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Nordic HOMICIDE in Deep Time

Lethal Violence in the
Early Modern Era and
Present Times

HUP HELSINKI
UNIVERSITY
PRESS

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Abbreviations

CHCD	Contextual Homicide Characteristics Dataset
EHM	European Homicide Monitor
HHM	Historical Homicide Monitor
HHMD	Historical Homicide Monitor Database
HVD	Historical Violence Database
ISCO	International Standard Classification of Occupations

Acknowledgements

This book is based on the research project ‘Nordic Homicide from Past to Present’ funded by the Nordic Research Council for Criminology.¹ The key aim of the project has been to develop a new approach for extending homicide research into the deep past. We wanted to do this in a manner that allows standardized, individual-level and long-duration comparison of different eras and regions. This book tests and showcases an emerging approach. We explore its challenges and explore its feasibility, while also describing a multitude of new and exciting substantial results on rates, patterns and long-term changes of lethal violence. Our research operates on the scale of centuries. We conclude by visualizing the extension of our approach to even longer time scales.

A major aspect of the project is its interdisciplinary character. We have brought together Nordic criminologists and historians with the aim of creating a common language between these two

¹ NRCC Grant No. 20180044.

intellectual traditions. This has been a great experience for the team. In a way, it is a controlled collision of nomothetic (criminology) and idiographic (history) approaches. It is now clear that this experiment is proving to be fruitful, as we hope to show in this research. Meanwhile, our project has transformed itself into the Historical Homicide Monitor Network, open to other researchers as well. This research thus aims at triggering continued interdisciplinary efforts to expand standardized homicide analysis to new and even more difficult frontiers in time and space.

Our research project was possible because of the long-standing criminological cooperation between the Nordic countries. Initiated, directed and coordinated from the University of Helsinki, the project brought together researchers from the Universities of Aarhus, Jyväskylä, Stockholm and Uppsala. From Iceland, the Icelandic National Commissioner of the Police and the Reykjavik Metropolitan Police participated, and, from Denmark, the Danish Ministry of Justice. The participation of all these institutions was partly self-funded during the project.

Dr Seppo Aalto kindly provided his copies of 17th-century Finnish court protocols for this research. Antti Kujala and Ismo Malinen provided historical data for the first preliminary test of the Historical Homicide Monitor manual. Dr Anu Koskivirta offered a detailed critical reading of the historical parts. We thank all these colleagues for their help. We also thank research assistants Maiju Tanskanen and Minna Mannila for their support. Project planner Anna Raeste was of huge help, with a strong grip on the Historical Homicide Monitor Database. The audiences of the special panels at the research seminar of the Nordic Research Council for Criminology and European Society of Criminology conference provided additional useful feedback in the process. Last but not least, the anonymous peer reviewers provided well-argued feedback that in many places led to changes in the manuscript.

While this book reports a wealth of substantial descriptive findings and research results, we were driven by a deeper sense of building a new approach to historical criminology. Fundamen-

tally, this is a methodological experiment seeking to assess the feasibility of long-duration standardized homicide analysis. We argue that homicide indeed is a unique vehicle of analysis that endures long-distance travel in space and time. In terms of analysis, these first findings merely sweep the surface of huge potentialities. Indeed, the concept of the Historical Homicide Monitor is not limited in any way to the Nordic area. The inclusion of more time periods goes hand in hand with a spread to new geographical regions in Europe and beyond. Thus, although it ends a project, this book is best seen as a beginning.

We dedicate this book to the memory of our friend, colleague and co-author Martti Lehti (1963–2021). His contribution to the creation of the Historical Homicide Monitor, and broadly to Nordic homicide research, was invaluable.

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CHAPTER I

Introduction

In the village of Sotkamo, north-eastern Finland, in the autumn of 1696, a master of the house was taking care of government business, staying away overnight from his homestead. When he returned in the afternoon, a terrible sight encountered him: his wife, and a maid, had been violently killed with an axe. The victims had big wounds in their heads. The crime had taken place at night, while the victims had been sleeping. The wife lay on the floor, with a child clinging to her ‘as if sucking blood from his mother’s breast instead of milk,’ as the court documents later expressed the consternation over the horrid scene. The perpetrator had stolen all the food from the household. Later identified as a vagrant lodger, the offender died in custody.¹

The homicidal violence in this case seems out of proportion to the motive of robbing food. Maybe the offender was trying to avoid detection by killing adult witnesses. And robbing food may not have been a trivial motive. The crime took place during a great famine, possibly explaining the desperation of the offender. Did he starve to death in jail? Was it simply a coincidence that the master had been absent because he had been transferring a fugitive thief? Be that as it may, the crime is rare in having two victims, but representative in the context of famine (see Chapter 10). Yet, we do not know how typical or atypical it was unless we know

¹ HHMD 3580000133.

how common violence was, and what were its qualitative aspects in general, and in context. To fully understand the trends and changes of violence, we need to combine disaggregation and comparability over the long historical span.

Over the recent decades, homicide rates have been decreasing in Scandinavia, as in many other developed countries (Suonpää et al., forthcoming). Criminologists speak of a general drop in violent crime and offer specific societal explanations (Tonry, 2014). However, from the perspective of historical criminology, the current homicide drop in developed countries is not exceptional. Rather, it reflects a long-term decline in lethal violence in the European cultural sphere, from very high medieval violence rates to the current situation, characterized by internally pacified societies. Yet, from a global perspective, homicide still kills more than armed conflict (UNODC, 2019). There are extensive disparities in homicide risk across the world. There is no reason to celebrate victory over lethal violence. We cannot take for granted the inevitable unfolding of the pacification process even in Europe. Indeed, there are signs that the homicide drop may be coming to an end in parts of the pacified West (Fridel & Fox, 2019; *Homicide in England and Wales*, 2019). In recent years, there have been worrisome trends in lethal violence, such as the increasing use of explosives and firearms in the urban violence landscape – a development witnessed in Sweden and Denmark (Lehti et al., 2019; Sturup et al., 2018; Suonpää et al., forthcoming). It is therefore hardly surprising that homicide has re-emerged as a serious social problem and concern in academic research and crime prevention.

The long-term decline in Western homicide levels has never been stable but has been punctuated by short- and medium-term fluctuations in homicide rates (Lindström, 2008; Spierenburg, 2012). Both historical data and recent developments thus show that neither homicide drops nor homicide waves last forever. Every drop will likely be followed by a new increasing trend and vice versa. There is an urgent need to explore the patterns of homicide change in a rigorous manner, in the dimension of deep historical time, to understand why societies pacify or fail to

do so. More knowledge is needed to understand societal factors explaining country differences and temporal change in homicide rates and patterns. It is essential to know the correlates and dynamics of interpersonal violence to be able to prepare for the future crime waves and prevent them, and to make future crime drops more sustainable.

1.1 Research Goals

This book is based on the research project Nordic Homicide from Past to Present, launched in 2018 to better understand the logic of long-duration homicide variation across space and over time. The basic idea behind the project approach was that homicide as human behaviour is a unique vehicle that enables long-duration comparison. However, it cannot be regarded as a constant. It needs to be disaggregated before it can be properly understood (Flewelling & Williams, 1999). Furthermore, we saw that the disaggregation should be based on a standardized indicator in the form of a coding manual. By means of such a standard indicator, it would be possible to build a standardized database for the systematic study of homicide stability and change. The project therefore set out to create such an indicator, and to test it in long-duration data.

The Nordic² context is particularly suitable for long-term and comparative homicide research because of its homogeneity and continuity in terms of societal structures and cultural patterns. Importantly, the legal culture, which produces the data on long-term homicide research, is also based on a shared genealogy. During the research project, we created a standardized coding manual of lethal violence, the Historical Homicide Monitor (HHM).

² We use the concept 'Nordic' as a convention referring to the five countries today forming the Nordic Research Council for Criminology (Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway and Sweden). The alternative concept of 'Scandinavia' is sometimes considered to exclude Finland and Iceland.

The current version³ of that instrument (HHM 2.0) has been published as a separate research brief, a public domain document that can be downloaded from the internet (Kivivuori et al., 2020a). The data on the project, the Historical Homicide Monitor Database (HHMD), are administered by the Historical Homicide Monitor Network.

Methodological Goals

We aimed to create a coding manual that would be historically sensitive, yet applicable to different time periods. It should also be standardized enough to be compatible with the homicide coding manuals used in contemporary criminology. A central inspiration in this regard was the European Homicide Monitor (EHM), created by a European research consortium in 2011 (Granath et al., 2011).⁴ The aim was to create a similar instrument that could be applied in the early modern period, and possibly even more distant eras. However, the development of the new manual for the coding of historical homicide sources could not start directly from a given existing model such as the EHM. Instead, we began testing the EHM on pilot data of Finnish homicide cases from 1700 to 1710. With this initial coding experiment,⁵ it became clear that we could not simply use the EHM or any other ready-made model. The shortcomings reflected the historical data, and also a lack of variables capturing important theoretical traditions of

³ The findings reported in this book are based on the HHM 1.5 version, which is also documented in the separate research brief (Kivivuori et al., 2020a).

⁴ The European Homicide Monitor network is currently coordinated by Nora Markwalder from the University of St. Gallen.

⁵ The first data coding manual was created and tested by Janne Kivivuori in January–June 2018. Test data from 1700–1710 were provided by Arto Kujala and Ismo Malinen (see Kujala, 2000; Kujala & Malinen, 2000). Prof. Karonen provided test data from Swedish cities.

historical long-duration criminology. There was a need to develop a new instrument that would be sensitive to historical contexts, compatible with modern instruments and theoretically informed. In this book we report the creation of the Historical Homicide Monitor (HHM) codebook (Kivivuori et al., 2020a). At the same time, this book shows how we put the standardized instrument to the ultimate test of comparing early modern and contemporary homicide patterns. Throughout the process, the work relied on a close cooperation between criminologists and historians specializing in the early modern period.

Theoretical Aims

In the history of social science, there have been bold attempts at the non-theoretical collection of facts. In the United Kingdom, the Mass Observation project, launched in 1937, is a prominent early example of this kind of extreme empiricism (Hinton, 2013). Similar operations can be conducted in the digital age by using various sources of big data. In contrast, we stress that the current research is not an archival ‘mass observation’ effort, or a project to digitize historical archives and documents. On the contrary, the project aims at substantial research using a new methodology based on theoretical considerations. In our research, we found it fruitful to divide the uses of theory in the functions of meta-theory and research theory.

Meta-theoretically, we build on recent violence research underscoring the existence of human universals (Daly & Wilson, 1988; Eisner, 2011; Lawrence, 2016, pp. 23–24; Roth, 2011; Sznycer & Patrick, 2020). From the point of view of long-duration analysis, this involves both the topic (homicide) and the means of knowing about it (human memory creating the data sources). Regarding homicide, there are reasons to predict some forms of stability, such as long-duration motivational stability in terms of revenge, jealousy, honour and material conflicts. Indeed, it is possible to overestimate the alien nature of pre-modern homicide, while

forgetting that modern violent crime has seemingly ‘pre-modern’ features like revenge and cycles of retaliation (Jacobs & Wright, 2006; Kivivuori, Savolainen & Aaltonen, 2016). Comparative analyses of legal codes across millennia and experimental research in modern humans indicate that violence is one of the most stable targets of regulation (Jarrick & Wallenberg Bondeson, 2018), ultimately reflecting the persistent evolutionary adaptation pressure to the aggressive behaviour of other humans (Sznycer & Patrick, 2020). Importantly, we do not see these meta-theoretical bases of long-term homicide analysis as predicting stability and similarity over the centuries. Rather, these emphases justify the possibility of long-duration analysis. It is possible to detect and analyse historical variation in a commensurate conceptual grid, such as the HHM (Kivivuori et al., 2020a).

Research theory refers to how theoretical discussions were incorporated into the creation of the HHM, and the interpretation of the first findings reported in this book. Here it appears warranted to explain how we related to theory. Briefly expressed, our key aim was to *increase the articulation of theoretical components* in long-duration violence research. Some important contributions in historical homicide research have created theoretical syntheses that combine various theoretical ingredients in a plural manner, yet appear in narrative form as relatively unitary. A very high-quality example in this regard is Randolph Roth’s groundbreaking work *American Homicide* (2009). Roth examined homicide patterns over a period of several hundred years from colonial to modern times. While incorporating differential theoretical influences and acknowledging variation of explanations across homicide types and different times, his synthesis revolves around the grand narrative of legitimacy. Crises of political legitimacy were linked to high homicide rates, while increased legitimacy reduced lethal violence.

Our use of theory differs from this. Our main goal was to develop a theoretically informed yet pluralistic instrument explicitly incorporating multiple theoretical variables; we sought to combine wide theory scope, measurement standardization, and

articulated theory expression (Kivivuori et al., 2020a and this book). Our main instrument was not developed only for the Nordic early modern period: in addition, it was designed to be applicable to modernity and to other historic locations of research. Even though our actual analysis of the early modern age in three Nordic regions supports specific theoretical approaches, such as routine activity theory and social control theory, the instrument is tuned to respond to dimensions corresponding to multiple specific theories derived from social science criminology.

The contrast between historical syntheses and explicitly theoretical social science criminology approaches are, to a considerable degree, matters of disciplinary traditions of writing and expression. Historical scholarship has the undisputed merit of the grand narrative tradition, but, in creating a standardized tool, we cannot go deeper into the philosophical questions of narrativism in historiography (Kuukkanen, 2015). Yet, it seems that the narrative element sometimes creates an illusion of the existence of a ‘unitary theory’ to a work whose foundations are, on the empirical level, multi-theoretical (Roth, 2009). A structured instrument such as the HHM comes with a price tag: the deep structure of narration in historical homicide research reporting, while still there, is less pronounced as the theories become more articulated.

This said, we were heavily influenced by the main approaches and grand narratives of historical homicide research, especially the debates on the causes of the great homicide drop from the medieval era to modernity. The homicide drop has often been explained by two main factors: the rise of the centralized state and the gradual changes in lifestyle modes that support self-control (Eisner, 2014; Spierenburg, 2012). Indeed, theories explaining the current crime drop from the 1990s onward are in many respects more detailed versions of the same explanatory framework (Kivivuori, Suonpää & Lehti, 2014). The state has promoted the rise of a security industry, while changing ideals of socialization have made people more conforming, and routine

activities have moved people's everyday lives towards more controlled environments (Farrell, Tseloni, Mailley & Tilley, 2011; Farrell, Tilley & Tseloni, 2014; LaFree, 1998; Levitt, 2004; Nevin, 2007; Roth, 2009). An example of routine activities increasing controlled behaviours could be young people's changing patterns of leisure time use, moving from unstructured loitering in public areas to the use of computers at home (Kivivuori, 2007b; Kivivuori & Bernburg, 2011). In contemporary criminology, it has become common to see homicide as embedded in societal factors and everyday routine activities (Aebi & Linde, 2014). Obviously, changes in time used in public places could affect the likelihood of violent conflict. Scholars of historical criminology have also suggested that violence between young males in public places has been the driving force for the changes in homicide and violence rates throughout Europe since the Middle Ages. This has been the case especially in short- and medium-term fluctuations (Eisner, 2014; Verkko, 1951).

Theories such as these have guided our exploration of continuities and changes in lethal violence. In research theory, we aimed to combine theoretical pluralism and the high specificity of theory articulation, even though some theoretical traditions are easier to capture with historical court protocols than others. Routine activity theories and strain theories have relatively clear correspondences with specific descriptive variables. Strain theory connects homicide with disadvantage and relative inequality, and can be captured by variables tapping into the social position of the homicide parties. Historical control theories are more challenging to address with specific variables. Rational choice and deterrence theories can be probed by zooming in on the motivational bases of offending, often linked to the need to project deterrence in social interaction. Possibly the most difficult theoretical-explanatory domain is that of learning theory. Nevertheless, these theories have been present in the current analysis, both in the creation of the codebook and in the interpretations given to raw findings. Some theoretical dimensions, emerging during

this research, were incorporated into the HHM to benefit future studies. Thus, the high level of theory articulation in the HHM codebook (Kivivuori et al., 2020a) is also partially a product of writing this book.

Research Design in a Nutshell

This research applies the HHM framework to a detailed and standardized analysis of early modern homicide during the period 1608–1699 in Denmark, Sweden and Finland, additionally comparing the early modern patterns with contemporary lethal violence (2007–2016).

The early modern period was chosen as the main research focus because it involved deep transformations in the Nordic polities (Chapter 2) and major shifts in homicide rates (see Chapter 3). The actual data windows for the three countries reflect the availability of the datasets in each country. We chose a feasible onset date for data collection, and the country coders then coded forward in time until 200 cases were included. The Danish data are the earliest and the Finnish data the latest, with Sweden occupying the middle terrain. An additional difference is that the Finnish data are extended over a longish historical period (1640–1699), and a larger area, to enable the collection of the 200 cases. The other two country datasets are more concentrated in both time and space.

Professional historians identified, selected and coded the early modern data (see Table B.1 in Appendix B). All our sources from the 17th century were original court protocols, retrieved from relevant archives. The bulk of the analysis examines this period over time and comparatively between countries, with theory-laden interpretation. We also compare the early modern homicides with contemporary Nordic homicides. The modern data in our analyses cover the period 2007–2016, using administrative datasets largely reflecting the data structure of the EHM (see Lehti et al., 2019).

1.2 From Tradition to New Synthesis

The Nordic tradition of studying homicide in the long duration dates back to the contributions of Veli Verkko (1893–1955), the founder of Finnish criminology (Kivivuori, 2017). He was a multiple-factor theorist who saw lethal violence as resulting from an interplay of biological and sociological factors. He is often remembered because of the generalizations known as ‘Verkko’s laws’ (Verkko, 1951). These laws referred to the fact that different types of lethal violence tend to manifest differential variability. The percentage of female victims tends to be high when homicide rates are low, and low when homicide rates are high. In recent scholarship, Verkko’s laws have often been linked to the hypothesis that changes in homicide rates are typically explained by male-to-male violence (Daly & Wilson, 1988, pp. 284–286). That is the most variable type of homicide. To detect such law-like patterns, Verkko worked to extend crime statistics backwards in time, into the past. Using the cause of death statistics of the Swedish Realm, he created a homicide time series for Finland and Sweden reaching back to 1754 (Verkko, 1951). In its historical parts, this series did not, however, contain other information in addition to the gender of victim and type of offence (e.g. homicide or infanticide).

Much of the criminological research on homicide continued the multiple-factor approach, albeit often excluding biological factors. An important model for such studies was probably Marvin Wolfgang’s groundbreaking study on the *Patterns of Criminal Homicide* (1958). This approach disaggregates homicides in terms of time cycles, modes of violence, and socio-demographic characteristics of offenders and victims. Much of the recent criminological work on homicide has similar goals. Even the EHM (Granath et al., 2011) can be seen as a continuation of this line of the multiple-factor tradition, with an inclination towards a relatively atheoretical approach. The ready availability of standard homicide data in the Nordic area (Lehti et al., 2019) testifies to close contacts between researchers and administrative data producers. Because of these factors, Nordic criminology has been, with the Dutch

and the British, at the vanguard of European homicide research (Kivivuori et al., 2014).

An important dimension in the theoretical discussion on homicide has been the contrast between conflict and consensus approaches to violence and its control, often discussed in relation to civilization theory as first defined by Norbert Elias in his monumental *Über den Prozess der Zivilisation* (2017a, 2017b [1939]). Thus, the decrease of violence could be seen either as an effect of top-down control or as a spontaneous change of interaction norms emerging from below, depending on which aspect of the civilizing theory was emphasized (Kivivuori & Lehti, 2011, pp. 126–130; Koskivirta, 2003, pp. 21–22). Analogously, Robert Merton's (1938) strain theory inspired historical explanations of violence peaks (Ylikangas, 1991, p. 52). Combining theory and extensive data, this research tradition resulted in multiple publications (see Karonen, 1998a, 1998b; Kivivuori & Lehti, 2011; Lindström, 2008; Österberg, 1996; Ylikangas, 1976a; Ylikangas, 1998c, for reflections on past work). However, more recently this type of macro-level historical violence research has been largely replaced by micro-level studies, analysing identities and mentalities in micro-interaction.

Our research provides a synthesis of these currents in homicide research. In the spirit of Verkko, we are expanding standardized homicide research backwards in time. We continue the multiple-factor approach, as evident in the empirical Wolfgang-style disaggregation tradition, as well as in the EHM, applying it retrospectively to past epochs. At the same time, we learn from the theoretical ambitions of historians, with the added element of anchoring the debates into a standardized theory-informed conceptual grid. Indeed, even as we use a quantifying instrument, or because we have it, we are able to explore even the micro-level social interactions as revealed by motives and immediate contexts of violence. In short, we tackle the challenge of long-duration violence analysis by combining macro- and micro-level aspects, and by transcending the divide between nomothetic and idiographic approaches in the study of homicide.

1.3 Is It Possible to Compare the Violence of Distant Epochs?

In this book, we study the homicides of the Nordic early modern period from 1608 to 1699, when homicide rates were much higher than they are today. We examine the trends of homicide during this period, as well as the constituent patterns of homicide: the victims, offenders, times, places, motives and many other aspects. We additionally compare the emerging picture with contemporary homicides in the same study regions. Our comparative time span thus covers a period of four hundred years, with the important caveat that we do not have data from the intermediate centuries. The comparison of 17th-century and contemporary homicide is here seen as a feasibility study, a major pilot testing the possibility of long-duration comparison. If comparing 17th-century and 21st-century homicide is possible, the creation of a continuous homicide time series remains a challenge for future research.

For the early modern period, we use court protocols as sources (see Figure 1.1), which we first transform into numeric form by using the HHM. The details of the creation of the Monitor, and other methods aspects of this study, are described in Chapter 4.

Can we trust the information contained in old court protocols? These days, psychologists and behavioural economists often doubt the accuracy of human perception, which is infested with all kinds of biases. All the standard limitations revealed by source critique also apply to the use of archival documents in long-duration study. Therefore, there is reason to discuss at the outset why we think it is *possible* to study homicide in the long historical duration. At the most general level, a concentration on homicide is a means of bypassing the challenge of hidden crime (Kivivuori, 2011). It is likely that the dark number of crime is less extensive in lethal violence than it is in most other crime types. The historical factor of relatively extensive state attention to lethal violence from pre-modern times (Lappi-Seppälä & Lehti, 2015, 2016; Lockwood, 2017) also likely increased the inclusivity of the court protocol sources. In addition, lethal violence tends to be salient and memorable for lay actors. Homicide is a type of human interaction that

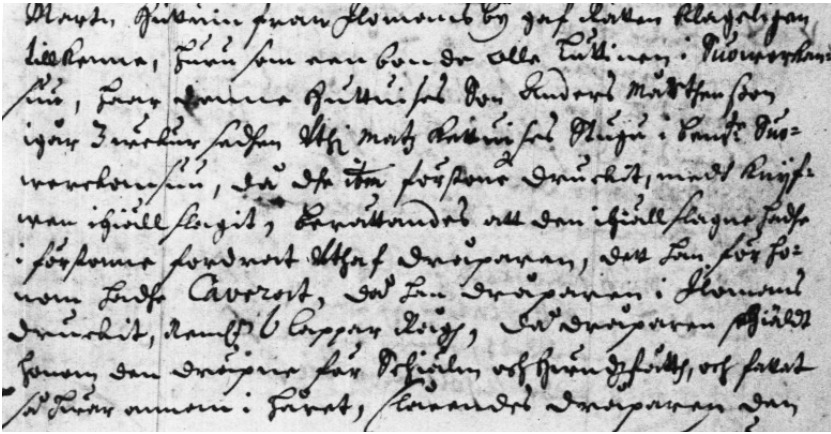


Figure 1.1: Specimen of the project data: court protocol on manslaughter in 1686, Northern Karelia, Finland. Source: Ilomantsi and Suojärvi court of assizes February 16–19, 1686. Renovated court book of Käkisalmi province in 1686. KO a 7, f. 19-19v. National Archive of Finland.

allows for standard analysis across the historical long duration. In what follows, we first discuss the pitfalls of long-term comparison, and then turn to reasons why it is feasible in the case of homicide.

Why It Is Difficult...

The use of historical court materials involves several validity threats. These can be divided into two types: threats to external validity and threats to internal validity. Threats to external validity refer to the problem of hidden and unrecorded crime. It is beyond reasonable doubt that there have been changes in the likelihood of lethal violence being reported to state authorities. For example, our data include cases of so-called stealth killings (*dulgadråp*, *salatappo*), where witnesses had detected a corpse but the killer remained unidentified. Such cases were prosecuted and have been coded into our dataset, as they involve intentional lethal violence. Since the Middle Ages, Swedish law has stipulated a fine to the local court (*hundred*) if the suspected killer remained at large (Hafström, 1984). Two such incidents were prosecuted in northern Finland. There is no way of ascertaining how this figure

relates to the dark number of homicide, yet it seems low. The early modern community structure and population density gave better opportunities to hide victims' bodies than did later periods. On the other hand, the rise and consolidation of state power is likely to have increased the proportion of homicides known to courts (Lockwood, 2017).

Internal validity here refers to what historians often call source criticism. From this perspective, it is important to assess multiple aspects of the source documents: genealogy, creation, originality, interpretation, author's authority and the competence and the trustworthiness of the observers, such as the court staff, and the scribes (for closer examination of these aspects, see Howell & Prevenier, 2001, pp. 60–68). The purposes of documents, and the contexts of their creation, influence their content. This holds true also when they are used for basic crime incident information. The early modern court protocols were not composed for the purpose of crime measurement or research. The court paid attention to facts that were relevant for investigation and examination. As distinct from modern courts, the process often combined the functions of investigation (as today performed by the police), prosecution and sentencing. Many characteristics of the conflict parties were irrelevant for the court. A good example taken from this research is the *age* of the victim and the offender. This tends to be reported in the protocols only when relevant for sentencing. Age was thus mentioned only when the victim was very young (infanticide) or when the offender was a juvenile or exceptionally old. The percentage of missing data for the age variable therefore became very high, above 95 per cent on average (see Chapter 4 and Appendix B).

The early modern courts were not interested in collecting socio-demographic information on offenders and victims of homicide. Such information was often incidental to the main goals of the judicial process. Yet, surprisingly, many variables routinely collected in modern homicide data systems could be retrieved from the early modern court records. Furthermore, since in some respects the early modern court process resembles later police investigations and interrogations, the voices and testimonies

could be multiple. Here, we follow the suspicion principle used in the EHM. This makes conviction and sentencing variables rather than inclusion criteria.

... and Why It Can Be Done

It is extremely important to understand and discuss the multiple pitfalls of long-term comparison. On the other hand, a balanced assessment of the source requires us to consider their strengths as well. It would be problematic to assume that going further back in time always increases errors in measurement. Factors related to the historical, cultural, societal and criminal justice system contexts may instead support the external validity of the sources.

- (1) *General beliefs supporting veracity of sources.* For instance, in the Nordic legal tradition, medieval beliefs supported the entry of homicide incidents into a legal process. Unpunished crimes were believed to trigger divine wrath, a notion that motivated the reporting of homicide to authorities (Ylikangas, 2001).
- (2) *Aspects of criminal justice systems promoting homicide reporting.* In medieval legal culture, ‘secret’ – meaning undeclared or unconfessed – homicide was defined as murder, while openly confessed homicide was judged as manslaughter (Kadane & Næshagen, 2014). This created an incentive to self-report a killing, analogous to that of modern self-report surveys (Enzmann et al., 2018; Kivivuori, 2007b, 2011). In some national contexts, monetary incentives to prosecute motivated prosecution (Lockwood, 2017). In the Swedish Realm, runaway offenders could appear in court under safe-conduct letters, a practice that likely increased the information about the incidents (Lindström, 2021). The early accusatorial and fine-based legal system (Netterstrøm, 2017a) meant that the relatives of the victim had an incentive to declare, sometimes perhaps even over-report, homicide. They would serve as proxies for the victim and speak for him/her in the court. The courts could divide the fines between the victim’s relatives, the Crown and the local community, further consolidating incentives to report suspected homicides. We may also underestimate the capability of early modern people to ascertain causes of death (Lockwood, 2017).

- (3) *Duration from violence to death.* In the historical periods, the time interval between the violent incident and the death of the victim could be long (see Section 6.1, ‘Time to Death’). For the purposes of methodological analysis and source critique, this fact is of high relevance. It means that the homicide victim could give testimony in his or her own killing. Modern criminologists naturally assume that homicide cannot be studied by victim reports, but early modern and medieval homicide records can and do contain information received from the victims of homicide. The old court protocols can thus be seen as incorporating elements that are deliberately used in modern crime measurement: official records, self-reports, victim reports and proxy reports. This reference to concepts of modern criminological research is intentional. Distance in time cannot always be equated exclusively with ‘darkness’ or massive validity threats.
- (4) *Human universals in motivation.* Theoretical and research developments in the social sciences, often linked to evolutionary perspectives, increasingly emphasize the notion that modern and pre-modern people share a common universal humanity in moral emotions and aspects of social cognition (Daly & Wilson, 1988; Sznycer & Patrick, 2020). Human universals allow researchers to study historical variation over the long duration without predicting absolute continuity or similarity. These meta-theoretical developments do not predict absolute similarity in patterns of violence. Rather, they support research studying variation with a standardizing conceptual grid that is applicable to distant periods (see also Lawrence, 2016, pp. 23–24).
- (5) *Human memory as cognitive storage.* Human memory, which produces the documents and sources of homicide research, can preserve information over long periods of time. Long-term memory transmits accurate information across long stretches of time, possibly even trans-generationally, a capability likely to be a human universal (Greve & Bjorklund, 2009). Furthermore, memory capabilities are domain-specific, meaning that some things are remembered better than others. Human memory preservation and retrieval is particularly enhanced for negative events. This capability is probably sensitized to events seriously risking survival, such as lethal violence; recollections of such incidents are resistant to oblivion (Buchner, Bell, Mehl & Much, 2009; Nairne, Thompson

& Pandeirada, 2007; Pfattheicher & Böhm, 2018; Suzuki, Honma & Suga, 2013). This domain-specific bias in human memory has relevance for studies using texts whose information had an oral stage before textual rendering.

1.4 Prior Advances in Long-Term Homicide Research

A major problem in long-term homicide research has been the lack of standardization amid a plurality of local, regional and national studies. So far, it has not been possible to ‘use [a] common classification system across studies’, which would, as stated by Flewelling and Williams (1999, p. 97), ‘greatly enhance our ability to interpret and synthesize the findings from multiple studies’. Our goal was to create such an instrument that could be used to disaggregate homicide to its constituent parts. The HHM we have developed is just such an instrument for making old judicial protocols (or other sources) commensurate with modern administrative statistics. The HHM disaggregates lethal violence in a way that changing patterns can be specified simply through an act of description. Of course, we did not have to start from scratch in this project. There have been important efforts to increase the comparability of homicide across countries and over time.

Previously, descriptive information on homicide characteristics and patterns has been distilled from earlier studies (Ruff, 2001). Some researchers have taken the reanalysis of prior work to a level that approximates systematic reviews and meta-analyses. For instance, Eisner’s important databases on homicide rates are based on aggregate-level data from previous studies. His Contextual Homicide Characteristics Dataset (CHCD) similarly includes aggregate-level information on the gender of perpetrators and victims, victim–offender relationship, age of perpetrators and victims, the distribution of homicide by location, day and time, the types of weapons used and the time lapse between the crime and the death of the victim (Eisner, 2014, pp. 69–71).

Some variables are immanently standard, such as gender and weekday, yet their uniform presence and coding quality cannot be guaranteed when the studies rely on prior research that has adopted a variety of inclusion principles and coding methods for studying historical homicide.

Created and sponsored by the Criminal Justice Research Centre at the Ohio State University, the Historical Violence Database (HVD) has progressed towards standardized analysis. The aim of the HVD is to serve as a repository of historical studies using standard worksheets and spreadsheets (Roth et al., 2008). It thus combines the goals of data sharing and standardization, with emphasis on the former rather than the latter. The project explicitly states that the ‘goal ... is to encourage the sharing and preservation of data, not to impose a single format for data collection.’ A related goal is to use the variables and variable codes of modern criminal justice agencies ‘so that historical data and contemporary data can be merged easily’ (Roth et al., 2008, pp. 85–87). The behavioural coverage of the HVD extends far beyond homicide, including suicide, non-lethal violence and rioting. While unique in ambition, the HVD has not yet progressed to become a merged dataset.

The European Homicide Monitor (EHM) represents the most recent effort towards standardization. Created by a consortium directed by Sweden’s National Crime Prevention Council, the EHM is a data structure and coding manual intended for individual-level homicide research (Granath et al., 2011). The original goal of the project was to create a merged and cumulative dataset. However, the original project dataset is currently the only merged dataset, comprising data from Finland, the Netherlands and Sweden and covering the years 2003–2006. Several European countries have subsequently started to use the EHM or compatible data structures for their national homicide databases. The data structure is standardized and allows for statistical analyses but has shortcomings such as the difficulty of analysing combinations of offender–victim characteristics. Developed with and for modern homicide data, some

variables of the European Homicide Monitor cannot be applied in historical contexts.

1.5 Nordic Countries as a Testing Ground of Long-Duration Analysis

A recent assessment of the state-of-the-art in historical criminology suggested three lacunae of research: the *early modern period*, *rural and peripheral areas*, and *cross-national comparison* (Lawrence, 2016, p. 31). This book answers all of these research needs. We focus on the early modern period between 1608 and 1699. We engage in the cross-national comparison of long-term homicide patterns using a standardized data grid, with Denmark, Finland and Sweden⁶ as sites of study. The data derive from predominantly rural societies of the early modern period. The studied regions are peripheral within the Nordic kingdoms of the era. At the time of our study, Sweden was at the climax of its European power.

Why is the Nordic area a good place to develop standardized long-duration homicide research? For centuries, the region has been characterized by the relative stability of cultural and societal development. The dominant languages of the area stem from the same Indo-European branch; the court protocols of the early modern period were written in these languages. Between 1397 and 1523, the Nordic kingdoms formed a personal union under a single monarch, also including the area today known as Finland, as well as the islands of the Northern Atlantic. Excluding the Russian annexation of Finland, 1809–1917 (when Swedish laws remained intact), the area has been a comparatively homogeneous cultural formation since the Middle Ages. The area has been

⁶ Iceland is incorporated in the HHMD with data from 1900 to 1989. Norway has been included in the separate comparison of modern homicide 2007–2016 (Lehti et al., 2019; Lehti, Kivivuori, Bergsdóttir & Jonasson, 2021).

divided into independent nation states, yet linguistic and cultural unity transcends historical sub-divisions. The state formation processes were similar, even though they progressed in a differential sequence (Knudsen & Rothstein, 1994). The similarities include shared legal culture and memory traditions (Glauser, Hermann & Mitchell, 2018; Kadane & Næshagen, 2014, pp. 287–288).

Owing to the labour-intensive nature of analysing court protocols from the early modern period, it was clear from the outset that we could not cover complete countries for the chosen periods. That would have been too time consuming. The historical datasets were, therefore, focused on particular areas: northern and central Jutland in Denmark, south-eastern Sweden, and northern Finland, as well as the whole of Iceland (Figure 1.2). The Icelandic data are examined separately because of their different time frame (1900–1989) (Lehti, Kivivuori, Bergsdóttir & Jonasson, 2021). For reasons of feasibility, we limited the size of the



Figure 1.2: Areas included in the current Historical Homicide Monitor Database (HHMD). This book excludes Iceland owing to its different time frame. Map by Petri Danielsson and Mona Rautelin.

historical data: from each country, we decided to include 200 homicide cases. Since our data have individuals (victims and offenders) as observation units, this number of cases yields approximately 400 matrix rows for each country.

In this research, data creation and analysis are closely intertwined: the coding of handwritten primary historical documents into the structure defined by the codebook constitutes the bulk of the analysis. The analytic goals are descriptive. Descriptive methodologies are not easier or simpler than causal designs; indeed, sometimes the reverse is the case (Gerring, 2012). In the study of crime, where the problem of hidden crime is urgent (Kivivuori, 2011), the descriptive task is also important because any explanation depends on valid description. In analysing the early court protocols, we employ both particularizing accounts of events and the goal of generalization, grouping cases into classes and typologies (Gerring, 2012, p. 725). The interpretation of patterns of homicide refers to historical contexts, with in-depth knowledge of the criminal justice systems that preserved the memory of the violent incidents to this day. Furthermore, since our research yields a standardized disaggregation of homicide patterns, it creates a new hermeneutical context of interpretation in time: the comparative dimension of the long duration. The project thus balances idiographic (uniquely contextual) and nomothetic (repeated or changing patterns across time) goals, revealing both stability and change in lethal violence patterns (Kivivuori et al., 2014). In this book, we respond to calls for more context-sensitive approaches in homicide research (Goertzel, Shohat, Kahn, Zanetic & Bogoyavlensky, 2013), while creating context-transcending comparability.

In the second chapter, we describe the social and legal setting of the early modern era in our research regions, including a short review of the political and legal systems of the time. In Chapter 3 we discuss the theoretical bases of our research. As a point of departure, we use the classical debate on the existence, nature and causes of the grand European pacification process and the resulting homicide drop. Next, in Chapter 4, we explain in detail

the data we use in this study.⁷ The fourth chapter also includes an in-depth source of the critical challenges involved in the use of early modern court sources. Indeed, we consider the explication of these challenges as research results in themselves. The strain of source critical commentary runs through the analysis, making this book a narrative of our struggle to create a standardized tool for long-duration violence analysis.

In Chapter 5, we turn to empirical findings by first examining the relative risks (rates) of homicide in the historical period.⁸ The next three chapters, Chapters 6–8, are devoted to the description of early modern homicide patterns, as disaggregated by the HHM. These chapters provide unprecedented information by combining substantial findings, routine activity theoretical interpretation, and a continuous thread of source critical discussion. The ninth chapter focuses on infanticide, a type of homicide that is excluded from other parts of the book because of very specific challenges for the validity of the comparisons. In the tenth chapter, we explore how the HHM can be used in the study of homicide during times of societal disruption, using examples from early modern Sweden and Finland.

The eleventh chapter then tackles the hard question of long-term change by comparing early modern homicide with contemporary homicide, starting with rate comparisons and then moving to descriptive pattern analyses. This enables us to comment on the great pacification hypothesis, while also addressing the challenge of short-term homicide peaks and their internal composition. In the final chapter, Chapter 12, we bring the threads together by discussing how the findings relate to theoretical frameworks, contrasting the grand nomothetic narrative of the pacification process with a more contextual interpretation referring to local

⁷ Missing data and other methodological aspects are also addressed in Appendices A–C.

⁸ The technical aspects of homicide rate calculation are described in Appendix A.

communities, their social control efficacy, borderland control vacuums, and short-term shifts in homicide rates and patterns. In the final pages we discuss the research needs to be tackled in the future. We foresee the extension of similar analyses to new epochs and countries.

CHAPTER 2

Historical Context

Why start with the 17th century in the long-duration analysis of homicide? As noted in the Introduction, the period has been singled out as needing special attention in historical criminology (Lawrence, 2016, p. 31). Apart from this, there are at least two good reasons to examine the early modern period. First, prior research suggests that the homicide drop was particularly strong at that time in the Nordic area (see Chapter 5; Eisner, 2014). Second, the period witnessed a considerable centralization of state power in the northern European kingdoms, a project that was also expressed in the so-called judicial revolution and intensified social order and control (Pihlajamäki, 2018). These processes took place in the context of warfare and the consequent necessity for military administration and taxation. At the same time, the wars likely caused dislocations and ruptures in social control. The societal disruptions likely resulted in a landscape in which many ex-soldiers possessed weak social bonds to conventional lifestyles and institutions. In the collision of both integrating and disintegrating forces, homicide started to decrease. At the same time, local and regional variation of violence likely decreased, in contrast to the medieval world (Eisner, 2014; Lindström, 2008; Chapter 5).

In this chapter, we contextualize our analysis of early modern homicide by describing the historical and legal context in which the crimes took place. In wider comparison, the Nordic legal context of the early modern period manifested several shared

features. These included the relative strength of statutory law over other forms of legal regulation, continuities from medieval laws, the strong role of the church as the local social control arm of the state, and the interaction of absolutism and the Lutheran reformation expressed in punitive criminal laws whose severity was not always translated into legal practice, and retribution as the goal of punishment (Pihlajamäki, 2018, pp. 806–810, 816–817, 826). However, this grand picture, of course, varied across realms and even, to a degree, within realms. The description of the legal context is important, because our data derive from original legal sources. The main goal of the legal processes was to attribute guilt and to mete out punishment. In striving for these specific limited goals, the early modern courts came to preserve information about the behavioural realities of lethal violence. Our research capitalizes on this unique memory storage. To understand the data, we next turn to assess the societal and institutional contexts of their creation.

2.1 Denmark

The early modern Danish state was a conglomerate state consisting of not just one uniform territory but a cluster of different realms and lands that were all ruled by the king of Denmark. Each territory differed from the others in the manner they were ruled by the king, and they each maintained unique constitutional and legal privileges and political institutions. The core of the Danish state was the Kingdom of Denmark, which had existed as a united monarchy since the early Middle Ages. It consisted of the three provinces of Scania, Zealand and Jutland (Skåne, Sjælland and Jylland), which retained their medieval provincial laws until the second half of the 17th century.⁹

⁹ In the research period 1608–1622, Norway and several North Atlantic areas (Iceland, Greenland, the Faroe Islands etc.), as well as the duchies of Schleswig and Holstein, were part of the Danish monarchy.

The Kingdom of Denmark was ruled by the king in cooperation with the nobility, which was represented in the Council of the Realm. The Danish nobility owned more than 40 per cent of the arable land in Denmark and built its political influence on this economic and social power over a predominantly agrarian society. The aristocracy enjoyed wide-ranging privileges (tax exemption, monopoly on higher royal offices, jurisdictional rights over their peasants etc.) and political rights. It was entitled to elect the king, who was, therefore, obliged to sign a coronation charter that confirmed the liberties and political rights of the nobility.

Aristocratic power was increasingly challenged and subverted in the 16th and 17th centuries. After the end of a devastating civil war and the Lutheran reformation in 1536, the monarch was significantly strengthened, and the centralization of power was reinforced through the following century, not least due to military-technological and -tactical developments, the so-called military revolution. In the 17th century, Denmark evolved into what historians have called a power state (*magtstat*) or tax state (*skattestat*), characterized by the ability to finance a state army by regular taxes. At the same time, the aristocracy lost its military importance as heavy cavalry. The process culminated with the introduction of absolutism in 1660, where all power was concentrated in the person of the king and the nobility lost its political rights. The fundamental dynamic in this process was Denmark's competition with its neighbours, first and foremost the Swedish Realm, which resulted in a massive military build-up and several lost wars.¹⁰

Internally, war-making accelerated centralization and state-building. The king gradually built a monopoly on violence and increased his control of the population. A long-standing state policy to prevent homicide was boosted by new ordinances criminalizing duels, passive bystanding, infanticide, noble offenders and private settlements (Netterstrøm, 2017a). A broad disciplining campaign against various deviant behaviours was launched

¹⁰ Denmark ceded Scania (Skåne) and other territories to Sweden in 1658 (Jespersen, 2000).

in 1617. An important rationale and context for analysing homicide cases in Jutland in 1608–1622 is, thus, that they occurred in the middle of ongoing processes of criminalization and pacification.

Legal context. The Law of Jutland (Jyske Lov) was a law code enacted under Valdemar II of Denmark in 1241 to create a uniform set of laws governing Jutland. According to this law, in effect until 1683, each homicide case was to be investigated by a local committee of eight lay assessors, the so-called *sandemænd* (men of truth-seeking), which was a permanent ‘jury’. This jury was taken from the hundred (*herred*) in which the homicide had been committed, but did not give its verdict at the local court. Instead, the jurors had to travel to the high court in Viborg town to give their verdict. This arrangement was still in function in the research period. The high court (*landsting*) of North Jutland – the court proceedings of which are at scrutiny in this study on Danish homicide – was a court of appeal in the middle of the judicial hierarchy in between the Supreme Court (*kongens retterting*) and different local courts, the rural hundred courts, town courts and manorial courts (*herredsting*, *byting/rådstueret*, *birketing*). Geographically, the high court district of North Jutland (Nørrejylland) encompassed the area north of the river Kongeåen, as well as a few small royal enclaves in the Duchy of Schleswig (i.e. Sønderjylland), south of Kongeåen.

The legal procedure at the high court was in principle accusatorial, which means that homicide cases were initiated and prosecuted by representatives of the injured party, often kinsmen of the deceased represented by a chosen relative, usually the father, brother or son of the victim, and not by the state. However, royal stewards and noble lords of both perpetrators and victims had (since 1539) been obliged to assist in the prosecution of homicides. Persons of authority and members of the elite were therefore directly involved as either accusers or defenders in many of the investigated cases, or influenced in the background in some of the cases prosecuted by the peasants themselves, a typical expression of the continued social dominance of the nobility in early modern Denmark. This involvement of persons of authority

can be seen both as a remnant of a 'feudal' system and at the same time as an intermediary stage in the long shift from accusatorial to inquisitorial legal procedures that was completed by the end of the 18th century.

At the beginning of the 17th century, homicide cases were prosecuted in a similar fashion regardless of whether the prosecutor was a relative of the victim or a person of authority, a royal official or a nobleman. Most of the high court trials followed a procedure where the prosecutor summoned the local jury (*sandemænd*) to the high court to give verdict in a homicide case. The prosecutor then presented evidence of the perpetrator's guilt; hereafter the representative for the suspected perpetrator, if he met at the high court, presented evidence to the contrary. In the end, the local jury (*sandemænd*) gave its verdict at the high court.

Cases appealed to the high court were slightly different, but still followed the same kind of procedure. Such cases were either verdicts from local urban courts¹¹ or earlier high court verdicts. The appellants summoned both the original jury and their opponents, presenting evidence that the original verdict was incorrect and should be altered in favour of the appellant. The jury and/or the opponents presented their contradictory evidence. In the end, the high court judges gave a final verdict in the case.

The evidence presented at the high court mainly consisted of written testimonies from the local court, where the parties had obtained evidence during the preliminary stages of the homicide trial. Typically, this evidence consisted of eyewitnesses to either the homicide or its surrounding events, and inspections performed by small ad hoc groups of investigators commissioned by the prosecution, or by the defence if the homicide was argued to have been committed in self-defence. In some cases, open letters were included in the court proceedings from, e.g., the barber surgeon who had treated the dying victim, the perpetrator claiming

¹¹ Homicides committed in urban jurisdictions were sentenced locally and only went to the high court if appealed. See more below, Section 4.3, subsection 'Social Biases.'

self-defence, or the parish priest who had attended to the victim on his deathbed. In some cases, ‘rumour witnesses’ testified to the rumouring of the deed in the local area.¹² Eyewitnesses and body inspections were prioritized in the jury’s evaluation of the evidence. Accused offenders who had fled the trial and omitted their own defence at the high court were put under strong suspicions of guilt. At the high court, eyewitnesses were sometimes, but not very often, summoned to confirm or deny their prior testimony at the local court. Occasionally, such eyewitnesses were further interrogated at the high court.

According to the Law of Jutland (1241), still in force in the studied period, the jury (*sandemænd*) could reach one of the following conclusions. First, they could convict the accused of voluntary homicide and outlaw him. Second, the jurors could decide that the homicide was committed in self-defence or a lethal accident. In both of these cases, the verdict was a monetary compensation (*wergeld*, *mandebod*) to the victim’s family. Finally, the court could acquit the accused altogether.

Since 1537, intentional lethal violence committed by non-nobles were to be sanctioned by the death penalty. Combined with the above-mentioned rules from the Law of Jutland, this meant that an outlawry verdict was the same as the death penalty. If an accused person was arrested and then outlawed, he would be executed. A fugitive accused offender would be outlawed *in absentia*. If he was arrested later, he would (in principle) be executed.¹³ The medieval Law of Jutland still applied regarding the sanction of compensation when killing in self-defence or by accident.

¹² In some cases, the so-called ‘law of the bier’, in which the suspect laid his hand on the victim’s body and called on God for a sign if he was guilty, was used as circumstantial evidence.

¹³ In the vast majority of the 200 investigated cases, the accused party was at large at the time of the trial. It is unknown how many of the killers who had been outlawed *in absentia* were later arrested and executed.

2.2 Sweden

The 1640s – the time of the research period in this study on Swedish lethal violence – was a time of intense state-building and territorial expansion in the Swedish Realm.¹⁴ In just a few decades, it transformed from a rather peripheral and insignificant kingdom with limited financial and military resources into one of the leading military powers of Europe. From the later part of the 16th century and all the way to the early 18th century, Sweden was involved in an almost endless series of wars. Many of these military conflicts involved Denmark. Within Sweden, this meant heavy taxation, extensive conscriptions for military service, and systematic governmental support of domestic iron and copper production. Seventeenth-century Sweden has been described, like Denmark, as a power state (*maktstat*) and tax state (*skattestat*), but also as a military state (*militärstat*).

The exceptional mobilization of economic and personal resources for military purposes was possible because of the unusual socio-economic structure, with a very high share of freeholders (i.e. peasants available for taxation and military service) and to the development of an efficient state administration. New central authorities developed and old ones were reorganized along more professionalized lines. At the same time, a new structure of regional administration emerged, headed by regional governors. Local officials and institutions were also integrated into the state administration. The political development in Sweden differed from that in Denmark. In the early 17th century a governmental structure evolved that was based on a division of power between the king, the aristocratic Council of the Realm, and the estate assembly. In this way, the aristocracy kept a strong political

¹⁴ The Swedish Realm was an early modern composite state comprising the present-day Sweden and Finland, as well as provinces in the present-day Baltic countries, north-western Russia, Germany and Poland. In this report, the Swedish Realm and the Swedish Kingdom refer to the whole kingdom, and Sweden and Finland to the provinces comprising present-day countries.

influence in Sweden that was not completely abolished even with the introduction of absolutism in the 1680s. At the same time, the estate assembly (*riksdag*) became a central political institution where even peasants had their own independent corporate representation as the peasant's estate.

Although the Swedish peasantry had a stronger and more independent economic and political position compared to many other parts of 17th-century Europe, including Denmark, social mobility was fairly uncommon. The church made efforts to provide education for the peasant majority, focusing on the New Testament and the Lutheran catechism. Parish priests at the yearly catechetical meetings tested people's knowledge of the Lutheran faith. Generally, the church acted in support of the Crown, underlining from the pulpits the importance of submissiveness to a king ordained by God. The Lutheran church can be described as a key actor in the local disciplinary functions, a dimension of the judicial revolution gathering momentum during the 17th century (Pihlajamäki, 2018, pp. 819–820).

Legal context. In the 17th century, a uniform legal system applied at the core of the Swedish kingdom, i.e. present-day Sweden and Finland. Swedish law was also introduced in the provinces conquered from Denmark in the 17th century, while the provinces in northern Germany and the Baltics retained their own legal system. Medieval law codes from the 14th and 15th centuries were still in use in the 17th-century Swedish Realm. There was one common law code for towns and another for rural areas. In 1608 it was decided that the Law of Moses was to be applied in the Swedish Realm, meaning that numerous serious crimes, including homicide, were to be punished by capital punishment. In practice, however, the courts often mitigated the punishments to economic compensation to kin and fines to the Crown. In connection to that, the medieval codes (King Christopher's rural law of 1442 and Magnus Eriksson's town law of 1357) were printed in authorized editions. High courts were established from 1614 onwards. As part of this reorganization of the Swedish judicial system, the lower courts were instructed to pass death sentences,

whenever applicable. All those cases were, however, to be sent to a high court for final decision. The high courts were still allowed to mitigate the penalty, if legal grounds could be invoked, which frequently happened (Karonen, 1997; Thunander, 1993, pp. 5–6, 142–153; Ylikangas, 1976a, pp. 82–83). Several supplements and ordinances were issued during the 17th century, but it was not until 1734 that a modernized law code for both town and country came into force. The Swedish judicial system nevertheless changed dramatically during the 17th century. This was, however, primarily a matter of institutional changes.

Since there was no professional police force, the official control of lethal violence depended on the public and the court system. Like in Denmark, the legal procedure in the Swedish Realm was basically accusatorial. Kinsmen of the victim, who could also be female relatives, usually initiated the lawsuit. Sometimes, homicides were reported to local officials (*länsman*, *nimismies*),¹⁵ who among other public duties could act as prosecutors. *Länsman* also assisted the bailiff in tax collection and policed public taverns, roads and transportation in a large circuit. To this effect, they were often travelling and were not necessarily available when needed (Haikari, 2017, p. 168). The medieval law codes also stipulated that local communities were liable to pay fines for concealed murders (*dulgadråp*), that is, a homicide where no offender could be identified.

The rural courts (*ting*, *käräjät*) usually met only two or three times a year, while the urban courts (*rådstugurätt*, *raastuvan-oikeus*) met more frequently, even several times a week. In the rural judicial districts (*domsaga*, *kihlakunta*), the judges (*häradshövding*, *kihlakunnantuomari*) visited a large number of different local courts, often within a wide area. A committee of 12 lay assessors (*nämnd*), considered trustworthy men of the local community, therefore had a key position in the rural judicial system.

¹⁵ We also give the Finnish-language concept, even though the institutions operated in Swedish in the Finnish part of the realm as well.

Their prerogative was to mete out a guilty or not guilty verdict, while the evidence was measured and the sentencing was meted out by the judge in accordance with the law. They were originally, in medieval times, summoned as a 'jury' for each individual lawsuit. In the 17th century, however, they had transformed into a permanent legal institution and they became regarded as an integrated part of the court. This change was formally confirmed in the 1734 law code. The judge at the local courts could also initiate extra court hearings when necessary, often to judge capital cases or acute conflicts involving larger groups of people (Letto-Vanamo, 1995). Unlike in Denmark, members of the nobility rarely played an active role in the local jurisdiction in Sweden.

Local courts did not mete out final judgements in any capital case, including homicide. That was the prerogative of the high courts. Between 1614 and 1634, the state created four appellate courts, the Svea High Court (1614) in Stockholm, the Turku High Court (1623) for Finland, the Tartu High Court (1629) for the Baltic provinces, Ingria and Karelia, and the Göta High Court (1634) for southern and south-western Sweden. These courts were established as part of the reorganization of state administration to promote judicial uniformity and centralize control of the local courts and their verdicts. Various measures were taken to achieve this. Among these were the obligation for all primary courts to send a copy of their court records to be revised by the high courts. All criminal cases that could render capital punishment, such as homicides, also had to be referred to the high courts for examination and final decision on the verdict. The legal procedure at the high courts was based on written evidence only, and the local courts sent extracts of their records to the high courts whenever cases were referred there. Sometimes these records included explicit petitions from the local court that the offender should be saved from capital punishment. The documents sent to the high courts could also include private petitions, from the offender or his kinsmen or from the victim's kinsmen, that the offender should be pardoned. In some cases, these letters even referred to private negotiations and settlements. It also happened

that the high courts demanded supplementary investigations of the local courts and occasionally they even reprimanded them for insufficient or inadequate documentation of court proceedings. According to this meticulous legal system, all prosecuted homicides should turn up in the case files of the high courts. When the high courts were introduced in Sweden, it was also declared that the members of the nobility should be judged by their peers only and, accordingly, the high courts became the first legal level for judging nobility and high-ranking officials. The king remained the highest judicial body to which cases could be referred for amnesty at the king's grace, if permission were granted.

2.3 Finland

Finland had, since the Middle Ages, been a part of the Swedish Realm, even though the majority of its population spoke another language, Finnish. For long periods, Finland had been the kingdom's eastern borderland. Indeed, our Finnish data derive from the northern parts of the country, and parts of the eastern frontier (see the map shown in Figure 1.2). North Ostrobothnia and Kainuu were incorporated into the Swedish Realm in 1595, and the utmost south-eastern (Käkisalme) area in 1617. In the period of this study (1640–1699), Finland was thus still, in many respects, a borderland.

Although wars pestered the Swedish Realm more frequently in the studied century than ever before or thereafter, Finland was left untouched by warfare, except for a short period in southern Karelia and Ingria during 1656–1658. The campaigns were fought in central Europe and the Baltic provinces. Still, the effects of war were devastating. Finland lost its position as the area for Swedish territorial expansion, while the demands for soldiering, provisions and taxation continued to decrease the population and impoverish the people. A third of the population and nobility of the Swedish Realm lived in Finland at the beginning of the 17th century, but only 10 per cent were by the second half of the century. In addition, the Finnish nobility shrank to a

fraction of its former glory (Karonen, 1999; Meinander, 2011; Villstrand, 2009).

During the study period, the central government intensified its control over the realm, including Finland. A uniform system for regional administration was created in 1634, integrating different areas of the realm. In order to provide educated people for the expanding bureaucracy, new universities were founded, one of them in Turku (1649). Furthermore, a large number of new towns were founded, many of them in Finland. This was done to stimulate trade and commerce, to facilitate control and taxation, and to promote integration¹⁶ (Meinander, 2010; Villstrand, 2009).

During the study period, the control of the country became even more effective, with a new system of main roads and with the Crown appointing the city mayors and some other local officials. In 1569–1680, large parts of the country were also awarded to barons or dukes as hereditary fiefs for military accomplishments or administrative duties, with extensive privileges regarding taxation, jurisdiction and appointment of local authorities, including the judges at the courts of assizes. Most fiefs were situated in the research area of this study.¹⁷

The land was in general scarcely populated. Long distances to neighbouring farms and regional towns made Finnish peasants – the absolute majority of the people – relatively free to fend for themselves as long as they paid their taxes, obeyed the law and regularly visited church. The majority were socially immobile, poor and illiterate. The majority of the people were Finnish-speaking, while the nobility and the inhabitants in the coastal areas and cities were Swedish-speaking or bilingual. Local administrators, priests and judges were required to master the Finnish language (Villstrand, 2009).

¹⁶ Three new cities were located in the core research area, Ostrobothnia: Raahe, Kristiinankaupunki and Pietarsaari (all created in 1649).

¹⁷ The Crown retracted them in 1680 in order to gain control over both nobility and budget, making the king of Sweden sovereign over land and people (Mäntylä, 1987, pp. 210–212).

A significant number of 17th-century Finnish peasants were engaged in slash-and-burn agriculture. Famine was imminent when crops failed in the harsh polar climate during the so-called Little Ice Age. Most exposed were the peasants in the northern parts of the realm, including the whole area for this study. The crop was to freeze and frost several times in the 1680s and 1690s. In 1695–1697, one third of the Finnish population – close to 150,000 people – succumbed to hunger and consequential diseases in one of the worst famines in European history. The catastrophe reflected the reluctance of the Crown to help these remote areas and because of poor communications (Lappalainen, 2012, 2014; Mäntylä, 1987, pp. 237–239).

Legal context. During the period, Swedish law was also applied in Finland, and the formal legal system was similar to that in the Swedish provinces described above in the section on Sweden.

2.4 General Observations

Heikki Pihlajamäki suggested that, until the emergence of inquisitorial procedure, it is anachronistic to see civil and criminal processes as separate; when public authority takes an active role in initiating proceedings and conducting investigations, the contours of the ‘criminal justice system’ start to emerge. During the early modern period, this process was slowly advancing in northern Europe, as central states were taking over the control of serious crimes such as homicide (Pihlajamäki, 2018, p. 811; also Netterstrøm, 2017a). Thus, in our study period, the criminal justice system did not exist in the modern sense. The modern systemic functions of the police, the prosecutor, the court/judge and the implementation of the punishments were partially overlapping. Evidential and procedural rules were also different. What this implied for the likelihood of apprehension and prosecution is difficult to judge. As case launch still depended on private complaints, the likelihood of apprehension may have been lower even in homicide. On the other hand, the communities were more close-knit: fertile soil for informal control. It is possible that the

social standing of the offender and the victim influenced the likelihood of apprehension and conviction, even though this is difficult to establish empirically.

The periods of our main historical data collection manifested vestiges from earlier medieval control cultures and practices in a context of accelerating change. That change has been variously described as the judicial revolution, internal pacification, violence monopolization, and civilization. In terms of institutional framework, the power to judge homicide became a political instrument in processes that sought to increase the powers of the central state. This control drive was connected to religious doctrines and justifications claiming that unpunished crimes awoke God's wrath on land and subjects. Besides referrals of capital cases and proper appeals, the high court controlled the basic functioning of the court system and the synchronizing of the sentencing by stricter control of judges, jurors and court records. While medieval law was still comparatively dominated by lay functions, the legal system became gradually more professional during the 17th century (Blomstedt, 1958), likely increasing the data validity of its protocols.

CHAPTER 3

Theory

During recent years, one of the most intensely debated questions in criminology has revolved around the causes of the crime drop that started in the early 1990s and has continued until recently. The drop has been observed in homicide as well, in many Western countries. In the long historical perspective, this recent downward trend (Suonpää et al., forthcoming) continues a more massive drop since the Middle Ages. Gurr (1981) was among the first to discuss extensively the decreasing trend and its likely causes. While there have been important elaborations and developments in this field after Gurr's original work (Eisner, 2014; Roth, 2009), we still lack a systematic analysis of the trends and their internal patterns for northern Europe. There is a shortage of analyses using wider regions than local villages and towns, and approaches capable of disaggregating patterns of homicide in a standardized manner across locations and over time. How did homicide patterns vary across regions and countries in historical periods? Did they reflect a new form of life, or emerging routine activities, as criminologists say? Or were there changes in culture, or less poverty, that could explain the turn?

The problem of violence is at the heart of any explanation on how societies evolve, and how polities emerge. Institutional solutions to control violence are related to economic and political development towards a centralizing state and later towards open access democratic polities (North, Wallis & Weingast, 2013,

pp. 257–263). While the current project is set within the auspices of criminological tradition and takes the view of the individuals in micro-level conflict, it opens a new perspective on macro-sociological phenomena such as state formation and the creation of violence monopolies. Because of this theoretical background, we chose to focus on the 17th century, a historical period characterized by a radical consolidation of the centralized state (see Chapter 4). The application of criminology in such a historical constellation potentially contributes to the understanding of why violence decreased, and how the internal pacification of the Nordic kingdoms connected to the rise of coordinating and organizing state formation (Mann, 1997; Ylikangas, 1998c).

In this chapter, we first discuss historical homicide trends before the era of national administrative crime statistics. This empirical starting point gives context to the ensuing theory discussion. After all, both of our main periods of observation, the 17th century and the contemporary era, have witnessed major homicide drops. It is therefore relevant to approach the theoretical context from the perspective of crime drop theories. We argue that such theories are diachronic adaptations of the classical synchronic theories of criminology. In other words, change over time is explained with reference to the same factors that explain individual-level variation in contemporary populations. We explore the theories most frequently used in the interpretation of variation in lethal violence, in terms of both area comparisons and comparisons over time. Thus, in this chapter, our *topic* is to describe major theoretical assets in an explicit, articulated manner. We approach this task with a *theme* of change, the crime drop. As an intended by-product, this gives a narrative dimension to our discussion of criminological theories (see also Section 1.1).

3.1 Long-Duration Homicide Trends in Northern Europe

The descriptive study of western European homicide rates has yielded an impressive historical record of the massive

homicide drop since the Middle Ages (Eisner, 2014; Gurr, 1981; Spierenburg, 2012). Lethal violence decreased from the annual average rates of about 20 deaths per 100,000 population at the beginning of the 16th century to about one death in the mid-20th century. The average annual reduction rate was 0.5 per cent, a pace that meant that the homicide rate was, on average, halved in each century. The decrease started in the central parts of western Europe and expanded later to more peripheral European regions (Eisner, 2014, pp. 68, 79–81). This overall picture is based on a meta-analysis of existing separate studies. Despite extensive local variations, long-term analyses of single locations often corroborate the decreasing trend, as in Cockburn's analysis of homicide in Kent from 1560 to 1985 (Cockburn, 1991). Some bio-archaeological research even suggests that the medieval heights in homicide rates may have been preceded by much lower rates of interpersonal violence in late antiquity. This would imply that the medieval homicide peak occurred between two periods of low homicide (Šlaus, Novak, Bedić & Strinović, 2012), not unlike the much smaller peak of the 1960s and 1970s (Eisner, 2014).

Generally, the same decreasing trend has been ascertained in northern Europe. The existing evidence is shown in Figure 3.1, which summarizes studies of local homicide rates from 1000 to 1800, and additionally gives the more continuous national series for Finland and Sweden after that. The figure shows that homicide rates were high during the Middle Ages, but started to decrease during the early modern period. The sharpest drop took place roughly between 1650 and 1750 (see also Lindström, 2008; Netterstrøm, 2017a). Even after that, the rates were decreasing, occasionally interrupted by reversal periods. In Finland, as in other north-western parts of the Russian Empire,¹⁸ the early 20th century showed a peak of violence that, however, pales in contrast with many late medieval and early modern local studies.

There are several methodological problems in ascertaining pre-modern and pre-statistics homicide rates, such as the lack

¹⁸ Finland was part of the Russian Empire from 1809 to 1917.

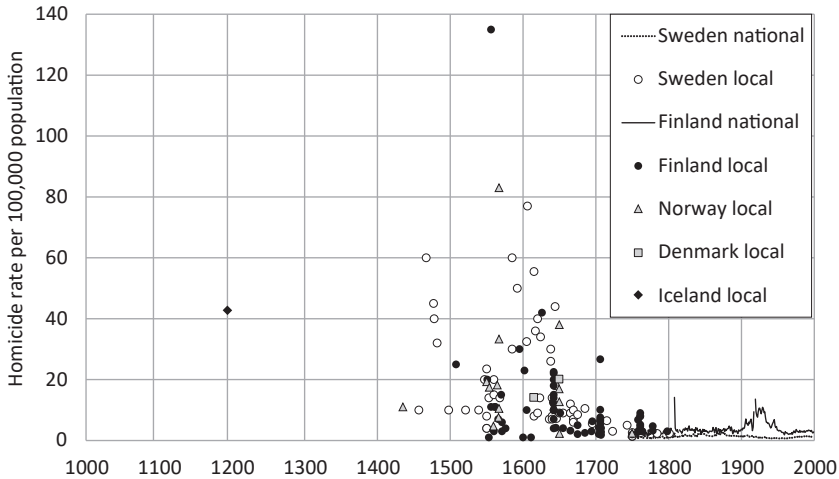


Figure 3.1: Homicide rates per 100,000 population in northern Europe, second millennium CE. Adapted and expanded from Kivivuori and Lehti (2011).

of reliable sources, limited numbers of preserved cases, regional variations, and difficulties in ascertaining the size of the base population (Lindström, 2008, pp. 48–49). Nevertheless, medieval homicide rates between 10 and 60 per 100,000 people have been reported for Sweden and Norway (Lindström, 2008, pp. 49–54).

The period before 1650 is particularly difficult to interpret with respect to the extreme local variation. Indeed, the few available studies involving broader rural geographic units express estimates of more moderate homicide rates. Kadane and Næshagen (2014) have calculated homicide rates between 8 and 13 per 100,000 people for rural southern Norway during the late medieval era. Our study indicates similar rates for Denmark (13.6) for the early part of the 17th century, but lower rates for Sweden (7.1) in the middle of the century, and especially for Finland (3.7), whose data extend to 1699 (see Chapter 8 below). Medieval cities and towns may have been extreme hotspots of lethal violence. Local studies dealing with the period after 1650 are more consistent in their homicide rates, indicating a slow decreasing trend (see Figure 5.1 in Chapter 5). This in turn reflects the emergence of more

homogenous societies in the centralizing states, replacing earlier medieval structures as local variation.

While the homicide drop is well established, less is known about how the change was related to subtypes of homicide, or differential regional or country-specific patterns of lethal violence. Bio-archaeological research has provided suggestions that domestic violence against women may have been relatively stable during the medieval era, implying that the variation was carried by male-to-male violence (Kjellström, 2009). Others have suggested that the homicide drop can largely be explained by a decrease in interpersonal conflicts and fights between men (Eisner, 2014, p. 85). Showing more stability, intimate partner violence probably decreased at a slower pace than other forms of violence. This led to an increase in the share of intimate partner homicides in lethal violence, corroborating the generalizations suggested by Verkko (1951; see also Kivivuori, 2017). Consequently, Spierenburg (2012, p. 33) defined two major patterns of homicide across centuries: an overall decrease of homicide rates and a relative increase in intimate partner killings. Within intimate partner homicide, punishment-related male-to-male violence may have shifted towards marital tensions-based conflicts (Spierenburg, 2012, p. 34; see also Roth, 2011). Clearly, there is a need for studies allowing for a more uniform and detailed disaggregation of homicide patterns.

3.2 Theoretical Integration

Our historical perspective starts from, and focuses on, the 17th century. In our study regions, the era was *the* turning point between the medieval high of homicide and the subsequent more moderate levels of lethal violence. To understand the starting point of the drop, this book describes the 17th-century rates and patterns of homicide in Denmark, Sweden and Finland. In this chapter, we examine theoretical discussions related to the explanation of crime drops in the long and short terms. The crime drop theories are connected with the aim of disaggregating lethal violence to different subtypes, because change can be explained by subtypes

rather than general decrease. In discussing the relevant theories, we underscore that the explanations of crime variation in criminology and history are similar. In explaining change, historians have referred to factors that criminologists use to explain population variation in criminal propensity in contemporary societies (Kivivuori, Savolainen & Danielsson, 2012). But, before examining the relevant research theories, we need to comment briefly on the meta-theoretical premises of the current research.

Chris Wickham, historian of the Middle Ages, suggested that there are two common assumptions regarding medieval humans. Some researchers construe them as ‘immeasurably different from us’, and as having values and cognitive categories that we moderns cannot grasp at all. These interpreters focus on the ‘fascination of the strange’. Others, in contrast, think that the people of past epochs ‘were just like us’, with no differences whatsoever. Wickham saw both of these extremes as traps to be avoided (Wickham, 2017, p. 7). The often big differences between ‘us’ and ‘them’ relate to values, norms, concepts, beliefs and institutional and structural contexts that provided very different incentives for action. However, the more basic aspects of social cognition and human motivation, such as moral emotions, are unlikely to have completely changed over the long historical duration. This also applies to the early modern period.

Indeed, recent developments in criminology and history have started to emphasize the notion that modern and pre-modern people share a common universal humanity in moral emotions and aspects of social cognition (Daly & Wilson, 1988; Sznycer & Patrick, 2020). Such meta-theoretical foundations allow researchers to study historical variation over the long duration without predicting absolute continuity or similarity (Lawrence, 2016, pp. 23–24). There is thus reason to discuss briefly the meta-theoretical tectonic shifts in how violence has been understood and conceptualized in societal thought generally. This discussion pertains not to historical research but rather to more general climates of opinion in the *social thought on deviance*, crime and violence. These climates influenced not only history but also

criminology through the social sciences, where scholars set out to show that even humans of the contemporary world could be different to the core.

It is useful to contrast the current criminological emphasis on the normality of criminal behaviour with strains of early 20th-century social thought, which saw humans of past epochs as essentially and fundamentally different from ours. To give an ideal typical and contrasting example, Johan Huizinga (1872–1945) described late medieval culture along these lines in his classic book *The Autumn of the Middle Ages*. The book painted late medieval human beings as childlike creatures incapable of exercising restraint, always acting on impulse, similar to that of modern psychopaths or neurotics. Huizinga saw them as aliens with ‘impressionability of mind’ with unique ‘sensitivity to tears’ and ‘susceptibility’ (Huizinga, 1997 [1919], p. 7). Because of these qualities, their daily life witnessed not only ‘flaming passion’ and ‘childish imagination’ but also ‘incredible violence’. These features explained the colourful and intensive nature of late medieval life. Owing to a different mentality, modern people are no longer prone to similar ‘unrestrained extravagance and inflammability of the medieval heart’. In the 15th century, emotions were ‘directly expressed’ and ‘broke through’ the veneer of any rational calculations (Huizinga, 1997 [1919], pp. 7–9, 15).

Similar thoughts on the comparatively infantile character of early modern human beings and their anger management difficulties can be observed in many other academic writings. Such emphases emerged especially in the 1930s and 1940s, when new developmental psychological theories on the human mind and its maturation were developed. The Finnish historian Pentti Renvall (1907–1974) followed these contemporary theories in his nationally influential study ‘A Sixteenth-Century Finnish Person in the Light of His Views on Justice’ (1949). He assumed that 16th-century humans were unable to control their emotions or to understand basic connections between things. Anger was therefore expressed with physical violence. At a later stage, more peaceful and rational ways of expressing feelings evolved among

members of the elite and spread to the ways of the people in the lower echelons (Lindström, 1988, pp. 67–68). Renvall was influenced by Freudian thought and evolutionism, according to which ‘human kind everywhere have gone through the same emotional stages as any individual child of today’ (Renvall, 1949).

The above examples, discussing an international figure (Huizinga) and a more local influencer (Renvall), testify to the importance of the ‘fascination of the strange’, as discussed by Wickham (2017, p. 7). People from different epochs were seen as representing deep otherness, just as anthropology was exploring the strong power of contextual culture among non-Western peoples in the contemporary world, often in remote islands (see Murray & Darnell, 2000). Later on, developments in social thought started to underscore the normality of deviants rather than their strangeness. In criminology, theorizing moved from the strangeness paradigm to normalization, a trend that had considerable impact on empirical criminology and its methodology (Kivivuori, 2011). The rise of human universals research from the 1990s similarly prepared the meta-theoretical grounds for long-duration homicide research (Daly & Wilson, 1988; Eisner, 2011; Roth, 2011; Sznycer & Patrick, 2020). As noted above, this is *not* to claim that homicide is always identical or explained by the same factors. Rather, these meta-theoretical shifts justify the possibility of studying human violence in designs spanning considerable stretches of time. It is possible to study *variation* – a central goal of our research – because the axes of the grid are stable.

Historical Control Theory

The decline in violence in Europe since the Middle Ages has often been explained by the theory on the civilizing process, as first formulated by Norbert Elias (2017a, 2017b [1939]) in his classic monograph *Über den Prozess der Zivilisation*. This theory has greatly influenced historical studies of violence and homicide dealing with the early modern period from the end of the 16th to the middle of the 17th century. Historical research on violence

during this period has revealed a general picture largely consistent with the civilizing process theory.

The process of civilization refers to a social process in which the general mental constitution of human beings becomes increasingly characterized by self-control.¹⁹ Elias called this new element in the psychological structure of humans *Selbstzwangsapparatur*, a mechanism of self-coercion and inner social constraint (Elias, 2017b [1939], p. 328). It serves as a barrier against norm breaches, and becomes a part of people's automatic style of behaviour in the process of human socialization. This change in mentality is caused by two main factors: the rise of the centralized state powers, which monopolize the use of violence, and increasing human interconnectedness by the differentiation of economic and other societal activities. The violence monopoly creates pacified spaces in society (*befriedete Räume*; Elias, 2017b [1939], p. 331).

In the early formulations of historical control theory, medieval people were seen as more likely to be erratic and out of control compared with people living in later, more civilized societies. They were more prone to mood swings and less likely to suppress their emotions. Like Huizinga and Renvall, Elias described the medieval human as volatile and spontaneous, shifting rapidly from excessive joy to violent anger. Medieval people idealized the mentality of a warrior with respect to his ability to satisfy his sexual needs without 'hang-ups' and the enjoyment in the destruction of enemies with force (Elias, 2017b [1939], pp. 332–333). In contrast, the new mentality emerging from changes in state power and increasing interconnectedness in commerce required better abilities to 'suppress spontaneous surges of emotion' and consideration of long-term consequences of his or her actions. New forms of social control attempted at suppressing uncontrolled natural drives. When these spontaneous drives were denied an expression in emotions or actions, they tended to be turned inside and

¹⁹ In the absence of direct citation, this discussion refers to Elias (2017b [1939], pp. 324–346).

suppressed (Elias, 2017b [1939], pp. 338–343). Elias frequently used hydraulic metaphors to describe human motivation (*Dämpfung, Umleitung*).

Recent adaptations of the civilizing perspective have taken distance to the strangeness emphasis and hydraulic metaphors. The emphasis has shifted towards the role of the state in promoting more controlled behaviours (for a criminological summary, see Kivivuori et al., 2012). The emerging central state gradually created a monopoly of the use of violence, while the emergence of a market economy created ties of interdependency between people that required more controlled behaviour (Elias, 2017b [1939], p. 328; see also Jarrick & Söderberg, 1994; Karonen, 1998a; Spierenburg, 2012). The criteria for socially esteemed masculinity shifted from the capacity to commit violence to the ability to suppress it. Similarly, people were expected to manage their emotions instead of acting them out (Eisner, 2014, p. 91). Decreasing violence resulted in increasing sensibility to cruelty and pain (Jarrick & Söderberg, 1994; Lockwood, 2017, p. 268). Use of disciplinary methods amounted to a cultural trend emphasizing the value of self-control (Lockwood, 2017, p. 13).

The internalization of self-control was a result of a gradual infiltration of state power into the social fabrics of everyday life. But the state could not directly or abstractly face the individual; rather, its impact took place via locally effective institutions, such as jurors and judges, capable of mediating state power to the grass-roots level (Netterstrøm, 2017a, pp. 467–468; Österberg, 1996). Changes in military recruitment, tactics and organization could also serve as conduits transferring new kinds of disciplinary practices from state to society (Mann, 1997; Neuding Skoog, 2018). Thus, the functioning and efficacy of local governments is important in understanding the use of lethal violence in a long-term time span. In historical periods, local actors of importance for the process of civilization were different parish governors such as churchwardens, constables, jurors and vestrymen. In urban areas, court officials met on a regular basis in the cities and could therefore investigate and judge violent city crimes much more

effectively than in rural areas.²⁰ According to Lockwood (2017, pp. 6–7, 8–11), the state used local authorities to create a ‘surveillance state’, to make the society legible. While the concept of state surveillance may be exaggerated when applied to 17th-century Nordic societies, the aim of governance was to penetrate the local communities by means of administrative roles and structures (Ylikangas, 1998c; Österberg, 1996).

The penetration of state power into local communities has become much more efficient in the modern era. Indeed, a plausible explanation for the most recent crime drop is the so-called *security hypothesis*. This states that local and situational crime prevention (increasing the efficacy of local social control by deliberate planning efforts) is capable of reducing crime. In empirical research, local and situational crime prevention has been identified as the likely cause for the homicide drop in the most recent decreasing trend (Farrell, Tseloni, Mailley & Tilley, 2011; Farrell, Tilley & Tseloni, 2014). These modern explanations of the recent crime drop suggest that the role of local actors may have been central in past crime drops as well, even though in earlier times the state was much weaker than today.

In both contemporary and long-duration criminology, social control is usually understood as a three-level regulatory mechanism. It consists of formal (official) control in society, informal (unofficial) social control in the local and peer group context, and the actor’s own self-control in the personal actions of the individual (Elias, 2017b [1939]; Hirschi, 1969; Koskivirta, 2003). It is possible that the civilizing perspective, or historical self-control theory, has emphasized the role of the state as an external actor imposing controls on people. Yet, humans do not ‘need’ the state or commerce to engage in informal social control. Even criminal groups enforce their own social norms by means of various deterrent and penal techniques. Historically, the spread of control

²⁰ The historical governance structures of the 17th-century Nordic countries are described in Chapter 4.

phenomena is vast, ranging from legal sanction to gossip, public protest and violence. The sanctions for uncontrolled behaviour vary from revenge and demands on restitution to mediation by a third party (Koskivirta, 2003; Matikainen, 2002). In these regards, historical explanations do not essentially differ from criminological social control theory. They too consider control as a continuum between formal and informal poles.

Gender Power Structures

Criminological homicide research has paid extensive attention to lethal violence against women and intimate partner homicide (Kivivuori & Lehti, 2012; Liem, Kivivuori, Lehti, Granath & Schönberger, 2018; Verkko, 1951). In modern criminology, this research is closely connected with the so-called *generality vs. specialism* debate. Criminological theory predicts that people with high crime propensity are generalists rather than specialists. That is, violence would be targeted at multiple types of victims, and different types of crimes would also be committed. Empirical research on modern homicide gives considerable support for the generality hypothesis (Kivivuori & Lehti, 2012; Lappi-Seppälä & Lehti, 2016). A related point is that high levels of intimate partner violence require *special* explanations only if they are higher than expected when compared to rates of other violence. For instance, if Finland has a higher rate of intimate partner violence than other Nordic countries, and it has a higher rate of other homicide as well, the high rate of intimate partner homicide can reflect general causes of violence rather than victim-type-specific causes.

In the specialist perspective to violence, intimate partner homicide connects to structural power differentials within households (Rautelin, 2009). In this framework, the patriarchal social power of men over women led to intimate partner violence, or violence was a means of maintaining that power (Dobash & Emerson Dobash, 2017; Nolde, 2008; Rautelin, 2013). On the other hand, there are studies that have observed a surprising lack of intimate partner homicide in historical periods (Maddern, 2002; Romvig

Thomsen, 2018). This suggests that social control has a complex relationship with lethal violence. We cannot exclude a priori the possibility that types of social control have prevented violence against women. If the rural village community was capable of controlling its members, this could explain the surprising scarcity of female homicide victims. This will be a recurring theme in this book, and will be revisited in the final concluding chapter.

It has been suggested that patriarchal structures tend to make female agency invisible in criminality, constructing women only as victims or accomplices, when in fact females often featured as offenders or instigators (Jansson, 1998; Kaspersson, 2000; Koskivirta, 2003; Kujala & Malinen, 2000; Lattu, 2008). According to earlier Nordic studies, the share of female offenders varied greatly depending on the time period. Also, the motives of female homicide offenders varied, although they most often killed their children or spouses (Jansson, 1998; Kaspersson, 2000; Koskivirta, 2003; Kujala & Malinen, 2000). The homicide type particularly characteristic for women until the second half of the 20th century was infanticide. In the last few decades, there is evidence that female offending has increased and broadened into different kinds of crimes, suggesting increasing gender equality also in crime. Increasing equality of culture may increase female criminality (Savolainen et al., 2017).

Legitimacy Theories

Fluctuations of violent crime have been connected to aspects of *legitimacy* in political and social structures. Analyses in modern cross-national data indicate that political legitimacy is related to low homicide rates, an association found independently of the levels of societal inequality (Nivette & Eisner, 2013). Similar findings have been reported from longitudinal and historical studies using shorter and longer time spans (LaFree, 1998; Roth, 2009). The relevance of legitimacy shows that people are not passive and docile in the hands of state or external powers. Rather, it matters how such powers are perceived.

Roth has specified four mechanisms that link legitimacy to homicide. First, belief in the stability of government and impartiality of judicial institutions tends to forestall conflicts that can lead to homicide. Second, a feeling of trust towards government and its officials works similarly and tends to prevent violence. Third, patriotic attitudes supporting empathy and solidarity are expected to predict low violence rates. Fourth, Roth suggests that seeing social hierarchy of the society as legitimate is linked to lower risk of violence. This last aspect refers to a sense that 'one's position in society is or can be satisfactory and that one can command respect of others without resorting to violence' (Roth, 2009, p. 18). Thus, if people see official control enforced by the state as illegitimate, they are more likely to resort to private violence.

The place of legitimacy theory in the classification of criminological theories is not straightforward, because it combines elements of social control theory and social learning theory. Legitimacy refers to the degree to which people see the exercise of official social control as acceptable in terms of its goals and methods. In this approach, people are not seen as passive targets of control; rather, their proactive attitudes toward control and pacification matter. Thus, legitimacy theory proposes that high violence reflects low state legitimacy. Similarly, increasing violence reflects decreasing legitimacy. Ruptures and setbacks in the state-building process are related to surges of old-style uncivilized behaviours, including private revenge, vigilantism and so forth. In northern Europe, one of the best examples of the relevance of legitimacy is the Finnish 'avalanche of violence' in the first decades of the 20th century (Lehti, 2001), seen also in Figure 3.1. The rise of homicide reflected a deep crisis of political institutions, as reflected in general strikes, agitation against elected government, men traveling to fight in foreign wars, unrest caused by extremism, and civil war (1918). Generally, the causal relationship between violence and deteriorating legitimacy is likely to be bi-directional, because increasing violence and decreasing personal safety are felt as signs of failing statehood.

Social Learning Theory

In criminology, approaches emphasizing culture and learning as causes of criminal behaviour emerged as counter-currents to theories underscoring the pathological causation of crime. Seeing crime as resulting from conformity to social norms was a means of normalizing deviance (Kivivuori, 2011). Thus, learning theory explains crime with reference to normal learning processes. As summarized by Edwin H. Sutherland, people need to learn two things in order to be able to commit crimes: the techniques of committing crime and ‘definitions favourable to breaking of law’ (Sutherland & Cressey, 1978). Crimes based on skills require the learning of techniques, while offenders use pro-crime definitions in all crime types. Pro-crime definitions come in multiple forms: honour cultures, anti-control attitudes, and neutralizations excusing or justifying offences (Eisner, 2014; Nisbett & Cohen, 1996; Sykes & Matza, 1957). Importantly, if we explain variation in violence by learning processes, the relevant learned contents can be anti-crime as well, explaining crime drops.

How does learning theory relate to the major crime drop during the last millennium? It focuses attention on changes in values and norms. The impulsivity of people from the past ages might not reflect a lack of norms but rather the existence of different kinds of norms. Impulsive behaviour expresses culturally learned behavioural scripts, just as more controlled behaviour patterns (Lindström, 2004, pp. 266–268; Thomas, 2018, p. 20). In the learning theoretical framework, ideas and values function as ‘definitions favourable to the violation of law’, or definitions supporting norm-abiding behaviour. As an example of hypothetical crime-preventing impact, religious thought seeps from elites to lay people by means of sermons and religious pamphlets. In northern Europe, the interaction effects of printing from the mid-15th century and reformation from the early 16th century strengthened this conduit. The content of the transmitted ideas, and the sheer time spent in reading (Eisner, 2014), could reduce people’s propensity to transgressive behaviour.

While some ideas support self-control and conforming behaviour, others can promote the breaking of social norms. Thus, when Roth (2009, p. 252) observed the rise of intimate partner homicide in US data from the early 19th century, he linked it to notions of romantic love. When people increasingly invested emotional energy in marriage, separation and jealousy motives more frequently erupted into violence (see also Eibach, 2016, p. 242; Spierenburg, 2012, p. 35). Another example is the short homicide backlash from the 1960s to 1980s. The emerging culture of 'self-realization' and expressivism, and the corresponding devaluation of conforming and law-abiding behaviour, likely eased the breaking of norms while also influencing how children were raised (Eisner, 2014).

Social Strain Theories

Theories of social strain explain crime by social disadvantage, often linked to poverty and inequality. The classical versions of this theory were economic and structural, while the more recent general strain theory incorporates life stressors, which can happen to middle- and upper-class people as well (Agnew, 2001). However, even earlier versions of this theory tradition did not represent economic determinism. The origins of strain theory linked social strain to subjective frustration and deficiencies of normative regulation. Émile Durkheim (1897) introduced the notion of anomie or 'normlessness' to describe these complex mechanisms. Within criminology, Robert Merton (1938) elaborated this approach by arguing that crime is a solution to a subjectively experienced mismatch between culturally induced aspirations and economically and structurally possible life outcomes. In the US context, this theory referred to the structural impediments of realizing the American dream. Violence thus reflected the frustrations emerging from a cultural-structural tension. According to this argument, changes in homicide, or differentials in it, could relate to changes in either cultural expectations or economic-structural possibilities, or both.

In Nordic historical criminology, Heikki Ylikangas consistently applied Mertonian strain theory. He saw violence as closely linked to underclass positions, and explained this by expectations-based frustrations: '[V]iolence seems to be closely connected with expectations of individual success, or more exactly, with the degree to which such expectations do or do not come true. ... The greater the conflict between expectations and reality, the more likely physical aggression will be' (Ylikangas, 1991, p. 52). Ylikangas (1976b, 1998a) based his analysis on rural homicide in specific parts of Finland during the 19th century, the so-called era of the knife fighters, many of whom were younger sons of farmers, with bleak prospects.

Strain theory thus has support in specific historical locales, such as the 19th-century Finnish Ostrobothnia (Ylikangas, 1998a). On the other hand, its predictions fit uneasily with the grand homicide drop from the medieval period to modernity. In fact, some regional studies indicate a reverse constellation or greater equality during the Middle Ages and a later increase in inequality from probably the 16th century onwards (Alfani & Ammannati, 2014, p. 37). Medieval and early modern societies addressed the problem of poverty by investing in different kinds of communal welfare arrangements (Dyer, 2012). Based on the strain theory, the rise of inequality should translate into a rise in homicide rates, instead of a drop in violence. Control-related factors could explain this anomaly, if decreasing equality is linked to more efficient control mechanisms.

The aspirations–economy disconnect thesis (Merton, 1938) rested heavily on cultural factors. According to the theory, economic deprivation or poverty was criminogenic only if culture defined affluence and upward social mobility as worthy life goals. Could the medieval homicide peak be explained by frustrated ambitions? This seems like an absurd projection of the 'American Dream' trope to a time and place where it had no relevance. The cultural mainstream of the European Middle Ages involved the notion that poverty was a positive thing, to a degree that authorities sometimes saw a problem in 'fake poverty' (Kalifa, 2013,

pp. 75–82). There was a ‘general hostility to individual social mobility and a stress on the need to accept one’s place on the social ladder’ (Rigby, 2007, p. 27). Such cultural emphases probably continued into the early modern period, and were valid for northern Europe as well. It is another and more complex question whether real social mobility was opening up and leading to less strain and violence. According to some studies, educational mobility has been relatively stable in the long duration from the high Middle Ages to present (Clark & Cummins, 2014). Other studies suggest that the central state opened career options and thus increased mobility (Rigby, 2007),²¹ a hypothesis that links the civilizing process and strain approaches.

However, it would be premature to discard the role of social disadvantage as an explanation of homicide. Shorter-term fluctuations in violence could be related to economic problems and famines, even though the megatrend of homicide shows a decreasing trend in spite of economic conditions. It also seems to be beyond reasonable doubt that, over the centuries, homicide has become marginalized in terms of social structure, as the upper and middle classes have withdrawn from such behaviours (McMahon, 2016, pp. 120–123). Because of this, modern homicide is relatively strongly linked to socially disadvantaged groups, even though the positions of the lowest groups change. To give an example, during the 1960s, the typical homicide carrier groups included petty farmers, unskilled workers and the seasonally migrant labour force (Kivivuori & Lehti, 2006). Later, as the economy changed, the same disadvantaged groups were increasingly registered as unemployed or disability pensioners. Despite changing labels, the major homicide carrier group was still at the bottom-most ladder of society. Structural continuity was camouflaged by changes in categorizations.

Finally, an important aspect of social disadvantage is *life expectancy*. Even today, health issues manifest a considerable

²¹ The plague of the mid-14th century had opened upward social mobility tracks (Rigby, 2007).

social gradient. Risk taking and readiness to violence reflect young men's perceived social environment. Where life is expected to be short and brutish, high-risk strategies are applied, including violence. Such behavioural strategies do not necessarily reflect rational calculations. Rather, they reflect tacit adaptation to perceived environmental cues of high risk. If you are likely to die without offspring, it is rational to take risks. That is why short life expectancy correlates with lethal violence (Wilson & Daly, 1997). What does this mean for the crime drop debate? It means that increasing life expectancy can explain some of the pacification of the West as well as the impact of social disadvantage as a crime-triggering factor for young males.

Routine Activity Approach

Routine activity theory is one of the most general criminological theories of crime. Since the 1970s, it has been extensively used in the analysis of modern crime. As such, it ought to be applicable to all historical periods. Recently historical research has promisingly adapted the theory, as shown by Tickell's (2018) analysis of shoplifting in 18th-century England. Nevertheless, it remains underutilized in long-duration homicide research.

Routine activity theory is a general perspective that links crime to people's normal routines and environmental opportunities. Similar approaches have been called ecological opportunity perspectives or lifestyle theories (Aebi & Linde, 2016, p. 78). According to this approach, crime happens when motivated offenders and suitable targets coincide in time and space in the absence of capable guardians (Felson & Eckert, 2016). A fundamental aspect of routine activity theory is that crime rates and crime patterns emanate from the flow of routine, normal and legal practices in time and space. Thus, the theory predicts that crime is strongly patterned in accordance with the time cycles of specific societies. If, for instance, Sunday is the only holiday in a week, alcohol and leisure related criminal offences tend to concentrate on Sundays. Again, if the weekend as a historical-institutional construction

is extended to Saturdays, criminal offences are predicted to spread to Saturdays as well, maybe even reducing the proportion of offences committed on Sundays (Kivivuori, 2002). The theory predicts analogous patterns to emerge in annual cycles even in predominantly rural societies. Another commonly used example of how routine activities can explain crime trends is the effect that increased female employment in the post-war developed countries had on certain crimes. As suburban houses were more often unoccupied during the day, burglaries increased in the absence of capable guardians within the households (Cohen & Felson, 1979). A third example is evolving around how major technological innovations and the changes in traffic systems have historically shaped the structures in opportunity to commit crime (Felson & Eckert, 2016).

Routine activity theory has developed specific concepts for capturing how crime risks are connected to space-dependent mass routines (Brantingham & Brantingham, 1995). *Crime generators* are places in which large numbers of people gather or move through, such as in traffic hubs or large-scale sports events. *Crime attractors* are places that simultaneously attract both motivated offenders and suitable targets, as in bars and pubs. These concepts are ideal types that capture the mechanisms of crime in space-risk interactions. Thus, we assume that similar crime hotspots were present in early modern societies. Busy marketplaces in towns, or fairs on saints' days, could have been crime generators, while taverns and public houses, as well as churches and their surroundings on Sundays, could have been crime attractors. On the other hand, in agrarian societies, leisure time activities may not have been differentiated from working life and work areas in the way they are in modern times. This especially concerns alcohol drinking, which in earlier times was more concentrated in private homes or households.

Routine activity changes can be slow or fast. The rise of civility as a social ideal correlated in the early modern age with several slowly unfolding structural-cultural changes in everyday routine activities. The printing revolution influenced routine activities

by increasing the number of hours dedicated to reading (Eisner, 2014) while limiting the time spent in crime-promoting settings like taverns and public houses. In 18th-century London, the rise of commerce created, on the one hand, new opportunities for crimes such as shoplifting (Tickell, 2018) but worked, on the other hand, in the opposite direction by promoting more civil forms of interaction (Thomas, 2018, pp. 112–113). The middle classes increasingly entertained guests in their own houses instead of in crime-provocative public houses. While emulating more civilized forms of interaction, new fashionable drinks like coffee and tea replaced alcohol in some circles (Thomas, 2018, p. 86). A factor possibly influencing the risks of intimate partner homicide was the decreasing numbers and presence of servants and apprentices in 19th-century households (Cockburn, 1991, p. 130). Analogously, one could offer the hypothesis that the absence of grandparents in the emerging nuclear families could similarly have reduced the presence of capable guardians, which increased the use of domestic violence and consequently heightened the risks for intimate partner homicide. In the 18th century, street lighting was gradually improved, potentially reducing violence during the night (Thomas, 2018, p. 103).

Routine activity theory also accommodates and predicts more abrupt changes or so-called *short- and medium-term shocks*. This refers especially to crime peaks, if temporally more time-fixed and specific ruptures in mass routine actions take place. In historical criminology, such abrupt changes have in several studies been related to military demobilization, causing shorter-term peaks of crimes or homicides (Gurr, 1981, p. 310; Lockwood, 2017, p. 267). For instance, the mid-18th century crime surge in England is explainable by the end of the War of Austrian Succession (1740–1748). The demobilization of 80,000 soldiers and sailors after the war was a social disaster when ex-soldiers, accustomed to the use of violence, turned to crime in the absence of other means of sustenance (Lockwood, 2017, pp. 290–293). In particular, violent theft and thefts committed by men increased drastically after the war (Rogers, 2012, pp. 46–48).

Similar crime contributing mechanisms have been observed in northern Europe. During the period of high homicide rates in the 17th century (see Figure 3.1), soldiers from the Swedish Realm encountered the new culture of mercenaries on the European continent. These *Landsknechts* were regarded as both godless and violent (Skoog, 2014). Resembling in some regards modern private war corporations rather than individual mercenaries, these men formed a new kind of violent sub-culture for soldiering under a recognizable garment, which functioned as deterrence against potential aggressors. Later in the 17th century, during and after the Swedish military interventions in central Europe, the returning soldiers posed similar new kinds of threats to the social order. Ex-combat soldiers kept their arms and continued the former military tactics of living off the land when roaming the countryside in gangs (Pettersson, 2014). Similar developments took place in England from the 16th century onwards (Cockburn, 1991, p. 85), when ex-soldiers became a prominent recruitment base for European bandit groups during and after the Napoleonic era (Ylikangas, 2003, p. 449).

Rational Choice Perspective

It has been argued above that contemporary theories and research methods in criminology increasingly normalize human behaviour (Kivivuori, 2011). One aspect of this process of theoretical and methodological normalization is the standpoint that historical people were no less rational than we are today. Indeed, early versions of the strangeness paradigm were extreme when painting medieval and early modern humans as irrational and lacking in cognitive skills.

The strangeness paradigm saw medieval people as lacking in ability to consider the longer-term consequences of their actions, a competence that emerged slowly from the beginning of the early modern age (Elias, 2017b [1939], pp. 347–352). Medieval and early modern humans were presumed to be irrational in their cognitive styles and tendencies, and even incapable of discerning

the difference between fact and fiction.²² This in turn is believed to have resulted in spontaneity and consequently in high violence rates. There are reasons to take such emphases with a pinch of salt. As mentioned earlier, modern criminological research tends to acknowledge that human beings, no matter the historical period, share specific moral emotions and cognitive skills (Daly & Wilson, 1988; Petersen, Sell, Tooby & Cosmides, 2012).²³ From this meta-theoretical perspective, pre-modern humans were capable of rational adaptation to the informal and formal sanctions systems in their social context.

According to the rational choice perspective, the likelihood, swiftness and severity of expected sanctions influence criminal behaviour. Could high medieval rates of violence reflect low expectations of detection and low-level sanctions? The relative leniency of medieval law, and even the partially decriminalized nature of homicide (Netterstrøm, 2017a), might explain why homicide was so prevalent during the Middle Ages and at the beginning of the early modern age. Violence was to some extent considered normal social behaviour and often condoned rather than condemned. People knew how society in general reacted to violence. In addition to the good chances of evading punishment, violence was situationally justified in private matters. Homicide under mitigating circumstances (manslaughter) could result in compensation to the victim's kin and/or to the king. Sometimes, the offender had the opportunity to define his or her own actions as manslaughter by confessing the deed, instead of being convicted for murder. Indeed, in contrast to the assumptions in the civilizing theory, Norwegian peasants of the Middle Ages have been described in research as using both restraint and rationality

²² See, for example, Hägg (1996, p. 44).

²³ Claiming that humans in more remote historical times were lacking in intelligence, cognitive skills or moral emotions resembles claims in contemporary times that underscore that some 'races' or 'primitive' cultures lack the ability to develop in the same ways as modern human beings are.

in their decisions on the use of violence (Kadane & Næshagen, 2014, pp. 290–291).

The high homicide rates in medieval and early modern Scandinavia may also have had another link to weak state institutions, and to how people reacted to that weakness. In a situation where state institutions for effective conflict resolution were missing, violence was the last resort instrument, often the only effective one, available for defending and furthering the economic and other interests of the individual and his family and kin (Koskivirta, 2003; Ylikangas, 1976c; Ylikangas, 1998b; Ylikangas, 2001). In that sense, violence was a rational adaptation to a specific environment.

Theory in Long-Duration Homicide Research

In this chapter, we have described the major theoretical assets in the field of long-duration homicide research. To sum up, our take-home message from this involves four points.

First, it seems evident that criminological and historical theories closely resemble one another: criminology has focused on explaining variance in populations and on shorter time periods, while history has used similar assets to understand change over time and the contextual embeddedness of violence (see also Kivivuori et al., 2012).

Second, we have combined in this chapter the topic of theory with the theme of homicide drop in an effort to achieve more explicit articulation of theories involved in understanding change and stability in lethal violence.

Third, we have discussed these theories to articulate the *research theory* operationalized by the variables of the Historical Homicide Monitor. Throughout this book, we shall discuss our empirical findings from the perspective of these theories. Thus, the ongoing effort to build a standardized homicide indicator seeks to clarify challenges posed by theoretical discussions in criminology and history, and by the integration of these disciplines.

Fourth, this chapter serves to remind us that the factors influencing the quantity and patterns of homicide cannot be presumed as constant across centuries. The explanatory power of theories is in itself subject to change, and this change is an empirical question. For example, it is possible that the relevancy of strain theory in explaining homicide has increased over the centuries. In medieval times, social and political elites could engage in homicidal violence (Cooney, 1997; McMahon, 2016). When homicide dropped, the upper and middle echelons of society became more civilized and pacified, leaving the margins of society as the main carriers of lethal violence. The honour culture survived among socially disadvantaged groups, triggering face-saving violence and revenge cycles. In any case, it is possible that the causes of homicide have changed in the long duration, a possibility that calls for the gradual build-up of more extensive data sources, and higher theoretical articulation of analytic approaches in the study of violence.

Finally, we have considered recent developments in human sciences as a *meta-theoretical justification* for the kind of approach that compares violence in the long historical duration. On the level of general social thought, we can see a gradual shift from pathology and strangeness notions to theoretical frameworks underscoring the normality and, in some cases, even rationality in offender decision-making. In other words, persons from different places, social categories and different eras are increasingly seen as sharing common humanity. Just as human rights are universal and inalienable, so the facticity of human species comes with features that connect people from different eras. This definitely does not mean that homicide is a constant, or that its causes are constant. Rather, it suggests that wide comparisons and long-duration research are possible. The conceptual grid, which allows us to detect meaningful variation and locally embedded interpretations, is likely to be usable across wide distances and long duration.

CHAPTER 4

Data and Methods

During the 1930s, the Finnish criminologist Veli Verkko came up with the notion that homicide statistics could be expanded backwards in time. He used archival sources²⁴ to retroactively construct homicide time series for the Swedish Realm, which originally included today's Sweden and Finland. He reached the year 1754 (Kivivuori, 2017; Kivivuori & Lehti, 2011). In this research, we set about to do something similar, to go even deeper back in time. We also wanted to connect long-duration homicide research with criminological research theory as described in the previous chapter.

Would that be possible? The research project reported in this book had a strong methodological component: we wanted in the first place to explore whether long-duration analysis is possible and feasible. The creation of a new tool, and the substantial results we find when using it, are thus intertwined. We consider both to be research results.

In this chapter, we focus on some of the key methodological aspects of our study. We start by describing the initial creation of the Historical Homicide Monitor (HHM). We then move on to describe the primary sources we analysed using the tool, and

²⁴ It can be argued that Verkko's original source was an early form of government statistics. He did not use original court protocols to construct statistics.

how we analyse the data in this book. Here, the emphasis is on the early modern dataset. The modern dataset is described more concisely here because it has fewer validity challenges, and because its creation and content have been documented in a separate publication (Lehti et al., 2019). Throughout, we pay attention to source critique. As noted in the Introduction, this book, in its entirety, can be read as a narrative of our struggle to create a standardized homicide research instrument for long-duration comparison.

4.1 The Historical Homicide Monitor

The HHM codebook, with detailed descriptions of variables used in this study, is freely available as an internet resource (Kivivuori et al., 2020a). The final codebook has been published as HHM 2.0. In this study, we used the HHM version 1.5. The published HHM codebook gives the HHM 1.5 variables whenever they diverge from the HHM 2.0 (Kivivuori et al., 2020a). Data coded using the HHM codebook constitutes the Historical Homicide Monitor Database (HHMD), which can be described as a pre-coding-based database (Harvey & Press, 1996, pp. 11–12, 223–224).

Key Source Type

Our historical data stem from handwritten textual information in original 17th-century court protocols. Qualitative textual data were transformed into a quantitative, standardized matrix²⁵ using the historical codebook. This was a labour-intensive project; a large part of the work was related to the standardized coding of the primary historical data, a process that created both the codebook (Kivivuori et al., 2020a) and the data used in this study. The coders of the project team were professional historians with unique skills of reading handwritten records in original languages (see Figure 1.1, showing an original manuscript).

²⁵ We used the IBM SPSS software in data entry.

Definition of Homicide

When conducting long-term research, it is particularly important to have a clear definition of the targeted phenomenon. Our main goal was to analyse lethal violence behaviourally, an emphasis that captures a fundamental departure point of our research. We consider lethal interpersonal violence as something that exists independently of the legal definitions imposed on such behaviours by state formations and other organized communities. Legal and other social reactions to homicide have changed, but the existence of interpersonal lethal violence is not culturally or socially constructed by such reactions, or by state knowledge about such incidents. The behavioural reality we target is defined by the following six criteria.

First, our focal point is *violence with lethal outcome*. We exclude all forms of non-lethal violence, such as incidents legally labelled as aggravated assaults or attempted homicides in many modern jurisdictions. As such, the HHM can be used in the coding of non-lethal violence, but it has been developed for homicide research.

Second, the act of violence must have been *intentional*. Cases with intentional violence leading to the victim's death are included, even though the lethal outcome was unintended by the offender. Some modern jurisdictions employ legal labels such as assault and causing of death or assault leading to death in cases where the offender could not foresee that his violence would result in the death of the victim. These incidents are included in our data because the violent act was intentional. This is more objective than any attempt to determine the intentions of the offender.

Third, there has to have been a *direct or indirect physical cause of death* due to physical contact, injuries caused by projectiles, being pushed from heights, drowned, poisoned etc. Thus, the data had to show that somebody in the legal process claimed a link from intentional physical violence to the victim's death. It is also sufficient that the legal document itself implicates the existence of a causal link or claim, such as prosecution or investigation under a specific legal rubric. This criterion is important, because, until the

early modern period, courts could regard witchcraft as a means of homicide. In a study based on coroners' inquests in England during the period 1500–1680, the method of killing was witchcraft in 10 per cent of the cases. Out of victims killed by women, 38 per cent were so killed (Kesselring, 2015). Similar extensive homicide definitions are likely to have existed in many cultures and epochs. All such incidents are excluded in this study, even if such cases were processed under homicide labels. We thus exclude incidents of sorcery, witchcraft or any magical influence, with no descriptions or allegations of intentional violence involving direct or indirect physical injury to the victim's body. The exclusion of witchcraft as a means of homicide reflects two fundamental principles of the HHM: the goal of ensuring maximal long-duration comparability, and the associated focus on a behaviourally anchored definition of homicide.²⁶

Fourth, the *person killed must have been born alive*. In historical periods, some cases, which today would be called abortions, were treated under homicide-related legal labels. If there is an indication that the homicide victim was a foetus or a stillborn child, the case is not included in the data, even if the source treats the case as homicide. Otherwise, the data includes so-called infanticides if the victim had been born alive.²⁷ The legal concept used in the primary record can be used as partial evidence ascertaining the case as homicide; the coder must make the final decision based on all the evidence she has. However, cases of abortion²⁸ are included only if the source makes explicit reference

²⁶ This concerns only witchcraft as a putative means of killing. Incidents where persons are killed because they are claimed to be witches (Adinkrah, 2004; Felson & Tedeschi, 1993) are included in the HHM. Cases where courts sentence witches to death are not included.

²⁷ Most of the analyses of this book exclude infanticide, which is separately dealt with in Chapter 9. Here we define infanticide behaviourally, meaning all cases where the victim was less than one year old.

²⁸ This refers to legal rubrics such as *sikiönlähdetys*, *fosterfördrivning* and *belgmord*.

to intentional violence towards a person born alive. In cases where the totality of evidence indicates that a person born alive was killed before the victim was one year old, the age of the victim is always coded as zero.

Fifth, the time to *death must have happened within 12 months* from the violent act. The historical codebook uses this time limit as a pragmatic cut-off point. In historical data, the time interval between violence and death can be long. Cases involving longer time spans from violence to death would likely compromise the comparability of the data across the long duration. It is therefore necessary to define an upper limit to the time of death. The one-year criterion is applied so that, if there is explicit information about a longer time from violence to death, the case is excluded.

Sixth, the HHM excludes the legal killing of outgroup members in war, the legal killing of persons convicted to death, fugitive criminals and outlaws by officials of central states. If it is unclear if the deed was a criminal homicide, such as posse groups of civilians seeking and killing an outlaw, the incident is included if the source treats it as a suspected criminal homicide. Central states refer to entities claiming and trying to enforce a monopoly of violence over specified territory. Even if official or social norms accept or tolerate private retaliation, such retaliation is included as homicide. For instance, feuding cycles are regarded as homicide even if they are construed, in a historical context, as normal and allowed by customary law. If the state allows private settlements of homicide, such homicide behaviour is still included.²⁹

To sum up, we define homicide as *intentional non-state violence by direct or indirect physical means against persons born alive and causing death within 12 months of the original violent incident*.

²⁹ As a special case of legal violence, the killing of persons in legal combat sports or gladiatorial shows is excluded (see the HHM 2.0 manual as published in Kivivuori et al., 2020a).

Age Criteria

In the analyses of *homicide* published in this book, we include only violence targeted against persons who were at least one year old at the time of death. Thus, victim analyses exclude victims who were less than one year old when they were killed. The offender group comprises people who killed persons who were at least one year old when they were killed. A person killing only person(s) under one year of age is excluded from the offender group, while a person killing persons under and above one year of age is included in the offender group. Incidents involving only persons younger than one year of age are examined separately as *infanticide* cases (see Chapter 9).

Suspicion Principle

Regarding offenders and victims, the HHM coding is based on information on *suspected homicides*.³⁰ For instance, if the suspect is not sentenced due to inadequate proof, we still code the suspect into the offender row. This is so because the European Homicide Monitor (EHM) is based, in large part, on police records with suspects included (Granath et al., 2011).

Furthermore, court evidence rules have changed substantially over the centuries, a fact that supports the use of the suspicion principle. This rule is the application of Sellin's law, according to which earlier stages of the criminal justice system are more reliable as indicators of criminal behaviour than later stages (Aebi & Linde, 2016; Kivivuori, 2011). So, as a pragmatic rule, the coder should avoid taking the judge's view or the jury member's view to research materials. He or she should code what is stated in the

³⁰ In principle, there can be data sources that do not derive from state-driven criminal justice processes (such as media data). When criminal justice sources are used, the suspicion refers to being suspected of homicide by the police, or the primary stage of official reaction in times where there was no police force in a modern sense.

source, without trying to determine the guilt of the suspect, or medical causation. In historical sources, court proceedings can focus on whether a victim of violence who died a couple of weeks after the intentional violent act died because of the violence or from natural causes. In such cases, the victim and the suspected offender are included in our data. The treatment of cases involving internally conflicting information is described in the HHM 2.0 manual (Kivivuori et al., 2020a).

4.2 Sources of the Early Modern Period

The theoretical rationale for focus in the early modern period is explained above, in the Introduction and in the chapter on theories. The early modern datasets (Table 4.1) additionally reflect the feasibility and availability of data resources. In each region, the national coders started from a specific date and coded until approximately 200 cases were reached. The Danish and Swedish data are original samples, while the Finnish data use a dataset collected earlier, during the 1990s, for a different project.³¹ Also, the Finnish data were coded from the original copies of the court protocols. The data origin means that we did not have the same degree of control regarding the inclusion criteria of lethal violence in the Finnish data.

Denmark. The Danish data draw from the verdict books of the High Court of North Jutland (*Nørrejylland*), which are the earliest extant high court verdict books from the Kingdom of Denmark.³² These verdict books were not chosen for the analysis because of a particular interest in the Jutland area but because they present the

³¹ A challenge was that this original project did not produce publications. In contacts with the data collectors, we were unable to find indications that any principle of selection was used, other than coverage of all homicide cases.

³² Similar verdict books for Sjælland (Zealand in English) are not extant before the end of the 17th century (and for Skåne/Scania they are entirely lost).

Table 4.1: Data from the early modern period, 1608–1699.

Country	Data type	Source	Area	Time period	N of incidents ^a	Data collector and coder
Denmark	Primary	Protocols of the High Court of Jutland	Northern Jutland	1608–1622	200	Jeppe Büchert Netterstrøm
Finland	Secondary ^b	Protocols of lower courts	Southern and northern Ostrobothnia (incl. Kainuu)	1640–1699	230 ^c	Mona Rautelin
Sweden	Primary	Protocols of the Göta High Court	Provinces of Östergötland, Kalmar, Jönköping and Kronoberg	1640–1650	197	Dag Lindström
					627 (total)	

^a Principal victims in the Historical Homicide Monitor Database (HHMD).

^b Original case protocol copies compiled by Seppo Aalto, supplemented with an additional sample of infanticide.

^c Finnish data include the cities of Kajaani, Kokkola, Pietarsaari, Oulu, Raahе, Uusikaarlepyy and Vaasa.

best possibility for investigating longer and representative³³ series of homicides in the Danish Realm before the end of the 17th century.

All homicides mentioned in the verdict books of North Jutland in the studied period were included in the investigation as long as they met the inclusion criteria. The verdict books are extant, with

³³ Verdict books of the Supreme Court of Denmark are extant from 1537. They include a large number of homicide cases but only such cases that were appealed from the lower courts, whereas the Jutland verdicts contain, in principle, all homicide cases from Jutland, yielding a fuller and more representative picture. (During the investigation of the Jutland material it became clear, however, that this only pertains to rural homicide cases; see below.)

large lacunae, beginning from 1569. The year 1608 was chosen as a starting point for the present investigation because the verdict books before then are very scattered (only three books, from 1569, 1581 and 1591, survive). From the year 1608, the material is much more coherent, although it still has considerable lacunae. Furthermore, homicide cases from 17th-century Denmark were expected to be more comparable to the Finnish and Swedish cases in the collective project than 16th-century cases would have been. The investigation began with the year 1608 and continued chronologically until 200 cases were reached, in the year 1622, which means that the investigation covers only the first part of this year. Reading through all the verdicts would have been impossible within the given period,³⁴ and homicide cases were therefore found using multiple entries³⁵ assuring that all homicides mentioned in the verdict books were included in the investigation.

The Danish data derive from the verdict books for the three subregions into which Jutland was divided for the purpose of registering high court verdicts. For the purposes of succinct expression, we call these the northern, eastern and south-western subregions. From each subregion, the years with extant data are included. The northern subregion has the longest data time span, with observation years 1608, 1612, 1616–1618 and 1621–1622. The eastern subregion has data from the five-year period 1616–1620. The south-western subregion has only four observation years, from 1616 to 1619. The sub-district divisions are relevant for the homicide rate calculations.

Sweden. The archive of the Göta High Court is the only one in present-day Sweden and Finland that has been fully preserved. Parts of the older records of the Svea High Court in Stockholm

³⁴ The verdict books 1608–1626 contain a total of 5,144 verdicts; see Henningsen, Johansen and Tamm (1979).

³⁵ Nørgaard-Pedersen (2010) (regist in word format allowing word searches); Hofman-Bang (1927–1930) (handwritten regist); notes extracted from Hofman-Bang's regist from the project *16.000 jyskedomme* (see Henningsen, Johansen & Tamm, 1979); Poul Rasmussen (1965–1984).

and all of the Turku High Court in Finland have been destroyed in fires. The so-called *Criminalia* volumes include two different types of documents. There is always a short description of the case and a so-called *resolution*, which is the decision of the high court. These are often short entries, a sort of documentation of the court's own work. In most cases, the resolution includes a verdict, but the case could also be sent back to the primary court for further investigation or the primary court could be urged to make a decision if it had not reached an explicit court ruling, which was sometimes the case. Cases referred back to the primary court for completion should always appear again in the high court for final decision. The legal process at the high court was based on written documents only, and copies from the primary court records make up the larger number of documents in the *Criminalia* volumes. Occasionally, letters from plaintiffs or the accused party also turn up in these volumes. The records in the *Criminalia* volumes are fairly complete. In a few cases, copies from the primary court records have been lost, but, because a full copy of all court records was also sent to the high court, the documentation of homicide cases can almost always be found anyway. Obviously, most of the committed homicides in the studied area are found in the archive of the Göta High Court.

Finland. The sources used are original case protocol copies from lower rural and urban courts in 1623 to 1700, compiled by Adjunct Professor Emeritus Seppo Aalto for another research purpose and project in the late 1990s.³⁶ The copies include data on murder and manslaughter, unintentional lethal assaults and, occasionally, suicides. For the purposes of the current project, only cases fulfilling the behavioural definition of homicide were included. An analysis of homicides in another region of Finland indicates that the data contain approximately 96 per cent of the pre-1650 homicides found in an independent cross-validation in primary archives. It is probable that the validity issues are concentrated on the earlier part of the Finnish time period and lessen as

³⁶ Dr Aalto has kindly given us the permission to use his materials in this study.

we move towards more recent times. In the course of the century, important changes were made in the court system that professionalized and consolidated the legal procedures in a way that diminished the risks for missing homicides. Furthermore, the Finnish data differ from Danish and Swedish data in that they are based on lower court materials. That court tier was used because a fire destroyed the entire archive of the Turku High Court in 1827, making the approach used for Danish and Swedish data impossible in Finland.

The research area covers much of northern Finland in 1640–1699 (see Figure 1.2 for a map). The circuits of Ostrobothnia in north-western Finland, which was extended to Kainuu further north and the southern parts of Lapland, as well as the most northern part of Karelia, in order to reach the required number of homicides to code. The core area of the Finnish data, Ostrobothnia, has been a traditional focus of Finnish historical criminology. In particular, South Ostrobothnia experienced exceptionally high homicide rates in the aftermath of the peasant uprising in 1596–1597. Later, during the so-called knife fighters era in c. 1795–1850, the area manifested very high homicide rates (Ylikangas, 1973, 1976b, 1998a). Similar ritualized gang-related crimes as those of the knife fighters are found also in Ostrobothnia in the late 17th century (Ylikangas, 2000, p. 47).

Ostrobothnia has a remarkably well-preserved series of lower court records, with only a two-year gap in 1665–1667 when the records were destroyed in the 1681 fire of the Turku High Court with most of the other crime ledgers from the 1660s and 1670s (Saarenheimo, 1994, p. 153). After the division of the circuit in 1680, there is also a gap in the court records of 1681–1682 in the South Ostrobothnia circuit. Still, these court records form a consistent source for criminological study. In contrast, the records are missing for Kainuu in 1665–1666 and 1668–1673 and in Karelia in 1650–1656, 1658–1659 and 1664.³⁷ For this reason, data from

³⁷ The gaps are related to the era between 1651 and 1680, when the barons of Kajaani, Kitee, Liperi and Tohmajärvi governed the area (Jokipii, 1956).

outside Ostrobothnia are excluded from the estimation of homicide rates, but included in the description of patterns.

We gathered a supplement of digitalized infanticide court records from the digital archive of the National Archive of Finland. The search was restricted to the circuit of North Ostrobothnia that is penetrable by card index (*TUOKKO*). The digitally preserved index, created in 1961–1980, enables a relatively fast and easy way to every judged and documented infanticide in the area in 1640–1699 meeting the description of intentional lethal violence on a born living infant. Since this register is indexed in academic rather than legal terms, it is possible that it underestimates infanticide. To assess the validity of the register, all lower court records in the Finnish and Swedish overlapping years of 1640–1650 were systematically searched in the renovated court records, and proved consistent.

4.3 Source Critique

In this study, we have applied a uniform conceptual grid, the HHM, to analytically describe homicide from vastly differing epochs. For the 20th century and contemporary era, the data stemmed from the activities of the modern criminal justice systems. As such, they are comparatively free from special challenges affecting the study of more distant periods. We therefore focus in this discussion on the long-duration dimension of our research.

For the early modern period, we used original court protocols as sources. We set out to study this source with a strong source critical emphasis, constantly reflecting on how the original purposes of the courts often obfuscate the behavioural realities of violence. Yet we also recognized the strengths of the source, ultimately resting on the oral testimonies of the people involved in the trials. Human memory is particularly adept at remembering negative events, such as violence, that pose a survival risk (Buchner et al., 2009; Greve & Bjorklund, 2009; Nairne et al., 2007; Pfattheicher & Böhm, 2018; Suzuki et al., 2013). Yet it is clear that multiple challenges and pitfalls were revealed in the process. We next discuss

the limitations and challenges thematically, rather than country-wise, even though particular challenges were more pronounced in some regions and less serious in others. We start from the more technical aspects such as sample creation and text comprehension and move to broader themes such as cultural relevance structures and the challenge of unrecorded crime.

Sample Differentials

While our analytic instrument was fully standardized, we did not reach full standardization of samples. An obvious limitation is that the time periods are not the same, as has been noted. Interpretations concerning the time vs. region effects are therefore underdetermined by empirical data. In creating a uniform method, we have not so far progressed to deeper validity analyses, such as the capture–recapture methods (Roth, 2001). However, in our study, the possibility of checking concurrent validity is highly limited by lack of alternative data sources in the early modern period.

The Danish sample was revealed in this research to concentrate on rural cases, and it was region-wise more heterogeneous than the two other regional datasets. The Finnish data were originally collected by another project, while the Swedish and the Danish data were collected for this project. Furthermore, the court level varied: the Finnish data were based on primary courts, while the Danish and the Swedish data derived from high court sources. The court-level differentials are mitigated by the fact that much of the higher court documentation, in both Denmark and Sweden, incorporated protocols of the lower courts.

Reading the Text

We used original court protocols for the early modern period. The handwritten old Danish and Swedish was difficult to code directly. In practice, we first transcribed and summarized the text in modern language, in order to make the content usable for analysis. In the Finnish data, the interpretation of historical handwriting

was particularly challenging. There, the language was sometimes a mix of old Finnish and old Swedish, written on stained or torn paper, scattered with stains and unrelated remarks. The Finnish 17th-century local court scribes seldom used punctuation, preferring commas, writing one subordinate clause after another to form long sentences.

Stability and Change

The creation of the HHM involved several lessons for the long-duration comparison. A case in point is the dilemma of detecting continuities behind superficial differences, and differences behind superficial continuities. For instance, during the coding we noted that, in the early modern period, homicide could be committed in private homes, but in a functional context resembling alcohol serving in modern restaurants. The location code was correct, but its interpretation potentially misleading. As a remedy, we decided to include a special functional context variable to the HHM 2.0 codebook (Kivivuori et al., 2020a).

Differential Coding Reliability

Different variables of our codebook possess differential coding reliability. Some information is probably quite reliable, especially when the parties did not seem to have any reason to lie. The main problems arise when coding the elements of the homicide narratives that have to do with the assignment of guilt. This particularly affects the variables on motives, premeditation and violent acts by the victim. In many of the cases, the embattled issue during the historic trial was whether the homicide was committed in self-defence. This made a huge difference in punishment: outlawry ending in a probable execution if the homicide was intentional, or compensation if it had been committed in self-defence. These challenges were tackled in the HHM 2.0 by clarifying coding principles in incidents with conflicting information (Kivivuori et al., 2020a).

When assessing decisions during the coding, it is important to keep the timing of the sample in mind. For instance, in Denmark, the homicide cases derived from a period characterized by state repression, high levels of violence and a widespread use of strategies to evade harsh punishment by acclaiming self-defence to cover up intentional homicide. It is probable that homicides in self-defence are over-represented in the Danish cases. On the other hand, there may also be cases where a killing in self-defence ended in outlawry for premeditated homicide. These factors might have biased the coding of especially three variables: the variable dealing with the victim's use of violence towards the offender during the deed, the variable capturing measuring how planned the offence was, and the variable describing victim threats against the offender. Analogous challenges are likely to have influenced the coding of these variables in the other two regions as well.

Social Biases

A key problem in early modern court sources is the possibility of various kinds of social biases. For instance, offences committed by nobles bypassed the lower courts, as they were directly handled by the high courts.

The investigated verdict books, which in principle record all verdicts passed at the high courts, were expected to contain all homicide cases judged in Jutland in the research period. In reality, they pertain to homicide cases from rural districts, the hundred courts and manor court districts. Homicide cases from urban jurisdictions were processed at the local town court (municipal court); these were brought before the high courts only when appealed. About one in ten of the Danish homicides in the dataset were committed in urban areas, while more than 10 per cent of the population lived in towns. The homicide rates were probably higher in towns than in the countryside (see Eisner, 2014; Österberg et al., 2000). An unknown number of homicides must have been committed within urban jurisdictions without ever reaching the high court proceedings. Consequently, homicides committed by

peasants are the focal point of this Danish homicide study. Likewise, members of the aristocracy committed none of the studied homicides, since the Supreme Court, not the high court, judged offenders of noble origin. Data from the Swedish Realm included urban areas. Yet one needs to take into account that homicide committed in towns could involve rural people.

Processual Factors

Processual-legal factors can both enhance and impair the validity of the relevant court sources. While the quality of court records varies in an apparently random manner, there could also be systematic differentials. For instance, in Sweden and Finland, rural and urban courts functioned differently. While urban courts often met several times a week, rural courts met seldom, often months apart; it is likely that urban courts therefore provide a more accurate and higher-quality data source than rural courts. This was not the case in more densely populated Denmark, where rural courts convened every week.

Another processual-institutional factor affecting the sources was the Danish law, which required all rural homicides to be judged by the high court. This makes the verdict books of the High Court of North Jutland a relatively good source in terms of coverage and representation of lethal violence in rural areas. Rural homicide cases of Jutland are thus, in principle, included in the verdict book.³⁸ In Finland, the high court sometimes demanded more specified information or further investigation into the crime, which gives better insight into the persons and the crime context (see also Virrankoski, 1970, pp. 124–125).

The presence and absence of the offender during the court proceedings is a factor influencing information; the early modern practices differed from modern criminal justice processes. If the offender escaped, it could take a long time before the case turned up in court, if ever. In Sweden, this could be the case even when

³⁸ In the future, this can be cross-checked with local court books.

the offender was identified as the main culprit of the investigated lethal violence. In fact, it was common that Swedish offenders appeared in court with a letter of safe conduct (Lindström, 2021). This meant that the offender was free to leave the court even after a guilty verdict and a death sentence. On the other hand, this system guaranteed that most offenders actually appeared in court. This supports the validity of the data, even though this system may have excluded offenders without connections or networks in the crime area. Consequently, such offenders were probably under-represented in the data.

Other aspects of the legal process provided complications and challenges for the analysis. In Denmark for instance, in a number of cases, the accuser demanded outlawry of the killer for voluntary homicide but then presented evidence of self-defence, in order to achieve a settlement and pecuniary compensation. The reason for the initial demand for outlawry was probably a wish to raise the stakes in the subsequent compensation negotiations to appear law-abiding in the eyes of the authorities. Of course, some of these homicides may indeed have been committed in self-defence, but, in the given context, this was probably not the case in every instance.

Another potential strategy to escape the legal capital punishment was to redefine intentional homicide as accidental killing, likewise sanctioned with compensation to the injured party. The Danish cases contain only a handful of such putatively accidental killings. They have been included in the data in accordance with the current inclusion principles, because there were clear suspicions or claims of intentionality. In some of these cases, the modern observer may indeed suspect that they resulted from intentional lethal violence, for instance the case where Jep Christensen was killed by accident by 'a knife his mother Mette Nielsdatter held in her hand' or, similarly, the case where Las Smed wanted to throw out the last guests after a wedding party and tried to shut the door with a sword but instead stabbed Anders Knudsen to death, successfully claiming at the high court that he did not see that the sword was unsheathed because of the dark.

The accusatorial procedure combined with fragmented authority structures in a relatively weak state structure influences the information available from the court protocols. Commonly eyewitnesses tend to diverge from the truth in their own interest. It is therefore difficult to ascertain from the court proceedings whom to 'believe' when dealing with pre-modern trials. The evidence presented in the court was subjective and aimed at diminishing or increasing the culpability of the defended party. Because of the legal procedure of the time, eyewitnesses were probably greatly influenced by social and economic pressures. It is therefore likely that the jury's verdict was less trustworthy than the verdicts of modern courts of law. Power relations probably mattered a great deal more than in modern times, especially when noble lords were involved in a legal case. Unfortunately, the jury's verdicts are very brief and of little use for inquiries into hidden circumstances in the crimes. In many cases, this is a challenge for the coder of historical homicide data and can best be solved by trying to combine the claims of both parties with a leaning towards the final verdict combined with the coder's own discretion when evaluating the narratives of the event.

The records also display a variety of errors, which are detectable by conflicting information in different parts of the transcripts. This complicates the coding of, especially, the time, date and weekday of the crime, as well as the identification of victim and offender. In rural Sweden and Finland, many had the same first name and similar patronyms. The errors probably derive from the first draft of the proceeding, and were transferred to the renovated court book, supplemented by further errors (see also Virrankoski, 1970, pp. 125–126).

Despite these challenges, a variety of crime particulars can be coded from the rural and city court transcripts. It is possible, even likely, that the lower court source – as used in this study for the Finnish part – includes information that is not passed to higher courts owing to irrelevance for guilt attribution. Use of lower courts can also partially mitigate the challenge of long time intervals between various stages of the criminal justice process.

However, the lower court source is not fully exempt from these challenges, as the same case could be processed in multiple court sessions. Indeed, sometimes information can be retrieved from a later session processing the same case. The lower court source has benefits in accordance with Sellin's law, which states that, in the study of criminal behaviour, earlier process stages are more valid than later ones (Kivivuori, 2011, pp. 43–45).

Information Relevance Structures

Generally, the challenge of missing data in long-duration homicide research should be interpreted *contextually*, and in relation to the existence of alternative information sources and statistics. For our research period, no alternative homicide statistics or any crime statistics were available. Having data on, say, half of the cases is good if that is the best data available. Nevertheless, there is reason to reflect systematically on the challenge of missing data. Next, we discuss quantitative findings on missing data, and move then to qualitative and source critical reflections.

Courts of the early modern period were not particularly interested in all the variables and dimensions that are included in our coding instrument. The information relevance structures were different from what they are in, for instance, modern criminal justice processes. The sole purpose of the court was to attribute guilt, and it was not interested in 'understanding' why the crime took place in some social or psychological sense. For many variables, this led to a high percentage of missing data. For instance, exact age was missing for 97 per cent of both offenders and victims. Exact ages of victims and offenders were not interesting to the courts, and maybe exact age was unknown for the parties themselves. Also, missing data were quite extensive in many infanticide cases.

Source critique is not exhausted by quantitative data loss inspection. There is a need to discuss more qualitatively specific challenges and dilemmas that emerged during the analysis. For instance, information about occupations should be treated with caution, as occupation or social position is reported rather by

chance than as a result of systematic registration. Multitasking was the rule in early modern societies, while occupational titles and personal descriptions indicating social position are very indistinctive. A soldier and lower military officer could be a peasant as well. To complicate it even further, peasants are seldom identified as peasants but by their name or their homestead in a certain village.

Owing to the way administration worked in the 17th century, the distinction between different sectors of public authority, for instance law enforcement and fiscal authority, was not always defined. This complicates the determining of variables like occupation and social status. Likewise, the victim–offender relationship, a very central focus of attention in modern criminal justice, is not explicit in the early modern sources. Either this was seen as irrelevant or it was well known and therefore unnecessary to enter into the records.

Furthermore, the cases often lack information on a clear motive. Motives are sometimes explicitly identifiable in the source, sometimes only implied. The courts were not focused on the motive for its own sake. Their goal was to establish the course of events, whether violence was the result of long-term animosity or more incidental, and whether the offender had acted intentionally or in self-defence. It is reasonable to assume that motives clearly related to the mapping of the course of events, such as self-defence, will appear more often and more explicit in the records compared to other motives, such as hate or revenge. It is also significant that infanticide cases almost never include any information about motives. Generally, the courts were not very interested in clarifying the causes of crime. It is therefore reasonable to assume that the documentation of motives was related to the mapping of the course of events and appears more often and more explicitly in cases concerning self-defence than in cases revolving around the hate or revenge motive.

The challenges of motive coding extend to the immediate foreground of the lethal interactions. In many cases, witness testimonies on who hit first or who used the lethal weapon were

sufficient for the court to make conclusions regarding the guilt of the accused offender. Consequently, the court omitted to investigate the events leading up to the lethal event. Luckily, the context of crime and its presumable motive can often be deduced with reasonable accuracy from the descriptive narratives during the legal process. In many cases, the prosecutor deliberately ignored the preceding conflicts and motives, because the more meaningless a homicide seemed to be, the more reproachable it was in the eyes of both the judges and the public.

Eyewitness accounts of verbal quarrels ending in lethal violence are often difficult to comprehend in full for the modern observer. The preceding conflict between the parties remains obscure. It is possible that homicides were motivated by long-standing conflicts and therefore *less spontaneous* than they may appear to the modern analyst of homicide data. A majority of the cases happened between old acquaintances of similar social status. Sometimes the place of incident or the quarrel leading up to lethal violence suggests that a prior grievance existed between the parties. Contrary to the observation on lethal violence being the result of long-standing conflicts, many offenders committed their deed under the influence of alcohol. However, alcohol may often have been the catalyst for lethal violence rather than the cause of it. This discussion is especially relevant to the discussions about the impulsivity of pre-modern homicide (Elias, 2017b [1939], pp. 323–352).

4.4 Unrecorded Crime

The challenge of unrecorded crime has preoccupied criminology since the 1820s, when official statistics were first used as data sources (Aebi & Linde, 2016). For long after that, criminologists despaired over the so-called official control barrier of crime measurement (Kivivuori, 2011). This barrier refers to the fact that administrative registers are created by state control authorities: the true extent and nature of crime could not be seen and it remained a *dark figure*. This challenge is likely to be particularly daunting when the analysis proceeds to historical eras further back in time.

The source of the problem is, however, the same. Even the early modern court protocols were created by the control activities of the state.

Modern criminology tackles the challenge of unrecorded crime *empirically*, by using alternative resources of crime measurement, such as population surveys, often conducted internationally (e.g. van Dijk, Manchin, van Kesteren & Hideg, 2007). For the contemporary period, alternative statistics such as hospital admissions or other clinical data also provide resources for assessing the validity of police and court records (Estrada, 2006). We do not have these resources for most historical periods. In the absence of empirical anchoring, there is a risk of anachronism: we might interpret divergence from modern homicide patterns as evidence for unrecorded crime. This would be the case if, for example, we concluded that the relative lack of violence against females in early modern Denmark and Sweden must result from under-reporting. We would thus presume that there must have been such violence, because it is with good reason regarded as a major social problem in contemporary societies. Nevertheless, even in the absence of empirical validity criteria, it is possible and necessary to reflect on the role of hidden crime in long-duration homicide research. In principle, the sources can both under- and overestimate homicide.

In the early modern data, the accusatorial procedure and the absence of an investigative police force could lead to the under-reporting of homicide. In the Danish data, for instance, a suspected killer is mentioned in almost all of the 200 cases, and there were eyewitnesses in the majority of the cases. Presumably, concealed homicides were difficult to find out and to prosecute. If there was no suspect, or if there was no proof against the suspect, the case was probably never brought to the high court *as a homicide case*. However, the high court did treat a number of cases where the cause of death was unknown or suspicious. A royal official often initiated such cases, presumably in order to establish the concealment of a serious crime or to prove that the suspect had played a part in a case, which later could turn out to be

homicide. Some of these suspicious deaths may have been concealed homicides. Such cases are not included among the Danish data used in this study, in the absence of explicit suspicions of a homicidal act.

Factors related to processual law and rules of evidence could also impact the validity of the court record as an index of lethal violence. Starting from 1684, in Sweden and Finland, the requirement for the death penalty was always a confession. Since our inclusion criteria do not require conviction (Kivivuori et al., 2020a), this does not directly pertain to our analysis. However, it is possible that likelihood of conviction impacted the propensity to report offences, leading to reduced reporting and therefore to increased unrecorded crime (Rautelin, 2009).³⁹ There is therefore some reason to suggest that unrecorded offences might have increased in Finland during the late 17th century.

The risk of overestimating homicide rates relates to the problem with missing cause of death evaluations. Finland, for instance, gained medical expertise in court proceedings by the end of the 18th century, when state-funded provincial physicians doing autopsies on victims of homicide became a reality (Rautelin, 2009). Prior to this, natural deaths could be judged as homicide when prior physical conflicts or incidents of violence had taken place between the parties of the conflict. The definition of the incident depended heavily on evidence of prior enmities between the parties. The longish time-to-death times could also blur the distinction between natural causes and homicide.

Overall, however, there is reason to believe that homicides are more likely to have been under- than over-reported in the early modern court records. Whether specific types of homicide manifested lower or higher dark numbers than average is more conjectural. Infanticide is a likely exception to this, as such cases probably represented an above-average share of unrecorded

³⁹ There were also other procedural factors such as attempts to speed up the court process during the 1690s (Ylikangas, 2000).

crime⁴⁰. The low number of infanticides in the Danish data is a case in point. Infanticide could be concealed owing to the woman's clandestine pregnancy, because nobody knew the victim was born, or because of a lack of interested relatives initiating prosecution. It was easier to hide an infant's body than the remains of an adult victim, and more difficult to connect the victim with a likely offender. It was also harder to prove the use of intentional lethal violence, because the newborn infant was easy to kill, in comparison with older victims, who often offer resistance.⁴¹

4.5 Sources of the Modern Period

We are able to disaggregate and examine contemporary homicide patterns for Denmark, Finland and Sweden because all three countries have national homicide monitoring systems. These systems are compatible with the EHM standard created by a criminological research consortium in 2011 (Granath et al., 2011; Liem et al., 2013). The general data structure and the variables are the same. Homicide data from Finland and Sweden refer to the years 2007–2016. They conform to the police investigation threshold used as the main inclusion principle in the EHM. In contrast, the Danish contemporary data stem from the years 2012–2016 and include only convicted offenders (Table 4.2). A detailed description of contemporary data is available from the *Nordic Homicide Report: Homicide in Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway and Sweden* (Lehti et al., 2019).

⁴⁰ In this book, we examine infanticides separately from other homicides (see Chapter 9).

⁴¹ In Denmark, the state had been trying to criminalize infanticide for some time before 1608, a project that was, however, fulfilled after 1622. It can be hypothesized that a later sample would include more infanticides.

Table 4.2: Data from the modern period, 2007–2016.

Country	Data type	Source type	Area	Contemporary	Data coder/compiler
Denmark	Primary	Register-based research data	Proxy of the early modern study region	2012–2016	Mikkel Okholm
Finland	Primary	NBI year-books; register-based research data	Proxy of the early modern study region	2007–2016	Martti Lehti and Janne Kivivuori ^a
Sweden	Primary	Register-based research data	Proxy of the early modern study region	2007–2016	Sven Granath

^a Lehti 1910–1929; Kivivuori 1960–1974; FHM 2006–2017.

4.6 Analysis

The substantial findings of this book are quantitative descriptions based on the coding of qualitative materials. Historical-contextual interpretation both precedes (coding phase) and follows (interpretation) the description of empirical patterns. In all analyses, the basic methodological idea is *disaggregation*: homicide is broken down into its separate parts in terms of context, motives and other aspects of the crime and its parties, victim–offender relationship, time cycles of the offending patterns, and time from violence to death, and so forth (see Flewelling and Williams, 1999).

Description

The analyses include frequency distributions and cross-tabulations for categorical variables and measures of central tendency for continuous variables. Percentages are rounded to integer.⁴² Graphical presentations are also used. We report homicide

⁴² Percentages in the range of 0.1–0.4% are indicated in table footnotes.

rates per 100,000 population and, when possible, separately for genders. The homicide figures used in our rate estimates derive from our own data. As we coded the patterns of homicide, applying the inclusion criteria described above yielded a count of cases for the specific time period. The population estimates are derived from prior research conducted in historical demography. Rate calculation is described in detail in Appendix A.

We use the concepts of ‘patterns’ and ‘rates’ as carriers of technical meaning. *Patterns* refer to relative frequencies, that is, percentages of homicide subtypes of all homicides. *Rates* refer to risks by factoring in population sizes. The distinction of patterns and rates is important. Rate differentials cannot be inferred from relative distributions. To highlight this, we complement selected pattern analyses with estimated subtype rates. These estimations divide the total rate into parts as indicated by pattern distributions. They ignore missing data and are thus based on the assumption that missing data are distributed the same way as known data.

Our research underscores the embeddedness of social realities in historical contexts and localities. Therefore, we do not consider the regional patterns as necessarily generalizable to wider populations, areas or eras. Nevertheless, as a reporting convention, we give statistical tests (χ^2) for the cross-tabulations shown in this book (see Table B.1 in Appendix B).

Interpretation

Historical source criticism and contextual interpretation of the findings are at the core of the methods used in this study. These are adjusted to the historical study and its resources at hand, within the boundaries of the normative set-up of the minimum demands of, and optimum norms for, historical scholarship (Torstendahl, 2005). Generally, source criticism refers to the process of investigating the origins of historical texts in order to understand the world behind the text by evaluating the genesis, validity, reliability and relevance of the sources (Howell & Prevenier, 2001; Torstendahl, 2005). This includes taking into account probable

missing data and presumed omitted information, which, at least from a more modern point of view, are essential when describing homicidal acts.

Comparisons of homicide in a long historical time span require the ability to combine context-sensitive factors with variables used for detecting repeated patterns and characteristics. In other words, this kind of analysis combines *idiographic* and *nomothetic* approaches.⁴³ Contextual interpretation is used in this study to explore legal and societal factors and contexts affecting aspects of homicide (Kalela, 2012). Here, contextual interpretation means that we refer to factors external to the data. Homicide is the outcome measured by our codebook, but the interpretations always also refer to external conditions. This operation does not differ drastically from sociological interpretations of homicide patterns. For instance, specific victim–offender patterns can be interpreted with reference to typical cohabitation traditions or routine activities. Of course, ideally one would also have time series data on the predictors, but this is, for most theoretical variables, unrealistic in the long-duration analysis. Our descriptive tool is based on theories.

A historical-contextual interpretation of the dataset can in practice mean, for example, that surface similarities can hide relevant differences, or, vice versa, that surface differences can conceal historical continuities. To take just one example of the latter, it is possible that apparent changes in the social carrier groups of homicide disguise hidden continuity (Kivivuori & Lehti, 2006). Itinerant ex-soldiers of the early modern period and contemporary marginalized males on unemployment or disability benefits both occupy the lowest ladder of society, even if their social existences otherwise vastly differ from each other. The same applies to the motivational structures of homicides:

⁴³ The distinction between idiographic and nomothetic sciences goes back to the philosopher Wilhelm Windelband (1980 [1894]). For a discussion in relation to homicide research, see Kivivuori et al. (2014).

surface differences can hide long-duration stabilities such as revenge behaviour, an important factor in the foreground of crime motivation in modern times too (Kivivuori et al., 2016). In different eras and social contexts, revenge can be triggered by different types of conflicts.

CHAPTER 5

Homicide Rates in the 17th Century

The key goal of this research is to describe and compare patterns of violence. This we do by disaggregating homicide into its constituent parts, and then comparing the relative distributions across the research locations (see Chapters 6–8). However, homicide research would not be complete without estimates of homicide rates. So, before we address the patterns, we describe the risk of violent death in early modern Denmark, Sweden and Finland. The aim of our rate estimates is to provide a general comparative overview of homicide risk in the study regions. In order to calculate rates, we need two things: homicide counts and population estimates. Homicide counts derive from our definition of homicide as applied in the data corpuses. Population estimates derive from taxation-related sources for the examined regions.⁴⁴

Population estimates are likely to be imprecise for the early modern period. However, there is reason to believe that population estimates usually do not compromise the overall comparative view of homicide trends (Aebi & Linde, 2016, p. 71; Eisner, 2001, pp. 627–628). Especially problematic are, however, the crime rates for urban areas. The resident populations of early modern Nordic towns were very small both by absolute numbers and when

⁴⁴ Church population records became the standard in the 17th century, in Sweden and Finland at the earliest by the late 1690s, in Denmark in 1645.

compared with the number of non-resident daily visitors. The rate calculations, however, include both resident and non-resident offenders and victims in relation to the city population. In addition, crimes committed outside the city boundaries were also sometimes recorded in the city court records. Nonetheless, rate estimations can be made and they provide a general picture of the frequency of lethal violence in early modern urban areas (Karonen, 1995, p. 2). In our study, we define the place of homicide as rural or urban depending on the type of court having jurisdiction in the case. The early modern Crown was rigorous in controlling city-based trade by demanding clear-cut city borders, customs and special taxation. However, in spite of this, the boundaries of cities and the adjoining rural areas remained in practice easily permeable for the population. This was the case especially as long as the cities were small or recently established. People could live in the rural outskirts of the city by night and gained their income from trade within the city borders in day-times. This makes any calculation of city populations hazardous.

5.1 Prior Research on Early Modern Homicide Rates

What is so far known regarding homicide rates in our study period? Several *local* studies have described homicide rates of specific towns and communities in northern Europe during the 17th century. Figure 5.1 summarizes these studies. As can be seen, there seems to be a downward trend. However, the decreasing pattern is largely created by the disappearance of very high homicide rate readings towards the end of the century.

Based on this figure, one could argue that the 17th-century homicide drop reflected diminishing variation in the risk of lethal violence. This is consistent with the creation of a stronger central state, whose powers worked towards more uniform nation states. The high variation can also reflect the local nature of the studies. There is clearly a need to base homicide rate estimates on broader areas, such as the regions examined in the current study. In what follows, we report regional homicide rates for complete regions

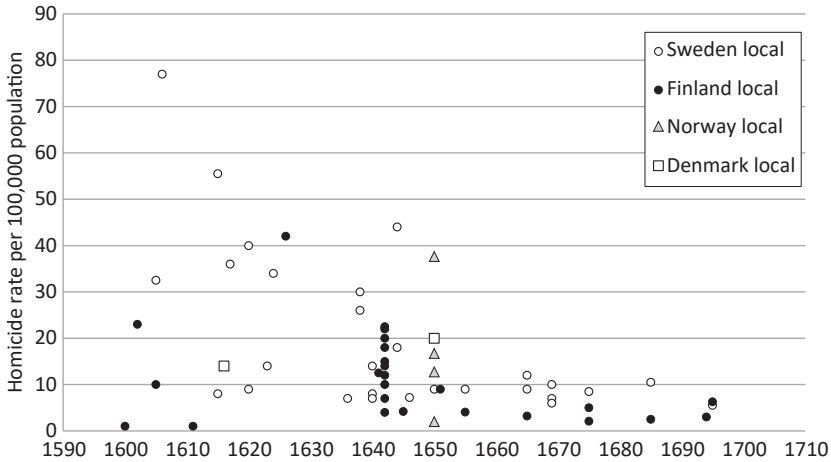


Figure 5.1: Homicide rates during the 17th century, compiled from Nordic studies. Adapted from Kivivuori and Lehti (2011).

during the early modern period, and examine the change of homicide rates within country data. We also discuss the differentials over the 17th century, with the strong caveat that the time periods differ. All differences can reflect regional and/or period changes.

5.2 Overall Homicide Rates

The general homicide rate for the 17th century in our combined data was 6.4 victims per 100,000 population per year (Table 5.1). This figure is of course very abstract and aggregates a century-long time period and significant geographical variation from western Denmark to northern Finland. It is therefore more meaningful to examine the region- and period-specific rates. There, Danish Jutland shows the highest homicide rate, of 13.6 victims per 100,000 population. South-eastern Sweden's rate is approximately half of that, with 7.1 victims per 100,000. Northern Finland shows the lowest homicide rate, of 3.7 victims per 100,000. Interestingly, the overall homicide rate decreases by half when we move from western Denmark to southern Sweden, and again from southern Sweden to northern Finland. This difference is simultaneously a geographical difference and a time difference.

Table 5.1: Homicide victims per 100,000 person-years, Nordic study regions, 1608–1699.^a

	Denmark ^b	Sweden ^c	Finland ^d	Total
All victims	13.6	7.1	3.7	6.4
Male victims	25.2	12.5	4.7	10.5
Female victims	1.8	1.5	2.2	2.0

^a Homicide figures exclude under-one-year-olds; population figures include all age categories.

^b 1608, 1612 and 1616–1650.

^c 1640–1650.

^d 1640–1699.

We also calculated gender-specific homicide victimization rates in the three research regions. To estimate the size of the male and female populations, the estimated resident population was divided by two.⁴⁵ As is shown in Table 5.1, the risk of lethal violence was drastically higher among males than females. In the Danish data, the male homicide rate was 25.2 per 100,000 men per year, while the corresponding figure was 12.5 in south-eastern Sweden and 4.7 in northern Finland. The male victimization risks explain the differences between the regions in the overall homicide risk. In contrast, female homicide victimization rates do not manifest an analogous pattern. Here, Finland shows higher risk rates than the other two countries.

We observe marked differences in homicide rates in the three study sites. These reflect differentials in male homicide victimization. In Denmark, male homicide rates were still rather high among the rural population in the first decades of the 17th century. This concurs with previous estimated homicide rates indicating a high level up to around 1640, followed by a sharp

⁴⁵ This calculation underestimates male homicide rates and overestimates female homicide rates. A sensitivity analysis based on a 47.5/52.5 gender distribution yields estimates around 5 per cent higher for males and around 5 per cent lower for females, but does not affect comparative findings across study sites. Note that the gender-specific rate estimates exclude victims with unknown gender (see Appendix A).

drop, which again corresponds to scant information from other Danish studies as well as the chronology of the great pacification in other parts of Europe (Netterstrøm, 2017a). The pattern from the earliest Danish data to the latest Finnish data can reflect regional differences or context differences. They are also consistent with prior observations on the Nordic homicide drop taking place especially strongly during the 17th century (Eisner, 2014; Kivivuori & Lehti, 2011; see also Figure 3.1 in Chapter 3 of this book).

It is also of some interest to compare these findings with the summary Figure 5.1. The impression given by local studies is that the rates could be very high in the early 17th century, while our regional data yield much lower rates. For Denmark, it needs to be noted that the figures exclude urban areas, but, for Sweden and Finland, urban areas are included. One reason for the general difference could therefore be that a regional study with a larger population base and longer observation periods, such as ours, produces more robust estimates.

If we count offenders instead of victims, the comparative findings are the same as the victim-based counts used here. The offending rates are slightly higher than victimization rates owing to multiple offender cases.

5.3 Region-Specific Homicide Rate Trends

In this section, we present findings regarding homicide rate changes in the examined regions. For each study region, we examine and compare both full regional trends and subregion-specific trends. Our research adds to prior research by using, in addition to municipality- and city-level aggregates, larger province-level aggregates that have fewer random error sources. Of course, even below our lowest subregion level, there are unobserved local patterns. All annual fluctuations can reflect random variation.⁴⁶

⁴⁶ We describe the data produced in the creation of the Historical Homicide Monitor. In the future there is a need to move towards time series analyses.

Northern and Central Jutland, Denmark

The Danish rate analysis is based on the single years of 1608 and 1612, and an annual series from 1616 to 1621. The analysis is complicated by the fact that the data were collected from three subregions of Jutland, and these areas did not have data for every observation year. We therefore opted to calculate rates from the original data collection areas and years, without aggregation. The non-aggregated annual rates are shown in Figure 5.2 below.

In all three subregions of Jutland, 1617 was a peak year of homicide. Northern and south-western regions show a decrease after the peak, while the eastern subregion has no pattern within itself. The scattered pattern of the observations suggests that there may have been a homicide high in between years 1617 and 1619, followed by lower rates during the early 1620s. More data and longer time series are needed to ascertain whether these observations represent random or substantially meaningful variation. For instance, the possible impact of the social disciplining campaign from 1615 would be a good hypothesis to test with more

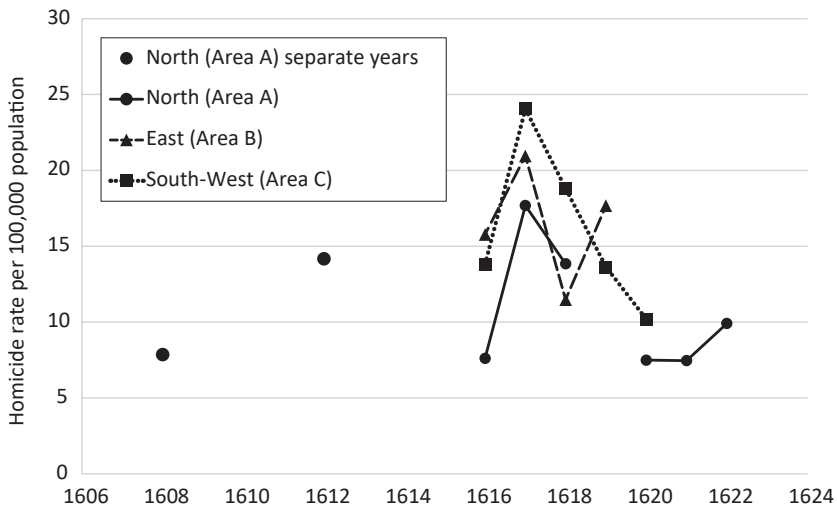


Figure 5.2: Homicide rates in Jutland, Denmark, years 1608 and 1612 and 1616–1622, with 16 subregional observations.

data. The campaign used increased legal prosecution and religious propaganda to counteract apostasy, witchcraft, premarital sex and excessive luxury. It was itself a part of more sustained efforts of the state to criminalize homicide by ordinances outlawing duels, passive bystanding, infanticide, noble offenders and private settlements (Netterstrøm, 2017a). However, the apparent decline in the first years of the 1620s can only be verified for northern and south-western regions, and it was followed by later homicide drops (from around 1640) that were steeper and encompassed all three subregions of Jutland (Netterstrøm, 2017a). It should also be noted that the peak in 1617 may be explained, at least partly, by increased prosecution due to the disciplining campaign initiated that year.

If we ignore time trends and only compare the regions, the northern subregion manifests lower homicide rates than the other two subregions. At first glance, this is surprising since the northern region had the weakest authority structures, the most scattered noble estates, the most distant royal officers, the lowest population density and the most isolated farms and smaller villages. One would suppose that all this would have made its population the least controlled by the authorities in Jutland. It could also have entailed a weaker horizontal social control, potentially resulting in more violence. On the other hand, from the point of view of routine activity theory, low population density, more isolated villages and thus longer distances between people could also relate to reduced violence risk by reducing interaction in crime generator and crime attractor hot spots (Felson & Eckert, 2016). It is also possible that the regional differences reflect differential reporting and processing likelihoods.

The explanation for the lower homicide rate in the northern subregion can be methodological, if conditions therein caused more homicides to be unresolved, ignored, or settled locally without reaching the high court. In crime measurement, societal conditions can yield differential reporting rates in various areas. If, however, such conditions and reporting rates remain stable during the observation period, as we can assume in our case because

the observation period is relatively short, it is probable that trends are more valid than absolute rates. From this point of view, it is of interest that the subregional trends in northern and south-western Jutland appear to be consistent. On the other hand, it is possible that reporting rates changed in the period 1608–1622 due to the disciplining campaign that began in 1617, entailing increased prosecution of crimes.

Overall, the findings are consistent with Denmark following the general pattern of the western European homicide drop. A major drop in homicide rates seems to have occurred from around 1640. The cases in 1608–1622 occurred in a period when the state tried to criminalize violence and homicide levels were falling, prior to the main pacification of the Danish Realm (Netterstrøm, 2017a).

South-Eastern Sweden

As noted in Table 5.1, in south-eastern Sweden the homicide rate in 1640–1650 was 7 per 100,000 population per year, almost exactly half the Danish rate in Jutland a couple of decades earlier. Can we see rate changes within the Swedish observation period?

The homicide rates fluctuated in the region between 5 and 9 (see Figure 5.3). What we see is a period of relative stability, or even a declining trend until 1648. This stability was reversed rather abruptly towards the end of the observation period, with high-rate years of 1649 and 1650.

When the four Swedish provinces of the study region are examined separately (Figure 5.4), two observations emerge. First, the homicide rate in Jönköping province is consistently lower than in the other three provinces. In Jönköpings län, the average homicide rate was 2.7 per population per year, while the corresponding rates were 8.6 in Östergötlands län, 9.5 in Kalmar län, and 9.1 in Kronobergs län. There are no obvious differences in political, economic or social structures, or routine activity patterns, that could explain why the homicide rates were so much lower in Jönköping.

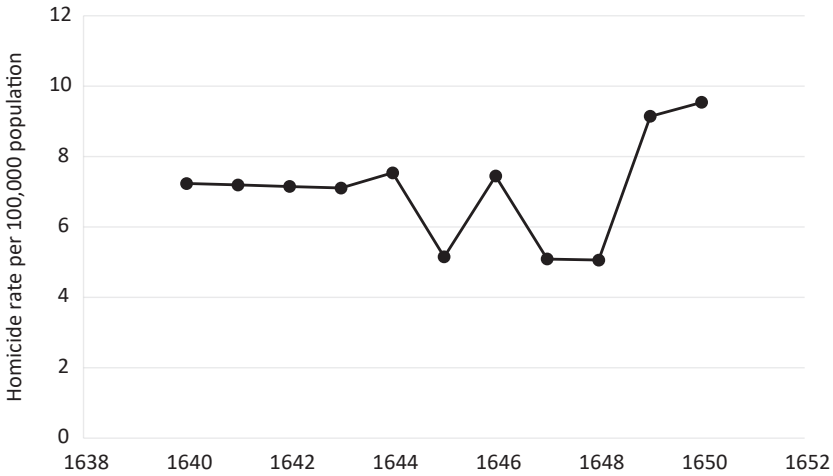


Figure 5.3: Homicide rate in south-eastern Sweden in 1640–1650.

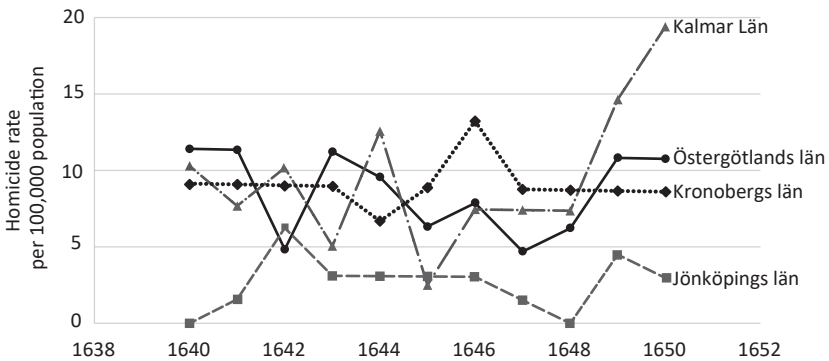


Figure 5.4: Homicide rate in south-eastern Sweden 1640–1650, by province.

Second, the 1649–1650 homicide peak was seen in other subregions apart from the Kronobergs län. To explore the magnitude of this change, we calculated pre- and post-rates for two-year periods 1647–1648 and 1649–1650. In the overall Swedish data, the increase in homicide rate was 84 per cent. However, the relative risk change was biggest in Jönköpings län, where the risk increased by a factor of five. In Östergötlands and Kalmar län, the risk approximately doubled, while in Kronobergs län no change was

observed. There is no immediate explanation as to why one of the Swedish subregions was exempt from the post-1648 peak.

From 1630 to 1648, the Swedish Realm participated in the Thirty Years' War in central Europe. The homicide wave of 1649–1650 could be related to the end of the war and the subsequent demobilization of the field army. At the end of the war, the Swedish army had comprised 64,000 soldiers, but only one quarter of these were Swedes or Finns; the majority were mercenaries who did not return to Sweden or Finland after the war. However, the Swedish government did perceive the returning soldiers as a potential problem and took measures to alleviate the problem (Karonen, 2012). Our Swedish study region was geographically much closer to the theatres of war than our Finnish study region.

Theoretically, the impact of military demobilization on homicide is plausible. Routine activity theory suggests that violent incidents increase when motivated offenders – such as ex-soldiers lacking legitimate opportunities for sustenance – and suitable targets – like rural people – coincided in time in the absence of effective guardianship by state actors. Similar conclusions can be based on other theoretical traditions as well, such as control and learning theories. The returning soldiers were often vagrants lacking legitimate social ties to the local community. Accustomed to using violence, they also espoused a strong honour culture with an often-marginalized social position, a combination that likely impacted the rates of violence in Sweden (Liliequist, 1999). However, the overall impact of warfare on homicide rates is likely to be complex, and possibly differential in varying time spans. The criminogenic impact of short-term mobilization shocks seems in any case to be supported by multiple local observations, including ours.

Ostrobothnia, Finland

As noted in Table 5.1, the northern Finnish homicide rate in the period 1640–1699 was 4 per 100,000 population per year, almost exactly half the rate in south-eastern Sweden in 1640–1650. Can we see rate changes within the Finnish observation period? The longer duration of the Finnish data makes this question

particularly interesting. What we see (Figure 5.5) is a zigzagging trend, which is reversed by rising rather abruptly towards the end of the observation period, from the mid-1690s. The zigzagging part of the Finnish pre-peak trend appears to have no systematic trend. From 1670 to mid-1690s, the rate was actually lower than the average rate.⁴⁷ If aggregated to the level of decades (see Figure 5.7), the Finnish trend is consistent with a slow decrease before the 1690s peak. Nevertheless, the northern Finnish trend cannot be described as a drastic homicide drop period.

The drop interpretation is further nuanced by the 1690s' surge of homicide. This peak coincides with a major famine period in Finland (Lappalainen, 2012), suggesting that strain theoretical factors, related to absolute poverty and serious economic crisis, explains the rise in lethal violence. Importantly, research indicates that the crisis known as the Great Famine did not lead to any interruption in the working of the court system (Lappalainen, 2014; Muroma, 1991). During the famine, homicide could be committed for the purpose of property protection. In one case, a delirious starving beggar killed people from whom he sought assistance in Vöyri in 1697.⁴⁸

We additionally estimated the Finnish rates separately for the rural and the urban populations (Figure 5.6). The figure shows that the urban homicide rate was higher than the rural rate. However, since most of the population lived in rural areas, the rural rate is very close to the overall rate. The urban rates are also based on a smallish number of cases, making the observations susceptible to random variation. We see an urban homicide bust after the 1650s, which, however, is partly due to missing sources in the archive. The homicide boom of the 1690s is visible for the rural areas and overall homicide rate, but the urban situation appears to have deteriorated a decade earlier. Owing to the decade perspective, Figure 5.6 does not reveal that the high readings of the

⁴⁷ The drop around 1675 probably reflects the fact that many court records of Kainuu were destroyed in a fire at the Turku High Court in 1681 (see data description).

⁴⁸ HHMD 3580000109.

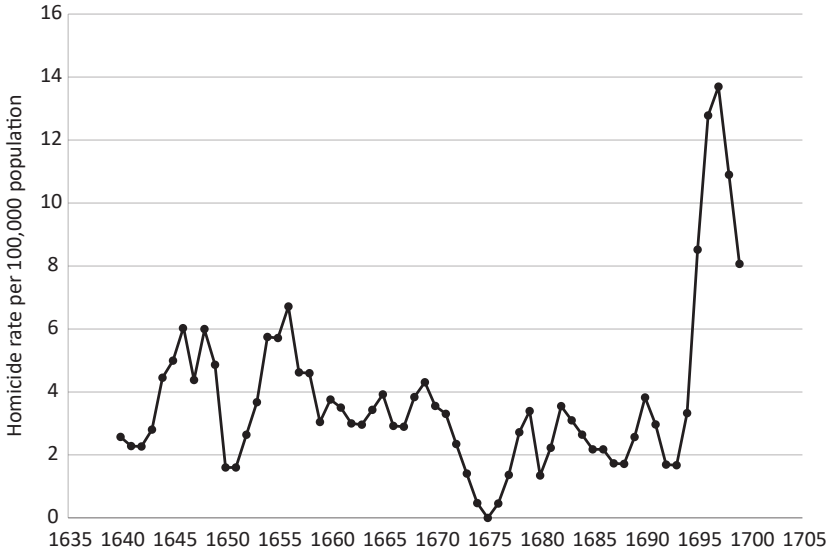


Figure 5.5: Homicide rate in the province of Ostrobothnia, Finland, 1640–1699.



Figure 5.6: Homicide rates by decade in the province of Ostrobothnia, Finland, 1640–1699, by type of community.

1690s mostly reflect the famine years. The rural decline of homicide corroborates that there likely was a slow decrease of homicide rate going on in northern Finland during most of our observation period. However, it remains unclear whether the urban areas followed this pattern, as there is no clear trend.

The findings are consistent with the prior observation that early modern towns had higher homicide rates than rural areas (Ylikangas, 1998b, p. 13; Ylikangas, Karonen, Lehti & Monkkonen, 2001, p. 71).

5.4 Comparison of Trends

Above, we examined the homicide rates and trends in our Danish, Swedish and Finnish study regions during the observation periods used in this study. Since the typical rates in these regions were different, the region-specific inspection largely ignores such differentials. In this section, we present graphs that place the homicide rates of the three study regions on a shared scale, allowing visual comparison of rates and trends. This complements the above raw comparison of overall homicide rates (Section 5.2 above).

Figure 5.7 provides a comparison aggregated to the level of decades. The Danish (1608–1622) and Swedish (1640–1650) data are treated as single observation units, while the longer Finnish series is divided into decades. As such, the differentials are consistent with both (stable) regional differences and temporal change. In south-eastern Sweden, the rate for 1640–1650 was higher than the northern Finnish average for the same decade, a difference partly accounted for by the Swedish 1648–1650 peak. After this, using the Finnish observations, the moderate drop continued and levelled off during the 1670s. The downward shift could reflect the rise of the central state and its efforts at internal pacification. A growing number of Crown and municipal officials, and a more efficient legal system, increased social control directly and indirectly, by training local citizens to intervene in conflicts at an early stage, stopping them from escalating into homicidal acts (Karonen, 1998a; Karonen, 1998b; see also Lockwood, 2017). The

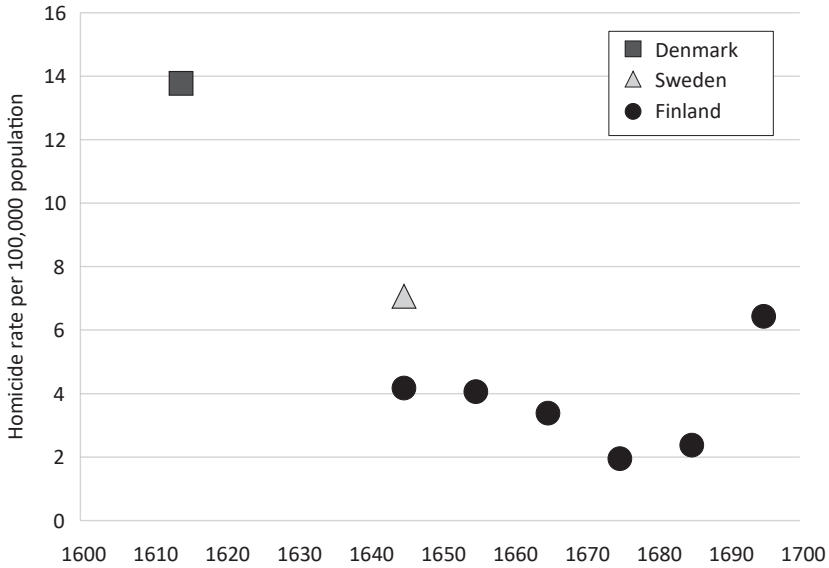


Figure 5.7: Homicide rates in Denmark, Sweden and Finland (study regions) during the 17th century by decades. Note that the data are not national but derive from specific regions of the countries.

Finnish increase of the 1690s reflects the famine crisis and serves as a reminder that the state-driven pacification process was not the only factor impacting homicide rates.

We repeated the same comparison using annual observations. Figure 5.7 shows each of the regional series separately, but in Figure 5.8 we place the observations on a shared vertical rate scale. For Jutland in Denmark, the graph shows each subregion separately, forming a scatter pattern. All three datasets manifest short-term fluctuation in homicide rate. Sweden and Finland both manifest a pattern of decreasing or stable pattern, rather than an increase. In both countries, this is reversed by a crisis peak at the end of the period. The drastic magnitude of the Finnish famine peak is clearly visible. The annual comparison also indicates that the difference between the Finnish and Swedish study region during the 1640s (Figure 5.7) was not fully explained by the 1649–1650 peak in south-eastern Sweden, as Swedish rates tended to be higher in the early 1640s as well (Figure 5.8).

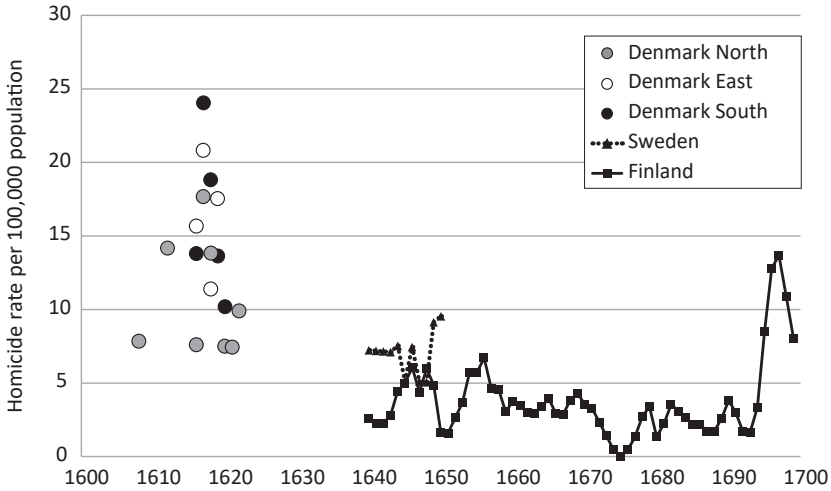


Figure 5.8: Annual homicide rates in Denmark, Sweden and Finland (study regions) during the 17th century. Note that the data are not national but derive from specific regions of the countries.

The general decline of homicide rates since the Middle Ages is by now an established fact, in northern Europe as in many other parts of the continent. This process was likely caused by the increasing efforts of the state to control societies. Indeed, the Danish king and church had since the Middle Ages gradually criminalized varying forms of homicide, and this process of criminalization accelerated during the 16th and 17th centuries in association with the early modern state-building primarily caused by military, economic and religious changes (Netterstrøm, 2017a). Similar intensification of state powers and local administration took place in Sweden.

As noted above, our data cannot directly prove a homicide drop during the 17th century because they derive from three different regions. If the all-Nordic pattern was decreasing during the 17th century,⁴⁹ the drop probably reflected the penetration of state powers to local levels (Österberg, 1996; Ylikangas, 1998a). While

⁴⁹ Our regional comparison is consistent with this, but does not prove it as such.

modern states can cause homicide to decline by intensified control (Goertzel et al., 2013), it would be problematic to claim that early modern states were incapable of similar crackdowns. The alternating conditions of war and peace are also possible predictors of homicide, a hypothesis that warrants further study.

Researchers have criticized the notion that the homicide drop was a smooth transition from violent to pacified societies (Karonen, 1998a, pp. 160–178; Lindström, 2008). Indeed, the process was never smooth, inevitable and free from friction. It met with resistance not just from the broader population but also in certain situations from members of the elite. People's attitudes towards homicide likely lagged behind the state's perspective, especially during times of crisis. Intentional killing could be tolerated in certain circumstances, and people could prefer to resolve homicide cases by settlement for compensation rather than prosecution for punishment (Netterstrøm, 2017a).

The current study suggests that the internal pacification of the Nordic kingdoms was more complicated and discontinuous than expected. Interestingly, taken separately, our regions do not show very consistent drops, with the partial exception of Finland and Sweden just before periods of social disruption at the end of the observation periods. Clearly, further research is needed, with longer and more continuous series from wider regional bases. The existence of short-term fluctuations may be even more evident than the more slowly unfolding drop. We therefore revisit the Finnish and Swedish patterns during periods of societal turmoil in Chapter 10 below. Before that, we give a comprehensive description of early modern homicide in our three study regions.

CHAPTER 6

Lethal Conflicts in the Early Modern Period

In the spring of 1661, in the village of Vattsor, South Ostrobothnia, a body was found floating in the river. The victim had a massive sharp weapon wound in the head. She was identified as the wife of the farmer Henrik Gunneson, who had earlier raised alarm suspecting that his wife had drowned. Soon evidence was mounting that Henrik himself had killed his wife. Witnesses told that, shortly before her death, the wife had expressed fear of being slain by her husband, who was in love with their maid and wanted to marry her. The case against the extramarital couple became solid when they escaped to Stockholm, capital of the realm, to avoid prosecution. When arrested, the maid confessed that her master had planned to murder his wife so that they could marry. In the end, Henrik also confessed to having hated his wife to the point of homicide. He had taken the wife to another village under pretence of buying grain. On their way back, he killed her, dumped the body in the river, and raised alarm for suspected drowning. Henrik was sentenced to be beheaded and dismembered, while the maid escaped the death penalty because she had assisted the authorities in clearing the case.⁵⁰

⁵⁰ HHMD 3580000076.

This case from early modern Finland took place more than 350 years ago. In spite of the time distance, the motives are hardly strange to us. The sexual motive of triangle drama, the offender ruminating and planning the crime, the failed attempt of cover-up as a drowning accident, the frustrated escape across the Gulf of Bothnia to the relative anonymity in the biggest city of the realm, and the final confession – all these aspects can be found in contemporary homicide as well. Yet we do not know how frequent this type of crime was, or how common it was, or whether it was more common in Finland than in the other two research regions.

In this chapter, we examine early modern homicide from the point of view of the incidents: how many people were involved, where it happened, and how the victim was killed. We also explore the basic types of homicide, describing the contexts of the incidents, and the relationship between the victim and the offender. We conclude the chapter by taking a look at the foreground aspects of the crimes. Why were the offenders propelled to their crimes? Were they engaged in self-defence, or avenging prior deeds against themselves? Or perhaps protecting their property by projecting deterrence to would-be thieves? In examining the motives of the offenders, we keep in mind the context. While our study era witnessed an increasing consolidation of state power, the state was nowhere as powerful and omnipresent as are modern nation states. In all aspects of life, people had to rely more on self-help than people of more recent eras do.

Our methodological approach, and many critical caveats, were described above (Chapter 4). However, there is reason to underscore the specific conventions we have adopted, as well as certain caveats. First, it should be noted that our early modern data are based on parts of the countries, not full countries. For simplicity of expression, we sometimes also use country names in parallel with the names of the regions. Second, the periods are not identical. The only overlap in observation periods is between Finland and Sweden in 1640–1650. Third, we present compositional information based on percentages. This kind of descriptive approach overlooks the differential rates of homicide in the study locations. To counterbalance this, we additionally discuss estimated rates

of homicide subtypes, to remind the reader that higher compositional percentage does not necessarily mean higher risk.⁵¹ Differences and temporal change of homicide rates were examined in detail in the previous chapter. There we observed that the homicide rate was highest in Denmark (14 per 100,000), intermediate in Sweden (7 per 100,000) and lowest in northern Finland (4 per 100,000). In temporal order, this would indicate a considerable homicide drop from the beginning of the 17th century to the later part of the century. Of course, since the areas are different, such a simplistic comparison is extremely tentative. The point here is to stress that proportional differences in homicide patterns should not be directly interpreted as differences in risk.

Bearing these caveats in mind, we are able to give an unprecedented full picture of early modern homicide patterns. All our information derives from the court protocols and is thus limited to cases and persons included in them. We include all persons suspected of homicide, irrespective of the result of the court procedure, in order to mimic the modern police files-based inclusion in the EHM guidelines (Granath et al., 2011; Kivivuori et al., 2020a). Not all of the suspects were convicted of homicide. In the relevant historical period, there was no modern police force investigating the cases distinctly from the judicial process. Rather, the stages of investigating, prosecuting and sentencing took place in a single legal continuum. For simplicity of expression, we use the terms ‘victim’ and ‘offender’ as referring to persons identified by court protocols as possible, likely or certain victims or offenders of homicide.

We describe the basic patterns of homicide using the *incident as an observation unit*. In practice, this means that we limit the analyses to the rows of the principal victim in the dataset. Each incident has been attributed to having had only one *principal victim* older than one year of age. We start the analysis from the basic offence features and move on to the variables that are of particular

⁵¹ Note that the rates used in these estimations depend on the observation unit used (incident, victim, offender).

interest from theoretical points of view, especially that of routine activity theory, such as the location of crime, mode of killing and the time cycles of the offending. All analyses, save those in Chapter 9, *exclude infanticide*, defined as all cases targeted at persons born alive and less than one year old at the time of death.⁵²

6.1 Number of Victims and Offenders in Cases

Typically, modern Nordic homicides involve one victim and one offender (Granath et al., 2011; Lehti et al., 2019). From the point of view of crime measurement, the number of victims is probably more resistant to cultural changes in long-term comparisons. The number of offenders in a case can reflect different criminal justice practices and changing cultural understandings regarding participation and complicity. Therefore, the number of co-offenders is, to a greater degree, subject to cultural and social construction processes. Based on our early modern data, however, the pattern of one victim and one offender in lethal violence appears to be resistant to societal and cultural changes.

The number of victims in a case ranged in our historical data from one to five, the case of five victims being a robbery killing of a whole family in northern Finland.⁵³ In contrast, the number of offenders ranged from one to ten, with the sole ten-offender case taking place in the Danish Jutland during a drunken brawl.⁵⁴ The only case in Sweden with a high number of multiple offenders involved a seven-offenders search party killing a fugitive.⁵⁵

From a comparative perspective (Table 6.1), northern Finland had more multiple victim cases and more multiple offender cases than the other two regions. One in five Finnish homicide incidents featured more than one offender. What could explain the

⁵² Multiple victim incidents and offenders are included, if at least one victim was at least one year old.

⁵³ HHMD 3580000184.

⁵⁴ HHMD 450000024.

⁵⁵ HHMD 460000079.

Table 6.1: Number of victims and offenders in homicide cases, percentage of incidents in Nordic countries, 1608–1699.

	Denmark	Sweden	Finland	Total
<i>Victims</i>				
One victim	99	99	95	98
Two victims	1	1	3	1
Three or more victims	0	1	2	1
Total ^a	100	100	100	100
N	192	158	190	540
Victims per case (mean)	1.0	1.0	1.1	1.0
<i>Offenders</i>				
One offender	86	82	78	82
Two offenders	9	12	19	14
Three or more offenders	4	6	2	4
Total ^a	100	100	100	100
N	191	158	190	539
Offenders per case (mean)	1.2	1.3	1.2	1.3

^a Columns may not add up to 100% due to rounding to integer.

comparatively high prevalence of multiple victim and multiple offender cases in northern Finland? This probably reflects the high prevalence of familial homicide in that region (see the analysis of homicide types in the subsection ‘Type of Homicide’ below). Multiple offender findings can refer to the high prevalence of robbery-related offences in northern Finland, even though long-standing conflicts between neighbours are also relevant (see findings in subsection ‘Victim–Offender Relationship’ below). For instance, two boys aged nine and 15, and an unidentified victim, were killed in 1649 because of their neighbour’s displaced aggression.⁵⁶ In this case, there were suspicions of the offender being a probable ‘sodo-

⁵⁶ HHMD 3580000041.

mite' (paedophile). The mean numbers of victims and offenders per case were similar in the three countries.

Critical reflections. The percentage of missing observations was low, less than 1 per cent, in variables tapping the number of victims and offenders. This aspect of the crime was quite relevant for the early modern court.

From the point of view of source criticism, there is an important difference between the number of victims and the number of offenders in the case. The former is more like a natural entity defined by violent death, while the latter is partially based on cultural interpretation. In other words, we need to acknowledge possible differences in the inclusion criteria of co-offenders. As such, the codebook principles aim to minimize sources of variation emanating from differential cultures and legal practices. Named suspects are counted as offenders.

Violent co-offenders were typically prosecuted in early modern Nordic courts, although complicity laws partially reflected medieval continuities in the realms of Denmark and Sweden.⁵⁷ It is possible that complicity laws, or cultural interpretive frames finding expression in such laws, have influenced how many persons are mentioned as suspects in the protocols. On the other hand, the difference between the Danish and Swedish distributions is quite small. Furthermore, the law was the same in Sweden and Finland, yet there is a considerable difference in findings on co-offending. It is possible that legal practices⁵⁸

⁵⁷ Complicity in homicide cases was known in Swedish medieval laws. It is mentioned briefly in Magnus Erikssons landslag (Dråpamålsbalken I, kap 22) as *hållbane*, and this is a bit more elaborated in Kristoffers landslag, which was applied in the 17th century (Dråpamål med vilje, kap 20, 21). And the law of complicity was elaborated even further in 1698. *Hållbane* literally refers to a person holding the victim when the offender kills the victim.

⁵⁸ The early modern courts may have been pragmatic with respect to evidence in pursuit of deterrence by harsh punishment, especially in cases of multiple-person drunken brawls. However, we find no evidence of this explaining the detected differences in Table 6.1.

of co-offender naming differed in parts of the realm, even though the law was the same, but there is currently no evidence to that effect. One relevant factor is probably the court type: the Finnish data are from courts of first instance, the Swedish and the Danish data from appellate court level. It is likely that the higher Finnish prevalence of multi-offender cases was reduced in appellate court levels. On the other hand, differences in behavioural patterns, like the comparatively high prevalence of family and kin cases in northern Finland, could also explain part of the difference.

6.2 Places of Killing

Place of crime is at the centre of modern criminological research. According to routine activity theory, crime occurs if motivated offenders and suitable targets coincide in time and place in the absence of capable guardians (Cohen & Felson, 1979; Felson & Eckert, 2016). People's legal routine activities constitute crime generators, such as modern traffic hubs or pre-modern fairs. Crime attractors, such as taverns and pubs, attract motivated offenders (Brantingham & Brantingham, 1995). Thus, the patterning of people's legal routine activities constitutes the opportunity structure of crime. There is no reason why historical periods should be exempt from such mechanisms. In what follows, we use the concepts of private, semi-public and public place, even though we acknowledge that these categories are historical formations; for instance, the homes of early modern societies tended to be less private than is typical in modern times (Laitinen, 2019).

Half of the homicides occurred in private places such as home-steads (Table 6.2). Interestingly, homicides were committed primarily in the private homes of 'others' in both Denmark and Sweden, while in Finland this type was rarer. In northern Finland, homicides were instead more often committed in the offender's and victim's shared home. The higher prevalence of such cases in the Finnish data can reflect a higher share of inti-

Table 6.2: Location of homicide, percentage of incidents in Nordic countries, 1608–1699.

	Denmark	Sweden	Finland	Total
<i>Private places</i>	49	48	52	49
Private home, resident unknown	0	1	0	0*
Private home of victim and perpetrator	2	5	18	8
Private home of perpetrator	12	6	7	8
Private home of victim	9	13	15	12
Private home of other person	26	23	12	20
<i>Semi-public places</i>	5	16	29	16
Institution dormitory	1	0	1	1
Inside private vehicle	0	0	1	0*
Park, forest, wilderness	1	4	21	8
Workplace	4	12	6	7
<i>Public places</i>	46	26	19	31
Shop, tavern etc.	1	0	5	2
Street, road, field, meadow	45	26	13	29
<i>Other</i>	0	10	1	3
Total ^a	100	100	100	100
N	167	153	156	474

*0.1–0.4%.

^a Columns may not add up to 100% due to rounding to integer.

mate partner violence (see Table 6.9), and the prevalence of homicide committed in extended or joint family households. Such households were more common in Finland than in the other Nordic countries (Koskivirta, 2003, p. 146; Sirén, 1999), impacting routines in a violence-relevant manner. In joint families, the risk of internal conflict tends to grow with the size of the family, whereas such a risk is more constant in areas where

nuclear families predominate (Daly & Wilson, 1988, p. 293, ref. 487).⁵⁹

In contrast, there were differences in the relative frequency of semi-public places of lethal violence. In the Danish data, few incidents occurred in places classified as semi-public, whereas in south-eastern Sweden this category took up every sixth incident. In northern Finland, nearly 30 per cent of the incidents were in this category. In the Swedish data, this reflected the high frequency of workplace killings, usually related to agricultural work, while in the Finnish data homicides in forests and the wilderness were more prominent in the category classified as semi-public places. The reason why the Finnish conflicts were often situated in a forest could also be work-related in the sense that the parties were occupied with securing their livelihood in forests.

The observed differences in homicides committed in semi-public, often work-related contexts, reflected prevalent routine activities in the study locations. Farmland was usually organized according to the open field system, where each peasant possessed or held their own scattered strips of land within larger fields, while livestock often grazed in common meadow lands. This system required communal regulations and close cooperation among the peasants (Jutikkala, 2003). Thus, farmlands could function as crime generators where many people met working side by side, with an elevated risk of conflicts. This homicide pattern appears prominent in early modern Sweden and Denmark. Northern Finland, in contrast, was dominated by the agricultural practice of slash-burning. Forestry in remote areas was also linked to tar burning as an important source of income in the area (Kaila, 1931; Kuuluvainen et al., 2004, p. 116). Both slash and tar burning were labour-intensive

⁵⁹ There is no research at hand on the sizes of 17th-century extended family households in northern Finland. According to the court records used for this study, these families tended to include multiple generations, and also include both legitimate and illegitimate children as well as extended kin.

enterprises and required the assistance of family and kin. Similarly as in work-related homicides in early modern villages, the prevalence of homicide in remote forests reflected routine activities in agricultural work. The gathering of large groups of potential offenders and victims in the absence of capable guardians created opportunities for conflicts and impulsive violent acts.

The role of public places, such as streets, roads, fields and meadows, as places of homicide increased in our data when we moved from north to south. Less than one in five Finnish incidents were committed in public places, while the corresponding share was more than one quarter in Sweden and nearly half in Denmark. This could reflect the borderland character of the northern Finnish region as well as differences in agricultural techniques and settlement types. The large share of homicide offending in public places in Denmark reflects killings in joint village areas such as common grazing grounds and in farmland fields, as well as public roads. In this regard, south-eastern Sweden occupies an intermediate position between Jutland and northern Finland. The relative unimportance of this location type in the Finnish data can also reflect opportunity structures. The building of public roads between larger towns intensified in Finland only after the Thirty Years' War (1618–1648) in order to promote the infrastructure for the economic life in the land (Villstrand, 2009).

The findings are complicated by the relativity of private space in the early modern period. In Denmark and Sweden, homicides were often committed or initiated in private homes that functioned as taverns, where the host sold beer for money. These were coded in this analysis as a 'private home of other person', not as restaurants. There were not many real taverns or inns in the countryside, so people gathered in such private taverns to drink. Also, many homicides in the Danish and the Swedish data took place at parties in private homes (birthday, funeral, Easter, Pentecost or Christmas celebrations). Although Finland had similar non-regulated taverns (Vilkuna, 1995), a lower relative share of northern Finnish homicide took place in such entertainment functions than in Jutland and south-eastern Sweden. Generally, in the early modern era, *activity functions* were not differentiated in terms

of *physical location* as much as in modernity. Parties or alcohol serving functions in private farms functioned as crime attractors, attracting uninvited guests and patrons seeking amusement and action, in the same way as the pubs and restaurants of today.

In sum, it is evident that the connection of violence to everyday routines was in the early modern period similar as it is today: violence *patterns* reflect the flow of common social interactions. The prominence of forests as crime locations in Finland, and streets, roads, fields and meadows in Sweden and Denmark, are cases in point. However, in particular, the role of crime attractors tended to differ from later periods. The majority of the early modern rural Nordic villages lacked proper and regulated public taverns for a local clientele, which for instance in England and Germany functioned as vital centres for village communication, gossip and local politics (Forster, 2009). Instead, Nordic villagers congregated in private homes, which also served as ‘public houses’ and entertainment sites. These spaces for social intercourse might have been a bit more dynamic and constant in Danish Jutland and south-eastern Sweden than in northern Finland. At least, this might explain the higher density of interpersonal lethal violence in public and semi-public places in Denmark and Sweden in comparison to Finland. In contrast, the Finnish crime patterns were impacted more by scarcely situated farms, long distances to neighbours and relative social isolation in long winter months, when the socializing depended solely on the members of the household. This may be linked to high salience of familial homicide as well (see subsection ‘Type of Homicide’), also reflecting the frequency of a joint home of the offender and the victim as a homicide site.

Rate perspective. Like all descriptive analyses comparing the patterns of homicide, the above discussions depict relative shares of places of homicides. While important and relevant as such, this omits the differential risks of homicide in the study locations. Table 6.3 shows the estimated place-specific homicide rates. Note that, even though the share of incidents taking place in private places was nearly equal in the three countries, the risk of getting killed in a private place was much higher in the Danish data from

Table 6.3: Estimated *location-specific* homicide rates per 100,000 population, Nordic countries, 1608–1699.^a

	Denmark	Sweden	Finland	Total
Private places	6.6	3.3	1.8	3.1
Semi-public places	0.7	1.1	1.0	1.0
Public places	6.2	1.8	0.6	1.9
Total homicide rate	13.5	6.9	3.5	6.2

^aThe category ‘Other’ is excluded from the table, but is included in the total homicide rate.

1608–1622 than in the Swedish data from 1640–1650 or in northern Finland in 1640–1699. With regard to public places, the risks and shares behave similarly.

Critical reflections. The location variable had missing information in 13 per cent of the incidents (Appendix B). This rate of data loss is quite satisfactory in data such as ours. The courts were interested in where the offence had taken place.

The coding of location in homicide cases provided a useful lesson for long-duration homicide analysis. Most importantly, it shows that *physical location* and *activity function* need to be coded separately in the future. For instance, during the coding process we observed discrepancies in how homicides involving household workers, and taking place in private homes, were coded. These people lived in their workplace; they were killed in private homes and in workplaces. The problem was solved by a joint decision to code homicides committed outside the working context as private places, and homicides in work contexts as workplaces. In unclear cases, the incidents were always coded as committed in private places. Another case in point is homicides taking place in private homes, but in the context of serving alcohol to outsiders. Here, too, the location and the function differ (see also Laitinen, 2019). It may be that function distribution could even resemble modern function distributions more than similar comparisons between physical locations. This shows the possible pitfalls of

pseudo-change (compare with Kivivuori & Lehti, 2006). To address this challenge, we incorporated into the HHM 2.0 a new variable (FUNCCONT) capturing functional activity context (Kivivuori et al., 2020a). Thus, in future HHM-based studies the function and place variables will be strictly separated, a decision that will also ease coding.

6.3 How the Victims Were Killed

Like many aspects of lethal violence, the instrument of killing reflects the available opportunities. According to routine activity theory, the available means of violence can impact the likelihood of violent incidents. A classic example is the introduction of non-poisonous domestic gas in the United Kingdom, which reduced the number of suicides by depriving motivated people of a readily available means of suicide (Clarke & Mayhew, 1988). In this section, we examine the instruments used by homicide offenders during the 17th century.

In a typical Nordic homicide of the 17th century, the victim was killed with a sharp instrument, usually with a knife or an axe. The most common weapon was the knife. Axes were quite prominent in Sweden and Finland. The second most common means of killing was a blunt instrument, used in every sixth homicide. They were typically stones, wooden clubs, logs, spades or hammers. The third most prevalent category is the heterogeneous class of other methods of killing. Killing without a weapon and using a firearm were rarer modes of lethal aggression (Table 6.4).

There were some interesting differences in the relative shares of killing methods in the three study regions. Northern Finland stands out with a relatively low share of sharp instrument killings and a higher frequency of violence without any weapon. This is, at first glance, surprising, as Finland became later, in the 19th century, notorious for its so-called knife fighters (Ylikangas, 1998a). Instead, the use of axes as weapons for killing was quite frequent in both south-eastern Sweden and northern Finland, but rare in

Table 6.4: Mode of killing, percentage of incidents in Nordic countries, 1608–1699.

	Denmark	Sweden	Finland	Total
<i>Firearm</i>	8	7	4	6
<i>Sharp objects</i>	67	64	45	59
Axe	8	19	16	14
Other sharp object	60	45	29	45
<i>Blunt object/weapon</i>	14	20	17	17
<i>Violence without weapon</i>	5	5	15	8
Hitting, kicking etc.	4	4	12	7
Push or shove (from/ in front of something)	1	1	3	1
<i>Other types of violence</i>	5	4	19	9
Poisoning	1	1	6	3
Hanging/strangulation/ suffocation	1	1	3	2
Drowning	1	1	7	3
Vehicle	1	0*	0*	0*
Smoke or fire	1	0*	0*	0*
Other	1	1	3	1
Total ^a	100	100	100	100
N	166	152	154	472

* 0.1–0.4%.

^a Columns may not add up to 100% due to rounding to integer.

Jutland.⁶⁰ This probably reflects the typical sources of livelihood, which in Sweden and Finland included forestry. The fact that the axe was frequently used in Finnish and Swedish homicides

⁶⁰ In the Finnish data, axe use was often linked to multiple offender cases.

probably reflects easy access to commonly used work tools. The axe was used for clearing new land for farming, in the context of cultivating new farmland and tar production (an enterprise highly prioritized by the state), and for a wide variety of other agricultural work tasks, like building and maintaining fences. The latter was itself sometimes a conflict issue. Pitchforks⁶¹ were used in approximately one in ten Danish homicides. This suggests a link between homicide weapons and prevalent economic activities, reflecting the importance of haymaking and keeping livestock. Haymaking must also have been important in Sweden, but pitchforks never appear as weapons. There may be various reasons for the lack of pitchforks in the Swedish data. One obvious explanation is that axes were so commonly used, because they were handled on a daily basis.

During the early modern era, firearms were rare as homicide instruments in all three study regions. Their use was, however, clearly more prevalent in Jutland and south-eastern Sweden than in northern Finland. Finnish homicides were characterized by an especially high share of other methods for killing such as poisoning, drowning and hanging or strangulation.

The predominance of sharp instruments, and the relative rarity of firearm use, was consistent with the way of life of the era. Rural people used sharp weapons like swords, halberds, crossbows or spears or a working tool, especially knife or axe, but also scythes, billhooks and hoes.⁶² Firearms were rare commodities, simply because they were very expensive, as was gunpowder. Guns were not, to the same degree as later, used for hunting, which from time to time in the 16th and 17th centuries was prohibited for the peasantry, even on their own land. More often, people hunted with pitfalls, traps and nets, killing the game with knives and spears, not firearms (Nyrén, 2012).

⁶¹ Coded to the category 'spear'.

⁶² See Kivivuori et al. (2020a), variables MODUS, SHARP and TYPE-FIREARM.

In the Finnish data, firearm homicides were mainly related to soldiers' brawls, or robbery killings by deserted or discharged soldiers. To give some examples, a Finnish army captain shot a drunken deserter when retrieving stolen army goods in Saloinen in 1656, while a former quartermaster shot, for unknown reasons, a noble lieutenant in Vaasa in 1683.⁶³ Firearms were also used by semi-public search parties catching fugitive criminals, and by ex-soldiers who had unlawfully appropriated military weapons when leaving service. Possibly, firearm homicides became more common later during the 17th century.

In the Swedish and the Danish data, firearm cases were different. Out of 13 homicides in Denmark committed with firearms, only one was committed by a soldier. In five other cases, soldiers used other weapons to kill. In one firearm case, the offender was the bailiff of a noble manor, but the rest of the firearm perpetrators were of peasant origin, in several cases young men such as rural servants or sons of peasants. These cases give the impression that gun ownership among commoners was not that rare in 17th-century Denmark. In Sweden, there were several cases with soldiers (including officers and navy seamen) involved as principal perpetrators, but only one homicide was committed by a soldier using a firearm. This happened after a shooting competition at a feast when two soldiers of German origin, who were also brothers-in-law, started to quarrel about the results.⁶⁴ The other Swedish cases are very mixed in terms of perpetrators. Some were local officials, some probably of peasant origin including rural servants, and one was a hammersmith at the Svartebo ironworks, who after previous frequent physical attacks from another hammersmith had decided to defend himself and his right to use a forge.⁶⁵ These observations confirm a large presence of soldiers in Swedish society, due to the nearly constant state of war, but a weak connection between soldiers and the use of firearms. On the other hand, firearms do not seem to have been extremely rare in Swedish society either.

⁶³ HHMD 358000049 and 358000009.

⁶⁴ HHMD 460000139.

⁶⁵ HHMD 460000092.

Why is northern Finland an outlier in ‘other’ modes of killing and killings without an instrument? One probable explanation relates to the poverty and remoteness of the studied Finnish region. People did not carry around their important work tools or expensive weapons when travelling long distances to meet friends and kin. Consequently, they used their hands and fists, or resorted to pushing and shoving as means of settling occasional disputes come homicides. This was a common pattern of Finnish homicide even a century later, especially in the remote eastern areas (Koskivirta, 2003).

Similarly, the higher frequency of drownings in the Finnish data seems opportunity-related. In the studied area, lakes and ponds are common, giving good opportunities for drowning as a *modus operandi*. The role of ice coverage during winter merits further inquiry, as the Finnish research region was much more northern than the other two regions. In early modern times, when public roads were scarce in remote areas, waterways formed such traffic arteries as are relevant for routine activity theory (Felson & Eckert, 2016). Many villages were situated by a waterfront. On the other hand, people in Sweden and Denmark also had good access to streams, lakes and the sea, so the picture is more complex and calls for more detailed research. Swedish homicides were often committed in locations where drowning was not an option.

Poisoning is sometimes regarded as a particularly female mode of killing (Mann, 1996), as is the case also in Finnish and Danish early modern homicide. Indeed, females were in the majority as offenders in this type of lethal violence. Only one in ten poisonings in our data was committed by a male offender. The majority of the incidents were situated in urban areas. The reasons for this concentration remain an open question, as knowledge of poisonous plants and herbs was likely prevalent among the rural peasantry (Haartman, 1765). Since detection of poisoning as the cause of death was probably difficult, not much can be said based on these differences.

Rate perspective. The above findings pertain to the relative shares of different methods of aggression. While important and relevant as such, this omits how likely people were to get killed with specific

Table 6.5: Estimated *mode of violence-specific* homicide rates per 100,000 population, Nordic countries, 1608–1699.

	Denmark	Sweden	Finland	Total
Firearm	1.1	0.5	0.1	0.4
Sharp objects	9.1	4.5	1.6	3.7
Blunt object/weapon	2.0	1.4	0.6	1.1
Violence without weapon	0.7	0.3	0.5	0.5
Other types of violence	0.7	0.3	0.7	0.6
Total homicide rate	13.5	6.9	3.5	6.2

weapon types. Table 6.5 shows the estimated mode-specific homicide rates. Note, for instance, that the risk of getting killed with a sharp instrument was twice as high in Denmark than in Sweden, even though the percentage of sharp object violence was similar. We also see that firearm incident risk was highest in Denmark, intermediate in Sweden, and close to non-existent in Finland.

Critical reflections. The mode of killing could not be extracted from the source in 13 per cent of the incidents. This amount of missing data appears satisfactory when historical court protocols are used as sources. The courts and parties in homicide trials often specified how the homicide had been committed, yielding a low missing data percentage. In Sweden, the percentage of missing data was as low as 4 per cent. Our assessment was that this variable worked well, owing to the centrality of the weapon in judicial decision-making.

The contested issue regarding modes of killing was in many homicide trials, who was the first to use the weapon, as this issue was important for determining culpability and meting out the sanctions. By means of such an inquiry, the courts sought to point out the main killer in multiple perpetrator cases. Therefore, it was often necessary to specify which weapon caused the fatal blow. In such cases, inspections of the victim's body were commonly carried out. Based on the evidence, it was possible to form fairly

accurate assessments regarding the injuries,⁶⁶ and to draw conclusions as to what weapon had caused the lethal wound.

The mode of killing could be contested in the trial, something that was observed mainly in the Danish sources. The parties could have reason to over-report or under-report the use of weapons, or give false testimony about what kind of weapons had been used. Since the prosecution had a stake in underscoring the use of lethal weapons, while the defence had a stake in minimizing the use of weapons, it is not possible to claim a uniform direction of bias in the source material. In the Swedish and the Finnish data, however, there are very few signs that the type of weapon was contested, as weapon selection did not affect sanctioning.

6.4 Types of Interpersonal Violence

One of the simplest, and often very informative, means of classifying homicide types refers to the genders of the parties. In most datasets, male-to-male incidents, where both the offender and the victim are male, are the most typical type of homicide in terms of gender combinations. Researchers have often suggested that this type of homicide typically explains homicide differentials and changes over time (Eisner, 2008; Verkko, 1951). It is therefore of special interest to examine the gender constellations in early modern homicide (Table 6.6).

Four out of five homicide incidents happened between males (Table 6.6). The second largest category was male-to-female cases, with more than every tenth incident belonging to this type. Female-to-male and female-to-female incidents were comparatively rare. When the three research regions are compared, a clear difference emerges: in Finland, more than one in five incidents were committed by males against females. Correspondingly, the percentage of male-to-male incidents was lower in Finland than

⁶⁶ See Lockwood (2017, pp. 19, 105–145) for a discussion of lay vs. medical expertise in early modern cause of death investigations.

Table 6.6: Percentage of gender combinations in incidents, Nordic countries, 1608–1699.

	Denmark	Sweden	Finland	Total
Male-to-male	90	87	66	81
Male-to-female	5	8	22	12
Female-to-male	4	3	6	4
Female-to-female	1	2	6	3
Total	100	100	100	100
N	190	158	175	523

in Denmark and Sweden. Northern Finland also manifested relatively more cases where the offender was female. Note that these figures exclude all cases where the victim was less than one year old, so the higher prevalence of incidents committed by females is not a reflection of infanticide.

Social Standing of the Parties

In early modern Nordic societies, people belonged to one of the four estates: peasantry, burghers, clergy or nobility. There were also marginal people and local landless people of peasant origin like servants and craftsmen who did not belong to any of the four estates. Furthermore, people were ranked in accordance with their household position as master or mistress, infant or servant. A husband ranked above his wife and other household members, while freeholding farmers were above tenant farmers. Generally, society was more explicitly rank-specified than is the case in modern societies.

Of all principal victims, more than half shared the relative position of their killer (Table 6.7). In more than one in four incidents, the principal victim came from a lower position than the offender. One in six incidents involved a victim whose social standing was higher than the social position of the offender. The three countries did not differ much in this regard. While the similarity of

Table 6.7: Victim's relative social standing in relation to the offender, percentage of incidents in Nordic countries, 1608–1699.

	Denmark	Sweden	Finland	Total
Equal	56	60	53	56
Below	27	27	27	27
Above	16	12	20	17
Total ^a	100	100	100	100
N	85	106	158	349

^a Columns may not add up to 100% due to rounding to integer.

the patterns is striking, we observe some minor differences. In the Finnish data, the percentage of incidents where a subaltern person killed his/her superior was higher than the Nordic average. These cases were rarest in the Swedish data, which manifested the highest percentage of killings between equals.

This observation relates to the discussions on the social status of perpetrators of violence in the early modern period. It is a prevalent view that most crimes of violence were committed by members of the lower strata of society (Muchembled, 2012). On the other hand, studies indicate that specific high strata of medieval societies were prone to violence (Cooney, 1997).

The frequency of killings transgressing rank divides can partially reflect data sources with respect to the urban/rural divide. The Danish data were mostly rural, while the Finnish and the Swedish data did not have any limitations in that regard. It is possible that the diversity of life and people in urban areas created better opportunities for committing homicides transgressing divisions of social standing. For instance, a wife of a lodger contract-killed a city official in the city of Vaasa in 1653 for the price of a silver spoon.⁶⁷ Similarly, a renowned female criminal and beggar killed a farmer while he was visiting Vaasa in 1657.⁶⁸

Women were lower in household rank than men of similar social position. Thus, the higher proportion of subalterns killing

⁶⁷ HHMD 3580000003.

⁶⁸ HHMD 3580000006.

superiors can be partially related to women killing men. This observation would be linked to the high prevalence and rate of familial and kin homicide in late 17th-century northern Finland.

Information on relative social rank was also often missing, ranging from 56 per cent in the Danish data to 33 per cent in the Swedish data and 18 per cent in the Finnish data (overall 36 per cent). Given the importance of social rank differentials in the early modern period, it is plausible to suggest that missing information is more likely when the parties of the homicide were of equal or low rank. The higher the social position of an individual in the sources, the more clearly (and easily for the coder to identify) the social status differential can be identified. As a consequence, the validity of the results on incidents involving parties of different social standing is more accurate the higher the position of at least one of the parties involved in homicide. This also means that the 'equal' row in Table 6.7 is very likely an underestimation of the real percentage of equal rank homicides, and especially so for Denmark and Sweden. However, if we define, as a sensitivity analysis, all missing data as belonging to equal rank row, the percentage of homicides against persons of upper rank would be greater in northern Finland (17 per cent) than it is in the two other study regions (8 per cent in the Swedish data, 7 per cent in the Danish data). These figures can be seen as lower boundaries of the real percentages. If the courts paid particular attention to cases where a person of lower rank killed a person of higher rank, we feel safe to say that northern Finland had more such transgressive lethal violence. This in turn again reflects the relative frequency of familial and kin homicide in the Finnish data.

The stratification dimensions of the early modern society were multiple and not exhausted by the nobility/commoners distinction. Our data are limited and at best partial with regard to cases involving nobility. Typically, cases involving a noble offender were in Finland and Sweden taken directly to the high court to be judged by their peers. This means that *homicides committed by noblemen are mostly excluded from the data*, while homicides

against noblemen by their subordinates are included. Danish nobles could only be charged with serious crimes in the Supreme Court, and judged by their peers (king and council). We know of homicides committed by noblemen from other sources, but such homicides were never tried at the High Court of North Jutland, which is the source of the present study.

Type of Homicide

In homicide research, the classification of homicides in major subtypes is a challenging task, and different researchers have opted for varying solutions (Flewelling & Williams, 1999). The variable used in the Historical Homicide Monitor (HHM) is derived from the variable used in the European Homicide Monitor (EHM) (Granath et al., 2011), with some additions and specifications. As in the European system, the aim of the variable is to capture selected key social interaction contexts and sequences in which homicide often occurs. Our variable definition is relatively detailed (see Kivivuori et al., 2020a). For the purpose of examining basic descriptive patterns, we combined multiple conflict types into a simpler classification.

The most common type of conflict was ‘other non-criminal’. Approximately two in five incidents belonged to this general category. This refers to quarrels with no explicit motive apart from the quarrel itself; for instance, in modern Finnish homicide the most typical type, so-called drinking group violence among alcoholic males, is typically coded in this category. The second most typical type was property-related conflict, covering one quarter of the incidents. More than one in ten cases arose from conflicts related to family and kin.

Finnish homicides were often linked to familial and kin strife, a relatively rare context in Danish and Swedish homicides. Property conflicts manifested a reverse pattern: one third of the Danish cases, one quarter of the Swedish cases and one fifth of the Finnish incidents belonged to this category. However, it may be more important to state the *general high importance of property conflicts*. The relative importance of this con-

Table 6.8: Type of homicide, percentage of incidents in Nordic countries, 1608–1699.

	Denmark	Sweden	Finland	Total
<i>Familial</i>	1	6	29	12
<i>Criminal- or crime-related</i>	1	9	14	8
<i>Feud or property conflict</i>	34	25	19	26
<i>Other non-criminal</i>	54	47	15	39
<i>Nightlife and other</i>	11	13	23	16
Nightlife- or honour-related	6	8	7	7
Control-related	1	0	1	1
Mental illness-related	0	0	2	1
Sexual	0	0	1	0*
Other	4	5	12	7
Total ^a	100	100	100	100
N	148	154	149	451

* 0.1–0.4%.

^a Columns may not add up to 100% due to rounding to integer.

flict type may reflect the rational need to engage in self-help in conflict resolution in conditions where the creation of state monopoly of violence was still proceeding rather than anywhere near completed.

Finnish cases were more likely to be connected to other crimes, compared to the situation in Sweden and especially Denmark, where this category was almost non-existent. These other crimes were usually robberies. In Denmark and Sweden, the ‘other non-criminal’ type of homicide dominates the pattern, while it is comparatively marginal in Finland. This is interesting as modern Finnish homicides show a high prevalence of this kind of conflict type (Granath et al., 2011, p. 56) (Table 6.8).

The prevalence of homicides in the non-criminal milieu in Sweden and Denmark is likely to be related to routine activities

in early modern villages.⁶⁹ These homicides were mainly adult male-to-male conflicts between either long-time acquaintances or new ones who had known one another for a day or less. Only 6 per cent of such homicides involved women as victims. The parties had often met up after work or during leisure time for socializing and drinks, usually in the private home of a third neutral party. These disputes were either situational – usually related to the drinking situation itself – or ongoing unsettled conflicts between two befriended adult males of similar status, turned lethal under the influence of alcohol. An example of the first category is the incident in Krarup, Denmark, in 1612, when two servants arguing about payments for the beers at hand ended in one lethally assaulting the other by hitting and kicking.⁷⁰ The latter type of incident can be found in Meming, Sweden, in 1641, when a cavalryman was invited with other people to the home of a soldier and his father to drink.⁷¹ After a while the soldier and the cavalryman started to play a game, which ended in quarrelling and fighting. The cavalryman was soon about to leave but forgot his hat. When he demanded to get it, the soldier and his father came out of the house, the father with a stick and the soldier with a frying pan in his hand. The cavalryman was hit in the head by the soldier and died a few days later.

Nearly half of the victims in ‘other non-criminal’ incidents did not use violence in self-defence. Only in a little more than a third of these incidents did the victim use violence first, but this was regularly in a non-defensive manner. The frequent use of sharp objects in this primarily male-to-male homicide type is likely to be connected to motives of retaliation in a situation of uncontrollable rage. Even though the assault in most of these cases was more or less opportunity-related rather than premeditated, the strikes clearly aimed to be lethal, often targeting the victim’s chest, abdomen or head.

⁶⁹ We use the concept of village to refer to rural settlements. In Sweden, early modern settlements were not always organized as villages in the same way as historians outside Scandinavia would understand the concept. Single farmsteads and ‘villages’ with no more than a handful of peasant households were common.

⁷⁰ HHMD 450000013.

⁷¹ HHMD 460000013.

Regarding the high prevalence of familial homicide in northern Finland, it is important to note that this category is not identical with the modern notion of intimate partner violence. These cases include a variety of familial or kin-related homicides: fatal intimate partner violence, the killing of offspring older than one year of age, children killing family members, and killings involving siblings, in-laws and 'other blood relatives'. So this category is not exclusively male-to-female violence. Indeed, in our combined data, fewer than half of the family and kin incidents were male-to-female cases.⁷² The relative frequency of family- or kin-related homicides was likely related to typical routine activities and the opportunity structures.

Homicides in extended families were embedded in a labour-intensive slash-and-burn economy characterized by familial isolation, especially in comparison to more stable and village-embedded agriculture. This way of life triggered work-related conflicts in the comparative absence of the capable guardians. The conflicts often targeted in-law relatives or other blood relatives rather than intimate partners, offspring, siblings, parents or grandparents, sometimes over perceived unfairness of workloads. For instance, in Oulu in 1646 a daughter-in-law lethally assaulted her infirm father-in-law with a stick for his laziness.⁷³ To some extent the pattern bears resemblance to the increase of conflicts on land and property during the slash-burning crisis in north-eastern Finland in the mid-18th century. This crisis was triggered by competition over land (Koskivirta, 2003), a crisis reflecting the weakness of the centralized state in frontier conditions. However, it should be underscored that, in our 17th-century data, the Finnish homicide rate was generally lower than the rate in Denmark and Sweden. Without these family- and kin-related cases, the Finnish homicide scene would have been even less violent.

⁷² Only two Finnish incidents taking place in extended family households involved wives being killed by their intimate partners (Kalajoki 1655 [HHMD 3580000033]; Ilmajoki 1696 [3580000108]).

⁷³ HHMD 3580000019.

The high share of property-related crimes in Denmark (and, to a lesser degree, in the two other countries) is not connected to feuds, which were rare. During our research period, central states had already suppressed this kind of feuding known from earlier periods.⁷⁴

It is also of interest to examine what is 'missing' from the homicide conflict types in the 17th century. There was only one sexually motivated crime: a gang rape and killing of a married woman in Kuopio in Finland in 1674.⁷⁵ Such crimes could not be found in Denmark or Sweden, although the motives for homicides refer to sexual motivation of some sort in 3 per cent of the incidents. A possible explanation for the low prevalence of lethal sexual assaults relates to the structures of the legal processes with respect to early modern rape trials. Even though rape was illegal and publicly condemned, especially when committed on respectable women with supportive family or kinsmen, rape was difficult to prove in legal practice. The dark figure on sexual violence on the whole is high in early modern crimes (Hassan Jansson, 2002). This pertains to our analysis insofar as there can be homicides against women in which the rape component remains hidden while the homicide is known.

Rate perspective. If type of homicide is explored using estimated subtype specific rates, the comparative differences between risks are the same as the compositional differences shown in Table 6.8 above. For instance, the rate of feud- or property-related conflicts per 100,000 population was 4.6 in Danish Jutland, 1.7 in south-eastern Sweden and 0.7 in northern Finland. Analogously, the rate of familial cases⁷⁶ was 0.1 in Jutland, 0.4 in south-eastern Sweden, and 1.0 in northern Finland. Thus, the Finnish risk of familial and kin incidents was three times higher than in Denmark and

⁷⁴ For an overview of historical feuding research, see Netterstrøm (2007).

⁷⁵ HHMD 3580000146.

⁷⁶ Familial here includes all family and kin relations, so it is meaningful to count risk against estimated resident population (rather than married persons etc.).

double the Swedish risk. Here the rate perspective is consistent with compositional changes. It seems warranted to say that the high compositional share of familial cases in northern Finland was not simply a reflection of ‘vanishing’ male-to-male violence.

Critical reflections. The homicide type variable is generally regarded as one of the most problematic constructs in homicide research (Granath et al., 2011, p. 55). The number of missing observations was, however, moderate, as every sixth incident could not be allocated to our homicide type categories (Appendix B). This figure may give an over-optimistic picture of coding reliability.

Following the guidelines established in the creation of the EHM (Granath et al., 2011), the homicide type variable requires the coder to categorize the type of homicide by simultaneously taking into account the relationship between the parties, possible motives and the occasional situation for the lethal violence between the perpetrator and the victim. The relationship is specified as being the most important variable in the coding decision. While the instruction is clear, its implementation is often difficult in early modern court materials. In the protocols, individual characteristics like their title, occupation, age and other key aspects often remain unspecified if such information was irrelevant for the verdict. Information may also be missing because the local communities knew the circumstances so well that they did not bother to record them in the files. Furthermore, the early modern courts were less interested than modern courts in motives, a fact that also hampers homicide type coding. Indeed, the above interpretations of the meaning of the results are influenced by other (often more reliable) variables and findings. Indeed, the reason we consider the homicide type as reflecting realities in addition to measurement error is that the findings are consistent with other analyses.

Victim–Offender Relationship

The victim–offender relationship is one of the classical variables in homicide analysis (Flewelling & Williams, 1999; Wolfgang, 1957). In our historical codebook, it is measured with a detailed variable

(see Kivivuori et al., 2020a). For purposes of this more general comparison, a simpler merged classification was used.

By far the most common type of homicide in the 17th century took place between longer-term acquaintances, such as friends or neighbours. Seven out of ten incidents involved such parties. The rest of the incidents divided fairly evenly across the other categories. Interestingly, killings of blood relatives are more prevalent than intimate partner homicides, in the combined data column and in each of the three countries. The situation is the reverse in homicide of today (see Chapter 8), likely reflecting the importance of kin networks in traditional societies.

In regional comparison, northern Finland stands out from the two other research regions (Table 6.9). One in ten Finnish incidents was an intimate partner homicide, while the share of this crime type was much lesser in Sweden and non-existent in Denmark. Homicide against blood relatives and in-laws were

Table 6.9: Victim–offender relationship, percentage of incidents in Nordic countries, 1608–1699.

	Denmark	Sweden	Finland	Total
<i>Family/kin</i>	4	15	33	17
Intimate partner	0	4	10	5
Blood relative	2	5	15	7
In-law relative	2	6	8	5
<i>Longer-time acquaintance</i>	93	68	53	72
<i>New acquaintance, stranger or other</i>	3	18	14	11
New acquaintance	0	7	8	5
Stranger	3	7	1	4
Other	0	4	5	3
Total ^a	100	100	100	100
N	165	131	155	451

^a Columns may not add up to 100% due to rounding to integer.

also more prevalent in northern Finland than in the other two study regions.

The findings suggest that northern Finland was an outlier in terms of the composition of incidents, or that Danish Jutland and northern Finland were extremes while south-eastern Sweden stood in between them. The share of family homicides increased from Jutland to northern Finland, while acquaintance homicide decreased from Jutland to northern Finland. South-eastern Sweden occupied the middle position in both axes. These two observations provoke two, largely contrasting interpretations: structural modernization and state-building processes.

The structural modernization interpretation connects high salience of family and kin killings to pre-modern interaction patterns. From this perspective, the Finnish data represent a relatively archaic structure, while the Swedish and the Danish data are more modern in this regard. For example, the prevalence of kin homicide could relate to different kinds of rural economies prevalent in northern Finland at the time of our study, as homicide patterns are likely to reflect routine contacts between types of people, and relevance of the social ties. In other words, killing non-nuclear-family relatives and kin is rare in modern contexts, where interaction with such persons has decreased, as has their economic relevance. Intimate partner homicides, blood relative killings, and in-law relative killings can all take place in extended households in rural-agricultural contexts, and these were prevalent in the Finnish study region.

The state-building process interpretation sees the difference of the three study sites as capturing the process of state formation, taming the unruly males and their male-to-male conflicts. We see that the Danish data (the earliest time period) have the highest prevalence of 'longer-time acquaintance' cases, which typically were male-to-male cases. In contrast, northern Finland, with the most recent data, shows the lowest percentage of acquaintance killings, while south-eastern Sweden lies in between. This could reflect the period differences between the three datasets: the earlier the measurement, the higher the homicide rates, and the share of

male-to-male acquaintance conflicts. Northern Finland is, in this interpretation, the most modern of the three research regions. This would be consistent with Verkko's laws: male-to-male conflicts between acquaintances drives the overall homicide rate and pattern development. As these conflicts decrease, what remains is a higher share of intimate partner homicide and killings of family and kin (Verkko, 1951; see also Daly & Wilson, 1988).

In many acquaintance cases, insults triggered violent interactions (see also Eisner, 2001). From medieval times until the early 17th century, honour constituted a highly important capital for a man in his peer group. An insult required a violent response as a culturally accepted means of restoring honour, and thus maintaining one's status in the group (Liliequist, 2009; Muchembled, 2012; Schmidt, 1994). Also, property conflicts between neighbours and longer-time acquaintances contribute to explaining the high share of public male-to-male conflicts. Defending one's honour and one's property were two sides of the same coin.

As noted above, south-eastern Sweden manifests an intermediate position between the extremes of the Danish and the Finnish study regions with regard to intra-familial, blood kin and in-law killings. This is consistent with both interpretations suggested above. In homicides against new acquaintances and strangers, the Danish data diverge from Finland and Sweden with only very few incidents falling in these categories. This result is consistent with the domination of adult male-to-male homicide between acquaintances in the Danish and the Swedish data.

In sum, the pattern of decreasing percentages of acquaintance male-to-male killings could thus reflect the modernization of homicide, a process linked to the pacification of the males by the rise of the central state (see also Table 6.6, showing the gender combinations of homicide incidents). In the latter part of the period – covered by the Finnish data – growing state power with more effective control of individuals, as well as over local communities, supported and enforced conforming behaviour and the resolution of property conflicts by peaceful means, while simultaneously reducing the importance of individual honour and

deterrence capability for the protection of property. As a reflection of this, male-to-male lethal violence decreased in relative importance, while family, blood and in-law homicide became a more prominent category of homicide. This interpretation is compatible with northern Finland still manifesting specific unique or archaic features such as kin homicide, often anchored in extended family households, and family killings related to slash-and-burn economies where family groups worked beyond the purview of the emerging state control actors.

Rate perspective. We examined the rates of homicide in the victim–offender relationship categories. These observations are highly tentative, because we use estimated resident population as the denominator for all categories. We do not possess relationship-specific population sizes for the early modern period.

With such reservations, the comparative findings were mostly similar as in the compositional analysis above. For example, the rates of longer-time acquaintance killings per 100,000 population were 12.7 in Danish Jutland, 4.8 in south-eastern Sweden and 2.0 in northern Finland. Interestingly, the rate of intimate partner homicide⁷⁷ was zero in the Danish data, but comparatively similar in the Swedish and the Finnish data (0.3 and 0.4). Thus, the higher percentage of intimate partner killings in Finland, compared to Sweden, *does not mean that there was a risk differential of the same magnitude*. Specifically for intimate partner violence, the compositional change is to a considerable degree a reflection of the drastic reduction of acquaintance killings between men. On the other hand, the broader concept of familial and kin violence shows a higher risk in Finland, suggesting that context-specific risk factors are at play, possibly related to extended households and related modes of economic activity.

⁷⁷ The estimated rate of intimate partner homicides is tentative, because we use estimated resident population as the denominator. In modern data, we would have the size of the real risk group (people in spousal relations) as the denominator. So this rate simulation ignores possible differentials in the likelihood of people being in ‘risk situations’.

Critical reflections. We were able to code the victim–offender relationship in 83 per cent of the incidents, with 17 per cent missing data share. As such, this appears to be a relatively satisfactory result.

Concerning relationships, the HHM follows a hierarchical coding procedure: in the case of multiple status connections, the most important relationship is inserted. How this impacts coding reliability is likely to depend on the statuses of the parties. Coding is more straightforward in familial, kin and in-law cases, as these overrule other connections between the parties. So, generally, the hierarchical coding logic supports reliability. However, in some values of the relationship variable, it is not easy to judge the most important status connection, given the nature of the early modern protocols. This is the case, for instance, in deciding between a friend and neighbour. As the sources may lack specifying information, the coding decision is made by the researcher. In cases such as the neighbour/friend distinction, this may introduce variation between coders. The problem is attenuated in analysis as we combine these categories (friends and/or neighbours = longer-time acquaintances).⁷⁸ Indeed, these dilemmas bring us to the more fundamental question of how well the concept of ‘friend’ can be applied across distant periods.

The near absence of homicide between new acquaintances⁷⁹ in the Danish data might be explained by a lack of relevant information in the sources. Cases where the offender and the victim had clearly met recently were therefore coded as slightly known to each other, which in Table 6.9 is included in the category of longer-time acquaintances. It is therefore possible that, owing to marginal or unclear information, the category of longer-time acquaintance is inflated. This could also apply to the Swedish data. The duration

⁷⁸ Even after this combination, the problem stands for the value ‘stranger’, which might have been underestimated in Denmark and Finland, while the value ‘new acquaintance’ might have been overestimated in Finland (and Sweden).

⁷⁹ Defined as ‘met in the last 24 hours’.

of acquaintance was not very important to the courts. They were more focused on establishing whether there had been long-term animosity between the homicide parties.

6.5 Group Conflict

Historical control theory focuses on the rise of the state and its monopoly of violence. This monopolization process involved the suppression of private violence, ranging from individual homicides to group feuding and private armies (Lockwood, 2017; Netterstrøm, 2007; Ylikangas, 1998c). Arguably, groups engaging in violence were more serious challenges to the centralized states than everyday unorganized homicides. The presence of such groups in homicides would thus indicate an incomplete degree of state-building.

Our findings indicate that the dimension of organized party violence was weak in the 17th-century Nordic area. Danish homicide did not manifest this dimension. In Finland (7 per cent) and Sweden (8 per cent), fewer than one in ten incidents were categorized as having an organized party dimension. There were some feuding group incidents in both of these areas of the Swedish Realm.⁸⁰

The low frequency of lethal organized group violence during our research period provokes interesting theoretical questions. We have pointed out that the Danish early 17th-century data showed highest homicide rates, with lower rates in later periods in the two different research areas. This suggests that none of our research areas and periods was in such a non-state condition that organized armed groups threatened the state's monopoly of violence. The earlier stages of state consolidation, like suppression of private warfare, had taken place earlier (see Lockwood, 2017, pp. 24–49, for state-building in England), and apparently progressed to lesser forms of organized group homicide as well.

⁸⁰ HHMD 358000056, 358000124, 460000157.

In northern Finland, the group dimension of homicides often revolved around fugitives: either citizen posses killing fugitives, or fugitives forming groups to commit crimes. We observed two types of fugitives: men escaping from criminal prosecution and men escaping from military organizations or drafts. Some of the Finnish fugitive criminals formed groups engaging in criminal activities such as robbery (Koskivirta, 2003; Petersson, 2014; Ylikangas, 2003). While some cases were connected to the search for fugitives, temporary group formations could also engage in violence for fun. The Finnish data include a case in which three minors joined up to avenge their stepparents in Sotkamo in 1696, thus forming a juvenile offender group.⁸¹

Also, in south-eastern Sweden, fugitives appear in group homicides. It is sometimes claimed that there were gangs of dangerous fugitives living in the forests. Suspected homicide offenders often managed to run away and they frequently sought refuge in the forests. If they were sentenced, they were also to be searched for. In 1642 in Guddarp a search group killed an outlaw when he resisted arrest.⁸² Runaway soldiers were another group of fugitives. In 1641 a search posse came to Tingsryd to look for a soldier. They were invited into the house of a local state official and were offered substantial quantities of beer. Later during the evening, several people started to quarrel, with the consequence that a local official was killed by one of the posse members.⁸³ There were several other killings where more or less authorized posses, officers of law, customs officers and other officials or military groups were involved. Obviously, they did not always behave like disciplined commissioned state officials; however, very few cases involving organized parties challenged state authority. In 1649,

⁸¹ In criminology, the concept of a gang has specific meanings and often requires that the 'gang' exists outside the offences, and over longer periods of time. Offence-specific groups are discussed under the label of co-offending. HHMD 3580000134.

⁸² HHMD 460000048.

⁸³ HHMD 460000143.

two brothers in Uppvidinge went to seek revenge for an assault on their brother-in-law. They ended up killing their antagonist, but claimed they had only tried to arrest him.⁸⁴ Only one case of an organized crime-related homicide appears in the Swedish data. In 1641, a group of grain thieves in Brokind got arrested, but one of the thieves got away. When the fugitive thief later disappeared, his arrested partners in crime were suspected of having killed him.⁸⁵

To sum up, group-related homicides often took place in the context of social control enforcement, by fugitives forming largish raiding parties, or in related revenge cycles. All these motives indicate challenges to the centralized states. The same applies to the high frequency of fugitives in northern Finland. However, even in Finland, less than 10 per cent of the incidents involved organized groups and in both parts of the realm a substantial number of group-related homicides took place in the context of officials or semi-authorized groups searching for fugitives or runaway soldiers. In other words, in those cases group violence was an instrument of the state to enforce its monopoly of violence.⁸⁶

Critical reflections. The variable capturing the presence of organized parties in homicides had only 1 per cent of observations missing. This dimension was particularly relevant for the early modern court. As instruments of the central state, the courts paid attention to organized challenges to their power.

6.6 Why Did They Do It?

Late one evening in October 1619, peasants and servants were gathered in Volle Jensen's house in Lystrup in the eastern part of Jutland. People drank beer and discussed local issues. At some point, the peasants Anders Sørensen and Knud Andersen started to quarrel 'about the drinking of a cup of beer', as Anders was

⁸⁴ HHMD 460000144.

⁸⁵ HHMD 460000010.

⁸⁶ The estimated rate of organized group-related incidents per 100,000 population was higher in Sweden (0.5) than in Finland (0.3).

refusing a toast. As such, this altercation could have stood for the classic ‘trivial altercation’ often found in the immediate foreground of lethal conflicts. But was it about trivialities, or beer, or toasting? The sources revealed a deeper chasm between the conflicting parties. Indeed, a third person had suggested that Anders and Knud should reconcile over beer. They had a conflict about an oats field owned by Knud, who had declined a deal of exchange offered by Anders. Finally, Anders rose and left, having first told Knud that ‘he should catch shame’, which was taken as a threat of violence. Anders then returned to his homestead, but was followed by Knud, and the quarrel started all over again. When Knud left the scene, Anders followed him, attacking him with a wagon stiff. Knud defended himself, leaving Anders mortally wounded, with his intestines bursting out of the abdomen. He was still alive when local peasants inspected his wounds the following day, but died soon after. This case testifies to the complexity of motives. What seems like a quarrel between drunken men can reveal longer animosities behind the final straw. This is not to suggest that the alcohol context was irrelevant; rather, it interacted with a more persistent conflict. In this case, there was also a public witnessing of the exchange of bad words, suggesting that ‘saving face’ was perhaps also involved.⁸⁷

Violence is typically both causally determined behaviour and intentional action with situational and cultural meaning. For instance, alcohol can impair social cognition and hence trigger conflict, which also has a deeper meaning in the personal histories of the antagonists. At a sufficient level of abstraction, the goals of human violence are likely to be universal (Felson & Tedeschi, 1993). To examine this dimension of violence, the HHM contains a set of motive variables. Since motives and meaning can be and often are overlapping, these are coded as separate variables rather than a forced-choice variable. Even so, many of these variables are challenging to code from early modern court records. The courts were usually not primarily interested in identifying motives or

⁸⁷ HHMD 450000166.

explaining behaviour. They focused on establishing guilt, based on actions and the sequence of events. It was, however, important in many cases to find out if a killing had been caused by long-term conflict or, rather, the result of an incidental dispute. For this reason, motives such as revenge and self-defence do occur in the legal sources. The HHM contains variables on violence by the victim, prior threats between parties, premeditation, and motives. We will next turn to each of these.

Violence by the Victim

Victim provocation or precipitation of offending is a classical criminological perspective since at least the studies by Hans von Hentig and Martin Wolfgang (Wolfgang, 1957; see also Suonpää & Savolainen, 2019). The basic observation behind these concepts is that violence is rarely unprovoked and random. Violent events more typically reflect interaction sequences between persons who knew one another previously. In these histories, the victim is rarely entirely passive.

Almost two in five victims had used violence first or in a non-self-defence manner during the lethal interaction (labelled 'other violence' in Table 6.10). Physical self-defence was used by 10 per cent of the victims. Half of the victims were not described as having used violence during the lethal incident in which they were killed. The three countries differed in terms of victim precipitation. More than half of the Swedish victims had used violence in a non-self-defence manner. In the Danish data, the corresponding share was more than one third and, in the Finnish data, approximately one in four victims.

Victim precipitation could be linked to alcohol-related fights. There were numerous cases where a drunken brawl or a fight was started by the later homicide victim, according to the court records. For example, at the local court in Konga in Sweden in 1640, Nils Lake was accused of having killed little Sven in 1637. They both attended a feast in a private home. When Nils arrived, Sven declared that he had had a disagreement with Nils's brother

Table 6.10: Victim violence, prior threats and premeditation, percentage of homicide, Nordic countries, 1608–1699.

	Denmark	Sweden	Finland	Total
<i>Victim violence^a</i>				
None	53	40	60	51
Self-defence	10	7	14	10
Other violence	36	53	26	39
Total ^b	100	100	100	100
N	176	153	128	457
<i>Prior threats^c</i>				
No	97	91	64	86
Yes	3	9	36	14
Total ^b	100	100	100	100
N	233	193	160	586
<i>Premeditation^c</i>				
None	59	80	54	65
Some	24	12	22	19
Clearly planned	17	8	24	16
Total ^b	100	100	100	100
N	176	192	166	534

^a % of victims.

^b Columns may not add up to 100% due to rounding to integer.

^c % of offenders.

about money. Nils said he did not care about their quarrel. They both drank together with the other guests, and after a while Sven asked Nils if he was mad at him, which Nils denied. Not much later, Sven took his beer mug and hit Nils on the head with it. This caused Nils to rise up from the table, grab an axe that was at hand under the table, and hit Sven in the head.⁸⁸

⁸⁸ HHMD 460000023.

Critical reflections. In this variable, the proportion of missing data was 19 per cent in the complete dataset, with considerable regional differences (Appendix B). However, there were large regional differences, with the Finnish data showing a much higher percentage of missing data. The Danish data may overestimate the percentage of victims using violence first. Overall, our assessment on the reliability of this variable is not very high.

Prior Threats

Homicide can be a culmination of a prior conflict interaction sequence. To capture this dimension, the coding manual charts evidence that there were prior threats between the parties. Of all cases, 14 per cent included references to prior threats (Table 6.10). This percentage was higher in the Finnish data than in the other two countries.

The higher frequency of prior threats in the Finnish data may be related to the higher frequency of intra-familial and intimate partner homicide in northern Finland. Such cases tended to be preceded by physical chastisement or abuse. In a typical case, in Kajaani in 1646 a farmer's 15-year-old son killed his cruel and vindictive father in a fight of retributive rage. The father had behaved cruelly towards his children, also making threats towards his eventual killer.⁸⁹

Critical reflections. In this variable, we had 13 per cent of data missing, with considerable national variation. Threats may very well have been present in many more cases than the sources communicate. It is also possible that processual factors, and the professionalization of judges, may impact the findings regarding prior threats. Based on missing data and the regional variation, as well as our qualitative assessment, this variable clearly had issues with consistency.

⁸⁹ HHMD 3580000025.

Premeditation

Sometime before the Candlemas of 1622 on the Danish island of Mors in Limfjorden, a peasant woman, Karen Nielsdatter, accused another peasant woman from the same village, Anne Petersdarre, of being a thief. Anne had told Karen to keep her mouth shut, and her sister Maren tried to bribe Karen into silence. Yet, Anne, her sister and her husband felt frustrated in their efforts at cover-up, and conspired to kill Karen. This they did in the victim's home, likely causing death by strangulation. Later, Anne escaped with her husband to avoid prosecution.⁹⁰

We classified this case as showing premeditation by the offenders. The group of three conspirators did not act on impulse; rather, they planned and executed the crime for the rational purpose of avoiding theft charges. Studying the element of planning in early modern homicide can be seen as an indirect means of assessing the civilizing process perspective (Elias, 2017a, 2017b [1939]). If people from earlier epochs were impulsive, spontaneous and childlike in acting out their inner drives, this should be manifested in the lesser role of premeditated cases. Of all offenders in our early modern sample, two thirds manifested no planning or premeditation of the offence. Almost one in five offenders were classified as showing some degree of planning, while one in six showed clear indications of having planned the offence.

The highest percentage of clear premeditation was observed in the Finnish data and the lowest in the Swedish data, while the Danish data occupied the middle terrain between these two (Table 6.10). The high numbers in northern Finland are consistent with earlier research on Finnish homicide, especially that of conjugal lethal violence. The main incentive for the premeditated murders of spouses was the desire to obtain benefits from the killing, for instance to form a new conjugal relationship. For women the main objective was to obtain economic benefits. Other kinds

⁹⁰ HHMD 450000199.

of long-standing family and domestic conflicts usually ended in more impulsive acts of lethal violence (e.g. Koskivirta, 2003).

If we regard planned homicide as a proxy capturing the civilizing process, northern Finland shows the most ‘civilized’ pattern of homicide. This is consistent with the idea that the differences in our three study locations are also differences in time. On the other hand, some previous findings suggest that the Swedish and Danish early modern homicide was more closely connected to forms of structured leisure time patterns (taverns, private beer-rooms etc.), and more alcohol-oriented. Therefore, these routine activity anchors would imply less premeditation in these countries. However, if cases coded as having some premeditation are included, Danish Jutland and northern Finland show similar proportions of premeditation (41 per cent versus 46 per cent), leaving south-eastern Sweden as a special case with a low proportion of premeditating offenders. As such, these findings cannot directly decide between various theoretical interpretations. We come back to speculative interpretations in the final chapter of this book.

Critical reflections. One in five cases had missing data on this variable, again with considerable regional differentials (Appendix B). When interpreting these numbers, it is important to keep in mind two things, one pertaining to sources and the other to coding. First, the law courts in all three countries were often not very interested in the prehistory of the homicide except for prior animosity between the parties. For this reason alone, premeditation can be under-reported in the sources, and in our data. On the other hand, prosecutors could have reasons to stress premeditation, and thereby counterbalancing under-reporting. Second, our impression during the research process was that premeditation is among the variables for which high consistency is difficult to achieve.⁹¹ The combination of high overall

⁹¹ In Finland, the high salience of within-kin and within-family cases may support the visibility of premeditation in the sources (see also Koskivirta, 2003).

missing data share and regional variation in missing data indicates potential consistency issues.

Motives

The motive classification we used in this analysis is based on the EHM (Granath et al., 2011). This involved two challenges. First, its application emerged as difficult (see the discussion below in ‘critical reflections’). To enable the comparison of the study regions, we counted motive prevalence from all offenders in each region. Second, in the preliminary stage, we noted that some historically (and perhaps even still) relevant motives were not included in the EHM manual. We therefore added new variables: defence and rivalry over property, defence of kin or friends from threats, sexual control of other persons than partners, motives related to conducting or opposing sorcery, and proxy crime. Proxy crime refers to situations where the offender is paid or otherwise forced or induced to commit the crime for someone else (Kivivuori, 2007a). When examining and developing the motive checklist, we drew additional inspiration from Felson and Tedeschi’s (1993) universal classification of violence goals. In their social interactionist perspective, goals of violence everywhere reflect the enforcement of compliance, expressions of grievances, or assertions of identity.⁹² The motive checklist contains five items for each,⁹³ as indicated by the superscript in Table 6.11. Since any act can have multiple goals and motives (Felson & Tedeschi, 1993, p. 298), each motive corresponded to a variable in the matrix, so that each offender could have more than one motive in the act.

Table 6.11 shows the observed motives of early modern homicide in descending order from the largest to the smallest

⁹² In the HHM 2.0, created as a result of this research, we further developed the motives checklist from the social interactionist perspective (Kivivuori et al., 2020a).

⁹³ Excluding mental disorder, which is not, as such, outside the classification of violence goals.

Table 6.11: Observed presence of motives in the source, percentage of all homicide *offenders* in Nordic countries, 1608–1699.^a

	Denmark	Sweden	Finland	Total
Self-defence ⁱ	32	31	19	27
Property protection ^c	25	26	19	23
Revenge ^g	12	18	23	18
Criminal-economic ^c	0*	5	27	11
Defence of kin or friend ⁱ	0*	8	9	5
Opposing state power ^g	2	10	3	5
Other criminal ^c	0	1	8	3
Sexual motive ^c	0	3	4	2
Jealousy ^g	0	0	5	2
Spousal separation ^g	0	0	5	2
Altruism ⁱ	0	0	5	2
Sorcery-related ^g	0*	0	3	1
Mental disorder	0	1	2	1
Sexual control ⁱ	0	0	3	1
Hate ⁱ	0	0	2	1
Vicarious crime ^c	0	0	2	1
N	240	199	235	674

^a Since multiple motives were possible, the percentages do not add up to 100%.

* 0.1–0.4%.

^c = Compliance.

^g = Grievance.

ⁱ = Identity.

prevalence, as calculated from all offenders. In our combined data, more than one in four of all offenders were propelled by self-defence, and almost one in four by property protection. Nearly one in five offenders was out for revenge. One in ten offenders was motivated by criminal-economic motives.

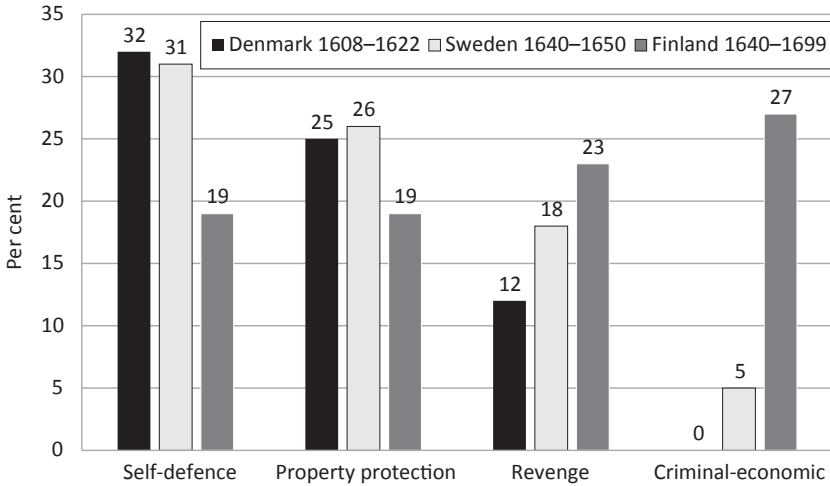


Figure 6.1: The relative share of the four most prevalent observed homicide motives in the source, percentage of all offenders by country, Nordic countries, 1608–1699.

We examine more closely the four most prevalent motives with more than 10 per cent in our combined data (Figures 6.1 and 6.2). Self-defence and property protection were high in the Danish and the Swedish data, and less prevalent in northern Finland. In contrast, Finnish homicide offenders were more often driven by revenge and criminal-economic motives. As seen in Table 6.11, the other criminal motives were also more common in northern Finland than in Jutland and south-eastern Sweden. Furthermore, defence of kin or friends was more common in Finland and Sweden than in Denmark.

Figure 6.2 shows the estimated rates of offending with special motives. This perspective reminds us that the overall rate of offending was much higher in the Danish data; thus, similar shares of offending motives correspond to lower motive-specific rates in Sweden. Generally, the estimated rates place south-eastern Sweden in between Danish Jutland and northern Finland in all four motive types. This comparison also suggests that the risk of committing criminally motivated homicides was highest in Finland.

We conducted exploratory analyses using sum variables capturing the theoretical dimensions of compliance, grievance and

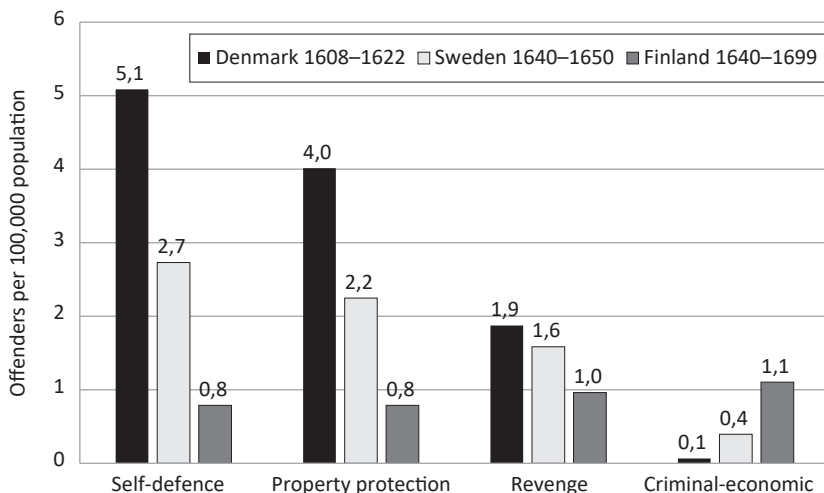


Figure 6.2: Estimated rates of offenders with particular observed motives in the source, per 100,000 population, Nordic countries, 1608–1699.

identity (Felson & Tedeschi, 1993). The use of sum variables was eased by the decision to count, in this analysis, the observed presence of a motive from all offenders in the regional data, so that missing information flagged the non-presence of the relevant motive (see the critical reflections below). The compliance dimension was more pronounced in Finland (42 per cent) than in Sweden (31 per cent) and Denmark (26 per cent). The grievance dimension behaved similarly, with higher compositional roles in Finland (34 per cent) and Sweden (28 per cent) than in Denmark (13 per cent). In contrast, the identity dimension was equally present in all three regions. The sum variable-based approach may be more rewarding when more study regions and periods are incorporated into the analysis.

The variety of motives was greater in northern Finland than in the other two regions.⁹⁴ Finland manifested 16 different motives compared to only seven in Danish Jutland and in the Swedish data. The most consistent difference was that Finnish offenders

⁹⁴ This fact also explains why the use of theoretically motivated sum variables (Felson & Tedeschi, 1993) yields higher prevalences for Finland.

included people propelled by jealousy, separation conflicts and sexual control, a finding that captured the higher salience of family and kin homicide in northern Finland. The Finnish data also included some hate offenders. For instance, two farmers killed a Russian priest in the Orthodox church of Paltamo, out of hate for Russians and their religion. Altruistic homicides were usually committed against incurable or infirm relatives who were perceived as likely to die within a short time. An example of this is the case from Liminka in 1643, when the parish sexton restrained and starved his infirm sister to death, allegedly out of altruistic feelings.⁹⁵ Motives such as revenge and property protection suggest that early modern homicides were not necessarily as impulsive in nature as extreme versions of the civilizing theory would lead us to predict. On the other hand, the decreasing presence of such motives can be seen as consistent with the civilizing perspective, if the rise of the central state reduced people's need to resort to self-help in personal and property defence.

Critical reflections. Owing to the inherent difficulties of the EHM-based motive variables, we did not reach sufficient cross-national comparative consistency in the treatment of missing motive information. For *comparative purposes*, we therefore recoded all values other than 'Yes' (= presence of the relevant motive in the source) as indicating that the motive is *not observed in the source*. Therefore, the motive analyses did not have missing values (see Table 6.11). This operation aimed at securing cross-national comparison, while additionally supporting the use of theoretically motivated sum variables. Sensitivity analyses indicated that the overall rankings of motives were not affected by the treatment of missing information (Appendix B). This applied to within-country rankings (the prevalence rank order of motives within a country) and to rank correlations across countries. Apart from this sensitivity analysis, it is of interest that the correlations between country motive rankings were fairly high, indicating similarity in early modern motive structures. The Danish and Swedish

⁹⁵ HHMD 3580000015.

south-eastern regions resembled one another in this regard more than the two parts of the Swedish Realm (Appendix B).⁹⁶

The above-mentioned difficulties not only connected to the problematic nature of EHM motive variables. They also reflected the nature of our data. The early modern sources rarely explicitly dealt with motives. The courts of our study period were more interested in *how* and *by whom* the crime was committed, rather than *why* it was committed. The early modern people did not live in the kind of ‘causal culture’ like we do. Many motives could be under-reported in our data owing to the focus on the immediate events leading up to the incident. The coding therefore had a relatively strong element of interpretive quality. Indeed, it cannot be excluded that the pre-conceptions of the coders regarding what was typical of 17th-century homicide could have impacted the coding decisions. Since cases could have several motives, it is possible that in many cases self-defence and revenge motives, in particular, were often coded as apparent sub-motives. If so, they would be over-represented in relation to other motives. On the other hand, the emerging motive patterns appear to be highly consistent with other results in this analysis; for example, the high salience of criminal milieu and family and kin homicide in Finland were also visible in the motive patterns.

Self-defence motive was probably over-represented in the Danish data, and maybe in all three datasets. Intentional homicides in Denmark were sometimes redefined as committed in self-defence to achieve a less harsh punishment. This assumption is congruent with the Danish court system, and with prior research on fictional

⁹⁶ Due to reliability challenges detected in the EHM coding logic, we decided to change the motive coding logic in the updated current version of the HHM, which incorporates lessons drawn from the current research (Kivivuori et al., 2020a). These are mostly related to the EHM categories ‘only other motive’ and ‘unknown’. We opted for a solution where the coder first decides whether motive information is present, and then codes the motives with a series of dichotomous variables. We also added a new ‘main motivation’ variable to single out the most important motive.

claims of self-defence and other excuses for, or justifications of, homicide (Netterstrøm, 2017a; Pohl-Zucker, 2017).

Generally, the overlapping presence of several motives may increase the validity of data, as real-life motives are complex. As such, motive variables do not directly assess the question of whether the acts were impulsive or based on premeditation or rumination. For example, revenge could reflect a recent trigger incident, or a long-standing animosity. Similarly, acts committed under the influence of alcohol are not necessarily impulsive, as they may reflect longer-standing quarrels between the par

Suicide

In modern homicides, a small but significant minority of offenders commit or attempt to commit suicide after the offence. In the modern period 2007–2016, 7–8 per cent of offenders in Finland, Norway and Sweden killed themselves in connection to the homicide; in Iceland, the share was only 4 per cent (Lehti et al., 2019, pp. 42–43). There is a research tradition on homicide-suicide as a subtype of homicide (Liem, 2010, pp. 31–86). In these cases, the homicide can be part of the suicidal motive,⁹⁷ or the suicide motive can emerge after the killing.

In our historical data, none of the offenders committed suicide. Six offenders, all from Finland, were described in the sources as having attempted suicide after the offence. This share of attempted suicide corresponds to 1 per cent in the complete data and 3 per cent in the Finnish data.⁹⁸ In modern samples, offender suicide likelihood is highest in familial incidents (Lehti et al., 2019, p. 43). This link may partially explain why suicide attempts were observed only in Finland, where familial homicide was most prevalent.

The observation of zero homicide-suicide offenders could reflect the nature of our sources: court protocols. When the offender is dead, court processes are unlikely to take place. On

⁹⁷ Often called suicidal murders or homicide-suicides.

⁹⁸ See also Koskivirta (2003) for the Finnish 19th-century situation.

the other hand, the difference can partially reflect behavioural realities (Kaspersson, 2000). In the early modern period, suicide was considered a crime, and could be registered in court records and even be brought before the high court. In the Swedish Realm, this was standard procedure from the 1680s to 1720. In addition to such formal deterrence, suicide was considered a sin. Ecclesiastical procedures expressed strong stigmatization, as suicides were buried outside churchyard cemeteries (see also Kaspersson, 2000; Miettinen, 2012). These sanctions could mean that homicide-suicide really was a less prevalent type of behaviour in the early modern period than it is today. Their missing from our sources is thus not necessarily only related to the type of our sources.

CHAPTER 7

Who Were the Victims and Offenders?

What kind of people became victims of homicide, or committed these crimes? There is a strong criminological and sociological tradition linking violence risks to socially disadvantaged groups. In modern societies, research supports this conclusion in Nordic societies (Kivivuori & Lehti, 2006). Classical strain theory predicts that low social position leads to frustration, which may find an outlet in criminal aggression. In this section, we describe the persons who were involved in lethal violence, either as victims or as offenders. We examine them using core socio-demographic variables such as gender, age, birth country, occupation and relative social rank. We also draw on alcohol-related variables to capture the lifestyles and personal proclivities of the people involved in lethal violence. Most of these variables are meaningfully related to social stratification. In the early modern period, women were below men in the societal and household hierarchy, and young people were subaltern to older people in the same social categories. Occupational and estate structures were also hierarchical.

In interpreting our results, there is need to underscore the specific limitations of the historical records used for the analysis. The early modern judicial sources were not very particular in presenting the victims' and offenders' ages, or social, economic or marital statuses. The omission to report individual factors in the sources partly reflects the smallness of the communities. When everybody was more or less acquainted with the involved individuals and

their situation in life, there was no need to explicitly document this information in the sources.

The court documents were created primarily for judgement and for the revision of the sentencing by the high court judges. The judges at all court levels occupied themselves with those crime characteristics that were relevant for the legal proceedings and the verdict. Individual characteristics of the parties were usually mentioned in the sources only when they had an impact on the verdict. Such a need could arise when the parties were of different societal estates, which had a bearing on the legal procedure, especially for those of a higher position. Similarly, the marital status of the parties is usually mentioned only in connection with pre-marital or extramarital sexual liaisons, because the judgement was aggravated for the conjugal party.

The records rarely indicated the marital status of men in male-to-male lethal violence, even if this can sometimes be concluded from other information. They much more frequently reported the marital status of women in the description of them as someone's wife or daughter, a piece of information sometimes incorporated in the women's surnames (e.g. Maren Jenskone, meaning Maren, wife (*kone*) of Jens). Occupational titles in a modern sense were also rare. The huge majority of people were peasants (in the broad sense of non-nobles and non-ecclesiastics living in the countryside), and that is almost never explicitly reported in the records. Multitasking and multiple sources of provision were prevalent. Soldiers or local officials were often also peasants. Titles were furthermore often used more to indicate social positions and status rather than describing an occupation. On the other hand, there was no freedom of trade and occupations in the modern sense.⁹⁹ Taken together, the occupational structure and nomenclature manifested both fluid and fixed aspects, with differential implications for long-duration analysis.

⁹⁹ The trend towards freedom of occupation and trade was legally completed in the 19th century.

7.1 Gender

Women's social position was very different in the early modern period compared to what it is today. It depended much on marital status, and it was also undergoing change. The husband's or father's position was empowered vis-à-vis that of his wife and daughter, at the expense of kin, in the aim of weakening the influence of the family and kin while strengthening the control of the central state. Although the rights of a wife sometimes resembled the position of a co-manager of the household, she remained subjugated to her husband. Only a widow had full competence to act in her own right in legal, economic and public affairs. Other women were represented in court by their legal guardian – the husband, father or a male spokesman of the family or kin. In fact, according to Swedish law, until 1697 women even lacked competence to bear witness in court; in legal practice, however, they were frequently heard as witnesses during the whole century. Nordic women, especially married ones, had a wider range of legal agency than might be concluded from formal regulations in our study period. They often represented themselves in court, they could enter into economic transactions, and sometimes they even represented their husbands in court (Ågrén, 2017; Dübeck, 2003; Lahtinen, 2009).

Of the homicide *victims* in our complete data, 15 per cent were women and 85 per cent men. The percentage of female victims was much higher in the Finnish data (29 per cent) than in the Swedish data (11 per cent) or the Danish data (6 per cent). The common feature was, however, that in all three study regions the huge majority of victims were men. Men were typically killed in the context of acquaintance homicides committed in non-criminal milieus in Sweden and Denmark, while in Finland intra-familial lethal violence targeting especially male in-laws and kinsmen was also relevant (see also Section 6.4). In terms of risk, victimization rates per 100,000 women were 1.8 in Danish Jutland, 1.5 in south-eastern Sweden and 2.2 in northern Finland. Thus, the high Finnish proportional share of female victims was not fully a function of a lower level of male-to-male violence but female

homicide victimization risk was also highest in Finland, even though the margin of difference was not very large.

Of all *offenders*, the great majority were males (92 per cent). The percentage of female offenders varied in the three countries, albeit not as much as the percentage of victims. It was highest in the Finnish data (12 per cent) and lowest in the Swedish data (4 per cent), with Danish data in between (8 per cent).

The estimated rate of female offending per 100,000 women was highest in Jutland (2.9), the second highest in northern Finland (1.3), and lowest in south-eastern Sweden (0.9). The Finnish female offending rate (and compositional share of female homicide) was markedly higher than the corresponding rate in the western part of the Swedish Realm. This probably reflects the higher salience of intra-familial homicide in the Finnish study region (see also Koskivirta, 2003). The lower proportion of female offenders in south-eastern Sweden is consistent with research in other parts of early modern Europe. It is often attributed to more rigorous informal social control of women, restricting the range of women's agency also in criminal acts (Beattie, 1986; Sogner, Lindstedt Cronberg & Sandvik, 2000; Walker, 2003).

7.2 Age

Like gender, age is an attribute whose meaning in societal control and power structures has evolved over time. The social position of old and young people differed in the early modern period compared to our own era. Children did not have the same rights and protection as today. It was common for children to start performing some work around the age of seven or eight years and many children left their parental home around the age of 12 to 14 years to serve in another household. At that age it was also common for children to travel alone long distances (Mispelaere, 2013). Parents, masters and mistresses were allowed to physically chastise children, but it was not allowed to be excessive or cause permanent injuries (Koskivirta, 2001, pp. 304–306; Österberg & Lindström, 1988, pp. 103–107). However, as in the case of gender,

the meaning of all this for violence risk is not clear (Bergenlöv, 2009; Koskivirta, 2017b).

The court protocols very rarely indicate the exact age of the persons involved in the case. This was not regarded as relevant except for the cases where the parties were very young, or below the age of criminal responsibility of 15 years of age. Furthermore, it is possible that the exact age of the persons was not even known to the officials, or even to the persons themselves. We therefore use a simple categorical variable that places persons in either the age category from one¹⁰⁰ to 14 years of age, or to the category aged 15 years and older.

In all of the three countries, the majority of the victims were at least 15 years old. In northern Finland, as many as one in ten victims was younger than 15 years of age. In Jutland (6 per cent) and south-eastern Sweden (3 per cent), the share was lower. In Finland, young victims were killed in, for instance, robbery killings targeting entire families during the famine period of 1696–1698. Gang- and insanity-related homicides also sometimes targeted children. The Swedish data include only four cases where the victim was 14 years old or younger. In two cases, both the victim's and the accused offender's age was less than 15.¹⁰¹ Both these cases refer to children being on their own while tending grazing animals. In another case, a man killed his wife, who had accused him of adultery; after that, he put their house on fire and his two small children were burned to death.¹⁰²

In assessing regional differentials in the composition of homicide, it is important to remember the substantial overall homicide rate differences between the compared regions (see Section 5.2). We do not have age-specific population data for the relevant regions and periods. However, we can assume that the age distribution was roughly similar in these three early modern

¹⁰⁰ On the exclusion of persons under one year of age, see Appendix B and Chapter 9.

¹⁰¹ HHMD 460000050 and 460000051.

¹⁰² HHMD 460000177.

populations. Thus, it is reasonable to use estimated resident populations for tentative risk comparison. When doing this, the estimated homicide victimization rate among one- to 14-year-olds was twice as high in Danish Jutland as in northern Finland.

Regarding *offenders*, the courts rarely indicated their exact age. We therefore use a simple categorical variable that places persons in the age category from one to 14 years of age (recall that infanticides were excluded) or to the category aged 15 years and older. In all three study regions, the great majority of the offenders were at least 15 years old. The proportion of young offenders was 2 per cent in all three countries.¹⁰³ Owing to the higher Danish homicide rate, this translates to a higher estimated youth offending rate in that country and period as well.

7.3 Country of Birth

We coded the person's country of birth in accordance with modern statehood. Thus, for example, a person born in Norway but becoming a victim of homicide in Denmark was coded as having been born in Norway, even though Norway at that time was part of the Danish Realm. Similarly, a person born in Finland and later a victim of homicide in Sweden was coded as having been born in Finland. From the perspective of political statehood, this coding is anachronistic. However, we wanted our coding to be consistent with long-duration comparison; therefore, we applied modern statehood classification in early modern data. In what follows, we use the term 'born abroad' as a shorthand expression; it does not mean that early modern people perceived themselves as citizens of any specific nation.

An overwhelming majority of homicide *victims* had been born in the same country where they were killed. Correspondingly, the percentages of foreigners were low among victims. In south-eastern Sweden, 7 per cent had been born abroad; in

¹⁰³ In Sweden 1.5 per cent, in Denmark 1.6 per cent and in Finland 2.2 per cent.

northern Finland, 4 per cent. Of Danish victims, none had been born abroad.

Persons of foreign origin killed in Sweden included four Danes, four Norwegians, two Finns and one Belgian. Belgium, the only non-bordering country, was the homeland of many Walloon blacksmiths immigrating to Sweden in this war-infested period. The foreign-born persons killed in Finland were a Swede and seven Russians. Thus, the distinctive feature of homicide against foreign persons was that these victims had been born in the neighbouring countries.

An overwhelming majority of homicide offenders had been born in the same country¹⁰⁴ where they committed the offence. Correspondingly, the percentages of foreigners were low among offenders. In south-eastern Sweden and northern Finland, 3 per cent of the offenders had been born abroad, while the Danish figure was only 0.4 per cent. The origin of foreign-born offenders mainly reflects mobility allowed by proximity. In Jutland, the sole foreign offender had been born in Germany. In Sweden, the foreign-born offenders were from Norway, Denmark and Belgium; in Finland, they were from Russia and Sweden.

7.4 Occupation

Social strain theories predict that lower social strata should have a higher homicide risk than higher strata. Here, we do not examine risks but rather relative frequencies, as adequate base numbers for occupations are not available.

In the analysis of victim and offender occupations, we used the International Standard Classification of Occupations (ISCO-08). This classification is extremely detailed. Since fine-grained analyses would likely introduce error to a long-duration analysis such as ours, we decided to merge multiple classes into broader categories. Of the original ISCO classes, only armed forces remained an

¹⁰⁴ For the coding of birth country, see the same analysis on victims above.

Table 7.1: Victim occupation, percentage of victims in Nordic countries, 1608–1699.

	Denmark	Sweden	Finland	Total
Armed forces occupations	2	25	5	7
Upper strata	5	10	5	6
Middle strata	0	0	3	1
Manual labourers	93	65	87	86
Total	100	100	100	100
N	179	60	112	351

independent category, as its coding reliability was assessed to be very high. Upper strata here combined ISCO categories managers, professionals and technical and associated professionals. In the historical data, all persons from nobility¹⁰⁵ and clergy belonged to this category, as well as the category of burghers.¹⁰⁶ The category of middle strata combined the ISCO classes of clerical support workers and services and sales workers; in historical data, typical examples were scribes and street merchants. The category of manual labourers incorporated ISCO classes six to nine: skilled agriculture, craft workers, plant and machine operators, and elementary occupations. We combined agriculture with manual workers because it was often difficult to distinguish between the two in the early modern period.

In our combined data, almost nine out of ten victims were manual labourers (Table 7.1). Most of these manual labourers were employed in agriculture. The remaining victims represented the armed forces and the upper strata, while members of the middle strata were nearly non-existent as victims.

¹⁰⁵ With the exception of nobles identified as armed forces representatives.

¹⁰⁶ This category is more exclusive than all persons living in an urban area, excluding, for instance, workers, servants and street vendors.

In regional comparison, the Swedish study region stood out as an outlier, where one in four victims represented armed forces. This likely reflected the early modern imperial-military nature of the Swedish Realm. The same fact may have explained the comparatively high percentage of victims from upper strata in the region. However, the same factor should have had an impact also on the Finnish data, Finland being an integral part of the same realm. The later Finnish study period or more peripheral location of the Finnish study region may explain the difference between the Swedish and Finnish results in this respect.

We underscore that this descriptive analysis is only tentative owing to multiple potential sources of error. First of all, the Swedish observations are impaired by a very high percentage of missing data. Possibly the occupations of the homicide parties were so well known that they were not mentioned explicitly. Second, the rural basis of the Danish sample likely affects the comparative validity towards the two other research areas. Third, the placing of early modern occupations into the ISCO classification is not without problems. However, it should be noted that the modern ISCO classification aims to be global, and thus includes occupations that are typically found in pre-modern and traditional societies, such as healers and village chieftains. The global reach of the ISCO classification of occupations thus mitigates the challenge of anachronism.

In our combined data, four out of five *offenders* were manual labourers (Table 7.2), most of whom were employed in agriculture. One in ten offenders came from the upper classes. The share of people representing armed forces was almost as large. Offenders from the middle strata were rare. Generally, offenders tended to be slightly more evenly distributed across the occupational stratification than victims were.

In regional comparison, the Swedish study region stood again out as an outlier. One in four Swedish homicide offenders were from the armed forces. Furthermore, one in six Swedish offenders came from the upper strata. Correspondingly, the proportion of manual labourers, out of all offenders, was smaller in

Table 7.2: Offender occupation, percentage of offenders in Nordic countries, 1608–1699.

	Denmark	Sweden	Finland	Total
Armed forces occupations	1	26	8	8
Upper strata	5	16	10	9
Middle strata	1	5	7	4
Manual labourers	93	52	75	79
Total ^a	100	100	100	100
N	215	91	143	449

^a Columns may not add up to 100% due to rounding to integer.

south-eastern Sweden than it was in the Danish Jutland or northern Finland. Also, these findings likely reflected the imperial-military nature of the Swedish Realm of the 17th century. The later study period and geography may have explained the difference between the Swedish and Finnish results in this respect.

There is reason to underscore the caveats we expressed above, when reporting findings on victims' occupations. The missing data problem is slightly less extensive in the analysis of offenders. Other sources of error are likely to be present as well. Most importantly, the Danish data are mostly from rural areas. Our data also *exclude homicide committed by nobility*, thus likely underestimating cases committed by the upper and military strata. The challenges of coding early modern occupations using a modern variable structure also apply, even though they are mitigated by the global coverage of the ISCO classification. The ISCO also covers the occupations related to traditional, pre-modern economies in the modern world.

7.5 Alcohol

In modern Nordic homicide, alcohol intoxication is often present (Granath et al., 2011; Lehti et al., 2019). Similar observations have been made also for early modern times. Generally, at that time, alcohol was very much present in everyday social life. It was commonly an important component of people's diet, a social

lubricant consumed not only during weekends and at special festivities (Sandnes, 1990). According to some information, beer consumption in 16th-century Sweden was up to 40 times higher than today. However, according to a study of late 16th- and early 17th-century Stockholm, not more than one third of the recorded homicide cases included information about alcohol consumption (Kaspersson, 2000, pp. 62–69).

Our data are based on two alcohol questions directly derived from the European Homicide Monitor: was the person under the influence of alcohol during the offence, and was he/she an alcoholic? We have collected information on alcoholism as a stable trait of an individual, and alcohol intoxication as a situational variable. As in many other variables, it needs to be underscored that early modern courts clearly did not pay detailed attention to the alcohol status of homicide parties. Information on the presence of alcohol in the homicidal interaction, and on alcoholism as a personal trait, is typically a by-product of the documentary narrative.

Of homicide victims, one in ten were described as alcoholics. This was more often the case in Finland and Sweden than in Denmark, where the sources did not indicate this trait in any of the victims. Situational alcohol intoxication at the time of the offence was much more prevalent, showing the lowest percentage in northern Finland (27 per cent), while Danish Jutland (40 per cent) and south-eastern Sweden (54 per cent) manifested higher readings. This could be related to the different patterns of crime, with a larger share of family-oriented homicides in Finland, and more public place and nightlife-oriented homicides in Denmark and Sweden. Be that as it may, it is evident that Finns also consumed large amounts of alcohol in everyday life, and at court sessions, church holidays, and markets and fairs (Vilkuna, 2015). Even female victims could be alcoholics in Finland. An example of this is a constantly drunken mother of six underaged infants in Liperi, who in 1687 was lethally assaulted by her husband and left to die naked in the snow, as punishment for her failings in motherly and wifely duties.¹⁰⁷

¹⁰⁷ HHMD 3580000200.

The overall picture for the *offenders* was similar. Less than 10 per cent of them could be described as alcoholics. The proportion was higher in the Finnish data (14 per cent) than in the Swedish (4 per cent) or the Danish (1 per cent) data. Again, alcohol was much more often present in the situations of homicide. In Finland, one third of the offenders were reported as being drunk (or having consumed alcohol) at the time of the deed, while the proportions were 40 per cent in Denmark and 52 per cent in Sweden.

The high situational alcohol embeddedness could reflect the specific homicide patterns in Sweden and Denmark, where male-to-male nightlife violence was more pronounced in homicide (see Section 6.4 and Table 6.4 on gender constellations in homicide incidents). In contrast, the comparatively low situational presence of alcohol in northern Finland could reflect the absence of urban routine activity possibilities in that region and period. This is, however, conjectural, as all three observation regions were predominantly rural, and the Danish data source excluded urban jurisdictions. Poverty may be a more accurate explanation for the lesser presence of alcohol in the Finnish 17th-century data.

Alcohol use was an everyday occurrence in the study period. Often lacking fresh drinking water, and because of cultural traditions, beer was heavily consumed. Although beer was relatively low in alcohol percentage, alcohol was probably a factor in more of the homicide cases than reported in the records. Alcoholism must also have been quite common, and many offenders were most probably alcoholics to some degree. This was rarely indicated in the Danish court cases, but somewhat more often in the Finnish and Swedish sources. The latter may be partly explained by the fact that most court cases focused on the immediate events leading up to the homicide, not the causes of the event. Early modern courts focused on blame attribution, not on causation. Furthermore, it is possible that everyday drinking was so prevalent that alcoholics did not stand out in early modern communities to the degree they did in later historical epochs, when alcohol consumption and alcoholism were increasingly defined as a societal problem to be handled with temperance and prohibition policies. The courts did

not use a medical concept of alcoholism even though individuals were sometimes described in a way that indicates alcoholism.

Situational alcohol consumption was mentioned primarily as part of the course of events, and drinking together could also be mentioned to indicate the absence of previous discord. Sometimes, drunkenness was mentioned in homicide cases when it was regarded as important for understanding otherwise irrational behaviour. Parties in homicide trials may sometimes have exaggerated or downplayed alcohol consumption prior to the homicide, but drunkenness could not, in the Nordic countries, be used as an excuse for homicide or as an argument for lighter sanctions. Consequently, alcohol consumption was not just mentioned by witnesses favourable to the defence in homicide trials; it could also be mentioned by the prosecutor's witnesses. Therefore, no systematic bias in alcohol reporting in homicide cases can be detected in either of these directions.

In some cases, the alcoholic beverage itself was the issue of the conflict, or the motive of the crime. The Finnish data include some robbery killings for spirits or beer, as in Kuopio in 1676, when a man was murdered for three cans of spirits.¹⁰⁸ There are also several cases in the Swedish data where not drinking but the quality and the handling of alcohol were conflict triggers. Several deadly conflicts started when someone spilled beer on someone else, or when someone complained about the quality of the beer that was served. In four of the Danish cases, violence leading to homicide started with quarrels about whose turn it was to pay for beer at drinking parties.

It should also be noted that alcohol in many cases seems to have been a catalyst of violence emanating from a prior conflict between offender and victim, and not just the single cause of the homicide.

Critical reflections. The early modern courts were not interested in information beyond the direct task of attributing guilt. This

¹⁰⁸ HHMD 3580000150.

resulted in fairly high percentages of missing data in the variables describing the people involved in the crimes. Occupation data were missing for more than one in three persons (33–38 per cent). In the alcohol dimension, situational information was more often available (15–16 per cent missing) than information allowing the characterization of the persons as alcoholics (25–27 per cent missing). In contrast, gender and birth country had less than 5 per cent missing data. Age was unique in this respect: the exact age information was missing for 97 per cent of both victims and offenders. We therefore used a variable flagging only age in the bracket of one to 14. This variable drew from the exact age when it was available, plus more qualitative assessment of the case description.

The offender is, as a statistical unit, more dependent than the victim on cultural conventions. This is so because the inclusion of co-offenders can vary across nations and over time. There were few cases in our data in which only the victim was known. This reflects the type of data we are using. Court protocols emerged when there was a known offender.

CHAPTER 8

Dimensions of Time

The dimension of time is central to this research. We aim at comparing, in a standardized manner, homicides separated by long stretches of time. In addition to this linear dimension, time has important cyclical aspects. Our lives unfold in the sequence of days, weeks, months and years, which recur without end. Some of these are natural cycles, especially the diurnal cycles of day and night, which have shaped humans as a species, while others are cultural conventions with extreme longevity, like the seven days of the week.

The link of crime to time cycles has interested researchers from the dawn of criminology. Notably, in as early as the 1820s, Adolphe Quetelet, one of the founders of the discipline, published findings on seasonal patterns of crime (Quetelet, 1831, pp. 51–53). After that, countless studies have revisited the theme, showing how crime patterns follow the social routine activities reflecting cyclical rhythms of everyday life over time. This does not mean that the patterns are historical constants. They change historically (Tiihonen, Räsänen & Hakko, 1997; see also Ekirch, 2015), as a reflection of changes in routine activities. Yet there is a shortage of standardized information on these cycles in the pre-statistics era. Could it be that the patterns of crime were somehow completely different before, appearing in their modern shape only when the French state decided to publish crime statistics for Quetelet and others to study?

We are in a position to answer this question, as the aim of our project was to extend standardized description to the pre-statistics era. We have examined the time cycles of homicide in greater detail in a previously published article (Kivivuori et al., 2020b). In this chapter, we briefly summarize the findings in that regard, while adding new ways of looking at the time cycles. We discuss the dimension of time in lethal violence from three perspectives: as recurring cycles of everyday life (Section 8.1), as specific festive occasions punctuating everyday routines while forming in themselves routines of potential transgression (Section 8.2), and as linear time from violence to the death of the victim (Section 8.3).

8.1 Recurring Cycles

Early modern patterns of lethal violent crime reflected the routine activities of the age. This can be seen in the daily, weekly and annual fluctuations of homicide.

Day

In terms of daily cycles, the most prevalent time of homicide was between 18.00 and 24.00 hours. Almost half of the homicides (47 per cent) happened in that time bracket. The evening concentration was more pronounced in Denmark and Sweden than in Finland, where a higher proportion of incidents took place during the day. Fewer crimes took place during the night (18 per cent) or in the morning hours (12 per cent).

The relative and comparative scarcity of night-time incidents is of interest as it contrasts with modern patterns (see Chapter 11). It can relate to lack of lighting, fear of darkness, and deterrence, since committing the homicide in darkness could be an aggravating circumstance. Even fear of darkness could have been involved (Duedahl & Langen, 2015). While the evening hours were in all three regions the most likely time of homicide, in other respects there was some variation (Kivivuori et al., 2020b). The partially different daily profile of Finnish homicide may reflect geographical

difference, as the Finnish study region was nearly 1,000 kilometres to the north from the two other study regions, a fact that also affects natural lighting conditions.

Week

If homicides were distributed equally over the weekdays, each weekday would have 14.3 per cent of the crimes. The early modern distribution of homicides was not flat in this manner. There was a clear cycle connected to the alternation of workdays and the day of rest (Sunday). In the overall distribution, Sunday was clearly the weekly homicide risk peak. In the total data, 23 per cent of incidents took place on Sundays. This was nearly ten percentage points more than would be expected if each day had the same number of cases. In Denmark and Sweden, Sunday was the peak homicide day of the week. Finland, in contrast, manifested a slightly deviant pattern, as Saturday had the highest share of homicides in that country.

The basic weekly pattern was, in all three regions, linked to the alternation of working days and the day of rest (Sunday). In all three areas, the post-peak day was the second most risky day: Monday in Denmark and Sweden; Sunday in Finland. Thus, in Denmark and Sweden, the Sunday homicide peak extended to Monday, while the Finns had already jump-started to the 'week-end' on Saturday. However, the link between the main partying night and the day after was not straightforward. The homicides of the 'day after' were often committed later in the day, not during the early hours. Some of them may have reflected disagreements triggered in the previous day or evening. In the overall data, the percentage of offences committed under the influence of alcohol was highest in crimes committed on Sundays and Mondays (Kivivuori et al., 2020b).

In terms of routine activity theory, the Sunday social activities seemed to have functioned as a crime attractor in the early modern age. It is not easy to tease out the role of church services in this, as not all Sunday incidents were connected to attending

church services. The aberrant Finnish week cycle pattern was probably linked to the specific conditions in the northern Finnish research region. Owing to long distances, going to Sunday church could require an overnight stay. The tradition of Saturday bathing in the sauna could also impact the weekly pattern (Kivivuori et al., 2020b). The social nature of sauna-related activities (Vuorenjuuri, 1967) was such that they could be linked to risk of conflict.

Year

If homicides were equally distributed over the calendar year, each month would have approximately 8.3 per cent of the crimes (Figure 8.2).¹⁰⁹ In reality, the months were not identical in terms of how many homicides occurred during them. In the monthly distribution of homicide incidents, April was the peak month in our combined data (12 per cent of incidents). There was some variation between the three study regions, but the overall pattern indicates a distinct period of heightened homicide occurrence. This period lasted from March to July, even though the difference from expected frequency is not very extensive.

Within the spring/summer period, the peak homicide month differed in the three study regions. The peak was March in Finland, June in Sweden, and July in Denmark. The earlier Finnish peak may have been linked to multiple factors, such as slash-and-burn agriculture and naturally occurring lighting and weather differentials in the north. The possibly relevant natural conditions include darkness during winter in areas close to the Arctic Circle, long distances, and post-winter weather conditions making transportation and control functions more difficult. If these are relevant, they likely interacted with social-economic factors. However, it needs to be added that the Finnish outlier position is based on the single months of March and September. Overall, there seems to have been a risk period in the spring and early summer, and a lull in the autumn.

¹⁰⁹ Figure 8.2 adjusts for month duration in days.

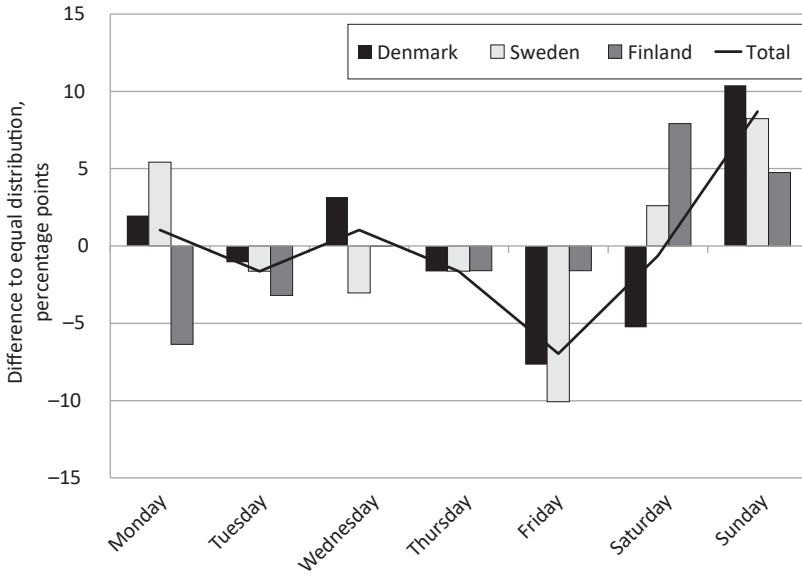


Figure 8.1: Homicide by weekday in the early modern period: difference to equal distribution, percentage points, Nordic countries, 1608–1699.

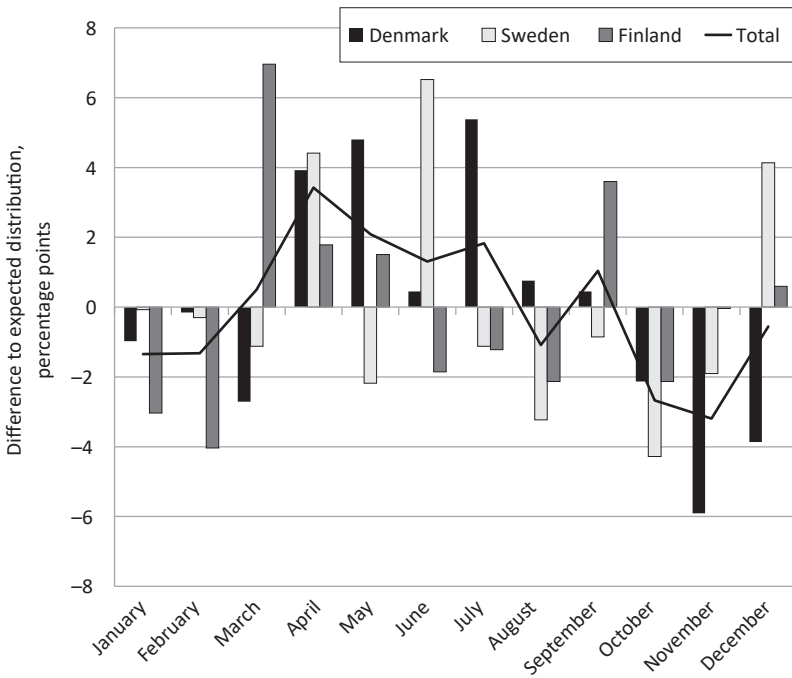


Figure 8.2: Homicide by month in the early modern period: difference to expected distribution, percentage points, Nordic countries, 1608–1699.

8.2 Public Holidays, Private Parties

In the early modern period, public holidays punctuated the annual calendar. They were moments of religious observance, yet also often connected with communal feasting, alcohol consumption and fairs. To a degree, these days had carnivalistic dimensions, as people could temporarily transgress social hierarchies. Just like regular church services on Sundays, public holidays were potential crime generators with the potential to trigger violent interaction sequences.

In all study regions, homicides were more likely during public holidays than they would have been based on equal daily distribution. In Denmark, almost one in five homicides (18 per cent) were committed on public holidays, while the corresponding share reached one quarter (24–26 per cent) in Finland and Sweden. The risk was elevated even though there were many public holidays (20 days in Denmark, 35 days in the Swedish Realm). The homicides were heavily concentrated on public holidays taking place in December and the first half of the year (December–June). In the complete data, about one third of homicides in this winter/spring period occurred on public holidays, while this share was much lower during the summer and autumn. Homicides taking place on public holidays were frequently committed under the influence of alcohol (Kivivuori et al., 2020b).

Private feasts¹¹⁰ such as weddings, funerals, births and baptisms have been recognized as major crime attractors with respect to early modern violent crimes (Ylikangas, 1976b, 1998a, 2001). While private parties as a homicide context do not directly pertain to time cycles, it is likely that most of these incidents took place during the ‘weekend’ (Saturday night or Sunday), or in the context of annual cycles such as haymaking or harvest. Often such parties were intended as payment for the hard work done

¹¹⁰ In this segment, some of the numeric information is derived from the open-ended variables of the HHM 1.5.

in a household. Our data include information¹¹¹ on altogether 23 homicide incidents in private parties and feasts. Most of these are reported in the Swedish data (14), seven are from Denmark and two from Finland. Of the 23 incidents, 12 took place in weddings, four at birth parties, three in haymaking, and the remaining three at Christmas, christening and engagement parties. The Finnish wedding killings represent typical conflicts arising from alcohol use and party context. One was a filicide in Kuopio in north-eastern Finland in 1655 during the wedding feast: three intoxicated brothers argued violently about the youngest brother's unfulfilled promise to his older brother to compensate for the borrowing of his clothes with tobacco, which escalated into a knife fight in the courtyard, killing the main troublemaker.¹¹²

Swedish wedding killings related to the consumption of alcohol and honour-related conflict, often between young males. At a wedding in Gryteboda in 1641, a young peterman,¹¹³ Bo Måns-son, was stabbed to death. A party of young men had stayed up drinking and eating after the other guests had gone to bed. The victim had complained over the quality of food and beer. Another young man, Per Svensson, answered him, implying a peterman had no reason to complain over the treat. This caused Bo to take out his knife and Per replied to this by inciting Bo to come out and fight with him. Other guests, however, intervened and stopped the fight. When the situation seemed to have calmed down, another man, Olof Nilsson, told Bo that he was a strange fellow always looking for a fight. Bo answered something and after that Olof's brother, Håkan Nilsson, started throwing various items (a plate, a platter and a candlestick) at Bo. The fight started again and Håkan soon stabbed Bo to death. According to a witness,

¹¹¹ This information is mostly derived from the open-ended response space of the CRIMESCENE variable. We report the findings qualitatively. If data on private parties on Sundays or public holidays were included for Denmark, the number of homicides committed in connection with parties would be higher for that country.

¹¹² HHMD 3580000045.

¹¹³ Peterman was archaically used as a name for a thief or a safe-breaker.

Bo certainly expected trouble. He had shown his knives, one of them with an inscription, and declared that as long as he had them no one could hurt him. Neither sharp weapons nor bullets could harm him, because he was ‘hard’.¹¹⁴

In Denmark, homicides committed at parties linked to alcohol consumption, and often arose out of the party situation itself, but there are also examples of parties functioning as occasions where previous conflicts culminated. In 1616, a priest’s wife was suspected of strangling a man at a wedding held at the priest’s house (i.e. her own home), and witnesses stated that she had done it because she and the victim’s wife were enemies. The priest’s wife was, however, acquitted at the high court.¹¹⁵ Generally, our findings on time cycles suggest that recurring patterns in lethal violence were often if not always linked to alcohol consumption. The role of alcohol as a driver of serious violence may be a relatively stable feature of homicide (see also Lehti & Sirén, 2020).

Critical reflections. As noted above regarding multiple variables, the early modern courts focused on blame attribution, not on producing crime statistics. Time-related information was often missing (see Appendix B). Yet, there are also strengths in the data source in this regard. Legal consideration supported some types of timing information. The commission of crime during the night or in a public holiday were seen as aggravating circumstances (Kuha, 2014). Human memory may also favour the recall of timing if the incident took place on a special day such as Sunday or during an annually recurring fair. It is also worth noting that some of the early modern time cycles closely resemble modern equivalents (see Figure 11.5). We consider this as indirect support for the validity of early modern timing data. Generally, it seems increasingly implausible to suggest that administrative crime statistics are arbitrary or biased constructs of control. The patterns of lethal violence correspond to daily routine activities, manifesting long-duration stability.

¹¹⁴ HHMD 460000035.

¹¹⁵ HHMD 450000057.

8.3 Time from Violence to Death

Criminological research suggests that communication technologies and the provision of medical services impact the lethality of interpersonal violence. If mobile phones or phone booths do not exist, roads are bad, no motorized emergency vehicles are available, and the nearest hospital is far, a person wounded in a violent encounter may die before getting help. And, if help is available, its quality matters. Modern medicine can save people who would have died otherwise. It is not only about the immediate response to wounds; it is also about treating wound infections later, when the immediate danger is over. A stab that is successfully treated by emergency medical services today could very likely have caused death during the 17th century. Inflammations mean protracted times between the violent encounter and the death of the victim, also enabling victims to give information in their own cases. Criminological research suggests that these factors have influenced the lethality of violence in the temporal span of decades (Harris, Thomas, Fisher & Hirsch, 2002; Linde, 2018). We focus on the early modern period, when medical services were rudimentary and communications and transports networks weak. The pace of change in these matters was also slow.

Using the Historical Homicide Monitor variable on the time interval between offence and death, we observe that around half of the victims died within one hour of the offence (Table 8.1). The country-specific figures were similar, ranging from 44 per cent in Denmark to 56 per cent in Finland.

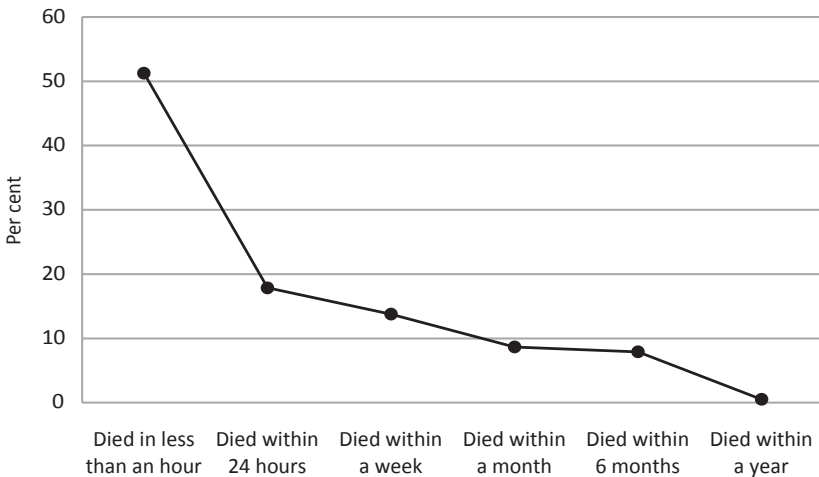
According to modern medical research (Acosta et al., 1998), the first 24 hours after a trauma¹¹⁶ are the deadliest for patients, even if they are admitted to effective hospital treatment. In all three countries, seven out of ten victims died within 24 hours of the incident. The same findings are shown graphically in Figure 8.3.

The results are comparable to similar studies of various localities in late medieval and early modern England, France and

¹¹⁶ This estimate includes injuries received in traffic accidents.

Table 8.1: Time from violence to death, cumulative percentage of homicide victims in Nordic countries, 1608–1699.

	Denmark	Sweden	Finland	Total
Died in less than an hour	44	52	56	51
Died within 24 hours	69	71	67	69
Died within a week	84	83	82	83
Died within a month	88	95	91	92
Died within 6 months	100	100	99	99
Died within a year	100	100	100	100
Total	100	100	100	100
N	112	145	135	392

**Figure 8.3:** Time interval from offence to death, percentage of Nordic homicide victims, 1608–1699.

Spain. In those research sites, the distribution of time-to-death durations was remarkably stable from the Middle Ages throughout the 19th century, until the rise of modern medicine after 1900, which drastically reduced long death intervals (Eisner, 2014, pp. 75–76). Overall, Nordic countries resemble the European pattern in this respect to a high degree. In England and

Spain (1300–1838), on average, 64 per cent of the victims died within the first 24 hours, 22 per cent within the following six days, and the remaining 14 per cent thereafter (Eisner, 2014, pp. 75–76). Our findings do not diverge much from these patterns. The main difference is that the proportion of immediate deaths (within the first hour after the incident) was slightly higher in the Nordic countries than elsewhere in western Europe. Since the proportion of deaths within the following 23 hours again was lower, this practically eliminates any substantial differences in homicidal deaths within the first 24 hours of the deed. Thus, the time to death was basically rather similar in our northern European study sites, when compared to other European countries of the time.

Consequently, this suggests that prior estimates on the significance of medical treatment when interpreting homicide rates apply in the Nordic countries as well. Eisner has estimated that around half of all medieval and early modern homicide victims would have been saved if modern medicine had been available. In Eisner's own words, this is a crude estimate (Eisner, 2014, p. 76). Our study is consistent with this estimate.

Critical reflections. The historical sources used for this study do not always give sufficient information to calculate accurate time to death intervals. For example, the Danish high court verdicts usually give the exact date of the violent confrontation but often not the exact time of death. In contrast, the time of death is mentioned more often in the Finnish sources than the exact date of the deed. The time-to-death variable had 30 per cent missing data, with relatively high regional differences (Appendix B).

Immediate deaths can often be ascertained from expressions such as 'and then he fell dead to the ground'. If the victim died days, weeks or months later, the exact date of death is rarely reported. The manual therefore instructs the coder to use the latest date the victim was reported to be alive to calculate time to death (Kivivuori et al., 2020a). In such cases, the victim may have lived days or even weeks longer than the date that was used for calculating time to death. This does not distort the reported results

since the time periods shown in Table 8.1 and Figure 8.3 are quite broad, which means that almost all available timed incidents are likely to be in the right category. Still, in many cases the information is not precise enough to calculate time to death at all. There is, however, no reason to suspect that the reported results would have been different if time to death had been known in all cases.

8.4 Reflections

In the early modern period, homicide showed time cycles in a manner that can be expected from the routine activities of the era. Evening time and the ‘weekend’, that is, the only day of rest, involved heightened risk of serious violence. Sunday and its ‘leisure time’ activities were often linked to alcohol use and feasting, routine practices that heightened the risk of violence.

The annual cycle is less straightforward and more difficult to interpret. There may have been a spring/summer peak in homicide. There are several possible hypotheses that could account for this phenomenon. In the early modern conditions, springtime was often linked to food scarcity, as storages had been depleted during the wintertime. This leads thoughts to strain theoretical explanations, as absolute deprivation and hunger may trigger frustrations and aggressions (Jutikkala, 1980; Lappalainen, 2012, 2014). Self-control may have been impaired by malnutrition and hypoglycaemia (Koskivirta, 2020; Miczek, 1994). The strain theoretical explanation is consistent with the observation that Finland had the earliest peak in homicide, although this is based on the single month of March.

Annual cycles may have also reflected economic and cultural factors, and even natural factors, as far as the difference between northern Finland and the two other study regions are concerned. The Danish and Swedish open field system of agriculture (Bjørn, 1988) involved different types of routines as crime generators than the northern Finnish slash-and-burn type of agriculture, with less social contact during the summer months. The problem

remains why the harvest time after the summer emerges in our study as a relatively low-risk time of the year. Some Finnish studies examining the 18th and 19th centuries have observed peak periods during the latter half of the year (Koskivirta, 2001; Lehti, 2001; Rajala, 2004; Ylikangas, 1998a). Clearly, more data and further research are needed on the historical variation in the annual violence cycle.

While the week included only one day of rest, public holidays provided additional outlets for socializing and festivities. The findings indicate that public holidays had an above-average share of homicides during the early modern period, and these were often linked to alcohol use. The role of public holidays in the early part of the year calls for more research. In the future, the interaction between places and times of crime should be studied in closer detail. Generally, we see a need for research to collect systematic information on routine activities, independently of the crime data sources. Nevertheless, our examination of time cycles suggests that, while early modern homicide has unique features, understanding its mechanisms does not require 'special' theories. Standard criminological theories, such as the routine activity approach (Cohen & Felson, 1979; Felson & Eckert, 2016), appear strong in the long-duration analysis of different types of crime ranging from serious violence (this study) to volume crimes like shoplifting (see Tickell, 2018).

As regards the time elapsing from the violent incident to the death of the victim, our main finding is that, for some victims, this time was relatively long. Different aspects of time pertain differently to long-duration comparisons. The cyclical time, while manifesting change, seems initially almost surprisingly invariant in its ways of patterning lethal violence. In contrast, the 'linear' time from violence to lethal outcome is likely changing in the long duration, as medical, transport and communication technologies have improved the likelihood of violence victims to survive. We will revisit both aspects of time in Chapter 11, when we compare early modern and modern homicide.

In Chapters 6–8, we have described the patterns of 17th-century homicide from multiple perspectives. We used low-inference descriptors to capture key differentials in homicide patterns. Throughout the analysis, we engaged critically with the sources, thinking through how they might bias the findings. In describing the patterns, we linked them consistently with what is known about the routine activities of the 17th-century populations. Next, we turn to the part of homicide excluded from these descriptive analyses: infanticide, defined as homicide against persons of less than one year of age.

CHAPTER 9

Infanticide

In 1641, in the south-eastern Swedish district of Björkekind, a young unmarried woman named Elin Ingesdotter was sentenced at the local court to death for infanticide. The body of a newly born child had been found in a well, and suspicions were directed at Elin. She first denied it but was then asked to hold the body. According to testimonies, the dead infant body had immediately started to bleed from the nose. Elin still denied that it was her child. In the end, however, she confessed in court that she had concealed her pregnancy, that she had given birth secretly in her father's house, and that she had hidden the body, more than six weeks before it was found. But Elin maintained that the child had been stillborn. The high court's decision was to bring her to the execution place for a possible confession.¹¹⁷

Did Elin Ingesdotter commit infanticide or was the child really stillborn? In our approach to the original data, we do not take the role of the court or the judge. Yet, her case directs attention to an important social problem in pre-modern societies: infanticide, or the killing of newly born children. Infanticide is usually studied separately from other homicide. There are at least two reasons for this. First, it is believed that the problem of hidden crime is bigger in infanticide than in other homicide; thus, differences between places and over time could reflect a differential detection

¹¹⁷ HHMD 46000014.

rate (Österberg, 1993) and changing intensity of social control of (mostly) female sexual behaviour. One of the reasons we focused on the study of homicide in the long time span was its relative immunity to control-related measurement problems. In the generation of data sources on infanticide, the role of control and cultural notions is likely to be greater. This is why this chapter uses a strictly behavioural criterion of infanticide, and combines the intertwined interpretive themes of behaviour and control.

Second, it has been argued that explaining infanticide needs different theories from other homicide (Jackson, 2006). This argument we find open to debate, because theoretical adequacy is a matter of empirical research rather than a priori judgement. Nevertheless, mostly due to the control-laden nature of its measurement and data generation, in this study we separated all cases involving victims less than one year old¹¹⁸ from all other homicides. Therefore, infanticide deserves a separate look. Using the Historical Homicide Monitor (HHM) in this area, we also examine whether its theoretical premises can be applied in the domain of infanticide. Owing to the small number of incidents in the data, the findings are tentative, exploring the potentiality of the HHM framework in this domain.

Legal Context

In modern jurisdictions, the legal concept of infanticide can be limited to acts by females against their own children. In the Middle Ages, infanticide was identified as a crime that could be committed by both women and men, on either legitimate or illegitimate offspring. The punishments included the death penalty, outlawry or fines, and ecclesiastic penance (Butler, 2007; Nielsen, 1982). From the 16th century, the state and the church became

¹¹⁸ Thus, here we define ‘infanticide’ behaviourally, not legally or as a cultural construction. By infanticide, we mean cases targeted at victims under one year of age. By neonaticide, we refer to victims killed in the first 24 hours of life.

more heavily involved in regulating pre- and extramarital relationships, and laws on infanticide changed. The penal code of the Holy Roman Empire defined neonate infanticide as an offence committed by the mother on illegitimate newborns, punishable by death.

In Denmark, a similar law was introduced in 1635, which criminalized the secrecy of childbirth in order to be able to punish by the death penalty single mothers who clandestinely gave birth and killed their newborn infants. The sentencing did not depend on proof of the killing itself. Infanticide also became gradually identified as a specific crime in the Swedish Realm in the 1640s. Both the high courts and law commissions were convinced that illegitimate infants were killed by their mothers, but the courts could not convict without witnesses and a confession. In 1655, a formal ordinance was issued for the Swedish Realm stipulating that, in the event a dead neonate was found, the suspect offender could be convicted if the mother had concealed pregnancy out of wedlock, and given birth in secrecy. Subsequent ordinances in the later 17th century further contributed to even harsher legislation (Bergenlöv, 2004, pp. 246–253; Thunander, 1993, pp. 135–142).

Entry of Cases to Court Records

Generally, forensic medical examinations, including dissections, are required for assessing whether a newborn is born alive or dead (Herman-Giddens et al., 1999). Such professional forensic investigations became the standard by the late 18th century, which is why reliable information on the newborn infant's cause of death is scarce in the sources in prior centuries (Bergenlöv, 2004, Chapter 7; Rautelin, 2009, pp. 481–491). It was common that the body of a dead neonate was inspected by trustworthy married women, lay midwives or other people of good reputation, at least if infanticide was suspected. The main purpose of these investigations was to establish whether the neonate was fully developed and killed deliberately, if it was a stillborn child, and whether there were any traces of violence (Bergenlöv, 2004, pp. 359–360; Rautelin, 2009,

pp. 481–485). Despite lay evaluations, the court records seldom give information about wounds or other traces of violence on the victims' bodies. The problems with establishing an infant's cause of death were further aggravated by the fact that many victims of neonate infanticide tended to be in a stage of decay when found. In addition, some infants had been burned after death. According to research in later centuries, this was a constant problem even for educated forensic specialists to investigate neonate deaths (Rautelin, 2009, pp. 485–488; Rautelin, 2015).

Homicides were usually brought to court by a private plaintiff, who would typically also be a close relative of the victim. In infanticide cases, the parent or stepparent would usually be the perpetrator (Bergnlöv, 2004; Hatters Friedman & Resnick, 2007). Prosecutions of infanticide depended on the public, but the Swedish and Finnish records are not very informative on how infanticide cases reached the courts. In many cases, prosecutions seem to have been initiated by rumours or by members of the suspect's home or local community. There are some cases where local judicial officials investigated suspected infanticides, and then acted as prosecutors in court. Commonly, measures were taken to identify the perpetrator when a corpse of a dead infant was found. In 1641, a dog found a dead newborn child in the parish of Lekeryd of Jönköpings län. It was announced that all maid servants and widows should come to the church to be inspected. Only one of these women, a soldier's widow, had milk in her breasts. She was sentenced to death in the primary court but acquitted in the high court. Similar proto-medical inspections are not mentioned in 17th-century court records of northern Finland, and very seldom even in later centuries. The milking procedure was regulated by law in 1754, but in Finland only the main suspects were inspected for milk in their breast when apprehended (e.g. Hailuoto, 1650; Kälviä, 1642; Saloinen, 1656;¹¹⁹Rautelin, 2009, pp. 385–386, 456–457).¹²⁰

Infanticide cases appear in the high court records (i.e. the Danish and the Swedish data) if a suspect offender had been

¹¹⁹ HHMD 3580000204 and 3580000207.

¹²⁰ HHMD 460000046.

identified and prosecuted in a local court. The Finnish lower court data, on the other hand, also include cases where no specific perpetrator had been identified. Testimonies from eyewitnesses to the killing itself almost never appear in infanticide cases. Instead, the typical testimonies were circumstantial, dealing with pregnancy, especially when concealed: sudden loss of weight, and seclusion at the time of parturition. Hence, if the suspect perpetrator did not confess, it was almost impossible to reach a conviction. It is not possible to estimate the extent to which accused perpetrators were acquitted in local Swedish courts owing to insufficient evidence, and the extent to which those cases did not appear in the high court. The Swedish high court records, however, include numerous cases with insufficient evidence or even probably false accusations. More than one in four Swedish cases ended in the 1640s in acquittal at the high court, and in more than 20 per cent of the cases the high court was unable to reach a judgement.

In the early 17th century, it was a common procedure that the high court, in cases of insufficient evidence, decided that the suspected offender who did not confess should be brought to the execution place. There the suspect was told that she would be executed, and asked to confess to a priest. In the event of a confession, she was immediately executed. If she did not confess, she was brought back to custody (Inger, 1984, pp. 314–315). The infanticide committed by Elin Ingesdotter, cited at the beginning of this chapter, was such a case. In another case (Kongahärad, 1644), the unmarried woman Berit Jönsdotter first denied having been pregnant, but later confessed to the pregnancy, giving birth secretly and hiding the body. Like Elin Ingesdotter, she too claimed that the child had been stillborn and was kept in custody for several weeks. Still she did not confess. The local court declared that there was strong evidence against Berit, but, as the case could not be fully proved, the court had to acquit her. The high court came to the same decision.¹²¹ After 1655, both Elin Ingesdotter's and Berit Jönsdotter's cases would have fulfilled the requirements for a death sentence.

¹²¹ HHMD 460000069.

9.1 Tentative Comparisons of Infanticide Risk

We calculated infanticide rates per 100,000 estimated resident population, as we do not have population sizes for the group of under-one-year-olds. This estimation is unsatisfactory, but suffices to tentatively compare the risks between research regions and periods. The comparability rests on the auxiliary assumption that sizes of estimated resident populations are related to each other in the same way as the size of the relevant age categories.

In Denmark the rate was 0.6 per 100,000 population. In Finland, the rate was 0.9, and in Sweden 1.7 per 100,000 population. This rate difference between Finland and Sweden was quite the same in the overlapping period of 1640–1650. In Sweden, there were differences between the sub-areas. The highest rate appears in the Kalmar province, 3.2, compared to only 1.0 in Jönköping. This province in general demonstrates a lower homicide rate than the Kalmar province, near the Swedish/Danish border, suggesting a link between homicidal violence and infanticide. There is no obvious explanation for this, but it is important to observe that regional differences could be quite strong in the early modern age.

Prior research has suggested that infanticide may have increased during the 17th century (Österberg, 1993). Our data are not ideally suited to assess this. However, it can be noted that Swedish infanticide rates were higher in the first part of the 1640s than in the second half of the decade. The decline was most significant in the Kalmar and Kronoberg provinces: the two provinces with the highest rates at the Danish border. The cases are relatively few, and the differences can be caused by random variation. However, with the various efforts to increase prosecution and convictions, eventually specified in the new ordinances from 1655 and later, one would rather expect increasing registered infanticide rates during the 1640s.

The long Finnish observation period provides an option to explore changes. If the observation period is divided into three 20-year periods, we see a U-shaped pattern from 1.6 via 0.6 to 1.3.

The general observation is that the Finnish rate increased in the middle of the century, as did the Swedish, which may reflect the short-term increase in other lethal violence in the aftermath of war (Karonen, 1998b; Karonen, 2012; Sundin, 1992). The final reading reflects the homicide peak during the famine of the 1690s, when single-year peaks reached the levels of 10.9 and 17.6 per 100,000 population in 1696 and 1697. During these years, the Ostrobothnian courts handled many reported suspicious infant deaths (Lappalainen, 2014). Taken together, the current findings are inconclusive with regard to changes in the risk of infanticide during the 17th century. Indeed, the Finnish famine peak suggests that infanticide may be linked to the same correlates as general homicide, related to social strain and crises involving the loosening of social ties and control.

Source critical reflections. Regarding the findings of infanticides in Denmark, the low numbers most probably reflect a high dark figure, which can be explained by the early dating of the Danish sample (prior to the new, harsher infanticide legislation of 1635). Overall, the numbers are so small in the Danish dataset that it is impossible to conduct any meaningful analyses with respect to infanticide rates (the Danish cases are, however, included in the pattern analysis below). With respect to differences in the sources of the other two countries, it is important to stress that the archive of Göta High Court is intact, covering full years, whereas there are specific problems with the Finnish sources that might underestimate the crime rate in the latter part of the century (see Section 2.3). After the implementation of new judicial procedures in the 1690s, many homicides are missing in the records from the lower courts. In order to hasten the judgement of dangerous killers, the lower courts immediately referred capital cases to the high court for judgement (Ylikangas, 2000). The number of missing cases in Finland cannot be ascertained. Variable-specific missing data information is given in Appendix B, which also includes significance tests showing that only sanction distributions differ significantly between Sweden and Finland.

9.2 Patterns of Infanticide

In what follows, we describe the basic patterns of early modern infanticide, which here refers to all killings of victims under the age of one year. We analyse the basic offence features and variables that are of particular interest from a theoretical point of view, especially those linked to routine activity and social control theories. Tables and figures indicate the unit of observation, which can be incident, offender or victim. We continue to use the behavioural criterion of infanticide, capturing lethal violence against children younger than one year of age. As a general caveat, the reader is alerted to consider the much smaller numbers of observations in this chapter compared to other chapters.¹²²

Most of the incidents were neonaticides, targeting infants within 24 hours after their birth. Based on an assessment of the qualitative descriptions, we estimate that more than nine out of ten of the infanticides in our data were such cases. This is consistent with modern studies, which consider the risk of being killed in infancy the highest in the first day of life, and ten times higher than during any other time of a child's life (Paulozzi & Sells, 2002; Porter & Gavin, 2010; from a historical perspective, Koskivirta, 2017b). Second, it is important to make this distinction, as the offenders of older children tend to be significantly different from those who murder newborns (Resnick, 1970). For instance, neonaticides tended to relate to illegitimacy, while victims who were killed after their first day tended to be marital offspring.

Children of married parents were killed in accident-like incidents depending on parental negligence or misadventure like overlaying (smothering) an infant. Although such incidents could be deliberate infanticide in disguise (Netterstrøm, 2017b), the typical pattern of sharing a warm bed with an infant in cramped

¹²² Appendix B shows the missing data percentages and the significance tests of the analyses of this chapter. Almost all of the differences between the three countries fail to differ from expected distributions based on random variation.

sleeping conditions probably contributed to the likelihood of such fatalities. These incidents were usually handled ecclesiastically,¹²³ unless the death was suspicious, such as when overlaying an illegitimate infant, the accusations of which radically increased in the 18th century (Bergenlöv, 2004, pp. 103–104, 108). In contrast, overlaying appears to be rare in our data. For example, in 1618 a married leather carver in Denmark (Silkeborg) was accused of overlaying his infant son, aged six months and nine days, in the marital bed while drunk.¹²⁴ A similar case happened in Finland in Lapua in 1693, when a sober married wife of a farmer suffocated her two-week-old infant in their sleep.¹²⁵ Among the Finnish marital infant homicides is a killing of a six-month old infant boy in his cradle by his mentally disturbed uncle (Oulu, 1680) and an incidence of altruistic killing (mercy killing) of a hare-lipped three-week-old baby girl, who was deliberately drowned by her father as she was believed to be going to die in any case (Pyhäjoki, 1693).¹²⁶

Number of Victims and Offenders

Typically, infanticide, like other homicides, involves one victim and one offender, although sometimes twins or a newborn and an older sibling under the age of one are killed in simultaneous or subsequent lethal acts (Overpeck et al., 1998). From the viewpoint of crime measurement in general, the number of offenders tends to be less constant, reflecting differential criminal justice practices and changing legal norms. In particular, the

¹²³ There were no ecclesiastic courts in Denmark or the Swedish Realm after the Reformation. Cases involving ‘overlaying’ were treated like all other homicides at the normal courts, but only in the event of a suspicious death.

¹²⁴ HHMD 450000100.

¹²⁵ HHMD 3580000101.

¹²⁶ HHMD 3580000122 and 3580000125.

Table 9.1: Number of victims and offenders in infanticide incidents, percentage of incidents in Nordic countries, 1608–1699.

	Denmark	Sweden	Finland	Total
<i>Victims</i>				
One victim	100	97	100	99
Two victims	0	3	0	1
Total ^a	100	100	100	100
N	8	39	37	84
<i>Offenders</i>				
One offender	88	87	89	88
Two offenders	0	8	11	8
Three or more offenders	13	5	0	4
Total ^a	100	100	100	100
N	8	39	36	83

^a Columns may not add up to 100% due to rounding to integer.

numbers of co-offenders are subject to cultural understandings of culpability.

The majority of incidents involved a single victim, with only a marginal difference between the three research areas (Table 9.1). The sole incident with two victims concerned the killing of neonate twins in Sweden (Åkerbo, 1646).¹²⁷

The number of infanticide offenders per case ranged from one to four. Nine out of ten incidents involved a single offender. Thus, slightly more than one in ten incidents involved two or more offenders, the percentage of two offender cases being similar in the study sites. In these cases, the victims tended to be killed by their parents. On the other hand, cases involving more than two offenders were rare: one case in Denmark, two in Sweden and none in Finland.

¹²⁷ HHMD 460000125.

Gender

Victims. The gender of victims is rarely mentioned in the sources. This reflects the fact that most of the cases were neonaticides, in which the victim did not have a name. The Swedish data mention the victim's gender in only two incidents, one of which is an illegitimate neonate boy (Tuna län, 1650), the other an illegitimate neonate girl (Ljungby, 1643).¹²⁸ In contrast, the Finnish data mention the victim's gender for 12 victims, of whom 11 were females and one male. The Danish data mention the gender in four cases (three female victims, one male victim).

There is no obvious explanation for the more frequent mentioning of female victims in the Finnish (and Danish) data. This gender bias calls for further research as it diverges from prior research (Bergenlöv, 2004, pp. 401–402; Koskivirta, 2017b; Rautelin, 2009, pp. 78–79). There are indications in early Finnish folklore of a debasing attitude towards women giving birth to females (Helsti, 1994). A possible explanation could then be that offenders tended to stress in court that the victim was 'only' a girl. In the patriarchal social order of early modern society, women ranked lower than men in both public and private life (Lennartsson, 2005; Pleijel, 1970). On the other hand, this ideology also demanded superiors to care and protect. Hence, an alternative explanation could be that killing a girl would demonstrate particular recklessness. However, qualitative examination of cases against female victims suggests otherwise, as these tended to involve a confession by the offender. The gender of the victim was probably mentioned as a means of avoiding the death penalty (e.g. Pietarsaari, 1661; Pyhäjoki, 1656, 1698; Saloinen, 1692).¹²⁹

Offenders. Of the infanticide offenders, four in five were women and one in five men. The women were typically the mothers, or suspected mothers, of the dead infants. In Sweden, there is one example (Tveta, 1647) of a principal offender being the grandmother of the infant. In that case the mother claimed that the killing was performed against her will, and she was later also

¹²⁸ HHMD 460000197 and 460000104.

¹²⁹ HHMD 3580000208, 3580000212, 3580000223 and 3580000227.

acquitted in court.¹³⁰ Men were more likely to be co-offenders than principal offenders.

In the early years of the 17th century, infanticide was not regarded as an offence committed only by mothers. Fathers and other relatives could be offenders, too (Anners, 1965, pp. 108–110; Rautelin, 2009, p. 424). One of the Swedish cases (Hökhult, 1641) involved suspicions against the mother, the father (who was also the mother's master) and both of the father's parents.¹³¹ In another case (Algutsrum, 1643), the unmarried mother, the married father of the child and his wife were all three suspected. The father's wife, who had been present when the mother gave birth, was later freed from charges, while the mother and the father were both on the run.¹³² In a Danish case from 1616, a young woman was accused of killing her newborn infant with the help of two young men, who were sons of her master.¹³³

Among co-offenders, many were men, but this differed in the two parts of the Swedish Realm. The majority of male offenders in Sweden were principal offenders, while most of the Finnish male offenders were co-offenders. In Sweden, 18 per cent of the principal offenders were men, while in Finland 6 per cent were. In Denmark and Finland, all co-offenders were men, while in Sweden only three out of ten co-offenders were men. Co-offending was higher in Denmark and Sweden than in Finland, where only about one in ten were co-offenders. This is consistent with a transition towards infanticide being identified as a female crime committed by mothers. These observations suggest that infanticide offences were more broadly investigated in the western part of the realm (Sweden) than in the eastern part (Finland). This likely reflects the time difference of study rather than within-realm variation in penal practice. In the 1640s, (Swedish) legislation involved better legal safeguards for female suspects than during the period of the Finnish data (1640–1699).

¹³⁰ HHMD 460000147.

¹³¹ HHMD 460000038.

¹³² HHMD 460000075.

¹³³ HHMD 450000112.

Marital Status

Three out of five infanticide offenders were unmarried at the time of the offence (Table 9.2). The second largest group were married individuals. Widows and people in stable courtship relationships were less common among infanticide offenders.

Of the female offenders (N = 70), two thirds were unmarried, while one in five was married. Among the few male offenders (N = 18), the reverse was the case: three out of five were married and one third unmarried. The percentages for women and men are, to a degree, mirror images of one another: female offenders are typically single, male offenders married.

Critical reflections. A factor possibly impacting the validity of the results is the likelihood of male offenders and co-offenders to be included in the data. The Swedish records from the 1640s often include some inquiry about the father's role, even when he was not explicitly suspected as an offender. In the Finnish records, on the other hand, possible male involvement (fathers) was usually not handled during the trial of the female principal offender but after the beheading of the female offender. Her last confession was then treated by the court as proof of co-offender culpability, and examined in the subsequent trial of the co-offender

Table 9.2: Marital status, percentage of offenders of Nordic infanticide, 1608–1699.

	Denmark	Sweden	Finland	Total
Married	33	26	28	27
Boyfriend/girlfriend relationship	0	5	5	5
Single	67	59	63	61
Widowed	0	10	5	7
Total ^a	100	100	100	100
N	9	39	40	88

^a Columns may not add up to 100% due to rounding to integer.

(Rautelin, 2009, p. 90).¹³⁴ Male offending can therefore be underestimated in the Finnish data, which include male co-offenders who were investigated at the same trial as the female offender.

Location

Infanticide is in general a consequence of an unwanted pregnancy, which in the early modern age primarily meant pregnancies out of wedlock (Bergenlöv, 2004; Kilday, 2013; Nielsen, 1982; Rautelin, 2009). With respect to crime location, prior research concludes that infanticide was often committed in the offender's private home or apartment, more seldom outdoors, although there are neonaticides in birthing units (Paulozzi & Sells, 2002). Typically, offenders go through child labour and then kill the infant within close proximity of others, without disturbing anyone, let alone calling for help (Porter & Gavin, 2010; Rautelin, 2009, pp. 329–332).

Nearly half (47 per cent) of the infanticides took place in semi-public areas such as forests, agricultural compounds and workplaces. Almost one third (32 per cent) of the cases took place in private homes, typically the home of the offender. The rest of the cases happened in other places and, very rarely, in public places. The locations tend to reflect the temporal cycles of the offences (see Section 9.3) and the fact that the typical suspects were a married master and his unmarried maid, or two unmarried servants.

Previous research on 17th-century infanticide has established the private home and workplaces like barns and stables as common locations for the killings (Bergenlöv, 2004; Kaspersson, 2000; Lövkrona, 1999, 2002; Rautelin, 2009, pp. 330–331), a finding corroborated here. In regional comparison, the shares of private places were fairly similar in the two parts of the Swedish Realm. Also, the share of incidents taking place in the wilderness was

¹³⁴ These protocols can be difficult to find, unless the court records are systematically searched. This was performed only for the period 1640–1650.

fairly similar. The rest of the crime scenes were most typically agricultural workplaces.¹³⁵

The distinction between private and non-private places is somewhat arbitrary when dealing with the early modern age. It is frequently difficult to separate private homes from workplaces.¹³⁶ For example, servants and apprentices usually belonged to their master's households and commonly worked in the same house where they lived. This is consistent with the high share of the infanticide incidents occurring in workplaces. The most common location was, however, private homes. With few exceptions, this would be the home of both victim and perpetrator.

Critical reflections. In infanticide cases, the location variable had 29 per cent missing information, more in Finland than in Sweden. The missing information in the Finnish sources seem to reflect several factors: the tendency of offenders, co-offenders and witnesses to keep silent on the context of crime in order to escape punishment, or that the body of the victim was found in another place than the crime location, which remained obscure in the sources in the absence of a proper confession.¹³⁷ Another explanation for the higher share of missing information in Finland might be the changing legal practice after 1655, when evidence was gathered from testimonies on hidden pregnancies and secret childbirths, sometimes at the expense of other offence details. While missing information might distort the picture of crime location, the findings confirm the concentration of infanticides in workplaces and private homes of offenders. Furthermore, the early modern courts regularly noted in the source when a suspect, prior to the act, had left a populated dwelling to give birth in secret, as this circumstance proved premeditation. The coding of location of infanticide appears consistent.

¹³⁵ For Denmark, place information was available for only five cases, four of which took place in private apartments.

¹³⁶ To solve this problem, a special functional context variable was added to the HHM 2.0 (Kivivuori et al., 2020a).

¹³⁷ The Göta High Court records also include that kind of case.

Modes of Killing

Infanticide typically occurs without weapons or instruments (Meyer & Oberman, 2001). Owing to the infants' small size and their inability to defend themselves, such acts are easier to commit than on adults, requiring neither strength nor skill (Porter & Gavin, 2010). Heavy violence was scarce also in 18th-century Finnish infanticide, and tended, when it occurred, to target the victim's head or throat (Rautelin, 2009, p. 86).

Owing to the high share of missing information, the findings concerning methods of killing are highly tentative. None of the offences in our data was committed with a firearm, sharp object or blunt weapon (Table 9.3). Infants were typically killed with other types of violence such as by smothering, strangulation, suffocation or drowning. This is similar to modern patterns (Porter & Gavin, 2010). In the 17th century, the majority of the victims died of asphyxia, but none by violent strangulation. Of the victims of suffocation, two were conjugally born infants, who were smothered in the parental bed in their sleep (Danish Silkeborg, 1618, and Finnish Lapua, 1693).¹³⁸

Only one incident in Sweden was very violent (Gösring, 1648).¹³⁹ After giving birth in a privy, the mother deliberately hit the infant so hard that she broke their neck. In court, she confessed that she intended, from the beginning, to kill her child. Interestingly enough, although premeditation to kill the infant was certainly not uncommon in Sweden or Finland, killing by heavy violence was. Suffocation as a method of killing likely reflects the aim of camouflaging the deed as a stillbirth.

Critical reflections. The percentage of missing information on the method of killing was extremely high in this variable (68 per cent). The shares of missing data were similar in the study regions. There are several reasons for the problem of missing

¹³⁸ HHMD 450000100 and 3580000101.

¹³⁹ HHMD 460000159.

Table 9.3: Mode of violence in infanticide, percentage of incidents in the Nordic countries, 1608–1699.

	Denmark	Sweden	Finland	Total
<i>Firearm, sharp or blunt object</i>	0	0	0	0
<i>Violence without weapon (hitting, kicking etc.)</i>	0	7	0	4
<i>Other types of violence</i>	100	93	100	96
Poisoning	0	0	0	0
Hanging/Strangulation/Suffocation	50	79	90	79
Smoke or fire	25	0	0	4
Drowning	0	7	10	7
Other	25	7	0	7
Total	100	100	100	100
N	4	14	10	28

data. The majority of the incidents in the data are neonaticides,¹⁴⁰ which even today present a forensic challenge when concluding on the cause of death. Second, the cause of death might reflect the practice among infanticide offenders to confess to a misadventure rather than a murder, and in neonate infanticide to a stillbirth or a miscarriage. Female offenders tended to relate as little as possible on the circumstances of crime to evade conviction (Rautelin, 2009, pp. 75–86), a reason why information is scarce in the sources. Third, neonate infanticide could in the Swedish Realm after 1655 be legally proved by circumstantial evidence of concealed pregnancy and secret parturition, thus making the cause of

¹⁴⁰ It was easier to determine the cause of death of older children than of neonates, a fact which persists today (Herman-Giddens et al., 1999). In our data, killings of children older than one day were attributed to clearly defined methods of killing: poisoning, hitting or kicking, and drowning.

death, to a degree, irrelevant for legal purposes. This fact probably explains why the ratio of missing information on causes of death peaks in the Finnish research period, which includes incidents to 1699. The late 17th-century infanticide court proceedings did not focus on physical evidence as thoroughly as in times of the old law in Denmark and Sweden.

9.3 Time Cycles

In this section, we explore the temporality of infanticide, a dimension that has often been overlooked in previous historical research. As mentioned before, criminological routine activity theory (Cohen & Felson, 1979) predicts that crime risks are not random in time. Rather, occurrence should manifest meaningful links to daily, weekly and annual time cycles of routines of everyday life. The time cycles primarily reflect neonaticide, as cases involving victims older than 24 hours old were rare.

Within-Year Cycle

The seasonal variable is used in this research because it has fewer missing values than the month variable. The seasonal distribution of the incidents in our combined data shows a summer peak with heightened shares also in the spring (Figure 9.1). The Finnish peak was in summer, while the Swedish peak was in spring.

The monthly distribution of offences (Figure 9.2) indicates a summertime peak in June and July, while April and December manifest secondary peaks. Owing to the small number of cases, region-specific figures call for caution. However, we do see that roughly the same months tend to manifest higher shares of infanticide. In Finland, nearly one third of the infanticides took place in the month of July.

An interpretation of the infanticide rhythm must consider the probable time of conception. In northern countries with strong seasonal contrasts in luminosity, the rates of conception peak in the summer, yielding maximum birth rates in spring (Rojansky,

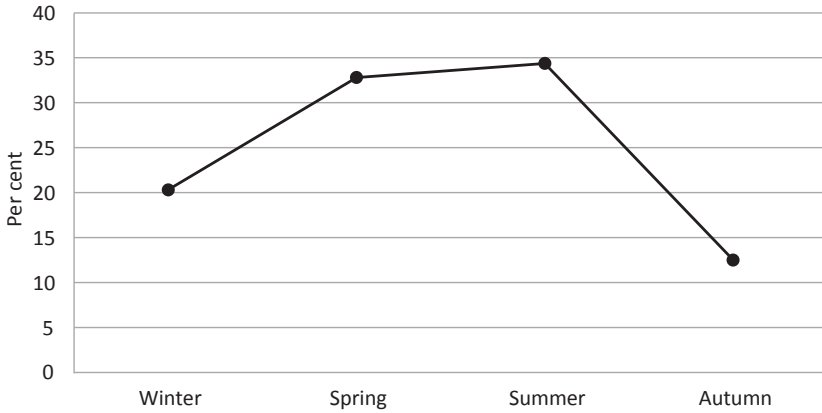


Figure 9.1: Infanticide by season, percentage of incidents, Nordic countries, 1608–1699 (N = 64).

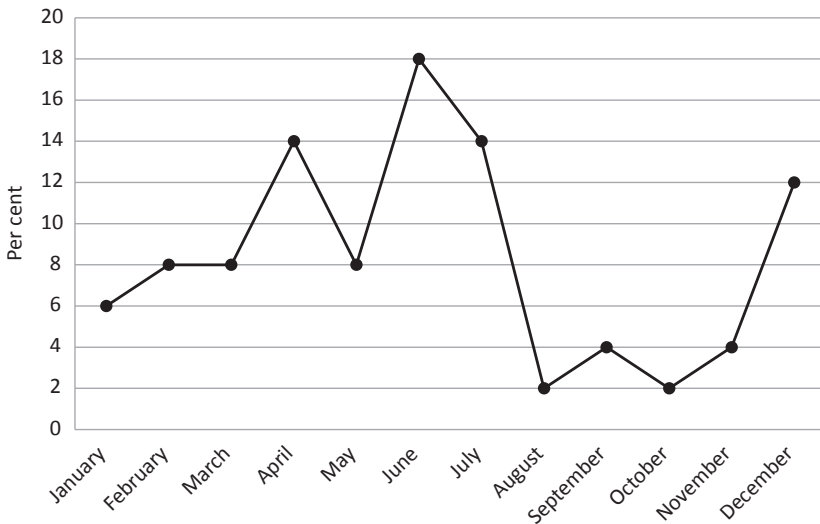


Figure 9.2: Monthly distribution of infanticide incidents, Nordic countries, 1608–1699 (N = 50).

Brzezinski & Schenker, 1992). If this pattern reflects a latitude-dependent universal, the early summer peak of northern infanticide could simply reflect the general frequency of births: infanticide peaks when births peak. This would be the most parsimonious

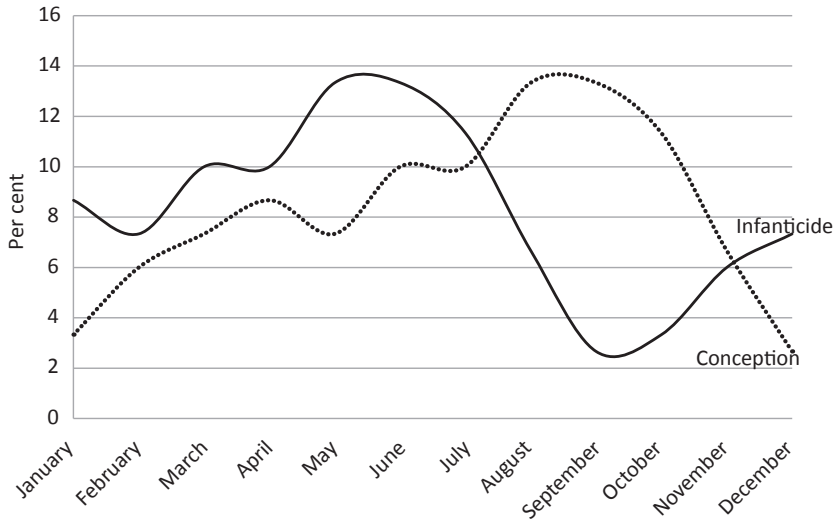


Figure 9.3: Monthly distribution of conceptions leading to infanticide and infanticide incidents, Nordic countries, 1608–1699 (N = 50).

explanation. To examine this further, Figure 9.3 contrasts these two aspects of infanticide. We have smoothed the curves to tease out annual patterns. It should be noted that the curves are identical, since the conception curve is simply the infanticide month minus nine months.¹⁴¹ The emerging pattern shows that infanticide peaks in summer, while conceptions leading to infanticide peak in late summer and autumn, roughly from August to October. The conception peak in late summer and autumn could thus explain the summer peak in infanticide. The deep dip of conceptions leading to infanticide in the midwinter months is consistent with the above-noted general cycle of human conception likelihood (Rojansky et al., 1992).

¹⁴¹ Infants are born when they are physiologically mature, unless the pregnancy ends in an induced or spontaneous untimely birth. The duration of an uncomplicated spontaneous labour pregnancy from conception to parturition is on average 280 days or 40 weeks +/- 10 days (Mittendorf et al., 1990).

Could certain routine activities explain the conception cycle? Research on Finnish family formation suggests that people in the early modern age tended to engage in courtship and marriage during less labour-intensive times (Sirén, 1999, pp. 142–147; Turpeinen, 1981, pp. 169–172). While this may be so for all births, the above graph suggests that those conceptions that led to infanticide were most likely to have taken place in late summer and early autumn, that is, during the busiest time of harvesting. Public holidays could also impact the pattern. Annual harvest-related festivities could have provided opportunities for conceptions leading to illegitimate births. In Michaelmas (late September), servants had their annual week off to secure work for the next year, and to visit family and friends. Postharvest fairs and markets gave people opportunities to interact with other people in the area (Wernersson-Wiberg, 2001). The wintertime low in conceptions leading to infanticide could also be related to social routine activities, even though December–January also had festivities. Indeed, natural luminosity effects and social patterns of interaction are intertwined, and should not be seen as competing hypotheses.

Week Cycle

We have information about the weekday of the infanticide for only 26 incidents, making conclusions tentative. The distribution of these cases peaked on Sundays (Figure 9.4). Mondays show a weekly low, while the other days of the week seem to have had approximately similar proportions of infanticide. Region-specific comparisons are not meaningful here owing to the exhaustion of cell frequencies. Both Sweden and Finland manifested the Sunday peak, however.

If Sunday really was a peak day of infanticide behaviour, the cause of this cycle cannot be here ascertained. Possibly it was easier for maids to hide during Sundays, and control could be laxer than normally. Relieved from domestic chores, offenders had opportunities to adequately withdraw from the public to

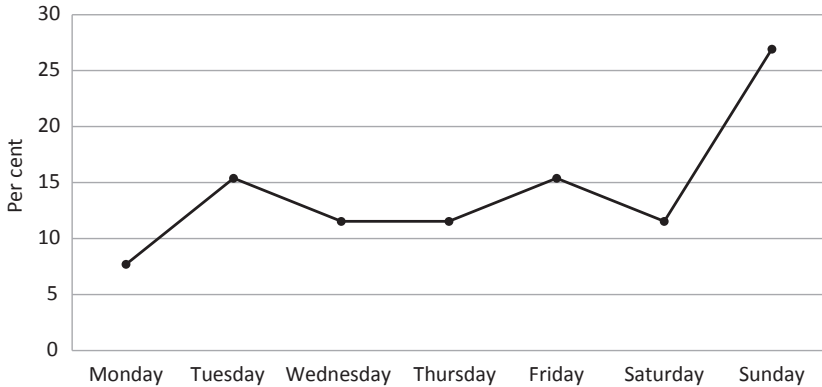


Figure 9.4: Weekday distribution of Nordic infanticide, Nordic countries, 1608–1699 (N = 26).

commit their deed, most frequently in work-related compounds or uncultivated areas.¹⁴²

Day Cycle

Infanticide peaked during the night and morning hours (Figure 9.5). Most Swedish incidents took place at night, while morning was the most common timing in Finland. All Danish cases took place during the night, or in the morning. The results are consistent with findings in 18th-century Finland, where most infanticides took place when other people slept (Rautelin, 2009, p. 332). The concentration of births during night and early morning hours is a human universal rooted in biology (Bernis & Varea, 2012; Olcese, Lozier & Paradise, 2013). The reason why infanticide also tends to happen during night and morning hours could thus reflect the general distribution of births as a recurrent routine activity. This would be the most parsimonious explanation

¹⁴² Above-average neonatal mortality during weekends has been observed in modern data, with a possible link to the induction of labour in modern medical practice (Gould et al., 2003).

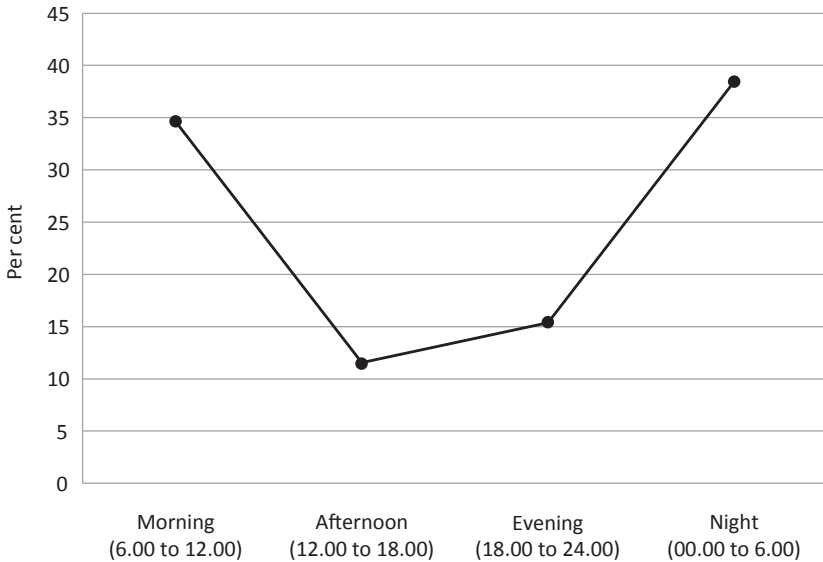


Figure 9.5: Daily distribution of Nordic infanticide, 1608–1699 (N = 25).

of the observed patterns. An additional factor could be the lack of social control during the night. A more definite resolution of the question of what causes the cycle would require information about the daily rhythms of all births. If infanticide *diverges* from the daily cycles of all births, social control-related factors would be likely explanations.

The difference in the time cycle of Sweden and Finland might be explained by the fact that the Swedish incidents took place in times when infanticide was still understood in a legal context where the mother was not yet the only possible offender. The risks of being suspected of co-offending might have induced witnesses to claim that they had been asleep and therefore could not intervene. Only a few such cases exist in the Finnish data (e.g. Kemi, 1696).¹⁴³ The majority of the Finnish incidents took place very early in the

¹⁴³ HHMD 3580000230.

morning, making the night/morning distinction partially superfluous.

Critical reflections. In all time cycle analyses shown above, the cell frequencies are low, and the distributions could be caused by random variation. In addition, the percentages of missing information were relatively high in the time cycle variables. In every fourth incident, season data was missing. The percentages of missing data were even higher for month, weekday and time of day. For season and month, the Finnish data had fewer missing data than the Swedish data did (Appendix B). The differences can reflect procedural changes in the middle of the century due to the Queen Christina's Penal Order of 1653, which among other things increased the information to be retrieved from the sources, putting stricter demands on legal proceedings and their documentation (Sundin, 1992, p. 121). The Danish cases had fewer missing data concerning time cycles than Sweden and Finland.

The Sunday peak of infanticide could reflect the ability of offenders to evade capable guardians during Sundays, detection likelihood, or source-related biases. It is plausible that Sunday was more likely to be remembered in the court than any other day. Some studies based on modern data have observed heightened neonatal mortality at weekends (Gould, Qin, Marks & Chavez, 2003), which may be related to medical service provision. If similar cycles existed in historical periods, increasing neonatal mortality could lead to higher infanticide figures due to the misattribution of death to criminal intent.¹⁴⁴

¹⁴⁴ For weekend cycles in homicide, see Figure 8.1, corroborating a high similarity of cycles across a 300-year time span (see Kamler, 1988). We refrain from drawing conclusions from general homicide to infanticide. Yet it should be pointed out that the weekly cycle of homicide in modern data is very unlikely to reflect bias in the sources.

Table 9.4: Sanctions of offenders of Nordic infanticide, percentage of offenders in the Nordic countries, 1608–1699.

	Denmark	Sweden	Finland	Total
Not sanctioned	40	35	13	27
Death penalty	50	59	68	61
Outlawry	10	0	0	1
Corporal punishment	0	3	0	1
Deportation, banishment	0	3	0	1
Prison	0	0	0	0
Other punishment	0	0	19	8
Total ^a	100	100	100	100
N	10	34	31	75

^a Columns may not add up to 100% due to rounding to integer.

9.4 Sanctions

Overall, patterns of infanticide were quite similar in our study regions. Differences in the legal reactions to infanticide are likely to be greater, due to the major legal changes during the research period. While Sweden and Finland were parts of the same realm with shared laws, Swedish and Finnish sources nevertheless relate to different legal contexts. This is so because they were extracted from partly different time periods, during which the legal understanding of infanticide was changing. With regard to timing, the Swedish and Danish legal contexts were more similar to one another than to the Finnish study period.

The majority of infanticide offenders were punished, and a majority received the death penalty (Table 9.4). The percentage of offenders receiving the death penalty was higher in infanticide than in other homicide (Appendix C). Killing an infant child was considered a very serious crime in the early modern age.

The share of non-sanctioned infanticide offenders was lowest in Finland. In the legal context of the Swedish dataset, it was difficult to pass the death penalty, or any penalty, without a confession, while in the later Finnish study period, this was no longer

necessary for the death penalty. The figures are affected also by the larger proportion of co-offenders in Denmark and Sweden compared to Finland. Of the Swedish co-offenders, only one was convicted (Lommaryd, 1646).¹⁴⁵ In another case (Algutsrum, 1643), the fugitive mother and the suspect father, a married man, could not be sentenced, as they were on the run.¹⁴⁶ Other co-offenders in the 'not sanctioned' category included offenders who were freed of all charges, and some in whose cases the outcome is not known. Co-offenders were more likely to be acquitted than primary offenders, a finding consistent with prior studies on 18th-century infanticide (Rautelin, 2009, pp. 85–86).

In Denmark and Sweden, sanctions other than the death penalty are almost non-existent. There are only two exceptions in Sweden: one corporal punishment and one deportation. In Finland, on the other hand, some infanticide offences were punished with replacement penalties due to unpunishable co-offending, when the co-offender denied culpability (Haapajärvi, 1698; Kemi, 1689), or due to the victims' bodies being missing.¹⁴⁷ Such circumstances always complicated the sanctioning, which is why the main suspect sometimes received just a punishment for a sexual offence (Hailuoto, 1640; Liminka, 1698).¹⁴⁸ As in any other type of homicide, infanticide offenders could also become fugitives. In such cases, the courts suspended the verdicts until the suspect was apprehended and charged (Ala-Parkkila, 1650).¹⁴⁹

Critical reflections. The sanction variable had 29 per cent missing data in infanticide cases. Some of the observed differences

¹⁴⁵ This case is in many ways exceptional. Both the father and the mother received the death penalty, although neither of them confessed and there were no witnesses. The main reasons seem to have been that the father, who was married, confessed to adultery, which in itself could render the death penalty, and he had helped her to escape from custody. Both had been fugitives for some time. HHMD 460000149.

¹⁴⁶ HHMD 460000075.

¹⁴⁷ HHMD 3580000140 and 3580000222.

¹⁴⁸ HHMD 3580000206 and 3580000231.

¹⁴⁹ HHMD 3580000203.

can reflect the court-level difference in the Swedish and the Finnish data.

In the Swedish data, there are a number of cases attracting the death penalty in the lower court that were rejected by the Göta High Court and resulted in either an acquittal or an unknown outcome. The high court verdicts were final (non-appealable) judgements, except for a royal pardon. In contrast, the lower court verdicts in infanticide cases represented suggestive punishment, the decision of which was referred to the high court for final judgement. The conclusion is that the reliability of the sanction description is less in Finland than in Sweden and Denmark. We hesitate to draw strong conclusions as to the punitivity of the regimes.

9.5 Summarizing Key Findings

In this chapter, we have described the patterns of 17th-century infanticide from multiple perspectives. We have identified similarities and differences, mainly between Sweden and Finland, because the Danish data set included only very few incidents of infanticide. We have also considered how legislation changed during the 17th century and how that might have affected our data. We have furthermore engaged critically with the sources, discussing how they might bias the findings.

In the early modern period, infanticide, as defined here, was not an offence committed exclusively by females. A significant minority of offenders were males. The offences were typically committed in private homes or work-related spaces. The mode of violence involved non-weaponized violence. There were systematic time cycles in infanticide, as in general homicide. The crimes were most often committed on Sundays, and during nights and mornings. There was a summer peak in the commission of these crimes. In particular, the daily and annual cycles of infanticide are likely to be related to similar cycles in all births. In a way, births as a normal human activity, strongly embedded in biological processes, are *the* routine activity, which can explain plausibly and

parsimoniously some of the key patterns of infanticide. Therefore, in order to further examine the meaning of the infanticide cycles, future research should collect information on the regular cyclic patterns of births in the same historical locations. Weekly cycle is an exception, because in pre-modern samples induced births are unlikely to impact the general birth patterns across the week. The Sunday peak is possibly a source-related artefact, as Sunday may have been more likely to be mentioned owing to the aggravated nature of lethal violence during that day.

In sum, there appears to be a relatively strong connection between infanticide and the regular rhythms of childbirth, linking the discussion to criminological routine activity theories. Also, strain and control theories remain highly relevant for this type of homicide. These are further discussed in the final chapter of this book. Infanticide differs in many respects from other homicide. However, the differences are themselves explainable by opportunity structures, routine activities, and other key theories of criminology. The reason to study infanticide separately is thus more grounded on the problem of hidden crime than on the applicability domains of theories.

Exploring Early Modern Turmoil Periods

The study of sudden changes in homicide rates is important for both theoretical and policy reasons. Such waves can be triggered by political choices, such as drastic changes in alcohol availability, as in the early 1970s Finland (Kivivuori, 2002). Or they can reflect momentary breakdowns in social control, thus ending when control is re-established by policy measures (Goertzel et al., 2013; Lehti, 2001). On a more general level, increasing homicide rates have been connected to government instability and lack of legitimacy, and to the erosion of acceptance of social hierarchies (Roth, 2009, pp. 17–26).

Recently, Goertzel et al. (2013) have advocated for qualitative analyses to examine the triggers and suppressors of homicide booms. They argue that preference for statistical analysis has led criminologists to over-emphasize socio-economic variables explaining variance in large datasets. The preference for long but substantially very limited time series may have contributed to a narrow vision regarding the factors shaping interpersonal violence over time. As a remedy, they suggest that historical factors can best be studied qualitatively by using comparative methods in small-N datasets, building on historical insights of even drawing on journalistic skills (Goertzel et al., 2013, p. 69).

This diagnosis rests on the correct premise that, typically, quantitative register analyses must rely on available administrative statistics (registers) on both sides of the equation. On the predictor

side, they can be limited to variables like gross national product, total alcohol consumption or other similar indexes. These in turn become less and less available and reliable the further back in time we go. In the outcome side of the equation, homicide is often indexed by total rates per population, sometimes broken down by gender. So, clearly, more nuanced and contextual information is sorely needed. Qualitative thick description is one such source. Yet this does not necessarily mean that such information could only be qualitative or journalistic. Homicide as an outcome can be disaggregated in a manner that breaks it down in multiple key aspects, and in a way that allows theoretical pluralism in explanation.

This has been the key goal of the Historical Homicide Monitor (HHM), which aims at disaggregating homicides to specify differences and changes. The analyses of the previous chapters have done that by comparing three study regions in three countries. The data entities represented different periods as well, from the Danish early 17th century to the Finnish late 17th century. While we have mostly referred to routine activities, social control and strain theories, we additionally discussed the differences from the perspective of temporal change. This, of course, is, to a degree, conjectural. It is not certain that the Finnish early 17th-century homicides resembled the Danish homicides of the period as revealed in this study; the observed differences can be regional rather than temporal, or a complex mix of both. It is, therefore, of some interest to test the approach in situations where homicide rate *undergoes more abrupt change in a single site, thus holding the region constant*.

Of the three countries described in this chapter, Sweden and Finland – both parts of the Swedish Realm – provide regionally consistent data from a single region. Sweden has more than a decade of observations from a largish area, while the Finnish data cover 60 years. Both of these datasets included a period of possible major social disruption. The final years of the Swedish data (1649–1650) correspond to the demobilization of the field army after the Thirty Years' War (Karonen, 2012). Analogously, the final years of the Finnish data (1695–1699) corresponded to a

large-scale famine (Lappalainen, 2012). Our inspection of the homicide rates in Chapter 5 above suggested that both periods manifested increases in homicide. The Swedish homicide rate change was less distinct and possibly related to a single sub-area. The Swedish demobilization era cannot be described as a clear ‘homicide wave’, yet it could have impacted the internal patterns of disaggregated homicide.

In this chapter, we test the disaggregation capability of the HHM in these two short-term turmoil periods. In both analyses, we use a limited and fixed set of indicators, which seek to capture the dimensions of *routine activities*, *social control*-related (civilization) processes, and *social strain*. We use dichotomous variables flagging the presence of specific homicide features: urban location, male-to-male case, private place as location, violence using no weapons,¹⁵⁰ familial and kin cases,¹⁵¹ criminal- and crime-related cases, cases transgressing social ranks,¹⁵² cases taking place during the spring season, Saturday or Sunday, or at night,¹⁵³ indications of alcohol use by the offender during the offence, offender occupation as an armed forces-related employee, offenders with property protection as motivation, and cases where the victims’ employment was linked to the government.

The purpose of these analyses is explorative. The number of homicides in our data taking place during the Swedish and Finnish peak periods is still low in absolute numbers. We have 36 victims from the Swedish focal observation years and 37 victims from the Finnish peak years. It is therefore clear that this chapter presents small-N research like that of homicide turmoils, as discussed in Goertzel et al. (2013). However, we add to prior research by

¹⁵⁰ Hitting, kicking etc. and pushing or shoving in mode of killing variable.

¹⁵¹ Intimate partner, blood relative and in-law values in victim–offender relationship variable.

¹⁵² Cases where the victim was above or below the offender in social rank.

¹⁵³ Between 00.00 and 06.00.

being able to compare pre-turmoil and turmoil periods using the same theory-driven conceptual grid of the HHM. The aim is to *showcase* what can be done more generally, and to other homicide peaks and troughs, in the future, using the HHM in bigger datasets.¹⁵⁴

10.1 Sweden 1649–1650

The Swedish mid-century homicide peak was linked to changes in proportional shares of offence types (Table 10.1). During the peak years, crime-related homicide increased its share. Similarly, there were more offences transgressing social rank divisions and offences motivated by property protection. A lesser share of homicides took place in private apartments. With regard to time cycles, homicide appeared to detach from the ‘normal’. Homicide also became less concentrated on springtime, weekends and situational alcohol use, while homicide at night became more common. The peak was not related to offenders employed in the armed forces, or attacks against people serving the lay or ecclesiastical administration.

The peak took place with the end of the Thirty Years’ War, and the related demobilizations. It is therefore interesting to see that the prevalence of offenders identified as soldiers did not increase. Maybe the courts did not see former soldiers as soldiers. The demobilized soldiers may have reverted to their peacetime occupations, or may have been perceived as vagrants. Furthermore, the homicide of these years was not particularly targeted against people serving the lay or ecclesiastical administration. Hence, we do not observe an ‘attack on government’. The possible changes

¹⁵⁴ Because of the small N, we conducted the same analyses without and with missing data replacement. In the latter analysis, missing information was coded in all variables as lack of the examined feature. The results were the same in both analyses. All analyses exclude cases against persons less than one year old.

Table 10.1: Pattern change in homicides in south-eastern Sweden, 1640–1650, percentages by subperiod.

	1640–1648	1649–1650
Urban	10	9
Male-to-male	89	83
Private apartment	52	34
No weapons	4	6
Familial/kin homicide	15	13
Criminal- and crime-related	7	17
Transgressed social ranks	36	52
Property protection	22	40
Springtime	31	20
Saturday or Sunday	44	29
At night (00.00–06.00)	9	21
Alcohol (situational)	58	46
Offender from armed forces	25	11
Victim worked for government	17	11

Higher prevalence italicized if $p < 0.05$. See also Appendix B.

were more diffuse, with transgressive and crime-related violence increasing outside private apartments, disconnected from the normal routine activities. While based on small data, the patterns are consistent with some disruption in societal regulation.

The Swedish homicide trend manifested a slow decrease before the peak. To explore the composition of this slope, we additionally divided the observation period into three sub-periods: 1640–1644, 1645–1648 and the peak of 1649–1650. In this analysis, the two first periods had quite similar internal pattern distributions of homicide.

10.2 Finnish Famine Years 1695–1699

Next, we turn to the internal pattern changes of northern Finnish homicide during the 17th century. As can be seen in Figures 5.5, 5.7 and 5.8, there was a drastic homicide peak during the last five years of the century, from 1695 to 1699. This peak correlated in time with a widespread famine. For the purposes of this analysis, we divided the Finnish time series into three parts: 1640–1667, 1668–1694 and 1695–1699. The last period corresponds to the peak of lethal violence, while the rest of the period is divided into two equally long subperiods, reflecting a longish era of homicide risk stability.

The famine period stands out in multiple respects (Table 10.2).¹⁵⁵ First of all, it has the lowest share of male-to-male violence. This shows that not all homicide peaks obey ‘Verkko’s laws’, which predict that homicide waves should manifest higher shares of male-to-male violence (Verkko, 1951). Second, the famine peak is correlated with a relative increase in the share of familial and kin homicides. The share of these was stable in the two first observation periods, but then doubled during the famine peak. These two aspects – the decrease of male-to-male cases and the increase of family and kin cases – differ from the Swedish pattern described above.

In contrast, there are also similarities. As in Sweden in 1649–1650, the Finnish famine peak was also correlated with an above-average proportion of cases transgressing social rank boundaries, crime-related incidents, and offenders seeking to protect their property. Furthermore, the detachment of homicide from normal routine activities is also observable in Finland: homicides were less linked to weekends, more frequently took place during the night, and became more associated with sobriety, possibly because there was no surplus grain to distil alcohol during the famine. The

¹⁵⁵ In Table 10.2, the period differences in male-to-male cases, family/kin cases, and situational alcohol use are statistically significant ($p < 0.05$).

Table 10.2: Pattern change in homicide in northern Finland, 1640–1699, percentages by subperiod.

	1640–1694	1695–1699
Urban	14	9
Male-to-male	71	43
Private apartment	51	55
No weapons	14	19
Familial/kin homicide	28	54
Criminal- and crime-related	11	29
Transgressed social ranks	44	65
Property protection	26	31
Springtime	32	43
Saturday or Sunday	49	19
At night (00.00–06.00)	15	36
Alcohol (situational)	35	7
Offender an armed forces employee	5	0
Victim worked for government	7	6

Higher prevalence italicized if $p < 0.05$. See also Appendix B.

only difference from the Swedish pattern is the rise of springtime cases in Finland. This may be linked to the likely primary cause of the homicide boom, the famine, with depleted food resources in the springtime. Finally, as in Sweden, the homicide disruption was not related to persons employed in the armed forces. Hence, the violence was not an attack against people serving the government.

We started this book with a case description from the Finnish data, describing a robbery-murder in 1697, during the famine. A vagrant lodger and his female accomplice attacked a homestead during the night, to rob food. Some of the aspects of this case are consistent with the quantitative patterns emerging from the tentative exploration in Table 10.2. It was a crime-related homicide

committed during the night. The reason that there was no capable guardian present was that the master of the house was absent to transfer a fugitive thief, thus participating in governmental control activities. We do not know whether this influenced the choice of target by the perpetrators, but it does fit with the general constellation where the early modern state was trying to cope with a crime wave.

10.3 Homicide and Societal Disruption

Taken together, there are two major lessons we draw from these analyses. First, homicide booms should be addressed when comparing wider regions and longer time periods. Thus, these explorative findings underscore the need for contextual sensitivity of analysis of homicide patterns. The Finnish outlier position in the overall homicide patterns during the research period (see Chapter 6) is partially but not completely explained by the inclusion of the famine peak in that country data. Second, the Finnish famine years were much more clearly marked by increase in homicide rate, and related changes in types and patterns of homicide. With current data, we hesitate to describe the Swedish peak as a clear 'peak' in risk of homicide, especially as it was most pronounced in a single subregion.

Third, with the above-stated caveat, there are some tentative similarities between the Swedish and Finnish turmoil years. Both were linked to an increase in criminal behaviour-related homicide and violence transgressing the social rank divides. To a degree, both periods detached homicides from the normal time cycles and alcohol consumption. The detachment from the everyday routine activities points toward a relative disruption or breakdown of the social order. The ultimate causes of the observed changes were quite probably different in the two research locations, but the outcomes appear to share some features. Maybe the early modern state was overwhelmed by external shocks such as demobilization and famine, weakening its grip, when the civil society experienced an anomic backlash in the civilizing process.

In the understanding of homicide peaks, loss of legitimacy, outbreak of anomie, and social control deficits may be different aspects of, or ways of speaking about, similar disruptions in the social order. The events that trigger such disruptions are plural, different and always contextual (Roth, 2009), yet the outcomes seem to share patterns when explored from the perspective of criminology. Even the early modern homicide turmoil periods appear to share some features with selected modern booms, namely their embeddedness in deficits or crises of social control (Goertzel et al., 2013; Lehti, 2001). They may also share a logic of escalation, if public disorder and ‘broken windows’ effects increase people’s sense of loss of control, as predicted by routine activity theory (see also Section 12.4). Indeed, some accounts of modern homicide booms may be too ‘socio-structural’. Thus, the early 1970s homicide boom in Finland has been linked to increasing alcohol consumption, socio-structural change, and demographic changes (Kivivuori, 2002). Yet that period was also characterized also by political-cultural turmoil such as strike movements, the rise of populism, and frequent change of governments. As historical events, abrupt changes in homicide rates combine unique contexts and recurring themes.

The explorative analyses reported in this chapter were intended to showcase the potential of the HHM in disaggregating homicide patterns during turmoil periods. The tentative findings indicate that the HHM conceptual grid is able to capture historically relevant theoretical perspectives (see Chapter 4; Kivivuori et al., 2020a). The findings invite interpretation from the point of view of the grand historical-criminological theories, such as historical control theory (civilization perspective), and approaches linking violence to prevalent economic modes of life. The biggest challenge in this regard is how well the findings match the grand narrative of societal pacification. Some of the findings, such as the apparently decreasing all-Nordic homicide rate, seem to fit quite well with the civilization approach. Of course, we should bear in mind that the observations are based on combined average levels of three different regions in three different periods, and not on a

continuous time series from each single region. In this regard, the analysis of shifts in homicide rates in single regions gives further insight into homicide dynamics, as they seem to be intimately linked to momentary ‘backlashes’ in the long-term processes of the state-political consolidation. We need more research on how sudden changes in homicide are related to longer-term trends, and how they come to an end.

CHAPTER 11

Composition of Homicide in the Long Duration

In the early 2010s, a double homicide was committed in a southern Finnish city. The victims were a married couple in their twenties. They had lived on social security benefits, with additional income from selling drugs. The victims themselves were drug addicts, and previously known to the police. The killing had been initiated using a sharp instrument with particular ferocity, causing multiple slash wounds. The offender completed the homicide by shooting the victims. After a prolonged process of investigation and trial, the offender, an unemployed man, was convicted and sentenced to life imprisonment. As an acquaintance of the slain couple, he had visited the victims the night before the murder. The motive of the act was related to drug debts. Unable to pay, he solved his problem by committing double homicide.¹⁵⁶

This modern homicide case involves features that obviously differ from early modern homicide. Both the offender and the victims were drug addicts, and the crime itself was related to the drugs market. Such crime features are absent from early modern homicide. Also, all people involved were receiving social

¹⁵⁶ The case description is compiled from public media sources by Martti Lehti. Some aspects of the description are intentionally imprecise.

security benefits, indicating an important change in the general societal context of lethal violence. As distinct from the 17th century, modern homicides in Denmark, Finland and Sweden take place in the context of advanced welfare state regimes that were lacking in the early modern age. On the other hand, we detect long-duration similarities. The grievance of the offender mentioned above was about property assets, as he was trying to solve a debt problem. The offender and the two victims were acquaintances and the offence was committed in the context of other criminal activity, a feature present in the early modern homicides as well.

Steven Pinker (2011) has identified a *humanitarian revolution* since the 18th century, which profoundly changed the extent, nature and practice of interpersonal violence in the Western world. In his view, this transition depended on many different factors, such as the rise of the modern city, the spread of literacy and capitalism, increased state intervention in the everyday life of the individual, and increased influence of science and reason in the conduct of human affairs. Eventually these changes led to a marked decline in violence as means of managing conflicts. Now, is this narrative somehow at odds with incidents such as the one described above? After all, that incident shows extremely uncivilized behaviour in the form of an overkill, and in the apparent wish to cause pain in addition to death, or maybe torture to find the drug sellers' stash. Yet, Pinker is of course talking about the quantitative risk of lethal violence, where drastic decrease is beyond doubt. Indeed, in some ways the Finnish case is particularly consistent with the homicide drop. The drop meant that violence is no longer regarded as an acceptable way of responding to conflicts and solving problems. The early modern high homicide rates thus imply that the persons involved were, comparatively and statistically speaking, behaving normally. Only at times of external societal disruption such as mass demobilization of armies, or famines, did the embeddedness of violence in everyday routines temporarily break down. The robbery-murder case we described at the beginning of this book happened during the famine crisis, and indeed shows some similarities in the level of brutality. But, more

generally, the reduced violence migrated to the margins, to be found among people living on the fringes of society. This macro-change makes many of the aspects of the Finnish crime above symptomatic of the grand patterns of homicide.

While scholars debate the social and historical origins of more controlled standards of behaviour, the reduction in violence since the Middle Ages is beyond doubt in most parts of Europe. This downward trend of violence has been observed also in the current study¹⁵⁷, even though it has been punctuated by crime waves triggered by social disruptions such as famine (see Chapter 10). The megatrend of decrease is often associated with the process of civilization (Elias, 2017b [1939], pp. 323–352). Research in the civilizing process framework has focused on the long-term decrease and related compositional changes in lethal violence. In so doing, it may have inadvertently moved research attention from continuities to change (Eibach, 2016; McMahon, Eibach & Roth, 2013). As argued in this book, there is reason to also study the continuities of lethal violent behaviour. Continuities can hide behind superficial changes, while change can take place camouflaged by superficial continuity in rates or patterns. Consider, for instance, how 17th-century private homes often doubled as places for drinking alcohol for outsiders as well, calling into question how the location of homicide has really changed in terms of action functions.

In earlier chapters, we examined stability and change in homicide patterns, focusing on the 17th-century transition era. The span of change was measured in years and decades. In this chapter, we proceed to explore *long-duration homicide patterns*. Using the historical codebook, with its inbuilt compatibility with the European Homicide Monitor, we disaggregate homicide into two periods separated by approximately 300 years: the 17th century and the period between 2007 and 2016.¹⁵⁸ Here, we call these the

¹⁵⁷ See Figures 3.1 and 5.1 and related discussion; see also Chapter 11 for Nordic comparison of early modern and contemporary homicide rates.

¹⁵⁸ For Denmark, the contemporary period is 2012–2016.

early modern period and the contemporary period. We examine changes in our combined data, and possible country differences, to identify recurrent regularities in patterns of homicidal activity in different countries without dismissing variations rooted in specific historical and societal conditions within each country. We first provide a short description of the homicide data for the period 2007–2016.

The following observations focus on changes in homicide patterns, that is, in the *composition of victim and offender populations*. As such, they should *not be confused with homicide rates or risks*. This is very important, so let us discuss an example. We see that the percentage of victims born abroad has increased. This does not necessarily mean that persons born abroad have become more victimized. It is possible that the rate of homicide victimization in that population has been stable or decreasing, while the incidence of other homicides has drastically decreased, yielding a higher percentage of victims born abroad. Changes in sub-category percentages *can reflect changes in other categories*. We focus on percentage and composition changes, because in most variables it is impossible to construct rates owing to the lack of base population information (e.g. we do not know how many foreign-born persons lived in the historical areas etc.). Another reason is related to the nature of the variable. For instance, motive and time cycle variables do not have meaningful base populations. However, we do calculate homicide rates for the estimated resident population and for genders separately (Table 11.1).

A second important caveat is that our analysis brackets what has happened between the two separate observation periods. We chose to use lines in the graphics to make the change pattern more easily visible to the naked eye. The continuous line stands for the difference between two periods separated by 300 years, although it does not correspond to any linear trends in between the periods. Yet, in spite of these caveats, it is highly relevant to study how homicide composition has changed. For example, in terms of prevention it is relevant to know how much of the lethal violence is linked to special population groups, intoxication, special motives or specific weapon types.

Long-Duration Comparison

Our historical data from the early modern period were *regional* in nature, stemming from Danish Jutland, south-eastern Sweden and northern Finland (see Figure 1.2 in the first chapter). In other words, we did not have full country data for the historical periods in these three countries. This posed a dilemma for long-term comparison. For instance, the historical regions do not include today's urban and metropolitan centres such as the greater Stockholm, Copenhagen and Helsinki regions, some of which suffer from unique gun- and gang-related homicide problems (Lehti et al., 2019). The historical regions of the current study were not central in the early modern or modern periods. To compare historical regions with full contemporary country data would thus be problematic. We therefore decided to compare past and present homicide in the historical regions, or their closest approximations, to reduce error. The geographic match of the historical regions and their modern proxies was good.

The downside of the decision to limit contemporary data to proxy areas was that we lost many cases from the contemporary observation period. In the end, we opted to do comparative analyses using both regional proxies and full countries as contemporary reference points. In what follows, we use data on the modern regions that correspond to the historical study regions for contemporary homicide but comment if the basic pattern differs in full country comparison. In fact, an interesting methodological result of our analyses is that the historical regions turned out to be good proxies for complete countries in the modern data in terms of compositional homicide patterns.¹⁵⁹ This is an interesting lesson for future research designs: labour-intensive coding and analysis in regional areas does not necessarily compromise the

¹⁵⁹ The incidents of the historical proxy areas are included in the national distributions. Yet the similarity of regional and national patterns is especially remarkable for Finland, where the historical proxy area had about one fifth of the national homicides, and Sweden, where the corresponding ratio was one tenth.

external validity of the modern regional equivalents in the analysis of homicide composition. This is true at least in the relatively homogenous Nordic countries. It does not, however, apply to homicide rates. In Denmark and Sweden, the historical proxy regions had below-average homicide rates, while the Finnish proxy region was more representative in this regard too.

On the other hand, we cannot estimate how well the regional data correspond to national homicide patterns in the early modern period. There is reason to believe that regional and local variation in homicide was greater in the early modern period than it is today. The multiple local studies from pre-modern eras show considerable variation in homicide rates (see Figure 5.1 and Lindström, 2008). While rate variation does not necessarily mean pattern variation, it is reasonable to say that, as proxies, the regions of the early modern era are not as uniform as modern proxy regions are.

11.1 Homicide Rates in Early Modern and Contemporary Era

In Chapter 8, we examined homicide rates in the historical data regions. We observed that Danish Jutland had the highest rate, with 13.6 per 100,000 population. South-eastern Sweden had an intermediate rate, with 7.1 per population, and northern Finland manifested the lowest rate, of 3.7 per 100,000 population. In Table 11.1, the early modern homicide victimization rates are compared with corresponding rates from the contemporary period in the same regions. In the contemporary period, the homicide rates were drastically lower than 300 years ago: 0.4 in Denmark, 0.7 in Sweden and 2.0 in Finland. Note that the gender-specific modern rates are based on accurate gender-specific population data, while the early modern readings are based on dividing the resident population estimate by two.

The biggest homicide drop has taken place in lethal violence against males in Denmark and Sweden; in Finland, the drop is more moderate, from 4.7 to 2.9. Female homicide rates have

Table 11.1: Homicide victims per 100,000 person-years, Nordic countries in the early modern and contemporary periods. Historical study regions.

	Early modern	Contemporary
<i>All victims</i>		
Denmark (North Jutland)	13.6	0.4
Sweden (south-east counties)	7.1	0.7
Finland (historical Ostrobothnia)	3.7	2.0
Regions combined	6.4	1.0
<i>Male victims</i>		
Denmark (North Jutland)	25.2	0.5
Sweden (south-east counties)	12.5	0.9
Finland (historical Ostrobothnia)	4.7	2.9
Regions combined	10.5	1.4
<i>Female victims</i>		
Denmark (North Jutland)	1.8	0.3
Sweden (south-east counties)	1.5	0.5
Finland (historical Ostrobothnia)	2.2	1.1
Regions combined	2.0	0.6

Early modern era: Denmark 1608–1622, Sweden 1640–1650, Finland 1640–1699.

Contemporary era: Denmark 2012–2016, Sweden and Finland 2007–2016.

also decreased. Again, the magnitude of change has been greater in Denmark and Sweden than in Finland. Importantly, we are not claiming any uniform or linear drop from early modern to modern period. Much of the drop may have taken place during the 17th century, rather than after it (see Figure 5.1 and Chapter 5, throughout).

If we examine the national homicide rates of the contemporary period, they are higher in Denmark (1.0) and Sweden (0.9) but similar in Finland (1.9). This reflects the fact that modern homicide in Denmark and Sweden is more concentrated in metropolitan areas than they are in Finland (Lehti et al., 2019). However, the basic pattern remains, indicating a drastic homicide drop over

the span of 300 years. The decrease of lethal violence risk is relevant for the interpretation of patterns reported in this chapter. Multiple changes, such as the increased proportion of intimate partner violence, or increased share of cases committed in private places, can partially reflect the drop of male-to-male conflicts in public places.

11.2 Victims and Offenders

In this section, we examine how the composition of homicide victim and offender populations has changed in the comparison of early modern and modern periods. We deal with specific attributes, such as gender, so that changes in victim and offender populations are contrasted. The vertical scales of the figures are the same in each comparison, making the figures visually comparable. In all findings of the contemporary period, the Danish figures include only cases that led to conviction.

Gender

The proportion of female victims has increased in Denmark and Sweden but remained comparatively stable in Finland (Figure 11.1). The change patterns are roughly similar in the proportion of female offenders: increase in Denmark and Sweden; stability in Finland.

These changes mostly reflect differential magnitudes of change in gender-specific rates of victimization and offending. The decrease of the homicide risk has been more drastic among males than among females.

Young Victims and Offenders

Owing to the problems of age specification in the early modern data, we used an age variable, which flags up the share of young persons as victims and offenders. We focus only on relative shares

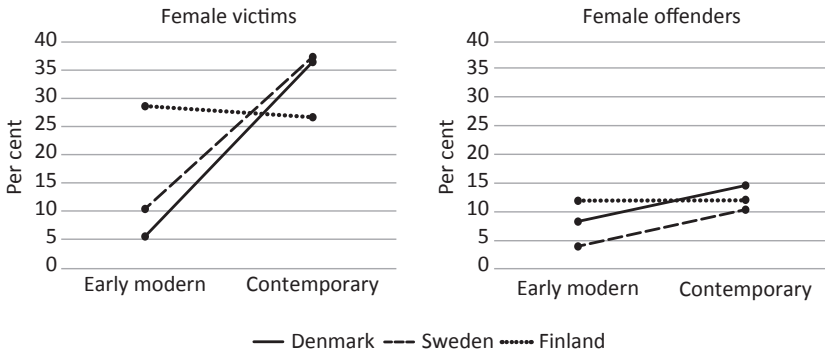


Figure 11.1: Percentage of female victims and offenders in Nordic homicide in early modern (1608–1699) and contemporary (2007–2016) homicide in Denmark, Sweden and Finland, historical study regions.

because we lack information on the size of young age cohorts in our study regions of the early modern period.

The proportion of child offenders is small in all countries and during both observation eras (Table 11.2). The percentage of children as homicide victims has developed differentially in the three countries. The percentage is stable in Denmark, increasing in Sweden and decreasing in Finland. Recall that the contemporary comparison point is limited to the historical region, and does not necessarily correspond to national figures. In Finland, the high share of young victims during the early modern period relates to the high percentage of familial/kin killings in that era. Especially during the Great Famine of the 1690s, economic strain was linked to familial homicide.

The change in the proportion of child victims can be underestimated for the early modern period, if incidents involving child victims were more likely to remain unrecorded than in the contemporary era.

Persons Born Abroad

In modern Nordic societies, homicide victimization and offender rates are higher in foreign-born groups than in native-born groups

Table 11.2: Percentage of one- to 14-year-old victims and offenders in early modern (1608–1699) and contemporary (2007–2016) homicide by country. Historical study regions.

	Denmark		Sweden		Finland		All	
	Early modern	Contemporary	Early modern	Contemporary	Early modern	Contemporary	Early modern	Contemporary
Victims	4	6	3	6	9	2	6	4
Total N	192	49	158	80	196	219	546	348
Offenders	2	0	2	1	2	0	2	0*
Total N	240	48	199	74	229	191	668	313

* 0.1–0.4%.

Table 11.3: Percentage of victims and offenders born abroad in early modern (1608–1699) and contemporary (2007–2016) homicide by country. Historical study regions.

	Denmark		Sweden		Finland		All	
	Early modern	Contemporary	Early modern	Contemporary	Early modern	Contemporary	Early modern	Contemporary
Victims	0	18	7	16	4	3	4	8
Total N	192	49	159	62	188	219	539	330
Offenders	0*	23	3	33	3	10	2	17
Total N	240	48	197	57	218	191	655	296

* 0.1–0.4%.

(Lehti et al., 2019, pp. 48–52). In the period 2007–2016, the share of foreign-born victims and offenders was lower in Finland than in the other two countries (Table 11.3). Owing to the differential size of the immigrant population, the modern rate comparisons yield a different picture. The modern homicide offending rate of foreign-born persons is higher in Finland (2.7 per 100,000 population) than in Denmark and Sweden (1.5 and 1.4 per 100,000 population, respectively).

Unfortunately, we do not have information on the size of foreign-born populations in the early modern period, making it impossible to calculate group-specific homicide rates. Thus, the findings reported here do not give information about changes in the risk of foreign-born groups becoming involved in homicide. We can only report the relative share of foreign victims and offenders.

The percentage of homicide victims who were born abroad is currently much higher in Denmark and Sweden than in the 17th century, while the corresponding reading in Finland remains stable (Table 11.3). The pattern is rather similar with regard to homicide offenders, with the exception that here also Finland shows a fairly strong rise. Generally, the change is quite marked in all three countries, and especially so in Denmark and Sweden. People born abroad are much more prevalent among homicide victims and offenders in the contemporary era.

The observed patterns mostly reflect general changes in the population composition. The share of foreign-born residents is likely much higher in modern Nordic societies. Sweden, an imperial power in the early modern age, already had a small immigrant population in the 17th century, probably explaining why the share of victims and offenders born abroad was highest there. In addition, in the Danish early modern data, the rural focus probably underestimated the overall presence of immigrants, since Danish urban communities had at least as many immigrants as the Swedish. Persons born abroad were likely to live in urban areas.

The early modern foreign victims and offenders had usually been born in neighbouring countries. In Finland, most of the homicide parties born abroad were Russians. The porous nature of the

wilderness border zone can impact these findings. Since persons born abroad were fewer in the early modern societies, it is possible that the sources are likely to mention such an attribute and therefore be reliable in the measurement of this dimension. In the contemporary period, the typical origins of victims and offenders born abroad has changed to a degree. Thus, in Denmark, the most frequent offender origin country in the contemporary period was Afghanistan. In Sweden, it was Iraq. In contrast, the most frequent origin country in Finland was Sweden.¹⁶⁰ The situation was quite similar among the victims born abroad. Generally, the composition of contemporary homicide reflects the globalization of the modern world. It should be underscored that compositional findings such as these do not in themselves give information about the risk or likelihood of various population groups to commit, or become victims of, homicide. We know that, in modern Nordic countries, the risk of homicide victimization and offending is higher among foreign-born than among native-born residents (Lehti et al., 2019), but a similar rate comparison is not possible in the early modern period.

Alcohol and Drugs

The alcohol variable was difficult to code reliably in the early modern data, as the courts were not interested in that dimension to the degree they are today. There is also the possibility that being under the influence of alcohol was so normal in the early modern period that it was omitted in the sources. We emphasize that the observed differences between the periods can relate to the sources, as they reflect changes in both lethal violence and the perceptual relevance structures of changing control cultures.

Acknowledging these caveats, we can see the Finnish homicide patterns manifesting change in this regard: both victims

¹⁶⁰ The northern location of the Finnish historical study area probably reflects the typical origin country distributions.

and offenders are more likely to be under the influence of alcohol in contemporary Finland than they were in the early modern period (Table 11.4). If this reflects a real behavioural change, it would relativize and limit the classical alcohol-related explanations of high Finnish homicide rates (see Verkko, 1951, on his alcohol-related explanatory framework). A similar increase of alcohol intoxication can be observed in Danish and Swedish offenders, but not among victims. The differences observed between modern datasets correspond to findings reported in prior research using nationally representative data (Lehti et al., 2019). Modern Finnish homicide is particularly closely connected to alcohol drinking.

We did not observe drug-related incidents in early modern homicide. This means that, in the long-duration comparison, being under the influence of drugs during the homicidal interaction has increased consistently and drastically in both homicide victim and offender populations (Table 11.4). All early modern observations are at the zero level, while drugs feature relatively prominently in contemporary homicides. The percentage of homicides under the influence of psychoactive substances is quite high. This figure excludes forms of drugs-related homicide, which reflects the operation of drug markets without intoxication during the offence. If there is a causal connection between drug abuse and violence (Norström & Rossow, 2014), the long-duration homicide drop would probably be even steeper without it. As discussed at the beginning of this chapter, the relative prominence of the drugs nexus in modern homicide is partly created by the long-duration reduction of violence as a legitimate way of solving problems.

With regard to drugs, there is no reason to consider the difference as an artefact of source biases. Use of drugs was rare in the 17th century, and this is reflected in homicide patterns as well. Owing to the rarity of drug use in the 17th century, courts and witnesses would have likely paid attention to such an abnormal situational aspect in the documentation.

Table 11.4: Percentage of victims and offenders under the influence of intoxicating substances in early modern (1608–1699) and contemporary (2007–2016) Nordic homicide by country. Historical study regions.

	Denmark		Sweden		Finland		All	
	Early modern	Contemporary	Early modern	Contemporary	Early modern	Contemporary	Early modern	Contemporary
<i>Alcohol</i>								
Victims	40	NA	54	39	27	64	40	60
Offenders	40	52	52	48	32	81	41	70
<i>Drugs</i>								
Victims	0	NA	0	14	0	14	0	14
Offenders	0	24	0	22	0	29	0	27

11.3 Types of Homicide

Place of Homicide

The analysis of place across the long duration involves considerable challenges. ‘Urbanity’ is a case in point. Not surprisingly, early modern homicide was, in terms of composition, predominantly rural, while modern homicide is predominantly urban. This reflects the general urbanization of societies. Long-term comparisons based on urbanity suffer, however, from multiple challenges. The meaning of ‘urbanity’ has changed over the long-duration time span, yet the urban/rural contrast exists sociologically in both eras. In the early modern data, this is based on the type of court, as urban and rural areas had different courts.¹⁶¹ In the modern data, the distinction is based on national (and therefore nationally variable) criteria. In what follows, we therefore concentrate on the more detailed variable on the place of killing.

As is apparent from the prior analyses of early modern homicide, even this dimension is challenging for long-duration comparison. The challenges relate to transformations regarding how specific routine activities are located in physical space. For example, in the early modern period some lethal incidents could have taken place in private apartments, while the contextual activity resembled modern alcohol retail and tavern functions. With this reservation in mind, we are able to observe changes in place patterns over the long duration, limiting our focus to private and public places (Figure 11.2). The percentage of homicide occurring in private places has increased; public places have become relatively rarer as places of lethal violence. The trend in the share of private places is nearly identical in the three countries, while the trend in the share of public places shows variation. Danish Jutland manifests the most drastic reduction of public place homicide.

¹⁶¹ For Denmark, the early modern data were predominantly rural to begin with; a fuller sample would have indicated a higher prevalence of urban cases in the historical period too.

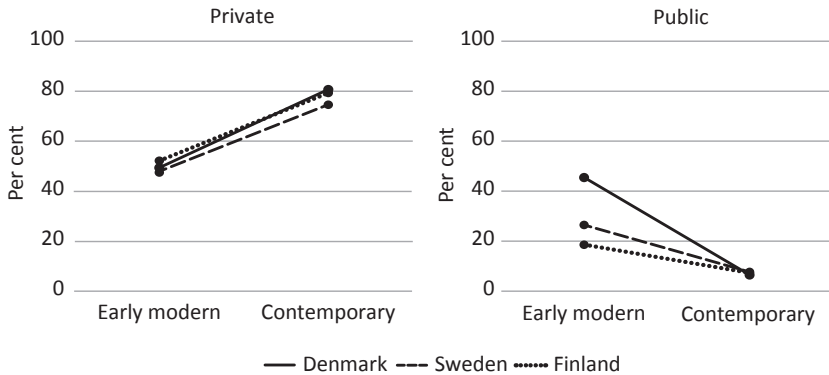


Figure 11.2: Percentage of incidents in private and public places in early modern (1608–1699) and contemporary (2007–2016) Nordic homicide by country. Historical study regions.

The overall privatization of lethal violence is consistent with historical control theories, which suggest that state-driven and cultural pacification processes mostly reduced male-to-male violence in public places. Private spaces are more difficult to police, making them more resistant to public control-driven processes and civilizing campaigns. Also, it is possible that routine activities have changed so that more people have better opportunities to spend more time in private apartments. The presence of artificial lighting in public places can impact crime through routine activities and by enabling capable guardianship in public places. The guardianship and supervision of public places has also become more intensive through CCTV and private security deployment, factors that likely have contributed to the crime drop and pacification of public spaces in recent decades (Kivivuori & Bernburg, 2011, pp. 418–424).

Thus, the privatization of the place of homicide is consistent with all three main crime causal factors identified by routine activity theory: the conjunction of motivated offenders and suitable victims in the absence of capable guardians (Felson & Eckert, 2016). However, there are recent minor reversals of this trend. Gang- and firearm-related violence in public places have increased in the

metropolitan areas of Sweden and Denmark (Lehti et al., 2019). Apparently, the scope of these recent developments is small in the long-duration scale of change.

The privatization of homicide has been previously observed in shorter time scales, from the 1960s to the present (Kivivuori, 1999; see also Kivivuori & Lehti, 2006). In any case, the pacification of the Nordic societies has, so far, more strongly involved public places than private locations. This can be additionally highlighted by estimating homicide rates separately for the three place types. Using the three study regions as a single entity, we see that private place homicide risk decreased from 3.1 to 0.8 per 100,000 population, while semi-public (1.0) and public homicide (1.9) nearly vanished to a risk level of 0.1 per 100,000 population.

The steep decrease of public place homicide in Denmark can reflect the fact that only cases leading to conviction are included in the contemporary data. The missing cases may more likely have taken place in public places. There are indications that public places are associated with reduced homicide clearance probability in contemporary societies (Liem et al., 2019, pp. 94–95). In this regard, the situation may have been different in the early modern period, when the role of witnesses was more central in the legal process.

Methods of Killing

Table 11.5 compares how weapons and methods used in homicide have changed when comparing the early modern and contemporary eras. The figures describe the share of various methods out of all incidents.

The proportion of homicides committed by *firearms* is nearly stable in Denmark, but increasing in Sweden and Finland. The temporal difference is largest in Finland, with the share of firearm homicides being almost five times higher in the modern era than in the early modern period. In Sweden, the observations are fairly close, as only one in ten homicides in the modern period was committed using a firearm. This finding may seem surprising, as

Table 11.5: Percentage of methods of lethal violence in early modern (1608–1699) and contemporary (2007–2016) Nordic homicide by country. Historical study regions.

	Denmark		Sweden		Finland		All	
	Early modern	Contemporary	Early modern	Contemporary	Early modern	Contemporary	Early modern	Contemporary
Firearm	8	9	7	10	4	19	6	15
Sharp objects	67	48	64	47	45	44	59	45
Blunt object/ weapon	14	9	20	10	17	8	17	9
Violence without weapon	5	9	5	12	15	13	8	12
Other types of violence	5	26	4	21	19	17	9	19
Total ^a	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100
N	166	46	152	78	154	192	472	316

^a Columns may not add up to 100% due to rounding to integer.

firearm violence has recently increased in the Swedish and Danish metropolises (Lehti et al., 2019). However, here we compare the historical regions examined in this study: the contemporary data are from the same regions, thus excluding Swedish and Danish metropolises. The Finnish increase of firearm use reflects the rarity of such arms in the early modern period and the frequency of hunting weapons in northern Finland today.

Sharp objects are today the most frequent method of killing in each of the three countries, a stable feature of homicide. However, the share of sharp objects has decreased quite markedly in Denmark and Sweden, from two thirds to half of the incidents. Since Finland shows stability at this level, the relative proportion of sharp objects has become more similar in this group of three countries. The high prevalence of sharp objects in early modern homicide reflects the routine activities of the age: it was common to carry knives and axes, as they were used in work and could be carried also in social gatherings. Also, in contemporary societies, the large share of sharp instrument homicides is related to the situations and locations where homicides are usually perpetrated. Kitchen knives with long, sharp blades are the deadliest weapon easily available in most private homes of today.

Blunt objects show a very similar pattern in the historical regions. In each country, their share of homicides has decreased. The share of *non-weaponized* violence has decreased in relative share in Denmark and Sweden but remained stable in Finland. Non-weapon violence is sometimes taken to capture the unfolding of civilization processes (Eisner, 2014). When the state monopolizes violence, it tends to reduce the weapons routinely carried by citizens. Here, we detect a minor increase in the proportion of non-weaponized homicide in Denmark and Sweden, while the compositional trend is level in Finland.

Other types of violence show a marked increase in Denmark and Sweden. This trend is difficult to interpret, as the category is heterogeneous, including vehicles, drowning, fire or smoke, and strangulation, hanging or suffocation. Indeed, the increasing trend in the share of such offences in Denmark and Sweden appears to be

linked to cases involving strangulation, hanging or suffocation. These findings are consistent in all three historical study regions, and also when full contemporary national datasets are examined. Indeed, when the whole country is used as the contemporary reference base, Finland shows the same increase in this category. The proportion of suffocation as a killing method increased, from the historical-regional value to the modern national figure, from 1 per cent to one fifth of the Danish cases, from 1 per cent to one tenth of the Swedish cases, and from 3 per cent to one in ten in the Finnish cases. Owing to falling homicide rates, the absolute changes are smaller. Yet this diversification of homicide instruments calls for further research. As is often the case, the temporal change can be a mix of behavioural and methodological factors. There can be real diversification with the use of weapons such as motor vehicles and bombs. On the other hand, some of the increase could be related to better medical cause of death examination capability, if some methods of suffocation leave victim bodies comparatively intact. If one focuses on a simple weapon/non-weapon dichotomy, a major change can be seen for Denmark and Sweden, that is, a falling weapon percentage, which is consistent with international findings (Eisner, 2014, pp. 77–78).

Family-, Crime- and Insanity-Related Homicide

As discussed in earlier chapters, it is challenging to form typologies of homicide types, which would enable consistent coding. Here we focus on family-related, criminal milieu-related, and insanity-related incidents as special cases that appear to be reliably captured by the coding. They are also types whose role in the homicide profile has changed between our long-duration comparison (Table 11.6).

The comparison indicates that *family-related* cases have increased, in terms of their relative share of all offences, and especially strongly in Denmark and Sweden: in Denmark, from 1 per cent to more than half of the cases, and in Sweden from 6 per cent to one nearly 40 per cent of the cases. In Finland, the difference is

Table 11.6: Percentage of three types of lethal violence in early modern (1608–1699) and contemporary (2007–2016) Nordic homicide by country. Historical study regions.

	Denmark		Sweden		Finland		All	
	Early modern	Contemporary	Early modern	Contemporary	Early modern	Contemporary	Early modern	Contemporary
Family-related	1	57	6	39	29	31	12	37
Criminal milieu and robbery	1	7	9	14	14	6	8	8
Insanity-related (non-family)	0	13	0	5	2	4	1	6
Other types	98	24	85	42	55	59	79	49
Total ^a	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100
N	148	46	154	77	149	192	451	315

^a Columns may not add up to 100% due to rounding to integer.

quite small when early modern and contemporary data are compared, indicating considerable proportional long-duration stability in the role of family related homicide.

Homicides committed in *criminal milieus or robbery contexts* have also increased proportionally in homicide patterns, when early modern and contemporary periods are compared. In Denmark and Sweden, their share has increased. In sharp contrast, this category decreased in Finland, from 14 per cent to 6 per cent. In Finland, criminal milieus of the early modern period were often related to fugitive criminal or soldier gangs, testifying to the incomplete stage of pacification by the central state, and such cases were over-represented in the crisis years of famine. On the other hand, we could also say that such a pacification is still short of the goal of full control by the state. Thus, modern criminal milieus include drugs- and motorcycle-related gangs, drug dealing networks, and organized crime with internal problems of organization. It is also possible that the general judicialization of social life has enhanced the capability of the criminal justice system to perceive modes of action as crime-related. This would imply that the early modern data could underestimate criminal milieus as contexts of homicide. On the other hand, gangs operating outside the law were also perceived as a social problem in the early modern period.

Insanity-related incidents are relatively few in all observation times and regions. Yet, we observe an increase in incidents coded to this category. Indeed, this type of homicide appears to be almost non-existent in the early modern period. In the contemporary period, its relative share is between 4 per cent in Finland and 13 per cent in Denmark. The larger share of insanity-related homicide probably reflects the rise of psychiatric and psychological frameworks, and also the general entry of causal thinking to legal practices and discourses, rather than behavioural changes or changes in the prevalence of mental disorder. As noted above, early modern courts typically did not seek to understand offender motives and trajectories to the degree that the modern criminal justice process does.

Victim–Offender Relationship

Figure 11.3 shows the findings regarding four major relationship categories.¹⁶² We first see that the percentage of *intimate partner violence* has increased from the 17th century to the contemporary era, and that this change has been almost identical in the three countries. In contrast, *kin homicide* shows a different pattern. In Finland, these incidents have lost their relative share of homicides. In Sweden, their position is stable. In Denmark, the share of kin homicide has increased. The share of offences between *long-term acquaintances* has decreased drastically in Denmark and Sweden, while it shows relative stability in Finland. Finally, the relative share of *stranger killings* has increased in all three countries.

There is reason to caution that these findings depict relative shares of homicides. Thus, the observation that intimate partner homicide has increased in relative proportion within homicide does not necessarily mean that intimate partner violence or its risk has increased. Rather, the emerging patterns are likely to reflect the main driver of the homicide drop: the decrease in male-to-male violence in public places. We also see this as a drop in the share of acquaintance killings, with Finland as an outlier in this regard. Generally, the findings are consistent with the privatization of homicide observed above. Private life has been

¹⁶² Since the victim–offender variable used in the European Homicide Monitor does not have a category ‘Other’, we have coded ‘Other’ values of the historical data as *unknown* in this comparison. This is why the number of observations differ from those shown in Chapter 4. Furthermore, the EHM does not make the distinction of other blood relatives and other in-law relatives, which means that we cannot consistently differentiate these categories. We therefore use a single category ‘relatives’ to capture both blood and in-law relations. One incident between male same-sex partners in the modern data is coded into the intimate partner category.

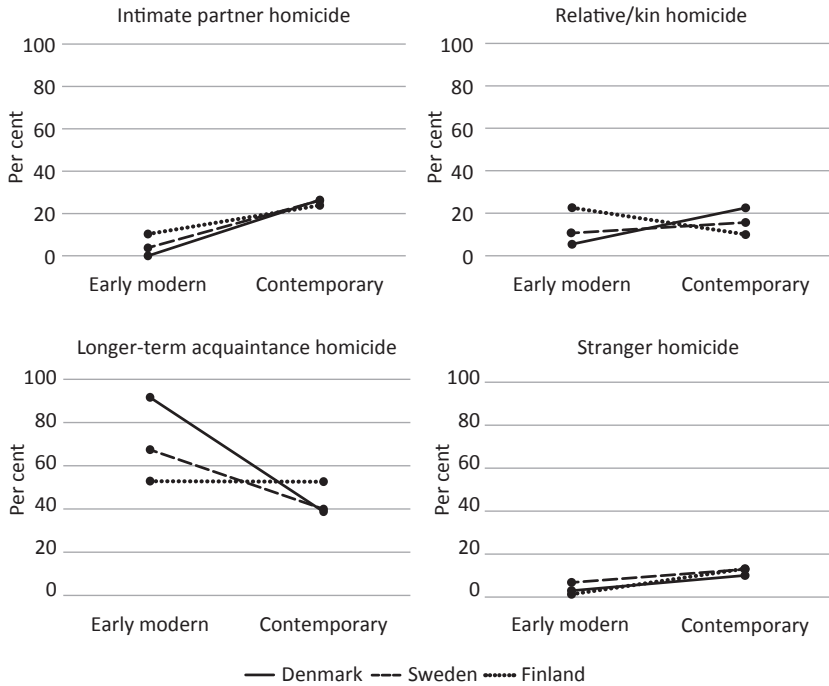


Figure 11.3: Percentage of victim–offender relationships, of homicide incidents in early modern (1608–1699) and contemporary (2007–2016) Nordic homicide by country. Historical study regions.

influenced by routine activities changes, and it may have become more important culturally and socially, for example through the increasing role of personal feelings in spousal expectations (Roth, 2009).

The category of stranger killings may be subject to special sources of error in the early modern period, if such cases were less likely to be included in the court process-based protocols we use for the early modern period. For Denmark, similar caveats apply to contemporary data as they are based on court convictions only. For instance, the Danish increase in the proportion of kin killings may reflect the fact that kin killings are solved more easily.

Motives

We focus here on selected homicide motives, which were sufficiently frequent in both the early modern and contemporary datasets: revenge, jealousy, separation, and sexual motives. Recall also that motives were analysed as separate dichotomous variables, so the percentages do not add up to 100 per cent.

The share of homicide offenders propelled by revenge has decreased when 17th-century and contemporary offenders are compared (Figure 11.4). This is consistent with the increasing state control of conflicts, that is, the rise of the state monopoly of violence. If the state provides means of litigation and arbitration, self-help through crime and violence is less needed.

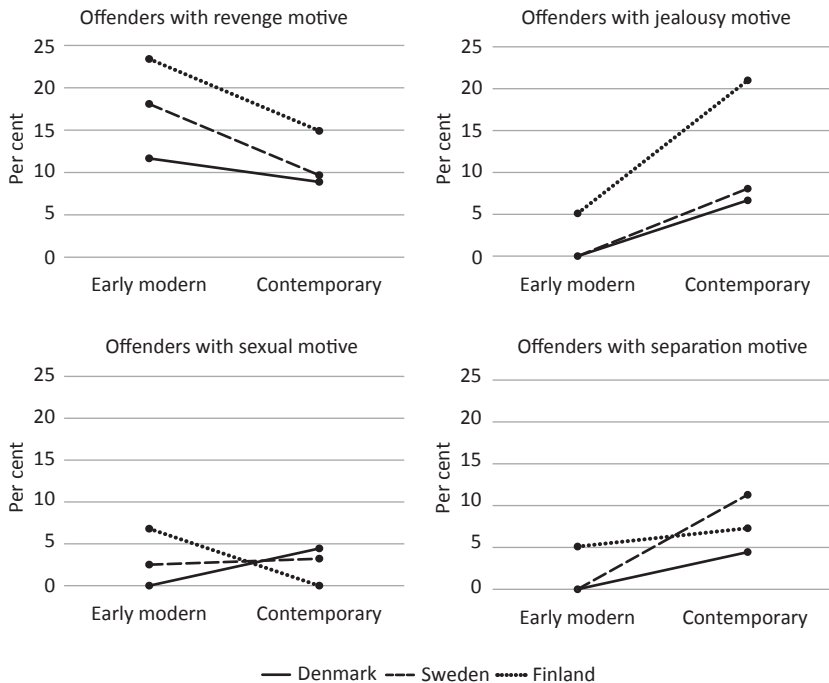


Figure 11.4: Percentage of offenders propelled by selected motives in early modern (1608–1699) and contemporary (2007–2016) Nordic homicide by country. Historical study regions.

At the same time, motives related to the intimate sphere have increased in salience. Separation and jealousy are more prominent motives today than they were in the 17th century. In Finland, the share of jealousy-related cases is consistently higher than in the other two countries. This would seem to be consistent with the higher share of familial cases in Finland. However, separation motives are not more frequent in Finland than in the other two countries. The rise of separation-related homicide also reflects the fact that divorce or separation was much rarer or nearly impossible in the early modern period. Also the content of separation-related homicides changed between the periods. In the early modern data their goal was the termination of an unwanted marriage; in the contemporary data they were mainly motivated by taking revenge for the termination of a relationship.

Changes in revenge, separation and jealousy motives are consistent in the three countries. In contrast, the patterns of sexual motivation (often connected to rape) diverge in the countries: Finland shows a decrease, Denmark an increase, and Sweden stability. The percentages are low and depend on a few cases. It should be underscored that the modern figures are drawn from the regions corresponding to historical study regions, which do not include metropolitan areas.

Generally, it is of interest to note the similarity of motive change patterns; they seem more similar across countries than many other pattern trends. Possible motivations reflect *cultural factors*, which transcend local national contexts. For example, the culture of masculine honour (Nisbett & Cohen, 1996) may have declined in all three regions. Roth (2009) has also suggested that, during the 19th century, intimate partnerships became increasingly connected to ideas of romantic love. People started to invest more emotions in their marital relationships. Such a cultural trend can also influence the detected patterns, especially the rise in the relative share of jealousy- and separation-motivated homicide. The decreasing salience of the revenge motive can in turn reflect the rise of the central state, which pacifies society. In the early modern period, people more often needed to resort to revenge

as a form of self-help due to the stealability of property assets (Nisbett & Cohen, 1996).

11.4 Time Cycles

Time cycles are at the core of criminological routine activity theory (Cohen & Felson, 1979; Kivivuori et al., 2020b). This theory predicts that homicide should be meaningfully related to prevailing everyday routines in all historical periods. If everyday routine activities patterns differ, that should also be observable in how violence spreads across the day, week and year.

Day

In both the early modern era and the contemporary era, homicides typically took place in the evening, between 18.00 and 24.00 hours. This time of day witnessed 47 per cent of homicides in the early modern period and 39 per cent of homicides in the contemporary era (see the rightmost columns of Table 11.7). Since technically this six-hour interval covers 25 per cent of the day, the concentration of risk is evident.

In terms of long-duration change, we see that the concentration of homicide in the evening hours has decreased by eight percentage points. At the same time, the percentage of incidents taking place during the night has increased from less than one fifth of the cases to 29 per cent. Possibly, the relative lack of night cases during the early modern period could reflect routine activities: in the absence of modern artificial lighting, social activities were more limited during the dark hours of the night. In the early modern period, killing during the night/dark was therefore more strongly condemned and sanctioned than open killing in daylight. This suggests that the relative lack of night cases in the historical period does not reflect under-reporting of the time of incident¹⁶³

¹⁶³ Regarding time perception generally, church bells could be used as time indicators in the early morning period.

Table 11.7: Percentage of homicide time in early modern (1608–1699) and contemporary (2007–2016) Nordic homicide by country. Peaks bolded. Historical study regions.

	Denmark		Sweden		Finland		All	
	Early modern	Contemporary	Early modern	Contemporary	Early modern	Contemporary	Early modern	Contemporary
Morning (6.00–12.00)	8	11	21	19	12	17	12	16
Afternoon (12.00–18.00)	19	16	10	19	33	15	22	16
Evening (18.00–24.00)	54	33	57	31	36	42	47	39
Night (00.00–6.00)	20	40	13	31	19	26	18	29
Total ^a	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100
N	91	45	63	52	103	184	257	281

^a Columns may not add up to 100% due to rounding to integer.

in protocols, as night-time was an aggravating circumstance, just as crimes committed on ecclesiastical holidays. On the contrary, night-time killings were probably more accurately reported, while day-time killings are likely to be under-reported in the early modern data (see Section 6.1). So, it appears possible that the change of daily patterns has been driven by changes in routine activities that enable the spreading of conflicts to night-time hours. If, for instance, alcohol drinking activities can spread throughout the night, this could even partly explain some of the increase observed in the percentage of incidents during the morning hours (from 6.00 to 12.00).¹⁶⁴

Regarding the night shift of homicide in the long-duration comparison, there are observable regional differences. In Denmark, the peak of homicide changed from evening to night, while in Sweden the contemporary distribution shows parity of evening and night in the early modern period, but both Denmark and Sweden show clear decreases in evening cases. Finland is an aberrant case, with stable evening peaks. The most marked anomaly in Finland is the high share of afternoon cases in the early modern period. Thus, during the early modern period Finnish homicide happened, comparatively speaking, earlier during the day than in the other two countries. The contemporary data are more similar with distributions found in Denmark and Sweden.

Week

In the early modern period, most of the homicides took place on Sundays. That day represents one seventh of the weekly time but harbours almost one quarter of the homicides in the early modern period (see Table 11.8 and Figure 11.5). In the contemporary era,

¹⁶⁴ Historians of sleep have suggested that, in the pre-modern era, people were often awake during the night-time hours (Ekirch, 2015). While we do not find evidence that such changes would be relevant for the understanding of long-duration homicide patterns, further research is needed.

Table 11.8: Percentage of weekly cycles of homicide in early modern (1608–1699) and contemporary (2007–2016) Nordic homicide by country. Peaks bolded. Historical study regions.

	Denmark		Sweden		Finland		All	
	Early modern	Contemporary	Early modern	Contemporary	Early modern	Contemporary	Early modern	Contemporary
Monday	16	24	20	9	8	8	15	11
Tuesday	13	11	13	12	11	14	13	13
Wednesday	17	22	11	12	14	12	15	14
Thursday	13	15	13	22	13	7	13	12
Friday	7	4	4	12	13	16	7	13
Saturday	9	11	17	22	22	24	14	21
Sunday	25	13	23	11	19	19	23	16
Total ^a	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100
N	166	46	71	74	63	193	300	313

^a Columns may not add up to 100% due to rounding to integer.

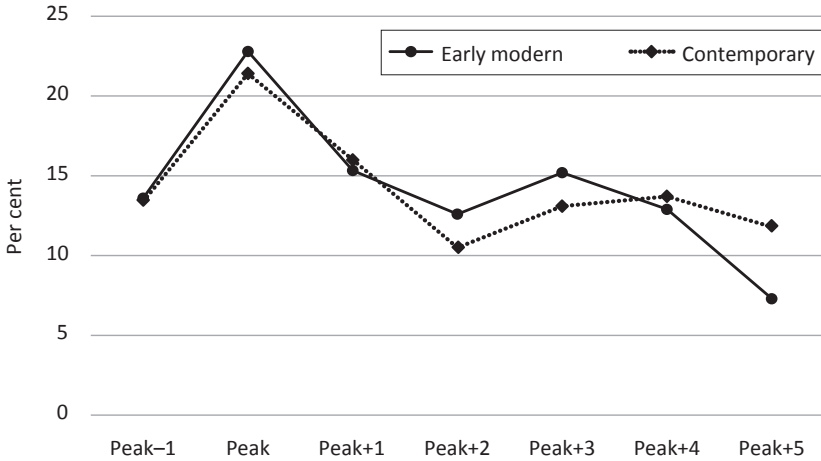


Figure 11.5: Weekly cycles of homicide *in relation to the peak day of the week* in early modern (1608–1699) and contemporary (2007–2016) Nordic homicide (%), historical study regions combined. Note that the peak day is Sunday in the early modern period and Saturday in the contemporary period.

Saturday has taken over as the peak risk day for homicide. Interestingly, for both periods, the day after the peak day manifests the second highest homicide risk: this day is Monday in the early modern period, and Sunday in the contemporary era. Clearly, these patterns are consistent with routine activity theory, linking violence risk to leisure time activities such as alcohol drinking.

If we examine the weekly patterns separately by country, the findings are the same. In Denmark and Sweden, homicide peaks on Sunday, while Finland manifests a peak on Saturday. In Sweden and Finland, the second highest concentration is found after the peak day (Monday in Sweden, Sunday in Finland).

If the early modern and contemporary weekly cycles are directly compared, they do not seem to match. However, if the cycles are described in relation to the homicide peak day, the shape of the weekly distributions is almost identical (Figure 11.5). This shows two things. First, homicide reflects, in both periods, routine activities and the alternating rhythms of work and leisure time. Second, the change patterns reflect the extension of the weekend to

Saturday. In both periods, the first day of the weekend is the peak day (in the early modern period, the first day of the weekend was Sunday, the only day reserved for rest).

Year

We observed the annual cycles of homicide using two variables: the season and the month. The season variable was additionally used as it had fewer missing values in the early modern data. In the 17th century, homicide peaked during the spring and summer months¹⁶⁵ (Table 11.9). The corresponding contemporary distribution is relatively flat. The shift towards a winter peak is driven by the Danish and Swedish homicide distributions. Generally, seasonal rhythms appeared stronger in the early modern period. The flatness of the contemporary distribution may reflect the irrelevance of agriculture-related routine activities, or the detachment of marginal populations from work-related routine activities (Kivivuori & Lehti, 2006).

The monthly distribution of homicide indicates that, in the early modern period, April was the peak month, and in the contemporary period it is January (Table 11.10). There is more variation between country-specific patterns. In both Denmark and Sweden, the peak shifts from summer to December; in Finland, the shift is from March to October. In Finland, the flatness of the contemporary curve stands out. This could relate to the concentration of Finnish homicide in marginalized and unemployed males with serious alcohol problems (Kivivuori & Lehti, 2006). This national pattern may detach modern homicide cycles from the time cycles of 'normal' people. In these comparisons, monthly absolute figures in contemporary proxy areas are quite low, especially in Denmark.

Overall, it is open to question whether we are witnessing meaningful patterns or random variation due to the small number of monthly incidents in the contemporary data.

¹⁶⁵ The high proportion of spring homicide in the overall 17th-century pattern is influenced by the atypically low share of incidents taking place during the summer in Finland.

Table 11.9: Percentage of homicide season in early modern (1608–1699) and contemporary (2007–2016) Nordic homicide by country. Peaks bolded. Historical study regions.

	Denmark		Sweden		Finland		All	
	Early modern	Contemporary	Early modern	Contemporary	Early modern	Contemporary	Early modern	Contemporary
Winter	19	35	27	29	21	23	22	26
Spring	32	11	28	23	34	27	32	24
Summer	32	24	27	25	17	27	25	26
Autumn	18	30	19	24	28	22	21	24
Total ^a	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100
N	177	46	113	80	157	193	447	319

^a Columns may not add up to 100% due to rounding to integer.

Table 11.10: Percentage of monthly cycles of homicide in early modern (1608–1699) and contemporary (2007–2016) Nordic homicide by country. Peaks bolded. Historical study regions.

	Denmark		Sweden		Finland		All	
	Early modern	Contemporary	Early modern	Contemporary	Early modern	Contemporary	Early modern	Contemporary
January	8	4	8	8	5	10	7	8
February	8	9	7	9	4	6	6	7
March	6	4	7	9	15	9	9	8
April	12	2	13	3	10	10	12	7
May	13	4	6	11	10	9	11	9
June	9	9	15	11	6	10	10	10
July	14	4	7	6	7	9	10	8
August	9	11	5	8	6	8	7	8
September	9	11	7	8	12	9	9	9
October	6	13	4	8	6	11	6	10
November	2	7	6	9	8	2	5	4
December	5	22	13	13	9	7	8	11
Total ^a	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100
N	173	46	95	80	110	193	378	319

^a Columns may not add up to 100% due to rounding to integer.

11.5 Time to Death

The time duration from the violent incident to the death of the victim is highly relevant for long-duration homicide research. It can potentially impact rates of homicide if modern medicine saves victims who would in earlier times have died. Additionally, the time lapse influences the information sources we have on homicide. Victims who did not die immediately could give testimony or other information regarding the incident. This is very rare in modern homicide, but not uncommon in the early modern period.

There has been a considerable long-duration shift in the time to death (the two rightmost columns of Table 11.11). In early modern homicide, only half of the victims died within one hour of the violent incident. In contrast, currently more than four of five homicide victims die within one hour of the violent incident. In all other durations, early modern homicide shows higher percentages. Thus, in early modern incidents, less than one third of the incidents involved a living victim more than one day after the crime, while one in six victims lived longer than one week from the crime. In our contemporary data, only 4 per cent of the victims died after the first 24 hours following the incident. Only 2 per cent lasted more than a week. Modern urban community structures, communication technologies, traffic arteries, advanced emergency services and a high quality of medical care probably explain these differences.

When regions are compared, we see that in the early modern Danish Jutland homicide victims died later than victims in the Swedish or the Finnish regions. However, the general patterns of change remain the same (Table 11.11).

The findings suggest that, in modern conditions, many of the homicide victims of the early modern period could have been saved. This in turn implies that improved chances of survival among victims of violence could partially explain the homicide drop. To examine this in a tentative manner, we estimated early modern homicide based on the counterfactual assumption that all victims who survived more than a day would have been saved in modern conditions. The findings are shown in Figure 11.6. Note

Table 11.11: Percentage of time to death after homicidal violence in early modern (1608–1699) and contemporary (2007–2016) Nordic homicide by country. Historical study regions.

	Denmark		Sweden		Finland		All	
	Early modern	Contemporary	Early modern	Contemporary	Early modern	Contemporary	Early modern	Contemporary
Died in less than an hour	44	82	52	76	56	85	51	83
Died within 24 hours	25	7	19	19	11	13	18	13
Died within a week	15	2	12	4	15	1	14	2
Died within a month	4	2	12	2	9	0	9	1
Died within 6 months	13	7	5	0	7	0*	8	1
Died within a year	0	0	0	0	1	0	1	0
Total ^a	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100
N	112	45	145	54	135	219	392	318

*0.1–0.4 %.

^a Columns may not add up to 100% due to rounding to integer.

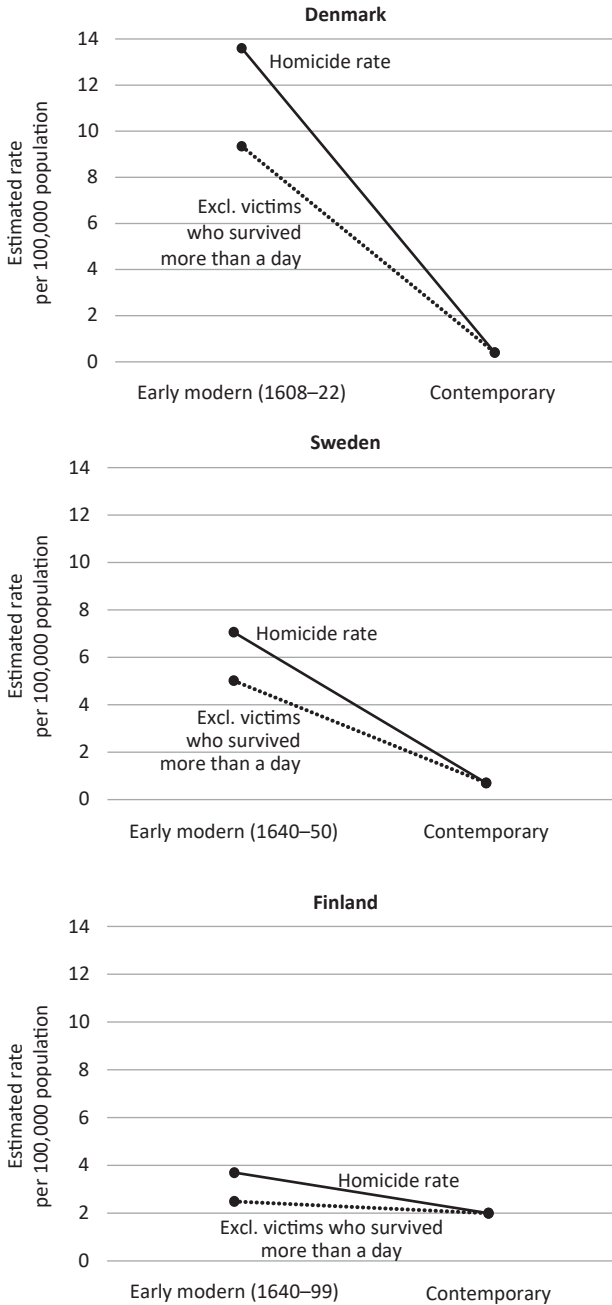


Figure 11.6: Estimated homicide rates per 100,000 population: overall homicide rate, and rate excluding persons who survived for more than one day after the violent incident.

that the contemporary rates are the same because we did not alter them in any way. For the early modern period, we calculate two values: the real one and the counterfactual one. The main finding is that, for Denmark and Sweden, improved survival does not make a major difference.

However, in Finland, the counterfactual line is nearly level. If all victims surviving more than a day had been saved permanently, the Finnish homicide drop would have been from 2.5 to 2.0 – a modest shift in comparison to the other two countries. Indeed, given the distances and communications technologies of the northern Finland borderlands in the 17th century, it seems realistic to suggest that violence victims surviving a day would have had considerable chances of survival in modern conditions. Figure 11.6 also underscores that, even without counterfactual adjustments, the Finnish drop is of less magnitude. As noted above, the country difference could partially reflect different points of measurement during the early modern period. The Danish historical data are from the beginning of the 17th century, while the Finnish data are concentrated in the latter part of that century.

11.6 Stability and Change

On midsummer eve 2009, youths were socializing and drinking beer in a south-eastern Swedish seaside resort. Most of them were between 18 and 25 years old, like the 21-year-old Daniel, who was there with his friends. Having just talked to some young women, they proceeded to walk along a pathway by the beach. There they were confronted by a group of immigrant youths, one of whom collided with one of Daniel's friends, apparently wishing to provoke a quarrel. Words arose, and the situation escalated into a fight. It is not clear how many actually participated, but initial media reports described a group fight with many participants. However, the most serious confrontation took place between smaller groups. At some point, having chased and cornered Daniel, one of the assailants said, 'Give me the knife, I will do it, I will do it.' He then stabbed Daniel, with lethal outcome. A friend of Daniel's was also stabbed,

but he survived. The 25-year-old offender later confessed to the crime, but claimed self-defence and denied lethal intent. He was condemned for manslaughter to seven years' imprisonment.¹⁶⁶

This case manifests a feature that is relatively common in contemporary homicide but very rare in earlier periods: the participation of persons with immigrant backgrounds, as victims and as offenders of homicide. This is consistent with the overall marginalization of homicide, as socially disadvantaged groups are increasingly present in lethal violence. Yet, it would be a gross oversimplification to suggest that cases such as this require the presence of immigrants. Rather, it is a typical honour contest in a public place between young males. They were sounding each other's stamina by means of insults (Matza, 1964, pp. 22–44), probably with young women as the audience. The motivational foreground of the offence testifies to long-duration continuities in lethal violence; the social composition of homicide reflects changes in population structure. The timing of the offence on a public holiday also suggests a deep continuity in the embeddedness of violence in routine activities.

In this chapter, we have compared the patterns of homicide in two time periods separated by 300 years, in the early modern and the contemporary (modern) era. Perhaps not surprisingly, the differences were obvious and, in many cases, considerably bigger than the differences we observed within the 17th century. In particular, the drastic reduction in the risk of homicide stands out. In the combined research area, the average homicide victimization risk decreased from 6.4 to 1.0 per 100,000 population. Many of the compositional pattern changes both reflect and shed light on the grand pacification. However, there are also some compositional aspects, which are not simply residual patterns becoming more visible as a result of the drop. For instance, the increasing presence of persons born abroad as homicide victims and

¹⁶⁶ This case description is not from the research data of this study; it is taken from a public source written by the investigating police (Karlsson, 2011).

offenders reflects changes in society. Similarly, the increased presence of alcohol and drugs is also likely to be a real change. In the future, we look forward to having a more continuous perspective to what has happened between our observation periods. Some of the changes in homicide patterns may be fairly recent.

CHAPTER 12

Discussion

On a Sunday in April 1647, a peasant, Peder Pedersson, travelled from his home in Urshult parish to the neighbouring Almundsryd parish in the southern part of Sweden. He was going to visit his daughter, who was living there. The daughter and her husband had economic disagreements with their neighbour, Håkan Eskilson, and Peder's intention was to reach an amicable settlement to the strife. Upon arriving in Almundsryd, Peder first attended the Sunday church. After the service, beer and liquor were available outside the church. Since Peder was a visitor, he was generously treated with drinks. As it happens, Håkan and his father, Eskil, the parties to the conflict, were also there. Demanding money from Peder, they started a fight. When a knife was drawn, bystanders intervened to protect Peder, who was by now seriously drunk. In the skirmish, Håkan was wounded by a bystander. Peder was able to ride away from the scene, but was chased after and intercepted by Håkan and several other people. In addition to the original economic grievance, Håkan was now also avenging the wound he had received in the fight at the churchyard. Peder was dragged from his horse and pushed to the ground, and one person in the chase group, a Dane, stabbed and killed him.¹⁶⁷

This Swedish incident captures many of the key elements we observed in early modern homicide, and also in the other two

¹⁶⁷ HHMD 460000141.

research sites. Like this case, many incidents were related to conflicts about property, often about land rights. The state did not yet provide efficient means of settling such conflicts, so people resorted to self-help. As in the Almundsryd churchyard that fateful Sunday, attempts at arbitration could deteriorate into conflicts. Here we also see the complex and multilayered drivers of homicide. The background and building-up of this conflict was economic and property-related. Yet the immediate foreground of the offence reveals recurring patterns as well. The role of the church service as a routine activity is obvious, explaining why homicide peaked on Sundays, the only day for rest in early modern life. This was aggravated by the fact that people served and consumed alcohol after the church service. Being drunk did not help Peder in his efforts at reconciliation and mediation, or to escape his chasers. The intervention of bystanders testifies to the fact that the community members did try to prevent fatalities. Yet, the man with a grievance, Håkan, was wounded by a bystander. In the final showdown, his acts thus had an additional dimension of displaced aggression, as his revenge targeted Peder, and not the bystander who actually had wounded him.

What was not typical in this case was that the final lethal violence came from a foreigner, a Dane living in Håkan's house. Who was he? The sources speak of a refugee, but was he also a hired gun, serving in the revenge posse? If so, his act has elements of proxy crime, as he was acting for his host. Yet, in most other respects, this case reveals typical and recurring patterns of lethal violence. Homicide is an extreme and rare crime. Yet the patterns reflect ordinary lives and time cycles of each historical period. The motives of lethal violence similarly reflect universal human goals and interests such as revenge, defence of property, jealousy and self-defence. When standardized homicide description extends to different historical periods, different kinds of societies are encountered, yet the social logics of violence emerge from familiar routine activity mechanisms and opportunity structures (see analyses in this book; Clarke & Mayhew, 1988; Felson & Eckert, 2016).

The universal nature of human violence means that its variation can be studied, in a commensurate manner, over long periods of time. Our goal was to build on that premise to expand standardized homicide analysis into distant historical periods. To achieve this, we developed a standardized homicide research instrument, the Historical Homicide Monitor (HHM), with the capability to describe homicides from different epochs similarly. We created this instrument based on four inspirational sources. First, we were inspired by meta-theoretical developments justifying the possibility of long-duration analysis, with regard to violence as such (Eisner, 2011; Szyner & Patrick, 2020), and human memory as a conduit creating the sources on violence (see Section 3.1). Second, we deployed theoretical research traditions in historical criminology as a resource for interpreting our descriptive findings (see Chapter 3) and as important guides for the creation of a research tool (Kivivuori et al., 2020a). Third, in efforts to build a new instrument, we were of course supported by prior similar projects (Eisner, 2014; Granath et al., 2011; Liem et al., 2013; Roth, 2009). Fourth, the process was guided by empirical research and its object, homicide in the early modern and contemporary eras. What resulted was, in addition to this book, the HHM codebook (Kivivuori et al., 2020a), and the core of a new homicide database.

This book has described the creation of the HHM and its basic descriptive potential for the study of lethal violence. It is the first step towards more in-depth and complex analyses. The creation of the new research instrument shows that further steps are possible and likely to be rewarding. In this concluding chapter, we discuss some of the larger theoretical interpretations and topics in a tentative manner. The final section discusses the next steps: the research frontier opened by the HHM.

12.1 Findings on Early Modern Homicide

Many of the findings triggering these discussions pertain to the apparent continuum from Denmark via Sweden to Finland, with Denmark and Finland occupying extreme positions. This pertains

to both rates of homicide and many of the patterns described in this study. On a theoretical level, the question boils down to two alternatives. First, this continuum could reflect the unfolding of the civilizing process during the 17th century. The Danish data from the beginning of the century yielded the highest homicide rates, while the Finnish data from the latter part of the century manifested the lowest rates of lethal violence. Second, the differences could rather, or additionally, reflect various economic-structural factors. Thus, the northern Finnish pattern would reflect its distinctive economy of slash-and-burn agriculture, and a border region syndrome. Our findings give some support for both interpretations. There is a fertile tension in seeing nomothetic processes, such as state-driven pacification, as well as unique, more idiographic contextual factors influencing homicide patterns. A key challenge of interpretation is to avoid imposing teleological structures of inevitable historical dynamics while remaining sensitive to general patterns of change.

Homicide Rates of the Early Modern Period

The Danish study region showed the highest homicide victimization risk, with 13.6 victims per 100,000 population. The corresponding figure was 7.1 for Sweden and 3.7 for Finland. There was a wide margin between male and female homicide victimization rates. The highest risk was observed among Danish males, with 25.2 victims per 100,000 population, followed by Swedish (12.5) and Finnish males (4.7). The three homicide rates appear to follow a steady trend, as the risk halves from Denmark to Sweden, and more than halves from Sweden to Finland. These findings are unprecedented in accuracy and evidential base, as most of the prior studies involve much smaller geographical units.

However, the rate differentials open up a question of interpretation: are we witnessing the homicide drop in operation, or do the differential risks actually reflect geographic regions and contexts? The decreasing homicide rate is consistent with historical control theories, and a rising capability of the emerging centralizing state to enforce effective control in public and semi-public spaces. On

the other hand, some aspects of the northern Finnish homicide patterns appear difficult to reconcile with increasing civilization. Rather, they might be associated with a partial breakdown of social order in borderland conditions. While we might suspect that peripheral northern Finland could have had a higher hidden crime problem than the two more centrally situated research areas, it would be problematic to dismiss theoretical arguments by hidden crime attribution. Furthermore, the northern Finnish data do show a plausible homicide peak during the Great Famine of the 1690s.

In addition to state-driven pacification, the rate differences could also reflect other contextual factors, such as the contrast between war and peace. The first half of the 17th century was ridden with wars and crises in these three countries, while the second half was less tumultuous. And, just after the observation period of this study, the Great Northern War of 1700–1721 probably increased homicide rates at least temporarily in Finland, which became the theatre of war while occupied by Russia from 1713 to 1721 (Kujala & Malinen, 2000). More concentrated homicide peaks are also relevant, as was shown by the analysis of Swedish and Finnish homicide in periods of societal disruption (see Chapter 10).

Theoretical Lessons from Periods of Social Disruption

The Finnish 17th-century patterns stand out in the current comparison of the three study regions. In northern Finland, homicide had the lowest relative share of male-to-male incidents, as just two thirds of the cases belonged to that type. In western Denmark and south-eastern Sweden, this type dominated the scene, with almost nine cases out of ten. In contrast, all other gender constellations – male-to-female, female-to-male and female-to-female incidents – were more prevalent in northern Finland. The Finnish data also had more incidents taking place in forests and wilderness, as well as more intimate partner cases, familial-kin cases, and more offences motivated by revenge, crime and defence of kin.

In the purest version of the civilization theory, the outlier position of the Finnish study region connects to the internal

pacification process, leading to the decrease of the standard male-dominated homicide over the 17th century. Based on rate change from the Danish to the Finnish study period/region, and the knowledge that a majority of the incidents were male-to-male cases, it is apparent that this homicide type was a major driver of the drop. In this regard, our findings corroborate historical control theories.

However, relevant explanations are likely to differ in different scales of change. The pacification description applies to the long-term pattern, while shorter-term changes can be driven by other factors. We explored two peaks: the Swedish demobilization peak of 1649–1650 and the Finnish famine peak of 1695–1699. Interestingly, these seemed to share key features, such as the rise of crime-related homicide, violence transgressing rank differences, and detachment from the regular time cycles of everyday life. In Finland, familial and kin cases also increased their share, while male-to-male cases were proportionally fewer during the peak. This last finding is of special interest because it goes against the expectations of Verkko's law, which suggests that homicide changes reflect male-to-male cases (Verkko, 1951). Generally, it seems that external shocks such as the demobilization of field armies, or famine, could trigger homicide peaks in the early modern era. The composition of these peaks reflected a crisis of internal normative regulation, as evidenced by the rise of crime-related and transgressive violence.

Theoretically, the findings from the analyses on social disruption periods are consistent with multiple approaches. In Finland, strain theory appears to be highly relevant, because the peak of the 1690s was triggered by a famine. In both countries, the peak pattern appears to be consistent with legitimacy theories seeing violence booms as grounded in the temporary disruption of people's relationship to authorities. Similarly, in Roth's view, the homicide booms and busts in American history reflect historical events that disrupted political and social stability (Goertzel et al., 2013, p. 62; Roth, 2009).

Our findings are consistent with this conclusion. We further specify that the ensuing violence did not stem from the armed

forces, nor was it directed against government employees. It was a broader crisis of civil society, a rupture that disconnected violence from the routines of everyday life, not a proto-revolt targeting the state. In Sweden and Finland, the triggers of changes in lethal violence were different but the outcomes were relatively similar, with homicide patterns reflecting increasing strains and an anomic state of society. Was the government so preoccupied with an external shock that there was a loss of formal control, and a loss of legitimacy of the state? The homicide peaks were backlashes in the process of increasing state control: the criminal, the socially transgressive and the nocturnal dimensions broke through the veneer of the surface of civilization. To further illuminate this mechanism, more qualitative research is needed, as suggested by Goertzel et al. (2013).

The homicide peak of the 1690s does not completely explain the divergent patterns of northern Finnish homicide. In some subtypes of homicide, the absolute number of Finnish cases is higher to the degree that the rates of subtypes are also higher, too. Such local, more sustained patterns could connect to economic and demographic structures prevalent in northern Finland. Possibly the centralizing state, and the social order in general, was more contested in such a remote area, creating excess homicide in some subtypes as a friction of increasing pacification and control efforts. This contestation does not refer to explicit motives, even though some of the fugitive groups and civilian posse phenomena intentionally challenged the central state. A full explanation is likely to be a multiple-factor interpretation, by combining a pacification trend with context-specific community economies and control patterns. Economic contexts and external shocks such as demobilization and famine influenced patterns of homicide in short-term anomic conditions.

Civilization of Elites or Resistance to Power?

Homicide rates had been falling since the late Middle Ages in Europe, and this was probably also the case in Scandinavia (Eisner, 2014; Gurr, 1981; Kivivuori & Lehti, 2011; Netterstrøm, 2017a).

The pacification is believed to have started among the social elites and thereafter trickled down to the middle class and finally to the lower classes. Homicides and other violent crimes increasingly became a type of behaviour associated with various poor and marginalized groups (Cooney, 1997). Although the present study does not capture aristocratic violence due to data restrictions, historical control theory predicts that, in the course of the civilizing process, homicide becomes increasingly concentrated in the lower population strata. Our data and social position variables cannot directly decide this matter, but various relevant observations can be offered.

The high proportion, about 30 per cent, of homicides committed by people of relatively high status on social inferiors in the present study suggests that the elites of the Nordic countries were not yet pacified. These cases include burghers and farmers killing subordinate household members, but also in many cases townsmen and peasants of the middling sort killing inferiors outside their own households. A similar lack of pacification is evidenced in the high proportion, 10 to 20 per cent, of subalterns killing people of higher status. The prevalence of such inter-class violence types may be regarded as a distinct feature of early modern Nordic homicide. It became even more accentuated during the short-term peaks of lethal violence, as in the demobilization peak of Sweden in 1649–1650 and the famine peak of Finland in 1695–1699 (see Chapter 10).

The closer we come to present times, the more of the lethal violence becomes internal to the lowest strata, meaning that socially disadvantaged people direct violence against each other (Kivivuori & Lehti, 2006). In today's Nordic homicide,¹⁶⁸ it is rare that people from the lowest strata attack well-to-do people, or people

¹⁶⁸ However, it needs to be underscored that we do not have modern datasets coded with the HHM variable on relative rank. Such a coding could reveal more rank differentials in modern data as well, or at least require an in-depth analysis of the contextuality and historicity of the rank differentials.

in power positions. Therefore, the high prevalence of subalterns killing their superiors in the 17th century could indicate social disruption, resistance to power structures, or conflicts triggered by the increasing inroads of the centralizing state into the social body. Again, the observed patterns can be reflected from multiple theoretical perspectives.

Weapons as Indices of State Power

Prior research has suggested that decreasing homicide rates were associated with a shift in the balance between homicides committed with or without weapons. Over the centuries, the use of weapons in homicides has fallen significantly. According to estimations based on English evidence, in the 14th century, almost nine out of ten of the incidents were perpetrated with some kind of weapon, but only 62–65 per cent in 1560–1650, and in less than half of the incidents (47–48 per cent) in 1650–1800. This trend could partially relate to the ability of control agents to detect non-weapon deaths as intentional violence cases. However, behavioural realities were likely also involved. People increasingly refrained from carrying weapons or other potentially lethal instruments on a daily basis (which could be used in violent acts), or avoided using weapons even when they carried them (Cockburn, 1991, p. 80; Eisner, 2014, pp. 77–78).

Thus, the proportion of weapon use can be regarded as a proxy variable for a more theoretical construct, the internal pacification process. From this perspective, the high proportions, around 90 per cent, of weapon use in our Danish and Swedish data indicate the relative weakness of state-induced pacification. These readings resemble those from late medieval England. Finland, in contrast, with its rarer use of weapons (66 per cent), would indicate a more pacified society, resembling, to a degree, England in 1560–1650. This conclusion corresponds with the higher homicide rates in the earlier Danish and Swedish samples, compared to the lower homicide rate in the later samples from Finland.

From Impulsivity to Premeditation?

Low self-control and impulsivity are strongly correlated with criminal propensity in modern populations (Gottfredson & Hirschi, 1990; Pratt & Cullen, 2000). Historical control theories, such as the civilizing process theory (Elias, 2017a, 2017b [1939]), propose that low self-control was more prevalent in pre-modern eras, before state-building and economic processes started to mould humans into more restrained and rational actors.

According to Pieter Spierenburg's study on homicide in early modern Amsterdam, violence with a highly impulsive character was dominant in the period 1651–1750. At this time, around 60 per cent of all homicides resulted from conflicts arising in a tavern or on the street without any discernible previous history. Many of the other homicides were impulsive, for example half of all the robbery-related killings. Later, in 1751–1810, impulsive homicides decreased. Fewer homicides were committed between strangers in nightlife violence, while less impulsive intimate partner homicide cases increased in proportion. Spierenburg interprets this shift from impulsive to planned homicides, together with a general decline of homicides, as a confirmation of Norbert Elias's civilizing process theory (2012, pp. 35–36).

These findings for Amsterdam in 1651–1750 can be compared with the results of the present analysis. The share of impulsive homicides was considerably higher in Amsterdam than in our study, if we use the 65 per cent unpremeditated homicide average as a proxy for impulsivity. If premeditation was under-reported in our sources, the difference from Amsterdam becomes greater. This difference might be explained by the fact that our data are primarily rural, while Spierenburg's cases come from one of Europe's biggest cities with a bustling commercialized nightlife presenting good opportunities for nightlife conflicts.

However, there is no reason to think that the more rural character of the Nordic countries explains the higher degree of premeditation. It is equally possible that early modern homicide was more premeditated and rational than is expected on the basis of

historical control theories. The relatively large share of homicide connected to property offences could reflect rational adaptation to conditions where legal redress was difficult to get. Even offences seemingly taking place in an impulsive manner, while drinking alcohol, could have a deeper background in personal quarrels and conflicting interests. As noted in Chapter 3, the original civilization theory by Elias, representing Freud-inspired theorizing popular in the early 20th century, saw pre-pacification violence as mostly a result of impulsivity and lack of self-control. The pre-modern person was seen as representing drastic otherness in relation to individuals of later times. The results of the present study challenge such elements of historical control theories. The need to further disentangle impulsive and planned behaviours is a serious challenge for long-duration homicide research.

Motives and Deterrence

In their groundbreaking study on subcultures of violence, Nisbett and Cohen (1996) suggested that honour cultures emerge as rational adaptations to environments lacking effective state control. If your property is alienable and easily stealable, you need to project credible deterrence to avoid predation. This logic has been found in agricultural societies and herding economies, but it is also evident in modern groups of marginalized men and criminal subcultures where recourse to police help is out of the question (Kivivuori, 1999).

Self-defence, property defence and revenge were the three most typical motives in early modern Nordic homicide. Could these motivational patterns reflect economic bases and routine activities in the study locations, as suggested by Nisbett and Cohen's honour culture theory? In conditions where the state is weak, rivalry over contested property was common, and people had to use self-help to protect their property. In rural economies, land possession and its use, pasture rights for livestock, and the necessary close collaboration between neighbours within the open field system, were all potential triggers of conflicts. The case of

Almundsryd we described at the beginning of this chapter had a background in economic strife. In many other cases as well, situational alcohol use escalated prior grievances into violence:

In 1642 three peasants in the village Bresäter in Sweden started to quarrel about livestock. Stefan Andersson visited his son, Börge Staffansson, and a neighbour Arvid Börgesson joined them. They all drank, and after a while, Stefan asked Arvid to take his livestock away, so that it would not cause damage. Arvid answered that if they only closed their gate, there would be no problem. They continued quarrelling, and Börge approached Arvid with an axe in his hand. Arvid ran into his own house and fetched a spear, stabbing his neighbour Börge.¹⁶⁹

Revenge is also a means of enforcing perceived equity in conditions where neutral arbiters are scarce or non-existent. Revenge frequently happened in a context of drinking in densely populated areas, in a cultural setting of frequent socializing with people from different households. In the more remote and scarcely populated area of northern Finland, without protection from close neighbours and local or state officials, people projected violence-based deterrence to protect their economic interests, themselves and their relatives. This could explain the relative frequency of the revenge motive in the Finnish study region. The prevalence of criminal-economic motives in Finland could also be related to revenge, if victimized people took justice into their own hands. However, this appears to be inconsistent with the civilizing process explanation, which suggests that the late 17th-century Finns were more civilized than the Swedes and Danes of the earlier decades of the century, who were more often engaged in property protection. More research is needed in this area. The study of motivation is important because it links macro-phenomena like state control to micro-level drivers of violence.

¹⁶⁹ HHMD 460000164.

Intimate Partner Violence

We observed an unexpected absence of intimate partner homicide in our Danish study region during the early modern period. This homicide type was also comparatively rare in Sweden, and even to some degree in Finland.¹⁷⁰ Does this reflect behavioural realities or validity deficits in the data source? The discussion of this question is challenging as it involves conjectures about unrecorded criminality. If we suggest that intimate partner homicide was prevalent but not visible, this conclusion should ideally rest on empirical evidence extracted from other sources or studies. In modern criminology, hidden crime research is a highly developed empirical methodology.¹⁷¹ Unfortunately, we lack hidden crime research resources for historical periods, and must resort to indirect discussion. So, what then are the main arguments concerning this issue?

Source critical interpretation. For a modern observer, it may be hard to believe that no incidents of husbands killing their wives took place in Danish Jutland during the study period. Considering the patriarchal structures and the generally high risk of violence, more intimate partner violence and violence against women could be predicted. It is therefore possible that intra-familial homicide or femicide remained unreported or unrecorded in the sources, thus contributing to a higher dark figure of intimate partner homicide and relative homicide in Denmark and Sweden. At the time of the Danish research period, the mediation of homicide cases

¹⁷⁰ The share of these offences was largest in northern Finland, but the difference between Sweden and Finland reflected differentials in the frequency of other homicide types. The estimated rate of early modern intimate partner homicide was nearly identical in Sweden and Finland (0.3 and 0.4 per 100,000 population). The corresponding modern figures in Sweden and Finland are 0.5 and 0.2 (Lehti et al., 2019, p. 37).

¹⁷¹ For methods used in modern criminology, see Kivivuori (2011). See also the discussion in Section 4.4.

was illegal but nonetheless still practised. It is possible that some of the intimate partner homicides were privately, and illegally, settled outside of court, and never prosecuted, and therefore were not entered into the court records.¹⁷² On the other hand, it may be of some relevance that, in our data corpus, cases involving female victims had in many respects fewer missing data on the patterns of cases (see Appendix B). Once the cases had reached the court, they were recorded better than cases involving male victims.

Substantial interpretation means that there really were fewer intimate partner homicides in the early modern period than today. There are studies indicating the relative rarity of intimate partner violence in historical times (see Maddern, 2002). Bio-archaeological evidence from the medieval era, including skeletal assemblages from Denmark and Sweden, has suggested a lower prevalence of female homicide victims than is typical in the modern era (Kjellström, 2009). Examining localities in Jutland in the period 1700–1850, Romvig Thomsen (2018) used multiple types of records¹⁷³ to collect a file of 5,600 individuals, but did not find any intimate partner violence prosecutions. Two cases, dealing with other matters, revealed intimate partner violence, neither of which was a homicide. Similarly, evidence from the early modern Netherlands indicates that neighbours protected women against domestic violence (Van der Heijden, 2016, p. 238).

¹⁷² In Denmark, mediation was prohibited for non-nobles in 1547 and in all social groups, including noblemen, in Sweden and Finland by the law of 1734, but in Sweden and Finland restrictions to out-of-court dealings were issued much earlier (Netterstrøm, 2017a; Ylikangas et al., 2001).

¹⁷³ The use of all available records to locate references to intimate partner violence, outside the main purpose of the document, can arguably be seen as a rudimentary proxy for hidden crime estimation. See Kivivuori (2011, pp. 73–78), for Sophia Moses Robison and her pioneering work on the notion of the ‘Central Register’.

Thus, the low prevalence of intimate partner homicide in the early modern period could reflect differential intensity and character of social control in families and villages. Local communities could control excessive disciplinary violence by males (Maddern, 2002; Österberg & Lindström, 1988; Romvig Thomsen, 2018; Van der Heijden, 2016). Informal social control practices of the medieval and early modern epochs both allowed and limited patriarchal violence (Maddern, 2002; Romvig Thomsen, 2018, pp. 147–149). Thus, low rates of lethal intimate partner violence can co-exist with high rates of non-lethal intimate partner violence.

Some of the tentative findings emerging from our current work comparing Finland and Iceland during the 20th century are consistent with the hypothesis that lethal intimate partner violence was less prevalent in pre-industrial societies (Lehti, Kivivuori, Bergsdóttir & Jonasson, 2021). The Finnish–Icelandic comparison suggests that the increase of such violence could be a recent phenomenon, possibly linked to the end of traditional societies in the turmoil of urbanization and industrialization, and possibly also to cultural factors making marriages more emotionally laden matters (Roth, 2009).

It is also possible that the relatively low share and rate of intimate partner violence reflects both methodological and substantial factors. Informal social control could reduce lethal intimate partner violence and prevent it from proceeding to courts. The same factor could therefore explain both a behavioural difference and an under-registration in court records. The behavioural part has implications for the ‘Finnish special case’. The comparatively higher Finnish intimate partner homicide prevalence could be related to the community structure, population sparsity and routine activities, all of which could lead to less effective informal social control. Taken together, we consider the findings as capturing behavioural differences, while critically acknowledging challenges involved in the sources.

12.2 Infanticide

Our study period, the 17th century, witnessed legal changes in the regulation of infanticide. This crime gradually came to be identified as a specifically female crime committed by unmarried mothers. The legal definition and the means of proof shifted from evidence (preferably a confession) confirming the killing towards circumstantial evidence focusing on acts of concealing the childbirth. This restricted unmarried mothers' possibilities to claim innocence in the event of a dead infant. At the same time, it expanded the options for possible co-offenders to escape suspicions. Legal decisions of the 17th century thus moved penal attention away from fathers or other males as possible infanticide offenders (see also Bergenlöv, 2004; Lövkrona, 1999; Nielsen, 1982; Rautelin, 2009). While legal context matters, the HHM codebook does not directly depend on legal definitions of the 17th century, or legal definitions of any other period. We included all lethal acts against persons of any age. If men or married women killed children under one year of age, and if these were taken to court, these incidents would have been included in our data.

The Question of Mental Disorder

For the purposes of interpreting the observed patterns, it may be useful to contrast them with modern conditions, with infanticide as a nearly extinct crime type. This is complicated and there are many anachronistic pitfalls to avoid. On the other hand, the inclusion of accumulated knowledge about infanticide through modern forensic, biological and social analyses contributes to a broader understanding of infanticide also in past times. Today, the rare infanticide offenders are in many countries systematically examined for possible mental disorders, linking this crime to psychological problems (Putkonen, Weizmann-Henelius, Collander, Santtila & Eronen, 2007). Modern Nordic infanticide laws reflect the notion that childbirth, if it coincides with pre-existing

vulnerabilities, may cause psychological problems and thereby diminish the capability to controlled behaviour. While a minor subset of women who kill infants are psychotic at the time, the majority appear to have wilfully murdered their unwanted offspring. However, courts often seem reluctant to hold women accountable for infant homicide (Porter & Gavin, 2010).

This was not the case in the early modern age. On the contrary: women were regarded as accountable for their actions. Women who committed infanticide were described in moral discourse as malicious or sinful individuals who committed crimes without remorse, and it was not until much later that possible mental disorder was systematically considered as a cause of crime (Garpenhag, 2012; Rautelin, 2009, pp. 343–344). Thus, the reason why we did not observe mental health dimensions is that the records did not refer to such disorders, or speak in terms of such problems.¹⁷⁴ The early modern courts were not primarily interested in finding causes to behaviours; they did not work from within the causal episteme.

Theoretical Links

Our findings link aspects of infanticide to everyday routines of the study period. In particular, the time cycles related infanticide to routine activities. For instance, it is possible that some of the cycles reflect the corresponding distributions in regular births. This, of course, does not explain how the motivation of the motivated offender emerges. In the case of infanticide, the offender was above the victim in social rank, but the overall constellation is more complex. The offenders themselves were in a lowly position in the hierarchies of society. Therefore, social strain theories

¹⁷⁴ This is not a statement regarding the historicity of mental disorders. Future development of the HHM should pay more attention to this dimension. It is possible that specific disorders exist in different epochs but are described in different discourses; there can be continuities hiding behind superficial differences.

remain highly relevant in explaining individual-level motivation. The Finnish famine peak clearly impacted infanticide rates as well as other homicide, testifying to the relevance of absolute poverty in early modern infanticide. Theories of social control are also potentially relevant. In particular, the control of pre- and extra-marital sexuality, the stigmatization of unmarried mothers, and the social control of pregnant women were all part of the societal context of infanticide. Infanticide shows the complex and the historically variable links of social control to crime, just like the missing intimate partner violence discussed above. The control of female sexuality could create situations motivating infanticide as there are cases where this is explicitly referred to as the reason for killing the infant.

On the other hand, social control can suppress infanticide in other ways. Examples can be drawn also from later periods, such as the 20th century, when the medicalization of childbirth increased social control in birth situations. The hospital context drastically reduces the possibility of neonaticide, thus contributing to the near disappearance of that crime type (Kivivuori, 2001). Other factors included better medical and social services during pregnancy and maternity, child protection services, contraception, abortion and adoption, which reduced situations where motivation to infanticide can arise. The general rise in living conditions is probably a major factor, since the reason for killing infants was often despair over future economic prospects for both mother and child. The promotion of gender equality, shared parenthood and easy access to childcare services have further enhanced women's full-time employment on the labour market, reducing female strains. Also, the diminishing role of the marriage institution, and consequently the near disappearance of the dichotomy between legitimate and illegitimate children, as defining an individual's status, must be regarded as important. As a result, infanticide has become extremely rare in modern developed societies, and possibly more connected to the mental health problems of offenders such as depression (Hatters Friedman & Resnick, 2007; Putkonen et al., 2010).

This means that the rise of the psychological discourse could partially reflect real behavioural changes, rather than an inability of the early modern courts to ‘see’ mental disorders. When infanticide was prevalent, social structural and power relations had a marked explanatory role, but, as it became extremely rare, the remaining variance was increasingly explained by psychological problems. Analogously, we should not infer that the lack of psychological vocabulary in the early modern period meant that there were no mental disorders.

12.3 Long-Duration Change

Above, we discussed the findings of the 17th-century analysis, from the point of view of key theories of historical criminology. In addition to that, we also touched upon the challenge of long-duration comparison. It bears repeating that this analysis was in fact a *comparison of two periods*: the early modern era and the contemporary period.

Same Direction, Different Pace

The comparisons spanning 300 years corroborate the drastic homicide drop already known from prior research. The overall homicide risk in the combined early modern data was 6.4 per 100,000 population, while the contemporary rate in the same geographic region was 1.0 per 100,000 population. The male homicide victimization rate dropped from 10.5 to 1.4, and the female victimization rate from 2.0 to 0.6 per 100,000 population. Thus, the female risk of getting killed was reduced considerably. However, the male rate decreased much more, yielding a higher proportion of female victims in the modern era. This constellation followed the logic of Verkko’s law, connecting decreasing overall homicide rates with increasing shares of female victims (Verkko, 1951). Thus, this law actually refers to the differential variability of homicide sub-categories. It is important to underscore the distinction between rates and compositions, because otherwise we

might erroneously conclude a higher female risk of homicide victimization from the higher percentage of female victims.

The rates stem from a conglomerate area combining Danish Jutland, south-eastern Sweden and parts of northern Finland. When these three regions are considered separately, each area corroborates the drastic homicide drop from the early modern to the contemporary period. However, the drop has been much more drastic in Denmark and Sweden than in Finland. For most comparative categories, the risk differential was smallest in Finland and highest in Denmark, with Sweden occupying the middle position. Thus, the risk of northern Finnish males dying of homicide was 1.6 times higher in the early modern period than it is today. The risk of south-eastern Swedish men dying from homicide was 14 times higher in the 17th century than it is today. The corresponding long-duration risk ratio reached its climax in Danish Jutland, where the male homicide risk was 50 times higher in the early 17th century than it is today. This flags the almost total pacification from the early 17th century to modernity. For females, the risk differentials were much less (2.0 in Finland, 3.0 in Sweden and 6.0 in Denmark).

These findings can partially reflect the differential timing of the early modern datasets: the Danish is the earliest, the Swedish in between, and the Finnish the most recent historical dataset. Since Finland, however, manifests the highest modern homicide rates, we conclude that the Finnish long-duration homicide drop has been less steep in this comparative constellation.

Marginalization of Homicide

Apart from the increase in the share of female victims, several compositional change patterns emerged when we compared the patterns of homicide in the early modern and contemporary eras. One way to capture the megatrend of homicide is to see it as an increasing marginalization of lethal violence. In the 17th century, we still see a pattern where violence appears to be, at least comparatively speaking, connected to a normal conflict resolution

technique. Offenders in the standard male-to-male incidents were often not deviants. In relative terms, the state was weaker and could not guarantee the safety of people or the ownership of property, thus ordinary men needed to project violent deterrence.

In contrast, in the contemporary period, we see how homicide has migrated to or become isolated to the social margins. Persons born abroad, often likely to be socially disadvantaged, are over-represented. Conflicts are increasingly linked to crime and psychological disorder. Homicide also increasingly relates to the use of intoxicants, especially the drugs connection has become strong. Homicide has moved from public places to hidden enclaves of private apartments. Even the rise in the proportion of incidents taking place in family contexts is partially linked to the waning of violence as a means of 'everyday' conflict resolution. Modern family and intimate partner violence is often linked to social disadvantage and alcohol problems, rather than being randomly distributed over the social stratification continuum (Kivivuori & Lehti, 2012). Seasonal rhythm may have attenuated as groups involved in serious violence are increasingly disconnected from the routines of the working population (see also Kivivuori & Lehti, 2006; Suonpää et al., 2018; Tiihonen et al., 1997).

Paradoxically, some of the patterns we saw in the homicide *peaks* of the 17th century seem to re-emerge in the 21st century, when homicide rates are *low* in long-duration comparison. Those early homicide waves were, to some degree, anomic deviations from 'normal' violence. During the early modern times of social disruption, violence detached from everyday routines. At least in Finland, the famine boom was linked to relative and possibly absolute deprivation. Apart from this, we did not find evidence that early modern homicide would have been linked to structural economic strain. The role of the economy was closer to the foreground motivation of offending. The need to protect property, or to enforce debt, could even motivate violence in groups that were not necessarily from the lowest levels of social stratification.

The early modern period manifested surprisingly low levels of intimate partner homicide. This could also be related to the

‘normality’ of violence in that context. If disciplinary violence by the household head was legitimate, it was also regulated by informal social norms against excessive violence. Needless to say, there is no reason to romanticize or appreciate this kind of normalized violence. Yet it may have been linked to comparatively low intimate partner homicide risk (and possibly a high risk of non-lethal intimate partner violence). Modern anomic, unregulated violence, more prevalent in socially marginal groups (Kivivuori & Lehti, 2012), may involve a comparatively greater risk of lethal outcomes, thus suppressing some of the dynamics of the long-duration homicide drop in this domain. These findings shed critical light on theories linking equality to less homicide and normative hierarchies to high homicide. They may be seen as support for institutional anomie theory, which sees lack of informal normative regulation of behaviour as criminogenic.

In discussing the paradigmatic shifts of homicide research theory (Chapter 3), we diagnosed an increasing normalization in the sense that people from distant periods are normalized, no longer seen as alien, irrational or childlike. To a degree, the emerging big picture here flips the constellation: the early modern people were, in their violence, normal and rational in their historically given context of a weak state and a strong local community, while our own homicide, taking place in a strong-state context, is increasingly linked to deviance, margins and social disadvantage. The explanatory frameworks have normalized¹⁷⁵ the motivational wellsprings of violence, while the social locus of homicide has become marginalized, increasingly connected to the lowest strata and social deviance. Some aspects of modern homicide, like organized crime and gang-related incidents, are difficult to place in this marginalization scheme, as they may involve rational norm enforcement and conflict resolution as motives.

¹⁷⁵ Needless to say, ‘normalization’ refers to a social structural description, not to a justification of violence.

Stable Dimensions of Lethal Violence

Over the span of 300 years, drastic changes took place in homicide. Most notably, the rate of lethal violence decreased drastically. There are also many new features in the homicide patterns, such as drugs-related homicide and the globalization of the victim and offender groups. In spite of changes, some stabilities also emerged. Notably, the embeddedness of serious violence in normal time cycles has remained the same to an astounding degree. The daily, weekly and annual cycles show considerable similarities. The changes, like the extension of weekends to Saturdays, are relatively minor and specific in the face of overall patterns. While criminologists often underscore (with justification) that crime statistics are constructed by control activities, the long-duration stability and interpretability of homicide time cycle patterns challenges this view. The stability and interpretability of time cycles capture real behavioural cycles in the likelihood and patterns of violence.

12.4 The Way Ahead

In the spring of 1827, the French government published the first ever national crime statistics annual report. The *Compte général de l'administration de la justice criminelle en France* was an immediate game-changer for the analysis of crime, eagerly seized upon by Quetelet, Guerry and other founders of criminology. It gave scholars the asset of a standard description of crime, including homicide, in all parts of a large nation, with some additional disaggregation possibilities as well. It also created a time dimension to the future. But what about the past? Could standardized and disaggregation-based analysis be extended back in time, to the pre-1827¹⁷⁶ statistical darkness? Our answer in this study is

¹⁷⁶ There were, of course, local and unpublished predecessors at least from the 1780s but none competed with the *Compte* in coverage and research usability.

affirmative. It is possible to extend uniform analysis backwards in time. The HHM, whose creation we have narrated in this book, is an instrument designed for that purpose. It creates a new approach to long-duration analysis of lethal violence, an approach that enables standardized comparisons over time and across countries, regions and localities. This study has only touched the surface of its potentialities for further analysis. In the future, the Historical Homicide Monitor Network will continue to develop the approach. This research enabled us to observe several research needs calling for attention in future work in the field of historical criminology.

Emerging Technologies

Often, historical sources are available as readily transcribed versions; in the best cases, they have been published as scholarly edited compilations. These are ideal for behavioural research. However, in many cases, original documents must be used. Towards the end of the 19th century, original sources are increasingly available as typeset text, or as electronic administrative records. For earlier periods, the sources are likely to exist in antiquated handwriting styles. From the point of view of research methodology, there is a need to move towards automatic text recognition tools. These facilitate the transcription of archaic handwriting. Promising technologies have been developed (Mühlberger et al., 2019). When the source texts have been transcribed, the process of transforming the information into the standard HHM variable format begins. Currently this relies exclusively on human interpretation. In the future, this process could be assisted by emerging technologies based on natural language processing. It is not impossible that some theoretical purposes could be advanced by such methods.

Further Research

The purpose of this book was to explain how the HHM was created, and to show its potential in comparing homicide over the

long duration and across regions. We emphasized basic description in close connection with source criticism and historically sensitive contextual interpretation. This task continues to be of great importance, as analysts should try to maintain historical sensitivity in using long-duration data. However, it is clear that the uses of the emerging Historical Homicide Monitor Database extend beyond this. For example, multivariate methods could be applied to find more complex and latent patterns in the data. We can also conduct quasi-causal analyses in the regression framework, with dichotomous or continuous outcome variables. Examples of dichotomous outcomes would be, for instance, offender suicide or the death penalty. Continuous variables include, to give just one example, the time duration from violence to death. These examples are chosen because, in them, the temporal sequence between predictors and outcomes is inbuilt. These possibilities reflect a key aspect of this project: as opposed to many other homicide data sources, the use of individuals as observation units.

Since the HHM is based on individuals as units, and incorporates personal identification information,¹⁷⁷ it is possible to link it to other information sources at the level of individuals. Indeed, the system includes personal identification information for this reason.¹⁷⁸ Using data from court protocols and then adding data from parish registers or other alternative sources is likely to be rewarding. For instance, the largely missing data on the exact age of offenders and victims could be so recovered, enabling the study of change vs. stability in the age–crime curve (Steffensmeier, Allan, Hared & Streifel, 1989) in the long duration. Similarly, parish registers could show family and kin linkages between parties, which may not be evident in the court protocols, enabling researchers to study the concentration of offending and victimization in families, or sustained hostilities between kin groups.

¹⁷⁷ For ethical and data protection guidelines of the HHM data collection, see Kivivuori et al. (2020a).

¹⁷⁸ This applies only to our early modern data. The modern comparison was made using aggregate findings from the study regions.

Information about the siblings of the offender, and their birth order, might be useful for strain theoretical examination of the younger sons hypothesis, according to which non-inheriting males were more prone to violence because of a Mertonian mismatch between expectations and economic means¹⁷⁹ (see Ylikangas, 1991).

Additional local data could further illuminate the above discussed marginalization of homicide. Comparatively speaking, the early modern offenders appear more like ordinary people and less deviant than their modern counterparts. Yet, a micro-perspective, applied in the HHM data context, might add nuances to this impression. Modern liberal societies enable the acting out of personality propensities, yet it is likely that variation in personality traits has always existed.

External data are needed also to describe the variable contexts. In this launch study, we used quantitative data on only one measure of external context: the estimated size of the population in the study regions. The population estimates and the resulting homicide rates are considered an integral part of the planned Historical Homicide Monitor Database. In the future, more detailed population information would be beneficial, for example to specify age-specific rates of lethal violence. It would also be of some service to relate disaggregated homicide to other mortality in the study locations. The drastic homicide drop since the medieval period could be related to mechanisms triggered by increasing life expectancy, as measured without homicide mortality to forestall tautological explanation (Wilson & Daly, 1997). Lockwood has recently advocated a similar broadening of perspective for source critical reasons. He sees a parallel change in homicide and accident mortality as particularly suspicious, possibly implicating shifts in the efficiency of post-mortem examinations by coroners and other authorities (Lockwood, 2017, pp. 269–281). Other contextual information could and should be collected to support qualitative, theoretical and contextual interpretation. For example, we would

¹⁷⁹ Even in the absence of strict primogeniture, social practices can favour a single or main inheritor of land property (Korpiola, 2010).

benefit from more information on household compositions, time cycles, regular births, and the physical placement of buildings and street grids, as described in external sources unrelated to homicide and criminal justice processes.

The HHM is a tool tailor-made for the analysis of lethal violence. Our focus on homicide was justified by the idea that lethal effect as criterion ensures comparability over the long-duration time span. Yet, researchers focusing on sublethal violence might consider using the codebook or some of its key variables. There is no fundamental obstacle to such applications. Including non-lethal cases would enable researchers to examine factors influencing the lethality of violence, a rewarding line of inquiry in modern homicide data (Ganpat, van der Leun & Nieuwbeerta, 2013).

Uses of Pre-registration

Scholars debate the causes of crime trends, and they may even disagree over the existence or direction of changes. Aebi and Linde (2016, pp. 73–74) suggested that differences of opinion among researchers can reflect their ideological convictions, their *Weltanschauung*. This gloomy analysis suggests that the social sciences are inevitably doomed to suffer from confirmation bias (Casad, 2007) if researchers prefer interpretations and evidence conforming to their prior views. In the course of this research, we engaged in lively discussions about how our empirical findings connected with theories.

In historical criminology, the role of unrecorded crime has considerable potential to feed such discussions. Critical reflection of hidden crimes is a necessary skill in the craft of criminology (Kivivuori, 2011), and it is extremely important in long-duration and historical analysis of crime (Aebi & Linde, 2016, pp. 66–70). However, in historical periods, there is typically no way of ascertaining the ratio of hidden to known crimes independently of the primary sources. While the discussion of hidden crime is necessary, the hidden crime argument can also be used to ‘save’ theories, or expectations based on modern conditions. The

surprising nature of non-existing intimate partner homicide in our early modern Danish data is a case in point. If we think that such violence against women must have always been a prevalent problem, we can, in principle, save this expectation with the help of the hidden crime argument. In this research, our primary solution was to stay close to the data and use low-inference descriptors in accordance with standard qualitative research methods (Seale, 2000). Theoretically, we often agreed that routine activity theory would serve well as a primary explanation, because it underscores proximate factors. There are low-inference theories as well as low-inference descriptors.

In the future, historical-criminological work might benefit from methods adopted in other social sciences to tackle the related problems of confirmation bias, publication bias and replication crisis. The solutions include systematic reviews, replications of prior studies, and pre-registration of hypotheses. Pre-registration in this context would mean that research teams would first discuss and agree how specific hypotheses are tested, which measures capture theoretical constructs, and whether and how hidden crime arguments are used. They would then collect the data to probe the pre-defined hypothesis. Such procedures are possible in qualitative research as well (Haven & Van Grootel, 2019). In the future, the availability of a standardized instrument, such as the HHM 2.0 (Kivivuori et al., 2020a), could help to solve contentious issues in the sphere of historical criminology.

Theoretical Frontier

While our approach was theoretically informed to begin with, it became increasingly clear to us during this research that our instrument needs broadening in terms of theoretical coverage. The instrument still lacked variables for important theoretical concerns. For instance, we missed variables capturing a learning theoretical dimension of definitions favourable to the violation of law. Neutralizations, i.e. the excuses and justifications offenders use to explain away their guilt, are an important subtype of definition

favourable to the violation of law (Sykes & Matza, 1957). We therefore added to the HHM 2.0 manual a special variable capturing neutralizations in the source (Kivivuori et al., 2020a).

Consider the high levels of homicide during the medieval and early modern era. Could that relate to prevalent modes of lay reasoning, that is, to the high cultural salience of neutralizations? Such an explanation could refer, for instance, to the culture of casuistry. Casuistry is a way of reasoning that seeks to resolve moral problems by allowing for strongly situational justifications for the choices made by the offender. Casuistics were used in situations that appeared to be in conflict with more general moral and legal rules (Corran, 2018). Consistent with this, medieval attitudes towards violence have been described as ambivalent and relative to situation and circumstances (Netterstrøm, 2017a, p. 466). In other words, people in principle condemned violence, but could easily find reasons why it was acceptable in specific circumstances. Thus, the high levels of violence in pre-modern Europe could in principle reflect the higher cultural acceptability of situational casuistry, expiations and remissions of sins. This could have affected the likelihood of violent behaviour, and even the crime rates.

Would the idea that pre-modern Europeans believed in Hell while explaining their sins away testify to the alien nature of their personality, and to radically historically constructed personality patterns (Wickham, 2017, p. 7; see also Chapter 3 in this book)? Not necessarily, since modern offenders constantly engage in similar justifications of their acts. There is a complete criminological sub-theory examining the techniques of neutralization (Sykes & Matza, 1957), resembling 'everyday casuistry' and the remission of sins. Modern offenders sometimes resort to causal rhetoric in excusing or justifying their crimes. As noted in this study, the early modern courts were not very interested in the wider causal context of the crimes beyond blame attribution; the control culture did not offer social, psychological or other causal discourses to the parties. In contrast, the modern delinquent is surrounded by rhetoric and discourse of causal understanding, provided by a multitude of professional understanders such as psychologists

and social workers (Kivivuori, 1998, pp. 665–667). From a criminological point of view, there is reason to explore both the cultural importance and culturally constructed situational justifications for crimes. Apart from causal discourse, other cultural traditions that may provide justifications for violence include romantic ideation (Roth, 2009) and cultures of honour, which provide culturally mediated scripts of how one must react to insults and provocations (Nisbett & Cohen, 1996).

Routine activity theory emerged in our analysis as a consistent explanation of homicide patterns. To further elaborate this dimension, more external data from other than criminal justice sources would be needed. The physical construction of buildings and street grids is of high relevance, as these impact the function of natural surveillance and capable guardianship. Consider the labyrinthine city plans of pre-modern urban spaces, very unlike the rectangular and open-spaced grids designed by the later, powerful central states; theory predicts higher crime rates in the former than in the latter, holding other causal factors constant.¹⁸⁰ The blurry nature of the private and public space could in itself be a criminogenic factor, triggering alcohol-related conflicts. The time cycles of homicide also show that pre-modern societies obeyed similar behavioural patterns as moderns do. Yet some time-embedded phenomena, such as those related to public holidays, appear more pronounced when compared to modern, industrial and post-industrial societies. Could the comparatively high violence rates of the early modern era partially reflect a kind of party culture, in which religious festivities created opportunities for alcohol use and feasting? Further research is also needed, at the micro level, on the environments, timing and context of homicide.

Furthermore, we could not here study the broken windows mechanism, which is central to the routine activities perspective. In modern data, space is known to communicate to possible offenders how easily crimes can be committed in the area. There

¹⁸⁰ Felson (2006, pp. 221–222) made this argument in relation to disadvantaged areas of 19th-century cities.

is more to this than the physical layout of the street grid and the length of lines of vision. Modern data show that different signs of probable *public disorder*, such as graffiti on walls, broken windows or derelict and abandoned houses, increase the risk of crimes in the area (Salmi, Kivivuori & Lehti, 2015). The relevance of such criminogenic mechanisms in the early modern age remains to be analysed. Given the paradigmatic normalization of humans in current thought, it seems plausible to suggest that humans of earlier epochs were equally rational in their choices as we are. Offender decision-making was likely influenced by evaluation of risk at the foreground of offences. On the other hand, the logic of deterrence may not have been as central in sparsely populated and agrarian societies as it is in modern times. Conceivably, the relevance of public disorder for crime causation increases only in more advanced societies, where the impact of state monopolies of violence is based on effective police forces and social policies. In such circumstances, unpoliced areas stand out from the general background of order and cleanliness.

Homicide Millennium Concept

We focused in this study on the Nordic 17th century, because important changes were taking place in the state formation at that time. As a reference point, we used the contemporary era. In the future, the HHM concept can be applied in even more remote epochs, moving further back in time. Currently, we are developing a new concept of the Homicide Millennium project,¹⁸¹ which intends to expand standardized measurement even further back into the past in the culturally relatively homogeneous Nordic area. The Millennium project can be realized in an incremental and piecemeal manner, by adding datasets to the database. At the time of writing, a research project is using the historical code-

¹⁸¹ The Millennium concept has been developed by the principal investigator of the current Nordic project, Prof. Kivivuori, University of Helsinki.

book in Finnish late medieval and early modern data in southern Finland.¹⁸² Currently, students at the Universities of Aarhus, Helsinki and Jyväskylä are using the codebook in preparing theses and dissertations in history and criminology. All these data will be incorporated into the emerging database.

So far, our research has drawn from court protocols or other documents of the criminal justice system. But what if such protocols are not available? This appears to limit the historical reach of long-duration homicide analysis. Such limits may not, however, be insurmountable. We have already tentatively explored the feasibility of using early proto-legal narratives¹⁸³ as source material. This would then enable HHM users to move further back in time, towards the high Middle Ages and even to earlier periods. In fact, there are no period or area limitations for the use of HHM. Indeed, analyses based on our codebook do not necessarily even require written records. At least two non-textual source types can be discussed. First, we could code in bio-archaeological data using the codebook, thus tentatively penetrating the silence of the pre-historic period. In such data, most of the variables would be missing, but some variables such as gender and age could be included, as well as place, injury and mode/weapon causing the death.¹⁸⁴ Second, content analysis of visual imagery (Bock, Isermann & Knieper, 2011) could be used as a source to complement textual sources. Of course, such reconnaissance should be done by interdisciplinary teams combining criminologists and experts of the relevant sources and historical periods.

The degree of ambition immanent in long-duration homicide research rests on specific meta-theoretical foundations, seeing violence and its memory as human universals. It is possible for homicide research to span long time periods using a unified conceptual grid. On the level of general social thought, we draw inspiration

¹⁸² Directed by Prof. Karonen, University of Jyväskylä.

¹⁸³ Medieval chronicles and sagas are examples of such sources.

¹⁸⁴ In such analysis, the big challenge would be to separate homicide from warfare.

from a gradual shift from pathology and strangeness notions to frameworks underscoring the normality and, in some cases, even rationality of people approaching the foregrounds of violence. Persons from different places, social categories and different eras thus share common humanity in moral emotions, social cognitions and rational needs to adapt to environments. Just as human rights are universal and inalienable, so are the facts of human behaviour, with features that connect people from different eras and areas. This definitely does not mean that homicide is a constant, or that its causes are constant. Rather, it suggests that wide comparisons and long-duration research are important and possible. The conceptual grid, which allows us to detect meaningful variation and locally embedded interpretations, is usable across wide distances and long duration. This kind of analysis helps us to understand the dynamics of homicide in the contemporary world.

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Appendix A: Calculation of Homicide Rates

In this section, we describe how we calculated homicide rates in each of the three study regions. Note that, in the 17th century, the Swedish and Finnish study regions were part of a single state with the same legal system, so the discussions regarding their sources can be partially overlapping. We focus on the calculation of homicide rates in the early modern period. The calculation of corresponding rates in the modern period is very straightforward and based on modern register sources (see Lehti et al., 2019).

Homicide Figures

The numbers of homicides used in the calculation are derived from the coding of the original court protocols. The counting unit is the victim. We chose this observation unit for rate calculations, because it is the typical way to calculate homicide rates in modern data. All victims younger than one year old are excluded from estimates.

To specify the trends in homicide, we decided to use variables indicating the time of the verdict. The decision to emphasize the sanction year rather than information about the time of the offence was based on several considerations, such as the long duration of court processes, missing (and sometimes unclear)

data regarding the year of the offence, and special considerations regarding interruptions in time series (see the Danish discussion below). Nevertheless, we believe that the sanction year provides the best and the most inclusive estimate of the overall rate *differentials and trends* during the observation periods. The following discussion provides country-specific information, in addition to shared principles of inclusion and observation units.

Denmark. Homicide figures include rural cases in northern and central Jutland. Homicides committed in towns have been excluded from the calculation. This decision reflects the nature of the Danish source materials, the verdict books from the High Court of North Jutland. All rural homicide cases were, in principle, brought before the high court (and therefore included in the verdict books), whereas urban homicide cases only went to the high court if the local urban court verdicts were appealed (see Chapter 4.3). While the coding of 200 homicides for the patterns analysis was finished in the middle of the verdict book of 1622, the remaining homicides of that verdict book have been included in the rate calculations to get a full picture of the homicide rate for that year.

In Denmark, the use of verdict year as a homicide frequency indicator served to bypass the problem of stand-alone years in the actual offence timing. Homicide investigations and trials could drag along for several years, which complicates the dating of the crime. For instance, of the homicides mentioned in the verdict book of 1608, one was committed in an unknown year, four in 1605 or 1607, and only four in 1608. If the verdict books dealing with 1609–1610 had been extant, they would, without a doubt, have contained homicides committed in 1608. Furthermore, a calculation by the time of crime would exclude all cases lacking a specific crime date and distort the homicide rate altogether. For periods with successive extant verdict books, there is no substantial difference between the two methods because drawn-out trials tend to level out each other over the years.

The Danish observation years differ with regard to source basis. Some years are based on only one subregion, some years on two subregions, and some years on all three subregions.

Sweden. Regarding the Swedish data, the 200 cases quota was completed in the middle of the year 1650. For the purpose of rate analysis, all cases of 1650 verdicts are included in this calculation. One case taking place in Blekinge, Denmark, has been excluded.

Finland. The Finnish homicide figures are based on the historical province of Ostrobothnia, in order to enable a consistent match between available population statistics.

Population Estimates

The specific challenges of population estimation are discussed in this section, separately for the three countries. For all countries, we have used total population estimates, even though homicide figures exclude victims under one year of age.

Denmark. The rural population in the study region was estimated by combining the best available sources. These included Ladewig Petersen's estimate of the total population of Denmark in 1645, his estimate of urbanization in Jutland (12 per cent), Axel Lassen's estimate of Jutland's share of the population in 1660, and Ladewig Petersen's seemingly corresponding share for the 1640s. Additional sources included Johansen's rough estimate of the population in Denmark 1600, his information on a yearly population growth of 0.4 per cent in the 18th century,¹⁸⁵ and his information on setbacks in population growth due to epidemics in c. 1630 and 1640, and the war in 1643–1645.¹⁸⁶ The population distribution between the three high court regions of northern Jutland was estimated from the great royal survey of the 1680s, summarized by Henrik Pedersen. The population estimate used in this study combines uncertain information and extrapolations and is therefore not exact, but it is probably not much off target. According to this estimate, the rural population of the study region rose from

¹⁸⁵ He estimates population growth the same in normal years in the 17th century, since it fits with the median of his rough estimate for 1600.

¹⁸⁶ Which eliminated 20 years of birth surplus.

c. 225,000 in 1608 to 238,000 in 1622, of whom 34 per cent lived in the northern subregion, 41 per cent in the south-western subregion, and 25 per cent in the eastern subregion (Johansen, 2002; Ladewig Petersen, 1980; Lassen, 1965; Pedersen, 1928/1975).

Sweden. There are two main population estimations available for 17th-century Sweden. In 1938, Sigurd Sundquist calculated Swedish population figures for 1630, basing his calculations on tax records. Because many individuals are not included in these records, Sundquist made estimations also for how to compensate for various under-represented groups, such as widows, the elderly, and poor people. He also estimated average household sizes. In this way, Sundquist estimated population figures for each administrative region (*län*) in Sweden. In the end, he actually presented three different figures: a definite minimum, a probable minimum and a probable maximum.

Sundquist's estimation methods have been criticized for systematically exaggerating the population figures. Recently, Lennart Andersson Palm estimated the Swedish population in 1571, 1620, and 1699–1751. Palm also used information from tax records to estimate the number of households. He then multiplied figures with an estimated average household size. While Sundquist used 18th-century census records to estimate 17th-century household sizes, Palm used sources that are more contemporary for this procedure. Palm calculated the average household sizes separately for the different regions, arguing that there were huge variations in the average household sizes between different regions in Sweden. Palm reached lower figures compared to Sundquist, closer to and sometimes even lower than Sundquist's definite minimum. Palm furthermore claims that he could establish a long-term population increase, during the 17th century, of 0.6 per cent annually, on average. Other researchers, however, have criticized this conclusion as being unrealistic owing to the more or less constant state of war, the heavy burdens of conscriptions, and the massive losses of lives.

Thus, there are no certain and undisputed population figures for 17th-century Sweden. Calculated homicide rates must

therefore be treated as rough estimations. For this purpose, Palm's figures for 1620 have been chosen. These figures have then been adjusted upwards by 0.6 per cent annually. Palm's figures are the best available figures at the present, and, although they differ from Sundquist's figures, they are still of the same magnitude, and mostly close to Sundquist's definite minimum figures.

Finland. The most reliable source for estimating the size of the 17th-century population of Finland is the general individual poll tax (*mantalspenning, henkiraha*), established in the Swedish Realm in 1634 and documented in tax assessment records (*mantalslängd, manttaaliluettelo*). These records included at first every citizen aged 12 and older, but from 1652 onwards only persons aged 15 to 63. In 1655, the Crown changed the upper age limit to include every male householder regardless of age (Jutikkala, 1957, p. 172). In reality, the census records include only the population fit for work at a certain age. Excluded groups varied with respect to changing taxation and legislation. Generally excluded were the poor, who were unable to pay any taxes, the nobility, with their servants, and groups unable to work for subsistence such as the infirm, soldiers, pupils, students and beggars.¹⁸⁷

Because of the excluded populations, the population sizes were estimated. A common procedure is to add a certain percentage or by doubling the taxed group during especially prosperous times with an increase in nativity and declining mortality. Another way of counting is to add five to seven more people to every taxed household (Luukko, 1945, pp. 66–69; Muroma, 1991, pp. 75–76). In general, the non-taxed population is estimated to have doubled the taxed population of Finland in the 17th century (Karonen, 1994, p. 64; Karonen, 1995, p. 2).

The annual population estimates for the overall population have been calculated by interpolation on the basis of existing estimates for the years 1635 and 1695 (Muroma, 1991; Vattula, 1983).

¹⁸⁷ In addition, specific Crown officials like executioners and university professors were usually excluded from individual taxation (Orrman, 1980, pp. 1–2).

Interpolating from only two measurement points 60 years apart is not ideal for estimating annual population changes, but this method is commonly used in early modern studies to depict overall changes. According to this calculation, the total population of the Finnish study region rose from 58,000 in 1640 to 80,000 in 1695. In the final years of the study period, the population decreased because of famine to only 56,000 in 1699.

The urban population estimation is based on three different years of taxation in 1654, 1662 and 1692. The population estimation is counted as an average of the population brackets calculated for each city by Petri Karonen (Karonen, 1994, Supplement 6, pp. 299–307), while the population calculation for 1692 is derived from tax assessments in each city (Mickwitz & Möller, 1951, pp. 20–21). In agreement with the calculation practices mentioned above, these population figures have then been doubled to also include the tax-exempted population. According to this calculation, the urban population in the district of Ostrobothnia was relatively stable, with only short fluctuations before the Great Famine in the 1690s (Luukko, 1971, pp. 105–108). The urban population stability (lack of increase) may relate to military conscriptions in the cities, and to the Crown incentives to establish new farms in the remoter areas.

Appendix B: Missing Data in Early Modern Sources

The modern records of homicide are detailed, and also believed to be externally valid. There is no reason to believe that, in the modern data, a substantial number of victims would be missing. With regard to offenders, some data are lacking owing to unsolved cases. Even in that regard, the modern Nordic data tend to be of high quality (see Lehti et al., 2019; Liem et al., 2019). In contrast, the problem of missing data is substantial in the early modern data sources. The size of the problem varies across variables. In this appendix, we give information on missing data, and conduct some tentative analyses regarding biases in the risk of data loss.

Extent of missing information. One of the aims of the current project was to ascertain the extent of missing data when transforming historical court protocols into a standardized HHM format. It was revealed that, for many variables, missing data were extensive and data loss varied by region (Tables B.1–B.3). Courts of the early modern period were not particularly interested in all the variables and dimensions that are included in our coding instrument. The information relevance structures were different from modern criminal justice processes, for instance. The sole purpose of the court was to attribute guilt, and it was not interested in understanding why the crime took place in some social or psychological sense. For many variables, this led to a high percentage of missing data. For instance, exact age was missing for 97 per cent of both offenders and victims. Age was measured more roughly, with a

Table B.1: Summary table of variables used in the description of early modern homicide; percentage of missing values in each variable, and significance tests for cross-tabulations by country (Chapters 6–8).

Unit	Variable	Measure of	Missing data (%)					Total	Table ^a	df	p
			Denmark	Sweden	Finland	Sweden	Finland				
Incident	NRVIC	Number of victims	0.0	0.0	1.6	0.0	1.6	0.6	6.1	4	
	NRPERP	Number of offenders	0.5	0.0	1.6	0.0	1.6	0.7	6.1	4	*
	OFGENDER	Gender combinations	1.0	0.0	9.3	0.0	9.3	3.7	6.6	6	**
	CRIME-SCENE	Location	13.0	4.4	19.2	4.4	19.2	12.7	6.2	6	**
	MODUS	Mode of killing	13.5	3.8	20.2	3.8	20.2	13.1	6.4	8	**
	TYPEHOM	Type of homicide	22.9	2.5	22.8	2.5	22.8	16.9	6.8	8	**
	RELAT	Victim-offender relationship	14.1	17.1	19.7	17.1	19.7	16.9	6.9	4	**
	PARTY	Organized party involvement, dichotomous	0.0	0.0	2.6	0.0	2.6	0.9		2	**
	RANK	Relative social standing	55.7	32.9	18.1	32.9	18.1	35.7	6.7	4	
	TIME	Time of day	52.6	60.1	46.6	60.1	46.6	52.7		6	**
	WDAY	Weekday	13.5	55.1	67.4	55.1	67.4	44.8	Fig. 8.1 ^b	12	
	MONTH	Month	9.9	39.9	43.0	39.9	43.0	30.4	Fig. 8.2 ^b	22	*
	SEASON	Season	7.8	28.5	18.7	28.5	18.7	17.7		6	*
	PUBHOL	During public holiday	12	42.4	58.5	42.4	58.5	37.4		2	

Unit	Variable	Measure of	Missing data (%)					Total	Table ^a	df	p
			Denmark	Sweden	Finland	Finland	Total				
Victim	TIMDEATH	Time to death	42.3	9.9	34.8	30.2	8.6	10	**		
	GENDER	Gender	1.0	0.6	6.3	2.8		2	**		
	AGE	Age (dichotomous) ^c	1.0	1.9	5.3	2.8		2	*		
	AGE	Age (exact)	99.5	96.3	94.2	96.6			
	BIRTH-COUNTRY	Birth country	1.0	1.2	9.2	4.1		2	**		
	ISCOCATEG	Occupation	7.7	62.7	45.9	37.5	7.1	6	**		
	DRINK	Alcohol (situational)	20.6	4.3	17.9	14.9		2	**		
	ALCOHOLIC	Alcoholism (trait)	51.0	3.7	15.9	24.6		2	**		
	DRUG ^b	Drug (situational)	1.0	1.2	16.9	6.9			
Offender	DRUGADD	Drug (addict)	1.0	1.2	15.5	6.4		2			
	GENDER	Gender	0.0	0.0	3.8	1.3		2	*		
	AGE	Age (dichotomous) ^c	0.0	0.0	2.6	0.9		2			
	AGE	Age (exact age)	99.2	94.5	96.2	96.7			
	BIRTH-COUNTRY	Birth country	0.0	1.0	7.2	2.8		2			
	ISCOCATEG	Occupation	10.4	54.3	39.1	33.4	7.2	6	**		
	DRINK	Alcohol (situational)	22.1	3.5	20.0	15.9		2	**		

(Contd.)

Table B.1: (Continued)

Unit	Variable	Measure of	Missing data (%)				Total	Table ^a	df	p
			Denmark	Sweden	Finland	Total				
	ALCOHOLIC	Alcoholism (trait)	56.7	2.5	17.0	26.9		2	**	
	DRUG ^b	Drug (situational)	0.0	1.0	18.3	6.7		
	DRUGADD	Drug (addict)	0.0	1.0	16.6	6.1		2		
	SANC	Sanction	2.9	13.1	20.9	12.2	App. C.1	10	**	
	SUICIDE	Suicide	0.4	0.5	3.4	1.5		2		
	VICVIOL	Victim violence	9.3	5.0	38.2	18.7	6.10	4	**	
	PRETHREATS	Previous threats	2.9	3.0	31.9	13.1	6.10	2	**	
	PREMEDIT	Premeditation	26.7	3.5	29.4	20.8	6.10	2	**	

* $p < 0.05$ ** $p < 0.01$ (χ^2).^a If empty, analyses used in the text without a table/figure.^b Figures 8.1 and 8.2 are based on WDAY and MONTH.^c Under 15 years of age, or older.

variable indicating whether the person was a minor or adult, as judged on the basis of available information.

Unless otherwise noted, we did not replace or impute missing data. The shown distributions therefore correspond to all homicides to the degree that data loss is non-systematic. The variable-specific causes of missing data, and possible biases in that regard, are discussed in the context of the actual analysis, as part of source critical practice. We are describing in this book the regionally and historically embedded data of the HHM/NHPP project, with no generalizability to other eras or areas. In Tables B.1, B.2 and B.3, additional information is given regarding statistical significance. Tests refer to the cross-tabulations of the known values by country, as they are shown and discussed in the tables or in the text.

As discussed in Section 6.6, one of the methodological findings of our research was that the type of motive coding used in the European Homicide Monitor was not feasible from the point of view of comparing countries reliably. We therefore developed another way of coding motives in future research (Kivivuori et al., 2020a).¹⁸⁸ However, during the current research, we relied on the EHM model variables. The process indicated that we could not apply missing data codes uniformly in motive variables, owing to the complexity of the EHM manual in the motive domain. To enable *comparative* analysis, we used the percentages of an observed motive type out of all offenders in the country sample. The prevalence ranking of motives was not substantially affected by this. Also, the comparative findings (the relative ranks of 16 motives) remained stable.¹⁸⁹

¹⁸⁸ Note that the HHM 2.0 is a result of this study; it contains many improvements that were not used here.

¹⁸⁹ We examined the robustness of comparative findings using rank correlations, which were not affected by our coding all non-observations as absence of the specific motive. For Table 6.11 rows (N = 16), Spearman's rank correlations were 0.82** (Den–Swe), 0.64** (Swe–Fin) and 0.61* (Den–Fin). For the actual data (N = 674), country differentials were significant ($p < 0.05$), apart from property defence and mental illness. With regard to the three dimensions of grievance, compliance and identity, differences in the prevalence of 'identity' motives were not significant.

Table B.2: Percentage of missing values in variables used in analysis of infanticide, and significance tests for cross-tabulations by country (Chapter 9).

Unit	Variable	Measure of	Missing data (%)					Total	Table	df	p*
			Denmark	Sweden	Finland						
Incident	NRVIC	Number of victims	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	9.1	4		
	NRPERP	Number of offenders	0.0	0.0	2.7	1.2	9.1	4			
	GENDER	Victim gender	50.0	95.0	31.6	79.1		2			
	GENDER	Offender gender	0.0	0.0	2.4	1.0		2			
	CIVIL	Marital status	10.0	20.4	4.8	13.2	9.2	3			
	CRIME-SCENE	Location	37.5	17.9	40.5	28.9		6			
	MODUS	Mode of killing	50.0	54.1	73.0	68.4	9.3	8			
	SEASON	Season	0.0	38.5	13.5	26.3	Fig. 9.1	6			
	MONTH	Month	0.0	51.3	37.8	44.7	Fig. 9.2	22			
	WDAY	Weekday	25.0	76.9	70.3	73.7	Fig. 9.4	12			
TIME	Time of day	37.5	69.2	75.7	72.4	Fig. 9.5	6				
Offender	SANC	Sanctions	0.0	30.6	26.2	28.6	9.5	10	*		

* $p < 0.05$ ** $p < 0.01$ (χ^2). Owing to the small incidence of infanticide in Danish data, tests were calculated only for Sweden–Finland comparison.

Table B.3: Percentage of missing values in variables used in Chapter 10, and significance tests for cross-tabulations by time periods as reported in Tables 10.1 and 10.2.

Unit	Original variable	Dichotomized to capture	Table 10.1 missing data (%), Sweden			Table 10.2 missing data (%), Finland				
			1640–1648	1649–1650	Total	p	1640–1694	1694–1699	Total	p
Incident	URBANRURAL	Urban location	0.0	0.0	0.0		0.0	0.0	0.0	
	GENCOMBI	Male-to-male case	0.0	0.0	0.0		8.7	12.5	9.3	**
	CRIMESCENE	Private location	5.7	0.0	4.4		21.1	9.4	19.2	
	MODUS	No weapons violence	4.1	2.9	3.8		20.5	18.8	20.2	
	RELAT	Familial/kin	18.7	11.4	17.1		21.1	12.5	19.7	*
	TYPEHOM	Crime-related	3.3	0.0	2.5		24.8	12.5	22.8	*
	MDEFPRO	Property protection	0.0	0.0	0.0		0.0	0.0	0.0	
	RANK	Rank-transgressing	32.5	34.3	32.9		18.0	18.8	18.1	*
	SEASON	Spring	32.5	14.3	28.5		21.1	6.3	18.7	
	WDAY	Saturday or Sunday	59.3	40.0	55.1		70.8	50.0	67.4	*
	TIME	Night-time (00.00–06.00)	64.2	45.7	60.1		49.7	31.3	46.6	*
	DRINK	Alcohol (situational) ^a	5.7	0.0	4.4		21.1	6.3	18.7	**

(Contd.)

Table B.3: (Continued)

Unit	Original variable	Dichotomized to capture	Table 10.1 missing data (%), Sweden			Table 10.2 missing data (%), Finland				
			1640–1648	1649–1650	Total	p	1640–1694	1694–1699	Total	p
Victim	ISCOCATEG	Armed forces employee	59.2	75.0	62.7		43.5	56.8	45.9	
Offender	ISCOCATEG	Working for government	2.5	0.0	2.0		10.8	12.2	11.1	
Total/ incidents	N		123	35	158		170	37	207	

^a Stated in or inferred from source.

* $p < 0.05$ ** $p < 0.01$ (χ^2) $df = 1$. Tests are based on dichotomous variables as shown in Tables 10.1 and 10.2. Sensitivity analysis with imputation (missing = lack of property) yielded similar results.

Biases in missing data. To understand data loss better, we compared the extent of missing data in specific types of homicide. The types were defined with variables with comparatively low missing data prevalence: victim gender, location (private/public) and type of homicide (familial/other). We examined whether the courts were more likely to omit information when the victim was a female; when the crime occurred in a private home; or when the incident was a familial case, taking place between members of the same family/kin group.

In victim gender-based comparison, four variables stood out: relative social rank, age, habitual alcohol use, and weekday. With the exception of weekday,¹⁹⁰ these variables had *fewer missing data for female victims than for male victims*. Location, victim-offender relationship and situational alcohol influence also manifested fewer missing data for female victims than for male victims. In other words, the courts recorded the details of the case better when the victim was female. In such cases, they were more likely to give information on whether the victim was killed by a person of lower or higher rank, how old she was, and whether she was a habitual alcohol drinker. Also, location, relationship and situational alcohol use were better described for female victims. Some of these differentials were probably linked to the fact that women were often killed in familial context. For instance, in early modern society, parent-child and spousal cases automatically gave information about relative social rank, as parents ranked higher than children, and husbands higher than wives. Women were thus more likely to be killed in particularly rank-invested contexts, like the household. A related factor could be the relative rarity of homicides against women.

Location of offence did not matter as much for data loss, as only two variables stood out in this comparison. Time of day and victim precipitation were known better for incidents taking place in private homes than in more public incidents. In homi-

¹⁹⁰ The reason why weekday killing was less diligently recorded for women remains an open question.

cide type comparison, data loss differentials were frequent, but the direction of these differences varied unsystematically. Location of offence, victim–offender relationship, relative social rank, and age had no missing data in familial cases, partially reflecting immanent links between ‘familial’ and these variables. In other variables, such as victim precipitation, prior threats and premeditation, familial homicide had typically more missing data than other homicide types.

A general lesson of our study is that data loss must be judged contextually. For modern data, we would not accept high data loss. But, for the early modern period, there are no administrative statistics or alternative crime information sources available.

Appendix C: Note on Sanctions

In this book, we have compared homicide patterns in three northern European regions during the early modern period. The observations dealt with the behavioural aspects of lethal violence, irrespective of how it was sanctioned. Here we give additional information on sanctions. This involves some challenges relating to the nature of the data. The Finnish data are from the courts of first instance, while the Danish and the Swedish data derive from appellate courts. The Finnish court verdicts were all preliminary. All homicide cases were to be referred to the high court for final decision. However, the Turku High Court records were destroyed in the great fire of 1827. Because of this, it is not possible to systematically examine the final sanctions of homicides in 17th-century Finland. We cannot establish factual sanction differences between Sweden and Finland. The lower courts also handled suspicious deaths, while the high courts only handled prosecuted cases referred or appealed from a lower court. For these reasons, this appendix should be seen as data exploration, and as a preparation for later in-depth analyses of penal reactions.

Overall, the Finnish courts of first instance were more likely than the Swedish Göta High Court to leave the offender unpunished, a difference that mainly reflects the type of court (Table C.1). The death penalty was given by Finnish lower courts much less frequently than by the Göta High Court. Fines

Table C.1: Sanctions of homicide, percentage of offenders in Nordic countries, 1608–1699.

	Denmark	Sweden	Finland	Total
Not sanctioned	16	12	47	25
Death penalty	1	43	27	22
Outlawry	49	0	3	20
Corporal punishment	0	1	0	0*
Fine or compensation (in court)	33	44	10	29
Other punishment	0	0	12	4
Total ^a	100	100	100	100
N	233	173	186	592

* 0.1–0.4%.

^a Columns may not add up to 100% due to rounding to integer.

and compensation were used more often in the Göta High Court, with only one in ten Finnish offenders receiving that sanction in the lower court. On the other hand, the Finnish lower courts also used other sanctions, such as outlawry, that do not appear in the Göta High Court verdicts.

Comparing parts of Sweden. The high courts were introduced in the Swedish Realm in the early 17th century for several reasons. One was to enhance judicial proficiency and standardize the jurisdiction. Another was to secure that all crimes punishable by the death penalty (e.g. homicides) were tried before a high court. Thereby the lower courts were deprived of the competence to independently pardon offenders or to reduce penalties in cases of serious crimes (Thunander, 1995). Nonetheless, there are indications that the Turku High Court in practice handed out somewhat harsher penalties for murder or manslaughter in the period 1635–1653 than the other Swedish high courts. Simultaneously, the high courts often changed death penalties into fines and compensations, especially in urban homicides (Karonen, 1998b; see also Chapter 4). The

high share of fines and compensation in the Swedish data confirms this observation.¹⁹¹

Why were there so many suspects who were not sanctioned offenders in Finland? One factor could be the prevalent type of homicide. Swedish and Danish male-to-male lethal violence during social gatherings in non-criminal milieus might have been easier to judge in courts than the relatively prevalent and sometimes premeditated intra-familial cases in Finland. Testimonies by family or household members were always contestable. At worst, they were disqualified owing to a jurisprudence that did not allow intimate partners, servants or children to testify under oath towards their partner, parents or masters and mistresses. Murders were especially difficult to prove, because of the requirement of a confession for the death penalty to be meted out in a pious manner. Proper murderers also tended to harass eyewitnesses into silence in order to escape punishment (Koskivirta, 2003).

It is also possible that the remote areas of northern Finland were less affected by the centralization of state authority and the professionalization of the legal system. The local community could impact the legal process in many ways due to the still-weak authority, in particular, of the rural judges, the so-called law readers (*lagläsare*, *lainlukija*) (Karonen, 1998b; Matikainen, 2002; Thunander, 1993). Another explanation could be that many homicide suspects were able to escape, sometimes with the support of family, friends or even the whole village (Matikainen, 2002). This could result in suspected homicides, registered in the local courts, that were neither sanctioned nor referred to the high court. On the other hand, Swedish data (based on high court records) include many cases where the suspected offender had escaped, but later appeared in court under the protection of a letter of safe conduct. Under such circumstances, it was possible for the court to pass a sanction

¹⁹¹ For studies on 18th-century sentencing, see Rautelin (2009) and Matikainen and Koskivirta (2019).

and refer the case to the high court even though the offender was on the loose.

Most of the non-sanctioned cases in Finland probably never reached the high court, and, if only sanctioned offenders are compared, a different pattern appears. In Finland, just over 50 per cent of the sanctions were death penalties and another 5 per cent were outlawry. In Sweden, death penalties were almost 50 per cent, and fines or compensation were also almost 50 per cent. In Finland, fines and compensation were just under 20 per cent. Almost one in four sanctions in Finland was 'other punishment'. It is of interest to note that, in this analysis, the share of death penalties is very similar in the two parts of the Swedish Realm.

Denmark and Sweden. Comparing Sweden and Denmark, the types of data sources are more similar, but the legal systems are different. The verdict of outlawry in Denmark was the same as a death sentence *in absentia*. The outlaw was peaceless (*fredløs*), which meant that he was not protected by the peace of the king and the land. Anyone could kill the outlaw with impunity. At the height of the Middle Ages, outlawry had been the main sanction for intentional homicide, but back then it had been possible for the outlaw to buy back his peace by paying a fine (*fredkøb*) to the king, and giving monetary compensation to the victim's kinsmen.

This possibility was severely curtailed from the middle of the 16th century. Simultaneously, the death penalty for wilful murder committed by commoners (townsmen and peasants) was introduced. These laws had the effect that people accused of homicide fled and went into hiding. Thus, the courts only managed to sentence intentional killers to death if the offender was arrested to stand trial. If the offender remained on the loose, capital sentence was commuted to outlawry. It was mandatory for royal officers and noble lords of both the offender and the victim to assist in apprehending and executing outlawed killers. Indeed, in the Danish cases, the offender was rarely present at his own trial. Instead, he sent representatives, either family members or his noble lord, to defend his case at the high court. If convicted, he was outlawed but not technically sentenced to death, although in practice

outlawry was the same as a death penalty *in absentia*. These factors explain the many outlawry verdicts, and the few death penalties among the Danish cases.

Therefore, the actual difference between Denmark and Sweden is smaller than it might appear to be. Also, in Sweden, most offenders escaped. But, unlike in Denmark, they usually turned up in court under the protection of a letter of safe conduct. This meant that they could freely leave the court even after a death penalty. If the sanction was confirmed by the high court, the order was that the offender should be searched for so that the punishment could be enforced. If that was not possible, the convicted offender also became an outlaw in Sweden. However, if the offender managed to keep away long enough, it was possible to plead for pardon and have the death penalty mitigated to fines.

The low number of Danish death penalties does not, therefore, reflect a more lenient approach in Denmark than in Sweden and Finland. On the contrary, the many verdicts of outlawry indicate that sanctions for homicide were harsher in Denmark than in Sweden and Finland. Homicide offenders were sentenced to death through verdicts of outlawry or death sentences in 51 per cent of the Danish cases, compared to 43 per cent in Sweden and 30 per cent in Finland (Table C.1). The difference between Denmark and Sweden (excluding Finland) is even bigger when excluding non-sanctioned offenders. Correspondingly, fewer homicides were sanctioned with fines and compensation in Denmark than in Sweden.

A legalistic explanation for the difference in the sanctioning of homicide in Denmark and Sweden may be that the Danish law courts were more influenced by stricter Continental penal law and applied a different understanding of self-defence than the Swedish courts did. The Swedish high courts admittedly applied a very strict definition of self-defence, but they nevertheless seem to have been prone to considering all sorts of extenuating circumstances. It is possible that the Danish judicial system was more authoritarian and that Swedish 17th-century courts, which even integrated more of a traditional communal law, permitted

elements of settlements and emphasized pardon as an essential dimension of the higher court order. Harsh morality could go hand in hand with shows of mercy.

The sanction variable had 12 per cent missing information. One in five Finnish cases missed this information, while the percentage of missing data was lowest in Denmark. As discussed above, the comparisons are highly tentative because of differential court types as sources; within-Sweden comparisons are complicated by data originating from courts of first instance in Finland and an appellate court in Sweden. The comparisons between Denmark and Sweden are a bit more rewarding owing to the relative similarity of the sources, even though the legal contexts differ. In sum, the sanctions findings are preliminary observations calling for further studies.

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Nordic *Homicide in Deep Time* draws a unique, detailed picture of developments in human violence and presents new findings on homicide in Northern Europe in two eras – the 17th century and early 21st century. The book provides answers to questions, such as where and when did homicide typically occur, who were the victims and the offenders, and what were the circumstances of their conflicts? Additionally, it offers an empirically grounded view on how state consolidation and changing routines of everyday life transformed the patterns of criminal homicide in the Nordics.

This publication is also a methodological experiment. When developing a new approach for extending homicide research into the deep past, the authors created a new instrument, the Historical Homicide Monitor. This tool combines wide explanatory scope, measurement standardization, and articulated theory expression. By retroactively expanding research data to the pre-statistical era, the method enables long-duration comparison of different periods and areas.

Written by an interdisciplinary team of criminologists and historians for professionals, students and anyone interested in the history of human behaviour, *Nordic Homicide in Deep Time* helps the reader to understand modern homicide by revealing the historical continuities and changes in lethal violence.

