

Belonging and Unbelonging in Encounters Between Young Males and Police Officers: The Use of Masculinity and Ethnicity/Race

Tove Pettersson

Published online: 5 June 2013
© Springer Science+Business Media Dordrecht 2013

Abstract This article is based on a study in which the work of police officers has been followed on a day-to-day basis, with a special focus on the work directed at youths. The focus is on how contact is established or obstructed in the meeting between police officers and young males, and the significance of constructions of masculinity and ethnicity/race for this process. Encounters between young males and police officers are analysed from Yuval-Davis notions of belonging and unbelonging. The analysis shows how both masculinity and ethnicity/race can be used for establishing or obstructing contact between police and young males. The article also show how belonging and unbelonging is a question of negotiations that can undergo a number of shifts in the course of a given situation, and also that these negotiations take the form of a collaborative activity, even if this starts from unequal power positions. A situation that starts from an antagonistic approach may in fact, via markers of belonging, turn out quite different. But it is also pointed out that the markers of belonging in one dimension, at the same time may generate markers of unbelonging in others. Finally this developing of contact shall be understood both as a way of changing the contacts into less conflicted ways and as one of several ways of gaining more control in stigmatized areas.

Introduction

One area of police research that often attracts attention involves the relationship between ethnic minorities and the police, and how the control exercised by the police in relation to ethnic minorities is implemented and perceived. In many cases this takes the form of controls directed at young, ethnic-minority males in areas characterised by social problems (Brunson 2007; Dikeç 2007). One consequence of this situation is an increased distrust of the police in these areas, particularly among young males from ethnic minorities (Brunson

T. Pettersson (✉)
Department of Criminology, Stockholm University, 106 91 Stockholm, Sweden
e-mail: tove.pettersson@criminology.su.se

and Miller 2006; Brunson 2007). Research on what influences perceptions of the police shows that the question is a complex one, but factors found to be significant include individuals' own negative experiences of the police, others' negative experiences, (Brunson and Miller 2006; Brunson 2007), perceived ethnic discrimination on the part of the police like exposure to racial profiling (Brunson and Miller 2006; Brunson 2007; Weitzer and Tuch 2002), how control is organised in society, for example targeting marginalized groups and ethnic minorities (Hallsworth 2006), and perceptions of discrimination in general (Weitzer and Tuch 2002; Brunson and Miller 2006; Sharp and Atherton 2007). Myhill and Quinton (2012) argue that positive experiences of police treatment are also important (but see Skogan 2012), but that negative experiences have greater potential to influence perceptions of the police. Brunson and Miller (2006, 615) note that "tensions between minority communities and the police are a widespread problem in many Western nations," and although the level of such problems can vary, this is also the case in Sweden (Hallin et al. 2010; Sernhede 2006, 2007).

The police have different strategies for obtaining control and *Community policing*, or *reassurance policing*, have constituted a means of trying to deal with the legitimacy problems faced by the police in socially disadvantaged areas (Wycoff and Skogan 1998; Hawdon et al. 2003; Adams et al. 2002; Sharp and Atherton 2007; Peterson 2010; Craig et al. 2010; Myhill and Quinton 2012). Central elements of this police strategy involve visibility, accessibility and familiarity. In order to improve relations between the police and residents of socially disadvantaged neighbourhoods, and thus to increase police legitimacy, local *police offices* have been established in Stockholm. The basic ideas behind this reform are the same as in *reassurance policing* (Peterson 2010). The goal of the police offices is to get to know and create confidence among those who live in a given area, particularly young residents, to work preventively together with other community forces and to intervene against crime and public order disturbances. One of the principal tasks of the police offices is to establish contacts with youths in the area surrounding the respective offices. This shall not be mistaken for less control from the police, quite the contrary. Successfully establishing contacts increases the possibilities to exercise control in the area, for examples by better knowledge of the youths, what they do and where they are, and more information to the police from the residents (Pettersson 2012). The control may however be performed in a less confrontative way.

This article is based on a study in which the work of such police offices has been followed on a day-to-day basis, with a special focus on the work directed at youths. One of the study's conclusions is that in the context of the local police officers' work to create better relations with those who live in the area where they work, it is essential that they succeed in striking a balance between control and contact. However, these factors are also interdependent and cannot easily be distinguished from one another (Pettersson 2012). Police research has often focused on the question of how police *control* is exercised and perceived (but see e.g. Craig et al. 2010 for an exception). In this article I will instead focus on how contact is established or obstructed in the meeting between police officers and youths, and on the significance that constructions of masculinity and ethnicity/race have for this process. However, these contacts are *central* for how police controls are both exercised and perceived.

Theoretical Framework

The analysis takes its departure from a critical intersectional perspective in which significance-bearing systems of oppression organized along axes such as gender, ethnicity/race and social class constitute power dimensions on the basis of which social positions are

constructed (West and Fenstermaker 1995; Hill-Collins 1998; Messerschmidt 2004; Bell 2013). Bell (2013) underlines how race and gender relations structure criminal justice practice. The focus in this article is directed at how these positions intersect and how they shift in the context of meetings between police and youths (chiefly young males), and at the significance this has for the contacts between the two, with in prolongation is important for the control the police exercise. Gender, ethnicity/race and class etc. is being constructed and produced by markers of belonging and unbelonging. Yuval-Davis (2006) differentiates between *belonging* and the *politics of belonging*. Belonging is about emotional attachment, of feeling at home, whereas the politics of belonging involve demarcations of who is “in” and who is “out” of communities. Thus the politics of belonging are about boundary maintenance. As Barth (1969) concludes in relation to ethnic groups, it is not the cultural stuff that is important, but the ethnic boundaries that defines the group. Both belonging and the politics of belonging involve issues of exclusion and inclusion. Yuval-Davis distinguishes three analytical levels at which belonging are constructed. These are *social location*, *identification and emotional attachment* and finally *ethical and political values*. *Social location* “...ha[s] particular implications *vis á vis* the grids of power relations in society” (199) and varies between different historical contexts. It is fluid and contested, and is never constructed from only one power axis but from multiple axes. Yuval-Davis distinguishes some social divisions as being more central than others for the shaping of people’s lives, for example gender, stages of the life cycle, ethnicity and class. *Identifications and emotional attachments* are linked to identities, which may be both individual and collective. However, Yuval-Davis also points to the importance of being aware of the fact that constructions of self and identity can be forced upon people in certain historical contexts. Finally, the *ethical and political values* level relates to the way in which social locations and individual and collective identities are valued and judged. It is this struggle about how boundaries should be drawn and how positions should be valued that represents the link to the *politics of belonging*.

Yuval-Davis (2006) describes the focus of the politics of belonging as “...the boundaries of the political community of belonging, the boundaries that separate the world population into “us” or “them”” (204). Her own discussions and work are for the most part focused on nation and citizenship and on the political level. This is not the level of analysis employed in the current article, even though the politics of belonging at this level have implications for the analytical level that constitutes the focus of this article. Here the issue of interest is the way in which these demarcations are produced in concrete encounters between people, in this case between police officers and youths.

Christensen (2009) proposes an analytical division of belonging into macro (larger “imagined” communities such as nations, see also Anderson 1991), meso (collective organizations such as political parties and social movements) and micro levels (the level of everyday life, involving e.g. local communities and lived lives). The empirical material employed in the current study is primarily focused on the micro level. These levels are not separated from one another, however, but rather the sense of belonging or unbelonging at the micro level is dependent on the macro level. Christensen argues that the issue of the correlation between the macro and micro levels is an important one. To take one example, demarcations about who does and does not belong in Sweden are of significance to individuals’ perceptions of belonging at the micro-level. Christensen (2009, 23) notes that “the basic assumption is that globalization and citizenship/migration regimes are reflected in local cultural practices, differentiations, lifestyles, and identities, and that the concept of belonging is an essential tool to grasp these processes of transformation in modern society.” However, my purpose is not to describe these processes of transformation, but rather

to focus on the way that they are visible in, and important for, the contact between police officers and youths in everyday encounters between the two groups. Christensen also notes that one important dimension of the belonging concept is the intimate interplay between constructions of belonging and unbelonging.

A Swedish example of the links between the micro and macro levels can be found in the work of Sernhede (2006, 2007; see also Hammarén 2008), who followed young males in a socially segregated area of Gothenburg. He employs Wacquant's (2004) concept of *territorial stigmatization*, in which the neighbourhood itself is stigmatized. It is in such stigmatized neighbourhoods that police offices have been introduced as a way of, for example, gaining more control in the areas. This stigmatization of the neighbourhood in which they live is clearly very real to the youths Sernhede came into contact with. The youths' narratives illustrate how palpably they experienced their alienation from Swedish society. Neighbourhood stigmatization also produces a situation where it is in relation to their specific home neighbourhood that the young males feel a sense of belonging, and not in relation to Sweden (where the experience is instead one of unbelonging). Hammarén (2008) also shows how youths' perceptions of the neighbourhood they lived in, and their feelings of belonging or unbelonging to different communities (the neighbourhood, Sweden etc.), were linked to markers of exclusion at the macro level. These markers are of significance for the youths' everyday lives (the micro level). Several of the neighbourhoods in which I have accompanied the police are similar to the areas of Gothenburg in which Sernhede and Hammarén conducted their studies, although my own research was conducted in the Stockholm area. In many ways it seems reasonable to assume that the identifications and emotional attachments of the residents of these neighbourhoods have in part been forced upon them through processes such as social segregation and ethnic discrimination. This process of marginalisation, its consequences for the feeling of belonging to the stigmatized neighbourhood (the suburb) and unbelonging to the larger context (Sweden) starts a complex reinforcing process where the young males themselves become a part of their own stigmatization process. Anderson (1999) have described similar reinforcing processes in relation to stigmatizing young black males as dangerous and violent, and the same has Hammarén (2008) pointed out in a Swedish context.

Yuval-Davis, in the company of many other writers within the field of intersectional analysis (Hill-Collins 1998; West and Fenstermaker 1995; Messerschmidt 2004; Bell 2013 to name a few) underlines gender, social class and ethnicity/race as central systems of oppression in society. Therefor these power dimensions are also central for the boundaries of "us" and "them", and as such they are important markers of belonging and unbelonging at both micro, meso and macro level. Christensen (2009) argues that in Scandinavia, ethnicity is the most powerful marker of belonging. In the field of Swedish police culture it is also clear that masculinity and Swedish ethnicity are substantial elements of the norm (Lander 2013). As earlier police research also points out being young, black and male is a highly vulnerable position for both exposure and experience of discrimination within the justice system (Steffensmeier et al. 1998; Anderson 1999; Reitzel and Piquero 2006). Constructions of ethnicity and masculinity are also the most visible markers of belonging and unbelonging that I have noticed in encounters between police officers and youths. The analysis will therefore focus on the significance of constructions of masculinity and ethnicity/race, even though other dimensions (such as age and class¹) may also play a

¹ My understanding of social class is that it is a complex social position related to factors like both own and parent's education, employment, economic resources and so forth. It should be pointed out that in a Swedish context social class and ethnicity is linked together.

significant role. Thus the analysis will examine how the use of markers of belonging and unbelonging linked to ethnicity/race and gender can influence encounters between police and youths.

The Study

The study material is comprised of observations. The police officers who have been observed have primarily worked at the local police offices and with youths, but some of the work-shifts have been with more incident-steered police work. The officers have been followed throughout their shifts. Two different police districts in the county of Stockholm have been included in the study, and the work of eight different police offices has been followed, each for a period of at least 2 weeks. I have participated in a total of 52 work-shifts, totalling 450 h and the field notes comprise about 600 typewritten pages. I have accompanied the officers both during the day and the evening, but the vast majority of the shifts were in the evening and stretched into the night. My role in the context of my observations has primarily involved standing alongside in order to watch and listen. When it has been possible without disturbing the situation or being overly awkward, I have presented myself and explained to the youth(s) who I am and what I do. The fieldwork was conducted during the spring and early summer of 2009 in one police district and during the spring and early summer of 2010 in the other. On most of the shifts in which I participated, I accompanied uniformed police officers, but I did on occasion accompany plain-clothes officers. The material is primarily comprised of direct observations of interactions between youths and police officers, and also of how the police acted in other situations during their work shifts. In addition to this I have held recurrent, informal interviews/conversations with police officers in the field, and sometimes also with youths with whom I have come into contact during the field work. I have also interviewed five of the eight group leaders of the police units that I have accompanied.

There are both similarities and differences between the areas covered by the police offices. One difference relates to their size. The catchment area of certain police offices can cover two residential neighbourhoods, each of which is larger than the total area covered by some of the other offices. By comparison with the population of Stockholm in general, a relatively large number of the residents in these areas are unemployed and have low average incomes, although this varies somewhat from one area to another. There are also differences in the areas' ethnic composition. They include areas both with a large and a small proportion of residents with a foreign (primarily non-European) background.² Common to the majority of the areas are that they have relatively extensive crime-related problems, and that the relations between the residents and police who work there are characterised by tension, which is also one of the reasons that police offices have been established there. In this respect too, however, there are variations between the different areas. Some of the areas are among those regarded as the most problematic in the Stockholm region. At the same time, it should be noted that the level of problems in these neighbourhoods is substantially lower than that found in corresponding areas in the USA, for example.

² In a Swedish context the dividing lines is more characterized by European/non-European background than by for example country origin, not the least in the area of discrimination within the justice system (Pettersson 2006).

In the context of ethnographic studies, the question of the researcher's effect on those who are being studied is an important one. It is likely that the presence of a researcher will influence what happens in the field (Holmberg 2003; Sollund 2005, 2007; Loftus 2009). How much, and in what ways, will depend on a number of factors. One of these factors is my own social position. I am a woman, a little bit older than most of the police officers and much older than the youths, and have probably been regarded as ethnical Swede (witch I also regards myself as) by both youths and police officers. When it comes to what police officers themselves choose to show or conceal, the issue of police behaviours that might cause problems for the police service itself is an important one. Experience from previous studies of the police shows that police officers have indeed manifested such behaviours in the presence of researchers (Granér 2004; Holmberg 2003; Sollund 2006, 2007; Loftus 2009), but that it is likely that they conceal a great deal. It is therefore reasonable to assume that what I have been able to witness constitutes what might be termed "the most benevolent case scenario" on the part of the police. On the other hand, institutional practices within the police, which might be the most interesting when studying police practice, is likely to be hard to hide (Sollund 2005). Even if the police act in a more benevolent way when I was present, the interactions I witnessed still developed as they did and the significance of markers of belonging and unbelonging *in these situations* does not change. The important point is that the *level* of different kinds of markers might be different when I wasn't present, but the level is not the aim of my analysis.

All of the names used in the article are invented and have been chosen to signify the sex and visible minority background (or not) of the individuals concerned (Mattsson 2005). The use of a name signifying that an individual belongs to an ethnic minority does *not* however mean that the individual was born outside Sweden. It is likely that the majority of the youths and police officers I have interacted with were born in Sweden. *Nor should* the names employed be associated with any particular part of the world or religious background. The names of police officers begin with P and the youths' with other letters. If the same individual was present at more than one of the incidents described, he or she is assigned different names in relation to the different incidents in order to avoid the risk of becoming identifiable.

Findings

The task of the police officers I have accompanied has thus been to create (more positive) contacts with the youths in the area where they work. A large proportion of the police's contacts with youths involve interactions with boys and young men. I distinguish two processes that underlie this disproportionate focus on young males, the first being that the police's "gaze" (Finstad 2000) is primarily directed at boys and young men, and the second being that boys and young men show a considerably greater interest in the police than do girls and young women. The boys' greater interest in the police, in talking to them, joking with them and "hanging around" them, may be interpreted both as a form of contact-seeking and as an element in the way that they construct their masculinity through a feeling of belonging—not uncommonly through an admiration of the police officers. But there were also more antagonistic encounters in which various markers of unbelonging could be very visible. The youths' interest in the police can also express itself in the form of challenging the police's authority (Sollund 2008).

One element that I have observed in the encounters between police and youths is that the interactions include a marked degree of playfulness. These playful interactions between police officers and youths also feature certain constructions of masculinity. One of the ways in which such constructions manifest themselves is through linkages to the police

role and its associations with masculinity. The body also plays a significant role in this game play, something which for example Messerschmidt (1999, 2004) has noted constitutes an important aspect of constructions of masculinities. This type of play often takes place between young boys and male police officers, and it functions as a way of establishing contact between the boys and the police by producing markers of camaraderie and thus belonging. The following example of a situation of this kind comes from an occasion when the police office neighbourhood premises were open to the public.

Mahmoud who is approximately 16 years old, arrives as soon as they are open. When he arrives, he walks to and fro “bouncily”, says hello to the police, says hello to me. He wonders if I am a police officer, or am going to be one, and I explain that I am a researcher accompanying the police. Mahmoud then immediately says that the police are great! He sees the protective vest that I have taken off and hung up on a coat hanger in the hall, and puts it on. But he puts it on back to front, which Petra points out to him, laughing. He laughs himself, embarrassed, and puts it on the right way round instead. He pretends that he is a police officer and says that he is working as a police. As he does so, he puffs his chest out in the vest. Mahmoud talks to Paulinho about when he arrived in Sweden, school, how often he goes training etc.

[...]

They talk for a little while and Mahmoud gets back to the fact that he is a police officer and “knows people” [within the police] etc. Paulinho allows this, along with some other things, to pass without comment. After a while, Mahmoud puffs his chest out again, but says something about the vest not really fitting properly. Paulinho says, with a smile, “You know that’s a woman’s vest, don’t you?” Mahmoud quickly says, “No,” and immediately takes off the vest and goes and hangs it up again.

Field note

This play around the role of the police officer becomes both a contact-development activity and a form of construction of masculinity. Mahmoud, together with the officers who allow him to carry on, creates a form of belonging to the police. This is done, amongst other things, through the construction of an expression of masculinity which the police (or at least the men?) are viewed as representing. When this masculine status is questioned, through the revelation that it is a “woman’s vest”, the game is quickly ended. This shows that the presentation of self as masculine constitutes an important part of the game for Mahmoud. The comment that it is a woman’s vest also transforms the situation into a marker of unbelonging. Despite Mahmoud’s masculine posture, the officer’s statement constitutes a refusal to acknowledge his masculine status. Sliding between belonging and unbelonging in this way (belonging while he was “allowed” to construct “police masculinity” and unbelonging when he was feminized) is common, and it shows that what is manifesting itself is an on-going process that expresses itself in the form of negotiations about who and what “belongs”.

The above example also shows how the body, and bodily expressions, constitute part of the construction of masculinity. From the dialogue between the police officers and some of the younger boys that they met quite often I understood that there was an ongoing jokey game about “beefiness” (“krallig” in Swedish, their choice of words, slang for muscular) among them. The boys joked that the police officers (two youngish males) were beefy, whereas the officers for their part said that they were not beefy, but that it was the boys who were beefy. The part played by the body in this game is very clear, amongst other things because the police officers who were participating in the game were tall, well-built

and in good physical shape, whereas the young boys were all short and slender. The game appeared to have been going on for some time. It happened while I was watching, and both the boys and the officers also referred back to previous situations. The part played by the police in this game, in the way they refer to the slender boys as beefy, might be interpreted as emphasising and making fun of the boys' "smallness", an expression of a form of hierarchical marker. I did not perceive the dialogue in this way, however, but rather as them playing a game with the boys, which established a contact, and as a means for the police to distance themselves from the emphasis that the boys placed on the police's beefiness—an emphasis that also contains an element of "playing with" the police, by exploiting the stereotype of the "big and beefy police officer".

Thus the above situations may be described as involving the use of markers of belonging in the form of common constructions of masculinity that also serve to develop contacts between the youths and the police. Most of the contact-development activity of this kind that I have seen in the material has involved constructions of masculinity. Presented below, however, is an example of this type of contact-development activity that includes constructions of both masculinity and ethnicity. Piotor talks to some boys (of visible minority background) at a soccer pitch in the area:

Ahmed shows his arm, where he has a [transfer] tattoo of the logo of the Stockholm County Police Authority. He tells Piotor that he was given it by Peter [another police officer working in the area]. Piotor: "Peter is a big kid". Piotor offers to give Ahmed badges which read "When I grow up I'm going to be a police officer". He has them at the office and says he'll bring them with him another day. Piotor and Ahmed talk a little about the fact that Peter is going to leave. Ahmed wonders, "Wasn't he allowed to stay on?" Piotor answers jokily that Per [the group leader] conducted an evaluation and said that "enough is enough" and that Peter then had to go. Ahmed raises the question again, "Didn't he want to stay on? Wasn't he happy?" Piotor answers, "No, perhaps he wasn't". This leads on to the question of immigrant background, linked to the fact that Peter is Swedish. Ahmed looks around and asks "Who is Swedish here?" He looks at me and asks, "Are you Swedish?" I say "Yes, I am Swedish," after a little hesitation, since I first thought of asking him what he meant by Swedish. Ahmed then turns to Piotor, and says "blatte³ power" and they both clench a fist and knock knuckles.

Piotor and Ahmed move on to talking about school and summer jobs. A third boy, Nazir, is mentioned. Piotor "was it you, or Hanad who put him on the floor?" Ahmed doesn't understand what Piotor is talking about. Piotor says that Nazir came down to the football pitch and said that he was strongest. Piotor is wondering whether it was Ahmed or Hanad who then put him on the floor and said that he was strongest. Ahmed laughs, "Did he come down and say that he was strongest?" Piotor: "Yes." They laugh again. Ahmed "Maybe it was Hanad".

Here both ethnicity/race (in the form of being an immigrant) and masculinity (in the form of laughing together at another boy who tried but failed to assert himself as being strong) form part of the encounter. At the same time, it is clear that the belonging that is expressed through ethnicity also includes an element of unbelonging, since it is constructed through a shared non-Swedish belonging, and in contrast to myself. In this specific situation, however, it is the "Swedish woman" (myself) who does not belong. My own disinclination

³ "Blatte" is a derogatory term for a person of visibly non-European background.

to define myself as (the only) Swede in the situation was also linked specifically to a feeling that this would involve expressing a marker of who may and may not belong to “what is (allowed to be) Swedish”—something I did not want to be a part of. It was with a sense of considerable discomfort that I participated in this expression of the others not being “Swedish”, even though it occurred at the instigation of one of them. In other words, the expression of markers of belonging and unbelonging can give rise to quite palpable emotions among the individuals who are involved in a given situation.

Ahmed seemed upset and troubled because Peter, whom he gave the impression that he liked, was going to stop working in the neighbourhood. His concern was in part related to a perception that Peter, as a Swede, did not want to work in an area where the residents were for the most part comprised of people of foreign background, which was the case in this particular neighbourhood. In this context of Ahmeds perceived unbelonging as a result of ethnicity/race, the way that Piotor and Ahmed develop the contact between them by means of a sense of belonging linked to ethnicity/race becomes even more interesting. It is a manifestation of opposition to a position of marginalisation, that is produced by stressing that in this particular situation and context at least, they are the ones who “belong” (compare Sernhede 2007; Hammarén 2008).

Many police officers have a Swedish background, and this is perhaps one reason why ethnicity rarely manifests itself as a marker of belonging, whereas masculinity does so more often. Another possible interpretation, however, is that ethnicity in the form of whiteness/Swedishness in itself produces a sense of belonging without this having to be marked (Lundström 2007). At the same time, there are also a large number of situations where differences in ethnic background between police officers and youths are not made visible or brought up, and where the focus instead is directed at alternative categories of signification that provide a basis for emphasising similarities, when expressions of belonging are manifested between the young males and the police.

There are also instances of shifts between belonging and unbelonging in the various encounters. Situations of this kind may show the significance of these markers for the positive or negative development of contacts particularly clearly. The situation described below represents an example of this. In the situation that is described below, the police had started talking to a group of boys (all of whom were of visible minority background) who were in a square close to a festival area.

The boys are quite irritated and are not too happy about talking to the police officers. Rayan makes a comment about a group of punks [as I perceive it] who walk past and into a diner. Rayan calls them “fucking Nazis” and says that he “hates them”. Rayan says that he thinks it’s completely ok to beat up Nazis and repeats that he hates them. Petter talks to him about freedom of speech and devotes considerable time to explaining what it means. Rayan says he doesn’t give a shit about that. He hates Nazis and racists and doesn’t care if he is committing a crime by beating them up.

Field note

During the initial phase of the encounter, there was a clear sense of distance on the part of both the boys and the police. This was also marked and intensified in several ways through constructions of ethnicity. Rayan expresses unbelonging in relation to Nazis, which is in itself an expression of his own unbelonging to Sweden according to Nazis. This antagonism towards immigrants constitutes an example of a marker of unbelonging at the level of the politics of belonging, and the significance this has for Rayan in the context of his everyday life (the micro level). Petter’s expression of support for the Nazis’ right to free speech (which of course is quite correct from a legal point of view) increases the

distance between them as it serves as a form of additional marker of unbelonging in relation to Rayan. However, the direction of the encounter changes when Petter, consciously or unconsciously, shifts focus in his conversation with Rayan. The situation continued in the following way:

After a while, Petter instead starts talking about hate crimes. He says that if you beat someone up because they are an immigrant or something, then this is regarded as more serious than other forms of assault. Rayan says “Aha, I get it, because you’re an immigrant then?” Petter explains once more and Rayan says, “Yes, but I understand that then it’s more serious.”

With this, Rayan’s attitude changes and he starts talking to Petter about how “everybody should respect all people and you can’t help where you’re born. And they hate me just because of where I was born. Everybody should respect everybody, irrespective” etc. And his mood now clearly becomes much better. They talk a little more. Then the police have to leave and they say goodbye. Petter says it was nice to talk and Rayan says that he thought so too.

Field note

Petter’s shift over to talking about hate crime is bridging the distance between them by showing understanding for Rayan’s perceptions of victimisation. In this way, the emphasis on Rayan’s not belonging to “the Swedish” becomes less marked, at the same time as there remains a clear line of demarcation between the two of them, since Petter (very probably) is defined as “Swedish” by Rayan. Rayan remains marked as not belonging to what is Swedish as a result of his status as an “immigrant”, but is at the same time entitled to extra protection if he should be exposed to violence as a result of this. This move towards rapprochement led Rayan to express another marker of his exclusion (by describing his feelings of discrimination) at the same time as it created a sense of solidarity between Rayan and Petter regarding the fact that this demarcation is wrong—or at least a sense that the social location “immigrant” should not be assigned such a low position in the power hierarchy as it is by Nazis. Questioning macro-level markers can thus produce markers of belonging at the micro level. The conclusion of the dialogue between Rayan and Petter shows how important markers of this kind can be for the contacts between police and young people and it shows the potential of markers of belonging and unbelonging for promoting or obstructing contacts between police and youths.

The following constitutes an example of a situation in which both ethnicity and masculinity function as markers of unbelonging. The police officers I was accompanying during the evening in question had arrested a young man and were in the process of searching him and registering him at the station. I left with one of the police officers to do an errand and we then returned. During the time we were away, two other police officers had come in with a young male they had arrested and were in the process of searching and registering him too.

Shayan is discussing what the description of the suspect might have been in a rather loud and irritated voice. He says he knows how suspect descriptions usually sound, “dark haired guy with cropped hair and an immigrant background”. Shayan continues, “dark guy shaved head. Does anyone else in here recognize themselves?” He looks out over everyone standing in the room, “No, exactly” he says emphatically. None of the police in the room react in any way to what he says; they don’t bat an eyelid. They carry on with what they are doing and say nothing. They don’t look at him; he is completely ignored.

After a moment, Shayan is told that he can choose which shirt he wants to wear; he is wearing two. He wants the one he is wearing on top and thus has to take both of them off first. He stands in jeans, bare from the waist up, and says “eye candy girls, eye candy”. Nobody says anything at first, but after a short while Petra says, “nothing wrong with the self-confidence.” Shayan replies, “You have to keep hold of something.”

Field note

The way that Shayan draws attention to his perception of having been arrested as a result of his ethnic background may be interpreted as an expression of a marker of unbelonging. The police officers’ choice to stifle these protests, by simply ignoring him, serves to produce an intensified marker of unbelonging between Shayan and the police. The final part of the interaction, with the reference to sexuality and being “eye candy” for the girls, can be understood as a form of self-identification as “the sexualised Other” (Segal 1997). It may also be a reaction to the vulnerability produced by standing half-naked in full view of a group of police officers. Shayan’s final remarks also functions as re-establishing some kind of pride and masculine authority through the fact that he is in any case an attractive heterosexual man—as his final comment suggests. Thus the situation includes interwoven markers of both ethnicity and masculinity. The fact that the police officers first chose to ignore the accusations of racism, but that Petra then chose to comment upon Shayan’s remarks about his masculine status, and in a way that represented an attempt to put him in his place, served to intensify even further the marking of Shayan’s unbelonging that was taking place in the context of this encounter. To borrow from Shayan’s own words, but applying them to the actions of the police: No, he did not get to keep hold of anything, there was absolutely no way that he was going to be permitted to belong.

Concluding Remarks

In this article I have displayed the significance of constructions of ethnicity and masculinity, as manifested in the form of markers of belonging and unbelonging, for encounters between police officers and youths. The situations show how, in the context of concrete encounters, belonging is a question of negotiations about belonging that can undergo a number of shifts in the course of a given situation, and also that these negotiations take the form of a collaborative activity among different individuals, even if this starts from unequal power positions.

Ansel-Henry and Branner Jespersen (2003, 77), who studied police officers and youths (young males) in a community in Denmark, where there were substantial conflicts between the police and youths from ethnic minorities, note that:

In the study, the youngsters’ perception that they are unfairly treated appears to constitute one of the most essential reasons for the higher level of conflict. The study illustrates that the youths are convinced that the police intervene against them purely for reasons of racism and a lack of professionalism. The police thereby often become an institution that they do not trust, and that they have no respect for. Since for many youths, the police are identical with Denmark as a place to which they can never gain access, this problem is particularly important (author’s translation).

The feelings about Denmark that Ansel-Henry and Branner Jespersen describe the youths as expressing may be viewed in terms of feelings of unbelonging. Their conclusion also shows that the police play an important role in the production of feelings of belonging and

unbelonging among these youths. Police officers have a very clear position of power in relation to the youths they encounter, as a result not only of their profession and the powers associated with it, but also their age and, by comparison with the youths they come into contact with, their often much more apparent “belonging” in relation to markers of Swedishness. This also means that they have greater opportunities to determine what and who becomes excluded and included in the context of a given encounter. In turn, this means that the police have a responsibility in their encounters with youths to find ways of inviting them to processes of belonging rather than unbelonging. Part of their (professional) role is to promote positive contacts with the people they meet since they (clearly) not only respond to situations but also creates them (Sollund 2008). The situation in which the issue of hate crimes were discussed, for example, shows that even in cases where there are clear expressions of unbelonging (in this case as a result of ethnicity/race), it is possible to at least in part bridge over these by reducing the intensity of these expressions of unbelonging (in this case by questioning the nature of the boundaries that exist at the macro level).

Christensen (2009) argues that ethnicity is the most powerful marker of belonging in the Nordic countries. This may be the reason that ethnicity primarily appears to function as a construction of unbelonging in the context of encounters between police officers and young males from ethnic minorities. One of the few exceptions is when the police officer him- or herself has a non-Swedish ethnic background. The police officers whom I have accompanied have to a large extent come into contact with youths of visible minority background, but it is conceivable that belonging is also produced on the basis of (shared) whiteness. However, this has not been as visible to me in the study material (perhaps partly because my own whiteness). The norm is often more difficult to see than the deviation, particularly for those who are themselves part of the norm. It is important to note, however, that the production of “the Others” is an integral part of producing what is regarded and perceived as “Us” (Yuval-Davis 2006; Christensen 2009). When belonging is produced through whiteness/Swedishness, there is no need for this to be marked (see Lundström 2007 and Mattsson 2005 for similar arguments). This is also in line with Barths (1969) point that boundary maintenance is a core issue in the formation of ethnic groups. It is in relation to (perceived) other groups this social boundaries needs to be pointed out.

Something else that is apparent is that when one dimension (such as ethnicity/race) does not function as a means of expressing belonging, it is nonetheless possible to find other ways of expressing belonging (e.g. by reference to gender). At the same time, this raises questions about what it is that takes place in encounters between police(men) and young males when they produce common constructions of masculinity. What is the nature of the “common masculinity” that they express? How does this relate to other markers of unbelonging, e.g. between women and men? Something that serves as a marker of belonging at one level, and allows for the development of positive contacts between police officers and young males, may at the same time serve to create greater distances in other dimensions.

Finally, while this article focus on how *contact* is established or obstructed between police officers and young males, it is also important to point out that this is highly relevant for the police *control* being exercised. In many ways establishing contacts with youths actually means more control over them than more distanced contacts would mean, and the purpose of establish police offices in these areas is in the end *both* about changing the relations to the citizens *and* (through this) another way of controlling the inhabitants in this stigmatized territorials.

Acknowledgments David Shannon has translated this article to English and I am grateful to him for that. I am also grateful to Nina Törnqvist, David Wästerfors, Ingrid Lander and two anonymous reviewers for comments on the manuscript. This work was supported by The Stockholm University Linnaeus Center for Integration Studies and The Swedish Research Council.

References

- Adams, R. E., Roth, W. M., & Arcury, T. A. (2002). Implementing community-oriented policing: Organizational change and street officer attitudes. *Crime & Delinquency*, *48*, 399–430.
- Anderson, B. (1991). *Imagined communities: Reflections on the origin and spread of nationalism*. London: Verso.
- Anderson, E. (1999). *Code of the street. Decency, violence and the moral life of the inner city*. New York & London: W. W. Norton & Company.
- Ansel-Henry, A., & Branner Jespersen, S. (2003). Konflikt på gadeplan—når etniske minoritetsungdom og politi mødes. Roskilde Universitetscenter: Center for Ungdomsforskning, Institute for Uddannelseforskning.
- Barth, F. (Ed.). (1969). Introduction. In: Ethnic groups and boundaries. The social organization of culture differences. Oslo: Universitetsforlaget.
- Bell, K. E. (2013). Young adult offending: Intersectionality of gender and race. *Critical Criminology*, *21*, 103–121.
- Brunson, R. K. (2007). “Police don’t like black people”: African-American young men’s accumulated police experience. *Criminology and Public Policy*, *6*, 71–102.
- Brunson, R. K., & Miller, J. (2006). Gender, race, and urban policing: The experience of African American. *Youth Gender & Society*, *20*, 531–552.
- Christensen, A.-D. (2009). Belonging and unbelonging from an intersectional perspective. *Gender, Technology and Development*, *13*, 21–41.
- Craig, C., Marnoch, G., & Topping, I. (2010). Shared leadership with minority ethnic communities: Views from the police and the public in the UK. *Policing & Society*, *20*, 336–357.
- Dikeç, M. (2007). *Badlands of the republic space, politics and urban policy*. Oxford: Blackwell Publishing.
- Finstad, L. (2000). *Politiblikket*. Oslo: Pax.
- Granér, R. (2004). *Patrullerande polisens yrkeskultur*. Lund: Socialhögskolan, Lunds universitet.
- Hallin, P. O., Jashari, A., Listerborn, C., & Popoola, M. (2010). *Det är inte stenarna som gör ont. Röster från Herrgården, Rosengård—om konflikter och erkännande*. MAPIUS rapport 5. Malmö: Malmö Publikationer i Urbana Studier.
- Hallsworth, S. (2006). Racial targeting and social control: looking behind the police. *Critical Criminology*, *14*, 293–311.
- Hammarén, N. (2008). *Förorten i huvudet: unga män om kön och sexualitet i det nya Sverige*. Stockholm: Atlas.
- Hawdon, J. E., Ryan, J., & Griffin, S. P. (2003). Policing tactics and perceptions of police legitimacy. *Police Quarterly*, *6*, 469–491.
- Hill-Collins, P. (1998). Intersections of, race, class, gender, and nation: some implications for Black family studies. *Journal of Comparative Family Studies*, *29*, 27–36.
- Holmberg, L. (2003). Policing stereotypes. Glienicke/Berlin & Madison/Wisconsin: Galda und Wilch Verlag.
- Lander, I. (2013). Obstacles for changes within the (Swedish) police force: Professional motivations, homosociality, and ordering practices. *Journal of Scandinavian Studies in Criminology and Crime Prevention* *14*, X–X (published online).
- Loftus, B. (2009). *Police culture in a changing world*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Lundström, C. (2007). *Svenska latinas: Ras klass och kön i svenskhetens geografi*. Stockholm: Makadam.
- Mattsson, K. (2005). Diskrimineringens andra ansikte—svenskhet och “det vita västerländska. In P. de los Reyes, & M. Kamali (Eds.) *Bortom Vi och Dom. Teoretiska reflektioner om makt, integration och strukturell diskriminering*. SOU 2005:41 Stockholm: Fritzes.
- Messerschmidt, J. W. (1999). Making bodies matter: Adolescent masculinities, the body, and varieties of violence. *Theoretical Criminology*, *3*, 197–220.
- Messerschmidt, J. W. (2004). *Flesh and blood*. Oxford: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers.
- Myhill, A., & Quinton, P. (2012). Confidence, neighbourhood policing, and contact: drawing together the evidence. *Policing*, *4*, 273–281.

- Peterson, A. (2010). From Great Britain to Sweden—The import of reassurance policing. Local police offices in Metropolitan Stockholm. *Journal of Scandinavian Studies in Criminology and Crime Prevention*, 11, 25–45.
- Pettersson, T. (2006). Särbehandlas personer med utländsk bakgrund vid anmälningar om våldtäkter, grov misshandel och eget bruk av narkotika? In: J. Sarnecki (Ed.) *Är rättvisan rättvis? Tio perspektiv på diskriminering av etniska och religiösa minoriteter inom rättssystemet*. SOU 2006: 40. Stockholm: Fritzes.
- Pettersson, T. (2012). *Att balansera mellan kontroll och kontakt. Lokala polisars arbete med ungdomar*. Lund: Studentlitteratur.
- Reitzel, J., & Piquero, A. (2006). Does it Exist? *Studying Citizens' Attitudes of Racial Profiling Police Quarterly*, 9(2), 161–183.
- Segal, L. (1997). *Slow motion. Changing masculinities changing men*. London: Virago Press.
- Sernhede, O. (2006). Förortens "hotfulla" unga män. Andrafieringens geografi och behovet av alternativ till stigmatisering och kriminalisering. In *Den segregerade integrationen. Om social sammanhållning och dess hinder*. SOU 2006:73 Stockholm: Fritzes.
- Sernhede, O. (2007). *Alienation is my nation: hiphop och unga mäns utanförskap i Det nya Sverige*. Stockholm: Ordfront.
- Sharp, D., & Atherton, S. (2007). To serve and protect? The experiences of policing in the community of young people from black and other ethnic minority groups. *British Journal of Criminology*, 47, 746–763.
- Skogan, W. G. (2012). Assessing asymmetry: the life course of a research project. *Policing & Society*, 22, 270–279.
- Sollund, R. (2005). Obstacles and possibilities in police research. *Outlines: Critical Social Studies*, 2, 43–64.
- Sollund, R. (2006). Racialisation in police stop and search practice—the Norwegian case. *Critical Criminology*, 14, 265–292.
- Sollund, R. (2007). *Tatt för en annen. Enfeltstudie av relasjonen mellom etniske minoriteter og politiet*. Oslo: Gyldendal.
- Sollund, R. (2008). Tough cop-soft cop? The impact of motivations and experiences on police officers' approaches to the public. *Journal of Scandinavian Studies in Criminology and Crime Prevention*, 9, 119–140.
- Steffensmeier, D., Ulmer, J., & Kramer, J. (1998). The interaction of race, gender, and age in criminal sentencing: The punishment cost of being young, black, and male. *Criminology*, 36(4), 763–796.
- Wacquant, L. (2004). *Fattigdomens fångelser*. Stockholm: Brutus Östlings förlag Symposium.
- Weitzer, R., & Tuch, S. A. (2002). Perceptions of racial profiling: Race, class, and personal experience. *Criminology*, 40, 435–456.
- West, C., & Fenstermaker, S. (1995). Doing difference. *Gender & Society*, 9, 8–37.
- Wycoff, M. A., & Skogan, W. G. (1998). Community Policing. In D. H. Bayley (Ed.), *What works in policing*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Yuval-Davis, N. (2006). Belonging and the politics of belonging. *Patterns of Prejudice*, 40, 197–214.