Routledge
Taylor & Francis Group

Policing and Society
An International Journal of Research and Policy

ISSN: 1043-9463 (Print) 1477-2728 (Online) Journal homepage: https://www.tandfonline.com/loi/gpas20

Within 'the Tin Bubble': the police and ethnic minorities in Sweden

Sara Uhnoo

To cite this article: Sara Uhnoo (2015) Within 'the Tin Bubble': the police and ethnic minorities in Sweden, Policing and Society, 25:2, 129-149, DOI: 10.1080/10439463.2013.817995

To link to this article: https://doi.org/10.1080/10439463.2013.817995

Policing and Society, 2015
Vol. 25, No. 2, 129–149, http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/10439463.2013.817995

Routledge
Taylor & Francis Group

Within 'the Tin Bubble': the police and ethnic minorities in Sweden

Sara Uhnoo*

Department of Sociology and Work Science, University of Gothenburg, Gothenburg, Sweden

(*Received 28 September 2012; final version received 25 April 2013*)

How can discriminatory treatment along perceived ethnic lines become reproduced within a discursive climate that claims to support ethnic diversity and condemn racism? Through an analysis of interviews with 21 current and former employees of the Swedish Police who identified their background as 'foreign', this article investigates how certain language use and specific talk can be reproduced in spite of the internal and external criticism directed at them. Six different, institutionally available accounts resorted to by the interviewees to make sense of and legitimise the derogatory language and joking they encountered at work are examined, shedding light on how the use of derogatory language, slurs, and degrading humour about ethnic minorities can remain commonplace within the police force without becoming considered as especially problematic. In addition, the analysis shows that which takes place within the police's own 'Tin Bubble', or in the police car, canteen, and lunchroom, to potentially have a carryover effect from one context to the other, colouring police interactions with the public and adversely affecting the workplace satisfaction of police employees coming from minority backgrounds.

Keywords: accounts; ethnicity; police culture; verbal racism

Introduction

> 'That little monkey bastard. Should I make him sterile when I catch him?' Somebody laughs. Another officer replies: 'Yeah, he should get such a good beating that he won't be able to stand once we're done with him'. (*Svenska Dagbladet* 5 February 2009)

Thus went a conversation, caught on film, among police officers chatting inside a police van during a period of social unrest in the Rosengård district of the southern Swedish city of Malmö in December 2008. It was, however, only when it was leaked beyond the confines of the officers' service vehicle, their 'Tin Bubble', and went public during a subsequent trial, that the exchange came to be seen as problematic. It drew much mass-media attention along with sharp criticism from politicians, and led to penalties to the officers involved and to an official enquiry commissioned by the National Police Board about the attitudes and behaviours among Swedish police officers, especially towards the country's ethnic minorities (Westin and Nilsson 2009). Two years later, a radio documentary (*P3 Nyheter granskar* 2010) was aired about discrimination against police employees with a foreign background by their Swedish-born co-workers, prompting the police authorities of a major region in the country to

*Email: sara.uhnoo@socav.gu.se

commission an investigation into the extent of racism within the police force (Uhnoo and Peterson 2011).

That Swedish mass media reporting on the country's police force often gives a picture of it as acting discriminately towards ethnic minorities was something that the majority of the police employees interviewed for this article were indeed agreed upon. On the other hand, accusations of racism have also been routinely directed at police by young people from minority backgrounds with whom the police frequently interact in the daily performance of their tasks. However, the police employees interviewed for this article tended to play down these accusations, considering them to be just 'part of the game' and an expected, ordinary feature of their encounters with immigrant youth on the street. The question can nevertheless be raised as to the factuality of any racism within the Swedish police force. Moreover, how do police officers themselves view the issue, and how do they perceive the factors and circumstances leading to such accusations and characterisations of police officers as racist in their treatment of minorities? In particular, how do those police employees who come from minority backgrounds look at the issue and perhaps personally experience it from within the police organisation, as members of a service-oriented agency claimed to be racist? Police employees from ethnic minority backgrounds, such as those participating in the present study can be assumed to be extra alert and sensitive to situations in which the ethnic background, whether of those in the general public or those who work within the police, becomes thematised and starts having implications for police's work. Their position, indeed, is an interesting one, in that they form part of and work for an organisation that is often accused of being racist, while at the same time belonging to the very ethnic groups that are presumed to be discriminated against by that organisation (cf. Cashmore 2002, p. 328). To listen to their voices and explore their perceptions and experiences thus becomes of particular interest for anyone tackling the topic of racism and discrimination within the police force.

Some of the police employees interviewed for this article saw themselves as 'spies' within the police force with an ability to apprehend aspects of the police's interaction with minorities that others like the media, the general public, and research community fail to understand. Below in this article, I will, accordingly, attempt to depict how the policing of ethnic minorities both *within* and *outside* the police force looks like in the eyes of Swedish police employees coming from immigrant backgrounds. Beyond this descriptive task, however, the main question guiding my examination and analysis is the following: How can any discriminatory treatment along perceived ethnic lines become reproduced within a discursive climate that officially supports ethnic diversity and condemns racism? For an inquiry of this kind, analysis of legitimating accounts by individuals suggests itself as a useful tool, providing as it does us with insights into how meanings are created and culturally embedded normative explanations arrived at and deployed by actors in specific situations (Scott and Lyman 1968, Orbuch 1997). By drawing attention to how the police employees interviewed for this study explained and legitimatised their talk and language use within the police organisation, and by examining the way they drew upon culturally available justifications in doing this, this article, accordingly, aims at contributing to a better understanding of the way certain language use and specific talk can be reproduced in spite of the internal and external criticism directed at them.

Police culture and its dark side: verbal racism as institutional weakness

The discretionary nature of policing, allows police employees significant room for manoeuvre in their law enforcement role, in the way they, in the performance of their professional duties, interpret the intention of the law, and thereby also in their exercise of social control over ethnic minorities. The manner in, and the extent to, which they exercise their discretionary powers in their work depends, among other things, on the prevailing police culture around them, constituted of 'a set of shared informal norms, beliefs and values that underpins and informs police outlooks and behaviour towards people' (Loftus 2008, p. 757; see also Skolnick's classic work 1966). The reasons behind the police's discriminatory treatment of ethnic minorities can involve structural, institutional, or individual factors (Hydén and Lundberg 2004). Among the institutional factors that can contribute to discriminatory treatment is the tendency of the policy culture to divide social reality in terms of 'Us' and 'Them', leading to an in-group isolation and solidarity among the group members (the police) (Waddington 1999, p. 287).

According to Waddington (1999, p. 288), research on the police has thus far concentrated too much on what the police *say* rather than how they actually *act* on the street. With that, the culture of the police has come to be seen as synonymous with oral culture, with quick but problematic conclusions drawn about the relationship between police talk and police action and behaviour as a result. The fact that, when left alone in the police van, the dressing room, or the canteen, police officers between themselves speak about ethnic groups in a certain way, does not necessarily entail that they act accordingly towards ethnic minorities in their practical police work. The language and the manner of speaking that police officers employ when talking about ethnic groups in these contexts rather represent 'backstage' behaviour manifested in 'canteen banter':

> [W]hat occurs in the canteen is expressive talk designed to give purpose and meaning to inherently problematic occupational experiences. The canteen is an arena of action separate from the street, where in contrast to the latter officers act before an audience of their peers. (Waddington 1999, p. 287)

Accordingly, rather than presenting a condemnatory picture of police sub-culture, Waddington (1999), in his well-known article on the topic, seeks to offer a more empathetic understanding of even its, in many respects strongly disagreeable features, by interpreting police culture as something constituting a reaction to the structural conditions in which law enforcement officers operate; 'the abusive, and often racist, denigration of [what officers often identify as a sub-citizenry of] "police property"', for instance, appears in this light as merely 'the means through which moral dilemmas are routinely neutralized' (Waddington 1999, p. 302). This way of talking, moreover, is something that tends to be generally endorsed by the very groups within the police that might be presumed to suffer the most from it, that is, the officers coming from minority backgrounds (Waddington 1999, p. 296). At the same time, however, Waddington offers no evidence showing that police officers from minority backgrounds would conceive of such 'canteen talk' as in any way unproblematic.

In the Norwegian context, Sollund (2007) has continued, where Waddington left off, interviewing police officers and ethnic minority representatives and observing actual police work on the street to empirically ascertain any relationship between

police officers' talk and their attitudes and behaviour towards ethnic minorities. Sollund's materials point to the existence of a same kind of verbal racism within the police force that Waddington also discusses, in the form of 'rough' language and talk, joking and banter, and verbally expressed frustration that, while directed at ethnic minorities, could nevertheless not be observed as a feature of the police's direct interactions with them (Sollund 2007, p. 81, see also Finstad 2000, pp. 86–88). According to Sollund, the derogatory terms used to negatively portray a category of people might then be 'apparently innocuous', but they nonetheless, 'may create, fortify and confirm social distance' between the speakers and those spoken about (Sollund 2007, p. 93, see also Finstad 2000).

The same language, however, also functions to legitimatise the police's exercise of coercive authority against ethnic minorities, suggesting that the treatment that those segments of the population receive is 'deserved' (Waddington 1999, p. 301, Sollund 2007, p. 93). As Sollund argues, here it is thus a question not only of talk, but also of negative, stereotyped *attitudes* existing within the police force towards ethnic minorities, attitudes that, moreover, build on experiences of one-dimensional encounters with ethnic minority groups (Sollund 2007, p. 88). Sollund's findings, however, are far more ambiguous when it comes to the actual encounters between police and individuals belonging to ethnic minorities and their possible discriminatory nature. Her interviewees from minority backgrounds, confirming the picture from other studies on the subject as well, reported experiences of unfair treatment and even harassment by the police (see also Sollund 2006). At the same time, however, Sollund's own observations of actual police work on the street seemed to qualify this fairly unanimous testimony. While 'police may be right in claiming that they never stop ethnic minorities because of their skin colour', she concluded, it nevertheless 'seems likely that ethnicity is amongst the factors, which may contribute to their regarding someone as suspicious' (Sollund 2007, p. 90, see also Holmberg 2000). The significance that the language use she studied had for police work, could accordingly, be summed up as follows:

> If not a racist expression per se, at least it may be characterized as an institutional weakness, which will even contribute to labelling the police as racist. This again will make people meet the police with hostility. Furthermore, in the long run, verbal racism may harm ethnic minorities directly because the use of derogatory terms may lower the threshold for stops and lead to unjustified stop practice and may even facilitate abuse. (Sollund 2007, p. 94)

In contrast to Waddington, Sollund, in other words, makes the argument that even if the verbal racism of police officers were to be about nothing more than unreflected practice without any discriminatory intent, it can nevertheless acquire significance for the way ethnic minorities are treated and dealt with by the members of the profession. It signifies a way of talking that reproduces power relations, creates social distance, and gives rise to an 'Us/Them' division of the social world that all potentially function to legitimatise discriminatory treatment of ethnic minorities. In addition, it can also lead to the stigmatisation of the police as racist in the eyes of the public.

Considering the different manifestations of racism in police culture in their respective cases, Waddington (1999) and Sollund (2007) both conclude that, indeed,

verbal racism is prevalent among the police in the United Kingdom and Norway; however, where the two disagree is in their assessment of how serious such behaviour is in its consequences – whether, in other words, it is confined to environments internal to the police institution itself and stays within the police's own 'Tin Bubble', or whether it also influences interaction with ethnic minorities outside of that 'bubble'. Regardless, however, of whether, and how, police employees' verbal racism might affect their on-duty behaviour vis-à-vis those outside their own ranks, the kind of discriminatory language and negative attitudes that are part of, or expressed through, such talk can, according to previous research, influence the way in which ethnic minorities *within* the police force experience their work situation (e.g. Cashmore 2001, Holdaway and O'Neill 2006, p. 286, Heijes 2007, p. 556, Loftus 2008, pp. 769–771). Westin and Nilsson (2009), for example, found the attitude and interaction problems within the Swedish police to derive from the negative aspects of the 'male-coded' traditional police culture, which even today still reflects a situation in which police employees are primarily ethnic Swedes. The disturbing elements of this culture, according to these researchers, are kept alive through a language used within the police force that, for an outsider, can but appear derogatory and as being exclusionary to many co-workers (Westin and Nilsson 2009, p. 40, see also Granér 2004). Loftus (2008), for her part, found that, in spite of the many years of diversity politics and efforts to change the values of police officers, ethnic discrimination and intolerant attitudes had not diminished in the British police force, although the arenas where discrimination was manifested had become fewer and more consciously restricted to the kind of 'safe environments' represented by 'white' spaces 'where the white majority feel comfortable enough to resist and subvert aspects of the diversity agenda' (Loftus 2008, p. 764). Yet, in the police van and in the canteen one nevertheless comes into contact with fellow officers and other police personnel coming from minority backgrounds. How do those belonging to this group of police employees view and discuss the police's attitudes and behaviour towards, and their co-workers talk about, ethnic minorities?

Methods and material

This article is based on 21 digitally recorded and verbatim transcribed interviews with 21 current and former employees of the Swedish Police who identified their background as 'foreign'. The 'foreignness' for them designated anything from having been born in the country from parents of whom at least one was born outside it, to having oneself been born in another country in or outside Europe or to having been adopted from abroad by Swedish parents. Only one interviewee hailed entirely from another Scandinavian country. The interviewees had lived in Sweden for different durations, and their religion, skin colour, language, and degree of foreign accent in Swedish varied. The interviews lasted from one hour to two and half hours, and they were conducted in locations of the interviewees' own choosing, such as university rooms or offices, cafés, pubs/bars, and libraries, and sometimes also the interviewees' workplaces. The interviewees were recruited through the police's own intranet, using an open invitation form that briefly described the background and purpose of the research and encouraged police employees with a foreign background to participate and share their understanding and experience of their working environment within the police organisation and of the working environment of this particular group of

police employees more in general. Twenty police employees accepted the invitation, nine of whom were women and 11 men. Seven of the study participants worked for the police as civilian staff and 13 as uniformed officers. In addition, one woman participant joined the project at a later stage.

The interviewees formed a heterogeneous group. Some of them had worked for the police authority for more than 20 years, while others had a significantly shorter work experience. As employees, their work roles and responsibilities varied notably depending on the police district they worked for, the department and unit they belonged to, their exact work position and tasks, and so forth. The interviews were relatively open-ended in nature, although they all centred on the theme of diversity in the police force, the influence of immigrant background on one's conditions of work within the police organisation, and police employees' talk about, attitudes towards, and interaction with ethnic minorities both within the organisation and in their encounters with the public. Even if the general topic tackled in the interviews was racism within the police force, the circumstance that they were nominally carried out within the framework of a work environment study made it easier for the interviewees to speak freely about the issues raised, facilitating open discussions on the topics covered. The common aim of the discussions was, based on the interviewees' viewpoints and suggestions, to seek and identify ways to develop the working environment for police employees with a foreign background. The interviewees were, consequently, approached as individuals potentially exposed to ethnic discrimination at their workplace, not as police employees questioned about their 'racist' practices and behaviour, which for its part, too, might have then helped to create a more open atmosphere for discussions. The overwhelming majority of the interviewees agreed to participate in the study in order to provide what they felt was a more accurate picture of the situation for ethnic minority officers in their police district, and thereby to counteract the accusations of racism and discrimination expressed in the media. While they were not uncritical, they above all wanted to provide a more nuanced perspective. The interviews were conducted by this author in all but one case, where also another researcher was present.

Analysis

The analysis of the interview materials that follows is divided in three parts, which all address different perspectives on the police and ethnic minorities. The sub-sections vary in their focus, looking at the situation either within or outside the police's 'Tin Bubble', or at what occurs internally between co-workers, within the police organisation in question, and externally, in connection with police employees' encounters with the public. The first sub-section examines how police employees internally, amongst themselves and within their 'Tin Bubble', talk about ethnic minorities. The second sub-section then looks at what takes place externally, outside that 'Tin Bubble', in the interactions between police employees acting in their professional roles and members of the general public representing ethnic minorities. The third and final sub-section again adopts an internal perspective on the subject matter, in analysing how police employees within the organisation experience the phenomena investigated in the preceding sub-sections.

Within the Tin Bubble: talking about ethnic minorities amongst co-workers

> You do have your own inside police humour within the organisation [laughter] that hopefully stays there, too, most of the time. It might sound totally off, a lot of the things that are being said aloud. So it's no wonder if people start thinking that [that the police are bigots] [laughter]. The way people talk, it can be pretty crude.

In their interviews, the study participants, as in the above quotation, talked about what they described as derogatory and stereotyping language and humour deployed by police employees that, in its effect, was among other things discriminatory towards perceived ethnic categories (cf. Pogrebin and Poole 1988). According to the interviewees, disparaging terms such as 'Taleban leader', 'Arab militant', 'nigger' (*neger*), and 'wog' (*svartskalle*) were common in such contexts. A woman interviewee with a non-European background reported on her experiences as follows:

> Although I've myself never really experienced racism personally, what I've certainly noticed is that there is incredibly much racism within the agency. How you speak about people: 'that nigger [*negern*]', you know; 'that gypsy', 'that' – whatever – 'that rabble', 'that riffraff', and so on. Expressions that to my ears – I thought, 'Excuse me, but if that's how you talk in here, then how are you behaving out there on the street with your monopoly on violence?' I mean, that's what they have. And always this notion of foreigners as people living on welfare.

According to some interviewees, this way of talking and joking about ethnic groups had its correspondence in certain *attitudes* about them. A woman interviewee from an Eastern European background described how she had become shocked when, as a new police employee, she heard how her co-workers talked about 'immigrants' during their morning briefings:

> *Interviewee*: I was really very surprised at first, when I started at my job. By now I've been working here for [many] years, so I'm a bit more used to it these days, but, before, I kept saying to myself, 'No, this can't be; are they kidding or what?'
>
> *Interviewer*: What did they say, for example? Or what did they talk about?
>
> *Interviewee*: [Sighing] Right; that all crime that's committed in general is of course committed by immigrants that only come here to either steal or live on social security, or to generally create hell for ordinary people. I mean, that's how they talk, that's what they say.
>
> *Interviewer*: Uh-huh; and when, in what kind of situations?
>
> *Interviewee*: All; all situations . . .. You sort of hear this chorus from behind you: 'Aha; and which country do they come from, you said?' I mean, it's like that all the time.

The dominant understanding among the interviewees was that the use of derogatory language, slurs, and degrading humour about ethnic minorities was common within the police force, even if to varying degrees in different departments and units. What is particularly interesting in this connection, however, is that the interviewees then resorted to different legitimating explanations, or 'accounts', to suggest reasons for why this should be so and why it nevertheless was not to be considered as especially problematic that such talk occurred.

One such legitimating explanation was that the discriminatory language directed at certain ethnic groups, or 'immigrants' more generally, was not to be taken seriously since it was meant in jest only, being an expression merely of coarse but good-hearted humour, which is how most of the police employees also understood and took it. Another explanation presented the assumption about the criminality of 'immigrants', or certain ethnic groups, as being based on 'facts' and as something that simply reflected joint experience accumulated during many years of police work. In other words, the problem was projected onto the ethnic minorities themselves, as in the following quote from an interviewee:

> That's not a prejudice; it's how things are in reality. It's how it is, if you look at our arrest records, who the people are who commit the crimes. So you can understand the frustration sometimes, when someone lets out something like 'that bloody immigrant', that they might have that sort of attitude . . .. We are the ones who meet the criminals, both immigrants and ethnic Swedes, but very often it's immigrants. It's really them that we meet . . .. At the same time, it's really the fault of the society that lets in so many people whom they then can't help in here. So it's not just their own fault, really, but it is in any case they who commit the crimes.

The interviewees seemed to share an assumption that ethnic minorities indeed were problematic groups – that the prejudices they identified were a reflection of how 'immigrants' actually behaved – which assumption was expressed through statements such as 'the majority of those we encounter are, unfortunately, immigrants', 'it's mostly immigrants who commit crimes', and the police 'has problems with certain groups'. The language used to speak about ethnic minorities was, moreover, taken to reflect overrepresentation of young immigrant males among the people that the police came into contact with:

> There is a certain manner of speaking about them [but] I want to say that it has become better. And then you can't close your eyes from the fact, either, that there are terribly many immigrant kids who get involved in crime.

Here the interviewees referred to their professional 'experience' as grounds for their assumptions (see also Sollund 2007, p. 88):

> *Interviewee*: Then you also have a lot of experience, too. So it's not always so that you just believe or say something and that it's negative just because it's about a certain ethnic group; it can also be that you've actually been around and seen the same thing about that group of people, over and over again. That it's become more like your experience.
>
> *Interviewer*: Uh-huh. Which you then draw upon in – your actions?
>
> *Interviewee*: Yes . . .. To give an example: I've seen cases, and I have colleagues who've been around in similar cases, in which – when you interrogate [suspects coming from certain ethnic backgrounds] – when you begin questioning them they will always go see a . . . dentist, because they are always in pain and always have a toothache. Because then you are allowed to see a dentist, and so they get it for free, or the state pays for it, I presume. And it's those kinds of things that we've learnt from experience.

In general, many of the interviewees made the comment that the professional interactions that the police had on the street with individuals from ethnic minorities

influenced police employees' ideas and notions about these minorities, and that this in turn then paved the way for specific discriminatory language, language use, and humour. This implies an underlying assumption that the experience one had of interaction with individuals from ethnic minorities outside the 'Tin Bubble' – externally, on the street – had influence on what takes place among police employees internally, as regards their sense and use of humour, their attitudes, and their own mutual interactions.

This kind of thinking is also to be found behind another legitimating explanation that the interviewees resorted to when reflecting on the police's language use, one that looks at it from the point of view of what Hochschild (1979) has called *emotional labour*. As one of the interviewees described it, 'our joking culture may be a bit rough and tough overall, but that's because we move in environments that, too, are a bit rougher and tougher, so we need to deal with them in another way'. To be able to successfully cope with their everyday realities, police officers, according to this logic, have a need for a 'rougher' or 'coarser' internal language through which to process and defuse for them, the emotionally trying situations that they encounter in their line of work. Many of the interviewees reported an understanding ('one can really understand', 'you have to keep in mind') that the stress, pressure, fear, anger, and frustration that may sometimes typify police employees' work situation, especially out there on the street, at times can lead them to express themselves heatedly using prejudicial language about ethnic minorities. This was considered merely 'human': 'You have to keep in mind that police officers who in their work deal with that clientele all the time – I mean, you're no more than a human being, and eventually it just gets to be a bit too much', as one interviewed police employee put it.

Another interviewed police officer with many years' experience of work on the street explained his understanding of the reasons behind the use of derogatory language as follows:

> Sometimes you really get embarrassed about by how your colleagues handle things. But if I were to put it a bit cynically: I can understand that if you work out there in the streets of [the infamous Malmö city district of] Rosengård and are out there on the beat every day and get taunted and jeered at, they throw stones at you . . . slash the tires of your car and yell at you that you're a 'whore', 'hope your kids die', and these people, they're all immigrants that you deal with, then it's clear that you can develop prejudices against immigrants because of that. I can understand that it happens, you know. And it's not an easy environment to be in.

The police should set an example through their behaviour, this interviewee concluded, but 'they, too, are human beings' who regularly find themselves in difficult and trying situations that entail significant risk: 'to do your rounds here on a Saturday night or go out into the suburbs, that's no joke; you're putting your life at risk'. Many of the interviewees spoke of police employees using metaphors from mechanics such as 'pressure-cookers' holding in emotions to the bursting point where they no longer can be contained, or a 'boiling point' where the 'steam needs to come out', with the derogatory language and jokes then serving the function of a 'safety valve' for these emotions. This language – 'that you just throw out some words, speak carelessly, maybe just think aloud' – had, for several interviewees, its justification as a quick, situationally induced affective response that served the purposes of emotional discharge and relief:

> I think a lot of times when something like that gets said it's out of frustration . . .. You can't blame them for that, but, if I say to a co-worker of mine, or my co-worker says that to me, that [sigh] 'Right, so there we have a *blatte*[1] again' or 'goddamn foreigner' or something, I'm not interpreting that as 'Oh, so now she's become a racist', but I understand what she means by that. She feels frustration, she's angry in a situation, or something like that, whatever it might be, so that's not anything I'm going to go and report to my bosses.

The interviewees were very careful to make a distinction between what is said *about* ethnic minorities in private or semi-private and what is said *to* them in public. The language used about minorities was considered understandable and, for many, also acceptable as long as it was confined to situations among co-workers, staying within the police's own 'Tin Bubble', 'in the house', 'in the group', 'between officers on the beat', or in the canteen or the lunchroom. In such contexts, the interviewees held, expressions, jokes, and prejudices which militated against the fundamental values guiding police work could be aired even when they were not allowed in public and would be met with criticism in the mass media if they leaked out from behind the police's closed doors. Epithets such as 'wog' (*svartskalle*) could in their opinion be used in a confidential discussion with a close colleague, but not in group situations and 'definitely not' in public:

> These kinds of expressions you may not use in front of other people. I mean, we need to be able to use them amongst ourselves, if you feel frustrated. Although I can say that I myself would not say such things even when sitting down in the canteen. I might express myself like that in the company of a few, close people, if I feel frustrated, but no, it should not be tolerated. Absolutely not, not when you are out there in the public; no, no.

Derogatory language appeared to be used primarily in 'safe' social contexts in the presence of trusted co-workers (cf. Loftus 2008, p. 770). When discussing the taped conversation from Rosengård excerpted at the outset of this article, one of the interviewees commented as follows:

> *Interviewer*: What do you think of those events?
>
> *Interviewee*: [sigh] Well, you know, in one way I can understand them damn well, you know. How it is when they're sitting there. For I've been in similar situations as well. I know how it can feel. You're really afraid, and you feel so pissed, when you're sitting there. You're really angry, and so you have to get it out of your system somehow, somewhere, and even when I think of my own case, I've myself, too, said stuff at times that I might not be so terribly proud of, if you know what I mean, but it's never ended up in me punching a person or doing something like – it's always stayed inside, within our own tin bubble in here . . . .
>
> *Interviewer*: Uh-huh. You mean inside the van? Like, between you guys as co-workers?
>
> *Interviewee*: Yeah, I can very well understand it. You get so – 'cause it's really such an us-and-them kind of situation.

Here the interviewee refers to the legitimating assumption about demanding police work that can issue in the form of 'stuff said at times', while also explaining the language used as a consequence, and reproduction, of a social division between 'Us' police officers and 'Them' the public.

In sum, the interviewed police employees coming from foreign backgrounds then used mainly five different types of accounts to make sense of and legitimise the derogatory language and joking that they encountered at work: they characterised it as 'coarse' but ultimately good-hearted *humour*; they referred to '*facts*' and actual experience of criminality among ethnic minorities; they presented it as a part of everyday *emotional labour*, necessary for those practicing a demanding profession; they considered it a consequence of a *social division* between 'us' the police and 'them' the public; and they, much in the manner of Waddington (1999), explained it as something *spatially and socially confined* to an internal arena of the police, 'the canteen'. An additional way of understanding and legitimating the derogatory language used by police employees was to see it as '*just talk*' that did not influence the police's conduct and behaviour before external audiences outside 'the Tin Bubble'.

Outside the Tin Bubble: interacting with ethnic minorities on the street

In line with Waddington (1999), many of the interviewees for this research made a distinction between 'inside' talk about ethnic minorities among police employees and the police's 'outside' interactions with minorities in their public, professional capacity. As one interviewee saw the situation:

> The police, they have the same kind of prejudices as all the others in the society, especially about those whom we deal with more often than others, for example [certain] ethnic groups. People can become a little prejudiced sometimes; that can happen, definitely. But it's my experience that those people [that one develops prejudices about] one nevertheless treats no differently.

Another interviewee, originally from former Yugoslavia, stated that derogatory talk unfortunately occurred and was unnecessary and offensive, but that it 'absolutely didn't' affect police officers' professional conduct:

> That [language] is not meant seriously, but, at the same time, I don't like it. I think it's offensive. For example, you might be looking at the booking report for the day and say, 'Right; anyone see anything interesting in here?' 'Yeah, there's one Swedish name on it,' can someone then say. And although that's of course pretty innocent, it's unnecessary. But they don't really mean to offend anybody; that I don't believe. I might maybe myself say something similar, and then it's not like I'd feel that 'Oh boy, this is a problem, this affects people negatively, it's beyond what I'm supposed to do in my professional role'.

Among the interviewees, there was, however, also a diametrically opposed view that presented those with a foreign background as discriminated against. Indeed, what became evident from the interviews was a double image of the police, one that depicted police officers as acting commendably at the same time as they were portrayed as discriminatory in their actions. In the words of one woman interviewee:

> Most of the officers are, to be sure, really good to work with and do their job really well and . . . are not nasty to people out there, if I were to put it that way, just because they are immigrants, but even so I wonder if, if there was a way to somehow measure and evaluate the way they treat different people, if you'd go pick up a guy whose name is [a generic Swedish one like] Kalle Pettersson and then a Mohammed-something, and if

> you'd then contrast and compare these two cases, I think you would see a difference between them; that's what I believe.

Another interviewee, born in an East European country, was more frank in his statement that ethnic minorities were treated differently: 'it's sad but so it is'. A woman police employee of non-European origin, furthermore, characterised the understanding of a difference between 'inside talk' and outside action as a 'myth' within the police service:

> We did have problems with some of our own people who sometimes expressed themselves in a really, really unacceptable manner out there in public. So I think that's a myth, actually [that such a difference exists]. That one doesn't conduct oneself in a certain manner out there, in the society . . .. It can be so that it's a bit more pronounced in there in the cafeteria. That you talk that way may be to air out things. But I don't even really believe it's to air out things. It's downright racism. It's a way of looking at people that I didn't think was really healthy. With some exceptions: some people had a very good set of values, although I should add that that they were not that many. Most didn't.

Some of the people that this interviewee had met in her current job outside the police force had described to her how they had been treated 'extremely disparagingly' by the police:

> For example, when someone was being fetched who was going to be expelled: 'Come here now and stop howling'. Then grabbed a hold, physically, of her. One of them even broke someone's arm. There's been unnecessary verbal and physical violence that's been used when it wasn't justified. [The person being fetched kept asking:] 'What kind of people are these who work there?'. . .. She didn't get a very good impression of the police.

One interviewee with 30 years of experience from police work reported his conviction that ethnic minorities are treated differentially in general in society, including in the courtrooms. In his opinion, some of his fellow police officers were less 'service-minded' towards them:

> The way they talk to them [differs]. You can go all the way, if you stop someone for drinking and driving and he's got 1.5 per mille in his blood. If it's a Swede, not much happens to him, but if it's an immigrant, it's straight to jail. Are we treated equally before the law? No, we are not . . .. I see that even at my workplace. I mean, we've got some old, terribly tired officers who sometimes sit at the reception desk, and when it's immigrants that they meet there, they are, I don't want to say unpleasant, but at least not as service-minded.

Another interviewee suggested that police employees more often than others tend to be suspicious of those with an immigrant background:

> You might come to the reception desk and not be able to speak Swedish, and you'd get verbally abused for that. Behind your back, not directly to your face. Although it's happened, too, that they've actually questioned whether they even can any Swedish. For example: a man comes in with his wife, and the wife doesn't know any Swedish, and the wife is applying for a passport. Then the husband and the wife, like, talk to each other, you know, with him acting as the interpreter, and then he has to take shit for things like 'Can your wife not speak any Swedish? But you are Swedish citizens, aren't you; how

> come you don't speak any Swedish?' Things like that I've heard being said god knows how many times, that they get treated with suspicion. But I don't think it's anything for us to start being suspicious about and questioning.

The same interviewee cited further examples of how ethnic minorities are treated by the police, suggesting, moreover, in line with the findings of Sollund (2007), that there was a clear connection between such negative attitudes and discriminatory action:

> The general attitude is . . . that most crimes are committed by immigrants; that's just how it is. So that's the way you look at things, and it's not like they're kidding about it – it's just [taken as] a fact . . .. [A]nd if this affects the behaviour? . . . [Y]es, I do think that it does, actually, because when this person comes in whom somebody drops outside the police station and he tells that that's how he got there, he came in a lorry, he doesn't speak any Swedish, he has this bag in his hand, he doesn't know where he should go, and he asks about the Migration Board; then they might let him just sit there a little longer, for it's OK, he can very well just sit there and wait. Because you of course believe that he's of course paid for his trip over here or alternatively that he's going around on his rounds stealing things or something like that. And he might be left there sitting and waiting at the reception for an extra half hour just to get help – that sort of an attitude. That's how I've heard them [my colleagues] talk about it myself, using those very words.

The interviewee claimed that the way one spoke of certain ethnic groups coloured the attitude towards what was seen as acceptable behaviour vis-à-vis these groups, that way legitimating discriminatory practices:

> *Interviewee*: When you hear this sort of thing all the time, you start thinking that it's also OK to do certain things, and that's what's so –.
>
> *Interviewer*: It also legitimates a certain way of doing this?
>
> *Interviewee*: Yes, since then it's OK if I get irritated about him, and then we can let him wait for an extra half hour because everyone else here then also feels or thinks the same – that's how I've heard them put it; I mean, then I can act like that and it's kind of like acceptable in some way and no one is going to say that I'm behaving stupidly.

Whether or not the interviewees saw ethnic minorities as discriminated against, however, a dominant assumption among them was that it was only when the derogatory language use spread beyond the boundaries of the 'Tin Bubble' and started having consequences outside of it that it came to be viewed as problematic by the police organisation. This could happen in two ways: either the way of talking and joking about ethnic minorities amongst one's own become known to the public that either witnessed it in action or otherwise learned about it, or it started affecting police employees' interactions with these minorities outside the 'Tin Bubble'. The latter case, discriminatory treatment of ethnic minorities in public, appeared to be inexcusable to the interviewees, as no legitimating explanations were resorted to in order to justify it; it was simply considered 'unaccountable'. The question then presents itself as to how the interviewees, who all came from an ethnic minority background, described the way in which that same manner of talking, joking, and interacting was experienced and perceived by police employees within the police organisation who, like them, had an ethnic minority background.

Within the Tin Bubble: talking before co-workers with a minority background

The interviewees who defined themselves as having a 'foreign' background were asked to describe the way in which they thought police employees with a foreign background in general experienced their working environment. Some of them suggested that the above kind of discriminatory language use within the organisation might undermine the workplace satisfaction, and lead to exclusionary treatment, of these police employees. Even when they were described as a way to talk *about* ethnic minorities in general, and not as something directed at co-workers, derogatory language, crude humour, and prejudiced comments about ethnic minorities were seen to affect the working conditions of, and the interactions among, police employees. As one of the interviewees put it, it can be 'mentally more demanding' for those with a foreign background to work within the police force, since 'it takes more energy to have to live with all these comments'. Another interviewee described it as offensive to hear how other officers talked disparagingly and generically about 'foreigners as social security spongers'. The derogatory language and prejudiced comments were even thought to lead to those police employees' perhaps beginning to be viewed with suspicion who, for instance, speak with an accent, hold certain religious beliefs, or move in certain social circles (see also Uhnoo and Peterson 2011). A third interviewed young police officer, with just a few years of experience on the job, reported feeling himself unhappy at his workplace and quietly excluded by his fellow officers. The latter's comments and prejudices about 'immigrants' had made it difficult for him to ever really become a full-fledged member of the team, leaving him feeling like there was no one to fully trust in him. His colleagues, furthermore, had advised him to watch out how he interacted with his 'foreign' friends. His loyalty was questioned: was he with 'them' (the immigrants) or 'us' (the police) (see also Peterson and Uhnoo 2012)? Yet another interviewee expressed himself as being unsure of how his co-workers ultimately viewed him, of whether they, when he was not present, perhaps spoke of him the same way they talked prejudicially about 'wogs' in the cafeteria room. A further interviewed police employee described occasions when he had been made to answer for the behaviour of other members of his own ethnic group:

> Unfortunately, there are many – not everybody, but many – among those arrested for theft who come from that background, and sometimes people ask me, 'Aren't you ashamed when your people do that?' 'No, I'm not, because they just happen to [share a certain ethnic background], but they're all different individuals. Aren't you ashamed when a Swede who's totally pissed is brought in here and thrown in a drunk tank now for the fifth time already? How do you feel about that?' . . .. I mean, sometimes I do feel ashamed, too, when it's like 'God! Don't tell me it's another [person from a certain ethnic background] they're bringing in'. . .. But most often I don't, because usually I think it's about individuals.

One interviewed police officer described herself as being emotionally affected when witnessing what she called the police's differential treatment of ethnic minorities: 'I think it's really unpleasant when they treat people like that; I mean, it's pretty serious stuff'. In a similar fashion, several of the interviewees spoke of their negative experiences of being confronted with prejudices, derogatory remarks, and what they saw as unprofessional police conduct and disparaging attitudes among police employees. While a young interviewee hailing from an Eastern European country

reported having only seldom heard derogatory remarks and disparaging expressions himself, he added that 'when you do hear those things, you tend to react and get a little upset about it'. Another interviewee stated that he 'disliked' the derogatory language use, often experiencing the situations, where he encountered it as 'a bit unpleasant':

> For that part of me that identifies me as Swedish, if you want to use that term, I'm OK in that environment, even if I do dislike it [the language use]. If it's just two people, it's a lot less of it, but if you're sitting in a bus, there's a lot more of that sort of talk. And I think it's a bit unpleasant at times, and often there's some one person, or a couple of individual people, who start it all and trigger it. But then you say that 'We're not supposed to talk like that, you can't just lump everyone together like that'. 'Yeah, you can; they're all the same'. But that's probably not something he really means, in fact, but it is the way they speak. And I think it's important that we get rid of it.

The interviewees told about the different ways they dealt with their co-workers' discriminatory practices. One of them, for example, recounted an occasion involving a practical joke that he strongly expressed his distaste for when hearing about it from his co-workers, prompting him and another police employee to walk out of the room in protest:

> *Interviewee*: People could laugh at things that I thought were just awful. As for instance [when they told about] this little Muslim boy who was about eight or nine years old and had asked: 'Is this pork?' He'd been given a piece of sausage. And he [a co-worker] had said: 'No, no; that's no oink, oink, I tell you'. Although it was pork. And they thought it was so funny. And then I thought: How do you guys look at people? Don't you have any respect?
>
> *Interviewer*: So they had made him eat pork by lying to him?
>
> Interviewee: Yes, and they [the co-workers listening to the story] thought it was so funny. I thought it was disgusting, disgusting.

Another interviewee described how he became 'really mad' when hearing about how police employees at another police unit had been making fun of a person with a foreign accent who had called in to request information on a relative. Instead of receiving assistance, the caller had been subjected to mockery by the police employees who sang satirical songs to him over the phone. Upon hearing of this, the interviewee had called up his colleagues, telling them what he thought of their behaviour, while nevertheless choosing not to report them. Yet another way of responding was to simply walk away from the situation, not having the energy to always or any more confront one's colleagues:

> Sometimes when they talk shit it really pisses me off. I leave the room. They know it. I mean, I'm not going to get involved and do something about it .... I myself, I'm not attacked; it's not that, but I don't like this way of talking that it's 'only immigrants' [who commit crime].

One interviewed police employee told that she had a bad conscience about her having gradually grown so 'used to' her co-workers' prejudiced talk as to become 'numb' to it all. One of the explanations that the interviewees gave for remaining passive in the

face of prejudiced talk by one's co-workers was that, it nevertheless was preferable that they not begin censoring themselves and make themselves 'politically correct' so that one will at least 'know what kind of people they really are'. Several interviewees stated that it was difficult to speak up and protest when witnessing prejudiced talk about ethnic minorities (cf. Cashmore 2001, p. 653). This, judging from the interview materials and based on previous research (e.g. Uhnoo and Peterson 2011), could be because of feelings of loyalty, fears about being left out of the group, or apprehensions about one's career prospects if one spoke one's mind. One of the interviewees, an experienced higher-ranking officer, expressed his fear that derogatory language use might become an unreflected part of police culture, one that would be difficult for police employees as a group to identify any longer and for individual police officers and other police employees (including superiors) to thematise and question:

> People might be joking, and that I think is OK to do when you're sitting in a car and talking amongst yourselves. But that type of language use can quickly become routine and something that's adopted for broader use. It can become prevalent, and if you then don't like that kind of language, you're seen as difficult to work with, and then it can become something that starts affecting people's behaviour and actions without their realising it . . .. That's dangerous, I think, and we have to watch out so that doesn't happen.

Another, even more drastic strategy than withdrawing oneself socially was to stop working for the police authority altogether. One of the interviewees described a situation which had contributed to the decision of a temporarily contracted police employee with a foreign background to resign from his position with the police department:

> He got to experience this thing with racism, not personally against himself but against others out there in the public . . .. When they'd be taking in a guy from [a non-European country]. He's been stabbed. A commanding officer then says to this guy: 'You fucking wog, you just lie there still now. Don't you even dare to . . ..' Straight to his face. He [the police employee with a foreign background] was shocked [to hear that]. I then said to him: 'You stupid, you should have reacted.'. . .. For otherwise it looks to the others like you're condoning it. But he couldn't get himself to say something . . .. He doesn't think the way police treat and interact with people is good; he felt like it was us the authorities against people. Against the public.

Not finding himself able to speak up and offer verbal resistance, the temporarily employed police worker then chose to leave his job in the police force instead. A woman interviewee with a long experience of working with the police maintained not only that 'the police are racist, that's just how it is', and that the police's way of talking and their language use were racist, but also that they acted in a racist manner towards ethnic minorities, both inside the organisation and outside in the community. This interviewee, like several others sharing her background, had left the police organisation despite liking her work within it, citing its racist and misogynous tendencies as one of the reasons for her decision.

The interviewees, in sum, reported different ways of responding and relating to incidents of differential treatment of ethnic minorities by their co-workers. Some of them found such incidents unproblematic, or in any case inconsequential for their

own personal position and workplace satisfaction as members of the organisation. Others reported themselves as being disturbed about such incidents but having gradually given up responding to them or preferring to stay silent and not think about them, or rather withdraw from certain interactions with their co-workers to avoid exposure to them. Still others described themselves as more inclined to take an active stance vis-à-vis their colleagues and speak up in order to register their objection to these colleagues' behaviour. There were, however, also descriptions of police employees who, in response to their personal experiences, had gone on to leave their job positions to seek employment outside the police force instead. What all these different responses seem to point to is the possibility of an unequal distribution of emotional labour within the police organisation: that police employees with an ethnic background other than the dominant one in the country invest more energy than their ethnically Swedish co-workers in their efforts to fit in and get on well at their place of work. This state of affairs would contradict the dominant assumption put forth in the interviews – one that also Waddington (1999) appears to concur with – that prejudiced talk and language use is not particularly problematic, and may even be viewed as acceptable, so long as it remains confined to the internal spaces of the police institution as a feature of peer-to-peer interaction among co-workers and colleagues.

Discussion and conclusion: cracking the diversity bubble

Before proceeding to draw any conclusions from above analysis and findings, it is important to point out that, as a group, the participants in this study, designated as 'police employees with a foreign background', represented a variety of different perspectives and experiences. This diversity notwithstanding, the analysis of their statements and accounts was able to reveal distinct patterns in the research material. It seems evident, for example, that the Swedish police regularly use disparaging language when addressing or speaking about ethnic minorities, that, through their practices, they contribute to the creation of a workplace culture of joking that promotes stereotyping, caricaturing, and pigeonholing of social groupings along perceived ethnic lines, and that they harbour generalising attitudes about 'immigrants' as a social problem.

The interviewed police employees – who, again, were themselves all from ethnic minority backgrounds – did, however, seek to render the verbal racism they had encountered more understandable, by resorting to six different legitimating explanations, or accounts, that were accessible to them as members of the police organisation. For the most part, they interpreted it as coarse but ultimately good-hearted *humour*; suggested that it merely reflected '*facts*' and recurrent real-life experience of professionals like the police that showed immigrants to be more prone to criminality; proposed it to be a form of necessary and situational *emotional labour*; identified it as a consequence of a *social division* between 'Us' the police and 'Them' the public (including the feelings of intra-group loyalty arising from this division); and described it as a phenomenon that remained spatially and *socially confined* in such a manner as to not to influence the police's interactions with ethnic minorities out on the street. A sixth way to understand and legitimatise the police's language use was to present it as '*just talk*' that did not influence police employees' conduct and behaviour towards those outside their own 'Tin Bubble'. However, while

language use could be excused through employment of a number of different, organisationally available accounts, what was nevertheless not possible to legitimatise the same way within the police organisation, and what thus remained as 'unaccountable', was, apparently, police employees' discriminatory treatment of ethnic minorities out in the public. The interviewed police employees either doubted that any such behaviour existed at all or, when evidence of actual discriminatory conduct was presented, strongly condemned it. None of the interviewees made any attempts to try to legitimatise police officers' discriminatory behaviour in public, in sharp contrast to how they responded to, and reflected around, the issue of derogatory language used to talk and joke about ethnic minorities inside the organisation.

Contrasting with the findings of Waddington (1999), but in line with those of Sollund (2007), the interview data suggests that verbal racism inside the police organisation may indeed have tangible negative consequences even outside of it, where there is an unconscious carryover effect from one context to the other, and the police's interactions with ethnic minorities out on the street become coloured by it. In such cases, it is likely to play a role in the reproduction of the social division between 'Us' and 'Them' and thus increase the social distance between the police and certain ethnic groups, which in turn will then make it easier to legitimatise any morally questionable behaviour towards the singled-out ethnic groups and categories (see Finstad 2000, Sollund 2007). As one of the interviewed police employees, coming from an East European background, put it: 'It's really about "Us" versus "Them"'. The interviewees' thinking around how their professional work *outside* on the street (interaction with ethnic minorities) related to their way of speaking and thinking (about ethnic minorities) *inside* amongst themselves was complicated. One paradox here was that, on the one hand, there was an assumption that actual 'facts' about crime and external, emotionally taxing professional experience of interaction with ethnic minorities influenced internal language use, leading to discriminatory practices, while, on the other hand, no such influence was assumed to be there in the opposite direction between the internal language use and interactions on the street that could have affected the police employees' external professional conduct.

It is beyond the scope of this article to examine or comment on how the police's interaction with ethnic minorities on the street actually looks like (for analyses along that line, see, e.g. Holmberg 2000, Sarnecki 2006, Sollund 2006). Rather, the purpose of this article has been to consider whether the police's verbal racism, joking culture, and language use within the organisation might present themselves as a potential problem regardless of whether, and how, they might influence police officers' professional conduct towards ethnic minorities outside the organisation. To also consider, as I have done in this article, the kind of consequences that police employees' derogatory language use might have internally, within the police's own organisation, represent, next to that problematic, less common angle in research on the police and ethnic minorities, bringing up new insights that contrast with findings from previous research.

Waddington (1999, p. 296), for instance, without offering any empirical evidence, proposes that police officers' use of derogatory language about ethnic minorities is generally endorsed by those among their colleagues and co-workers, who could be assumed to suffer from it the most – those coming from minority backgrounds, for example. The analysis of the empirical materials used for the present study, however, gives cause to suggest a different interpretation. What some of the interviewees above

described as innocent talk or coarse but good-hearted humour taking place 'within their own Tin Bubble', or as a way of handling one's emotions through verbal means, can clearly lead to decreased workplace satisfaction among police employees coming from minority backgrounds (see also Cashmore 2001, Holdaway and O'Neill 2006, p. 286, Heijes 2007, p. 556, Loftus 2008, pp. 769–771). This can have as its consequence the very real possibility that these employees then become excluded from their community of peers and that their loyalty becomes questioned (Peterson and Uhnoo 2012). The assumption that verbal racism that is overtly expressed only 'within the Tin Bubble' is not problematic as a phenomenon, that it in those conditions is 'just talk' that no one, really, takes too seriously or becomes upset about, is not supported by what the police employees with a foreign background in this study stated in their interviews. As the interview materials show, police employees coming from ethnic-minority backgrounds can, however, react and respond to their co-workers' verbal racism in a variety of ways: they can construe it as a non-problem, at least for themselves personally, or they can speak up and protest, gradually grow so accustomed to it as to start seeing it as 'normal', choose to remain silent on purpose, or withdraw from the environments where they encounter it. In the latter case, the result is often avoidance of certain social interactions with one's co-workers or, as an even more drastic alternative, resignation from one's job on the police authority.

The share of police employees with a minority background in at least the Swedish police force, will potentially only increase over time. In its capacity as a public authority, the Swedish Police has the obligation to increase the ethnic diversity of its workforce with the goal of making it reflect the ethnic composition of the country's general population. The question here has been presented as being one about legitimacy and efficiency, although greater diversity can be assumed to also play a role in increasing the public's – and especially ethnic minorities' – trust and confidence in the police force (see Uhnoo and Peterson 2011). The talk of the interviewees in this study offered concrete examples of how various forms of discrimination can stay alive in a police organisation despite countless 'diversity projects' and comprehensive efforts to change its culture, grounding it in a set of shared values and ethical principles. That talk also sheds light on the reasons why the fact of verbal racism in the police force only so seldom 'leaks out' and becomes known to those outside the organisation – why the 'Tin Bubble', or the 'Diversity Bubble', does not more often become cracked despite the recurrent efforts of the media, the research community, and suburban youth to investigate and expose its existence and extent in the law enforcement agency. One factor helping to keep the problem hidden is, no doubt, loyalty among co-workers, a feature that numerous studies have shown to be typical of police culture (and which Waddington (1999) calls 'defensive solidarity'), along with the fear of having one's career prospects jeopardised should one, as a police employee, become labelled as difficult to work with and lacking in loyalty towards one's co-workers and colleagues or towards the police organisation (see Cashmore 2001, p. 653, Uhnoo and Peterson 2011). Another explanation, however, that can be put forward is to be found in the kind of accounts analysed in this article that in themselves delimit the prospects of critical thinking within the organisation, making any thematisation and discussion of the problematic aspects of the police's language and language use more difficult, and the

reproduction of the behaviours involved that much more effortless and even fully unobjectionable to accomplish.

Acknowledgement

This research was supported by the Swedish Research Council for Working Life and Social Research (grant number 2009–0011).

Note

1. A slang term used (often pejoratively) to refer to someone (dark-skinned) of non-Western European or non-European origin.

References

Cashmore, E., 2001. The experiences of ethnic minority police officers in Britain: under-recruitment and racial profiling in a performance culture. *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, 24 (4), 642–659.

Cashmore, E., 2002. Behind the window dressing: ethnic minority police perspectives on cultural diversity. *Journal of Ethnic and Migration studies*, 28 (2), 327–341.

Finstad, L., 2000. *Politiblikket* [The Police Gaze]. Oslo: Pax Förlag A/S.

Granér, R., 2004. *Patrullerande polisers yrkeskultur* [Occupational culture among patrolling police officers]. Lund thesis in social work 18. Lund: Lunds Universitet.

Heijes, C., 2007. Officers at work in a multicultural police force. *Policing: An International Journal of Police Strategies & Management*, 30 (4), 555–556.

Hochschild, A.R., 1979. Emotion work, feeling rules and social structure. *American Journal of Sociology*, 85 (3), 551–575.

Holdaway, S. and O'Neill, M., 2006. Etnicity and culture: thinking about 'police ethnicity'. *The British Journal of Sociology*, 37 (3), 483–502.

Holmberg, L., 2000. Discretionary leniency and typological guilt: results from a Danish study of police discretion. *Scandinavian Studies of Criminology and Crime Prevention*, 1 (2), 179–194.

Hydén, S. and Lundberg, A., 2004. *Inre utlänningskontroll i polisarbete: mellan rättsstatsideal och effektivitet i Schengens Sverige* [Internal control of foreigners in police work – between rule of law ideals and efficiency in Sweden under Schengen]. Malmö: Malmö University Press.

Loftus, B., 2008. Dominant culture interrupted: recognition, resentment and the politics of change in an English police force. *British Journal of Criminology*, 48 (6), 756–777.

Orbuch, T.L., 1997. People's account counts: the sociology of accounts. *Annual Review of Sociology*, 23 (1), 455–478.

Peterson, A. and Uhnoo, S., 2012. Trials of loyalty: ethnic minority police officers as 'outsiders' within a greedy institution. *European Journal of Criminology*, 9 (4), 354–369.

Pogrebin, M.R. and Poole, E.D., 1988. Humor in the briefing room: a study of the strategic uses of humor among police. *Journal of Contemporary Ethnography*, 17 (2), 183–210.

P3 Nyheter granskar. 2010. *Rasism inom polisen* [Racism within the Police] [online]. Available from: http://sverigesradio.se/sida/avsnitt/68045?programid=1646 [Accessed 4 July 2013].

Sarnecki, J., ed., 2006. *Är rättvisan rättvis? Tio perspektiv på diskriminering av etniska och religiösa minoriteter inom rättssystemet: rapport* [Is justice fair? Ten perspectives on discrimination against ethnic and religious minorities in the judiciary]. Stockholm: Nordstedts Juridik.

Scott, M.B. and Lyman, S.M., 1968. Accounts. *American Sociological Review*, 33 (1), 42–46.

Skolnick, J. N., 1966. *Justice without trial. Law enforcement in democratic society*. New York: Macmillan.

Sollund, R., 2006. Racialisation in police stop and search practice: The Norwegian case. *Critical Criminology*, 14 (3), 265–292.

Sollund, R., 2007. Canteen banter or racism: Is there a relationship between Oslo police's use of derogatory terms and their attitudes and conduct towards ethnic minorities? *Journal of Scandinavian Studies in Criminology and Crime Prevention*, 8 (1), 77–96.

Svenska Dagbladet, 2009. Poliser förflyttas efter kommentarer [Police transferred because of comments] [online]. *Svenska Dagbladet*, 2 May. Available from: http://www.svd.se/nyheter/inrikes/poliser-forflyttas-efter-kommentarer_2424277.svd [Accessed 27 September 2012].

Uhnoo, S. and Peterson, A., 2011. *Utvärdering om diskriminering, trakasserier och särbehandling av anställda med utländsk bakgrund inom polismyndigheten i Västra Götaland* [Evaluation of discrimination, harassment and special treatment of Police Employees within the Police Authority in Västra Götaland]. Gothenburg: University of Gothenburg and Västra Götaland County Police.

Waddington, P.A.J., 1999. Police (canteen) sub-culture: an appreciation. *British Journal of Criminology*, 39 (2), 287–309.

Westin, C. and Nilsson, A., 2009. *Attityd- och bemötandeproblem inom polisen: Rapport till Rikspolisstyrelsen* [Attitudes and behavior problems in the police. Report to the National Police Board] [online]. The Swedish Police. Available from: http://www.polisen.se/Global/www%20och%20Intrapolis/Rapporter-utredningar/01%20Polisen%20nationellt/Ovriga%20rapporter-utredningar/Attityd_bemotandeproblem_dec_09.pdf [Accessed 27 September 2012].