# *Introduction*

I don't trust cops and I don't know many Black people that do.

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## A STARTLING TURN OF EVENTS

My interview with Brian, fifty-eight years old, was scheduled for seven o'clock in the evening. I went by his house, rang the doorbell, and knocked. No answer. I then called Brian on the phone, with no answer. Thinking that he was just late getting home or that there was some other logical explanation for his absence, I circled the neighborhood and eventually parked at Kirkwood Commons, the neighboring shopping plaza. Again, I attempted to call Brian, and finally, he answered the phone and asked if I was still in the community. I told him yes. He apologized for being late and anxiously asked if I could still meet him at his house. I said yes, told him I was on the way, and we hung up.

It took less than two minutes to get back to Brian's house. As I pulled up, I saw two Kirkwood police cars parked on the sidewalk in front of his house and a couple of white male officers, but I did not see Brian. Needless to say, I was puzzled and somewhat disconcerted to find the police at his address. After all, Brian and I had just spoken, with no mention of them. I parked across the street from Brian's home; immediately, an officer walked to my window. With a serious tone, he said, "I'm not sure what you're over here to talk to Brian about, but I need you to stay in the car for a minute. We're talking to him about some things." It was then that I spotted Brian in the back seat of one of the squad cars. Given the scene and the officer's directive, I was alarmed. Two things were clear: one, the officers were there to address a problem involving Brian; and two, he had obviously alerted them of our appointment. I pondered leaving, but instead I stayed. Here was a good opportunity for observational research of black citizen–police interaction in Meacham Park.

Roughly five minutes later, the same officer returned, explaining that Brian had several warrants and that they were taking him in. He also stated that Brian wanted me to secure his home. Brian yelled, "Please, lock up my house," from the police car. He repeatedly called my name, apologizing and begging for my help: "Ms. Boyles, will you PLEASE go inside my house, get my keys, and lock up my front door for me?" At this point, Brian was refusing to cooperate or leave with the police without first seeing his home get locked, and he clearly did not want the officers to do it.

Given his belligerence and obvious distrust of the police, I worried that the police would become less patient and more forceful. After all, research shows that citizens' demeanor can influence officers' treatment of them.[1] To prevent escalation, I reluctantly agreed to lock Brian's front door and asked for his keys. Brian wanted to go inside with me to find them but he was not allowed. "The keys are on the kitchen table, I think . . . they might be in my bedroom . . . I don't know where I put them, that's why I need to go in and look for them." As I proceeded toward the front door, so did an officer, stating, "I'll help her find them." Immediately, Brian panicked: "NO, I don't want them in my house. Ms. Boyles, will you PLEASE look around for my key. I don't want them [police] in my house, going through my stuff, planting stuff."

Finally, I went inside, found his keys on a table, immediately locked his front door, and with the officers' permission, returned his keys to him. Brian calmed down, apologized for having involved me, and, along with the officers, thanked me for assisting. They immediately pulled away.

I could not help but wonder how much of their patience and restraint with Brian, despite his antagonism, was motivated by my involvement. Local officers were aware of my neighborhood inquiries and research. It is also possible that Brian adjusted his behavior accordingly; he too was familiar with my research. It is plausible that he may have behaved adversely, thinking that the police would not do anything harmful with me there as a witness.

Nonetheless, the tense exchanges and distrust in Brian's situation represent those of many black citizen–police interactions, particularly in disadvantaged communities. Black citizen–police encounters are often negative, often unexpected, and often include physical restraint or even altercations. Brian's experiences were direct, but indirect experiences with the police—in the form of being an observer—also shape black attitudes and distrust toward police.

*Race, Place, and Suburban Policing* accounts for actual, everyday black citizen encounters with police and an all-too-often ambiguous "to protect and to serve" response by police. This book explores black sensitivities to,

interactions with, and perceptions of the police, irrespective of criminality and place. The reality is that bad encounters between black folks and the police take place, not only in the well-documented inner city, but also in perceivably upscale, secluded, and thus, "safe" communities in the suburbs. That said, this research takes as its place of focus Meacham Park—a disadvantaged black neighborhood located in the heart of one of St. Louis's most exclusive suburbs.

## AN ALL-TOO-FAMILIAR RECAP

On March 4, 1991, the world awakened to an amateur video clip that not only rocked the City of Los Angeles but also inflamed the nation and thrust issues surrounding race, policing, and the criminal justice system onto the national stage. The roughly two-minute footage transported us to a dark, suburban street in San Fernando Valley, where twenty-five-year-old Rodney King was repeatedly stunned, kicked, and beaten by four police officers, leaving King "with eleven skull fractures, a broken eye socket, and facial nerve damage."[2] With each airing of the horrific images, racial tension and frustrations mounted. Most were unaware of King's history with the criminal justice system: he was on parole for an armed-robbery conviction, had a history of drug and alcohol abuse, and had just led police on a high-speed chase. Similar to Brian's behavior in Meacham Park, King was initially noncompliant, and it was somewhere between the chase and officers' restraint that his resistance became an excuse for immense police aggression. Hence, all we saw was a seemingly defenseless black man being viciously brutalized by four, armed, white police officers. This incident divided the nation along racial lines and exploded into a three-day riot that left fifty-five people dead, over two thousand injured, and roughly $1 billion in property damage.[3] Recently deceased but still a well-known name, Rodney King has become nearly synonymous with police brutality.

Years later, in February 4, 1999, the shooting death of twenty-two-year-old Guinean immigrant Amadou Diallo by officers reignited fury and national conversations surrounding police brutality and intensified black citizen–police relations. Unlike King, Diallo had no criminal history and certainly had not just spurred a high-speed chase. As they would later recount, the officers confronted Diallo because he resembled an armed serial rapist believed to be at large. According to the officers' testimony, Diallo ran when confronted and ignored their orders to show his hands. Even though Diallo

was unarmed, the officers mistakenly assumed a reach for what later would be discovered his wallet was a reach for a gun. The officers responded with forty-one shots, nineteen of which hit Diallo.[4]

Diallo was posthumously cleared of any criminal culpability, which leaves one to question why Diallo fled. His fleeing likely suggested guilt to the police and thereby spurred them to more serious action: if he had nothing to hide, why run? It is not too much to surmise that, as a black man, Diallo assumed the police would not believe he was innocent; he may have thought that he was going to be subjected to a negative police encounter either way, whether he stayed or ran.

Similar to the King beating, this shooting came to symbolize racially biased brutality, a pattern of officers appearing to resort to excessive use of force in restraint of black suspects. Such ready—even anticipatory—violence appeared to stem from negative assumptions of race and place, or more specifically, a suggestive black criminal nature or the appearance of criminality among young black men from disadvantaged communities.

With each incident, citizens' perceptions of racially biased policing intensified, particularly among blacks. It is no wonder, then, that the 2006 police shooting of twenty-three-year-old Sean Bell set off yet another race-related firestorm. Bell was killed, and his two friends injured, after his bachelor party at a Queens strip bar.[5] While the details leading to the shootings remain unclear, it is undeniable that none of the men were armed and the officers' fifty shots were unwarranted and excessive. As did the King and Diallo cases, the shooting death of Sean Bell resulted in numerous protests and marches, casting further light on persisting police brutality and excessive use of force with black suspects.

As is evident in all four cases (Brian, King, Diallo, and Bell), the least bit of perceived resistance can, in a split second, create volatile black citizen–police exchanges. Such encounters can trigger impulsive, unjustifiable, and potentially deadly acts of police aggression, irrespective of criminality and place. Yet, despite what the public, particularly blacks, believed to be overwhelming evidence of police brutality in the three nationally profiled cases, all officers involved were initially acquitted. For many, the acquittals indicated not only injustice for the victims but also institutional protection and license for aggressive policing tactics and differential treatment targeting and endangering minorities. Protests driven by hurt and fear demanded changes in verdicts and law enforcement policies detrimental to minority communities. National discourse surrounding the cases were riddled with questions:

Why did this happen? Is this really indicative of racial biases among officers, police departments, and the criminal justice system altogether? Should we grant officers the benefit of the doubt, given their stress and risk? If racial bias is a factor, how do we recognize it as such and then adequately address it through effective policy change and training? How do we prevent the discriminatory practice of conflating blackness and criminality?

Discussions and debates surrounding the role of race and profiling in policing, the criminal justice system, and society at large again commanded the national spotlight with the February 26, 2012, fatal shooting of unarmed seventeen-year-old Trayvon Martin by George Zimmerman. While Zimmerman was not a commissioned officer, he acted as such in his role as a neighborhood watch volunteer, and, like the officers in the King, Diallo, and Bell cases, is believed by many to have exerted excessive and unwarranted force, acting on assumptions and fear indicative of a broader problem: differential policing that presumes blacks, particularly young men, are inherently deviant, and thus, suspicious and criminal in nature.

The widely held belief that the Zimmerman-Martin confrontation began because of racial profiling stems from Zimmerman's 911 call describing Martin as "a real suspicious guy" looking "like he's up to no good."[6] The fact that Zimmerman was not initially arrested after Martin's death further stoked public perception that this case was about race. Authorities' protection of Zimmerman based on Florida's "stand-your-ground" self-defense law did not resonate: Zimmerman had just killed an unarmed teenager, so Zimmerman's protection seemed more about disregard for Martin's life and race-based differential treatment than about justified self-defense.[7] Following weeks of outrage and nationally organized protests, marches, candle-lit vigils, and online petitions, the Florida State Attorney's office arrested and charged Zimmerman with second degree murder and launched a full investigation, but in July of 2013, Zimmerman was acquitted. Thousands spoke out, demanding reevaluation, not only of the stand-your-ground legislation, but also, more broadly, of racially motivated law enforcement policies and even racial discrimination in general.

## HOODLUMS WEAR HOODIES

That the Martin case brought so much attention to broad societal issues of race and discrimination is due in part to covert suggestions that Martin

himself, the victim, bore responsibility for looking suspicious. Heraldo Riverio's candid assertion on Fox that the "hoodie" worn by Martin the night he was killed was attire that a "hoodlum" or "gangster" would wear, and, by implication a voluntary contribution to his suspicion and eventual death, outraged Martin supporters and raised important questions: Does wearing a hoodie make a person a hoodlum? What does attire and its accompanying stereotypes mean for other young black men, and is this standard equally applied across races? Should Martin have "known better" than to wear a hoodie in an affluent, white neighborhood? Is that even a fair or relevant question?

The notion that blacks bear responsibility for drawing suspicion is not new. Accordingly, as reporter Jesse Washington explains, a sort of black male code permeates black culture, a code aimed at preventing black men from seeming suspicious.[8] A set of "safe" and educated directives for how to respond to and compensate for the social construction of black male suspicion and its effects, the "code" includes paying close attention to one's surroundings, especially if one is in an affluent neighborhood where few or no black folks live; and understanding that not being a criminal might have little bearing on people's suspicions or assumptions, especially if one is wearing certain attire. However, while pragmatic and maybe even necessary for safety, the compensatory nature of such a code does not address the real issue. It absolves any harm done to a suspicious-looking-but-innocent person and blames the victim for not knowing better than to take precautions against looking suspicious—a subjective determination at best. Emphasizing the need to anticipate and compensate for negative stereotypes takes the focus away from the real problem: the negative stereotype itself and the resulting persistent racial discrimination in policing.

When Martin supporters took to wearing hoodies in protest of the contention that Zimmerman was justified in his actions because Martin "looked" suspicious; when President Obama commented, "If I had a son, he'd look like Trayvon"; and when other prominent figures, such as black male legislators, wore hoodies and carried bags of skittles or a can of tea to the floor of their respective capitols, the message was clear: this could happen anywhere to anyone with characteristics similar to Martin's, which means current law enforcement policies and practices are not working.[9] Instead, these policies and practices leave black citizens, especially young men, vulnerable to racial biases and excessive use of force—a vulnerability that deserves serious attention.

## HOODS AND HOODIES

It is somewhere between "hoods" (neighborhoods) and "hoodies" (appearance) that blacks, especially young men, come to be suspected of wrongdoing. As such, police scrutiny and aggression are not based solely on place *or* race, but they occur at the intersection of the two. Consequently, race, place, and policing cannot be understood as separate from one another. They must be recognized as overlapping forces that produce a set of often unavoidable circumstances for blacks. Blacks, especially young men, by virtue of where they are and what they look like, can fall prey to criminal biases when found within predominantly black communities, and perhaps even more so, when found within predominantly white ones.

Because poor black neighborhoods, or "the hood," often have high crime rates, they are deemed by police as "hot spots" and are thus subject to aggressive forms of policing.[10] This kind of proactive policing is not generally deemed necessary in more advantaged white communities, where, rather than proactively and anticipatorily patrolling suburban areas as a policing strategy, reactive policing is more common: officers respond upon request.

An exception to this proactive versus reactive policing pattern occurs when a white community is adjacent to a black community, as Kirkwood, a white community, is to Meacham Park, a black community. Brian is from the "hot spot" neighborhood of Meacham Park situated in the seemingly safe, crime-free suburb of Kirkwood. His location called for the police to *re-race place,* deferring to proactive policing as a result of a neighboring black enclave instead of the usual reactive strategies employed in predominantly white locations. Such policing tactics work to contain or remove racial minorities where they threaten to disrupt nearby white comfort—when blacks are within close proximity to predominantly white locations or black-white overlap occurs in certain places.

While Amadou Diallo and Sean Bell were found in "hot spots," or locations known for criminal activity. Rodney King and Trayvon Martin were not; they were in areas where police would not be routinely patrolling or would be doing so infrequently by comparison. They experienced the "race-and-place effect": an increase in surveillance such as tailing and other behaviors motivated by suspicion.[11] Despite King's criminal history and the chase leading up to his beating, the "crime" instigating the incident seemed to be traveling into a predominantly white community, the suburbs of Lake Terrace. Martin, on the other hand, had no criminal history, and was guilty

only of being a young black man traveling after dark in a hoodie through the Retreat at Twin Lakes, Florida, a gated, predominantly white community. What ensued, particularly with Martin, was bias, harassment, and excessive use of force from pseudo-law enforcement in a pseudo-safe location.

Differences between the four cases notwithstanding, the salient commonality is aggression by law enforcement officers toward young black men. Notably, the crime scenes included both hot spots (overtly disadvantaged minority communities where anticipatory policing is common), and more advantaged, predominantly white areas. This illustrates how factors of race and place work together rather than independently.

## MY OWN PLACE AND RACE

Walking to church one evening when I was young, my mother and I witnessed a drive-by shooting that killed an older gentleman just paces ahead of us. Officers sought details from us as paramedics worked unsuccessfully to save the man, but because everything happened so fast, we were unable to provide much information. I remember being relieved that the police were working to gain information and evidence that might lead to the shooter's capture. However, I also remember being skeptical that they would catch the shooter and worried about what that might mean for my mom and me. Would the shooter remember us as witnesses and try to apprehend us later? Is the shooter watching us talk to the police right now, seeing us as threats? I felt vulnerable and scared and wanted to get away from the scene as soon as possible. Even as a child, I doubted entrusting the situation's resolution to the police.

Growing up in a disadvantaged, troubled community in St. Louis, I was no stranger to police. They were extremely visible in my neighborhood, and witnessing police stops, frisks, drug busts, and arrests was commonplace. I can recall many negative interactions between police and my neighbors concerning shootings, domestic disputes, drug-related offenses, and so forth. Based on what we heard and saw, many of us, especially the teenagers, could identify officers by name and as "good" or "bad." I accepted tense citizen-police exchanges as the norm because I felt powerless to provoke change.

As I grew up, I became interested in studying criminal justice, and more specifically, police-citizen relationships. I wanted to better understand the nature of such relationships, how they emerged and how they persisted.

Ultimately, I wanted to improve police-citizen interactions in my community and others like it.

The high-profile cases of Rodney King, Amadou Diallo, and Sean Bell increased my concern and desire to contribute to change. With each incident, the media portrayed the nation as divided along racial lines, and increasingly, I wanted to be a part of those national discussions. Like others, I deeply wanted to understand the contentious concept of racial profiling and its role in excessive use of force and brutality and blatant police misconduct that was often exonerated. Using my own experiences, thoughts, and ideas regarding police in disadvantaged, black communities, I hoped to extend race, place, and policing dialogue in ways that would work toward improving police-citizen relationships.

While the King, Diallo, Bell, and other high-profile police-brutality cases brought concerns about police-citizen relations to the national stage, I more personally confronted these issues by following two lower-profile tragedies in a suburban St. Louis community near my childhood home. Three police officers were killed in two separate racially charged incidents in 2003 and 2005, prompting me, by then in a doctoral program, to begin my contribution to the dialogue on police-citizen relationships with my research. It began with a very basic question: "How do blacks feel about the police?"

## RACE, PLACE, AND POLICING

Race, place, and policing research has provided greater insight into how blacks experience policing, how policing differs by population and location, and how the policing agenda particularly is shaped and influenced by dominant forces. While this research has been beneficial, it has been limited in several ways. First, apart from a few studies, researchers generally account only for attitudes toward the police (ATP) rather than the experiences that created them.[12] ATPs do not emerge in isolation; they are the effects of experiences with the police. Therefore, it is crucial to race, place, and policing dialogue to account for the chronology of negative black-citizen perceptions: experiences first and attitudes second. Otherwise, the uninformed become misinformed and are left to conclude that "black folks just don't like the police."

Second, race, place, and policing dialogue has not given sufficient attention to the policing of race in a variety of places. It has typically addressed

black disadvantaged, inner-city "hot spots," neglecting to account for the policing experiences of blacks in other locations. Consequently, the tenets of race, place, and policing have been somewhat weakened; its contributions to the larger black citizen–police platform have been minimized and depreciated by consistently covering the same ground, the inner city. As it stands, current race, place, and policing research involuntarily suggests the following: (1) that black places are exclusively urban areas; (2) that blacks do not have contentious experiences with the police in other locations, and if they do, the most salient of black experiences rest in the inner city; (3) that arguments and analysis situated around differential policing can be produced only in urban places; and (4) that the implications of racialized policing hold true only in the inner city.

By default, urban experiences have become the template for what black citizen–policing relationships look like, consequently giving the impression that negative black experiences outside of the inner city are simply the exception to the rule. However, *Race, Place, and Suburban Policing* calls attention to the biases of place and attends to other locations inhabited by blacks—specifically, the suburbs. This book recognizes that the suburbs do not necessarily provide better social experiences for blacks than does the inner city, but perhaps similar or worse experiences. As Douglas Massey and Nancy Denton have stated, "Often black 'suburbanization' only involves the expansion of an urban ghetto across a city line."[13] Consequently, *Race, Place, and Suburban Policing* calls into question the practice of routinely attributing certain places as unambiguously "bad for blacks" and other places as good or better. In this book, I argue against one-dimensional notions of disadvantageous black places and experiences—but only to the degree that I acknowledge and avoid partiality to certain locations, thus making race, place, and policing analysis more "race-and-space inclusive."

Research has suggested that black experiences are similar irrespective of place. If by the social construction of race alone, the totality of black life, even when seemingly embedded in accomplishment and privilege, is riddled with the effects of "difference" and racialized treatment. Likewise, research suggests that it is with respect to place that differences emerge as a result of perceived measures of threat. Group-threat theory argues that predominantly white populations perceive an economic and political threat by large groups of minorities living within close proximity;[14] therefore, because black populations are often perceived as threatening, they are viewed with suspicion, as are the places they occupy.[15] Hence, a fear or suspicion of black presence and

their motives then gives way to more aggressive police tactics, particularly as feelings of "racial threat" increase with them living near or within a white community.[16] Furthermore, the "race-and-place effect" suggests that black experiences with the police are worse when blacks travel closer to or through predominantly white places.[17] They fall under suspicion, prompting increased police inquiries (e.g., tailing, running plates) and stops.

In the broader sense, this project hinges on the interactive effects of race, place, and policing. However, with respect to suburban policing, this project tests group- and racial-threat theories in analyzing interactions and exchanges between police within the predominantly white location of the City of Kirkwood, and blacks in neighboring Meacham Park. Under examination is whether blacks in Meacham Park experience the "race-and-place effect," which would hold that close proximity to the white Kirkwood area makes blacks in Meacham Park more susceptible to increased police scrutiny than blacks in urban settings.[18]

In an attempt to extend race, place, and policing dialogue, this book first pays attention to black citizen–policing experiences. While this study began with a basic inquiry into how blacks felt about the police, the more salient question became how blacks *experienced* policing, and more specifically, how they experienced it in suburban contexts. Underlying this question were still others: Should we *expect* black experiences with urban and suburban policing to differ? How and why? *Are* the experiences similar/dissimilar? Again, how and why? And therefore, what are their perceptions of the police? Are they similar/dissimilar as well? These are all crucial questions regarding race, place, and the police.

Second, this study challenges the status quo by calling attention to "taken-for-granted" presumptions of place. It exposes the limited analyses of the past and forces future race, place, and policing data to account for black places and experiences beyond the scope of urban locations. It aims not to propose, conduct, or implicate research which assumes that the worst of black social experiences, particularly with the police, occur only in inner-city neighborhoods.

The uniqueness of this study lies in the following: (1) It recognizes and dispels subtle suggestions of black life as synonymous with urban life and likewise for black experiences. (2) It turns a critical lens on the misconceptions of race and place by challenging and discrediting notions of the inner city as an inherently bad place for blacks and the suburbs as inherently good. (3) With black-citizen experiences of the police in the forefront, it tells a full

story of social injustice and the ambiguity of black life, ranging from land grabs to the retaliatory shooting deaths of police and city officials. (4) This study is all-inclusive with regard to race, place, and policing, and to broader social issues, by showcasing similarities in black experiences irrespective of place and dissimilarities in their experiences associated with place. And finally, (5) it makes data readily available whereby the rigidity of race and class, as well as possibilities for poor black-rich white cohesion, can be analyzed and measured through the most acrimonious and tragic of circumstances.

While this book does not offer absolutes for resolving differential treatment across broader social spheres, it does discuss possibilities by paying homage to previous urban-based studies and through suburban analysis. After all, it is in urban locations that race, place, and policing gained respectability in social science. As a testimony to this, this project seeks to further the framework by strengthening its credibility in uncharted territory—the suburbs. Its influence and ability to propel social change heavily depend on the depth to which it is willing to go in producing contemporary analyses of evolving experiences. Otherwise, race, place, and policing research undermines its mission, becoming as guilty as stereotypical dominant ideas in furthering black uniformity and exclusion—and even more so, for having done so under the guise of social justice and awareness.

## THE PLACE

> Well, it's pretty much an African-American community . . . a poor part, a community that now has been annexed with Kirkwood. But to those who are not familiar with the area, it's Kirkwood. But to us [Meacham Park residents], and the police, and everybody that was born and raised in Kirkwood, it's still Meacham Park.
>
> LOLA, FIFTY-NINE

While the City of Kirkwood, also known as West County St. Louis, is predominantly white, dubbed the "Queen of the St. Louis Suburbs," the adjacent Meacham Park is an annexed, low-income black enclave.[19] Though originally classified as an unincorporated area of West County St. Louis, Meacham Park was annexed to the City of Kirkwood in 1991, thus expanding Kirkwood's borders politically, economically, and geographically. Annexation

can be likened to colonialism: the most powerful, dominant region, the City of Kirkwood, commandeers unattached, disadvantaged territory, Meacham Park, establishing complete ownership and governance, as well as use of its public services. This is the story of Meacham Park and how its poor black residents came to gain Kirkwood citizenship, that is, Kirkwood residency rooted in class conflict and racial divisiveness.

Despite sharing suburban status, Meacham Park is extremely segregated and thought of as somewhat of an "enigma" to many Kirkwood residents.[20] Its property values are low, and a significant number of its residents fall below the poverty line, receiving low wages or welfare benefits. Meacham Park is characterized as the ghetto—a shadowy, crime-and-drug-infested community only a couple of miles from Kirkwood's more elite sections. There exists a history of racial tension between the two communities, inflamed most recently by the shooting deaths of Kirkwood city officials and officers in two separate incidents, in which both of the shooters (Kevin Johnson and Charles "Cookie" Thornton) were black men from Meacham Park.

Any inquiry into how blacks experience policing in suburban contexts must begin, of course, from within a specific community. Community context matters; it is in such locales that citizens and police alike define as well as interpret one another.[21] Accordingly, my research commenced while in attendance at a mediation forum between Meacham Park and the City of Kirkwood. There, I observed and familiarized myself with Kirkwood city officials and residents, residents of Meacham Park, and the politics of both communities. Following that mediation forum I came to know about the Meacham Park Neighborhood Association and was later invited to attend a meeting where I introduced my project and reasons for why the Meacham Park neighborhood was an ideal location for race, place, and policing research.

## SUMMARY

Thus began two years of close interaction with thirty adult Meacham Park residents, ages eighteen to eighty, acquired through neighborhood association meetings and snowball sampling. Open-ended interviews afforded cathartic and safe opportunities for participants to discuss their perceptions of Meacham Park, the City of Kirkwood, and the police, as well as to provide detailed accounts of vicarious and direct contacts with the police inside and outside of their neighborhood.

In general, Meacham Park residents suffered ridicule and stereotypes for the tragic actions of Johnson and Thornton, so their stories have been muffled, lost, and in some instances, completely ignored by the media. *Race, Place, and Suburban Policing* draws on these compelling stories of disadvantaged, suburban blacks, whose policing experiences are unaccounted for in the broader race, place, and policing literature.

Since blacks have historically been situated, segregated, and policed in places based on proximity to whites, chapter 1 provides a template and a timeline from which black citizen–police relationships emerged in U.S. history. This chapter traces the history of differential policing by chronicling the functions and persisting effects of the slave patrol, Slave Codes, Black Codes, and Jim Crow laws. Also, this chapter delves into the growth and policing of segregated urban and suburban areas by providing a historical analysis of black citizen–police interactions in so-called sundown towns—white towns off-limits to blacks after sunset. Additionally, I review literature on the current state of suburban segregation, black citizen–police interactions as understood through racial profiling, and data accounting for citizens' attitudes toward police. Finally, I review studies that have relied on interview and ethnographic studies to assess the community context of policing and the responses of black citizens.

Chapter 2 describes the process and experience of annexation, as the unincorporated community of Meacham Park transitioned to being a disadvantaged neighborhood within the affluent suburb of Kirkwood. This chapter communicates experiences and attitudes of Meacham Park residents regarding the loss of land, homes, and overall displacement due to eminent domain brought by the building of a strip mall over half of the Meacham Park land acquired through annexation. It also discusses residents' overall perceptions of their new local government and its role in the annexation process, as well as the role played by police in ensuring their compliance to new ordinances.

Chapter 3 provides insight into involuntary police contacts faced by the participants. Blacks in Meacham Park gained new residential status through annexation; this chapter accounts for aggressive policing experienced by them under a new, stricter jurisdiction. Additionally, this chapter calls attention to the significance of race and place and how the stereotypical idea of black criminality in the neighborhood of Meacham Park gave way to contentious police encounters in the forms of harassment and misconduct. Furthermore, this chapter accounts for the everyday experiences of blacks that work to shape negative attitudes toward police.

Chapter 4 delves into the lives of Kevin Johnson and Charles "Cookie" Thornton, two black men from Meacham Park, and their contentious interactions and relationships with Kirkwood city officials prior to two separate high-profile shootings that rocked residents of both Meacham Park and Kirkwood. In 2005, Johnson shot and killed a police sergeant, and in 2008, Thornton went on a shooting rampage in Kirkwood City Hall, injuring the mayor, the city's attorney, and a newspaper reporter, and killing two police officers, two city council members, and the city's director of public works. Thornton was killed at the scene by responding officers, and months later, the mayor died from shooting injuries and complications from cancer. This chapter also accounts for how Meacham Park residents came to perceive the police prior to and following the two shootings, and how, through vicarious contacts, both shooting incidents came to be characterized by many participants as a result of police negligence and harassment. Additionally, this chapter describes experiences gained by Meacham Park residents with multiple police agencies. Lastly, this chapter discusses some participants' grappling with what they believe to be preexisting stereotypes of them now having been exacerbated and confirmed by the actions of their neighbors, Johnson and Thornton.

Chapter 5 addresses misconceptions regarding blacks' attitudes toward the police and their willingness to partner with them in the community. Subsequently, this chapter lends itself to the possibility of reconciliation in the City of Kirkwood by accounting for voluntary contacts with the police whereby participants came to have not only negative encounters with them but positive ones as well. This chapter also explores the mediation process, and how improving relations through federal intervention became muddled with approval from some and dissent from others.

This book's conclusion summarizes key findings regarding black citizen–police interactions in Meacham Park. Additionally, this chapter examines the mediation process and agreement leading to a 2010 mandate issued by the U.S. Department of Justice between Meacham Park and the City of Kirkwood. Finally, this chapter offers suggestions and possible solutions for improving police-community relations, locally and nationally, based on positive policing experiences shared by some Meacham Park residents and a review of outcomes from the mediation agreement. The book concludes with ideas for future race, place, and policing research.