Copyright is owned by the Author of the thesis. Permission is given for a copy to be downloaded by an individual for the purpose of research and private study only. The thesis may not be reproduced elsewhere without the permission of the Author.
How do Social Dominance and Minority Influence affect the Collaboration of Refugee Services?

A thesis presented in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of

Master of Science

in Psychology

at Massey University, Albany, New Zealand

Sarah Helene Hahn

2015
Abstract

Social Dominance Theory has problematic implications for humanitarian work: It suggests that stakeholders of the humanitarian sector collectively maintain the social hierarchies that disadvantage the very minorities that they are supposed to empower. Minority Influence Theory, on the other hand, suggests that social innovation in the humanitarian sector can emerge from the bottom-up, thus against the grain of social hierarchies. This thesis explores for the refugee service sector of Auckland, New Zealand, (a) if former refugees are indeed marginalised within the inter-organisational context that is supposed to empower them, (b) if this has detrimental effects on the sector’s performance, and (c) if fostering minority influence might alleviate such effects. The first research question was approached through a stakeholder analysis, which revealed that the social hierarchies within the refugee service sector indeed mirror the marginalisation of former refugees in general New Zealand society. Then, stories of positive and negative incidents of collaboration in the sector were analysed through the lenses of Social Dominance Theory and Minority Influence Theory. A thematic analysis of negative incidents of collaboration gathered accounts of discrimination through disregard, as well as legitimising myths. The latter concerned the inaccessibility of services, confounding participation with collaboration, voluntarism as unambiguously positive, feelings of indebtedness among former refugees, and the false belief in opportunities in New Zealand. These findings support the idea that social dominance perpetuates social hierarchies in the refugee service sector and thereby negatively affects its performance. However, the assumptions of Social Dominance Theory concerning behavioural asymmetry did not match the data, which indicates different root causes of social dominance than claimed by the theory’s authors. Stories of successful collaboration involved factors that facilitate minority influence, such as finding consistency, appealing to common values, enough time, bottom-up accountability in the form of community ownership, and trust. This suggests that facilitating minority influence in the Auckland refugee service sector simultaneously facilitates collaboration. Social Dominance Theory and Minority Influence Theory proved to be instrumental to analysing problems within the inter-organisational context of refugee services and for finding indications for future research and better practice.
Acknowledgements

I would like to express my gratitude towards the dedicated staff and volunteers of the Auckland refugee service sector who made time in their extremely busy work-lives to help me gain a better understanding of the support system that they all provide together. I fell in love with New Zealand all over again by meeting so many truly inspiring New Zealanders, who were born here, or in South-Sudan, Malaysia, Eritrea, Fiji, Somalia, China, Scotland, Burma, Afghanistan…

Vielen, vielen Dank to my equally inspiring supervisors Clifford van Ommen and Stuart Carr, who have guided me through the jungle of theory and data, allowing me to pick up the best from two worlds of thinking. Tēnā kōrua!

Thank you to the Massey University Human Ethics Committee for approving this research.

Thank you to my sister, who supported me with endless patience and cupcakes.

Dylan, you made a year that could have been one of my most difficult, one of my best.

And to my parents, thank you for always walking your talk about your love for learning, thereby teaching me that passion is good, but only becomes great when it is paired with endurance. Also, the proofreading.
Table of Contents

Abstract .......................................................................................................................... ii
Acknowledgements ....................................................................................................... iii
Table of Contents .......................................................................................................... iv
List of Tables ................................................................................................................ vii
List of Figures ............................................................................................................. viii

Chapter 1: Social Hierarchies in the Humanitarian Sector ......................................9

1.1. Social Dominance 12
   1.1.1. Social Dominance Orientation 12
   1.1.2. Legitimising Myths 14
   1.1.3. System Justification Theory versus Social Dominance Theory 15
   1.1.4. Discrimination and Behavioural Asymmetry 19
   1.1.4. Historical perspective on social hierarchies in humanitarianism 27

1.2. Minority Influence Theory 28
   1.2.1. Facilitating factors 31
   1.2.2. Minority influence and participation in the humanitarian sector 35

Chapter 2: Setting the research context ...............................................................37

2.1. Stakeholder analysis of the Auckland refugee service sector 37
    2.2.1. Method 38
    2.2.2. Indications for the main data acquisition 41

Chapter 3: Method .................................................................................................48

3.1. A critical realist perspective on research in the humanitarian sector 48
3.2. Ethical considerations about research on refugee services 50
3.3. Critical Incident Survey 51
3.3.1. Participants 51
3.3.2. Measures 52
3.3.3. Procedure 54
3.3.4. Thematic analysis using NVivo 54
3.4. Delphi Technique 57
3.4.1. Participants 58
3.4.2. Measures 58
3.4.3. Procedures 58
3.5. Credibility and validity 59

Chapter 4: Findings .................................61
4.1. Hypothesis I: Social dominance and failed collaboration 61
4.1.1. Hypotheses Ib and c: Disregard as discrimination 61
4.1.2. Hypothesis Ia: Legitimising myths 65
4.1.3. Hypothesis Id: Lack of out-group favouritism 75
4.1.4. Hypothesis Ie: Shyness - Culture, self-debilitation, or adaptive? 76
4.1.5. The consequences: Distrust and more social dominance 78
4.2. Hypothesis II: Minority influence and successful collaboration 79
4.2.1. Hypotheses Ila and b: Consistency 79
4.2.2. Hypothesis Iic: Similar values and interests 81
4.2.3. Hypothesis IId: Enough time 82
4.2.4. Hypothesis IIe: Bottom-up accountability and community ownership 83
4.2.5. Trust: Precondition and consequence of minority influence 85
4.3. Conclusion 87
List of Tables

Table 1. *Background and number of participants on expert panel* 52

Table 2. *Themes and codes based on Social Dominance Theory* 56

Table 3. *Themes and codes based on Minority Influence Theory* 56

Table 4. *Numbers of coding incidents for the axial codes ‘Social dominance’ and ‘Minority influence: Facilitating factors’ across all unsuccessful versus successful critical incidents of collaboration.* 87
List of Figures

Figure 1. Schematic overview of social dominance theory 13

Figure 2. Schematic representation of the stakeholder hierarchy in the Auckland refugee service sector. 42

Figure 3. Iterative survey design based on the Delphi Technique (adapted from Rowe & Wright, 1999) 59