
Understanding Police Brutality and Excessive Force

Abstract

This paper talks about police brutality and excessive force and how it is affecting people perspectives and attitude toward police officer. Police brutality and excessive force has and is a big issue around the United States. Innocent people are being killed or mistreated by officers who don't respect protocol and who take advantage of their power. This paper also explains body cameras and how they are useful and how race and ethnicity is being targeted at times. The article also explores solutions towards this issue.

Literature Review: Police Brutality and Excessive Force

Police Brutality and Excessive Force has been an issue in the United States that seems like there has been no solution too. The killing of people in this country has become a routine something normal (Francis-Santiago,2016). A police officer should be protecting the people of a city or town and at times it seems like they are doing the opposite of their job. According to Francis-Santiago (2016), In the united states the police kills two people every day. Things like race and ethnicity are a big factor of the choices a police officer make and use their power the wrong way and end up hurting people who are innocent.

Data collected for this research has helped to make this essay and assemble. The research will help understand the reader of what police brutality and excessive force is, and some subtopics that may influence or may help this issue. Question will be answered throughout the essay that help backup what the research. There is a total of four questions that will help the reader understand more about police brutality and excessive force. The questions for this research include:

Question 1

What is Police Brutality and Excessive Force?

Question 2

Are certain race/ethnic being targeted?

Question 3

Are body cameras useful?

Question 4

What can be done to stop this?

What is Police Brutality and Excessive Force?

Police Brutality and Excessive Force is something you hear about almost everywhere. It is a big issue where there is always a story, but what exactly is it? According to Law Enforcement Use of Force (n.d.) excessive force is the application of force beyond what is reasonably believed to be necessary to gain compliance from a subject in any given incident. Lyman, (2016) states that police brutality is extra-legal violence that is willfully conducted by officers who knowingly exceed the bounds of their office. Police brutality happens because of excessive force when a police officer exceeds the force needed to control a person it leads to police brutality where the officer can't take control of the situation and abuses its power. A police officer is trained and told to only use the amount of force necessary to mitigate an incident, make an arrest, or protect themselves or others from harm (Police Use of Force, n.d.).

In order to know if a police officer was using the correct amount of force the case of *Graham V. Conner* created a few guidelines to set and end point of what is excessive force and what is not which are known as the Graham factors. The supreme court decided that these are the best things to not second guess an officer's decision and to see if they exceeded the force that was needed for a certain person. Excessive force cases against the police (2017) states:

In judging whether an officer used excessive force, one must consider, "the severity of the crime at issue, whether the suspect poses an immediate threat to the safety of officers or others, and whether he is actively resisting arrest or attempting to evade arrest by flight."

To see if an officer follows the Graham factors knowing the officer's safety is important to see and understand if he or she reacted the right way. As an officer knowing background information on a suspect is important to understand the severity of the situation. It is also important to know if a suspect is a threat to others who are around, the police officer, or himself (Excessive force cases against the police, 2017).

Are Certain Race/Ethnicities Being Targeted?

Police officers are criticized to attacking minorities and it looks like it might be a factor to their decisions, and it seems like African Americans are being targeted more. There is anecdotal evidence showing that African Americans are more likely to be subjected to excessive use of force by police than are people of other races (Ajilore & Shirey, 2017). African Americans are what people think of for incidents of police brutality and excessive force. People, who are African-American/Black are twice as likely to be killed by a police officer while being unarmed compared to a Caucasian/White individual. (Lombardo, 2017). There is a high number of African Americans being killed by police. In an interview to an African American male he states, I'm actually afraid to call them why am I calling them for if it's going to be backfired on me (Francis-Santiago, 2016, Personal Interview). People no matter who they are should be afraid to reach out to police officers who are supposed to be there to help you.

African Americans aren't the only once being affected by police brutality and excessive force, but according to Downs (2016), among minorities, the rate of police killings for Latinos is second to those of African-Americans. People don't always talk about other race and ethnicities being targeted. The Center on Juvenile and Criminal Justice noted that the number of Latino victims of police killings is 30% above average, and at 1.9 times the rate of whites (Reyes, 2015). Latinos and Hispanics don't get as much as much attention from the media and people like African Americans, but Hispanics deserve to live and work in communities where the police treat them

with fairness and respect. Latino lives do matter and ought to matter just as much as those of other Americans (Reyes, 2015).

Figure 1: <https://necpluribusimpar.net/reality-police-violence-us/>

The graph shown above show the probability of force being used from a police officer offer towards a race. The audience can see how African Americans/Blacks and Hispanics/Latinos are being targeted more than Whites/Caucasian.

Figure 2: <https://thesocietypages.org/toolbox/police-killing-of-blacks/>

The image above shows a graph of the percentage of kills by police officers that each race White, Blacks, and Hispanics from the year 2015-2017. The audience can see how from the years given the numbers of African Americans/Blacks were being targeted the most and then Hispanics/Latinos and finally White/Caucasian.

Are Body Cameras Useful?

Police officers have been accused of doing the wrong thing and not doing their job right and lately police have been using body cameras, but are they useful and necessary? In an interview to Lawyer Scott Rynecki says, that citizens have a powerful weapon that is not a gun, but a cellphone and a voice and because of the cellphone camera police brutality cases have raised. (Francis-Santiago, 2016). Before cameras people couldn't see thing to believe them, but as simple as a camera is it can be so useful for this problem. From 2007 to 2013, the percentage of local police departments using in-car video cameras increased from 61% to 68% (Local Police Departments, 2013: Equipment And Technology, n.d).

The increase of body cameras on police officers has been a good thing for the safety of citizens around the United States. Report Show Body Cameras Reduce Excessive Force By Police (2017) states:

"Officers wearing cameras were slightly more likely, by about five to seven percent, to make an arrest or issue a citation based on a call for service. So, they were actually more productive than officers not wearing cameras," says Dr. Coldren.

Wearing cameras has a lot of potential benefits that can help people and officers both in their own way. Body cameras on an officer can be useful and beneficial for increase civility, quicker resolution, corroborating evidence, and more (Body-Worn Cameras: What the Evidence Tells Us, n.d.).

What Can be Done to Stop This?

Police brutality and excessive force has always been an issue, but its been recently heard of more, but why has this problem gotten bigger and what can be done to stop it? Although the researcher may not have the answer to this completely there is somethings that can be done to decline the numbers for police brutality and excessive force. First Starting with teaching respect to people. Not every cop is doing the wrong thing and if they feel threatened, they have probable cause to use force. Also, have penalizations or consequences towards police officers

that are doing wrong to citizens. Not every person that has been killed is a threat to society. Finally, supporting movements that bring awareness. Movements like Black Lives Matter have made a difference and have helped people become more aware of their surrounding and of events that are happening (Alang & Contributor, 2017).

Conclusion

In conclusion, police brutality and excessive force has been a big issue that together as the people of this country can try to make the rate of it slow down. By reading this, the readers, can understand more about this issue and get informed more. The reader can also look at the police officer point of view by an understanding of the procedures that go in to taking action, but without exceeding force. People in general can get more involved in movements like Communities United against Police Brutality or get involved within their own community.

To get more information and a better understanding on police brutality and excessive the researcher conducted a survey to see what other people in the community think about this issue. The audience that was targeted to take this survey were college students of any age. The survey was done via the website Survey Monkey and given to multiple UTEP students from different locations found in the university. The survey included multiple choice and free response question to get a further understanding and see what others though about the issue police brutality and excessive force. Here are some of the questions give un the survey:

Q1. What is Police Brutality and Excessive Force?

Q2. Are certain race/ethnic being targeted?

Yes, If so which ones

No

Hispanics

African American

White

Other

Q3. Are body cameras useful?

Yes

No

Q4. What can be done to stop this?

Even though the survey targeted different people the results for the survey were almost all the same. Everyone that took the survey agreed that Police brutality and excessive force is when an officer takes advantage of their power or authority. Although they were all explained differently, they all ended up getting to the same. For the second question, multiple choice was given 76.3% of the audience given the survey though that race, or ethnicity are being targeted. 7.8% of the audience said no. They were also asked what race or ethnicity they thought were being targeted and the results are as followed 81.5% African Americans, 2.6% White, 76.3% Hispanics, and 13.6% for other. For the third question, people were asked if they thought body cameras were useful 86.8% said yes and 13.1% said no. For the final question people were asked what they think can be done. People who took the survey had the same ideas of consequences for the police officers and to bring more awareness.

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