

An Examination of Race, Gender and Police Brutality

520 words (3 min read) | 1 pages

Categories: Police Brutality

Police brutality against minority groups reveals complex layers of injustice at work. Viewing acts of excessive police force simply from a racial or gendered lens fails to capture the multidimensional nature of oppression faced by marginalized communities. An intersectional analysis that encompasses race, gender, and other identity factors is vital to fully understanding and addressing police violence.

Race as a Risk Factor in Police Brutality

A substantial body of evidence shows racial minorities face a considerably higher risk of police brutality compared to white citizens. Studies demonstrate that Black Americans are over 3 times more likely to be killed by police than white Americans based on population data (Edwards, Lee, & Esposito, 2019). Reports also reveal significant racial disparities in non-lethal use of force, arrests, and other contacts with law enforcement.

However, focusing solely on race obscures key elements of marginalization. Police violence disproportionately impacts minority women as well as men. Overreliance on controlling narratives centered on men also minimize the vulnerability of women of color in police interactions.

The Compounded Jeopardy of Gender and Race

Police violence does not impact all women equally. African American women are 4 times more likely to die in incidents involving police than white women (Lopez, 2021). And excessive force against women of color is often accompanied by sexualized violence and verbal abuse as well (Ritchie,

2017). So race and gender function concurrently to heighten vulnerability to police brutality for minority women.

An intersectional perspective illuminates the need for understanding race and gender as interconnected factors that mutually reinforce oppression. Case studies consistently reveal police frequently perceive African American women as aggressive, dangerous, and lacking femininity—putting them at compounded risk (Crenshaw & Ritchie, 2015).

Toward Holistic Solutions: Policy Reform through an Intersectional Lens

Viewing police violence against multifaceted identities reveals the need for policy solutions targeting both racism and sexism in policing culture. An intersectional analysis points to some possible high-impact changes.

For one, reforming use-of-force policies with input from women of color and their advocates could lead to clearer restrictions on excessive force while highlighting gender-specific vulnerabilities. Expanding civilian oversight boards to include minority women also promises increased accountability. Finally, mandatory implicit bias testing and diversity training—designed intersectionally around both race and gender—can mitigate preconceptions that underlie violence against marginalized groups.

In an era of growing awareness of police brutality, applying an intersectional lens remains critical. It illuminates realities obscured by single-axis analyses—like the amplifying jeopardy faced by women of color. Only by accounting for the complex layers of identity behind police violence can we address it wholly and foster true justice and safety in policing for all.

References

Crenshaw, K. W., & Ritchie, A. J. (2015). Say Her Name: Resisting Police Brutality Against Black Women. African American Policy Forum, Center for Intersectionality and Social Policy Studies.

Edwards, F., Lee, H., & Esposito, M. (2019). Risk of being killed by police use of force in the United States by age, race–ethnicity, and sex. *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences*, 116(34), 16793-16798.

Lopez, G. (2021). Why police often single out trans people for violence. Vox.

Ritchie, A. J. (2017). Invisible no more: Police violence against black women and women of color. Beacon Press.