



Journal of Social Issues, Vol. 75, No. 3, 2019, pp. 707–725
doi: 10.1111/josi.12339

This article is part of the Special Issue “Ableism,” Kathleen R. Bogart and Dana S. Dunn (Special Issue Editors). For a full listing of Special Issue papers, see: <http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/josi.2019.75.issue-3/issuetoc>.

Disability: Missing from the Conversation of Violence

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The data on violence against disabled people are scarce. The data on prevalence that does exist is staggering, however: disabled people make up one third to one half of all people killed by law enforcement and experience twice the rate of violence that others do. To study the relationships among ableism, violence, and disability as an intersectional identity, we use a DisCrit theoretical framework to conduct a selective review of three reports: a Bureau of Justice Statistics (2017) report on violence and disability, a Ruderman Foundation white paper on media coverage of police violence and disability (Perry and Carter-Long), and a report from the Center for American Progress (CAP) investigating the mass incarceration of people with disabilities in the United States (Vallas). The authors examine ways the available data tell a particular story about disability and violence and identify crucial missing conversations. The findings from these analyses suggest that to combat ableism and the violence it causes, oppressive systems must be named, the voices of disabled individuals must be included, and data on disability must be more systematically gathered in all national efforts related to violence and violence prevention. We also present the implications of this work for social policy, psychologists, and larger contributions to the literature on victimization.

Violence, broadly defined, has rightly become a target of public reckoning in the United States. Although disability activists (disabled activists of color in particular) have been identifying the effects of violence on the disability community for a decade or more (Harriett Tubman Collective, 2018), research, policy, and publicly available data have just begun acknowledging and exploring this problem and its relationship to disability and ableism. In this article, we engage with scholarly and activist work that defines many aspects of violence and its relationship

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to disability, with the understanding that disability is socially constructed in the same ways as other identities and often intersects with those identities in ways that increase people's experiences of violence (Annamma, Connor, & Ferri, 2013). The purpose of our selective review is threefold: to engage existing data sources toward an understanding of disability and violence; to question and critique the literature for further exploration in this area; and to encourage psychologists to engage in conversations and reflect on these issues in their work.

Conceptualizing Violence

Violence is “the intentional use of physical force or power, threatened or actual, against oneself, another person, or against a group or community, that results in or has a high likelihood of resulting in injury, death, psychological harm, maldevelopment or deprivation” (Krug, Dahlberg, Mercy, Zwi, & Lozano, 2002). This definition encompasses both violent victimization (in which people are the victims of violence) and police violence (the “systemic, generalized problem” of violence by police against civilians), both of which are experienced by disabled people (Obasogie & Newman, 2017, p. 279). This definition, however, does not encompass violence perpetrated by ideological systems such as ableism that undergird the way a community responds to violent acts, either with the victim or with the perpetrator.

Conceptualizing violence as including actions by both people and systems means that the impact of violence on disabled people is not a simple matter of statistics—although even that level of analysis is not readily available with disaggregated disability categories. This conceptualization is related to the ways people define and understand both disability and violence in communities, the impact of ableism on responses to violence, and the way systems, not just individuals, perpetuate both ableism and violence.

Violence affects disabled people in many ways. In this article, we operationalize the ways disability and violence show up in communities using the International Classification of Functioning, Disability and Health (ICF) framework of disability, which defines both functioning and disability in relationship to four concepts: body functions and structures, activities, participation, and environmental factors (World Health Organization, 2001).¹ We are most interested in understanding how violence intersects with disability at the activity, participation, and environmental levels—that is, how violence and disability interact to affect the functioning of

¹Throughout this article, we use person and identity first language interchangeably based on the on the language of each source, but foreground identity first language in our own analysis. This choice follows recommendations by disability activists and scholarly work (e.g., Dunn & Andrews, 2015) to challenge the exclusive usage of person-first language and recognize disability as a unique identity experience.

the individual, the participation of disabled people in community life, and the environmental factors (facilitators and barriers) that keep disabled people affected by, involved in, or protected from violence.

Disabled people, according to the relatively small body of data collected on this demographic, experience serious violence at a rate “nearly twice that of the general population” and represent one third to one half of all people killed by law enforcement officers (Perry & Carter-Long, 2016). Disabled people are also overrepresented among the arrested and incarcerated, who are nearly three times as likely to report having a disability as the nonincarcerated population (Vallas, 2016). The literature on violence experienced by disabled people also focuses on the connection between institutionalization or hospitalization and imprisonment (Ben-Moshe, 2013; Ben-Moshe, Carey, & Chapman, 2014), on specific sexual and intimate-partner violence (Basile, Breiding, & Smith, 2016), and on evaluating current interventions that prevent violence (Mikton, Maguire, & Shakespeare, 2014).

One interpretation of these findings is that disabled people are both victims and perpetrators of violence. Although this is reasonable, the present article is grounded in a more critical assumption: all the aforementioned ways of naming and categorizing violence are part of ableist systems and ideologies that endanger disabled people in a myriad of ways. Focusing on a single aspect of this violence, either by typifying kinds of violence against disabled individuals or addressing just the overrepresentation of disability in prisons, means ignoring the larger system of ableism that shapes our understanding of what disabled people must endure because of the ways they exist in our communities and the opportunities and supports they have to draw on.

Disability, though, is not the only way individuals can identify themselves. Ignoring the systematic and intertwined roles of ableism and intersectionality further perpetuates the status quo of oppression. In fact, members of the disability community, specifically the contributors to the Harriet Tubman Collective (2018), have criticized the lack of accountability in reporting on disability, race, and police violence: “There is no in-depth treatment of the impact of intersectional identities of folks with disabilities or mention of previous encounters with police officers, which by their very nature, require discussion of racism and classism, among other oppressions intersected with ableism” (p. 7). This critique of police violence is an example of community activism, but it also raises the larger issue of what happens when someone is labeled with a disability in a way that subsumes the rest of their intersecting identities in the public mind.

Theoretical Framework

To interrogate the relationship between ableism, violence, and disability as an intersectional identity, we use a DisCrit theoretical framework. DisCrit is grounded

in both disability studies and critical race theories and holds that “bodies and minds determined to be abnormal were identified as problematic, pathologized through labeling, segregated for remediation, and punished for perceived abnormalities” (Annamma, 2018, p. 21). This discussion of “abnormal” bodies and minds is not focused on a single identity category or an ideological system related to a particular identity; DisCrit theorizes that “racism and ableism are normalizing processes that are interconnected and collusive” (Annamma et al., 2013, p. 6). The interconnection of racism and ableism is rooted in an idea of human difference that places black and brown bodies and minds below white bodies and minds and was historically used to justify racist and ableist systems and ideologies, including slavery, segregation, and violence against people who were deemed different and less. DisCrit has its origins in a historical argument, but the ways that racism and ableism collude continues to cause violence in the lives of black and brown disabled people in particular.

To use DisCrit theory in analysis, Annamma et al. (2013) suggested selecting macro-level issues of racism and ableism and examining how they are enacted in the everyday lives of the people they affect. This theory has seven tenets; we use two for our macro-level analysis of violence, though each tenet informs the others. One of these tenets is the recognition of the “material and psychological impacts of being labeled as raced or dis/abled, which sets one outside of the western cultural norms” (Annamma et al., 2013, p. 11). The other “considers legal and historical aspects of dis/ability and race and how both have been used separately and together to deny the rights of some citizens” (p. 11). Our review focuses on the material and psychological impacts and the legal and historical frameworks that cocreate experiences of violence.

Using DisCrit as a theoretical framework requires an acknowledgement of the work done by others to bring this perspective forward. The Harriet Tubman Collective (2018) has called for honoring and recognition of people of color who are “activists, scholars, attorneys, organizers, artists and cultural workers, journalists, bloggers, philosophers, community builders and advocates” and who have worked to integrate disability and racial justice in a way that has a direct impact on scholarly discussion of violence, especially using a DisCrit theoretical frame like the present article. The analytic work in this article is a result of work done in both academic and community spaces to recognize the importance of talking about race and disability together rather than separately, to fully honor and represent the experiences of people living at these intersections. We encourage readers to refer to the Harriet Tubman Collective (2018) for a more detailed discussion and recognition of disabled individuals of color who have been engaged in this work for years.

DisCrit enables an understanding of violence against disabled people that not only includes an awareness of the power dynamics and differentials within disability as an identity category, but attends to the ways disability is seen publicly

by individuals and communities. A DisCrit framework is helpful for contextualizing reporting information for people who have varying disability identities and for their understanding of their own impairments when they experience violent crime. It also provides a helpful theoretical background on the attention paid to disability as a factor in violent crimes. For example, how do victims of violence self-identify, and is ableism a part of their personal narratives about disability? Dirth and Branscombe (2019) remind us that personal conceptions of disability shape the way disabled people experience ableism; this finding naturally relates to discussions, experiences, and naming violence. These are analytical questions, but they represent a larger need for more consistent, thorough, and informed conversation about the intersection of violence with the lives of disabled people. These questions also have implications for psychologists treating disabled survivors of violence who are grappling with similar questions and processing their own trauma. It is worth noting that two of the three authors of this piece identify as disabled, and two as non-White; these perspectives are important for our analysis and the broader conversation about disability, intersectionality, and violence.

Selected Reports and Findings

Selective Review Criteria

Our criteria for inclusion in this selective review were as follows: publicly available government or disability organization reports that (1) report on nationally available data from the United States, (2) were published between 2016 and 2017, (3) include disability as a primary topic, and (4) focus on violence experienced by people with disabilities. We therefore included the following reports: a 2017 Bureau of Justice Statistics (BJS) report entitled “Crime against Persons with Disabilities 2009–2015” (U.S. Department of Justice, 2017b), a 2016 Ruderman Foundation report entitled “On Media Coverage of Law Enforcement Use of Force and Disability” (Perry & Carter-Long, 2016), and a 2016 Center for American Progress (CAP) report entitled “The Mass Incarceration of People with Disabilities in America’s Jails and Prisons” (Vallas, 2016).

Our selections were intended to reflect the range of experiences of disabled people as victims of noninstitutional violence, of police violence, and of institutional violence via incarceration. As such, each report focuses on a different aspect of violence and disability. Although these included reports don’t exhaust the resources meeting our criteria due to the vast number of disability organizations, these three are nationally representative and have been gaining traction among national disability leaders and organizations. This visibility contributed to our decision to include them. Some reports we found did not center on disability or the experience of disability; that is, disability may have been mentioned as a demographic but it was not analyzed. We have not included these in our review.

Bureau of Justice Statistics Report

The BJS report describes the types and amounts of noninstitutional violence involving people with disabilities from 2009 to 2015 (U.S. Department of Justice, 2017a, 2017b).

Purpose. The BJS data (U.S. Department of Justice, 2017b) were collected from the National Crime Victimization Survey (NCVS), in which participants over the age of 12 were asked about the victimization they had experienced. These victimizations were defined as nonfatal personal crimes, including rape, sexual assault, robbery, aggravated assault, simple assault, personal larceny, burglary, and other theft. Interviews were conducted in person, with follow-up interviews conducted either in person or by phone. The report explicitly excluded institutional settings (correctional or hospital facilities) and people who were homeless (U.S. Department of Justice, 2017, p. 8).

Sampling frames. For the data used in the BJS report (U.S. Department of Justice, 2017b), the NCVS identified disabled participants through a screening questionnaire, as “persons who may require assistance to maintain their independence, be at risk for discrimination, or lack opportunities available to the general population because of limitations related to a prolonged (six months or longer) sensory, physical, mental or emotional condition” (p. 8). The BJS report describes disability as “the product of interactions among individuals’ bodies, their physical, emotional, and mental health, and the physical or social environment in which they live, work or play” (p. 8). Importantly, the BJS report also notes some coverage errors based on the inclusion and definitional criteria of disability for its data: the survey instruments and methodologies privileged verbal communication, so they might underestimate levels or types of violence against disabled people. The report uses a criminal justice system–based definition of crime and defines non-fatal violent crime as rape, sexual assault, robbery, aggravated assault, or simple assault.

Key findings. The rate of serious violent crime (rape, sexual assault, robbery, and aggravated assault) for people with disabilities (12.7 per 1,000) was more than three times the rate for others (4.0 per 1,000) and the rate of simple assault (19.6 per 1,000) more than twice as high (8.7 per 1,000). People with cognitive disabilities had the highest victimization rate among the disability types measured for total violent crime (U.S. Department of Justice, 2017a).

Limitations. The data in the BJS report (U.S. Department of Justice, 2017b) exclude people living in institutions. These include institutional group quarters (GQs), correctional institutions, nursing homes, and a large number of others,

many of which exclusively house disabled people (She & Stapleton, 2006). The institutional population is a very small part of the entire population, but it increased from 1.3 percent in 1990 (3.3 million people) to 1.4 percent in 2000 (4.0 million people; She & Stapleton, 2006).

Ruderman Foundation Report

The Ruderman Foundation white paper (Perry & Carter-Long, 2016) focuses on media coverage of police violence and disability from 2013 to 2015.

Purpose. The Ruderman paper (Perry & Carter-Long, 2016) generally describes incidents of violence in public settings. Its discussion of disability and police violence uses an intersectional framework and focuses on three years of media coverage of eight cases. The paper locates four important patterns in those cases. First, “disability goes unmentioned or is listed as an attribute without context.” Second, when it is listed, it is used “to evoke pity or sympathy for the victim” (p. 6). Third, “a medical condition or ‘mental illness’” is often “used to blame victims for their deaths” (p.6). Lastly, in instances where disability is described as part of an intersectional identity in a particular social context, the stories are represented as opportunities for stronger policing models (p. 6).

Sampling frames. The Ruderman paper (Perry & Carter-Long, 2016) relies on a definition of disability that might be consistent with the Americans with Disabilities Act, including the categories of “physical, developmental, intellectual, psychiatric, emotional, and any other form” (p. 5). The CAP report (Vallas, 2016) used the ADA’s definition of disability, which refers to “people with all types of physical, sensory, cognitive, emotional, or psychiatric disabilities, including people with mental health conditions” (p. 26). Both the Ruderman and CAP reports mention mental illness or psychiatric distress as an example of a disability, but neither specifies at what level illness or distress becomes a disability. Mental illness occurs on a continuum of functioning so that its presence may not be enough to classify someone as having a disability. Diagnosis and identification of disability in the case of mental illness are complex issues that go beyond the scope of this article, but they must be noted, as decisions to “identify” disability in reports and the media often do not report corroboration with diagnosticians, due to privacy concerns and the rights of people with mental illness.

The Ruderman paper (Perry & Carter-Long, 2016) does not define “use of force” or “violence,” although cases of severe violence such as killing, strangulation, beating, use of tasers, shooting, and throwing people from their wheelchairs are among those examined.

Key findings. Up to half the people killed by police in the United States are disabled, and almost all well-known cases of police brutality have involved a person with a disability. Yet media coverage of police violence largely fails to note disabilities when Americans are injured or killed by law enforcement.

Limitations. The Ruderman paper (Perry & Carter-Long, 2016) does not consistently mention the ages of the victims in its selected cases. Nor does it analyze the relationships among age, disability, and violence. It also does not discuss whether certain types of disability are more vulnerable to police violence in general or particular kinds of police violence.

Center for American Progress Report

The third data source was the CAP report investigating the mass incarceration of people with disabilities in the United States (Vallas, 2016).

Purpose. The CAP report (Vallas, 2016) reviews violence and lack of accommodations in jails, prisons, and the criminal justice system.

Sampling frames. The CAP report (Vallas, 2016) addresses violence against incarcerated disabled people. The report also focuses on the lack of proper safeguards against inappropriate incarceration, and the lack of safeguards for the civil rights and physical and psychological health for people who are incarcerated.

Key findings. Disabled people are overrepresented in U.S. prisons and jails. A lack of community-based alternatives has contributed to the mass incarceration of disabled people, and they face disparities in access to medical care, accommodations, and disability-related supports when incarcerated.

Limitations. The CAP report (Vallas, 2016) does not analyze the relationship between age, disability, and violence.

Discussion

Using these three data sources, we sought to answer the following questions: (1) What are the characteristics of violence against people with disabilities in the United States? (2) How is the relationship between disability and violence reported (or not reported)? (3) Through a DisCrit lens, what is the missing conversation on violence and disability and its implications for clinicians and practitioners? We first analyzed the three reports to better understand the characteristics of violence against disabled people in the United States, focusing on the frequency and type of violence involved and the experiences of people with disabilities. Second,

we identified the definitions of violence and disability used in the reports, and the type and nature of disabilities described. Finally, we compared the results to further extend the conversation on research into violence and disability.

As noted above, the data from the three reports cannot be compared directly one-to-one. The BJS report focuses on incidents of violence involving people with disabilities, whereas the Ruderman Foundation analyzes what appeared in the news, and the CAP report (Vallas, 2016) synthesizes national statistics, broadly discusses their implications for policy, and highlights the results of incarcerating victims of violence with disabilities. However, this framing analysis does shed light on the social construction of violence involving people with disabilities. These frames are considered “conceptual tools which the media rely on to convey, interpret, and evaluate information” (Neuman, Just, & Crigler, 1992, p. 60) and have implications for how the public perceives and makes meaning about disability. Conceptual tools for discussing violence have been criticized for divorcing issues of institutionalization and incarceration (Ben-Moshe, 2013); here, however, we aim to understand more comprehensively how violence and disability are reported on and analyzed.

Characteristics of Violence against People with Disabilities in the United States

Age. Descriptive results from the BJS data indicate that from 2011 to 2015, for each age group measured except people 65 and older, the rate of violent victimization of people with disabilities was at least 2.5 times the unadjusted rate for those without disabilities. Among those with disabilities, people aged 12–15 had the highest proportion of violent victimization, which has tremendous implications for interventions and policies.

Gender. The BJS (U.S. Department of Justice, 2017b) reports that the rate of violent victimization of males with disabilities was 31.8 per 1,000, as compared to 14.1 per 1,000 among males without disabilities. For females, the rates were 32.8 and 11.4, respectively. Males and females had similar total incidences of violent victimization for every disability type measured except independent-living disabilities.

Although the Ruderman (Perry & Carter-Long, 2016) and CAP (Vallas, 2016) reports do not specify any relationships between gender, disability, and violence, the Ruderman report does review cases involving both men and women. None of the papers specifies the relationship among transgender status, disability, and violence.

Disability type. Among the types of disabilities measured, the BJS report notes that people with cognitive disabilities (defined as serious difficulty in concentrating, remembering, or making decisions because of a physical, mental, or

emotional condition) had the highest rate of total violent crime victimization (57.9 per 1,000), serious violent crime (22.3 per 1,000), and simple assault (35.6 per 1,000). People with hearing disabilities had the lowest total rate.

The CAP report (Vallas, 2016) discusses the difficulty of maintaining mental health while incarcerated. It notes that mental illness may worsen, and people without mental illness may develop it under the conditions of incarceration.

Race. The perspectives on the relationship of violence to race, ethnicity, and disability were inconsistent. The Ruderman paper explicitly argues that disability intersects with race to increase risk of violence and highlights case studies involving African American and First Nations disabled people. The CAP report (Vallas, 2016) notes a higher prevalence of intellectual and developmental disabilities among racial and ethnic minorities of lower income. By contrast, the BJS report (U.S. Department of Justice, 2017b) finds that multiracial disabled people had the highest rates of violent victimization but finds no significant difference in victimization rates among other minority racial and ethnic groups. Notably, unlike people without disabilities, among disabled people Black race was not significantly associated with a higher incidence of violent victimization.

Relationship between Disability and Violence

Definitions of disability. Although all three reports discuss and center their analyses on disabled people, they define the category in different ways. The Ruderman paper (Perry & Carter-Long, 2016) and the CAP report (Vallas, 2016) use one definition and the BJS report (U.S. Department of Justice, 2017b) another. This not only affects the kinds of data presented, it raises questions about the identification and disability-labeling processes used in their data collection. The two definitions refer to the same phenomenon but call out different features of the disability experience in significant ways.

The CAP report (Vallas, 2016) focuses on the inclusion of many different diagnostic categories through which an incarcerated person might receive services. The CAP report's definition of disability is "people with all types of physical, sensory, cognitive, emotional, or psychiatric disabilities, including people with mental health conditions" (Vallas, 2016, p. 26). Disability is treated as a label assigned on the basis of certain physical, mental, or social conditions and which afford a person certain rights.

By contrast, the BJS (U.S. Department of Justice, 2017b) definition focuses on the interaction between a person's body and the environment. In fact, the BJS report does not use the word "disability," nor indeed any diagnostic labels, to talk about the experience of disability or impairment. The BJS' definition of disability is "the product of interactions among an individual's body—including their physical, emotional, and mental health- and the physical and social environment

in which they live, work, or play” (U.S. Department of Justice, 2017b, p. 1). This definition makes a subtle distinction between disability as an inherent characteristic of a person and disability as a result of environments that are inaccessible or mismatched to a person’s particular needs. This shifts the focus on disability away from the particular physical, mental or social characteristics of the individual and onto the way environments are accepting of only certain bodies, minds, and ways of being.

These definitions differ in that one treats disability as a predetermined label agreed upon by all sides, and treats the data on disabled individuals as simple fact, while the other leaves room for discussions of impact and recognition that the actual personal experience of disability is more complex than a particular label or diagnostic decision can often communicate. Importantly, these conversations are not new; defining disability has been a longstanding theoretical and methodological challenge in many fields (for a broad overview of this issue, see Fujiura & Rutkowski-Kmitta, 2001). This issue has also had implications for conversations about incarceration, particularly on mental health and historical conceptions of “normalcy” (Ben-Moshe, 2013) as well as stigma around mental health conditions (Young, Goldberg, Struthers, McCann, & Phills, 2019). These differences are important not just for comparing the reports but because of the questions they raise about how definitions shape our conversations and analyses. How do we decide who has a nonapparent disability? What tools do we use? What weight should self-disclosure have on either of these definitions? Do these differences on the meaning of disability affect how disability is reported on in the media?

Definitions of violence. Victimization is constructed in a range of ways across the three reports. Two focus on violence, but the other takes a more expansive view. The BJS report (U.S. Department of Justice, 2017b) appears to construct violence as occurring just between civilians, as its categories for the relationship of perpetrator to victim include familial and social groups but not the relationship of law enforcement officer to civilian.

The Ruderman Foundation paper (Perry & Carter-Long, 2016), by contrast, focuses solely on police-perpetrated violence against civilians, treating police use of force as synonymous with police violence. As a result, the authors of the report do not discuss what levels of violence might be considered “justified” or “unjustified.”

The CAP report (Vallas, 2016) describes infringements of civil liberties and physical violence against disabled people. This suggests that the concept of victimization should be expanded to include failure to properly provide safe, person-centered institutional care.

Prevention versus accommodation. A significant question navigated in both the BJS (U.S. Department of Justice, 2017b) and CAP (Vallas, 2016) reports involves the overall goal of providing services for disabled people who have come into contact with the justice system, either as victims of violence or as

subjects of incarceration. This distinction means the goal can be framed either as simply providing accommodations for disabled people in jail with the aim of legal compliance; or as keeping people out of jail and in safe environments, a task that requires programming, supports, and building just systems over time to reduce the prevalence of violence against disabled people.

The CAP report in particular (Vallas, 2016) focuses strongly on the prevention of people with disabilities from entering the criminal justice system. It notes that “a growing number of police departments have begun partnering with local health departments and social service providers in their communities to develop pre-arrest and pre-booking diversion programs” to reduce incarceration rates (p. 7). The strategies these communities have employed include law enforcement training, community drop-off centers, and “assertive community treatment,” which includes wraparound services such as mental health support, housing, medication management, and outreach. The CAP report also spotlights the importance of providing accommodations for disabled people who are incarcerated, noting the case of Abreham Zemedagegehu, who was arrested on suspicion of stealing an iPad that he used to communicate and was denied a sign language interpreter or a videophone while in jail for 6 weeks (p. 6). The BJS data (U.S. Department of Justice, 2017b) also do not account for services provided to incarcerated people in jail or answer more complex questions about requests for accommodation or the recidivism rates of incarcerated disabled people.

Race

The reports differed in their accounts of the relationship among violence, race, and disability, with the Ruderman and CAP reports linking minority races to greater vulnerability among disabled people and the BJS report finding only that multiracial disabled people experienced a higher incidence of violence. While this last finding is noteworthy, it is not in line with theoretical views of race, disability, and violence, and it may be a sample-specific datum.

The BJS report (U.S. Department of Justice, 2017b) also finds that people with disabilities had much higher incidences of violent victimization overall than people without. The lack of significant differences in victimization across the Black, White, Hispanic, and Other race groups may indicate that race-based vulnerability to victimization is superseded by vulnerability due to disability. However, this framing contradicts the Ruderman paper (Perry & Carter-Long, 2016) that the combination of minority race and disability results in a unique vulnerability to victimization.

It is possible that this inconsistency is related to the source of perpetration. The Ruderman paper (Perry & Carter-Long, 2016) focuses on police use of violence, whereas the BJS report (U.S. Department of Justice, 2017b) does not investigate police violence. As the CAP report (Vallas, 2016) notes, low-income racial and

ethnic minorities are more likely to come into contact with police, so it may be that the consequences of the intersection of race and disability depend on whether the perpetrator is a civilian or an agent of law enforcement. This is an important area for further research.

Activists from the disability community, largely persons of color, issued a response (Harriet Tubman Collective, 2018) to the Ruderman Foundation paper (Perry & Carter-Long, 2016) to draw attention to the predominantly White male gaze of the analysis, which left the racial analysis of the paper incomplete and lacking. The collective also named several organizations and individuals who have raised issues around violence and incarceration for disabled people of color; these individual stories, collective actions, and advocacy are essential to the definitional work surrounding race and disability, and they point to a potential problem in the reporting and recording of experiences in larger data collections such as the BJS.

Comparisons with Nondisabled Populations

Overall, the BJS report (U.S. Department of Justice, 2017b) finds that people with disabilities face higher rates of violent victimization than people without disabilities, except among those 65 and older. Of those who were victimized, disabled people were also found to be more vulnerable to severe violent victimization than others. This higher level of violence remains consistent when race and gender are controlled for: disabled people reported more violent victimization regardless of race or gender. This increased vulnerability has implications for psychologists in terms of exploring trauma with disabled clients, and researching the social influences on how, where, and to whom these incidents are reported.

In comparison to people without disabilities, however, there was more similarity in rates of violent victimization between the genders. Although men and women with disabilities reported similar rates of violent victimization, among people without disabilities, male sex was associated with greater victimization. This similarity was also found across racial groups of disabled people, with the exception of multiracial people, who had the highest reports of violent victimization in both the disabled and nondisabled groups. For psychologists studying racial inequity in relation to victimization, this highlights the importance of exploring disability and race together. The remaining races showed no significant differences in violent victimization among disabled people, whereas among people without disabilities, Black race was associated with higher incidence of victimization. This finding could indicate that the increased vulnerability caused by disability reaches a certain ceiling, beyond which the effects of race and gender do not contribute any further increase.

This conflicts with the intersectional viewpoint taken by the Ruderman Foundation paper (Perry & Carter-Long, 2016) in which race is considered to contribute to violent victimization by making disabled people vulnerable to racial bias in

law enforcement. It is possible that the higher percentage of known perpetrators among victims with disabilities explains the weaker relationship between race and victimization. Relatives of disabled people, who are likely to share their racial background, make up a larger portion of the perpetrators of violence against them than is the case among nondisabled victims, and this may alter whatever relationship holds between race and victimization among people without disabilities. Social psychologists could explore this conflicting evidence more thoroughly with a careful study of the races of victims and perpetrators, the presence and races of bystanders, and the reporting process. It is well known that minority populations experience cyclical and systemic forms of oppression (Harro, 2000), which may be lost in these reports.

The BJS report (U.S. Department of Justice, 2017b) finds that violence against disabled people is primarily committed by people known to the victim, which may also explain the relationship between disability and intimate partner violence. Feminist theories of intimate partner violence conjecture that social marginalization influences the expression of violence (Dutton & Goodman, 2005; George & Stith, 2014). Therefore, the influence of disability status on intimate partner violence may be to make the rates of victimization among people without disabilities more similar to those with disabilities. Because violence perpetrated by strangers is more common among people without disabilities than among disabled people, intimate partner violence may represent a point of convergence between the two groups. In other words, a major consequence of disability may be that violence by familiar perpetrators is more common, and because by definition intimate partner violence is perpetrated by familiars, the two groups converge in this category of violence.

“Missing” Pieces

Many of the available large datasets collapse disability into a simple binary classification: disability versus no disability. Yet, when we consider the complexities of disability and all that is included under its definition, it raises questions of what this information is actually telling us and how it is being interpreted and consumed by the public. It seems that further research is needed to identify subgroup differences among types of disability. However, this is a double-edged sword, as we must be cautious about overinterpreting and overgeneralizing to all members of any disability subgroup. Furthermore, from an analysis standpoint, it is difficult to collect diagnosis-specific information without adding considerable length to instruments.

Many simpler categorization strategies could be considered: apparent versus nonapparent or less apparent disabilities (or both); physical versus learning or psychiatric disabilities (or a combination). Using these, we could ask questions such as, what subgroups of people with disabilities are most at risk of being victims

of violence? And building on this, which subgroups that also account for race, gender, or LGBT status are most at risk? These questions add complexity to the conversation. We often think that aggregating results into a simple binary helps us protect the identities of people with disabilities. However, by doing so, we may miss indicators of risk factors and opportunities for targeted interventions. In addition, and perhaps most importantly, DisCrit theory and activist work remind us of the need for qualitative accounts of the intersection of violence with race and disability by both disabled people and disabled researchers, particularly those of color and with other intersectional identities.

Conclusions

This review of current research and reported statistics on violence involving disabled people advances several important methodological and analytical findings. First and foremost, we note that violence is experienced by disabled people at disproportionate rates in comparison to nondisabled people. We also note that different methodological definitions of both disability and violence are used across our three sources. A DisCrit conceptual analysis focuses on the consequences of these findings for the everyday lives of people affected by violence; they are a reminder that the way we measure and analyze violence has an impact on the people who experience it and the ways it is addressed. This focus is supported by activist work on these issues. The sources we review here suggest that disabilities have many varied material and psychological impacts related to violence, from greater exposure to violence acts to increased incarceration rates. However, these impacts are difficult to fully understand as they are currently reported, due to differing definitions of disability, violence, and race and a lack of explanation of these intersectional identities and experiences. Further research and explorations are imperative for improving the lives of disabled people living inside ableist systems.

Implications for Social Policy

Our work has several implications for social policy. First, we must intentionally collect demographic data on disability in national surveys on violence. These data must go beyond the binary classification of disabled or nondisabled to allow for more nuanced and critical analyses. Collecting any demographic data on disability is a start, but if the data remain broad and general and the definition of disability remains inconsistent between data sources, we will continue to face incomplete datasets and inaccurate pictures of the national landscape. Collecting more specific disability data would allow psychologists to conduct more advanced analyses and researchers to better assess group-level interactions and differences.

Second, and especially regarding the intersectional nature of much of the police violence against people of color with disabilities, our work adds to the conversation on the experiences of individuals of color with disabilities, including their socioemotional needs, disability awareness, and sense of belonging in schools and communities. We must consider less punitive policies that are centered on helping people with disabilities gain access to the services they need and navigate the oppressive systems that perpetuate ableism.

Access to psychological services may be a particularly difficult initial hurdle, but it would ensure that psychologists have these issues on their minds when working with clients. This difficulty may take multiple forms depending on the client's experiences, but an individual who has experienced violence by law enforcement may have a general mistrust of people in power or helping roles, even psychologists. This may be exacerbated by racial differences between the client and clinician. While there is no one-size-fits-all solution, it is imperative that psychologists be intimately aware of these larger dynamics, which can affect their relationships with clients because of the systemic ableism and oppression potentially faced by clients.

Third, the present work contributes to the literature on victimization, particularly of disabled individuals. It centers the missing conversations and draws attention to aspects of analysis on which further research is needed by including the perspectives of disability in violence-based work. More specifically, the research on various aspects of violence, such as violence and youth, sexual violence, school-based violence, and intimate partner violence, ought to more intentionally include disability in its analyses. While some researchers are doing this work (Forber-Pratt & Espelage, 2018; Hughes, Lund, Gabrielli, Powers, & Curry, 2011; Jones et al., 2012; Lund, 2011), it is apparent that more can be done. Such research includes building partnerships between psychological researchers and clinicians to investigate and inform broader fields of practice and conduct evidence-based research. By neglecting to name and consider disability in our discussions of the victims of violence, we are not fully representing the lived experience of people who have been victimized. Further, we must interrogate the type and nature of these disabilities in relation to race, socioeconomic status, and LGBTQ status to better understand the complete situation. From a policy perspective, in the same way that the reporting of race in national studies is often expected if not required, requiring the reporting and discussion of disability might be a first step in this direction.

More inclusive policies that are less punitive and minimize the discrepancies between disabled and nondisabled individuals will help to combat ableism. Dismantling ableism also requires naming the oppressive systems, including and centering the voices of disabled individuals, and more intentionally and systematically collecting data on disability in all national efforts related to violence and violence prevention.

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