



Cops without uniforms in Sierra Leone

Challenging police officers' stereotypes
towards people with disabilities

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Cover photo: Police officers in Tongo, the largest diamond mining region in Sierra Leone

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Abstract

This thesis analyzes the initiative of employing people with disabilities (PWDs) within the Sierra Leone Police and how it has affected police officers' stereotypes towards people with disabilities. I draw on intergroup contact theory - contact reduces prejudice in intergroup relations - to analyze the initiative and its effectiveness in challenging police officers' stereotypes. The study aims to shed light on the effectiveness of contact interventions in the field of disability in developing countries. The thesis is based on a six-month fieldwork in Freetown. Data was collected by carrying out formal and informal interviews with police officers, disabled police officers, PWDs-communities and organizations working on disability issues and by doing participant observation. The thesis' main argumentation is that the employment of PWDs within the police did not challenge police officers' stereotypes towards PWDs. The police has employed PWDs through a specific selection process that has been perceived as unfair by police officers. Therefore, police officers believe that unqualified PWDs with the wrong attitude have been hired. This has significant implications over disabled police officers' experiences in the forces, where they are tolerated but marginalized. Moreover, while analyzing police officers' perception towards PWDs, the thesis argues that the use of the term 'PWDs' in Sierra Leone hides important thoughts on how the concept of disability is understood by police officers. Not only police officers have different perceptions according to the impairment, but they show a preference of impairments, where physical impairments are considered superiors to others. The findings are connected to important recommendations for the initiative and for future contact interventions.

Keywords: Sierra Leone, People with Disabilities, Police, Contact interventions, Stereotypes,

Map of Sierra Leone



Source: <http://www.un.org/Depts/Cartographic/map/profile/sierrale.pdf>

List of acronyms

AFRC- Armed Forces Revolutionary Council
AIG- Assistant Inspector General
APC – All People’s Congress
AWWA - Amputee and War-Wounded Association
CID- Criminal Investigation Department
CRPD- Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities
CSOs- Civil Society Organizations
DFID- Department for International Development
DPOs- Disability persons organizations
IG- Inspector General
NaCSA – National Commission for Social Action
NGO- Non-governmental Organization (NGO)
NPFL- National Patriotic Front of Liberia
OFP- One Family People
OSD- Operational Support Division
PWD- People with Disabilities
RUF – Revolutionary United Forces
SLP- Sierra leone Police
SLPP- Sierra Leone People’s Party
SLRP- Sierra Leone Reparation Programme
SLESRC- Sierra Leone Ethics and Scientific Review Committee
TRC – Truth and Reconciliation Commission

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Dedication and acknowledgments

In memoriam of Astrid
(1994 - 2016)

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Introduction

Photo: Travelling to the rural Sierra Leone with the 'poda-poda-'
Source: <https://hulloiminsalone.wordpress.com/page/6/>

Chapter 1. Introduction

1.1 Problem statement

With an estimation of around 10 per cent of world's population living with a disability, people with disabilities (PWDs) represent the world's largest minority. As disability affects vulnerable population, 80 per cent of PWDs are living in a developing country (WHO et al. 2011). This study takes place in Sierra Leone, a country that has one of the highest global rates of PWDs: it is estimated that 450,000 PWDs are living in the country, including the blind, deaf, polio victims, war wounded and amputees (Restless Development 2012). Despite the lack of reliable data, PWDs are supposed to represent approximately 8 per cent of the country's 6.5 million population (Restless Development 2012).

In Sierra Leone, the wider community marginalizes PWDs mainly because of the deeply entrenched belief that sin, voodoo or black magic cause disability (Powell 2010). As many people believe that disability is the devil's work (Stone 1997), when a disabled baby is born, he is often referred to as "debulpikin", which means "devil" or "demon child" (Andregard et al. 2017) and families sometimes leave him in the forest to give him back to the demon spirits from where he came. PWDs are a figure for derision, they are often exposed to deliberate provocation and denied service because people think they will bring bad luck (Frobisher 2016). Traditional beliefs have had and continue to have a negative impact on PWDs causing discrimination in many public sectors such as education, health, employment and justice (McEwan et al. 2007).

Because of their marginalization, PWDs are believed to be often engaged in illegal activities, such as begging or sex work in order to satisfy their basic needs for the short-term survival. On Fridays, it is common to see PWDs begging around the Western richest area of Freetown and outsiders are often warned to be wary of them because "they thief." (Berghs et al. 2011). Many of them are rejected by their families and end up living on the streets or in illegally-occupied buildings in the city center of Freetown. As they cannot afford public transportation, it is quite common to see disabled youth weaving in and out of morning traffic jams on wheelchairs and holding the back of mini-buses causing potential dangerous incidents.

Police officers are often involved in actions against them and conflicts arise between the two. Because of traditional beliefs and PWDs' perceived anti-social behavior, there is a common perception within the forces that disabled are troublemakers, people that like to fight and use abusive language (BBC 2012). Not only they are seen as people difficult to deal with, but also it is often believed that their behavior causes their disability. "Na dat mehk God mehk u so" [this is why God made you that way] is an expression frequently used towards them during conflicts (Frobisher 2016).

Challenging societal attitudes is supposed to be the first step to build an inclusive society for PWDs (Beckett 2009). Awareness-raising initiatives are often recognized by NGOs as the most efficient and effective means of challenging stereotypes (EIGE 2010) and they are normally the first step in which any advocacy group engages. Disability awareness-raising initiatives rely on the assumption that more information will lead people to rethink the concept of disability (Lindsay et al.

2013), will encourage a positive attitude towards PWD (Columna et al. 2009) and will provide the public with an understanding of the challenges they face (Fittippaldi-Wert et al. 2007).

Awareness raising initiatives normally include workshops, conferences, distribution of fliers and brochures (Tones et al. 2001). However, it is debatable whether knowledge on its own has the potential to change people's stereotypes about PWDs. Abundant research shows that people who are given more information on a topic are likely to accept only those information that fit into their preconceived schema of the world (Blake 1999, Markova et al. 1990, Kaiser et al. 2003). For this reason, some organizations shifted from the approach of teaching through workshops and conferences to activities where participants are directly in touch with PWDs. These activities referred to as 'contact interventions', rely on the assumption that living or working in close contact with an individual with disability is likely to change people's negative attitudes towards him or her.

Supporting the idea that through getting to know PWDs, people may be able to break down their stereotypes, a disability organization started to advocate to employ people with disabilities within the Sierra Leone Police. The objective was to challenge police officers' stereotypes towards PWDs and to improve the relationship between the two stakeholders. In 2012, the Sierra Leone Police hired four persons with disabilities in the Communication department in Freetown. This initiative has drawn international attention and has been described as an important step forward in challenging negative stereotypes affecting PWDs in Africa (BBC 2012). In total, ten persons with disabilities have been hired in different departments of Freetown and the number is highly likely to increase in the coming recruitment process (Respondent, personal communication, December 12, 2017).

The employment of PWDs within the police was chosen as a case study for this thesis as it can provide insights on the effectiveness of contact interventions. The past two decades have witnessed a rapid proliferation of contact interventions around the world (Stroud et al. 2016). Mixing Jewish and Arab in dance class in Israel, gardening projects in Palestine, inter-ethnic soccer matches in the Balkans, interreligious basketball leagues in Nigeria are just some examples (Maoz, 2000; Griesbeck, 2004; Gasser et al, 2004; Kuriansky, 2007; V'asquez, 2009; Cardenas, 2013). The goals of these interventions are ambitious, as they aim at achieving societal transformation through micro-attitudinal change (Stroud et al. 2016).

Part of the appeal of contact interventions relies on the immediacy and simplicity- contact between conflictual groups lessen prejudices. Along with this, contact interventions are morally attractive: a large part of the population wants the world to be a better place, where people come together, care and respect each other's. However, the outcomes of contact interventions are far more complex. In this thesis, I argue that not only there is the risk that contact interventions lead to no action, but they may even create a fertile ground for more extreme forms of prejudice.

1.2 Scientific and social relevance of the thesis

Intergroup bias between groups refers generally to the tendency to evaluate one's own membership group (the in-group) more favorably than a non-membership group (the out-group) (Pettigrew 1998). Many intergroup approaches to bias reduction focus on the need to increase the quantity and quality of intergroup contact. What was originally a modest "contact hypothesis" proposed by Allport (1954)- who suggested that contact, under certain conditions, will create a positive intergroup encounter, which in turns will lead to an improvement in intergroup relations- is now a complex and longstanding theory.

Since Allport's hypothesis, literally hundreds of research papers and book chapters have appeared on this subject. Since 1950s, many studies have investigate contact interventions by focusing on attitudes towards ethnic or racial groups, especially towards African Americans in the United States. Contact effects between black and white have been studied in desegregated public housing (Deutsch et al. 1951, Wilner et al. 1952, Works 1961 Cagle 1973) or in schools (Carithers 1970, Pettigrew 1971, D'Augelli 1989, Cotten-Huston et al. 2000, Eller et al. 2003).

Later on, a cumulative body of knowledge on contact effects has emerged also towards other groups, such as the elderly (Caspi 1984, Drew 1988, Meshel et al. 2004), the homosexuals (Herek et al. 1996, Cotton-Huston et al. 1999) and the victims of AIDS (Werth et al. 1992). For what concerns PWDs, existing studies investigated mainly the contact effects of health professionals, teachers or caregivers (Bell 1962, Casey 1978, Eberhardt et al. 1995, Uysal et al. 2014, Desforges et al. 1991, Canter et al. 1960). Therefore, little remains known about whether, and how contact interventions contribute to challenge stereotypes and traditional beliefs of disability of other service providers, such as police officers.

A feature of past studies on contact interventions in the field of disability is that they have mostly been carried out in the developed nations, and, more specifically, mainly in the United States. Therefore, the elements of the effective components of contact interventions in developing countries have not been synthesized and remain largely unknown.

This thesis can then provide insights on the effectiveness of contact interventions in the field of disability in developing countries. Considering the rapid proliferation of contact interventions around the world, I hope to contribute to help practitioners to design more effective disability awareness interventions.

1.3 Research questions

In this research I seek to answer the following main question: *How has the employment of PWDs within the Sierra Leone Police affected police officers' stereotypes towards PWDs?*

The following three interrelated sub questions are derived from the research questions:

(i) *How has the initiative been identified and implemented?*

This is a contextual question necessary to understand the context of the employment of PWDs within the police. Answering this question provides background information on the employment of PWDs within the police and analyses the advocacy process and the main actors involved.

(ii) *How has the initiative challenged police officers' perception towards their disabled colleagues?*

This question focuses on the perception of police officers towards their disabled colleagues. Answering this question provides information on the implications of contact effects on police officers' prejudices.

- (iii) *How has the initiative challenged police officers' perception towards PWDs as a social group?*

This question aims at understanding if police officers' perception generalize beyond their disabled colleagues. Therefore, answering this question provides information about how police officers see people with disabilities as a social group.

Answering these sub-questions will lead to an understanding of complex relationship between the Sierra Leone Police and people with disabilities in a post-conflict society. To answer these questions, I conduct interviews and participant observation in a six-month fieldwork in Freetown. To reach conclusions, I used my own findings that included interview with police officers, disabled police officers and members of different organizations working on disability issues in the country.

I argue that the initiative of employing people with disabilities in the Sierra Leone Police was not successful in challenging police officers' stereotypes towards people with disabilities. Because of the perceived unfair recruitment process, police officers hold negative perception towards their disabled colleagues, that, therefore, are tolerated but marginalized in the Sierra Leone Police. Moreover, I will present interesting insights on police officers' conceptualization of the term 'PWDs'.

1.4 Overview of the chapters

To reach this conclusion, I proceed as follows: the next chapter is called '**Setting the scene**' as it does not provide actual field data, but places the research in a necessary background context: I open this chapter by providing a historical and socio-economic overview of Sierra Leone. I then proceed by analyzing the Sierra Leone Police and I introduce the disability picture in the country. The third chapter is the **Theoretical framework** that presents the main theoretical pillar on which the research is based: the intergroup contact theory. After an overview of the theory and a review of the previous research on this subject, I outline the critical elements that are relevant for the later discussion. In the fourth chapter, broadly called **Methodology**, I discuss the research context and the methods chosen, then I then introduce the field by specifying participant selection, access and ethical implications. After presenting how this methodology was combined with my own choices and position in the field, I outline the data analysis as well as the limitations of the research. The fifth chapter, **Results**, analyses my findings by answering the three sub-research questions. In this chapter, I outline the data in three main parts: an overview of the initiative with background information about the employment of PWDs within the police, an analysis of police officers' perception towards their disabled colleagues and finally an examination of police officers' perception towards people with disabilities as a social group. In the last chapter, **Conclusion**, I engage in a discussion on the effectiveness of the initiative and more generally on contact interventions. Last, I provide a series of practical and theoretical recommendations and I identify possible further research.



Setting the scene

Photo: Police officers from the Operations Support Department (OSD) in Kambia District in the Northern Province

Source: <https://unipsil.unmissions.org/national-security-0>

Chapter 2. Setting the scene

2.1 Introduction

The goal of this chapter is to briefly introduce the reader to the Sierra Leonean context, providing an historical background to the thesis, with a particular focus on the Sierra Leone Police and on disability issues in the country. After all, a good understanding of today's dynamics can be achieved only by tracing events and ideas back to their origin and by analyzing their evolution over time. There are multiple interpretations of the past, however, I have to limit myself to sketching an overview of the relevant aspects, as diving into the historical details of this topic is not possible within the scope of my thesis.

The first part of this chapter gives an overview of the country from the colonial era, through the eleven-year civil war until the current socio-economic characteristics needed to understand the context in which the fieldwork took place. The second part of the chapter presents the two main actors of the research: the Sierra Leonean Police and people with disabilities.

2.2 Historical background of Sierra Leone

Sierra Leone is a small country that borders Guinea and Liberia on the coast of West-Africa with Freetown as capital and largest city. The country is roughly divided in four administrative regions: West (Freetown Area), East, North and South.

Colonial era (15th – 20th Century)

In the late 15th Century, Portuguese ships began visiting regularly the country as Freetown estuary was one of the few good harbor on West Africa coast. Slavery had a great impact on the region and export slavery remained a major business in Sierra Leone until mid-19th century. In the 17th Century, Portuguese imperialism waned and British took over the control of the country establishing a trading post (Baker 2008). In 1787, the British Crown Colony of Sierra Leone was founded, with Freetown as a capital. The city of Freetown was founded as a settlement for freed slaves who sided with the British during the American Revolutionary War and will be the destination for freed American slaves until 1885. Slaves liberated in Freetown originally came from all areas of Africa, most chose to remain in the country and some of them turned from slaves to slavers: their descendants are known today as the Krio (Baker et al. 2004).

In the early 19th Century, Sierra Leone was a small territory extending a few kilometers up the peninsula from Freetown. The majority of the present Sierra Leone's territory was still inhabited without external control by indigenous peoples such as the Mende and Temne. Over the course of the century, the British expanded inland promoting trade through treaty making with native chiefs and military expeditions. When chiefs' behavior did not conform to British dictates, the army and navy

were going out from the Colony's capital Freetown to attack them. In such context, the colonial authorities founded the Sierra Leone Police Corps in 1829 with the aim of maintaining law and order and protecting colonial interests (Baker 2008, Charley et al. 2012). While the British were developing a modus operandi characterized by heavy interventions in the country, a large-scale military resistance was organized by the local people. Despite episodes such as the Hut Tax War, popular resistance continued in other forms and tribal chiefs became a target of hostility as they were seen as allies of the British (Elias 1962, Fage 1957).

In 1961, Sierra Leone became politically independent of Great Britain with a parliamentary system of government and as a member of the British Commonwealth of Nations. The Sierra Leone People's Party (SLPP), led by Sir Milton Margai ruled the country first but in a closely contested election in 1967, the All People's Congress (APC) took over the power. During APC ruling, corruption, nepotism and financial mismanagement led to impoverishment of the population and decay of public institutions, despite the presence of valuable minerals such as diamonds, gold, iron and bauxite (Baker 2008). This general malaise has been identified as one of the causes for the formation of the Revolutionary United Front (RUF) in 1984. The RUF claimed to be a political movement with the aim to restore the country and overthrow the misconduted APC. Its invasion of Sierra Leone from Liberia in 1991, led to the civil war that lasted from 1991 to 2002 (HRW 2003).

Sierra Leonean civil war (1991- 2002)

The civil war began in March 1991 when the Revolutionary United Front (RUF), with support from the special forces of Charles Taylor's National Patriotic Front of Liberia (NPFL), intervened in Sierra Leone in an attempt to overthrow the Joseph Momoh government (Peters 2006). The causes for the war were very diverse and included elements such as corruption, poverty, weak institutions, poor governance, injustice, unemployment, and insecure human rights (Keen 2003). Many young men, especially in rural areas, were predominately unemployed, uneducated and unable to finance marriage or make a home and they blamed chiefs and elders for monopolizing the limited resources and for blocking the social mobility (Baker 2008). This created a fertile ground for the expansion of RUF, who described the invasion to eastern Sierra Leone in 1991 as a movement to overthrow the corrupt elites and as an opportunity to reverse power relationship and access resources (Mitton 2013). For this reason, RUF expanded very quickly: it is estimated that RUF included between 50000 and 75000 combatants and about half of them were in the age range between 8-14 years old (Peters et al. 1998).

During the first year of the war, RUF took control of large portions of territory in eastern and southern Sierra Leone: the main target were diamonds mines as RUF main funding came from the illegal sale of diamonds. The government's ineffective response led to a military coup d'état in April 1992. Later on, Sierra Leone installed an elected civilian government and the retreating RUF signed the Abidjan Peace Accord in 1996. However, the peace deal unravels and hostilities recommenced: under the new government Armed Forces Revolutionary Council (AFRC), the constitution was suspended, demonstrations were banned and political parties abolished.

In 1999, world leaders intervened diplomatically to promote negotiations between the RUF and the government and the Lomé Peace Accord was signed. This agreement aimed at bringing peace by giving RUF blanket amnesty and offering them governmental positions. For instance, the

commander of the RUF was granted the vice presidency and control of Sierra Leone's diamond mines in return for a cessation of the fighting and the deployment of a peacekeeping mission. However, RUF did not follow with the disarmament process and the UN mission began to fail. The United Kingdom decided to intervene to support the weak government of President Kabbah and on 19 January 2002, the president declared the Sierra Leone Civil War over. According to the UN, 2.6 million of displaced people, 257 000 women and girls were sexually abused or exploited and around 12 000 girls were forced to join armed troops (Dyfan et al. 2004). The civil war had a significant impact on the country's economy, governance, civil society, environment, health and education system (UNEP 2010).

Amputation was used as a weapon during the war, affecting approximately 250000 people (Kandeh et al. 1996, Berghs 2007). Amputation not only spread terror, but also was an effective strategy to deprive the enemy of the political and social capital of labor (Bourdieu 1986) as it turned thousands of government supporters into dependents (Richards 1996, Peters et al. 1998). Moreover, amputation has a specific role in the context of Sierra Leone, where power is linked to who controls and exploits young man laboring bodies (Richards 1996, Ferme 2001) and becoming a 'big man' or 'big woman' in the Sierra Leone culture is closely tied into the productive capacity and actions (Berghs 2011). In rural culture for instance, when girls and boys are socialized through secret societies such as the ethnic Mende Poro society for boys or the Sande for girls, the body is inscribed ritually into male and female adulthood (Berghs 2011). Therefore, young people that were rebelling against a local cultural system that allowed a political elite to treat its youth as laboring slaves, were using amputation as a means of inverting such system by declassifying it (Berghs 2007).

The image of the amputee (man, woman and child) soon became symbolic of the atrocities of the civil war and can explain why PWDs gained relatively wide attention in Sierra Leone compared to other West African countries. In the post-conflict phase, the government realized that the amputee community's stories and images could be used as a visual metaphor to aid the reconstruction of the country (Berghs 2010). Through the images of amputees in the camp, Sierra Leone would be known in the global media and funds could be attracted to rebuild the country (Berghs 2007). Media and NGOs had an easy access to the camps of amputees, which has been described 'almost like a zoo' and 'very chaotic' (Berghs 2011), and where not only abuses and corruption were widespread, but where the humanitarian goals of the camps themselves had to take a backseat to the political goals (Berghs 2007). In such a context, the 'disability business' (Albrecht et al. 1999) of international organizations, NGOs, charities and religious organizations tried to reintegrate amputees back into a communal life. It has been estimated that there were at least sixty aid agencies and NGOs working on disability issues, with the British aid agency DFID (Department for International Development) particularly prominent (Baker et al. 2004).

Current socio-economic characteristics of the country

In the decade that followed the end of the conflict, the country held two successful elections in 2007 and 2012 and has tried to rebuild its economy opening for foreign investment and received a lot of attention from donors. Sierra Leone's positive trajectory was interrupted in 2014 when the Ebola epidemic outbreak struck and quickly demonstrated the incapacity of the country's already

fragile health care system to deal with such a crisis. The 2014–2016 outbreak has been recognized as the largest and most complex Ebola outbreak since the virus was first discovered: the government was forced to declare state of emergency and by the end of 2014, there were nearly 3000 deaths and 10.000 cases of the disease. On 17 March 2016, the WHO declared the country Ebola-free (WHO 2017).

Today, Sierra Leone remains among the world's poorest countries, ranking 179 out of 188 countries in terms of HDI in 2016 (HDR Report 2016). Poverty remains highly widespread with the majority of population lives below the national poverty line. Unemployment and illiteracy levels remain high, especially among youth. Even if the country has experienced positive economic growth in the past decade, the economy remains highly dependent on aid, with half of public investment programs financed by external resources (Human Development Report 2016). One of the main implication of the poor economic development is the issue of corruption: as a Sierra Leonean proverb says, 'you cannot feed a child and not lick your hand' (Baker et al. 2004:45). Corruption, either grant such as the illegal trading of diamonds or petty, such as the charge demanded by a low-ranking police officer for a service that should be free, remains endemic in the country (Baker et al. 2004).

Despite the challenges aforementioned, in 2018, general elections have been held to elect the president, parliament and local council and, despite the country's widespread poverty and underdevelopment, they have been the fourth peaceful elections since the civil war.

After having presented an overview of the country's history, the following sections will present the two main actors of this research: Sierra Leone police officers and people with disabilities.

2.3 A force for good: the Sierra Leone Police

The section documents the evolution of the police from its British foundation in 1863, through the civil war until the post-conflict setting and today's challenges.

The police's colonial origin and role during the civil war

The origin of the Sierra Leone Police can be traced as far back as 1863 when the British established the West Africa Frontier Police (Bangura et al. 2016). The main task of the police at that time was to protect colonial border from any form of armed resistance: in fact, they were mainly confronted with conflicts between the Krio descendants of freed slaves and the indigenous ethnic groups of the protectorate (Baker 2008, Charley et al. 2012). A fundamental feature of the Sierra Leone Frontier Police from which the today's Sierra Leone Police takes its origins, owes to the fact that colonial security institutions had been created not to defend the inhabitants against attack, but to assist foreigners to conquer and control the country (Baker 2008). In 1906, the police was operationally designed and tailored in line with the British Police Force and became part of the British-led Colonial Civil Service (Baker 2008, Bangura et al. 2016). During the 1960s, indigenous Africans began to take on significant role in civil service and by the time of Sierra Leone's independence in 1961, the police had been Africanised: in 1963, the first Sierra Leonean Commissioner of Police was appointed (Charley et al. 2012). As part of the British Police Force,

Sierra Leonean police officers were sent to Great Britain for advanced training in policing, law enforcement and discipline (Culp 2007).

With the consolidation of power by then President Siaka Stevens and the introduction on the one-party Constitution in 1978, the police became deeply enmeshed into politics and its role was altered and compromised. After the military coups of 1967, the police was used as instrument of state oppression against political dissidents. The Commissioner of Police, that became “Inspector General of Police” (IG) in 1985, took on different political roles such as member of ruling party, nominated member of Parliament and Cabinet Minister. This politicised position of the IG introduced nepotism and corruption in police recruitment procedures, management, administration and promotion. (Meek 2003, Charley et al. 2012). Moreover, as police officers were poorly equipped and remunerated, they used to be involved in corruption as a way of survival (Horn et al. 2006). This led to a breakdown of discipline and jeopardised police’s credibility in the society.

This general malaise was reflected in all aspects of civil services and government conduct, considered as one contributing factor to the civil war that broke out in 1991 (Charley et al. 2012). According to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) Report of Sierra Leone, the police has been described as “incompetent, corrupt, a ready tool for the perpetuation of state terror against political opponents’, and as engaged in ‘extortion of money and the violation of basic human right... All these factors served to widen the gulf between the public and the police’ (Sierra Leone Truth and Reconciliation Commission, 2004, Vol.3a:77). As the police was considered the direct representative of a corrupt and inefficient government, a wholly demoralised and unprofessional force, police personnel and buildings were a particular target of the RUF insurgency. Moreover, as a common practice for rebels to eliminate established law enforcement in order to establish their primary, the first targets entering Freetown were police buildings and the prison, releasing many prisoners. When the rebels attacked Freetown, at least 250 police officers were killed and 375 of their family members were murdered (Horn et al. 2006).

As part of the move towards returning the country to democracy in 1996, several advisory councils were set up to consider areas of governance of the police that were problematic. Two years later, in 1998, when the previous government of Kabbah was restored to power, the government embarked on a process of reorganizing the police along the recommendations made by the advisory councils. Therefore, International Police teams were involved in the process of reforming the Sierra Leone Police, which included a new organizational structure with an emphasis on decentralizing responsibility and on increasing the human resources capacity (Charley et al. 2012).

However, plans were derailed again because of the “January 6” invasion, as it came to be known. Despite the return of the democratically-elected government to power in 1998, on 6 January 1999, rebels’ forces attacked Freetown targeting the police: the Police Headquarters was burnt down, the recently acquired equipment was vandalised and after 48 hours of invasion, the number of police vehicle was reduced from sixty to five. About 164 Million Leones meant for police salaries was stolen from the offices and the police armoury in Kingtom looted (Charley 1999). This invasion presented a huge setback rendering the police unable to perform its duties.

With the renewed rebel attack of 1999 repelled, the United Kingdom and the government decided to continue with the police reform. With relative peace restored, even if this would not be

definitive until 2000, the most important action of immediate significance was Kabbah's interim appointment of the British Keith Biddle as Sierra Leone's interim Inspector General of the Sierra Leone Police (Bangura et al. 2016). In order to be able to provide visible and reliable internal security for the population, the United Kingdom put in place a capacity-building exercise. The reforms taken included efforts to curb corruption, to strengthen civilian oversight of the police and to improve relations between the public and the police (Charley et al. 2012).

This section showed how the police has been considered a critical partner in the consolidation of the Sierra Leone's democracy and in ensuring public security in a context where civil war was still being waged in some parts of the country. The numerous sets back occurred at the end of the civil war in the process of reorganizing the SLP have been explained in detail to provide an understanding of the depths from which the Sierra Leone Police have had to climb. The next section will continue to document the journey of the police in the post-conflict phase by emphasizing the implications on the police's current challenges.

Becoming and remaining 'a force for good': from post-conflict recovery to today's challenges

In a post-conflict phase, when almost everything has had to be rebuilt, including basic infrastructure, the economic crisis hit everyone hard: fuel and food prices began to rise and even ordinary citizens who used to work could not 'manage' living with their salaries and had to ask for money or favors (Berghs 2010). Despite the support received since 1990s and despite significant progress from the point of initial support, it has been estimated that the SLP's effectiveness to provide basic policing services has declined since the mid 2000 mainly because of paucity of national resources. Not only the amount of budget to support police officers has been reduced, but the extensive external support available in the early 2000 is no longer available (Baker 2008). Therefore, the SLP is becoming increasingly reliant on income generation in form of armed police officers being hired to protect private institutions (SLP 2011).

This paucity of resources had and continue to have an impact on police's services. A police constable's basic salary correspond to the cost of a sack of rice (SLP 2011), therefore, police officers have difficulty in meeting housing and health requirements and they try to find a number of alternative means of providing for their families. For instance, police officers are known to charge complainants fees for papers and pens before obtaining statements from them (Baker 2006) or to ask money to undertake investigations (SLP 2011). It is common knowledge that police officers often stop vehicles and asked for some 'small small' (a little extra in Krio) to ignore the traffic violation that neither the driver nor the passengers saw (Berghs 2010).

Corruption is not an activity confined to low-rank police officers but it is deeply embedded in the organization (Baker 2008). More specifically, it involves also senior police officers and politicians (Baker et al. 2004). Despite the anti-corruption reforms in the police and the media development work to encourage investigative reporting, in exchange of money, police officers sometimes are engaged in what Baker et al. (2004) refers as 'unacceptable actions'. To give an example, the Minister of

International Affairs has been accused to order the arrest of all senior members of staff following a fire at Kenema on 28th February 2011 (SLP 2011). The accusations are of course only anecdotal, but the widespread perception among society is that there is a day-to-day pressure that politicians exert on police officers (Baker et al. 2004).

However, the strong link between politicians and police officers should be analyzed in a broader framework of characteristics of the country's political environment where jobs and opportunities often come down to who you know, and who you are related to (Charley et al. 2011). Sierra Leone, as many other West African countries has in fact been described as an extremely relational (neo-patrimonial) country (Charley et al. 2011).

The political pressure over the police is closely related to the role of the Inspector General, who not only is appointed by the President and supervised by the Minister of Internal Affairs (Baker 2008), but is considered as the one who personally manage the police organization, as a 'one-man show' (Baker et al. 2004). The power of the Inspector General is more ascribed to him as a person, rather than an office-holder and the distinction between public and private spheres is not as clear-cut.

Moreover, given the blurred distinctions between public and private spheres, police practices should be analyzed in a framework where formal institutions exist alongside regimes 'based on the giving and granting of favors' (Cromwell et al. 2005: 2). Politics has in fact a significant influence over the Sierra Leone Police' recruitment processes (Baker et al. 2004). To give an example, in 2011, the recruitment of 735 personnel has been criticized to be a strategy to gain favor amongst voters of All People Congress (APC) as the great majority of recruits were APC supporters coming from a specific area of the country (SLP 2011). Similarly, an independent review committee funded by DFID, pointed out how even though there should be only one recruitment process for all candidates, each student is tested again on arrival at Police Training School (PTS) as it appears that the PTS does not trust the Human Resources department (SLP 2011). The rationale for this is related to PTS' insufficient faith in the oversight and robustness of the entrance examination test, because of poor invigilation, corruption and impersonation at local examination centers (SLP 2011). Patronage networks are extremely important in Sierra Leone, where professional progress very often depends on connections, rather than qualifications and expertise (Bøås 2001).

After having presented the Sierra Leone Police, in the following section I will focus on the second actor, people with disabilities.

2.4 The disability picture of Sierra Leone

Almost 250000 civilians suffered amputation during the civil war (Richards 1996). Amputation was used as a strategy during the war and was widely available through the media (Berghs 2011). Therefore, in the post-conflict phase, international donors' focus very much on supporting amputees and PWDs whose disability was a direct result of the conflict (Berghs 2007). The main consequence is that almost no support was available for PWDs whose disability was not caused by a direct act of violence (Ovadiya et al. 2009).

In order to attract funding from international donors for all groups of disabilities in the country, the government tried to unite different groups with disabilities under the generic term

‘PWDs’, emphasizing how they all faced discrimination (Berghs 2010). For instance, in his inaugural speech during a seminar on Law on Disability in 2005, the president Kabbah very much united amputees identities with other groups of disabled, emphasizing how groups such as amputees and polio victims were were playing football together on the beach to emphasize how sports can unite these two groups that can fight discrimination together (Berghs 2007). The same strategy has been used by international organizations and NGOs. Despite the fact that the groups with disabilities did not consider themselves as belonging to PWDs, as the director of Handicap International pointed out, they tried to unite them under the term ‘PWDs’:

“I have tried for over two years to get them to sit with each other and realize that they are facing the same inequalities but they see things in a different way. The amputees say: ‘we are not disabled; we are different from polio victims’. And the polio victims say: ‘the amputees are not like us because we have been suffering from birth, and we have to combat witchcraft’. The conflict between the two has been quite aggressive and certainly by focusing on the amputees we contribute to it. We (Handicap International) have decided to forget about these differences and try to unite them as people with disabilities but the population does not see it in that way” (Berghs 2007:5).

The term ‘PWDs’ in Sierra Leone is then related to a specific historical moment, the post-conflict phase. However, this term hides an important aspect of how the concept of disability is understood in Sierra Leone (Berghs 2007). This is shown for instance by how different ethnicities in the country, like the Mende, Limba, and Temne, have specific words for particular impairments, and words for how each impairment occurred. For example, in the Temne language, fit can literally be glossed ‘blind’, but fitasne means ‘to inflict this state on oneself’, while fitas means ‘to be made blind’. This indicates that either one is born or loses vision through one’s own actions, or outside forces, which can be natural or supernatural, blind one (Berghs et al. 2011).

This fragmentation conceptualization of disability is also related to the debate on who is a ‘real’ disabled and whether PWDs with ‘newer’ impairments such as people with autism can be seen as not ‘truly disabled’ (AWWA 2014). This excludes certain types of impairments that are not considered part of the term ‘disabilities’.

Moreover, along with the exclusion of some types of impairments, the concept of disability in Sierra Leone is strongly related to a hierarchy of different impairments, where some of them are considered more ‘important’ than others. This occurred mainly after the set up of the war reparation program in the post-conflict phase. In 2004, following a key recommendation of Sierra Leone’s Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC), benefits were largely delivered through medical, educational, vocational and housing assistance (IOM 2009) in order to enhance national healing and rehabilitation for the population. Reparations were in fact considered as a signal to victims that society validates their grief, anger and feelings of injustice (Sørheim 2010). However, TRC reparations have been highly criticized because of the arbitrariness method of selection of who could be eligible and who was not.

In order to be eligible for the benefits, specific criteria have been set. First, only PWDs whose injury occurred between 23rd March 1991 and 1st March 2002 (NaCSA 2009) were eligible. Moreover, as the TRC Commission “did not want to accord the same benefits to a victim who lost his/her limbs, with a victim who lost a finger as a result of a violation and may be able to sustain

himself/herself.” (TRC 2004:244), specific percentage of the value of the loss of a body part were calculated: the loss of an arm constitutes a 70 per cent, loss of four fingers and thumb of one hand for 60 per cent and so on (TRC 2004). These criteria had the perverse consequences of provoking resentment between amputees and to produce a social hierarchy of amputation within the camps (Berghs 2007, Sørheim 2010). People who suffered double amputation of arms were considered the worst off, while amputees, who had lost a leg, were considered more ‘lucky’ as they still had the possibilities of using their arms and hands, as well as wearing prosthetic limbs, allowing them to walk (Berghs 2007).

This process also created tensions between amputees and war-wounded. As the criteria were purely focused on physical impairment because “that was the visible problem” (AWWA 2014:27) it creates much confusion, demonstrating a sense of arbitrariness (Sørheim 2010). Some war-wounded excluded from the process were extremely upset as reparations were not based ‘suffering’ (AWWA 2014) and they blamed amputees to not have help them enough and they accused them to not be ‘real’ victims and to gain advantage from reparations (Berghs et al. 2011).

The hierarchical structure among amputees and the conflict between amputees and war-wounded is also important concerning ideologies of equality towards other disability groups, whose disability was not a consequence of the conflict. Not only amputees did not consider themselves as ‘disabled’ as those whose disability was not a direct act of violence (Berghs 2007), but they considered ‘PWDs’ as connected to a different moral realm linked to witchcraft and voodoo (Berghs 2011). This even created tensions between amputees and other disability groups who received help in the post-conflict phase. For instance, Berghs (2007) pointed out how amputees were accusing polio victims to have become ‘more dangerous’ because they received crutches and wheelchairs from NGOs after the conflict, making them more mobile. This should be seen in a broader context of economic crisis: in the post-conflict phase, begging was considered one of the main sources of economic revenue for both amputees (as war reparations were not considered enough) and for other PWDs. Therefore, amputees would often had to compete with other beggars such as the blind or people with polio, therefore, the identity of injuries became very relevant (Berghs 2007).

Overall, people felt that war reparations had not been uniform, and instead of bringing people together, it was upsetting the communal ties and patrimonial system. This create tensions not only among PWDs, but also between PWDs and the rest of society. A significant example include land issues. Because of reparation for amputees and war-wounded, some NGO bought land and build schools and other facilities making ‘the place fine’ (AWWA 2014). As the land was now attractive, tensions arise between PWDs and people from other communities excluded by this process: secret society rituals were used against PWDs to stop them accessing the land and to turn people against each other (Millar 2011). Moreover, people felt that because of reparations to war-wounded and amputees, they lost support from other organizations. Many communities saw the emergence of a climate of austerity in which many NGOs curtailed or cancelled projects and they felt excluded from programs (AWWA 2014).

Despite the attempt made by the government and international organizations to reunite all groups of disabilities under the term ‘PWDs’, the previous section showed how this use of ‘PWDs’ as a general term does not translate easily in Sierra Leonean languages and culture. Moreover, the

term ‘PWDs’ in Sierra Leone has been constructed under particular historical circumstances, notably the post-conflict phase, and more specifically, when the war reparations occurred.

Disability rights remain on the paper

In the post-conflict phase, PWDs were mentioned in the Report of the Sierra Leone Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC), mentioned before in this chapter. As already aforementioned, the scope of the TRC recommendations was limited to PWDs who have become temporarily or permanently physically disabled because of the conflict (TRC 2004). Following the recommendations, the government launched the Sierra Leone Reparation Programme (SLRP) in 2008 and mandated the National Commission for Social Action (NaCSA) to implement reparation in different areas, such as health or education. I already mention that the delivery of such benefits was confined to certain people, according to the criteria I present in the previous section. However, here, it is important to emphasize how this already partial delivery of benefits has created high, yet unfulfilled, expectations as many PWDs that were eligible, did not benefit due to funding limitations (UNIPSIL 2011). The main result is that even the people that were supposed to receive the benefits according to the TRC requirements, saw reparations as a provocation, as it provided nothing that the population considered helpful and was just ‘tok-tok’, Krio for too much talk (Millar 2011).

A part from the TRC recommendations, PWDs’ rights had not be given attention in the country for many years. Only recently, after the ratification of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD), the government has shown increasing commitment towards disability issues. In terms of legislation, since 2011, Sierra Leone has a strong framework to protect the rights of people with disabilities. The government of Sierra Leone was one of the first global signatories to ratify the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) for PWDs when it was open for signatures, on 30 March 2007. With a strong support from Julius Cuffie, the first disabled Member of Parliament, this treaty was subsequently domesticated into national law in the Persons with Disability Act (2011). The Disability Act seeks to prohibit discrimination against PWDs and achieve equal opportunities (UNIPSIL 2011). The enactment of the Person with Disability Act fills the gap between Sierra Leone’s national legal framework and its international obligations (UNIPSIL 2011). The Disability Act aims at protecting PWDs from discrimination in education, employment, public participation and envisages positive actions in a number of sectors to overcome obstacles and barriers, including access to justice, public facilities and health (Disability Act 2011).

Moreover, since 2011, many policies have been designed to promote PWDs’ rights. In 2011, the parliament adopted the National Social Protection Policy in order to provide social protection for vulnerable groups within the Sierra Leonean society, including PWDs. Two years later, in 2013, the President of Sierra Leone launched the Agenda for Prosperity (2013-2018) that indirectly addresses disability. Some of the objectives include free Health Care, a strengthening of rehabilitation services and a general improvement on training opportunities for youngster with disabilities (Adeola 2015). The Strategic Plan (2014-2018) developed by the Ministry of Social Welfare, Gender and Children’s Affairs, which is the government department in charge of issue around disability rights in the country, also addresses this topic, emphasizing the need for PWDs to live a life of dignity in a society that respect their human rights (Ovadiya et al. 2009)

This policy and legislative change has been possible thanks to the advocacy put in place by the growing number of disabled people's organizations (DPOs) and non-governmental organizations promoting disability issues in Sierra Leone. Many of the current DPOs started as support groups for PWDs during the conflict and later became organizations (Trani et al. 2010). Currently, there are many DPOs in the country such as, Sierra Leone Association of the Blind (SLAB), the Sierra Leone Union of Polio Persons (SLUPP), Sierra Leone Association of the Deaf (SLAD), however Sierra Leone Union of Disability Issues (SLUDI) functions as national umbrella body. The relationship between these various groups is sometimes characterized by disunity, quarrelling, political partisanship and a general lack of co-ordination towards a national strategy for advocacy (Frobisher 2016).

Yet despite the legislative and policy efforts and DPOs' engagement, for PWDs actual improvements on ordinary aspects of life remain difficult to achieve. Despite the creation of opportunities related to the adoption of UNCRPD, and the expectation that projects would have gone further and faster, the practical implementation has proved to be challenging: the government had to take on the provision of services that donors used to provide, while often lacking funding, the adequate infrastructure and the institutional know-how (Berghs 2011). Despite the high number of organizations working on disability issues in the country, PWDs' main form of support remained family and informal community-based safety nets, especially in rural areas (Ovadiya et al. 2009). Currently, the government's support through the Ministry of Social Welfare is very limited (H. Diallo, personal communication, August 10, 2017). NGOs, UN agencies and charity organizations provide the bulk of assistance (Ovadiya et al. 2009). Despite the provision of assistive devices such as wheelchairs and hearing aids by international NGOs or voluntary organizations, there is often some cost associated with them that place these devices beyond the means of the poorest PWDs (WHO 2017).

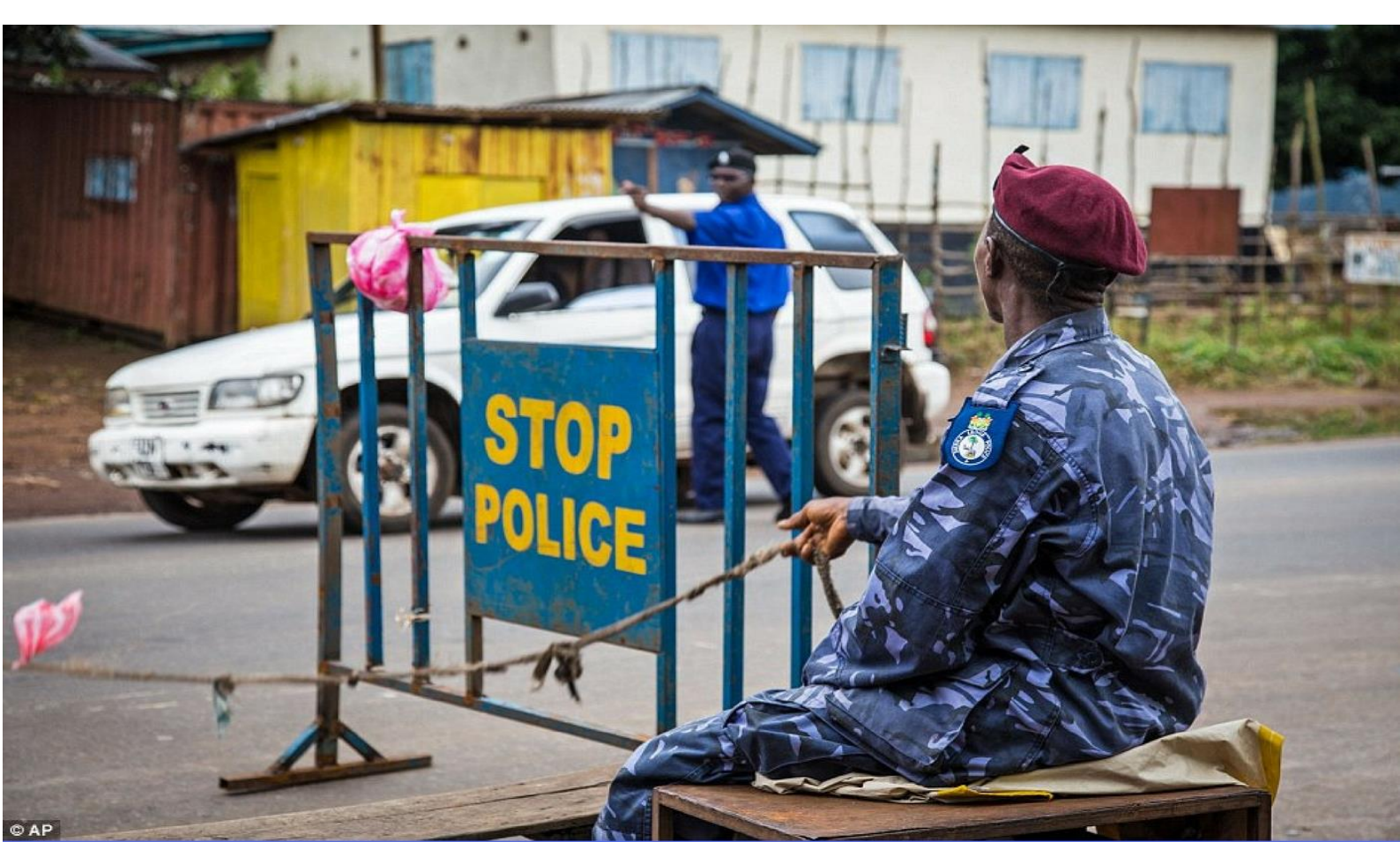
Stigmatization and discrimination of PWDs in Sierra Leone remain strong, with very negative perception of disability by communities, public officials and institutions (Adeola 2015). Overall, PWDs face many barrier while getting access to health care, education and employment in a country where such access is already quite low (Adeola 2015). Even though the Disability Act offered an important normative instrument to fight against discrimination and to promote employment for PWDs, a large number of PWDs still survive through begging in the streets or through assistance from charity institutions (UNIPSIL 2011). Lack of unemployment is then rooted in difficulty in accessing economic and social opportunities. Moreover, it is worthy to mention that the situation of PWDs seems to be quite heterogeneous depending on the type of disability: while some groups are better organized and represented, others, especially people with mental and intellectual disability, have their voices hardly heard (UNIPSIL 2011).

2.5 Concluding remarks

This chapter aimed to provide the historical background needed to understand the following chapters. Sierra Leone in West Africa is a country known for the beauty of its people and land, and sadly, since 1990, it became known for its ‘blood diamonds’ and for the decade-long civil war. Overall, decades of economic decline, the eleven-year of armed conflict and the Ebola outbreak had dramatic consequences on the country’s economy. Despite the considerable progress since the end of the civil war in consolidating peace and democracy, Sierra Leone remains one of the poorest country in the world. This paucity of resources is closely related with corruption that, either grant or petty, remains endemic in the country.

The Sierra Leone Police is commonly known to be the one who demand bribes at checkpoints and harass drivers that commit traffic offences. However, corruption is not an activity confined to low-rank police officers but it is deeply embedded in the organization. Moreover, there is a day-to-day pressure that politicians exert on police officers (Baker et al. 2004) that should be analyzed in a broader framework where jobs and opportunities often come down to who you know, and who you are related to (Charley et al. 2011). Sierra Leone, as many other West African countries has in fact been described as a neo-patrimonial country (Charley et al. 2011). Two main points are relevant to remember for the purpose of the thesis: the important role of the Inspector General and the relevance of patronage networks in obtaining jobs within the police.

The last section of the chapter focuses on PWDs in the country. PWDs in Sierra Leone are often associated with amputees, as their image became symbolic of the atrocities of the civil war and was widely available through the global media. For this reason, most of international donors focused mainly on amputees and on PWDs whose disability was a direct result of the conflict. In order to attract funding from international donors for all PWDs, including those whose disability was not a direct result of the conflict, the government and international organizations tried to unite different groups with disabilities under the term ‘PWDs’. However, this decision, along with the arbitrary criteria of war reparations, had the outcome of creating many tensions in society. More specifically, this created tensions between PWDs and able people in terms of benefits received: many citizens think that PWDs received much attention and benefits but that they suffered as everyone else during the war. Moreover, PWDs have been blamed to ‘distort’ the attention: many communities saw the emergence of a climate of austerity in which many NGOs cancelled projects to focus on amputees and they felt excluded from the process (AWWA 2014).



Theoretical background

Photo: Police officers at checkpoints in Freetown

Source: [https://voiceofpeopletoday.com/supreme-court-sierra-](https://voiceofpeopletoday.com/supreme-court-sierra-leone-cancels-postponement-second-round-presidential-elections/)

[leone-cancels-postponement-second-round-presidential-elections/](https://voiceofpeopletoday.com/supreme-court-sierra-leone-cancels-postponement-second-round-presidential-elections/)

Chapter 3. Theoretical framework

3.1 Introduction

Do contacts between able and disabled police officers change police officers' stereotypes? To what extent positive experiences with individual disabled police officers result in positive perceptions towards PWDs? What about negative experiences?

Interest in such questions has led to an exploration of a broader theoretical framework that might illuminate the dynamics of relationship between the police and PWDs. A large part of the research literature presented in this chapter focus on the intergroup contact theory. Intergroup contact theory has been described as one of the most influential theories in social psychology since the first formulation by Allport in 1954.

3.2 The rationale of intergroup contact theory

Social psychology made major advances in understanding the complex dynamics of intergroup relations. What was originally a modest “contact hypothesis” proposed by Allport (1954) is now a complex and longstanding theory. Allport presented the first outline of the contact hypothesis claiming that true acquaintance between groups lessen prejudice. As knowledge, on its own, will not make people negating their prejudices and stereotypes, since they are very likely to accept only the information that fit into their preconceived schema of the world, the best way to break down people' stereotypes is to getting to know the other (Allport 1954). Part of the appeal of the theory relies on its immediacy and simplicity: contact, under certain conditions, will create a positive intergroup encounter, which in turns will lead to an improvement in intergroup relations. In the following section, I will provide a more in-depth understanding of *how* and *when* contact works.

When analyzing the intergroup contact theory, the central question that comes is: *how does intergroup contact reduce prejudice?* As the original hypothesis did not specify about the processes by which contact changes attitudes, a number of different processes have been proposed and tested in the research literature: in the next section, I will consider the four processes proposed by Pettigrew (1998).

The four processes are: (i) learning about the outgroup, (ii) changing behavior, (iii) generating affective ties, and (iv) in-group reappraisal. The first process, learning about the outgroup, has been held as the major way in which intergroup contact reduce prejudice: when new learning corrects negative views of the outgroup, contact should reduce prejudice. In other words, contact between members of different groups is expected to improve the attitudes of the in-group towards the out-group by replacing the in-group ignorance with knowledge that disconfirm in-group stereotypes towards the out-group members (Pettigrew 1998). The second process, changing behavior, is related to the idea that optimal intergroup contact creates new situations, that require conforming to new

expectations. If these expectations include the acceptance of outgroup members, this behavior is highly likely to produce attitude change (Pettigrew 1998).

The third process, generating affective ties, emphasizes the role of emotion in the process. Continued contact reduces anxiety and empathy for a stigmatized outgroup member- a woman with AIDS, an individual with disabilities or a homeless man- can improve attitudes towards the whole outgroup (Batson et al 1997). Intergroup friendship can also be pivotal. The fourth and last process refers to ingroup reappraisal. Optimal intergroup contact provides insight about ingroups as well as outgroups: with contact, people realize that ingroup norms and customs are not the only ways to manage the social world. This new perspective can reshape the ingroup view and lead to a less provincial view of outgroups in general (Pettigrew 1998).

The second question that need to be addressed is: *when contact works?* Allport (1954) suggested that certain conditions need to be present during intergroup encounters for contact to effectively reduce prejudice:

“Prejudice [...] may be reduced by equal status contact between majority and minority groups in the pursuit of common goals. The effect is greatly enhanced if this contact is sanctioned by institutional support (i.e. by law, custom or local atmosphere), and provided it is of a sort that leads to the perception of common interests and common humanity between members of the two groups.” (Allport, 1954: 281)

Therefore, contact between groups would be more likely to reduce prejudice if four conditions were met: (i) equal status among individuals, (ii) intergroup cooperation, (iii) common goals and (iv) institutional support.

First, there should be equal status among individuals in the contact situation. As discriminatory practices within society may establish and maintain a lower status for minority groups, for instance in terms of attainable job or education, Allport (1954) suggested that the perception of equal status within the contact situation can redress societal imbalances. Research has shown for instance that the assignment of equally valued but differentiated tasks to the groups during contact is likely to reduce intergroup bias (Dovidio et al. 1998). Second, the situation in which contact occurs should require cooperation between groups. For instance, following Allport’s condition, Slavin (1985) pointed out how cooperative-learning methods, which employ ethnically mixed learning groups who receive rewards based on the degree to which they can increase the academic performance of each member of the group, may enhance intergroup relations.

Third, groups should have common goals. The effects of common goals have been for instance vividly demonstrated by Sherif et al. (1961) in their classic Robber’s Cave studies. Hostility aroused between two groups of summer camp young people when they were made to compete for several prizes. However, when the experimenters introduced goals that could be achieve only through a common effort by both groups, such as pooling money to rent a movie, conflict and prejudice decreased gradually. Finally, contact should be legitimized through institutional support (Hewstone et al. 2014). As contact programmes are normally implemented within an institutional or organization context, such as school workplace or community centers, Allport (1954) recognized that authorities play a key role especially when the majority group shows resistance to engage in contact with

minority group. The importance of authority support has been underscored in military (Landis et al 1984), business (Morrison et al. 1992), and religious institutions (Parker 1968).

Even if Allport's contact hypothesis did not specify if the contact effects generalize, a third question that is very important for the application of the theory in real-world settings is: *when do the effects of contact generalize?* In other words, this means to what extent contact can generalize outside its original situation, or beyond the people originally involved. Pettigrew (1998) points out three distinct types of generalization: (i) Situational – do the changes generalize across situation? (ii) individual to the group – do the changes generalize from the specific outgroup members with whom there is contact to the outgroup? and (iii) uninvolved groups – do the changes towards the outgroup generalize to the other outgroups not involved in the contact?

First, generalization across situations is considered. Very few studies showed major improvements in attitudes towards outgroup members in different situations. For instance, Stouffer et al (1949) pointed out that despite the improvement of white attitudes towards black soldiers after fighting together in the World War II, white continued to favor racially separate post exchanges. Similarly, the first cooperative encounters of the Robbers' Cave that I mentioned before did not generalize either.

Secondly, generalization from the outgroup individual to the outgroup. Brown et al. (1981) questioned the generalization of effects between interpersonal and intergroup phenomena. They doubted whether positive effects from getting to know an outgroup member (interpersonal) could affect attitudes about the outgroup (intergroup). Following this reasoning, Hewstone et al. (1986) theorized that contact effects generalize to the outgroup only when group membership is salient. When group saliency is low, the situation is interpersonal and no intergroup effects should result. Only when the members perceive the other as a group representative, the contact generalize to the outgroup. This point is crucial for this thesis and will be later discussed more in-depth.

Thirdly, generalization from the immediate outgroup to other outgroups. This means that if positive contact can change perception towards an outgroup member, people will have some positive attitudes also towards other outgroup members, not involved in the original contact. This higher-order form of generalization presupposes the other form. Pettigrew (1997) argues that having an outgroup friend is related to a greater acceptance of other minorities.

After having already mentioned some of the studies, in the next section I will provide a review of previous research in order to situate my study in the literature available.

A review of previous research: gaps in the literature

Allport (1954) derived his hypothesis from early field research, mostly based on the situation of African Americans in the United States. After desegregation of the Merchant Marine in 1948, when interdependency developed on ships and in the maritime union between black and white people, Brophy (1946) demonstrated that the more voyages the white seamen took with blacks under the four conditions, the more positive their racial attitudes became. After Allport (1954), literally hundreds of research papers and book chapters have appeared on this subject.

Earlier studies have predominantly focused on contact effects that involve attitudes towards race or ethnicity, mainly in the United States (Wilner et al. 1955, Williams 1964, Yinon 1975, Wilson 1984, Van Dick et al. 2000, Stephan et al. 2000). For instance, Kephart (1957) investigation carried out in the US police showed that white police in Philadelphia who had worked with black colleagues had fewer objections to black police joining their districts, teaming with a black partner, and taking orders from qualified black officers (Kephart 1957). Field studies of public housing provided the strongest evidence by showing that equal-status interracial contact in public housing related to more positive intergroup attitudes for blacks and whites (Wilner et al. 1952, Works 1961 Cagle 1973). In addition to public housing, contact theory has been usefully applied to schools in order to understand the racial desegregation in educational institutes (Carithers 1970, Pettigrew 1971, D'Augelli 1989, Cotten-Huston et al. 2000, Eller et al. 2003).

However, later on, studies started to be undertaken also involving attitudes toward a wide range of targets beyond the blacks and whites, such as the elderly (Caspi 1984, Drew 1988, Meshel et al. 2004), the homosexuals (Herek et al. 1996, Cotton-Huston et al. 1999) and victims of AIDS (Werth et al. 1992). For what concerns people with disabilities, most of the contact interventions investigated focused mainly on the attitudes of health professionals towards people with physical impairments (Bell 1962, Casey 1978, Eberhardt et al. 1995, Uysal et al. 2014) and with mental disabilities (Desforges et al. 1991, Canter et al. 1960).

Moreover, it is worthy to mention the existence of non-experimental studies that analyze PWDs' social integration and inclusion in employing settings. These studies have looked at the contact interventions strategies designed to promote PWDs social integration in workplace settings, from attempting to improve PWDs' social skills to actively encourage able coworkers to interact with them (Chadsey 2007, Chadsey et al. 2001). However, the evidence regarding the effectiveness of these strategies has been mixed. If evidence suggests that while PWDs entering supported employment do expand their social networks and increase their interactions with able coworkers, it has been proven that PWDs often do not feel socially accepted at work (Chadsey et al. 1997, Novak et al. 2011).

Other intervention strategies took a more indirect approach: instead of focusing on changing the social behavior of PWDs or of able coworkers, indirect interventions strategies focused on the workplace culture (i.e. the social norms of a workplace) (Novak et al. 2011). Studies in this area have explored the influence of workplace culture on opportunities for social interaction and integration of PWDs. For instance, Butterworth et al. (2000) found out that young adults with developmental disabilities were more likely to be supported and included at work when the workplace culture included certain key elements, such as clearly identified places and times for socialization between colleagues. In addition to the workplace culture, other studies focused on the job design (Chambless 1996, Butterworth et al. 2000, Mank et al. 1997, Jahoda et al. 2008). For instance, Parent et al. (2007) pointed out that some features of work relationship structures, such as working in physical proximity to able employees or to cooperate with them to complete tasks are closely linked to PWDs' social integration. However, as these studies were not experimental, they are of partial relevance for my thesis.

A feature of all the past studies on contact interventions in the field of disability that I mentioned, is that they have mostly been carried out in the developed nations, and, more specifically,

mainly in the United States. Findings on contact interventions in the field of disability in developing countries, and especially in African countries are lacking. One of the very few study available is the investigation made by Nabuzoka et al. (1997), who analyzed the social acceptance of a group of Zambian children with intellectual disabilities by two group of non-disabled children where one were in direct contact with them for six months while the other was not. Even if the findings are preliminary, she argued that non-disabled boys who had in contact with children with disabilities had more positive attitudes than boys who had no direct contact. No studies seem to have been undertaken on contact interventions targeting adults with disabilities in developing countries

This thesis, by looking at how the employment of PWDs within the police has challenged police officers' perception towards PWDs, can provide insights on the effectiveness of contact interventions in the field of disability in developing countries. Considering the rapid proliferation of contact interventions around the world, I hope to contribute to help practitioners to design more effective disability awareness interventions.

3.3 Criticism on intergroup contact theory

There is still a last and most obvious question that has not been answered: *Does contact work?* Despite the enormous literature available on this topic, the intergroup contact theory continues to receive ambiguous empirical support (Hewstone et al. 2011, Pettigrew et al. 2006, Hewstone et al. 2011). On one side, some researchers assert that: *After more than six decades of research, we now have consistent evidence that contact "works"*. (Vezzali et al. 2016). Many scholars show enthusiasm towards the theory, suggesting that intergroup contact is likely to reduce intergroup prejudice (Cook 1984, Harrington et al. 1992, Jackson 1993, Patchen 1999, Pettigrew 1971, 1986, 1998). From the overview of the supporting studies I outlined in the previous section, one may wonder if there is actually anything else that remains to be studied in the field after more than sixty years of fruitful research.

For this reason, it is essential to mention that other studies reached more mixed conclusions (Amir 1969, Forbes 2004) and some authors discarded the theory asserting that *"the initial hopes of contact theorists have failed to materialize"* (Hopkins et al. 1997: 306). For instance, after having examined fifty papers in contact literature, Ford (1986: 256) assert that the research presented was *"grossly insufficient in representing the various settings of daily life"*. Similarly, McClendon (1974) suggested that the contact research has been unsophisticated and that is lacking in rigor.

Despite its promise, the intergroup contact theory appears to suffer for many defects, however, for the purpose of the thesis, I turn to a more detailed discussions of the three major shortcomings of the past reviews which are relevant for the topic. The major difficulties are: (i) the role of negative contact, (ii) the generalization effect for 'PWDs' and (iii) the context in which the thesis takes place.

Investigating negative intergroup contact

Graf et al (2016:93) pointed out that *"the noble aim of challenging prejudice in society underpins intergroup contact researchers' enduring passion for positive intergroup contact and their related neglect of contact's darker side"*. The intergroup contact theory has mostly been analyzed

with a prevailing interest in positive contact. However, positive contact represents only one of the dimensions of the possible intergroup contact experiences, or what some researchers refer as ‘contact valence’. The other dimension is negative intergroup contact. Failing to consider the effects of negative contact not only limits the knowledge gained from contact research but highly restricts its applicability in real-life settings. Recent studies that have started to explore negativity as an integral part of intergroup experiences (Dhont et al. 2009, Paolini et al. 2010) have in fact proved how negative contact can increase and exacerbate prejudice, rather than only failing to produce positive outcomes (Graf et al. 2016).

It is then important to deal with the effects of negative intergroup contact, which may occur through an unpleasant interaction with an out-group member. One of the few model that take into account the effects of negative intergroup contact theory is Paolini et al. (2010) model of intergroup valence asymmetries in intergroup relations. This model guides the research and underpins most of the concepts that will be further discussed.

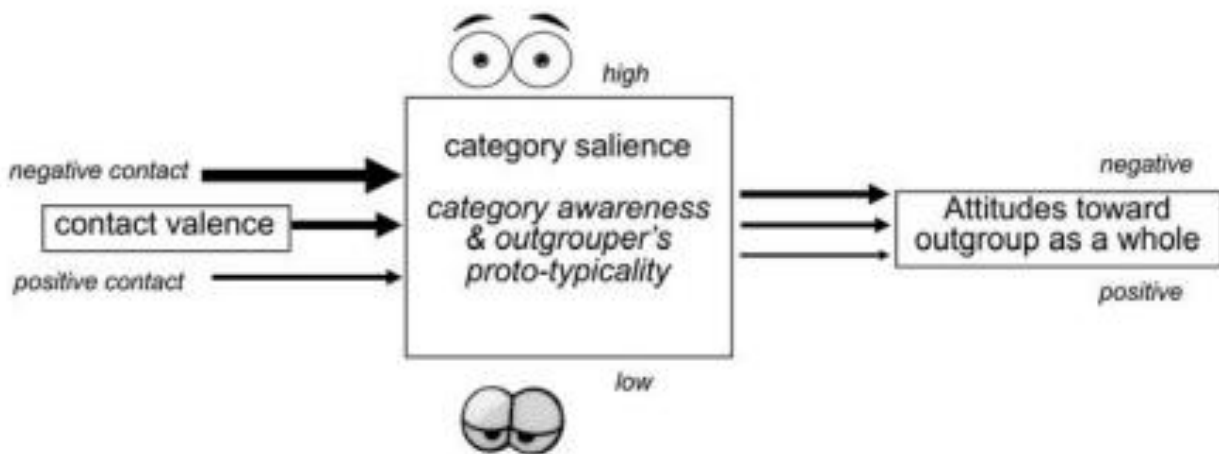


FIGURE 1.1 Paolini et al. (2010) model of intergroup valence asymmetry in intergroup relations

The model is based on three main building blocks: (i) contact valence or, in other words, contact experience, (ii) category salience and (iii) outgroup evaluations. The first building block refers to the experience of the contact, that can be positive or negative depending on the quality of the contact. In our case, this refers to the experience of the exchange between police officers and disabled police officers: if it goes well or not or if people experienced it as pleasant or not. The second building block refers to the notion of ‘category salience’. In the contact literature, the term ‘category salience’ is used to understand to the extent to which a social category is activated (i.e. salient) or dormant (i.e. non-salient) during the contact experience (Brown et al. 2005). In other words, this refers to what extent police officers perceive the disabled police officers as belonging to the category of PWDs.

The causal links that this model introduces between contact experience and category salience is that experiences of negative contact with out-group members should increase category salience situationally because the negative contact is more consistent with people’s (generally negative) expectations about outgroup members (Graf et al. 2016). In other words, if police officers normally have negative expectations towards PWDs, when they have a negative contact with a person with disability, they are likely to emphasize the fact that the person is a disabled.

The third and last building block in the model refers to the group-level judgments or evaluations and, as recent research pointed out (Paolini et al. 2016), it encompasses generalized changes in out-group stereotyping. This last element is closely linked to another shortcoming of the theory and will be outlined in the next section.

The generalization of effect problem: who is included under the term 'PWDs'?

The last building block in the aforementioned model is an important aspect of the contact theory for its policy implications: if contact effects do not generalize, the theory is in fact of limited value for social policy (Lolliot et al. 2013). However, if the prejudice-reducing effects are able to generalize beyond the outgroup member encountered, intergroup contact can have significant values as a means used to improve intergroup relationships (Brown et al. 1981). For instance, Forbes (1997) concluded that intergroup contact may lower prejudice at individual level but fail at the group level.

As briefly aforementioned, contact effects generalize from the individual to the outgroup when group membership is salient. When membership salience is low, the situation focuses on the interpersonal level, therefore, there is no effect on the intergroup level. On the other side, when people see each other as group representatives, the contact become an intergroup event (Pettigrew 1998). This means that stereotypes change generalize from the interpersonal to the intergroup level when the individuals are seen as 'typical' group members (Hewstone et al. 1992, Vivian et al. 1995, Weber et al. 1983, Wilder 1984).

It is interesting as the generalization of contact effects implies that the out-group is a homogeneous group. This may not always be possible when analyzing social groups, such as people with disabilities. As I already mentioned in chapter two, the term 'PWDs' hides important thoughts on how the concept of disability is understood in Sierra Leone. Before diving into this debate, I will outline how the term 'people with disabilities' is used in this thesis.

Disability is a complex, dynamic, multidimensional and contested concept (WHO and World Bank 2011) whose definition vary widely depending on the context and the country (Iriarte 2015). In some countries, only people with physical impairments are identified as having a disability, whereas others apply a much broader definition to include mental impairments as well as intellectual disabilities (Groce 2004). The UN Convention on the Rights for Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) states that PWDs include 'those who have long-term physical, mental, intellectual or sensory impairments which in interaction with various barriers may hinder their full and effective participation in society on an equal basis with others' (2006: 2). This definition of disability demonstrates that disability comes from an interaction between a person and his or her own environment (Iriarte 2015),

This definition of 'persons with disabilities' has been described as an 'homogenised and individualised form of thinking (which) is essentially asocial and depoliticized questions of definition, expectations and practices' (Barton 1992:4). With this definition, other relevant factors such as culture, history, gender or socio-economic status are all ignored in the search for a universally acceptable definition (Ariotti 1999). Many researchers have in fact emphasized the need to

contextualize disability in the specific country: Anita Ghai (2002) for instance, pointed out the need to conceptualize disability specifically in the Indian context to really understand the meaning and nature of disability itself.

The use of a universally acceptable definition fails to take into account that in many culture one cannot be 'disabled' for the simple reason that the concept of 'disability' does not exist (Ariotti 1999). There are for instance, blind people, lame people, stubborn people, slow people, but 'the disabled' as a general term does not translate into many languages (Ariotti 1999). This means that, not only PWDs may not agree to be viewed as constituting one segment of the larger group of PWDs, but people' perception may vary according to the disability. Even if previous studies on this topic tent to treat PWDs as a homogeneous group (Yuker et al. 1966), Jaffe (1967) and Esses (1994) suggests that every disability label or description evokes its own set of attitudes and stereotypes. This is even more relevant in post-conflict settings, and especially in Sierra Leone where the concept of disability is closely related to the civil war, as discussed in the previous chapter.

Moreover, researchers pointed out how not only people have different perception according to the impairment, but some studies focused on the relative preference rankings of different impairments. Yuker et al. (1966) support the argumentation that, in an employment setting or professional relationship, the crippling disabilities are generally most favored (physically-impaired), over the sensory disabilities (speech and hearing or visually impaired) which are generally preferred over the brain-related disabilities (epileptic).

This was to show the second shortcoming of the theory and how this has an implication over the thesis. In the next section, I will outline the last shortcoming, referred to the context in which intergroup contact takes place.

The importance of the context

As aforementioned, there are divergent findings on the likely effects of the theory in intergroup conflict. A possible explanation is that some of the studies were conducted in context that were structurally unfavorable to the development of positive intergroup relations. Subsequent research emphasized the need of considering the context, as it could represent a key variable in the development of positive intergroup relations (Vezzali et al. 2016). Selection bias has in fact been described as one of the major limitation of the theory: in the previous cited studies in the merchant marine, in the US police in Philadelphia or in New York public-housing research, little choice was available to participants. However, this study takes place in a highly structured (i.e. low choice) context, characterized by a tense and power-defined environment, where out-group avoidance is limited (if not impossible). Therefore, the next section will outline some key characteristics of the context in terms of cultural variables that are highly likely to have an influence on contact effects.

Police culture: closer look at the rules of the game

Brown (1988) defined organizational culture as reflecting the underlying assumptions about the way work is performed, about what is 'acceptable and not acceptable' and about what behavior

and actions are encouraged and discouraged in the organization. The “rules of the game” of the Sierra Leone Police go beyond formal policies, practices and structures and includes the norms and definition of what the police accepts or allows (Paoline 2003).

Police culture has been studied mostly described within Western policing environments. However, these concepts are relevant within police organizations in West Africa as they are deeply interconnected with other police organizations worldwide. Researchers have looked at police in West Africa and in the Global South in general, as a copy of the model exported from the Global North during colonialism (Beek et al. 2015). However, since the 1990s, as West African police organizations had more and more relationships beyond their former colonial ties (Beek et al. 2015), this argumentation has been questioned and the relationship between police organizations worldwide has been proposed more as a flow of ideas, practices and personnel between different countries (Anderson et al. 1991, Sinclair 2006).

One relevant concept that could be used to describe West African police culture today is that of ‘travelling models’ (Behrends et al. 2014). Normally this concept is used to describe how models such as development projects, international policies and legal norms are carried from one place to another (Czarniawska et al. 1996). However, in chapter two, I outlined the colonial origin of the Sierra Leone Police and I mentioned the involvement of International Police teams in the 1998 reform process. This was done to prove that the history of the Sierra Leone Police has been highly influenced by other countries’ ideas, practices and personnel. Therefore, analyzing the SLP with the lens of Western policing environment is adequate as the SLP is deeply interconnected with other police organizations worldwide and how Western police core values are highly likely to be experienced by SLP police officers as well.

A deep understanding of police core values’ can gain insight in how police officers’ make decisions and actions and in how they make sense of situations they navigate in everyday life. However, this does not mean that individuals are perceived as passive recipients or victims of planned change, or as ‘cultural dopes’ who simply follow existing rules or conventions (Verschoor et al. 2001). Within an organization, individuals create room for manoeuvre to benefit as much as they can, therefore, police officers should then be seen as actors that can think and operate individually. If on one side it is true that “the individual policeman finds his own interests have been forcibly identified with those of the group” (Westley 1970;110) and that police officers are loyal to the group’s shared attitudes, I agree with Brown (1988) that police culture demands loyalty but grants autonomy at the same time.

Police culture as integration or fragmentation?

The notion that police possess a distinctive occupational culture lies at the center of much research about policing: because of the organization’s demands and the nature of the occupation, police culture is unique (Chevigny 1969). Researchers have defined two main conceptualizations of police culture. In early research into police culture, researchers have supported a traditional view of police culture as a single and homogenous entity (Britz 1997; Frewin et al. 1998, Toch 1976, Westley 1970). On the other side, research that is more recent reflects a view of a segmented culture with

various styles, patterns, and characterizations (Brown 1988, Herbert 1996, , Paoline 2003, Paoline 2004, Reuss-Ianni 1983,).

A traditional view of police culture identifies it as a unifying force among officers. This means that individuals tend to adhere to a single culture with certain norms, values, attitudes and behavior. The first author to support a monolithic view of police culture is Westley (1970) who later inspired research into police norms and values. Westley (1970) described police officers as people placing a strong value on in-group loyalty and secrecy among them. Officers are expected to rely on each other for support and to back up one another when in situation of need. This refers not only to professional situations, but also to emotional and personal support (Westley 1970). In-group loyalty is strongly related with the sense of suspiciousness and social division within the police environments (Kappeler et al. 1998).

Solidarity offers police officers reassurance that their colleagues will ‘pull their weight’ in police work and will defend and assist them when confronted by external threats (Goldsmith 1990). More specifically, he refers to the concept of ‘the blue wall of silence’ as the first rule for officers. The ‘blue wall of silence’ is also referred to as the ‘cop code of silence’ and it has historically been the main obstacle to uncover police misconduct or misbehaviors (Reiner 1985). Any officer who breaks this norm faces numerous consequences, both on a personal and professional level. In terms of personal consequences, the most important is social exclusion from the group (Britz 1997, Frewin et al. 1998, Toch 1976).

Moreover, it is relevant to the thesis to outline that a traditional view of police culture emphasizes the role of police officers as law enforcement agents and crime fighters as primary roles and duties of ‘real’ police officer (Brown 1988, Paoline 2004). Duties such as service and order maintenance are seen as less important and irrelevant to the police officer’s primary role (Paoline, 2004). Much research has been done on the ‘cult of masculinity’ and its association with ‘physicality’ as an explanatory tool for understanding the policing environment (Silvestri 2017). Manning (1978: 249) described the police culture as ‘*Essentially a masculine culture with an emphasis on virility, toughness, masculinity, and masculine interests such as sexual triumphs, sports, outdoor life, and so.*’ As I mentioned in chapter two, physicality is an important element in the Sierra Leone Police: the recruitment of ‘big and strong’ OSD officers is only a first example, that will be followed by many others throughout the findings.

However, such traditional view of police culture has been criticized to be too limited and shortsighted as it does not consider the many changes happened within policing environment in recent decades, such as the increasing numbers of women and minority officers and the implementation of community policing (Britz 1997). In response to this aspect, researchers have investigated police culture under the assumption that it is more variable than static (Mastrofski 2004). Many researchers have in fact demonstrated the existence of multiple sub-culture within the policing environment. For instance, scholars distinguish between urban and rural police (Cain 1973), between the hierarchical rank divisions (Reuss-Ianni et al. 1983), between different departments and special units (Kraska et al. 1997). This shows how the notion of police culture can disappear into near-infinity of sub-cultures.

An example of the existence of sub-cultures that is relevant for the research is the difference between officers of different ranks. Reuss-Ianni (1983) identified two distinct cultures according to the rank: street cop culture at the lower rank and management cop culture. While the first focuses on the immediate aspects of the job and on the risks police officers must face in the streets, the management cop culture primarily consists of a strong commitment to rules and regulations. Manning (1994) suggests that the management culture is comprised of two distinct parts: middle management and top command. The so-called middle management acts as a buffer between the street (low-rank officers) and upper management (top command) and is more concerned with management functions. On the other side, the top command is consumed with the politics of managing the 'police organization' and is accountable to external audience (Farkas et al. 1997). The main implication of the existence of sub-cultures in this study is that contacts between low-rank and disabled police officers may have different effects compared to contacts between high-rank and disabled police officers. The existence of sub-cultures per rank should then be taken into account when designing disability awareness interventions, as I will suggest in the recommendations.

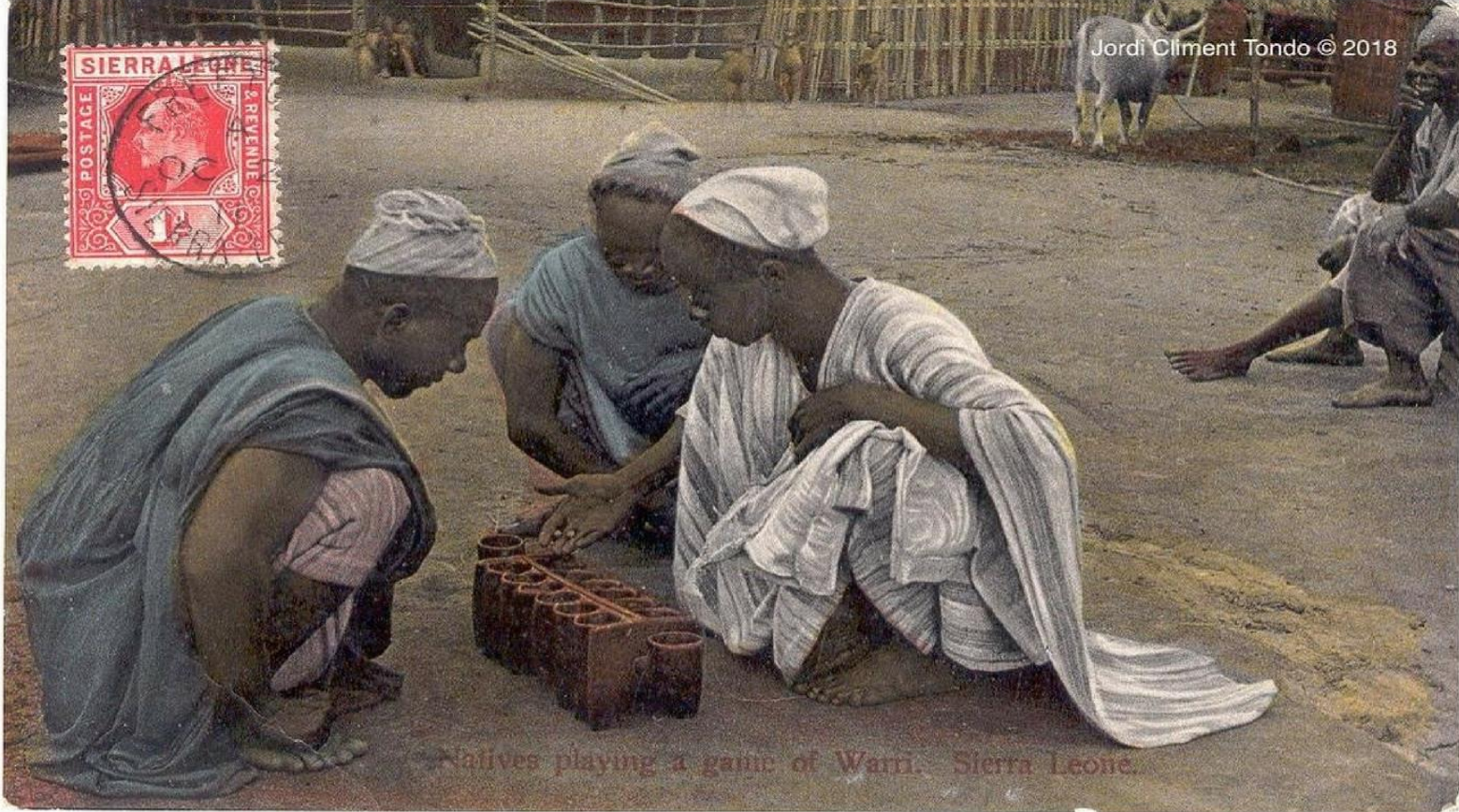
This brief overview aimed at analyzing the police culture, which is important to understand the context in which the contacts between police officers and people with disabilities take place.

3.4 Concluding remarks

As this chapter outlines, this thesis uses intergroup contact theory to analyze the contribution of the employment of PWDs within the SLP to police officers' stereotypes towards PWDs. What was originally a modest "contact hypothesis" proposed by Allport (1954) is now a complex and longstanding theory. However, despite the enormous literature available on this topic, the intergroup contact theory continues to receive ambiguous empirical support. While many scholars show enthusiasm towards the theory, suggesting that intergroup contact is likely to reduce intergroup prejudice other studies reached more mixed conclusions and some authors have discarded the theory.

Drawing on the criticism towards intergroup contact theory, there are three main shortcomings that are relevant for the thesis. Firstly, I argued that negative contact should be taken into account when analyzing contact effects: not only it can fail to produce positive outcomes but it may even exacerbate prejudice. Secondly, the generalization effect, which is an important pillar of the theory for its policy implications, may not be appropriate for heterogeneous outgroup, such as people with disabilities. Thirdly, I outlined characteristics of the policing environment because of the need to consider the context as a key variable in the development of positive intergroup relations.

After having outlined the theoretical framework on which this thesis is based on, in the next chapter, I will present the methodology that has been used to carry out the study.



Native playing a game of Warri. Sierra Leone.

Methodology

Photo: Old postcard: people playing the Warri
Source: Jordi Climent Tondo 2018

Chapter 4. Methodology

4.1 Introduction

In this chapter, broadly called Methodology, I present how the research was conducted. I share my research process with the reader, discussing the research context, why I chose for a qualitative interviewing and participant observation methodological approaches, who the research participants were and how I got to know them. Later on, I present the data analysis and introduce any practical and ethical consideration related to the nature of the research and to my positionality and identity as a researcher.

4.2 Research context

This research is part of the cooperative project “Breaking down barriers to inclusion – building capacity for lobby and advocacy for children with disabilities” between the African Studies Center (ASC) and the Liliane Foundation (LF). Recognizing the lack of information on the conditions for successful disability advocacy in developing countries, the project aims at enhancing knowledge and capacity in the field of lobby and advocacy for children with disabilities. In a period of four years, several Masters’ students conduct research in Cameroon and Sierra Leone in order to have a better understanding on the factors that determine a successful advocacy campaign. This thesis fits in the project’s trajectory examining disability awareness interventions in Sierra Leone. Within my thesis, two local partners were involved in the project: One Family People as host organization and dr. Aisha Ibrahim as local expert. They provide me with practical support and suggestions while in Freetown.

This qualitative research has been conducted in a six-month period of fieldwork from July to December 2017. During my fieldwork, I was able to intern within a local organization in Freetown, One Family People, which is a strategic partner organization (SPO) of the Liliane Foundation. Founded in 2008, One Family People works to ensure PWDs’ empowerment through projects in education and health and to promote disability rights in West Africa through lobbying and advocacy. From July to September, while I interned full-time with OFP, I was able to collect background information on my topic in an informal way. From September to December, I fully dedicated to the research, conducting formal interviews and doing participant observation with the police and PWDs. My main location of stay was in Freetown. The main implications of my internship will be later discussed in the chapter.

4.3 Methods

The following section will explain which methods have been used to conduct the research and why they have been chosen in the first place. This section also provides a geographical overview of where the research took place.

Qualitative Interviewing

During my fieldwork, I gathered information through semi-structured interviews, leaving the choice to people about what to tell about the life. I chose this method for many reasons. First, I wanted to treat participants less as subject of the research and more as social actors in a process that explore and analyze their lives. The use of semi-structured interviews reduces the dominant power relations between the respondents and myself. It allowed me to be 'just' an equal participant engaged in a conversation, reducing also the imposition of my own perspective of the world on respondents. In addition, I consider this method as the most appropriate for the nature of the research, as it does not limit the scope of answers a participant wishes to give. As my topic touches potential sensitive issues and personal trauma, the use of semi-structured interviews is an unobtrusive, accepting and nonjudgmental way to obtain data. Moreover, as it focuses on issues I would not be able to understand because I did not live, such as being born with a disability in Africa or having experienced a civil war, I felt without this method, I would not been able to understand the context.

The interview were roughly forty-five minutes each and the interview guide was used as a starting point. I constructed a topic list with relevant themes to be discussed per 'group': one for police officers, one for PWDs-communities and one for disabled police officers. Conversations with police officers included their personal and professional life (educational background, motivation to join the forces, main duties, rank position) and their relationship with PWDs (presence of PWDs within their family, frequency of contact with PWDs, conflictual episodes with PWDs while on duty). Conversations with PWDs focused mainly on their personal background (type of impairment, educational and professional background) and their relationship with police (frequency of contact with police, conflictual episodes with police). With disabled police officers, interviews aimed at understanding their personal background and their experiences within the police (motivation to be part of the police, ordinary challenges at work, main duties). However, the interviews often took their own direction as respondents suggested new idea for discussion. For instance, the absence of uniform among disabled police officers has spontaneously been raised during interviews by police officers, giving new insights to the research. During interviews, I used audio tapes (when permitted) to ensure a replication of contents, to facilitate analysis and to minimize any loss of data. Moreover, I tried to write brief handwritten notes on the side.

Participant observation

A popular slogan of PWDs in Sierra Leone is "Nothing about us without us" and many people I met felt I really had to go to the field and meet other PWDs in their homes and communities to really understand their issues. For this reason, I relied on participant observation, defined as an act of observing in order to gather impressions on the surrounding world and that consisted of the widest variety of actions conceivable. It ranged from to going out on the streets where PWDs used to beg to from spending hours talking to police officers in the streets, from hanging around police stations in Freetown to attending meetings in prisons.

Field visits were made in the Western Area (Freetown and Waterloo). To understand PWDs living situation and their ordinary challenges, I visited the following areas: street homes, centers for

skills training and different type of schools, homes for amputees, communities for polio people, associations for people with epilepsy, and different offices of advocacy centers for PWDs, NGOs and DPOs. While doing participant observation in different PWDs-communities, I was able to understand how the concept of disability is locally understood: more specifically, I realized how local DPOs have a strong identity related to their impairments and how they do not use the term 'PWDs'. Moreover, interestingly, by doing participant observation I was able to geographically make sense of the location of DPOs and to take advantage of this: I realized that many DPOs that focus on amputees or polio are located in Grafton, which is located a 45-minutes *poda-poda* (minibus) journey outside Freetown in the Western Area. During the conflict, Grafton was one of the village that housed thousands of internally displaced persons (IDPs) and, for locals, Grafton was the place to go for people that had nowhere else to go and needed aid from NGOs or charities (Berghs et al. 2011). For this reason, after a while, I knew that Grafton was a suitable place to conduct interviews with people with physical impairments and to collect information on the situation of PWDs in the post-conflict phase as many organizations continue to have projects in this area. On the other side, I soon realized that DPOs and organizations that work with people with mental and intellectual disabilities are located mostly in the Eastern area of Freetown, which is the poorest and the most difficult to reach with public transport. It is quite clear how organizations located in Eastern Freetown receive less funding and are generally not used to receive visits from *opotu* (white people). This information helped me to organize my methodology as well: by having an idea of the organizations in the area I was able to organize how many interviews I could do in one day.

In addition, I visited different police stations in Western and Eastern Freetown, police barracks, police headquarters in Freetown city center, food street corners where police officers normally go, two female and one male detention center in Freetown. The process of getting to know individual police officers and for them to know and trust me was an important part of the methodology. For this reason, I used to spend much time with police officers and hang around the police station, not always related to conducting interviews or collecting information on disability issues. In the end, I feel seemingly pointless activities bore their fruits, as I was able to gather relevant information not only on police officers' perception towards disability issues but also on their personal and professional situation as well as their way of thinking. To give a specific example, by hanging around in the police compound in KingTom area, in the Western part of Freetown, I soon realized how I was the only civilian going around, and this helped in understanding why disabled police officers work in this specific department, as I will demonstrate in my findings. Moreover, the visits at the prisons helped me in collecting information on the justice sector in Sierra Leone and on the difficulties that PWDs encounter when they try to get access to it.

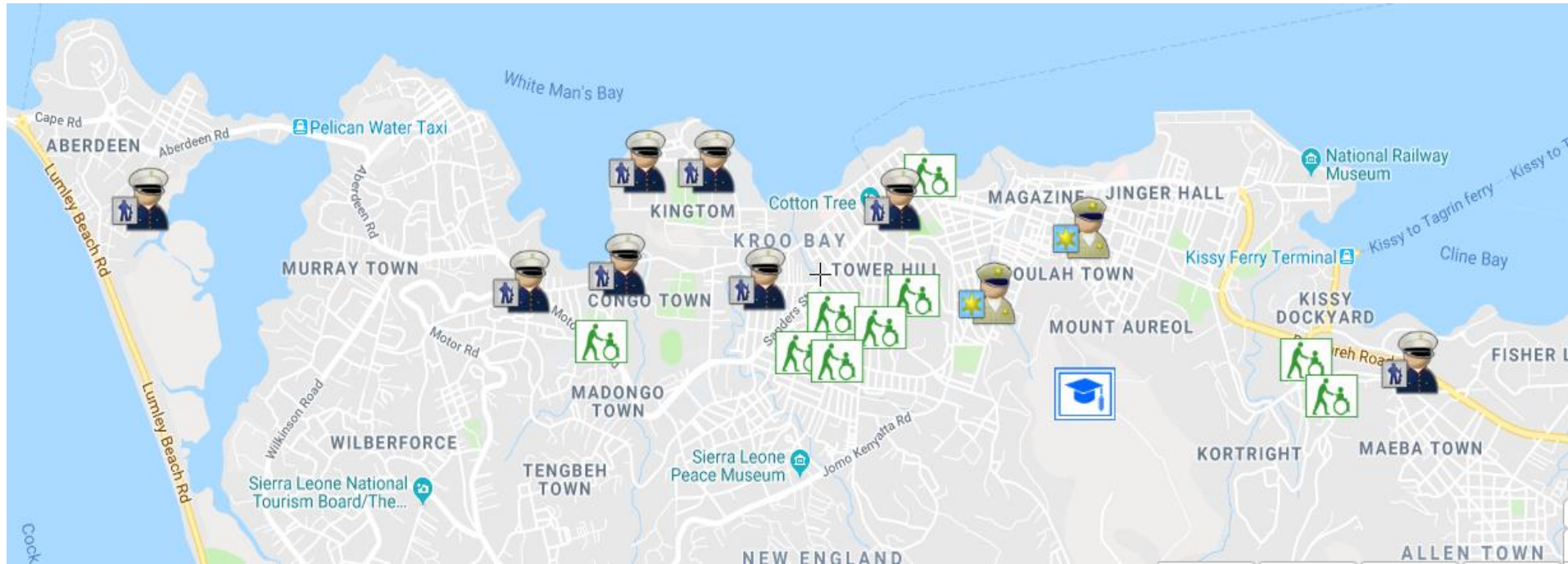






Figure 1.2 Research Locations in Freetown

Table 1.1 Map legend of research locations

	<p>Police stations and police barracks, including the following: Congo Cross Police station, Aberdeen Police station, Kingtom Police stations, Kingtom police barracks, Police Headquarters, Kissy Police stations, Kissy police barracks</p>		<p>CSOs, DPOs, NGOs and other organizations, including the following: One Family People, Ecowas street community, AdvocAid, Prison Watch, Amnesty International, SLUDI, ACOD, EASL, WESOFOD Kambia, DAAG, Freetown Cheshire Home</p>
	<p>Detention centers, including the following: Freetown Female Correctional Center, Freetown Central Prison (Pademba Road prison)</p>		<p>Fourah Bay College</p>

4.4 Introducing the field

The following section aims at introducing the field: I will first outline how respondents have been chosen, how many interviews I conducted and what I wanted to know from these interviews. Secondly, I will further discuss how I got access to the policing environment and to PWDs-communities. Finally, I will outline the ethical considerations related to the methodology: working with a translator.

Participant selection

The 32 interviews conducted with 32 police officers based in Western Area form the backbone of my data collection. Eight of the 32 police officers interviewed were disabled. At the beginning of my fieldwork, I got in contact with Teddy Foday-Musa, a disability activist working as a university professor at the Fourah Bay College with many contacts within the policing environment. Thanks to him, I was able to obtain a meeting with the Assistant Inspector General Ibrahim Samura, working in the Communication Department at the Police Headquarters in Freetown. Mr. Samura was my first key contact within the police and helped me to get an understanding of the different departments and ranks within the SLP and to collect some information on the relationship between the police and PWDs. Moreover, he introduced me to the first police officers I met in Freetown and he took part in the first informal conversations I had at the Police Headquarters. After meeting the first police officers, most of my sampling was done through snowball method and respondents were chosen based on two main criteria: they were part of the Sierra Leone Police and they were willing to participate.

In addition, I conducted interviews with 23 members of different Civil Society Organizations (CSOs), Disabled People Organizations (DPOs) and PWDs-communities. Respondents were members of international organizations, such as Amnesty International and Prison Watch, local organization such as AdvocAid or Freetown Cheshire Home and of disabled communities such as Ecowas Street. I got in contact with these organizations mainly during my internship and through contacts of One Family People.

Negotiating access and building rapport

Because of the attachment to One Family People, my positioning was strongly linked with disabled communities in Freetown. This had both benefits and limitations. On one side, I strongly believe that in many situations, without the introduction of being a volunteer from OFP or being accompanied by a colleague of mine, it would have been very difficult to gather data amongst PWDs. On the other side, getting access to the police has been quite challenging. I had assumed I would be able to conduct semi-structured interviews and focus groups within the police stations after having obtained some type of permission. Before the start of fieldwork, I obtained permission from the Governmental Office of the Sierra Leone Ethics and Scientific Review Committee (SLESRC) to conduct interviews within the police presenting the informed consent documents, study design and key study personnel. However, when I started to get in contact with police officers to conduct

interviews, police officers were generally reluctant to talk to me and they emphasized the need to get an additional permission from the headquarters.

Later on, I understood that some of the barriers in getting access to police officers were caused by a specific previous episode involving a PWDs employed by the police. One of the first disabled police officer recruited in 2012 has been dismissed some months before my arrival in Sierra Leone because he did not ask for permission to conduct an interview with a journalist during the International Day of Person with disabilities (IDPD). This episode will be more clearly described in the findings, however, it is relevant to mention as it has been one of the main reason for the complicated access to the police.

After two months in Sierra Leone, I obtained a meeting with the Inspector General. During the meeting, the Inspector General emphasized his availability to help me, his interest for disability issues and motivation to be part of the research. He gave me a formal written permission to get access to pertinent documents and to conduct interviews with police officers in the Western Area of the country. However, despite the permission from the highest rank in the police, it was obvious from the beginning that I could not simply walk into a police station, ask to have access to their files and start asking sensitive questions, even if formally police officers were authorized by the headquarters. First, many police officers told me that the permission of the Inspector General was not enough and that they had to receive a personal permission from his or her own superior. For this reason, as I already outlined in the section on participant observation, getting to know police officers was an important aspect of my methodology.

While getting to know police officers, I also realized how my aspect and identity played a key role in getting access to the police. If Brewer (1991) and Gurney (1985) pointed out how a young female researcher in a policing environment may face many disadvantages (in terms of suspicion, sexual advances and paternalism), I mostly experienced advantages during my fieldwork. A youthful appearance, a low status as a student and being a woman helped to create the impression of being nonthreatening and naïve. I think that being seen as an ‘acceptable incompetent’ (Horn 1997) helped me to get access to many places where outsider are not often allowed to go, such as the police barracks in Eastern Freetown.

Ethical considerations

In the next section, ethical considerations will be discussed. More specifically, I will explain how the ‘do no harm’ principle has been applied to the methodology in terms of voluntary participation and informed consent. Moreover, I point out the emphasis on confidentiality and respect for respondents’ point of view. In the third part, I refer to my identity and positionality in the field. I discuss how my status may have influenced the findings.

The importance of ‘Do no harm principle’ in this research

Voluntary participation and benefits

In my research, the most important challenges in following the “do no harm” imperative were to ensure that research subjects made their own informed decision to participate in the project and gave their consent. As aforementioned, I gained ethics approval from Sierra Leone Ethics and Scientific Review Committee (SLESRC) in August 2017 to conduct interviews with the chosen participants. Before each interview, I explained respondents how they have been selected and I informed them that their participation was voluntary and never mandatory: I left some time to decide if they wanted to participate or not and make sure they may talk to anyone about the research. I made clear that they had the right to withdraw and that their refusal to participate had no bearing on their job (especially for disabled police officers) or on any work-related evaluations, or benefits they are normally entitled to. I explained that they were free to change their mind later and they could stop participating even if they agreed earlier. I asked each participant to sign the consent form.

The topic of the research did not carry physical risk but involved potential psychological harm, discomfort or stress to respondents. For this reason, during all fieldwork, I constantly reflected on the consequences of my behavior and my research with the intention of ‘do no harm’, that will presented later in the chapter. The involvement of Dr. Aisha Ibrahim as a local expert and of One Family People as a local organization has been essential to ground the risk analysis in the proper socio-cultural context.

In terms of benefits, respondents received a small monetary reimbursement for their time and expenses involved (such as travel costs). This issue has been carefully considered on a case-to-case basis and care has been exercised when the research needed interpreters or transcribers. One Family People’s staff has been crucial in advising what was appropriate in a different context. Overall, I observed a desire, on PWDs in particular, that my research would benefit them directly in some way. I think this was related to the fact that, after the war, many journalists and researchers have come to ask questions to PWDs in the post-conflict phase. My role as a researcher created somehow confusion on what was my real aim and I felt I need to explain and emphasize (both orally, both in the informed consent) that being a “researcher” was different from being a “reporter”. I always made clear from the beginning that as a student I could not promise any type of rewards for their participation, not at that time, not in the future. However, I always felt that there was high expectations from PWDs regarding the research.

Confidentiality and respect for respondents’ points of view

During fieldwork, I always respected the confidentiality of data in terms of information about the respondent and the information he or she shared. For instance, I maintained the transcriptions and the recording of interviews locked on my laptop.

Because of the nature of the topic, in many interviews police officers were making harsh statements against PWDs, mocking and insulting them and telling with pride their episodes of discrimination. Sometimes I found it difficult to not question their beliefs or to put them on moral scales. Especially because of my internship within One Family People, I became sympathetic towards the plight of PWDs and I had much difficulty in writing and analyzing statements that were against my worldview. Even if I recognize that researchers do not have the task to edit statements that they find unpleasant, or even worse, which offend the researcher’s sense of morality, during interviews, it

happened many times that I wanted to engage in discussions with them about their statements. However, by the end of my fieldwork, I realized that my empathy for PWDs did not necessarily imply that I was biased. Moreover, I also had some experiences in understanding how PWDs sometimes use their disability and suffering to elicit pity, money and assistance from foreigners. This only applied to very few PWDs I encountered, but it was significant and helped me to control my overwhelming sympathy. For this reason, I always respected the respondents' points of view by reporting what they said as accurately as possible and I never intervened in conversations with moral judgements or by putting words in their mouth.

In addition, as I engaged in personal conversations with some respondents every day, it is difficult not to include valuable aspects of daily conversation in the research itself. However, separating the usable data and what may have been said in confidentiality is challenging. Therefore, to mitigate this problem, in situations where this was appropriate, I asked if that was "off the record" or if I could include in the study.

Researcher's identity and positionality

I am aware that my identity and positionality had an impact on the research: as a white, Western, female researcher in my early-twenties without a disability, as Wall et al. (2008) suggested, my characteristics conveyed a certain status that cannot be avoided. This 'status' influenced how people behaved towards me in many ways. I presented myself as an Italian student from a Dutch university doing a research for an academic degree in the Netherlands, affiliated with the African Studies Center and the Liliane Foundation.

As researchers are part of the "information economy", I am aware that my topic involved making political and ethical choices. During one of my first interviews in Eastern Freetown with a disabled police officer, while we were walking behind the police barracks in order to find a quiet place to talk, an able police officer, visibly drunk, came aggressively towards us screaming "I am a disabled too, are you interviewing me now or I am not enough interesting?". Then, he tore up the informed consent form I gave to the disabled police officer and walked away laughing and imitating the walking of the disabled police officer. This episode is significant in showing how the researcher makes a political choice by deciding which voices are heard and whose knowledge counts.

I did feel during my all fieldwork that some PWDs may have resented me for being another white woman who has come to speak of something I have not lived. I had many times PWDs that did not want to talk with me: this could have been due to a number of factors including the fact the visitors in the past have had a very negative impact on PWDs-communities in some way. I was told that many people were afraid I would pull out a camera and take their pictures and use it for my own gain, like so many before me. As a non-disabled female student interacting with an impoverished disabled community, I felt it was important to inform respondents' about the limits of research and the potential limited consequences that a master's thesis could have on their life.

Because of my internship with OFP and the practical support they gave to me throughout my fieldwork, I was strongly linked with their organization. My affiliation with OFP is highly likely to have affected the way I was perceived by respondents and my research findings as well. Many PWDs

that I interviewed claimed a certain degree of victimization, partly because of their desperateness, partly because of their expectation that *opotu* (white people) working with disability organizations may be able to provide supplies and to support them financially. I believe that some PWDs could have perceived me as a possible opportunity to benefit from OFP, therefore, I suspect some respondents of overemphasizing their emotional hardship and livelihood struggles in some interviews and informal talks. This does not mean that PWDs' life is easy and that they do not suffer, but that some of them adopted a strategy to enlarge their struggle hoping to get supported by OFP. The same happens with the eight disabled police officers I interviewed. I had the feeling that in some cases, it was more in their interest to emphasize their need of external assistance, therefore they were somehow expecting me to present their life as a problem and help them in some ways.

4.5 Once back home: interpreting the data

The following section is divided in two main parts. In the first part, I will outline how data have been analyzed both during and after fieldwork. I will also present how coding was carried out and how I validated the data collected. In the second part, I present some key aspects related to the process of emotional detachment from the field and I will explain how this process allowed me to use an objective lens to analyze the data.

Data Analysis through coding

My data analysis relied on a mix of open and axial coding and it was done during and after fieldwork. During fieldwork, I generally transcribed all my interviews right away to be able to analyze and reflect upon my data with a 'fresh memory'. By transcribing myself, not only I started to see patterns but new interesting questions came up and I was able to identify any missing information or any potential respondent. The first phase of analysis relied on open coding. In practice, this means that I coded the interviews' transcriptions by looking for distinct concepts in the data. The open coding includes a mix of pre-set codes (derived mainly from the list of topics used for semi-structured interviews) and emergent codes (arguments and topics repeatedly emerged from interviews). For instance, pre-set codes included episodes of conflict between the police and PWDs or background information on the initiative itself. Emergent codes included topics such as stereotypes of PWDs among police officers and disabled police officers' experiences within the police in terms of promotion.

At the very end of my fieldwork and once back in Europe, I carried out the second phase of analysis, which relied mostly on axial coding. This means that I related the codes to each other. Practically, axial coding was done by transferring data to an Excel file with different columns. In columns, I categorized pre-set codes and emergent codes under 'supercodes'. Re-analyzing emergent codes led to surprising and more deep conclusions and to some re-shaping of findings as well. For instance, re-analyzing disabled police officers' experiences within the police led to a deep analysis of their situation of inclusion/exclusion that will be later explained in the findings.

During the second phase of analysis, I also associated different colors to respondents according to specific criteria. Because of the numerous ranks positions within the police, I divided

the ranks in three main categories (high rank, medium rank and low rank) and associate three different colors to each rank. A specific color was chosen for disabled police officers. In addition, I associated different colors according to the different type of impairments of PWDs. This allowed me to have an overview of the arguments of police officers according to the rank and proved to be a useful method when analyzing topics such as the perception of able police officers in having a disabled supervisor. This allowed me to demonstrate that police police officers have different perceptions according to their rank.

If in this section data analysis is described in a linear pattern, in reality it was done in a cycle: I added and erase codes many times, analyses and re-analyze data in different moments and I change super-codes many times. I agree with Khandkar (2009) that data analysis consists of three parts: noticing, collecting and thinking, which are all interrelated. For instance, by analyzing interviews, I got insight in some topics then it was necessary to collect more data or to go back to the data to analyze it in a new light. The advantage of retaining a flexible approach during the data analysis is that it allowed me for a more ‘realistic’ analysis of the context. As the data analysis, the process of writing and editing the thesis was a cycle as well.

In order to secure an in-depth understanding of the topic, it is essential to use different methods and to triangulate all available information and sources. For this reason, during my all fieldwork and during my data analysis I ensured a constant comparison interviewing different people from different points of view on the same topic. Moreover, as part of the cooperative project ‘Breaking down barriers to inclusion’, a learning event was organized in December 2017 in collaboration with One Family People and dr. Aisha Ibrahim. During the event, I presented the preliminary research findings to a group of about 50 people consisting of various stakeholders, including OFP-staff, police officers, members of CSOs and PWDs-communities and disability activists. As part of the triangulation process, I included the feedback I received during the event.

The next section will outline an important part of the data analysis: the emotional detachment of the researcher from the field and from the data. This have significant implications in terms of justifying methodological choices made in the field, as well as choices made during the data analysis.

The necessary emotional detachment from the field

During the first lesson of the course ‘Fieldwork in conflict and post-conflict settings’, the future researchers are explained that one of the biggest challenges of fieldwork is to not have as much control over what is going on. As Mead (1975: 25) nicely synthesized: “*The fieldworker is wholly and helplessly dependent on what happens...one must be continually prepared for anything, everything—and perhaps most devastating—for nothing.* Before leaving for Sierra Leone, I was quite confident to be able to play around with situations and take advantage of them in for research purposes, while trying not to forget that I needed material to work on.

However, after the landslide that affected Freetown on the 14th of August 2017 affecting about 6000 people (World Bank 2017), I started to question my safety in the country. This feeling was reinforced by my limited knowledge of the city (since I have been in the country only for one month), by a misunderstanding with the host organization and by recognizing that I completely lacked any reliable contacts with international organizations. This feeling of unsafety was then mostly related to

my perceived incapacity to deal with any potential significant problems in the field because of limited financial means and resources. Because of the mudslide, I soon realized that with a student budget in an emergency setting, the researcher cannot go very far.

The main implication of this feeling of perceived unsafety is that I decided to not conduct participant observation on the streets or during protests, or in general settings where it would have been likely to experience conflicts between the police and PWDs. Even if before the mudslide I got in touch with organizations that could suggest me and help me to identify potential situations and proposed to accompany me, after the mudslide, I backed out and decided to do participant observation within police stations and to focus on disabled police officers.

Before explaining the second element related to the emotional detachment from the field, I would like to stress the fact that it was a 'perceived' incapacity, as I think my judgments about the exact situation at that moment were highly influenced by the high stress related to things I saw, I heard and how I perceived the overall event. During my fieldwork, I never had any significant problems with the Sierra Leone Police. The only two negative episodes (related to bribery and theft) I had with police officers should be analyzed within what every ordinary citizen in Sierra Leone faces. It is worthy mentioning that this feeling of perceived unsafety slowly disappeared towards the end of fieldwork, when I felt confident to go around with local transports and when I felt confident enough to do participant observation as I wanted at the beginning. This shows that a certain period of reflection is necessary to consider the direction of the research and to make sense of the decisions made in the field.

The second important implication in terms of data analysis and emotional detachment refers to the highly emotional interviews and informal conversations I had with women police officers about their experiences during the civil war. Even if I was aware that these topics were beyond the purpose of the paper, when I started analyzing the data, I found it quite hard to exclude some interviews only on the basis of relevance to the topic. I generally found quite difficult to distinguish what was relevant for the purpose of the thesis and what was relevant per se: Who is the researcher to make a choice between what is relevant and why? Why are police officers' feelings over the civil war not relevant? Is the fact that women police officers have been gang-raped by rebels not relevant? I found it quite hard to tell myself that the some interviews were 'more relevant' than these people' stories. However, thanks to the emotional detachment from the field, and to the more and more sporadic contacts with respondents, the identification of the 'relevant' topics and ideas occurred in the writing process.

4.6 Limitations and challenges of the research

The main limitations of the thesis have been already mentioned in the chapter. However, this section will provide an overview to identify them in a consistent way.

First, the limitation that had a major impact on the methodology and on the findings themselves is related to the feeling of perceived unsafety I experienced after the mudslide. For this reason, I decided to focus almost entirely on disabled police officers' experiences in the police to answer the main research question. The main implication on the findings is that police officers' perception is analyzed through the lens of disabled police officers experience, which is only one way

of looking at the problem. On a way, it can be seen as simplistic because disabled police officers were all but one polio victims, so related to one group of impairment and they were only ten people, therefore, it can be difficult to generalized from this initiative.

The second limitation refers to time period. At the beginning, I thought that six months in a country would be an extremely long period in the field: in the project proposal I was aiming to conduct one- hundred of interviews (!). I soon realized how much time is spent to first familiarize with the new culture, the country, the host organization and even the topic itself. The main implication is that it has not been possible to go more in-depth with the findings. Time also had an implications over my access in the policing environment. As already mentioned, I had access only to certain departments (mainly the Communication and Maintenance departments), however, interviews with police officer from other departments, such as the Operations Support Division, where police officers are often accused to start fights with PWDs in the streets, would increase the quality of data.

The third limitation refers to the geographical area in which the methodology was carried out. My place of stay was Freetown and most of the interviews and participant observation, as shown in the map at the beginning of the chapter, took place in Western area of Freetown, which is the richest part of the country. Along with the feedback I received during the learning event, I believe a research based only in this area has a significant limitation in terms of being representative of the country, considering the importance of rural area in Sierra Leone.

The fourth limitation refers to the use of a translator. As all participants spoke some English, I never needed an English-Krio translator during my interviews. However, for three interviews with speech and hearing impaired, I had to hire a sign-language interpreter. The main limitations arise in relation to potential semantic loss as sign languages are not grammatically structured as spoken languages. Sign languages involve facial expressions, visual orientation and movement, therefore, it is very difficult to translate this complex multi-layered concept within a 'formal' word limit in English. Because of a lack in sign-language interpreters and time constraints, it has not been possible to double-check if the translations were correct. However, this had a limited impact on the findings because of the very limited number of interviews in which the translator was involved. Moreover, the use of a sign language translator arise challenges in terms of his positionality: I recognize that the translator is part of the process of knowledge production. However, I tried to limit these issues by working with trusted figures within the disabled community and I ensure that interviews were transcribed and translated in the field.

Finally, in retrospect, I am aware of some mistakes I made during my fieldwork of which one deserves mention. Moreover, I wish I had better recorded the comments, jokes, and the informal discussions I had with police officers during participant observation. I was slow to understand the values of those interactions as I initially had an overly simple understanding of the relationship between police officers and their disabled colleagues. Only later, I come to understand these comments as good examples demonstrating the inclusion/exclusion of disabled police officers in the police.

4.7 Concluding remarks

This chapter aimed to explain the methodology used to carry out the research. During my fieldwork, I was able to intern with the local organization One Family People (OFP), which is a strategic partner organization (SPO) of the Liliane Foundation. As One Family People works to ensure PWDs' empowerment through advocacy and lobbying and is well-connected in the network of disability organizations, getting access and gather data amongst PWDs-communities, CSOs and DPOs has been quite easy. My strong link with OFP is highly likely to have affected the way I was perceived by respondents: I believe that some PWDs could have perceived me as a possible opportunity to benefit from OFP, therefore, I suspect some respondents of overemphasizing their emotional hardship and livelihood struggles in some interviews and informal talks. This element should be seen in a broader framework of doing research with people with disabilities in Sierra Leone. Overall, I observed a desire of PWDs that my research would benefit them directly in some way and a general confusion about me being a 'researcher' or a 'reporter'. I think that this was related to the fact that, in the post-conflict phase, many journalists and researchers have come to ask questions to PWDs. To avoid misunderstandings, I always made clear from the beginning that as a student I could not promise any type of rewards for their participation, not at that time, not in the future.

The reverse side of the coin of having an 'easy access' to PWDs is that getting access to the policing environment has been more challenging. I had assumed I would be able to conduct interviews after having obtained the permission from the police. However, despite the permission from the Inspector General, it was obvious from the beginning that police officers did not trust me enough to share their knowledge and points of view. For this reason, I consider participant observation as a main pillar in my methodology: the informal conversations I had with police officers were essential to build a relationship with them and to obtain crucial information. I come to understand the importance of these moments only later on and I believe that the comments, jokes and small talks I had with police officers were crucial in understanding police officers' perception towards PWDs. Here again, my identity and positionality played a key role: a youthful appearance, a low status as a student and being a woman helped to create the impression of being nonthreatening and naïve, therefore, I had access to places where outsiders are not often welcomed. During some conversations, police officers made harsh statements against PWDs and it has been somehow difficult for me to not question their beliefs. However, I always respected the respondents' points of view by reporting what they said as accurately as possible and I never intervened in conversations with moral judgements or by putting words in their mouth.

This element is strongly related with the idea that it is impossible to have an emotion-free methodology. I believe emotions influenced my methodology in terms of choices made and findings. Game (1997) argues that sociologists must recognize that emotion is the way of knowing the world, that knowledge is not something objective and removed from our own bodies but emotions are the means by which we make sense of the world. I mentioned in the chapter how sometimes I felt unsafe during fieldwork and how it has been difficult to distinguish what interviews I should use for the purpose of the thesis and what I found touching or important per se. An important, if not the most important, of my methodology took place during the writing process of the thesis, when, thanks to the emotional detachment from the field, and to the more and more sporadic contacts with respondents, I was able to analyze data in a more objective way.



Findings

Photo: Police officers at the end of Police Training School
Source: Personal collection of a disabled police officer (2017)

Chapter 5. Findings

5.1 Introduction

The fifth chapter presents my findings by answering the three sub-questions. The first part aims at answering the first sub-question: *How has the initiative been identified and implemented?* In order to answer this question, I provide an overview of the employment of PWDs within the police by giving background information and by presenting the main actors involved and the advocacy process that led to the recruitment.

The second part aims at answering the second sub-question: *How has the initiative challenged police officers' perception towards their disabled colleagues?* In order to answer this question, I outline the implications of the initiative, and more specifically of the recruitment process, over police officers' perception towards their disabled colleagues.

The third part aims at answering the third sub-question: *How has the initiative changed police officers' perception towards people with disabilities as a social group?* In order to answer this question, I dive into police officers' perception towards PWDs as a social group. Interestingly, while trying to answer this research question, I found out that police officers have different perception according to the impairment, therefore, do not have one perception towards 'PWDs'. The implications on this will be later discussed in the chapter.

5.2 Presenting the employment of PWDs within the police

In 2012, the police decided to include PWDs with IT skills in the official hiring process. Disabled police officers were formally offered the same wage, benefits and promotion policy as able constable police officers (BBC 2012). After being selected, disabled police officers followed the Police Training School with the other police officers and they started the on-the-job-training in the department where they are assigned. In 2012, four PWDs, all polio victims, were hired in the Kingtom police department in Freetown. In this department, based in the Western area of Freetown, they were assigned to the Communication department and their tasks included receiving phone calls from the public or reporting information to the headquarters (BBC 2012). In 2017, six PWDs were hired in different police departments in Eastern and Western Freetown. Most of them were polio victims while one was a speech and hearing impaired. While some of them have been deployed to the Communication department, including the four PWDs hired in 2012, some of the disabled recruited in 2017 have been hired also in the Maintenance department, where they were responsible for technical support to police stations (BBC 2012).

The initiative was specifically targeting PWDs with advanced IT skills. Computing has been described as an adequate field for PWDs and, at the same time, it was a needed skill in the SLP. For PWDs, it is a sitting task and it can provide a good income in the country (Member of disability organization, personal communication, December 12, 2017). For the SLP, having skilled IT

professionals was an attractive idea considering the growing challenges in modern crime. In 2012, the police had more than 11.000 front-line police officers and very few police officers trained on elements of modern crime such as computer-based fraud and security (Voanews 2013).

The initiative as a way to fill the void of disability awareness in the Sierra Leone police

The initiative of employing PWDs within the police represents one of the few awareness raising activities that has been organized within the Sierra Leone Police. While CSOs have undertaken activities on gender issues, democratization or human rights, very few have focused on awareness raising on disability issues. During my fieldwork, police officers did not recall any workshops, training or awareness campaign on disability issues.

While collecting information on disability awareness in the police, I came across a one-year project carried out in 2011 by a local organization, Disability Sierra Leone (DiSiL). DiSiL's campaign seems to be the only campaign organized that aimed at improving access to justice for PWDs. The main activities included workshops on how to deal with speech and hearing impaired, sign language training for police officers and general social work activities to help PWDs in getting access to justice (DiSiL 2014). However, after six years, DiSiL campaign is little remembered within the policing environment and it had a limited impact and follow-up. More specifically, while collecting information on the campaign, apart from donor reports on the campaign, neither police officers nor PWDs could give information on the campaign. Most of the time, even people that were organizing the campaign, such as university students that were volunteering there, were confusing DiSiL' campaign with other disability awareness campaigns.

The initiative of employing PWDs in the SLP not only was greeted with optimism by CSOs, DPOs and PWDs-communities but also draw attention both at national and international level: newspapers, such as BBC as shown in the figure below, reported the news.



Figure 1.3 Newspaper sharing the news of the initiative

As the title in the BBC article shows, this initiative has been seen as a way to change negative perception towards PWDs in Sierra Leone. In fact, one of the main aims of the initiative was to change police officers' perception (Respondent, personal communication, October 12, 2017). As already mentioned in the introduction, because of traditional beliefs and PWDs' perceived anti-social behavior, police officers hold negative stereotypes towards PWDs. The employment of PWDs within the SLP relied on the idea that by getting in touch with an individual with disabilities, police officers would have changed their negative perception towards them. The initiative had a specific geographical target as it has been implemented only in Freetown: first, only in the Western part and later on also in the Eastern part of Freetown.

Even if there are no studies have been conducted on police officers' perception towards PWDs before the initiative, some insights on their knowledge and awareness on disability issues emerged from the conversations I had with them. More specifically, they were asked to describe when was the first time they got in touch with PWDs or if they have ever participated in a training on disability awareness. The police officers' statements show quite a significant difference between high rank and low-rank police officers' perception towards PWDs. A difference on police officers' perception according to the rank emerged quite often all over my fieldwork.

Most of high-ranking police officers have been in contact with PWDs or have participated in disability awareness activities abroad. Almost all high-ranking police officers I interviewed graduated from British universities in the United Kingdom and as one of them explained, they have been exposed to disability issues during their studies:

'I was in this place, called Roosevelt in the university [...] and they would bring [PWDs] around, staying in the university campus. Give them the admission and they will stay there as students. All eat together; we all stay together, go and play together. I think this is good so that they go back to their places and they would be happy, with their certificates.'

(AIG, personal communication, November 27, 2017)

Many medium-rank police officers confirmed this idea, as an inspector explained:

'While some of our commanders went abroad to do some graduate studies, they went there and see that [PWDs have] the same challenges in other countries. But those countries have employed PWDs and they [police officers] did their own research over there and people told them that these physically-challenged people are able to perform.'

(Inspector, personal communication, November 28, 2017).

On the other side, low-rank police officers, especially constables, stated they did not participate in any type of trainings organized within the forces and that, generally, they have not been exposed to disability issues. This was quite clear during interviews because they often used inaccurate and derogatory language when talking about disability: most of the time, constables were able to describe the impairment but they could not name it. For instance while describing a polio victim, they refer to the person having 'foot problem' or 'cannot move with the feet'. In addition, they used terms that can be widely viewed as derogative terms: 'abnormal' 'crazy', 'loony', 'mad', 'psycho', 'mongoloid' when referring to PWDs.

Taking into account that police officers have different perceptions according to their rank is a useful insight to take into account when designing disability awareness campaigns. However, I believe it is also important to mention that police officers' knowledge and awareness on disability issues is the same as any ordinary citizen in Sierra Leone. Police officers' lack of training on how to deal with PWDs should therefore be seen in a broader context of lack of sensitization on disability issues in the society, which started to grow only after 2011, with the passage of the Disability Act. If police officers are often blamed to be the ones harassing PWDs and unable to deal with them, their behavior is probably similar to many other public service providers, such as public transport drivers or teachers in public school.

Behind the initiative: the cooperative process between a disability movement and the police

Two people played a key role in the advocacy process: Abs Dumbuya and Francis Munu. The first relevant stakeholder in the process is Abs Dumbuya, founder of a charity organization, the Dorothy Spring Trust, which is specialized in giving IT training to PWDs. Mr. Dumbuya is a Sierra Leonean citizen who contracted polio as a young man, left to study in the United Kingdom and then returned to create opportunities for disabled young people in his country. During our informal talks, I soon realized how Mr. Dumbuya is well connected with the Sierra Leonean elite and, more specifically, with the high-ranking officials in the police.

The Inspector General of the Sierra Leone Police is the second key individual. Mr. Munu has been sensitized to disability issues while following a police training abroad and later on, because of the passage of the Disability Act in 2011, he was the one who formally presented this initiative (Disability activist, personal communication, December 12, 2017). Even though some CSOs criticized his role because they feel he could do much more for PWDs (Disability activist, personal

communication, October 10, 2017), throughout my fieldwork PWDs, including disabled police officers, voiced the belief that the Inspector General played an important role in promoting disability rights in the police.

As I mentioned in the chapter two, the role of the Inspector General in the initiative is crucial. Given the importance of the ‘personal’ role of the Inspector General, his personal interest and passion on disability issues explain why the initiative took place in the first place. More specifically, during the interview we had, he emphasized how he personally support a football team of PWDs in Freetown and how he generally helps PWDs that are begging on the streets. Without his personal interest, it is highly unlikely that this initiative could have taken place.

It is difficult to describe the steps or processes that Mr. Dumbuya and Francis Munu undertook to implement the initiative. The process that led to the employment of PWDs within the police occurs in sudden leaps, in unexpected ways and somehow in response to the most unlikely circumstances, such as the meeting between two people attending the same religious ceremony. As Abs Dumbuya explained:

‘The process started with the first three IT people that we were training at very advanced level. It actually started mainly on a personal point of view, I was in the church as the same AIG Al-Shek Kamara. He was in the Operations Unit in the police force. As we have been training these disabled guys in IT, I told him it would be nice if we can get disabled people in the police force, who are IT skilled. I don’t know what happen... he just... got it. He was a very dynamic man, very clever and he said: “yes let me think about it, it sound like a great idea.” He said he would consult with his boss that is the IG Francis Munu. Then few days later, he asked if we could pick up the phone from the headquarters, fill the forms, and it was done.’

(Member of disability organization, personal communication, December 12, 2017)

The meeting in the church is again interesting when analyzed in a broader context of Sierra Leone, where opportunities often come down to who you know, and who you are related to. In this case, the relationship between Abs Dumbuya and the AIG Shek Kamara, that later put Abs Dumbuya in contact with the Inspector General, is at the backbone of the initiative.

Moreover, the role of Mr. Dumbuya in the recruitment process is crucial. During our interview, he mentioned how, when he received the applications form from disabled police officers, as he was the one responsible to help them to get a job in the police, he recognized that the CVs and motivation letters were not up to standard and could not have been accepted by the police. He stated:

“So, when they [disabled police officers] finish this form [application form], they sent their CVs to me, I reviewed them and I immediately saw that the CVs were not up to standard. When I looked at the CV, I said: “[name of disabled candidate to the SLP] even if you send me, a disabled person myself and if I was recruiting, I would look it at your face, I would destroy it and put in the bin. I said because it is not good enough. It is not because of discrimination, or so, it is because your CV is not good enough. Even when you are looking for jobs, you need to write cover letters, and yours is plenty of errors! I would not accept it.”

(Respondent, personal communication, December 12, 2017)

For this reason, he reviewed the material and personally send it to Francis Munu, the Inspector General, who, as aforementioned, decided to employ them all. As Abs Dumbuya stated:

“So having review the forms, I personally handed them to the IG so I wasn’t surprised when he called me and said they should go medical, they did the check up and everything. “

(Respondent, personal communication, December 12, 2017)

After opening the recruitment process, the police acknowledged the possibility to hire PWDs, therefore, after having received four applications, the police decided to accept them all in the selection process. The four PWDs did not have the same selection process as able police officers. Formally, to be recruited within the police, individuals must fulfill certain requirements: they have to be citizens of Sierra Leone, be between 18 to 35 years of age at the time of application, they must have a higher education, be able to prove basic skills in English language, mathematics and being able to read and write (SLP 2017). Individuals who meet the minimum requirements are then shortlisted and have to go through the second phase of recruitment, which includes an entrance examination, a fitness test, a medical examination, a recruitment interview and a criminal record check. More specifically, the entrance examination aims at testing skills and the recruitment interview at checking candidates’ motivation to enter the police. Individuals who successfully pass the second phase of recruitment are then invited to attend the Police Training School.

The recruitment process for PWDs was slightly different. More specifically, they did not validate any entrance examinations or fitness tests. In 2012, disabled police officers had a group interview with the Inspector General (IG), who, in a one-hour meeting welcomed them in the police with a formal speech. On the other side, in 2017 they were asked to have a one-hour personal interview with an Assistant Inspector General (AIG) and Human Resources manager (Disabled police officer, personal communication, November 8, 2017). According to disabled police officers, this interview was mostly an informal talk aimed at checking disabled police officers’ literacy and English skills and not at their motivation. After this, the four PWDs, like all able candidates went through a medical check and a criminal investigation to make sure they had no criminal records (Disabled police officer, personal communication, November 27, 2017).

As aforementioned, the initiative relied on the idea that disabled police officers joining the police should be qualified with professional IT skills and computing skills (BBC 2012). Despite the requirements of having specific skills, disabled police officers’ IT and computing skills were not validated before their recruitment in the police. One of the main implications of this, according to Mr. Dumbuya, one of the founder of the initiative, is that the IT skills of disabled police officers were very different according to the individual: some were highly qualified while other disabled police officers had followed only basic IT trainings. However, as Mr. Dumbuya further explained, despite differences in skills and abilities, the police employed all disabled applicants to show its commitment towards PWDs:

‘We [Mr. Dumbuya’s organization] sent very high-qualified IT guys, with advance level. [name of another organization’s founder] on the other side, sent these other guys, that have just been done basic IT course.. But as Munu wanted to demonstrate the commitment to disability issues, they took also these guys...’ (Member of DPO, personal communication, December 12, 2017).

Another element that needs to be taken into account when describing the recruitment process in the SLP refers to the importance of personal connection and networking. As I already mentioned in chapter two, in Sierra Leone, patronage networks are very significant and professional progress very often depends on connections, rather than on qualifications and expertise (Bøås 2001). Similarly, during our informal and formal conversations, many disabled police officers pointed out how they have been helped by relatives or friends during the process. The following statement is an example: a relative of a disabled police officer explains how he helped by ‘following’ up with the procedure.

“Well he [the disabled police officer] is a relative to me and when they were asking PWDs to enroll in the police I thought about him...”

“I facilitated his entry in the police... he did not start with the police exam and he did not go into all the protocol of the police... this was the process for disabled [to be recruited in the police]...”

(Inspector, personal communication, November 20, 2017)

In the interview he told me that he was helping him with some documents, and he told me he made sure people knew he was his relative.

“He went to school so he has some documents... I just helped him to put together the documents... because he couldn’t walk faster so I took those documents to the police headquarters and I was following up.. Wherever the documents needed to go I make sure they were there”

(Inspector, personal communication, November 20, 2017)

More specifically, during our informal conversation, he explained that he was following up with the procedure because, as they have different family names, he was not sure that police officers could understand that they were relatives, and this could have had an implication on his recruitment. Other disabled police officers, when I asked them about how did they hear about this process, mentioned the fact that they have been helped by members of family, friends or even by their previous colleagues. Therefore, the recruitment process of disabled police officers should be seen in a broader framework where recruitment process for all candidates who want to join the SLP often relies on personal connection.

After having outlined the different selection process for PWDs, both in 2012 and 2017, I will outline police officers’ perception towards their disabled colleagues: according to police officers, because of the different selection process, PWDs with the wrong attitude and not qualified enough have been able to enter the police.

5.3 Police officers’ perception towards their disabled colleagues

The outcomes of a different selection process for disabled

As disabled police officers did not have the same selection process as able police officers, there is a common perception among police officers that some PWDs have been able to enter the police just because the recruitment standard has been lowered for them. Police officers in fact often voiced the belief that some PWDs had a wrong attitude and some did not meet the minimum requirements to enter the police.

Some police officers pointed out that, despite the fact that normally in the recruitment process, candidates are asked to share their motivation to join the forces, disabled police officers did not follow the same process. The main implication is that some with the wrong motivation were hired by the police. This argumentation was normally justified when talking about episodes in which disabled police officers were drunk at work:

“Some of the guys [disabled police officers] did not do very well. In fact, some went with the wrong attitude, they kept being drunk, I think one or two were kicked out of the police force.”

(Constable, personal communication, December 12, 2017)

Throughout my fieldwork, I heard multiple times about episodes in which disabled police officers were not able to perform because they were drunk. I never observed this behavior during fieldwork myself, but many police officers mentioned these episodes.

Another episode that was frequently mentioned by police officers to justify who people with the wrong attitudes have entered in the police referred to disabled police officers' absence during the parade in the morning. Everyday before starting the shift work at 8am, police officers have to participate in the parade. Participating in the parade means that they get together in the office and colleagues that are about to finish the shift pass on the information about what happened, they inform their colleagues on how they should run their duties and the senior police officers decide where police officers belong for the day. After the parade, everyone goes to its various department to start the work.

During our informal talks, police officers often pointed out how disabled police officers almost never participate in the parade in the morning because they arrive late at work. This idea was confirmed by disabled police officers themselves, arguing that as the distance they have to cover to come to work is too long (normally can take up to three hours), they often cannot arrive at work on time:

“This morning I didn't do the parade because of transportation.. this time that I am covering to go there[to the police station].. It's too long. So I travel three hours before I reach there. So at times, I miss the parade.” (Disabled police officer, November 23, 2017)

When they miss the parade, disabled police officers go to the timetable, where it is written where everyone is assigned for the day so that they know where they should be. Many police officers pointed out that the fact that they are missing the parade has implications over their work, because, they start to work earlier than disabled police officers do.

Another episode that was frequently mentioned to justify how PWDs with the wrong attitude have been able to access the police refers to a specific episode that happened during my fieldwork that had a wide political impact: the dismissal of a disabled police officer for improper practice.

In 2012, the National Commission for Persons with Disabilities, which is the organ established by the Disability Act composed by representatives of the ministries, NGOs working on disability issues and DPOs asked a disabled police officer to be interviewed during the celebration of International Day of PWDs to share his experience within the police. During the interview, the disabled police officer was asked if he was receiving all benefits as able police officers. More specifically, the journalist asked him if he was receiving the bag of rice, which is an additional contribution given to police officers apart from their salary. The disabled police officer answered that he was supposed to receive all benefits but that he, without knowing the reason, was not receiving the bag of rice. This episode had quite a wide appeal with the general public, it was shared by many local newspapers, and even the president was interviewed about this issue. Later on, the disabled police officer has been accused by the police to not have asked for permission to conduct the interview, as all police officers are supposed to do, and he received one-month punishment and he was later dismissed by the police.

Police officers, during our informal talks, explained that it is quite common among freshmen to be denied some benefits that are distributed among senior officers. Therefore, it is highly likely that the bag of rice the disabled police officer was not receiving was in fact distributed through superiors in rank. As a police officer explained, the disabled police officer did not respect the principle of the Sierra Leone Police and this is why he was dismissed:

“He [disabled police officer] has been dismissed for improper practices: he went on radio to do an interview without asking for permission, when they call me and ask me what happened I had no idea he was there. Also he was using his uniform off-duty while with other disabled and you cannot do that. You need to follow the principles of the organization, you need to respect rules of the Sierra Leone Police.” (Inspector, personal communication, November 11, 2017)

This episode is relevant because it had some implications over police officers' perception. During conversations, police officers often pointed out how people learn in Police Training School that, when asked to be part of interviews or press conferences, police officers always have to ask for permission. Therefore, many of them believed that the disabled police officer did know that he had to ask before conducting the interview and he decided not to do so.

This episode is closely related to the concept of 'the blue wall of silence' (Reiner 1985) described by many researchers to be the main obstacle to uncover police misconduct or misbehaviors. The blue wall of silence refers to the informal rule that exist among police officers to not report on a colleagues, or superior's errors or misconducts. Any officer who breaks this norm faces numerous consequences, both on a personal and professional level (Paoline 2003). On a personal level, the police officer is socially excluded from the group: the disabled police officers in fact not only has been dismissed by the police, but was strongly condemned by all his colleagues.

The episodes previously mentioned, including the rumors about disabled police officers being drunk, the accusation of being always late at work and the dismissal of one disabled police officer, have been described by police officers as examples of the unfair recruitment process. Moreover,

according to police officers, some disabled police officers did not meet the minimum qualifications to become police officers. An example of such perception is seen in the statement of a police officer, colleague of two disabled police officers:

“This is what they are saying. That they did an examination, a medical check and that they have all requirements to be here... But when they are here they cannot perform so... to what I can see they don't have them [the requirements].” (Inspector, personal communication, October 12, 2017)

Similarly, police officers pointed out how a disabled colleague was not able to perform law-enforcement duties:

“He is not arresting, does not work. He does not take part in special duties outside of the stations... he stays in one place the all day and in the evening he goes back home.. [...] So it is not too good. I think there is a problem”(Chief Superintendent, personal communication, November 16, 2017).

Moreover, they emphasized how he was unable to perform even basic police work. As explained by a police officer who tried to identify tasks in which the disabled police officer could have been involved:

“Most of the time, he [a disabled police officer] was at the public and got information from the people, and took notes. [...] However, that was challenging for him, he can write but his academics is weak... We don't really know what is wrong with him. But if you ask him to write a simple sentence it is very difficult for him. [...] So, they put him in the Communication Center. He was there for a week or two but that too was too challenging. So, they put him in the Community Service Center as a diarist, but that too was too challenging” (Constable, personal communication, November 20, 2017)

The same police officers explained then that, at the end, after having acknowledged the inadequate skills of the disabled police officer to perform, he found a way to make the disabled police officer ‘engaged’: *‘So now, he looks at the corridor and he said to people “no we don't allow people to stay here, to stand in the corridor”. [...] Yes. That was just for him to get engaged. To see that the corridor there is not crowded.’* (Same constable as above, personal communication, November 20, 2017)

Another example of such perception is seen in the following response given by a superior of a disabled police officer, when he was asked whether he believed disabled police officers could be employed in the police: *“How can you send somebody like him as a police officer... you understand? You are sending somebody like that one... go out there and visit people [...] After that when you come back to your station, you have to write a report, that man cannot even construct a simple English sentence. So, you cannot send that man out there to go and work like that. So that's why I am saying for me I don't know about others but for me disabled are not okay to do our job.”* (Inspector, personal communication, November 20, 2017).

During fieldwork, it has not been possible to interview the aforementioned disabled police officers as it has been hard to find him in the police station, as every time I was going there and he was not there, his colleagues did not know where to find him. During my last week in the country, I was able to meet him but, because of his difficulty to structure sentences and language barriers, we could not have a conversation.

Because of all these episodes, police officers often voiced the belief that the initiative rewarded the wrong people and they voiced the beliefs that there is a need to do a ‘proper’ selection process for disabled police officers:

‘I believe it’s time to make sure that they do the proper things to... That they do a right enlistment’ (Sergeant, personal communication, November 20, 2017).

I know a lot of... disabled that are very good at it. But some of them are not born like this. But the other, that talent they have, they can still use it. Even the government can benefit from that... you can work with computer. Be an IT specialist... but only those you can, not everybody. (Inspector, personal communication, November 20, 2017).

Some police officers articulated very negative thoughts about the initiative of employing disabled police officers, some of them described the initiative as ‘all flash and no substance’:

‘Hiring them means that you are giving the impression that they can work and help them, but that’s not true so find other ways to help them’ (Sergeant, personal communication, November 20, 2017).

The negative interactions between disabled and able police officers are closely related with the recruitment process: disabled police officers had a different recruitment process compared to able police officers as their skills in IT were not tested and not all of them had a recruitment interview before being selected to validate their motivation. The main consequences of this different recruitment process has been the recruitment of a small number of disabled police officers that, according to police officers, had ‘the wrong attitude’ and was not qualified enough. This brings interesting insights that need further explanation.

Positive actions, such as facilitating the recruitment of minorities as police officers are normally seen as a positive effort to end discrimination in employment by increasing their group representation (Stokes et al.1996). However, sometimes, positive actions can even reinforce the stereotypes they seek to correct. Through a perceived unfair recruitment process for PWDs, I believe there is the potential to increase and exacerbate prejudice: when police officers criticize and complain about the initiative, they state that unqualified PWDs have been hired, are payed, received the same benefits as the others, and ‘do nothing all day’. For instance, as an inspector pointed out, the disabled police officers have been hired and receive the same benefits as the other police officers, even if they do not perform:

“All the time he spend like sitting there, at the end of the month he receive the bag of rice without doing nothing.” (Inspector, personal communication, November 20, 2017).

This has an implication in the relationship between disabled and able police officers, as it could lead to an increasing of tensions between the two and even to a more negative perception towards disabled police officers. An example of such perception is seen in an inspector’s response:

“I don’t think this is possible for them to employ PWDs because we have much work, you cannot hire somebody who is disability or handicapped because their challenges are so many...”
(Inspector, personal communication, November 20, 2017)

Some police officers pointed out how they think they have more work to do because the disabled police officers are not able to perform. This has the potential to even increase tensions between police officers and PWDs.

In the previous section, I demonstrate that because of a different selection process, police officers think that disabled police officers with the wrong attitude and inadequate qualifications have been hired in the police. Along with this perception, police officers often voiced the belief that disabled police officers cannot be ‘real’ police officers, as I will demonstrate in the next section.

Being a ‘real’ police officer: having the bodily capital and performing law enforcement duties

Since the beginning of my fieldwork, I realized how police officers consider the body as an important aspect of their life. Interestingly, the body plays an important role in the recruitment process as well: in 2012, there has been a recruitment process for the Operational Support Division (OSD), which is the unit responsible for riot control, for providing guards for government facilities and for providing mobile armed support to the general duty officers (Baker 2005)¹. During the recruitment, some candidates have been assessed with ‘lower intellect levels’, however, as they have been described ‘big and strong’, they have been destined for the OSD (SLP 2011). This decision has been highly criticized by an independent British review on the SLP made in 2011, as OSD officers, that carry firearms routinely, and that could be faced with making life or death ‘shoot or no shoot’ decisions, may not have the adequate capacity to perform (SLP 2011). This gives an idea of the importance of the body already during the recruitment process, when police officers also have a fitness test to validate to enter the police.

When talking about disabled police officers, they often voiced the belief that disabled police officers are weak and not fit physically. Police officers regularly express the idea that disabled police officers have ‘something wrong in their body’. This is probably linked to the fact that all but one of disabled police officers employed within the police since 2012 have a physical impairment and, more specifically, they are polio victims. Because of polio, some muscles may shrink and become smaller making a big difference in a person’s ability to function properly or, in worst cases, muscle weakness results in a complete inability to move the legs. Therefore, the large majority of disabled police officers employed need mobility aids such as crutches or wheelchairs.

Police officers were skeptical about what could be the role of ‘physically unfit people’ within the police, which is an environment based on physical work (Respondent, personal communication,

¹ It is important to mention that, since the end of the conflict, even though unusual for African countries, the government decided to keep Sierra Leone’s established policy of unarmed policing (Hills 2011)

November 8, 2017). Examples of such perceptions can clearly be seen within the following responses given by a police officer: *'You are part of an organization and you need to be able to engage in all activities. But if you don't get what it takes [...] what are they here to do? What is the disabled person really able to do?'* (Chief Superintendent, personal communication, November 16, 2017).

I agree with Diphorn (2015) when she emphasizes how many police officers regard their body as their most important asset for their work. Even if the importance of training and other skills is not undervalued, it is often emphasized how the physical body 'gets the job done' and provide them with an income to support their families. Monaghan (2002) refers to the so-called 'bodily capital', which include not only the physical appearance of an individual but also the 'techniques of the body', so they ability of using the body (Mauss 1973 in Monaghan 2002). This concept is extremely relevant for this study as the lack of bodily capital may exclude and isolate members who do not have it or who are perceived as a weak fit.

As I demonstrated above, police officers regularly voiced the belief that disabled police officers' inability to use effectively their body has significant implications on their ability to perform as police officers. More specifically, police officers voiced the belief that disabled police officers cannot perform law-enforcement duties. This has been clearly shown by police officers' perception that, as disabled police officers do not take part in law-enforcement duties such as being sent for riots, patrol, arrest or control the public as front-lined officers, there is something wrong:

"What I am saying here is that whenever you are a police officer, you are expected to go and patrol, to go and arrest, to control the public order. However, if you are not able to do that job... since you cannot do it physically, then there is no need to go around. It's a waste of time." (Chief Superintendent, personal communication, November 16, 2017).

I agree with Paoline (2004) that argues that police officers often emphasize their role as law enforcement agents and crime fighters as 'primary roles'. Arresting and controlling the public order are the duties of a 'real' police officer. The main implication is that other duties are seen as less important. This is clearly shown by the fact that disabled police officers, as they cannot arrest or go patrol are not seen as 'real' police officers. Moreover, their duties in the Communication department or in the Maintenance department are not seen as relevant duties for police officers.

After having demonstrated that police officers think that disabled police officers are not 'real' police officers because they are not physically fit and because they do not perform law-enforcement duties, I will outline the implications of these beliefs in the disabled police officers' experiences within the police.

The paradox of the police's tolerance towards the disabled police officers

At the beginning of the fieldwork, when I conducted formal interviews and informal conversations with police officers, I was expecting to receive very harsh and negative comments on PWDs. On the other side, after few weeks of fieldwork, my initial feeling was that the relationship

between the two seemed to be quite friendly. Therefore, my preliminary analysis was based on the idea that disabled police officers are well integrated within the Sierra Leone Police.

However, once that I started to analyze the findings and to code the interviews transcriptions more in deep, relevant information and useful insights came out. A main point became clear: police officers and disabled police officers have cordial relationship, at least on the outward appearance, however, disabled police officers are somehow excluded within the policing environment. In this section, I will explain how disabled police officers are tolerated within the police as long as they remain invisible and they stay at their place.

Disabled police officers' invisibility

First, disabled police officer are asked to remain invisible in the police. This is clearly showed by two main elements: the fact that they are not allowed to wear the police uniform and the location and the departments in which they work.

An interesting episode that happened during my fieldwork can help in illuminating the issue. As aforementioned in the methodology chapter, I organized a learning event in Freetown at the end of my fieldwork. During this event, different stakeholders including police officers, disabled police officers, members of CSOs and DPOs came together to discuss and gave feedback on the preliminary findings of this research. This was one of the first time that I saw disabled police officers wearing police uniforms. Even more interestingly, disabled police officers arrived in plain clothes and they changed their clothes for the event. Throughout my fieldwork, while I was having informal conversations in police stations, disabled police officers were often the ones wearing civilian clothes in all department. The only exception happened with the first formal interview that I had with a disabled police officer, who was actually the only one wearing a police uniform, despite all his colleagues were wearing civilians. As the pictures below show, when disabled police officers are portrayed for pictures on international or national newspapers, they are always represented with police uniforms.



*Figure 1.4 Pictures of disabled police officers with uniforms. Top left: Disabled police officers during the learning event organized in Freetown on 14 December 2017. Top right: Disabled police officers portrayed at the end of the police training in Police Training School in Hasting (Freetown). Bottom: Disabled police officers portrayed for the BBC during their first day of work in Communication department in Western Freetown.*²

The SLP uniform has a highly symbolic meaning to police officers: not only it makes possible to recognize the identity of the individual but also the department and the rank where he belongs. All freshmen in Police Training School are given the uniform and they are taught how to take care of it and where and when it is appropriate to use it. In police stations, police officers generally looked very dapper in their uniforms: uniform is always ironed, clean, and kept well.

When I asked clarifications to police officers about this issue, many of them voiced the belief that disabled police officers should not wear police uniform. Two main reasons were given to justify this statement. Firstly, police officers argue that disabled police officers do not perform ‘traditional’ police duties, so they do not need police uniform. Once again, police officers articulated the primacy of law-enforcement duties for a police officer, explaining that disabled police officers should not wear uniform because of the duties they perform. As one police officer explained when asked why disabled police officers do not wear police uniform: *“Well...that’s the irony. We expect when somebody dressed the uniform as a police officer your duty is to run after criminals, so we don’t expect to wear a uniform and sit all day... the kind of job he does, does not really need police power. Because you put on your uniform to demonstrate police power... but when you see me in uniform... what do you have in mind? Law and order. Is not so?”* (Chief Superintendent, personal communication, November 16, 2017)

He further explained that: *“And obedience. But, he does not need a uniform. Because what he does is that he sits there, watch and if somebody comes he monitors. So he does not need uniform for the type of job he performs”* (Chief Superintendent, personal communication, November 16, 2017).

However, police officers pointed out a second reason for the lack of uniform among disabled police officers. Police officers believe that it is not acceptable to send a disabled police officer in the streets because this would tarnish the police image. A response illustrative of this idea can be found the following statement regarding people with epilepsy: *Now if we have such people [people with epilepsy], and they are coming to the office and they fall down in public, with uniform and especially now with social media, people will take photos or videos and send it to the social media, I think it’s even humiliating... let’s think about the organization...”* (Assistant Superintendent, personal communication, November 21, 2017).

Similarly, another police officer pointed out: *‘Because if he [disabled police officer] puts on his uniform, people start asking a lot of questions, because it’s not easy... it’s not usual here in Sierra*

² Source: Pictures at the top are part of the private collection of some disabled police officers, taken in 2016 and 2017. Pictures at the bottom: <https://www.voanews.com/a/sierra-leone-police-hires-disabled-for-first-time/1598089.html>

Leone to see a person with disability with a uniform. Especially a police uniform. So he usually put on different clothes when he wants to go home and come back. (Inspector, personal communication, November 11, 2017)

Interestingly, the initiative was described as a PR-stunt in order to attract attention on disability issues, however, at the same time, police officers saw the initiative as an undermining PR strategy. Police officers often state that they welcome disabled police officers and that they should have the same wage and benefits. For instance, while introducing the initiative of employing PWDs within the SLP to the media, the Inspector General shared this idea that employing PWDs would improve police's image among society: *"When you see a disabled officer, you do not have a perception of any immediate threat. The police should be looked at as not only using force but also using persuasive and other non-confrontational methods (BBC 2012).*

Moreover, he reinforced this idea during the interview we had: *'It is important to be perceived as a friendly force, less threatening and this [initiative] was a good way'* (Inspector General, personal communication, November 8, 2017).

It is interesting because police officers seem aware of the importance of 'being visible' for a disabled police officers. By becoming a police officer, respondents strongly believed that disabled police officer would be more likely to be seen by the public as trustworthy, credible and responsible, as they pointed out during interviews:

"They [community] people] will accept them [PWDs]. Because if you say a disabled person serve in the police force, you tend to respect him, this person is working for the police, which means, is somebody respectable, worth-being doing business with, worth-being accommodating, somebody to interact with, somebody to mingle with, it gives them the feeling that disability is not inability. It gives to the public the feeling that people with disabilities are just as any other human beings. We are just like them. So, they will treat them as they treat any other person." (AIG, personal communication, October 23, 2017).

However, police officers are also convinced that they should be somehow 'hidden', without a police uniform. This shows the first element of paradox of the tolerance of disabled police officers in the police. The second element will be described in the following section.

Disabled police officers hidden from the public

Another element that deserves mention refers to disabled police officers' work location and their main tasks. Most of disabled police officers were hired in two main departments: the Communication department and the Maintenance department in Western area, and more specifically in Kingtom Area in Freetown. KingTom Area can be described as a sort of police compound within Freetown. In the neighborhood, many buildings belong to the Sierra Leone Police: there are offices from the Communication department, the Maintenance department, the Police Hospital, the police Cemetery and other different police offices.

Besides the St. Edward's Secondary School and the police compound, KingTom Area is known to be a residential area. When I was going there with public transport, this location is generally known among bike drivers as 'police compound'. While walking in the police compound, I soon realized I was normally the only civilian going around, except for the women selling food on the streets. Most of the buildings that belong to the police in this area are not open to civilians or to external people as they take care of what I refer as 'internal management' of police affairs, such as maintenance of police vehicles or of services among police stations. The main implications is that disabled police officers are not seen by the public. If in other police station for instance, they could be seen by civilians that go to police station to make a complaint, in KingTom Area they are relegated to a police compound in which the large majority of people living and working there are police officers.

Moreover, because of the tasks they are asked to perform in the communication and maintenance departments, disabled police officers do not interact with the public directly. Within the Communication department, disabled police officers' main tasks included transmitting information, receiving memorandum from the police, receiving complaints and information such as fire incidents from the public and directing the information to the appropriate department (Disabled police officer, personal communication, November 27, 2017). Within the Maintenance department, disabled police officers' were mainly including in work on general carpentry, electrical and plumbing. As communication occurs mostly by phone and as maintenance tasks are performed within police stations, there is no contact between disabled police officers and civilians.

Here again, the contradiction arise: the police employs PWDs but decides to locate them in a 'closed' police compound and to appoint tasks that do not include a direct interaction with the public. Along with the prohibition to wear police uniform, this element supports the idea that disabled police officers are asked to be invisible in the Sierra Leone Police. In other words, they are accepted if they do not wear police uniforms and if they are not in contact with the public.

Disabled police officers' inability to climb the social ladder

In the previous section, I presented how disabled police officers are tolerated within the SLP as long as they are not visible. In the following section, I argue that disabled police officers are tolerated within the SLP as long as they do not attempt to climb the social ladder of the police. This is clear when looking at disabled police officers' potential movement within the police in terms of promotion. I will argue that disabled police officers are excluded as they cannot work in all police departments and this has significant implications in terms of their promotion.

Even though all departments and units should be technically equally important, it is common knowledge within the Sierra Leone Police that some departments attract more prestige than others. Since the beginning of my fieldwork, disabled police officers often pointed out their ambition to work for the Criminal Investigation Department (CID). This branch aims at investigating and solving serious crime as well as targeting organized crimes. It is commonly considered as prestigious department and working there is a source of pride: *"Formally they are all important. But people think*

that CID is the most important. It's about intelligence"(Disabled police officer, personal communication, November 27, 2017).

During my fieldwork, disabled police officers stressed often how, despite they think they have the required qualifications to serve in specialized units and in CID (Respondent, personal communication, November 27, 2017), they are not allowed to work in such departments, but also in departments other than communication or maintenance:

'I can do that job, bring the suspects and I will ask the questions, maybe I am not able to run after criminals but I know how to use my brain. Right now, I want to be allow in all departments, disability is limiting me in this way.' (Disabled police officer, personal communication, November 27, 2017).

It is difficult to verify if disabled police officers are actually qualified enough to work in departments such as the CID, especially considering that these departments are normally very selective in terms of access. Also, it is important to take into account how the large majority of constables aim at working in CID and, during fieldwork, it happened once or twice that police officers pretended to be working in such department to conduct an interview and take a picture together.

However, the disabled police officers' claims to work in departments other than the communication and the maintenance ones is relevant in this topic as it is closely related to the topic of promotion in the police. Formally, the advancement of career is based on seniority, educational level and performance requirements. More specifically, according to the SLP promotion policy: *"Promotion in the SLP shall be based on merit, ability, competence, performance, experience and above all integrity"* (Sierra Leone Police Promotion Policy, 2014)

Despite these three formal requirements, there are 'hidden' requirements to get access to higher rank in the police. It is widely agreed within the forces that working in different departments may accelerate a police officer's promotion to higher rank (Respondent, personal communication, November 15, 2017). During the interviews, when asked to described their background, police officers used to list one-to-one all departments in which they have worked and they emphasized their transfer from one department to another. As a disabled police officers pointed out, the possibility to work in different departments gives the possibility to be exposed to different tasks and to show the ability to handle them:

"If you want to be on a higher rank, you need different experiences in different departments. If you want to become an IG you must work in different departments."

(Disabled police officer, personal communication, November 27, 2017)

However, this represents a potential barrier for disabled police officers, as until 2017, they have been working in the same department, and their requests to change departments have not been heard (Disabled police officers, personal communication, November 27, 2017). This has implication for disabled police officers' promotion:

“This is a challenge: when you ask for promotion they will ask you where you have been working and if you say only communication department...”

(Disabled police officer, personal communication, November 27, 2017)

When disabled police officers are not allowed to work in all departments of the police, they are limited in their advancement of carriers. This is a first element that could represent a barrier in disabled police officers’ advancement of carriers. Secondly, when discussing disabled police officers’ advancement of carriers, it is important to look at police officers’ perception towards the possibility of having a disabled supervisor.

As supervisors are in charge of enforcing the practices and rules of the organization, they are considered as important figures in the organization. Interestingly, when asked about the possibility of having a disabled supervisor, police officers’ opinions vary according to their rank. I agree with Manning (1994) that each level of police rank designation has a distinctive culture, different concerns, orientations, values and norms. More specifically, I use Manning (1994) differentiation in ‘lower participants’, ‘middle management’ and ‘top command’ in explaining police officers’ different perceptions on this issue.

Generally, low-rank police officers acknowledged the possibility of having a disabled Inspector General without too much criticism. When asked about their opinion, many constables justified their statement by emphasizing the importance of obeying orders in the police: *‘I will always obey him since he is my supervisor’*. (Constable, personal communication, December 4, 2017)

Another response illustrative of such perception is seen in the following statement made by a constable: *“There is nothing wrong [in having a disabled supervisor] ... in this job, we take orders. Superior orders. That is what your boss says. You do not disobey to orders.”*(Constable, personal communication, November 27, 2017)

Such statements should be analyzed in the broader framework of what Reuss-Ianni (1983) refers as street cop culture, whose members normally see themselves as cops for the rest of their careers. These statements support also the argumentation that Clark (2004) makes when arguing that among low-rank police officers, the value of unquestioning obedience is extremely relevant: only those who obey order ‘readily and punctually’ can aspire to be promoted and only people who submit to discipline are considered as best qualified to command.

Thus, not all police officers shared low-rank police officers’ unquestioning respect for authority, especially those in the medium-rank, who were much more skeptical towards the possibility of having a disabled supervisor. Almost unanimously, medium-rank officers expressed doubts about the possibility for a disabled individual to have enough knowledge and leadership skills to be qualified for senior positions in the police: *‘With disability? To be a commander, I cannot see. It is not easy, despite the educational background you have to move. If like in the operation area you have to move with your personnel, you have to go out with them. However, if you are a disabled you cannot. You see?’* (Inspector, personal conversation, November 20, 2017)

Such a response illustrate the belief that, despite their education background, disabled police officers are not able to be leaders because of the need to move fast and be physically strong while in a position

of command. This vision was generally shared among medium-rank police officers: *'To be an inspector general, you have to move with your personnel, you have to visit stations, take decisions, the president will call you... what do you do? He or she cannot perform...'* (Inspector, personal conversation, November 21, 2017).

Medium-rank police officers' general skepticism towards a disabled supervisor is understandable as they are less impressed by ranks but more by merits. This supports the argumentation of Reussi-Ianni (1983) that medium-rank police officers are middle-class individuals whose education and mobility have made them eligible also for careers outside the police, making them less dependent and less loyal to the traditional core characteristics of police culture. This does not mean that medium-rank police officers do not obey, but that they are more likely to stress the importance of competence and merit.

Top command police officers, including the Inspector General Francis Munu and several Assistant Inspector Generals, were strongly in favor of having disabled police officers in senior positions. High-rank police officers justify the statements by saying that as long as disabled police officers are qualified to do the job, they can attain senior positions. As a top command pointed out: *'It is just... having tall people and you been very short commanding them. Here in the police, we will not look at your legs or your muscles... we will look at your brain.'* (AIG, personal communication, November 27, 2017)

Some of them argued that if a disabled police officer is able to lead the disabled police officers' movement, he possesses the adequate leadership skills to lead a police team: *'Yes, a person of high caliber, he [a disabled police officer] can be in one place and people work for him. You just have to identify the right people, if a disability person can head their organization, they can do also with other... all depends on their education.'* (AIG, personal communication, November 20, 2017)

The top command vision strongly in favor of having disabled police officers in senior positions should be analyzed considering that top commands are linked with the politics of managing police organizations, as Farkas et al. (1997) pointed out. Top command rarely have the time to exercise direct supervision and are mostly concerned with administrative duties and paperwork. However, in this case, the positive reactions of top command police officers should also be analyzed considering that, as aforementioned in the first section of the empirical results, that high rank police officers have been sensitized about disability issues while abroad. Therefore, by following disability awareness training, they are aware of the importance of disabled police officers' internal promotion.

Facing barriers in advancement of carriers have implications in terms of leadership: if less (or none) disabled police officers are in top command positions that means they have less direct responsibilities to guide the institution. As a DPO' member pointed out: *"For instance, when they will reach a very important position within the police, senior management the change is even bigger."* (President of DPO, personal communication, August 18, 2017).

If disabled police officers' input is deemed less valuable, they are more likely to be omitted from key discussions and to be left out of informal networks that provide the context for critical information sharing within the forces. They are more likely to be viewed as lacking traits for success and leadership, creating a system where they are cut off from opportunities to exert influence and change.

In this section, I presented what I refer as ‘the paradox of tolerance’ of the Sierra Leone Police towards the disabled police officers. On one side, they acknowledge the presence of disabled police officers with enthusiasm, however, my findings show that they are accepted in the police as long as they remain invisible and they stay ‘at their place’. This exclusion faced by disabled police officers is based on their perceived incapacity of perform, that relies on the idea that disabled police officers, as people with physical impairments are not physically fit to do police work. This raise important questions as the term ‘PWDs’, as used by the initiative, does not refer only to physical impairments. Therefore, the next section will discuss police officers’ perception towards PWDs as a social group.

5.4 Police officers’ perception towards ‘people with disabilities’

The third research question I aimed to answer (*How has the initiative challenged police officers’ perception towards PWDs as a social group?*) is extremely important for its policy implications. If the initiative of employing PWDs within the police had been successful in challenging police officers’ perception towards PWDs, thanks to their (positive) experiences with their disabled police officers, this example could be used in future contact interventions that aim at challenging stereotypes. For this reason, after having focused on the relationship between disabled and able police officers, I aimed at understanding able police officers’ perception towards the other disabled, in other words, towards PWDs outside the policing environment.

However, while analyzing the findings, interesting insights came out and made me realized that I could not answer this question, mainly because, in Sierra Leone, the term ‘PWDs’ hides important thoughts on how the concept of disability is understood.

Many international and local organizations work to promote the rights of ‘people with disabilities’. However, during my fieldwork, I soon realize that, compared to international organizations, local organizations are generally focused on one or two types of impairments. Organizations such as Sierra Leone Association of the Blind (SLAB), the Sierra Leone Union of Polio Persons (SLUPP), Epilepsy Association of Sierra Leone (EASL) are just an example. Almost all local organizations working on disability issues are then regrouped under the umbrella body Sierra Leone Union on Disabilities Issues (SLUDI), however, they strongly maintain their identity. During my internship, when I got in touch with local organizations such as DPOs in Eastern Freetown, I realized that people working in the organization almost never used the term ‘people with disabilities’ but mostly refer to a specific impairment.

As I already mentioned in the theoretical framework, in this thesis, I decided to use the UN definition of ‘people with disabilities’ that include physical, mental, intellectual and sensory impairments. This choice was made mainly because I thought that this term is the usual and common-sense definition used in academia and in the world of NGOs. However, this term oversimplifies the way police officers understand and make sense of the concept of disability.

Police officers' fragmented conceptualization of the term 'PWDs'

All over my fieldwork, police officers did not use very often the term 'PWDs': normally they refer to PWDs' as the stubborn. For instance, when police officers were describing episodes of violence between the police and PWDs, they called them 'the stubborn', as the following statement shows: *"These people are very... stubborn... stubborn and difficult to deal with. For example, in the case of evictions. Evictions are not doing by the police, it is not our responsibility, is the responsibility to the court to give that eviction and it's responsibility of the police to execute that order. So, but because there are times when these people are stubborn, there are confrontations. So in most cases, they will throw stones on the police, you know, they will become furious. But I think again it has to do.. for the government to do something for these stubborn."*(AIG, personal communication, October 23, 2017)

Almost police officers used this term during our interviews, while describing the episodes they had together: *"They are very stubborn. Disabled people, especially those, like the blind they are very stubborn, I don't know if it's because their disability but they are very stubborn. They will do things that will make angry them quickly, some of them they insult people."*(Inspector, personal communication, November 27, 2017)

During interviews, police officers often used the term 'stubborn' when referring to PWDs. Some scholars pointed out how in many countries, "There are blind people and lame people and "slow" people, but "the disabled" as a general term does not translate easily into many languages' (Whyte 1995: 7). This is interesting as it is similar in Sierra Leone, where there are blind people, amputees, or 'stubborn' people, but the term 'PWDs' it not very used by police officers. This has significant implication for disability interventions, and, this was the main barrier I encounter when I tried to answer the sub-question. Moreover, this raises questions in terms of who is included under the term 'disabled' or 'stubborn': in the next section, I will argue that there are some types of disabilities that are not considered disabilities by police officers: more specifically, mental, intellectual and acquired disabilities.

Exclusion of mental and intellectual disabilities

In chapter two, I briefly mentioned how mental and intellectual disability are still viewed as separate from disability in general and how the concept of disability in the country is generally focused on physical impairments. Unanimously, all police officers interviewed, along as the large majority of ordinary citizens in Sierra Leone, did not consider people with mental and intellectual disabilities as part of people with disabilities: they almost never used the term 'mental disability'.

During interviews, police officers did not make any distinction between mental and intellectual disabilities: most of the time they use to describe the problem as 'having something wrong in the brain'. Generally, the only distinction they make refers to the age: when they refer to adults, they use the term 'mental' while for children, they refer to 'intellectual'. Some of them included epilepsy in this category. When they had to talk about the possibility of employing people with epilepsy, which is often seen as a mental problem, many respondents were skeptical because of the impact of epileptic

attacks. As police officer stated: *“Mental disability? So I know one [police officer] has epilepsy but they [colleagues] don’t know that. It’s a secret”*

(Inspector, personal communication, November 25, 2017)

When asked about their perception towards them, all police officers said that they considered people with mental disabilities as dangerous: *“Mental is different. They are dangerous. They will never be employed by the police. There are different levels of insanity and craziness, but they are dangerous to others.”* (AIG, personal communication, October 5, 2017)

This negative view towards people with mental and intellectual disabilities supports the extensive research on the exclusion of mental disabilities in Africa. I generally agree with McKanzie et al. (2013) and Njenga (2009) that even when services are present for persons with other impairments, mental and intellectual disability are often neglected.

Exclusion of people who acquired disabilities later in life

An interesting element that emerged from the findings refers to police officers’ differentiation between people who born with an impairment or acquired as very young children and people who acquired the disability later on in life because of accidents or amputation. Unanimously police officers, when talking about individuals with impairments, referred to people who were born with it. This was clearly explained by police officers when referring to colleagues who acquired an impairment while on duty, for instance for work accidents. This was then not related to the civil war. Police officers’ different perception towards police officers that acquire an impairment while on duty is also reflected in work’s benefits and perception.

Police officers think that if you acquire a disability on duty, for instance in a car accident, you will still be different from disabled police officers: *‘Well... for me it makes a difference... the reason for that is that people joined the forces, they are not disabled... but during the course of their work, something happen and they become disabled but that doesn’t mean that they can’t continue their job. You still continue the job... that would enable to sustain their families. And you have the insurance that is covering some of these areas...’* (Sergeant, personal communication, November 15, 2017).

In a country where incidence of disabilities were exacerbated by the Sierra Leonean civil eleven-year civil war, is it important to point out how amputees and war wounded are not considered as part of PWDs. During fieldwork, police officers never referred to amputees and war-wounded and most of them seem quite annoyed about this topic and refused to talk about it. There are two main reasons that could explained this behavior. First, this topic is quite political and was not on the list of the topic I was ‘allowed’ to interview according to the formal permission I had from the Inspector General. Therefore, it is highly likely that police officers did not trust me enough to talk about this topic. Secondly, from informal interviews I had with police officers and, more specifically, from formal interview I had with PWDs-communities and disabled police officers, I realized that there is somehow a negative attitude towards amputees and war-wounded related to the benefits they had access to in the post-conflict phase in the country.

As I already explained in chapter two, there is somehow a common perception among society that amputees and war-wounded received much benefits in the post-conflict phase. Even before the

fieldwork, it was quite clear how amputees and war-wounded communities have received much attention from journalists and international donors. While collecting information on potential interviewees and organizations in the country, almost everybody I asked suggested to visit amputees football players in Freetown. However, in the country, there is a general skepticism to talk about amputees, not only by police officers but in general by society. This could be related to the feeling that amputees received much international attention and funding from international NGO while police officers, while many other civilians during the war that did not face amputation, did not receive all this attention. During informal conversations with disabled police officers, many of them pointed out how amputees, after all, are Sierra Leonean citizens, and how disabled police officers face the same problems that amputees face and could possibly face.

These findings show the importance of examining perceptions towards ‘PWDs’ at levels that go beyond the global evaluation. By proving how police officers have different perceptions towards different types of impairments, I suggest that the elimination of prejudicial attitudes will require a heterogeneous approach that take into account different types of impairments. In other words, the component that serve as the groundwork of attitude towards PWDs and, therefore, stereotypes change, appear to be strongly dependent on the type of impairment in question. Without considering this, contact interventions that maintain a global evaluation of PWDs are highly likely to fail.

Another interesting element emerged from the findings is that not only police officers do not consider some impairments as disabilities, but they place disabilities in a hierarchy of ‘preference’, as the next section will explain.

Hierarchy of impairments: Physically impaired first, sensory disabled second

When police officers talk about ‘disabled’, no matter what term they used, they refer mainly to physically-impaired and to people having sensory disabilities. Interestingly, during interviews, many police officers argued that people with a physical impairment in parts of the body such as arms or legs are somehow ‘superior’ to others disabled groups. Many police officers justified this argument saying that physically-impaired people have their brain working, they think the same way as able people and they can do almost the same thing as able people. There is a general agreement that people with certain physical impairments are ‘eligible’ to work with the police.

On the other side, there is a common perception among police officers that people with an impairment in their senses, such as speech or hearing impaired or visually impaired are somehow ‘different’ from physically-impaired people. Throughout my fieldwork, I heard several times the importance of having the five senses ‘correct’. People often told me that, in these cases, disability does not refer only to the body, but also to the way of thinking and to the sense of reasoning.

This has a significant impact on their potential employment in the forces. According to the large majority of police officers, it is not possible for visually-impaired to work for the police:

'The blind obviously will not be police officer, if you are a blind man you cannot see where you are going, so many things that are coming here for the day... Because if you cannot see, you cannot see what is happening'

(Sergeant, personal communication, November 20, 2017).

Similarly, police officers exclude speech and hearing impaired, despite the presence of one of them in the police since January 2017:

'No, no, they [visually impaired] cannot come because. When you apply to be a police officer... you have to go so many trainings... you have to go to training school, before you come back, if you are deaf or dumb you cannot perform well..'

(Sergeant, personal communication, November 20, 2017)

Interestingly, this perception towards individuals with disabilities related to the five senses was shared by disabled police officers themselves:

'You know, we have different categories of persons with disabilities, we have the blind, the deaf and dumb, the polio victims, amputees, people with mental problems. But let me tell you something, you should look at the polio victims [...] I think the most important thing in life is when you have five senses really correct. I think I am a polio, I have no problem with my brain, I think the way you think, I do things the way you do. It is just the way you walk, you walk straight I don't walk straight. Even some of the things I do, the able people are not able to do.'

(Polio victim, personal communication, November 8, 2017).

These findings support the argumentation of Jaffe (1967) and Esse (1994) that every disability label evokes its own set of attitudes and different types of impairments evoke different stereotypes as well. More specifically, my findings that show the hierarchy of disabilities (physical, then sensory, then brain-related) supports Yuker et al. (1966) argumentation that this hierarchy has an implication in the employment setting: therefore, physically-impaired are considered somehow 'superior' compare to the others, as this initiative, that employed all but one polio victims, shows.

This bring interesting insights as it show that to achieve a real change it may be necessary to focus on "forgotten impairments". I argue that it is important that, whilst contact interventions aimed at change people's stereotypes, strategies for attitude change are targeted in a manner that makes them most effective. This may include focusing on impairment groups that, in Sierra Leone, as well in many other African countries, face the most discrimination in society. In other words, focusing on those that are ranked lowest in the hierarchy of impairments.

5.5 Concluding remarks

The aim of the fifth chapter was to present my findings as answers to the three sub-questions previously presented.

Firstly, the chapter has looked at the employment of PWDs within the police. The initiative should be seen in a broader lack of disability awareness interventions within the Sierra Leone Police. Moreover, the very few disability campaigns that have been organized in the past did not have any follow up and are not remembered by police officers. Therefore, this initiative represents a first step in promoting disability rights in the country. The initiative took place in the first place because of the commitment of Mr. Dumbuya as a Sierra Leonean polio victim involved in disability advocacy in the country and because of the personal interest and passion on disability issues of the Inspector General Francis Munu. The process that led to the initiative cannot be presented in a linear way, as it occurred in sudden leaps and as an outcome of the most unexpected circumstances; however, it occurred mainly because of the personal connection between the two men involved.

Secondly, the chapter aimed at answering the second sub-question by focusing on the experiences of police officers with the disabled police officers. In this section, I argue that police officers think that, because of a different selection process, people with the wrong attitude and with insufficient qualifications have been hired in the police. Moreover, they believe that disabled police officers cannot be 'real' police officers because they are not physically fit and they do not perform law-enforcement duties. These perceptions have significant implications in the way disabled police officers are included (or excluded) in the police. In the section, I argue that disabled police officers are tolerated in the police if two conditions are met. First, they are asked to be invisible by wearing civilian clothes instead of police uniform and by working in hidden locations and by not having contact with civilians. Secondly, they face barriers when they try to climb the social ladder of the police because of the limitation of work only in certain departments and because of the perceived incapacity of supervise.

In the third part, I explained how it has been difficult to answer the third sub-question related to police officers' perception towards PWDs as a social group. Despite the common-sense and internationally-wide used term 'PWDs', police officers have a fragmented conceptualization of disability. More specifically, while they refer to PWDs as 'stubborn people', they do not include mental, intellectual and acquired disabilities in the term 'PWDs'. This has implications over the design of contact interventions that will be discussed in the next chapter.



Conclusion

Photo: the Female Prison in Freetown is the former detention facility of the Special Court for Sierra Leone

Source: <https://www.aljazeera.com/indepth/inpictures/sierra-leone-maximum-security-prison-women-180320123948503.html>

Chapter 6. Conclusion

6.1 Introduction

In Sierra Leone, the wider community marginalizes PWDs mainly because of the deeply entrenched belief that sin, voodoo or black magic cause disability (Powell 2010). Along with traditional beliefs, PWDs' engagement in illegal activities led police officers to be often involved in actions against them and conflicts arise between the two. For this reason, there is a common perception among police officers that PWDs are troublemakers and people who like to fight.

One way to improve the relationship between the police and PWDs has been to challenge police officers' stereotypes towards PWDs by putting in touch a person with disability and police officers. Supporting the idea that through getting to know PWDs, police officers may be able to break down their stereotypes, disability organizations in Sierra Leone started to advocate in order to employ people with disabilities within the Sierra Leone Police. This thesis is based on the following case study: since 2012, the Sierra Leone Police started to hire persons with disabilities in the Western area of Freetown. Until December 2017, ten persons with disabilities have been hired in different departments of Freetown and the number is highly likely to increase in the coming recruitment process.

This initiative represents an interesting and innovative example as it can help to understand the effects of face-to-face contact on the relationship between conflictual groups. For this reason, in this research I seek to answer the following main question: *How has the employment of PWDs within the Sierra Leone Police affected police officers' stereotypes towards PWDs?*

Researchers have devoted their energies to uncovering the causes of intergroup conflict and what can be done to reduce it. Of all the interventions that have been proposed to overcome conflict, intergroup contact has seen the widest implementation and has been the most studied in academia (Pettigrew et al. 2006). The literature on intergroup contact is vast (Pettigrew et al. 2011), and in this thesis I attempt to identify significant policy implications for interventions embedded in intergroup conflict.

To reach this aim, I conduct interviews and participant observation in a six-month fieldwork in Freetown. To reach conclusions, I used my own findings that included interviews with police officers, disabled police officers and members of different CSOs, DPOs and other organizations working in the country.

6.2 The limits of good intentions

If the truth be known, I am only a partially reformed idealist. In the secret depths of my soul, I still wish to make the world a better place and sometimes fantasize about heroically eradicating its faults. When I encounter its limitations, it is consequently with deep regret and continued surprise. How, I

ask myself, is it possible that what seems so right can be a chimera? And why, I wonder, aren't people as courageous, smart, or nice as I would like?

The limits of idealism (Fein 1999)

As Fein (1999) nicely synthesized, a large part of the population wants the world to be a better place, where people come together, care and respect each other's. This is one of the main reasons to have development projects and more specifically awareness raising campaigns. However, I believe that the main lesson from this thesis that the reader should take home is that the outcomes of such programs, interventions and initiatives should always be looked via a critical lens, as even the best intentions can harm instead of help.

I have described the framework in which the initiative of employing PWDs took place: since the passage of Disability Act in 2011, many disability awareness raising initiative have emerged in the country. Changing negative attitudes towards PWDs has been recognized by DPOs and other organizations working on disability issues as the first step to improve PWDs' inclusion in the Sierra Leonean society. However, as many researchers before me have outlined, it is debatable whether knowledge on its own will bring people to automatically change their attitudes as they are likely to receive only the piece of information that fit in their preconceived schema of the world. In the Sierra Leone Police, very few awareness initiatives have been organized on disability issues. During my fieldwork, one in particular, which is probably the most recent one as it took place in 2012, aimed at improving access to justice for PWDs through workshops and trainings for police officers on how to deal with PWDs. This campaign, however, as probably many others, is little remembered within the policing environment and provides evidence on the slight impact that some campaigns may have on people's attitudes.

In the past two decades, there has been a proliferation of contact interventions that aim at challenging negative attitudes through intergroup contact. The idea is simple, immediate and morally attractive: by putting members of groups that stereotypes each other in contact, there is the potential to improve intergroup relations. In this thesis, I have looked at one example of contact interventions: the employment of PWDs within the Sierra Leone Police. Part of the appeal of this initiative, again, relies on its immediacy and simplicity: contact between police officers and disabled police officers may reduce police officers' negative perceptions towards PWDs. However, the outcomes of the initiative are far more complex. The most important conclusions drawn from this initiative are outlined below.

When good intentions go bad

The main objective of the initiative of employing PWDs within the police was to challenge police officers' stereotypes towards PWDs. To reach this aim, the police opened a recruitment process for PWDs in 2012. The recruitment process was seen as a way to promote PWDs' inclusion in the forces. Compared to able police officers, disabled police officers had a different selection process: more specifically, they did not have any personal interviews to share their motivation and they did not have any entrance examinations to validate their skills. Moreover, along with the difference in formal criteria, it is relevant to mention that since the beginning of the initiative, all PWDs who

applied have been hired. This shows the attempt made by the police to show their commitment towards disability issues.

However, because of the different selection process, police officers believe that people with the wrong attitude and without the adequate qualifications have been hired. Episodes of disabled police officers drunk at work, their absence during the parade and consequent late for work, the dismissal of one disabled police officer because of improper practices and the incapacity to perform even basic police work have emerged from the findings of this research. These negative experiences are important because I believe there is the potential to exacerbate prejudice: police officers strongly criticize the initiative as it has rewarded the wrong people. This can increase tensions because police officers think that disabled police officers have been hired, are paid, received the same benefits as the others, and ‘do nothing all day’. Despite the good intention of the initiative, there is the risk to increase tensions between police officers and disabled police officers.

Along with these negative experiences, police officers often voiced the belief that disabled police officers cannot be ‘real’ police officers because they are physically unfit and because they do not perform law-enforcement duties. This has significant implications over the experience of disabled police officers in the police: even if it seems that they are accepted in the SLP, they are tolerated if they remain invisible and if they stay at their place. For instance, police officers believe that disabled police officers should not wear uniform because they do not perform law-enforcement duties, such as arresting or control riots. Some police officers also justified the idea that disabled police officers cannot wear uniforms because the public will ask questions if they see a ‘physically unfit’ person wearing a police uniform. Moreover, police officers often voiced the belief that they cannot become senior police officers, or supervisor, because they need to ‘move’ with the personnel, to go out with the police officers, and as disabled police officers are physically unfit, this is not possible.

Therefore, the good intention of the initiative - hiring PWDs in Sierra Leone Police –did not challenge police officers’ negative perceptions towards PWDs: police officers believe that, because of their lack in bodily capital and their inability to perform law-enforcement duties, they cannot be ‘real’ police officers. Moreover, the initiative itself may have the perverse outcomes of increasing tensions between police officers and disabled police officers: through a perceived unfair recruitment process, police officers believe that disabled police officers receive the same benefits as they do but without deserving them.

When good intentions lead to no action

The aim of the initiative was to challenge police officers’ perception towards PWDs, also outside the policing environment. However, what I and other international organizations refer to when talking about ‘PWDs’ is very different from what police officers, and other citizens in Sierra Leone refer to. In this thesis, the term ‘PWDs’ has been used referring to the UN definition that include physical, mental, intellectual and sensory impairments.

However, when talking about ‘PWDs’, police officers normally refer to as ‘stubborn’ and they do consider people with mental, intellectual and acquired disabilities as part of PWDs. As police

officers have a fragmented conceptualization of PWDs, a stereotype change towards the outgroup should be considered in terms of people with the same impairments, such as polio victims or speech and hearing impaired. Police officers have different perceptions according to impairments, therefore, a generalization of contact effect should consider the specific types of impairments, rather than ‘PWDs’ as a category for the outgroup.

This underscores the importance of examining perceptions towards ‘PWDs’ at levels that go beyond the global evaluation. Police officers have different perceptions towards different types of impairments, therefore, the elimination of prejudicial attitudes will require a heterogeneous approach that take into account different types of impairments. In other words, the component that serve as the groundwork of attitude towards PWDs and, therefore, stereotypes change, appear to be strongly dependent on the type of impairment in question. Without considering this, contact interventions that maintain a global evaluation of PWDs are highly likely to fail.

Not only police officers have a different conceptualization of the term ‘PWDs’, but they show a hierarchy of preference among specific groups of disabilities. In police officers’ hierarchy, physical impairments are considered somehow ‘superior’ to sensory impairments while mental and intellectual disabilities are placed at the bottom of this hierarchy of preference. This bring interesting insights as it show that to achieve a real change it may be necessary to focus on “forgotten impairments”. Therefore, to have effective contact interventions, strategies for attitude change should focus on impairment groups that, in Sierra Leone, as well in many other African countries, face the most discrimination in society. In other words, focusing on those that are ranked lowest in the hierarchy of impairments to achieve a real change for those groups of disabilities whose voices are hardly heard.

The reader may now rightly ask: what now? Shall we stop all contact interventions because of the perverse outcomes? What about the moral imperative to respond to human suffering and to end PWDs’ marginalization and stereotyping? Those are valid concerns. And for this reason, from the above, the next section will outline some recommendations that may be used for the initiative itself and for future contact interventions.

6.3 Recommendations

From the above findings, this section will outline the main recommendations that can be used for the initiative itself and, by generalizing from it, for future contact interventions targeting PWD stereotyping. For the implementation and further development of the employment of PWDs within the police, I suggest:

1. **Use the same recruitment criteria to hire PWDs as for non-PWDs**

From the findings it emerged the very negative perception towards the initiative, that is perceived as an ‘unfair’ recruitment process. Police officers are convinced that disabled police officers have been hired only because of their disability. This has significant implications: it risks to devaluate disabled police officers’ real accomplishments, it reinforces the idea that disable police officers cannot stand on their own feet, it may increase tensions and it may rewards the wrong people, such as unqualified people. By delineating clear regulations (such as entrance examination to validate

IT skills and requirements and an interview where disabled police officers share their motivation to join the forces), the perverse outcomes of the positive action can be reduced.

However, the implementation of a ‘fair’ recruitment process for PWDs is necessary but not sufficient. I believe positive action should not be considered as a panacea for challenging stereotypes: as my findings show, the fact that ten people are hired in the police does not mean automatically that people will change their stereotypes towards them. There are many factors involved and intergroup conflict are embedded in a complexity that revolves around political, social, historical factors. Positive attitudes towards the disabled police officers can be improved by ameliorating work conditions of the disabled police officers. Therefore, the next recommendation:

2. Make PWDs visible and give them the opportunity to climb the hierarchical ladder

I shared with the reader some interesting findings in the previous chapter regarding the situation of disabled police officers in the police: I can therefore suggest four practical examples that emerged from the findings. First, allow disabled police officers to wear police uniform as all able police officers. Second, reconsider the main work location and departments in which the coming disabled police officers will work in order to increase the contact with civilians. Third, allow disabled police officers to work in different departments (for instance in the Media and Public Relation Unit or in the Community Relations Department) in order to develop skills needed for their promotion. Fourth, consider the possibility of hiring qualified disabled police officers to take leadership positions (for instance by including PWDs into the recruitment process for Police Cadets).

Moreover, as police officers often believe that disabled police officers cannot be ‘real’ police officers because of their lack of bodily capital and because they do not perform law-enforcement duties, I can suggest to:

- 3. Include an adequate physical requirement in the recruitment process for PWDs**
- 4. Give PWDs the opportunity to be engaged in law-enforcement duties, such as interrogating suspects**

The fifth recommendation for the initiative, refers to the use of the term ‘PWDs’:

5. Take into account that police officers do not perceive ‘PWDs’ as a single category

I argued throughout the thesis that the term ‘PWDs’ hides the real perception of police officers and I suggested that the elimination of prejudicial attitudes requires a heterogeneous approach that take into account different types of impairments. In this case, the initiative should have restricted the objective to change police officers’ perception to one type of disability: the physical impairments.

Contact interventions, as many other interventions, are based on the need to make things fit to a sound bite, label or keyword. It is normal to assert the label or category in lieu of recognizing the portfolio of choices that this label and category represents. However, by asserting the simple over the complex, an important aspect is missing: the appropriateness of the action.

6. Target low-rank police officers in disability awareness interventions

Moreover, throughout the thesis I pointed out several times the differences in opinions between police officers of different ranks. Following scholars’ suggestion that police culture is fragmented per rank, I suggest that this aspect should be taken into account when organizing disability

awareness interventions in the police. More specifically, different aspects of disability awareness interventions may be more relevant for low-rank police officers, that, as my findings show, are often the one in contact with PWDs and are the one who did not receive any trainings.

From these recommendations specifically targeted for the initiative, other more general recommendations for future contact interventions can be drawn. As I mentioned before, the success of contact interventions around the world may be related to the theory's strengths of being immediate and simple, rather than on its efficacy and rigor. I agree that simplification is needed to understand the world, and that when simplification works, it can indeed be very effective. However, I argue that simplification does not always work (and so more is not necessarily better) and when it fails, it fails miserably. The last point needed to take into account for designing contact interventions:

7. Consider that 'contact interventions' can reinforce negative stereotypes

Contact is not always positive. Negative contact can actually act to prevent groups from fully overcoming their differences and, in some cases, can even create a fertile ground for more extreme forms of prejudice.

After having outlined the recommendations for this initiative and for the future contact interventions, in the next section, I will outline future research suggestions.

6.4 For further Research

What about policewomen with disabilities?

In a very interesting article, Habib (1995) points out the imperative to address gender issues in disability interventions in developing countries. More specifically, she strongly criticizes the unfortunately quite common assumption of these disability awareness interventions that you cannot do 'disability and women' at the same time. While analyzing the initiative of employing PWDs in the police, I soon realized how women with disabilities not only have not been hired in the police but are completely excluded by the initiative, with the assumption of 'let's do disability first, then we'll think of women'. This situation not only makes for a relevant case study about the inclusion of women with disabilities in the police, but can provide extremely interesting insights in how the gender policies implemented in the SLP recently (for more information: Ibrahim 2011) are excluding the disability debate.

SLP and PWDs relationship in the countryside

In the methodology chapter, while I present the main limitations of the study, I pointed out how the geographical area in which my research was carried out (Western Area, mostly western part of Freetown) is not representative of the country. During fieldwork, I already noticed differences between police stations in the western and in the eastern part of Freetown. In order to have an overall picture of the relationship between the Sierra Leone Police and people with disabilities, a study that takes into account the rural area of the country is needed. At the time of my fieldwork, following a

UNDP report³ on the community perceptions of the SLP in Kambia (Northern provinces), UNDP consultants were revising the survey to analyze police officers perception in rural area while taking into account disability issues. Similar investigations using a qualitative approach could be done.

Intergroup contact in correctional environments

While visiting the Freetown Female Correctional Center in Freetown during fieldwork, I realized how the issue of mental disabilities is discarded and completely underestimated. In a prison with around ninety prisoners including their children, women on death row, those serving life imprisonments sentences and women with quite visible mental disabilities live together with a large majority of almost teenager female prisoners arrested for minor petty offences. The correctional environment is often adversarial and conflicting in nature with officers and inmates placed in oppositional roles. In such context, an experimental study on the effects of intergroup may bring useful insights to better understand the apparent very cordial relationship and friendships between the prisoners and the correctional officers (for more information: Farkas et al. (1997), Manning (1993, 1994). AdvocAid Sierra Leone⁴ is highly likely to be the only organization that can provide access to prisons for fieldwork in Sierra Leone.

³ Community Perceptions of the Sierra Leone Police in Kambia A Survey of Magbema, Samu and Gbinle-Dixing Chiefdoms

⁴<http://advocaidsl.org/>, <https://www.aljazeera.com/indepth/inpictures/sierra-leone-maximum-security-prison-women-180320123948503.html>

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