

Project - Assignment 3

Ethnic Profiling in the UK

Group 1.3

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Table of content

Introduction

Ethnic Profiling

Impacts and Consequences

Boateng Incident

Group Processes

Theoretical Framework

Social Identity Theory and Social Categorization Theory

Attribution Theory

Stereotype Content Model

Intergroup Contact Theory

Common Ingroup Identity Model

Intervention

Target Group

Conditions for Effectiveness

Limitations

References

Introduction

In recent times, a recurring topic of discussion within the social framework that has generated much debate is police abuse, mainly against ethnic minority groups. Goodey (2006) mentions that specifically after the terrorist events in the U.S. in 2001 and London in 2005, the term ethnic profiling has been applied in the police and security forces of these countries. Ethnic profiling situations are those in which the authorities in charge make law enforcement decisions based on racial, ethnic, or religious factors rather than on the individual's behaviour (De Schutter & Ringelheim, 2008). As an example, Laurencin and Walker (2020) report that in the US "Black teens are 21 times more likely to be shot and killed by police than white teens". Regarding the UK, black people were over 3 times as likely to be arrested as white people (UK Government, 2020). Therefore, this paper will firstly analyse a recent profiling case through different psychological theories, and secondly offer the blueprint for an intervention designed to reduce discrimination and prejudice among police officers in the UK.

Ethnic Profiling

Impacts and Consequences

In an effort to diminish the occurrence of racial profiling, governments and citizens worldwide are discussing and demanding a substantial improvement of the situation, as this type of violence has serious consequences not only for the victims, but also in different areas of society. In regards to mental and physical health, these incidents cause victims to experience stress, anxiety, and trauma (Laurencin & Walker, 2020). Therefore, it is likely that without effective intervention, confidence in the police will diminish and prejudice against minorities will increase. This spiral reinforces the opposition, aggravates existing problems and can lead to protests and even Riots (King, 2003). Further, according to Novich and Hunt (2017), the gap of trust will widen if no measures are introduced to help reduce prejudice of police officers and minorities.

Boateng Incident

One recent incident in North London that sparked major outrage, was the case of 13-year-old Huugo Boateng and his father, who became victims of unjust police aggression due to ethnic profiling (Iqbal, 2020). When father and son took part in a charity cycling tour, a man nearby was seriously injured with a knife. The victim told the police that the perpetrators were people of colour. As a result, a policeman disguised in civilian clothes took aim at Huugo and pursued him until he was violently arrested with the threat of a taser aimed at his face. His father, Andrew Boateng, was also ordered shortly afterwards to get on his knees and not to resist. Huugo as well as his father and a witness who filmed the event reported an extremely aggressive attitude of the police towards the two cyclists. The two victims of the aggressive arrest described afterwards a feeling of shock and humiliation because

of the involved police officers. One officer justified the arrest by saying that because of the vague description of the offenders, black males on bikes, they stopped the Boatengs. Police officers visited the victims the same evening and asked them about their well-being and offered to enter into a dialogue with the police officers who were responsible, so that every party could share their perspective. Although the police spokeswoman publicly announced that such cases were being taken very seriously, the father of the 13-year-old boy argued that more changes needed to be made within the police force so that young people in particular had more trust in the police. In addition, he mentioned that police officers needed to learn more from such incidents (Iqbal, 2020). In order to better understand this situation we will regard this incident with the use of several field-leading social psychological theories.

Theoretical Framework

Firstly, social identity theory, and its extension social categorization theory assumes that people tend to Self-Categorize, and thus create ingroups and outgroups for the most distinct features (Tajfel, 1978). Additionally, the Stereotype content model states that outgroups are based on two variables: Warmth and Competence (Cuddy et al., 2009). These outgroup judgements have the potential to lead to prejudice and discrimination. Similarly, Attribution theory explains how people attribute causes either to situational or internal factors in other people (Hogg, 2013). Based on these theories, people, including police officers, can experience biases that cause them to discriminate against outgroups, such as people of colour. For the effort of designing an effective prejudice reducing intervention we will therefore make use of firstly Common Ingroup Identity Model, which states that creating an overarching ingroup for two subgroups can result in a more harmonious relationship between the two groups (Dovidio, Gaertner, Ufkes, Saguy & Pearson, 2016). Secondly, Intergroup Contact Theory proposes that different groups experience less prejudice between each other when intergroup contact is seen as positive (Pettigrew, Tropp, Wagner, Christ, 2011).

Social Identity and Self-Categorization Theory

The social identity theory (SIT), developed by Tajfel (1978), which is based on the minimal group paradigm, assumes that individuals self-categorize as belonging to a certain group or several groups, such as a fan of a sports team or student at a specific university. In other words, self-categorization refers to the principle that individuals make judgements about the groups of which they perceive themselves as a member (ingroup) and groups they do not see themselves in (outgroups). Self-categorization and two other aspects, namely group evaluation and the value of the group membership for the self-concept of an individual then form an individual's social identity (Trepte & Loy, 2017).

When interacting with other groups, as human beings we have a general and unavoidable tendency to categorize each other (Fiske, 1998). Within this process, stereotypes, prejudices and

discrimination can arise. The outgroup homogeneity effect could explain the origin of the assignment of stereotypes, prejudices or even the discrimination of individuals belonging to an outgroup. According to Ostrom and Sedikides (1992), the outgroup homogeneity effect is the phenomenon that causes people to consider the individual members of an outgroup as more similar to each other than the members of their ingroup, affecting not only their perception but also their behavior. This is due to the lack of information at the individual level that people have about each member of the outgroup, so they proceed to judge them and even treat them unfairly without considering differences between them (Ostrom & Sedikides, 1992). This is clearly identifiable in the chosen example, where members of a group, in this case policemen, assume that Huugo and Andrew are the criminals and without warning or search they threaten and handcuff them. One of the officers justifies his behavior in the little detailed description of the victim about 'two black men on a bike' and another indicates that the reason for the arrest is because they match the description. In conclusion, the police officers used prejudice and made use of very poor information and proceeded to unfairly arrest two people for having a certain skin color and ride a bike.

An extension to Social Identity Theory can be found in self-categorization theory, which further distinguishes between personal and social identity. The theory states that people's behaviour, attitudes and cognitions are strongly influenced by the salience of an individual's personal or social identity, which vary in degree depending on the situation (Turner, Hogg, Oakes, Reicher, & Wetherell, 1987). According to Turner et al. (1987) this can lead to the process of self-stereotyping, where individuals act less based on personal characteristics but exchange attitudes and behaviour with more similar ones that conform to their ingroup. Holmes and Smith (2012) further argue that since police officers often possess quite different social identities than regular citizens, both parties are likely identifying in strong contrast to each other. Applying this to the case of the Boatengs, the situation of searching for a possibly violent and armed suspect in combination with being in a group of other uniformed police officers, presents a situation in which the salience of the social identity of "being a police officer" is probably higher than in a regular situation.

Stereotype Content Model

In addition to the aforementioned theories, the stereotype content model can also be quite helpful in explaining the incident on the fourth of June.

The stereotype content model (SCM) tries to explain how we see others and the behaviour that fits with it, by splitting this process up into two factors: warmth and competence (Cuddy et al., 2009). Cuddy et al. (2009) say that people ask themselves two questions: (a) "Do they intend to harm me?" (p.3) and (b) "Are they capable of harming me?" (p.3). Looking at these questions, people judge others by the intent and by their ability to act out that intent. Competitors are usually seen as less warm than people who do not compete; people with a high status are often seen as more adequate than people with a lower status (Cuddy et al., 2009). One study showed that the aspects 'warmth' and

‘competence’ can explain 82% of the variance of the image one has of others (Wojciszke, Bazinska, & Jaworski, as cited in Cuddy et al., 2009).

Now that it is explained what the stereotype content model exactly is, it is important to apply it to the example of Huugo Boateng and his father. The behaviour shown by the police officers was quite intense and did not fit that situation. The question now is, why did the police officers act the way they did? As mentioned before, the way we see others is based on the factors of ‘competence’ and ‘warmth’, and behaviour is based on the impression we make of others. Therefore, it is important to look at the SCM-model and research that has been done on it. Fiske, Cuddy, Glick, and Xu (2002) argue that black people are generally perceived as moderates on both scales “warmth” and “competence”. They are, therefore, not necessarily seen as very friendly and good people, but they are also not seen as the most capable or high in status. The behaviour the police officers showed could be an intimidation, since the Boatengs could be seen by them as less nice and low in status. However, the behaviour of the police officers could also be explained by that the Boatengs could have been seen as not friendly, not really capable, but still capable enough to commit a crime.

Attribution Theory

The Attribution Theory, according to Hogg (2013), argues that people tend to assume that the behavior of an outgroup is based on its own characteristics and disposition, while the behavior of the ingroup is based on the situation and external factors. This is an attribution dimension of stereotyping just like essentialism. Essentialism is a process similar to attribution theory and highlights that people tend to "transform objects or traits associated with intergroup attitudes into immutable properties or essences of outgroups" (Hogg, 2013). When essentialism focuses on negative characteristics of the members of the outgroup, this process results in another one called dehumanization, which in turn is a process in which people lose their sense of humanity, and as mentioned by Smith (2014), they attribute to others the nature of subhuman beings. As a result of this dehumanization, it is easier to adopt violent behaviors and harm individuals belonging to certain outgroups regardless of the damage that may be caused, such as wars, genocides and in the case of this article, a wave of violence and police abuse towards ethnic minorities as mentioned in the introduction of this paper (Hogg, 2013). Based on this theory and associating it with the Boateng case, it could be concluded that the police workforce attributes criminal behaviors of certain people belonging to an ethnic minority group to internal factors and the essence of this group that cannot be changed. Thus starting the dehumanization process that can end with aggression and even death caused by the use of excessive force by the police. Although the chosen example did not end in the deaths of Andrew and Huugo, the force used by the police against a 13-year-old boy in order to arrest him is striking.

Intergroup Contact Theory

A potential theory that might be able to diminish negative prejudice and discrimination against certain outgroups such as minority groups is Intergroup Contact Theory. The theory revolves around the effects of different groups, so called intergroups, being in close proximity and contact. Intergroup contact can have positive effects, but also negative ones (Pettigrew et al., 2011). Negative experiences with an outgroup usually leads to a more negative view on outgroups. Hence simply intergroup contact is not enough. It has to be positive intergroup contact or else the negative stereotypes or discrimination can intensify. Conclusively, the intervention needs to include positive intergroup contact (Pettigrew et al., 2011).

Common Ingroup Identity Model

The reformation of perceived ingroup-outgroup differences is not always the easiest way in creating a harmonious relationship between the conflicting groups. Manipulating the identity focus can therefore help in various ways. Through a common ingroup identity, the focus of the groups might be shifted towards recognising oneself and the others as part of a different, more broad ingroup as citizens of their own country (Dovidio, Gaertner, Ufkes, Saguy & Pearson, 2016). In the specific example of Huugo Boateng and his father, the situation might have occurred in a more smoothly fashion if the police force did not see these people as outgroup members due to their skin colour, but as an ingroup due to their heritage from the same country, England. If the intervention were to achieve that policemen start to consider suspects of different ethnicities as being in the same ingroup as they are, there is a good chance that racially motivated actions are reduced (Dovidio, Gaertner, Ufkes, Saguy & Pearson, 2016).

Intervention

Based on the previously presented case and corresponding theoretical framework, the blueprint for an Intervention, the *Social Sports Programme (SSP)* was designed. With this intervention we aim to achieve positive intergroup contact in accordance with propositions by Pettigrew et al. (2011), as well as to create a common ingroup of communities and police officers. To achieve this, in-training police officers will be required regularly to participate in the organisation and execution of a sports related activity within an ethnically diverse community. By this both becoming officers and people of colour will be working equally towards a common goal in a fun and healthy context and will also be presented the opportunity to form friendships among each other.

Target Group

In order to guarantee a functional intervention, a fitting target group needs to be chosen. Police officers in training were identified as a suitable target group, as experiences in police training have profound impacts on job behaviour (Klinger, 2012). Moreover, Heslop (2011), regards the process of police training not only as the simple acquisition of a new skill set, but the evolution into

the identity of an officer. As a consequence, police training can be seen as an important step in the socialization of police officers.

Next, the intervention has to ensure involvement of this target group. Consequently, the decision was made to implement the intervention as a mandatory part into regular police training. Furthermore, the idea of community contact by British police officers also conforms with educational guidelines for neighbourhood policing, which stresses the importance of “regular formal and informal contact with communities” (College for Policing, 2018, p. 5). Therefore, police training should involve the formation of community engagement from early on.

Conditions for Effectiveness

For the intervention to be effective, there are several conditions that should be met. To be taken into consideration are most importantly factors such as feasibility of the intervention and the originality of the intervention. These factors will be further discussed in this section.

Changing the Training

To make the intervention effective, the intervention needs the approval of other parties involved. The most important stakeholder involved, are the committees that decide upon the police officers training programme. Without the approval of these committees, the intervention cannot happen. Therefore, the presentation of a resulting intervention must fully convince the stakeholders involved in legislative matters, with the benefits outweighing the costs.

Positive Mindset

As previously mentioned in the theoretical framework, a positive intergroup contact is required to effectively decrease prejudice between different groups. An important determinant of that is the mindset of the participating individuals. With a negative attitude towards the intervention, the contact might not be harmonious but rather hostile or otherwise negative. As this might endanger the effectiveness of the intervention, a positive intergroup contact must be ensured in order to fully harvest the benefits of the intervention.

Hidden Agenda

Police officers in training will not be informed that the actual goal is to decrease racism and the focus and framing of the intervention will lie on personal growth of police officers to increase their capabilities and quality of the training of becoming a police officer.

The reasoning behind this decision is that racism and discrimination are sensitive topics. Directly confronting police officers in training with the problematic nature of ethnic profiling within the police force could lead to defensive reactions, which in turn could decrease the willingness to cooperate and interact with people of colour.

Participation of People of Colour

In order to make sure the intervention is effective, it is important of course to include the people of colour in the intervention. This will be done by giving them the option to participate in a sports game, in which police officers will be joining as well. The sports games will be held in black neighbourhoods in cooperation with institutions that are already existing in that neighbourhood. By giving them a place in which they feel home, which is close, and which they are already familiar with, the researchers hope that black people will join the sports games. In addition, it is thought that having the intervention to be a fun event, which will be beneficial for the community, will make people of colour want to join the sports games.

Feeling Part of a new Group: Re-Categorization

As mentioned above in the part 'Common Ingroup Identity Model', a way to make sure that people have less prejudice towards others is to re-categorize their original group into a group that involves people of outgroups. In order to meet this condition for effectiveness, it was decided to have mixed teams in the sports games. This way, police officers are in the same team as people of colour. In the game, they have to work together to win, which will create a feeling of a new group. This new, re-categorized group will reduce prejudice towards the people of colour.

Equality

It is important for both sides, people of colour and the police officers in training, to feel as equals. In society, there is often a difference in equality between people of colour and officers, since police officers have to make sure people abide by the law. They get certain tools for that, which gives them a certain 'power' over others, including over the group 'people of colour'. MacDonald and Stokes (2006) show in their study that people of colour generally distrust the police in their area more than others. To make sure this condition is met, there are sports games in which there are mixed teams consisting of police officers and people of colour. There are no differences in status within these teams. People have to cooperate with each other to win the game. In addition, there will be a third-party facilitator to make sure that both parties are treated equally.

A Diverse Offer of Activities

Since the participation is obligatory for police officers in training, it was argued that it is important to offer these police officers a diverse offer in activities they can choose from to participate in. This to make sure that for all police officers there is something that they would enjoy doing, and that they have a positive attitude towards the obligation. If they join the sports game with a negative mindset, this will not be beneficial for the interaction between the two groups.

Offer Guidance and Coordination for the Intervention

In order to make sure that conflict does not arise during the intervention, a third-party facilitator will be present during the sports games. A third-party can help with keeping the peace and making sure the intervention between the two groups will go smoothly. The third-party facilitator will be mostly

looking at the process of the intervention, instead of working towards a certain outcome. This will lead to more satisfied groups and a better outcome of the intervention (Karambayya & Brett, Karambayya et al., Lewicki and Sheppard, as cited in Giebels, Ufkes, & Erp, 2014).

Originality and Costs

Although it is not possible to preclude the existence of similar interventions, it was decided to follow an alternative approach to achieving an effective outcome of the intervention, namely to have the increased intergroup contact to decrease discrimination or ethnic profiling in general, as a hidden goal. In addition, the goal of this intervention is to reduce racism, discrimination, and prejudice within police officers. An intervention made by the The Hague Police Unit (n.d.), looks quite similar to our own intervention at first. However, this intervention is mostly focused on improving the relationship between police officers and residents of that certain neighbourhood and creating more trust. It is not focused on ethnic profiling, which our intervention is.

The costs are kept relatively low, since the intervention takes place only one afternoon a month, with police officers having it part of their training programme to volunteer at already existing institutions. However, the biggest cost factor is the education and presence of a facilitator. This facilitator is necessary to make sure the contact will go smoothly between both parties, which is a must for the intervention. Therefore, we argue that the benefits outweigh the costs.

Conclusion

All in all, looking at all the conditions for effectiveness, the intervention is expected to be quite feasible. While the amount of conditions might look overwhelming at first glance, they individually do not pose a high threat to the feasibility of a resulting intervention. Costs are, overall, kept quite low, the time investment is minimal, and there are multiple ways to establish positive intergroup contact. However, there are some limitations that might decrease the feasibility.

Limitations

Various limitations can be found within the blueprint. For one, the environment in which both parties act is not completely controllable. One can try to lay the best groundwork possible for a harmonious interaction between each other, but if the intergroup contact will be positive cannot be expressed with certainty and the likelihood of succeeding in every scenario is unlikely. Thus, the intervention might reduce discrimination on a larger scale, but can fail in certain scenarios, facilitating negative intergroup behaviour and therefore strengthening prejudice.

Furthermore, lack of trust may decrease the likelihood of participation by people of colour in the intervention. Through early learned distrust in the police force, their motivation to participate might be hindered partially or even completely (The Opportunity Agenda, 2016). Additionally, this might add to the likelihood of situations occurring in which the atmosphere is rather tense and the intergroup contact not necessarily positive. The consequences of that being mentioned above.

A last limitation would be the willingness of police educators to include this intervention as a permanent part of police training. The intervention resulting from this blueprint needs to convince the stakeholders involved in legislating the police training, in order to become a part of the training process. This might prove difficult due to potential arising doubts concerning funding, a limited time frame or the effectiveness of the intervention based on its experiential nature.

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One of the most recent ethnic profiling events that went around the world causing a stir, debate, and protests, is the death of George Floyd at the hands of the US police in a clear demonstration of police abuse captured on video. This is one of many cases of ethnic discrimination experienced by minorities, which occurs more frequently than might be thought.

