

## **Producing Legalists or Dirty Harrys? Police Education and Field Training.**

### **Abstract**

This paper explores Nordic police students' attitudes towards non-legalistic police work, based on a cross-national longitudinal survey (N = 1,438). We ask where police recruits in four different Nordic countries are placed along a legalistic–autonomous continuum, and how the exposure to field training affect their acceptance of Dirty Harry-inspired measures. We find quite large differences between student populations. The Swedish police students are the most sceptical towards non-legalistic measures, while the Danes are the most positive. Danish and Icelandic police students gradually come to accept less legalistic procedures while enrolled at the academy, while there are small changes among the Swedish and Norwegian students. Based on a difference-in-difference model, we conclude that being exposed to field training during education makes students more positive towards Dirty Harry-inspired measures, but the effect is small. Country-specific cultural traits, such as views of legality and law abundance, seem to be important.

**Keywords:** police education, legalism, police culture, field training

### **Introduction**

The conflict between legalistic and autonomous perspectives on police work is a classical theme in police research (Skolnick, 1968, Van Maanen, 1978a). These perspectives may be utilized to characterize officers' outlooks on non-legalistic police work. A central feature of the legalistic perspective is that if the value of the rule of law opposes that of efficiency, supremacy is granted to the former. However, several features of the policeman's occupational environment weaken the idea of the rule of law as the primary objective of police conduct. One is the element of mission, reflected in their sense of themselves as performing an essential role in safeguarding social order (Muir, 1977). Secondly, legal rules may well be used arbitrary or symbolically, rather than being principles that guide police actions. In these cases, legal rules may act as an ideological facade, making it possible for the public to turn a blind eye to the messy realities of policing (Fekjær et al. 2014, Reiner, 2010). Thirdly, the pressure put upon individual policemen to "produce" – to be efficient rather than legal when the two norms are in conflict (Skolnick, 1975). When taken together, these factors illuminate what previous research has shown: that many of the rank-and-file officers view themselves as *craftsmen* rather than *legal actors* (Maynard-Moody and Musheno, 2003, Moskos, 2008, Reiner, 2010). In short, when an autonomous officer talks about efficiency, he or she has few objections to actions that will produce quick and tangible results. The policeman Dirty Harry, played by Clint Eastwood in a series of movies from 1971 and onwards, is the archetype of an officer with such an outlook on the police role.

Although attitudes towards non-legalistic police work have been a major topic of police studies for decades (Niederhoffer, 1969, Muir, 1977, Alain and Grégoire, 2008, Reiner, 2010), there is still limited knowledge on differences between countries and the development of these attitudes. In this paper, we explore cross-national differences in police recruits' attitudes towards non-legalistic measures, and the link between exposure to police culture by field training as part of the recruits' basic training program and the recruits' acceptance of Dirty Harry-inspired measures.

The potential merits of raising the formal education requirements for police officers is a recurrent topic of debate (Stevnsborg, 2010, Macvean and Cox, 2012, Hilal *et al.*, 2013). One reason for this is a belief that longer and more academic police training will result in more legalistic attitudes among the recruits (Punch, 2007). Paoline, Terrill and Rossler (2015) argue that researchers have yet to provide consistent empirical evidence that police officers' occupational outlooks and behaviour would benefit from college experience prior to basic police training. Raising the educational requirements for police officers can be done either by raising the minimum education required before entering the police academy, or by making the police-specific education longer and more academic. In this paper, we focus on the impact of the police-specific education and examine the role of this education in shaping students' outlooks on non-legalistic measures. Do graduates from shorter and less academic educations take a more positive view of non-legalistic measures?

Scholars have often portrayed police work as a profession with similar traits, regardless of where in the western world these tasks are carried out (Knutsson and Partanen, 1986, Reiner, 2010). This implies that officers in different countries will have a similar view of their role as police. An example of this is the notion that police officers constitute the thin blue line that separates a functioning society from chaos. A limited number of studies lend support to this characterization (Reiner 2010). With some exceptions (e.g. Sun *et al.*, 2010), there are few comparative studies of police officers' attitudes. The assumption that "cops are cops in all countries" thus needs additional empirical testing.

Previous research has shown that a recruit's introduction to the police culture results in the development of an autonomous outlook on their professional role (Moskos, 2008, Fekjær *et al.* 2014). The grooming and advice provided by streetwise colleagues are said to have a substantial impact on the recruits. The argument is that the pervasive police culture effectively transfers occupational perspectives from generation to generation of police officers (Manning and Van Maanen, 1978, Loftus, 2009). This picture of a universal, pervasive and unchangeable police culture has been challenged. Chan (1997) called for a theory of police culture that can account for variations, change and structural conditions, acknowledging police officers as agents, not only passive recipients of the culture. In line with this, Cockcroft (2012) suggested that differences in culture and behaviour may imply that the expression police *cultures* is more accurate than speaking of one single police *culture*. Chan's and Cockcroft's notion of a complex police culture is supported by other researchers highlighting different aspects of police culture (e.g. Paoline, Terrill and Rossler 2015, Fielding 1988). An autonomous outlook on their professional role represents *one* aspect of police culture. In this paper, we examine the link between exposure to police culture by field training as part of the recruits' basic training program and the recruits' acceptance of Dirty Harry-inspired measures.

We examine whether police recruits in four Nordic countries differ in their degree of non-legalistic attitudes when they enter police education and how these attitudes change during training. More precisely, we focus on how consecutive months of field training affect students' attitudes towards non-legal measures. These questions are explored by utilizing quantitative panel data, examining recruits' attitudes towards Dirty Harry measures upon entrance to the police academy and at graduation (total N = 1,438). Our study responds to a call by Ingram *et al.* (2013) for longitudinal studies of police culture, starting in the academy.

### **Police Education in a Nordic Setting**

In this paper, a comparison is made between police educational programmes in Sweden, Norway, Denmark and Iceland. These four Nordic countries show similar traits concerning several societal issues in the post-Second World War era. Sweden, Norway, Denmark and Iceland have traditionally been categorized in the same sphere of welfare states (Esping-

Andersen, 1990). All four countries are viewed as stable democracies with far-reaching societal commitments and a clear orientation towards market economies. The Nordic police forces have had a demilitarized character, grounded in humanistic and democratic values. In response to a perceived threat from terrorists and organized crime, these ideals have come under pressure. These new threats are said to require new means of law enforcement, and more emphasis is being placed on crime fighting (Haarr, 2001, Flyghed, 2005, Høigård, 2011).

Interestingly, with respect to the research questions posed in this paper, police education programmes in the Nordic setting differ substantially. Table 1 highlights their basic features.<sup>1</sup>

**Table 1 Police Education in Sweden, Norway, Denmark and Iceland**

	Sweden	Norway	Denmark	Iceland
Field training during education	No (½ years <i>after</i> graduation)	Yes, 1 year	Yes, 1 year	Yes, 4 months
Length of in-school training	2 years	2 years	2 years	8 months
Total length of programme	2.5 years	3 years	3 years	1 year
Academic status	No (some ECTS credits)	Bachelor's degree	No (aspiring)	No

In Norway, Denmark and Iceland, the police students undergo field training *during* their education (although only for four months in Iceland). The Swedish recruits serve under field training officers for six months, but only *after* completing in-school training. The Norwegian and Danish recruits experience one year of field training. In Norway, as well as in Denmark and Iceland, the period of field training is both preceded and succeeded by academic courses. However, the length of these periods and the academic content varies. The Norwegian and Danish recruits experience two years of in-school training, while the Icelandic recruits spend less than a year at the academy.

The Norwegian police education results in a bachelor's degree, while the others do not. In the case of Denmark, the course was designed as a bachelor's programme, but the formal bachelor's degree status had not yet been granted (the formal bachelor's status was achieved in 2014, but later revoked). The question of granting the Swedish programme a formal bachelor's degree status is under discussion. However, the recruits earn ECTS credits.<sup>2</sup> As for the Icelandic programme, the students in our study graduated from an educational programme without formal academic status. During 2016, a political agreement was reached to implement a full bachelor's degree programme within the near future.

<sup>1</sup> Information on the Nordic police programmes is provided by Høigård (2011) and official websites: pbs.no, politiskolen.dk, polisen.se/bli-polis and logreglan.is/logreglan/logregluskolinn/.

<sup>2</sup> European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System (ECTS) credits are a standard for higher education across most European countries. It enables the transfer of credits from one education/university to another and adding up credits to a degree. One academic year corresponds to 60 ECTS credits.

For recruits to be admitted, all Nordic countries demand a clean criminal record and good health, and require recruits to pass physical and psychological tests. Academic grades are also taken into consideration, but the degree to which these are emphasized varies.

Nordic police education programmes are relatively academic and long. In contrast, the Canadian federal police recruits undergo only 24 weeks of academy training. Police recruits in US spend on average 19 weeks at the academy, and a college degree is normally not required for admittance. We also find some examples of longer and more academic programs. In New South Wales (Australia), police training results in a formal university degree and stretches over a period of 20 months (including field training). In many countries, the scope and length of the programmes are under discussion (Stanislas, 2014). The underlying theme in this discussion is the imprint made by in-school training and field training on the recruits' professional outlook. This provides the rationale for comparing the attitudes and the attitudinal changes of the recruits in different educational settings, such as the Nordic countries.

## **Theoretical Frame**

### **The Legalistic–Autonomous Continuum**

In any established society, the state claims to be the sole holder of legitimate force (Weber, 1983). This presents the police with a dilemma: as state agents, officers are required to maintain order and at the same time be accountable to the rule of law, which is sometimes incompatible. In addition, the ideal of legality rejects discretionary innovation by police, while the ideal of professional autonomy encourages such an initiative. The idea of professionalism is often invoked as the solution to this dilemma (Skolnick, 1975). The meaning of this idea is however by no means exact.

One of the more established concepts of “professionalism” is associated with bureaucratic theory, an idea put forward by Max Weber. His analytical focus was primarily on the legitimacy of the established order (Beetham, 1985). Weber himself posed the question: When and why do persons living under the state's rule submit to the authority to which the wielders of power lay claim? (Weber, 1989). The answer lay in ensuring that the governed regarded the exercise of power as legitimate. Weber viewed political legitimacy as depending partly on the principles of political representation. However, the output side – the implementation of policy by bureaucrats – was just as important for Weber, because it was this side of the state with which the citizens came into direct contact, and on which they were dependent. The central idea in Weber's theory of bureaucratic legitimacy was that the strict and neutral implementation of codified universal and precise laws would make the decisions of state agents predictable for the citizens (Rothstein, 2003, Maynard-Moody and Musheno, 2003).

Following Weber's thoughts on bureaucratic legitimacy, it is possible to identify three cornerstones when it comes to policing and legitimacy. Firstly, discretionary decisions must be backed by juridical support. Secondly, actions taken by the police must honour the principle of proportionality – i.e. the measure taken should not be disproportionate to the objective. Lastly, the use of police powers is restrained and governed by decisions made by elected officials.

The diametric outlook on these Weberian cornerstones of implementing policy defines the analytical distinction between a legalistic and an autonomous police officer. In terms of the *need for juridical support*, officers representing these outlooks on policing will interpret the concept of efficiency differently. Firstly, time is a factor. Minor offences that will involve time-consuming administrative procedures may be handled "practically" by the autonomous officer. The more uncertain the outcome of an action – in terms of a concrete sanction against the suspect – the more likely is "practical police work". The situation will be solved, although

not the way prescribed by departmental regulations. A related factor is the amount of resources spent on an action, e.g. ordering expensive laboratory tests in order to ascertain an addict's drug abuse. While the legalist sees this as an important step in safeguarding the rule of law, an autonomous officer expresses doubts when scarce resources are used in order to establish facts that are "known" to any streetwise officer. Thirdly, the autonomous officer sees rules in a democracy as "enabling" rules, while the rules deriving from the rule of law – from a legalistic perspective – are intended to constrain police conduct. The more police tend to see themselves as craftsmen, the more they demand a lack of constraint upon initiative. By contrast, legalists see themselves as legal actors, sympathetic towards the necessity for constraint and review (Skolnick 1975).

The *principle of proportionality* is put to a test when an officer's authority is disputed. When faced by arrogance or hostility on the part of the citizenry, the officer may be tempted to make strong claims of authority for which he has few, if any, legal grounds. In such a situation, a policeman may have to choose between correcting the challenger or swallow the regret. While the legalist typically stresses that the measure should not be disproportionate to the objective, exercising street justice is a feasible alternative for the autonomous police officer (Van Maanen, 1978a).

Lastly, *respect for democratic structures* means that the police should ultimately be governed by democratically appointed officials. However, the need for situational adjustment in policy areas such as policing is often so great as to render impossible any centralized, uniform decision making process (Lipsky 1980). Also, unlike elected officials, police officers are neither voted into, nor can they be voted out of office. Politicians have no option but to rely on the hierarchical steering mechanism that claims that lower echelons of the bureaucracy answer and report to higher hierarchical levels. Following this logic, the respect for democratic structures is put to the test when an officer breaks the law. The autonomous officer typically chooses not to inform on colleagues. According to the legalistic perspective, such an infringement should be reported to the supervisor (Fielding, 1988).

Developing a professional code solely based upon the legal bureaucratic model certainly implies challenges. For one thing, such a concept of professionalism does not bridge the gap between the maintenance of order and the rule of law. In addition, the ideal of legality rejects discretionary judgements, a prerequisite for tasks that come with any demand for situational adjustment. The theoretical framework presented in this paper mirrors rather than solves these challenges. Our model of legalistic-autonomous attitudes is not a dichotomy but rather a continuum, defined by so-called polar types. This implies that we do not expect to find empirical cases that correspond to these theoretically constructed extreme ends (Sartori, 2005). These endpoints are neither good nor bad by definition, but merely mark the outer boundaries within which the actual cases can vary.

In summary, an autonomous police officer at one end of the legalistic-autonomous continuum will choose quick and tangible results, defending police authority and honouring the internal code of silence. At the other extreme, a legalistic police officer will prioritize the rule of law and the balanced and proportional use of force, and will choose to report a colleague if necessary. In this paper, we explore where police recruits in different Nordic countries are placed along this continuum, and how the exposure to field training affects their position.

### ***Socialization into a Profession***

Following Van Maanen (1976), we treat the recruits' initiation to the organizational setting as if it occurred in four discrete stages. While only analytically distinct, these stages serve as useful markers of the phases of the socialization process. The organizational socialization process starts with the pre-entry phase, followed by the phases of admittance, change and continuance (Van Maanen, 1978b). We define these stages as follows. Phase one relates to the

admission process during which the recruit seeks entrance to the organization. Phase two covers the time span when the recruit is in formal education. Hence, we refer to this phase as *in-school training*, while being aware that recruits may serve beside a field training officer during this period. The remaining stages correlate with the experience of working as a sworn officer. Phase three covers the recruit's initial working years, when the rookie is very susceptible to the norms displayed by fellow officers. The fourth phase, referred to by Becker *et al.* (1961) as the final perspective, reflects the more experienced officer's perspective on the occupational role. Because our panel data do not cover these later phases, we refrain from commenting on these in detail. Our main focus is phases 1 and 2, which are described in greater detail below.

Phase 1 covers the period prior to acceptance, when the potential recruit's perception of police work is influenced by various sources of information, including official recruitment material, friends or relatives working for the police, and representations of the police in the media and popular culture. In this phase, the recruits' opinions will be influenced by the mere fact that they are under evaluation. Applicants who conform to the traits of the organizations' own members may have a greater chance of gaining acceptance into the programme. According to Caplow (1964: 177), "few organizations are exempt from that spontaneous chauvinism that makes the candidate with conforming traits look more talented than the outsiders". Hence, applicants have an incentive to portray themselves as possessing the characteristics of the peer group to which they aspire. In general, this means that the applicants' opinions are influenced even before they enter police training. In this paper, the first measurement of attitudes towards non-legalistic police practice is conducted as the recruits enter police training. This measurement point corresponds to the end of phase 1 of the socialization process.

Phase two covers the period of in-school training. This phase is expected to lead the recruits towards a legalistic perspective. This is because the norms and attitudes conveyed by the police academy stress values such as juridical support and hierarchical steering (Van Maanen, 1978b). However, we expect that the legalistic imprint made by formal training varies in different educational settings; the longer and more formal the education, the more distinct the legalistic imprint will be.

In her review of van Maanen's theory, Tuttle (2002) points out that the transitions between the four phases are crucial points in the socialization process. A distinctive feature of these boundary movements is the uncertainty felt by the individual when he or she is unaware of the expectations and demands of the next phase. As a consequence, individuals are highly receptive to demands and norms when they move from one phase to another. Seen from the viewpoint of the recruit *in spe*, any norms and values emphasized by recruitment officers or other official channels receive maximum attention. On the other hand, the academy graduates are focused on what they perceive as established norms among police officers.

In our study, Tuttle's perspective implies an expectation that the recruits' attitudes will be under the influence of the legalistic norms of the academy when assessed during the transition from phase 1 to phase 2. Similarly, we expect them to be more focused on the perceived norms among police officers when we assess them at graduation. However, we also expect that in-school training after the completion of field training will have an impact, presumably pulling recruits in a legalistic direction.

## **Previous Research**

A gradual slide during the recruits' socialization, from a legalistic to a more autonomous view on the police role, has been described in classic police studies (Rubinstein, 1973, van Maanen, 1973, Moskos, 2008). This development towards greater acceptance of non-legalistic police measures has also been found in more recent studies (Catlin and Maupin, 2004, Fekjær et al.

2014). Jonathan-Zamir and Harpaz (2014) provide a reasonable explanation of this. From the autonomous officers' point of view, the need for a pragmatic stance towards laws and regulations is a prerequisite for delivering the police service demanded by people in general. This outlook mirrors the critique reported by Skolnick (1975) that too legalistic a view of the police role risks handcuffing law enforcement.

However, other studies tell a more nuanced story, where the recruit does not necessarily go from having a legalistic outlook on the role to becoming an autonomous police officer. Alain and Grégoire (2008) actually report the opposite; as they gain more experience, police recruits more often state that they will choose to follow the rules rather than be efficient. Another option is that rather than moving from one extreme to another, police recruits may move towards the middle, no longer seeing the world in black or white but reflecting the grey shades of reality (Alain and Baril 2005: 143). Like Fielding (1988), Chan *et al.* (2003: 202) describe how some of the respondents, instead of simply 'taking on' the values and assumptions of the culture, quietly adopted opposing aspects of cultural conventions. Bradford and Quinton (2014) also report differences among officers. On the one hand, officers who felt that their superiors treated them fairly were more likely to express commitment to democratic modes of policing (e.g. favourable views about suspects' rights and a restrictive view of the use of force). In contrast, officers who experienced organizational injustice tended to express cynical and authoritarian attitudes. The results of these studies indicate that viewing the socialization process as a straightforward matter and implying that all officers adopt an autonomous outlook on the police role may be too simplistic.

How will the attitudes of the recruits be affected by in-school training? Previous research does not provide us with a clear answer. Studies report an effect of in-school training on the recruits' support for procedural justice (Skogan *et al.*, 2015) and attitudes related to community policing and problem solving (Haarr, 2001). On the other hand, other studies find limited effects of training on levels of integrity (Blumberg *et al.*, 2015), attitudes towards fair treatment and procedural justice (Wheller *et al.*, 2013) and moral reasoning skills (De Schrijver and Maesschalck, 2015). De Schrijver and Maesschalck (2015) report that although training facilities differed in terms of their scope and ambition of providing recruits with moral reasoning skills, the effect of this training proved to be quite similar. To conclude, studies on the effects of in-school training are few and points in various directions. This is highlighted by Skogan *et al.* (2015:320): "We know virtually nothing about the short- or long-term effects associated with police training of any type".

The recruits' attitudes towards Dirty Harry measures may also mirror differences in their personal backgrounds. Previous studies indicate that the outlook on the police role may be affected by gender (Lander, 2013), age (Jonathan-Zamir and Harpaz, 2014) and educational background (Paoline and Terrill, 2007, Telep, 2011). On the other hand, we also find studies indicating that gender (Poteyeva and Sun, 2009) and educational background (Sun *et al.*, 2009) have limited importance. The importance of background in attitudes towards non-legalistic police work specifically has been little studied. Fekjær *et al.* 2014 reports that young male police recruits are more prone to adopt an autonomous view on the police role compared to older female recruits, while educational background does not seem to be important.

Previous studies have not described how the socialization process and the development of attitudes may differ between educational settings. Our study, utilizing panel data from four countries, provides a unique opportunity to explore the level of autonomous attitudes in different countries, as well as the impact of exposure to field training.

## **Data and Measures**

The data were collected as part of the RECPOL project (Recruitment, Education and Careers in the Police) in the period between 2010 (phase 1) and 2013 (phase 2). The response rate

was generally very high, varying between 83% and 97% (with the exception of Norway in phase 2; 69 %). The data include 1,438 police recruits in total, from Sweden (N = 350), Norway (N = 637), Denmark (N = 359), and Iceland (N = 92).<sup>3</sup>

Under ideal circumstances, surveys would have been filled out during the first and last day of the basic training programme. Due to practical reasons, surveys were distributed within a three-week period that coincided with the recruits' academy entrance (phase 1) and their graduation (phase 2). Hence, we argue that it is likely that the bulk of the in-school socialisation takes place within the time span covered by our measuring points.

Panel data studies provide us with the opportunity to investigate changes over time, and strengthens the possibilities for detecting causality. It also provides challenges, one of them being falling response rates. Selection bias may still be a problem if respondents in phase 2 are different from those participating in phase 1. An observed change in autonomy may then incorrectly be interpreted as individual changes, while the real cause could be a modified selection of respondents. However, additional analyses (not shown here) reveal that the demographic profiles of the recruits answering in phases 1 and 2 are remarkably similar, indicating limited importance of selection bias.

Another potential challenge with panel data is that the methodological design does not account for the possibility of exogenous shocks or changing trends, events that may affect the dependent variable. Societal changes between the first measurement point in 2010 and the last in 2013 may, for example, have caused respondents to adopt more autonomous attitudes. However, as this relatively short period of time was not characterized by major societal changes, e.g. a steep increase in crime rates, we expect this potential effect to be negligible in the case of our study.

Our dependent variable, the degree of autonomy in attitudes, is not a straightforward concept to measure. We utilize an index consisting of 14 statements, listed in Table 1 (developed in Fekjær et al. 2014). The response categories varied from "Fully agree" (1) to "Fully disagree" (5) and "Don't know".<sup>4</sup> The statements originate from a qualitative panel data study for which officers were presented with a series of mundane police dilemmas (Petersson 2015). In-depth interviews with 24 police recruits were conducted by one of the authors of this paper (Otto Petersson) on a yearly basis over a three year period. The fieldwork only captures a limited number of respondents and is restricted to the Swedish setting. However, it did provide a rich and detailed material covering the recruits' own stories of their socialisation journey into the police profession, providing insights useful when formulating the questions constituting our index.

Theoretically, the statements correspond to the three pillars described by Weber (1983) as essential in order to build legitimacy as state officials exercise authority (see *Theoretical Frame* section). Moreover, a mutual aspect of the statements is that they all parallel core aspects of respondents' outlook on their police role. Police research is replete with examples of this. To name a few, Van Maanen (1973) highlighted the potential conflict between defending police authority and adhering to the principle of proportionality, Skolnick (1975) in turn researched the classic conflict between producing results and the rule of law, while Reiner (2010) turns our attention to the code of silence. From this follows that respondents

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<sup>3</sup> Online-surveys are generally plagued with low response rates. To avoid this, the survey was distributed by teachers and filled out by students on campus. Recruits who were not present were given the opportunity to complete the survey afterwards. Representatives of the police academies encouraged participation, but emphasized that any participation was voluntary. Likewise, participants were informed about their possibility to withdraw from the study at any time. No incentive payment for participating was issued.

<sup>4</sup> To make the results more easily interpretable, we have reversed the scale in the analyses, and excluded "Don't know".



postures towards these statements reflects the dividing line between a legalistic and autonomous outlook on the police role. The autonomy index has been rescaled to range from 0 (legalistic to the maximum extent) to 100 (autonomous to the maximum extent). Cronbach's alpha for the autonomy index is 0.7.

## Table 2 Autonomy Index

Statements:

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1. Those who pick a quarrel and are unpleasant when they are checked by the police should be judged more sternly than those who co-operate.
2. Those who behave in a disrespectful manner towards the police should be treated correspondingly.
3. In cases where the law is inadequate, it is acceptable for the police to punish those who are obviously guilty.
4. The police should discipline individuals who misbehave, even if they do not commit a specific crime.
5. In policing, it is more important to achieve results than to follow the rules in every detail.
6. Everyone should be treated equally, no matter whether they are ordinary citizens or known criminals.
7. To direct your attention towards certain people on the basis of their appearance or origin is an inherent part of police work.
8. Interpretations and enforcement of laws and regulations should be guided by common sense.
9. Individuals who regularly commit criminal offences should get another chance.
10. An individual who has opted for a criminal lifestyle will probably always remain a criminal.
11. If police officers break the rules, then this should be dealt with by colleagues rather than by having charges brought against them.
12. The police should first and foremost make sure that criminals get the punishment they deserve.
13. High-ranking police chiefs have a proper understanding of what it is like to work as a police officer.
14. Police work is, to a large extent, based on experience; you learn the job in the field rather than through training or education.

We measure the degree of autonomy in attitudes when the students are enrolled at the academy and when they graduate. We do not have a measurement point when the students return from field training. This means that we do not know whether the students may have held more autonomous attitudes directly after field training, which the subsequent months of in-school training may have adjusted in a legalistic direction. However, our two measurement points are suitable for assessing the students' initial attitudes and the overall impact of education with and without field training.

The treatment variable, *field training*, is coded as 0 for Sweden, where there is no field training during police education. For Norway, Denmark, and Iceland, where the students are exposed to field training while enrolled at the academy, field training is coded as 1.

In table 3, we also control for the following background variables: Gender (33 % female), age (mean age 25 years), age squared (to check for non-linearity), previous education (32 %

with previous higher education), parent's education (63 % with some higher education) and whether the respondents have a parent who is a trained police officer (9 % yes). These averages hide some clear differences between the countries. Compared to the sample averages listed above, the percentage of female police students are particularly low in Denmark (24 % females), while the Norwegian students are the youngest (average age 23 years). Relatively few students have higher education before they started police training in Iceland (14 %) and Denmark (15 %). The Icelandic police students more seldom have parents with higher education (45 %), while as many as 70 % of the Norwegian police students report that their parents have some kind of higher education.

## Methods

We calculate difference-in-difference estimators, which are the average change in the dependent variable (the autonomy index) minus the average change in the dependent variable for those in the control group (Sweden, where the students are not exposed to field training). This model helps us to control for potential observed and unobserved determinants of the dependent variable (e.g. gender or political attitudes) and eliminates differences in the initial level of autonomy before education (pre-treatment differences in  $Y$ ) (Stock and Watson, 2007: 480-481). Because we compare changes in different countries instead of actual levels of autonomy, we eliminate fixed differences between the countries that may cause omitted variable bias (Angrist and Pischke, 2015: 203).

Difference-in-difference models are utilized when we do not have random assignment of participants to the treatment- and control group, and the two groups hence are likely to differ in many ways. These models can reveal a treatment effect if the post-treatment path is different from the trend in the control group (Angrist and Pischke, 2015). In our case, this implies that an effect of field training can be revealed if the development of non-legalistic attitudes are different among the students who have been exposed to field training (treatment group) and those who have not (control group).

Difference-in-difference models are based on the assumption of *common trends*: without treatment, the outcomes would move in parallel between the treatment group and the control group (Angrist and Pischke, 2015: 178). Here, common trends means that if none of the students were exposed to field training, the development of non-legalistic attitudes would follow the same pattern in the four countries. As described in the sections on the Nordic police education and the theory section, all Nordic police students move through the same phases of socialization described by van Maanen (1978b) (such as pre-entrance in phase 1, and in-school training in phase 2). Because the students move through the same phases, it is likely that the trends would be parallel, although at different levels on the autonomy index.

In Figure 1, the estimates are based on a difference-in-difference model with clustered standard errors at the individual level, to account for auto-correlation, which affects the standard errors (Bertrand *et al.*, 2004, Angrist and Pischke, 2015: 207).<sup>5</sup> In addition, we have tested a model with controls for background variables (gender, age, age squared, previous education, parent's education and whether the respondents have a parent who is a trained police officer), which also resulted in small changes to the results.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> We have also tested models with robust standard errors and with bootstrapped standard errors (Figure 1 and Table 3). This yielded only minor changes to the results. In the model with robust standard errors, the changes in Iceland from phase 1 to phase 2 is insignificantly different from the changes in Sweden. These changes are significantly different in the model with bootstrapped standard errors.

<sup>6</sup> Control for background variables slightly decreases the differences between the countries. For example, the difference between Denmark and Sweden on the autonomy index is reduced from 12.6 to 11.4. However, the

Table 3 is based on a difference-in-difference model with clustered standard errors. The model includes controls for background variables not shown in the table: gender, age, age squared, previous education, parent’s education and whether the respondents have a parent who is a trained police officer. The aim of this analysis is to estimate the effect of being exposed to field training during education.

**Results**

Do the police recruits in the four Nordic countries differ in their degree of non-legalistic attitudes when they enter police education, and do their attitudes change during their education? Figure 1 shows the Nordic police students’ attitudes when they enter the education and when they graduate.

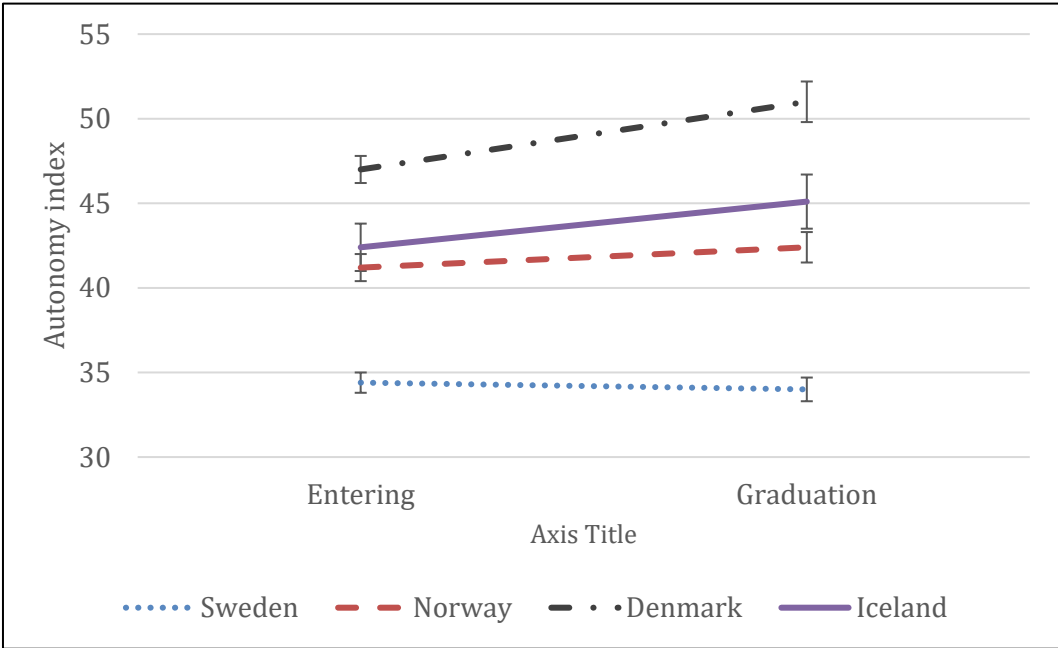


Figure 1 Nordic police students’ attitudes to non-legalistic police measures. 95 % CI error bars.

Figure 1 shows that Nordic police students differ in their attitudes towards non-legalistic police measures. The index ranges from 0 to 100, where the endpoints of the scale represent the legalistic (0) and autonomous (100) perspectives on policing. At the start of academy training, the Swedish police students are the most legalistic, with an estimated average of 34.4, while the Danish police recruits come across as the most autonomous (estimated average 47.0). The difference between the Swedish and the Danish police students is quite large and significant. In the middle are the Norwegian and Icelandic police students. They score 41.2 and 42.4 respectively, and are not significantly different.

The attitudinal differences between the Nordic police students are even more pronounced when they graduate. The Icelandic and especially the Danish police students gradually come to adopt significantly more autonomous attitudes during their education. On the other hand, the Swedish and Norwegian students on average hold about the same views on non-legalistic

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main result is that the pattern is remarkably stable even when we control for various background characteristics. This also holds when we test the models in Table 3 without controlling for background variables.

measures when they enter and when they finish their education (insignificant changes). At graduation, the typical Danish police student has an estimated average score of 51.0, far more autonomous than the Swedish police students, with an estimated average of 34.0.

Do the students’ attitudinal changes mirror the way in which the Nordic police training programmes are designed with respect to field training? In Table 3, we estimate a differences-in-differences model with clustered standard errors. This shows us whether the treatment—exposure to field training—affects the development of non-legalistic attitudes.<sup>7</sup>

**Table 3 Attitudes to Non-Legalistic Police Measures Before and after Education. Mean (SE).**

	Without field training	With field training	Difference, with FT–without FT
Before education	33.7	41.3	7.6 (0.7)***
After education	32.8	42.8	10.0 (0.9)***
Change	-0.9	1.5	2.4 (0.8)**

R<sup>2</sup> = 0.15

\*\*\*p < 0.01; \*\*p < 0.05

In Table 3, we note that experiencing field training during their education affects the police students’ attitudes, but only to a limited degree. Those who undertake field training become significantly more autonomous, but the difference is small. Undertaking field training results in a small alteration in the autonomous direction—2.4 points on our index from 0 to 100 (compared to those who do not undertake field training).

When assessing the results, one should remember that only Swedish students were not subject to field training. We should also take into account the composition of the student body that did undertake field training. The most marked changes appear in Denmark and Iceland, but the large group of Norwegian students display smaller attitudinal changes, which contributes to the modest overall effect of field training in table 3.

**Discussion**

How can we explain that Nordic academy freshmen differ substantially in their attitudes towards non-legalistic police work? According to Caplow (1964), recruits have an incentive to depict themselves in a manner that matches the organization’s admission requirements. Recruits that enter the academy are thus likely to bear in mind many of the demands that characterize the admission process. Hence, national differences in the emphasis on legalistic demands may be one explanation of the notable differences between Swedish and Danish academy freshmen. In Sweden, a legalistically oriented police education and admission process may explain why freshmen gravitate towards a legalistic position.

<sup>7</sup> The results are also controlled for gender, age, age squared, previous education, parent’s education and whether the respondents have a parent who is a trained police officer.

Having said this, we recognize a more complex pattern in our results. Sweden and Norway have similar profiles in terms of admission requirements, but Norwegian freshmen, despite a longer and more academically oriented education, are more autonomous than the Swedes. This implies that different courses of education are not the sole explanation for the variation in autonomous attitudes among Nordic recruits. Several explanations are plausible. Among these are culturally based differences in perspectives on legality and law abidance.

Higher crime rates and a more hostile public could be a possible explanation for the more positive attitudes of Danish and Icelandic police students towards non-legalistic police measures. However, this explanation is not supported by the statistics. All the Nordic countries are marked by relatively low levels of crime, low imprisonment rates and a high level of trust in the police. The small differences that do exist between the Nordic countries do not support the idea that police recruits become less legalistic when the crime rate is high and the public is hostile. In fact, the pattern is quite the reverse: Sweden has the most legalistic police students, but scores relatively high on crime rates and has the lowest level of trust in the police of all Nordic countries. At the other end of the scale, the Danish police students have the most positive views of non-legalistic measures, but receive relatively high levels of trust from the public, and Denmark has low crime rates and imprisonment rates (Lappi-Seppälä and Tonry, 2011, ESS, 2012, ESS, 2014).

A classic theme in police research is the long-held assumption that police culture is resistant to change (Manning and Van Maanen, 1978, Reiner, 2010). The norm that recruits are expected to learn the job by observing and imitating colleagues—and thereby developing a more autonomous outlook on policing—is the presumed explanation for this (Loftus 2009; van Maanen 1978). We would thus expect the recruits' attitudes to be affected by whether the academy involves a coherent period of field training.

Our data do not support the presumption that the recruits' encounters with police culture have any substantial effect on their outlook on non-legalistic measures. We note a shift towards a more autonomous position among students who undergo field training, but the displacement on our index is limited. This does not mean that the recruits are unaffected by the norms displayed by their colleagues once they have graduated and start work as sworn officers. In fact, the initial research that has been done on young officers' socialization suggests that they gradually come to adopt more autonomous views (Moskos, 2008; Petersson 2015). Whether this is a likely trajectory of the individuals in our data set is beyond the scope of our present panel data. This said, the empirical findings presented here indicate that encounters with police culture may not be the presumed watershed. The norm of “forget what you learned at school, now we start over” does not seem to be widespread among the Nordic recruits while they are still enrolled at the academy.

The years at the academy are believed to be a factor in shaping recruits' attitudes towards non-legalistic measures. Van Maanen (1976) explains this by citing the socialization process undertaken by any candidate who wishes to enter a profession. Once at the academy, the recruits are subject to a course curriculum and professional norms that reflect a legalistic outlook (Chan 2003; van Maanen 1978). Tuttle (2002) argues that the recruits' perceptions of demands and norms are heightened as they pass from one phase to another. As freshmen at the academy, their attention is focused on the expectations mediated by the academy. This is in line with the findings presented in this article. In general, newly admitted recruits tend to take a legalistic outlook on the police role, as displayed in Figure 1.

Returning to the academy milieu may have a resocialization effect on recruits' attitudes. Such an effect would mitigate the imprint of collegial influence during field training. Moreover, the effect would be unaccounted for by our design, because we do not measure the students' attitudes directly after returning from field training. However, we question the potential power of resocialization at the academy, based on the arguments proposed by Tuttle

(2002). Back at the academy, the recruits' perceptions of street relevant norms and working methods are likely to weigh heavily on them. In such a context, norms communicated by streetwise officers are likely to outweigh any perspective communicated by academy staff.

## **Conclusions**

This paper explores whether the degree to which police recruits hold non-legalistic attitudes differs between systems of police education and how their attitudes change over the course of academy training. We use a cross-national longitudinal survey covering Sweden, Norway, Denmark and Iceland. These four Nordic countries are interesting cases for exploring the importance of police education, because the police and the societies in these countries share many similarities, while the police education systems are quite different.

We find quite large differences between the student populations. While the Danes appear to be the most sympathetic towards non-legalistic measures, the Swedes seem to be the most law abiding. Danish and Icelandic police students gradually increase their acceptance of non-legalistic procedures while enrolled at the academy. Swedish and Norwegian students display only small attitudinal changes at graduation.

Utilizing a difference-in-difference model, we explore the effect of being exposed to police culture during field training. Our results defy the assumption that recruits tend to adopt the norm of “forget everything you learned at the academy, now we start over”, at least while enrolled at the academy. Recruits who undergo field training shift towards a more autonomous position, but the displacement is limited.

Our study indicates a complex pattern in shaping outlooks on policing. Country-specific cultural traits, such as attitudes towards legality and law abidance, seem to be important. Longer and more academic education courses do not seem to immunise recruits against adopting Dirty Harry measures. This implies that the content and design of their education are not the only factors in shaping recruits' attitudes towards the role of the police.

Whether an ideal police officer always should choose to stay at the legalistic end of the continuum is not given. One could argue that the law-governed nature of the police is a safeguard against clientalism, corruption and favouritism. The central idea of bureaucratic legitimacy is the strict implementation of universal and precise laws, thereby creating predictability by all citizens. Arguably, however, there is a potential contradiction between the law-governed nature of the bureaucracy and the service-delivery aspect (Peters and Pierre 2003). Strict law-abiding procedures may be both contra productive – e.g. the police may want to refrain from intervening for tactical reasons – and rigid. A formal, legalistic approach may in some cases alienate the police from the public they are supposed to serve, and trigger more tension and conflict. For example, police officers who do not report infractions like littering or traffic offences may come across as reasonable, thereby securing valuable positive relations to the public in the future. Granting police officers more autonomy may be positive as this opens up for situational adjustment, i.e. tailor-fitted solutions adapted to the local community and the specific situation at hand.

Future research should include some factors that until now have been largely overlooked in studies of police socialization. Previous research describing the different phases of socialization has highlighted the importance of time in the development of police attitudes (see e.g. Van Maanen, 1978b, Chan *et al.*, 2003). However, the importance of space is seldom mentioned. Our results show large attitudinal differences in the context of Nordic police education. This is noteworthy because the Nordic countries are often portrayed as societies with many common traits. While we recognize that the police profession exhibits similar characteristics in various countries, our results refute the portrayal of police forces as more or less cloned entities.

We also find reason to ask whether previous research may have overestimated the pervasiveness of police culture. We find an effect of field training, consistent with earlier studies. However, the impact of exposure to police culture is small among recruits enrolled at the academy. This, in turn, may call into question the long-held belief that future generations of police officers are bound to adopt the perspectives held by their predecessors. Having said this, we recognise that although the utilized autonomy index is comprehensive, it does not consider all aspect of police culture illuminated by fellow scholars (cf. Paoline, Terrill and Rossler 2015, Fielding 1988).

Police culture has been portrayed as unchangeable, omnipresent and uniform across countries. Our study raises questions about this view by showing cross-cultural variations and revealing the limited importance of field training when it comes to adopting autonomous attitudes. Whether we produce legalists or Dirty Harrys as future police officers is clearly determined by more factors than the design and content of police education.

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