

# Police Officers Professional Knowledge

by

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# Introduction

Work of police officers is knowledge intensive, and police performance is determined by professional knowledge (Chen et al., 2002; Luen and Al-Hawamdeh, 2001; Holgersson and Gottschalk, 2006). Sometimes, a police officer lacks the required knowledge to be able to take action in a policing situation (Hughes and Jackson, 2004; Holgersson, 2005a). A variety of situations where knowledge is required can be identified in the work practice of police officers (Pendleton and Chavéz, 2004; Holgersson, 2005a). These situations can be described in terms of knowledge types (Sambamurthy and Subramani, 2005; Holgersson and Gottschalk, 2006).

Based on an empirical study of police officers in Sweden I will describe different types of knowledge that are a part of police officers' practice. Even though an intervention usually forces a police officer to apply several different skills, I have chosen to discuss different forms of professional knowledge separately, in order to make things easier to comprehend for the reader. In general, a large part of police officers' professional knowledge, as well as professional knowledge in many other contexts, is complex and difficult to describe and explain in words. The police profession is distinguished by the broad range of skills that are required and by the time pressure under which actions often must be taken.



# Research Methodology

The study was mainly qualitative, as it is based on participative observation and interviews with police officers (Holgerson, 2005a). This study involved more than 6000 hours of participant observation and 2000 interviews, involving all (21) police districts in Sweden, from interviews with police officers in the biggest city in Sweden, Stockholm, with 1.5 million citizens, to snow scooter patrolling in the mountains in the North. The interviews with police officers and participative observation started in the beginning of 1998 and ended in April 2005.

The approach applied in this research is not strictly inductive, as it contains some deductive elements. Goldkuhl and Cronholm (2003) define a method called MTG (Multi Grounded Theory), which is inspired by grounded theory (see Strauss and Corbin, 1990), but their method also contains deductive elements (see also Cronholm, 2004, 2005; Goldkuhl, 2004).

In addition to studying a number of different types of places, this research also included various types of police officers: new recruits, experienced officers, officers with a special interest in some kind of activity, officers known by other police officers as lazy/high performing, and officers known as “normal” (Patton, 1990).

Most interviews had an informal structure (Patton, 1990), where the interviewed person had ample opportunity to talk freely about the work and explain what he or she thought was important knowledge for being a good officer. Bryman (1997) has found that unstructured interviews are effective to use in combination with participative observations because then it is possible to obtain a deeper understanding of a phenomenon.

The study also included participating observations in combination with interviews for a period of six months with the same police officers. The intention was to test different types of knowledge and see how it works, for example if it is possible to catch more drunken drivers when acting in a special way (Holgerson, 2005a).





# Literature Review

The amount of research on police officers' professional knowledge is very limited. Remarks on this subject made by Sweden's only police professor, Leif G.W. Persson, can easily give the impression that professional knowledge is not required, or even present, within the part of the police force that serves in uniform:

*"It's no bloody intellectual profession. It's basically: 'Get out on the streets, get some names and kick some ass'".<sup>1</sup>*

This view on the uniformed police is enhanced in detective stories. In these novels the work of the uniformed police takes place in the periphery, as opposed to the work of the detectives, and is more or less ridiculed.

Kirkham, an American criminologist who worked as a uniformed police officer during a period of time, writes in an article titled 'From Professor to Patrolman':

*"As a criminology professor, I had always enjoyed the luxury of having great amounts of time in which to make difficult decisions. As police officer, however, I find myself forced to make the most critical choices in a time frame of seconds rather than days... I found myself progressively awed by the complexity of tasks faced by men whose work I once thought was fairly simple and straightforward."* (Kirkham, 1974)

Another American professor, Goldstein, emphasizes that a police officer must be able to make highly sophisticated judgments that have a great impact on the lives of the involved persons. These kinds of judgments are not made mechanically and are at least as difficult to make as for example those a researcher in social sciences has to deal with. Often, a police officer's decisions are more difficult than for example those made by a prosecutor or a judge, as a police officer must make decisions under the pressure of the immediate circumstances (Goldstein 1967). A Norwegian criminology professor, Finstad (2000), states that police work involves criminality control (intervene against criminal actions, carry out controls in case of suspicions), physical work (help injured persons out of car wrecks and burning houses, take care of drunk persons), social work (help exposed children and teenagers, support persons with psychologi-

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<sup>1</sup> Lecture by L. G.W. Persson in Folkets hus, Stockholm, on Oct. 16th 2002. This quote is based on two interviews, independent of each other, with persons who attended the lecture. During the lecture it also became apparent that Persson does not consider the police profession to be a profession for which particularly high intellectual abilities are required.

cal problems), transportation work (drive prisoners to their cell, deliver documents), service work (open locked car doors), information work (describe the shortest route to the pharmacy, inform tourists about which expositions can be seen at the museum, inform about the opening hours of the passport office), cultural and assignment work (role plays and lectures at schools about traffic safety and drugs), hotel and restaurant work (make sure that prisoners and witnesses have something to eat and drink), office work (write reports) and acting (act in front of the general public in order to create security, law and order). According to Finstad, the profession of police officer is indeed an intellectual and analyzing occupation, as it involves analyzing different situations and environments as well as making decisions using a broad repertoire of interpretations and actions (Finstad, 2000). Other criminologists, for example Greenwood & Petersilia, point out that patrol officers need to be able to catch up information that a crime victim gives. This is the most important factor that determines whether a crime can be solved or not (Greenwood & Petersilia, 1975). The working methods of police officers decide whether or not persons can be arrested for a crime (Skogan & Antunes, 1979).

Finstad (2000) considers the police profession to be a handicraft; not in the sense of mass production but rather as a form of art handicraft (*ibid.*). Waddington (1999) states that the skills and knowledge that a police officer possesses are difficult to describe in theoretical principles, because it is a handicraft (*ibid.*). According to Brown, this handicraft is largely based on experience and intuition (*ibid.*). Bittner (1972) points out that the worrying issue is that police work is not seen as the heavy handicraft it is, and that it often is assumed that those who work as police officers do so because they would have problems finding work elsewhere. Bittner believes that police work needs to be addressed and judged in a more serious and analyzing manner (*ibid.*).

Bayley (1994) believes that police officers acquire a large knowledge bank. This is especially true for frontline police officers, whose knowledge has been subject of research on a far too small scale. Practical knowledge is underrated as it usually consists of intuitive, experience-based, inexplicit and non-systematized knowledge. By trying to formulate this knowledge it becomes available for persons from outside and possible to develop and spread in words (*ibid.*).

McElroy (1998) emphasizes, as Finstad, that a police officer must be able to function in different roles. He must be able to plan, solve problems, spread and gather information, organize co-operations and coordinate working efforts within a certain area (*ibid.*).

Broderick (1977) believes that police work in addition contains a large amount of abstract knowledge that shall be applied on specific problems. To be able to do so police officers need both theoretical and practical knowledge, according to Broderick (ibid.).

I believe that the patrol/local police need a range of different forms of knowledge together with a flexible intellect to be able to function in a satisfying manner.

Göranzon (1990; 1998) divides professional knowledge into three different types:

- 1) Statement knowledge/theoretical knowledge
- 2) Skill knowledge/practical knowledge
- 3) Familiarity knowledge

Göranzon considers knowledge that is formulated in different principles, theories, methods and regulations to be statement knowledge. Skill knowledge is acquired, as well as used, during the practice. Familiarity knowledge, finally, is knowledge attained by being part of a tradition. The interaction with others within the same profession is crucial for this type of knowledge.

*"When the nature of knowledge is being discussed, there is a clear tendency to over-emphasize theoretical knowledge at the expense of practical knowledge, while familiarity knowledge tends to be forgotten completely."* (ibid.)

Several researchers have made similar classifications. Nordenstam (1983), for example, uses Wittgenstein's (1953) division of knowledge into three types of groups:

- 1) Theoretical/scientific knowledge
- 2) Practical/productive knowledge
- 3) Knowledge as practical wisdom

Gustavsson (2000) divides knowledge in the same manner. He points out, as Göranzon above, that during a long period of time theoretical-scientific knowledge was considered the only form of knowledge (ibid.). This type of knowledge has a long tradition with roots in the Greek antique (see Aristotle). An important principle is the distinction between knowing something with full certainty on the one hand and believing and guessing on the other. The second type of knowledge as defined by Gustavsson (ibid.) is practical-productive knowledge. This kind of knowledge stands

in close relation to skills and practical abilities, knowledge in practice. Practical wisdom is the third form of knowledge described by Gustavsson. Characteristic for this knowledge type is that the goal of an action at the same time is part of the action. This form of knowledge has a political and ethical dimension, of which the purpose is people's well-being. When we for example build a house, the manufacturing process is separated from the fact that we will live in the house and want it to be designed in a way that gives us a high living standard (ibid.).

Josefson (1991) uses another classification of knowledge than the above mentioned researchers. According to her, there are different aspects of knowledge, not different knowledge types. The first aspect consists of statement knowledge, the other of familiarity knowledge. Josefson writes that these aspects of knowledge are closely related to each other and that the borders are shifting. Familiarity knowledge gives live to the abstract terminology of the statement knowledge. The reason why she emphasizes that professional knowledge consists of these two aspects, is that we, according to Josefson, tend to consider knowledge equal to statement knowledge (Josefson 1991).

Rolf (1991) points out that researchers like to divide reality into classes, types and categories. He criticizes researchers as Nordenstam and Göranson for doing so. He states that researchers (for example Nordenstam, see above) who refer to Wittgenstein's writings misinterpret his ideas. Wittgenstein does not try to sort knowledge into different categories, according to Rolf. Wittgenstein's entire philosophy is opposed to the idea of categorizations and classifications. Instead, he wants to illustrate that knowing something and saying something sometimes overlap each other and sometimes not.

Carlström (1999) has studied police investigators in the city center of Stockholm and believes that their knowledge is transitory, a perishable. It is impermanent and needs to be filled up constantly. When investigators described the process that leads to a suspicion, they used the word intuition. A deviation can give them the feeling that something is not right. Their professional knowledge is specific and can not be generalized or used in other contexts than where it belongs. It is related to place and time and can not be applied elsewhere. It concerns a specific surrounding, time and context, specific persons, cars, addresses and crimes. I believe that among

patrol/local policemen<sup>2</sup> there is knowledge that is perishable, as well as there is knowledge that is more or less constant and not as dependent of time and place<sup>3</sup>.

It is usual that knowledge within organizations is divided into silent ('tacit') and explicit knowledge (Goldkuhl, Röstlinger & Braf, 2001). Nonaka & Takeuchi (1995) and Zack (1999) make such a classification. Schön (1983; 1987) argues that there is a difference between espoused knowledge and knowledge in use. The professional knowledge described in this section consists of different types of knowledge, but is always knowledge in use (skill/ability)<sup>4</sup>. Often it is not explicit and consists of so called silent knowledge (see for example Polanyi, 1962; Rolf, 1991). One form of statement knowledge that is part of what I call professional knowledge will not be discussed in this document. An example of this type is knowing that the amount of robberies has been increasing in a certain area and that robberies in general have become more common among teenagers.

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<sup>2</sup> I do not agree with Carlström's statement that police investigators' knowledge only is perishable. Part of their knowledge is tied to persons, place and time, but they also make use of knowledge that is more constant over time.

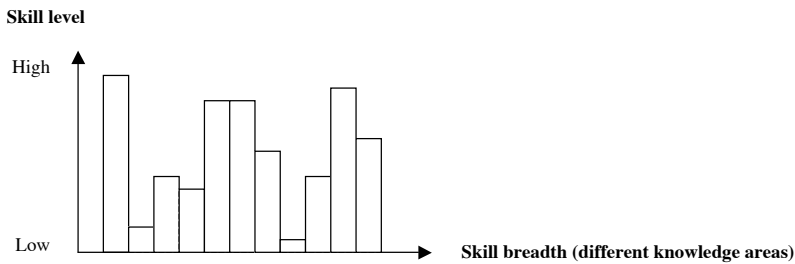
<sup>3</sup> See Goldkuhl & Braf (2001). They make a distinction between knowledge of typical and knowledge of specific matters.

<sup>4</sup> See Molander. (1996).



# Police officers have different skills/ knowledge

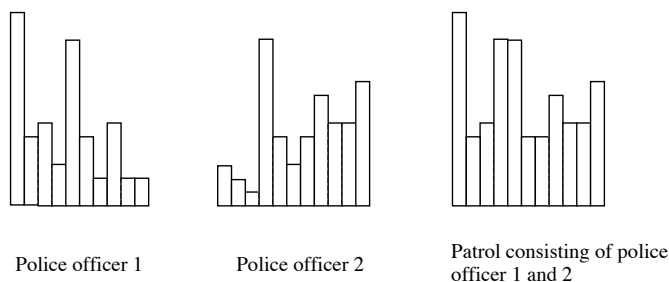
**Figure 1: Exemplifying the knowledge profile of a police officer**



Usually there is more than one way to solve a situation (see for example Broderick, 1977) and in order to reach the best possible solution police officers can use different knowledge areas. I believe that strength within one area can compensate for a weakness in another. When, for example, a police patrol comes across a group of teenagers smoking in the subway, a police officer with good argumentative abilities but not as much authority can use his argumentation skills to persuade them to stop smoking. However, a minimum level of most knowledge areas is required for front line patrol/local police officers to be able to function in a satisfying manner. If, for example, a police officer has difficulties to deal with his own feelings and therefore becomes too nervous to perform a task or too angry to control himself, advanced skills in other areas become irrelevant.

When tasks shall be performed, police officers usually are part of a patrol<sup>5</sup>. The patrol has its own knowledge profile:

**Figure 2: Knowledge profile of a patrol**



<sup>5</sup> The same is true when police officers are part of a group that shall solve certain tasks.

Carlström (1999) writes that she could observe police officers develop a collective memory, a type of common knowledge bank. Argyris and Schön (1990) use the term collective maps to describe an understanding pattern that several persons develop together, and emphasize the importance of this organizational learning (see also Berger and Luckmann, 1979).



# Different types of professional knowledge

In the following sections, different forms of professional knowledge that a police officer should possess are discussed. The size of the sections and the order in which they appear shall not be seen as a valuation of which skills are most important. In certain situations, one type of knowledge may be important, while in other contexts other types are needed. The goal has not been to provide a description that covers all forms of professional knowledge within the field of activities of the local/patrol police.

It is important to bear in mind that the knowledge level of the two police officers described in the section below should not be seen as typical. The purpose of the presentation is to illustrate different forms of professional knowledge that it is desirable for a police officer to possess. The examples should be seen as a general description and not as a complete analysis of each type of knowledge. By reading this paper it is possible to understand both the police officer's complex work practice and also the need to identify and describe the professional knowledge this work requires.

## Using the skills of other police officers

*Fourteen year old Sarah never came to school that day. She was lying with her face buried in her pillow and her eyes were bloodshot from crying. Patrol 7337 consisting of police inspector Fredrik Pålsson and senior police officer Anna Ekeröth had the task to register a report. When they rang the doorbell to the apartment at Advokatbacken and were let inside by the girl's mother, they did not know much more of the case than that a pupil at Albyskolan had been attacked on her way to school. The mother told them briefly that a man in his forties had molested her daughter. He had pulled up her t-shirt from behind and held her in his grip, while he started to stroke her breasts. Since Fredrik Pålsson and Anna Ekeröth had worked together so much, they did not need more than eye contact, some small movements with their eyebrows and a small nod to agree over how they would divide their tasks.<sup>6</sup>*

The ability to use police officers' skills can be coupled to individuals, patrols and groups.

One type of knowledge that is coupled to the level of the individual is a police officer's ability to understand his own and his colleagues' stronger

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<sup>6</sup> The sections with Fredrik Pålsson and Anna Ekeröth have the form of a novel. They are based on real events that I have come in contact with while collecting empirical data.

and weaker sides in case of an intervention. This means that he has an intuitive feeling for how the tasks shall be divided, when to step forward and take the initiative and when to step back and leave the initiative to a colleague, for example when a patrol is involved in a discussion. The ability to distribute the tasks in an appropriate manner is important within a patrol as well as between patrols, when several patrols are involved in a certain situation. A commander's ability to form patrols and take advantage of a group in the best possible way is a part of this knowledge category.

To be able to distribute the working tasks in an appropriate manner, a police officer needs to know which measures and routines usually come up in a certain situation. Besides knowing the area well, it is important to have knowledge about reoccurring crimes, specific problems and individuals within the area. For a distribution of the working tasks in a way that fits the situation, it usually is of central importance that there is a dialogue between the police officers (see section 'To prepare mentally and communicate with colleagues').

Another form of knowledge is a type of collective knowledge, related to a certain patrol or group. This knowledge form becomes visible when a group/patrol is involved in a case and different roles and working tasks are distributed more or less automatically within the patrol/group. Even though the individuals within the group/patrol possess this ability, the knowledge is collective and maintained by the members of the patrol/group. This collective knowledge makes the individuals in the patrol/group experience a certain 'flow' when they are working.

## **Showing empathy towards a victim**

*Fredrik Pålsson nodded understanding as he sat in the kitchen speaking with Sarah's mother, who was upset over what had happened. In Sarah's room Anna Ekeröth had just sat down on the side of the bed. She did not say anything. Sarah was sobbing and was still lying on her stomach, without looking at the police officer who had been in her room for several minutes at that point. Anna Ekeröth laid her hand on Sarah and said: "How are you?" Sarah turned around with a deep sigh and their eyes met. "Not so good" Sarah answered. "My name is Anna; I understand that this is difficult!" Anna Ekeröth continued. Without the police officer having asked for it, Sarah started to tell about what had happened. Anna Ekeröth sat silent and made notes, at the same time as she every now and then confirmed that she was listening by saying "I understand" and other short comments that made the conversation with Sarah easier.*

Different persons who have been the victim of a crime can have different reactions. Some may not need any support at all, while others react

strongly over crimes that a police officer does not find so grave. The police officer must adjust his supporting measures depending on the subjective needs that a victim has. Even when a police officer thinks a police case is unimportant, he must be able to show empathy. Furthermore, he must be able to be indulgent towards persons who have been the victim of a crime and are angry or come with malicious remarks, for example when a crime victim sharply points out that the police surely can catch speeding offenders or beat demonstrators, but are not able to get hold of burglars that rage in an area.

To be able to show empathy, body language in the form of body position and distance becomes important. Holding somebody may be right in one situation, while not so fitting in another when the victim wants to keep a distance. Another important component is to listen actively<sup>7</sup>, where the police officer shows that he is listening. A police officer must have the ability to let the victim tell his story in a way that seems best to the victim, at the same time as he gets enough information to be able to make a judgment of what has happened. Below follows a fragment from an interview with a police trainee:

*"You are good, you older policemen. You can listen and at the same time somehow ask a question every now and then and get information for a report, without disturbing the story. I find that really difficult. You just want to get answers in the right order about: personal number, name, telephone number, time of the crime, place of the crime .... You feel frustrated when all you can do is stand there and listen, when actually you want to have this information but the person you speak with strays away from the subject."*

At the same time as the police officer shall show empathy, he usually also has other tasks to perform, in most cases some form of interrogation or other crime investigating measures. The police officer must have a feeling for when it is suitable to for example ask a victim to come along to a hospital for corpse identification. He must be able to decide when sensitive questions can be asked. Should he wait with an interrogation? Should the interrogation with a victim take place at a calmer place than where they are at that point? A police officer must feel how fast for example crime investigating measures can be carried out. He or she must have the ability to adjust treatment depending on the situation and the crime victim.

In addition, a police officer must be able to assess what type of support the victim needs when the police have left the crime scene. Is it fitting to drive the victim to an acquaintance, a hospital or a women's refuge?

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<sup>7</sup> For example by paraphrasing, in which case the listener confirms that the information has reached him or her, by in different ways repeating what is being said.

Does the victim want the police to call when the offender is released? In some cases giving some advice is enough to make the victim feel safer. In other situations the police may find it important that the victim is in contact with and receives support from somebody in his or her surrounding. The support that is needed is highly individual and the police officer must make a judgment about which measures are needed and possible to carry through.

## **To prioritize cases and use the available resources effectively**

*Fredrik Pålsson looked at his watch as he and Anna Ekeröth walked down the stairs and towards the police car. Writing the report at Sarah's house had not taken much time. Both Fredrik Pålsson and Anna Ekeröth knew that at that moment there were problems with the selling of drugs in the centre of Alby, and they had promised to try to engage themselves in the matter. Anna Ekeröth sat down in the radio seat and Fredrik Pålsson took place in the driver seat, while he was complaining about the hockey game of the day before that started to come back to him.*

*"Oh, I forgot my hat and gloves in the apartment", Fredrik Pålsson said.*

*"Mr. absentminded has struck once again" Anna Ekeröth said with a tone of mild resignation.*

*"Yes, I know" Fredrik Pålsson sighed while he got out of the car again.*

A police officer must be able to make a well thought-out judgment about how much time can be put in a certain case. Is there reason to put energy in the case or should the aim be to finish it as fast as possible, as the police organization's resources for that case are minimized (see also the section 'To debrief an event')? There are many factors that can affect this decision. First of all, the police officer must take the victim into account. An eighty year old woman who has been the victim of a crime may be in bigger need of support than a twenty-two year old man who has had a burglary into his car. A second factor is the crime's gravity and the police officer's analysis of the possibilities that the case will be taken to court.

Even when a police officer concludes that it will be difficult to take legal proceedings against a person, he may still decide to lay down energy on a case, for example when it concerns a serious type of crime or a reoccurring problem in an area. When, for example, there has been a series of fires, a small fire that only will be classified as damage can be enough to send out a dog patrol or perform a door-to-door search to find the offenders. Perhaps it is possible to find out who was behind the series of fires,

without solving the issue that the patrol at that moment is involved in. In the same way a police officer can decide that there are good reasons to lay energy on having a person arrested, in a case which normally would not be important enough for a patrol to be engaged in. This can be the case when the offender already is being watched by the police organization.

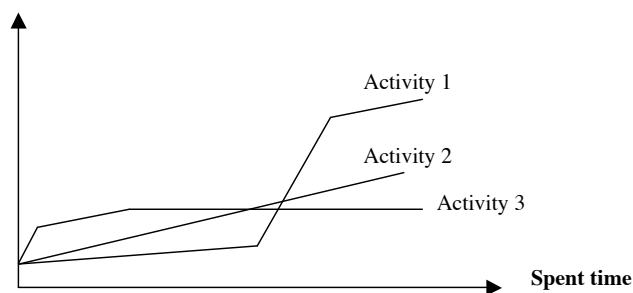
Thus, a police officer needs different forms of knowledge to be able to select those cases where there is cause to put energy in. It is, among other things, important to be informed about particular problems and individuals that are active in a certain area. Good insights in investigation work and technical research as well as legal knowledge are also important.

A police officer must also be able to decide how much time can be put on one case. A patrol must feel whether the estimated effect makes the amount of time put in a case justifiable. The effect of the time one puts into a case can differ.

Lipsky (1980) describes that a street-level bureaucrat, for example a police officer, works in an environment in which there is a strong need to prioritize. This is a consequence of the fact that street-level bureaucrats are only able to work with a small part of all the cases that come in. The street-level bureaucrat must constantly look at the marginal benefit, i.e. decide whether it is justifiable to put more time into a case considering the effect it will have. According to Lipsky, police officers may be the street-level bureaucrats with the most contradicting tasks (ibid.).

**Figure 3: Example of the effect of the time spent by a patrol**

**Effect of patrol's spent time**



**Activity 1:** A patrol is for example engaged in a case in which the crime victim is so shocked that the patrol's time initially does not have a large effect. When after a while the victim is calmed down, the patrol can gather qualitative information at the same time as the victim can receive support. When enough information is gathered and the victim has calmed down

even more, the effect of the patrol's time there is becoming less. During the initial phase, the patrol must estimate how long time it will take for the victim to calm down and whether it will be worth the time to wait there (or if it instead may be better to for example make sure that an acquaintance or a non-profit/professional institution can take care of the victim).

**Activity 2:** A patrol is for example engaged in traffic control. They write reports about, among other things, car drivers not wearing a safety belt. The patrol can write about five reports per hour. The effect of the patrol's work is more or less constant, but the patrol must all the time consider if there are other activities that have a larger marginal benefit.

**Activity 3:** A patrol is for example taking care of a person who wants to report a car break-in. The immediate effect diminishes as soon as the police officers have received information about the victim and all information they need to be able to write a report.

A patrol must be able to see when it is fitting to end an activity as the effect of more time put down will be small in relation to other activities that the patrol could take up. When a patrol takes time for a case, current and estimated workload must be taken into account. Usually, five minutes are worth more on a Saturday night at 02.00 a.m. than on a Tuesday morning, as the workload in relation to the available staff is bigger on Friday night than Tuesday morning. The police officers must have knowledge about normal and calculated workload and if there are specific problems in a certain area, on a certain day or time of the day, to be able to make decisions about which activities should be prioritized. When, for example, there have been many robberies in a specific area, police officers should balance the importance of being available near to this area at the time of the day when the risk of robberies is highest, and being engaged in another matter relatively far away from this area. Another example is a series of burglaries that have been taking place between 9 a.m. and 2 p.m. in a certain area, which creates a need of police officers searching the area for suspicious persons or cars at that time of the day. Because of this, other matters may get lower priority.

When deciding which activities should be prioritized and how much time can be used for them, it also is important to have knowledge about what the other patrols are doing, where they are and if there is much work waiting to be finished.

Finstad (2000) believes that when patrols are keen on being available, there is a risk that crime victims receive bad service. Patrols who want to wait for the big 'job' do not take time for 'small errands' (ibid.). It is important that a police officer makes a balanced and professional judgment about to

what extent he can be engaged in a case, and avoids doing so in a routine fashion. It is not right when a police officer always is in a hurry to finish a task in order to be available for possible new assignments.

In addition, a police officer must be able to decide how time shall be divided when he or she is involved in a case. How much time shall be spent on victim support and how much time on investigation measures? Making the choice between staying with the victim and trying to catch an offender means balancing the victim's need of support and the importance and probability of catching the offender.

Finstad's findings (2000) show that police officers often believe that crime victims want the offender to be caught rather than to receive support, even though in reality the opposite is true. Though I have observed the same, I also have experienced that crime victims often find it important that the police arrest the offender. Lindgren's (2004) results show that a large part of the crime victims finds it important that the police identify and arrest the offender (87 %) as well as trace stolen goods (67 %). There is at the same time a large group that finds it important that the police give crime preventing advice (60 %)<sup>8</sup>. During interviews the following has been said by police personnel:

*"A crime victim does not want one to be nice and considerate too long. You should not just sit there as a psychiatrist and nod understanding. The victim wants one to act as well. That is a difficult balance."*

To be able to make decisions as described above, a police officer must be able to listen to the radio, answer the phone, observe the surroundings etc. at the same time as he listens to a crime victim without giving him or her the feeling that he or she does not receive enough attention or that the police officer's work is affected negatively in another way. Even though a police officer chooses to be engaged in a certain case, he must constantly make a balance. When a police officer learns about an ongoing rape or knife fight, it can be justified to break off a less important case. Factors that affect this decision are for example the estimated amount of time it takes to drive there and whether the case is ongoing or recently committed. If the crime scene is far away, the police officer may conclude that he will not be able to do much more than writing a report. The decision is also dependent on how much time has gone since the crime was committed. There are several other factors involved, which already have been discussed in this section, as for example where the other patrols are and what they are doing.

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<sup>8</sup> In Lindgren's research, different activities were not opposed to each other.



## To distinguish deviations and quick categorize individuals, objects and events

*They had just left Advokatbacken and only driven a short bit over Tingsvägen when Fredrik Pålsson shouted: "There we have something!" and made a fast U-turn. The old red Opel started to drive faster but had no chance against the police car's 250 hp engine. The driver did not even reach the cycle lane that he intended to drive into in order to avoid the police patrol. Instead, the driver stopped the car and jumped in between the two passengers on the backseat. Both Fredrik Pålsson and Anna Ekeröth were quickly out of the police car and approached the Opel. They knew exactly who had been driving the car.*

Skolnick (1966) points out that police officers automatically notice people's way of walking, their clothes, their car etc. to be able to distinguish deviations (ibid.). Rubenstein (1973) believes that these routine controls of the environment help making police work more efficient. Finstad (2000) emphasizes police officers' ability to notice deviations. She believes that one of the most important things in the working day of police officers is how they examine the environment and what they do on their own initiative. However, it is easy to believe that being active, for example stopping and carrying out a control, is the same as being efficient. Believing that being active and being efficient is the same thing is at best debatable, but can lead to over-control, according to Finstad (ibid.). That police officers sort the impressions they get, usually consisting of meager and superficial information, is a prerequisite for police work, according to Holmberg (1999). Police officers can recognize suspect persons from a long distance (ibid.).

Carlström (1999) observes that police officers can begin to form suspicions based on a detail that does not fit in the picture they are used to. When she was out on the street with the investigators, it was clear that they saw and observed things that she did not notice. They could for example hear somebody whistle, which could be a signal between thieves before breaking into a car (ibid.).

Knutsson and Partanen (1986) discovered that police officers point out hidden occurrences and meaningful or interesting situations, using different signs that ordinary people do not notice or are unaware of. Knutsson and Partanen wrote that police officers often have an amazing ability to discover cars that contain "mischief" or to find drug addicts – even when the cars or persons do not send out any particular distinguishing signs. 'Something' is there that the policemen use as a starting point. Below follow some factors that Knutsson and Partanen say influence whether a car is stopped or not:



- The looks of the car. Does it look like a ‘car with mischief’ or is it a brand that is easy to steal?
- The looks of the driver and the passengers. Are they old or young, do they have long hair or appear nervous?
- Driving behavior. Does the driver drive particularly fast or slow, turn as soon as the police are within sight or behave strangely in another way?
- Time of the day. Cars that are out driving in the middle of the night are suspect.
- Place. Cars that are parked on a hidden place or are badly parked are suspect.
- Time and place combined. If a car is parked or is driving near a bank, industrial area etc., this is suspect.

Knutsson and Partanen experience that the reasons for controls vary a lot. Sometimes the grounds are so vague that police officers, when asked, can not say exactly why they examined a certain car or area (ibid.).

Wahlin (1999) observed that criminals can learn how to behave in order to avoid drawing the attention of the police. This becomes a struggle between a police officer’s knowledge about how to interpret his surroundings and a professional criminal’s knowledge about how to blend in in his surroundings:

*”...you learn how to use psychology; you become a little bit a psychologist. When you behave in one way, not so many persons will notice you. It’s the same thing; I have escaped from the police several times. When you walk over the street with some bags or whatever in your hands, they’ll soon have stopped with their windows down. When you look guilty or suspect, of course they will look what you have with you. But then all you can do is go on, put your head in their police car and talk to them. Then you’ll make it... That’s how they think as well. They look for signals... In the beginning you become tensed of course, but you learn how to control your feelings. You show nothing. You’ve just got to make the best out of the situation... It’s an instinct of self-preservation. You learn all these tricks, how to behave. It’s the same when you meet people in the stairs or something like that. Usually you say hi and continue down. You’ve got to be a bit social. You try to get as little attention as possible, but at the same time not too little, because then you’ll draw too much attention anyway.” (ibid.)*

A police officer observes his surroundings and judges what he sees. Different behaviors, individuals and objects make the police officer form

suspicions of different degrees. Does somebody walk too fast? Does somebody walk too slowly? Does somebody look around too much? Does somebody look around too little? Does somebody seem to be nervous? Is this a person the police know from before? How does a person behave when he looks at a police officer, does he look too long, too short – or does he avoid looking at all? The environment and the persons that accompany somebody are also affecting the judgment. A broken headlamp, an expired tax control sticker, the driver not using a safety belt and the looks of the driver in combination with the state of the car are other factors that I have experienced can be reasons for an intervention. From an interview with an ex-police officer:

*"I remember that when I just started I was impressed with the older police officers who could notice everything at once when a car approached."*

### ***Observations during participating observation***

*"I was standing outside a bar together with a younger colleague. It was closing time and full of people outside the bar. I looked at my colleague. He was looking out over the crowd but seemed to have a 'thousand miles look'. He looked into the crowd without focusing on the individuals to be able to see what state they were in. I asked him: 'What are you looking at?' He answered, a little surprised, that he did not look at anything in particular and wondered why I asked that. I continued to ask: 'Do you see that guy in a white sweater, do you see that his eyes are 'dark' of anger and that he is staring at the guy standing in front of him?' 'Oh, yeah, I think you're right' my colleague answered curious. We went to the man in the white sweater and talked to him. He turned out to be angry but our conversation with him calmed him down. When we were back on our spot on the sidewalk I asked my colleague: 'Look, is there anything in particular you see right now?' 'Well, perhaps he in the blue sweater?' he answered wondering.... We continued to stand there and observe and spoke to a number of persons in order to prevent fights. It hit me that one has to learn things that I considered obvious. My young colleague was not tired or unmotivated. That was not the reason why he did not see when there was reason to talk to certain individuals. He needed guidance in what to focus on. He also needed to learn that one does not need to wait for a decision of a coercive measure to just talk to a person.*

*At another occasion I was standing at a railing in a newly opened department store together with an older colleague. The store had several open floors and there were many persons walking around. I saw that my colleague switched focus constantly, all the time examining new people. I asked him: 'Maybe you think my question is strange, but what is it you're looking at when you stand here looking out over the crowd of people?' My colleague answered, after having thought it over: "I look if there is something that isn't right, if someone is looking around too much, or too little, if someone walks too fast or too slow.... '. We compared our judgments and saw that we roughly made the same conclusions about*

*which individuals were divergent. We realized that this is a form of knowledge one acquires by working as a police officer. That you react to what is different.”* (Holgersson, 2005)

My own experience is that part of the categorizing that can be used in for example Stockholm, is not at all functional on the countryside. This is mainly the case when deciding which cars to control. I have noticed several times that cars that draw my attention when I work out on the countryside are driven by young persons from a small village with an interest in cars. These cars and drivers pass controls almost always without any remarks. Other police officers that come from a big city to a small town have observed the same. In smaller towns, personal knowledge seems to be more important than in a big city. Police officers in a small village are usually very well informed about the criminals and the cars they drive. Still, the ability to notice what is deviant is important even in small towns.

The ability to distinguish the deviant and to find reasons to act against an individual or a vehicle is developed as an experience-based knowledge. This ability consists partly of being able to discover the deviant, as described above, and partly of being able to consider different factors once something deviant has been discovered. When, for example, a police officer starts to suspect a case of drunken driving as the driver of a car makes a 'pear'<sup>9</sup> or 'truck'<sup>10</sup> turn, brakes without reason, drives too slow or too staggering, only one of these signs, if clear enough, may be enough to motivate stopping the car. It is probable that a drunk-driver behaves in a certain way, but not at all certain.

There are other variables that can raise or lower the degree of suspicion of an ongoing drunken driving case. If it is a Friday afternoon and the car belongs to a construction or plumbing company, only small unclear indications can be enough motivation to stop the car<sup>11</sup>. If, on the other hand, the driver of the car is an old man with a hat or a woman staring straight forward who seems to be a bad driver, the suspicion degree may become lower. The looks of the driver, possible passengers and the environment in which the car is observed influence the decision. If the suspected driver is seen outside a liquor store a Saturday morning with a bag from that store in his car, the suspicions will be stronger than when the driver stops outside

<sup>9</sup> Steering movements come too late, become too big and need to be corrected (shape of a pear).

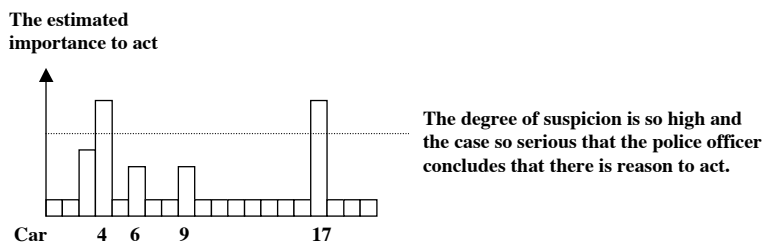
<sup>10</sup> The driver makes a turn as if he were driving a truck with a long trailer behind him.

<sup>11</sup> A police officer who is known to be good in catching drunk-drivers has stated that construction workers, electricians, plumbers etc., who drive a company car to and from work like to drink a couple of beers after work at the beginning of the weekend. During participating observation, I have discovered several drunk-drivers with this type of cars on Friday evenings.

a church on a Sunday morning. The degree of suspicion also rises when the driver already is known to the police from similar crimes.

Even when a police officer discovers something illegal, he must constantly make the decision (see previous section) if it is an errand that is suitable to be engaged in at that moment. Shall a patrol for example stop and make a report about someone for not using a bicycle lamp or for illegal bill-posting? The police officer asks himself two things: Is the degree of suspicion high enough to motivate an intervention and does the gravity of the suspected crime justify an intervention?

**Figure 4: What precedes an intervention?**



**Exemplification of the figure above:**

The patrol meets 20 cars:

- Car number three looked shabby, but the patrol made the judgment that the driver in combination with the looks of the car did not make the suspicion strong enough to motivate stopping the vehicle.
- Car number four was stopped as the patrol suspected that the driver might be lacking a driving license. Nothing could be objected to the car or the driver.
- In car number six and nine the driver was not wearing a safety belt. However, the patrol did not turn to stop these vehicles because of the traffic intensity. The patrol thought it would take too long time to turn around and catch up with the cars that should be stopped, considering the crime that was committed.
- Car number seventeen drew the patrol's interest. The patrol had to wait for three vehicles to pass before they could turn and follow car number seventeen. None of these three cars drew more attention than number seventeen. The patrol caught up with the car and made it pull over. It turned out that a driving ban had been imposed on the car. However, it was not the owner who was driving the car and

the driver stated that he did not know about the driving ban. As a result no report was written. While the patrol was standing outside car number seventeen talking to the driver, they discovered another car that drew their attention. They followed after and stopped the car. The driver turned out to lack a driving license, which resulted in a primary report for aggravated unlawful driving.

It is important that a police officer makes a balanced decision and finds a suitable level for when to investigate something further. In that way he can avoid controlling too many vehicles or individuals. From an interview with an experienced police officer:

*"When you're young you tend to see things more in black and white. You haven't developed an instinctive feeling. The older ones use a more grayish scale."*

A university student who came along with police officers during a few shifts learned:

*"There was a difference between the younger and older police officers. The older ones were calm, observed the surrounding and saw when something wasn't right. It seemed as if the older police officers stopped the right cars. Often something was wrong when they stopped a car. I asked them: 'How do you know which cars to stop?' They answered: 'We just look.' The younger ones panicked a little; when 500 cars had passed they seemed to think: 'Something must happen! –Let's take one, maybe we're lucky.'"*

## **To form a suspicion**

*"Aren't his eyes a little faint?" Anna Ekeröth wondered. "Have you taken something?" Fredrik Pålsson asked. "What do you mean, taken something?" the Opel driver said. But there was something in his eyes that made both Anna Ekeröth and Fredrik Pålsson suspicious. Since three more persons were in the car, the patrol did not have the possibility to keep an eye on them and get permission to carry out a bodily search and a house search. Therefore Fredrik Pålsson made the decision to search the car and the persons inside the car. Anna Ekeröth had seen that one of the persons in the car had dropped something to his feet. One thing led to another and five minutes later the patrol had confiscated ca. 350 rohypnol pills (illegal drug), two knives and one mobile phone that they suspected was stolen. Three of the four persons that had been in the car were suspected of a crime. But still there was more that could be done and Fredrik Pålsson called the prosecutor to try to get permission to search the house of the person who had had the stolen mobile phone in his inside pocket and of the person who had had the main part of the rohypnol pills hidden in the sleeve of his jacket.*

To be able to form a suspicion and from there get the possibilities to perform coercive measures, a police officer needs to possess different types

of knowledge. He must be well up in the legislation that regulates police officers' possibilities to use coercive measures as well as in the legislation that a certain individual has violated. A police officer must constantly draw conclusions from the things he sees and the conversations he has and connect these conclusions to the current legislation. Are his pupils really normal? Doesn't he hold his plastic bag a bit too tightly? How is it possible that he says he just came from the gas station, when in fact we saw him coming from the other direction? Doesn't his pocket stick out? Doesn't he all the time put his hands in his pockets, as if he has something to hide? Doesn't he act nervous? Why is his right hand in a fist all the time? Why did he bend down behind the shrubbery when he saw us? Do these indications form enough circumstantial evidence to perform a personal search? Are there enough reasons to suspect him of the crime? The police officer must constantly be active in his observations, questions and judgments. The ability to form a suspicion requires, to use Göranson's (1990; 1998) terms, both theoretical as well as practical knowledge. A large portion of knowledge that could be classified as familiarity knowledge is needed as well. A police officer must constantly search for possibilities to move on in a case.

The way in which a case is built up can vary. When a person is discovered driving a car on which a ban of driving was imposed, it is important to find out whether it was a permitted ride. In a situation in which someone is suspected of having robbed a person, the police must try to obtain information that can form a ground for an arrest or a bodily search. From an interview with a police officer:

*"Since the legislation is as it is, we must know what we want. There are always, and there always will be, gaps. It is like a cancer disease. It demands more of you as a police officer. You have to be smart, ask the right questions and build up the case."*

In certain cases, for example when a person drives a car on which a ban of driving has been imposed, the legislation often provides gaps for those who want to lie. A police officer must in these cases fill these gaps by asking thought-over opening questions. The same is true for interrogations. There, one method can be to approach the central issues carefully, i.e. one begins to ask questions in a sort of outer ring, which slowly becomes more and more narrow.

## **To communicate with individuals and groups**

*Yesterday's shift with two house searches and the following debriefing had taken quite some time. Anna Ekeröth had missed her training and when Fredrik Påhls-*

son came home at 7 instead of 6 p.m., his wife had sent him some angry looks. Now it was Friday and another dayshift was about to start. Both Anna Ekeroth and Fredrik Pålsson actually preferred to work evening shifts. It did not happen often that, as now, they worked two dayshifts in a row. Anna Ekeroth stopped the car outside Tallidsskolan in Fittja and both police officers stepped out of the car. They had planned to only make a short visit to the school. It did not take long before they were surrounded by children: "Shoot me!" Anna Ekeroth and Fredrik Pålsson had made a bet how long time it would take before someone would say that. Anna Ekeroth won. It took less than ten seconds. Both Anna Ekeroth and Fredrik Pålsson were good at handling children. When the groups were large, it was usually Fredrik Pålsson who kept order and made the children raise their hand when they wanted to ask something, to avoid that everybody would speak at the same time. He always tried to do so and usually he succeeded, even in the middle of the night in a subway station. After having talked and joked with the children they headed for the teachers' staff room. They explained that a student of Albyskolan was molested the day before and that it had been the fifth report of sexual assault in two weeks. Had any teacher heard anything? The same question had been asked to the children out on the playground. Fredrik Pålsson and Anna Ekeroth knew that the chance of obtaining valuable information was big, as long as one was willing to get out of the radio patrol car and dare to talk to people.

By observing the police in London, Waddington (1999) found that police officers show a large social competence and an ability to deal with different types of meetings with different persons (ibid.). Finstad (2000) writes that police officers are more involved in role play than the average citizen and that they therefore are very skilled at it. She also points out that police officers often appear to be strict and determined when they rebuke someone, but that this usually is acted. They often are not at all as harsh as they seem (ibid.). Granér (2004) and Smångs (2001) have also discussed the importance of role play within the police profession. Granér describes a case in which a person was lying under a subway train and a police trainee tried to make the other passengers leave. When he calmly explained that the situation was acute as the person lying under the train may still be alive, he was met with protests from persons who were going to be late etc. When he then started to shout that everybody at once had to leave the station, he was obeyed without anyone objecting (Granér, 2004).

A police officer gets into contact with social outcasts living on the street as well as with high-income earners living in a fancy neighborhood. He also frequently meets persons with a varying cultural background. The person a police officer shall talk to can be a five year old girl, a boy in high-school or a forty year old female cashier. The categories of people that a police officer communicates with vary a lot.

This communication can consist of a relatively superficial conversation



with a guard, gas station personnel, a ticket collector, private persons etc. At the same time it can mean a very personal conversation about a sensitive subject. The purpose of the communication can be to convey a message, for example make somebody leave a certain place, or a reprimand, in case of for example inappropriate traffic behavior. The communication can also consist of just listening to a person who is frustrated about something.

The environments in which the communication takes place can vary substantially. Sometimes the police officer must be able to find a suitable place for the conversation. To sit down in the radio patrol car can be a good method. In other situations it can be fitting to walk away a bit, for example with a young man who wants to 'behave tough' in front of his friends. In some cases a calm place indoors can be required.

Just as important as being able to start a functioning communication, is being able to finish a dialogue in an appropriate manner. The person a police officer is talking to can be shocked, aggressive or under the influence of alcohol. In these cases, he often needs to be patient and tactical to be able to establish a functioning communication. A person deprived of liberty often questions upset why the police have arrested him. When a police officer tries to explain this, he often is interrupted with new questions. One method for the police officer to solve this type of problem can be to stop speaking and instead point out: "You asked me why you are being taken to the police station. You can't interrupt me with a new question. Do you want to have an answer to your question?" When the police officer has interrupted his own answer like this several times, it often is possible to establish a functioning dialogue and the arrested usually calms down. A police officer must learn different methods to make a dialogue possible, but sometimes it is not possible or even desirable. To communicate with a person who is deprived of liberty because of a committed crime can sometimes have a positive, sometimes a negative effect on the investigation. An offender who plans to make up a story can be helped by talking about the committed crime with a guard or police officer, as it gives him the possibility to fill the holes in his story before an interrogation. Police officers must be aware of the risks.

The purpose of a conversation can vary. One purpose can be to control a suspicion and possibly build up a case (see previous section), another to search for information. The goal can also be to make certain criminals aware of the fact that the police have observed them, the clothes they wear and who they are together with. The dialogue can also be intended to create a 'social glue', which according to Finstad can make the contact between police and citizens easier as it encourages others to talk (Finstad, 2000).



In certain situations the ability to hold a monologue is important. It can happen that the person who is being reprimanded wants to tear down the police officer's message and get the upper hand. In these cases it is important that the police officer can convey his message and does not get disturbed by the other person's behavior. Attempts to create a dialogue are in this type of situations likely to fail, as the other person has a completely different goal. When the police officer is unaffected by the other person's attacks, a dialogue may be established in the end after all, as the person who wants to disturb the police officer's message can feel that his attempts are meaningless.

A meeting of house-owners, a school class in a classroom or parts of the same class under influence of alcohol celebrating the end of a school year are situations that all put different demands on a police officer.

A dialogue that takes place out on 'the street' differs usually from the dialogues held in a meeting room. A difficult situation for a police officer out on 'the street' can be arguing against 20 persons who often all talk at the same time. When the group consists of younger persons, one way of dealing with this problem can be to make everyone raise their hand when they want to say something. Another method can be to talk to one person at the time and completely ignore comments and questions from the rest of the group and tell them (unless the police officer comes up with a better comment): "Maybe you also will have the honor to speak to me; right now I talk to him."

## **To get an informant and interact with an informant**

*Fredrik Pålsson's telephone rang. He nodded and asked a few questions with a concerned look on his face. It was one of his informants who called. The conversation only took a couple of minutes. A man sold amphetamine and had at least half a hectogram hidden in his bathroom in a ventilation shaft. The name of the street where he lived was Forvägen and he was called "Josse".*

There are different types of informants. Some are in the centre of a criminal group while others are more in the outskirts. An informant can be a parent, a brother or sister or a neighbor to criminal person. The quality and usefulness of the information varies.

The most valuable information is obtained from those who are within the same criminal group as the one the information concerns. This puts special demands on a police officer, who must handle the information carefully. The information itself can reveal the informant's identity, which is why the police officer must think through how he is going to use the information. For the same reason it can be difficult when, for example, a police officer

wants to ask something to a centrally placed informant. The police officer must be careful and think over how the contact can take place without the informant being exposed. Other factors that must be considered are a possible economical compensation and what to do when the informant participates in an attack. The same dilemma arises when the informant himself commits a crime. It is for example not unusual that an informant tries to get away with aggravated unlawful driving by referring to the valuable information he has supplied. The police officer must think through in advance how to respond to this type of demands.

A police officer must be available as much as possible. It is not unusual that a centrally placed informant decides to call in the middle of the night to give out some information, possibly about someone he is angry with in combination with the influence of drugs. If the police officer's telephone is switched off, there is a clear risk that he will miss important information. Usually the information requires immediate action. Moreover, if the informant starts to feel that is difficult to get in contact with the police officer, he may stop calling. A relationship and trust has been created between a specific police officer and the informant, which makes that the informant usually wants to give his information only to that particular police officer and no one else<sup>12</sup>. If the communication between a police officer and his informant always takes place over the telephone, the police officer should have his telephone switched on a large part of the day, irrespective of whether he is working or not.

It is desirable that a police officer constantly tries to gain new informants, by getting in contact with criminal persons in different contexts. The police officer must be active in his work in order to find centrally placed informants. Once the police officer has found a suitable informant, it usually is the informant who contacts the police officer. However, sometimes it can be needed to call the informant to 'push' him to give information.

Centrally placed informants put special demands on the police officer. The information concerns in these cases usually relatively aggravated crimes and are often so precise that they can be reason for an attack. As I mentioned earlier, there are also other types of informants, for example parents, brothers and sisters, neighbors, guards, mailmen, teachers etc., who can be useful in these contexts<sup>13</sup>. These informants have usually information

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<sup>12</sup> There are special modes of procedure when it comes to dealing with informants. Because of various reasons these are not discussed here.

<sup>13</sup> In these cases it usually is the police officer who gets to 'fit the pieces together' and draw conclusions from the received information, in order for the information to be useful.

about less serious crimes, for example illicit distilling, unlawful driving, drunken driving etc.

## Using and understanding different social language variations

*”That was my IF who called” Fredrik Pålsson said and continued ”apparently there is some peddler called ‘Josse’ living at Forvägen who pushes aimies and ropies<sup>14</sup>.*

In contact with the prosecutor and lawyers or when writing different types of reports, the police officer uses a formal language filled with legal terms. Contact with professional criminals requires knowledge of the words that are used by them. When communicating with children it is crucial to understand certain other terms.

A central part of a police officer’s work consists of communication with persons who are not working within the police, even though communication between police officers is important as well. As some parts of the police work is done under time pressure, knowledge of certain terms is important to enable effective communication.

Imagery languages are used as well. Colors are for example used to express the tension level. They are also used for pointing out different sides of a building (white, red, black and blue), where for example white stands for main entrance and black for the backside of the building.

In the communication between police officers, legal terms are frequently mixed with word used by professional criminals or children. This can be compared to the profession of nurses. Josefson (1991) writes that the language used by nurses contains technical terms at the same time as it is permeated with the practice in which it has developed. A nurse who has recently passed her examination and just started to work will learn the language that has developed over the years. If she does not do so, she probably will not remain a nurse, according to Josefson, as she does not participate in this common language (ibid.).

Goldkuhl & Lyytinen (1982) write that a central part of practical abilities is the language that is used. A social language variation consists of linguistic categories and rules that steer people’s perception and communication (ibid.).

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<sup>14</sup> IF=Informant. Peddler=Narcotics supplier. Push=Sell drugs. Aimies=Amphetamine. Ropies=Rohypnol.

## Dealing with mentally ill and unstable persons

*Fredrik Pålsson and Anna Ekeröth were on their way to the police station to do some computer work. Their visit to the Tallidsskolan had given another report of sexual assault plus information that complemented the earlier description.*

*They heard a crackling sound from the police radio: "7337, 70"*

*"7337, Hågelbyleden, over" Fredrik Pålsson answered.*

*"Ok, we have a request for assistance at Passvägen, over." The voice that came out of the police radio sounded familiar. He must have worked for the police radio for more than 30 years, Fredrik Pålsson thought while he was writing down additional information about the case. Ten minutes later they stood outside the locked apartment door. Initially nobody opened but after a while they heard an angry voice:*

*"What do you want?"*

*"We just want to talk a little, can you open the door?" Anna Ekeröth answered. She was good in convincing mentally ill persons to come along voluntarily. The door was opened by a fifty year old man. His hair pointed in all directions, he wore only underwear and the rank smell in the apartment hit the patrol.*

*"Can we come in?" Anna Ekeröth asked. They knew they did not need to ask that, since they had gotten coercive measures to go into the apartment, but it was better to be subtle and make sure that the person who should come along would not take offence. The police officers were asked to come inside but the corpulent man was irritated.*

*"I know that between us everything is fine" Anna Ekeröth said in a low voice, "but there are some persons who want you to come to the hospital and we are here to take you there. We hope that we can solve this smoothly. Do you get dressed? Is this your coat?" Anna Ekeröth continued and held the man's coat. The man headed for his bedroom and Anna Ekeröth followed behind with the coat in her hands.*

*"Do you have any identification in this coat, or is that somewhere else?" Anna Ekeröth asked.*

*"It's in the kitchen" the man answered while he was putting on his trousers. It didn't go fast, but it went in the right direction. Fredrik Pålsson went into the kitchen and found the man's wallet, with an identification card. The patrol didn't want the man to get into the kitchen, since there were too many sharp objects there.*

*"Is this the shirt you want to wear?" Anna Ekeröth asked.*

*"No, it's over there" the man answered. Anna Ekeröth took the shirt and handed it over to the man who had just gotten his trousers on. A few minutes later the*

*patrol sat in the police car and Anna Ekeröth talked to the man in the backseat. They were on their way to Huddinge Hospital and both Anna Ekeröth and Fredrik Pålsson hoped they would not have to sit and wait or drive the man to another care institution. There was so much else to do.*

In the section ‘To communicate with individuals and groups’, the importance of a police officer’s ability to communicate with others was described. This ability is also important when a police officer comes in contact with mentally ill persons. A police officer expressed this like this:

*”Rather talk in twenty minutes than fight in two.”*

I have chosen to describe the knowledge concerning contact with mentally ill persons separately because this type of communication and contact is special. If a police officer wants to be successful, he must be able to understand and deal with the difficulties that come along when communicating with a mentally ill person. There are several aspects that have to be balanced.

First of all, the police officer can have a complete different perception of reality than the mentally ill person. The mentally ill person can for example see that the floor is filled with snakes. It can be tempting for the police officer to pretend to see snakes as well and in that way solve the situation. This can of course be a successful method. However, it can be dangerous as well when the patient suddenly sees something that the police officer can’t predict. In that case the mentally ill person can completely lose his faith in the police officer. Moreover, the police officer’s acting can enhance the clinical picture. It is at the same time not appropriate to abruptly dismiss the things the patient sees. The police officer must balance between making the patient realize that he understands him, even though he does not necessarily see the same things as he does. To make this example more concrete, the police officer can for example answer: “I hear what you say, that you see snakes, but I can’t see any snakes. When I look into the room I don’t see any snakes. But I understand that you are scared if you see snakes, because I know I would be. But in this room I don’t see any snakes...”

Second, it is often important to show that the mentally ill person does not have any alternatives. He must follow the police officers at the same time as the police can not be too firm and insult the patient. It can be important that the mentally ill person does not have to lose his face. One can make it appear that the patient is the one who decides, even though both parties know that it is the police who really are in charge. Being on the side of the mentally ill person can in these cases be important. Comments like “Just

come along, so they don't have to argue with you" or "We're no enemies of each other, right?" can be useful to create a feeling that the police patrol and the mentally ill person are solving the problem together.

Third, the police officer's ability to solve problems and think logically can be on a complete different level compared to the mentally ill person. It can easily happen that a police officer tries to come up with a solution too soon, when the mentally ill person can not understand a reasoning about a problem's solution. When, for example, a police officer tries to stop a person from committing suicide, he must first win the trust of the suicidal person. To succeed in that, he must listen and show empathy. Asking a person who is about to commit suicide "You are planning to kill yourself?" can be a good start. Other phrases that can be fitting are "How are you doing?" and "What is the problem?"<sup>15</sup> As the mentally ill person can't answer these questions with yes or no, he will hopefully start to speak. The police officer can build up trust by listening and showing he understands. Once the mentally ill person has reached a level where he listens and can be influenced, the police officer must start to come with arguments. He must find reasons and argue, keeping the other's view and needs in mind.

In some cases it can be necessary to use violence. One police officer said:

*"When they start to breathe heavily, it's best to jump on them straight away."*

It is important that the police officer reads the situation and, if possible, is the one who takes the initiative and who decides if violence is going to be used.

It is not unusual that a patient shows a completely different behavior once he has arrived at the hospital. When, for example, a patrol has been holding the patient during a long ride, it is not unlikely that he temporarily is out of strength. The doctor will in that case have a different picture of the patient than the police patrol, who may have been struggling with the patient for more than half an hour. Police personnel describe that a doctor can be much more motivated to have a person committed to compulsory institutional care when he himself was present during an intervention:

*"A doctor was with us and he got kicked by the patient. He became angry and took out two needles straight away; you got a bit scared that he might do something stupid . . . If a doctor is present during an intervention, the chances are higher that he'll understand that the person is ill."*

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<sup>15</sup> Why, when, how, etc.

Since usually no doctor is present when a patrol deals with a patient, police officers must be able to describe the patient's behavior as accurate and credible as possible (see also the section 'Presenting a case to decision-makers').

## **To save lives and minimize the proportions of injuries**

*Of course Anna Ekeroth and Fredrik Pålsson had to drive the patient to St. Göran Hospital instead of Huddinge Hospital. It had taken up much of their time and both Anna Ekeroth, who was driving, and Fredrik Pålsson, who sat in the radio seat, were irritated that they had to work as taxi drivers. "What has happened here?" Anna Ekeroth said, at the same moment as she braked, switched on the blue light and parked behind the moped that was lying on the road. A woman in her thirties sat next to a young man who was lying on the ground, moaning. Fredrik Pålsson opened the trunk and took out the first aid kit. Anna Ekeroth was already sitting on her heels next to the injured man. She put her hand on his shoulder and asked what had happened and where he had pain.*

A police officer must be able to take care of injured persons<sup>16</sup> as well as handling the initial work at the scene of an accident. The size of the injuries can vary. It is important that he can make a fast, medical judgment concerning which persons need medical care most urgently. In case of a traffic accident, it also is needed that a police officer makes other road-users watchful in order to prevent additional accidents.

In case of a crime, the police officer must decide when the investigating measures can be taken. Saving lives has higher priority than catching an offender.

## **To prepare mentally and communicate with colleagues**

*Anna Ekeroth and Fredrik Pålsson had just finished their work with the moped accident and waved at the man from the salvage company as he drove away with the moped on his loading platform, when the county communication centre needed radio cars for another traffic accident.*

*"70 needs cars to Vårby backe, traffic accident. At least one person got stuck, over."*

*"7337, Masmö, over" Fredrik Pålsson answered. Anna Ekeroth turned on the siren and headed for the scene of the accident. "It might be a multiple collision"*

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<sup>16</sup> First aid measures that involve ABC (Airway, Breathing and Circulation), but also being able to deal with other types of conditions as asthma and false croup.

*Fredrik Paulsson said and continued: "If you warn the other road-users, I control the injuries of the involved persons, OK?"*

*"Sure" Anna Ekeröth answered.*

*"I hope no cars have overturned and that there aren't any children involved"*  
*Fredrik Paulsson said.*

*"Ugh, I really hope not but I guess we better be prepared"*

Police officers get involved in different kinds of situations. These can range from a police officer himself being exposed to danger to seeing severely injured and dead persons. It is not unusual that a police officer encounters strong emotions, as grief and aggression.

It is important that a police officer is mentally prepared for different types of scenarios, as well as he must be prepared to act himself. Like an athlete, he must have pictured himself carrying out certain actions, as for example using a firearm against a person or a dog in a threatening situation. If he mentally is not prepared well enough for being involved in stressful or threatening situations, the risk of making mistakes increases, which can have serious consequences for him and for others.

One skill a police officer must master is to communicate with his partner in order to reach the same mental level before an intervention. When, for example, a patrol stops a car, it is desirable that the police officers can make each other aware of how threatening they believe the situation is. When a police officer involved in an intervention gets indications that something is wrong, or if a patrol is on its way to a certain address and a police officer knows there has been trouble there before, it is important that he informs his colleague.

A police officer must attempt to be on the same mental level as his colleague. "Do you recognize that registration plate?" "Now we must be prepared!" "Does that car give you strange vibes as well?" are examples of questions and statements that should occur. A police officer must be able to convey his apprehensions to his colleague.

However, when a police officer constantly believes that the worst has happened or will happen, there is a risk that he eventually does not stay focused. It is good if a police officer does not assume too often that something has happened or will happen. He should be relatively neutral on his way to an assignment, at the same time as he shall be prepared for 'anything between heaven and earth'.



Apart from communicating with each other in order to reach the same mental level, it is important that police officers also in other ways are mentally prepared for an intervention. They need to know what they can expect from the other and use each other as discussion partner. Questions as “How do you usually do this?” can be good to ask so that the intervention can proceed smoothly. Knowing a partner’s thoughts, behavior and attitude is important when a police officer prepares himself mentally and thinks through how he is going to act and what is expected of him.

## **To mediate a peace and solve problems**

*It was Tuesday. Anna Ekeroth and Fredrik Pålsson had been off for some days. Friday’s traffic accident had not been very serious but it had taken up time and when the patrol was finished it was time to go home. During the weekend there had been another sexual assault, the seventh one during a short period of time.*

*Just after 6.30 p.m. Anna Ekeroth parked the police car outside Robban’s pizzeria. Fredrik Pålsson was on his way out of the car when he heard the characteristic sound of the connection of a general call out of the police radio. “No work right now, I’m starving” Fredrik Pålsson said and finished his sentence with a deep sigh. “70 needs cars to Vetevägen, ongoing fight. A group of teenagers is trying to get into an apartment, over.” Fredrik Pålsson and Anna Ekeroth waited with answering, but as only one other radio car replied to the call they felt they had to report themselves on the radio. Their food would have to wait. Fredrik Pålsson and Anna Ekeroth arrived just before patrol 7410 from Huddinge. As it turned out, a fifteen year old girl had called 911. The situation was calm and patrol 7410 could leave again. The girl who had called lived in an apartment and when Anna Ekeroth and Fredrik Pålsson went through gate number eight, where she lived, an entire group of teenagers wanted to accompany them. “We will answer your questions later” Fredrik Pålsson said and continued in a decisive tone of voice: “You are all going to wait here!” It worked. Only one person still tried to follow the patrol by making up a bad excuse, which Fredrik Pålsson immediately dismissed.*

*Anna Ekeroth rang the doorbell. The door was opened by fifteen year old Maria.*

*”Hi, you had called?” Anna Ekeroth said.*

*”Yes” Maria replied.*

*”Things can’t continue like this!” Maria’s mother said who had appeared in the hallway. She was upset.*

*”May we come in?” Anna Ekeroth asked.*

*”Come in” Maria’s mother replied. The patrol went in and sat down in the kitchen together with Maria and her mother. It turned out that a girl had threatened Maria*

*and gotten all the neighborhood's teenagers on her side. They had been throwing things on the balcony, rang and knocked on the door and yelled through the mail slot. The reason of the fight was that Sabina, a girl one year younger than Maria, had accused Maria of having written on a wall that Sabina was a whore. Maria claimed that she had not done this but Sabina did not believe her. Anna Ekeroth and Fredrik Pålhlsson looked at each other.*

*"If you stay in here we will just go out for a moment to discuss how we are going to solve this" Fredrik Pålhlsson said at the same time as he got up. Anna Ekeroth followed him out into the hall.*

*"This is clearly not going to be solved by writing a report. There hasn't been committed any serious crime, but I have a feeling that it will go on like this for a while and that more patrols are going to have to drive here. What do you think? Shall we arrange a meeting with Sabina and Maria and their parents, later tonight?" Fredrik Pålhlsson asked.*

*"Sounds good, but we must explain that we can't guarantee we can come if anything more serious happens" Anna Ekeroth answered. They returned to the kitchen and explained their suggestion. Both Maria and her mother felt a little uncertain, but after a while they realized why it was important to all meet up. With the help of a school catalogue and the police computer system they easily found Sabina's full name and address.*

*After having answered a great deal of questions that the children outside of Maria's gate had, Fredrik Pålhlsson and Anna Ekeroth drove to Sabina's home address. However, Sabina was at a choir rehearsal. They agreed with Sabina's mother that they would meet at 8.30 p.m. on the parking lot outside of where Maria lived, unless they would be occupied with another case. Anna Ekeroth called Maria. It was her mother who answered and they agreed that Sabina and her mother together with the police patrol would come to her house just after 8.30 p.m., unless they would be engaged in something else. Anna Ekeroth and Fredrik Pålhlsson left Vetevägen. Only one hour later they would be there again.*

*After having taken care of a shoplifting at Maxi supermarket as well as eaten something, the patrol parked their car again at Vetevägen. Sabina and her mother were already there. Together they went to Maria's apartment and rang the doorbell. They were let inside and Anna Ekeroth opened the meeting. Both girls first described their view on what had happened and what had caused the fight. After that a discussion was started. In the mean time a group of teenagers had gathered on a little hill outside the kitchen window, screaming and making the wave. It was the same group Anna Ekeroth and Fredrik Pålhlsson had met earlier that evening outside Maria's gate and several of them, as it turned out, had been with Sabina when she was fighting with Maria. Fredrik Pålhlsson left the apartment. The children had to leave. They were disturbing. After a while Anna Ekeroth left the apartment as well, but Sabina and her mother stayed. The discussion had developed so well that the need of a police officer being present had decreased. When Anna Ekeroth came out to the yard, she smiled. She saw*

*that Fredrik Pålsson had made the group of about fifteen children sit down in front of him in two lines and that he was in the middle of a lesson in law and justice. When Fredrik Pålsson and Anna Ekeröth a little later were on their way to the car, two girls came up to them who wanted to talk to them. Fredrik Pålsson and Anna Ekeröth had met these girls at the Tallidskolan when they explained that all children should keep their eyes open if they saw a man on a bicycle who seemed to behave strangely. The two girls had seen a man stare at them when they were on their way to school last Friday. They had seen the same man the day after nearby Eriksberg. He was together with another man. The girls thought that both men had been speaking Finnish. Both had been carrying a dark green plastic bag.*

A central skill for a police officer is being able to solve problems. Sometimes it is not enough to write a report or to arrest someone, although in some cases this can be a solution.

In the example above it would of course have been easy to write a report and then leave again. However, according to among others Banton, police officers should see themselves as peace mediators rather than focusing on repressive work. That police officers solve a problem that arises is very important, according to Banton, otherwise the general public may easily lose faith for the police (Banton, 1974). Similar points of view are expressed by Wilson, who writes that police work mainly is about dealing with people, not dealing with the law. Police officers must try to apply a general rule on a specific situation. It is important that they take measures that are appropriate for the situation. According to Wilson, police officers will not find any help for that by looking for solutions in the law, since the law only describes what one is not allowed to do, not what police officers are supposed to do in a specific situation (Wilson, 1968).

In the example above, as well as in many other cases, there is a risk that the situation escalates if the police officer does not take the appropriate measures. Brodeur (1998) compares the importance of the police reacting in time and taking measures with the importance of a doctor discovering and treating a patient's cancer in an early stage.

The problem a police officer faces does not always consist of a conflict between two persons, as in the example above. Instead it may be a reoccurring damage in a certain area. Also in that case it is important to act in an early stage. Wilson and Kelling (1982) observed that when a broken window is not repaired, the result will be more broken windows. They point out that when the police do not act against problems in a certain area, the proportions of these problems will increase.

Many researchers, for example Goldstein (1990), Knutsson (2003), Knutsson & Søvik (2005) and Torstensson & Wikström (1995), emphasize the importance of police officers working problem-oriented in order to cope with different types of problems.

I have divided problem-oriented policing into two variants (Holgerson, 2000), which concern time consumption. For many patrol/local police officers it can be difficult to actually take the amount of time that is required for certain tasks, as for example attending scheduled meetings, making deep-going analyses of problems and design solution proposals based on the developed problem picture. There are local police officers who can reserve the amount of time that is required for this type of problem-oriented policing. It is required that they can work relatively<sup>17</sup> undisturbed and goal-oriented. An important part of this work is to use the help of and co-operate with other actors in society. This can consist of building away certain problems, which requires knowledge of different forms of burglary protection, alarms and how for example a garage best can be built<sup>18</sup>. In other cases the help of others can be required to get hold of a certain offender or for solving problems with for example burglaries into summer houses or robberies. The working methods can consequently be both preventive and repressive.

Even though many police officers find it difficult to in advance reserve a continuous period of time for problem-oriented policing, they still can work problem-oriented. First of all, the measures they take can be part of a more long-term strategy. An example of a repressive measure of this kind is the establishment of a co-operation between the police and summer house owners. When the house owners see something suspicious they call a certain telephone number. The involved police officers are well informed about different aspects of burglaries into summer houses, as for example procedure, interesting vehicles and interesting individuals. This repressive work is part of a long-term strategy. A similar example is when investigation personnel have a description of a suspected robber and frontline police officers try to identify and take pictures of persons who resemble the description. An example of a repressive measure is when police officers hand out brochures about steering locks or give advice on how to protect one's house, in an area where many burglaries into homes and cars have taken place. Second, police officers' measures do not have

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<sup>17</sup> I use the word 'relatively' because the time consumption varies. In those cases in which extensive co-operation with external interested parties is required in the shape of meetings, the police officer must be able to schedule many meetings in advance without being pulled away to other types of working tasks.

<sup>18</sup> For example Lindh (2000) and Bo Tryggt 01 (The police authorities in the county of Stockholm, 2001).

to be part of a long-term strategy; they can stand by themselves. The focus is on solving problems rather than merely observing a problem and writing a report or memorandum. In many cases it is possible to initiate a solution to a problem by, for example, organizing a parent meeting, have children clean up their own graffiti, arranging a meeting between offender and victim, mediate peace between different parties etc. These are all measures that frontline patrol/local police officers can perform fast within the frame of their working schedule, which often is under time pressure and difficult to plan.

### **Performing in-house investigation and using information in, among other things, computer systems**

*Fredrik Pålsson sat down in front of the computer. It was Friday and he and Anna Ekeröth had been working for some hours. As usual, it took annoyingly long to log on. In addition, computers tended to create problems as soon as Fredrik Pålsson sat in front of them. And usually Anna Ekeröth sat smiling at the entire show. Fredrik Pålsson and technology simply didn't go together very well. After a while both Anna Ekeröth and Fredrik Pålsson were logged on and could start their computer searches. It was likely that the person who lay behind the sexual assaults was living nearby the area in which he had attacked the girls. He could be working there or only be there for a temporary visit. It was most likely that he resided there more permanently, since the attacks had taken place at different occasions and rather continuous during a period of three weeks. They knew that CIS<sup>19</sup> had been trying to find a person in the same area who was suspected or sentenced for similar crimes. The computer searches of CIS had given some result, but the looks of these individuals did not at all match the description the attacked girls had given. Fredrik Pålsson started to gather all male persons between the ages of twenty and fifty that were registered in Eriksberg and had a Finnish sounding name, since the girls the patrol had spoken to last Tuesday at Vetevägen believed the two men had been speaking Finnish to each other. Neither Fredrik Pålsson nor Anna Ekeröth had had time to take notes of what the two girls had told them and, moreover, their information had been rather vague. Since their last shift another attack had taken place, the eighth within three weeks. The description that most girls had given, as well as the girls at Vetevägen, gave the impression that the offender looked worn and haggard. Fredrik Pålsson assumed the man could be found in their registers. When he found a Finnish sounding name, he wrote down his social security number and passed it further to Anna Ekeröth who searched in the computer: Had this person been convicted before? Had he been in contact with the police because of drunkenness? Was he in the police registers? If he had a passport or if the police had taken a photo or fingerprints, did the length correspond to the offender's approximate length?*

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<sup>19</sup> Criminal Intelligence Service.

*The dark green plastic bags the men were carrying were probably from a liquor store, since they usually have that color. If they had had a party on Saturday, perhaps someone in the same building had called the police to complain. Fredrik Pålsson started to search in the program Storm. He went through all cases of disturbing neighbors in Eriksberg that had been reported the last months. He found several cases of houses where Finnish speaking persons were living and where there had been several complaints about disturbing neighbors the last months. There had been one complaint last Saturday. Anna Ekeroth's searches showed that two persons with Finnish sounding names who lived in this building were in the police registers. Their length corresponded to the offender's probable length. This made them more interesting. Fredrik Pålsson ordered pictures of them.*

A police officer must be able to use the information that can be found in the police computer system. Usually, the police officer wants to acquire more information about a certain registration plate or wants to determine a person's identity in case the person does not have any identification.

Police officers should also be able to perform in-house investigation, which to a large extension consists of using the police computer systems. An example is a case of a missing person. By using the computer systems, a police officer can come up with different ideas about where and with whom the missing person can be, which increases the police patrol's possibilities to find him or her. Another example of in-house investigation is trying to find a suspect for a certain crime by computer searches and looking at different forms of photographs.

## **To act preventive**

*Anna Ekeroth had several names left to control and neither she nor Fredrik Pålsson had had time to search for persons with Finnish sounding names in Eriksberg who in their turn were connected to interesting persons. The patrol was forced to start debriefing the errands they had been involved in, in order to make it in time to the centre of Huddinge. They intended to stand outside the bar, to be able to remove disturbing elements at an early stage. There had been many fights in Huddinge lately and the patrols that were on duty in Botkyrka and Huddinge helped each other to try to solve this problem. Fredrik Pålsson had heard that the Huddinge patrol was involved in a case of woman abuse which meant that they probably were going to be occupied for a while.*

Even though measures that are discussed in this section can be part of a strategy for solving problems and should therefore belong in the section 'To mediate a peace and solve problems', I have chosen to anyway discuss these measures as a separate point. Preventive measures form a central part of police work and are taken without a special action plan and without someone needing help with a specific problem.

This point is of course closely related to the section ‘To distinguish deviations and fast categorize individuals, objects and events’. It is required, as I also described in ‘Forming a suspicion’, that police personnel have knowledge about legislation and different routines. Measures that belong in this section are for example PL 13 § (reject, remove or take someone into custody), take a person into custody because of drunkenness, PL 19 § 2 st (bodily search to find, among other things, dangerous objects) and light narcotics crimes. For police officers it often comes down to being at the right place at the right time. It requires that they have knowledge about the geography, problems and criminal individuals of the area they work in.

### **To show authority and inspire with respect**

*The tall guy was bothering the guard. When he finally left the entrance, he pushed another person who was standing about ten meters away from the bar. Anna Ekeröth and Fredrik Pålsson were quickly there and managed to deflect a fight between the two. Anna Ekeröth had a serious conversation with the tall angry man. Fredrik Pålsson spoke to the person who had been pushed. The distance between the police officers was about twenty meters and they had each other constantly within sight. The person Fredrik Pålsson was talking to was calm. He had only been irritated for being pushed aside. He started to slouch homewards together with his girlfriend. Fredrik Pålsson went to Anna Ekeröth. He knew that she had authority and that if she failed to convince the man to leave, he probably would not succeed either. But two police officers standing next to each other can sometimes create a strong argument in itself.*

In certain situations it is important that a police officer shows authority, in order to reach his goal. Many police officers believe that this is not a matter of screaming and pointing with an entire hand:

*”One has to be an authority instead of authoritarian. One must send out confidence.”*

To explain in words how this shall be achieved is difficult. It is, among other things, a matter of posture and vocal pitch. It is a matter of sending out security and self-confidence.

During interviews it has become apparent that the way in which police officers use their eyes is important:

*”Dare to see someone in the eyes. Dare to keep on looking. Dare to show that you are serious about the things you are saying.”*

Smångs (2001) writes in a section titled ‘The necessary authority’ that personnel had expressed the following during interviews:



*"...it is highly dangerous to just go along with everything. If you do that you end up with an uncontrollable crowd that tries its hand at rescue attempts and God knows what."*

As I wrote before, Professor Kirkham trained himself to become a police officer. Already after a few hours during his first shift, he noticed that some persons interpret kindness as a sign of weakness and as an invitation to attack the police officer, either by being disrespectful or by using violence. A drunken person refused to leave a bar and Kirkham was the one in the patrol who took the initiative and approached the man. He spoke politely to him because he knew that he was well educated to interact with people:

*"Excuse me, sir," I smiled pleasantly at the drunk," but I wonder if I could ask you to step outside and talk with me for just a minute? ... Suddenly without warning he swung at me, luckily missing my face and striking me on the right shoulder. I couldn't believe it. What on earth had I done to provoke such a reaction? ... Before I could recover from my startled condition, he swung again.....For the first time in my life, I encountered individuals who interpreted kindness as weakness, as an invitation to disrespect or violence." (Kirkham, 1974)*

Holmberg (1999) states that it is important that police officers behave in a way that does not make the general public lose their respect for the police, something that might happen when a police officer is too tolerant (ibid.). Kirkham has drawn similar conclusions and exemplifies his conclusions with a case in which a person had double-parked. Police officers told this person to move his car, at which he replied screaming that they should mind their own business and that there was no way he was going to move his car anywhere. The police officers came in action and it all ended in a big fight. Kirkham (1974) writes:

*"As a criminology professor, some months earlier I would have urged that the police officer who was now myself simply leave the car double-parked and move on rather than risk an incident. As a policeman, however, I had come to realize that an officer can never back down from his responsibility to enforce the law. Whatever the risk to himself, every police officer understands that his ability to back up the lawful authority which he represents is the only thing which stands between civilization and the jungle of lawlessness." (ibid.)*

## **To convey a serious message**

*"7337, 70, over".*

*"7337, Huddinge centre, over".*

*"Yes, 7337, the station commander wants you to call, over".*

*"Understood, over".*



*”Over and out.”*

*Fredrik Pålsson took his mobile phone and called the station commander Ivar Thorwaldsson. A sixteen year old boy had been arrested for a rather serious assault. The station commander wanted the patrol to inform the boy’s mother and if necessary drive her to the police station. The boy had not been sentenced before. Anna Ekeroth and Fredrik Pålsson went to their car and headed for the villa in Fullersta, where the mother unsuspecting just had fallen asleep. Both Fredrik Pålsson and Anna Ekeroth looked resolute. This was never pleasant. At least no one has died this time, Fredrik Pålsson thought as they parked the car outside the red brick house. It was pitch-dark.*

*“I wonder if anyone is at home” Anna Ekeroth said. When the patrol had rang the doorbell for the second time they heard footsteps coming down the stairs. A newly awakened woman of about 45 years old opened the door.*

*“What has happened?” she managed to ask. She seemed shocked.*

*“I’m afraid Marcus has been arrested for a serious assault at Heron City. We would like you to come along with us to the police station to be present during the interrogation that will be held with Marcus” Fredrik Pålsson said rather formal. Before he managed to begin a second sentence he was interrupted by the mother who screamed: “Oh my God!” before she sat down on a stool in the hall. She held her hands over her face. Anna Ekeroth crouched down and put her arm around the mother.*

A police officer must be able to convey a serious message. It is a difficult balance between being considerate and at the same time explain clearly what has happened. It can be that a family member has died or been severely damaged or that a relative has disappeared from a home for old people. How someone will react is difficult to predict. The police officer will have to adjust his approach depending on the reaction (see the section ‘Showing empathy towards a victim’). A common shock reaction is that the person wants to repress the information. It is therefore important that the police officer avoids being ‘woolly’ and instead is clear and straight-forward, even though this may be difficult.

## **To act in case of an attack**

*The mother wanted to take her car but was too upset to be able to drive. Therefore, Anna Ekeroth drove the bright yellow Volvo to the police station. Fredrik Pålsson had just stopped the car when the police radio started to crackle.*

*”70 needs cars to the centre of Flemingsberg, fight”.*

*"7337, Flemingsberg's police station, over".*

*"7450, Huddingevägen, over".*

*"7337 and 7450, apparently there is a fight going on outside the centre, over".*

*"7450, understood, over".*

*"7337, understood, over".*

*"We keep the channel open until we know the extent, over".*

*"7450, understood, over".*

*"7337, understood, over".*

*7450 arrived first. A man was kicking a person who was lying on the ground. The police officers in radio car 7450 ran out of the car and took hold of the man kicking the other person. When Anna Ekeröth and Fredrik Pålsson arrived they saw that patrol 7450 was being attacked by roughly ten teenagers. They jumped out of their car. Fredrik Pålsson screamed: "Step back!" at the same time as he took his baton. Some of the young persons stepped back a little. One man was put down on the ground but another managed to kick Fredrik Pålsson's leg while a third screamed threatening to the two female police officers of radio car 7450 "You die you bitches!" At that point a third police car arrived and the gang backed away about twenty meters.*

A police officer must dare and be able to act when he is exposed to a criminal attack. In these cases it is particularly important to act decisive (see section 'To show authority') and to be mentally prepared (see section 'To prepare mentally and communicate with colleagues'). Klockars and Green (1991) are of the opinion that a good police officer is moderate in using power. When the situation requires so, he uses his power in a balanced manner – not too much, not too little. These skills are acquired rather by developing knowledge of human nature than by being a champion in karate or weapon handling (ibid.).

Police officers have during interviews pointed out that giving the impression to be crazy and dangerous can be an advantage, as it can make aggressive persons insecure about how the police officer will react. When others believe that a police officer can use violence at any point, the risk of violence being used can actually decrease. I have experienced this myself during participating observation. Other researchers have made similar observations:

*"Another primary orientation of police routines is to manipulate their public image as ready to use violence if necessary" (Skolnick, 1966).*

## Safety thinking

*The young man who had kicked Fredrik Pålsson started to run. Anna Ekeroth ran after. Fredrik Pålsson was lying on another man and screamed into the radio that more patrols were needed in Flemingsberg's centre. Anna Ekeroth was a good runner. She held a distance of about twenty meters and screamed into the radio where she was. There was no reason to carry out an arrest herself. They ran into a badly lit and obscure parking lot. The man Anna Ekeroth was chasing suddenly stopped. He took a few quick steps towards Anna Ekeroth, raised his fist and screamed: "There, you bitch!" He did not have time to do much more before Anna Ekeroth had sprayed a little pepperspray into his eyes. The effect came immediately. He fell to the ground and started to scream. Anna Ekeroth said calmly: "So, have you learned anything of all of this?" She waited some seconds to let her words sink in. Then she continued: You have pepperspray in your eyes as you maybe have noticed. We will remove it with water, but now you chose to run so far and the water is in the radio car."*

Safety thinking has many dimensions. The safest thing to do is probably to stay inside the police station wearing a bulletproof vest, helmet etc. But as soon as a police officer shall act he must balance the risks he shall take in order to be able to carry out his tasks.

Safety thinking can be expressed in various ways. It can concern the choice of protective equipment, car driving and not exposing oneself or others to unnecessary risks. Another skill is to make sure to have one or more patrols 'behind you', to report the need of enforcement in an early stage when there is a risk for the situation to escalate and to back up colleagues on their way to a certain address or certain types of assignments.

Simple rules as to avoid walking close to and with your back turned towards a train that leaves a station or to be observant to not get any objects on your head when standing next to a high building are other examples. Other researchers have described how police officers try to turn safety thinking into routines:

*One way in which they routines their approach to interaction is to maximize their safety in the event of an attack. Thus, for example, police officers physically position themselves to be in the most advantageous situation if an attack materializes, even if the probability of an assault is low (Skolnick, 1966).*

The importance of mental preparation (see section 'To prepare mentally and communicate with colleagues') and well-trained routines is large, for example in a situation in which a dangerous person in a vehicle shall be stopped or in which one shall look for a specific person in different types of buildings.

## To take investigation measures at the crime scene

*It was a chaotic situation. The person who had been kicked was driven to Hud-dinge Hospital in an ambulance. A patrol would go there later, but at that moment all patrols had one arrested person each to take care of, at the same time as Anna Ekeroth was standing on a parking lot at Terapivägen by herself, in need of transport for an arrested person. Fredrik Pålsson limped around to talk to persons who might have seen the fight and could witness. He still felt the pain from being kicked. He found three persons who had seen what had happened and wrote down their names, telephone numbers and social security numbers. Even though it was late he asked them to wait a short moment. "It is not the right moment for an interrogation, without having spoken to Anna" Fredrik Pålsson thought. Then Anna Ekeroth informed that she had the situation under control but needed a radio car rather fast as she was standing by herself with an offender. Fredrik Pålsson got 7450 to drive to Anna Ekeroth while he in the mean time held three quick interrogations with the witnesses. Police officers Stefan Holgersson and Lars Ahl, who drove radio car 7310, guarded the person that Fredrik Pålsson had wrestled to the ground and the person who sat in their car with handcuffs on.*

*Fredrik Pålsson focused on getting in the most important information to avoid that an investigator later would have to interrogate the witnesses a second time. The man who had gotten pepperspray into his eyes had calmed down so that 7450 could drive both the arrested persons and Anna Ekeroth to Fredrik Pålsson in the centre of Flemingsberg. 7310 left to take their arrested person to the hospital as fast as possible, while 7450 waited for Fredrik to finish the interrogations. Radio car 7450 and 7337 then drove back to the police station together. Radio car 7450 left first, together with the man who had had pepperspray in his eyes. Anna Ekeroth and Fredrik Pålsson followed behind and could in that way see if any problem would arise during the transport to the station.*

It is important that a police officer is able to take extensive immediate measures. To finish as much as possible at the scene will help the investigation. The initial measures are very important. Carrying out interrogations, confiscating objects, sealing off areas or securing traces (see also the section 'To perform a technical investigation') and different forms of coercive measures are examples of measures that can be part of the extensive immediate measures. A large part of the knowledge is theoretical and includes rules concerning possible coercive measures and the objective and subjective prerequisites<sup>20</sup> that are important to know and that need to

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<sup>20</sup> Prerequisite: required previous condition for a deed to be punishable, Dictionary of the Swedish Academy (1998). Objective prerequisite concerns external conditions (for example in case of theft that someone's property has been taken unlawfully). Subjective prerequisite concerns the offender's mental attitude (for example that the offender had the intention to unlawfully take a person's property). For a view of how these terms are used, see for example Dahlström, Nilsson & Westerlund (2001).

be backed up with evidence at different types of crimes. As I described earlier, research has shown that police officers at the scene of a crime play an important role in whether or not a crime will be solved (Greenwodd & Petersilia, 1975 och Skogan & Antunes, 1979).

### **Keeping feelings under control and supporting each other (colleagues)**

*The man in Anna Ekeroth's and Fredrik Pålsson's radio car uttered insulting remarks about the two police officers during the entire ride. This was not something that affected Anna Ekeroth or Fredrik Pålsson in any way. On the contrary, Anna Ekeroth became even more friendly and understanding. The man found it difficult to deal with the police officers not reacting to his verbal attacks.*

According to Kirkham (1974), those who are not capable of completely controlling their own feelings in all situations should not consider becoming a local police officer. Through own experience he has discovered that this can be difficult. He describes a situation in which he and his colleagues had just finished a very laborious shift where they had been close to being severely injured. While they sat in a restaurant to eat breakfast they heard a church window being shattered. They managed to get hold of two boys who tried to run away. Kirkham showed his police identification for one of the teenage boys and asked him to identify himself. The boy ignored him and started to walk away:

*"The next thing I knew I had grabbed the youth by his shirt and spun him around shouting "I'm talking to you, punk!" I felt my partner's arm on my shoulder and heard his reassuring voice behind me, "Take it easy Doc!" ... silently for several seconds, unable to accept the inescapable reality that I had "Lost my cool". .... Now here, I was, an 'emotional control' expert<sup>21</sup>, being told by a patrolman to 'calm down!'" (ibid.)*

That a police officer must be able to control his feelings does not mean he does not get affected by the things he sees and experiences. To be able to talk about these things is therefore important for being able to process feelings and experiences. According to Finstad (2000), verbal communication and reflection are important within the police profession, as well as within most other professions. She believes that it would be healthy if one, as a tradition, would discuss a day's many tasks more (ibid.).

It is important that police officers observe their colleagues and that they are able to notice when a colleague does not feel well.

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<sup>21</sup> Kirkham has mentioned that he has taught police officers techniques to control feelings (own comment).

## To debrief an event

*Fredrik Pålsson and Anna Ekeröth entered the debriefing room. The personnel of radio car 7450 were already there. The debriefing would take up the remaining of Anna Ekeröth's and Fredrik Pålsson's shift. Stefan Holgersson and Lars Ahl in 7310 had not returned yet from the hospital, but Fredrik Pålsson had the plaintiff's social security number so that he could start with the report. In addition he had three interrogations to write. Anna Ekeröth would document the other cases they had been involved in during the evening. After that she could continue the computer searches to try to find interesting names for the coming week, in which they would discuss and develop a strategy to deal with the many sexual assaults. Fredrik Pålsson cursed. He had forgotten his password, which made Anna Ekeröth smile. Fredrik Pålsson saw that and said tired "I know, I'm lousy with computers."*

To be able to debrief an event, it is mainly theoretical knowledge that is required about different law sections and those routines that are relevant for a certain type of crime or event. Practical knowledge is also needed, for example about how to work with IT-systems and how to express oneself in a comprehensible and exact manner.

In certain cases a police officer may deliberately write a 'bad' report, to minimize the burden on the judicial system (see the section 'To prioritize cases and use the available resources effectively'). The following example comes from participating observation:

*"Two patrols are involved in a case in which some persons are trying to get into an apartment. They have among other things threatened to pour gasoline into the plaintiff's mail slot. The first patrol meets five alcoholics who are very upset. A young girl, known to be criminally active, has taken a wallet from an alcoholic. The first patrol manages to get the group of alcoholics out of the staircase. One police officer goes into the apartment where the young girl and her family live. The girl states that she surely has not stolen any wallet. Outside the newly arrived patrol is standing as well as one police officer of the patrol that arrived first, writing down the alcoholics' personal data. The police officer in the apartment tells the parents that their daughter probably has stolen a wallet. He explains that he will go out for five minutes to give them some time to discuss this with their daughter in private. When the police officer comes back after five minutes, the girl tells him that she took the wallet and they agree that she will point out where she threw it. The money in the wallet, which was not as much as the owner had stated, has been used to eat hamburgers at McDonalds. The wallet is found.*

*The family does not want to report the matter. They just don't want to be threatened any more and they want the case to be settled. They understand that the group of alcoholics was upset. The person whose wallet was stolen admits that the amount she lost wasn't quite as high as she had stated from the beginning. She is glad to have her wallet back and will not demand to get the missing money*

back as well. The patrol explains to the group that they are under suspicion for a crime and that the case will be investigated further if they will return to the apartment and knock on the door. Otherwise it will stay with this rebuke. The patrol points out that the parents had been scared but that they also think that the case is settled now. The group of alcoholics understands that the parents have been afraid and want the patrol to convey their apologies. The patrol returns to the apartment. They explain that they must write a report which will be sent home to them, but that the report is going to be very brief and that the case therefore won't be investigated any further. They say that they also are going to have to write a report about the stolen wallet. However, since the daughter is under the age of fifteen, the police will not undertake any further measures. A copy of the report will though be sent to the social authorities.

At the police station the patrol writes two reports: one for the stolen wallet and one for unlawful threatening. The patrol writes these reports to make sure that they will not be accused of not having written any report, in case a discussion would arise afterwards. It is easy to be sentenced for a formal mistake, more difficult to be sentenced for a report's low quality. The patrol chooses therefore to write a 'bad' report that won't be investigated any further. Instead, they could have written a report that the police would have been forced to investigate further, even though none of the involved parties wanted that. The patrol solves this by writing a report that does not contain the information that would be needed to investigate the matter further."

In addition, a police officer must be able to not put too much time into debriefing.

## **To plan measures based on a certain problem picture and existing legislation**

*It was Wednesday and Fredrik Pålsson had been off since last Friday while Anna Ekeröth had been working on both Monday and Tuesday. Fredrik Pålsson took a big bite of his cake. The young police officer Niklas Karlsson had managed to drive into a safety island. Radio car 7310 was at the garage.*

*"I have made quite some computer searches" Anna Ekeröth said. The nine police officers around the table were listening. She continued: "I have found several interesting names to look up. We should also stop men that correspond to the description we have and that ride a bicycle at the same time as school begins and ends. Almost all the girls were attacked on biking or walking paths between the housing areas."*

*"Has there been any attack since last Friday?" Fredrik Pålsson asked, half his mouth filled with cake.*

*"Yes, behind Maxi supermarket, you know, the biking path that crosses the E4 next to the gas station" Anders Larsson answered, an officer who normally served in Huddinge.*



*"From where do we get the right to stop persons who match our description?"  
It was Mats Lindh who asked this, though his question was rather a statement  
than a question.*

*"PL 14 §, should work?" Fredrik Pålsson answered quickly.*

*The telephone rang. The county communication centre wanted a radio car to  
Coop Forum in Fittja. Fredrik Pålsson and Anna Ekeröth took the job.*

It is important to have planned what to focus on during a shift if nothing particular takes place. This is made easier by good knowledge about the district, specific problems and individuals in the area and routines and applicable law sections. This part of the job has many similarities with the section 'To mediate a peace and solve problems'. However, this part is discussed separately as it involves the entire group working towards a common goal. The commander has of course a big responsibility, but it is important to emphasize that it is not he alone who leads the work. That the entire group takes responsibility and comes with ideas and suggestions is of great importance.

An important part of this planning is to share information. It is not unusual that police officers have interesting information that has not been documented anywhere. Together police officers can fit the pieces of a puzzle together. This is similar to the way in which Carlström (1999) describes the work of investigators. She writes that a common view inside the investigation office is investigators in intense discussions about what they had seen, heard and felt and how these observations and ideas could be interpreted. They spoke about suspected individuals and tried to figure out who their friends and relatives were. Knowledge about suspected criminals was important in the investigators' work. Knowledge about people is not something that can be learned at school. Instead, it is gained by years of experience. This type of knowledge can not be valued on paper or be defined by a grade. Groups developed a collective memory, a common knowledge bank that everyone used as well as contributed to. They kept track of specific criminal prison visits, leaves, networks and home addresses (ibid.).

I have observed that police officers in smaller villages often have good knowledge about the criminals. In that way they can solve crimes by only a weak description or by knowing in what way the crime was committed. Those tasks that in television series often are performed by tough police detectives are in real life often carried out by patrol/local police officers. It is common that they 'ferret', identify and arrest. Their work is often focused on 'prying' and being curious.



The ability to together form a fairly structured and common strategy for, for example, getting hold of an offender is important.

## **To show consideration and humbleness**

*Anna Ekeröth and Fredrik Pålsson were met by a crying boy at Coop forum. He was thirteen years old and his name was Samir. He had taken two chocolate bars and was ashamed. He really did not want to be driven home in a police car. Fredrik Pålsson said that they had to do that but that they would try to find a good way.*

*"We drive a civil car and we will stop a bit away from your house. I will put a jacket over my uniform" Fredrik Pålsson said. Samir sobbed and followed the patrol to the car. Fredrik Pålsson thought it was a good sign that Samir did not want to look like a criminal.*

It is important to be able to show consideration but sometimes this can be difficult, in particular when someone has committed a serious crime (see the section 'Keeping feelings under control and supporting each other'). There are several advantages of showing consideration. Being considerate in case of for example a women battering can make the intervention easier. Appearing to be a problem solver by saying 'We'll try to find a good solution to all of this' instead of being rough and repressive can favor the investigation and initiate a possible solution to the problem. When a young person is ashamed over a committed crime and does not want the neighbors to see him together with police can be a good sign. The child does not want to appear to be a criminal. A criminology term is the stigmatizing theory. This theory states that the stigmatization of individuals as being inclined to commit crimes because of their group or category affiliation, leads to more criminality. According to this theory, a person who has been stigmatized as criminal by others or society (see for example Lindgren, 1998) has more problems to find a way out of his criminal behavior. Showing consideration to such a person can make the situation easier for a younger person. He or she can in that way escape from the role as 'criminal'.

In some cases it can be favorable for an intervention and the following investigation process if the offender is taken by surprise and treated decisive. Sometimes it can be needed that a person feels ashamed and is exposed to others' looks that make him 'lose his face'. An example of such a situation is when a person is showing off on a motorcycle in front of a police car and a bicycle patrol gets hold of him. When the bicycle patrol walks with the motorcycle and the person who had been driving it towards the police car while many persons can see that the police has

gotten hold of him, it can feel as real ticking-off. It is always a matter of finding a balance but the central point is that a police officer as a ground rule shows consideration to those he is in contact with.

A closely related ability is to show humbleness, for example being able to admit a mistake. An example of this is an experience I have had when I once was suspected of narcotics crimes and exposed to a coercive measure:

*“While I cross Sergels torg and walk up the stairs towards Drottninggatan I hear somebody scream ‘stand still!’ I turn around and a uniformed police officer runs towards me and grabs my arm. He tells me to come with him. I have been identified as a seller of narcotics. I tell him that he probably has made a mistake but that I of course follow him voluntarily. The uniformed police trainee holds me while I walk down the stairs. There are many persons sitting there watching us. The person who had pointed me out comes to the police trainee and tells him it was not me he had meant. The police trainee apologizes, says he is terribly sorry about what has happened and shakes my hand. I show him my police identification and wish him good luck for the remaining of his traineeship.”*

## **To use different communication aids**

*Anna Ekeroth made a directed call and it took a few minutes before the characteristic peeping signals that opened the radio were heard.*

*”7337, 70, over”.*

*”7337, we are ready with the shoplifter in Fittja. It’s going to be a report for shoplifting. The suspect is thirteen years old. We’ll drive him home to his parents at Postängsvägen. After that we intend to come to the police station and finish writing the report.”*

*”Understood, over and out.” The county communication centre coupled down the radio call.*

*”Short and concise as usual” Fredrik Pålsson said to Anna Ekeroth in a slightly ironic tone of voice. Though Anna Ekeroth did not answer she sent a long cross look to Fredrik Pålsson via the rear-view mirror. They had spoken several times about her long messages and Anna Ekeroth was not good at taking in criticism.*

To technically be able to work with the radio is one thing, to use it in a good way another. It is important to express oneself short but comprehensible.

A police officer must constantly be aware of the possibility that the things he says are listened in to. Sometimes he must avoid giving out certain

information over the radio as for example his position when on his way to an alarm. When many cars are on their way to a certain address it can be appropriate to not burden the radio traffic unless a patrol has something important to report.

In certain situations it can be better to use the telephone, for one thing because it is easier to listen in to a radio.

Being able to use both radio and telephone when for example organizing which way cars shall take on their way to a job, is important.

## **Conducting a technical investigation**

*Fredrik Pålsson and Anna Ekeröth had just dropped off Samir and spoken to his parents when the county communication centre informed them about a burglary into a villa at Rådjurstigen. Fredrik Pålsson and Anna Ekeröth drove there and would consequently not have time to work on the case with the sexual assaults that day. Anna Ekeröth parked the car and Fredrik Pålsson took out the technician bag from the trunk. They both found technical investigations difficult and felt insecure. Neither of them was particularly good at them and they often did not even take out the technician bag.*

A police officer must be able to secure technical evidence at a crime scene. Even though some evidence, for example shoe traces, will not lead to anyone being convicted for a crime, it can still be useful for future events, as it can give the police an indication that the crime was committed by a certain individual.

Because of the possibilities offered by DNA techniques it is important that when police officers seal off an area they do this very thoroughly and that they themselves try to find traces that may be useful with the help of DNA technology. When technicians are not called out to a crime scene, it is often the task of patrol/local police officers to secure technical evidence. They must, among other things, be aware of the risk of contamination when clothes are secured.

There are many types of traces – for example from tires, breaking in, graffiti – that the police officer must know how to handle. The camera is an important tool in documenting different types of damage. It can also be useful for documenting an ongoing fire to help the technicians or for documenting which persons are watching the fire in order to see if a particular person often is in ‘the audience’ during fires.

## To give advice and instructions

*Fredrik Pålsson went around brushing different places in the villa. The offender had been around rummaging in many rooms. It would take a while and the possibility of finding something of interest was low. Anna Ekeroth sat in the kitchen with the affected family. Apparently this was the second burglary in six months. She thought about good advice she could give, but outer protection was not her strongest side.*

A police officer must be able to give different types of advice. In case of a burglary it is fitting to give advice about outer protection, i.e. measures that aim at making a break-in less interesting and more difficult. An example: an industrial building experiences problems with persons who climb on the roof via the fire escape and break in. It turns out that these stairs are not necessary, since there are enough emergency exits. The stairs are removed and a sensor directed lamp is installed to scare away potential burglars.

Other advice concerning burglaries can be that the neighbors park their car on the garage driveway of the persons who are not at home and empty their mailbox. A police officer is expected to provide advice within many areas with varying character. Knowing a little about many things and coming up with appropriate suggestions using common sense becomes important.

## Balancing between 'common sense'/ethics and legislation

*It was Thursday 2:50 p.m. and Fredrik Pålsson had ten minutes to change. Anna Ekeroth had already changed and received a call from the county communication centre. Fredrik Pålsson and she would drive to the footbridge between Huddinge Hospital and Flemingsberg centre. Two boys had been seen inside a personnel room at Huddinge hospital. A wallet was missing and two guards had caught the boys just before Flemingsberg centre. When Fredrik Pålsson and Anna Ekeroth arrived, the plaintiff, the nurse Jenny Olsson, was there as well. She told the police officers that her wallet was missing. In her wallet she had had about 250 crowns and a monthly public transport ticket that she had bought for about one week ago. Fredrik Pålsson went to the guards who were guarding the two boys. Anna Ekeroth stayed with the plaintiff and wrote down her personal particulars.*

*“Where do you have the wallet?” Fredrik Pålsson asked.*

*“I haven't taken any bloody wallet” the oldest boy answered irritated. The younger one looked down.*

*“Anna, can you come here?” Fredrik Pålsson asked. Anna Ekeroth came and*

*the younger one of the two boys sat down in the police car while Anna Ekeröth continued writing down information about the plaintiff.*

*“All right, you haven’t taken any wallet. Do you have it with you then?” Fredrik Pålsson asked.*

*“No” the boy answered, equally irritated as before.*

*“You say that you don’t have the wallet with you and that you didn’t steal it. If I find the wallet on you now that will mean that you admit that you took it. Do you understand that?”*

*The boy hesitated before he answered “no”. Fredrik Pålsson noticed the small hesitation at once. It convinced him that the boy had taken the wallet. Fredrik Pålsson called the station commander for permission for a bodily search, but it was occupied. He waited five minutes but it was still occupied. “We can’t just stand here and wait” he thought. He knew he could not take the decision about a bodily search to find the wallet. He was only allowed to do so when there was a risk in waiting. On the other hand, he did have the right to search the boy for identification as well as to perform a protection search in case of an arrest. Fredrik Pålsson started to search for the wallet. If he would be reported for this he would of course say that he was looking for identification. It didn’t take long to find the wallet. The boy had hidden it in his left sleeve. The buss card wasn’t in it, but Fredrik Pålsson found it in his right pocket.*

*“That’s my buss card” the boy said.*

*“Did you buy it?” Fredrik Pålsson asked.*

*“Yes” the boy answered.*

*“Why do you own a buss card for an adult when you don’t need one?”*

*The boy did not answer. He tried to think of a good answer.*

*“How much did the card cost?”*

*No answer.*

*“You don’t know what you paid for the card? Shouldn’t you know that if you’re the one who bought it?”*

*“No, I don’t know” he answered.*

*”Ok, when did you buy it?” Fredrik Pålsson asked.*

*”I don’t remember.”*

*”But you must remember if it was yesterday, a week ago, a few weeks ago or many weeks ago? Fredrik Pålsson continued.*

*"No, I don't remember" the boy answered.*

*"What, you don't remember if you bought this card yesterday or three weeks ago?" Fredrik Pålsson asked, pretending to be surprised.*

*"No" the boy answered.*

*"We can of course find out where it was bought, using the number on the card. But you must remember where you bought it?" Fredrik Pålsson continued to ask.*

*"No, I don't remember that" the boy answered.*

*"Is this really your card?"*

*"Yes it is" the boy answered.*

*"Ok, if I understand you correctly, you're telling me that you have bought this card but you don't know where, when or how much you paid for it. Don't you agree that it is a little strange that Jenny over there has just lost her buss card, which had the exact same date as the one on this card?"*

*"It's my card" the boy said shortly.*

*"Don't you think it's a little strange that you tell me that you don't have any wallet with you and that I then find a stolen wallet in your jacket? That a buss card is missing in that wallet and that a similar card is found in your pocket?"*

*"It's my card" the boy answered.*

*"Perhaps it's your wallet as well? Maybe you and I simply have different ideas about ownership?" Fredrik Pålsson asked sharply.*

*"No, it isn't my wallet" the boy answered.*

*Fredrik Pålsson took the wallet and went to the nurse to hand it back to her. He explained the problem with the buss card:*

*"Since the boy claims the card is his the police must confiscate it. By the time you can get it back it probably has expired. Unfortunately the boy probably does not have any money to compensate you for the lost card."*

*"So I must buy a new buss card" Jenny said dejected.*

*"We'll see. I'll try to convince him." Fredrik went back to the boy and tried to make him see things from Jenny's point of view. The boy was relentless. A youth leader who knew the boy showed up and helped Fredrik Pålsson. After a tough discussion with the youth leader the boy changed his mind. Fredrik Pålsson handed the buss card over to the plaintiff. He called the station commander to tell him about the decisions the station commander had made without knowing it himself. It was still occupied. Since they were nearby Flemingsberg's police station Fredrik Pålsson and Anna Ekeröth drove there.*

Several researchers have discussed the different moral decisions police officers have to make. Carlström (1999) is one of those who early have paid attention to the moral engagement police officers have in their work. Ideas about right and wrong permeate their profession (ibid.).

How eager police officers are to follow the rules varies. Granér (2004) describes two extremes, the legalistic perspective and the autonomous perspective. In the legalistic perspective police officers consider themselves to be the extended arm of the political and judicial system and the police organization. Their work is regulated by legislation, policy documents, other rules and the superior's instructions. The central principle is that every form of police exercise of power shall be based on legislation and shall be documented. Police officers shall follow their superior's instructions and carry out the orders they receive as loyal civil servants. Police officers with an autonomous perspective see the police as an independent social force that shall maintain morale, law and order based on the people's needs. As a metaphor for the legalistic perspective one could use the neutral and rule-governed bureaucrat or soldier. The corresponding metaphor for the autonomous perspective can be taken from romantic male hero myths. The police officer is the sheriff, the samurai or the knight devoted to a mission to defend the good and fight the powers of evil (ibid.). It is desirable that police officers follow the intentions of the legislators. At the same time, it is difficult for police officers to apply a Weber-like approach, according to Knutsson & Granér (2001)<sup>22</sup>.

Waddington (1999) illustrates police officers' approach to legislation by using the following comparison: "When the obstacles are too high, the horses will go around them." He believes that police officers do not follow 'the book' (legislation) because the book simply is too extensive and incomplete. The size makes it difficult for police officers to be able to grasp and have access to all the parts of the law that can be relevant in a certain situation. By incomplete Waddington means that in spite of the extent of the legislation, police officers often lack regulations for how to handle certain situations in a desirable manner (ibid.).

Somehow police officers must know when they are expected to follow the legislation and when not. It is not unusual that a police officer finds himself in a situation in which whatever he will choose to do will be wrong. To not do anything can in some cases also be seen as an action and as taking up a stand (see 'non-actions' Goldkuhl, 2003) in the same manner in which omission can be seen as an act of criminality (Dahlström, Nilsson & Westerlund, 2001).

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<sup>22</sup> See also Holgersson, 2005a.

First of all, police officers must follow some sort of guiding rule which in most cases ought to be the legislator's intentions. However, ethics and 'common sense' must be balanced into the judgment in each specific case. This knowledge comes often down to familiarity knowledge. When a police officer has not acquired the police culture's basic values of what is expected of him as a police officer, his own perception of right and wrong will have to function as a guiding rule. Finstad (2000) believes that the balance between effectiveness and legality cannot be explained with police officers' individual inclinations. Instead it is a product of the organizations' built-in tensions between goal and means.

Second, police officers must try to find fitting legislation so that they can act in a way they consider appropriate for the situation. They use theoretical knowledge to motivate their actions. Third, police officers sometimes make the judgment that it is worth to act in a certain way even though legislation cannot cover their actions. There can for example be a lack of time when a police officer wants to undertake an action but must wait for a certain condition to be fulfilled in order to stay within the legislation. Debriefing is also important for motivating a certain intervention (see the section 'To debrief an event').

The research of Sherman and Berk (1984) has been of great importance for the view on how to act in case of a women battering. They have been very convinced that police officers should arrest offenders and not make their own judgments, as for example trying to mediate between the two parties instead of writing a report or writing a report without arresting the offender. Some police officers believe that an arrest can make the situation worse in some cases<sup>23</sup>. Based on his data, Sherman dismissed this idea among police officers as unfounded.

Later Sherman (1992) changed his mind and became of the opinion that an important ability for a police officer is to make a well balanced judgment about whether a suspected woman batterer shall be arrested or not. According to Sherman it is not always obvious that a suspected woman batterer shall be arrested (Sherman, 1992).

Uchida & Mastrofski (1993) analyzed several studies about women battering and found that there is a risk that an arrest makes the situation worse. In for example the cases in which the involved persons were unemployed the violence could increase after an intervention (ibid.).

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<sup>23</sup> Of course not as long as the offender is deprived of liberty, but when he is released; while waiting for a trial, while waiting for serving a sentence or after served sentence.



## **To use imagination and adapt, among other things, driving techniques to increase the chances of catching an offender**

*Anna Ekeröth and Fredrik Pålsson had just finished in Flemingsberg's centre when a person called to the county communication centre. She had just stopped a man who attacked a little girl. The man had jumped on his bicycle and biked away.*

*"70 needs cars to Alby. A girl has just been attacked by a man. The man has absconded on his bicycle, over."*

*"7350, Hågelbyleden, over."*

*"7337, Glömstavägen, over."*

*"7310, Tumba centre, over."*

*"I'll get back when we have a better description, wait."*

*"7350, 7337, over."*

*"7350, over."*

*"He probably has had time to ride some minutes. You make sure to cover Eriksberg? Over."*

*"Yes, shall we stand at Hallundaleden? Over."*

*"Can one of you get out to the gas station nearby Tre Källors väg and watch the biking path and another stand on the hill above Hallundaleden? Over."*

*"Yes, we'll do like that, over."*

*"7337, 7310, over."*

*"7337, over."*

*"Shall we drive to the crime scene and meet the plaintiff? Over."*

*"Yes, do that. We'll watch to make sure he doesn't go to Fittja. If he lives in Alby he should already be home by now, over."*

*"70 has a description of the man. He is about 40 years old. He wears a jeans jacket and dark blue sweatpants with white stripes. He rides a light colored lady's bicycle."*

To be successful in their work, police officers must try to understand how criminals reason. Carlström (1999) describes that a continuous theme in investigators' conversations is the uncertainty about how the criminals' lives look like and which of the competing versions of reality is the correct

one. The conversations create a process in which reality is stabilized and objectified. The investigators develop an ability to imagine themselves in the criminals' situation and to predict and understand their behavior (ibid.). I have made similar observations concerning patrol/local police officers.

There are situations in which the patrol/local police work civil and their tasks in many ways correspond to those of narcotics investigators, as Carlström describes. Police officers can come into contact with different forms of narcotics crimes while working in uniform. There are more situations in which a police officer's chances of success will increase if he uses his imagination, for example by trying to enter into other persons' perspectives: Is the description that the witness gave correct, or may she have seen things a little wrong? Which route should the drunken driver take if he is on his way home? Where can they have hidden the stolen goods? Which way should the offender take if he is on his way from the crime scene? Who is the co-offender of the arrested person? Which would be the natural route to take from the playground for the missing child? Where do the children with the motorcycle stop to change driver? Is the alarm call that came in a distraction maneuver? How should we behave so that the offenders will not discover us? Where and in what way does the offender expect the police to appear? Which measure is important to carry out first to make it more difficult for the offender to leave the area (for example subway, commuter train)?

***I will illustrate this with an example***

The county communication centre receives information about a teenage gang that goes around causing all kinds of damage, among other things by crushing buss shelter windows.

- 1) *If the patrol chooses to drive into the area in a police car, it is likely that one or more of the following events will occur:*
- A) The patrol discovers that a buss shelter has been damaged. No teenagers are seen. The patrol writes a report about the damage. No one is suspected for the crime.
  - B) As above, but the patrol does not write a report. Instead they decide that it is better if the plaintiff reports the matter, to avoid that the crime will be reported double.
  - C) The patrol does not discover any damage. No report is written.
  - D) The patrol discovers a teenage gang walking beside the road. The

police officers have a feeling that it can be persons in this group who have participated in causing damage in the area, but they have no evidence or information from witnesses that point in that direction. The patrol turns around and passes the group a second time before they leave the area.

- E) The patrol sees teenagers standing near a buss shelter. When they see the police car they start to run. The police officers see that several of the buss shelter windows are broken. They do not succeed in catching anyone.
  - F) As above, but two boys are caught. The patrol writes a report. The boys are mentioned in the report but because it cannot be proved what they had done, the preliminary investigation is dropped. They were at the scene of a damage, but state that they did not participate. The patrol cannot say if any of the boys broke a window, only that they were standing nearby the buss shelter and ran away as soon as the police patrol showed up.
  - G) The patrol discovers a damaged buss shelter. Several teenagers are standing in front of the buss shelter. They say that it was someone else who caused all that damage but that they do not know their names, or that the shelter already was damaged when they got there. The teenagers are identified and a memorandum is made. A report is written without known offenders.
  - H) The teenagers who damaged the buss shelter continue their behavior after the patrol has left the area.
- 2) *When a patrol has knowledge, instead the following could happen:*
- A) The patrol drives a civil police car.
  - B) When the police officers receive the assignment from the communication centre they stop the car and put on civil jackets.
  - C) The patrol drives to the area and parks the car at a discrete spot.
  - D) The police officers get out of the car and try to hear any screams or see any teenagers.
  - E) It does not take long time before they hear the breaking of glass.
  - F) They go to the place and make sure that the teenagers will not discover them.
  - G) They observe the teenagers.

- H) They see that two boys in the gang break a buss shelter window.
- I) The patrol arrests the two offenders<sup>24</sup>.
- J) The other children stick around because they do not want to leave their friends. The patrol identifies all children in the group and contacts their parents. The patrol interrogates the suspected boys in presence of their parents. Other parents come to the scene because they are upset about the damage and do not want their children to stay out any more that evening.

The same type of actions can be suitable in combination with many different crimes, for example reckless driving on a motorcycle or if a drunk person becomes aggressive and attacks other persons.

A central skill is a police officer's knowledge about different ways in which to reach a crime scene. The police officer must first decide whether his main goal is to stop an ongoing behavior or to arrest an offender. If the goal is to break off for example an ongoing battering or a rape, it is important that the police are heard and seen as early as possible. The way in which the county communication centre works affects how soon a patrol receives certain information.

If instead the goal is to arrest an offender the police must be able to advance in a completely different way. In these cases they have to surprise the offender. First of all they must make sure that the police car is not exposed too early or too obvious. The best solution is a civil police car, as they are more difficult to discover than a 'painted' police car. Police officers know that the time it usually takes to drive to a crime scene is so long that the reported crime in most cases already is finished by the time the police get there. Therefore they can adapt their tactics and for example use a

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<sup>24</sup> There are many ways in which an intervention can be carried out. If it takes place in a small village where everyone knows everyone, addressing the offender by his name can be sufficient. In a bigger town the patrol can choose to make a concealed advance, if the surroundings are favorable. Another alternative is that the patrol approaches the group of teenagers carelessly, for example by walking on the other side of the street and pretending to be involved in a discussion. It is in these cases very important how the officers watch. They shall avoid looking the ones they are interested in too long in the eyes or looking a second time when they recognize someone. Another method is to instruct another police officer to carry out the intervention. The patrol can for example choose to split up so that one police officer observes while the other uses the civil police car. When police officers try to enter the teenagers' perspectives, they have high chances of being successful.

civil police car, even though they will perform an intervention<sup>25</sup>. Second, the offender should not hear the police coming. This can be achieved by choosing a suitable route, by driving carefully and quietly and by avoiding the use of the radio. Third, the route in which the police advance to the crime scene should be chosen and divided in such a way that the chances of meeting a possible offender on the run are as large as possible. It can become necessary to prioritize where the police officers shall go. Should the subway/commuter trains be closed? Should busses be stopped? Should taxis be contacted? Fourth, it can often be suitable that a police officer gets out of the car and advances the last part by foot. A hidden advance and/or the police officer wearing a civil jacket over his uniform can be an effective method to localize the offender. Fifth, it is important to be able to use the help of the general public, the plaintiff, witnesses and the one who reported the crime to localize the offender if he has left the crime scene. One way can for example be to borrow someone's bicycle to be able to search the area fast and quietly.

I have experienced the importance of a tactical advance many times during participating observation. Some notes from participating observation:

*"Four police cars were on their way to an ongoing car break-in. My colleague who drove parked the police car a few blocks away from the street where, according to the report, the car break-in was taking place. My colleague usually did like that. He believed that it was better than driving all the way and scaring away the possible thief. We walked to the crime scene. It was heard very clear when the police cars approached. We saw two police cars driving into the street where the crime was supposed to take place. One police car was already there. The police officers in the three cars observed that the street was empty. They did not see any ongoing car break-in and reported a 55<sup>26</sup> to the communication centre. The three cars left the scene. We could observe that when the police cars were out of sight, a man came out of a shrubbery, where he had been lying. It had been impossible for our colleagues to discover him there. A car close to the place where the man probably had jumped into the shrubbery when he heard the police cars coming had been exposed to a break-in attempt. There were recent breaking marks on the passenger door's lock. The man carried a screwdriver and was also suspected of narcotics crimes. My colleague contacted the communication centre and reported that one person had been arrested. The operator at the communication centre*

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<sup>25</sup> A common argument against using a civil car is the importance of a 'painted' car's visibility. However, researchers have not been able to find any crime reducing or safety creating effects of being 'visible' when patrolling in a police car (see Holgersson 2005a; 2005b). In spite of these facts I still find it advantageous to use a 'painted' police car during certain shifts. When a patrol for example thinks that they will mainly be working with traffic control because of a motor festival or because there have been warnings for icy roads, a 'painted' car is preferable.

<sup>26</sup> No investigation result. Old intervention messages routine.

*said that it did not look good that three patrols just left from there thirty seconds ago, reporting the measure code no investigation result. 'We can't really let this man walk, just because the other cars didn't see him!' my colleague said irritated. Apparently this was not the first time this happened to him."*

## **Finding an offender**

*None of the patrols had seen the offender. Patrol 7350 asked persons who were out walking if they had seen a man of about 40 years old on a bicycle. They got a lead. A person who corresponded to the description had been seen biking towards Eriksberg. The patrol knew that they now had to hurry and called out to the other patrols.*

*"7310, 7350".*

*"7310, over".*

*"It seems as if the man has biked towards Eriksberg. We met a person who saw a man who corresponded to the description, biking over the bridge near the gas station.*

*"Understood. Did 7337 hear this as well?" Anna Ekeroth asked over the radio.*

*"Yes, they are on their way" Stefan Dahlberg in radio car 7350 answered.*

*The patrols knew that it now was urgent to get hold of other persons who might have seen something. Soon it would be too late. 7310, 7337 and 7350 split up and took different streets. Again it was Stefan Dahlberg in car 7350 who met a person who had seen the possible offender. The man had biked past Hallunda subway station and continued towards Hammerstaskolan. The patrols' inquiries led eventually to the conclusion that the man could have gone into one of three possible gates.*

*"Shall we ring a door and see if we can get access to the bicycle room?" Anna Ekeroth asked.*

*"Sure, shall we take a gate each?" Stefan Dahlberg answered.*

*Each patrol went in through a gate. Fredrik Pålsson and Anna Ekeroth found a bicycle in the bicycle room that could be the one they were looking for. The color matched and the tires were wet. There was no name on the bicycle though. After having rung two doors in the building Fredrik Pålsson and Anna Ekeroth met a woman of about 70 years old. She had seen a man in the house with a bicycle like that. She believed he lived on the fourth floor and that the name on the door was Lipponen. Fredrik Pålsson and Anna Ekeroth went up to the fourth floor. There were wet spots outside Lipponen's door which seemed to come from shoes. Anna Ekeroth rang the door. They heard footsteps and saw that the peep hole in the door became dark.*

*"Hello, can you open the door? We just want to ask some questions" Fredrik Pålsson said.*

*It was quiet. No one opened. Fredrik Pålsson stayed outside the door, while Anna Ekeröth went down to the first floor to discuss with the other police officers what they would do. Finally they had found the one they had been looking for so much, Anna Ekeröth thought while she went down in the elevator.*

Police personnel must have an ability to find offenders. This involves partly trying to enter the offenders' perspective, but also seeing signs when someone went in a certain direction. Using help from the general public is important in this context. I have experienced cases in which the public formed telephone chains to be able to catch an offender who fled from the crime scene. In one of these cases, a robbery in a small village, this led to the arrest of the offender.

Knowledge about the area and knowledge of people are crucial for how successful the police can be in this task.

## **Presenting a case to decision-makers**

*After some computer searches and contact with the county communication centre, the police officers had a suspect for the crime. Stefan Dahlberg called the station commander at the police station in Flemingsberg for permission to search the house of the suspected person. However, the station commander thought that a prosecutor should take that decision. Therefore Stefan Dahlberg called the prosecutor who was on duty for that day, but he did not want to take a decision about a house search, since the crime was so mild, sexual assault. As the police officers already had a suspect, they could instead take him in for questioning. There was no need to undertake any coercive measures at that point. Stefan emphasized that there had been a serious problem with sexual assaults in that area, but the prosecutor's decision was clear. Anna Ekeröth took the elevator up to Fredrik Pålsson who was standing outside the suspect's door.*

*"Shall we go in?" Fredrik Pålsson asked when Anna Ekeröth opened the elevator door.*

*"No, it didn't work out."*

*Fredrik Pålsson sighed and went into the elevator.*

Police personnel must have an ability to present a case to decision-makers. They have to be clear and pedagogical. It is an advantage if the decision-maker already from the start has faith in the person who presents the case.

Sometimes it can be good to present a case before carrying out a planned

action. In that way decision-makers can be better informed about the case and the police officers can also get an indication of whether it is worth to carry out the action at all. Working two days on finding a certain address and then not being allowed to carry out a house search can be meaningless and has often a devastating effect on the motivation.

Police officers must have a clear vision on how they are going to present a case and based on which grounds a decision-maker might take his decisions.



## Conclusions

A patrolling police officer requires a substantial amount of professional knowledge in order to be able to act in an appropriate way. A lot of this professional knowledge takes the form of so called “tacit” knowledge and may be hard to describe in such a way that a new recruit will be able to absorb it simply by reading a text. In nursing, the importance of the reflective practitioner has been observed through research (see for example Burns & Bulman, 2000). It is important to try to describe and identify Professional Knowledge because it then becomes more easy to discuss and reflect about different types of knowledge (see Josefson, 1991). To produce police officers with a high level of skills it is important to assist the officers to become reflective and to be able to develop and to share knowledge. The conclusion from the study is therefore that there is a need to identify and describe professional knowledge.

This paper has presented a broad range of different forms of professional knowledge in police practice in a relatively brief manner, and the need for further and more detailed descriptions and analysis is obvious. The paper also shows that the work practice of a police officer is very complex. Becoming a police officer is easy, but becoming a good police officer is very difficult!



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