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**Unit Question (For High School Students):** How does criminalization affect students of color in the classroom and beyond?

**Unit Texts:**

**Schools need to acknowledge their part in the criminalization of Black youth, Stanford scholar says | Carrie Spector | Stanford News Article**

<https://news.stanford.edu/2020/06/18/school-systems-make-criminals-black-youth/>

In an article, Carrie Spector recorded Subini Ancy Annamma's (a Stanford education professor) answers to a series of questions regarding the criminalization of Black youth. The article provides an overview of what criminalization looks like for students of color and how these students are pushed away from the classroom and class participation. Annamma focuses on everyday occurrences of this issue in the classroom that create a culture within schools that harms Black students. The article discusses actions that teachers can take to fight the issue and policies that can be changed, like removing police from schools. The article demands that schools take responsibility for allowing this form of racism to remain in schools and encourages the audience to find places where they can intervene and take action.

**How Black Girls Are Pushed Out of Schools | Bustle | YouTube Video**

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rTDBtZZqj-E&t=52s>

This YouTube video by Bustle, points out the effects that harmful stereotypes about Black girls have on their academics and experiences in schools. The video highlights statistics

that show that a higher number of Black girls receive out-of-school suspensions compared to their white counterparts. Black girls are treated differently in schools because of false expectations that teachers have of them and how teachers misinterpret their behavior. Lowered standards cause Black girls to feel that school is not a welcoming learning environment for them and that they are not capable of achieving as much as their peers. The video discusses the importance of listening to Black girls, especially their needs, and showing them understanding and empathy. Black girls may have distinct responsibilities compared to boys that may be interfering with their ability to prioritize academics that people should be aware of and recognize, especially when tackling this form of oppression.

**Effective strategies for teaching minority students | Chapter 19: Praise, Encouragement, and Feedback | Howard Hill | Book**

This chapter of Howard Hill's book, *Effective Strategies for Teaching Minority Students*, highlights the importance of providing minority students with praise, encouragement, and feedback in instruction. The chapter explains that genuine praise promotes motivation in students and that it is important that students feel that their teachers have a positive view towards them. Hill states that minority students often need encouragement to perform well in school. The chapter provides examples of how teachers may approach demanding situations and how to address them in a matter where students feel encouraged rather than pushed away. The chapter indicates the significance of showing students empathy over disputing with students, since that will not fulfill their socioemotional or academic needs.

**Body camera video shows arrest of 6-year-old girl at Orlando school | WKMG New 6 | YouTube Video**

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=e\\_7\\_huMD76I&t=48s](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=e_7_huMD76I&t=48s)

This body camera video posted by WKMG News 6, shows a 6 year old girl named Kaia being taken away from her school after she had a tantrum in school. Kaia was in the process of being taken to a juvenile detention center. The school called for the police after the first grader kicked and punched three school workers. In the video, she was being arrested on a charge of misdemeanor battery and the police officer used zip ties around her wrist to control her. In the video you can hear Kaia crying and asking for help, but no one comes as the police officer guides her to the police car and she places her inside.

**Implicit bias may help explain high preschool expulsion rates for black children | Bill Hathaway | YaleNews Article**

<https://news.yale.edu/2016/09/27/implicit-bias-may-explain-high-preschool-expulsion-rates-black-children>

This article by Bill Hathaway summarizes findings found from a study conducted by the Yale Child Study Center. The study used eye-tracking technology to analyze how teachers observed a video of a group of four elementary school students; the teachers were told to point out any misbehavior. Two of the students were white, one boy and one girl, and two of the students were Black, one boy and one girl. While the preschool teachers were enforcing discipline, they showed signs of implicit racial bias. The teachers, who both identified as Black and White, tended to pay closer attention to the Black students, especially the boy. According to the author, the findings help to explain why Black students are suspended at higher rates than their white counterparts, since teachers may expect more misbehavior from them based on racial biases.

**Why There's a Push to Get Police Out of Schools | Anya Kamenetz | NPR Article**

<https://www.npr.org/2020/06/23/881608999/why-theres-a-push-to-get-police-out-of-schools>

The article and audio recording by Anya Kamenetz from NPR discusses the effects that students are facing from having police in their schools. Kamenetz describes how this push to have police in schools is not promoting security, but is depriving students of necessary support and increasing the likelihood that students of color will be involved in the legal system. When students are involved in incidents in school, they are being met with force instead of people who are trying to find ways to understand why they are having a challenging time. The article addresses how the presence of police in schools perpetuates the idea that students of color need to be under surveillance, which causes these students to be dehumanized. The article ends by providing alternative solutions to improving school safety, which includes implementing restorative justice programs and replacing police with mental health counselors.

Since the 2020 Black Lives Matter movement, different forms of racism that exist in the United States have come to the attention of millions of Americans and conversations about racism have gained traction. The silence that racism was feeding off from all around the United States was being broken and change was being demanded by those that wanted to address the inequality that Black people and people of color were facing every day. Ways that Black individuals were being treated unfairly were gaining awareness, but there was one form of racism that was still hiding in the shadows, the criminalization of students of color.

Criminalization is “the collective process by which a criminal identity is prescribed to an individual or group of individuals through discourse, demeanor and modes of punishment, monitoring, and control” (Basile et al., 2019, p. 7). The topic of criminalization is typically connected to the criminal justice system and prisons, but racial criminalization has developed in nuanced ways to target people of color. The criminalization of students of color allows racism within the United States to sustain and grow. Although education is one of the most well-known ways that individuals can achieve social mobility and gain independence, it is being stripped away from students of color. Many individuals are aware that Black students face harsher punishment in schools than white students, but the issue of criminalization goes far beyond this.

The goal of the following text is to introduce to high school students the complexity of this issue and how it can be better understood and addressed. The following text provides a foundational understanding of the issue, shows us what students are losing when they are being criminalized, the role that each individual plays in this form of racism and how we can address the issue to promote change. The following texts are meant to show how the effects of criminalization go beyond the classroom and need to be addressed to allow students of color to regain control over their lives and accomplish their goals. These texts push us to think about our

privileges, biases, and personal experiences in regard to the criminalization of students of colors at all levels of schooling. The unit compelling question encourages students to challenge this form of oppression that has remained in the shadows for too long.

The first text I chose was an article by Carrie Spector, which provides a more in-depth understanding of how criminalization manifests in schools beyond the clear examples of a higher number of suspensions and expulsions for students of color. Other forms of criminalization include arrest, being referred to the police, and hyper-surveillance in schools. All these practices not only make students of color feel like they are being pushed out of school, but actively do it by making them lose class time and class material. I choose this article because it makes a key point that students of color aren't only being pushed out of school through criminalization, but through other forms as well, like not being called on when they raise their hands or not receiving as much attention as their white counterparts. Criminalization is not the only force in schools pushing students of color outside the classroom. Students of color are experiencing multiple forms of unjust treatment that create an environment where they feel isolated and unwelcomed. Being aware of this unjust treatment allows students to be better equipped to call out these behaviors and practices in the classroom or during the school day. Students that read this article can learn ways to get involved and fight for policies that will promote a more welcoming space for students of color in schools. For example, getting police and strict policing out of schools.

The second text is a YouTube video created by Bustle that shows the criminalization of Black women through personal experiences. Throughout the video, alarming statistics are shown that add to the stories that women are sharing. This video highlights not only their experiences of criminalization, but also the effects that these interactions had on their attitudes towards school, teachers, and higher education. The video pointed out that Black girls felt the teachers had lower

expectations of them, which caused them to feel like they were not wanted in that space and that they were not capable of as much compared to their peers. This video is important because it touches on the impact that this treatment has had on their futures. For example, the statistic, “43% of black women who don't have a high school diploma are living in poverty” (Bustle, 2016). I included this text because it emphasizes the importance of listening to Black girls and students of color instead of telling them what they need or telling them how to act. The article also addresses intersectionality and how Black girls face criminalization differently in schools compared to Black boys. This pushes students to think about how intersecting identities can complicate this form of oppression and make students feel more isolated in schools, as well as how this issue affects Black female students after they finish their schooling.

The third text is a chapter from Howard Hill’s book *Effective Strategies for Teaching Minority Students*, called Praise, Encouragement, and Feedback in Instruction. This chapter explains the importance of providing minority students with these three forms of input. The purpose of this reading is to show that students who are criminalized and pulled out of class could be losing this source of support. They are not only losing class time and missing material but may not be receiving praise that encourages them to stay in school and remain engaged. This reading emphasizes the importance of showing students of color empathy and to stress the importance and urgency of this issue since it harms students of color in many different ways and creates obstacles for students to succeed in schools. Students will hopefully feel motivated to take action to address this issue if they are aware of the magnitude of resources that students of color are losing while this form of oppression persists in our schools.

The fourth text is a body cam video that was posted on YouTube in 2020, where a six year old girl named Kaia is being taken out of school by a police officer with zip ties around her

wrist as she cries out for help and mercy. The video allows us to hear the fear in the young child's voice and how she begs for help. Watching this video is meant to make the criminalization of students of color more real and help students hear the emotions that students feel when they are criminalized. This text was included because it shows how criminalization in schools affects the ways that students of color feel safe or supported in their schools. On a similar note, events such as these change the ways that students feel around police officers. Instead of feeling like they can rely on police to protect them, events such as these can cause students to feel like they are alone and have to protect themselves from police, which shows how the effect of criminalization goes beyond school grounds.

The following text is a description of a study conducted on preschool teachers by Bill Hathaway that evaluates implicit racial biases in the classroom. The Black boy in the study was more closely observed when teachers were told to point out any misbehavior. This reading reveals that all humans have biases, and we must retrain our brains to be able to combat the issue of criminalization of students of color. This article also highlights how students of color are treated differently, even at an early age, and this is not only an issue present in secondary level schooling. This article is meant to encourage students to think about their own biases and how we must actively commit to being anti-racist. Even if the criminalization of students of color is enacted through unconscious forms of racism, it is our responsibility to address that and retrain our ways of thinking to stop unjust treatment towards students of color in our schools and beyond.

The final text is an NPR article and audio recording discussing the reasons why people are trying to remove police officers from schools. Police officers were placed in schools in response to fear about violence, guns, and mass shootings, but their presence has created a new



obstacle for students of color. Police officers in schools lead to “hyper-criminalization and a way that people perceive them (Black students) to be criminal, even if they are just being children” (Morris, 2015, as cited in Kamenetz, 2020). This article teaches students how they can be involved in the fight against the criminalization of students by demanding more mental health counselors and restorative justice programs. Even if a student is not facing criminalization in school, they should still stand with those that need their support and demand that police officers be replaced with more helpful support staff. This article is meant to encourage students to attend school board meetings, speak to administration, voice their concerns, and find new ways to change policies within their schools and demand change.

These texts work together to show the complexity of the criminalization of students of color and how this issue goes beyond the classroom and the school environment. The effects of this form of oppression are detrimental to students but are not discussed enough. Students of color have been dealing with this for far too long but have been silenced. As we saw in a post made on the Blackatuncommon Instagram page (2020), a student received detention for asking a friend for help in the school’s commons. The teacher’s response when asked if it was necessary was, “there’s nothing I can do” (Black at Uncommon, 2020); the student said that the event made sense because, “they love phishing us” (Black at Uncommon, 2020).

All these texts emphasize the importance of listening to students and their needs. Many of the issues that students of color have been facing for far too long could have been addressed had people listened to students' concerns and experiences in schools. These texts show the significance of making the unconscious conscious and making the invisible visible (S. Seider, lecture, February 7, 2022). When we combine listening to students with these two micro-intervention practices, we can start addressing these issues and start supporting students of

color in ways that are most beneficial for them. This lesson is meant to be for both students of color that face criminalization and students that do not face this form of oppression. One of the goals of this text is to help students feel heard and let them know they are not alone. For those who do not face this struggle, this lesson aims to educate them and encourage them to use their privilege and position to break the silence surrounding this issue. We often leave the responsibility to create change upon students and people of color, but it is crucial that people who have privilege in the United States stand for those that are often silenced and made to feel subordinate.

By providing ways that people can address this issue through these texts, there is a hope that it will encourage students to tackle the issue and feel confident that they can make a difference, even though the issue is complex and goes beyond schools. Several of these texts show how one form of oppression in schools can cause a ripple effect and leave a scar on students that will affect them for the rest of their lives if it is never addressed or resolved.

Altogether, this form of oppression and these texts point to a larger issue that persists in the United States that being a person of color is perceived as a crime. This relates to a post Sydney Moore made in the Module 2A discussion thread; Sydney stated, “Graham's "The Rules" exposes this heartbreaking reality that most Black people are forced to face at some point in their lives: being Black is a crime in America. Graham shows us how no matter how educated, well dressed, or careful you are, it does not matter” (Moore, 2022). This form of oppression is one specific way that this racist idea manifests in one of the largest institutions in the US, schools. All these texts show the importance of having empathy, listening to one another, and taking action. One of the main goals of this lesson is to make students feel encouraged and empowered

to do these things for either themselves or for their peers to promote equality and create a more just society.

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