Consequences of refusing to participate in the criminal investigation or protective measures

A quantitative study within a group of women assessed for risk of future intimate partner violence victimization

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Master’s Thesis

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Abstract

Intimate partner violence [IPV] is a global issue and IPV towards women have received increased attention during the last decades. The police perform a vital task in supporting victims of IPV and providing protective measures to prevent further violence. Some victims refuse to participate in the criminal investigation or protective measures, which can have consequences for the judicial process or the risk of future victimization. The aim of the present study was to investigate the consequences of refusing to participate in the criminal investigation or protective measures within a group of women assessed for risk of future IPV victimization. A quantitative approach was applied to compare women who refused to participate against women who participated. The sample consisted of 207 cases which were assessed with SARA:SV in the police county of Södertörn. The results demonstrated that when women refused to participate in the criminal investigation the cases were 6.2 times less likely prosecuted. Women who refused to participate in the protective measures were repeatedly victimized to the same amount, even though they in comparison were a lower risk group. However, these women were 4 times more likely victims of assault when repeatedly victimized. Findings from the current study provide useful knowledge about consequences for women who refuse to participate in the criminal investigation or protective measures and enables practical solutions for agents of the judicial system to further help these women.

Keywords: Intimate partner violence, participation, criminal investigation, protective measures, SARA:SV
We would like to thank our supervisor Susanne Strand for her guidance and our loved ones for their unconditional support

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**Introduction**

Intimate partner violence [IPV] is a worldwide problem that exists in every country and across socioeconomic, religious, and cultural groups (Heise & García-Moreno, 2002). IPV is defined by the World Health Organization [WHO] as “any behavior within an intimate relationship that causes physical, psychological or sexual harm to those in the relationship” (Heise & García-Moreno, 2002, p.89). This definition includes acts of physical aggression, psychological abuse, sexual coercion, and controlling behavior. IPV especially that perpetrated against women has received increased attention during the last few decades and continues to be an important item on the agendas of different formal agencies (National Council for Crime Prevention [NCCP], 2009). The police perform a vital task in supporting victims of IPV and providing protective measures to prevent further violence (National Police Board [NPB], 2012a). However, there are times when victims refuse to participate in the criminal investigation or protective measures offered. This refusal can have consequences for the judicial process and the success of the criminal investigation (the Swedish police, 2012). Furthermore, refusing to participate could increase the risk of future victimization because the police are unable to protect these victims (Weisel, 2005). Consequently, victims of IPV who refuse to participate in the criminal investigation or protective measures are an important group to study.

**Intimate partner violence**

*Exposure to and perpetration of IPV*

WHO investigated the prevalence of women victimized by IPV in ten countries, for lifetime prevalence of physical and sexual violence the range was 15%-71%, with an average between 30%-60% (García-Moreno, Jansen, Ellsberg, Heise, & Watts, 2006). During the year prior to the study, 3%-54% of the women were exposed to physical or sexual IPV, with an average prevalence between 20%-30%. Emotional abuse was just as common, between 20%-75% of the women surveyed had experienced emotional abuse from an intimate partner within the previous 12 months.

Few studies have been conducted in Sweden regarding the prevalence of IPV. Lundgren, Heimer, Westerstrand, and Kalliokoski (2001) conducted a prevalence-study regarding violence against women that was ordered by the government and NCCP. Their result showed that 35% of women had experienced IPV from their former husband or cohabitant, 11% from
their present husband or cohabitant and 15% from a non-cohabiting boyfriend. This study was however criticized for using a too broad definition of IPV which might have resulted in an overestimation of the IPV (Hagekull, 2005).

A debate exists regarding whether women or men are more often victims of IPV (Straus, 2011). Melton and Belknap (2003) conducted a study of IPV prevalence through police reports and results indicated that men were the perpetrators in 86% of cases. The NCCP (2012) compiled all of the police reports in Sweden between 2009 and 2011 regarding assault carried out indoors from kindred, towards men and women over the age of eighteen. They found that 45% of the assaults toward women and 7% of the assaults toward men were perpetrated by a former or current intimate partner of the victim.

Studies conducted using surveys points to more conflicting results. Tjaden and Thoennes (2000) found that women report being more victimized than men, regardless of whether prevalence is measured over the lifetime (22% vs. 7%) or in the last 12 months (1.4% vs. 0.8%). On the contrary, Whitaker, Haileyesus, Swahn, and Saltzman (2007) stated that in relationships with non-reciprocal violence, women are more often the abuser (71%) and in nearly half of all violent relationships the violence is reciprocal. Even though it is unclear whether there are any differences in victimization of IPV between the genders, studies reveal that women experience more severe, frequent and persistent IPV than men (Ansara & Hindin, 2011; Melton & Belknap, 2003; Tjaden & Thoennes, 2000) and they seek more help from health care facilities and the legal system than men (Tjaden & Thoennes, 2000).

Repeated victimization

The true prevalence of women who are repeatedly victimized is hard to measure due to the nature of IPV. The majority of women who are victims of IPV do not seek help or report the offense to the police (Busawa, Hotaling, & Byrne, 2006; Davies, Block, & Campbell, 2007). Davies et al. (2007) found that during the previous year, 76% of women who experienced non-life-threatening IPV and 46% of women who experienced severe or life-threatening IPV did not report that violence to the police. Buzawa et al. (2006) found that more than half of the re-victimized women (58%) did not report the IPV to the police. Davies et al. (2007) surveyed women about their reasons for not reporting IPV victimization and found that the most common reasons were that women felt the violence was too minor, that the women had excused the violence, or were protecting the perpetrator. Furthermore fear of retaliation
towards themselves or their children was also a common reason for not reporting their IPV victimization.

NCCP (2001) found that women who had reported threats or abuse from a known male perpetrator to the police, had a 25% higher probability of making a second report to the police regarding the same offence within a 12 month period. If there were two previous reports, the probability of reporting repeated victimization increased to 40% within a 12 month period. NCCP (2001) concluded that every third report to the police regarding threats or abuse from a known male perpetrator was preceded by a previous report. The recidivism often took place in close proximity to the previous offence, often within days. Therefore, it is of importance to provide immediate protective measures following a report of IPV to the police (NCCP, 2001). However, reporting IPV to the police has at least some deterring effect. Studies show that if the IPV was reported to the police, exposure to repeated victimization was less likely to occur and the level of violence and threats were lowered (Felson, Ackerman, & Gallagher, 2005; Willson, McFarlane, Lemmey, & Malecha, 2001). For those who did not report the offence to the police, the odds for repeated victimization increased with 89% (Felson et al., 2005).

**Consequences of IPV**

Women who are victims of IPV report significantly poorer overall health compared to women not exposed to IPV (Ellsberg, Jansen, Heise, Watts, & Garcia-Moreno, 2008; Ruiz-Pérez, Plazaola-Castaño, & del Río-Lozano, 2007). Poor health status is more likely an outcome than a cause of IPV but causality has not yet been conclusively proven (Ellsberg et al., 2008). Ansara and Hindin (2011) report different psychosocial consequences of IPV such as fear, depression/anxiety, sleeping problems and lowered self-esteem. Women previously or currently victimized by IPV appear to be more likely to suffer from chronic diseases than women who have not been abused (Ruiz-Pérez et al., 2007). Furthermore, the higher the intensity and duration of the abuse the greater the negative health consequences reported. IPV can also have negative social and economic consequences (Lindgren, Pettersson, & Hägglund, 2001). For instance, a victim may have to move or leave their job as a result of the violence.

**Why do women stay in abusive relationships?**

Meyer (2012) reported that a majority of women (72.4%) remained in the abusive relationship for a prolonged period of time following the first instance of violence. Multiple studies have investigated why women stay in or leave abusive relationships. The most common methodology for such studies, in-depth interviews with the victim. Meyer (2012) reported that
the decision to stay or leave an abusive relationship often is a rational choice, where the risks and benefits of leaving the relationship are weighted. The decision to leave or stay depends upon multiple factors, such as the presence of children (Fanslow & Robinson, 2009; Meyer, 2012; Scheffer Lindgren & Renck, 2008), financial dependence (Fanslow & Robinson, 2009; Kim & Gray, 2008; Meyer, 2012), level of fear (Kim & Gray, 2008; Scheffer Lindgren & Renck, 2008), and self-esteem (Kim & Gray, 2008). The presence of children constitutes a restraining factor in the beginning of the abuse, but can gradually become a reason to leave the relationship (Meyer, 2012; Scheffer Lindgren & Renck, 2008). Fears is a central factor in an abusive relationship that can both prevent the woman from ending the relationship or encourage her to leave (Scheffer Lindgren & Renck, 2008). The woman’s attachment to her abusive partner contributes to the decision to stay in an abusive relationship. Fanslow and Robinson (2009) found that the decision to stay depended on reasons such as she loved him, forgave him, or thought he would change.

Leaving an abusive partner is often a long process, women typically makes several attempts to leave their partner before they succeed (Scheffer Lindgren & Renck, 2008). Meyer (2012) found that several women (45%) had attempted to leave their abuser but returned several times before ultimately leaving. Fanslow and Robinson (2009) found that 27 % of the abused women returned to the relationship. Reasons for returning were according to Fanslow and Robinson (2009) similar to those previously reported regarding the decision to stay in an abusive relationship.

**IPV and the judicial system**

**The role of the police in preventing further IPV**

It is the police’s duty to decide and implement protective measures in IPV cases (NPB, 2012a). Police must also inform the victim of the level of threat and which protective measures need to be taken to ensure the victims safety. The police in Sweden use the SARA:SV (Spousal Assault Risk Assessment guide: Short Version; Kropp, Hart, & Belfrage, 2008), a risk assessment checklist, to prevent future IPV and it serves as a helpful resource to assess victims’ needs for support and protection (NPB, 2010). The protective measures implemented by the Swedish police include safety planning, motivational interviewing, and assistance in applying for a restraining orders, alarm package, and safe housing (NPB, 2012a). The effectiveness of protective measures has been evaluated with positive results (Belfrage &
Strand, 2012). Studies investigating the effects of specific protective measures such as the use of restraining orders demonstrate a reduced rate of recidivism (Holt, Kernic, Lumley, Wolf, & Rivara, 2002; Holt, Kernic, Wolf, & Rivara, 2003; McFarlane et al., 2004; Strand 2011). However, there are some conflicting results, Strand (2011) report that restraining orders work best in low/medium risk cases (measured with the SARA:SV) and McFarlane et al. (2004) report that there was no significant difference between those who only applied for a restraining order and those who received one.

**The prosecutor's role in preventing further IPV**

In cases of IPV in Sweden, a prosecutor leads the criminal investigation and he or she is obliged to prosecute if there is sufficient evidence indicating that a crime has been committed by the suspect (the Prosecution Authority, 2013). If a decision is made to proceed with the prosecution it is the prosecutor's responsibility to prove to the court that a crime has been committed by the suspect. If there is insufficient evidence to prosecute, for example due to lack of witnesses or technical evidence, the prosecutor can make an order to suspend the investigation until further evidence is available (the Prosecution Authority, 2013). There are certain factors that increase the chances of IPV being solved and connected to an individual (NCCP, 2008). NCCP found that participation constituted an important role; it was 2.8 times more likely that the suspected crime was solved and connected to an individual if the victim participated in the criminal investigation. Similar results were found internationally, Messing (2010) reported that the likelihood of prosecution was 4.7 times greater if the victim was willing to assist in the prosecution of the perpetrator.

**Crime classification and legal sanctions**

Intimate partner violence does not have its own classification in the Swedish penal code [Brottsbalken, BrB, SFS 1962:700] . Instead IPV is classified under different offences such as assault (BrB, 3:5-6), unlawful threat (BrB, 4:4), and sexual crimes (BrB, 6:1-3). There is however a classification for IPV if the abuse has been systematic attempted to damage the victim’s self-esteem, referred to as ‘gross violation of a woman's integrity’¹ (BrB, 4:4a). The legal sanctions for IPV perpetrators differ depending on which crime they have been charged with. The legal sanction for gross violation is prison for a minimum of six months to a maximum of six years (BrB, 4:4a). The most severe legal sanction for assault is prison for a maximum of two years (BrB, 3:5); if the assault is considered severe the sanction can vary

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¹ ‘gross violation of a woman's integrity’ will further be referred to as gross violation
from one year to ten years (BrB, 3:6). The legal sanctions regarding unlawful threat include fines or prison with a maximum incarceration of one year; if the threat is considered severe the legal sanction is prison from six months to four years (BrB, 4:5). If the court considers fines insufficient, other legal sanctions besides prison include conditional sentence or probation (BrB 27:1; 28:1).

**Theoretical approach**

*The ecological model*

Heise (1998) applies the ecological model, originally formulated by Belsky (1980), to IPV perpetrated by men against women. The purpose of applying the ecological model regarding IPV was to emphasize and sort out the complexity behind that violence. The ecological model provides potential explanations to why IPV occurs from four different factors (see figure 1.): Individual factors (individual), Microsystem factors (relationship), Exosystem factors (community), and Macrosystem factors (society).

![Diagram of the ecological model](image)

Figure 1. The factors of the ecological model (Heise, 1998)

Individual factors are the result of an individual's experiences or personality, these factors affect how the individual reacts to stressors from other factors (micro-, exo-, or macrosystem; Heise, 1998). The main individual factors forwarded as potential explanations of IPV include witnessing marital abuse as a child, parental abuse in childhood, or an absent father. Microsystem factors are presented as the context where the violence occurs, for IPV this would mean the abusive relationship (Heise, 1998). Microsystem factors are for example male dominance in the family (patriarchal structures), marital conflict and use of alcohol (by the perpetrator). Exosystem factors refer to how social structures (both formal and informal) within a community influences individuals (Heise, 1998). The exosystem factors are for
example unemployment or low socioeconomic status, isolation, or negative peer associations. The macrosystem factors are the general attitude towards women’s and men’s role in society; these attitudes are believed to influence the individual factors (Heise, 1998). The four different factors influence each other and can collectively, individually or in different combinations provide potential explanations to why individual men use violence towards women in domestic situations (Heise, 1998). For example, general negative attitudes toward women in society (Macrosystem factors) influence a man’s role in a relationship and family (Microsystem factors) whereas he believes it is correct that the man controls the decisions (Heise, 1998).

The process of normalizing violence

A theory that aims to describe how violence is maintained in abusive relationships is ‘the process of normalizing violence’ (Lundgren, 1992; 2004). The theory also explains why women stay with a violent partner. The theory describes the process of maintaining the violence in societies and families. On a societal level, the violence is maintained due to gender structures in which men are considered superior and women are subordinate (Lundgren, 2004). When well-adjusted men abuse women, the violence is gradually accepted by the society.

In an abusive relationship, the boundaries for what is acceptable begin to shift and the woman eventually internalizes the violence (Lundgren, 1992). The process occurs gradually, every day, within the relationship and results in acceptance of the violence, for both the victim and the perpetrator. In the process of normalizing violence, two of the control mechanisms used by the perpetrator are isolation from friends and family, and a continual shift between violence and warmth. As the man isolates the woman physically she is also isolated psychologically, and the man acquires control over her emotions. The constant shift between violence and warmth enhances the control and the good moments are gradually magnified by the victim (Lundgren, 2004). The woman begins to develop different strategies in which she adjusts to the man’s demands in order to end or survive the violence. However, the violence will not end due to adjustment, the previous boundaries will only change and tighten (Lundgren, 2004). She gradually internalizes his view of her and the violence becomes a sign of love. It is then difficult for the woman to end the relationship by herself. The theory postulates that even when the woman has left the abusive relationship, the process of violence might not have ended (Lundgren, 2004).
Refusing to participate in the criminal investigation or protective measures

NCCP (2008) studied preliminary investigations of IPV in Sweden, with a partial focus on the female victims’ participation in the criminal investigations. Nearly two thirds of the women had at some point stated during the investigation that they did not wish to pursue charges and ultimately one third of the women refused to participate. The primarily reason to report the abuse was that a statement would be recorded by the police, followed by ending an acutely violent situation (NCCP, 2008). Only one in four women forwarded that a legal consequence for the perpetrator was the primary reason for reporting. This can to some extent explain why some women do not wish to follow through and participate in the police investigation despite reporting the IPV. Other reasons given as to why women refused to participate in the investigation were the burden of a trial, participation could result in more violence, or negatively impact their children.

Reasons why women refuse to participate in protective measures have been investigated in several studies (Roberts, Wolfer, & Mele, 2008; Malecha et al., 2003). Roberts et al. (2008) report that women withdrew protection orders mainly because they were no longer afraid, the defendant was attending counseling/rehabilitation, or because of factors related to emotional attachment such as the defendant promising to change. Emotional attachment as a reason for withdrawing a protection order was also reported by Malecha et al. (2003) in addition to the protection order process being too complicated and difficult, or withdrawing to protect the perpetrator and/or children.

Lewin (2006) investigated differences between participating women and women who refused to participate (in criminal investigations) from interviews with police officers. The results showed that women victimized by IPV could be divided into two groups, those who had a social network and a job and those who stood outside society without a network or job. The police officers stated that in their experience, women who participate were more often part of the first group and women who refused to participate were more often part of the second group. The faster the police investigation proceeded the more likely it was that the women would participate. Lewin (2006) concluded that this could be related to the process of normalizing violence. If the investigation was prolonged, the relationship between the victim and perpetrator progressed into the next phase of the process where the perpetrator once again displayed warmth towards the woman. Police officers also experienced frustration because the
prosecutor sometimes closed a case before the police officers had finished their investigation (Lewin, 2006). Police felt that prosecutors should work even harder on cases where women refused to participate. Lewin (2006) stated that the prosecutor requires a great deal of information and evidence in order to prosecute the case and be relatively certain of obtaining a conviction. When women refuse to participate, this requirement could result in a greater number of closed cases, since there is not enough information to prove guilt (Lewin, 2006).

Women exposed to IPV are generally a vulnerable group (Heimer & Posse, 2004) and the risk for repeated victimization is great (Felson et al., 2005; NCCP, 2001). IPV can have several negative consequences for the victimized women (Ansara & Hindin, 2011; Ellsberg et al., 2008; Lindgren et al., 2001; Ruiz-Pérez et al., 2007) and the violence receives a great deal of resources from the police (NPB, 2010). Previous research has focused on why some women refuse to participate in criminal investigations (NCCP, 2008) or protective measures (Roberts et al., 2008; Malecha et al., 2003) and why they stay in the abusive relationship (Fanslow & Robinson, 2009; Kim & Gray, 2008; Meyer, 2012; Scheffer Lindgren & Renck, 2008). There is however a lack of scientific research regarding the legal consequences and future IPV victimization for women who refuse to participate. If women refuse to participate in the criminal investigation it could result in an inadequate judicial process due to lack of evidence (Lewin, 2006). These women might also suffer an increased risk for future victimization due to lack of protection from the perpetrator (Weisel, 2005). Investigating the role of participation is therefore of importance to uncover the potential consequences that these women could face.

Aim

The aim of the present study was to investigate the consequences of refusing to participate in the criminal investigation or protective measures within a group of women assessed for risk of future IPV victimization.

How do women who refuse to participate in the criminal investigation differ from participating women regarding prosecution?

How do women who refuse to accept protective measures differ from participating women regarding repeated victimization?
Method

Study design
A quantitative approach was applied due to the nature of the purpose and study questions. There was a desire to investigate this field as it is rather unexplored and through statistical testing establish how refusing to participate in either the criminal investigation or protective measures affect aspects of the judicial process or future victimization. The data utilized in this study has previously been the subject of three studies (Belfrage & Strand, 2008; 2012, Strand, 2011). These studies aimed to investigate the usefulness of SARA:SV and protective measures to prevent future violence, the role of participation was not the core interest.

Procedure
The data gathering process was initiated by Henrik Belfrage and Susanne Strand as part of their research regarding risk assessment for partner violence, especially working with the risk assessment tool SARA:SV (the project was active during 2001-2012). Data was collected from the police county of Södertörn during May 2005 to January 2007 and the cases were followed up during 2009, the follow-up time was between 28-48 months. Södertörn is a region located south of Stockholm in Sweden; the police county of Södertörn is one of eight police counties in the Stockholm area and contains four municipalities. The data gathering procedure is described in detail elsewhere (Belfrage & Strand, 2008; 2012, Strand, 2011). Due to different limitations (sickness of key persons and consequences of the tsunami in 2004) not all cases of intimate partner violence were assessed with SARA:SV and were therefore not included in the present sample. In previous studies, investigating the same sample, this has however not been considered a problem since the aim was not to provide data regarding prevalence (Belfrage & Strand, 2012). The data contained few internal missing values and are not believed to have affected the results in a considerable way.

Material
The current sample is based on SARA:SV assessments made by police officers stationed in Södertörn. The SARA:SV is based on the structured professional judgment [SPJ] approach and its’ core purpose is to assist the evaluator in assessing adequate protective measures in

SARA:SV is the Swedish version of B-SAFER, the only difference between the two at the time of the data gathering was that B-SAFER did not contain any victim vulnerability factors (Kropp, Hart & Belfrage, 2008). At present time, victim vulnerability factors have been added to B-SAFER version 2 (Kropp et al., 2010). However, SARA:SV was used at the data gathering and will therefore be referenced to throughout the present study.
order to prevent recidivism in IPV (Kropp et al., 2008). The SARA:SV contains 10 risk factors and 5 vulnerability factors (Kropp et al., 2008) and is a short version of the SARA (Spousal Assault Risk Assessment guide; Kropp, Hart, Webster & Eaves, 1999). Each factor in the SARA:SV is assessed on a three point scale; yes (present), partial (partially present) or no (not present) from the current and historic situation. Kropp et al. (2008) describes that the final risk is assessed low (some risk), medium (increased risk), or high (high risk), through a complete consideration of all factors in the SARA:SV. The risk is assessed with regards to the near future (imminent risk < 2 months) and lethal violence. Protective measures are thereafter considered and initiated with respect to the individual case (Kropp et al., 2008).

| Table 1. Risk and vulnerability factors in SARA:SV (Kropp, Hart & Belfrage, 2008) |
|-----------------------------------|-----------------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| Part 1 Perpetrator risk factors   | Part 2 Psychosocial adjustment    | Part 3 Victim vulnerability factors |
| Violent acts                      | General criminality               | Inconsistent behavior/attitude     |
| Violent threats or thoughts       | Intimate relationship problems    | Extreme fear                      |
| Escalation                        | Employment problems              | Inadequate access to resources     |
| Violation of court orders         | Substance abuse problems         | Unsafe living situation            |
| Violent attitudes                 | Mental health problems            | Personal problems                  |

Studies investigating the internal validity of the SARA:SV have demonstrated good results, the number of risk and vulnerability factors correlates with the degree of risk (Belfrage & Strand, 2008; 2012). The SARA:SV has proven to be useful when applying protective measures, high risk resulted in higher proportion of protective measures (Belfrage & Strand, 2012; Kropp, 2008). Education and training in assessing risk for violence has proven to generate a stronger correlation between risk factors and initiating adequate protective measures than pre-training (Storey, Gibas, Reeves, & Hart, 2011). Belfrage and Strand (2012) found that in 60% of cases assessed low risk and in 10% of cases assessed high risk the perpetrator recidivate, indicating that the SARA:SV has poor predictive validity. However, the police used more protective measures in high risk cases than in low risk cases, which demonstrates the preventive usefulness of the SARA:SV.

**Sample**

The perpetrators in the current sample were *males* who had inflicted or threatened to inflict physical damage on their current or former *female* partner. Individuals referred to as perpetrators in this study were not necessarily convicted of the crime, some were only suspected perpetrators. Due to convenience they will collectively be called perpetrators. The original data file contained 219 cases. Three cases were excluded because the victims were
male. On the variables ‘participation in criminal investigation’ and ‘participation in protective measures’ nine cases were collectively missing and therefore excluded from the entire sample as they served no purpose for the study. Ultimately the final sample contained 207 cases of female victims and male perpetrators who had had or were currently in an intimate relationship with each other. There were no data on the age of the victims. The average age of the perpetrators in the sample was 38 \( (SD = 12, \ R = 19-74 \text{ years}) \). 56\% (n = 115) of the victims and 60\% (n = 125) of the perpetrators were of immigrant origin. In 47\% (n = 97) of the cases both perpetrator and victim were of immigrant origin. Children were present in 60\% (n = 125) of the cases.

Variables

Independent variables
We theorized that the group of women who refused to participate in neither the criminal investigation nor the protective measures was a specifically vulnerable group. However, due to their small sample size (n = 36, 17\%) we chose not to further investigate this group because we would lose those women who refused to participate in either the criminal investigation or protective measures. The main independent variable used was the women’s participation in either the criminal investigation or protective measures, these variables are considered categorical dichotomous. Depending on which study question was analyzed, the sample was divided into either non-participation \([\text{non-PC}]\) vs. participation \([\text{PC}]\) in criminal investigation or non-participation \([\text{non-PP}]\) vs. participation \([\text{PP}]\) in protective measures.

Categorical control variables such as summary risk ratings, victim vulnerability factors, legal sanctions, and index crimes were used in order to acquire the real effect of women’s participation. These variables were considered to be of importance because they could influence the decision to prosecute or future repeated victimization. Two different summary risk ratings were used, imminent risk for violence and risk for severe/lethal violence, with two separate levels of risk: low and medium/high. Due to the diverse number of reported index crimes, minor categories were collapsed into one major category; other crimes.

Dependent variables
Two main dependent variables were used, prosecution and repeated victimization. Prosecution was a categorical dichotomous variable (Yes/No) and repeated victimization was both a categorical dichotomous variable (Yes/No) and a continuous ratio variable (number of days until repeated victimization). Days until repeated victimization was controlled for the
entire follow-up time, one year, and two months. Time limitations were applied partly to minimize the effect of few specific outliers and also in relation to the imminent risk (<2 months) in SARA:SV. Repeated victimization crimes and legal sanctions were also used as dependent variables. Due to the diverse number of crimes and sanctions, minor categories were collapsed into major categories; other crimes and other sanctions.

**Analysis**

All statistical tests were calculated using SPSS 20.0. Chi-square tests of independence (with Yates continuity correction) were used regarding categorical data to analyze if there were any significant differences between the groups. Chi-square tests could be applied to the majority of our categorical data. However, Fisher’s exact probability test was used as recommended by Pagano (2010) in cases where the assumptions for the Chi-square test were violated (expected frequency less than 5 in at least one cell). Odds ratio (OR) was applied to significant variables to determine the effect size and likely occurrence of the dependent variable. The odds ratio was inverted (according to Pallant, 2010) to receive a comprehensive and practical result. Effect size was also determined by the phi coefficient when the data was dichotomous and Cramer’s V if the contingency table was larger than 2x2 (as recommended by Pallant, 2010). When the independent variable was on ratio scale Mann-Whitney U was used to test for significant differences. The non-parametric test was used due to outliers and a non-normally distributed sample (as recommended by Pagano, 2010). Effect size was determined by Pearson correlation coefficients (as recommended by Pallant, 2010).

**Ethical considerations**

It was impossible to keep the sample anonymous since the police officers who risk assessed the cases and those who coded the risk assessments into SPSS have information concerning the involved individuals. It was however not possible for the authors of the current study to identify any individuals since the dataset was already coded without any information that identified specific individuals. Confidentiality is of great importance; identification of specific individuals in a published study should not be possible (Denscombe, 2004). To make sure no individual person could be identified in the current study; data are presented at group level. To make sure the dataset is not viewed by anyone unauthorized; the dataset was handled and used on a specific computer provided by our mentor. When the computer was not being used, it was locked in a safety locker in our mentors’ office. This minimizes the risk of the dataset falling into the wrong hands and being misinterpreted.
Results

Amongst the whole sample, assault (59%) was the most frequent reported index crime followed by unlawful threat (17%), and gross violation (17%). Regarding imminent risk for repeated victimization, 26% were assessed low risk and 74% were assessed medium/high risk. For severe/lethal violence, 54% were assessed low risk and 46% were assessed medium/high risk. Forty (20%) women refused to participate in the criminal investigation, which constituted group non-PC. Fifty-three (26%) women refused to participate in the protective measures, which constituted group non-PP.

Table 2. Descriptive information regarding participation in crime investigation (N=207)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Non-PC</th>
<th>PC</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>$\chi^2$</th>
<th>$p$</th>
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<tr>
<td>Present</td>
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<td>34</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>40</td>
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<td>Unsafe living situation</td>
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<tr>
<td>Present</td>
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<td>43</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>43</td>
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Notes: *p< 0.05, **p< 0.01. Significance was calculated with $\chi^2$ (df=1) using Yates Continuity correction or Fischer's exact test.

There were no significant differences between non-PC and PC regarding immigrant background, children present, or index crimes (see Table 2). There was however a significant difference between participation and imminent risk; non-PC was more likely to be assessed low risk than PC (48% vs. 21%; OR = 3.5, 95% CI = 1.7-7.3). There was also a significant difference between the groups regarding risk for severe/lethal violence; non-PC was more likely to be assessed with low risk than PC (74% vs. 49%; OR = 3.0, 95% CI = 1.4-6.8). When testing the presence of victim vulnerability factors there were significant differences between non-PC and PC. Non-PC was more likely assessed with not present regarding
extreme fear (29% vs. 49%; OR = 2.3, 95% CI = 1.2-4.9) and unsafe living situation (38% vs. 62%; OR = 2.7, 95% CI = 1.2-6.0).

There were no significant differences between non-PP and PP regarding immigrant background, children present, or index crimes (see Table 3). There was however a significant difference between participating and imminent risk; non-PP was more likely to be assessed with low risk than PP (47% vs. 18%; OR = 4.0, 95% CI = 2.0-7.9). Furthermore, there was a significant difference between the groups regarding risk for severe/lethal violence; non-PP was more likely to be assessed low risk than PP (77% vs. 46%; OR = 3.9, 95% CI = 1.9-7.9). When testing the presence of victim vulnerability factors there was a significant difference between non-PP and PP. Non-PP was more likely assessed with not present regarding extreme fear (28% vs. 48%; OR = 2.4, 95% CI = 1.3-4.7).

**Participation in criminal investigation and prosecution**

Out of the entire sample, prosecution occurred in 57% of the cases. The main reasons for cases not being prosecuted were ‘lack of evidence or information’ (57%, n = 49), followed by
crime could not be confirmed’ (33%, n = 28) and ‘other reasons’³ (11%, n = 9). There was a significant difference between non-PC and PC regarding prosecution. The odds for a case being prosecuted were reduced if the woman refused to participate in the criminal investigation (23% vs. 66%; OR = 6.4, 95% CI = 2.8-13.3).

Table 4. Participation in criminal investigation and prosecution (N=207)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Non-PC (n=40)</th>
<th>PC (n=167)</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>χ²</th>
<th>p</th>
<th>ϕ</th>
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<tr>
<td>Missing</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>21.615</td>
<td>.001***</td>
<td>-3.40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prosecution</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Imminent risk</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low</td>
<td>4 (9%)</td>
<td>44 (26%)</td>
<td>48 (21%)</td>
<td>2.784</td>
<td>.057</td>
<td>-.197</td>
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<td>Medium/High</td>
<td>5 (13%)</td>
<td>56 (33%)</td>
<td>61 (27%)</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lethal risk</td>
<td>2 (5%)</td>
<td>38 (23%)</td>
<td>40 (19%)</td>
<td>.618</td>
<td>.286</td>
<td>-.108</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low</td>
<td>3 (8%)</td>
<td>38 (23%)</td>
<td>41 (19%)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Medium/High</td>
<td>5 (13%)</td>
<td>63 (38%)</td>
<td>68 (31%)</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
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<td>Conviction</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Prison</td>
<td>38 (95%)</td>
<td>62 (37%)</td>
<td>100 (48%)</td>
<td>2.250</td>
<td>.488</td>
<td>-.108</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Probation</td>
<td>25 (63%)</td>
<td>21 (13%)</td>
<td>46 (22%)</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Conditional sanction</td>
<td>13 (33%)</td>
<td>10 (6%)</td>
<td>23 (11%)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Other sanctions</td>
<td>25 (63%)</td>
<td>7 (4%)</td>
<td>32 (15%)</td>
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</table>

Notes: ***p< 0.001. Significance was calculated with χ² (df=1) with Yates Continuity correction or Fischer’s exact test.

A Chi-square test of independence (with Yates Continuity correction) demonstrated a significant difference within the entire sample regarding level of risk and prosecution, more medium/high risk than low risk cases were prosecuted regardless if the risk was imminent (81% vs. 18%; OR = 2.5, CI = 1.3-4.8), χ² (1, n = 201) = 7.215, p < .01, ϕ = .201 or lethal (57% vs. 43%; OR = 2.9, CI = 1.6-5.2), χ² (1, n = 200) = 11.945, p = .001, ϕ = .255. When testing if there were any differences within the non-PC and PC groups regarding how risk affect prosecution, Fisher’s exact test demonstrated no significant difference within the non-PC group regardless if the risk was imminent χ² (1, n = 39) = .000, p = 1.000, ϕ = .019 or lethal χ² (1, n = 38) = .127, p = .411, ϕ = .131. Chi-square demonstrated no significant difference within the PC group regarding imminent risk χ² (1, n = 162) = 3.708, p = .054, phi = .167. However a significant difference was found within the PC group regarding lethal violence χ²(1, n = 162) = 6.721, p = .010, ϕ = .217 where more medium/high risk cases were prosecuted (76% vs. 24%; OR = 2.5, 95% CI = 1.3-5.0). Within the prosecuted group, no significant differences were found between non-PC and PC cases regarding risk for imminent or lethal violence (see Table 4).

³ Other reasons for cases not being prosecuted were: lack of results from scouting, the crime was barred, or other reasons not stated.

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Overall, 76% of the prosecuted perpetrators were convicted of the IPV crime. There were no significant differences between non-PP and PP regarding conviction or allocated legal sanction (see Table 4). Out of the perpetrators sentenced to prison, the median incarceration time was 8 months. Mann-Whitney U revealed no significant difference between non-PC and PC regarding median incarceration time ($Md = 8, n = 54$ vs. $Md = 9.5, n = 2$) $U = 41$, $z = -.577$, $p = .564$, $r = .08$.

**Participation in protective measures and repeated victimization**

Out of the entire sample 44% of the women were exposed to repeated victimization by the same perpetrator, there was however no significant difference between non-PP and PP (see Table 5). The most frequently reported crime when repeatedly victimized was assault (41%), followed by unlawful threat (26%) and gross violation (7%). There were no significant differences between non-PP and PP regarding index crimes when repeatedly victimized except for assault (67% vs. 33%, OR = 4.0, 95% CI = 1.4-11.4). Women in non-PP were more likely than women in PP to be the victim of assault when repeatedly victimized.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 5. Participation in protective measures and repeated victimization (N=207)</th>
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<td>Repeated victimization</td>
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<td>Against the same partner</td>
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<tr>
<td>Reported crime</td>
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<tr>
<td>Assault</td>
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<tr>
<td>Unlawful threat</td>
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<td>Molestation</td>
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<td>Sexual offence</td>
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<td>Attempted murder</td>
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<tr>
<td>Other crimes</td>
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<tr>
<td>Imminent risk</td>
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<tr>
<td>Low</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Medium/High</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lethal risk</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Notes: *p< 0.05. Significance was calculated with $\chi^2$ (df=1) with Yates Continuity correction or Fischer’s exact test.

A Chi-square test for independence (with Yates Continuity Correction) indicated no significant association between perpetrators sanctioned to prison and repeated victimization, $\chi^2 (1, n = 198) = .015, p = .902, \phi = -.020$. Within the group of repeatedly victimized women the chi-square test demonstrated no significant differences between non-PP and PP regarding prison sentences (14% vs. 31%, $\chi^2 (1, n = 88) = .1.6, p = .211, \phi = .163$) and the
Mann-Whitney U indicated no significant differences regarding median time incarcerated \((Md = 3, n = 3 \text{ vs. } Md = 6, n = 21), U = 21.5, z = - .878, p = .380, r = .179\). A Chi-square test of independence (with Yates Continuity correction) demonstrated no significant differences within the entire sample regarding level of risk and repeated victimization regardless if the risk was imminent \(\chi^2 (1, n = 199) = .000, p = 1.000, phi = .006\), or severe \(\chi^2 (1, n = 198) = 1.077, p = .299, \phi = .084\) and no significant differences were found between the groups (see table 5).

Mann-Whitney \(U\) was conducted to test if there were any significant differences between the groups regarding time elapsed between reporting the index crime to the police and repeated victimization. There were no significant differences between \(\text{non-PP}\) and \(\text{PP}\) regarding the amount of days until repeated victimization regardless if the whole follow-up time was included \((Md = 150, n = 21 \text{ vs. } Md = 95, n = 67), U = 609, z = -.925, p = .355, r = -.06\), or if the time was limited to either one year \((Md = 124, n = 16 \text{ vs. } Md = 57.5, n = 54), U = 380, z = -.727, p = .467, r = .05\) or two months \((Md = 17, n = 6 \text{ vs. } Md = 24, n = 28), U = 82, z = -.091, p = .22, r = .006\).

**Discussion**

The aim of the present study was to investigate the consequences of refusing to participate in the criminal investigation or protective measures within a group of women assessed for risk of future IPV victimization. Overall, findings demonstrate few significant differences between the groups. The main results are that women who refused to participate were more likely assessed low risk and the victim vulnerability factor extreme fear was less assessed present. Furthermore, cases regarding women who refused to participate were 6.4 times less likely prosecuted. Regardless of participation, more high risk than low risk cases were prosecuted. However, level of risk did not influence repeated victimization. The current findings demonstrate that women who refused protective measures reported repeated victimization to the same degree as those who participated. However, women who refused protective measures were 4 times more likely to report being victims of assault when repeatedly victimized.
Theoretical discussion

Prosecution

One of the key findings of the present study is that the likelihood of prosecution decreased 6.4 times if the women refused to participate in the criminal investigation. Similar results were presented by NCCP (2008) and Messing (2010) who reports that the likelihood of prosecution increased 2.8 vs. 4.7 times if the woman participated. These results indicate that participation in criminal investigation is of importance in order to acquire prosecution (which is also stated by Lewin, 2006). However, among the women who refused to participate, the purpose of reporting the crime to the police might not have been to acquire legal consequences for the perpetrator (as seen in NCCP, 2008). Due to the public prosecution regarding IPV, it can be difficult to encourage these women to participate in the criminal investigation as participation would increase the possibility of their former or current partner being prosecuted and convicted.

In 83% of the prosecuted cases the perpetrator were convicted of the IPV crime and within the group of convicted perpetrators, prison was sanctioned in 58%. Furthermore, a higher amount of medium/high risk cases were prosecuted in comparison to cases that were not prosecuted. These results indicate that the prosecutor decides to prosecute more severe cases of IPV (as seen in Messing, 2007). However, since women who refused to participate in the criminal investigation did not differ significantly from participating women regarding which index crime they reported, severity of IPV cannot explain the difference regarding prosecution. This could imply that when the woman refused to participate, the prosecutors did not believe they would obtain a conviction (perhaps resulting from lack of information). It is within the prosecutor’s right to dismiss prosecution in cases where they assess there is not enough evidence to obtain a conviction for the perpetrator (the Prosecution Authority, 2013). However, police officers in Lewins (2006) study experienced that the prosecutor at times prematurely decided to close cases before they finished their investigation. Furthermore, police officers stated that the prosecutor should pursue cases harder where the victim refuses to participate. The present findings do not give a straightforward answer to why cases where women refuse to participate in the criminal investigation are less often prosecuted. This issue should therefore receive further investigation to establish if prosecutors close cases prematurely and weather refusing to participate influence this decision.
Repeated victimization

The present result demonstrates that the number of women who reported being repeatedly victimized (44%) was higher than displayed in previous studies (e.g., 21% Busawa et al., 2006). Since there was no significant difference within the entire sample between level of risk and repeated victimization, the high rates of reported repeated victimization cannot be explained by the proportion of cases assessed medium/high risk. The high rate of repeated victimization could however be due to the long follow-up time (28-48 months, as seen in Belfrage & Strand, 2012). On the other hand, as previously stated by Buzawa et al. (2006), repeated victimization is not always reported to the police. This could also be true in the current study, which would imply that even though the rate of repeated victimization was high, the actual numbers of repeatedly victimized women were underestimated.

One important finding of the present study is that women who refused protective measures did not differ from participating women concerning reported repeated victimization, regardless the level of risk or if prison was sanctioned. We theorize that the equal rates of repeated victimization can be the result of several potential explanations, functioning individually or together, such as: an underestimation of the risk or an underreporting of repeated victimization in cases where the women refused to participate. Furthermore, the equal rates of repeated victimization can be the result of adequate protective measures, or inadequate protective measures implemented in cases were women participated.

The present study only measured repeated victimization from police reports, not from contact with victims through interviews or surveys. Holt et al. (2002) previously reported that women who refuse to participate in protective measures do not report repeated victimization because they want to stay with the perpetrator or do not want to have contact with the police. Women who refuse to participate might not be prone to report repeated victimization since they are not involved in the judicial process. This would imply that the true rate of repeated victimization was significantly higher for the women who refused to participate than that reported to the police. However, due to the high rate of repeated victimization in the entire sample, underreporting might not be the explanation for why the groups did not differ.

Kropp and Hart (2000) reported that women assessed low risk in SARA were less repeatedly victimized. Women in the present sample who refused to participate were assessed significantly lower risk, which could indicate that the repeated victimization rate for these
women was higher than expected. Therefore, a more likely explanation for the equal rates of repeated victimization than underreporting is that these women as well as the risk assessors have underestimated the risk for repeated victimization. Kropp (2004) described that some victims underestimate their risk. Women abused for a long time are often normalized, causing the women to internalize and excuse the violence and therefore experience the violence as less dangerous or wrongful (Lundgren, 2004). Women who refuse to participate could therefore be reluctant to reveal facts about the case and change their story after deciding not to participate, making it hard for the assessor to make adequate decisions about the risk. As Kropp (2004 p. 684) stated “a risk assessment is only as reliable as is the information on which it is based”.

One possible explanation for the equal rates of repeated victimization stems from the perspective of women who did participate. Women who participated were more often assessed medium/high risk for repeated victimization, which indicates that this group of women had a higher risk of being repeatedly victimized (as seen in Belfrage, 2008; Kropp & Hart, 2000). However, since women who participated received protective measures, the rate of repeated victimization should have decreased (as seen in Belfrage & Strand, 2012). The actual number of repeated victimization could have been higher if no protective measures were implemented. Therefore, the equal rates of repeated victimization can be explained by effective protective measures. On the contrary, since the recidivism rate was higher than displayed in previous studies (Buzawa et al., 2006), another explanation for the equal rates of repeated victimization is that the protective measures were not efficient in all cases (as discussed by Strand, 2011). The preventive effects of protective measures might be different depending on level of risk. This would imply that the rate of repeated victimization for the women who received protective measures was high due to inadequate protective measures. Therefore it is of interest to further investigate the effectiveness of different protective measures implemented by the police.

Another important finding in the current study is that women who refused to participate in protective measures were significantly more often repeatedly victimized in assault. One of the previously reported reasons for why women do not participate in protective measures is emotional attachment; the women return to the perpetrator due to perceived change (Roberts et al., 2008). This would imply that these women are repeatedly victimized in assault because the perpetrator is present in their life. Furthermore, these women are not involved in the
judicial process and may not report less severe abuse. Instead they wait to make a report until the violence is more severe, as in the form of assault.

Understanding women who refuse to participate

Reasons for not participating in the criminal investigation or protective measures might vary between cases (see e.g. Malecha et al., 2003; Roberts et al., 2008). The four different factors (Individual, Micro-, Exo-, and Macrosystem) in Heise's (1998) ecological model can not only contribute to an understanding of why individual men use violence towards women but we also believe it could be applied to why women stay in abusive relationships and by extension refuse to participate in the criminal investigation or protective measures. The influence of individual factors could have made these women more vulnerable to community or society factors, which in turn affected the relationship. This combination of factors influenced the woman to stay with the perpetrator and consequently the decision to refuse to participate in the criminal investigation or protective measures. However, vulnerability within this group of women was not supported in the present study. Women who refused to participate did not differ from participating women regarding the victim vulnerability factors ‘inconsistent behavior/attitude’, ‘inadequate access to resources’, or ‘personal problems’. Furthermore, the factor ‘extreme fear’ was less often assessed as present when women refused to participate and when the woman refused to participate in the criminal investigation the victim vulnerability ‘unsafe living situation’ was less assessed as present. This result indicates that the women who refused to participate were not a specifically vulnerable group in comparison to women who participated. However, as discussed above, making adequate decisions about the risk in cases where women refuse to participate can be difficult and there is a possibility that our results do not reflect these women’s vulnerability. Lewin (2006) stated that women who refuse to participate are a more vulnerable group, often standing outside of the society without a network or a job. The current set of data consisted of few variables regarding demographic information about the victims. The lack of this information makes it hard to distinguish certain patterns that are prominent for the women who refused to participate.

Another theory that contributes to the understanding of the women who refused to participate is the theory of normalizing violence (Lundgren, 2004). If the woman is normalized it is difficult to leave the relationship and the process might not end even if she leaves (Lundgren, 2004). It is possible and perhaps likely that the women of the current study were at different stages in the process of normalizing violence, where women who refused to participate were
not as far along with ending the process (as discussed in Lewin, 2006). On the contrary, some of these women could have been rational in their choice to refuse help, because they had a solid support. According to Meyer (2012) the decision to leave an abusive relationship is often a rational choice. Women in the current sample who refused to participate in either the criminal investigation or protective measures had a significantly lower assessed risk for repeated victimization. These women might therefore not have perceived the risk for repeated victimization as serious, acting rational in their decision when refusing to participate. Another important aspect regarding rationality is fear. Fear is according to Scheffer Lindgren and Renck (2008) a central factor in an abusive relationship and Roberts et al. (2008) describes that a reason for refusing protective measures is that the victim is not afraid. The current result demonstrates that women who refused to participate were assessed to experience less extreme fear, which indicates that the decision to not participate was rational. However, women reported repeated victimization to the same degree, indicating that refusing to participate was not a rational choice. Instead, women abused for a long time could be normalized, and due to internalization experience the violence as less dangerous (Lundgren, 2004).

The ecological model and the process of normalizing violence may not explain every case of IPV or give an ultimate answer to why a woman decides to participate or not. However, the theories contribute to a more nuanced picture regarding the complexity of IPV and what factors could influence abused women’s decisions.

Limitations
The aim of this study was directed towards victims of IPV; however, the data utilized for this study was originally gathered with focus on the perpetrators of IPV. This generated a lack of descriptive information concerning the victims. It was therefore not possible to control for the influence of these variables on the dependent variables. Consequently, the differences between the groups could have been influenced by variables other than participation that we could not control for. The current sample consisted of approximately 20% women who refused to participate in criminal investigation or protective measures (which was also found in NCCP, 2008). Women who refuse to participate are generally a small group, which of course is positive. However this could have had negative implications on our study since it is more difficult to detect significant differences in smaller samples (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2013).
The sample is based on police officers assessments with the SARA:SV in cases of IPV. If the checklist was not coded in a correct manor it could have caused a weakness in the internal validity of this study. Kropp (2008) reports that some police officers were uncomfortable with assessing risk ratings. However, police officers in the current study were instructed and educated in coding the SARA:SV correctly. Education and training in risk assessment has proven to generate better identification of present risk factors and enhance the ability to initiate more adequate protective measures (Storey et al., 2011). Furthermore, the internal validity of the current study could have been compromised by the fact that we did not enter or code the risk assessments into SPSS. This was done previously by other individuals. In order to minimize the risk of a weakened internal validity, the authors checked for outliers that seemed to be numbers incorrectly coded. It was however not possible to check for incorrectly coded numbers that were not outliers, consequently this could have affected the internal validity of the study.

Not all cases of IPV in Södertörn (during May 2005 and January 2007) were assessed with SARA:SV (Belfrage & Strand, 2012). Due to the high number of repeated victimization and considerable number of prison sentences, it is possible that more severe cases were prioritized and assessed by the police. This could indicate that the sample is a sub-group of women with a high-risk for future victimization and the external validity could therefore be somewhat lowered. Furthermore, it is of importance to acknowledge that the current sample is based on cases of IPV assessed with SARA:SV. Therefore, participation might affect the judicial process and risk for future victimization differently in samples that are not based on risk assessments or concerns other crimes.

**Practical Implications**

The police should always work towards supporting and encouraging victims to participate in the criminal investigation as well as in protective measures. Risk assessing cases were the women refuse to participate might be a challenge since these women could be reluctant to reveal facts about the case and change their story after deciding not to participate. This would restrict the assessor in making adequate decisions about the risk. Encouraging women to participate is also important in order to obtain sufficient information, which would ease the prosecutors’ decision to prosecute and acquire a conviction. Even if it is not possible to convince women to participate, it is of importance to encourage them to immediately report future violence. This could prevent more severe forms of violence, such as assault.
As noted earlier, acquiring prosecution or a conviction is not always the women’s main objective when filing a police report (NCCP, 2008). If a woman refuses to participate in the criminal investigation even after police officers have tried to encourage her, it is still of importance that they help the women with protective measures, counseling, support or other necessary matters to at least reduce the risk for repeated victimization. When doing this, knowledge about the ecological model and the theory of normalizing violence and how these theories contribute to explain the decision about participation are of importance. The women’s individual needs can be analyzed from each of the factors in the ecological model and illuminate what factors are of particular importance to address, for example financial or housing situation. Working with these factors can increase the odds of participation. Furthermore, it is useful to determine in what stage of normalization the relationship is in order to adjust the help and support for the victimized woman.

**Conclusion**

Investigating IPV from the victims’ perspective is informative as well as a brinkmanship. The aim is not meant to impose guilt upon the victim, but to increase understanding for these women and their situations. Findings from the current study provide useful knowledge about consequences for women who refuse to participate in the criminal investigation or protective measures and enables practical solutions for agents of the judicial system to further help these women. Refusing to participate decreased the chances of a thorough judicial process, which could be due to prematurely closed cases or lack of information. Women who refused to participate did not differ from participating women concerning reported repeated victimization. Due to the high rate of repeated victimization this is likely the result of an underestimation of risk regarding the women who refused to participate or inadequate protective measures implemented in cases were the women participated. Women who refused to participate were more often repeatedly victimized by assault. This more severe form of violence can be the result of a continued relationship with the perpetrator or the lack of involvement in the judicial process.

Encouraging these women to participate could reduce the repeated victimization and enable reports to the police in an earlier stage, which would consequently decrease their exposure to severe violence. When encouraging these women to participate, judicial agents should use the ecological model to clarify which factors are important to address in each case and in what
stage of the process of normalizing violence these women are. This group of women should receive further attention, not only by the judicial system but also in research, enabling increased help and support that hopefully will increase the possibility of participation.

**Future research**

There are few previous scientific studies to compare our results to, more research is required to further investigate the role of women’s participation and to validate the results from the present study. In future research it is of importance to gather all possible information concerning the victimized women in order to establish a more detailed picture of these women’s situations and to determine if other factors influence the legal consequences and repeated victimization.

Future studies should also aim at investigating a group of women with a more normal distributed assessed risk. Since February 2012, it is required that all cases of IPV are risk assessed across all police counties (NPB, 2012b). It would be of interest to replicate the current study with a larger sample after the implementation of these new directions. This replication would increase the external validity and enable comparison to other police counties. Furthermore, research should focus on establishing the prosecutors role in cases were the women refuse to participate and why these cases are significantly less prosecuted, tentatively through interviews with prosecutors and case studies. It is also of interest to determine the effectiveness of specific protective measures, other than restraining orders, and establish their efficiency in different risk groups. In order to establish the true number of repeated victimizations and the role of participation or the effectiveness of protective measures, a better measure of repeated victimization should be applied, for example through victim surveys or interviews.
References


