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Private security policing by ‘ethnic matching’ in Swedish suburbs: avoiding and managing accusations of ethnic discrimination

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Recent research has stressed the dependency of the private security industry on public recognition and legitimacy. This article discusses how one Swedish security company, through the work of its individual security officers ‘on the ground’, carries out legitimization work in relation to the public. The empirical focus in this examination is on the company’s work vis-à-vis youths from ‘foreign’ backgrounds in the ethnically and socioeconomically segregated suburbs of one of the largest cities in Sweden. The ethnographic data collected through field-based interviews and observations on the security company officers’ work, perceptions and views point to a specific type of legitimacy management strategy adopted by the company in question in its operational context: ‘policing by ethnic matching’. The article shows how this strategy is implemented to avoid anticipated accusations of ethnic discrimination, to manage such accusations when they nevertheless occur and to repair the legitimacy of the business when it is seen to have been damaged. The techniques used in the company’s efforts to advance its legitimacy claims are shown to rely on impression and emotion management.

Keywords: ethnic discrimination; impression management; legitimacy management; policing

Introduction

Early research on the private security industry (DeWaard 1999) highlighted a difference in the way the existence and practices of *public* and *private* policing are legitimated, identifying a distinct accountability context and mechanism for each. While the police as an authority is regarded as accountable to the government and the public at large (almost always through statutory regulations), the private security industry is commonly considered ‘not accountable to the public, but to the clients who contract [them] for its services’ (De Waard 1999, p. 169). Yet, just like the police, also private security companies have a need of gaining and maintaining certain legitimacy in the eyes of the public. They not only are in the business of ‘supplying services and products to [their] customers’, but also wield considerable power through their ability to regulate the conduct of the public in private as well as public spaces of the city (Thumala *et al.* 2011, p. 284). While the industry thus stands in need of public recognition and public legitimacy, it often finds itself struggling with problems that hamper its chances of winning any, including poor quality of staff, the

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‘cowboy’ character of many of the companies operating in the field and associations with criminality and violence (Thumala *et al.* 2011, p. 287, see also Zedner 2006).

In an international perspective, the country regarded as something of a forerunner when it comes to the quality and regulation of the security industry has for some time already been Sweden (De Waard 1999, van Steden and Sarré 2007, Button 2007a). Yet, even Swedish private security companies and, as we shall see, individual security officers frequently face the need of having to account for the tarnished reputation of the industry at large. In this article, I will look more closely at this imperative, exploring the legitimacy management strategies of one private security company operating in Sweden. More specifically, I will examine a particular type of strategy the company in question has used to achieve its goals in this respect, namely, ‘policing by ethnic matching’. This approach has had the express purpose of helping the company to avoid anticipated accusations of ethnic discrimination, to manage such accusations when they are voiced and to repair the legitimacy of the company’s operations and of the industry sector more broadly when needed. This article seeks to address the following questions: how, then, is the strategy of policing by ethnic matching – proposed by the security company examined as a distinctly modern and progressive strategy – carried out in practice? How does it relate to the company’s view of ethnic diversity in its staff, and in society in general, as a specific asset? Are contemporary notions of ethnic diversity – diversity not only as an asset, but also as factor in the socioeconomical segregation of the cities – reproduced or changed through it?

The policing strategy that the approach entailed for the security company in concern mainly targeted people residing in, or otherwise associated with, the ethnically and socioeconomically segregated suburbs of one of the largest cities in Sweden. The group of citizens covered by this definition represents a specific category in Sweden, one that frequently risks being seen as a cause of others’ insecurities and, consequently, as less worthy of protection than others in the country (Bradley and Sedgwick 2009, p. 486). The general tendency to criminalise socio-economic problems of marginalised populations that has been observed elsewhere (e.g. Waquant 2007) can also be detected in the ethnically and socioeconomically segregated metropolitan suburbs of Sweden (Sernhede 2006, 2009, Forkby and Liljeholm Hansson 2011). As a result of the country’s post-war housing and city planning politics, entire new neighbourhoods were built in the outlying areas of major Swedish cities. The aim to modernise the housing stock and combat overcrowding in urban centres was reached, although with an unanticipated side effect: increased ethnic and socioeconomical polarisation (OECD 1998). Much as a result, the degree of segregation in the country’s largest cities, between ‘foreigners’ and ‘Swedes’, has today grown higher than the average for OECD countries as a whole (OECD 1998, Molina 2005). At the same time, the image, spread in the country’s media, of “‘the threatening youth” in the dangerous suburbs’ has become part of ‘the public consciousness’ (Sernhede 2006, p. 102).¹

In this article, I analyse ethnographic fieldwork data collected through informal field-based interviews and shadowing of private security officers working for a private security company in Sweden. The policing strategy of the security company in question was developed in 2009–2011, a period witnessing particularly violent clashes in some of the ethnically and socioeconomically more segregated suburbs of a major metropolitan city in the country, between suburban youths on the one hand

and the police, fire-fighters and private security officers on the other hand. During this period, employees working for Swedish rule-of-law institutions were increasingly more frequently subjected to personal threats, direct violence and more or less explicit accusations of ethnic discrimination in connection with their work in suburban environments, coming to experience the latter as notably resentful of their presence (Forkby and Liljeholm Hansson 2011, Björk 2013). Over time, private security officers – along with their company managements – grew to expect accusations of discrimination and, indeed, racism to regularly be directed at their work. The accusations made were often enough accompanied by direct personal violence against security company employees to make their work tasks more difficult to perform, prompting the company studied for this article to develop and implement new strategies aimed to forestall accusations of discrimination and (thus) violence, to manage situations in which such accusations and violence nevertheless occurred, and to improve the somewhat tarnished reputation of private security services more broadly. In implementing the new policing strategy in their daily work and in their interactions with the inhabitants of the ethnically and socioeconomically segregated suburbs, the security officers of the company in question were nevertheless faced with a particular challenge. On the one hand, those living in these suburbs (and other groups associated with them) were regarded as a (potential) security problem, as a source of insecurity for other citizens that needed to be neutralised by the security officers; on the other hand, the security officers implementing the new policy on the ground needed to work in such a manner as to be able to win and maintain legitimacy for their operations in the eyes of the very public that their policy was intended to target.

The police research covers the promotion of (ethnic) diversity within the police force and also ‘policing diversity’ as a means of achieving legitimacy (Rowe 2002, Cashmore 2002, van Ewijk 2011, Peterson and Uhnöo 2012, Pettersson 2013), but in the private security industry, strategies concerning ethnic diversity are a new phenomenon that has not been researched. Previous research in the field of private security has focused on the actual service delivery of private security officers (Hobbs *et al.* 2003, Wakefield 2003, Button 2007b), the ‘risk gaze’ or risk profiling targeting specific categories of people (McCahill 2002, Wakefield 2003, Hutchinson and O’Connor 2005) and also ethnic profiling by private security officers (Gabbidon 2003, O’Dougherty 2006, Kempa and Singh 2008), as well as public perceptions of the industry (Livingstone and Hart 2003, Noaks 2008, van Steden and Nalla 2010, Berndtsson 2011, Thumala *et al.* 2011). This article broadens and, in part, rearranges this focus of the previous research on private security by looking at ‘policing by ethnic matching’, which involves deliberate attempts by private security officers to gain legitimacy in relation to a specific public by claiming ‘likeness’ to it in terms of ethnic background. In practice, as we shall see, the approach relies on stereotypical use of appearance, language, bodily style, and emotion.

Thumala and her collaborators’ term ‘legitimation work’ refers to ‘the symbolic legitimation devices deployed by security purveyors’, entailing ‘rituals and claims intended to justify the activities and purposes of the security industry’ (Thumala *et al.* 2011, p. 284). The authors investigate the legitimation work that key players and stakeholders in the security industry perform in order to win legitimacy for themselves and their actions among colleagues, other industry players and the police. Such legitimation work is shaped by audience perceptions and assessments of it, for

which reason the specific type and character of the legitimisation work will always vary depending on the type of audience. The specific audience targeted by the legitimisation work of the private security officers employed by the security company studied for this article consisted of urban inhabitants living in, or otherwise associated with, an ethnically and socioeconomically segregated Swedish suburb who come from 'foreign' backgrounds. The security officers were all employed by one and the same privately owned and operated security company that used (ethnic) diversity (of staff) as a key concept in its promotional material. This fact alone made it of interest to subject it and the work of its employees, to closer scrutiny, since it seemed to express an awareness of the importance of 'ethnicity' in policing. The resulting case study reported below in this article was then carried out as part of a larger research programme looking at the question of how ethnicity is policed in a diversified Sweden.

In what follows, I will start out by giving an account of the research methods chosen, the type of data used and the analysis carried out. After that, I discuss the image and policing strategy of the security company studied as it was presented to me by the company's managing director. Next, representative examples of how policing by ethnic matching is carried out in actual practice are presented. Finally, the main findings from the analysis are outlined and discussed in terms of an ethnicised security provision that results in a naturalisation of the categories 'native' ('Swede') and 'foreigner' ('immigrant'), with the specific type of legitimisation work – here termed 'policing by ethnic matching' – done by the security officers of the company studied considered as an example of the kinds of impression and emotion management techniques one finds employed among private-sector security providers in Sweden.

Methods, data and analysis

The fieldwork part of this research was carried out in January–April and September–October 2011, for a few full days each week. The data gathered included both informal field-based interviews focusing on current as well as past events and observations of events occurring in the course of the studied security company employees' everyday professional activities. The technique employed was that of 'shadowing' (Czarniawska 2007), or the 'go-along method' (Kusenbach 2003), which entailed accompanying security officers engaged in their daily work, observing and listening to them and asking questions from them about that work as it was being performed. All this was to develop an understanding of the settings where the security officers' work was being carried out, to be able to better look at that work from the perspective of the private security officers involved and to be able to chart the social interactions that this work entailed or that defined it. Observations and informal field-based interviews were carried out on 27 different occasions, for 4–13 contiguous hours each time (most commonly seven). While riding along with the informants in their cars, notes (on key phrases, metaphors, specific wordings or expressions, facts of events taking place, etc.) were kept to record down key observations and contents of informal conversations with the officers accompanied. When walking with the latter on the street, or accompanying them when they were working the door at a nightclub or a restaurant, these notes were made on a mobile phone so as to draw as little attention as possible to the presence of a third

person/researcher. At the conclusion of each field day, the notes were written out and organised, usually on the following day. The number of hours spent shadowing the private security officers amounted to 204 in total. In addition, one formal interview was conducted with the managing director of the security company in question, focusing, among other things, on the rationale and arguments for the company's strategy of policing by ethnic matching.

There are three types of private security officers working in Sweden, in each case involving a different authority, different training and different work tasks (see Munck *et al.* 2005). The security officers studied for this article represented all three of these types, carrying out different work tasks in different types of settings, although they were all employed by one and the same private security company. Those who in this article are called Type 1 security officers are authorised and controlled by county administrative boards and can only use force in self-defence, commonly carrying nothing more than a baton and handcuffs on duty.² For this study, eight individual Type 1 security officers were shadowed on a total of 10 separate occasions. These officers patrolled corporate and municipal buildings and building grounds, including public schools, during evenings and nights, moving by car between the various locations (a building or set of buildings) assigned to their responsibility, and they were also accompanied on building and site checks carried out on foot.

Type 2 security officers, in contrast, are trained, authorised and controlled by the police, and they have the authority to deny a person access to a specific location, remove a person by force, detain persons, restrain persons with handcuffs and use violence in self-defence.³ For this study, Type 2 security officers were accompanied on four separate occasions when they were working in restaurants/nightclubs, either working the door or patrolling the area. On the first two of these occasions, there were two security officers working together. On the third occasion, the officers working together numbered five, and on the fourth occasion there were a total of 21 officers working together. During the third and the fourth occasion, I mostly accompanied the supervising officer, as that enabled better access to information on the incidents taking place during those evenings and nights. Besides working just like any other security officer on duty, the supervising officers in the company in question received all incident reports from their fellow officers in the group when these chose to intervene in a situation, which then needed to be directly reported to them.

Lastly, six security officers of Type 3 who worked day shifts together at a municipal police station's reception desk were accompanied on a total of 13 separate occasions. The Type 3 security officers are authorised by county administrative boards and, like Type 1 security officers, trained by privately owned and operated companies (the most notable among these being an academy run by the employers' association in the country's private security services sector). Type 3 security officers may search persons and property to confiscate items, forcefully remove persons from a restricted area and detain persons on suspicion of espionage and/or sabotage.⁴ Since to qualify as Type 3 security officer, one has to first become authorised as a Type 1 security officer, and most of the Type 3 security officers accompanied for this research had in fact been authorised and trained as both Type 1 and Type 2 officers, it was possible to also discuss with these individuals the work experiences they had had while still Type 1 and 2 officers, besides their current work as Type 3 officers.⁵

Among the security officers 'shadowed' for this article there were both men and women, and the officers came from both ethnically 'Swedish' and 'non-Swedish' backgrounds. To protect the study participants' anonymity, no fuller description of their characteristics, or of the customers paying for the security services of their employer company, is provided in this article, given the relatively small sample size and the fairly narrowly defined geographical context in which all of the officers worked. Such information would, moreover, risk revealing the identity of the security company studied, as most individual security officers working in the private sector, whether in managerial positions or out on the street, tend, at least in Sweden, to be well aware of, and knowledgeable about, their competitors on the security services market, including the exact type and nature of the services these provide as well as where, when and for whom they provide their services. Yet, given the high relevance of that information for the purposes of this article, in the discussion that follows, a distinction is often made between security officers from a 'Swedish' background and from a 'non-Swedish' background, where necessary or helpful, also indicating the region of origin and the mother tongue of the individual security officer in question.

The 'shadowing' or 'go-along' method made it possible to explore how the security officers studied for this article perceived and interpreted the people and the places that constituted their work environment, how they positioned themselves in relation to, and interacted with, different groups of people and what their views were on their work providing security in different parts of the city. From early on, it became clear that the way in which the security officers perceived and interpreted different places and people was related to their, and their colleagues', previous experiences both on the job and as individual citizens in society. Through this method, it was possible to develop a better understanding of how these individuals, in the performance of their work at different sites, integrated their memory of past events and experiences with anticipations of future events (cf. Kusenbach 2003, p. 472). For example, when working the doors of a particular nightclub, one security officer stated that 'People here hate us', implicitly referring to certain visitors to the establishment, located in a specific part of the city (but also more generally to 'people in this neighbourhood'), whereas at other sites located in other neighbourhoods the security officers seemed more assured that their presence and work there was appreciated.

The security officers used a variety of strategies to handle what they assumed or experienced to be such negative responses from the public to their presence in different parts of the city. As Kusenbach (2003, p. 478, emphasis in original) has noted, the go-along method helps make 'visible and intelligible how everyday experience *transcends* the here and now, as people weave previous knowledge and biography into immediate situated action'. How the situated actions of the security officers studied for this article unfolded depended, to some degree, on their memories of past events and actions, and on their interpretations of the social world. It was common for them to categorise and classify people and places, something that, to be sure, can be understood as basically a necessary thing to do in order to interpret the social world (Bowker and Star 1999, Loseke 2003), especially when faced with (potential or actual) threats and risks. The people and places, however, were in this case experienced and understood in openly ethnic terms. In this article, 'ethnicity' is analysed as 'not a thing *in* the world, but a perspective *on* the world' (Brubaker *et al.* 2004, p. 32, italics in original). The strategy of policing by ethnic matching can thus

be understood to constitute a response to an interpretation of people and places in ethnic terms.

During the first stage of the analysis, all mentions of, and references to, ‘ethnicity’ and ‘ethnic matching’ in the field notes were identified in, and lifted from, the dataset containing a total of 110 pages of field notes. After that, these data were scrutinised more closely to understand when, how and why the private security officers interpreted certain people and places in ethnic terms, as well as when, how and why the strategy of ‘policing by ethnic matching’ was put to use, considering also any claims made to justify this type of policing practice and its purposes. It is important to note that the materials used for this study in fact consisted of mainly two different types of data. Firstly, there were field notes recording my own direct observations. Secondly, there were field notes recording the contents of the conversations and informal interviews carried out on a continuous basis during all of the 27 occasions on which security officers were accompanied. For the most part, these conversations were focused on what were, at the time, *ongoing* events, while they also sometimes addressed *past* experiences and events. The research material culled from the field notes on the informal conversations and interviews as well as from the transcripts of the formal interview with the managing director of the security company is in this article analysed as *talk* (claims) about work and its purposes and pre-conditions (as distinct from my own direct observations of actual work practices). Accordingly, in what follows, the strategy of policing by ethnic matching as a specific type of legitimation work is analysed both in terms of situated actions and as ‘moral stories’ conveyed publicly, containing claims made to explain and justify the activity of ‘policing by ethnic matching’ along with its forms and purposes. One important aspect of this particular kind of legitimation work is the use of particular stories to shape one’s own perceptions and those of others, to create and maintain the company’s organisational identity as well as the self-identity of its individual employees, and to influence the audiences’ perceptions and evaluations of the work done by the company, its employees and the industry at large (Suchman 1995, Ashforth and Kreiner 1999, Golant and Sillince 2007, Silva 2007).

Avoiding accusations of ethnic discrimination through use of PR: ‘giving them what they don’t expect’

The current public rhetoric and politics in Sweden stress ‘difference’ or ‘diversity’ in society as something worth striving for. It is held to constitute ‘an asset’ especially in a variety of employment-related contexts (de los Reyes and Martinsson 2005, p. 9). The new politics of difference in the country thus form an important discursive environment for the security company narratives in which ethnic diversity of the staff is presented or approached as a valuable resource. This environment can indeed be said to even directly produce specific stories of ethnic diversity in which such diversity is identified as part of a successful business concept. Among the individuals studied for this article, both those representing company management and those working on the street talked about this ‘diversity of ethnicities’ in the workforce of their security company (as one of the officers put it) as a ‘pride’.

In its promotional material, the security company for which the study participants worked for claimed to value ‘diversity’, stating that it strove to serve as ‘a role model and an inspiration’ for other actors in the country’s private-sector

security industry. 'The point is to provide good services, treat the public nicely and thus get a good reputation', as one security officer explained the company's official line. This image projected by the company was, furthermore, linked to its strategy of employing security officers from different ethnic backgrounds (with different 'looks' and mother tongues). In an interview, the firm's Managing Director depicted the company as a rare example within the industry:

We think a little broader perhaps than what you'd normally do in our field. . . . Our aim is not to get into . . . a cat-and-mouse game with those youngsters. We want good relations with them . . . to counteract what the media in some way is trying to reinforce, which is a caricature of the private-sector security officer We have something we call the multicultural Sweden. And that's how we also recruit.

The company thus did not want to 'get into a cat-and-mouse game' with young people, but instead sought to establish 'good relations' with them. In its thinking, social commitment contributed to solving security-related issues, as, as the interviewee put it, 'some things we simply can't get done if we don't have good relationships with young people'. Creating and maintaining good relations with young people in general, and immigrant youth in particular, was, however, also described as a good strategy from the point of view of profit maximisation. It was something that would allow the company to deliver better service to their customers – in fact, better than their competitors'. This perceived need to establish good relations with immigrant communities, and especially young immigrant men, was, besides the recruitment policy targeting job candidates from ethnic backgrounds, also linked to a strategy to plan and staff security assignments based on the practice of 'ethnic matching'. The determination of who was sent out on a security assignment for a certain customer was made based on what was known about the neighbourhood and the area in which the work was to be carried out (city centre or suburb?); who the customer was; what type of event, occasion, or function was in question and who the people were who were expected to be encountered on the assignment. For instance, if it was a hip-hop concert in the suburbs, it would be staffed by security officers 'with a dark skin', as one security officer in charge of planning and staffing security missions described it, while officers with a lighter skin colour would be sent to a rock concert in the city centre. The company manager himself explained this strategy as follows in his interview:

It's basically about giving them what they don't expect. If they expect us to send there our biggest and bulkiest guys, we won't do it. But if, instead, we use someone who hasn't lived in Sweden for that long yet, someone who's not so tall or whatever, then . . . we'll get a dialogue going [with the youth to be encountered on the assignment] They [the youth] won't part even their lips if we send there two large, two-meter-tall bulky types who have a blond hair.

Accordingly, the staffing of each security assignment was planned thoroughly with the aim of managing the encountered public's impressions and emotions, and in that way facilitates the security officers' work in delivering security services in the suburbs. Not corresponding to the stereotypical images of a security officer that the company managers perceived to be there among the public was understood to play a key part in this effort. Being 'a very multicultural company' with a staff that

represented ‘many different ethnic backgrounds’, as the study participants themselves characterised it, could but then be seen as constituting a valuable resource that could be used to help avoid accusations of ethnic discrimination and build legitimacy for operations, something that was felt to be particularly necessary in the more resentful and hostile environments of the city’s suburbs.

The legitimisation work of the security officers on the street was thus carried out using two basic techniques: impression management (Goffman 1959), relying on appeals to ‘likeness’ in appearance, mother tongue, style/bodily conduct, and emotive expressions, and emotion management (Hochschild 1979, Hardesty 1987, Cahill and Eggleston 1994), or efforts to manage one’s own and others’ feelings. In the following section, concrete examples of this kind of ‘policing by ethnic matching’ are presented for discussion, as are illustrations of the more specific kind of legitimisation work that was carried out in resentful environments.

Avoiding and managing of accusations of ethnic discrimination through ‘policing by ethnic matching’

In the everyday work of private security officers, power is about ability to make others do what the security officer wants them to do. This goal can be reached by different means. Sometimes it is reached without anyone noticing themselves to have become subjected to controlling or disciplining measures. This dimension of power can be termed ‘thought control’ (Button 2007b, p. 129) or ‘consensual governance’ (Kempa *et al.* 1999). The form of power in question operates through rewarding of ‘orderly behaviour’ and sanctioning of ‘disorderly conduct’ (ejection from the reward system; Kempa *et al.* 1999, p. 204). A reward for the ‘orderly behaviour’ of youths hanging out on suburban street corners could be their continued ability to stay on the site and respectful treatment accorded to them, while ‘disorderly conduct’ could result in the security officers’ making use of their means of coercion. Yet the latter is most often a last-resort solution only, to be employed when consensual governance has failed (Kempa *et al.* 1999, Button 2007b, pp. 128–131, 182). The private security company studied for this article recommended consensual rather than coercive control strategies to prevent otherwise anticipated ‘opportunities for disorderly conduct’ (Kempa *et al.* 1999, p. 204) and forestall accusations of ethnic discrimination.

Patrolling the suburbs: avoiding conflicts and accusations of discrimination through double staffing and ethnic matching

When the individual security officers participating in this study were asked why ethnic diversity of staff, in their opinion, was a good thing, and in which ways, they almost always referred to ‘the dangerous suburbs’ and the company’s strategic use of ethnic diversity in the staff as a resource. To avoid accusations of discrimination, and to calm down a situation (manage antagonistic and/or resentful emotions), they claimed security officers with ‘non-Swedish’ looks should be engaged to deal with immigrant youths in the suburbs, and the latter should be approached in a respectful, cheerful and friendly manner. Hence, it was not only the new politics of difference, but also the image of the “‘threatening youths” in the dangerous suburbs’ (Sernhede 2006, p. 102) that constituted the discursive environment for these security officers’ organisational narrative about ethnic diversity of staff as a strategic resource and

solution. In the informal interviews and conversations with the study participants, narratives of especially turbulent periods and threatening situations in the ethnically and socioeconomically segregated suburbs were a commonplace. Such periods and situations, in the case of these security officers, had involved notably many incidents of arson and general destruction of public property. Some security officers had had the tyres of their vehicles slashed, their patrol cars destroyed by graffiti and, on a few occasions, even set on fire. Others had been threatened with physical harm and had had stones and other objects thrown at them. In normal circumstances, Type 1 security officers work alone. During particularly turbulent periods, however, the company has begun to resort to 'double staffing', or having Type 1 security officers work in pairs. Such pairs, as one security officer in this study put it, are to ideally include 'a mixture' of staff with 'one fair-skinned and one dark-skinned' security officer, and these officers 'should be peaceful people, older people who can talk to young people'.

The rationale for double staffing, according to the study participants, was based on past experience. One security officer from an ethnically Swedish background, for instance, described an incident in which she had been involved a few years earlier. Her group leader for the night had called her and asked her to respond to an alarm about a burglary or vandalism at a public school in one of the city suburbs. The security officer drove to the scene, only to realise that she had to wait for the group leader, too, to arrive there, since only the latter had the equipment to repair broken windows. When standing there, looking at the broken pane, the officer heard a car alarm go off. Suspecting it was hers, she returned to her car, only to find it surrounded by five young men aged about 10–15 years. The car's windows had been smashed. The security officer responded by yelling 'Fucking hell, go somewhere else to kick things!' At that point, the young men on the scene closed up on her. The security officer retreated into her car, locked its doors and drove around the corner to the other side of the building where the reported broken window was. The youngsters, however, ran after her, throwing chunks of ice at her when she stopped her car (it was winter). The officer then called the group leader who in turn called the police. Shortly thereafter, however, she had to leave the scene, feeling her personal safety to be compromised. It was experiences of this kind, stated the study participants, which motivated 'double staffing' in certain high-risk suburbs.

Among the security officers participating in this study, the new policing strategy based on double staffing and ethnic matching was contrasted with stories about how *other* private security companies responded to similar situations. Some of the officers spoke about a strategy employed by another security company, which included letting dogs loose to defuse tense crowd situations and ensure control of the situation. This, the officers believed, could, however, only increase the tensions, resulting in an 'atmosphere of hatred and even more stone-throwing'. One security officer (of ethnic Swedish origin) explained that, in contrast to these other companies' approach, what he himself did in similar situations was to get out of the car and talk to the youths, without demanding them to leave the site. Another security officer, likewise of ethnic Swedish origin, concurred that it was 'a good idea to talk to the kids', adding, however, that he found it 'difficult to talk to the immigrant youth', because all they said back was 'You are only talking to us because you think that we will do something'. According to this officer, his co-worker who came from a non-Swedish ethnic background was met with entirely differently in

these situations: he was addressed as ‘a brother right away’ and could be greeted with ‘Damn, how cool, you have a baton?’ or something similar. The officer felt that his chances of succeeding in his work tasks were ‘much bigger when dealing with middle-class brats in the wealthy suburbs’.

Yet another security officer, from a non-Swedish ethnic background, stated that it was ‘a good thing’ that the company studied for this article (to which he referred as ‘we’) was ‘very multicultural’, as this meant that the staff member sent to the ‘problem area’ would then likely be ‘somebody like them [the troublemakers]’, whereas if it was ethnically ‘Swedish’ security officers who would be sent to the scene ‘it would easily lead to conflicts’. In a similar vein, still another security officer estimated that the benefits of this fact – that the company purposely sought to increase the number of its employees from minority groups – had to do with the different impression it made when it was he, ethnically non-Swedish in his background and appearance, who arrived at the scene in the suburbs. In this officer’s estimation, ‘Swedish’ security officers, regardless of their intentions, tended more frequently to be accused of racism, whereas the risk of hearing the same accusation was much lower if the officers working in the suburbs looked ‘non-Swedish’ and also spoke languages other than Swedish. It was for this reason, stated one security officer from an ethnic Swedish background, that, when ‘double staffing’ the patrol cars in the suburbs, he rode with ‘an immigrant co-worker’ who was then better able to calm a situation by addressing those involved in it in their own native tongue.

Underlying the distinction these security officers made between ‘foreign’-looking and ‘Swedish’-looking, and the decision to strategically pair up officers representing both types, is a specific notion of ‘Swedishness’ linked to *appearance*. According to Mattson (2005), in the history of nationalism in Sweden there is an overlap between, on the one hand, ‘Swedishness’ as a cultural category and, on the other hand, the idea of ‘the Nordic race’ and a specific ‘Swedish’ appearance. A ‘Swedish’ appearance – to ‘look Swedish’ and to have a ‘Swedish style’ – is ‘often equated with being blond and having blue eyes, which involves a direct and clear link between Swedishness and whiteness’ (Mattson 2005, p. 150). In theories of racial biology, blond hair and blue eyes are considered to be genuine ‘white’ characteristics. Even today, the general image of ‘Swedishness’ remains coloured by such assumptions of racial biology theories ascribing key significance to external attributes like blond hair and blue eyes. By extension, both historically and still today, dark hair and dark eyes are taken to signify deviation and difference. This link constructed between ‘Swedishness’ and whiteness very much continues to influence the way people are treated and categorised in contemporary Sweden (Mattson 2005, pp. 151–152). The images of ‘the Swede’ and its counterpart, ‘the foreigner’, are then drawn upon in the provision of security services in ethnically and socioeconomically segregated suburbs, with, for example, the security company studied for this article planning, staffing and carrying out security assignments based on the idea of ‘ethnic matching’ (appealing to likeness in appearance and, sometimes, mother tongue) as a resource.

In the case under consideration, there were situations when the professional feeling and impression management rules prescribed by the security company seemed not to be successful in their intended function as instruments helping to win respect and legitimacy for the company’s operations in the eyes of the others and so prevent or calm down a conflict. Such occasions then called for a somewhat different approach to the ‘enactment of likeness’ strategy, one that was more attuned to local cultural codes

of conduct. In those cases, policing by ethnic matching was carried out not only by claiming likeness in terms of appearance and native tongue, but also through deployment of a certain style of bodily conduct, through a certain kind of enactment of emotions and through an implicit appeal to shared experience as ‘immigrants’.

One security officer, hailing from the former Yugoslavia, told that when being accused, or expecting to soon be accused, of ethnic discrimination, ‘I play the ace up my sleeve: I start talking in Bosnian’, thus appealing to (assumed) similarities between himself and the other party. This, the security officer claimed, often took the sting out of the accusations. Such appeals to shared similarities, whether these had to do with being ‘foreign-looking’ (or ‘non-Swedish-looking’) or having a mother tongue other than Swedish, could also be resorted to in order to diffuse dangerous or threatening situations. The security officer just quoted also claimed that ‘Language skills have saved my life’, going on to report about something that happened when he was still working as a Type 1 security officer. The officer had been busy driving in his car between different sites assigned to him that night when suddenly he had had to respond to a burglary/attempted burglary alarm. Arriving at the scene, he had made preparations to board up a broken window when a few men – ‘Serbs’, according to the officer – had passed by and started yelling, ‘There he is, the bastard; get him!’ The security officer then, in his own words, had ‘enacted the crazy Yugoslavian’, or, as he phrased it on other occasions, ‘went for the crazy-Yugoslav style’. In this case, it meant talking loudly (in Serbo-Croatian) and behaving ‘cockily’, using the body language and gestures of someone who ‘owned the streets’, was at home in the neighbourhood and demanded respect. The security officer had yelled back to the men, ‘What the hell do you want?!’, causing the latter to eventually back off, startled by his attitude. In the security officer’s understanding of the situation, this was because they had realised that, as he himself expressed it, ‘Hey, he’s one of us’.

As the security officer in question then proceeded to formulate the issue, he was, personally, never afraid of going into neighbourhoods like the one where the above incident took place when dressed in civilian clothing, while entering them wearing a security officer’s uniform made the situation altogether different: then one represented the Swedish rule-of-law institutions. At the same time, however, as he explained, ‘you are supposed to act as a role model for suburban kids’. For one thing, this meant encouraging the young men encountered on duty to think along the lines of ‘If he can do it, so can we’, by giving an impression that they shared some basic experiences with him as ‘immigrants’. Responding to a question about the exact respects in which he represented a role model, the security officer explained that in the Swedish society in general, being ‘immigrant’ was associated with criminality and a certain style of manners (acting like one who ‘owned the streets’), and when he, as a security officer with an immigrant background, went out into the suburbs to interact with young men there, he became a role model for these as these *believed* that he shared their experiences. The security officer went on to elaborate that, in doing so, his addressees assumed that he, too, as a fellow immigrant, had been involved in law-breaking activities at some point in his life:

You yourself don’t have to have been a crook, but, really, what you do is you take advantage of people’s prejudices. This is where ‘the crazy-Yugoslav’ thing comes in: it’s an enactment, a performance that I can use to my advantage; but of course they don’t know that.

In this example, past experiences and knowledge of the neighbourhood and its local cultural code of conduct are weaved together and translated into situated actions by the security officer, helping him to find the type of impression and emotion management technique needed to effectively practice ‘policing by ethnic matching’.

Working the club doors in the city centre: resisting discriminatory practices through ethnic matching

To categorise individuals standing in a nightclub queue based on their assumed ethnic background – or, rather, to divide them into those ‘foreign-looking’ and those ‘Swedish-looking’ – is not in itself an unlawful practice in Sweden. It would, however, be illegal (indeed, constituting a criminal offence) for the door personnel to deny access to anyone *because of the person’s non-Swedish looks or appearance*. Using the ethnic origin of individuals as grounds for a kind of treatment or decision that has negative outcomes for them constitutes, in Swedish law, an instance of unlawful ethnic discrimination. According to the security officers participating in this study, those who denied entry to an establishment when working its doors often responded with irritation and, sometimes, anger. ‘You can’t imagine how many times I’ve been called “you fat pig”’, was how one security officer described it. The security officers were often accused of unlawful discrimination and told that they would be reported to the police. Yet, when shadowing the officers providing door security in this study, it seemed most often to be the case that when patrons were denied entry or removed from the premises, it was due to their being underage, intoxicated or otherwise under influence.

Pursuant to the Swedish Anti-Discrimination Act, those who, in this kind of contexts, can be sentenced for unlawful discrimination include both restaurant and club owners who discriminate based on race, colour, national or ethnic origin, or religious belief *and* the security officers working for them. According to Molina (2005), there is a pattern of systematic rejection of ‘foreign-looking’ patrons by nightclubs in the three largest cities in Sweden. Some of the security officers participating in this research considered this practice or pattern to result from clear instructions given by customers, or the club owners (see also Molina 2005). Club owners, however, do have a right to discriminate on the basis of age, dress code, degree of intoxication, behaviour, as well as VIP membership or lack thereof (Swedish Hotels and Restaurants Association 2012). Consequently, although discrimination based on perceived ethnic origin is unlawful, it is nevertheless possible to practice it without manifesting it as such: those with a ‘wrong’ skin colour or ethnic background have been denied entry for instance based on their lack of VIP membership (Molina 2005).

All Type 2 officers who were shadowed for this article spoke of how difficult it often was to accommodate customer’s wishes, desires and express guidelines in this regard. As Type 2 officers, they were authorised, overseen and trained by the police, employed by a security company and engaged by customers who paid their security company employer for the services they rendered. The actual delivery of their services thus took place amidst conflicting demands and expectations. When the differing demands were mutually contradictory, it was the customer’s demands that the security officers said carried more weight when making decisions about whom to

let inside, what level of intoxication to allow and when to detain and remove a person. As one security officer expressed it, 'Everything depends on how the customer wants it to be'.

When discussing a recent scandal where a group of security officers working for another security company were found guilty of systematically assaulting and stealing from patrons at two nightclubs in the city, the same officer commented that 'What happened was [in each case] the result of the customer's instructions'. He then proceeded to give a concrete example of what it meant for security officers to be caught in the crossfire of conflicting demands from the various parties impacting their work. When still working for another security company, a customer of that company, a nightclub owner, had expressly instructed him to proceed in his work in ways that amounted to unlawful discrimination against certain patrons. The officer described one particular incident and the verbal exchange during it as follows: "He's not getting in", the owner said. "Why not?" I said. "Because he's black and he's an immigrant", the owner said. Then I said, "But I look just like him. Next time it's me who's not getting in." The officer considered leaving his assignment right away in protest, but was persuaded to stay. Threatening to go home for the night is a powerful 'weapon' for security officers to use, since the consequences for the customer are always severe; the security officer then has to immediately report the withdrawal from the assignment to the police, which for all practical purposes means that the nightclub must close for the night. In addition, the city's stipulations tie the owner's liqueur licence to the provision of adequate security at the establishment, in the form of a certain number of security officers (relative to the number of patrons frequenting the establishment) being present each night when the establishment is open for business, which means that inadequate manning of security posts would automatically jeopardise the owner's most important source of revenue. At the same time, to be sure, leaving one's assignment would also mean cutting ties with the customer who would not want to have the individual in question to work at the establishment again, thus affecting one's work and even career prospects.

In the example above, the security officer's 'enactment of likeness' – assertion of similarity between himself and the patron initially denied entry – was used for the benefit of the club patron with whom the security officer identified, as a means of actively resisting discriminatory practices encountered at workplace. Despite such individual examples, the mere existence of a pattern of systematic discrimination against patrons with a 'non-Swedish' appearance indicates that not all security officers succeed in resisting, or even make an effort to resist, the demands of their customers that they engage in such unlawful practices.

Working the reception desks at police stations: managing accusations of ethnic discrimination through ethnic matching

The Type 3 security officers shadowed for this article often described their work manning police station reception desks as difficult since it involved direct interaction with the public. The security officers routinely had to reject and turn away persons requesting various forms of assistance. Doing so often meant being met with accusations of (ethnic) discrimination, as in the following example involving a Roma man and a security officer hailing from the former Yugoslavia. While accompanying the security officer sitting at his desk, I witnessed a man come in, walk up to the desk

and ask this officer to call up a specific police officer. It was clear that he did not have an appointment made beforehand. The security officer first phoned the police officer as requested, and then gave his telephone number to the man, instructing him to call the police officer himself the following day to make an appointment. The man responded with a 'Thank you', proceeding to then tell the security officer that he had been beaten and that the police were 'not doing anything about it', concluding with a proclamation that 'It's discrimination!' After the man had left the building, the security officer turned to me, saying 'That was a really annoying bastard!' and that 'It's easy to get angry when you are dealing with this kind of people'. It should be noted, however, that, during all that interaction, the officer did not express any feelings of frustration but remained calm and polite, even though he himself, too, was accused of discrimination. 'Police investigations take time', he even noted in sympathy with the man. The officer also stated that he knew right away that the man in question was from the Balkans, adding that:

I could have talked to him in Bosnian, but I didn't because I thought that you should understand [what we were saying]. He also accused *me* of discrimination. If he would have gone on about that, I would have [started to talk to him in Bosnian].

The strategy of policing by ethnic matching – the presence of a security officer with a 'Yugoslav' (or 'non-Swedish') appearance, meant to facilitate the enactment of likeness – was in this case not enough to avoid accusations of discrimination. The security officer, to be sure, did not respond to the visitor in his mother tongue, which would have been in line with what was considered a successful strategy in managing accusations of ethnic discrimination, as that would have prevented me from understanding the verbal interaction going on. At the same time, however, the example also yields indications of another strategy for fending off accusations of ethnic discrimination. As van Dijk (1992, p. 90) has noted, those accusing others of ethnic discrimination are often in turn accused of being 'oversensitive and exaggerating... [of being] intolerant and generally [of] "seeing racism where there is none"'. Even though the security officer in this case himself represented an ethnic background other than 'Swedish' and had a 'foreign'-looking appearance, in the eyes of the other party he represented 'racist' 'Swedish' public authorities. The security officer's counter-claims illustrate the degree to which he identified with the 'Swedish' public authorities that had contracted his services through the security company he worked for, although he denied that these authorities were racist. The example, furthermore, illustrates how claims for legitimacy 'on the ground', in interactions with the public, are advanced through impression and emotion management. Here, as in the other examples given above, the emotional labour of the security officer is just as much about handling one's own emotions as it is about managing others' resentful feelings.

Policing by ethnic matching as legitimization, impression and emotion work

One of the ways to which the security company in question resorted to avoid accusations of ethnic discrimination was to recruit security officers representing many different ethnic backgrounds and 'looks', and to strategically use the resulting staff diversity as a resource. This solution to the problem of how to forestall

accusations of discrimination and defuse conflicts also formed part of the company's organisational narrative that projected it as modern and progressive, which representation in turn could be interpreted as serving as a means for the company to win legitimacy. 'Diversity', in this narrative, is demonstrated through staffing decisions whereby the work is performed by an employee with a stereotypical 'Swedish' appearance together with an employee with a 'foreign'-looking appearance. This implementation of diversity constitutes then an example of impression management in relation to the public, aimed to improve the company's (and the industry's) reputation and legitimacy. However, when carrying out work in the ethnically and socioeconomically segregated city suburbs, assignments were staffed based on *ethnic matching*. When this was the case, *similarity* served the main resource and organising principle in the security officers' work practices. Ethnic matching, for this company, involved enactment of likeness intended to help avoid and manage accusations of ethnic discrimination (and defuse conflicts) and claim legitimacy for its operations. The security officers sent out to meet and interact with young people of 'foreign' origin in the suburbs were those with an ethnic background/appearance other than 'Swedish', while security officers coming from an ethnic Swedish background were assumed to have better success in interacting with middle-class youth and other 'native' Swedes in other parts of the city. In these cases, diversity was used for performing 'likeness' through 'ethnic matching', based on some visible ethnic markers (skin colour, general appearance, mother tongue) taken as points of departure. All this was done to establish better relationships with young people representing ethnic backgrounds other than 'native Swedish', to forestall and defuse accusations of ethnic discrimination and conflicts, to manage the latter when they occurred, and to improve the reputation of the company as well as that of the industry as a whole in relation to a specific public in the suburban areas.

In the estimation of both the security company's management personnel and the security officers working for it on the street, its policing strategy in resentful environments, consisting of the specific type of legitimisation work termed here as policing by ethnic matching, had been successful in the sense of having led to a decreased number of incidents, conflicts, and accusations of ethnic discrimination. At the same time, however, this policing strategy can be said to only reproduce the image of immigrants (and especially of young immigrant men) residing in, or associated with, ethnically and socioeconomically segregated suburbs as something embodying danger and crime, as a 'security object' to be targeted and controlled. Ideally, this control, for the company studied for this article at least, was to be exerted through consensual rather than coercive power. Yet, as the company has continued to employ its security strategy of ethnic matching, drawing upon the notion of 'likeness' as a means to avoid accusations of ethnic discrimination and improve the company's public image, a discourse is inevitably reproduced whereby the categories of 'Swede' and 'foreigner', together with the stereotypical notions of difference that underlie and indeed directly influence them, are naturalised and become territorialised.

The specific type of legitimisation work investigated here, policing by ethnic matching, consists of security officers working on the street in direct interaction with the public, and it is carried out through means of impression management and emotion management. As Thumala and her collaborators (Thumala *et al.* 2011) have pointed out, this kind of legitimisation work entails actions and claims made to justify

the activities of private security companies as well as the purpose of these activities. It is also a means to manage reputational problems and strive for recognition – in short, to claim legitimacy. The analysis in this article of the security officers' particular legitimisation work on the street – their specific style of policing by ethnic matching – shows it to entail efforts at impression management geared towards producing a certain appearance that could then influence others' perceptions of the company, its workers, and the work these both are doing. The impression management technique here included the matching of external looks, mother tongue, emotional expressions, personal style, and bodily conduct. At the same time, this specific legitimisation work also involved efforts at emotion management, including attempts by individual officers to change their own feelings (e.g. of frustration or fear) and attempts to influence (resentful) feelings of others. It thus involved *emotional labour*, to borrow the term of Sieben and Wettergren (2010, p. 10), on the part of the security officers studied. Emotions, for them, are the *object* of their work: individual security officers have to influence others' emotions. Emotions, however, are for them also a *means* of working more efficiently: the emotive expressions of security guards are used to fulfil work tasks as efficiently as possible and to win legitimacy for their work. Finally, emotions are also a *condition* for their ability to work: security officers must 'establish . . . a certain emotional state' and (sometimes) suppress and try to alter their own feelings when dealing with others (Sieben and Wettergren 2010, p. 10). Among the security officers participating in this study, the enactment of (one's own) emotions seemed most of the time to be done in adherence to the professional feeling and impression management rules prescribed by the company management, although experienced security officers also seemed to know when other ways of enacting 'likeness', through emotional expressions more in line with local cultural codes of conduct, were needed in order to manage (potential) conflicts and win legitimacy. In the ethnically and socioeconomically segregated suburbs of the city where these security officers worked, the local order of distrust and resentment was thus managed by means of policing by ethnic matching, intended as an instrument to help claim, win, and manage legitimacy in situations in which it was deemed as particularly necessary yet difficult to attain.

Notes

1. All translations from the original Swedish are mine.
2. Just like all private citizens in the country, security officers of Type 1 have the right to apprehend a person caught in the act of committing a crime or fleeing from the crime scene if the crime being committed is punishable with a prison term of any length. Acting on suspicion only, however, is prohibited by law, and there is no obligation to intervene in the situation; the only obligation is to document what is being witnessed and report it to the police. Yet, it seems not unusual for security company customers to in fact expect company employees to detain offenders (and only then call the police). Type 1 security officers are commonly engaged for patrolling, CCTV monitoring, stationary security, shop security, and reception services. The guidelines for their training are issued by the National Police Board. The training lasts a minimum of 128 hours, plus 160 hours of supervised work to gain practical experience (Munck *et al.* 2005). Many, although far from all, Type 1 security officers eventually go back for further training, to become authorised for work as Type 2 security officers of (see below).
3. The training of the Type 2 security officers, organised by the local police authority, lasts a minimum of 76 hours. To qualify for training as this type of security officer, one first needs

- to become authorised as a Type 1 security officer. Type 2 security officers are used to complement the police in maintaining public order, and are commonly deployed at demonstrations, public functions, sports events, nightclubs, restaurants, shopping malls, and security controls at court buildings (Munck *et al.* 2005).
4. In Sweden, this type of security officers may carry a baton and handcuffs, and can also be authorised to carry a firearm after passing weapons training. The guidelines governing this training are given by the National Police Board, specifying its length to be a minimum of 40 hours. Type 3 security officers are often employed to protect sensitive civilian and military installations such as military bases and airports (Munck *et al.* 2005).
 5. In Sweden there are thus three different types of security officers, in this article referred to as Type 1, Type 2 and Type 3, that differs in terms of authority, legal powers, training and work tasks. The formal and informal terminology used to describe security staff varies between countries and regions of the world. At first glance, Type 2 security officers in Sweden may seem to be synonymous with door supervisors in the UK or bouncers in the USA. However, there are important differences when it comes to authority, legal powers and training (e.g. Swedish Type 2 security officers are authorised, trained and controlled by the police, which door supervisors and bouncers are not, and requirements for bouncers and door supervisors do not match the requirements for Swedish Type 2 security officers). For a comparison of the culturally diverse terminology to be meaningful, a thorough account of how the authority, legal powers and training also differ would be needed. Consequently, I will refrain from any further comparisons of the culturally diverse terminology used to describe security staff. That would, however, be an interesting topic for another article.

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