



# **Race and Police Brutality: Roots of an Urban Dilemma (SUNY series in Deviance and Social Control)**

*Malcolm D. Holmes, Brad W. Smith*

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*Disputes standard explanations of police brutality against minority citizens to offer new insights and suggestions on dealing with this problem.*

What causes police brutality, and why are minority citizens the primary victims? Social scientists often attribute the behavior to poorly managed police departments, bad cops, or the interests of the powerful in controlling minorities perceived as criminal threats. Malcolm D. Holmes and Brad W. Smith contend that these explanations fail to identify key causes of police misconduct, particularly the use of excessive force. Focusing on the interaction of ordinary social-psychological processes and the disadvantaged conditions of minority neighborhoods, Holmes and Smith develop an integrated model of police brutality that takes into account contemporary theory and research on social identity, stereotypes, and emotions—factors that produce intergroup tensions and may trigger unwarranted acts of aggression. Their approach overcomes existing theoretical difficulties and raises the question of how this complex social problem might be effectively addressed.

Malcolm D. Holmes is Professor of Sociology at the University of Wyoming

Brad W. Smith is Associate Professor of Criminal Justice at Wayne State University.

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