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Does Suspect Race Influence Use of Force by Police?

Anastassia Bystrova
University of Western Ontario, abystrov@uwo.ca

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Anastassia Bystrova
Western University, Canada

Abstract

Is the media to blame for predominantly focusing on situations with minority suspects being on the receiving end of police brutality? Or, do the police more frequently target certain races with force? This paper investigates if the race of the suspect has an impact on whether the police implement force. Using a variety of empirical studies, it will be argued that force is more commonly used on suspects that identify as minorities.

INTRODUCTION

Benjamin Spock once said, "Most middle-class whites have no idea what it feels like to be subjected to police who are routinely suspicious, rude, belligerent and brutal." Though equality is regarded as being of the upmost importance in North America, discrimination against certain races, religions, genders and social classes have not been completely eliminated. This discrimination is seen as consisting of particular negative behaviors directed at a distinct group of people based on their own prejudices, which are undesirable attitudes towards the group.

These attitudes are predominantly based on socially constructed stereotypes, such as Muslims being terrorists or women being inferior to men. It is important to acknowledge these shortcomings of societies where they exist, as acceptance is the first step in order to successfully overcome them. Ignoring the root of the issues and allocating societal inequalities to factors such as laziness would only set the fight against discrimination backwards.

The topic of discrimination within the criminal justice system is a prevalent issue in today's society, mainly pertaining to the differing levels of force exerted on suspects of various races. With cases such as Eric Garner, Michael Brown and Tony Robinson highlighted by the media, there is debate on whether one's race really does have an impact on the way one is treated by the system. This potential systemic racism would ultimately leave minorities, particularly people identifying as Black, with a great disadvantage in their encounters with agents of the criminal justice system.

Since there are many levels within the system, this paper examines the initial interaction between street-level police officers and minority suspects. These interactions are looked at in reference to police contact with white suspects. To emphasize the difference, the variation in the use of force by police will be looked at. Accordingly, this study is beneficial for determining the possible discrimination that is ingrained within the police culture, which would demonstrate the biased use of discretion and thus the change that departments would need to undergo to reflect the value of equality.

THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVES

A variety of theoretical perspectives have been presented about this topic, regardless of whether the theorist assumes truth in the racial inequality argument when

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receiving force from the police. The sociological theory assumes that the behavior of police varies based on social dynamics of the encounter (Worden, 2007). This is a situational approach, and factors influencing the decision to apply force include the victim and offender socioeconomic status, gender, race, as well as the seriousness of the offence and the relationship nature between the parties. Other elements considered are neighborhood characteristics, whether the events happened in public or private spheres, the offender interactions with the police and the amount of police officers that were dispatched (Worden, 2007). Thus, if the offender is black, of low socioeconomic status and the crime is serious, the officer is more likely to exert force.

Applied to this topic, Black's sociological theory of law states that the characteristics of the parties involved influence the quantity of law utilized by the police, such as their race or socioeconomic status (Black, 1980). From this view, the socioeconomic status of the victim is more important in determining whether force will be employed on the offender, thus the higher their status, the higher likelihood of force. If the situation is reversed and the victim is lower class with the suspect holding the higher-class title, there is a lower chance that police will subject the suspect to force.

The conflict perspective in the field of sociology examines the inequalities between the bourgeoisie and the proletariat, or the elite and the working class, and oftentimes the racial minority ends up as the latter (Willhelm, 1980). It is based on a limited amount of resources within society, and the way in which the powerful class maintain control over the working class to ensure they remain theirs. The Marxist theory adopted by Willhelm asserts that

racism caused by capitalism would be the underlying factor behind minorities being on the receiving end of more force from the police. This racism is the product of constructing minorities as inferior in order to cheapen their labor, and is used by the powerful class for their own economic benefit (Willhelm, 1980). The results of this constructed inferiority still influence minority status today.

The minority threat hypothesis claims that there are more crime control efforts exerted to neighborhoods consisting of a higher percentage of minority residents because the dominant group want to protect themselves from who they perceive to be problem populations. Since these groups are seen as a threat to the larger society, extra attention is allocated to policing them, oftentimes resulting in heightened levels of force and brutality (Chambliss & Seidman, 1971). This theory is also rooted in the conflict perspective and emphasizes the socially constructed inequalities between the powerful class and the groups they choose to discriminate against.

Smith & Visher support the conflict perspective as well, claiming that the various levels of discretion employed by the police in terms of street-level law enforcement reflects the stratification within society, thus having more to do with minorities' disadvantaged positions than with the crimes themselves (Smith & Visher, 1981). This argument claims that police are more likely to utilize force because of the minorities' lower social positions. Though law is perceived to be free of bias and solely dependent on the crime at hand, inequalities are illustrated through the differing treatment of advantaged and disadvantaged populations at the street-level of the criminal justice system.

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Ethnocentrism among the police is caused by their general support for maintaining the status quo, and results in their justification of using force to oppress minorities back into their lower class positions (Swett, 1969). Swett's conflict-based view asserts that police take on an "us vs. them" mentality, grouping themselves with the middle-class because of their positions of power, and the minorities with the lower. Officers are ultimately harsher on citizens that do not have the same set of norms and values as their middle-class ones because of the cultural barrier. These barriers also create stereotypes of the lower-class citizens and encourage use of force when dealing with them (Swett, 1969).

The conflict perspective relates to police feeling like they have power and therefore being less wary of how they treat minorities they encounter, thus using force more frequently. The psychological perspective looks at the different characteristics of the officers and uses that as a basis for their actions (Worden, 2007). Behavioral differences pertaining to characteristics of the officer such as gender, socioeconomic status, race, and education all have the power to influence their mindset, and ultimately drive their behaviors (Worden, 2007). A black female officer could be less likely to resort to force on a suspect of these same characteristics because of their similar experiences within the world, whereas a white male officer is less likely to be able to relate. Though the attitudes and behaviors of people often co-align, cognitive dissonance is also frequent, when the beliefs and actions of an individual oppose and ultimately cause discomfort because of the lack of consistency.

A hypothesis within this psychological perspective states that officers who use force typically have authoritarian personalities and thus suspect race has no influence (Balch, 1972). Balch connects the authoritarian personality with the police personality in general, as many of the assumed traits overlap, such as general distrust for people, aggression and a tendency to play strictly by the rules without swaying. This police personality also imagines the officer with a high sense of entitlement for respect from others, even if it means using force to receive it (Balch, 1972). Police officers come from many different backgrounds and have various personalities, not all being authoritative. These differences in personalities would influence their use of force on suspects, with suspect race making no difference. The ones with extremely authoritarian personalities would be the ones responsible for much of the interactions in which force was involved, and would be viewed as the "problem officers," (Balch, 1972).

The association between personality types of officers and their use of force is also emphasized by White (1972). She states that force is more likely to be used by officers falling under the "tough cop" category, with characteristics such as perceiving that citizens negatively view them and being naturally distrusting of people. Much like the authoritarian personality theory presented by Balch, the tough cop is also particularly strict and extremely abiding of the rules with no exceptions. The category of officers least likely to use force is the "problem-solvers," as they tend to be optimistic about people and their motivations as a whole and see their job as having a positive impact on society. They would rather assist in solving a problem than harshly enforce the rules, unlike the tough cop group (White, 1972).

The organizational perspective places importance on the work environment of the police and asserts that this

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atmosphere influences the likelihood of an officer using force, as it is the milieu in which officers learn to do their job (Worden, 2007). If the environment is more accepting of force and sets less clear boundaries regarding it, there is a higher probability that its officers will employ it. Using the watchman, service and legalistic policing types as a basis, Wilson claims that officers in watchman-style departments are more likely to use force (1978). These differences are credited to the senior management of each department, and assume that their expectations vary according to the policing types with the watchman chiefs influencing officers to engage in force the greatest. This force engagement by the watchman-style department officers is typically done in response to observed police disrespect (Wilson, 1978). Consequently, the department may be a larger deciding factor in whether force is exerted than the suspects.

Aligning with the organizational perspective, Whitaker claims that officers exerting force is more likely to happen within larger police departments, as the administration is not able to keep as close of an eye on each officer as they are in a smaller department (Whitaker, 1983). The fewer levels of hierarchies also impact the closer surveillance within small departments, as information about potential physical encounters can be communicated faster between street-level officers and management. Smaller departments are also beneficial through creating more face-to-face contact, thus administrators being able to identify potential problem officers before a situation occurs (Whitaker, 1983).

Goldkamp has examined the disproportionate amount of minority Americans to white Americans fatally injured by the police (Goldkamp, 1976). He allocated this discrepancy to two explanations: high minority arrest rates because of discrimination and because of enhanced involvement in violent crime. The first explanation claims the exaggerated arrest rates are because of the systemic racism that causes law enforcement agents to apply the law more severely to the lower class, oftentimes the minorities (Goldkamp, 1976). This constant state of heightened surveillance leads to higher arrest rates, and thus rates of force. The second theory takes on a culture-blaming approach and argues that subcultures of violence exist in areas predominantly inhabited by minorities and have different norms than the rest of society, including a wider acceptance of violence, therefore resulting in higher levels of violent crime (Goldkamp, 1976).

Important figures in the subculture of violence theory are also Wolfgang and Ferracutti (1967), who claim that violent crime is more common among marginalized areas, typically inhabited by lower class black citizens. They claim that these subcultures influence the heightened use of violence through its normalization and encouragement of it to survive, and the acceptance and internalization of these norms causes an increase in violence (Ferracutti & Wolfgang, 1967). As violent crime increases, police are forced to adjust accordingly, which results in greater likelihood of officers resorting to force when dealing with criminals.

Similar to Goldkamp's theory, Forslund (1972) states that the high death rates among minorities caused by police officers may be explained by the disproportionate arrest rates among them for violent crime. Unlike Goldkamp, he claims that the reason behind the plethora of arrests is solely because this population commits more violent crime, thus the fatal

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injury rates among the minorities are not due to racism. Though he takes differences between various cities into account, he ultimately claims that crime committed by minorities greatly outnumbers crime committed by white citizens (Forslund, 1972). Based on this theory, it is necessary for officers to control these populations, even with the use of lethal force, because they are more prone to crimes that require it this extreme level of control.

CURRENT STUDY

The current study will be looking at whether the suspect race influences the use of force exerted by the police. To gain an answer to this question, various empirical studies will be critically evaluated. Using the mentioned theories as possible explanations, field experiments and observations will be used to examine if there is a correlation between the two variables.

Many theorists have examined this topic and have come up with possible explanations supporting their claims. The sociological, conflict, psychological, organizational and offender-blaming perspectives all offer insight as to why force may be applied more frequently in interactions with minorities, though it is difficult to pinpoint one exact explanation for the potential injustice. If the sociological perspective has merit, one should observe other social factors surrounding the situation and use them as indicators for why force was or was not used. The conflict perspective views minorities as being oppressed by the powerful class in the competition for resources, and can be eliminated by working to heighten their socioeconomic statuses. The psychological perspective explains the use of force through individual police officer characteristics, and the organizational perspective claims the department styles

can encourage and discourage use of force among officers. Lastly, the offender-blaming perspective claims that if police do use force on minorities more frequently, it is because they commit more violent crime and thus require it.

If this hypothesis is generally true, one can conclude that there is systemic racism engrained in the criminal justice system and being a minority is an automatic disadvantage. In a North American society that claims to thrive on multiculturalism, it would be oppressing the very races that make the countries diverse. Based on the 2011 long-form census, Canadians identifying as visible minorities consisted of approximately 19.1% of the total population, or 6,264,800 people, and one out of every five Canadians was foreign-born (Statistics Canada, 2011). According to the 2014 United States Census Bureau, in America, 22.6% of citizens identify as being non-white, such as black, Hispanic, Native, or a combination of minorities. It is also projected that in 2020, greater than half of all the children will identify as a minority (United States Census Bureau, 2014).

Given these numbers, if force by the police is more likely to be used on minorities, a large part of the overall population will be more vulnerable to this severe practice. If the hypothesis is accurate and the minority population continues to grow, as the United States Census Bureau has predicted, violence among citizen-police encounters may grow in frequency and one day even be regarded as the norm. For now, the impact this study would have is that if is deemed that there is a correlation between suspect race and use of force, minorities should expect a greater amount of force used against them when in an encounter with the police. This would cause understandable distrust of policing institution by minorities,

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causing unfavorable relations and a hesitancy to rely on them in times of need. This would be a wake-up call for police departments to re-examine and closely monitor their procedures and actions in order to eliminate the ingrained discrimination, and eventually rebuild the level of trust.

EMPIRICAL DATA

Many studies have been carried out, driven by the motivation to discover an answer for whether suspect race really does have a significant impact on the use of force exercised by police. ProPublica, a reliable journalism source, examined federally collected data on fatal police shootings from 2010 to 2012 in America (ProPublica, 2014). Looking at a total of 1,217 shootings that were amongst the collected data, it was concluded that males ages fifteen to nineteen were twenty-one times more likely to be killed at the hands of police. To balance out the odds, one hundred eighty-five white males would have had to be killed every week (ProPublica, 2014). The FBI's Supplementary Homicide Report for the year range of 1980 to 2012 was also assessed, using data from more than 12,000 fatal injuries.

Out of forty-one males aged fourteen and under were killed, twenty-seven were black, four Hispanic, one Asian and eight white. The majority of the killers were white officers, though black ones were responsible for about ten percent of cases (ProPublica, 2014). This may give validity to the psychological perspective, as black officers were less likely to fatally injure a black suspect. In seventy-seven percent of instances where the circumstances around the assault were deemed "undetermined," the suspect was black (ProPublica, 2014). This does not support the sociological theory

because if it were other factors that contributed to the event, it should have been easier to name them. Between 2005 and 2009, the officers claimed that they were under attack explained sixty-two percent of shootings, abiding by the offender-blaming perspective.

A problem with this study is that it relies solely on official national statistics, which are known to be inaccurate as many cases do not get reported and do not undergo the specific paperwork necessary to be included in the data. Approximately 17,000 police departments across the country do not input information about fatal shootings, and this has the potential to severely skew the data. Age could have been another factor that was studied, as it was mentioned the average age of a white suspect killed was 35, whereas the age of a black suspect was considerably lower, at 30 (ProPublica, 2014). This could also have compared females, as this study gave no attention to the opposite gender.

Fachner & Carter investigated officer-involved shootings in the Philadelphia Police Department from 2007 to 2014 (Fachner & Carter, 2015). This case study was completed through observations, data collection and five meetings with department and community members. Specifically, data analysis, interviews, direct observation and document review were utilized. The results showed three hundred ninety-four officer-involved shootings in the years that were examined (Fachner & Carter, 2015). Eighty percent of the suspects shot were black, ten percent Hispanic, nine percent white and one percent Asian. Of these shootings, most consisted of three or less officers at the scene, with the majority of these officers being white. Like the ProPublica study, this would also support the psychological claim,

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as only thirty-four percent of black officers were responsible for black suspects shot.

The sociological theory of social determinants is applicable as well, such as the amount of officers at the scene being a pattern for lethal force used. Because suspects were unarmed a mere fifteen-percent of the time (Fachner & Carter, 2015), the offender-blaming theory could also have affected the circumstances. The external validity of this study may not be ideal, as Philadelphia has its own unique traits that other areas may lack, thus it may not be generalizable.

Pedicelli used media coverage as a basis for her study involving police use of lethal force, with an emphasis on Montreal and Toronto between the years 1991 and 1997 (Pedicelli, 1998). She compared the rates of black populations within the cities to the rate they were on the receiving ends of the force employed by the police, and concluded blacks were highly overrepresented. In 1991, the black population consisted of approximately two percent in Montreal and just over three percent in Toronto, though forty-five percent of people shot in Montreal and fifty percent of suspects shot in Toronto were black males. Pedicelli designated these differences to police justifying these disproportionate violence rates to the fact that the black populations were more involved with violence and thus needed harsher control (Pedicelli, 1998).

This view aligns with the conflict, specifically the minority-threat hypothesis, and offender-blaming perspectives. Stricter policing of these "problem populations" ensures they remain at the bottom of the social ladder and the status quo remains unchallenged, and assumes that they require it because of their higher involvement in violent crime. A limitation of Pedicelli's study is that it relied too heavily on media sources that may potentially be reporting instances in a biased way, as it is not the priority of newspapers to accurately depict each detail as much as it is to quickly get the story out and attract buyers. There may also have been a small sample size, as during 1991 there was no overabundance of different news sources as there is now.

Morrow conducts his study by compiling data from the Stop, Question and Frisk database compiled by the NYPD in 2012 and the US Census Bureau (Morrow, 2015). Detailed information regarding use of force is provided within the Stop, Question and Frisk database, which were categorized into nine sections, such as use of baton, weapon pointed and suspect on the ground. The results displayed that Blacks were twelve percent more likely to have non-weapon force used against them by the NYPD, and Hispanics were eight percent (Morrow, 2015).

Force with a weapon did not show suspect race as a significant influence. Situational factors were deemed important, such as proximity to offense, whether they were frisked, suspected violent crime and noncompliance (Morrow, 2015). This corresponds to the sociological theory regarding social dynamics, as well as the offender-blaming perspective since they were seen as committing the crime that required the violence to control them. To support the organizational theory, Morrow found that non-weapon force was exercised fifty-five percent more frequently in departments led by Deputy Inspectors as opposed to Captains (Morrow, 2015). A drawback of this study is potentially inaccurate statistics if incidents have not been reported, since it looked only at

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national statistics and did not include a citizen voice.

Using the observational method in Indiana and Florida, Terrill and Mastrofski studied two sets of data from the Project on Policing Neighborhoods: observation of police officers and interviews with police officers (Terrill & Mastrofski, 2002). Twelve beats were observed in each city, and officer characteristics were derived during the interviews. Graduate and undergraduate students were trained to carry out the observations. The findings were inputted into SPSS, and it was concluded that a significant amount of police force is allocated because of the behavior of the suspects. The suspect was also more likely to receive force if he was a male, non-white, young, and poor, even when other factors were controlled (Terrill & Mastrofski, 2002). Younger officers with less experience were more likely to engage in force, which may support the psychological perspective in assuming that there are certain behavioral characteristics of less educated officers that bring about the greater usage of force.

The conflict perspective and minority threat hypothesis was exemplified through the findings that poor suspects had a twenty-two percent chance of receiving force, whereas upper-middle class suspects had merely eleven percent (Terrill & Mastrofski, 2002). A limitation of this study includes that Florida and Indiana police departments have relatively similar social climates so differences were not very pronounced. If an alternate location was also studied with a significantly different police department, such as in Detroit, the study could have produced results that could be contrasted easier. Utilizing students as the observers may have impacted the data as well, as they are not professionally trained with years of experience, as effective researchers are.

A social observational study done by Terrill, Paoline & Manning in Indiana and Florida contrasted the results concluded by Terrill & Mastrofski and claimed that the police use of force exclusively resembles the values of the individual officer (Terrill, Paoline & Manning, 2003). This study drew on the same data as the Terrill & Mastrofski study, and also utilized the same methods of observation and interviews as well as using students as observers, but aimed to examine whether differences in the use of coercion were because of climate of the police (Terrill, Paoline & Manning, 2003). It agrees with the police personality theory inspired by the police culture, similar to the authoritarian personality.

The results showed that officers who were more intent on strictly enforcing the law and have a deep internalization of the traditional policing values were more likely to use force, more frequently being officers from Indiana (Terrill, Paoline & Manning, 2003). This psychological perspective does not support the claim that suspect race has an influence on whether officers employ force. A drawback of this study is that suspect characteristics should have been included as variables, as all that was studied was the psychological characteristics of the police, and they may not be the concrete answer as to why some officers resort to force, while others do not. Students being used as observers may, again, not have been the best idea.

Terrill & Reisig used observational methods in Indiana and Florida, the same as the previous two studies, but with an emphasis on discovering whether neighborhood characteristics played a part in encouraging police to use force in interactions with citizens (Terrill & Reisig, 2003). Data collection from the Project on

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Policing Neighborhoods was used again, as were the students as the observers. The results concluded that more force was exercised by officers in "problem neighborhoods," supporting the subculture of violence theory (Terrill & Reisig, 2003).

The "Concentrated Disadvantage" and "Homicide Rate" categories were related to the amount of force used, but minorities only experienced more force when they were within these problem neighborhoods. They received more force within these neighborhoods, but only because they were encountered more there (Terrill & Reisig, 2003). This may also fall into the sociological perspective of social determinants independent of race, as the environment was displayed as having an impact on the use of force. The psychological traits of the officers should have been examined further in this study, and perhaps more qualified researchers than just students should have been used.

Jacobs & Britt take a conflict perspective stance on the topic of unequal perpetuation of force by the police (Jacobs & Britt, 1979). They examined eight independent variables for correlations between them and police homicides, including the percentage of black citizens, the economic inequality, police per capita and the percentage of residents in large cities. Percentage of change in population, violence index and whether the state was border or southern were also included.

It was concluded that the percentage of black citizens was most significantly associated with police use of force, followed by the index of violence and then economic inequality (Jacobs & Britt, 1979). Aligning with the conflict perspective, it is displayed that states with the most inequality and black citizens are the most frequent targets for

police force. A limitation of this study is that there were hand-picked variables that the researchers assumed would impact the police-caused homicide rates, but there may be other variables they did not account for that were not examined.

Milton et al. studied American cities with diverse crime rates and attitudes towards violence: Birmingham, Detroit, Indianapolis, Kansas City, Oakland, Portland and Washington (Milton, Halleck, Lardner & Abrecht, 1977). Researchers examined data recorded about police shootings in each city in a span of one to three years, and rode in patrol cars for their observations. Their findings suggest that though there is no universal rule regarding firearms across all police departments, the number of minorities shot is significantly greater than any other race, though not inconsistent with their engagement in violent crime (Milton, Halleck, Lardner & Abrecht, 1977). This study confirms the offender-blaming theory and justifies the high rate of force used on minorities by defending that it is based on them partaking in dangerous crime that requires this form of control. It also mentions higher "problem populations" in the ghetto (Milton, Halleck, Lardner & Abrecht, 1977), thus attesting to the violent subculture theory as well. A drawback of this study is that it is outdated and may not necessarily reproduce the same results today, as society has drastically changed since 1977.

CONCLUSION

There are a vast amount of theories suggested as to why police seem to disproportionately exercise force on suspects of minority status. These perspectives range from explanations rooted in causes such as societal, environmental and psychological, and it is

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difficult to know which ones are directly responsible for this phenomenon. This is an extremely important topic to conduct further research on as, if proven true, the debate on whether the suspect race impacts the use of force by police could bring society back decades in the fight against discrimination.

A variety of empirical studies have supported the claim that suspect race influences the use of force by the police, specifically, minority races. In almost all of the studies, this was proven to be the case, whether a menial or significant difference. The only study not directly relating the use of force to suspect race was done by Terrill, Paoline & Manning, as it allocated the differing levels of force to the authoritarian personality of some police officers. Generally, the studies strongly agreed with the fact that the likelihood of force being employed on a citizen would rise considerably if the citizen identified as a visible minority.

Many of the study findings are supportive of the major theoretical perspectives. The psychological perspective can be used to explain the findings of the ProPublica study, as the overwhelming majority of black suspects fatally injured were at the hands of white officers. The conflict perspective could also be applied, as the police could identify with the middle class and develop ethnocentricity, stereotyping the black suspects as lower class and distancing themselves away from them. Because of this "us vs. them" mentality, they may have perceived them as higher threats, thus acting on the basis of the minority threat hypothesis. Fachner & Carter's study also supports the psychological claim, as predominantly white officers used force on black suspects. The sociological theory is also illustrated, as the force was more

frequent if there were three or less officers present. Based on the majority of suspects being armed, this could result in officers feeling threatened and thus supporting the offender-blaming theory.

Though Pedicelli claimed that police justified their actions by saying black suspects were more involved with violent crime and thus required stricter control, this may be discrimination alongside with the offender-blaming explanation. This is essentially a stereotype, and would encourage constant surveillance that Goldkamp mentioned, thus naturally exposing more crimes committed by this population. The conflict perspective may also be used alongside with the minority-threat hypothesis, as the police may see these populations as a threat and may feel they need to oppress them. The social dynamics in the sociological perspective may explain Morrow's study, as many external factors besides race proved significant, as well as the offender-blaming perspective through committing the violent crime in the first place. Morrow was the only study that accounted for the organizational perspective, and proved Captain and Deputy Inspector-led departments encouraged different outcomes in terms of use of force.

Terrill & Mastrofski's study may be explained by the offender-blaming perspective, as suspect behavior made a significant difference, as well as the conflict theory through the more frequent utilization of force on the poor. The psychological perspective may also contribute, as less educated officers were more likely to exhibit force. The Terrill, Paoline & Manning study supported the authoritarian personality theory through looking at the characteristics of the officers as the difference between force usages. Terrill & Reisig's study

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supports the subculture of violence theory, as it claimed that police force is more likely to be exerted in problem neighborhoods because of the acceptable view of violence resulting in violent crime. This also ties into the offender-blaming theory, as police may be forced to use harsher means to control them because of this.

The conflict perspective may account for the results of Jacobs & Britt's study, as the percentage of black citizens was an even more significant factor than the index of violence when it came to force. Discrimination may also play a part, as the race is deemed more important than the violent culture. Milton et al.'s study may be rooted in the subculture of violence theory, as well as the offender-blaming view, through the rates of force aligning with violent crime participation.

Though not concrete, there is clearly a relationship between suspect race and the police use of force. If the suspect is a minority, there is greater likelihood that police would use force against them, though this relationship may change when other variables become involved. It is no coincidence that minorities being handled with force by the police have blown up over the media during the last couple years, as now society is less accepting of discrimination. Saying this, there are a variety of ulterior reasons as to why this extra force is allocated to minorities, and it is difficult to pinpoint a universal one.

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