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***EXPLORING POLICE RELATIONS WITH THE IMMIGRANT
MINORITY IN THE CONTEXT OF RACISM AND
DISCRIMINATION: A VIEW FROM TURKU, FINLAND***

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Abstract

Citizens and immigrant minorities come into contact with the police in various circumstances, either as witnesses, victims of crime, or even as suspects. The present study is an attempt to examine issues concerning racism and discrimination in police/immigrant relations in Finland under these circumstances, which to our knowledge has not received the academic scholastic investigation it deserves. Furthermore, this is also an attempt to look at police/immigrant everyday interactions to help in understanding this relationship. The research was carried out by means of a questionnaire (the sampled respondents consisting of forty-seven graduating police cadets a day before their graduation from the Police School and six serving police officers) and a semi-structured interview with thirteen police/cadets volunteers. These sources then served as the basis of this analysis. Secondly, the participants' experiences were examined in our attempt to determine whether the relationships were cordial or not. The authors are of the opinion that the experiences of these respondents could help to understand and shed some light on how

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these two groups view their relations. The finding indicates some level of ignorance on the part of the police/cadets of the cultural differences between the immigrant minorities and the majority population. The causes of these cultural misunderstandings are discussed and analysed and further investigation is proposed on this issue with regard to ethnic relations in Finland.

Introduction

The image of an unarmed police officer as a public servant in uniform as opposed to a quasi-military police officer is supposed to give the impression of a friendly, and sympathetic, understanding and impeccably behaved individual (Uildricks and Van Mastrign, 1991:10). Despite this idealistic characterisation of the police, however, it is clear that tensions exist between the police and immigrant minorities to a certain degree, when the views of the immigrant minority are assessed as to the friendliness, and sympathetic behaviour of the police. Moreover, it is a fact that all human behaviour can be described either from an individual or a conceptual perspective. This is because human beings are born as unique individuals; this tends to shape our experiences, education, and worldview. Hence, these concepts are all controlled by the societal structure around us. As a result of these stated concepts we may find a range of opinions and behaviour, especially among immigrant minorities in Finland as their experiences may vary. In many cases this can be because of their previous experiences with the police prior to coming to Finland or because of the policing style which is quite different from that of their country of origin.

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Over policing, has received considerable scholarly attention elsewhere (Gordon, 1983:24 – 50; Hunte, 1966:12), and in the latter author's study for the West Indian Standing Conference, it was suggested, for example, that previously the sergeant and constables leave their stations with the express purpose of going "nigger hunting". In other words, they decide among themselves to bring in a coloured person at all costs, even when there are no such orders from their superiors to act in that way. This finding was also similar to another study, by All Faiths for One Race (1978) in which 34 African/Caribbean men in Birmingham were involved. The findings of this study indicated that one-third of the group recounted experiences of at least one incident of police harassment or brutality either to themselves or a close friend, as well as the police speaking in a racially abusive manner to indicate that Blacks were inferior. In spite of the existence of these kinds of problems, however, in the Finnish research community there is still a lack of sufficient scholarly investigation in this area. This is probably because immigration to this country is a recent phenomenon (Egharevba, 2004a), or simply because the police authorities are not interested in this area of research in Finland as the Finnish police tend to enjoy a high approval rating among the population.

The aim of the present study is to explore and shed some light on police relations with immigrant minorities in the context of alleged racism and discrimination, which some segments of the immigrant minority have alleged to be rampant among the police in Finland. This conduct was alleged to be most prevalent in police/cadets dealing with immigrant minority clients with different cultural beliefs, values and customs. If this allegation were to be true, this would be contrary to the widely held ideal within the country. This

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lack of scholarly attention to this field of research could be taken as a non issue within the Finnish research communities. It is therefore not surprising that the Finnish authorities are still battling to grapple with the challenges that the immigration flows have lately brought to this country. However, despite these new challenges, there has not been any major manifestation of racial conflict of a significant magnitude as to automatically warrant investigation as to the level of racial tension between the police and immigrant minorities. Such conflicts have been experienced in other countries in Europe and elsewhere, one example being the United Kingdom, as Holdaway (1996) has observed, where police authority has been “tested to the limit by black youth demonstrating on the street” (p. 105) which he terms a crisis of confidence.

This level of distrust was also revealed in the early 1980s by the Islington Crime Survey in London (Jones, *et al.* 1986:205), where distrust was suggested to be particularly problematic among groups such as the young and ethnic minorities. This led to recommendations regarding police training. Just as the Policy Studies Institute reported in 1983, the police in London were regarded favourably by the majority of the public until they had actually been in contact with the police. In other words, citizens were not surprised however to find some police officers being rude and bullying towards members of the public (Heward, 1994:243). In response to this kind of criticism, the police have been trying to improve their image on two fronts, first by pacifying their protagonists regarding their interactions with the public, and

secondly through the transformation of their internal personal affairs.

Hypotheses

Our hypothesis in the present study is that certain segments of the police/cadets are aware of the tension between them and immigrant minorities in Finland as these groups tend to view the police with more suspicion and mistrust compared to the majority population. Hence, the authors expected to hear about this awareness from the participating respondents. Secondly, the authors wanted to know the general knowledge and awareness of the police of racism within the respondents' personal experiences of dealing with immigrant minorities in Finland. This is because immigrants are more likely to relate any bad police behaviour to their group experiences. The authors have assumed that the police and police cadets were aware of this problem in Finland.

Literature review

In Finland, as elsewhere in the world, new police recruits tend to be socialised by more experienced officers by making them aware of many things, among them "insider" cultural rules. One of the most important of these rules is to produce results. As Fielding (1988) admits, new recruits are aware that arrests are one of the concrete things that serves the organisation's need to assess performance (p.151). Arguing further in the same vein is Westmarland (2001:108 – 109) who suggested that even experienced officers are often afforded status according to their

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arrest rate. In addition to the solitary nature of the work, police officers can often cover up their mistakes and amplify their successes. Another cultural trait of the police is the need to collude with other officers when they tell distorted versions of events especially within the rarefied air of criminal investigations. This is an environment Young (1991) has described as a close and somewhat elite family group, whose strength includes the insider support of other members of that society (p. 81). Similarly, Reiner (2000) has expressed the view that given the low visibility and hence inevitable discretion of much routine police work, the key to any changes has to be in the informal culture of the police and their practical working rules (p.183). Quoting Wilson (1968:7), Reiner has argued that the police are a unique organisation in that discretion increases as one move down the hierarchy (p.86); in effect, those in the lowest ranks in supervisory terms have the most power in operational situations.

Hence, with a similar background in the organisation in the Finnish police, this points us to a dilemma as to who would be willing to blow the whistle on any of their colleagues. The bond between the police, even within the police recruits seems to be strong, to suggest otherwise would be nonsense, thus blowing the whistle on a colleague in this situation could lead to ostracism from the work and social groupings of the others on the team. The fear of such exclusion is, according to Morgan (1987), an even more powerful force than wishing to join the police and be accepted (p. 48). The result of this kind of dilemma is that there is unnecessary pressure on individual police officers to conform to this solidarity culture

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despite any feelings of the ethical and moral implications of these kinds of conduct. Our core area of interest in this evaluation is whether:

- Police officers often have to make a decision about which course of action to take, without the benefit of time for reflection or any peer consultation. This is an area of interest for the present study.
- Secondly, in Finland the issues of racism and discrimination definitions may still be especially difficult for many police officers, probably because they have not been accustomed to having to consider such concepts so explicitly prior to the influx of immigrant minorities to this country. If this is true, the question is what is being done by the police authorities concerning retraining their officers in this regard?
- Finally, the police, being the legitimate enforcers of the law, would love to be above the subjective judgements affected by biases in the cases of visible minorities, ethnicity, gender or class. Is this a common problem within the Finnish police? If the answer is positive, this is bound to generate a serious problem in specific areas such as informers, more generally in items of the rights of a criminal.

Hence, it is clear that the police need to be seen to act in a fair and just manner because they are the body that arbitrates over so many circumstances where discretionary judgements are made or put to practice. Therefore, the police should be understood as the

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custodian of public power and the legitimacy of all their actions is extremely important. For example, the Act (1272/1997, 15§) on police training stipulates that:

“A person to be selected for the police school has to be suitable for taking care of the duties of the police.” What this means in practice is that a minor disciplinary record could bar a person from a career in the police force.²

In order to avoid this kind of problem, before joining the police all new Finnish police recruits are required to produce a certification of their suitability and unimpeachability from the local police chief to the police school authority. To show how important this norm is in enforcing these suitability rules, let us briefly examine one case of a police officer who has been convicted of several assaults in the past. He lost his job as a result of the publicity that surrounded these misdemeanours or offences, (Reinboth, 2002 a). When the same person was later hired by another police department on a temporary basis, this once more raised public concern about the police officers' suitability, and as a result of this, his employment was not renewed (Reinboth, 2002 b). It is not surprising to see this rule being enforced in the Finnish police, as blamelessness in the

² On January 1st 2002 the former Interior Minister commented on a case in which a person who had been convicted of assaults was employed as a police officer. The Minister pointed out that in order for the police to maintain the confidence of the public, there has to be a strict demand for blamelessness in the police force. He went on further to stress that a person with a record of conviction for assault in his judgement is not suitable for police work.

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security apparatus is a much higher priority in the police force than any other civil servant position in Finland (Helminen *et al.* 1999: 329).

The legitimacy of the police and other institutions can only be measured through surveys; one such survey was conducted in 1998 by Lappi-Seppälä *et al.* (1999). Its results suggest that the Finnish police enjoy the confidence of the population since 92% trusted the police, and only about 1% of the sampled population claimed not to do so. This high level of trust when compared with other state and municipal institutions might reveal a different picture if the survey had been carried out differently. What may have been missing from the sampled population in the survey was a sample of the immigrant minority as a separate group from the majority population. It is our belief that if this group had been asked separately how they felt about the police the results may have been different, as has been previously argued by Egharevba, (2004a), i.e. that there is a lot of apprehension about trusting the Finnish police among immigrant minorities in Finland.

Nevertheless, going by the survey results, the police scored extraordinarily well, as did the Finnish Military Forces, which also enjoy the high level of confidence of 88%. Other social institutions measured in the survey did not score as highly as the two institutions above. On the basis of these results, it was concluded that the police have a significant status in Finnish society, which probably led the authors to the conclusion that the police inspire the people with confidence. In other words, the people's confidence in the police is higher than in other social institutions (Lappi-Seppälä *et al.* 1999:25). Their findings should be understood in the context of the fact that the police do fulfil the

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expectations of the population in general. This is not far from the truth, if we look at the other Nordic countries' populations' confidence in the police; for example the citizens' confidence in police ranges from 89% in Denmark, through 88% in Norway and 85% in Iceland (Listhaug and Wiberg, 1995). The analysis of these countries has shown that there is a great sense of confidence in the police, but since the quoted figures are from ten years ago, we are not entirely sure whether these percentages still hold true. If any section of the mainly immigrant minority were to be asked the same sort of questions as regards their confidence in the police, the result would be different (Egharevba, 2005a). This area of research still requires more investigation in Finland. However, let us now shift our attention to how citizens perceive the police, using the crime reports made against the police as the medium of our analysis.

As can be seen from the table below, the high rating of the Finnish police has not stopped citizens from complaining about police tactics or methods. Furthermore, what the above statistics also tell us is that human rights guarantees enacted in the constitution for the protection of all citizen rights are being put to proper use. In Finland, the societal order is guaranteed in section 2 (3) of the constitution, meaning that in all public activities, the law shall be strictly obeyed. Section 118 stipulates that:

CRIME REPORT MADE AGAINST THE POLICE IN 2000 –
2001

	2000	2001
Assaults (this includes aggravated/minor)	92	82
Dereliction of duty (wilful, negligence)	80	97
Misuse of power (include aggravated)	10	8
Bribery/corruption		-
Deformation, Discrimination	8	8
False statement	2	5
Traffic offences	58	47
Other offences	20	31
Other investigation	88	111
Total	358	392

(Source: Office of the Prosecutor General, Finland 2002)

“Civil servants are responsible for the legality of their actions. It also reinforces the notion that everyone who has suffered a violation of his or her rights or sustained any loss through an unlawful act or omission by a civil servant or other person in performing a public task be sentenced to punishment and that the public organisation, official or other person in charge of a public task can be held liable for damages”.

If the injured party feels a suspected crime was not investigated satisfactorily, he or she has a right to complain to either the Parliamentary Ombudsman, or the Chancellor of Justice who act as the supervisory organs responsible for every public agency's and

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civil servants lapses. This is also applicable to any citizen who feels he or she has not been treated fairly and want to make complaints against the police in Finland.

Moreover, in Finland, as elsewhere in the world, human rights and fundamental freedoms are guaranteed to every citizen and legally resident immigrant, for this reason, if any minority immigrant feels he or she has not been treated fairly, he or she has the right to file a complaint which can be directed to the Parliamentary Ombudsman's office, the Chancellor of Justice, and the Ombudsman for Minorities, while at the same time any complaint concerning the police authorities can also be dealt with by the police department of the state provincial offices and the police department at the Ministry of the Interior. In addition, the police chiefs in the local districts and the chief of the national police units can also handle any complaints against police officers. When investigating the complaints, if an erroneous action or serious neglect has been found or it has been concluded that an offence has been committed, the authority responsible for the investigation can make a formal report on the offence, which can then be sent to the prosecutor's office for further investigation.

Offences committed by police officers are investigated following a procedure set out in the Criminal Investigations Act with the public prosecutor acting as the head of the investigation. All allegations of offences against the police are thoroughly investigated. According to the 2001 figures, there were 392 such cases. A pre-trial investigation was conducted in all these listed cases, although

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in many of the reported cases the pre-trial investigation concluded that the police officers had not committed the alleged offences.

Moreover, the cases labelled as “other investigation” were labelled in the sense that it was obvious from the start that no offence had been committed, although, in some cases, the allegation/complaint has been made without giving sufficient reasons, such as the complainant claimed that he or she had not been treated appropriately, or in his or her opinion, the police officers’ use of force was unnecessary or had made inappropriate remarks about his or her race. In some cases, the suspects have made the officers’ crime investigation even more difficult by accusing the investigating police officers of committing a crime during the investigation of the criminal case (Vuorinen, 2002:77). In the above mentioned allegations about police investigations, 80% - 90% of the investigations are dropped by the prosecutor if the investigating supervisor is convinced that an offence has not been committed. If we subtract those labelled “other investigation” from the total for 2001, we are left with 281 reported allegations against the police. Thus when these offences are analysed using the scale of police personnel in Finland it amounts to 35 reported allegations per 1,000 police officers.

Nevertheless, concerning the cases falling under proper investigation, in approximately 60% of the cases, prosecuting discretion is exercised. Normally, it is only in few cases that a policeman/woman will be prosecuted or even convicted of these allegations, having set out the empirical evidence relating to police/immigrant interaction. Let us now look at some concrete examples of discrimination in Finland

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Discriminatory experiences of immigrant minority in Finland

Previous studies in Finland have suggested that immigrant minorities experience more discrimination and racism which are mostly manifested in overt hostility in public encounters and in an indirect mechanism which prevents the employment of members of immigrant minorities in many areas of employment. As a result of this kind of behaviour an overwhelming majority of the immigrant minority are still without basic job opportunities. This has been documented by researchers such as Forsander, (2001); and Wahlbeck, (1999) who demonstrated that the overwhelming majority of the immigrant minority end up not having any employment at all. The introduction of the integration law in 2001 has tended to shift the focus of the assimilation of ethnic minority into society, as was the practice in the past with regard to the Romany minority group in Finland. This strategy has now shifted to that of an integration policy in which the integration law and integration plans by different municipalities are combined. This seems to have made some difference to the lives of members of the immigrant minorities as in addition to the least wanted jobs such as cleaning restaurants, offices and factories, many of them are beginning to find jobs as bus, tram and taxi drivers in some major Finnish cities.

The question is how long will it still take Finnish employers both in the public and the private sector to finally put prejudice aside and offer equal opportunity to immigrant minority members

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especially those with an African background. For instance, hiring black Finns as police, immigration and customs, and frontier guard officers or as bank workers, voting them in as members of the national parliament, or even in the most successful aspect of blacks across the world, which is sports or entertainment, we are yet to see any sizeable number in this area. As having these sorts of role-models will probably go a long way in showing that Finnish society is willing to demonstrate its determination to achieve the idea of equality in this country. This is another area requiring further research, which is unfortunately outside the scope of the present study.

On paper, Finland has tough and precise laws barring racial discrimination in areas such as employment, access to restaurants and housing, yet these laws are rarely enforced and as a result of this, most immigrant minority members still do not have an economic, educational or political voice in this country in the area of protecting their fundamental rights and freedoms. The lack of understanding of these socio-economic problems that immigrant minorities are facing within the society on the part of the enforcers of these laws on anti-discrimination tends to be a problem. Consequently this has resulted in many new immigrant minorities especially, those of African origin, perceiving themselves as being, marginalized while others, regardless of their social or economic background, seem to be better off than Africans.

This poor self-image explains, for example, why many new immigrant minority members such as those from Africa take the issue of being called “neekeri” (nigger) in a more derogatory manner; it is understandable due to their frustration within the society resulting from their state of mind because of the lack of

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many employment opportunities available to them. Thus, it is going to be a daunting task to change the attitude of the majority in order for racial equality to be achieved as a goal, but with a refocusing of the authorities' energy more on investing in educational training, housing and employment and minority tolerance this is an achievable goal that should be pursued vigorously in Finland. Frankly speaking, we still do not see this happening soon, but this is a challenge for the Finnish authorities.

Methodology

The target groups were police cadets and serving police officers. There were forty-seven police cadets and six serving police officers who volunteered to participate in this study: from these numbers, thirteen volunteered for a face-to-face semi-structured interview. The police cadet participants were made available through the police school authorities from the school in Tampere, while in the case of the police officers from Turku, our application for a permit to conduct this research was at the police station for over two years without any decision forthcoming whether to grant us the permission to conduct the research or not. However, our insistence on conducting this research made one of the supervisors intervene by calling the chief of the police, who said he was never aware of our application which had spent over two years on somebody's table without any decision. In spite of this delay, we finally got the permission we needed when we went to see the acting head of the police in 2003, who instructed one of the authors

to meet with a superintendent who could help him in coordinating the interviews with the assigned six police officers for this purpose. For the sake of clarifying this domain of inquiry (i.e. the focus point of this inquiry) let us now provide a working definition of each and some explanatory remarks on racism and discrimination.

Definitions

Racism should be understood in the context of this present paper as abusive, prejudicial or discriminatory behaviour towards those who are different, especially members of another race.

Racial discrimination: the act of perceiving, noticing, or making a distinction between people on the basis of race, this can also mean perpetuating unfair treatment of an individual or groups on the basis of racial prejudice.

Reverse discrimination: this should be understood as giving preferential treatment to underrepresented racial minorities in the area of hiring, education, and employment as well as government/municipal contracts.

Cultural habits: in the present study this should be understood as taking three forms as the authors were of the opinion that this is where the problem with the policing of immigrant minority lies (1) bad habits such as talking loudly, playing music at odd hours, a lack of respect for the opposite sex and (2) routine habits such as limiting eye contact, not knowing how to respect personal space and walking or cycling on the wrong side of the street, (3)

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suspicious and mistrust, this often trivialises the real experience of racism and distracts people from confronting the real cases of injustice.

With this brief definition of key concepts in this study, it should be understood that in Finland, the issue of human rights norms has long been promoted since the nation has a self-image as a place where everyone is equal. This may be a vague term to use bearing in mind the proportion of the number of immigrant minority unemployment statistics, we will categorize this term of equality as a myth in order to comfort the country's ethnic minorities. Thus in the case of the immigrant minorities which make up about 2% of the total population, there are hardly any in top posts in business or government or amongst the 200 members of parliament.

Participants

The method used for this research consisted of two methods, qualitative and quantitative, and the sample consisted of 53 participants from both the police and cadets. Of the 47 graduating police cadets from the police school, we were only able to analyse 45 cadet questionnaires, since two questionnaires had to be removed from the total because of missing vital information. From the Turku police 6 serving police officers assigned for this purpose filled in the questionnaires and they also voluntarily granted one of the authors a one-on-one interview.

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The second method then was a semi-structured interview with seven volunteering police cadets on 28 and 29 of January 2003, and with the six serving police officers who were assigned for the purpose of this research between December 3 and 7 2003 at the police station. There were some difficulties during the interview with the serving police officers due to language. Three of the volunteering officers could only grant the author an interview in Finnish, and for this reason there were some difficulties with their understanding of the original questions, which were in English. Therefore, this led the researcher conducting this aspect of data collection to modify some of the questions. Despite this modification to some of the questions the author still assumes that as a result of these language difficulties, it is possible that some of the responding officers had some problems in choosing the right vocabulary to answer even the rephrased questions and find an appropriate answer to these questions. As their answers were tape-recorded, it occurred to us that we would need the assistance of a native Finnish speaker to translate their answers in order to avoid making mistakes. In addition, in order to avoid preconceptions as Smith (1999) noted that a danger in discourse analysis is that researchers will simply verify their own preconceptions we had to consult several different native speakers, four in number, to translate each statement to see if there were any differences in their interpretation of the police officers answers. Fortunately, they all translated the answers the same way. In addition to the language problem another difficulty is that one of the authors, being an immigrant himself, it would sometimes be difficult to maintain an objective view while interpreting and analysing the respondents' answer however, as scientists, knowing the ethics regarding research of this nature, he has tried to maintain his objectivity as a researcher.

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All the participants were Finns drawn from the Finnish population. While the questionnaires provided the authors with a useful summary of the information and were included in the coded entry, the most interesting data came from the individual interviews where there was a strong defence of the police culture in its entirety. The sampled police cadets consisted of 27 (60%) males and 18 (40%) females and their ages ranged from 20 to 40, while the serving police officers sampled consisted of 3 males (50%) and 3 females (50%) and their ages ranged from 25 to 49 with a mean age of 37.7. The marital statuses of the police cadets were single 15 (33.3%) married, 9 (20%) and co-habiting 21 (46.7%) while that of police officers' were married 33% divorced 17% and co-habiting 50 %

Materials

A questionnaire with 35 questions was filled in by both the serving police officers and the cadets (for easy identification, we shall hereafter refer to the police cadets as PCs and the police officers as POs) and the results were coded and computerised for easy analysis using the SPSS statistical programme. One interesting point that we observed was the common usage of a term by both groups of the responding participants, which tended to rationalize their experiences in order to rearrange their perceptions to fit into a zone of comfort. It then occurred to the authors to assume that the experiences of both groups of respondents could be used to

interpret the general attitude towards immigrant minorities in Finland in general. Their line of defence was very strong during our attempts to determine whether either the police or the cadets were worried about the alleged breaches of immigrants' rights in Finland. The conclusion that can be drawn from the participants' perceptions or views was the use of the terms professional such as "we are professional and we do not prejudge any of our clients" this would seem to us to be a denial of the real issue of breaches of human rights among certain segments of the police in this country. There was no denying the fact that a certain group of those participating still believed or agreed with the notion that most of the immigrant minority are in Finland to exploit the social welfare system and merely to stay unemployed.

This points to some kind of difficulty in the relations between the police and the immigrant minority population, which has a self-perpetuating effect since each group organises its everyday relations on the basis of negative stereotypes, as has been identified earlier by Smith (1985:20). However, what the present research indicates is that both the police officers and police cadets still need some training as a result of the present multi-cultural nature of the Finnish society. This is not to say that there were not enlightened individuals from both participating groups of respondents, but based on fieldwork notes and an analysis of the data collected, the authors are inclined to conclude that there are far more challenges ahead with regard to ignorance on the part of the police. This could be as a result of Finland's short history of immigration and biased media coverage of events concerning immigrant minorities in this society. Certainly the latter should have contributed more to a common sense view on immigrant minority in the society.

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This is similar to a finding by Holdaway (1996:5) that states that common sense is a powerful characteristic which has an impact on the way people think and act. This means that one incident by an immigrant is enough to reinforce the negative attitude due to the national media style of reporting on issues concerning immigrants in general. Hence, immigrants and ethnic minorities are bound to have a vivid recollection of bad experiences just as the police will also have over an extended period of time from their experiences with immigrant minority client in the society. These factors point to the evidence of suspicion of immigrant minorities by the police in Turku. This could be explained given the historical context of the status differential on insecurity which led Holdaway to conclude that “it is not surprising..... that the racial element of crimes is heightened, perhaps even constructed from minimal evidence” (1997:386). This is not to abandon such perceptions but to highlight the problem of reducing the racial effect of such problems in Finland at the time of increasing influx of immigrants that has been continuous since the early 1990s.

Interview

The interviews with the police officers and police cadets were conducted on a face-to-face basis lasting one to two hours. In the case of the police cadets each of our interviews lasted between half an hour to forty-five minutes, in order not to disrupt their other engagements a day prior to their graduation from the police school

Validity and reliability of the data

In the present research the authors were mindful of the most serious concern relating to qualitative research which is how to determine the validity of the measurement that leads to the development of theory (Merton, 1957, and Silverman, 1993). A semi-structure one-on-one interview was devised for this research, however, interviewing can be used as a resource for understanding how the respondents make sense of and act within their social surroundings. During the interview the authors were very cautious in interpreting what was observed during the interview. Thus the respondents' account of their experiences in this present study is the core basis of the analysis. Secondly, an interview is a social encounter. It was not the authors' aim to produce a false social situation which has no validity beyond the interview, but to try to explore and understand the respondents' everyday experiences. According to Silverman (1985:165) interview data reports are not an external reality displayed in the respondents' utterances, but on the internal reality constructed as both the interviewer and interviewee contrive to produce the appearance of a recognisable interview. Also concurring with this idea was Mills (1940), who correctly stated that observation is a complex process in which it is more of sensory experiences than merely seeing. Furthermore, Smith (1999) has also argued that the key to the issue concerning validity in research does not depend on whatever method that was used in conducting such research or data gathering, but on whether the data reflected reality, he argued further that research questions asked often reflect who we are, our race, class, sexual orientation, gender and personal trajectory. Hence in this present research the

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authors were mindful of all the above concepts as the interview questions were solely based on the objective as laid out in the present research, which was to determine the police/cadets perception of immigrant minority in Finland. However, what has been outlined so far does necessarily show the need for more research with a larger sample of police/cadets in Finland, as many of them may have different dispositions regarding immigrant minorities, which might have resulted in some experiencing more unfair or bias treatment or as a result of some of the immigrant minorities being more socially active than others in their encounters with the police.

Findings

The questions relating to the police/cadets' encounters with immigrant minorities were used to enable the participants to elaborate on events and possible personal experience while dealing with immigrant minority clients. The responses of both groups were coded and entered into the computer for analysis purposes. The coding and the interview were conducted by one of the authors of the present study. All the interviews were tape recorded, the transcript was read repeatedly in order to eliminate any discrepancies that may arise as a result of mistakes while entering the data into the computer, and the reliability of this method adopted was found to be one hundred percent efficient.

What was clearly demonstrated from the participants' answers to the study interview questions as regards bad experiences with immigrant minority clients was that there were certain members of immigrant minorities who would not even bother to answer any question from a female police officer merely due to her gender, some immigrant minority clients talked loudly, and some were aggressive towards officers. In spite of this provocation, however, in the responding officers' opinion, there was no recollection of having abused their power in any way in their work-related experiences with immigrant minority clients.

Police/cadets' attitude towards the understanding of racism

Both the police and the cadets were asked whether they felt that immigrant minorities have a negative attitude towards the police: the answers sought from the participants included, very often, often, cannot say and never. Out of 45 police cadets and six serving police officers, only one from each group believed that immigrant minority members have a negative attitude towards their profession.

Thus, in both groups there is still a lack of awareness about how immigrant minorities view the police in Finland, probably because there has not yet been any major confrontation between the police and immigrant communities. However, there is some sort of knowledge among some segments of the police about immigrants harbouring negative views of the police in Finland, yet to others this is not a problem as long as the police continue to enjoy the high rating among the majority population 92% in 1998, why bother about immigrant minority negative views? In addition, the

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police/cadets were also asked whether it was fair to label them as racist. Out of a total of 53 participants, 51 (96.2%) disagree with this characterisation of the police as being racist, only the remaining 2 (3.8%), were not surprised at this opinion, one individual from both groups did agree with this characterisation to some extent. In other words these two individuals did not see anything wrong with this allegation being made against any public officials, including the police, for these two individuals also believed that sometime in the future their colleagues will learn to live with these kinds of accusations from immigrant minorities in Finland. The most common answer that was given by those who despair being labelled racist was that they were professional as such they did not consider any immigrant/ethnic background when carrying out their duties; these were expressed in these words by a cadet and two police officers:

“I can say that some officers may not be open to the idea of having a lot of immigrants in our society, it is because of this that the minority do think of us as being racist in uniform” (female, 27-years-old cadet).

“I can say quite unequivocally that the police in Finland are not racist, for we try inasmuch as we could to treat everyone of our clients in the same way, for this reason the police are not at all racist, of course one is not discounting that they may be some segments of the community we police who are racists, that is not for me as a police officer to judge” (male 49-year-old officer).

“Police usually deal with people that often do not want anything to do with the police; this may probably be responsible for why the police are being accused of being racists” (male, 35-years-old officer).

In the participating groups in this study, the majority resent the word racist because they consider its usage unfair. For immigrant minority members to have alleged that they are racists was very unacceptable to many, some even asked whether these allegations were because they were yet to see any visible minority officers in their ranks. The general conclusion from their reaction was that this kind of allegation was wrong and many were of the opinion that this should warrant a more in-depth investigation into these kinds of allegations to ascertain the true position of the Finnish police. Thus, the Finnish police are aware that the police should mirror Finnish society, for efforts are still being made to recruit and encourage members of the under-represented groups recruitment drive to the police forces, yet this still seems a daunting task among the police authorities in this country. Nevertheless, there was still some reassurance that Finland will be attempting to resolve the issue of the lack of visible minority members in the police force. If the police are to succeed in this endeavour, they will need to invest heavily in breaking down any barriers that exist within the admission structure.

The overwhelming majority of both groups of participants agreed that in any democracy, such as that in Finland, with openness, all freedoms guaranteed in the constitution and transparent institutions, the police should expect to be criticised in a valid, constructive way. Going by minority allegations of the police

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being racists this should take place even if this is unacceptable to the profession, probably, because many other public institutions do not get so much criticism as the police do from time to time. In other words, there may be other institutions that may have a worse record of racism and discrimination, but they may not be getting the level of scrutiny that police institution receives from time to time. In addition, those questioned believed that the police are taking the issue of diversity training very seriously and there are plans to encourage immigrant minorities into the police.

In the available statistics on official complaints against the police for 2001, the reported figures show that 392 complaints were made against the police, and of those 97 were for wilful negligence, 8 complaints for discrimination and 8 complaints also for misuse of power. It is clear from these statistics that the number of reported cases against the police is still very small. This picture may not be very different from other Nordic countries, but there was a lack of statistical evidence to make this comparison so this should be left for other studies to follow up. On the other hand, 8 complaints of discrimination and 97 of wilful negligence to us seem too high a number to be taken lightly as this is an organization that aims to protect and serve the public. What we found very interesting however was that these were merely allegations. Though the different government protection agencies in Finland do take these sorts of allegations very seriously and whenever such allegations are made they are totally investigated, in most cases the prosecutors are not able to bring charges against police officers

either due to lack of evidence or lack of sufficient evidence on the part of the accuser.

Of the 45 police cadets in the present study, 42 (93%) said that it was very unfair to the police profession that these kinds of unsubstantiated allegations were made against the police, while 3 (7%) believed such allegations should be taken as a form of challenge to the work of the police in immigrant minority relations in Finland. Out of six serving officers, 3 (50%) believed that these allegations were unfair to the profession, while 2 (33.3%) believed this to be fair and it should be taken as a challenge, while 1 (17%) refrained from taking a position. It would appear to us that even the serving police officers were more prepared to accept any criticism of their profession in good faith compared to their cadet counterparts. In spite of this conclusion, however, we have to stress that caution should be taken while looking at this analysis because if this analysis had been based on a much larger group of serving police officers across the country, the result may well have been different. Nevertheless, there was the general feeling among the participants that the Finnish police are not racist.

Discussion on race relation with the police/cadets

The Police and cadets were asked if they ever discussed race relations with their colleagues at work or school. Of the 45 police cadets, 39 (87%) said they do discuss race relations with their colleagues at school, while 4 (9%) stated that they do not discuss such issues and 2 (4%) could not say. Among the serving police officers there was unanimous agreement on this aspect of discussion among themselves especially in understanding cultural

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differences. Thus, in this analysis what can be concluded is that the serving police officers felt the need to discuss such issues and this demonstrates that racism is becoming an important subject of discussion among the police. They claimed to have had both positive and negative experiences with immigrant minority clients and they were all for the need to have a broader diversity training for the police in Finland.

Media portrayal of the police

A question that was asked of only serving police officer participants was how they felt they were being portrayed in the Finnish mass media. The answer was mixed: those who agreed that they were being portrayed in good light were 5 (83%), while 1 (17%) disagreed because there have been instances where the media had been unfair to an individual policeman such was the case with the officer with the assault conviction in 2002 which illustrated the media's lack of support when it comes to certain personal issues. This same participant also admitted that this kind of journalism is too sensational in nature. The police cadets were not asked this question because at the time of data collection they were not yet employed as full-time police officers. What these statistics point out is that the majority of the responding police officers felt that they are being portrayed objectively in the media, even though a minority felt otherwise

Police officers' experiences with immigrant minority clients

The serving officers were asked about the level of bad experiences they have had with immigrant minority clients? Of the six serving police officers, 2 (33%) said they have often received disrespect from immigrant minority clients of similar origin, while 4 (67%) said that they have not encountered any of such disrespect from immigrant minority clients. A closer analysis of those who had encountered disrespect at the hands of immigrant minority clients revealed that the few were mostly female officers, thus the event may well have been due to the cultural difference between the clients' country of origin and Finland. We would argue that this sort of experience should certainly not be taken as an isolated incident because it is still a common practice among certain immigrant minorities to disrespect women in any encounter they have had with them, but the cause of the issue is that these groups fail to understand that there is gender equality in Finland. It is therefore recommended that educational awareness training should be arranged for new immigrant minority members on arrival in this country on the issues of gender equality and general legal norms in this part of the world.

The problem of the lack of visible minority members in the police force

The police officers and cadets were asked whether they felt it was necessary to introduce some preferential treatment into the police drive to include visible minorities in the police every year. This question is of particular importance because of the continuous increase in immigrant populations since the early 1990s. The main

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reason is to be able to increase the representativeness of the police as society is presently increasingly experiencing changes with regard to its population. Of the 45 cadets questioned, 35 (78%) thought that it was a bad idea to lower the standard of recruitment into the police school only to accommodate visible minorities, while 6 (13%) had no opinion, 4 (9%) thought this was a good idea. However amongst the serving police officers, 5 (83%) felt that it was a good idea and only 1 (17%) felt it was a bad idea to embark on such moves. Their theory was that by allowing these visible minorities into the police force this will give a balanced picture as the police of comprising all segments of the population within society. Those agreeing with this model were 9% of the police cadets and 83% of the serving police officers, and those disagreeing with this model range from 78% in the cadet group to 17% from the serving police officer groups. In this regard, the police authority in Finland see their work cut out for them by the responses of the participants in the present study, for it is only by embarking on recruiting visible minorities to reflect the representativeness of the entire society that the police can win the trust and support of immigrant minorities in Finland.

The only worrying element of any significance was the percentage of those cadets unwilling to accept such immigrants is alarmingly high, but with a little bit of effort on the part of the authorities this should be overcome relatively swiftly. One should not dispute their stance on recruitment into the police school on merit and not on preferential treatment, since this discontent with any such proposal for a reduced requirement for visible minority member was clearly

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evident from the statistics. Even though this seems contrary to the serving police officers' position, most probably if we were to use a larger sample of serving police officers it would be difficult to predict what the result might be and whether it would still be positive or more towards the cadets' position. This area of scholastic inquiry is left for others to pursue later in the form of an investigation. Nevertheless, it is necessary to first provide assistance to immigrant minority members who are interested in joining the police force, perhaps in the form of scholarships in order to help them achieve the set standard for recruitment.

This has become necessary because most of these visible minorities are to be found in under-privileged positions in society, which has resulted in many of them suffering from psychological pressure and the under-utilisation of their skills associated with a lack of employment and poverty. Furthermore, this disadvantaged position of many immigrant minority members has made many of them unable to compete with their majority population counterparts even before the process of selection is undertaken. A scholarship could help many of those interested in the police as a profession to attend language courses and meet their immediate financial needs in order to concentrate on learning the language and other subjects required for admission to the police school. This scholarship will act as a motivating factor for most of the immigrant minority members to work hard in order to be on a par with the majority population during the process of selection to the police school, for it has to be seen that even members of the immigrant minority have an equal chance of being selected. This will be different from the way it is practiced today in Finland. Some of the participants summed it up this way:

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“the process of encouraging immigrant minority enrolment into the police school should act as a turning point in reflecting a balanced picture of the police as comprising all segment of the society’s population” (female cadet, 27-years-old).

“I would welcome any other means of recruiting immigrant minority members to the police school instead of lowering the entry standard, for personally I believe that the police should reflect the community in which they serve as this may act as a catalyst for those still having doubt about the police as an institution (male police officer, 39-years-old).

Finally, another of the cadets added that:

“If immigrant minority members are seen in the police uniform and they are seen by both the police colleagues and the society at large, this could have a positive effect of the view of the immigrant minority in this society (male cadet 32-years old).

One very important message that has been demonstrated by most of these respondents is that giving an opportunity to immigrant minority members to join the police force should be a priority for the police authorities in Finland.

Racial awareness training

Twenty-three (51%) of the cadets agreed that there is a need for more cultural awareness training, while thirteen (27%) cadets felt that there was no need for such awareness training as they are satisfied with the knowledge they have already acquired in their police training, and nine (20%) did not have an opinion. Amongst the serving police officers, four (67%) agreed with the cadet regarding the need for more cultural awareness training, while two (33%) did not have an opinion about any extra training or retraining. As they have all had adequate training on racial awareness already, these two thought that it was enough for the time being. Thus, it is interesting to note that even the police/cadets felt the need to have more cultural awareness training in spite of the fact that they are highly rated and trusted by the majority population in the country. Probably this awareness is necessitated by the increasing number of different nationalities of their clients in work- related situations.

With the foregoing in mind, it would have been interesting to discover from both the cadets and the serving police officers the sort of cultural training they have had in the police school prior to the influx of immigrants into this country. However, this was not asked because this might be construed as sending the wrong message in challenging whatever training they might have had. As this was not the aim of the present research study, this particular question was left out of the entire study. Thus while this kind of question might serve as a useful point for starting an investigation into police immigrant relations in Finland in the past, the researchers were more concerned about the future of race relations

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in this country. It is also important to stress here that this is not to say that the Finnish police are racists who need awareness training, but it is the author's desire to test or explore the impact of such training on both groups recently due to the changing nature of the Finnish society. Since such racial awareness training might highlight the disadvantaged position of the immigrant minority, hence more emphasis on such training should be placed on the positive contribution the immigrant minorities are making to the society, since focusing only on their being disadvantaged may send the wrong message to the police that this is the group that needs constant policing. This may be interpreted as one of the obstacles in fighting racism and discrimination, which is the equation of this concept with strong personal or individual prejudice that often leads to hatred. As correctly observed earlier by Sivanandan, (1983:17) in the UK, this perception that disadvantaged individuals are prone to crime was very strong and widespread within the police in the United Kingdom, consequently resulting in the existence of racist thoughts being denied and therefore left unchecked. The author argued further that this information alone does not, however, change police attitudes and the behaviour of people, but if attitudes and behaviour are to change, the people should be receptive to information (p.22).

This view should be developed further by researchers in Finland to see how this concept relates to the attitude and behaviour of Finnish police towards those who are different. This should be done by organizing projects; the first priority in such projects should be for the participants to get to know each other by having

simulated games or brainstorming with a view to allowing the participants to share their ideas with a commitment to changing attitudes. The first important criterion should be the inclusion of people with an immigrant minority background in such a project from the start. In addition to this, there should also be debates as to whether to shift from understanding different cultures and values towards identifying racism and discrimination within the police. What should be uppermost in the minds of police/cadets is the notion that developing personal awareness and the acceptance of difference within immigrant minority communities is not the same as identifying racial discrimination within the actions of their colleagues. This awareness training will go a long way in helping to identify and distinguish what is racial discriminatory behaviour from what is not racial discrimination towards immigrant minority.

Public Control Over the Police

The police officers and cadets were asked whether public control of the police as it is presently organized is adequate for preventing or curbing the misuse of police power. In other words, whether individuals who felt the police have acted arbitrarily could file a complaint report with either the Parliamentary Ombudsman or Chancellor for Justice. Of the 45 cadets, 34 (76%) seem to agree that this mechanism has functioned well and they do not see any reason for making changes or improving this mechanism, while 6 (13%) had no opinion of the adequacy of this system for prevention of abuse of police power, and 3 (7%) agree with the need for further improvement of the mechanism. In the case of the serving police officers, there was a general acknowledgment of the important role this public control mechanism has played and they

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all added that if there was any need for further improvement, they would support such moves, 3 (50%) were prepared to support such moves, while 2 (33%) had no opinion whether it was satisfactory or not and but one (17%) answered there was no need for such changes.

Conclusion/recommendation

This study has tried to explore police/immigrant minority relations in the city of Turku, Finland by focusing on how the police perceive racism and discrimination within the police organization. In the process this study has also identified some problems faced by the police that may be similar to those faced by other police organizations across the world that interact with a large concentration of immigrant minorities. Thus, problems such as a lack of immigrant minority members in the police force, and a lack of sufficient racial awareness training during police training are some of the problems that need urgent attention in Finland. In addition, the public institutions established for the control over the use of police power, and attitude of the police to these institutions i.e. whether the way it was presently instituted was adequate were all dealt with in this present study. However, the present study represents one of the few studies to explore police/immigrant minority relations in Finland in the context of racism and discrimination. Some of the recommendations in this study should be explored further by the police authorities both in this country and elsewhere in making the police as representative of the general

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population as possible. This is especially important in Finland because of the increasing flow of different immigrant groups into this country since the early 1990s. It is strongly hoped that some of the points raised in this study will stimulate a more intensive debate for further research interest into racism and discrimination within the police in order to improve race relations in this society. More emphasis should be directed towards the following points:

- The police authority in Finland needs to improve their publicity drive toward recruitment to the police school in order to attract more immigrant minority members' interest.
- There should be more increased information on cultural beliefs, values and customs in the police training school as this would facilitate mutual understanding of differences by the police in this country.
- More interaction should be encouraged between the police and the immigrant minorities in Finland in order for the police to know what the immigrant minority thinks of the profession.
- In the case of unsubstantiated allegations made against the police, the police should be encouraged to seek redress in a court of law within this society.
- There should be less publicity in the cases of police misconduct in the mass-media until investigations are concluded.

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