Chapter 1
Understanding Fairness, Equality, and Police Legitimacy

Stephen Egharevba
Consconsult Inter., Finland

ABSTRACT

For decades, research on minority predisposition to comply or cooperate with the police has evolved, as citizens’ encounter and experiences with the police can affect their sense of self-belonging in societies. However, less attention has been given to the issues of police act and behaviour in accordance with the laid down principles of policing in their interaction with citizens. For instance, some of the difficulties of the police in fostering its’ legitimacy are the events in Totteham, London in the UK in 2011, and the USA in 2014, 2015 and 2016. This introduction analyses how the police engage with minorities and treat them fairly in order to improve their legitimacy and how violence, brutality and racial profiling has been utilized in police practices. The result revealed a perceived unjust policing and a high level of violence across many societies in the world. Finally, we have tried in this book to identify how police, courts and the penal system officials can improve and facilitate a fair, equal and understanding in their practices in general towards minorities.
INTRODUCTION

The debates about equal justice that is the tenet of every democratic state come into question, especially when the people entrusted with the power to enforce law and order in the pursuit of justice now abuses such powers. The police have discretion to use force when necessary, but those that suffer most from these practices are the minorities. The question is does the fact that police violence often involve minorities suggest inequalities against a particular racial, class or ethnic groups? We have also seen a new move towards strengthening the bonds between police and community and empowering both groups to act effectively against community challenges. If this is the case, why are minorities distrustful of the police in societies? This is not surprising given the experiences of differential treatment in the criminal justice system. Scholars’ attentions are focused on understanding and interpreting the relations between police and minority citizens to create paradigms or situate the ways to crystallize the complexities of police and minority relations.

Research findings have consistently suggested that minorities are more likely than White to perceive the police with suspicions and distrust. Minorities often claim that the police disproportionately single out ethnic minorities and racial groups for double standard of policing. Thus, citizens’ perception about the police actions and practices is important criteria of assessing police legitimacy in a democratic state. Police lawfulness means that they follow the constitutional, legislations and professional norms within the society too. Furthermore, distrust of the police by certain segments of the society has a serious consequence, as it undermines the legitimacy of the police and without legitimacy, the police losses the ability and authority to protect citizens effectively (Horowitz, 2007; Weitzer, & Tuch, 2005; and Skogan, 2005). In sum, scholars’ analysis has pointed out that many minorities are at a disadvantage in their encounter with the police (Chambliss, 2001; Stevens, 2001; Egharevba, 2014). The various encounters minorities have had point to the various strategies police officer uses in carrying out their duties. In many police departments, they consist of well-educated, trained and equipped officers and the scope of police duties has increased in view of the international terrorism across the world.

Thus, police departments have expanded their technological knowhow to the level that officers now react quicker to any threat than before aftermath of the terrorist attach of September 11, 2001. However, in many police departments, many police officers have different goals and orientation toward work, some of their aggressive strategies are harmful to the police and citizens’ relations especially in their use of excessive force that tend to lead to inefficiency in preventing and building trust between the police and the people they are supposed to protect. Some police behaviour and practices have resulted in tension and apprehension in minority citizens.
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