

Gender Inequality, Intersectionality, and Violence Against Women: A National- and State-level Analysis of Violence Against Women Trends

Ph.D. Dissertation

Department of Criminology and Criminal Justice
University of Missouri St. Louis

CheyOnna Sewell

Abstract

Violence against women declined with other forms of violence during the 1990s. Nevertheless, the most popular macro-level theory regarding violence against women, which suggests that changes in gender inequality are associated with changes in the level of violence against women, has been studied primarily cross-sectionally and with mixed findings. In fact, the nature of the relationship between gender inequality and violence against women is undecided. One hypothesis, amelioration, suggests that as gender inequality decreases, and the genders become more equal, violence against women will also decrease (the inverse is also true that as gender inequality increases, violence against women will also increase). Another hypothesis, backlash, suggests that as gender inequality decreases, and the genders become more equal, violence against women will increase. Amidst the mixed findings have been notable conclusions that have found that the relationship may be race-specific and/or dependent on the victim-offender relationship. This project uses the intersectionality perspective, as introduced by Black Feminist scholars to take into account these important findings and thoroughly investigate the relationship between gender inequality and violence against women. I use multiple datasets, investigate fatal and non-fatal forms of violence against women, investigate the relationship at the national- and state-level, incorporate race-specific trends of violence against women, and use gender inequality indicators that are informed by intersectionality. The national-level analyses use homicide data from the Supplementary Homicide Reports (SHR) and victimization data from the National Crime Survey and National Crime Victimization Survey (NCS/NCVS). The national-level analyses use correlation analyses to examine trends of women's status and trends of violence against women from 1980-2012. At the state-level, panel data regressions examine the relationship between women's status and women's homicide rates (1980, 1990, 2000, 2010). In the end, this study produces mixed findings that lend to specific recommendations for future study and data development by emphasizing the importance of disaggregation by victim-offender relationship, geographic level, fatality of violence, and race/ethnicity.