

3 Spaces of Injustice, Discrimination, Disparity: Marginalization of Blacks in the United States

In American cities as well as rural areas, Black people suffer from significant difficulties in their daily lives. The three most prominent topics that receive national and even international news coverage are (systemic) racism, police violence, and inaccessibility in a varied set of areas. The following subchapters will introduce these three aspects and provide an understanding of their significance. An introduction can facilitate comprehending more points throughout this thesis, including socio-political counterinitiatives and the relationship to the urban context in Washington and Minneapolis.

3.1 Racism: A Haunting Social, Political, Geographic Reality

Racism as “the expression of individual negative attitudes, beliefs, and acts against minorities” (OKAZAKI 2009, p. 103) is a complex, extraordinarily prevalent aspect with which Blacks are confronted regularly in the US. It can transcend many boundaries of public life and arises in several types that all have their respective implications and dire consequences. Therefore, the following sub- and main chapters integrate the topic as basis, while presenting different central realities and explanations.

Broadly, racism can be classified in three categories, developed by English philosopher Antony Flew and outlined in Anthony Skillen’s (1993) *Flew’s Three Concepts of Racism*: unjustified discrimination, heretical belief, and institutionalized racism. In the first case, the basis for the argu-

ment is race, and people are discriminated against or in favor of others. The social or cultural situation and status is unimportant, simply phenotypical characteristics, the physical appearance, are determinant (SKILLEN 1993, p. 73). As Skillen (1993) warns, this conception is highly problematic and does neither fit societal nor scientific perceptions about the notion of race (SKILLEN 1993, pp. 75, 76).

The second case focuses on emphasizing differences believed to exist among races, based on people's lives and actions (SKILLEN 1993, p. 73). As the label 'heretical' indicates, the conceptions are passed on from generation to generation. Flew mentions sensory and behavioral characteristics, or in other words psychological instead of phenotypical ones, as determinant. Interestingly, Flew says that if this concept is not used to disguise an actively visible practice – which is case one – then condemning those people is wrong. This is of course a problematic view when cultural modifications and today's different belief systems are considered. Flew tries to repudiate the argument when he says people adhering to his second concept are receptive regarding criticism and correction. However, the text by Skillen (1993) states that morality would not be an issue (SKILLEN 1993, p. 73).

The third and final concept is, just like concept one, the one BLM and others try to attack: Racist institutions (SKILLEN 1993, p. 74). Institutional members themselves claim the motivation for the effect of exclusion and the denial of certain advantages to racial groups, despite not spoken about explicitly. The affected individuals could be at a lower societal position, which leads them to say that institutions are to blame because of racist behavior. Flew, however, argues that institutions cannot be morally blamed here as they do not have intentions. Of course, this is far from true as institutions have agendas and goals which members formulate to advance their work, and something can happen to the detriment of a particular race in the process. Skillen (1993) himself utters this criticism, saying that "[I]f it is the case that individuals, not institutions, have intentions or goals, we need to say that institutions operate through individuals, that our intentions are structured by institutions" (SKILLEN 1993, p. 80). Thus, to avoid contentiousness and confusion, the text states that Flew has said this *a priori* – a judgment *a priori* is possible without

experience. Those people wanting to do away with institutionalized racism, Flew holds, reach back to discrimination starting at the other end, which of course would be redrawing to Flew's concept one. Importantly, Skillen (1993) says, 'institutionalized racism' is not "a function" (SKILLEN 1993, p. 74) of the practice of 'unjustified discrimination,' but 'heretical belief' is termed "a legitimating smokescreen" (SKILLEN 1993, p. 74) for this. The Swann Committee Report cited here corroborates this assumption: It states that "routine practices, customs, and procedures" (SWANN COMMITTEE 1985, cited in SKILLEN 1993, p. 79) not considering Blacks or other minorities are reiterated through "relations and structures of power" (SWANN COMMITTEE 1985, cited in SKILLEN 1993, p. 79). Further, they are claimed as right because of "centuries-old beliefs and attitudes" (SWANN COMMITTEE 1985, cited in SKILLEN 1993, p. 79). Here, the relational dimension of racism is underlined.

For Flew, however, it is central to stress that striving towards equality is critically different from treating a racial minority group in a preferable manner. Certainly, some people who criticize BLM might think members aim at "discriminating in [favor] of a racially defined subset out of the total set of all those worse off than the majority" (SKILLEN 1993, p. 74). They might see this movement as trying to put Blacks at a higher position than for instance Latinos. However, there are two reasons to question this: First, the notion of race is knowingly broad, and many can identify as Black, while also 'being part' of another race. Thus, the critique is not applicable, as members of other groups, including Whites, are not excluded from the movement. Second, the movement emphasizes equality of opportunity in different areas, which is by no means an intention of 'Black superiority,' but simply a message that Black lives and livelihoods are important to consider in society and politics.

As becomes clear, like several others Flew sees racism connected to certain beliefs and ideology, and beliefs can often not be freed from racist content (see SKILLEN 1993, pp. 75, 79). Racism modifies constantly and goes hand in hand with societal and personal changes, induced by beliefs. Thus, external influence on individuals through their surroundings plays a substantial role (see MATSUEDA & DRAKULICH 2009, p. 167). While Flew leaves out these contexts in the 'unjustified discrimination'

concept, Skillen (1993) thinks racism is decisively influenced by culture and an individual's cognitive assessment of social situations, processes, and developments. Therefore, racism quite often becomes "an object of individual moral condemnation" (SKILLEN 1993, pp. 75, 80). However, Skillen (1993) says racism should be made visible and understood on a more substantial scale than mere individual people. What can thus be seen in the BLM Movement is that many people wish to counteract several kinds of racism or address several instances in which racist behavior can be detected. Naturally, Flew observes, people who position themselves against racism struggle with the very concept of race. It calls for fundamental differentiation, the belief known as *othering* and the *us versus them* mentality (see SKILLEN 1993, p. 78). These conceptions regard people of another race, particularly Blacks, as different in many aspects. This includes that a dominant racial group feels eligible to have better opportunities (see MATSUEDA & DRAKULICH 2009, pp. 164, 166).

Blumer (1958) explains this by naming the term prejudice. He departs from the rather traditional psychological approach – feelings and opinions – to define it differently. He says it has arisen within society and serves as explanation for these different positions of different groups. A dominant group, Whites, finds definitions for the group below them, which are Blacks in this case. In so doing, Whites can claim what their "group position and group identity" (MATSUEDA & DRAKULICH 2009, p. 166) is. They do that by adhering to two orientation pillars, as Ross L. Matsueda and Kevin Drakulich (2009) explain: "domination-subordination and inclusion-exclusion" (MATSUEDA & DRAKULICH 2009, p. 166). As an illustration, they elaborate Blumer's (1958) recognition of different feelings, which can be summarized as follows: alienation of others, superiority, claim of better position, and fear of challenge (MATSUEDA & DRAKULICH 2009, p. 166). Thus, Whites construct a binary respectively bipolar and especially hierarchized narrative of society (see SKILLEN 1993, p. 78). As a reaction, Flew says, people rather forget about the concept of race and try to eradicate it from people's minds. In some ways, however, it is necessary to think about this, and what a racial identity encompasses, to have a better understanding (see SKILLEN 1993, p. 76). Skillen (1993) believes that racial identity can be a reason why racism itself is perceived as ideological.

Racism is thus a deep-rooted concept characterized by definition-fluidity and transcendence: People think and speak incongruently about how to approach the issue, and racism itself can cross formally clear-cut separational lines between different areas. Whenever in this case anti-Black racism is challenged, it is at first quite difficult to generate White solidarity in the US. Either there is a fundamental resentment by many Whites, or they doubt whether race plays a role in the country at all. They continuously practice scape-goating – finding a guilty Black person for any situation – in order not to fear their societal position. Moreover, many Whites express more solidarity when Blacks have not done anything wrong, making assessment and focus substantially more difficult because of this special condition (see HOOKER 2016, pp. 460, 461).

Besides outlining this argument, Hooker (2016) further has the intention to politicize the issue of racism, and to connect it to the American democracy, explaining why the subchapter's title involves politics. Incorporating opinions of other scholars like Melvin Rogers, she explains why racism is present and visible despite democratic political organization. Rogers (2014) says the motivations for the protests in Ferguson (Missouri), as well as other cities like the two examples, are twofold: First, it is about "[political] reciprocity" (ROGERS 2014, cited in HOOKER 2016, p. 449). This means the inclusion of Black people into both the political framework and process, a guarantee of representation. The second aspect is the "disposability of Black lives" (ROGERS 2014, cited in HOOKER 2016, p. 449). Put differently, Blacks today cannot – because of those obstacles in their way – participate fully in the American democratic enterprise anymore (HOOKER 2016, p. 449). Other American citizens and most prominently institutions try to invoke negativity and hostility toward Blacks on a regular basis. This is an inhibiting force that many Blacks cannot overcome easily (HOOKER 2016, p. 449).

The author holds that people not supporting BLM's protests for more equality are allegedly not a reason for Americans to talk about a democratic crisis in the country. She links this to two important questions: one is whether people wish to pursue the endeavor of inclusion. The other is whether one should look at historical happenings and see "loss as a form of democratic exemplarity" (HOOKER 2016, p. 450), while the loss-

es are not fixable because of shifted political beliefs and frameworks in our days. Consequently, she wonders whether “undue democratic sacrifice” (HOOKER 2016, p. 450) – because of Blacks’ limited possibilities – is an overall example for democracy.

However, she doubts that all these aspects hold true, explaining why these assumptions prove to be problematic. First, there is a historically motivated reductionism to them: Black people in the US have long been politically active and rich in thought, not just during the historical era of the CRM. Second, “white moral psychology” (HOOKER 2016, pp. 450, 458) is interpreted in a wrong way: Simply consenting loss to more dominant fractions of society, in this case Whites, would not cause any difference. It would not have an impact on the social situation, much less though on “ethical orientations” (HOOKER 2016, p. 450) of Whites. People supporting this claim, Hooker (2016) states, hold that if political activists set an example, the “dominant racial group” (HOOKER 2016, p. 458) will switch to more positive conceptions, will even feel ashamed (see HOOKER 2016, p. 460). Blacks peacefully accepting violence could ostensibly cause at least some Whites to think about this violence, and perhaps to reject or disapprove both that and racial injustice as a whole reality (HOOKER 2016, p. 458). Hooker (2016), however, does not support this perception.

Third, and most evidently seen in the case of the BLM Movement, if Blacks are not using violence to make their voices heard, it is by no means accepting the situation or a mere act of victimization. This position, Hooker (2016) says, fails to acknowledge the definition of themselves as “engaging in acts of defiance” (HOOKER 2016, p. 450, see also p. 456). Thus, she asks what could be expected of Black people as the (American) democratic system cannot properly counteract all racially motivated forms of injustice. A possible solution for her is a redefinition of some theoretical elements in politics, because the current thinking does not “accept black anger as a legitimate response to racial terror and violence” (HOOKER 2016, p. 451). This is important as it is precisely the anger that is seen in violent altercations during protests in several American cities. However, it is interesting to consider the opinion of Steven Johnston here: Johnston (2014) says that indeed, those altercations can be “democratically contributive...Citizens who have no official outlet for redress of grievances need

to be self-reliant” (JOHNSTON 2014, cited in HOOKER 2016, p. 454; HOOKER 2016 p. 464; for person, DEPARTMENT OF POLITICAL SCIENCE n.d.). Congruently, Hooker (2016) writes about Brandon Terry’s observation that thinking about disagreements and radical tendencies in civil and social justice movements is important but lacking. This is because of a certain public opinion: By assuming non-violence would increase socio-political efficacy, and make the path for inclusion, more harsh types of resistant activism – i.e., violence – would not be deemed acceptable and useful. It would simply not be regarded as an effective approach (HOOKER 2016, pp. 457, 458).

Danielle Allen explicitly challenges Hooker’s (2016) opinion about distributional irregularities in experiencing loss of Blacks and Whites. She thinks democracies – because of different views and aspirations – have by necessity those who gain and those who lose something when decisions are made. (for person, see EDMOND J. SAFRA CENTER FOR ETHICS n.d.). Thus, these citizens are automatically challenged to make a sacrifice (HOOKER 2016, p. 453). Further, they are motivated to strive for sovereignty, but the reality is often different. Additionally, even democratic theory says some people rightfully lose as debating an issue is about individual preferences, capacities, and capabilities (HOOKER 2016, p. 451).

Importantly, the theory holds that everyone can profit from decisions or not, and in advance there are no inherently organized considerations – only the outcome can be a different and perhaps undesirable one. Further, Hooker (2016) agrees with Allen in an important point: Both women state that those who lose and *acknowledge* to be losers of a decision or an endeavor, and therefore make their sacrifice, are important for a democracy and its institutions to survive, to continue in the future (HOOKER 2016, pp. 451, 452, 453). To be clear, Allen admits the component of sacrifice has of course not affected everyone equally in the past (HOOKER 2016, p. 453). Likewise, she says racial divides into sovereigns and the disadvantaged prove fertile soil for further decreasing credibility (HOOKER 2019, p. 454). Thus, for Allen, legitimate sacrifice is linked to absence of coercion, distributional alternation (i.e., no group can be continuously expected to make the sacrifice), and honor by those who benefit (see HOOKER 2016, p. 454).

Taking a positive note, Hooker (2016) says it is “seductive” (HOOKER 2016, p. 454) to think about African American socio-political activism as “as heroic form of democratic sacrifice” (HOOKER 2016, p. 454). This is because it is – at least *mostly* – non-violent and “within the parameters of the rule of law and the norms of liberal politics” (HOOKER 2016, p. 454). In one aspect, however, Hooker (2016) contradicts Allen’s point of connecting non-violent acknowledgment and being an exemplary democratic citizen. She says Allen does not consider who is to what extent affected by loss, which is often caused by racist beliefs and attitudes. Blacks in the US are disproportionately affected by that loss since it is as fluid as racism itself, and able to surface on different levels (see HOOKER 2016, p. 453). This becomes evident when looking at political representation. Therefore, she insists that Allen cannot, on an ethical or moral basis, take African Americans and other People of Color as a primary example to explain her theoretical approach of “democratic loss” (HOOKER 2016, p. 451, see also p. 455).

Another important point included by Hooker (2016) about racist influence in the political realm is raised by Joel Olson (see JOEL OLSON ARCHIVE 2019): He states that White people’s political imagination was crucially influenced by history and their own societal perceptions. As they were mostly both the beneficiaries and winners in the American democracy – while maintaining a privileged position – they have set up a particular thought about some variables of democracy. The definition of being a citizen, citizenship, is reduced to a mere status and not regarded as one of many vital elements of democracy. Freedom, a democratic virtue as well as human right, is increasingly understood in negative terms, and equality even receives an opportunistic note (HOOKER 2016, p. 455). What is important to see here is that Whites’ political imagination was not influenced by loss, but by a space of liberty. Thus, they should recognize, Hooker (2016) says, that they as a person or their position and status were rarely influenced. However, precisely this circumstance leads to White fear, and sacrifice will not be properly respected (see HOOKER 2016, p. 455).

Being democratic citizens thus expects something of Blacks and other minorities. They should strive to make “the political community more just and free” (HOOKER 2016, p. 454) as well as “do the work of demo-

cratic repair” by continuing to act non-violently “on behalf of the polity” (HOOKER 2016, p. 456). Hence, everything not connected to “submission, respectability, and non-violence” (HOOKER 2016, p. 464) is not regarded as a correct argument. To adopt this submissive position, however, might have consequences for what they themselves would like to achieve for their community (see HOOKER 2016, p. 454). Analytically approaching this from the other end, which Hooker (2016) does not consider, would have implications on freedom of expression, as they are constrained by white imagination. Thus, it would be a danger for the American democracy.

In these quotes and explanations, a social and a political dimension of racism can evidently be noted. However, even more importantly, racism has a third sphere of influence that has become relevant in writing this thesis: geography, and especially urban areas. Geography might not, in contrast to society and politics, be the first area to think about when considering racism. However, it is one that needs to be looked at. There are two defining concepts which are useful to explain here, while 4. talks about those in a contextual manner. The first is Bodies Out of Place (BOP), the second is racialized spaces.

BOP connects material, social, and verbal levels for a clear analytical framework, or an explanation for racist practices and ideology (see COMBS 2018, pp. 42, 43). This is interesting when looking at the situation of Blacks in the US: Many Whites believe racism is not an omnipresent phenomenon, rather occurs away from the spotlight of societal discourse in isolated fashion (COMBS 2018, p. 42). They do not see the perceived multifaceted inequ(al)ity and injustice as a problem, but as a situation to be maintained, as it benefits them. They indeed claim it is favorable for society. A problem though is that even when Blacks are physically integrated, or in proximity to other races in a city or neighborhood, it does not mean they are socially integrated (COMBS 2018, p. 42). However, it can also happen that the physical integration does not unfold, that Blacks are portrayed as “placeless” (HAWTHORNE 2019, p. 5). This could be termed one module of exclusionary geographies. To better understand the concept of BOP, Barbara Harris Combs (2018) divided it into five different named typologies, providing the linkage between geography, society, black lives, and racism.

The first is ‘Massah Has Spoken.’ Whites are allegedly morally superior, can thus decide “what is right, reasonable, and or necessary [sic!]” (COMBS 2018, p. 45). This grants them the power to give orders and thus expectedly force a certain BOP into full compliance, while disrespect or non-adherence will accordingly be sanctioned (COMBS 2018, p. 45). Verbalized orders disconnect a body from the place it tries to enter, resulting in its physical re-installation in a “position of subjugation” (COMBS 2018, p. 45).

The second typology is the ‘Historical Fear Response’: It is an emotionally motivated justification of violence against Black people, or the mere announcement of it, by the state. Whites fear that Blacks might challenge resources and positions that once only they had, which automatically includes neighborhoods – geographical spaces. Thus, the adjective is not there to imply that this fear has stopped, quite the contrary. A quote by writer Nanette D. Massey shows a clear correlation between the three characteristics of skin color, preconception, and emotion, being applicable to this very day: “It is impossible to be unarmed when our blackness is the weapon they fear” (COMBS 2018, p. 45). Corey Robin (2004) recognizes that the feeling of fear has always been there in (white) American society. It becomes problematic though as it enters the political, and more specifically the policy realm: It can “create an overturn laws [sic!]” (COMBS 2018, p. 46) Thinking about the statement, those potentially overturned could be the very laws of which Blacks and other ethnic minorities are and were beneficiaries, those which paved the way toward equality. However, as Meacham (2018, p. 47) observes: “The forces of fear had [for some time] kept equality at bay” (MEACHAM 2018, cited in COMBS 2018, p. 46; brackets in original). Equality is a defining factor of democracy. Thus, fear – an emotion and a powerful psychological trigger for (in) action – could have a serious impact on maintaining democratic quality.

A third typology discussed in more detail in 3.2. is the ‘Presumed Criminal’ (COMBS 2018, p. 46). It is emphasized that Black people are assumed to be guilty of something until there appears contradictory evidence making them innocent. The perception can not only be seen in interactions between people of two different races, but especially in interactions between African Americans and American law enforcement.

While these variants present the more socio-political side of the concept, the fourth typology – ‘You Don’t Belong Here!’ – is the geographical or rather spatial side of it (COMBS 2018, p. 46): Where do people belong when and with whom? These are (often White) preconceptions that cannot be silenced since they change over time (COMBS 2018, p. 46). Under this frame, one can find something often termed racial slurs – words and phrases usually involving graphic and disgraceful language toward Blacks (COMBS 2018, p. 46). However, there are manifold ways of intimidating and excluding Black people in urban areas: They encompass, for instance, gentrification (i. e., developmental practices to the detriment of Blacks and their livelihoods) or evictions (i. e., that a renter is thrown out of his or her home). These racism-induced threats can seriously affect the psyche of a person, or the general state of life and the societal positioning (see COMBS 2018, pp. 39, 46). To the extreme, there is the possibility of death in racially charged, violent altercations (COMBS 2018, p. 46). Obvious examples are the countless shootings of many unarmed Black American citizens, which happened while they were moving through an urban, hence geographical, space. Thus, it can be noted that this category employs both space and place as two fundamental variables (COMBS 2018, p. 46; HOOKER 2016).

The fifth typology claims ‘It’s All White Space!’ This frame is clearly indicative of White supremacist thinking, as they claim that every space, regardless of what nature, is freely available to Whites (see COMBS 2018, p. 47). It can be space in the common geographical sense, but it can extend to spaces of religion, culture, and the personal environment. What can be said about this is Whites expose Blacks to a “systemic displacement and dispossession from the spaces of everyday life” (MILLER & NICHOLLS 2013, p. 454). Sometimes, they even commit an infringement on Blacks’ private spaces because they deem it necessary (COMBS 2018, p. 47) – a phenomenon commonly referred to as “space-claiming” (HELMUTH 2019, p. 747). As Combs (2018) accordingly notes, referencing Sullivan (2006, p. 10), there is a spatial expansionism performed by Whites, a notion that sounds all too familiar from historical accounts (COMBS 2018, p. 47)

What becomes apparent is that racism rests on a dualism of the socio-political landscape and geography. This forms the two respective

oppositional pairs already explained by Matsueda and Drakulich (2009), and to a less concrete extent by Hawthorne (2019) and in Skillen's (1993) article *Flew's Three Concepts*. The first is societal and embedded in a hierarchized notion of it: domination versus subordination. The second then – where geography comes in – is partly societal and partly related to space and place: inclusion versus exclusion. It is societal as it refers to groups of people. More importantly, it relates to both space and place as it alludes to BOP (i. e., sense of belonging) and the right to be in certain spaces which is denied by the dominant group (see MATSUEDA & DRAKULICH 2009, p. 166; COMBS 2018, p. 45).

Another approach in the literature about racism is called “racialized spaces” (SUMMERS 2019, p. 151). Racialization means “the process by which meaning and value are ascribed to socially determined racial categories, and each racial category occupies a different position in the social hierarchy” (GARCÍA & SHARIF 2015, p. e28). Geographically then, this relates to the melting of societal beliefs and practices into how people operate in and move through a geographical space. Drawing on Parks (2016, p. 292), this approach “links the discourses of race and mobility” (PARKS 2016, cited in COMBS 2018, p. 40). The fact that “the dynamics of politics and power” (PARKS 2016, cited in COMBS 2018, p. 40) are involved in this correlation could be and is a real threat to achieving racial justice. Like any manifestation of *injustice*, then, it also threatens democracy. Because what comes with it, Combs (2018) emphasizes, are “containment and subordination” (COMBS 2018, p. 41). As already alluded, these two are intimidation strategies used against minorities like Blacks. They should never be part of the identity of a country that calls itself a democracy, like the US do.

What could be seen is that racism is a topic of many levels not easy to grasp, since it is comprised of this substantial set of variables. However, to include space and place in the discussion is certainly useful because these are prominent spheres of influence. Space, Lipsitz (2011) argues, is both a mirror of and a machine for racism. Thus, it not only makes racism visible, but it also acts as a producing tool for it (see HAWTHORNE 2019, p. 5). Further, Combs (2018) explains the role of place with observations of Natalie Byfield (2014), while not using her exact words. Combs (2018) writes that “state and local jurisdictions (including police) and media play

a key role in the construction and maintenance of racial group categories and separateness through mechanisms that employ place as a proxy for race and belonging” (COMBS 2018, p. 48). In other words, the three components of space, place, and race are inseparable. As following sub- and main chapters will show, racism has penetrated many areas in the US, extending to its cities where it continues to be a haunting reality on a full scale of sections.

3.2 Police Violence in the US: Law Enforcement Immoralities

For a long time, the US have been marked by a tense relationship between African Americans and law enforcement. Hooker (2016) mentions important points the BLM Movement wishes to address, which are “racial terror, state depredation of poor black communities, mass incarceration, racial profiling, excessive use of force by the police, disparities in sentencing, and lack of accountability of law enforcement” (HOOKER 2016, p. 462).

Many African Americans and other Black people in the US perceive to be treated “more harshly than whites” (WEITZER 2000, p. 129) by law enforcement officers (LEOs) on a regular basis. Therefore, already back in 1995, nine out of ten Blacks have agreed that police should not incorporate racial(ized) considerations into their practices, and the federal government should intervene against inequality (WEITZER 2000, p. 129). In other words, it should be a guarantor of democracy. In the following two decades, however, many Blacks have even been killed by police. As mentioned earlier, these “acts of blatant, unwarranted brutality” (JOHNSON & RUSSELL 2019, p. 34) were the main reason why the BLM Movement emerged, and subsequently spread throughout the US (see BURCH et al. 2020). Policing, supporters as well as the mentioned authors argue, must be viewed both in societal and historical contexts (see DUNHAM & PETERSEN 2017, p. 341).

Jerome Skolnick (2007) explains that based on historical evidence, police activity in the US could be regarded as “racialized social control” (DUNHAM & PETERSEN 2017, p. 341; further p. 347): It serves to keep Blacks in a certain space and/or position. Officers developed “consider-

able” (SKOLNICK 2007, cited in DUNHAM & PETERSEN 2017, p. 341) prejudice that could even evolve to be more severe over time. This resulted in the substantial deterioration of the relationship between various police departments and the Black communities they served. The opinions and pictures both LEOs and Blacks have of each other is an additional thing, Ronald Weitzer (2000) says: They each bring a package of certain things they associate with one another: Police looks suspiciously at Blacks, and they in turn expect to be treated in an unfair way. Thus, they avoid showing obedience and respect, which provokes reactionary behavior by officers (WEITZER 2000, p. 138). Moreover, the appearance of police is an issue: The sincere posture, the “often brusque and authoritarian” (WEITZER 2000, p. 138) disposition, and actions are immediately connected to racial discrimination of someone of color (WEITZER 2000, p. 138). The same goes for the heavily equipped and showy patrol cars as well as the gun, two important elements Weitzer (2000) does not mention here. This dynamic of fear and racialization is one that continues through the 1980s and 1990s right into our days.

A study about police killings in 2015 by Nix and colleagues (2017) examines different factors in policing and different jurisdictions (DUNHAM & PETERSEN 2017). Looking at confrontations, it shows African Americans (along with Latinos) are those more affected by deadly force compared to their white counterparts. This holds even *after* looking at ostensibly mitigating factors of policing, something depending on the respective situation. Activists, politicians, and scholars have therefore called to create an easily accessible database, giving an overview about how many members of racial minorities were killed. *The Washington Post* has established the ‘Fatal Force’ database, compiling evidence collected by journalists and societal observants, as well as several other physical and digital data sources. This should provide information on police use of deadly force (see DUNHAM & PETERSEN 2017, p. 342). There is a certain bias, however, since only fatal shootings and shootings with more and likewise more detailed news coverage appear. The important situational circumstances leading to the shootings were often only described by the news. Further, governmentally provided data are sometimes incomplete and less detailed. Thus, critics could say this might pose serious reliability issues (see DUN-

HAM & PETERSEN 2017, p. 342). This critical position about the sources and the limited scope is also shared by the authors, Roger G. Dunham and Nick Petersen (DUNHAM & PETERSEN 2017, p. 348).

More useful would be a national database, they argue, since police violence is perceived to be a national problem in the US (DUNHAM & PETERSEN 2017, p. 343). They outline it should include information about the officer and the suspect, like demographics and job information in case of the former. Further, it should be noted where a particular altercation happens, that is in which city, county, state, or legal and administrative sphere. Thus, it can be noted that geography plays an important role for analyzing police violence, and for combatting it. A third characteristic that is most important to consider is what happens in the given situation, meaning what the suspect/s or officer/s does/do. When anything before and during the situation should be included, it is logical to also present what the outcome is. Based on this ‘idol,’ subsequent data collections should make visible every situation in which a LEO uses a weapon against a citizen (DUNHAM & PETERSEN 2017, p. 343).

Obviously, pure numbers and statistics do not change real-life conditions. They are observations of a situation, but the incentives for improvement must be provided otherwise. Wheller, Quinton, Fildes, and Mills (2013), as well as other authors, suggest what can be called a ‘professionalization of the profession’: By including the topics of shootings and aggression into policy and bureaucracy within police departments, several practices can be reassessed (DUNHAM & PETERSEN 2017, p. 343, further p. 348). This helps to change police-community relations for the better. It does so by promoting reliability, confidence, and institutional fairness and legitimacy (see DUNHAM & PETERSEN 2017, p. 343; further BATHELT & GLÜCKLER 2018, p. 47). The latter two are obviously key characteristics of democratic and institutional stability. Derived from the text’s thoughts, police departments could think about special trainings and especially rhetorical seminars teaching officers how to adequately behave, and converse, in a tense situation. An important strategy mentioned by Dunham and Petersen (2017) is inspired by Alison V. Hall, Erika V. Hall, and Jamie L. Perry (2016). The strategy they mention is about three types: “perspective taking, stereotype replacement, and stereotype countering” (DUN-

HAM & PETERSEN 2017, p. 344, further p. 346). This would be particularly effective considering the widely present opinion of Blacks as “presumed criminals,” mentioned before. Often, LEOs conflate the mere physical appearance of Black people and the notion of threat, Oona Hathaway and Daniel Markovits recognize (HATHAWAY & MARKOVITS 2020). In other words, they criminalize the very citizens they are inclined to ‘protect and serve,’ as the prominent slogan on their patrol cars goes (although sometimes in local variants). The strategies to counteract such awful preconceptions have been employed in some departments, and already proven effective (DUNHAM & PETERSEN 2017, p. 344). Violent behavior of any kind is strongly linked to psychological motivations and imaginations, which is why these three types are undoubtedly important (see DUNHAM & PETERSEN 2017, p. 344).

Further, there are more technically oriented approaches. One is a so-called Early Intervention System (EIS), to locate officers within a certain department who are most likely to cause a suspect’s harm or even death by force. People should ask which practices could be useful to find these officers and agree on a selective basis, thus a set of criteria (DUNHAM & PETERSEN 2017, p. 344). When those responsible are found, it would be ideal to provide professional psychological aid, to raise awareness through more intense and detailed training, and to look at and analyze finished interventions (DUNHAM & PETERSEN 2017, p. 344). Additionally, a department’s supervisor can engage in talks to find out about behavioral patterns, practices, or problems. Samuel Walker (2015) is convinced that a combination of this EIS strategy with other deeper systemic modifications can be beneficial (see DUNHAM & PETERSEN 2017, p. 344, further p. 348).

The other possibility are body-worn cameras (BWCs), or colloquially known as body cams. A debate about them has already been around for many years in the US. Proponents say they are effective in preventing unwanted, negative, and violent interactions between the police and citizens (DUNHAM & PETERSEN 2017, p. 345). Although BWCs have overtime been implemented in some American and worldwide police departments, obstacles remain. They range from costs over technological-processual knowledge to a specific training to administrative and legal capacities for

ruling out usage violations. The most pressing issue in the latter case of capacities is by far individual data protection and privacy (see DUNHAM & PETERSEN 2017, p. 345). A report by the NAACP lists some recommendations on how to balance the elements law enforcement video-taping and civil rights and liberties on page 36. This includes proposals for specifying operationalization, usage, and video material availability (see JOHNSON & RUSSELL 2019, p. 36). Since these recommendations prove extensive, they cannot be a topic of this thesis in detail.

Besides these possible technical and organizational solutions, a social approach could be especially promising: A diversification of the entire body of law enforcement agencies. Not only does this create trust, but it opens possible areas of department-internal conversation and strategic exchange. An important observation by Joscha Legewie and Jeffrey Fagan (2016) needs to be considered: Once a police department has been filled with more officers of ethnic minorities, a shooting with an officer that turns fatal is less likely (DUNHAM & PETERSEN 2017, p. 344, further p. 347). This holds especially if the diversification takes the example of the area or community they are assigned to, in terms of which minorities are represented. Nick A. Theobald and Donald P. Haider-Markel (2009) mention another important point, connected to racial composition: When minority citizens are served by minority police officers, they have a common “sense of values and experiences” (DUNHAM & PETERSEN 2017, p. 344). In other words, there is a culture-induced empathy. What it means is that cultural benchmarks each group knows create a vice-versa understanding and make help in difficult situations easier. With this kind of empathy, there is a more visible physical and psychological proximity of officers and communities (e.g., see SCHUCK 2014, referenced in DUNHAM & PETERSEN 2017, p. 344). Linked to earlier aspects, this would reduce the intense fear present among Black residents and would draw the two parties closer together. Therefore, this approach is widely known as “community-policing” (DUNHAM & PETERSEN 2017, p. 344).

Thinking more about the cultural empathy strategy, Thomas F. Pettigrew and Linda R. Tropp (2006) observe a promising point: that it could also be used in cross-racial interactions. They say White officers need to be more in contact with people belonging to minorities (DUNHAM &

PETERSEN 2017, p. 344). When they exchange values, experiences, fears and other emotions and contents, the risk for painting stereotypical pictures is lower. That is perhaps a more significant reason why it would be beneficial for overall interactions between the community and police (see DUNHAM & PETERSEN 2017, p. 344, further p. 347).

Hence, police violence and deteriorated police-community relations apparently rely substantially on racist paradigms and imaginations. The overall criminal justice system is an influential institution in the US to sanction grave transgressional acts. It is comprised of the several municipal, city, state, and tribal police departments, community patrols, sheriff's offices, courts, and departments of corrections. To avoid negative influence on society, and to provide democratic legitimacy and stability should be their most honorary tasks – tasks they frequently do not live up to. If police tactics and approaches are considered closely, then, it can be noted that many of them are regarded as “almost exclusively American brands” (HOGAN 2019, p. 123): They are used for marketing purposes of the film industry, while not routinely part of daily life “in democracies outside US borders” (HOGAN 2019, p. 123). Whereas this is certainly true, Hogan's (2019) point that out of officers in other countries, “[m]any are unarmed on patrol” (HOGAN 2019, p. 123) is not, particularly in one example: German Federal and State Police are most often equipped with small handguns while out in their cruisers checking city streets, train stations or other relevant locations.

In America, through the criminal justice system, those who negate advancements in social justice can rise to a powerful position within national politics (see WILLIAMSON, TRUMP & EINSTEIN 2018, p. 401). One could call it a criminalization of democracy. This is even to be understood literally when closely considering the article by Vanessa Williamson, Kris-Stella Trump – who is not related to the former President – and Katherine Levine Einstein (2018). Thus, if the institution itself depicts the very brutality and immorality it wishes to counteract, it is a serious threat not only to Blacks but to the American democracy.

3.3 Accessibility Problems: Health, Food, Housing

Besides racism and police violence, Black people in the US struggle with another substantial problem that affects and, indeed, threatens their livelihoods: accessibility. Three elements, power relations and the processes of vital resource distribution and allocation, systematically neglect them. This is visible for healthcare, housing, and even food. Instead, the three mentioned dynamics often favor those in a different societal position. Mostly, these people are white. Thus, it is at first glance not only a problem on a social, but also on a political level: The denial of basic human rights and most importantly dignity of life to minorities and People of Color (PoC) bluntly disregards the characteristics of a healthy democracy.

Taking a closer look at the issue of accessibility quickly highlights the additional dominant variable beyond black lives and politics: geography. Thus, the triangular model specified in the introduction becomes applicable. Questions about getting from A to B are always connected to distance and mobility, two of many geographical determinants. Thus, American scholars and city politicians must interpret the problem in spatial contexts to find adequate, reliable information and plan accordingly. However, what often happens with African Americans is that they live rather disconnected from alleged possibilities, and certainly from providers.

The first issue where this becomes apparent is healthcare. Effective and reliable treatment is difficult to get for Black people in America as they often lack financial capacity or legal advice to be protected against inequality. This inequality arises from the “societal epidemic” (GARCÍA & SHARIF 2015, p. e28) of racism. It is one that spreads through telecommunications and social media, thus through a digital space (compare 2.). The “self-perpetuating, reinforcing systems” (n. a., THE LANCET 2020, p. 1813) produced by social transmission have fundamentally impacted the psychological state and overall health of Blacks. Consequently, disruptions in corporeal systems occur, resulting in partly severe sickness or diseases (see GARCÍA & SHARIF 2015; COMBS 2018, p. 39). People from the outside can more readily take an exclusionist stance against minorities and

hamper participation in social endeavors and accessibility to basic services (see ALLEN, LAWHON & PIERCE 2018/2019).

Unfortunately, as seen in the previous paragraph, those strong racist systems have also reached the healthcare sector, posing severe obstacles to Blacks and other minorities. For instance, as *The Lancet* (2020) Editorial article *Medicine and medical science: Black lives must matter more* shows, there is a substantial racial gap in sick and dead people when comparing Blacks and Whites (see n. a., THE LANCET 2020, p. 1813). Analyzing a list of common death causes in the US, the article shows that African Americans from the ages of 18 to 34 even die more often than their white counterparts, considering the first eight of the causes. They involve nervous system and cerebrovascular diseases, as well as issues like homicide.

Providing equal services and achieving overall equity in this social area is important, and not a new demand among African Americans. Back in 1970, the Black Panther Party has already brought it up, and so-called People's Free Medical Clinics (PFMCs) were established (NELSON 2016, p. 1735). To guarantee this provision, Jennifer Jee-Lyn García and Mienah Zulfacar Sharif (2015) hold in their *Commentary on Racism and Public Health*, is about the "responsibility to directly confront, analyze, and dismantle racism" (GARCÍA & SHARIF 2015, p. e28). To understand racism as a "powerful, structural force that restricts the attainment of optimal health for all" (GARCÍA & SHARIF 2015, p. e28) is crucial to meet the challenges. This is particularly true as many (fatal) diseases disproportionately affect Black people (GARCÍA & SHARIF 2015, p. e28). If inequalities, injustices, and disparities caused by racism can be properly addressed, the achievements will be more significant. Thus, García and Sharif (2015) say people in the public health sector, no matter in which position, should recognize the presence and importance of the whole topic (GARCÍA & SHARIF 2015, p. e28).

Certainly, *The Lancet* Editorial article warns, it is not enough if intra-sectoral institutions like the American Medical and the American Public Health Associations (AMA; APHA) voice opposition against this situation. They must do something to eliminate it, for instance with the initiative 'White Coats for Black Lives': American medical students formed this organization to not only introduce Blacks to the profession, but to

recognize, uncover, and prevent racism in the sector. Moreover, journals like the famous Journal of the American Medical Association (JAMA) should continue to provide scientific insight, a set of beliefs, and core values to develop an anti-racism strategy (see n. a., THE LANCET 2020, p. 1813). This is indispensable, and as health care is an issue of “justice and rights” (n. a., THE LANCET 2020, p. 1813), highlighting the democratic responsibility is important to the branch. To say it with Alondra Nelson’s (2016) phrase, the “democratization of medical practice and knowledge” (NELSON 2016, p. 1736) must be brought forward. As evidently demonstrated in the last paragraph of the article, *The Lancet* actively and eagerly supports this mission (n. a., THE LANCET 2020, p. 1813).

The second area in which accessibility becomes important is nutrition. Many African Americans, especially in cities, do not have adequate access to food providing the necessary substances for a healthy lifestyle. This is particularly because many of them live in poverty. They are then often dependent on small stores only selling a limited number of foodstuffs, which are in many cases heavily processed, so-called convenience stores (see 4.). Thus, people must consume food that in the long run could be disease-inducing, reconnecting to the first aspect of accessibility – health.

The reasons for low food accessibility can be found, as outlined, in the geographical components distance and mobility. Blacks often cannot get to grocery stores with a more varied selection, and many do not own a car because they cannot afford to buy one (see SMITH 2017). Often, they live spatially disconnected from urban centers or from accumulated service-providing facilities, and transportation in many urban areas cannot meet the demands. A good description of these characteristics is the one by Armstrong et al. (2009, p. 7), referenced by Nunzia Borrelli (2018). She writes that the “primary determinants” (BORRELLI 2018, p. 110) for food accessibility are “geographic distance, transportation choices, and variations of urban form such as terrain and the quality of transportation infrastructure” (BORRELLI 2018, p. 110). Although her article is about Portland, Oregon, this also applies to countless other American cities. The chapter about Washington and Minneapolis will more adequately demonstrate the topic, as here the situation is the same for Black residents in their neighborhoods. To address the problem of food *inaccessibility*, urban plan-

ners and politicians must review scientific evidence to imagine, inform and plan according to (Black) people's needs. Useful pieces of evidence would certainly include Walter Christaller's Central Place Theory, hard and soft location factors as well as transport and transaction cost theories (see BATHELT & GLÜCKLER 2018, pp. 127-129, p. 171, pp. 224-230).

The last important sphere is housing, also a topic among many appearing in BLM's exigencies. In substantial parts of the country, African Americans and other minorities face problems getting a decent place to live. As the chapter about the two cities will clarify, there is widespread discrimination in this sector, based on race. This also explains the "spatial mismatch" (STOLL 1999, p. 78) that exists when looking at where jobs are available and where Black people live, showing a severe incongruence (STOLL 1999). This also manifests, Stoll (1999) shows, when looking at Washington DC and neighboring counties. More importantly, this discrimination has historic roots, as unfair housing practices were around for many years before any legislation could outlaw them. And still today, despite legal efforts, realities such as residential segregation in neighborhoods are still prominent in American cities. Society has to this day not succeeded in completely abolishing these practices, which is a severe social and political problem. Often, financial, and overall economic interests lead to the racialization of the housing market and deprive Black residents of the possibility of living in dignity. This is especially relevant because a disproportionate number do not own their homes but are temporary renters (e.g., see INGRAHAM 2020).

Housing is, as much as the other areas, a fundamental human right enshrined in the state and federal levels of constitutional and other types of special law. Thus, these elements are manifestations of a substantial impact on democratic quality and stability. The pervasive logic of racism and separation is still enormously persistent, and some people seek to challenge the benevolence of equal opportunity. They try to undermine efforts of for instance BLM to detect vulnerable sectors, dynamics, and processes, consequently threatening the American democracy to an extent that is truly worrying.

At the end of describing these sensitive elements, a question remains: Why is the explanation so detailed, difficult, and important at the same

time? It is difficult because the presented elements all come with their own level of complexity, making the explanation especially detailed. It is not merely additional information in a process that can be forgotten right after acquiring it. Instead, the subchapters about racism, police violence, and accessibility problems illustrate fundamental components for an understanding of social, political, and geographic realities of Black American citizens. Once a general, national understanding is established, their explanatory power can be accordingly projected onto a smaller space: cities like Washington and Minneapolis.

