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.

“A model of theoretical synthesis, sound and thorough research, and clear writing, this book would be appropriate for courses in police studies, criminology, race, and even research methods.”
— Norman Weiner, State University of New York at Oswego

Malcolm D. Holmes is Professor of Sociology at the University of Wyoming, and Brad W. Smith is Associate Professor of Criminal Justice at Wayne State University.

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