

Evaluative police research in Sweden

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In Sweden, as in many other countries, there has been a lack of scientific evaluations of the work conducted by the police. In the following, I will present a brief, general review of the police research with an evaluative focus that has been conducted in Sweden since the beginning of the 1990s. I will also be reflecting on a range of factors that may contribute to the difficulties associated with the initiation and conduct of evaluations of the work of the police and – primarily on the basis of the perspective of the Swedish National Council for Crime Prevention – on which factors might serve to explain why such research appears now to be on the increase. Finally, I will present three evaluations of police work that have been published by the National Council in 2009.

Evaluative studies 1990-2003

Professor Cecilie Höigård has conducted a review of the Nordic police research published during the period 1990-2003. The review shows that very little university-based police research was conducted in Sweden during the period in question. No doctoral dissertations focused on police work were completed at Sweden's only university department of criminology, with the exception of a study on the work of the security police during the Second World War. A total of five doctoral dissertations on the contemporary police force were presented at other university departments: one in law, one in education studies, one in ethnology, one in economics and one in sociology. The only one of these five that employed an evaluative approach was the dissertation in sociology, which focused on the issue of changes since the 1960s in how the police work to combat the drugs problem. The dissertation's subtitle describes its theme: "From nationwide actions against drug profiteers to local measures to disrupt drug abuse".

At the Swedish National Council for Crime Prevention, a research-focused national agency working under the Ministry of Justice, studies on the work of the police were given a relatively low priority. With the exception of two research commissions from the Government in 1998 to evaluate what has become known as the "local police reform", which resulted in the publication of three reports, only a couple of studies with a police focus were published during the period. Neither of these took the form of an evaluation.

During the period 1991- 1998, however, there was a relatively active research unit at the National Police College in Stockholm, the home of researchers such as Johannes Knutsson, Peter Lindström and Marie Torstensson. This research unit conducted studies of police investigative work, the work of maintaining public order, and the police's crime prevention activities and their work with crime victims. Some of these studies were relatively small scale and were linked to specific police authorities, but others resulted in publications of a more refined scientific character.¹ The research unit was transferred to the Swedish National Council for Crime Prevention in 1999.

Factors that obstruct a robust police research agenda

One might ask what factors serve to obstruct the development of a robust evaluative police research agenda. There are probably a range of such factors. At the general level, interest in evaluating the work of justice system agencies is a relatively new phenomenon. The evaluations that have been conducted in the area of crime policy have primarily been focused on the effects of different types of treatment for offenders, and then first and foremost *young* offenders. At the beginning of the 1990s, not least in connection with the economic crisis witnessed at the time, politicians became increasingly interested in “value for money” and the provision of funding to public sector agencies became more performance-based than had previously been the case. The healthcare, childcare and drug abuse treatment sectors were all subjected to scrutiny, for example, and were forced to make savings on the basis of increased demands for cost-effectiveness. The agencies of the justice system, among them the police, were largely exempted from such demands, however. Against this background, there was no real direct interest on the part of the Government in looking for evaluations of the justice system agencies and of their effectiveness.

In addition, there is the fact that the police are by tradition a closed organisation. This would in itself suggest that there is often no great interest in inviting external researchers in to scrutinize and evaluate the organisation's work.

¹ In this context, a couple of internationally published studies can be noted:

Björ, J.; Knutsson, J. & Kühlhorn, E. (1992). The Celebration of Midsummer Eve in Sweden - A Study in the Art of Preventing Collective Disorder. *Security Journal*, 1992, Vol. 3, No. 3, pp. 169-174.

Knutsson, J. (1997). Restoring Public Order in a City Park. R. Homel (ed). *Policing for Prevention: Reducing Crime, Public Intoxication and Injury*. Crime Prevention Studies. Vol. 5, pp. 203-220.

For a more detailed description of the research conducted at the National Police College and the National Council for Crime Prevention during the 1990s see Knutsson: *Den myndighetsanknutna polisforskningen* (PM 2009).

The reasons for the difficulties are probably not all to be found among those who commission such research, however, but also among researchers themselves. Since the police are a relatively closed organisation with broad working goals and broad work descriptions, it is difficult to develop a clear picture of the concrete activities that the work of the police actually consists in. Few researchers have a sufficiently good knowledge in this area to enable them to formulate high quality evaluations of the effectiveness of the work of the police.

Furthermore, even those who *do* have a good knowledge of police work can face difficulties in finding good, clearly defined, evaluative questions relating to the working methods employed by the police. Only a very small part of the work of the police is structured in a way as to allow it to be viewed as comprising clear, circumscribed working methods whose effects can be evaluated in relation to clear-cut goals.

Evaluative studies from the past five years

Recent years have witnessed an increasing production of academic dissertations focused on the work of the police. Seven such dissertations have been presented since 2004: one in law/sociology (2004a), one in social work (2004b), one in psychology (2004c), one in education studies (2005a), one in computer science (2005b) and two in criminology (2005a and 2008). The themes of the dissertations can largely be discerned from their titles (presented here in the same order as the academic disciplines noted above) : 1. *Internal control of aliens in police work: between the ideal of the rule of law and effectiveness in the Sweden of the Schengen Treaty*, 2. *The organisational culture of the police: An explorative study*, 3. *Police interviews with victims and suspects of violent and sexual crimes: Interviewees' experiences and interview outcomes*, 4. *The occupational culture of patrolling police officers*, 5. *Profession: Police. Occupational knowledge, motivation, IT-systems and other conditions of police work*, 6. *Law or order? The police's handling of the EU summit in Gothenburg in 2001*, and 7. *"An officer beyond reproach?"* (which illuminates police ethics on the basis of a vignette study).

This overview shows that a majority of the studies focus on culture, organisation and attitudes within the police, rather than on the work actually conducted by the police and the extent to which it meets its targets. They might be characterised as "occupational research". The studies focusing on the control of aliens and on the "Gothenburg riots" constitute exceptions, however, and have a more concrete focus on the work of the police itself. Irrespective of the content of these dissertations, the increased level of general interest in the

police that they manifest may nonetheless pave the way for a greater number of more direct evaluations of the effectiveness of police work.

Evaluations initiated by local police districts

It is also possible to discern an increasing interest among local police districts for following up and evaluating their work. To date, this interest has primarily been focused on evaluations of the work of the police with violence against women. Over recent years, a couple of police districts which have developed specialist organisations for this kind of work have both evaluated how satisfied the women concerned have been with the work conducted by the police and have followed up the extent to which the women who have reported being assaulted subsequently make additional assault reports.

Research at the National Council

When the research unit at the National Police College was disbanded, the resources were transferred to the National Council for Crime Prevention. It took a couple of years to develop a “research environment” at the National Council that was suited to studying police work, and it is first and foremost over the past five years that research into the work of the police has started in earnest. The police research conducted at the National Council over the past five years can be divided into three areas: the national victimisation survey, descriptive studies of various aspects of the work of the police and more prototypical evaluations. A national victimisation survey has been conducted annually by the National Council since 2006, based on a representative sample of 20,000 respondents. The survey includes questions on exposure to crime, fear of crime and the public’s view of the agencies of the justice system, including the police.

Descriptive studies of various aspects of the work of the police have constituted part of several of the research studies that the National Council has been instructed to carry out by the Government over recent years. These have included police efforts to combat drug crime, for example, the police’s work with restraining orders, police investigations of crimes committed by children under fifteen years of age (i.e. those below the age of criminal responsibility), police interrogations of suspects aged under fifteen, the division of labour between the police and social services in such cases, the possibilities of reducing processing times for more straightforward high-volume offences by means of the use of a simplified charging and summonsing procedure, and the police’s use of special powers to combat

organised crime. Studies of this kind include questions on goal-attainment, but for the most part they are not designed as evaluations.

Three more extensive studies have been conducted based on a more purely evaluative research design. The central question addressed in these studies has been that of the extent to which a change in working methods might increase police efficiency. Two of the studies focus on the ability of the police to clear up offences, and the third on a method (known as the “Kronoberg Model”) intended to prevent violence among young people in public places. The content of these three studies is described in more detail later in this article.

Why has there been an increase in police research at the National Council?

The number of studies focusing on the work of the police has thus increased over the past five years. Just as was the case with factors that may lead to a lack of police research, it is reasonable to ask what factors may have led to this increase.

- Demands from politicians/the Government for police efficiency have increased – but the demands being made on the police to improve their levels of efficiency are still relatively “weak”.
- The development of statistics and bench-marking within the police means that shortfalls in performance become more visible – but evaluations remain difficult in many areas as a result of problems with the available statistics.
- There has been an improvement in police confidence that external scientific evaluations may be more helpful than harmful.

The increased demands from politicians/the Government for an effective police service constitute part of a more general trend in society at large. The interest in the efficient use of resources by public sector agencies that developed among politicians during the 1990s has thus now also started to be extended to the agencies of the justice system. The Government’s annual Budget Bills emphasise the importance both of the police becoming more effective in their work to prevent crime and of more crimes being cleared up. Demands are also increasing that the work be knowledge-based and that operational activities be subjected to evaluation. Generally speaking, however, there is relatively little focus on the cost effectiveness of the police in the rhetoric of either government or opposition parties. It is still more common for

politicians to speak of the need for more police officers as a means of resolving problems than to focus on demands for greater police efficiency.²

As a way of living up to the increased demands for efficiency, the National Police Board has developed its operational statistics and has introduced a number of benchmarking figures. In their turn, these statistics increase the pressure on police districts and may thus pave the way for a greater interest in evaluations involving a comparison of the work conducted in different districts.

In order for an increase in the number of evaluations to become a reality, however, the police must also feel confident that researchers will not simply criticise and expose their shortcomings in a judgemental way, but will rather be able to provide constructive guidance as to what works and how the work of the police might be improved. One partial explanation for the increase in the number of evaluations conducted by the National Council over recent years is that this kind of confidence has developed in relation to the work conducted by the Council.

Police work-targets no easy subject for evaluations

Before I go on to describe the recent evaluations conducted by the National Council, I will present a brief account of a number of problems encountered when evaluating the police, which are linked in turn to the type of goals associated with police work. The goals of police work are often described as including the following:

- Safeguarding the rule of law by investigating crimes so that they can be prosecuted
- Preventing crime
- Improving the public's sense of security
- Working to ensure that crime victims who report offences are satisfied
- Providing limited services of various kinds

The first problem associated with attempting to evaluate the effectiveness of police work in relation to these goals is that, generally speaking, there are few opportunities open to the police to influence crime trends in any decisive way. When the Government writes in the Budget Bill that it deems that the police service has not completely achieved its crime prevention goal because reported violent offences have increased by seven percent, this implies a demand for target attainment that cannot be regarded as particularly realistic. Given

² During the period in office of the previous National Police Commissioner, Stefan Strömberg, the Government emphasised a promise of putting more police officers on the street, while at the same time Strömberg's statements in the media emphasised that the central problem was not a lack of police officers but rather their lack of efficiency.

this, it is not particularly meaningful to evaluate why this national goal has not been achieved. On the other hand, evaluations of police crime prevention goals can be meaningful if they are focused on local initiatives directed at a specific target group or a restricted geographical area. The National Council's evaluation of the "Kronoberg Model" constitutes a case in point here.

Another problem is that the different goals often conflict with one another. A successful result in relation to one of the goals will sometimes produce a negative result in relation to one of the others. To take one example, the goal of clearing up and prosecuting more crimes can sometimes come into conflict with the goal of ensuring that crime victims are satisfied, since not all of those victims who report an offence want the offender to be punished. Increased efforts to attend to and clear up more crimes may also come into conflict with the goal of increasing the public's sense of security, since increased efforts can produce a picture which suggests that crime is on the increase. This complication is intensified by the fact that there is not always a clear, explicit prioritisation among different goals when measures that are intended to achieve these various goals produce conflicts of this kind.

Three evaluations

1. The Kronoberg Model - combating youth violence in public places
The first evaluation is focused on the police's goal of crime prevention. In 2006, the Swedish National Council for Crime Prevention and the National Police Board were together instructed by the Government to develop the working methods employed by the police to reduce the number of assaults in public places, and to evaluate the effectiveness of these methods. The police, however, found it very difficult to formulate distinct "methods" for reducing violence in public places that could then also serve as appropriate objects for evaluation. Similarly, an international research review conducted by the National Council also identified very few concrete measures. One method that did however show itself to be suited to evaluation was the "Kronoberg Model", which was developed in one Swedish police district and which had furthermore won the Swedish selection competition for the European Crime Prevention Award (ECPA) in 2006. The method employed in the Kronoberg Model involves measures focused on influencing both the demand for and the supply of alcohol. The model thus works in two directions simultaneously, in part being directed at youths aged 13–19 who come into contact with alcohol in public places, and in part at suppliers who illegally sell or otherwise supply alcohol to young people. The model comprises the following components:

Components involving measures focused on youths and their parents

- 1) The police intervene against three groups of young people – youths in possession of alcohol, youths who are intoxicated and youths who are in the presence of someone in possession of alcohol.
- 2) The youths' alcohol is systematically confiscated and the youths are asked where the alcohol came from.
- 3) When the youths subject to such an intervention are under eighteen years of age, the police contact their parents.
- 4) The police inform the social services in cases where parents are unwilling either to come and collect their child or to organise a lift home for the child.
- 5) The police subsequently summon affected parents to an informational meeting at which the social services also participate.

Components involving measures focused on combating the supply of alcohol

- 6) The police register a report of an offence against the Alcohol Act whenever they find youths in possession of alcohol in public places.
- 7) There is a plan and a routine for how these reported cases should then be investigated and for who is responsible for their being investigated.
- 8) The police prioritise their investigative resources (holding interviews etc.) to those reported cases of supplying alcohol to minors where there are substantive leads of some kind that may lead to the conviction of a supplier.

The work conducted within the framework of the Kronoberg Model is for the most part comprised of well-known policing methods. More or less all of the measures employed are such as have previously been used by police around the country. What is new is that the model involves a much more structured approach than previously to the work conducted with the youths themselves. The more strategic focus on the investigation of supply offences is also something quite new.

The project was implemented to a varying extent in the different police districts

Eight police districts in different parts of the country tested the method for a period of approximately seven months. These districts had between 20,000 and 120,000 inhabitants and the number of youths aged between thirteen and nineteen years ranged between 2,000 and just over 9,000. The original intention was that all of the participating police districts would

implement the model completely during the test period. In reality, however, the level of implementation varied across different areas. The majority faithfully followed that part of the model which involved intervening against youths in possession of alcohol in public places. In all of the districts bar one, the number of documented instances of alcohol forfeiture among young people increased, and a large number of parents to youths under the age of eighteen were contacted in connection with these interventions. As regards the goal of investigating and prosecuting suppliers, however, neither the efforts devoted to this end, nor the results achieved, were particularly noteworthy, with the exception of a single police district.

On the basis of a range of statistical measures and assessments made by police officers and other professional groups who come into contact with youths in public places, the National Council assessed that there were three districts which had worked with the model to a sufficient degree to warrant assuming that it may reasonably have had an impact on youth violence in public places. Two districts were placed together in a group which had not implemented the working methods to as great an extent as this, while two other districts had worked so little with the methods of the Kronoberg Model that that is was not deemed reasonable to ascribe any possible reductions in violent crime to this work.

The youths altered their behaviour

The assessment of the police in the three districts in which the Kronoberg Model was implemented most systematically was that the youths had altered their drinking patterns so that they drank or were intoxicated in public places less often. The youths quickly understood the working methods that the police were using, and they adapted their behaviour to these. The number of youths requiring treatment for alcohol poisoning also declined in several of the participating districts. On the other hand, the police were less sure as to whether youths were also drinking less in private.

Positive effects on violent crime among young people in places where the model was implemented

Levels of reported violent crime among youths in public places declined during the project period in three of the four “active” districts by comparison with the years 2006/2007, and in the fourth district the level was unchanged. The decline in violence was greatest in the two areas that worked most intensively with the model (Sundsvall and Karlstad). The conclusion that the decline in violence was an effect of the Kronoberg Model is “muddied” a little

however by the fact that violent crime not only declined here, but also in two other districts where the model was only implemented to a more limited extent.

In order to analyse the situation further, supplementary data were collected on the total level of reported outdoor violent crime in the relevant police districts and in the surrounding regions. Here the point of departure was that if aggregate violent crime followed the same trend as violence among youths, and if the trend was the same for the county as a whole, and not only for the districts in which the model was implemented, then any decline in violent crime among youths was probably not due to the implementation of the Kronoberg Model but rather to some other factor.

In fact, however, these data reinforce the conclusion that the police's work with the Kronoberg Model did produce a positive effect. The trend in outdoor violent crime among youths was much more favourable in the two most active police districts than were the trends both in other forms of outdoor violent crime within these districts and in outdoor violent crime in the relevant counties as a whole. In the third of the four most active police districts, violence among young people did not decline by a substantial amount, but the trend in reported violence among young people in the police district concerned was nonetheless considerably more positive than the trend in violence among adults both within the same municipality and in the county as a whole. In the last of the four active police districts, there is nothing in the data to suggest that the implementation of the Kronoberg Model had any major impact on violent crime among young people.

Less positive trends in areas where the model was implemented less actively

As was noted above, the level of reported violence among youths also declined in one of the "in-between" districts, where the police's implementation of the model was somewhat less active. Looking at the data on outdoor violence committed by adults, however, both in the police district itself and in the surrounding county, it can be seen that the trend in this other form of violence is just as positive. This suggests that the positive changes in the trend in violence are due to something other than the implementation of the Kronoberg Model. In the second of the two districts in this "in-between" group, there was an increase in the number of reported incidents of violence among youths, and this increase was furthermore greater than that found in relation to the aggregate level of outdoor violence in both the municipality and the county as a whole.

Looking finally at the two project districts that did very little work in connection with the implementation of the model, one of them experienced something of an increase in reported violence, which was in line with the trend in the county as a whole. The other district deviates from the pattern of covariation between the trend in violence among young people in public places and the extent to which the Kronoberg Model was implemented actively. Here the number of reported incidents of violence among young people decreased despite the fact that the police did not work very actively with the implementation of the model.

The results are summarised in Table 1.

Table 1. Percentage change in number of reports of assault among youths in the police district, and in the total number of reported assaults in the police district and the remainder of the county (excluding the relevant police district). Comparison of years 2006-2007 with 2008.

<u>Police district</u>	Percentage change in number of reported assaults among youths in police district.	Percentage change in total number of reported outdoor assaults in police district.	Percentage change in number of reported outdoor assaults in remainder of county.
Sundsvall	-27	-12	+4
Karlstad	-15	+6	+21
Nacka	-3	+15	+2
Håbo	0	+2	+2
Piteå	-10	-10	+3
Enköping	+14	+4	+4
Skärholmen	-14	- ³	+2
Gotland	+5	+5 ⁴	+5

Discussion

The results of the evaluation can be viewed as positive, particularly against the background of the fact that the model involves a clear, intelligible working method that is relatively simple to implement. Previously, scientific support has been found for a small number of general police strategies, such as directed police patrols⁵, for example, but the Kronoberg Model is one of the few concrete working methods that has been evaluated with positive results.

The Model has been introduced as a working method that focuses on both the demand for alcohol among youths, i.e. their opportunity, and by extension their motivation, to drink alcohol in public, and on the supply of alcohol. The evaluation indicates that the results which

³ There are no statistics for Skärholmen since the local police district does not match the boundaries of the city district and official crime statistics are only available at the level of the city district.

⁴ The municipality of Gotland and the county of Gotland have the same geographical boundaries. The increase of five percentage points noted for both the municipality and the county thus relates to the same offences.

⁵ Braga (2007).

have been achieved are probably primarily associated with a reduction in the youths' motivation to drink alcohol in public places. This becomes a less attractive proposition since the youths become aware that there is a substantial risk that the police will intervene, dispose of the alcohol and ring their parents. There is also a substantial risk that the youths' parents will come and take them home, and prevent them from going out again in the evening.

On the other hand, there is much less to suggest that the results might be an effect of it having become more difficult to obtain alcohol, since with the exception of Sundsvall, none of the police districts have succeeded in prosecuting more than the odd supplier. This means that it is also difficult to know how great the as yet unexploited potential of the model may be. We cannot say whether the effect would be even greater if the police were to become more effective in their investigation of supply offences, so that a larger number of suppliers were convicted.

One conclusion that can be drawn on the basis of this evaluation is that implementing and working with the Kronoberg Model requires good planning, time and resources. The National Council's study was intended as an evaluation of the effects of the model across seven different police districts, but in reality the evaluation has been rather more limited since several of the selected police districts did not implement and work with the model in its entirety. In the final analysis, we have instead been able to use these districts to illuminate the dose-effect relationship.

It is important to learn from these implementational difficulties when the police continue to roll out the use of the Kronoberg Model around the country. The National Council's evaluation indicates that the model can produce positive effects even if it is not fully implemented. It is also important however to identify what constitute the minimum requirements for regarding the model as having been implemented in a way that produces the conditions necessary for positive effects.

The National Council's evaluation has been conducted on a relatively small scale: the number of police districts that have implemented the model is quite small, and the time allotted to the project has been relatively brief. In order to produce an even more reliable basis for concluding that the model can in fact reduce youth violence in public places, it would be worthwhile to conduct further evaluations. Such evaluations might also examine how well the model "survives" when the time comes to integrate it into the police's routine operational activities, and whether the model can be implemented on the basis of fewer resources without eliminating its positive effects.

2. Evaluation of police investigations of assaults between non-acquaintances

The demands for improved police effectiveness relate not only to the goal of crime prevention but also to that of clearing up reported crimes. One of the areas in which demands for improved clearance rate are greatest is that of violent crime between non-acquaintances, where the proportion of cases that result in a prosecution is as low as sixteen percent. One explanation for the low clearance rate that has been raised by Professor Leif G. W. Persson is that the police do not always investigate those reported offences that are in fact investigable.⁶ Against this background, the National Council has conducted three studies. The first relates to the extent to which there is a potential to clear up more crimes if a greater number of reported offences were to be investigated. The second poses the question of whether more crimes could be cleared if the quality of the investigations were improved. The third illuminates to what extent different chief investigating officers make different prioritisations in relation to the investigative measures employed.

The first study is based on a review of all the documentation from the investigations relating to almost 400 police reports registered in two police districts with quite different profiles (one in a metropolitan area, and one dominated by a medium sized town).⁷ The study addresses the following questions:

1. How many of the reported assault offences by non-acquaintances are made the object of an investigation, and how many are presented to the prosecutor?
2. Are there more “investigable” reported crimes than those that are investigated today?
3. What characterises the reported crimes that the police choose to investigate and not to investigate respectively, i.e. how do the police prioritise when deciding which of the total number of reported crimes are to be investigated?

The material shows that the police make a decision to initiate an investigation in over 80 percent of the cases reported to them, but that in practice a large proportion of these then lie dormant without anything actually happening; concrete investigative activities were undertaken in less than half of the cases reported.

An assessment was then made of what a crime report ought to contain for its investigation to be worthwhile, with such cases then being labelled “investigable”. Cases were classified as

⁶ (Leif G. W. Persson, PM 2005-12-08, Rikspolisstyrelsen)

⁷ Since the object of the study was to examine the prioritisations made by the *police*, cases where the investigation was led by a prosecutor were excluded from the analysis. Of the original 460 crime reports requisitioned by the study, 37 (8 percent) were excluded for this reason.

indisputably investigable when: 1. There was information as to the perpetrator’s identity, 2. The complainant was known and was willing to cooperate, 3. There was clear information on how, where and when the crime was committed, and 4. The complainant would be able to recognise the perpetrator. The review of reported cases showed that a substantial number of “investigable” reported crimes were not investigated and the assessment was made that increasing the number of investigations had potential as a means of increasing the proportion of cleared crimes.

Table 1. Police responses to reported crimes in the metropolitan district and the medium sized district, in percent.

Police response to reported crimes	Metropolitan district (n=173)	Medium sized district (n =194)
Investigated	42 %	48 %
Not investigated but investigable	16 %	8 %
Proportion of reported crimes cleared and passed on to prosecutor	9 %	14 %

If we assume that all of the investigable crimes that were not investigated would have been cleared and passed on to the prosecutor, this would lead to the proportion of cleared cases increasing from 14 to 22 percent in the medium sized district and from 9 to 25 percent in the metropolitan district (14+8 in the medium sized district and 9+16 in the metropolitan district).

One factor that characterised the cases that were not investigated despite being investigable was that they more often involved less serious crimes, that the perpetrator had counter sued and that both parties had a non-Swedish background.

The next study examined a nationally representative sample of reported cases of violence between non-acquaintances. 615 cases from 2006/2007 were studied, with the focus being directed at the quality of the investigations. The first question examined was that of which types of investigative measures produced results in connection with this type of crime, in the sense of contributing to a resolution of the case. The next question in focus was that of the proportion of cases in which no such productive investigative measures were undertaken, despite the fact that the opportunities existed to do so. The third question was that of whether the police took “irrelevant” considerations into account when prioritising the amount of work they would devote to a given investigation.

On the basis of interviews with prosecutors and a logistic regression analysis of the quantitative data, it emerged that there were three criteria which were crucial to determining whether a case would result in a prosecution, namely *a suspect, a known complainant, and a clear and credible account of what happened from the complainant*. It was also desirable, although not essential, that there existed some form of *supporting evidence*.

On the basis of what was lacking for a prosecution in the cases where the investigation was discontinued without being cleared, the study then examined to what extent there were possible investigative measures that had not been taken, which might have been able to resolve this problem. The study came to the conclusion that there was a good potential to increase the number of cleared crimes by improving investigations, as can be seen from Table 2.

Table 2. Proportion of cases with varying potential for being cleared that had been discontinued.

Proportion of discontinued cases	79%
Proportion with "unexploited investigative opportunity"	47 %
Proportion with only one remaining "problem" and at least one unexploited investigative possibility	21 %
Proportion with only one remaining "problem" and more than one unexploited investigative opportunity	10 %

Finally, the study examined the question of what it was that governed the police’s prioritisations in relation to their investigative work. The cases selected for this part of the study were those that offered good prospects for investigation since there were several leads to work with, which was the case in approximately 60 percent of the reported cases. A comparison was then made between the cases the police prioritised, by exploiting the investigative possibilities that existed, and those they did not prioritise in this way. The factors that were found to increase the risk for the case to be discontinued despite the presence of unexploited investigative potential are presented below.

Circumstances of the offence	Characteristics of parties involved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Non-serious cases -Cases requiring substantial time/resources -Cases with no suspect identified from the start -Cases involving a countersuit -Cases reported once some time had elapsed -Cases where nobody was arrested/remanded in custody 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Cases where the victim was intoxicated -Cases where the victim did not wish to cooperate -Cases where both parties had an overseas background

The police now register more reported crimes than previously against the wishes of the victim

One factor that had a major significance for the question of whether a case was prioritised was that of whether or not the victim was willing to cooperate with the police. In this regard, however, we found a complication in relation to the possibilities available to the police to increase the proportion of cleared crimes. When a comparison was conducted with 600 offence reports from 2001, it was found that there had been a dramatic increase in the proportion of cases where the victim was not interested in participating in the police investigation. This was due to a substantial increase in the proportion of cases not based on a report from the victim him/herself but where the police had themselves registered an assault offence report in connection with a “fight”. This shift in the police’s propensity to themselves register offence reports accounted for 40 percent of the increase in the number of reported cases of violence between non-acquaintances during the period in question. The change in police practice is the result of a court judgement from 2002, in which two police officers were fined for failing to register an assault offence report in a case where the victim did not wish to cooperate. Since this time, the police have been careful to always register an offence report – but these cases are almost always then discontinued without further investigative action being taken, since they are perceived as being very difficult to clear. Taken together, the consequence is a reduction in the proportion of reported offences that are cleared.

Variations in the propensity to investigate between different chief investigating officers

A third study investigated whether there were significant individual differences among the police officers who determined which cases would be the object for investigation, namely the chief investigating officers [CIOs]. This question was examined by means of a vignette study based on ten authentic reported cases conducted among 40 CIOs from three police authorities.

Each CIO was asked to state whether or not they would choose to investigate each of the cases and if so, how they would do so.⁸

The study clearly shows that there are differences between CIOs as regards how large a proportion of, and which reported cases they would choose to investigate. The same is true of the investigative actions they would take. It is first and foremost in connection with certain specific types of assault cases that the CIOs make different choices, and where the question of who is the CIO in a given case thus makes a difference. Examples of cases of this kind included cases involving a perpetrator who counter sues, cases where the victim is not willing to cooperate, cases that are “awkward”, that do not have “ideal/real victims”, cases that require a great deal of work or where there is little information to work with.

The study identified five different “types” of CIOs representing different approaches to the question of which cases would be investigated. These types are: “The CIO who finds it difficult to prioritise”, “The ambitious CIO”, “The efficient CIO”, “The CIO who only investigates ‘real’ crimes” and “The CIO who investigates as little as possible”.

3. Evaluation of police investigations relating to assaults against women in intimate relationships

The design of the study of police investigations relating to assaults against women in intimate relationships is largely similar to that focused on assaults between non-acquaintances, with the difference being that a different sampling process was employed. This study is based on the police investigation material from 600 cases relating to violence against women in intimate relationships from 2006. The sample was not drawn nationally, but rather from four police authorities: Kronoberg, Blekinge, Uppsala and Jönköping. Kronoberg was chosen as the police authority with the highest proportion of person-based clearances in the country, and Blekinge as the police authority with the lowest proportion (on average, 37 and 18 percent respectively over recent years). Jönköping and Uppsala were selected as mid-range comparisons. One further factor that was taken into account in connection with the selection of Uppsala was that the authority has a specialised organisation for its work with violence against women.

Four factors affect the likelihood of a prosecution

A logistic regression analysis was conducted, with the results showing that there were four main factors that affect the likelihood that a case will result in a prosecution.

⁸ The participating CIOs were also given a questionnaire to complete and participated in group discussions. In addition, interviews were conducted with 12 investigating police officers who do not work as CIOs.

Table 3.

Factor	Increase in probability of prosecution
Supporting evidence from witness	3.5
The woman participates in the investigation	2.8
A documented injury	2.2
The suspect admits the act	1.5

An analysis was then conducted of whether the circumstances of the cases varied across the different police authorities in a way that might affect the likelihood of clearing them. This analysis compared, amongst other things, the proportion of crimes of varying degrees of seriousness, the proportion of cases with different types of witnesses and the proportion of cases where the victim had sustained visible injuries (which could thus be documented). No major differences in these respects were found between the different police authorities. The next stage of the analysis studied the extent to which the investigations conducted by the different police authorities contained the elements that increased the likelihood for a prosecution. Since there was no difference between the police authorities in the actual frequency of witnesses and injured women, it was thus possible to draw the conclusion that possible differences in factors affecting the likelihood of prosecution were associated with differences in the way the police worked. Table 4 shows that there *were* differences of this kind between the police authorities, and that Kronoberg, the authority with the highest proportion of cases that resulted in a prosecution, was the agency which worked most to exploit the opportunities offered by these “prosecution factors”.

Table 4: Proportion of cases in the sample from 2006 which included factors that affect the likelihood of a prosecution, and proportion of cases resulting in a prosecution in the four police authorities. Percent.

	Kronoberg	Blekinge	Uppsala	Jönköping
Prosecution factor1: Supporting witness	59	39	46	48
Prosecution factor2: Victim participates	75	61	72	60
Prosecution factor3: Documented injury	63	60	56	59
Prosecution factor4: Some degree of admission from suspect	42	23	33	29
Prosecution	39	28	37	34

A further finding was that the possibilities of securing the necessary factors increased the more work the police conducted directly at the scene, here referred to as “on-the-spot measures”.

Varying potential for increased clearance associated with different factors

The greatest potential for increasing the clearance rate was associated with conducting more witness interviews and with increased documentation of the woman’s injuries. If at least one witness was interviewed in all cases where witnesses existed, the proportion of cases with witness statements would increase by 20 percentage points, from 47 to 67 percent. There is also a potential to dramatically increase the proportion of cases in which injuries are documented. If all injuries were documented, the proportion of cases with documentation of this kind could also be increased by 20 percentage points, from 60 to 80 percent.

The likelihood that the suspect might admit the crime, or some part of the crime, would increase if the suspected man was always interviewed, which is not the case today. If it is assumed that a similarly large proportion of those suspects who were not interviewed would have admitted the offence in whole or in part as was the case among those who were interviewed, the proportion of cases with an admission of this kind would increase by twelve percentage points if all suspects were interviewed (from 31 percent to 43 percent).

It is rather more difficult to estimate how much it would be possible to increase the proportion of victims who choose to participate in the police investigation. This is due to the fact that a significant proportion of the women who report having been assaulted by their partners have no desire for the report to result in a prosecution (this phenomenon is illustrated in more detail below). Setting high targets in this area may lead the police to give insufficient consideration to how the women perceive their situation and to cause the women to feel pressured and “forced” into participation by the police. The study showed that in total, 67 percent of victims participated in the investigation. This can be compared to the figures for the two police authorities with the largest proportion of participating victims, namely 72 and 75 percent respectively. The potential to improve the level of participation among the victims would thus lie at somewhere between five and eight percentage points.

The study also showed that the probability of a case being cleared increased if the man was under the influence of alcohol at the time of the assault, since these men were more inclined to make a confession. If the woman had previously reported having been assaulted by the man, this also increased the probability of the case resulting in a prosecution. By contrast, this probability decreased for women from a non-Swedish ethnic background. This was due in

part to the fact that the circumstances of these cases were such that they were more difficult to clear, and in part to the fact that the police exploited the possibilities open to them to clear these crimes to a lesser extent than in other cases.

In total, the study suggests that there is a potential in all police authorities to clear as large a proportion of these crimes as the best county, i.e. almost 40 percent. A logistic regression analysis based on the material collected for the study indicates a possible person-based clearance rate of 50 percent.

No indication that the way the police organise their work has any crucial significance

The study provides no indication to suggest that the way the police work with reported cases of violence against women is affected if this work is conducted at a specialised family violence unit, or that the use of such units improves the clearance rate. On the basis of the investigative documentation examined, there is nothing to indicate that the family violence unit in Uppsala works differently in any way from the comparison police authority of Jönköping. Nor is the proportion of cases that lead to prosecution any higher in Uppsala than the national average.

Proposals for improving police investigations in assault cases

The evaluations of the police's investigative work were financed by the Swedish National Police Board and they have had a substantial impact within the police organisation. One important reason for them having had this impact is probably the very concrete proposals for improvements to the work of the police in this area that were presented in the National Council's reports. The following constitute the most central proposed improvements:

- Increase the proportion of cases in which on-the-spot measures are taken at the scene.
- Conduct those investigative measures that are possible to a greater extent.
- Do not allow the propensity to investigate cases to be affected by the national or ethnic origins of the parties involved
- Consider the introduction of some form of checklist and of performance indicators
- Provide more feedback to police officers at all stages

Final remarks

The work of the police is both wide-reaching and central to the functioning of society as a whole, and society devotes a great deal of resources to this work. Against this background, it should be quite natural to subject the work of the police to various types of scientific follow-up and evaluation. As was described at the beginning of this article, however, the number of

evaluations that have examined the work of the police is surprisingly small – both in Sweden and internationally. It is important that the research focused on the work of the police be developed and strengthened in order to produce a better basis for assessing which methods are effective – and cost-efficient – and which are not.

My own experiences from the past five years at the Swedish National Council for Crime Prevention are that, if we proceed from strategically selected research questions, there is much knowledge that can be produced on the basis of statistics, field studies and the documentation produced in police investigations, which can provide important insights into how the work of the police can be improved. This thus constitutes an exciting field of research which ought to provide a challenge for a much larger number of researchers than is the case today. My own perception is furthermore that there exists an active interest among the senior ranks of the Swedish police to disseminate the knowledge produced and to incorporate it into the practical work of the police. While I am hopeful, I am not always quite as optimistic when it comes to the work to produce concrete change. But I do believe nonetheless that if the research conducted in this field, in dialogue with the police, can be further developed in the current direction, there is every chance that we will in ten years time have a police service that works in a considerably more knowledge-based fashion than is the case today.

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