

# Chapter 1

## Critical Race Theory and Victimization

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### ABSTRACT

*Although non-White victims experience many crimes, they are often a hidden population in various contexts. Extensive research has been devoted to exploring how racial dynamics impact offenders' experiences in the criminal justice system. However, less is known about the impact racial dynamics may have on victims and victimization. This chapter aims to discuss how studies of victims and victimization would benefit from further incorporating critical race theory. Specifically, this chapter will describe the trends in scholarship that discuss race, ethnicity, and victimization, discuss the impact of racial dynamics on victimhood among non-Whites, and describe how race, ethnicity, and victimization are represented in news and media. Additionally, avenues and suggestions for future research will be discussed.*

### INTRODUCTION

Critical Race Theory (CRT) is a theoretical approach explaining structurally embedded racism within various institutions and systems in society (Delgado & Stefancic, 2017). CRT has been explored within institutions such as the educational system (DeCuir & Dixon, 2004; Gillborn, 2015; Ladson-Billings, 2013; McCoy & Rodricks, 2015) and the criminal justice system (Arrigo, 1999; Glynn, 2013). Scholarship have also addressed how CRT impact actors within these systems, especially within the criminal justice system (Bornstein et al., 2012). Furthermore, scholars highlight the many ways racism manifests itself and examine the adverse outcomes and negative

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implications these racial practices have for non-Whites (Heitzeg, 2009). Although several scholars have explored CRT in relation to experiences, treatments, outcomes, and implications for individuals interacting with the criminal justice system on a structural level and on an individual level, most of the attention have been put on offenders (Brewer & Heitzeg, 2008; Gonzales Rose, 2016; Schiffer, 2014). Due to the specific focus on offenders, scholars have failed to explore in-depth CRT and victimization. The few scholars that explore victimization and CRT highlight the need for further discussion of the racialized structures within society and how these may impact victimization and victims (Fish et al., 2017; Long, 2021). Although studies show mixed results in how race and ethnicity impact victimization rates (Fisher et al., 2015; Tillyer & Tillyer, 2016), several scholars highlight that race and ethnicity are factors that are important to take into consideration when discussing victimization (Dugan & Apel, 2003; Esbensen et al., 2010; Jackman et al., 2020; Peguero et al., 2015; Wooldredge & Steiner, 2012).

There are several reasons why it is important to explore CRT in-depth in relation to victimization. For example, although non-Whites are victimized, scholars argue that the narratives that are presented by news media outlets when depicting victims and offenders overly emphasize that Whites are overrepresented as victims and Blacks are overrepresented as perpetrators (Dixon & Linz, 2000). This misrepresentation leads to an inaccurate understanding of who most often is the victim and victimizer. Furthermore, these misrepresentations can also lead to negative stereotypes towards non-Whites which can cause further stigmatization of non-Whites victims. The misrepresentation of non-White victims highlights how racial dynamics impact how society perceives non-Whites. The narratives created about non-Whites are often a result of racist rhetoric embedded within structures and norms in society, which, when shared by outlets such as the media, further contribute to the already existing racial structures. Thus by further discussing how victims are represented, and the role race and ethnicity play in the presentation of victims in society, more information can be gained about what misconceptions are spread and the possible negative stereotypes they can lead to about non-Whites. CRT provides a theoretical lens that aids the critical examination of the racial structures within the criminal justice system and how these structures potentially can cause adverse implications for non-White victims in their interactions with the criminal justice system.

Furthermore, although several scholars highlight adverse and differential treatment and/or outcomes for non-Whites interacting with the criminal justice system, most of this research is focused on individuals who are committing crime, not individuals who have been subjected to victimization. Statistics show that non-Whites are frequently subjected to certain types of victimization, such as violent victimization (Catalano, 2005, 2006; Rand, 2009a, 2009b). By neglecting to further examine the modalities of racial dynamics and victimization, knowledge gaps are created

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