

Research paper on racial profiling

[Society](#), [Terrorism](#)



Racial Profiling

Racial profiling is a term used to refer to any action taken by the police for reasons of safety, security or simply to protect the public based on race, ethnicity, or nationality of an individual. It includes police stops, searches and coercions of suspects, which are not based on an individual behavior but rather on his or her ethnicity (Shantz, 2010). Police officers should not use ethnicity to determine who to stop and search but can use racial disparity to identify people who match suspect descriptions. Racial profiling is inapplicable in crime scenario involving people of the same race therefore it is crucial to put other characteristics in mind.

This practice conflict with the right of equal treatment therefore bridges citizen privileges and liberty unjustifiably. Generally it leads to alienation of the entire race from society (Fauchon, 2004). Racial profiling has been expanding especially after September 11, 2001 terrorist attack. In early days racial profiling was used for drug interdictions but this has graduated to a risk management tool criminality and terrorism through surveillance of targeted individuals of certain communities a form evident especially when Arab and Muslims are identified as potential threats. Racial profiling has also expanded to air passenger profiling as a result of rise in terrorism through suicide bombers.

This practice is both ineffective and wrong and is a serious concern in America therefore cannot be ignored. It has been argued that it allows flexibility in solving crimes but it also leaves room for conscious and partial conscious racial discrimination. According to Weitzer any racial profiling

bridges the fourth amendment, which provides a right from unjustified search (2007). Therefore racial profiling violates the American constitution the supreme law in which some tries to justify it. When police use race as the determining factor of those they stop for checkup they end up practicing statistical discrimination (Arrow, 1973).

Race based law enforcement has alleged benefits and negative effects but the later outweighs those benefits. However some advocates of racial profiling still believe that this practice helps in preventing terrorism based on crimes committed disproportionately by some racial groups. Therefore to them its price is worth it and reasons have been advanced to support racial profiling as explained by this paper. First they argue that Muslim is a key component of terrorism therefore it cannot be ignored. Muslim extremists threaten national security making race and religion a necessary factor of investigation

Another argument to support racial profiling is that racial based law enforcement disrupts terrorist networks through such government measure such as deportations. American Department of Homeland Security has also come up with Admission programmes requiring Arabs and Muslims who want admission in United States to comply with requirements. This has created a lot of pressure disruption terrorist missions.

Finally it has been argued that racial profiling act as a risk management and resource allocation strategy statistically. Based on this argument racial profiling can be considered a smart way of enforcing law through focusing most of available resources on a suspect group. Statistically it has been

shown that some ethnic communities especially minority groups are more probable to engage in crime. This applies mostly in some sector like airports where high security alert should be observed. Air passenger profiling is used and has been reported to produce equal results with computer screening according to John and Nicola (2001). However it consumes a lot of time therefore computers are preferred (Reem Bahdi, 2010). These arguments justify racial profiling as an important procedure to ensure effective law enforcement.

On the other hand racial profiling has adverse effect to the economy and critics have argued that the negative effects outweighs its benefits therefore measures against it should be advocated. Among the harmful effects is an increase in the number of minorities engaging in profile substitution and evasion. Due to strict counter-terrorism measures, terrorist take time to alter their behavior, manipulate passports, stamps and visas therefore capable of escaping scrutiny. This fact undermines all supporting arguments listed above as they fail to consider the elasticity of non-profiled groups leaving room for substitution.

Racial profiling is also discriminating because other characteristics tend to be ignored when assessing risks and decisions about people are only made based on their race or religious affiliation. Currently most anti-terrorism investigations target Arabs and Muslims communities increasing possibilities of racial, religious and ethnic profiling. Therefore stereotype profiling does not provide accurate and relevant information to these investigations.

The third argument against racial profiling is based on its implementation problems. Racial profiling is easy to apply in theory but practically it is hard for it to work efficiently. For example, drug abuse could be higher in wealthier neighborhood than poorer racialized ones. Religion also tells us very little about those who are a threat to national security and those who value and respect the society therefore it is not a good criterion of analyzing people's behavior.

Racial profiling discourages potential informants from confiding with the police especially when these people belong to a minority group. A group considered as a first suspect is less likely to report a crime to the law enforcement agency. This also minimizes trust in the justice system therefore they refuse to cooperate with the police as witnesses in court proceedings where they could help influence adjudication of justice.

Efficiency of racial profiling is not guaranteed and, at times it can even lead to wastage of resources. It can also lead to racism within an agency due to increased tolerance to stereotyping.

Both arguments agree that there is need to review racial profiling based on its discriminatory characteristics. It has been a controversial issue lately and it especially vital in America since a lot of people have been identified as victims (Veronica, 2007). Whenever America encounters a national emergency it results to profiling as a tool to monitor its enemies (Reddick, 2004).

It is important to note that communities that undergo racial profiling encounter unfair policing, unjust scrutiny and are represented in courts

disproportionately (Reem et al 2007). These victims are denied their liberty rights when they are stopped, searched, arrested and detained unjustifiably. Use of disproportionate force is based on perception that the authorities are confronting a violent person. A recent occurrence was the killing of Charles de Menzes an innocent man on being mistaken for a terrorist because he was brown skinned (2007). The media is also to blame for its role in increased profiling of Muslims. The media has portrayed Arabs and Muslims as extremely violent, immoral and untrustworthy.

Measures against racial profiling were therefore necessary as a plan of action against it. First there is need to raise awareness to all affected parties. These parties include the public, minority groups and the institutional players. This could be done through outreach programs advocating for ways of abolishing racial profiling. Secondly, it is important to involve all parties especially policy makers in supporting laws that can do away with racial profiling.

Lastly identification of all situations capable of leading to profiling is done. All information regarding detained individuals such as age, sex, race, and religion should be identified. Allegations of racial proliferation are then addressed through engaging in test case litigations. Administration of justice requires we consider the society first and then the law enforcers. If we allow profiling to take place, both the society and the government will lose.

In conclusion, racial profiling is any action taken by a person in authority based on color, race or religion without reasonable suspicion. It is a practice mostly carried out by law enforcement agencies such as the traffic and airport police. This paper has shown that racial profiling is discriminatory and

undermines the process of enforcing laws although theoretically it appears attractive. It has been justified on its benefits and criticized on its adverse effects but all strategies agree on a need to review it due to its inefficiency and ineffectiveness. Therefore, before passing judgment all characteristics should be observed in accordance with the law while exercising moderation and a lot of restraint.

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