

Lessons learned from participatory discrimination research: Long-term observations and local interventions

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In this paper, we argue that racism and discrimination research has not used enough participatory and intensive methods. We argue that the commonly used cross-sectional methods have led to an emphasis on both abstract and generalizable theories and also on interventions that stress verbal increases in ‘cultural awareness’ and the like.

Drawing on our long-term research with a refugee community, we present examples of subtle and everyday discriminations that would not be documented using questionnaires or even interview methodologies. We draw on examples from minority discrimination, religious discrimination, everyday discrimination, and discrimination in bureaucracies, with some of the finer contextual analyses provided for the last of these. The implications for designing interventions are briefly examined.

There have been many decades of research in social psychology concerning discrimination and racial prejudice. Most of this research has been strongly ‘top-down’ and guided by theoretical or basic research approaches, sometimes justified by Lewin’s (unsupported) declaration that “there is nothing so practical as a good theory” (1951, p. 169; Bishop & Browne, 2006). Such theories include social categorization, group conflict, and biased information processing. However, when we look at the few interventions based on such basic research findings that have actually been implemented, compared to the amount of research resources put into such basic research, we wonder whether the theory building has benefited more than the people on the ground.

Based on intensive community research and work with refugee, indigenous and other communities—in short, by adopting a different methodology—we have found a different picture of discrimination that does not easily fit with current theories of discrimination, and one which suggest very different interventions. What we have found supports both other ethnographic approaches to discrimination, and also the efforts being given to study everyday discriminations rather than just extreme forms (e. g., Bell & Nkomo, 1998; Broman, Mavaddat & Hsu, 2000; Byng, 1998; Carroll, 1998; Connolly & Keenan, 2002; Cowlshaw, 2004; Edmunds, 1994; Essed, 1991a, 1991b;

Feagin, 1991; Goto, Gee, & Tekeuchi, 2002; Hein, 2000; Mellor, 2003, 2004; St. Jean & Feagin, 1998; Swim, Hyers, Cohen, Fitzgerald, & Bylsma, 2003; Trudgen, 2000).

One of the most important things we have learned from 10 years of participatory research with Somali communities is that discriminations, even simple everyday discriminations that most people would consider a minor inconvenience, affect people in many different ways and in all areas of their lives. This is not only from cumulative stress (Clark, Anderson, Clark & Williams, 1999; Kessler, Mickelson & Williams, 1999; Moritsugu & Sue, 1983; Williams, Yu, Jackson & Anderson, 1997), but also from much more subtle effects on people’s lives.

For example, we found that issues in the Somali community that had been explained to us in terms of ‘essential Somali qualities’ were often due in large part to avoidance of situations of racial or religious discrimination. In one such case, we were asked to facilitate exercise classes for the Somali women because the women felt that they were not walking as much as they used to—evoking images of African village women walking to the local markets for food—and because they all used cars now instead. Others had suggested to us that Somali women did not walk much because they were ‘lazy’ and ‘overweight’ or that they preferred to have others chauffeuring them around. From both our informal observation and our formal research, it seems clear that many of the women did not walk

because of experiencing discrimination, such as staring, verbal abuse, teasing, and rude comments when they did walk (Guerin, Diiriye, Corrigan & Guerin, 2003). Many women were using cars not because they were unhealthy from not walking, but because they were avoiding discrimination—a sad indictment on our society.

Our original plan was that discrimination would be one topic we would study as part of a long-term series of studies. However, discrimination became part of every topic we studied, including housing, mental health, employment, women's health, religious practices, family life, youth, dealing with bureaucracy, and education. Our witnessing this widespread discrimination across so many areas also gives an indication of the powerful effects discrimination has in the lives of people. It also led us to suggest changes to methodology and intervention, since discrimination no longer seemed like a separable topic that could be studied independently of other social behaviours.

We argue that the 'top-down' approach is not useful in this area. We suggest two main changes to focus on for research and understanding: first, that the local context needs longer and more sustained observations instead of brief cross-sectional contacts; and second, that the development of interventions needs to be more local than general or theoretical. We will illustrate these points by first going through some areas of our research, and then bringing the points into a closer focus and suggesting what needs to be done next.

Discrimination as a Minority

African refugees often become minority groups within the countries in which they have been resettled. This can involve colour (usually as a black minority), religion (usually for African Muslims), and refugee status. There are well known effects for minorities within societies, and especially within either white or colonial societies, but these will not be outlined here (e.g., Chapter 6 of Guerin, 2004). Instead, a few of the less obvious points will be made about the consequences of being a minority.

First, re-settlement lands refugees in countries where they are not only a national minority but also a group that is poorly understood by the majority. That is, in most cases the resident population has little knowledge

of the group and their background or practices. It is not just being a minority that has important consequences, but also being a member of a misunderstood or completely unknown group.

Unknown minorities have various social properties not of their own making. For example, unknown minorities have little power to enact consequences on the resident population. Their presence provides the resident population the opportunity to talk abstractly and without a factual basis—especially in the common social forms of rumor and urban legends (Guerin & Miyazaki, 2006). Finally, the presence of unknown minorities provides the resident population with the opportunity to use the problems and issues arising for other purposes that suit them, for example, as issues during an election.

A second less obvious effect of being a minority is one that has only become apparent to us after some years of participatory research. This concerns the absence of role models for youth and others in the resident society, although this differs between different countries of resettlement. For example, in the United States, black African refugees have a number of important role models to look up to as black people who have 'made it', including politicians, sports stars, successful business people, television and movie 'personalities', and senior people in the education fields. The same applies to the United Kingdom, with some black persons of African or Caribbean origin as role models for success. In New Zealand, and most of Scandinavia, on the other hand, there are almost no such role models, where the history of black migration is very recent. In terms of minority religions, the same is true. So, leaders and role models are almost exclusively 'white' but rarely are black or former refugees.

This lack of role models not only affects the refugee population who are resettled, but also the resident population since there may be few exemplars of people of colour or minority religions to counter their abstract language strategies against minorities (Guerin, 2003a, 2003b). The only "factual" sources of information most people can get on Somali, for example, are the reports of terrorists hiding in Somalia, the movie *Black Hawk Down*, and the occasional media-stereotyped articles on female

circumcision, none of which are very accurate or useful.

The effects described above are subtle, and we have found that common social science methods, even including interviews, do not find out information about what is happening. Most of the above points cannot be easily verbalized or reported, and there are other reasons why they might not get reported, so they do not get reported often.

Religious Discrimination

Many refugee groups also face religious discrimination. Since the September 11th events and the London bombings, many westerners have become more vocal in stating their negative views of Muslims, especially through the media (Gale, 2006). As mentioned above, many westerners in countries of resettlement know little about other religions and this will be one reason for the heavy reliance on the media for information. Media portrayals, however, are typically unbalanced, misrepresentative and have powerful effects. For example, Muslim women in a recent study of ours reported that the whole atmosphere seemed to change after September 11th, and there was a foreboding sense of menace in shops and elsewhere (Veelenturf, Guerin & Guerin, 2005). Women in the same study also reported that they felt that the atmosphere was different for them after any 'bad' media coverage, stemming, they report, from the media dramatizing the issues, giving inaccurate reporting, making generalizations to all Muslims, and failing to recognise the huge diversity among Muslims.

To illustrate this from our participatory and interview research with Muslim women, mainly African and Middle-Eastern, we will outline some contexts reported when we explored the issues of headscarves being worn for religious reasons. Such issues have gained prominence from the French ban on headscarves in schools and elsewhere and a case in the USA of a woman and her employer having death threats made because she wore a hijab to work. In New Zealand, there was a court case where concern about wearing a burqa was highlighted because the prosecution claimed that she could lie easier when wearing a burqa. There has also been opposition to Muslim women wearing veils in western countries because it supposedly signifies

oppression and servitude.

While this is only one example of religious discrimination, when looked at in a wider context the whole argument is full of holes and ignores most of the detail, a result of cross-sectional information and methods. The idea that veils are a demonstration of oppression is too simplistic, abstract and out of context, since we could say the same for western men and women 'forced' to wear certain dress codes to work (such as a tie). The oversimplification of an issue (such as the notion that veils are a demonstration of oppression), is used as a strategy in a local context. This oversimplification can be challenged with information such as we present briefly now.

First, wearing veils for Muslims has many origins and many different religious meanings. Additionally, in many contexts, Muslim men also wear forms of head-coverings, but are not labeled as 'oppressed'. For example, in a volunteer English language class for men, run by one of the authors, usually about one third of the men wore some form of head-covering every lesson. Many Muslim women since the 1980s choose to wear a veil, and some see veiling as a good corrective to the "beauty myth" of western countries or can be worn as a symbol of rejecting western ways.

The veils, hijab and burqas themselves are also highly diverse and there are different social strategies of wearing them. We have seen teenage girls wear them in a highly flirtatious way when boys are around, even though the veil is still the same. Women can wear plain ones or very fancy and coloured ones that stand out at weddings and other community events. The functions of veils are also diverse, and originally for some Somali women, for example, veils were only needed if men were around who were strangers, non-kin, or marriageable, and that was often rare so women did not wear a veil at all (McGown, 1999). Therefore, some women took up wearing the hijab or veils only upon moving to a new country. In fact, some Somali women even arrived in New Zealand without owning a hijab or veils and had to buy or borrow one quickly.

Finally, it has been argued that our western understanding of veils and burqas is probably derived from colonial literature that is written by non-Muslims (Zine, 2001), and the criticisms are

therefore very condescending for that reason as well. Veils also have functional equivalents in any society and non-Muslims have functional equivalents such as wearing dark sunglasses, and holding poker faces to disguise feelings and thoughts (Guerin, 2001; Murphy, 1964).

The point of going through this detail is precisely to show that abstract analyses that rely on small amounts of information, usually taken cross-sectionally in time, are persuasive but not sustainable. The function of veils and the like are micro-social and require more intensive methods than self-reports in questionnaires or interviews. The majority of the talk that sustains religious discrimination for wearing veils is unsubstantiated and misses the historical, social and cultural detail and diversity, even more so for other religious or cultural practices such as female genital cutting (Guerin & Elmi, 2004).

Everyday Discrimination

There are many forms of everyday discrimination and the current thinking is that the stress effects are cumulative (Clark, Anderson, Clark & Williams, 1999; Kessler, Mickelson & Williams, 1999; Moritsugu & Sue, 1983). That is, any one incident might be innocuous but the lifetime accumulation of incidents can lead to stress, anger, frustration, or other signs (Feagin, 1991) and impacts on health (WHO, 2001). Feagin (1991) found that these effects were all occurring for his sample of middle-class, professional Black Americans, not just poor Black Americans. These professional people reported being pulled over regularly by police, especially if they drove an expensive car, of being watched closely in shops, and of shop keepers not wanting to touch their hands when giving them change. A more thorough review of the literature on everyday discrimination has been summarized elsewhere (Guerin, 2005a).

Common situations in which everyday forms of discrimination occur are in education, employment/work, housing, everyday social interactions, when shopping, in dealings with bureaucracy, social conversation, media representations, and in dealings with police and other authorities (Guerin, 2005a). Common everyday practices of discrimination include assuming things about people, avoidance, giving bad service, bullying, discouragement, exclusion, extra checking, failing to help, being followed

around in shops as if suspicious, frequent stopping, harassment, hiring biases in employment, firing biases in employment, ignoring, jokes/teasing, miscommunication, name calling, not providing insurance, not touching, not sitting next to you, physical abuses, racist graffiti, not renting, rudeness, segregation, being singled out, staring, setting up structural barriers, being unfriendly neighbours, verbal prejudice, withholding, and workplace discriminations (Guerin, 2005a).

While overt and salient forms of discrimination can be easily observed and verbally reported in questionnaires and interviews, detecting and documenting subtle and everyday forms of discrimination also requires a radical change in methodology. Micro-social contexts and details are required, and this entails participation in the field, repeated interviews rather than one-off interviews, and a strong and real relationship with the people involved. It also requires interventions to be derived *in situ* from the participatory analyses leading to reliance on forms of action research and participatory intervention.

Further to these changes in applied methodology, a great deal of everyday discrimination occurs as verbal or language forms, and much of it is not meant as discriminatory even though it certainly has that effect on recipients (Guerin, 2003a). This might be simply making fun of someone's name, or getting a laugh by using a stereotype, or calling someone names. But other parts of the verbal discrimination arise from making assumptions that are simply untrue but for which the listeners do not have the conversational resources or skills to reply in a way that might stop it. This means further methodological changes are required to include conversational or discourse analyses as part of the research methods, since verbal reporting of discourse (surveys and questionnaires) will not provide the detailed analyses required. Recording 'natural' conversations and verbal exchanges need to be part of the methodology since strategic uses of words is a large part of discrimination and racial prejudice (Guerin, 2003a). Much of this is now happening in this area (e. g., Augoustinos, Tuffin & Sale, 1999; Condor, 2006; Durrheim, 2005; Guerin, 2003a; Lecouteur & Augoustinos, 2001).

Discrimination in Bureaucracies

Much discrimination has always occurred within bureaucracies, in the ways that service providers treat clients, but research on discrimination within bureaucracies is only slowly growing (Bowling, Phillips, Campbell & Docking, 2004; Cropley, 2002; Essed, 1991a; Gunaratnam, 2001; Hollands, 2001; Howitt & Owusu-Bempah, 1999; Morgan, 1999; Trudgen, 2000). This is probably because it is difficult to study this topic in a practical sense of getting access to organizations and examples of discrimination. The area can also be difficult to research ethically because of the implications of negative findings.

To understand discrimination in bureaucracies better, we participated with refugees and migrants when dealing with bureaucracies, either as advocates or as friends. Through participation in a support group of government and non-government agencies involved with refugee resettlement, we also spent time talking informally with those in bureaucracies about clients and thereby gaining insight into the bureaucrat's side of the story. We found that this long-term, participatory approach, from both sides of the fence, illustrated dynamics that would not be understood from one perspective only. For example, viewing discrimination solely as a refugee advocate could lead to suggesting that staff of an agency need 'cultural sensitivity' training because they act in discriminating ways. However, a closer look from both sides shows that the problems are more structural in nature, as revealed through longer-term discussions with staff. It would not have been useful to investigate 'racists' or a 'racism' residing 'in' the staff (Guerin, 2005a). Discovering the specific local context assists interventions to address the situation rather than applying broad general or theoretical principles which might not be appropriate.

One issue relating to discrimination among bureaucrats is whether the discrimination results from or is exacerbated by contact with minorities or whether contact with minorities reduces discrimination. For example, if people begin working for bureaucracies and already discriminate against minority clients, as they increase their contact with those groups and begin to understand them better and see their

viewpoint, do they become less discriminating? This fits with many of the current theories of discrimination and prejudice that having contact with 'outgroups' under the right conditions leads to less discrimination and prejudice (Goto, Gee & Tekeuchi, 2002; Hewstone, 1994, 1996; Miller & Brewer, 1984; Pettigrew, 1998; Walker & Crogan, 1998). While such contact hypotheses never claimed that all and any contact would lead to better relationships and understanding, there has been little exploration of the specific, local conditions that are required to reduce discrimination and prejudice. Unfortunately, from our understanding, by the time the local conditions are incorporated there is little that the original, abstract contact hypothesis is saying that is of much added value (Guerin, 2004).

Our experience, on the other hand, like that of some others (Dixon & Durrheim, 2003; Dixon & Reicher, 1997; Hollands, 2001), is that contact has much more subtle and strategic effects. For example, we have observed new staff coming into a bureaucracy full of understanding, goodwill and lack of discrimination, eager to help the most struggling clients. After six months or so we have seen this behaviour change, with the staff members stereotypically talking about groups and treating people differently based on ethnicity (cf. Cropley, 2002). This cannot be attributed to, or blamed on, either the clients or the bureaucrats (although cross-sectional research methods almost certainly would get the wrong idea), but we believe it comes about through a variety of situational factors that are quite common. To help see this, we will give some examples of these factors based upon our participatory research alongside Somali.

Strangers and Family

The majority of refugees come from societies in which the main social relationships are those of kin-based or close extended families and communities. These are built from a variety of practices and in turn allow a number of social properties that define them (Guerin, 2004, 2005b). People can do things with family networks that they cannot do with networks of friends or acquaintances. For example, family members tend to know each other (and can therefore report both good and bad things about members to others) whereas networks of friends or acquaintances tend not to know others in the

network as much, especially family, meaning that they can report less to the others who are important (more of these social properties are summarized in Table 3 of Guerin, 2005b).

The point of this is that bureaucracies are built on stranger relationships or contractual relationships (a term sociologists use), whereas the strategies for social influence, persuasion, monitoring, networking, and bonding for most refugee groups (and indigenous groups) are built upon strong, interrelated family groups forming communities. This means that the styles of interaction and influence that people in close families and communities are most familiar with will be either inappropriate or ineffective with people in bureaucracies. This is where building social relationships through gifts, as would be acceptable in close networks, can turn into bribery when tried within bureaucracies (e.g., Achebe, 1988).

What this means is that misunderstandings are very likely to arise when a client with ‘family network’ strategies of social influence attempts to find their way through a bureaucracy that is built on stranger or contractual relationships. Those working in the bureaucracy get the wrong impression, and often a bad impression, of such clients because they are trying to achieve very different ends.

A Begging Situation

A second factor in developing discriminatory practices amongst workers in bureaucracies is that, almost by definition, bureaucrats only see clients in a context of asking for something, even when that ‘something’ is usually an entitlement. Most of the relevant bureaucracies are welfare agencies looking after housing, income, employment, economic or family needs. Thus, bureaucrats get a narrow vision of people from refugee groups because they see only a limited, and not very flattering, range of behaviors and activities. This can give the impression that “they are all the same”, “they are all lazy”, and that they are “all helpless and cannot do anything for themselves”. These statements, even heard from seasoned workers in the field, can arise from limited contact in a limited domain. Even though these issues are the same for non-refugee people who are accessing services, service workers may not develop the same perceptions of non-refugees because there

is more contact with non-refugees outside of the service situation. In these cases, there is either not the same discriminatory practices taking place, or the discriminatory practices are directed differently—such as towards those with mental health issues.

This is further complicated for refugees in that many have a history of having to beg or ask for resources. From being in a refugee situation, most food, clothing and shelter would have been provided by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and other agencies and so there is a long history of asking and negotiating for resources. This becomes difficult when refugees are in a country of resettlement and bureaucrats are not used to working with people who have this history and so can react negatively to the presenting behaviours. Similarly, bureaucratic policies are usually written based on characteristics of the majority of service users and fail to accommodate unique characteristics of refugees, such as entitlements when the children were not born in New Zealand or the lack of official documentation of things such as death or adoption. This further complicates the interaction between service providers and refugees.

“Thank you”, Politeness and Other Misunderstandings

There are also specific misunderstandings that arise from the bureaucratic situation, and especially between different community groups. For example, we have had bureaucrats tell us that “those Somalis are not very nice people; they are very rude”, whereas “those Iraqis are such nice people”. Upon further observation and questioning over a longer period, we believe that some of this was attributable to a specific factor: that culturally, some Somali, particularly older Somali and during early resettlement, did not say “please” and “thank you” in the same way most New Zealanders and Australians do. Many men, especially, do not need to do this within their families, and most of their community members are family, so this means that most of the time they do not need to use these forms of politeness since politeness is usually shown within the context for most close family rather than needing to be made explicit (Brown & Levinson, 1987; Guerin, 2003b). These and other differences can lead to the wrong impression once bureaucrats

spend some time with clients, which is why we believe it takes time to develop more appropriate ways to interact.

Another example that is very common amongst all groups with strong extended family and community ties is that of being late for appointments. The implication for bureaucrats is that this is indicative of people who are lazy, do not care, or both. We found this occurring for migrant groups, refugee groups, indigenous groups, and others and was a very common impression. Because this is widespread our methodology has been to spend time following up specific examples *in situ* rather than discussing the issue in principle or just asking people in cross-sectional studies how they get that impression.

We found that, in most cases, there were two overriding considerations. First, we found that community and family commitments often interfered with getting to appointments on time. With very large families and the demands of resettlement, these commitments were time consuming and frequent, especially during the early resettlement period. Additionally, we found that histories of having to wait a long time for appointments also dampened the urgency of getting to appointments early or on time.

Second, we found that appointments and time-management were more important to stranger or contractual relationships than to family and close community relationships (Harris, 1984, 1987). People who most often are involved in family and close community relationships, rather than stranger or contractual relationships, may not then engage in the stranger relationships in the same way as people who frequently engage in stranger relationships. Conversely, people who most often engage in stranger relationships may then find that interacting within family and close community relationships is challenging, such as often having unexpected visitors.

The point here is that impressions can be easily made and lead to prejudicial or discriminatory practices when a more detailed analysis of the situation shows many factors lead to this. It is not about intergroup conflict but, rather, it is more about the local shaping of strategic social behaviour. This is why long-term and intensive applied methodologies are required.

Language Strategies

Bureaucratic language can be very useful for making decisive sounding remarks about certain groups and also for avoiding the consequences of making discriminatory or prejudicial remarks. First, staff working with ethnic groups can claim first hand experience or personal knowledge as a basis for establishing certain facts or beliefs about groups, especially if hedged or prefaced to avoid responsibility afterwards (Beattie & Doherty, 1995; Shuman, 1993; Tusting, Crawshaw & Callen, 2002). E.g., *“I’m not one to talk badly of people, but I’ve spent a lot of time with Somali [albeit in the office setting] and know them well, and I am more than ever convinced that they are just lazy to the bone, unlike the Iraqi who are such nice people. Yes, if you had spent as much time as I have with Somali you would agree.”* So working in a bureaucracy allows a variety of privileged strategies to claim or warrant knowledge in this way, even if misguided or wrong.

Second, the language strategies or discourses surrounding discrimination are complex but there are numerous ways of avoiding what would otherwise be negative consequences for saying such things (Guerin, 2003a; van Dijk, 1987, 1992). Even blatant statements such as *“Those Somali are all lazy”* can be easily hedged, *“Oh there are some conscientious ones, but they get dragged down by the rest”*, or bolstered in the ways mentioned above, *“It sounds prejudiced but if you had seen them as much as I have you would agree.”*

The Backroom Culture

The final local factor we will mention comes from observations of the talk going on in the backroom of the bureaucracy. Informants have told us that the norm is to make ‘funny’ or exaggerated jokes about the groups in the backroom although in most cases with no real intent of being discriminatory or nasty about it. As argued elsewhere, however, even if it is not ‘really meant’ to be nasty, such talk can be just as harmful and even more insidious (Guerin, 2003a, 2005b). This is because it can promulgate the talk without the speakers taking any responsibility for it, and also because the interventions need to be of a special sort since just raising awareness of the groups or prohibiting such talk can backfire. For example,

prohibiting talk that is used in the first place for humorous or social reasons can make that talk even more valuable or useful because it has become even more wicked (Guerin, 2004).

The point of these subtle contexts for bureaucratic discrimination is that they are unlikely to be picked up through traditional social science methods such as surveys and questionnaires. All we have said here depended upon using long-term and participatory approaches.

Discrimination in Other Areas of Life

There are many other areas of life where discrimination becomes a problem and can either hurt the refugees or restrict their options. In looking closely at employment situations, for example, we, as well as others, have found that discrimination is a (usually silent) force keeping refugees (especially if black or Muslim) out of jobs or only in part-time or lower-paid jobs (Deitch, Barsky, Butz, Chan, Brief & Bradley, 2003; Guerin, Guerin, Diiriye & Abdi, 2005; Gunaratnam, 2001; Mesthenos & Ioannidi, 2002). Such discrimination might involve dress codes (particularly for the women) or simply making things easier by not hiring (Shih, 2002).

Housing is a similar area in which discrimination is rife despite it being illegal to discriminate on the basis of race or religion. This occurs both in private renting markets and in the state housing schemes. In one instance that is all too common, a Somali woman (early 30s and professional) telephoned a landlord who said the house was available for rent. Upon arrival the landlord met her and apologetically said that the house had just been rented out over the phone. The house was in a good location and a good size so the woman contacted us and asked us to phone the landlord to ask about the house. We were told that the house was available and that we could come have a look. On arrival, with the Somali woman, the landlord once again said that it had just been taken. We confronted him with these contradictions, however, and he confided that he was worried about lots of cars coming and going to the property and damaging the lawns, based on incorrect assumptions about Somali. An arrangement and promises were made and the lease taken. A year later when the Somali woman decided to move out for other reasons, the landlord said that she was one of the best

tenants he had ever had (although she did then have difficulty in getting her bond back).

It is hard to overestimate the value of participatory methods here. We have asked similar people time and again about their experiences of discrimination only to be told they had not experienced any. Upon spending more time with these same people and seeing such things happening, and hearing much more detailed accounts of events such as this one, we have learned that verbal reports of discrimination are not worth much by themselves. Sometimes, even the people themselves have been surprised at how much discrimination they have experienced but never labeled as such once the instances have been identified.

Interventions to Reduce Racial and Religious Discrimination

Most interventions work towards raising people's awareness of either the cultural groups involved (to solve intergroup misperceptions) or the problem of discrimination itself. These consist of information campaigns predominantly, with simulation games and other activities to 'heighten awareness of others'. Unfortunately, the evidence is that they are not working particularly well (Hill & Augoustinos, 2001; Kiselica, Maben & Locke, 1999; Pedersen, Walker & Wise, 2005). In some instances people remember information but do not change their discriminating practices, while in other cases they remember the information a week or two later but no longer.

It should be clear from all of our work described here that we have come to a different conclusion about intervention methodologies (Guerin, 2005a). We believe that the common recommendation of interventions to 'raise awareness' are a direct product of the type of cross-sectional methodologies that are employed in typical research in this area. If one skims the surface then the intervention recommended will merely raise the surface a little more.

What we have pointed out and argued for is a situation-specific intervention agenda. This arises because, as we have seen throughout this paper, the causes and contexts for discrimination episodes are locally governed and depend upon the situation despite the generalist and abstract academic talk around the topic. This means that global interventions to prevent or stop

discrimination are unlikely to work, and certainly not ones that just try to raise a global or verbal awareness of the issues (Guerin, 2005a). This makes sense when considering how researchers have been trying to draw these hugely different examples of 'racism' under the same abstract category in order to come up with theories and interventions that would work across the board. The discrimination situations cover a huge range, from skinhead racism to 'innocent' racial jokes in the workplace.

While this approach to intervention is not as elegant as those promising 'one intervention to fit all', we believe it is more realistic and fits the real situations on-the-ground better than previous attempts. We have seen excellent awareness raising interventions in bureaucracies to improve client-staff relations but on Monday morning things are back to usual and the backroom chat is what it always was (cf. Hill & Augoustinos, 2001). This means that more hard work is needed but that intensive study is required in any case when working with refugee communities.

So the answer to interventions, we argue, is to use methods that allow more time in specific situations doing intensive and longer-term analyses of what is going on, drawing in the social, cultural, religious, historical and economic dimensions (Guerin, 2004). The interventions should also then be guided by local contexts and changes occurring in those local contexts. A plethora of interventions approaches is then available to try (Guerin, 2005b).

Conclusions

Psychology has spent too long on abstract theories and generalist intervention plans for discrimination and racial prejudice. We have tried to show that this partly comes from the cross-sectional methods employed, and we consider that even most 'longitudinal' methods in psychology are really repeated cross-sectional methods. These leave out the local context, in which the real determinants of discrimination lie. For those who have pursued instantiations of these abstract theories in attempting applied research, this has happened anyway, with interventions requiring a lot of local input and knowledge that does not fit the theory and is usually not written up afterwards in the reports.

In all cases we have looked at in this paper, the key determinants were local, and this needed

lots of long-term observations and local interventions. This raised many issues not raised elsewhere, for refugees dealing with everyday, bureaucratic, minority, and religious discriminations. All required finding out very specific contexts for what took place and spending the time observing and participating where possible.

The conclusion, therefore, is that we can have a greater impact on applied situations if we can be specific and local in the long run, and spend more time with the people and their situations. This might not be easy perhaps, and goes against the grain of the academic emphasis on generalization as a key factor in any academic endeavour, but being useful should overrule any such principle. Abstract and generalized talk need to be restricted to the social policy arena rather than working with people on the ground. We believe that participatory research of cases or instances will take the analysis and intervention of discrimination to a new level.

We have tried to show through examples from some of our research how things have been learned that could be predicted neither from generalist theories nor from previous research based on cross-sectional designs or especially laboratory experiments. This is not to denigrate such methods, just to argue that in this arena they are not as useful as they might be elsewhere. There might be nothing so practical as a good theory, according to Lewin, but we have not established what a good theory consists of, nor how we would know one. Our argument through this paper is that we have seen abstract discrimination theories put into applied settings and they have needed to have so much local context and detail put into them that the original generalizations no longer apply.

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