**ARTICLE**

# Gendered racial vulnerability: How women confront crime and criminalization

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**Abstract**
Prior research illustrates how race-class subjugated communities are over-policed and under-protected, producing high rates of victimization by other community members and the police. Yet few studies explore how gender and race structure dual frustration, despite a long line of Black feminist scholarship on the interpersonal, gender-based, and state violence Black and other women of color face. Drawing on interviews with 53 women in Minneapolis from 2017 to 2019, we examine how gendered racial vulnerability to both crime and criminalization shape dual frustration toward the law. Findings illustrate that police fail to protect women of color from neighborhood and gender-based violence, while simultaneously targeting them and their families. Despite their spatial proximity to women of color, white women remained largely shielded from the dual frustration of crime *and* criminalization. Attention to the gendered racial dimensions of dual frustration offers an intersectional framework for understanding women's vulnerability to violence and cultural orientations toward the law.

## INTRODUCTION

From slave patrols in the Antebellum South, to the "law and order" era policies like stop-and-frisk and mass incarceration, policing remains central to American racial domination (Hinton & Cook, 2021). Since 2014, activism by the Movement for Black Lives has called public attention to aggressive, predatory, and fatal policing practices in cities such as Ferguson, New York, and Minneapolis, triggering national conversations about the role of police in society (Boyles, 2019; Cobbina, 2019; Vitale, 2017). At the center of this conversation lies the relationship between police and race-class subjugated (RCS) communities (Soss & Weaver, 2017). Spanning place and methodological approaches, researchers consistently find that poor Black, Latinx, and Native communities disproportionately experience both over-policing–including aggressive police presence, frequent harassment, enforcement of low-level offenses–and under-protection, including failure to prevent interpersonal and community disorder and violence (Bell, 2017; Boyles, 2019; Gorsuch & Rho, 2019; Rios, 2011). Meares (1997) argues that this paradox of over-policing and under-protection produces "dual frustration," leaving communities burdened by both community and police violence.

Yet existing studies on dual frustration often prioritize the impact of crime and policing on Black men, yielding little attention to the gendered racial vulnerability of Black women and its impact on their experiences with the law (Brown & Jones, 2018; Cobbina et al., 2008; Malone Gonzalez, 2019). [Correction added on September 16, 2021, after first online publication: Reference citation "Malone 2019" was changed to "Malone Gonzalez 2019" after original publication.] As Threadcraft and Miller (2017) argue, "Conceptions of the carceral state that do not situate criminal justice within the larger context of raced and gendered subject formation depict the criminal 'justice' system as an arena composed almost exclusively of adult males" (479). However, a long history of Black feminist sociolegal scholarship reveals that Black women also experience the repressive face of the state (Aniefuna et al., 2020; Crenshaw, 1991; Potter, 2013). Richie (2012) argues that Black women are vulnerable to the "violence matrix," confronting physical, sexual, and emotional violence from intimate partners, neighbors, and law enforcement. This violence matrix targets Black women both directly and vicariously through family members, particularly children (Aniefuna et al., 2020; Elliott & Reid, 2019; Turner, 2020). Richie's work suggests that Black women likely experience a unique and painful form of dual frustration. Yet few sociolegal studies explore the experiences of women with law enforcement and legal socialization (for exceptions see Elliott & Reid, 2019; Malone Gonzalez, 2019). Even fewer studies examine how women across other racial identities, including white women, in heavily policed neighborhoods perceive and interact with police (though see Cobbina, 2019; Gorsuch & Rho, 2019; Hitchens et al., 2018). Bridging sociolegal and criminological scholarship with intersectional feminist theory, we examine women's experiences of dual frustration through the lens of gendered racial vulnerability (Malone Gonzalez, 2019).

Our data consist of semi-structured interviews with 53 women in North Minneapolis between 2017 and 2019, a period of public upheaval due to several high-profile police killings and debates about police reform. North Minneapolis forms the heart of Minneapolis' Black community and remains the site of frequent police-citizen conflict. Our analyses explore how women of color, which in our sample were largely Black or African American women (but also included Native and Asian women), and white women in North Minneapolis experienced dual frustration. We find that the violence matrix produced a unique dual frustration for women of color, who wanted protection from neighborhood and gender-based violence yet remained reluctant to enlist police assistance due to a history of racialized social control and police violence against themselves and their loved ones. White women, despite their spatial proximity, experienced less exposure to gender-based, community, and police violence.

Our analysis advances understandings of cultural orientations toward the law across several dimensions. First, we center women's voices through an intersectional framework that refrains from conceptualizing police-community relations solely in terms of race and/or class subjugation. Instead, we examine how interlocking gendered and racialized vulnerabilities shape cultural orientations toward police. Second, a focus on women reveals that sociolegal understandings of state violence must include both the state's surveillance, harassment, and abuse toward women of color and its failure to protect them from household, community, and gender-based violence (Aniefuna et al., 2020; Threadcraft & Miller, 2017). Third, we conducted interviews from 2017 to 2019, in the wake of the eruption of the Black Lives Matter Movement. The resulting public scrutiny of Minneapolis (and other) police may have shaped neighborhood attitudes in ways not observed prior—including potentially increased consciousness among white women about racial disparities in legal punishment (Hayward, 2020). Finally, our analysis contextualizes the uprising that followed the police killing of George Floyd in 2020, documenting long-standing frustrations with law enforcement in Minneapolis.

## CONCEPTUAL BACKGROUND

### Dual frustration and legal cynicism

Anti-Black punitive practices have shaped policing and race relations in the United States since its inception (Hinton & Cook, 2021). Recent studies consistently find that police are more likely to stop

(Rojek et al., 2012), deploy force against (Legewie, 2016), use a disrespectful tone with (Voigt et al., 2017), and kill unarmed (Nix et al., 2017) African Americans. This discriminatory treatment by police disproportionately impacts people of color in economically and politically marginalized neighborhoods. Soss and Weaver (2017) define these neighborhoods as race-class subjugated "RCS" communities, denoting how race and class together exclude, punish, and exploit the racialized poor. Yet disparate treatment against racialized groups also shapes police-citizen relations in middle-class neighborhoods. For example, Laniyonu (2018) finds the highest rate of police stops in integrated and gentrifying neighborhoods. Similarly, Boyles' (2015) ethnography of a Black enclave in a predominantly white suburb illustrates that Black proximity to white suburbia disrupts "white comfort," resulting in disproportionate police contact for Black residents.

Fewer studies explore how policing impacts other racialized and subjugated groups. Beyond the Black–white divide, several studies suggest Latinx and Native communities are also vulnerable to surveillance, harassment, and violence by police (Rios, 2011; Solis et al., 2009). For example, Afro-Caribbean youth in New York City perceived police as uninvested in Latinx neighborhoods, disrespectful, and slow to respond when called for emergencies (Solis et al., 2009). Similarly, Hitchens et al., 2018 finds that like Black girls, Latina teens and younger women were more likely to encounter negative interactions with police, including gender-based harassment, than their white neighbors.

Negative experiences with law enforcement in racialized communities foster legal cynicism, "a cultural orientation in which the law and the agents of its enforcement are viewed as illegitimate, unresponsive, and ill equipped to ensure public safety" (Kirk & Matsuda, 2011, p. 44; see also Carr et al., 2007; Hitchens et al., 2018; Kirk & Papachristos, 2011; Sampson & Bartusch, 1998). Survey-based research confirms that white Americans are more likely than African Americans to approve the use of force (Carter & Corra, 2016; Johnson & Kuhns, 2009), trust law enforcement (Lai & Zhao, 2010; Tyler, 2005) and be satisfied with police performance (Dai & Johnson, 2009). Legal cynicism often results in reluctance to trust and enlist police in providing public safety, thus reducing community compliance and cooperation (Tyler, 2004), engagement with pro-social community resources (Brayne, 2014), and collective efficacy, or a neighborhood's ability to control residential disorder and violence (Kirk & Matsuda, 2011). As such, legal cynicism can further alienate communities from the protection of the state.

More recently, Bell (2017) reorients this literature, arguing that the crisis in police legitimacy in RCS communities is better understood as legal estrangement, or "the intuition among many people in poor communities of color that the law operates to exclude them from society" (2054). Three sociolegal processes produce legal estrangement: procedural injustice (experiences of unfair treatment), vicarious marginalization (poor treatment of friends, family, and others by the police), and structural exclusion (unequal distribution of policing resources and protection from community violence). Critically, Bell's work suggests that the roots of legal estrangement (or cynicism) lay not in deficient cultural repertoires, but in state violence. Rather than understanding over-policing and under-protection as a paradox, Bell (2017) argues that Black Americans in poor neighborhoods experience aggressive police scrutiny and harassment alongside the routinely high rates of violent crime as two expressions of law enforcement's failure in their communities.

This framework helps develop the older concept of dual frustration, or the twin burdens of crime and inadequate protection and poor treatment from police, first developed by Meares (1997) in the context of drug crime. Bridging across these concepts, we argue that a crucial dimension of legal estrangement is the individual and collective experience of dual frustration toward the law produced by under-protection and over-policing. This dual frustration, however, does not suggest RCS communities always want less police presence; instead, some communities demand more and better policing, desiring protection from both neighborhood violence and police predation (Boyles, 2019; Campeau et al., 2020; Carr et al., 2007; Forman Jr, 2017; Fortner, 2015; Meares, 1997). Campeau et al. (2020) argue that this seeming contradiction emerges in part from belief in the "law's transformative potential" to recognize individuals as valued citizens and address their needs, even when people's own experiences show law's discriminatory practices (2). However, this line of research on legal

cynicism and estrangement has often prioritized men's experiences, neglecting how women's gendered and racialized vulnerabilities shape dual frustration and orientations toward the law.

## Women, girls, and intersectional vulnerabilities

Black feminist sociolegal scholars and activists contend that cultural orientations, and the structural conditions that give rise to them, are deeply shaped by gender (Crenshaw, 1991). Despite the importance of gender in shaping legal socialization of police, few studies on legal cynicism or dual frustration closely examine its interaction with race. Black feminist legal scholars have called for critical engagement with intersectionality that acknowledges how systems of power such as race, gender, class, and sexuality intersect to (re)produce systemic inequalities, particularly for Black women (Brown & Jones, 2018; Collins, 2019; Crenshaw, 1991; Potter, 2013; Richie, 2012). Considering these dynamics, recent intersectional scholarship contends that the focus on young men of color in policing research often dismisses, or treats as collateral damage, the experiences of women, girls, genderqueer, and transgender people of color (Malone Gonzalez, 2019; Ritchie, 2017). This gap in scholarship remains troubling as women represent 44% of all adults who experience a police-initiated contact and 25% of adults in incidents where police used force (Prison Policy Initiative, 2019).

An intersectional analysis of policing shows both how women have unique experiences with law enforcement—and how men and women's experiences are mutually interdependent. First, women in RCS communities, like their male counterparts, navigate ecological contexts produced by structural racism, neighborhood violence, and the "code of the streets" (Brunson & Miller, 2006; Cobbina et al., 2008; Jones, 2009; McCurn, 2018). While research on neighborhoods and crime often emphasize forms of public violence, such as physical altercations, robberies, shootings, and gang activities, this obscures forms of gender-specific violence highly associated with women's and girls' experiences, including intimate partner violence and sexual assault. Black women are vulnerable to what Richie (2012) calls the "violence matrix"—simultaneously navigating physical, sexual, and emotional violence within households, neighborhoods, and police interactions. Because of the violence matrix, women of color report at times relying on police for assistance (Bell, 2016) yet are simultaneously reluctant to enlist police for fear of being labeled a "race traitor" against Black men and the risks police encounters bring for those men (Brunson & Miller, 2006; Hitchens et al., 2018; Richie, 2012; Ritchie, 2017). Jones (2016) argues that these twin forms of violence are intimately related and gendered, with police violence subjugating and humiliating men, who in turn subjugate the women they encounter in public and private life.

Second, like men in their communities, women of color experience criminalization, or "the targeting of individuals for surveillance and punishment based on the presupposition that they are deviant" (Elliott & Reid, 2019, p. 204). Criminalization occurs through racialized and gendered controlling images, including the "monstrous and licentious 'Jezebel', the drunk and promiscuous Native American woman, the 'hot-blooded' Latina, and the highly sexualized and degraded Asian woman… [which] continue to produce surveillance and punishment by police enforcers of white supremacy disguised as morality" (Ritchie, 2017, p. 15). These controlling images allow police to surveil, stop, question, frisk, and sanction women and girls of color in their homes, neighborhoods, and schools. Police criminalization toward girls and women may also involve sexual harassment and abuse, where police "stare down, flirt with, and bribe" women (Hitchens et al., 2018, p. 38; Ritchie, 2017). Furthermore, women and girls may experience increased surveillance when accompanied by Black and Latino men (Brunson & Miller, 2006), and, in some cases, young men may attempt to use young women as shields to deflect police scrutiny in public spaces to deflect police scrutiny (Stuart & Benezra, 2018). Even when women and girls of color lack direct experiences of criminalization from police, stories from loved ones and news media accounts of high-profile killings of co-ethnics at the hands of police contribute to vicarious marginalization (Bell, 2017; Elliott & Reid, 2019; Kerrison et al., 2018).

Third, Black women often bear the brunt of family obligations, which makes them uniquely responsible for managing "family criminalization," or "the ways wide-ranging fears and realities of criminalization permeate the lives of low-income urban Black mothers and children" (Elliott & Reid, 2019, p. 204). Black mothers fear that police will target their children in schools, neighborhoods, and homes, especially if police believe their children are involved in illicit activities such as fighting. In shouldering the burden of protecting their children through "racial socialization," Black mothers employ multiple "protective carework strategies," such as sharing cautionary tales, sheltering their children, and complying with institutional demands (Armstrong & Carlson, 2019; Dow, 2016; Elliott & Reid, 2019; Malone Gonzalez, 2019; Turner, 2020). However, Bell (2016) illustrates how Black mothers' carework strategies may include using state force and calling the police to assist (and connect services to) their male partners and sons. Bell argues that in these moments, Black mothers invoke "situational trust" in the police, who became a crucial resource when few alternatives exist. Yet, Black women's carework strategies may neglect their daughter's intersectional vulnerabilities to police violence by emphasizing their sons as primary targets (Malone Gonzalez, 2019). Aniefuna et al. (2020) contend that cumulative police violence against Black mothers and their children perpetuates reproductive injustice, where state criminalization hinders Black mothers' ability to protect their children.

Police interactions with white women in majority–minority neighborhoods remain largely unexamined. An intersectional framework reveals how interlocking power structures including anti-Black racism, whiteness, gender, class, sexuality, and other inequalities produce privilege in white women's interactions with the law (Cobbina, 2019; Fine et al., 2000; Frankenberg, 1993; Harris, 1993). Hitchens et al. (2018) research in low-income and high-crime Philadelphia neighborhoods finds that teenage white girls are largely ignored by the police, unless they are accompanied by Black men. White teens and young women were also more likely to have direct ties to people working in police departments and were less likely to experience direct force in police encounters. Even when police caught white girls and young women engaging in delinquency, they reported that police "appear compassionate, forgiving, and even amused during these interactions" (Hitchens et al., 2018, p. 37). Together, existing research suggests that the matrix of private and state violence works to exclude poor women of color from protection by the state (Threadcraft & Miller, 2017), producing a unique form of dual frustration. We extend this line of research to explore how women of color and white women confront gendered racial vulnerability to interpersonal, community, and police violence in North Minneapolis.

## METHODOLOGY AND ANALYSIS

Minneapolis, MN, is a progressive stronghold in the Midwest, known for its high quality of life (for white residents) and its stark racial disparities. During the Black Lives Matter era, the Minneapolis Police Department (MPD) has been at the center of several high-profile police killings. The first occurred in 2015, when a white MPD officer shot and killed Jamar Clark, a Black man, during an altercation in North Minneapolis. In response to Clark's death, activists staged an 18-day occupation of the local police precinct. In 2017, a Somali American MPD officer fatally shot Justine Damond (née Ruszczyk), a white woman living in a wealthy South Minneapolis neighborhood who called 911 to report a possible sexual assault in her alleyway. In between these two high-profile police killings, Philando Castile was fatally shot by police in a nearby St. Paul suburb. Local activists connected each death to the criminalization and abuse of low-income Black, Latinx, and Native people, particularly in the city's North side. Until Derek Chauvin's most recent conviction for the murder of George Floyd, only Damond's case had resulted in conviction of the involved officer and produced a record-breaking civil settlement with the MPD. In 2020, MPD officers killed George Floyd, sparking a local, national, and international wave of Black Lives Matter protests.

Between 2017 and 2019, we interviewed residents who lived and/or worked in North Minneapolis. This area of the city—a collection of neighborhoods North of downtown—has a higher percentage of racial/ethnic minorities (50% of residents identify as African American, compared to 19% city-wide), low-income households (36% of residents are below the poverty rate, compared to 22% for the city), and unemployment (21% of residents were unemployed, compared to 10% for the city) than the rest of Minneapolis (Northside Funders Group, 2014). In addition to being the site of the police killing of Jamar Clark, Northside is also the historic heart of Minneapolis' Black community and has a long history of police violence and citizen activism (MPD150, 2017). We recruited participants by posting flyers in Northside[1] restaurants, stores, salons, and barbershops, churches, community centers, and bus stops, and participant referrals both online and in-person. Interviews took place at fast food restaurants, libraries, and cafes and lasted between 30 and 60 min. Each interview covered participants' perceptions of neighborhood conditions (e.g., safety level, problems, positive aspects), interactions with, and perceptions of, MPD and police more generally, willingness to call 911 to report a crime, attitudes and awareness of MPD reforms, and activist efforts to transform Minneapolis policing; and residents' opinions about what they wanted to see change in policing. We also collected demographic information, including age, racial/ethnic identity, household income and education level, and disability status. We interviewed 33 participants one-on-one, while 20 women asked to be interviewed with others, most often close friends, partners, or relatives, including one focus group. These group interviews were similar to individual interviews, since they were typically conducted with people the participant trusted. One advantage of this flexible approach is that in group interviews participants responded to one another's comments, allowing us to trace points of agreement and contestation. Residents received $30 for their participation. Interviews were audio recorded for transcription[2] and, to protect participants' anonymity, we assigned each person a pseudonym that we use to describe findings.

We conducted interviews with 112 adult residents for the broader research project, but we focus here on the 53 women participants, including one participant who identified as gender non-binary but detailed their life as a woman in most of their responses. Table 1 details our sample's demographics. Our sample was diverse across age (ranging from 21 to 70 years, with a mean of 45) and race (15 white women and 38 women of color). Among women who did not identify as white, 25 identified as Black or African American, eight as multiracial or "other" race (though most referred to themselves as Black throughout the interview), four as Native or American Indian, and one as Asian.[3] Our sample had predominantly low or moderate socioeconomic status markers, with 68% reporting annual household incomes of $20,000 or less, 34% of women employed outside the home full-time, 68% reporting some college or higher educational attainment, and 27% reporting homeownership. Importantly, white women in our sample held higher socioeconomic status indicators (like homeownership, education, and income) than the women of color. Thus, racial privilege among our sample was layered on top of class privilege.

We utilized Deterding and Waters (2021) "flexible coding" strategy, which adapts grounded theory's principle of emergent theories and inductive analysis (Charmaz, 2001) for use with a large dataset with multiple collaborators. The research team created a list of initial themes from prior literature and emergent themes in the data, including "Exposure to Violence," "Criminalization," "Verbal and Physical Abuse from Police," and "Trust in Police." The first author and a graduate research assistant coded transcripts individually and the team met bi-weekly to discuss emerging themes and revised codes. Team members wrote and discussed analytic memos from the coded transcripts,

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[1]We use "North Minneapolis" and "Northside" interchangeably.

[2]We used a digital transcription service, corrected by research assistants. To complete qualitative data analysis, we used NVivo12 on a shared remote desktop drive.

[3]Racialized groups have unique histories of criminalization and exclusion from the protection of the state. We use the umbrella term "women of color" not to reduce these intra-group differences, but to reflect how women from subjugated groups often experience policing differently than white women. We did not have a large enough sample of Native, Asian, or multiracial women to analyze each group's experiences separately. When our findings are specific to Black women, we refer to that racial group.

**TABLE 1** Demographic characteristics of sample

| | % | N |
|---|---|---|
| Race/ethnicity | | |
| Black, African American | 47 | 25 |
| White | 28 | 15 |
| Native, American Indian | 8 | 4 |
| Asian, Asian American | 2 | 1 |
| Multiracial or other race | 15 | 8 |
| Mean age | 45 years (range: 21–70) | |
| Living arrangements | | |
| Homeowner | 27 | 12 |
| Renter | 40 | 18 |
| Lives with relative/friend | 18 | 8 |
| Other | 16 | 7 |
| Annual household income | | |
| $10,000 or less | 41 | 17 |
| $10,001–20,000 | 27 | 11 |
| $20,001–40,000 | 15 | 6 |
| $40,001 or more | 17 | 7 |
| Employment status | | |
| Full-time | 34 | 18 |
| Part-time | 8 | 4 |
| Unemployed | 13 | 7 |
| Homemaker | 15 | 8 |
| Out of labor force | 30 | 16 |
| Educational attainment | | |
| Less than high school | 8 | 4 |
| High school graduate | 25 | 13 |
| Some college | 34 | 18 |
| Associate degree | 13 | 7 |
| Bachelor's degree or higher | 21 | 11 |
| Total N | | 53 |

NOTE: Data are from participant surveys administered prior to their interview. Some respondents did not answer all questions; percentages are only for non-missing responses. Percentages may not sum to 100 due to rounding.

allowing us to pinpoint specific facets of experience (e.g., types of police maltreatment, neighborhood crime, gender-based violence), count their prevalence, and begin theory-building processes across multiple themes. We selected three themes for the final analysis: "Neighborhood Disorder and Violence," "Gender-Based Violence," and "Criminalization." We then analyzed racial differences in how women of color and white women experienced, perceived, and navigated law enforcement interactions across each theme.

Critical engagement with intersectionality calls for an acknowledgement of the researcher's positionality and reflexivity in how it shapes knowledge-producing practices (Collins, 2019). As a racially and ethnically diverse team who also represent an academic institution—one that has a long history of tenuous relationships between researchers and members of marginalized communities—we recognized positions of both insider and outsider status (Harding, 2004; Smith, 1990; Zempi, 2016). The interviews were conducted by a research team of one undergraduate student and

four graduate students, all of whom identify as Black, Latino, and/or biracial from diverse socioeconomic backgrounds. The lead author, a Black woman, primarily interviewed Black and Native women, while two Latino and biracial students conducted most of the interviews with white women. While this setup was unintentional, it did allow for rapport-building around shared racial understandings of police. As a white woman faculty supervisor, the second author worked to build a collaborative team environment where students played a key role in shaping the interview guide, recruitment strategies, analysis, and rapport with key community stakeholders. The lead author and second author worked together to develop the coding scheme and analysis, using our own racialized experiences and viewpoints to interrogate the data from multiple subjectivities. Bridging those perspectives allowed us to better understand the variation we found across the narratives of women who shared their stories with us.

## FINDINGS

We draw upon women's accounts and perceptions of exposure to victimization and criminalization to illuminate how intersectional vulnerabilities produce dual frustration. We first discuss women's concerns about neighborhood disorder and crime and the ensuing responses—or lack thereof—by law enforcement. Second, we trace how women experience gender-based violence and the binds they faced in trying to get responsive protection. Third, we explore how women experienced direct and vicarious criminalization from law enforcement, which heightened the burdens of victimization. Across each theme, we show how white women's racial and gender privilege often allowed them to avoid police violence, while Black and Native women faced the dual burdens of crime and criminalization. Collectively, these contexts demonstrate how layers of micro- to macro-level patterns of victimization perpetuate state violence against women of color and (re)produce dual frustration toward the law.

## Neighborhood disorder and crime

Women in low-income communities confront a ubiquity of public disorder and crime (Jones, 2009; McCurn, 2018). In our sample, women of all racial backgrounds discussed the threat of violence in the community and the need for strategies to address public safety. Over three-fourths of the interviewees cited gunshots, prostitution, public domestic disputes, fights, and high-speed traffic as major concerns in their neighborhoods. Women also discussed concerns around more minor infractions or perceived disorder, such as open-air drug markets and people loitering on the street, and often used words like "hectic" and "uneasy" to describe their perception of neighborhood safety.

    Yet, important racial differences emerged in how white women and women of color discussed the extent to which they personally felt safe. The lack of protection particularly impacted Black, Native, and Asian women, as they bore the brunt of neighborhood crime. When we asked women to rate their neighborhood safety, only nine of 38 women of color reported their neighborhood safety was "Good" or "Very Good." Kayla, a 35-year-old Black woman, revealed, "you never know what you gonna walk into. You never know if you're gonna get shot at or gonna get hit with a bottle or some lil' drunk driver's gonna hit you and hurt you and your children." Similarly, Kim, a 21-year-old Black woman who worked in Northside, lamented, "You know, some days it's great. And at other times like this, you hear distant gunshots and you're like, 'Oh, let me get out of here', or 'I just want go home'." Their comments reveal the extent to which the unpredictability of community violence hindered how women of color could safely navigate their neighborhood.

    In response to unsafe neighborhood conditions, 24 Black, Native, and Asian women described how they avoided certain sites or "hot spots" where they perceived pervasive public violence. Shanince, a 57-year-old Black woman, echoed several women's descriptions of "hot spots" where

"people hanging around, get to fussin' and fightin', turf wars, boyfriend–girlfriend [disputes]," on public transportation, in parks, and in certain businesses. These women further navigated "hot spots" of neighborhood violence by closely surveilling their surroundings and remaining inside their homes during certain times (e.g., nighttime, summertime) to increase their sense of security. After being robbed, Marcela, a 44-year-old Native woman, shared, "You just feel like you always have to keep an eye out, always be cautious. I do not walk around at night." As Black and Native women, like Shanince, and Marcela, expressed caution toward these "hot spots," they also voiced their desire for the kind of community safety that would allow for more freedom. During an exchange among several Black women in our focus group, one of the most vocal participants, Rudy, expressed her holistic vision for public safety in her neighborhood:

> We all deserve to feel safe in our homes and around our homes and our neighborhoods. We all deserve to have, you know, policing in our communities, or ways of managing things in our communities that are, like, helpful and positive… that build rather than tear down and destroy.

Rudy's plea for a safe neighborhood reflected both her high exposure to neighborhood violence and the poor and/or abusive response residents received when they did invoke the police for help (Boyles, 2019). While most Black women expressed that they would call 911 for emergency situations, many described their reluctance to do so (Clampet-Lundquist et al., 2015). When they did call police to report neighborhood violence, Black women were often let down when police failed to investigate or showed up to the scene late—if at all. Tamaiah, a Black woman in her late 40s, relayed her frustration with police for failing to address open drug use: "there's somebody shootin' up heroin right there and the police are sitting right in [the] parking lot or at the gas station. They don't do anything. And you be like, 'They over there shootin' up dope!'" Patricia, a Black woman in her 50s, echoed Tamaiah and several other Black women's sentiments that police simply "let too much go on." To provide examples of apathetic policing, Patricia vividly detailed how police failed to respond to several shootings in her neighborhood:

> There were three shootings in this area… I'm sitting there in my room and I hear all of those gunshots. But did the police get there on time? No. They all got away. Whoever did the shooting down there, he got away. Whoever was on that bus and shot that dude, he got away too. And then down here, that person got away, too. They [police] ain't never there when they need to be.

Mabel, a multiracial woman in her early 40s, voiced concern that this lack of police engagement in addressing neighborhood crime would lead to residents taking matters into their own hands. She lamented, "everyone's like, 'No, I'm not calling the police. I'm just gonna handle it on my own or just let it go'. Which is really bad, you know, because the police is there for a reason." Tamaiah, Patricia, and Mabel's responses highlight how Black and multiracial women experienced law enforcement dismissing their concerns around community crime and its subsequent impact on their negative perceptions of police.

Black women in particular held little access to police in voluntary settings, such as neighborhood block club meetings. Porsha, a 26-year-old Black woman volunteer at neighborhood club meetings, explained, "I really don't see any Black community people there… it's mostly a lot of white people… 'cause they're afraid of violence." Her goal as a volunteer included "getting the Black people to come to these community meetings so we can all help each other like instead of it just being white people at these community meetings, or officers or judges." Porsha's experience, however, was an outlier among Black women we interviewed, who largely did not report these kinds of cooperative relationships with law enforcement. In addition, Black women contrasted this lack of access with white women, who they perceived as getting more sympathetic treatment from law enforcement. Drawing

from her perception of neighborhood drug use, Destiny, a Black woman in her 20s, explained that white people's problems received special attention: "for years heroin [has] been a problem in our Black community. But now it's a problem because it's in the white community. Now it's like 'Oh, we need to stop the opioids'." Similarly, Donna, a Black woman and community advocate in her mid-40s, expressed that "because of the gentrification that's going on [and] because we have more Caucasians moving in, and they're calling the police more, it's like, Oh okay, now you gotta–now [police] showing up because I have more Caucasian neighbors." For Porsha, Destiny, and Donna, these observances of white privilege reinforced the law as a protector of white bodies and white property (Harris, 1993).

Six of the 11 white women talked about the fear of neighborhood violence, suggesting that like most Black, Native, and Asian women, they did not feel safe. Yet, despite their fears of encountering violence, nine white women also talked candidly about being removed from that violence because of their racial and class privilege. As mostly homeowners, most of the white women we interviewed lived on blocks they perceived as safer than other Northside blocks. Sheila, a 44-year-old white woman, expressed, "I read the crime stats that they send us regularly. So, for North Minneapolis, [my block is] much safer than other parts." When invoking community disorder and crime, most white women instead discussed minor infractions or nuisance issues such as burglaries and loitering. For example, Carol, a white woman in her late 60s, described feeling "really lucky" that she had not experienced neighborhood violence that other neighbors described: "The only time I've had that problem is with kind of livability issues. Noise… I feel fortunate that I haven't had to call [police] about assaults, or somebody breaking in my house when I'm at home." Like Sheila and Carol, white women's frustrations with the neighborhood were largely quality of life concerns in the neighborhood, which included public violence, which was rarely targeted at them directly.

Several white women also expressed frustrations with law enforcement's inadequate response to community problems. These concerns included complaints that police did not patrol the neighborhood regularly enough or took too long to respond to calls. Women of color and white women alike often noted that race and class affected police's perceptions of the neighborhood and lack of interest in responding to crime in Northside. Seventeen participants described how white people, both in their neighborhoods and in suburban communities, received more police investment, including faster response times, less involuntary contact with police, and more concern about their victimization. An exchange between a white mother and daughter captured this feeling:

> **Sarah:** They think of North, I'm just generalizing but, they think of North as a place with lots of crime and that's it.
> **Rebecca:** Instead of a community where people live.
> **Interviewer:** Where are you getting that sense from them that they don't live here and that they kind of just see it as a job rather than, you know, them bettering the community?
> **Rebecca:** I got it from, actually from an instance, my—from somebody's Facebook. I don't know how I found it, but it was some cop that was just talking about North and just like, I don't know, how it should be fenced in or something, you know. Like just stuff that was, you know, nasty to say about a neighborhood. So, I think my mom was right. I think that they don't live here and that…
> **Sarah:** If they did have some sort of investment, like they lived here too, maybe they would care a little more.

Sarah and Rebecca, like many of the women we interviewed, perceived law enforcement as largely uninterested in neighborhood crime or the signs of disorder due to its stigma as a poor Black community. Yet their perceptions of neglect and disorder were not compounded by concerns of direct neighborhood victimization. Instead of discussing their direct exposure to violence, white women described "silent judgment" and explicit derogation from police about their (white)

presence in Black neighborhoods (e.g., officers asking them "Why do *you* live in *this* neighborhood?").

Yet for white women, this experience of neighborhood stigma was not compounded by police apathy and hostility; instead, white women were better equipped to marshal resources and protection of community groups and law enforcement. Compared to Black, Native, and Asian women in our sample, white women reported more formal involvement in crime watch groups, online crime alerts, and neighborhood social media updates. Echoing Porsha's sentiments about block club meetings, Kerrie, a white woman in her early 40s explained that "Usually it's a lot of the, you know, white community that will come out to these events [neighborhood meetings]." Attending these meetings provided white women with direct access to law enforcement and a sense that police were generally there to address their concerns about their neighborhood. Olivia, a white woman in her early 60s, described how she maintains direct access to police when she needs them:

> I attend our block club meetings and I'm real community-involved and that's how I've gotten to know police, pretty much. Otherwise, you know, you don't. And that's that interaction we get that gives me a better understanding of what they're up to… I mean, there's cops that have given me their cell phone number. If I felt I was unsafe, they would come. So, you can do that; you can build those relationships.

Olivia's description reveals how voluntary interactions with officers during neighborhood meetings provided an additional layer of privilege for its attendees. Not only did women like Olivia have space to be listened to and voice their concerns, but they also had access to individual officers, who they could call for help. Women of color largely did not experience this sense of safety Olivia describes from direct police contact.

## Gender-based violence

A core part of the violence matrix is gender-based violence (Crenshaw, 1991; Richie, 2012). Sixteen women in our sample disclosed prior experiences of gender-based violence (e.g., sexual assault, stalking, domestic violence) and several cited domestic disputes as a primary problem in the neighborhood. These moments provided opportunities for police to respond with compassion and care. Instead, women—and especially Black women—recounted stories of police apathy, criminalization, and procedural injustice. For example, after being threatened repeatedly by a male acquaintance, Jalissa, a Black woman in her early 20s, rushed to a local police station to seek protection, where she was denied assistance and told to contact 911. She recounted feeling dread because "That man coulda been standing by my car and coulda killed me dead right there." Jalissa described storming out of the police station, telling officers, "If something happen to me, you're not gonna get sleep at night!" For Jalissa, law enforcement's response toward the man she viewed as an active threat to her life signaled the lack of value placed on her life. Thus, she blamed police for any harm that might come from their denial of assistance.

For six Black, Native, and multiracial women, invoking law enforcement assistance after gender-based violence compounded their trauma when police treated them as criminal suspects—blending both exposure to victimization and criminalization (Ritchie, 2017). Detailing her attempt to enlist law enforcement for help after a sexual assault, Imani, a multiracial woman in her late 30s, stated:

> I called them [police] one specific time when I had got raped… And what I remember about that is let's just say… [He] was a friend, but evidently, he wasn't too much of a friend to slip a [drug] in my drink at the bar. But I remember leaving from the bar disoriented and blurred vision and blacking out. When I woke up, I was somewhere else

that I don't remember getting there and everything, but I was raped. And called the police and they treated me like I was a disease. Like I was the suspect. I'm the one, literally like I'm defending myself and just… How you think—you think I just ran out here in the middle of the street…, barely half-dressed with no shoes or something on?

Kamela, a Black woman in her early 40s who had experienced interpersonal violence throughout her life, also grappled with whether she could safely contact law enforcement in an emergency:

Every time I call the police and I was in danger, it got flipped on me. I know for a fact I was the one being attacked. I was the one being in danger, but they flipped it on me… when they run my name, and it pops up, they automatically assume that I'm the one that's the aggressor. And that has not been the case. So, when they walk up on me, it's already like that. They don't want to hear shit I gotta say… And it frustrates me, so I get irritated… it's like I'm a bad person. You didn't even hear what I have to say.

Imani, and Kamela's accounts of police responses to incidents of gender-based violence reveal the frustration victims often encounter when enlisting law enforcement for help. In Imani's case, instead of listening to her story and trying to help her remove her items from the perpetrator's house, they treated her like a "disease" and a "suspect" and questioned if she was simply alleging abuse because of a quarrel after consensual sex. For Kamela, her prior record marked her as an "aggressor" before police investigated her case. Law enforcement's assumption of Kamela as the aggressor during her attacks also illustrates how police use controlling images about Black women's aggressiveness and violence to dismiss claims of abuse (Ritchie, 2017).

Jalissa, Imani, and Kamela's stories were consistent with other women of color's reports of police failures to protect. Whether contacting police for public or private violence, interviewees recounted that police frequently exhibited rudeness or dismissiveness, refused to answer their questions, failed to demonstrate compassion, and showed unwillingness to conduct a thorough investigation after a reported crime. They further feared negative outcomes including the risk of arrest, harassment, and (potentially lethal) police violence for themselves and/or the perpetrator. As such, Black and multiracial women were left vulnerable to gender-based and community violence without protection from the state (Threadcraft & Miller, 2017).

Reflecting on multiple experiences where she called police for protection, Imani described the frustration with police unpredictability and the potential repercussions of their responses: "I'd rather call my mom, my dad, or my brother or call somebody—anybody else besides the police because when they coming, you might be the victim, you still going to jail!… And that's crazy because… [the police are] supposed to serve and protect." Cameron, a person of color in their mid-20s,[4] echoed Imani's frustration when considering the potential for police violence:

If I am in trouble, if I have a situation, I'm wrapping my brain on who is it that's actually going to come to my rescue. And unfortunately, I have never ever thought that the police was a good idea to call. Never. And you're speaking to a woman that's been in an abusive relationship. You're speaking to a woman that has been beat many plenty times as a child and as an adult… You have to ask yourself every single time when you pick up the phone, "What is this phone call going to transpire to?" Because people that look like me and people who look like you [gestures toward Latino male interviewer] it's something that we have to ask ourselves. Are they going

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[4]Cameron identified as non-binary and "other" on their pre-interview survey, but at several points in the interview referred to themselves as both a woman and a person of color.

to make the situation worse? And unfortunately, it hurts to say but a lot of times they do make the situation worse.

Cameron's account illustrates that, despite multiple incidents of violence, they remain reluctant to call the police because of the unpredictability and potential of violence aimed at themselves or their loved one.

Yet, the violence matrix often generates moments where women turn to law enforcement for temporary protection of themselves and their loved ones (Bell, 2016). Imani later revealed that she enlisted law enforcement again for a different incident of sexual assault, but this time credited the police for saving her life:

> If it wasn't for the police that day, I would be dead… something sent me their way… it was God sending me in their direction for help… I think if it wasn't for them, I wouldn't be here. So, I can say that because I really needed 'em right then and there and they couldn't have come no sooner.

Like Imani, women—even ones who stated they did not trust police overall—would often acknowledge that law enforcement had assisted them in incidents of neighborhood and interpersonal violence. As Kamela later revealed, "I don't have faith in them [police] at all… But then at the same time, you gotta call them if you need 'em… you damned if you do, you damned if you don't." This ambivalent dependence on police, who both inadequately protected and punished women of color seeking assistance, hindered women of color's sense of overall safety.

These experiences of gender-based violence, and the criminalization women of color faced when they turned to police (or not) for protection, rarely came up in interviews with white women. Three white women disclosed incidents of gender-based violence when discussing interactions with law enforcement. Two found police presence helpful in these incidents but provided no further details.[5] Katherine, the only white woman in our sample that talked at length about interpersonal violence and law enforcement's response, described how police helped her during several traumatic incidents with an abusive boyfriend. Yet, Katherine also noted that she felt "bad" when police would say, "Oh, I remember you," and express annoyance at the number of times she called law enforcement for an abusive boyfriend. Still, all three white women who reported a history of intimate partner violence expressed general confidence in police and did not indicate that these incidents changed their overall (positive) views of police.

## Criminalization

### Direct criminalization of women of color

As documented above, women often experienced criminalization in the context of seeking protection and redress for gender-based and intimate-partner violence. Women also described how they were criminalized in their daily lives outside of gendered violence (Ritchie, 2017). Among the 38 women of color in our study, 22 described pervasive criminalization by police officers, including procedural injustices like racial profiling, hostile verbal commands like "Shut the fuck up," aggressive physical restraining, and invasive body searches. Recounting multiple experiences where she and her loved ones experienced police surveillance and abuse, Rudy, a Black woman in her late 30s, explained that police "criminalize just our way of life."

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[5]Other reports have found more robust evidence of white women's negative encounters with police in the context of gender-based violence (Stahl, Bjorhus, and Webster 2018). Our interview guide did not specifically ask about gender-based violence so we may have inadvertently missed some of these stories.

Black women spoke at length about the impact of racial profiling. Patricia, a Black woman in her early 50s, echoed Rudy's summary when she described how police treated her with scrutiny:

> Sometimes if I'm having a bad hair day, I'll wear my scarf a certain way. So, I'm downtown and I'm walking and I'm on my phone because I'm killing time 'cause my bus is gonna come. So, there's a female cop and there was a male… They kind of gave me a look, and it's written all over their face because they kind of get excited and kind of jumpy because they want to hurry up and judge people and put people in a category. I looked at them like, "Yeah right! Don't judge a book by its cover"… You know, don't be judging me because I've got the scarf on… it seems like when you're a person of color, they're kind of stand-offish. That's what I get from them, because they always want to overdo things and put you in a category.

Like the suspicion Black men and boys face when wearing hoodies or baggy pants (Kerrison et al., 2018), Patricia viewed her head scarf as a signal to police that she too represents a criminal threat. Lorraine, a Black woman in her early 70s, similarly recounted negative experiences with officers at bus stops and how avoiding police criminalization reshaped her daily routines:

> Police assume the worst… So, I just stop waiting at these particular bus stops because I don't want to be herded in like I was part of what was going on just because most of the people standing there are people of color, and I don't feel that I should be targeted just because I'm a person of color.

For Black women like Rudy, Lorraine, and Patricia, living and working within heavily policed communities structured their daily routines. Neither gender nor age shielded them from the suspicion and judgment of law enforcement. All three women linked these micro-interactions with police to a broader system of racialized social control. Consequently, they either reluctantly frequented and/or avoided altogether sites like public transit stops where they might encounter police (see also Brayne, 2014).

Black women often believed law enforcement's racial targeting distracted officers from confronting those "who might [actually] be doing something" and addressing their concerns about disorder and crime in the neighborhood. They pushed back against police assumptions of Black criminality by asserting that most Black Americans were not engaged in criminal activity and were thus undeserving of police surveillance. Cherlene, a Black woman in her late 50s, explained that "I know they've had bad experiences with Black people, but not all Black people are up to no good or bad or criminals. And they treat everybody like they're criminal." Gwen, a 30-year-old Black woman concluded that "You could be the smartest Black person in the world, they'll still judge you and be like, 'Ah naw, you're a criminal'." Cherlene and Gwen's comments exposed how women of color felt obligated to defend their communities (of color) by affirming their innocence and blaming a subset of the neighborhood—most often young Black men hanging out on street corners—for its crime problem. However, these defense mechanisms may increase criminalization of some young men in the community (Stuart & Benezra, 2018).

These direct incidents of criminalization informed how women understood police perceptions of them, and consequently how they responded to police aggression. Tanya, one Black woman who had been repeatedly victimized and had experienced several negative encounters with police throughout her life, explained how police surveillance and sanction shape her current attitudes toward law enforcement:

> If you… treat me… like I ain't nothin', like I'm trash, you know, then I'll treat you the same way. And that's when you start getting aggressive with them, they wanna lock you up: "Ok then. You goin' to jail." You know I'm not finna let them do me like that. If you respect me, I respect you. But if you don't respect me, then I don't wanna even talk to you.

For Tanya, police aggression should be met with citizen resistance. Yet, Tanya's affirmation of her own worth by challenging police power comes at a high cost. By exhibiting seemingly aggressive behavior in response to unfair police treatment, she increases her risk of further punishment (i.e., "Ok then. You goin' to jail."). Such interactions demonstrate the racialized and gendered precarity of women of color, who were often punished for disrupting traditional femininity tropes and asserting themselves against the "masculine arm of the state" when navigating criminalization (Herbert, 2001; Prokos & Padavic, 2002).

Other women confronted this criminalization by trying to deflect police violence through avoidance and deference to officers. Kim, a 21-year-old Black woman, shared that she largely avoided police contact because "at the end of the day it's your safety. And they have a badge, and the law is almost all the time on their side. You know, yeah, you have rights but like I said, better prevent than heal." Unlike Tanya's self-defense strategy, Selena, a multiracial woman in her early 40s, shared that when police are on a "power trip" with her, "I don't fight against it 'cause I'm gonna make it worse for myself." Selena's and Kim's comments reveal how the law provides a poor redress for the abuse women face from its enforcers.

Women of color often experienced this criminalization in contrast to the (real and perceived) experiences of white women. Over three-fourths of women of color expressed that white people receive better treatment than people of color, particularly Black Americans, during police encounters. Twenty-six-year-old Porsha, for example, explained that police "look at white people and feel like they don't do as bad as Black people do… But I feel like, shit, we just probably get caught more than the white people do." When Pam, a Black woman in her 50s, was asked if police treat people differently based on race, she responded, "YES! YES! Oh yes… I done seen it! Based off a white lady, they might give her a warning. They'll kill Black lady, she gon' be on the ground… She gon' be sittin' there for about an hour 'fore they even let her go IF she ain't did nothing." It is unclear where Pam gleans her experience with how white women are treated, but it is obvious that she felt Black women's race singles them out for police maltreatment. Patricia, who earlier shared her fear of police contact, expressed similar thoughts after the fatal shooting of Justine Damond by police:

> When that white woman got shot, oh! Then it opened everybody's eyes. See the difference? All the Black people that have been killed by them? I tell you, see, that's the example right there. That's the chip off the iceberg. Because it's like we don't exist. We're treated so unfairly… when somebody white gets killed? "Oh my God! It's the end of the world. We've got to find somebody!" But then also, too, if the suspects they say are Black, they'd be looking all over the place for us… So, it's racism. It all has a lot to do with people not being treated equal, people not being treated fair… Also too, if it's a Black person, they ain't going to keep them on long. But let it be a white person, you've got to hear about that for two months.

Pam and Patricia's comments highlight how Black women position themselves in relation to white women. For them, white femininity signals social capital, and thus the right to be valued as legitimate victims of police violence (Hitchens et al., 2018) and receive justice. In their eyes, Black women maintain little to no such capital.

## Vicarious criminalization for women of color

Black and Native women experienced vicarious marginalization, or "the marginalizing effect of police maltreatment that is targeted toward others," including partners, children, other friends and family, and co-ethnics or other community members (Bell, 2017, p. 2104; see also Rosenbaum et al., 2005). Twenty Black and Native women described hearing about and/or police harassment from loved ones, most often male family members, friends, or partners (Elliott & Reid, 2019). These

women worried about the Black and Native men in their lives, and especially sons and partners who had a larger physique, locs, and/or wore clothing that police deemed "suspicious" (Kerrison et al., 2018; Malone Gonzalez, 2019). They believed that police perceived routine activities like driving as suspect, especially if there was more than one Black man in the car. Ms. Lenora, a Black woman in her late 60s, explained that "None of my Black sons, Black nephew, whatever, ever drove my cars because I didn't want them to be stopped for driving while Black."

Black women like Ms. Lenora navigated these worries by offering Black men "the talk," or cautionary tales of how to protect themselves from criminalization (Armstrong & Carlson, 2019; Malone Gonzalez, 2019). Thelma, a Black woman in her early 50s, described fears for her son's safety as a young Black man who's "very focused on school," but has a large physique:

> I mean from the stories that I hear and the stuff on the news then somebody may look at him and say, "Oh because he's 5 5 , 250 pounds, he's a threat." And I don't want that for my child because of how he looks. That's not who he is. So, I don't want anybody to mistake him.

While height may be immutable, women worked to reduce outward characteristics that officers might associate with criminality. Thelma, for example, described how she educated her son to drive carefully and avoid the "in-crowd" to escape police suspicion and violence.

Yet, despite efforts to protect their loved ones, more than half of the Black and Native women we interviewed described police harassment toward their (male) family members. DeJanay, a Black woman in her 30s, called MPD "terrible" after her fiancé "had an altercation with some people and instead of them turning the issue on what he called for, they ended up running his name and treated him totally disrespectful… And he ended up going to jail." After police arrested Simi, a Native woman in her early 40s, and her son, Simi attempted to quiet him from calling the cops "racists" while detained in the back seat. Recalling how her brother, and three other Native men, had been shoved in a police trunk, taken down to the river, and humiliated by cops, Simi warned him, "we're riding in the back seat or else we could be riding in the trunk." Her warning to her son spoke to the dangers Native men challenging police authority when in custody. Tanya echoed other women's concerns when she vividly recalled her Black son, then 17-years-old, being tasered multiple times in a case of mistaken identity. She recalled that "if it wasn't no witness… and a lot of people, they would have killed him. They would have shot him." Both women voiced that these incidents of abuse changed their perceptions of police. Simi explained that now she just "respects 'em and hope I don't get something like that happen to me." For Tanya, the trauma from that incident nearly a decade earlier continued to trouble her, resulting in the family's active avoidance of police contact.

Black women often framed Black men as the primary targets of state violence, understanding their own gender as a form of protection from police scrutiny (Stuart & Benezra, 2018). Donna, a Black woman in her mid-40s, shared, "You know, it's like I'm excited that [my friend is] having a girl and not a boy because she don't have to worry about that fear that I have to worry about… you know, bringing a Black male into this society when they are the most wanted." Several other Black women in the focus group nodded in agreement with Donna's comment. Donna's assumption that Black daughters remain shielded from police violence highlights how Black girls' and women's gendered racial vulnerabilities often remain marginalized in Black mothers' socialization practices (Malone Gonzalez, 2019). Several Black women shared Donna's sentiments that Black men were the primary targets of racialized police violence. When we asked Dee-Dee, a 28-year-old Black woman, who police pull over during traffic incidents, she responded, "probably some females but I just notice males, and especially like, you know, young Black males. And don't let 'em have dreads!" Dee-Dee also revealed that she avoided wearing certain hats in her car so that police would not mistake her for a Black man. Marsha, a Black woman in her late 40s, expressed a similar sentiment: she had never had a problem with the police because she was "an educated woman… a professional woman" who knew how to carry herself. She contrasted her experiences to Black men, arguing that "it's hard

for Black men to even trust white police officers because automatically they thinking they [Black men] a criminal. More than likely they get stopped." Kristen, a 30-year-old Black woman, echoed these sentiments that her gender identity prevented her from racialized police violence. While describing her experiences with police, she replied:

> No police confrontation. And that's the crazy thing… I haven't seen any… See, I'm a young Black female so I never had to come encounter with stuff like that. I had a lot of friends, you know, that are young Black males that come in contact with the police a lot because they think any Black male is a drug dealer.

Yet in framing criminalization vis-à-vis their obligations to boys and men, Black women simultaneously rendered their own direct and vicarious experiences of direct criminalization secondary. Despite these women's perceptions that police primarily target Black men, all four women described how they worked to appear less threatening to reduce the risk of violence. Dee-Dee, who above described avoiding wearing hats in the car, voiced her dismay that (Black) women should even have to worry about police violence:

> … it's to the point to where when the police get up behind me or pull me over… you get scared. When did that feeling come into play? When all these killings started happening and no justice! That's how I feel. Especially for a woman, you know? Why should a woman feel scared because the police is pulling you over for a traffic stop?

For Dee-Dee, the recent police killings of civilians caused her to question her own vulnerability to police violence. Her response suggests that while her gender *should* protect her and other Black women from police violence, the racialized nature of police killings made her feel at-risk. These contradictions represent the complexities of how women of color grappled with intersecting structures of race and gender.

## Evading criminalization through whiteness

Racial and economic privilege–relative to Black, Native and Asian women in Northside–shielded most white women from police criminalization (Frankenberg, 1993). In these interviews, experiences of police scrutiny and disrespect were largely absent. Yet, two did experience negative encounters with police that involved verbal and physical harassment. Janet, a white woman in her mid-30s, recalled being stopped and detained five times in Northside for "running the streets" and substance abuse. When asked if she believed police singled her out, Janet responds:

> No, I had warrants… but how they knew to ask me for my ID, I don't know. And when I wouldn't even give them my ID, I say, "No! You have no reason to ask my name." And then they put me in handcuffs. They said, "You're being detained until you can be identified." That was three of the times. Another time I just said, "Fuck it! Yeah, I'm Janet, let's go." And they were real—when I said that—they were really nice, really cooperative. Let me smoke a cigarette. Let me take phone calls. You know they were really nice then.

Similarly, Jane, a white woman in her early 50s, recalls her experiences with police during periods of alcohol addiction: "even in the times I've dealt with them for my own deal in the past… I was under the influence of alcohol." In both cases, the women had some plausible reason for police contact relating to substance abuse. White women like Janet and Jane needed additional stigma to receive the same level of scrutiny from police that women of color experienced. Notably, neither

woman owned their own home, suggesting they may have had a different economic status than many of the white women in our sample.

However, while Janet and Jane experienced police encounters of surveillance, questioning, and in some cases, arrest, like the women of color, they did not experience harassment or abuse from police (i.e., "they were really nice."). Nor did they link those experiences to a history of racial trauma or a broader system of racialized social control. Where women of color often perceived police interference as unwarranted and racially discriminatory, Janet and Jane view such interactions as related to their own addictions and legal violations. Each concluded that in these interactions, police were "doing their job," if overly zealously. In fact, Jane explicitly dismisses the idea that police target people for no reason, noting that "If I'm breaking the law, if I'm driving, they're going to pull me over because I didn't signal my turn or ran a stop sign or whatever. You know, I was under the influence a couple of times behind the wheel, and I shouldn't have been. That's against the law." Thus, for white women, involuntary police contact was not experienced as criminalization and instead bolstered their perception that police were doing their job.

The incidents Jane and Janet describe were rare among white women in our sample, a reflection of the raced, gendered, and classed privilege many white women acknowledged. Of the 15 white women we interviewed, 11 described how their whiteness—and to a lesser extent, gender—shielded them from police maltreatment, despite living in a heavily-policed community. Lucile, a 67-year-old white woman who had lived in North Minneapolis for 40 years, draws on an illustration of racial discrimination:

> … there was a giant drug bust out in Minnetonka and it was like a coalition of like, you know, six or seven white guys and none of them stayed in jail! They all got arrested, got in court, and got out on bail. And some low-level person who sells drugs in North Minneapolis—a Black person—they're gonna get arrested, they're gonna sit in jail until their case comes up… they treated those white people differently than the Black people in North Minneapolis and a lot of people were really ticked.

Other white women shared similar sentiments regarding race, privilege, and police criminalization. For example, Sheila, a white woman in her mid-40s, shared that "I'm pretty damn sure that when [police] pull me over and they see my two baby car seats… and I'm a white lady who dresses like a professional… they assume I'm up to only good things. And that works in my advantage." Sheila further described two recent incidents where she pulled over to assist Black people in their interactions with police, sharing that she felt it was her "responsibility" to intervene, using her racial privilege to help diffuse the situations and protect her neighbors.

Like women of color, a few white women worried about the consequences of police calls for their family, friends, and neighbors (especially when those loved ones and acquaintances were Black). But this fear did not have the same destabilizing intensity for white women since they were rarely worried about the direct threat of police to their partners or children. Whereas for many women of color, reluctance to call law enforcement had been a life-long struggle and was the source of much agonizing, white women were primarily concerned about the repercussions for other people (not their immediate family and friends). For example, Carol, a white woman in her mid-60s, recounted how a police officer treated her rudely for not leashing her dog at a local park. Carol successfully resolved the incident with police, remarking, "… my concern at the time, and I did express it to his boss, was that if he treated me, a white female, by the way that he treated me, how does he treat people of color? Or younger people?" Samantha, a white schoolteacher in her late 20s, reflected that she could call the police when needed, but acknowledged that "this is my privilege speaking." She explained that "I probably could call the police and in most cases I would be fine. Could my best friend… who's a woman of color? I don't think so… Could my students? Could their parents? Like, I don't think so." These reflections show how white women understood raced and gendered vulnerability to criminalization and police violence.

While most white women reflected on racial and gender privilege, three white women refuted the idea that police discriminated against Black Americans by comparing their own experiences with police. When the lead author asked whether police treat all people fairly, Barb, a white woman in her late 50s, responded:

> I mean they treated me fairly… I'm not going to go with what the media says. Because the media would have you believe that they do not. But I don't know that they don't, I don't know that they do… Are they thinking that Black men are targeted more? D-W-B, I've heard, you know, "Driving While Black." I'd have to see some statistics on that.

Similarly, Jane, who described her experiences with addiction and police above, shared with a Latino interviewer that "I don't fear [police] at all," went on to deny racial profiling:

> I have friends of all different races, and I'm at a point where I've heard both sides from—say, from Black guys—think I've only heard one or two say to me that they do think they [police officers] profile. And I just went, "Oh, gosh. Well, was the person doing something? You know, did they have a license plate that they were searching out? Did it look like they were swerving? Were they right in an area where a bank or a grocery store clerk was shot?" You know? And if the description was a Black man with a hat on, what [would] I do? I would pull over everyone with a hat on that fit that description… I can't say because of my skin color, but I don't see it… I don't see color in people.

Barb and Jane adopted a color-blind perspective, where they dismissed racialized social control and law enforcement simply served to protect the public from "criminal" activity. Since they had not experienced such direct discrimination, they denied the problem altogether. In doing so, these women also failed to identify their own sources of privilege.

## DISCUSSION

Despite the increasing importance of intersectional and Black feminist theory within critical legal studies, with a few exceptions, research on policing centers boys' and men' experiences, often failing to explicitly consider gender as a key organizing structure (Threadcraft & Miller, 2017). In addition, this research often treats heavily policed communities as homogenous, neglecting class and race variation within such communities. The neglect of gender—and its intersection with race and class—obscures the voices of women and reduces racialized policing practices to discrimination against Black men. To address this lacuna, we conducted interviews with 53 women in heavily-policed neighborhoods in North Minneapolis, MN, and examined how women navigated dual frustration, or the parallel burdens of crime and criminalization. To untangle the role of gender and race, we draw on the concept of gendered racial vulnerability (Malone Gonzalez, 2019), comparing the experiences of women of color (who largely identified as Black or African American) and white women.

Our findings show important differences across racial identities in women's experiences of dual frustration, and, by extension, legal estrangement (Bell, 2017). Women of color experienced the violence matrix, burdened by community, gender-based, and police violence (Richie, 2012). They often felt under-protected by the law and simultaneously faced pervasive criminalization, both of which exacerbated the legacies of racial trauma. Black and Native women's criminalization was directed at them as individuals and via family criminalization, particularly through burdens they felt in raising Black sons to navigate police targeting and violence (Bell, 2016; Dow, 2016; Elliott & Reid, 2019; Malone Gonzalez, 2019). Together, this produced a unique dual frustration for women of color, who

needed police assistance with private and public violence, yet also feared police violence. While white women shared residential space with women of color, they reported less exposure to interpersonal, community, and police violence and were often exempt from the perpetual cycle of criminalization and suspicion by law enforcement. Instead, white women largely worked with the police to manage disorder in their neighborhoods. While both women of color and white women expressed concerns of unmet expectations from law enforcement to protect and serve its citizens, white women remained largely removed from the repressive face of the state, and consequently dual frustration, that is so often imposed on women of color within RCS communities (Hitchens et al., 2018).

Perhaps in part because we interviewed women after the first wave of Black Lives Matter protests, many women were intensely self-reflexive about their own positionality and gendered racial vulnerability to violence. Black women described how they felt disadvantaged relative to white women, reaffirming perceptions that Black women's lives were largely disregarded by the law. Similarly, most of the white women in the study perceived at least some racial discrimination by police, reflexively processing their own gendered racial privilege in North Minneapolis (while a minority insisted on a "color-blind" perspective). However, when discussing the risks and failures of policing, both groups of women often centered the experiences of Black boys and men. Thus, women of color in our sample positioned their own vulnerability to police abuse and violence somewhere between white women and Black men—privileged by their gender but punished by their race. While Black boys and men do face a higher rate of interpersonal lethal violence, police killings, and imprisonment, this centering of male experiences rendered invisible women of color's own experiences of racial targeting, harassment, abuse and violence—including their unique gendered vulnerability to private, gender-based, and state violence.

Centering women's narrative accounts does not obscure the lethal threat Black (and Brown) men often encounter at the hands of law enforcement. Rather than view these lenses as competing discourses, we encourage policing scholarship to consider what Jones (2016) calls a "shared vulnerability to violence" among men, women, and genderqueer persons, whereby police violence spills over into community and gender-based violence. By focusing on women's experiences with street harassment, intimate partner violence, and criminalization and neglect by police, we can better conceptualize the causes and consequences of dual frustration.

Several limitations exist in our findings. First, while our sample includes a handful of Native and Asian women, this small sample size does not allow for a deeper exploration for how women of color outside the Black-white binary perceive and experience police presence in their communities. Similarly, while we include one genderqueer person who described their experiences as a woman, a deeper analysis of gender and race must also include the voices of genderqueer individuals. Third, our small sample of white women–and the relatively advantaged socioeconomic status of those women despite their neighborhood contexts–limit our ability to draw conclusions about the experiences of the poorest white women in urban neighborhoods. Finally, our sample skewed toward older women. This perhaps explains why our respondents experienced more family criminalization (Elliott & Reid, 2019) than direct targeting from law enforcement, as earlier studies of teens and younger women of color have found (Brunson & Miller, 2006; Hitchens et al., 2018). We urge future sociolegal research to build on these findings, centering the voices of women, girls, and non-binary and transgender people as integral to theories regarding dual frustration, legal cynicism, and legal estrangement. Future research might better unravel how race, gender, socioeconomic status, and age all intersect to produce unique legal socialization.

Finally, our interviews were conducted before the police killing of George Floyd, which sparked national conversations about police defunding and abolition. This new context may shift how residents of heavily-policed communities conceptualize the role of law enforcement and the state in their lives. Moving forward, we argue, scholars, activists, reformers, and abolitionists must foreground how intersecting structures of gender, race, and class co-produce crime and abusive policing in their diagnoses and solutions to RCS communities' exclusion from the law's protection (Brown & Jones, 2018; Kaba, 2021). Only by considering the full matrix of violence, and the unique experiences

of women of color, can we fully understand legal estrangement and the path toward women's ability to feel safe from violence in their homes and communities.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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