.” So he was like, “I have to give you a seatbelt ticket just for something”. . . And of course, he was like, “What’s in the car? What do you got going on?” But what was funny is the girl that was driving, she was white and she’s very pretty. And he was very much being affected by that. It was very obvious. So maybe that was why we didn’t get in more trouble.”

Juxtaposing Josephine’s experience with Trey’s below also brings out how these experiences are also gendered:

**Trey:** “Oh, yeah. The first time I definitely was criminalized was after my 17th birthday whenever that cop pulled me over. That really changed my perspective on life, for real. It was just the fact that he really did see me in a nice car with a white girl next to me, and that was just my friend, too, and then he tried to assume all this stuff as I’m in the car with them. . . He got real hostile with me, and I was like ... At the time, I was pretty nervous, because I’m only 17, dude, what are you talking about? . . . just to walk up to a 17-year-old, hostile for no reason, that shit’s insane. And then just the fact that he got my license, so he clearly saw that I was 17 and it was just my birthday, and he still felt the need to act super mean for no reason. It was crazy.”

**Julien:** “You mentioned that you were also driving with a white female friend.”

**Trey:** Mm-hmm (affirmative).



**Julien**: “Do you think that also influenced how that officer was interacting with you?”

**Trey**: “Yeah. It's the fact he asked her if she was okay, like I was out here kidnapping her. He tried to make it seem like I was trying to harm her or something. He kept being hostile toward me, then he just looked over and like, "Are you okay, ma'am?" Like I wasn't the one that he was being mean toward. I was like, "Bro ... " It was a wild experience. It was good, though, that she got to see that happen in life, because white people with their privilege, they might not always see it. On the way home, she was really mad, like, "I can't believe he really did that to you. That was so unfair of him." But yeah, it was a really messed up experience.

What's noteworthy about these retrospective looks at their experiences of being in a situation where they or someone they knew was pulled over, both explicitly considered their treatment when in the proximity of a young white female friend. Josephine explicitly considered that the presence of her white friend shaped the officer's interactions with the two in a way that was likely more lenient than had Josephine been alone and driving. Especially considering that in another story of D.W.B. that Josephine shared, she expressed a genuine fear of being taken to a local jail for her traffic mistakes.

Trey's experience on the other hand is rooted in the long history of the criminalization of Black men especially in relations to white women. As mentioned last chapter, Black men and boys have often been criminalized especially as threats to the constructed racial and sexual purity of white women. The presumed or accused sexual assault of white women was the pretense offered in the lynchings of Black men and boys (Wells, 1892). This history has implications well into the 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> century; Racial hoaxes throughout the 1980s and 1990s made use of Black men either sexually preying

upon young white girls and women or committing some violent crime (Rome, 2004; Russell-Brown, 1998).

Other students, like Sunny's friend experienced "shopping-while-Black":

"I think the only thing that I kind of experienced which didn't really happen directly to me, but in the makeup aisle of Target or Walmart, in some stores the darker shades have security tags on them and not the lighter shades. And I think I was with one of my friends and we were in a makeup aisle and she was trying to purchase something. And the employer, what is they called, the Walmart worker, lady, whatever, had to walk her up to the counter to pay for it. Or she asked us if we were done shopping, we said no and she was like, okay, well, I'll hold onto this until you're ready to go up to the counter because she had to be the one to walk us up to the whatever. So I think that was the only thing that I can really think of right now. And that was kind of like, oh, you're black, you're darker skinned, so you will steal this and so I have to hold onto it. Yeah."

Not all students interviewed experienced such profiling and criminalization, others discussed the experiences of those they knew in how they made sense of the way criminalization made its presence known in their lives, often through the experiences of the Black men and boys in their lives.

**Starr (Senior, Kansas City, MO):** "Yeah, so we live in a predominately white neighborhood. It's fairly quiet. . . I feel like it's predominately white, but we moved away from all the college students and stuff and moved to where it's a family area. . . And I see that when my husband comes home from work and it may be dark outside and we have a white neighbor and she sees him, she'll clench her purse or try and rush and get her keys to get into the door. And it's like, what is that for? Why is it necessary?"

Starr's comments on her husband's experiences were also intimately linked by the spaces they navigated that shaped how they experienced criminalization and profiling. Many other students made comments to or alluded to how space shaped their experiences

or those they knew, especially in the context of predominately white spaces and regions. This could have great implications for how Black who live in these neighborhoods experience the everyday mundanities of profiling, like Starr's husband.

When considering the role of space and region in shaping experiences, Shaun's experience is a dramatic example of the type of policing that can occur in Black or particular suburban neighborhoods:

"So, me and my cousin was walking down the street and the police actually pulled up. It was a White cop and a Black cop. They was looking for whoever it was that they kicked in the house for. They didn't find them. They thought that me and my cousin ... they was looking for two dudes. You know what I'm saying? Five-eleven, light-skinned males. They thought that me and my cousin was the dudes and we actually got put on the ground. The dude was going to take us to jail thinking that we was them dudes.

For one, the White cop was the dude who was driving, so he hopped out hella quick. He threw the car in park and hopped out hella quick and was like, "Get on the ground," and all this stuff. Talking real bad to us, thinking that we was them dudes but we wasn't. And the Black dude was actually the one who was like, "All right, bro. That's not them." We didn't say anything."

The concept of the 'iconic ghetto' (Anderson, 2012; 2022), the social-symbolic place of Black people that is characterized by violence, disarray, and dysfunction, can be used as the general framework for understanding the interactions of Black people, especially Black men, with law enforcement in Ferguson, where Shaun is from. A house in the neighborhood had been broken into, and Shaun and his cousin were initially mistaken for the suspects. The aggression that Shaun and his cousin faced is rooted in the social ecology of policing that intersects with the 'iconic ghetto' that shaped how officers interact with residents (Williams, 2019).

## “THE TALK” AND THE ROLE OF SOCIALIZATION AND INTERACTION

Common to many students who were interviewed was a communication of hardship and stressors by their parents or guardians during the process of racial socialization. Of particular importance and relevance to this specific section is “the Talk”. “The Talk” is a colloquial term for a specific type of explicit-intentional racial socialization that many Black parents have with their children about criminalization and racial profiling and how to safely conduct themselves in interactions with police officers and other individuals in statuses with authority and power (Anderson, O’Brien-Caughy, & Owen, 2021). It has several elements of other categories of racial socialization observed (like preparation for hardship and some degree of mistrust), “the talk” arguably exists in a category all its own as it concerns a very specific type of racist encounter as well as practical strategies to avoid or mitigate the interaction (Whitake & Snell, 2016).

In a study on “the talk” among Black mothers, the gendered controlling image of the “thug” influenced several strategies that these parents used to socialize their sons (Dow, 2016). Experience management and environment management were two strategies used that sought to directly shape the opportunities for interaction and social environment in ways that excluded prejudicial people and circumstances as best as they could. The next sort of strategies that parents engaged in were image and emotion management. Brandon Jackson and Adia Wingfield (2013) found similar strategies in college-aged Black men. They managed the expression of particular sets of emotion across the front stage and back stage of their everyday interactions in a way that would not get them pegged as the “Angry Aggressive Black Man”, a controlling image that can have implications for business interactions and professional settings. Image management

primarily concerned the prohibition of wearing certain clothes or styling hair in a certain way or ownership of or practicing certain cultural objects like certain types of cars or tinted windows or custom rims.

Increasing attention to these conversations has also come as a wave of attention has swelled over the last decade to multiple high-profile cases of criminalization, violence and police abuse (Bonilla & Rosa, 2015). Figuring prominently in several interviews were the cases of 18-year-old Mike Brown and of 17-year-old Trayvon Martin, who was murdered while walking in a subdivision in Sanford, Florida by George Zimmerman in February 2012. This high-profile case took place in memories of the formative years of these students and influenced their understanding of racial criminalization as well as their own personal habits:

**Trey:** “I wouldn't say they really talked about it much, because before then I was pretty young. Whenever Trayvon died, I think I was probably like 12 or 13, so that's whenever I started getting into my teen years, like I'm starting to go out more, or do this and that more, so that's whenever I started to get more of age to where this could really be a concern. Because whenever I'm hanging out with my friends, they're not with me, so that's around the time where I started hanging out with more people outside of the house, we're going places, doing this and that, so they really saw that as a concern after that one.”

The shooting death of Trayvon Martin was experienced as a vicarious cataclysmic event that many African-Americans saw as racially motivated (Gabbidon & Jordan, 2013; Thompson & Cohen, 2013; Pew Research Center, 2013). This in turn affected the racial socialization of many Black parents who sought to discuss the case and its implications for their own children. “The talk” is just one notable example of the role of racial

socialization and interaction in the development of racial subjectivity and criminalized subjectivity. Shared meanings developed through interaction was key to subjective understanding and was brought up by several interviewees when asked about how their friends discuss the topic.

**Ezra**: “Yeah, I think that like when me and my black friends and relatives, like I'm really close to my cousins. I think it's more just like kind of affirming one another in our feelings. Do you know what I mean?”

**Julien**: “Mm-hmm” (affirmative).

**Ezra**: “Not necessarily discussing like the ins and outs, because we already know what it feels like, or what it is. But just kind of being cathartic. Do you know what I mean?”

**Julien**: “Yeah.”

**Ezra**: “And just like discussing, maybe our experiences with it, or just like, if something's in the news, like another black man or woman was killed by police. It's just kind of discussing that and being outraged, basically, that that stuff happens.”

These stories then become collective constructive exercises that are used to negotiate and maintain a positive racial identity and to stave off the harmful effects of stigma through venting and catharsis (Mays, 2000). Not all students experienced such socialization however. Much like the details discussed in the previous chapter on racial socialization, “the talk” didn't happen for several students for similar reasons such as the priority placed upon discussing it, or the parents' race(s) and concurrently their racial politics. One biracial student, Rose, whose white caregivers deferred to Black family members in the process of racial socialization described how same process happened for her socialization regarding racial criminalization. Others were surrounded by family and peers that were either unsympathetic to the issue or did not delve into it and give it

priority. Not all peer groups were noted as being especially supportive or understanding, more than one student noted how their increased awareness of racial criminalization affected the way they interacted with peers.

**Clover (soph., Cincinnati, OH)**: “Yeah. I think it's just uncomfortable sometimes because knowing that I understand the truth about criminalization when it comes to race and then being in a room where I'm surrounded by people who-that they just don't have to worry about those things, it makes me just wonder, do they understand all of me and am I fully accepted here because I know what I know, but I don't know what they believe. . . And so it can get uncomfortable just because at that point I'm like, "Okay, well now I need to put my best face forward because I don't want to fit the description of what they see.”

She went on to say that these sorts of ambiguities resulted in a constant state of self-reflection on her demeanor and behavior. Another student, Angela, discussed how she felt a sense of ambiguity in interactions, in her words “it’s more like an assumption, or it’s just I’m getting treated this way because I’m Black.” Ezra spoke about how they became estranged from a predominately white friends group in high school in the aftermath of the shooting of Michael Brown. All of these developed out of the fact that micro-level processes in criminalized subjectivity emerge from social relations that communicate certain ideas about the criminal-legal structure. The DuBoisian veil is also pertinent here if we understand that the veil can distort and affect interactions between parties.

#### CRIMINALIZED SUBJECTIVITY AND UNDERSTANDING CRIMINALIZATION

As was discussed in the previous chapter, interviewees had all to varying degrees of depth, discussed racial criminalization as a mechanism of larger systems of domination

and exploitation, often using historical and contemporary examples to develop their perception. However, there were several factors in their comprehension that must be accounted for.

### *Role of Intersectionality*

What was also key to an ever-evolving understanding of criminalization and criminalized subjectivity was the role of an intersectional lens. Much like racialization, criminalization happens differently or can have different implications across a variety of axes such as gender or social class. A notable event that makes this clear is the case of the “New Jersey Four”. On August 18, 2006, in the Greenwich Village of New York City, a group of young Black queer and lesbian women got into a physical altercation with a young man outside of a movie theater (Pasulka, 2015). During the altercation, the man was nonfatally stabbed in the abdomen. Four of the women- Patreese Johnson, Renata Hill, Terrain Dandridge, and Venice Brown-were tried and convicted. The case received sensational media attention, with coverage often characterizing the women as members of violent lesbian gangs. The coverage of and experiences of the four existed at the intersection of various criminalized and marginalized groups (Black, queer, and poor); something that a singular lens of race or gender simply wouldn’t capture.

Similarly, Ezra’s journey of criminalized subjectivity was compounded by their status as a genderqueer individual:

**Ezra**: “I think the way that I kind of perceive myself getting like criminalized, is kind of both on blackness and queerness together, if that makes any sense. So, it's like, you're like sexually deviant, and people will assume things about that. Yeah, but then it's like I'm also black. I don't know. I'm so sorry.”



**Julien**: “No, it's fine. It's actually a very good point. Because I was going to ask, as you started to really study black feminist literature in high school and into college, how do you think that that has affected your understanding of racial criminalization? How it's affected your understanding.”

**Ezra**: “I definitely think that it's kind of broadened my understanding of it. And basically, to like the degree and severity of it, and how it can look different depending on how you look. Like I'm very cautious of the fact that because I'm lighter, that I'm definitely less susceptible to being criminalized, because of colorism, because of issues like that. But then there's also like, because of intersectionality, like because I'm black and queer, a lot of the criminalization can be like... And I'm also fem, I like to wear heels. You know what I mean?”

**Julien**: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

**Ezra**: “I think people tend to see that difference, and then kind of make assumptions about me before even meeting me, or like talking to me. You know what I mean? Like, assuming that... I don't know. You know what I mean? It's hard to put in words. But yeah.”

**Julien**: “So, it's like blackness is not just criminalized, but also queerness is criminalized.”

**Ezra**: “Right.”

Laws criminalizing the LGBTQ population have a long history in the United States (Ritchie, 2013; Mogul, Ritchie, and Whitlock, 2011). Laws penalizing ‘crimes against nature’ have been used against gender and sexual minorities (Mogul, Ritchie, and Whitlock, 2011). An intersectional analysis allows us to see how the discretion of law enforcement to enforce this statute and many others like it lends itself to both the explicit and implicit policing of race, poverty, sexual orientation, gender and gender presentation, something that Ezra points out. These have implications for the negative experiences of

policing by many queer people, particularly queer men and women of color (Meyer, 2020; Gaynor, 2018).

Similarly the criminalization of Black women is something that mattered very much to several Black women who were interviewed:

**Angela**: “I definitely think there’s a difference, and I think Black men, it’s more common for them to encounter racial issues, but I think it’s also important to realize how certain issues affect Black women as well. I just don’t want Black women to be forgot about or people to think that Black women don’t experience police brutality the same way Black men do. . . Do I think that Black women are forgotten about? Yeah. I try to talk about things that Black girls, like something like I said with criminalization of Black girls in schools, how that affects young Black girls at a young age, especially is it’s not talked about. Young Black girls are forgotten about.”

This point of the lack of serious attention and exploration that Angela raises is due to specific factors; much like socialization about stigma implies shared societal norms about normality and deviation, shared beliefs about vulnerability and which bodies are more vulnerable in what ways informs “the talk” and who received it; vulnerability is highly racialized and gendered (Madriz, 1997). Because the controlling image of criminality has been thoroughly read through Black masculinity this affects how many Black parents choose to address these topics or how those who wish to be parents would tackle the topic:

**Starr**: “So I would say first. . . At first, I was frowned upon of having my kids, but if we had a boy, because he would be a black male and raising him in this society now, it will be very challenging, I feel like. And I was always discouraged by that. I don’t want to have a boy for-because of this reason.”

**Julien**: “Really?”

**Starr:** “Yes. I feel like having a black son, it’s like, they’re born with a target on their back. And it’s like-like, how do you teach against everything that we see now? So that’s been my thought process for a while, and my fear of losing him to violence. I was like, I’d rather have girls, just deal with their attitudes, yeah, they would probably go through some stuff, but it won’t be as much as a black man would.”

Gonzalez (2019) argued that “the talk” as it was typically enacted or visualized marginalized Black girls’ experiences in several ways: (1) the conceptualization of boys as the primary target of police with a simultaneous construction of girls as ‘collateral’, (2) emphasis of masculine forms of violence at the expense of gendered forms of sexual violence, and (3) socialization being directed almost exclusively at boys. Starr’s comment points to the first key point: the construction of Black boys and men as the primary targets of police harassment and violence while simultaneously constructing Black girls, women, and non-men in general as “collateral” or that they “would probably go through some stuff”. Even many female interviewees, when discussing the criminalization and profiling of those they knew defaulted to the experiences of the Black boys and men in their lives or relied on common cultural discourses of criminalization and profiling that centered Black men. Tellingly, only female participants even mentioned the 2015 case of 28-year-old Sandra Bland, and with little discussion of how this case affected how their parents or guardians discussed the criminalization. Nor did participants ever discuss the case of Tony McDade, a 38-year-old Black transman, who was shot by Tallahassee, Florida police on May 27, 2020, only two days before George Floyd’s death in Minneapolis.

What was also present, if not incredibly more common, was the third point of marginalization: “the talk” being directed almost exclusively at brothers or male cousins.

Many parents, especially mothers, mentioned that their daughters were not often explicitly excluded from these talks even though they were not the focus (Gonzalez, 2019). There's a general tendency to homogenize racial criminalization, flattening it into a general phenomenon that one experiences by virtue of group membership in Blackness, but in a way that continues to marginalize the experiences Black girls and non-boys/men in general. Clover discussed how this affected the way her older sister reacted to being suspected of the potential to steal while in line at her middle school's cafeteria. In relaying her sister's experience, Clover described her sister's responses as shocked, upset, and angry and, in her words, possibly rooted in some idea that it would happen more to their brother than her.

Even in universalizing 'the talk' as something that happens due to racism, because of how it is often framed, discussed, and targeted, the experiences of Black girls (however unique or similar) end up getting less attention. Some parents may make up for this by giving their daughters different advice:

**Julien**: "All right. So did your mother ever talk about how black women also face criminalization or. . .?"

**Scooby**: "She did. When she would teach me how to act in a job, she always told me, "Be prepared that people are going to accuse you of stealing money," those kind of things. They are going to tell you, "You can't count right, and that you're not properly educated. And that's why you can't do this, than the other." She taught me that you have to count change once to yourself once out loud, and then count again for them when you hand it to them, so that they know that you're counting it correctly because people would accuse me of not counting it correctly. Specifically because I am a black woman, and that I would be treated differently."

In her interview, Scooby continued to juxtapose her socialization with the socialization of her older brothers who she felt received a far greater and more extensive “talk” from their mother. The racial logics of criminalization and vulnerability meant that many parents, especially mothers, were at a slight loss of how to account in depth for the gendered profiling and violence that Black girls may face. There were parents that made sure to address the specific sorts of policing abuse and violence that Black women may face:

Maria: “Like I said, I don't think they were worried as much that I just get manhandled and put in prison, but there have been cases where women have been driving alone and they've been sexually assaulted or were touched or stuff like that. Or where they've been put into jail for something they didn't do, just because they were not feeling the situation. They talked about they were just worried that my words or the officer would feel inclined to prey on me. So that was much of the discussion.”

This discrepancy may also have to do with the masculinization of police violence, especially the presence of lethal violence like shootings and chokeholds. One student's discussion with her parents was far more explicitly centered around the experiences of Black women. The data on Black women's experiences and interactions with the criminal-legal system hold out an important avenue of exploration. For example, in a study of racial disparities in traffic stops in the city of Columbia, Missouri, when considering both age and sex, Black women were consistently pulled over in rates higher than their proportion of the population (Avery, Benton, Canada, He, and Kleinsorge, 2021). Black women aged 18-29 were recorded having a disparity index of 3.5 while those aged 30 and over had a disparity index of 2.2; meaning that, respectively, they were pulled over 3.5 and 2.2 times their actual population (Avery et al., 2021). Sex and gender

identity are not the only social fields that can implicate difference in criminalization, xenophobic discourses are also something that exists in a mutually reinforcing relationship with criminalization and was brought up by Grace:

**Julien**: “Okay, I . . . is that African immigrants to America. . . African ethnicity Americans ... but that they are often also criminalized in their blackness. So do you find that to be true?”

**Grace**: “Hell yeah. I think it's true. There's the whole stereotype that Nigerians are scammers, we're liars, we're untruthful ... it's a big thing.”

**Julien**: “Wow.”

**Grace**: “Yeah, there's a big stereotype that we're all scammers. I feel like African immigrants are definitely criminalized. I never really expressed that I was Nigerian so I guess oftentimes that wasn't really put on me. . . But, I think there's a stigma there and I think it's true that the intersection of being black and being a foreigner, I feel like it plays a big role in criminalization.”

Within the larger web of xenophobic discourses, Nigerians and Nigeria as a whole has been framed and stereotyped on the international stage as uniquely corrupt and prone to criminal activity, especially scams (Akpome, 2015). Because Black-Americans are disproportionately more likely to be stopped, arrested, or incarcerated, this means that Black immigrants may be more likely to be profiled or even deported.

*Understanding across Time and Place*

To continue to gauge our second question, the understanding of these topics can and should be as a temporal process, situated within a web of interactions and associations. On a temporal level, it has potential to be discussed from more than one angle. First, similar to the classical racialization identity process described earlier, such understanding is developed through an awakening followed by a series of stages of increased knowledge of the issue, often rooted in socialization and education with family, peers, and otherwise:

**Julia**: “Yeah. . . No. Like I said, I didn't think about it as a black thing. I didn't think about it as black criminalization because I didn't know what that was. For me, I really did just think, "Oh, that guy is a bad guy and he's just stupid and that he was holding a gun." I just knew it was unfair. I just didn't know why.”

**Julien**: “How do you think your understanding of this case changed as you got older?”

**Julia**: “The more victims there were, the more I saw the pattern and what was going down between these similar cases was when I was like, "Okay. What's actually going on here?" I mean, I say all the time, the internet raised me more than my family did. For my family it was just like family time or whatever, and learning the basics and stuff, but when it came to social awareness, it was really the phone and just me being on the internet constantly. When I had a question about something, or I wanted to look into something, I didn't go to them. I went to Google.”

Schuman and Scott (1989) argue that the formation of political memories are also influenced by age; that adolescence and early adulthood is prime ground for the imprinting of formative memories. Several of the most high-profile cases and political events were formative events to triggering a process of awakening and interaction-based

stages. However, it is worth going back to the data about the awareness of intersectionality and its implications for understanding criminalized subjectivity. It is here that the understanding of criminalization through a temporal process can fill in the gaps for the lack of thorough socialization that some Black women felt that they'd received. If many Black women observe in retrospect that they did not receive adequate education about the subject then how did they grow to their current state of awareness?

**Kenzie:** "I think that because black culture is so nuanced and there are so many different intersections within the community that connect with outside and back and forth, I think that some of the ideologies that my parents had, they didn't think could apply to me, but statistics say otherwise. Being a black woman, I didn't see a lot other black women going through the system, but then working in public health and learning some more facts, there is a very high number of black women behind bars."

Kenzie, for example, attributed her increasingly complicated awareness to further education and work in the public health sector that put her in contact with the sort of statistics that could lead to a greater consciousness of what the criminal-legal system meant for her and peers as Black women. This sort of temporal process also makes room for how the discussion and understanding of profiling increasingly becomes more nuanced as the child grows up:

**Scooby:** "I think it's changed just that it's that thing that I believe now. When you're younger you have such a black and . . . A black and white view of how things are like, "Oh, people do bad things, they go to jail. So I guess black people are bad." And you get older and it's like, "Well, why are they doing those things?" And then you learn more about poverty, low income, those kind of social disparities that exist. And you realize, "Wow." You realize people are doing things out of desperation for one because they're not given opportunities to do anything else. And also that, that's what they're expected to do."



“The talk” also implies a singular discussion that that some students did relate and have with their families but what was also commonly observed (if not more common) were multiple smaller conversations over time; often expanding in complexity as the child grew older and were able to assess the topic in progressively age-appropriate manners:

**Julien**: “All right. If you don't mind me also building off on that, did your parents talk about these issues differently when you were younger versus as you got older, if you noticed at all?”

**Shaun**: “Yeah. Yeah, for sure. For sure. They used to just tell me stuff and then not give me a reason. . . They used to just tell me. Like I said, for instance the car thing. They would tell me stuff, because as a kid you don't get dynamics and you don't get the way that the world works at a young age. You know what I'm saying? But as an adult, I for sure sit there and have all types of deep conversations with my parents and ask them or tell them, "Okay. I get it. I get it why you told me don't have my music up hella loud and you didn't give me a reason." . . . As a kid, they wouldn't give me those answers. . . But now as I get older, I look back and be like, "Okay. I get why you told me that I needed to avoid this person and that person and this type of perception.”

On a second level, one interesting way we can look towards this issue is on the concept of ‘temporal inequality’ and ‘racialized time’ as shared meaning. Time is assumed a neutral phenomenon but the experience of daily life and the time associated with it is intimately connected to a host of social and structural factors. In his theoretical essay on ‘white time’, Mills (2014) discusses how racism also takes time to function; racist policies, laws, actions, and interactions can take away time from those racialized as non-white. For example, in Ray’s (2019) theory of racialized organizations, he argues that

agency within an organization is structured by hierarchy with those at the top or near the top of the hierarchy having more time and therefore more agency. While those at the bottom or near it are tasked with more time-consuming labor along with a lack of resource access that shapes agency (such as a reliance on public transportation); given that these positions are disproportionately filled by Black and Latino workers then it stands to reason that time is taken away from these workers.

Kwate (2017) argues that such racialized time is a social determinant of health for Black people in several ways: (1) more time is taken to access basic needs for Black-Americans, (2) less time is spent on the needs of Black-Americans, and finally (3) loss of years of life (of quality of life or through death). Similarly, an ethnographic study of a youth center in Minneapolis found that the nonwhite youth perceived 'white time' as full of luxury and resources that they themselves did not have and, related, how they spent of their own time trying to simply survive (Mahedeo, 2019). So what can this do with criminalization and racial stigma? The larger process of awareness of criminalization can lead to a greater awareness of how criminalization shapes the time and agency of Black Americans.

**Julien**: “Going off of that, what do you and friends talk about when you talk about these sort of incidences?”

**Grace**: “I guess just how annoying it is, and how tedious it is that day-to-day activities are affected or impacted negatively by racism.”

**Julien**: “So you guys talk about how it's more annoying and tedious than anything to have to not just go through it but even have to worry about going through it?”

**Grace:** “Yeah.”

Notice that she used words like ‘tedious’ and ‘annoying’ to describe how she and her friends discussed these issues, both of which implicate a loss of meaningful time. So Grace’s exchange leads us to consider how time and specifically the loss of it is a shared meaning that is attached and reinforced through interaction with fellows. Such loss of time and agency can be seen in the time it takes to adjust behavior and dress, or to the premature end of various mundane activities to avoid being further profiled. Clover described going on a family shopping trip in Los Angeles. Her family visited a high-end store on Rodeo Drive, and almost immediately were singled out for surveillance by store employees; the father then led the family out of the store prematurely ending what was supposed to be a pleasurable shopping experience. Mass criminalization and incarceration are also sources of ‘racialized time’ because of its effects on the health and life chances of those stigmatized much like Kwate (2017) discussed in the third part of his work. Such life chance effects have been observed in increased frequency of mental illness (Massoglia, 2008) and increased and increased mortality rates (Farrell and Marsden, 2008; Wildeman, 2008; Pridemore, 2014). Similarly, many student interviewees expressed a fear of themselves or someone they knew being subject to potentially fatal police violence, a tangible measurable example of racialized lost time through literal lost life.

The understanding of criminalization as a topic across space can also be tackled from more than one angle. First is, how the neighborhood contexts of their upbringing and networks influenced their understanding of criminalization and profiling. At least two

students noted their close relationships to others in their neighborhoods who were criminalized or subject to violence. The second, how their perceptions and knowledge of other spaces and regions influence thoughts on the matter of profiling and racism and relatedly how these perceptions influenced how they thought they would have to interact with others and engage in impression management. For the first, marginalized and exploited communities are often oversimply characterized by disorder and dysfunction but are still communities in their own right with specific interaction orders and meanings as discussed in the last chapter. These interaction orders are deeply intertwined with a subjective understanding of the material conditions and relationships of these neighborhoods, in case with criminal justice.

**Clover:** “A lot of my black guy friends... I'm trying to think of how this relates. So a lot of my black guy friends are just... They feel very strongly about it and my black girlfriends, but a lot of them have friends in what we would refer to as the hood and their lifestyle, they come from the places that you hear about on the news. . . And so they feel so strongly about criminalization of black people especially black men, because that's their friends in jail for marijuana charges and that's their friends. . . All my question were answered because I grew up around people who had those experiences and my friends had those stories to share with me. So, I knew what it can look like in someone's life who's close to me to experience criminalization or unfair treatment while black outside of school, in school and their neighborhoods, things like that.”

The criminalized subjectivity of Clover's friends was also key to her continuing evolution of understanding the topic and is also inseparable from the recent history of mass criminalization in their hometown of Cincinnati, Ohio. Between 1995 and April 2001, fifteen Black males were killed while in police custody. These factors culminated in the April 2001 shooting death of 19-year old Timothy Thomas by Officer Steven

Roach causing nearly a week of civil unrest in the Over-The-Rhine neighborhood (Waddington, 2007). Nearly 30 prior, a similar civil unrest erupted in the primarily Black neighborhood of Avondale, Cincinnati in June 1967 after years of police violence, discrimination, and misconduct. Policing of drug activity and drug possession is also intimately related to this phenomenon as well as deepening class inequality and poverty in the city; the Cincinnati Police Department had averaged 2,300 drug-related arrests a year (Waddington, 2007).

It was this larger web of material conditions that shaped the sense of hostility and legal skepticism in many residents; for these people the criminal-legal system was an institution rife with discrimination, corruption, and alienation that directly shaped their everyday lives and those that they knew. But it was also these conditions that these neighborhoods resisted in various ways.

**Kenzie:** “I think that I have a lot of personal knowledge to it because of where I grew up, knowing people that were in and out of jail, and just knowing people that had lost loved ones to gun violence, knowing people that had lost children to gun violence just even in my church family, but then also seeing how community can heal people and can come together to try and solve some of those problems when some of the larger system are not sharing the resources to get those solved. I know our church always did, one of the really big things, was a back-to-school bash. That was for the community come and get back to school supplies. . . . Our church also employed a lot of men, and boys, and black people that needed positions in the church so that they could make money, so that they could provide for themselves and their family. Just seeing that, I think it helped me a lot see how a lot of it is not on the individual and on the system itself. I think I've carried that with me into my adulthood, so taking the blame away from those that are incarcerated and putting it on the institution that is keeping them held there.”

As Rawls and Duck (2020) have demonstrated, communities like Clover and Kenzie's are often understood as sites of deprivation, formal social control through law enforcement and other institutions, and material exploitation, but these are realized communities. Neighborhoods like Kenzie's are also an example of the concept of 'collective efficacy, defined as the ability of a community or neighborhood to control and enact for the common goals of neighborhood, often through informal social control (Sampson, Raudenbush, and Earls, 1997). This type of efficacy, much like individual efficacy is shaped by enabling or constraining factors. Kenzie connected this collective efficacy to her increased understanding of the role that systems play in criminalization.

Utilizing the informal networks that construct collective efficacy has been a central avenue of critical engagement and development of criminalized subjectivities of communities and individuals. One prominent example of such is the occupation of vacant lots in Chicago across from Homan Square, a site where abuse occurred at the hands of Chicago Police Department at one of their various 'black sites' (McLeod, 2019). The square became the site of an encampment, protests, and a block party that advocated central tenets of police abolition, specifically 'decarceration', keeping individuals out of prison by addressing the root material conditions of the neighborhood that increase the chances of incarceration, whether that be advocating for increased mental health training or offering rehabilitation for those with substance abuse issues (Davis, 2003; Bargaric, Hunter, and Svilar, 2021). In Kenzie's case, such collective efficacy looked like organized drives for school supplies that directly tied into the material conditions that needed to be addressed that also kept people off the streets. This is not to say that neighborhoods like Kenzie's or Clover's specifically advocated for police or prison

abolition, but rather that observation of their material conditions and their connections to larger systems of economics and criminal-legal control informed how they understood the topic, and relatedly what it meant for them specifically as Black people.

Many Black students also lived in suburban and predominately white communities and their environments also shaped how they experienced and understood criminalization and but also the communication that they received:

**E.J.:** “I believe they have, because for me, I wasn't really much of a partier back in high school, I'm a chill person, I would just like to chill out, be with the homies just kicking it, like this and that. My sister was always out of the house. Then like I said, we live in a mostly white society, so she liked to hang around them, and my parents would just tell them to be careful because, "You can't do all the same stuff they do. A party get busted, you going to jail. They mommies and daddies can talk their little way out of it. That's not how it's going to work for you.””.

Quotes like this actually lead into how perceptions of place are a factor that several students brought up in their understanding of criminalization across space and region. Racial demography and political leanings of a region (real or perceived) were regularly brought up in interviews. For example, Maria, a biracial (Black/Mexican) freshman perceived varying levels of racism and tension that could exacerbate criminalization and profiling and explicitly connected it to the demographic and political makeup of the surrounding community however what remained constant was a general association of increased potential for profiling in predominately white neighborhoods, communities, and places:

**Mary-Jane (Senior, Glenwood, IL.):** “Oh, yeah, for sure. Especially if you're in a predominantly white neighborhood and the majority of the people there are racist and

you're going to run into some problems. A lot of the gated communities are predominantly white. So I'm never going to be going over there, not. Oh God. Okay. No, I have the perfect example. I love to look at the houses around Columbia and the really big houses are pretty much owned by white people because this is pretty much a white state. Got to an area where there were a lot of Trump signs last year and I was like, "I need to get out. I cannot be here because I don't feel safe." And people were staring at me, a guy who was standing on his lawn was just looking like he was ready to call the cops."

Elijah Anderson's concept of the white space seems to guide a lot of the students' understanding of criminalization and racial stigma on a spatial aspect. The 'white space' as Anderson (2015; 2022) has defined it is a perceptual social and geographic environment where whites predominate and the Black people who do exist are few and marginalized. "In the absence of routine social interaction between blacks and whites, stereotypes can rule perceptions, creating a situation that estranges blacks." (Anderson, 2015; 13). Space, place, and race all operate within a complicated dance; opportunities are racialized and concurrently spatialized (Lipsitz, 2007; 2011). These inform how we use social and environmental cues to make meanings of our social environments (ie: neighborhood demography, political lawn signs, socioeconomic status, etc.)

Literature has suggested that white-Americans are more likely to adopt a sense of group position in which they believe entitles them to space and resources (Blumer, 1958; Bobo and Hutchings, 1996). They were also more likely to align themselves with social institutions, especially criminal-legal institutions that could reinforce these perceptions about who belonged and who didn't as per Mary-Jane's quote about predominately white neighborhoods (Weitzer and Tuch, 2004). This has implications for how Black people navigate these spaces and how for unmarked spaces operate. What may be unmarked and



default spaces for many white people like a suburb or store can also be a site where Black people and other people of color become acutely aware of prejudicial perceptions that can occur in white spaces, this has a great effect on the potential for such profiling. Anderson (2022) has described such incidents as “n\*\*\*\*\* moments”, interactions and incidents that reinforce the symbolic place of Black people when navigating white space.

In April 2018, two Black men were profiled, accosted, and arrested by police in a Philadelphia Starbucks after sitting in the store while waiting for someone (Stevens, 2018). This moment reinforced the symbolic relationship that these two Black men had with a certain public space. A series of high profile cases from 2018-2021, often called by their memified nicknames such as ‘BBQ Becky, or Permit Patty’ also exemplify how usually unmarked spaces such as parks, trails, and concession stands can be sites of white surveillance for Black individuals and groups (Williams, 2020). Some of the experiences outlined earlier in the chapter may be examples of this ‘n\*\*\*\*\* moment’. The possibility of this was a thread across several students’ retrospectives of how they were socialized about profiling and criminalization, much like EJ above.

**Julien**: “All right. Okay. So one of things that caught my eye when you were talking about how your family, or specifically how your sister and pastor talk about this issue, one phrase that you mentioned was that they talked about, how in other neighborhoods this is something that could happen. I thought that was interesting. Do you think that racial criminalization can happen differently depending on where you are? Do you worry about its potential, more in one place than another?”

**Kyle**: “Yeah, I do. Yeah, I do. Like, I know in the south, well in the neighborhood that I grew up in, like in the southern parts of Chicagoland, our policing, it wasn't full of that prejudice and things like that, but I know that if I go to the western side of Chicago, or to the northern side where the north is more predominantly white than the south where I

grew up, I know that they're, in the west side they can assume me to be a criminal, like a gang member, or in the north the same thing, because of the violence in the west and the prejudice that's in the north. So yeah.”

It should be mentioned that students still perceived racial criminalization as a nationwide phenomenon but they also conceptualized such a criminalizing gaze as more prominent in overt in the white space relative to other spaces. Kyle’s assessment of criminalization in the Chicagoland region can imply a continuum of criminalization that occurs differently across spaces and neighborhoods. Even as racial criminalization remains a social fact, the reasons for this may be various. On the West side, Kyle (and by extension his family’s) understanding was rooted in the reputation of the predominately Black West side as a neighborhood and the ‘iconic ghetto’ policing that is used (Williams, 2019). On the other hand, in the north, the reasons for criminalization are explicitly linked to the predominately white and wealthier demographic profile that makes up the North side. Kyle’s assessment above of how he understands profiling and criminalization utilizes comparing a phenomenon and attributing and comparing them to differential policing practices across a city. These racialized meanings given to space and region was used by the students in a way that solidified their implications and sense of self as a member of a criminalized racial group. This was also observed or perceived on a more macro-level by students beyond neighborhood when discussing regions of the United States. Whether regions like the South have markedly high levels of antiblack racism and prejudice is a hotly debated topic, or at the very least there are debates centered around how to interpret the data (Firebaugh & Davis, 1988; Reed, 1993). Regions like the South are perceived as having more overt in-your-face racial prejudice compared to other regions (Pendergrass, 2013):

**Gerard:** My kind of view on race, there was a time I went to New York for a baseball tournament and we went up north and everyone's like, "Well, up north isn't racist. It's racist but it's in a different way." So I've kind of learned each region kind of has their own brand of stereotyping racism and criminalization. . . Everyone's is like "the south is racist". The south is just blunt about the racism, which is a good and a bad where it's at least you know what you're getting but it also makes you just very hyper-aware of it."

**Julien:** "Hmm. So, people assume a lot of things about the racial climate and criminalization in the south, right?"

**Gerard:** "Mm-hmm" (affirmative).

**Julien:** "Oh. And you expected some of this sort of stuff in the Midwest too."

**Gerard:** "I expected it in the Midwest but was not sure if it was going to be the same amount of directness or who's going to be like New York where it was kind of like just all struck in a horrible way."

The South has long served as a major epicenter of mass criminalization and mass incarceration with states like Louisiana, Oklahoma, Florida, and Alabama as particularly egregious in state-level statistics; as of 2019; Louisiana incarcerated 887 per 100,000 residents and has one of the highest life-without-parole populations in the country (Carson, 2020; Delvin, 2021). In Southern counties that were historically more dependent on chattel enslavement of Black people there is now greater disparities in arrest rates between Black and white arrestees (Ward, 2022). States in the Midwest also have higher than average disparity rates of incarceration and mass criminalization, made worse by the social and economic segregation of many cities like Milwaukee, Chicago, and Cincinnati (Gordon, 2019). Students made no explicit indication that they were aware of the specific statistics but still regarded the criminalizing gaze as stronger and more immediate in some spatial circumstances than others. The knowledge or lack of knowledge about the

specific areas of Columbia, Mid-Missouri, or Missouri in generally had to varying degrees shaped the expectations for profiling that they felt they would be subjected to, which will be explored in the next chapter.

Understanding of racial criminalization and the development criminalized subjectivity is a temporal process. Many students' first taste of profiling and criminalization happened at school age, falling in line with general data on the subject of racial disparities in school punishment, suspensions, and expulsions. Many students received some degree of socialization from family and peers that communicated their social and material relation to the criminal-legal system. If we take this role of socialization seriously, we must also contend with how many students were or were not socialized. For example, many were already familiar with racial criminalization as far as Black men and boys were concerned, leaving many Black girls and women to discover with the help of peers and news media that this was a phenomenon that also ensnared them too.

The criminalized subjectivity of these students was also tied to their sense of space and place especially as far as they perceived the white space and its potential for experiencing the criminalizing gaze. While a nationwide phenomenon, several students repeatedly associated criminalization with predominately white spaces, communities and regions and in ways that reinforced their sense of membership in a criminalized racial group. In the next chapter, what will be explored is precisely how these factors manifest in the lives of these students at the University of Missouri and in the larger community of Columbia, Missouri.

## CHAPTER 4- BLACK IN A MIDWEST COLLEGE TOWN

“I would say in a way you know these people don't act this way except for around you. . . And it feels like this block. And then when the controversial issues come up. . . People will look at me and I'm like they want to know what I think, but I can't tell them what I think.”- Maria

In the previous chapters we established that racial criminalization is a phenomenon that affects how Black students understand themselves as racialized people, primarily through the development of a criminalized subjectivity that is intimately tied into how Blackness has been constructed in the United States. The degree to which students understand the topic writ large and perceive its prominence in their everyday life changed over time through various forms of socialization via family and/or peers. Their understanding was also affected and shaped by place and region. The white space (Anderson, 2012; 2022) remained a salient factor in their understanding of racial stigma as well as criminalization. Higher education in the United States have also operated as sites of anti-Black oppression and surveillance as long as the institution has existed often in continually evolving ways, even as the franchise was opened to Black students and faculty (Mustaffa, 2017). This chapter then contextualizes this using the University of Missouri and its location in Columbia.

### *Perceptions of Space & Region*

Perceptions of space and region are also heavily indebted to symbolic boundary-making; as people cross and navigate physical and symbolic boundaries they also enter or leave particular social arrangements that also shaped by histories (Lamont and Molnar, 2002; Pendergrass, 2013). Students varied in their knowledge of the Columbia/Mid-Missouri area and its history, racial and otherwise, before they officially began attending.

As discussed in the previous chapter, the perceptual aspects of white space, especially when conflated with political conservative ideas, was a running theme in how students understood their expectations. Words and statuses such as “conservative”, “white”, “country”, “midwest”, “southern” were consistently emerging themes in the assessments of students who were new to the region or least the state.

**Rose:** “I’m going to say this one story. I had cried before, I had, me and my roommate, we had two black girls that we were supposed to room with, but one we didn’t get them, and before even figuring out room situations, I had had nightmares that I got super racist roommates and just couldn’t do anything about it. Because I know a lot of mid-Missouri-very conservative people come to Mizzou, along with a lot of people who are diverse, city, have progressive thinking. But there are a lot of people here, because it is Missouri who have conservative thinking. I had to keep in mind, I’m not going to school in LA or New York, where it would be uncommon to have racist roommates. I was very scared about that, coming in, and getting put into a situation where I was nervous about race all the time.”

Here in Rose’s commentary, we observe a symbolic juxtaposition of Missouri with cities and regions like Los Angeles and New York, but also how this juxtaposition shaped her own visceral fears of experiencing racism on campus and the larger area of Mid-Missouri. Because dormitories also mean parties will be in close everyday contact and interaction with each other, this has implications for how Black students anticipate interracial interactions and the racial climate of various environments (Trail, Shelton, & West, 2009). Black and nonwhite students who expected to be the target of racist prejudice in interactions experienced more negative affective consequences (Shelton, Richeson, & Salvatore, 2005)

What should also be taken into account is the role of social media in shaping the perceptions of some students. Maria discussed similar concerns after a spate of social media cases:

“I don't want to say it was a sinking ship before, or maybe it was kind of a wow and eye opener, but before I got here, COVID had already hit and I had already gotten accepted to Mizzou by February, I had my stuff done. I was really excited. It was the best journalism school. That's why I was coming here. I was okay, I can go anywhere else, but I will come here. And then that tape with those freshmen, white girls imitating George Floyd came out before I was going to move in, it was a few weeks it was really having me rethink going. And then #BlackAtMizzou. Those Twitter pages started coming up on my mom's feed, So that was their experiences. It was disturbing me. It was kind of scaring me.”

Many students found that their expectations were to varying degrees confirmed or changed for the positive the more time they spent living on campus and in the general area. That said, many still were very aware of a campus racial climate that partially shaped how they navigated campus and interactions.

#### *Town & Gown Ambient Racism*

Campus racial climate can be defined as part of the institutional context that includes members' attitudes, perceptions, behaviors, and expectations around issues of race, ethnicity, and diversity.” (Hurtado, Griffin, Arrelano and Cuellar, 2008, 205) A helpful concept that communicates how Black students navigate the racial climate of the University of Missouri and the larger city is ‘ambient racism’. Developed by Woody (2021), ambient racism describes not only the legacies of racism that permeates social environments but how that then affects how people of color emotionally navigate these

environs. Emotions are not just responses to social situations but are also avenues through which structural racism operates (Woody, 2021; Bonilla-Silva, 1997). These are then subtly isolating and exclusionary characteristics that heighten emotional senses of alienation from ones' environment (Woody, 2021). These can manifest themselves in the interactions and micro and macroaggressions that these students deal with. The University of Missouri is nowhere near unique in having tacit and explicit racism exist on its campus. Waverly and Duck (2020) discussed several representative narratives concerning the experiences of everyday racism on college campuses from students of color. These ranged from racist jokes, assumptions of special treatment, racial and cultural ignorance, and the perpetuation of the 'forever foreigner' trope when applied to Asian-American students (Waverly and Duck, 2020; Harwood, Browne-Huntt, Mendenhall, & Lewis, 2012). The histories of these institutions are key to shaping and understanding the racial climate.

What does make the University of Missouri unique was the campaign of antiracist activism from September to early November of 2015 that captured nationwide attention and commentary. The series of protests began that September 24 with the first "Racism Lives Here" rally (Johnson, 2015; Blatchford & Weinberg, 2015). This culminated in the resignation of both the UM System President and MU Chancellor within hours of each other on November 9<sup>th</sup>, 2015. However, even before the protests, Black students reported experiencing ambient racism and microaggressions as well as macroaggressions on campus and even well after the protests (Eligon, 2015). In the summer of 2020, a social media hashtag "#BlackAtMizzou" was created that detailed the everyday experiences of microaggressions, racism, and discrimination that both current and alumni Black students



faced on the campus and in the community (Cowden, 2020). Trending nationally, several themes emerged detailing lack of diversity and feeling unsafe on campuses.

In the spring and fall of 2020, various students and faculty protested the presence of the Thomas Jefferson statue and headstone at Francis Quadrangle (Bacharier, 2020). The resistance and criticism of the statue's place on campus is rooted in Thomas Jefferson's role in enslaving Black people and his rape of, and fathering children with, a teenaged slave named Sally Hemming (Guthrie, 2015). It was not the first time that students made a move to have it removed from campus as a similar effort was made in 2015 (Guthrie, 2015). Nor is it the only example of such a monument on the campus associated with and reflecting white supremacy. A large red granite rock commemorating local confederate soldiers and veterans was dedicated on the University of Missouri campus in 1935. It stayed at the corner of 9<sup>th</sup> and Conley streets until 1974 after Black students organized a series of complaints (Noblin, 1974); it was then moved the grounds of the Boone County courthouse until 2015 when it was moved to a local Civil War battlefield in Centralia (Kessler, 2015). When discussing monuments and memory, they can be powerful shapers of how people navigate space and how students and stakeholders experience and understand the campus, and their place in the larger organization of things and also shapers of ambient racism in a given area (Combs, Dellinger, Jackson, Johnson, Skipper, C.R.T., 2016; Tichavakunda, 2022).

Students who were interviewed for this study generally didn't necessarily regret their decision to come to this school but the ambient racism that they and those they knew experienced and perceived affected their subjective understanding of their place on campus. What should be taken into account is that the covid pandemic was a great shaper

how students navigated the campus since 2020, this was more observed for underclassmen like freshmen and sophomore students. Kenzie, a senior, said that based on her own subjective observations over her tenure, “nonwhites were disposable”.

Black people, when in the white space, are subject to a “dance” that staves off the scrutiny and ambiguity that often shapes the interactions between white and Black parties in a given white space:

**Maria:** “I’m going to use the J[ournalism] school as a primary example. Coming into the J-school, I’m already a minority because I am different colored, different mix, come from different background and I’m a girl. So my experiences have been... I’m going to use maybe instructors like some mentors as an example. Race-wise, I felt either pause or either I’ve felt, this is different. . . . It’s hard to make genuine colleagues who are not trying to either pry into what I’ve got going on background wise or who are genuinely trying to be colleagues. It’s just hard to separate. My mom likes to make this joke because she comes back sometimes she’s like it’s almost like they’ve never seen black people before. Some of them are in awe and then some of them are like “I don’t get why you’re here”. And it’s so hard to distinct it, but I feel it, I really do. And there has been several occasions where I’ve actively heard that some people just do not want to work with me because they have that little perception, those negative perceptions.”

Of course, how students navigated these waters was also subject to partial influence by their relationship to the university as an institution. EJ, an athlete, had this to say:

“But personally, it hasn’t affected me too much. I think that may be due to the environment that I put myself in. Being an athlete. . . We’re in the locker room, in the facility practicing, doing that. You’re set apart from normal student life. A lot of the things you do, you’re not trying to raise awareness for social justice, or do anything like that. You’re trying to just go to school. You’re trying to do your sport and be the best you

can be in that. When it comes to that, I find myself really disregarding a lot of things that's going on, because my mindset has been, like, "I'm here off for a mission. That has nothing to do with me." It's hard to say that, because I'm black. It's hard to say, "Well, you should be, well, it has something to do with you, you're black." You notice.”

There's been research done on the salience of an athlete status and its implications for perceptions of racism and discrimination. On the one hand, the salience of a collegiate athlete identity was inversely correlated to a centrality of racial identity and also positively correlated with the association that discrimination was less of a problem (Brown, Jackson, Brown, Sellers, Keiper, and Warde, 2003). On the other hand, Black athletes remain quite aware of racial disparities and of the racism they experience. Another study noted that in terms of understanding how colorblind racism influenced how Black collegiate athletes perceived racial disparities, they pushed back against common tropes and notions about perceived lack of cultural emphasis on education and also recognized the disparities of representation among high-ranking coaches as a critical example of racial inequality on campus (Bimper, 2015).

What makes this case notable was that on November 7, 2015, the University of Missouri football team declared a boycott of the 2015 season in protest of the racism on campus which does partially push back at Brown et al. (2003)'s assertion that the salience of an athletic identity dampened the centrality of a racial identity and, but not always, a critical understanding of racial inequality. In fact, E.J. later went on to explain that his fellow teammates had a team meeting and discussion in the aftermath of the death of George Floyd in the early summer of 2020. Black athletes on campuses are caught in the position of simultaneously occupying a valorized identity of 'athlete' and stigmatized

identity of 'Black'. In other words, they are cheered on the field but surveilled and avoided off the field (Brooks, 2016).

E.J. went on to describe how he experienced various assumptions and microaggressions on whether he played sports but he also experienced positive differential treatment off campus at various establishments upon their learning his status as an athlete such as special favors and discounts. This raises an interesting question of how visible or verbally confirmed status operates as a shield against stereotypical assumptions outside the campus. "When my jogging outfit associates me with a university, it identifies me as a certain "kind" of Black person, one local White people might trust or find comforting, a Black male with a putative collection of positive attributes or markings that might distance me from the iconic ghetto" (Anderson, 2022, 29).

Josephine noted similar treatment at her service job: "If I'm on campus, it's like, "She's a college student." Not that college students can't do anything wrong, but there's a safety net of being a college student. My job, I think it's just, the idea of being a college student isn't applied to me because people don't really know. And there's something about when you tell that you go to Mizzou or you go to college, it's just like, "She's a little more trustworthy now." They're a little less suspicious now, because they're a college student."

But at least one student also made mention of their hometown of Ferguson, Missouri as something of a similar shaper of interactions with both Black and white individuals on campus:

**Julien:** “That's an interesting point. When you tell people that you're from Ferguson, because of the negative connotations that Ferguson has gotten over the past several years, that kind of influences how people interact with you?”

**Shaun:** “I would say not necessarily, but I would just say it also depends on who I'm talking to. If I'm talking to a Black professor or whatever and I say I'm from Ferguson, they're going to be like, "Okay. I need to grab onto this person and help mentor them." You know what I'm saying? They want to help me out. But I've noticed when I talk to some of my White professors and I mention Ferguson, they be like, "Oh. Okay." They had that initial shock and be like, "Oh. Okay. How is it?" Or they'll be like, "Oh. Okay," but you can tell in their face it's kind of like, "I don't know how this person is." You know what I'm saying? It's kind of for some of them a disconnect because they don't really know what it means.”

There's been a well-documented racial divide in perceptions of the shooting of Michael Brown and the social protest and unrest that came from it with roughly 80% of Black Americans polled saying that shooting raised important issues of systemic racism as opposed to 37% of White Americans polled (Pew Research Center, 2014). However, Shaun's comments point to the concept of 'territorial stigma' that explores how material and symbolic power are used in the stigmatization of place (Wacquant, 2014; Wacquant, Slater, & Borges-Pereira, 2014). In this case, "Ferguson" has become a highly racialized label that called to mind social disorder, crime, and riots. But the racial divide in the response to Ferguson seems to have also been applied to some degree to people from the area. Just as the Black students' perceptions of space and region partially influenced their anticipation of interaction, they may also notice how other's perceptions of a student's background can shape how they react to them. Shaun said that the Black professors didn't know him any better than his white professors, all they knew was that he was from

Ferguson and they responded accordingly, with a more sympathetic outlook that still relied on these stigmatizing perceptions.

#### TOWN AND GOWN RACIAL CRIMINALIZATION

When asked whether they thought racial criminalization or profiling was a problem on the university's campus, virtually all expressed concerns or "wouldn't be surprised if it was (the case)"; the curious thing is that when asked if they'd personally experienced any sort of profiling or racial criminalization on the campus, very few had any traditional examples of such things happen to them. Instead, the "white space" tended to be a shaper of their expectations for such interactions:

**Clover:** "I'm not sure about criminalization just because I don't have any firsthand experience with it, or know any friends who know any friends who have experienced that at Mizzou. As far as profiling goes, I absolutely do think it happens. I think it happens everywhere when you're black. When it comes to me, I don't think I've ever been extremely profiled on campus in a way that I at least noticed, but it definitely does happen. My roommate last year was black and so she was just even on edge all the time because she didn't want to be profiled. So even though she might not have ever experienced it, she was still anxious about it happening and I think that's a lot of people's stories on campus."

Clover's statements encapsulated the general themes of students' remarks surrounding criminalization and racial stigma in this particular setting. Racial profiling for these students was taken as a potential fact of life with very little reason to believe that it could not happen on a university campus. In general, the spectre of racial criminalization and profiling did not totally prevent them from going on campus or from

going where they wanted or felt necessary but it did partially guide some students' sense of safety among certain spaces on campus and how they interacted with other students:

**Shaun:** "I mean I would say, for one, I make sure that if I'm walking ... I know when I was living on campus, I would be out at the library pretty late. So, I would most likely, before I had my car, I would be walking late at night. I would make sure, for sure, that I would not have a hood. If it was cold outside or something like that, that I wouldn't have a hood on, especially if I was walking behind a female. I would make sure I'm not looking creepy. Especially if it's a girl and I can tell that she ain't Black. Just women in general, but ... I don't know. It's not really too many places that I try to avoid that look in certain places."

Other male participants also mentioned being especially aware when in the presence of women, particularly non-Black women, and especially white women. E.J. himself noted that when in similar situations in the dorms, some white female students would hurriedly try to close their doors when he was behind them. Because of these controlling images, Black men are in the position of being able to shape how others interact with the spaces that they're in together (Staples, 1986). Black men specifically are subject to controlling images that are used to perpetuate criminalizing surveillance (Smith, Mustaffa, Jones, Curry, and Allen, 2016). But they also would participate in image management to try to offset the other party's perceptions of the student.

Perceptions of campus space was also a running theme among several students in their understanding of racism and profiling on campus. Compare Shaun's experience with Ezra, and it becomes abundantly clear how navigation of space is intimately tied to how race, sex, gender, and gender expression are criminalized and deemed suspicious:

**Ezra:** "Like I said, I like to dress in heels. And I don't identify as male, but like being perceived as male. I know that people will make certain assumptions about me when I go

out. So, I am kind of cognizant, is like, if I'm going to do that, I want to be with people. I don't want to be out by myself looking like that at night. Knowing that I could be perceived a certain way, and either physically attacked or get the police called on me, because people think I'm weird and up to no good or something. Or, like, I don't go to frat parties at all. You will not catch me on frat row on Friday night."

The section of campus reserved for the predominately white fraternities and sororities on campus was consistently treated as a site or "white space" where the criminalizing gaze would be most felt or experienced. Given settings can signal the degree to which a person will feel safe or threatened through a variety of setting cues (Purdie-Vaughns et al., 2008). For example, institutional identity safety indicators like "safe space" designators signal to members of a marginalized group can feel safe and comfortable and relatively free from prejudicial treatment (Gainsburg & Earl, 2022). But on the other hand, such cues can conversely signal that there is a problem in the area from which marginalized students should be protected.

It's worth noting that the Greek Row area was also an area where several students also noted their perception that behavior that was tolerated or even encouraged in their white fellow students would be deemed criminal and overpoliced had Black students done similar:

**Clover:** "Yeah. So, I have a friend who's in Greek life with me in my sorority and she's also Black. And so we were just having this conversation one time about how... So Greektown, where all the frat houses are, is essentially if it weren't white, people would be getting arrested because there's drugs like crazy and hard drugs. That's the norm. There's weapons. There's these loud parties. There's all the things that would call for someone to get in trouble by the police if they were Black, but because they're frat parties and it's Greektown and it's a white fraternity, that it's just not a thing. MUPD will literally turn the other way or Columbia PD will literally just not really do anything about



it. And we feel as if that wouldn't be the case if these were black parties, if this wasn't Greektown, because it's not like these cops don't know that they're talking to kids with drugs on them, that other black people are sitting in jail cells for. It's just very interesting to see the disconnect there. So that's some of the conversations pertaining Greektown, I would say."

In May 2013, 70+ Los Angeles police were sent to disperse a college party, most of the attendants were African-American college students from the University of Southern California, with six arrested and later released (Meraji, 2013). So, Clover's concerns may come from these sorts of observations. The sense of differential treatment in policing also influenced the subjective perceptions of the campus-wide alert system, MU Alert. Sarah, a sophomore student from Atlanta, Georgia, described this as an explicit concern: "So, we actually had a conversation about this in my journalism class this semester, and my teacher, in fact, brought up the way that the MU alert system and the way they describe people helps to further this notion of... of course, like journalism, we're going to talk about sending out alerts and informing the public, but about how MU alert does a bad job in that sense of painting that picture for people."

At least one student didn't think that racial criminalization or profiling was as serious a potential problem

**Julien:** "Do you think that the fact that it can be different in different places, do you think that that has, or that it could affect how you understand criminalization happening? If that question makes sense."

**Kyle:** "Yeah, yeah. Because, growing up, how black people, it's not uncommon for them to be pushed into one neighborhood, or in one area of an entire city. So, when you're traveling out of those areas or into those areas, there's different dynamics knowing that here, you have more of a chance to be profiled, than you do here. Yeah, just things like

that. I see criminalization, it's more, I would say it's more common in areas where people are forced to be pushed together like in project type areas.”

**Julien**: “All right. So, do you think that this can also be an issue, or do you know if it's an issue here at Mizzou?”

**Kyle**: “I would say no, I don't think that could be an issue here because, well, yeah, from my knowledge the black population is all spread out throughout campus. We're not all in one area so, I don't think it would be the same as one neighborhood being more heavily under watch than others. Well, of course, all the dorms are in one area of campus but, it's not like the whole Black population is in this specific area, and in this specific dorm, and things like that. So I think that type of being profiled according to location isn't an issue here.”

Kyle explicitly connected his understanding of profiling to the role of space and how it was policed, particularly the overpolicing that many poor Black neighborhoods face. This leads us to ask how students do experience or don't experience or observe racial criminalization and racism in the larger community versus the campus. In general, students who were from Columbia were usually more familiar with the more specific details of how racial criminalization manifested in the city.

**Annalise**: “Yeah, I feel like in general CPD. . . I know some of them [MUPD]work also for CPD . . . but in general I feel like CPD for the whole city, they definitely target Black people or non-white people more than white people. My cousin, when she was younger, she was 16 when she was pregnant, and she had gotten pulled over by a police officer in Columbia and they slammed her on the ground. All she did was speeding, but they were just instigating stuff for no reason. And she was pregnant, they threw her on her stomach. So yeah, it was really bad. . . But then I also know I have white coworkers and colleagues and they'll get pulled over for speeding and they just give them a warning. So it just really depends, but I mean, also police hang around places like the projects and the other

government housing and by Douglass Park because it is a problem area, but also over-policing is what causes those issues in the first place. So definitely the way they watch non-white people is definitely different than how they treat and watch white people in Columbia.”

The park that Annalise referred to in her comments, Douglass Park, had garnered a locally negative racialized reputation as the “Black park” in Columbia which was also in proximity to public housing in the area. Scooby, a fellow Columbia native, validated the general perceptions of Douglass Park:

“That's the part of town that the park suddenly had closed hours. So the police would patrol it more during certain hours of the night. And they put more street lamps up there, and they got rid of some playground equipment. And those sorts of more infrastructure things were done in that part of town. . . . the neighboring places of the Douglass neighborhood. And additionally, the Section 8 housing. It's very close to there. It has disproportionately black people. So it is known as the Black Park. And it is categorized by the police in our town, and even the city itself, the city government considers that to be the place where drug dealers have it, all those sorts of things.”

Not every student experienced racial criminalization but when students did discuss the general phenomenon or potential for criminalization and racism in the larger environment of Columbia or Mid-Missouri they usually juxtaposed the campus with other spaces:

**Kendra**: “I feel on campus, I feel a lot more included in that community just because there are spaces for me, like I'm part of the MU Black Pre-law Student Association. And I feel like I can always find someone who was on the same path as me, or has had similar experiences, or is always willing to share information or tips or help about how to navigate campus. And in terms of the wider Columbia area, I feel like in certain places I am a lot more cautious about where I'm going just because you never know. I feel like there's a difference between White people and people who happen to be White. And I feel

like you never know what type of person that you are going to run into or how they're going to react to you or your Blackness, or what adjectives are going to associate with you based off how you look to them.”

Kendra’s comment not only juxtaposed the campus with the wider community but also explicitly rooted that juxtaposition in the sense of community that she experienced on campus. This sense of community performs many roles and in Kendra’s case fulfilled a need for resource access but also socialization on where to go or not go. Also notice that Kendra distinguishes between “White people and people who happen to be White.” When pressed further or to elaborate, she said, “I feel like White people are people who have a fixed mindset about race and Black people. And I feel like people who happen to be White are more open to listening to the experiences of other people who are not like them and don't automatically assume things about them that might not be true.” Her distinction relied on an associative notion that “White people” comes with a particular set of held racial ideologies, while “people who happened to be white” were those racialized as white but did not hold to such ideologies; she elaborated on this by characterizing people who created a high school diversity club with her as “happening to be white”. To her, the problem as she described it was a lack of knowledge about the type of person one would or could encounter outside of these networks. And it can be this uncertainty that can shape willingness to cross symbolic boundaries or a sense of safety when crossing them.

**Julien:** “Okay. All right. So do you think that criminalization affects how you travel or navigates Columbia or Mizzou?”

**Scooby:** “I think yes. But more so on Mizzou’s campus because I have lived in Columbia so long that I feel more comfortable. In my own places, if that makes sense. I live on the north side of town. So I feel comfortable frequently on that side, I would feel very strange going to the south side of town because it is mostly white people over there. I would not feel comfortable being there. I don't feel comfortable being there late at night. I would not want to be there. I try my best not to go downtown. Because that is where the police station is. And I've heard of multiple friends of color being like stopped for silly things like they didn't turn their blinker on to go into a roundabout or your license plate wasn't visible. Or your brake light's suddenly out, you turned your headlines on too fast. Those sorts of things have been more frequently in the downtown, in South Side areas, and especially in those neighborhoods. I would not want to drop my friends off . . . into those suburban areas.”

Kenzie also noted the perception of neighborhoods and areas of Columbia, specifically in the language of how non-Black people (residents or otherwise) speak about certain areas. These perceptions are not new, the neighborhood of Sharp End was reportedly nicknamed for the reputed presence of knives, razors, and other weapons (Baalman, 2019).

*Racialized Burdens, Sanctions, and Criminalization*

**Maria:** “One of my good friends who doesn't actually go here, she goes to Louisville, she was saying how at their library, they used to, you'd have to scan your card to get in, but they were only doing that for the black students there. So they just got rid of that entirely. And she would say, “I would go in and if I was by myself, they would ask to scan my card, but if I was with some of my white friends, that would not happen. And if she went with a group of black people, they would scan their cards. She was like they assume that we are going to steal books or do whatever. So they would scan our cards so they could know we were here.”

A document like a campus student ID is simply a photo identification that grants and legitimizes access to campus buildings, resources, and right to space. However, as stories like the above point out, they could also serve as a racialized form of surveillance and ‘belonging/unbelonging’ (Jenkins et al., 2013). How universities generally function can be understood via the concept of ‘racialized organizations’ and their consequential concepts of ‘racialized burdens’. According to Ray (2019), racialized organizations have both symbolic and material dimensions and have four basic tenets that we have already slightly touched on: (1) they enhance or diminish the agency of racialized groups within them, (2) they legitimate the unequal access and distribution of resources, (3) Whiteness as credential, and (4) the decoupling of formal rules from organizational practice is often racialized. The fact that universities are racialized organizations may help to clarify the emotional and psychological aspects of Black students navigating campuses. On a micro-level we can see how racialized organizations affect the agency of Black students to take unfettered advantage of all the resources that the university has to offer (e.g.: campus IDs) but this may also offer a chance to clarify how meso-level institutional decisions and micro-level interactions can disproportionately impact Black students through criminalizing lens that treat Black students as unbelonging or more likely to commit acts of deviance.

Campus police and the role of police can also be something that contributed to a student’s subjective understanding of criminalization on campus. Citizens of the public perception of the legitimacy of police develops out of the ways in which officers exercise their authority and whether that exercise is perceived as fair and just (Jacobsen, 2014). The status of campus police can only be compared to city police so much due to the

differences between the people that they're tasked with policing. College and university communities are primarily comprised of young adults who are in a transitional period. But as studies and news stories consistently show, campus police are an important institutional avenue through which the 'unbelonging' and criminalization of Black students, faculty, and staff is reinforced (Martinez & Imam, 2018; Jenkins et al., 2020; Slabaugh, 2020; Armus, 2020).

Members of racial minorities, especially African-Americans have tended to have more critical and unfavorable views of the police as an institution. (Miller & Davis, 2008) These findings seem to be fairly consistent and significant even when accounting for university students (Mbuba, 2010). These perceptions also had gendered effects: white and male respondents in one study were more likely to perceive police use of force as justified compared to female and nonwhite respondents (Girgenti-Malone, Khoder, Vega, & Castillo, 2017) Students interviewed tended to vary in their feelings towards campus police and police in general. Some students (e.g.: Trey and Shaun) had fairly neutral opinions towards the police while others (e.g.: Josephine or Angela) openly had abolitionist leanings and/or in Josephine's words "despised" police or were no more likely to grant legitimacy to campus police than any other departments. No students had had any personally negative encounters with the campus police but as one student said, their perceptions and understanding of the police as an institution even colored whether they engaged when they needed help.

**Mary-Jane:** "I'm not sure, but I have definitely become intoxicated to a point where I may have needed to have an escort home. And my mother suggested the police and I was not so sure about that option because I was not sure what might happen to me just because I knew I consumed some illegal substances. So I just didn't want to even see

what that interaction might be like. I know the motto is supposed to be your safety first, but then again, I also am a black woman in a world that is against black people.”

Another avenue of exploration comes from administrative burden theory, namely in how seemingly small burdens have long-lasting consequences that affect resource access and that also fall unevenly on those with less power (Heinrich, 2016). When discussing the concept of racialized burdens, they may operate by how policymakers and those in decision-making power can enable racially disproportionate burdens through facially neutral rules using nonracist reasons (Ray, Herd, and Moynihan, 2022). As Angela below pointed out, these racialized burdens often make their presence known through disciplinary measures.

**Julien**: “Yeah. Do you think that there’re issues like that here on campus too?”

**Angela**: “I do. I think that for sure if it was a group of white students protesting for something, and there was a group of black students protesting for something, of course we already know who will be more targeted. Black students get in trouble for stuff that white students have done much worse . . . where if black students are on campus protesting racism. . . then they get these disciplinary actions and get holds on their accounts, much more serious precautions. I think that’s somewhat of an example of how we see it on campus.”

**Julien**: “I see. Do you know anybody who’s been subject to that sort of stuff?”

**Angela**: “I know personally my friend who was a part of [protest group], how she was treated versus the other white students who got in trouble as well for the same protest that she was involved in.”

In 2017, a university task force recommended changes to university policies on rights and responsibilities in public spaces, this also included protest. According to the



Use of Facilities section of University of Missouri Business Policy and Procedure Manual:

“The University will not interfere with events, meetings, rallies, demonstrations, vigils, protests, or assemblies in public areas of grounds and buildings unless participants engage in one or more of the following behaviors: 1. Disrupt, interfere with, or prevent (a) the orderly conduct of a University function or activity, including, but not limited to, classes, research, study, lectures, performances, meetings, interviews, administrative business, or ceremonies or other public events, or (b) access to any room or space in which such functions or activities are being held.” (Chapter 6, §. 6:050).

These were adopted in April 2015 and subsequently revised on June 1 and August 24, 2017 and August 21, 2019. In the aftermath of protests that moved in the main administrative building, roughly 40 students were referred to disciplinary action in violation of these restrictions. But as Angela pointed out, the exercise of these neutral policies contributed to racialized burdens that disproportionately fell on the academic profiles of Black students like her friend. This is not a new phenomenon as there’s been research that shows that enforcement of tougher criminal laws, even when facially neutral, have tended to fall harder on racial minorities; under the Racketeering Influenced and Corrupt Organization (RICO) statute for example, 86% of those prosecuted for gang activity were racial minorities (Woods, 2012). Such effects are also observed in the consequences of zero-tolerance policies and their disproportionate harm on students who are racially minoritized.

On September 19, 2020, the university placed an acrylic case around the Jefferson headstone in response to recent vandalism and graffiti on the nearby sidewalk (Keller,

2020). Administrative decisions like the above can be important in influencing how Black students understand their campus, and specifically their subjective understanding of Black peoples' place in the larger institution as a collective. One student explicitly connected these differential priorities and attitudes towards vandalism (real and perceived), to criminalization of Black students and protestors especially.

**Julien**: “All right. Do you feel like criminalization or racial criminalization could be or is an issue at Mizzou's campus?”

**Trey**: “To a certain extent. It's just the way they perceive some of us to be ... like the fact that they felt the need to put a glass thing around the bust because they were afraid that somebody was going to vandalize it, but whenever people actually vandalized the stuff at the BCC, they didn't do anything back in the day. . . So I just keep that stuff in the back of my mind, like we know who they really care about at the end of the day, so I kind of just act accordingly. They can say they're here to not have racial inequalities and this and that, but at the end of the day, bro, your actions speak louder than your words. I've been here five years, I've seen Mizzou's actions, and their actions aren't leaning toward not having racial inequality, so I know how they operate here, so I just know how to act accordingly, I guess.”

These facially neutral policies and consequences can also be placed within the larger context of the criminalization of antiracist protest. Aside from differential treatment by law enforcement (Cunningham, 2022), police have used pre-existing trespassing and unlawful assembly laws to charge and criminalize protests (Delage, 2015). A spate of bills in state legislatures were also proposed or passed that would criminalize protest, themselves rooted in a history of anti-Black surveillance projects (Divine and Blackson, 2022).

*“Black Mizzou” and the Role of Socialization & Networks*

**E.J.:** Yeah. Well, personally, for me, I hang out with mostly Black people. When it comes to parties and functions, it's mainly Black people. Mizzou has their own, I guess you'd say student community that we dub 'Black Mizzou'. We have our own functions, our own things that we do, own community that comes with that. That's mostly who I've been associated with, because I feel more comfortable being around other black people. . . That doesn't mean I'm not around other races or white people. But when it comes to my experience, that's mostly who I've been around. It's been a good experience.”

Students on college campuses can become involved with a variety of sub-communities that contribute to a sense of belonging on campus, this can be academic or nonacademic and supported via institutional resources and peer resources (Allendoerfer, Wilson, Bates, Crawford, Jones, Floyd-Smith, Scott, & Veilleux, 2012; Kirk & Lewis, 2015). E.J. is referring to a sub-student community at the University of Missouri anchored by a network of Black student organizations, resource centers, extracurricular organizations, and parallel social events that are primarily centered around Blackness and Black students. Such communities can come with a host of benefits ranging from validation of cultural heritage (Moreno & Sanchez-Banuelos, 2013), personal validation, peer support and interactions (Yosso et al., 2009). This can also be bolstered by institutional support through organizational resources and supportive staff and faculty. Participation these sorts of extracurricular activities and organizations can also be sites of racial identity expression and development (Harper & Quaye, 2007; Jackson & Wingfield, 2013).

**Julien:** “All right. So what sort of meanings or messages do you think you've been taking away from these sorts of conversations?”

**Clover**: “With other friends who've experienced [it]?”

**Julien**: “Yeah.”

**Clover**: “Okay. Yeah. Just how unfair it really can be. That's the main thing, because I know my experiences and I know how I felt with those experiences. And there's tons of other stories like the one I told you in preschool. And so I know what my life has looked like, but then when I hear it from this person and this person and this person and this person, I'm like, "Oh, this is actually such a big problem. And this is the reality of so many black people." And they have these stories not for any other reason than them just being black. It's what I've picked up each time. It's like, "Wow, we both are living the same life almost when it comes to race, because we're both profiled the same way, or we both know the stereotypes that are stacked against us.”

A university setting can serve as one of the contexts for another stage in Black Identity Development. Formal institutionalized education can take the form of coursework that, in this case, drives more detailed awareness of material conditions and a sense of self as a member of a racialized group. However, given that 32.49% of students at the university are out-of-state students (College Factual, 2022), this gives us an opportunity to consider a factor that influences collective racial identity movement among peers. Up until university life, much of the racial socialization about criminalization that we've explored happened amongst family and peers in a student's immediate neighborhood and family context. Clover's statement on hearing similar stories from other Black students describes a moment of clarity for her on the proliferation of criminalization for many young Black people; that so many Black students from different states, regions, and cities could experience similar treatment indicated that criminalization was a racialized stigma that many Black people are subject to that in turn contributed to a sense of collective identity.

Trey also discussed how he and his peers would discuss the topics of criminalization and racial identity differently on campus versus how he and his peers discussed it back in his hometown.

**Trey:** “I wouldn't say we really talked about it like that. Or at least a lot of my friends here. Maybe back at home, we may have. We may have talked like how we're perceived back at home because we're around more white people and certain stuff, just interacting with less of our people and more of them, I guess, as opposed to here where I'm typically around mostly Black people.”

**Julien:** “All right, so something you said kind of caught my eye, like how you all are perceived back in your hometowns versus here at Mizzou. How do you think that that has influenced your understanding of these issues, or have you noticed?”

**Trey:** “I guess here I'm with more Black people, like I said, so it's more like-mindedness about these certain topics. We're all under the same understanding, like this should not be had, but in a vastly white suburban place, there will be those that agree with us, but then at the same time there are going to be those people that don't agree, so just knowing that and trying to act accordingly.”

The stories that people tell are integral to the interactive dimension of negotiating identity but as Trey demonstrates they can also differ across space and the networks that they're shared with. It's not immediately clear who the “they” is that Trey is referring to but it can be deduced that this “they” is referring to white members of his hometown community. Participating in Black Mizzou did not preclude any interaction or friendship with non-Black fellows. Not all students felt that this network was penetrable or that “Black Mizzou” was able to be accessed. In literature on sense of community, students were far more able to feel a sense of community based on factors like how well integrated

they were to their environment (McMillian & Chavis, 1986).

**Mary-Jane**: “Being black in Columbia just feels lonely. There is such a small group of black people. And if you're not in [African Student Association] ASA or Greek life or any type of organization that has to do with being African-American you're on the outside of that group, or if you go to parties too, you're still included, but I don't do any of that stuff so I feel like an outsider.”

**Julien**: “So you say that it feels lonely, right? You said that most of your friends are other black people or at least other racial minorities. When you say that it feels lonely do you find that that also affects your connections with other black MU students?”

**Mary-Jane**: “Yeah, I don't know. I wanted to join ASA my freshman year, but I thought you had to be African to be a part of it, not just African-American. So, I was really nervous that I wouldn't be black enough. I wouldn't have enough black experience to contribute to conversations. And it changes the way that you can interact with people. Because if you don't share that same cultural similarity, then you don't really have much in common. But it doesn't mean that you can't be compatible, but it loses some aspect of what your relationship with them could be.”

That said, it may be worth asking how or to what degree does a lack of integration into this larger sense of community affect racial socialization at this vital age in young adulthood? Beyond the existence of “Black Mizzou” as a collection of networks, there are smaller ‘Black affinity networks’, small clustered of Black affect and life in predominately white spaces which point to Black life-making in the midst of stigma (Ohito & Brown, 2021; Mustaffa, 2017). But as Mary-Jane’s comments allude to, a sense of investment and integration is also tied to ones’ subjective understanding of their identity and their connection to others. Most students who were interviewed didn’t think criminalizing stigmas were off the table in shaping how Black students experienced life

on campus. Even when they themselves were not subject to those experiences, they were cognizant of the forces that create those experiences or they could point to others both here and at other campuses who did experience criminalization. University life offered students ways of thinking about types of profiling and criminalization that were somewhat unique to the university system. But the university also allowed for the creation and manifestation of various social networks that play a part in their lives. But their participation in these networks was also as good as their ability to integrate themselves into them.

## CHAPTER FIVE- CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

I don't even know if I really have any way that I truly cope with it. You've just got to keep going really.”- Angela

### *Rundown*

In my interviews with these students, I uncovered the ways in which they understand their racialized identity as something that they gained a deeper understanding and appreciation of as they grew older. This racial socialization was shaped by a multitude of factors including their immediate environments, family, politics, and peer networks. One major component of their racial socialization dealt with the status of Black-Americans as a racially stigmatized group (Lenhardt, 2004). This led to the incorporation of not just a ‘racialized identity’ but also an intimately linked ‘criminalized subjectivity’, the special sort of insight or perspective that comes from being a criminalized person or from a criminalized group (Clair, 2021). There develops a racialized collective consciousness surrounding this particular structural issue and its consequences for interactions, socialization, and to some degree identity-building.

We set out to answer two primary research questions, the first of which concerned the degree that the identity construction and experiences of Black undergraduates was shaped by racial criminalization and stigma. I found that these students did not internalize these racist stigmas as true. They recognized that these stigmas were imposed and recognized that there were potential consequences in their interactions, in fact several already had experienced such criminalizing stigmas. But while the development of their racialized identity and a related criminalized subjectivity was influenced by a critical awareness of that stigma, they didn’t internalize it as composing their entire being or as a



reflection of who they truly were. The resistance to internalization was rooted in a strong sense of self that was developed through racial socialization and appraisals from primary and secondary networks (Johnson & Carter, 2020).

A process of awakenings with further development through socialization, interaction, and engagement is a fundamental frame to understanding how Black students' micro-level subjectivities are shaped by larger macro-level and meso-level organizations of society and institutions. A variety of factors influence this process and was reflected in students' experiences. These experiences with othering and criminalization often happened as early as elementary and middle school, which sometimes served as a catalyst for parents and guardians discussing the events with their children and how those experiences were shaped by and caused by anti-Black racism.

Parents and guardians would give "The Talk" to their children as a means of socializing their children about not just othering and criminalization, but also communicating strategies to avoid and successfully navigate an encounter where they're being criminalized (Whitake & Snell, 2016). These often took the forms of experience management and image management, shaping the environmental factors that could increase/decrease likelihood of being profiled and discouraging dressing a certain way or owning and displaying certain types of objects and modifications that are also heavily racialized. But in exploring how Black students were socialized about criminalization, we discovered that many Black women weren't given "The Talk" either to the same extent as their male relatives and friends or even at all. Because of the way that profiling and criminalization discourse centralizes the experiences of Black men, the experiences of Black women/non-men are either pushed to the side and marginalized or subsumed under

the assumed universalization of being Black; similar to how the unmarked is assumed universal while the marked is only seen as representative of the marked (Brekhus, 1996).

A symbolic interactionist process of awakenings, interactions, and engagement is crucial for answering our second question, to what degree is the understanding of students molded across time and space, and region. Such a process operates as a way of shedding light on how Black women grow to understand racial criminalization, and relatedly what it may mean for their subjective perceptions of being a Black woman. In this process, Black women and non-men gained a further appreciation of how integral the theories and concept of intersectionality was to not only their understanding of themselves as Black women & non-men but also contributed to their criminalized subjectivity and a more nuanced understanding of racial criminalization. Peer networks and neighborhood contexts have also been integral to the identity construction and critical awareness of Black college students on criminalization. Socialization and interaction among friend groups and peers served as a secondary form of racial socialization that in many ways was a method of validation, meaning-making, and collective identity construction among Black peers. So we can determine that the degree of influence changes significantly across time, as one grows older and their comprehension becomes more complex and that it may continue to grow as the student grows older.

The subjective perceptions of space and region was also part of how Black students understood criminalization and stigma. The material and demographic characteristics of neighborhood contexts were a factor in how many students thought about criminalization. Most accepted it as a social fact and social possibility but thought about it in different ways. For example, the concept of “white space” seemed to influence

several Black students' subjectivity on the topic, namely that criminalization or potential profiling was more associated with predominately or all white spaces, regions, and neighborhoods. But as students like Kyle, Annalise, and Scooby pointed out, such practices can also be exercised in predominately Black neighborhoods or spaces racialized as "Black" for reasons that imply a continuum of reasons and factors for this social fact. These networks also implicated an intersection of race and social class that shaped their engagement. Their subjectivities reinforced their own sense of membership in a criminalized racial group. This theme seemed to remain somewhat consistent in some student's perceptions of the Mid-Missouri area and Missouri, especially from those who were not from the area. And even for several who did not have any major preconceptions or notions of the region, the connection between race, stigma, and potential consequence for interaction was significant for some.

University life can be a transitional period in a student's life as they move from primary groups in the home environment often to a new set of social networks and institutional navigation. As liberating as this transition can be it is also a site of great sensitivity to stress (Chung & Hudziak, 2017). This stress can be further compounded by racism or anticipation of racism. Concepts such as 'ambient racism' (Woody, 2022) and 'racialized burdens' (Ray, Herd, & Moynihan, 2022) can be instrumental to how Black college students conceive of criminalization factoring into their lives and the lives of fellow students on campus. The role of socialization and interaction continued to be an important contribution in some students' micro-level process of racialized identity-building and development of criminalized subjectivity. I found that college-aged peer

groups can be an important site of constructive narrative-building that reinforces a certain set of knowledge about the relationship between race and stigma.

I also found that the role of space and region continued to factor into their comprehension in college and in ways that often reinforced their sensitivity to membership in a racialized and criminalized group. The first way was through the framing of certain intra-campus locations as a place where racist profiling was more likely to happen or at least perceived to happen more frequently. The second way was through juxtaposing the campus as a safe place relative to regions and spaces external to campus or the college town as the safer space relative to other towns in the larger region. The logic being that at least the campus and/or city was home to their own social networks and where they enjoyed the (not always) tacitly assumed status of being a student of the university. Said tacit assumption may or may not have been guaranteed in situations and environments; students could run the risk of being subjected to interactions that reinforced a criminalized ‘unbelonging’.

### *Limitations*

The primary limitations of this research concerned the sample size and the related demographics of the sample population. As noted in the methods section of chapter 1, most of the studied population were women with relatively few non-women. On the one hand, this unintentional overrepresentation led to notable findings in the roles of intersectionality and its link to temporal process in micro-level subjectivity. On the other hand, some overrepresentation meant that less Black non-women were recruited. There’s research that indicates that African-American people have lower trust in research and

researchers, which then affects their participation in research (Webb, Khubchandani, Striley, & Cottler, 2018).

The scope of inquiry for future work must also include more robust and explicit explorations of the ways in which social class shapes and influences the process of racial identity construction and racial criminalization. Members of the middle-class can have access to the sort of capital that working-class people may not have as a coping response to racial discrimination (Feagin, 1991). The role that social class and socioeconomic status played in how these students understood profiling and criminalization was rather implicitly gathered through their recollections about their social networks and neighborhood environments in this project. This angle must be explicitly explored especially considering that many members of the Black middle class exist in close proximity to working-class or lower-middle class Black people (Patillo-McCoy, 1999; Anderson, 1999). Though not always, university life implicates a set of middle class social, economic, and cultural capital that can shape how subjects understand, experience, and cope with the topics in question. The scope of inquiry for this project was specific to the contexts of the University of Missouri and Columbia, Missouri as places and institutions with recent histories of de jure and de facto segregation, racial profiling, and social justice activism.

### *Implications*

This research was undertaken with the goal of elaborating on an opportunity for developing a critical application of Goffmanian stigma that explicitly places it within the interlocking systems of domination and oppression that gives stigma its power (Tyler, 2018; 2020). More specifically in this research we situate criminalization as a form of

racialized stigma that operates as a form of racialized social control. This critical application of stigma also seriously considers the insight of those belonging to the stigmatized group themselves. This dissertation opened up with a reference to Rios' (2011) ethnographic work shadowing Black and Latino teenage boys in Oakland, California.

That ethnographic work was and is critically acclaimed, but this dissertation wasn't interviewing and shadowing Black teenagers in a low-income neighborhood; it was interviewing Black-identified university students attending a Midwest flagship university. In doing this we gain a greater appreciation of criminalization as a manifestation and consequence of racial stigma and how it's perceived to exist and evolve in the lives of Black university students. This research also adds to the literature that explores how mass criminalization trickles down into the micro-interactions and micro-regional. Beyond traditional stigma tales of racial profiling, being pulled over while driving or shopping-while-black, Black students made note of punitive and criminalizing measures that are to varying degrees unique to a university setting and even more specific to the university settings that they attended.

This research seriously considers how larger social practices and institutional practices affect the experience of stigma (Charmaz, 2020) and in a university this can take the form of micro-level exercise of institutional policy like differential treatment in being asked to show an ID, interactions with campus police, or the measures of sanction that some Black students face relative to non-Black and white peers. Much research has been conducted on higher education as a site of simultaneous antiblack oppression and

black life-making (Mustaffa, 2017). On the one hand, this opens up to a discussion on how resistance is a salient part of Black life (El-Khoury, 2013):

**Ezra:** “I don't know, I definitely think that I take them [stigmas] into account. I don't necessarily let it control my every move and my action, because I also know that to, like, be liberated, and be who I want to be I have to move regardless of the stigma. Part of being black and queer is disruption. You know what I mean? And I think disruption is important.”

That said, Black students are students like any other, subject to all the stressors that come with being a university student. But as many noted are still subject to and aware of material and social realities; the realities of Black student life are often narrowed to resistance in studies (Tichavakunda, 2021).

Student's responses to such racial criminalization, whether actual experiences or to the topic, have been as varied as the students. A couple of students embraced antiracist and pro-Black activism as a form of resistance to push back against not racist criminalizing stigmas but also in ways that were skeptical of the sort of image management that many of them were socialized into (Kerrison, Cobbina, and Bender, 2018). Many other students took other routes. For example, when discussing the problematically vague descriptions of the MU Alert system that could lead to racial profiling last chapter, Sarah then went on to describe how she and her friends regularly joked about the vague descriptions in the MU Alert notifications: “I remember joking about the fact that it's like, "Oh, Black man. Why did it have to be a Black man or blah blah," or literally joking about the fact that there's very little information and that's not really helping people. They're like, "Well, I just saw a Black man in a white shirt, that

could be him." Humor as a means of challenging oppressive political discourse and actions has long been used in African-American culture (Outley, Bowen, and Pinckney, 2021; Williams, 2020) and as a response to the stigmas of everyday life.

These students are by and large not 'tragically colored'(Hurstun [1928]2008; Tichavakunda, 2021), forever preoccupied with the stigmatizing structures and interactions in their lives and how it shapes them. In this way, we also see how the students in questions are fully realized human beings at a critical juncture of their lives; in other words, they're 'agents not objects' (Howarth, 2006). They engage and process this stigma and its place in their lives in a variety of different ways, and a critical process of interaction can be a key to how they will continue to process it in the future.



## APPENDIX

1. Angela was a sophomore female student from Kansas City, MO. Interview took place on November 06, 2020.
2. Grace was a junior female student from Huntsville, Ala. She had described herself as a second-generation Nigerian (child of Nigerian immigrants). Her interview took place on November 10, 2020.
3. Alexis was a sophomore female student from Kennett, MO. Interview took place on November 23, 2020.
4. Starr was a senior female student from Kansas City, MO. A nontraditional student. Interview took place on January 6, 2021.
5. Yvette was a freshman from Kansas City, MO. Interviewed on January 18, 2021.
6. Lily was a senior female student from Ferguson, MO. Interview took place on January 28, 2021.
7. Rose was a freshman female student from St. Louis, MO. Growing up with two white mothers shaped her understanding and socialization of identity and criminalization. Interview took place on March 3, 2021.
8. Sunny was a junior female student from St. Louis, MO. Interviewed on March 4, 2021.
9. Maria was a freshman female student from El Paso, TX. She was a biracial student (Black and Mexican). While originally from El Paso, her upbringing was also shaped by moving as a result of her father's career in the military. Interviewed on March 9, 2021.

10. Josephine was a freshman female student from Springfield, MO. She was biracial, raised by a politically conservative white mother which shaped her self-described internalization of racial stigmas and the eventual move away from that internalization. Interview took place on March 12, 2021.
11. Kendra was a sophomore female student from St. Louis, MO. Interview took place on March 19, 2021.
12. Shaun was a junior male student from Ferguson, MO. He was interviewed on March 19, 2021.
13. Trey was a senior male student from O'Fallon, MO. Growing up in a predominately white neighborhood influenced the ways that his parents socialized him and his sister. Interviewed on April 15, 2021.
14. Sarah was a sophomore female student from Atlanta, GA. She had moved from a predominately Black neighborhood to a white suburb that shaped her experiences of racialization and identity. Interview took place on April 19, 2021.
15. Paige was a junior female student from Webster Grove, MO. Growing up in a predominately white suburb of St. Louis, her family was interested in watching political shows on television which played a role in her development as she got older.
16. Scooby was a freshman female student from Columbia, MO. Scooby was a biracial student (Black father and Latina mother) with two older brothers. Interviewed April 26, 2021.
17. Annalise was a sophomore female student from Columbia, MO. Interviewed on May 3, 2021.

18. E.J. was a sophomore male student from Columbus, OH. He grew up in a Black middle-class family. He was interviewed on May 5, 2021.
19. Julie was a freshman female student from Joplin, MO. Her mother was Black but her father was not, but was raised primarily with her mother's family. Interviewed on September 9, 2021.
20. Ezra was a senior genderqueer student from O'Fallon, MO. Being biracial, they mentioned that their experiences. Interviewed on September 16, 2021.
21. Gerard was a freshman male student from Dacula, GA. Describing himself as second-generation Caribbean-American (father was from U.S. Virgin Islands, mother was from Jamaica). Interviewed on September 23, 2021.
22. Kyle was a freshman male student from Matteson and Riverdale, IL. He grew up in predominately Black neighborhoods in the south Chicagoland area. Much of his understanding of race and profiling was influenced by these environments that emphasized self-determination. He was interviewed on October 4, 2021.
23. Mary-Jane was a senior female student from Glenwood, IL. A biracial student who was primarily raised by a white mother. Interviewed on October 15, 2021.
24. Kenzie was a senior female student from a predominately Black neighborhood Houston, TX. She went to a large socially integrated school and grew up in a Black middle class family. She was interviewed on November 11, 2021.
25. Clover was a sophomore female student from Cincinnati, OH. Interviewed on December 17, 2021.

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## VITA

Julien Grayer was born in New Orleans, Louisiana and raised in both New Orleans and the Cincinnati, Ohio area. In 2013, he completed a BA in sociology at Xavier University of Louisiana and in 2015, completed an MS in criminal justice at the University of Alabama at Birmingham. His research interests cover the range of racial identity, stigma, racial criminalization, and critical interactionism

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When not drawing and collecting records, he was involved in the intellectual, cultural, and social life of the campus community. Within the department, he served on the colloquium committee, which is responsible for recruiting scholars across the country to present their research on a public forum. He was also involved with a university program of underrepresented graduate students through the Office of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion that allowed the opportunity to mentor undergraduate students.