Ragnhild Sollund

Obstacles and possibilities in police research

Summary

Drawing on a Norwegian research project investigating the possible existence of police racism, this article explores challenges related to conducting research in such sensitive sites as the police with reference to methodological and institutional obstacles. The project featured participant observation, in-depth interviews with ethnic minority men, and in-depth interviews with police officers and lays the basis for a discussion of the diverging perspectives on police racism held by the police and by members of ethnic minorities. The degree to which research on the police can reveal the 'truth' of policing and thereby contribute to changing police practice is problematised and questions are asked about the extent to which research can contribute to facilitating change within the police that might be of benefit to the relationship between the police and ethnic minorities. A key question raised is whether the existence of a specific police culture, featuring loyalty, a hierarchical organisational structure and the use of discretion may prevent such research methods from revealing 'true' data, as well as organisational change. A discussion of problem-oriented policing illustrates some of the obstacles to implementing changes. The article concludes that the police in Oslo do not demonstrate evidence of institutional racism though there is evidence of derogatory language use and stereotyping where ethnic minorities are stereotyped in homologous ways to other marginalised groups who come into contact with the police such as drug users.

Introduction

The research project which forms the background to this paper is financed by the Police Directorate and involves three police stations in Oslo. The research is a follow up of the Norwegian Government's Plan of Action Against Racism and Discrimination (2002-2006). The project is a response to criticism raised by the European Commission against Racism and Intolerance where it is maintained that the Norwegian police stop and search ethnic minority men disproportionately. There has been no research which could confirm this, as unlike in the UK (Hallsworth and McGuire 2004) incidences of stop and search are not registered in a data base in Norway. Part of this project involved analysing whether police practices of 'stop and search' in relation to ethnic minorities are justifiable, or whether the motivation for stops conducted is based on immaterial factors such as physical features. The police have been accused of mistrusting ethnic minority men when they are in conflict situations with ethnic Norwegians, whilst young ethnic minority men are claimed to have little confidence in the police. Ethnic minority men's confidence in the police was also studied in the project.

Racism?

I was specifically asked to investigate the possible existence of racism in the police. The concept of racism may be defined in many ways and has long roots (Gullestad 2002). A traditional definition is '[the belief] that intellectual, cultural and moral qualities are genetically transmitted among the main racial groupings of mankind, that racial groups can be graded according to these qualities as inferior, with the racialists' own group at the apex' (Sherman in Barker 1981:3).

Such a definition is however not helpful in this case, as it is unlikely anybody within the police would openly assume such a view. I use a concept of racism that implies that the police ascribe ethnic minority men negative, stereotypically-based characteristics that result in unjust selection for stop and search. This may be caused by a racialised attention which in turn leads to racialised relations, connected to institutional structures. As Holdaway says:

> '[Here], the internal structures of the occupational culture [the police's] – in particular, assumptions of virtual absolute control over people and of interpreting demeanour in particular ways – are related to over-arching structures of unequal, racialised relations' (Holdaway 1996:77).

This implies the existence of structural racialised relations at a societal level where restrictive immigration policies and negative depictions of immigrants in the media may contribute to create racism within the majority population in general (Brox 1991), and within the police in particular. Solomos (2003) shows for example the connection between violent urban unrest in multiracial urban areas and the effects on policing of ethnic minority communities, where black youth become a specific target for policing. This again may affect the police's relations to ethnic minorities at an institutional level. For example, if images of immigrant groups as particularly delinquent

are dispersed in the media, this may, from the police perspective, legitimate extensive police control of these groups, which may again reveal more crime and entail more control and stereotyping of these groups. The consequence is, according to Holdaway, that we can identify racialised prejudices connected to discrimination which are unrealized and unintended, but all the same internalised in officers' actions and attitudes, and in the dynamic relations within the police as an organisation with everyday practices which reconstruct 'race'. Such 'normal' aspects of police work may be institutionalised practices and be examples of what is known as indirect discrimination.

Possible prejudiced assumptions towards ethnic minorities, whether they are based on phenotypical features – which I would find unlikely as it would imply racism in a traditional understanding of the word – or whether they are based on assumptions of culture[1] may be found at the level of each individual police officer, but they may, as Holdaway suggests, even be found at an institutional level as part of police culture. Police work will always imply discrimination (Choong 1997, Holmberg 1999, Finstad 2000 a.o.). The question is whether this discrimination is illegitimate towards ethnic minorities, and whether this will be possible to reveal.

The project raises some important sets of questions. The first set are methodological. What possibilities does research have of revealing the reality of police work? Are there elements in the field which prevent the collection of 'true' data? Do such elements limit the potential the research has to contribute to policy recommendations and impact on professional devel-

_____

1 Cf Barker (1981)

opment[2]? A second set of questions circulate around whether there exists a culture within the police force which promotes a special loyalty and solidarity within the profession and the force, which may hinder not only the researchers' access to the field but also change within the profession. Questions in this area relate to police culture and have implications for methodology and changing policy and practice. This is connected to a third set of questions relating to the application of research findings: What problems may research-based knowledge have reaching all levels of the police organisation in order to contribute to real change in police practice if that is considered desirable? Will for example the strictly hierarchical structure of the police organisation contribute to prevent change in police practice?

These questions frame the discussion of obstacles and challenges to conducting research about the police that the rest of this paper explores.

Methodology

The project is based on qualitative methods. In-depth interviews were conducted with three samples of men of ethnic minority background, 18 in total and one woman. These samples were constructed through a youth project connected to the Anti-racist Centre, through the Organisation Against Public Discrimination (OMOD) which is also a non-governmental organisation, and through the government organisation, the Centre Against Ethnic Discrimination (SMED). In the latter two samples it was not a question of *whether* these informants had negative police experiences, but rather what they involved, why they occurred, and how they were dealt with.

In addition fieldwork was conducted amongst the police. This involved participant observation in the reception of a police station, but foremost patrolling in police cars. Participant observation as method was chosen considering that it would be difficult to get knowledge about how the police work and their attitudes and actions towards ethnic minority groups through in-depth interviews alone. I participated in 14 shifts at the first station, 13 at the second, and 11 at the third station, mostly dayshifts, but also nightshifts. I find as Liv Finstad (2000) that fieldwork as methodological approach to police research is the obvious method. What the police say they do and what they actually do may not be the same thing (Waddington 1999 B) and through observation data a broader picture emerges than through interviews alone. It is easier to understand the police's work and ways of handling situations by being present. At the same time observation data provides knowledge which makes it possible to ask qualified questions in the interviews. The fieldwork notes comprise 167 typewritten pages.

Finally, in-depth interviews were conducted with managers and officers at different levels at the police stations. The samples of informants were made considering variation among them. They include managers and officers of different rank, experience and ethnic background[3], men as well as women. Informal interviews were also conducted with all the officers I patrolled with, asking them the same questions and others which arose from incidents that took place. I have been driving and talking with 85 officers in total, several times with some of them. These conversations form part of my fieldwork notebooks.

---

2 By professional development I mean a development within the police profession which implies improvements in the ways the police perform their duties to the benefit of both the police organisation and the population.

3 Although I specifically wanted to and tried to get ethnic minority police informants I got only one. This reflects that there are very few police officers of ethnic minority background in the Norwegian police. This is a problem the Police academy is aware of and is trying to rectify in their recruitment policy.

I will proceed by outlining some of the methodological considerations and their implications for the development of knowledge.

Methodological and ethical considerations

Based on ethical considerations I chose to be open with the police officers I met during the fieldwork regarding the aim of the project. Ethics may however make data less accessible and in my case one must assume, as several of my police informants commented, that my possibilities of uncovering racism must be regarded as few as long as the police officers know what I am looking for. This assumption is further strengthened by the attention these issues have raised, both in the media and politically. On the other hand, if racism has been an institutionalised practice in the police, it is likely that it cannot easily be hidden. A documentary of the police in Redfern, Australia, revealed for example that police officers who were filmed were more cautious about:

> 'whether they were wearing their hats when the cameras were rolling than about the racist slurs and disparaging comments they routinely made about Aboriginees' (Brockie 1994: 178, her in Chan 1996).

This may indicate that when racist behaviour is an integrated part of a specific police culture, it may be hard to conceal, even from a researcher.

The police are a particularly powerful organisation where access to the field may be difficult, just as Tombs and Whyte (2003) show that research access to powerful (state) corporations may be difficult. This was not the case in this project as the initiative was taken by the Police directorate itself so managers were obliged to grant access. Still, access to the field could have been jeopardized by the police officers in charge if they had instructed their officers to behave in a special way when I accompanied them. The fact that the heads of the divisions who organised whom I was to patrol with were often not informed about my coming suggests that no special precautions were taken to hinder insight. Although the leading police officers said they had become increasingly more restrictive in giving researchers (and journalists) access, this did not include this project because it was initiated by the police. Access may have been facilitated by the police's interest in clearing themselves from racist allegations which circulate frequently in the mass media, but also by a genuine interest in coming to terms with possible police racism in order to counteract it.

One might expect police officers to hold back given the presence of a researcher independent of whom of the public they deal with, and to be extra cautious in relation to ethnic minorities. There were officers who said that the police would be more reluctant to stop and search ethnic minorities when I was in the car than they would otherwise. Both the police officers as the researched part and I as the researcher became participants in a game where both considered their next steps (cf Van Maanen 1981, in Finstad 2000)[4].

The role of the researcher discourages the improper interference with data. I was prohibited by research ethics from trying to make the police act in a specific way in order to confirm presumptions I might have had. Still there are ethical limits to the extent to which the researcher can and shall maintain her 'neutrality' if situations occur which may require

4 As Finstad (2000) points out I am as a researcher per definition a stranger because of my interest in studying the police. The experience of being present in a situation where I do not belong and cannot contribute has sometimes been importunate, because there is nothing I could or should do to resolve situations even though I have my own ideas about how the police should act.

interference, such as violence and abuse. For the record, only in one case did I witness behaviour from the police towards the public I regard as blameworthy and that was from a police trainee who pushed a man as he was trying to look into a police van where another man was arrested. But the absence of such situations may indicate that the researcher doing fieldwork will always affect the data, even more so as she enters into conversations with research subjects and the social relationships this entails. One situation which may illustrate that I affected the field was when four young men of ethnic minority background had parked their car at the beach, which is illegal, and had made a fire where they were grilling hot dogs. The police officers and I got out of the police car and went over to them and the police approached them in a friendly manner. One of the young men inquired about who I was and I explained whereafter he replied to the police, 'so this is why you were so nice today'. If I affected the police officers in the way he suggested this may have as a consequence that the picture I got of friendly police officers chatting with a group of young ethnic minority men was not in correspondence with the way the police officers usually behave. The picture I got may thus have been wrong. However, if my presence as a researcher contributes to a higher level of consciousness among the officers I consider this to be a positive research effect. Still, in the case that the police officers' behaviour that night was a show off in honour of the researcher's presence, it could, if accepted as the 'true' version of police practice, even facilitate continued hostile practice from the police towards ethnic minorities. Other sides of my person may also contribute to affect the field, such as gender and age. My role as a guest prevented me from being active. I was, like Holmberg (1999) in his Danish police study, not an active participant but an observer and my presence may even have made work more complicated for the police. As a passive bystander when somebody is arrested I only watch. I take part in the situation but do not participate. This position can be a challenge to handle when for example research subjects act in a way contrary to one's own beliefs and values.

It is, as mentioned, likely that the police were to some degree affected by my presence. Some incidents however suggest that this was only to a very limited extent, and my impression is that most police officers express a certainty and security in their work situation which impedes the influence a researcher in the backseat could otherwise have had. This may be connected to the right they are given to exert power over other citizens. This gives them an authority in work even when what they do may be an object of criticism. I will give one example. The patrol car I was in was called to an accident. A young Somali man was involved. The officers questioned the witnesses and afterwards, when they were recapitulating what had happened, one of them said, with reference to the Somali man; 'That negro in the car…'

Gullestad (2003) shows with reference to a Norwegian debate that took place three years ago, that the word negro [Norwegian: neger] is understood as a racist concept and it is unlikely that this debate has not reached the police. Officers are given instructions by their managers not to use the word. Still most of the officers I spoke with maintain their 'right' to use the term, which they say is purely descriptive and without negative connotations. So if this officer's use of the word was part of institutional practice it may also – from his perspective – have been a consequence of lack of alternative options which my presence did not alter. It is however likely that if the officer in question had been influenced by my presence, he would have chosen another term. The fact that he did not, may on the other hand have been a demonstration and his way of showing

that he would not let himself be influenced in his work by the presence of a researcher. The quick glance he sent me may also indicate that it was a slip of the tongue, that he for a moment forgot about my presence and would have chosen another word if he had remembered. I find it less likely that he would have used the word to the Somali while I was present as all the officers emphasise the distinction between what you say about people and what you say to them. Because the topic of my research was common knowledge among the officers the chances that I would affect the field were greater than if I had not told them.

Finstad (2000) sustains that the police officers after a while 'forgot' about her presence, an experience she shares with Fangen (2001) who did fieldwork among rightwing extremists and Skilbrei (2003) who did fieldwork among cleaners. I do however hold it more likely that the researcher does affect the police' work, as Holmberg (2003) found. How strong the effect is will vary with the missions the police deal with. In hasty situations they will probably be more inclined to forget about the researcher, than in situations which give more room for reflections. The officers were not given the same opportunity of 'forgetting 'about my presence as in Finstad's study because I drove often with different officers. Thus my presence could not become a habit for them. As we had different goals for our research, and it was important to me to see a variety of how different officers deal with ethnic minorities, to drive with only one shift was not an option.

The question is consequently, given the transparency displayed by the researcher, what can be discovered? A number of studies (Solberg (1987), Bratholm (1999), Kruize (1995, in Ansel-Henry and Jespersen 2003), McNamara (2002), Waddington (1999) Holdaway (1996), Granér (2000) a.o.) emphasise loyalty within the police force. One must therefore assume

that the police officers in the field would cover themselves and their colleagues if they accept the premise that racism is problematic and racism was part of their daily lives, and would deny this during interviews. However, fieldwork revealed officers to be surprisingly open, both in patrol cars, in the canteen, and during interviews.

William Foote Whyte's (1981) study of an Italian slum in USA and Erving Goffman's (1967) study of a mental hospital provide examples of researchers whom are described as total participants since they do not reveal their identity as researchers to those they research, and are active participants in the field (Jacobsen and Kristiansen, 2004). This would have been impossible to carry through in the police. A possible way of being an active participant in fieldwork amongst the police would be to go the other way around, as Malcolm Young (1991), Simon Holdaway (1996) and Stein Roar Solberg (1987) exemplify. They worked as police officers for many years before they became researchers. In that way they did not risk affecting the field the way I did because they were not outsiders intruding. As soon as their new identity was established however they undoubtedly faced risks of affecting the field in similar ways, although maybe not to the same degree. They may have been expected to take part in situations because of their police background, something a non police-trained researcher will experience to a lesser degree. I found that an 'experimental strategy' such as that Goffman (1974) suggests where the researcher keeps her intentions hidden was both impossible in practice and ethically dubious. A researcher's presence provokes curiosity and questions and it would have been complicated socially as we spent many hours together in the patrol car. Furthermore transparency can be advantageous: a lot of interesting data was gathered precisely because of the discussions my research field provoked among the po-

lice officers studied. Valuable data emerged precisely because of the open/transparent strategy.

The interviews make it clear that it is impossible to rely on one research method alone, and that various approaches are required in police research. As mentioned, the important angles in this project were the police interviews and the interviews with the different samples of ethnic minorities. The latter also required some ethical considerations.

The samples included immigrants and refugees who had been victims of discrimination and harassment, both from the police as well as from representatives of the majority population, according to their own interpretations of the situations. As victims of this, they may have had expectations about the researchers' capacity to solve and somehow compensate these experiences, and this may have been the reason why they accepted to be interviewed. Such expectations may however not be fulfilled through participation in a research project although some may find it positive to talk about their experiences (cf. Kvale 1997). The more vulnerable the informants are, the more they may need the opportunity such an interview may provide of giving their version to a stranger who pays total attention and has a genuine interest in hearing it, but the more dissapointed they may become if it gives no apparent results. If nothing comes out of the research project, those who feel – and have reason to feel– discriminated by the police may feel that their participation served no purpose. This could also mislead them to believe that this was another confirmation of their own marginality in society rather than giving them the impression that their versions were finally taken seriously.

Their motivation for participation in the project may also have been tinted by a wish to 'get back' at the police, and this again may have led them to exaggerate their experiences. The ways some of the ethnic minority youth began the interviews stating that; 'all police are racists', were for example strongly modified towards the end of the interviews. The fact that the project was initiated and financed by the Police Directorate may also have misled the informants to believe, both those of ethnic minority background and within the police, that the researcher would not be neutral in terms of analysis of her findings and that she would favour the police.

'To go native'

Another problem in police research, relating to the researcher's possibility of revealing 'true' [5] data, is connected to processes related to the way the researcher herself is affected by the process of engaging in data collection. The problems are connected to nearness and distance and the question is how close the researcher shall and may go (Syltevik 1998). When is the researcher affected by the nearness and what consequences will it have for the possibility of collecting objective data? The phenomenon whereby the researcher over-identifies with the subjects of the research is known as 'to go native' within social anthropology. This has consequences for the researcher's possibility of contributing to change within the police if she assumes the police's perspective to such a degree that she no longer sees why change of practice might be required. Repstad (1987) claims that a relationship to the research object which is too close and unbalanced may make the researcher blind to the problems that exist or make her sympathise to such a degree that the research is undermined. Jacobsen and Kristiansen contend that:

> 'no researcher, no matter the degree of involvement and interaction with the field is immune to

---

5 For a discussion of 'true data', see Sollund (1998).

the human and moral relationship a long lasting fieldwork brings up between him/her and the research objects the research includes' (2004: 10, my translation).

The time one spends in the field and the degree of identification with research subjects increases the danger of going native. In this project I regard the danger of my assuming the police' perspective as larger than that of assuming the ethnic minorities' perspective. I spent, for example, more time with the police than I did with the ethnic minority informants. Time itself gives me a better grasp of the police's reality than the ethnic minority informants'. This may increase my inclination to assume the police perspective and thereby accept their ways of acting and the language they use, the same way Holmberg (2003) describes that he internalised the 'police glance', whilst at the start of the fieldwork he had been more critical of police opinions about a suspect's guilt. At the same time the fact that I share ethnic background with the majority of the police officers may increase my identification with them, an identification which will be even further increased when the officers are women. In relation to the ethnic minority informants, the basis for identification may have been smaller, among other reasons because they, with one exception, are men. In addition, our different age, experiences and life situations, not to mention ethnicity may provide less basis for identification. On the other hand, the professional involvement I have had with refugees and immigrants over many years[6] may make me more susceptible to their perspective.

There is something seductive about police fieldwork which is connected to police work and the way it is done, which increases the potentiality for identification and thereby the danger of going native. It is especially appar-

ent for the researcher inside the patrol car and is related to the reason many police officers give for choosing their profession, namely excitement and variation (Waddington 1999A, Finstad 2000, Holmberg 2003). The researcher shares the officers' excitement when the patrol is called for a mission and the sirens and lights are put on. The researcher also shares the experience of boredom when nothing happens, an empty space which is filled only with conversation and thereby the establishment of personal relations. At the same time the car constitutes a physical frame which emphasises the difference between 'us' inside the car, and the 'others' outside.

The contradiction between the majority population and ethnic minorities may be illustrated by the way the police refer to them. At lower levels ethnic minorities are consistently talked about as 'foreigners', even in conversations where I insist on the term ethnic minorities.

The sensation of 'us police' against' them' may also be transmitted to the researcher in the backseat. Maybe this will entail that she accepts stereotyping rather than pointing at actions and attitudes which should be subject to criticism, and bring forward suggestions for efforts which may contribute to change them. As an example, the police officers spoke a lot about their negative experiences with certain minority groups related to their drug abuse and other delinquency. This, in their eyes would justify that these groups were more subject to control than others. I noticed self-reflectively that while I was critical to the stereotypical ways some groups were referred to, I did still accept that the police had these stereotypical conceptions because I perceived them as a consequence of accumulated negative experiences, which I saw as an excuse. But in accepting this I may have gone too far. As Holmberg adopted the police's perspective, I may have

---

6   I have worked with refugees as a consultant at the Employment office, as an interpreter, as a teacher, in a refugee camp, as well as in various research projects.

gone too far in taking the police's experiences for granted.

Bratholm (1999:68) states that the problem of going native may be a problem inherent to police research. It is important to be aware that going native can contribute to cement dubious actions and attitudes, rather than contributing to change and improvement.

The danger of going native in police research emphasises the importance of having various methodological approaches, as for example the fieldwork alone would only have provided one part of the reality as would the interviews with ethnic minorities or police officers alone. Only through combining the three methodological angles can the complexity the field constitutes be captured. My data so far show two diverging realities, where especially the interviews with ethnic minorities show a reality which may indicate abuse and prejudices in the police, whilst at the same time the fieldwork in the police shows a police corps with a reflective relationship to their work and the power they have. The question is what reality the researcher is to believe in; one of them, none of them, or both?

In the following section I will focus on elements within police culture which may prevent change.

Police culture and loyalty

Research by Kruize (1995 in Ansel-Henry and Jespersen 2003), Ansel-Henry and Jespersen (2003), Bouza (1990) Crank (1998 in Burns and Crawford 2002), Holmberg (1999), Finstad (2000) and Granér (2000) a.o, shows that the distinction between the police and the population is accentuated by the police's stereotyping of the people they meet through their work. The basis for stereotyping and the creation of enemy images is related to the kind of semi-military organisation of the police, which according to Bratholm (1999) predisposes for solidarity.

My fieldwork suggests that the solidarity within the organisation may be fortified by the fact that many police officers' social networks are developed through the job or through training for the job. All the officers I interviewed, both formally and informally in the police cars, praised the social work environment. They selected their friends from among their colleagues and this tendency was encouraged by the fact that most of them came from other parts of Norway. Their relations may be characterized as multiplex and thereby more committing (Goldstein 1996).

The character of police work, often being in dangerous situations where they depend on each other, and often being subject to criticism in the mass media which they cannot object to, will likely strengthen an attitude of 'us police' against 'them' (McNamara 2002, Westley 1970 in Solberg 1987, cfr.Holmberg 1999). McNamara explains that this is because the police are a kind of organisation with an intense training phase, little autonomy, great internal control and many rules. McNamara also claims that members of such organisation will be strongly influenced by each other. This, in addition to an active encouragement of solidarity among the members of the organisation promotes the division between people inside and outside the organisation. People outside the car are in contradiction to police officers inside and may constitute danger or a problem the police are given the power to sort out. The police may develop internal norm and value codexes which may imply a negative view on groups they are in regular contact with (Ansel-Henry and Jespersen 2003). Waddington (1999 A) claims that police work is distributed in a way that has particular consequences for the young, the lower classes and ethnic minorities as well as

a combination of the three. He underlines the exclusive character of police work in relation to those who are not recognized as fully worthy members of society. Holdoway (1997) claims that racial prejudices and discrimination have appeared to be lasting elements of police work culture.

Inquiries by Nordhus and Vogt (1981), Collins (1998), Burns and Crawford (2002), Mendes et al. (1999) and Haacke (1997) show that the police may not only adopt a negative view of the people they meet through their work, but may even mistreat them. This can go on under cover of what Andenæs calls 'false loyalty' which is performed in order to conceal suppression and abuse (Bratholm 1999). Collins (1998) writes that a huge problem related to the investigation of police violence in USA is the silence codex which prevents an officer from testifying against another. We saw this phenomenon in Oslo in the so called Maridal's cases where eleven officers were witnessing maltreatment, but all denied it (Bratholm 1999). Nordhus and Vogts' (1981) violence investigation in Bergen shows how far the police are willing to go to produce an enemy image of the public and in allowing this to have an outlet in violence, given the right conditions of bad leadership. According to McNamara (2002) the knowledge of the existence of police subcultures is old and well documented. However, the assumption that the police should constitute one homogenous subculture is contradicted by Paoline (2000) who finds different attitudes among different subgroups of officers and claims that lines of division are as likely to go along shifts and areas that are patrolled as along background variables as gender, race, education and workplace. I found for example that different divisions at the same police station had different priorities in their work and in their work cultures. One division would, as it was formulated; 'go out to get prisoners' and go for the drug addicts who are easy to spot and likely to give them a catch, while others

would focus on crime prevention and did not consider it to be 'real' police work to chase drug addicts.

Jermier (a.o. 1991) finds that the development and maintenance of negative values and attitudes among police officers has many implications and refers to Regoli and Poole (1979) who found that police officers' experiences of cynicism intensify their need for respect and increase their desire to exert authority over others. This again may entail that the population to an increasing degree will fear the police, which in turn may create hostility from the police towards the public. Such negative attitudes may conserve attitudes and work against change (Regoli and Poole in McNamara 2002).

This may be relevant for the resistance the researchers Nordhus and Vogt met in the police force (Bratholm 1999). Their inquiry (1981) reveals how far police loyalty may be stretched in order to conceal the use of violence. It makes it clear in a disturbing way that police research may meet strong resistance which may hinder the change of practices within the police force. The research may in such extreme cases contribute to an even stronger contradiction between the police on one side, and the population, including the researchers on the other. I experienced that the way I was met by police officers varied a lot. Some met me with an openly negative, suspicious attitude. On occasions this made the fieldwork rather uncomfortable and made me feel like an unwanted guest. Others would be open and friendly, telling me to ask questions and explaining to me why they did things the way they did. One senior officer in charge of a division exemplifies the first category. When I asked him whether he knew whether his officers were often accused of racism, something which had come up as a frequent experience among the officers I had spoken with, he repeatedly failed to understand the question. This was because of his assump-

tion that I believed the police to be racist which he based on his knowledge of the study.

Several inquiries show that the police may have a loyalty to each other that does not prevent abuses of power (Kruize 1995 in Ansel-Henry and Jespersen 2003, Bratholm 1999, Waddington 1999, Collins 1998, Burns and Crawford 2002). Abuse of power is notoriously difficult to research. Even though it may be obvious, the researcher may be powerless to reveal it and the inner solidarity within the police and the experience of 'us and them' may make potentially necessary changes within the police even more difficult.

Police language: argot[7] or stereotyping?

A less serious example of what I interpret as loyalty which illustrates an aspect of the researchers' problem gaining accurate accounts appeared in one of the first police interviews I conducted. The informant had been two years in the police. During patrol I had been struck by his self presentation (Goffman 1992) through which he demonstrated his determination to play the part of 'the correct police officer', both in regard to his descriptions of the work he performed as well as his behaviour throughout the shift. During the interview I asked him whether he had ever heard colleagues use derogatory language about ethnic minorities. Quickly, very quickly he answered, no. I approached this from different angles during the interview but the answer continued to be no. I did not trust his answer and had the distinct impression that the picture of a decent police force must be upheld.

My doubts were confirmed in a subsequent interview with an officer with five years ex-

perience. He answered the same question, saying, 'Yes, I have often heard that'. He gave several examples of expressions and words of derogatory character that are used during patrol. He said he took part in this himself. It would seem that the first officer lied out of loyalty to colleagues and the police force, while the second spoke the truth. This interpretation was further strengthened by several other officers who claimed that the use of derogatory language is not unusual. This does not however imply that these officers are disloyal towards their colleagues and the police corps; rather I find it likely that they do not consider it to be serious whether the police use derogatory language about the public, whether of ethnic majority or minority background as long as this remains within the patrol car or in the canteen. Again the difference between what you say to the public and what you say about them is emphasised. These officers may have told me the truth out of a confidence that I understood and agreed to the difference. Several have mentioned that they think it is negative that Finstad (2000) revealed that the police use expressions such as 'slask' about the population. The police's use of derogatory language about the public is a general finding in the literature (Finstad 2000, Holmberg 1996, Holdaway 1996, Granér 2000 a.o.) The officers' confidence when telling me about the derogatory language they use suggests it holds different meanings for them than to outsiders.

The difference between what police officers say and what they do, is also pointed to by Waddington (1999B) who shows that the language officers use in the car or in the canteen does not necessarily affect the respectability they display in interplay with the public. Waddington refers to Reiner (1985) who finds that the police have a rich vocabulary of negative character to denominate members of the group who in the Norwegian context are referred to as

---

7 Argot is the internal language used in a subculture.

'slask', 'skurk', 'kjeltring' [crooks] and similar expressions (Finstad 2000), and which in the Swedish context are referred to as 'buset' (Granér 2000). The words used by the second officer may have had the same character and may as Waddington (1999B) found be without significance for the work the police actually perform.

The reason why police officers use derogatory language about ethnic minorities may be connected to police subculture. The officers I have met consider it neither very significant nor very condemnable that they use derogatory language about the people they meet through their work. They are confident that this does not affect the way they do their work. If however there is more behind their derogatory language than argot this has consequences for the possibilities of bringing about change.

To elaborate on this, it would be possible to conclude that the use of demeaning language is due to stereotyping of certain groups, and not just an expression of canteen language. The stereotyping may be connected to racialisation which according to Lien (1997) does not necessarily imply racism but is an immediate registration of difference which will arise in meetings where people have different skin colour. This division between racialisation and racism is however criticized by Gullestad who claims that racialisation will imply racism. Holdaway (1996, 1997) also uses the concept of racialisation as synonymous with racism. If people reflect upon this registration and the reasons why they register them in the first place, however, this may be a sufficient step to avoid racism. The important question is whether such racialised registrations of difference will lead to racist acts. The use of derogatory language may be one such expression and evidence of racist attitudes, although racist acts in direct contact with ethnic minorities would be far more serious.

Stereotyping may furthermore be interpreted as racist if it entails that ethnic groups are ascribed properties that legitimate discrimination. Stereotyping may for example be expressed in perceptions such as: 'Moroccans and Algerians are pickpockets and never admit guilt even if they are caught in the act, Somalians chew khat and beat up their wives, Kosovo Albanians are drug traffickers, Pakistanis are involved in gang delinquency', a common way of speaking amongst my informants. Or as the police say in Holmberg's study: "All immigrants are criminal' (2003:59). This stereotyping may be stigmatising and may lead to an over control of certain groups which in turn may confirm the negative picture (Prieur (1999). What may make such perceptions difficult to change is the fact that such stereotypes are not taken out of thin air, but are based on the police officers' accumulated, negative experiences through years in operational Order Service. One officer, when I asked him whether his attitudes towards ethnic minorities have changed through his years in the police, said:

> 'I will claim that I am negatively influenced by working towards criminals with ethnic minority background (…). I can feel it grow inside me; negative attitudes and wear'.

At the same time the police force is hierarchically organized with bureaucratic features. Bauman (1991) has pointed to the need for taxonomies to work from in bureaucratic systems. The police officers in Order Service have a special need for organising systems which will help them to execute the right judgement in relation to whom may be responsible for criminal acts, and decisions must be made fast. Holdaway (1997) says however with reference to Manning (1977), Chatterton, Norris (1992), and Keith (1993) that the relationship between typologies and stereotypes is very close (Holdaway 1997:24, Holmberg 2003:63 and Finstad 2000:119). Because of the rapid identification of people, places and acts that

police work requires in front line service, stereotyping may lead to stereotypical thinking which in turn may lead to processes which facilitate, articulate and strengthen racialised prejudices and discrimination. Rolf Granér finds that the police's need for degrading others through derogatory language has various reasons. One is the importance the perception of in and out groups has for inner solidarity and social identity. It also corresponds to the legal division of guilty and not guilty. Furthermore he sees the need to degrade to be a consequence of the fact that the police in the fight against crime always will be losers. Finally, he sees it as a defence strategy as the police's readiness to use force, threaten and hurt people involves a moral conflict. The dehumanization of the victims of police intervention implies a certain defensiveness (2000: 228).

Weber (1990) pointed out that the bureaucrat does not serve a person or a government, but an impersonal goal which is built into the organization he or she works for. Kleinig (1996) argues correspondingly that police officers are both administrators and judges of a general will. This may entail that police officers get an exaggerated belief in the value of their own decisions which may affect the police researchers' possibilities of contributing to change.

Officers' perceptions of the groups they meet in their work situation are maintained through their cooperation. Together, for example, in the car on the way to a mission, they share the negative experiences and stereotypes are reinforced. The character of police work, the way in which they are steered to missions often involving delinquency, while they to a far lesser degree have anything to do with law abiding citizens, may have as a consequence that it is difficult not to generalize negative experiences. The majority of the officers I have spoken with say consistently that they were much more naive when they

started to work in the police. Now they know how the different 'foreigners' are. The experiences have become 'truth'. On the other hand, they contend that they do not generalize ethnic minorities and never stop anybody on the basis of skin colour.

Still, stereotyping may be intensified by language that, as Searle (1998) claims, even contributes to create the reality, thereby stigmatizing ethnic minorities. I do not however consider it likely that a researcher pointing out such a phenomenon will lead in itself to a change in practice. It is more likely that the police's common experiences and norms will have greater significance. It is more probable that internal punitive reactions within the police will counteract derogatory language, just as the managers tell me is practice.

As mentioned my data sources show two diverging realities and I will now turn to the picture the ethnic minority informants convey.

Accusations of racism and abuse of power

The study utilised three samples of ethnic minority informants. The first sample was selected partly through the snowball method, partly through a youth project. The other two samples were selected strategically in order to provide a basis for analysis of minority informants' negative police experiences.

Informants from the first sample told me about frequent stop and search incidents they experienced as unmotivated. They were quick to accuse the police of racism. This may exemplify several things. To accuse the police of racism may be a popular allegation. It may also be an expression of counter power (Ansel-Henry og Jespersen 2003). These impressions are strengthened by the police officers' frequent experiences of being accused of racism. They

report it is a common allegation. Holmberg (2003) reports officers who characterise second generation immigrants as hostile to the police. Several of my police informants see accusations of racism as an attempt to intimidate them and deter them from doing their job. Some say this has the effect of making them more careful and to hold back in situations that involve ethnic minorities. At the same time accusations of racism may be en expression of real mistrust. In the same way that the police may have stereotypical conceptions about ethnic minorities, ethnic minorities may have stereotypical conceptions about the police (Ansel-Henry and Jespersen 2003). It is also possible that ethnic minority youth experience control by the police in a different way to the majority population because of their experience of social exclusion (Ansel-Henry and Jespersen, Waddington 1999B, Prieur 1999, 2005). They may therefore be extra vulnerable in relation to the police and interpret control within a racist frame which is not necessarily there. Holdaway (1996) questions for instance whether the policing of ethnic minorities is essentially different from the policing of other groups. In several of the interviews I conducted, accusations were moderated after a while, and as one of the young informants said: 'The police are all right to you if you are all right to them'. This may indicate that there is a contradictory relationship between the police and ethnic minority youth where the youth must take their part of the responsibility when confrontations occur.

In the other samples there appear stories which to a greater degree question the police's credibility and which may give reasons for claiming that the police as organisation has a problem in its relationship to people from ethnic minorities.

These informants tell about both physical and verbal attacks. For example, David tells me that he was stopped and searched in his car on his way to work. A female officer said; 'Shut up bloody negro!' when he demanded to know why he was stopped. He got angry and the situation escalated. Four police cars appeared on the scene and David was forced to the ground in a brutal way, his glasses were broken and he ended up in a waiting cell where he sat 14 hours. He was given a fine for violence against the police, while the police were aquitted of his charges of police brutality.

Several tell about corresponding escalating situations which have resulted in minority informants being given a fine for the use of violence against a public servant (cf. Ansel-Henry and Jespersen (2003). This may be an expression of counter denunciations from the police, the way Solberg (1987) describes, and not necessarily be due to ethnic minority informants' actual violence against the police. These informants also tell about abuse of power, for example when the handcuffs are tightened when the police are asked to loosen them because they are too tight. But escalations may also be connected to accusations about racism and other irreverent behaviour from the ethnic minority men. Worden and Shepard (1996, in Holmberg 2003:67) establish that it is a general finding that when a suspect shows disrespect or other hostile behaviour towards the police, the probability that the police will react with arrest or other punitive action will increase. This is a phenomenon my police informants refer to as talking yourself into custody. Holmberg (1999) and Finstad (2000) also show that those who behave as 'good clients' are more likely to get away with a warning than those who do not accept police interference. According to my police informants it is typically the ethnic minorities who 'don't know how to behave in relationship to the police and who show disrespect.'

However, this could be reversed, as many of my ethnic minority informants say they have no problem accepting being stopped and

searched by the police, as long as the police are polite and give an explanation for the stop. Usually this is not the case, and when they feel they are stopped only because of their physiological appearance, they may react aggressively as a consequence. For that reason I emphasised to the officers I drove with that it is insufficient to say to people they stop that 'this is a routine control'. To stop and search people is routine for the police, but not hopefully for people on the streets. Rather, the police should be encouraged to justify their actions by, for example, giving a reason for the stop.

As I have mentioned I found it unlikely that I would witness abuse. Participant observation amongst the police alone is thereby an insufficient methodological approach, because it gives an incomplete picture. Had I not conducted the interviews with ethnic minority informants, I could have been misled to believe that events such as those described by my ethnic minority informants do not take place.

The majority of the officers I have been in contact with have shown respect for the population in my presence. They are also reflective in relation to their role and the theme of my project. It is possible that the officers who expressed negative attitudes to me as a researcher and to the project acted this way because they were in a defensive position – and had reason to be. How can we explain the abuse that still remains? Are abusive actions the reflection of 'rotten apples in the basket' or are abusive acts an expression of a police culture where harassment against ethnic minorities is accepted among officers at lower levels of the organization? What implications will the alternatives have for the research's possibility of contributing to change within the police?

If there are 'rotten apples' the research will probably have few consequences as there is already a high level of awareness regarding criteria for recruitment (Finstad 2000), an awareness that is also reflected in the management's view of what kind of people would fit into the force. An important question is however what happens after the police training, something which may be illustrated by one of my police informants who says; 'The first thing which must be dealt with is that we must stop saying that what we have learnt at the Police academy does not work in practice.'

This may imply that no matter what efforts are done to select applicants to the police academy, the socialisation into the police profession will entail learning other norms (Solberg 1987). If abusive acts are expressions of a police culture this will probably be difficult to influence as we must assume that internal loyalty codexes will counteract it. If abuse is the expression of a culture, it may be a consequence of stereotypes and prejudices which in the eyes of the abuser may legitimate it. If the members of the culture experience abuse as legitimate the culture may be difficult to influence, as Holdaway (1997) found in relation to the British police. The British police's omission in the investigation of the murder of Stephen Lawrence which in the McPherson report is described as the result of 'discrimination through unwitting prejudice, ignorance, thoughtlessness and racist stereotyping which disadvantage minority ethnic people' (here in Solomos 1999:5) is an example of such a culture. Contrary to Holdaway (1997) I find it unlikely that there are police cultures within the Oslo police force which imply racist violence supported by superiors.

Even given this tentative conclusion it remains important to consider to what degree it is possible to change police practice. The attempt to implement changes following research conducted by Herman Goldstein (1990) provides a useful example of factors within the police which may contribute to resist change.

Problem-oriented policing – an empirical example of problems related to change

Goldstein suggested the implementation of a new policing strategy which he called problem oriented policing (POP). His work shows that police research may have great impact on change in policing strategies. POP has been implemented in a number of countries, yet not without frictions. The Norwegian Police Directorate's strategy plan for 2002-2005 entails that POP shall be implemented on a national level in Norway. In practise, POP has been under implementation in Oslo for five years, according to the managers. But the question is at the same time; what is done in the name of POP? POP should include four phases: 1) Identification of problems, 2) mapping and analysis, 3) elaboration and implementation of efforts, 4) evaluation. POP is regarded as a more scientifically based police method than a traditional one characterised as being steered by events (Finstad 2000). My fieldwork indicates that there are numerous interpretations of what POP represents among police officers at lower levels. I will give one example. In an interview with one of the managers he elevates the POP work and emphasises its importance. At the same time he says it is easy to fall back to old methods and stop and search drug addicts and deprive them of their tools, but according to him this is not POP. It is interesting then, that one day I asked the officers what they had done before I came, one of them answered that they had taken the tools from a drug addict in the 'good spirit of POP'. This illustrates that there is great variation and even contradiction regarding what is considered to be POP work and that the managers' understanding of what POP is supposed to be does not necessarily reach the officers at the operative lower levels.

An example of what POP may imply which may also affect police is relationships to ethnic minorities is the focus on pick pocketing in the centre of Oslo. It was revealed through mapping and analysis of reports of stolen mobile phones, purses and wallets that this mainly took place within a limited area of the city centre. It was also revealed that certain men of ethnic minority background stood behind it. As a consequence the police did focus especially on this area, involving the restaurant and the shops owners where the pick pocketing took place and observing people who might be offenders. This was not a popular task among the officers. A further consequence of this was the concern raised by one officer who was working specifically with the implementation of POP, that it would contribute to further stereotyping of ethnic minorities as the officers now can say for example, that it is 'evidence based' that the pickpockets who constitutes a problem in Oslo are Moroccans. This in turn may make Moroccans more subject to stop and search and would rather mirror traditional policing methods, where stop and search of suspicious persons is a well-known element, and where for example Waddington (1999) says that policing is distributed in a way that especially targets the young, the lower classes and ethnic minorities.

Balchen (2004) says that some claim that POP represents holistic thinking, while others maintain that it is only a concept for target-directed efforts and that the police have always worked that way. As several of the officers say: 'we must always prevent crime. POP is just another word for crime prevention.' It seems like central parts of POP like mapping, analysis and evaluation are not included in these officers thinking around POP. Resistance to POP is according to Balchen articulated by the fact that the police continue to be steered by incidents and that the police lack resources to work proactively in a long term perspective.

POP is experienced by many officers as another demand which is directed to them from above just as Goldstein (1990) warns against, and which also entails extra work because POP related activities are to be accounted for in a specific POP report. Consequently it seems like there is a certain resistance to POP which counteract its implementation. There may however be other obstacles to the implementation of POP which are connected to the police's organizational structure and which may also be of specific relevance to my project.

Organisational structure and change

Bratholm (1999) and McNamara (2002) see the police's military like organizational form as one of the factors which contribute to internal solidarity. Such an organizational structure may also be compared to what Burns and Stalker (1996) call the typically 'mechanistic' organization in contrast to the 'organic'. Mechanistic organisations are characterized by strictly hierarchical control structures, precise formulations of rights and obligations, a high level of bureaucratization and a wide range of specialization and work division. Loyalty to the organisation and obedience to superiors are other important features. Another feature of bureaucratic organisations is that administrative actions and decisions are formulated in writing and decisions are made at the top of the organization and move downwards. Mechanistic organizations are typically inflexible to change. These features may be important to understand why there is an apparent inertia in the implementation of POP in the police force.

Any eventual resistance to change may also be connected to the police organisation per se. Holdaway says that organisations based on division of rank or status, like the police, are particularly inert to change. This may be of particular relevance in organisations where racialised relations exist: 'race relations are mediated through organisational structures and cultures, which affect the extent to which it becomes possible to develop policy approaches to phenomena like racial attack and harassment' (Plaistow in Holdaway 1996: 67).

Even though there are a number of features connected to the mechanistic organisation which may illuminate the inertia in the implementation of POP, the great degree of self direction at lower levels does not correspond to Burn's and Stalker's typology. The police's discretion is emphasised by many of my informants as very positive. Even though there are increasing demands for documentation, police officers on the street are still empowered to use discretion for example by not interfering in situations which may lead to reporting. Holmberg's (2003) and Finstad's (2000) inquiries also confirm the degree to which the police officers on street level may make judgments. Holmberg says:

> '(…) the police may choose what kind of activities they monitor and what citizens they control, stop and search, and they have a number of choices regarding what reactions they shall use when suspicion is confirmed' (2003:3).

An example of how discretion may be used is the way both my ethnic minority informants as well as the participant observation and the police interviews revealed that the outcome of a situation depended on how the situation developed, and that police decisions were crucial. If a person acted 'good', that is not provocative and accepting of police authority, it could be possible to get away – even with an illegal act. But a situation could also end up with detention, even though it started out without an illegal act being committed if the person involved was aggressive and questioned the police authority (cf. Holmberg 1999, and Finstad 2000).

When a police officer decides to stop and search somebody the decision is not based

on laws or politics but on 'situationally-justified reasons' (Manning and Van Maanen (in Waddington 1999B), Finstad 2000, Hallsworth 2004, Holdaway 1997, Holmberg 1999, a.o.). Something is not correct, something is 'out of place' (Douglas 1996). This may be a car driving in an industrial area at night, a shabby driver in an expensive car, a shabby car alone in a rich area etc. A couple of my police informants also admitted that they would probably stop ethnic minority youth in a 'white' neighbourhood at night, more than they would stop white upper class boys in an immigrant neighbourhood, although they would be equally 'out of place'. The great majority of my police informants consistently stated however that being 'out of place' would not necessarily coincide with ethnic minority status, and this was indeed confirmed through the participant observation. Some police officers did still recognize that some years ago, when gang activity among second generation Pakistani immigrants had been a problem, being a Pakistani could indeed provoke a stop and search. It was even described by the officers as deliberate harassment and disturbance, the intention being to molest the gangs so much that they would eventually be split up. This of course affected not only the gang members but everybody who appeared to have Pakistani background. If they drove an expensive car they would be even more at risk, as one of my 'snowball' informants, a medical student told me. He says he is stopped at least once a month. In spite of the fact that police officers state that this is no longer policy, perhaps it still takes place because of organisational inertia.

Even though the police officers are given instructions at the beginning of each shift about what they are to target, great parts of the shifts are left to the officers' own preferences and choices. As a consequence there is a variation not only between the police stations regarding what a shift looks like, but also within

the different shifts at the same police station. While some are more eager to take traffic offences, others will go out to 'get a prisoner' as mentioned. Gardell (1981) argues that self direction is an important factor for well-being in a work situation. But it may also entail that even though changes are initiated in order to develop the police's professional work after initiatives from superiors, the police officers' work culture, here understood as the way the police officers perform their work, may entail that change in police practice will not take place. It is maintained that police discretion itself may, as part of the rank and file culture, prevent change in the organisation:

> 'Police culture, with rank and file officers' enormous discretion in their work, can subvert or obstruct policing reforms initiated at the top, or law reforms imposed externally and is seen as the main obstacle to reforms in police work' (Reiner 1992 in Chan 1996:110).

This is also supported by Jermier (a o. 1991) who found that subcultures within a police organization counteracted or modified the management's dictates about change. Janet Chan (1996) concludes her study of reforms initiated in a police district in Australia in order to improve the relationship between the police and ethnic minorities, drawing on Bourdieu's concepts of habitus and field, stating that:

> 'Changes in the field (e.g. in the formal rules governing policing) inevitably alter the way the game is played, since habitus interacts with the field, but the resulting practise may or may not be substantially or even discernibly changed' (Chan 1996:131).

So changes within the police may be hard to achieve. If the officers are used to stop and search drug addicts they may continue to do so, even though this is not desirable in the view of the management. In this way the officers' discretion may counteract research based suggestions of reform within the police. This is also related to the distance between those who

make the decisions and those who put them in to practice. One of the officers says: 'We get some fragments which are knowledge from man to man which is not a holistic analysis'. What he says may be interpreted as suggesting that even though analysis is formally included in POP, this is not fully implemented due to the informal "training' that goes on between officers. The enthusiasm of managers was not reflected at the bottom level of the service, which is an impression I share with Helene Gundhus (2004) who found that the officers at the bottom were fed up with 'POP talk'. They did not find it meaningful to drive in a target-steered POP patrol car, but preferred to drive an incident-steered car led by the operation centre. They regarded this as more fun and exciting when they could use themselves when entering conflict situations that had already arisen, rather than working preventively by giving advice and information. They did not consider the latter to be 'real police work' (cfr. Herbert 1997 in Holmberg 2003, Holdaway 1996, Finstad 2000, Granér 2000). They preferred to be reactive.

The reason many of my informants say they chose to become police officers – the freedom, the variation, the excitement and the ways these factors contribute to shape the work culture and the incident steered police work – may also contribute to a resistance against POP among officers at street level. The police officers' loyalty to each others may also entail that they omit to criticise each others' police work even though this may be against orders from above and thereby may lead to inertia in the organisation thus counteracting change (McNamara 2002).

The management in one police station considered it a problem that the officers do not read written material which is distributed because they do not consider it to concern them. Because the officers' understanding of what POP

is may be fragmented and based on second hand information, it may open up for a variety of interpretations of what POP is. This may make it harder to carry POP through in practice.

Conclusion

I have discussed issues considered to be problematic for police research's possibility of contributing to potentially necessary change within the police, by taking my current research project as a point of departure. These issues are related to methodology, police culture and organisation.

I find that even though the researcher is given access to participant observation, this alone is insufficient for revealing 'true data' as the researcher is likely to affect the field, and for example influence the officers into not deviating from rules in their presence. I find that police culture, which implies solidarity and may even imply a contradictory relationship to the general public, including the researcher, may be of hindrance to the researcher's access to information and knowledge. It is necessary for police researchers to spend a considerable amount of time in the police organisations and with police officers. Participant observation creates opportunities to build confidence and gain insight and in that way surmount some of these barriers. Furthermore, if police research is to be the basis for a reformative change within the police, different methodological approaches and angles should be adopted and utilised. This study suggests that derogatory language used by the police in relation to ethnic minorities is not necessarily related to institutional racism. Rather it is part of a police culture which stereotypes the people the police deal with and draws a line between 'us – the police' and 'them – the (criminal) public'. Ethnic minorities are stereotyped the way drug addicts and others also are stereotyped and spoken of in derogatory ways. This derogatory

language is however subject to criticism as it may widen the gap between the police and ethnic minorities, and language itself contributes to create a reality where ethnic minorities are degraded and attention is drawn to their minority status.

The interview data with the ethnic minorities was another important brick in the puzzle indicating that individual transgressions of rules of police conduct do take place. These are not perceived as outcomes of a single uniform police culture, but rather as exceptions and consequences of individual racist prejudices which must be considered to reflect 'rotten apples in the basket'. I see confirmation of this when two officers single out one officer in another division who embarrasses them because of her racist attitudes and the demeaning ways in which she addresses ethnic minorities. Had her attitudes been commonplace she would not have warranted a mention. On the other hand, police officers' internal solidarity and resistance to report and openly criticize each other does entail that transgressions may not be prevented by colleagues' surveillance and rarely have any consequences.

Were I to rely on the interviews with ethnic minorities alone I might have concluded that the police do stop and search ethnic minorities disproportionately, directed by physiological features. This was refuted by the participant observation where I indeed took part in stop and search of ethnic minorities, where they were ostensibly stopped for legitimate reasons, for example because they were parked illegally in the cycle track, were driving a suspicious car, e.g. lacking a registration plate, or were otherwise behaving suspiciously. It seems likely that when the ethnic minority informants claim to be subject to stop and search because of their skin colour, in most cases other factors are decisive in the police officers decision to stop them. This is not seen by the ethnic minorities who consistently claim that the police are racists, allegations that do not contribute to the improvement of the relationship between the police and ethnic minorities. It is reasonable to believe that the social exclusion many ethnic minorities suffer, for example on the labour and housing markets, contributes to their interpretations of the police as racist. The allegation and belief that the police are racist does also seem to be a popular one, nourished by tales of police racism, especially among the youth. When entering into such tales, allegations and personal experiences, in most cases the youth admitted that the allegations were not well-founded.

Such allegations do however seem to be efficient fuel in making ordinary stop and search situations escalate, and what is revealed is that such situations may indeed entail critical police conduct which may include both racist language and the use of unnecessary physical force.

I also find that the hierarchical organizational structure of the police and the traditional incident-steered focus and culture, may be a contributing factor to why it takes time to carry through thorough changes in police practice, which POP is an attempt to do. My findings suggest that actions which contribute to damage the relationship between the police and ethnic minorities take place on both sides. The results of the study will be communicated to the police, to ethnic minority communities and to NGOs working with ethnic minorities in order to heighten the level of consciousness among them and as an effort to prevent escalating conflict situations. In this way it is hoped that this research might help to promote change in the police and in the communities they serve.

References

Ansel-Henry, A.and Branner Jespersen, S.(2003). Konflikt på gadeplan: når etnisk minoritetsungdom og politi mødes. Roskilde Universitetscenter Center for ungdomsforskning Institut for uddannelsesforskning.

Balchen, P.C. (2004). *Problemorientert politiarbeid*. available from oslo.politet.no/opd/infirm4.nsf/c19587edd91052b3412567dc00720 fb5/4

Bauman, Z. (1989). *Modernity and the holocaust*. Cambridge: Polity Press.

Bratholm, Anders (1999). *Politi, påtalemyndighet, presse og rettssikkerhet. Politivoldsaken,- foran og bak kulissene*. Oslo: Tano Aschehoug.

Barker, M. (1981). *The new racism*. London: Junction Books.

Brox, O. (1991). *Jeg er ikke rasist, men…* Oslo: Gyldendal.

Burns, T. and Stalker, G.M (1996). *The management of innovation* Oxford University Press.

Collins, A. (1998). Shielded *from Justice. Police brutality and accountability in the United Stated.* Human Rights Watch.

Bouza, V. A. (1990). *The police mystique: an insider's look at cops, crime, and the criminal justice system.* New York: Plenum Press.

Burns, R.G. and Crawford, C. E. (2002). *Policing and Violence.* New Jersey: Pearson Education.

Chan, J. (1996). Changing police culture. *British Journal of Criminology* vol. 36, No 1 Winter 1996 109-134.

Douglas, M. (1996). *Rent og urent.* Oslo: Pax labyrinth.

Fangen, K. (2001). *En bok om nynazister.* Oslo Universitetsforlaget.

Finstad, L. (2000). *Politiblikket.* Oslo: Pax forlag.

Gardell, B. (1981). *Arbetsinnhåll och livsvkalitet.* Arlöv: Bokförlaget Prisma. Berlings.

Goffman, E. (1992). Vårt rollespill til daglig. Oslo: Pax forlag.

Goffman, E. (1974). Anstalt og menneske. Oslo: Pax forlag.

Goldstein, H. (1990). *Problem oriented policing.* New York Mc Graw Hill.

Goldstein, T. (1996). *Two languages at work. Bilingual Life on the Production Floor*. New York: Mouton de Gruyer.

Granér, R. (2004). *Patrullerande polisers yrkeskultur* Lund Dissertations in Social Work.

Gullestad, M. (2004). *Det motsatte av å være "neger"*. Foredrag i P2 akademiet.

Gullestad, M. (2002). *Rasisme i Norge.* I *Sosiologi i dag* 4/2002 s.5-35.

Gundhus, H. O.(2004). *Politiarbeid og IKT-studier*. Unpublished.

Haacke, C. (1997). *Racist Violence in the United Kingdom* Helsinki: Human Rights Watch.

Hallsworth, S. and McGuire, M. (2004). *Examining stop and search patterns in the City of London* Report, London Metropolitan University.

Holdaway, S. (1997). Constructing and sustaining 'race' within the police workforce. *The British Journal of Sociology*, vol.48 nr.1 1997s.19-35.

Holdaway, S. (1996). *TheRracialisation of British Policing.* Houndsmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire and London: MacMillan Press LTD.

Holmberg, L. (1999). *Inden for lovens rammer – politiets arbejdsmetoder og konkrete skøn* København: Gyldendal.

Holmberg, Lars (2003). Policing stereotypes. A qualitative study of police work in Denmark. Glienicke/Berlin; Madison, Wis.: Galda + Wilch.

Jacobsen, M. Hviid and Kristiansen, S. (2003). Den moralske dimension i deltagende observasjon – Sociologisk feltarbejde og forskning i, og om mennesker. *Sosiologi i dag* nr. 1/2004.

Jermier, J. M., Slocum, J. W., Fry, L. W, and Gaines, J. (1991). Organizational subcultures in a soft bureacracy: Resistance behind the myth and facade of an official culture. *Organization science,* Vol. 2, No.2.

Ministry of Justice, Norway (2001). *Forebygging av rasisme og diskriminering i politi- og lensmannsetateen.*

Kleinig, J.(ed.) (1996). *Handled with discretion. Ethical issues in police decision making* London: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers.

Lien, I. L. (1997). Hvordan diagnostisere rasismen? In: Brox, O. *De liker oss ikke. Den norske rasismens ytringsformer* Oslo: Tano Aschehoug.

McNamara, R. (2002). From Report Takers to Report Makers. Understanding the police and violence. In: Burns, R.G. and Crawford, C.E.

(eds.) *Policing and violence.* New York: Prentice Hall Policing series.

Mendes, E. (1999) et al. (eds.). *Democratic policing and accountability*. Brokfield USA, Singapore, Sidney: Ashgate.

Nordhus, G.and Vogt, E. (1981). *Volden og dens ofre. En empirisk undersøkelse*. Oslo: Cappelen.

Paoline, E. A. (2001). *Rethinking police culture Officers' occupational attitudes*

New York: LFB Scholarly Publishing LLC.

Prieur, A. (2002). Fargens betydning. Om rasisme og konstruksjon av etniske identiteter In *Sosiologi i dag* 4/2002 pp 59-83.

Prieur, A. (1999). Respekt og samhold. Unge innvandrermenn, kriminalitet og maskulinitet In: Jensen, A.M et.al. (eds.) *Oppvekst i barnets århundre. Historier om tvetydighet.* Oslo: Ad Notam Gyldendal.

Prieur, A.(2005). *Balansekustnere Betydningen av innvandrerbakgrunn i Norge*. Oslo Pax.

Repstad, P. (1998). *Mellom nærhet og distanse: kvalitative metoder i samfunnsfag* Oslo: Universitetsforlaget.

Rogstad, J. (2000). *Mellom faktiske og forestilte forskjeller*. Oslo: Thesis, Unipub.

Searle, J. (1995). *The constructions of social reality* New York: The Free Press.

Skilbrei, M. (2003). *Dette er jo bare en husmorjobb. Ufaglærte kvinner i arbeidslivet.* Oslo:

Norwegian Social Report (NOVA) report 17/03.

Solberg, S. R. (1987). *Hva og hvem er "politiet"?* Hovedoppgave i kriminologi, Instistute of Criminology, University of Oslo.

Sollund, R. (1998). Forskningsetiske og vitenskapelig betraktninger om forskning på voldsdømte flyktninger. In: *Annual report 1998*, Institute of Criminology, University of Oslo.

Solomos, J. (1999). Social research and the Stephen Lawrence Inquiry. *Sociological research Online* 1999, vol. 4 no. 1.

Solomos, J. (2003 third edition). *Race and racism in Britain.* Basingstoke: Palgrave, Macmillan.

Syltevik, L.J. (1993). Å ta de utforskedes perspektiv. *Sosiologisk tidsskrift* 1, pp. 51-68.

Waddington, P.A.J. (1999A). *Policing citizens* London: UCL Press.

Waddington, P.A.J. (1999B). 'Discretion,' 'respectability' and institutional police racism. *Sociological Research Online* 1999, vol. 4 no. 1.

Weber, M. (1990). *Makt og byråkrati.* Oslo: Pax forlag.

Whyte, W. F. (1993/1943). *Street corner society. The social structure of an Italian slum* Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Worden, R. E. (2000). *Attitudes of police: Implications for police culture* (Abstract Dissertation online).