

OFFICIAL POLICE REPORTING

CRIMINAL OFFENCES

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OFFICIAL POLICE REPORTING OF CRIMINAL OFFENCES

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INVESTIGATION INTO THE POLICY REGARDING THE OFFICIAL  
REPORTING OF CRIMINAL OFFENCES BY THE POLICE

1. Introduction

At the request of the Committee on Police Reporting of Criminal Offences, the Research and Documentation Centre carried out an opinion poll among public prosecutors and the police in order to ascertain how serious the various penal offences were considered to be on the one hand and what bearing a number of factors, inter alia the gravity of the offence, had on the detection and prosecution policy. A list of about 50 offences was used for the first subject and the persons interviewed were requested to indicate the gravity of each offence on a 9-point scale.

For the second subject a simulation experiment was carried out in which the persons concerned were requested to indicate for each particular case what kind of information they would require before they could decide whether or not to take action by preparing an official report.

Reports have already been published on both subjects but they are not all exhaustive. A report entitled: "The Gravity of Offences: Opinions and their Measurement" (De ernst van delikten: Mening en Meting) containing detailed information on the first subject was published in 1974. Somewhat later a report entitled "Police Reporting Methods; Kinds of Information and Decision-making" (Verbaliseringsgedrag; Informatie en Beslissing) dealing with the second subject was published. Both reports were discussed in the Committee.

It appeared that the members were of the opinion that the Dutch public as well as the police forces and public prosecutors would have to be sounded on the matter if a true picture was to be obtained. They also believed that critical evaluation of the impact of the outcome on policy would be particularly useful.

The present report is intended to satisfy the wishes of the working group.

2. Definition of the problem

The wishes of the Committee provide narrower terms of reference than those on which the two previous reports were based. Assuming that one of the Committee's duties is to recommend policy directives for police reporting, some indication must now be given as to the direction in which the Committee could proceed in establishing such directives in the light of the results of the investigation. The outcome of the opinion poll on the gravity which the police and public prosecutors accord to the various offences is one factor to be considered; an other is an evaluation of the various points in the light of which the decision whether or not to report is taken. In view of this, we wish to give further attention to the following subjects. First of all, we shall consider what weight the officials involved in the policy such as the police and the public prosecutors attach to the offences concerned and, additionally, what the public has to say about the offences. Next we shall devote some attention to any differences in the opinions of the public prosecutors, the police or the public. To conclude this section, we shall try to find out if, despite any differences that may emerge, there are any general criteria for the way in which the police, the public prosecutors and the public form their opinions.

When we have thus obtained some idea of the weight which the persons interviewed attach to various offences and of the criteria on which their judgement is based we shall also need to know to what extent the gravity of an offence determines police policy when preparing an official report on it.

In view of what is stated in the introduction, the last subject will be the possible effect of the results on policy.

3. How public prosecutors, the police and the public evaluate the offences submitted.

First of all, the poll to ascertain the weight attached to 50 offences was held among 131 public prosecutors and 3 representative groups of officials belonging to the municipal police forces, district-divisions

and regional groups of the National Police.<sup>1)</sup> The sample totalled 1,424 persons.

The poll was repeated at a later date with a representative sample of the Dutch population totalling 1,151 persons.

The persons interviewed were asked to give their opinion on about 50 offences.<sup>2)</sup> They had to tick their reply off on a scale ranging from 1 (not very serious) up to 9 (very serious).<sup>3)</sup> What was the result?

Before answering the question whether the public prosecutors, the police and the public evaluated the gravity of offences differently we should consider the average rating obtained from the five sample groups for all 50 offences. We saw that the highest average rating for the 50 offences was reached by the public at 6.6. The second highest rating was obtained by the National Police regional groups with 6.0 and the National Police district divisions with 5.8, the Municipal Police with 5.5 and the public prosecutors brought up the rear with 5.3

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- 1) Organisationally the National Police is divided into various district-divisions. Each district-division in turn is divided into regional groups. Officials who are responsible for crime detection or traffic problems at the district level are directly attached to the district division while other officials belong to the regional groups.
  - 2) The persons interviewed were given a short description of about 50 actual cases which according to the police officials consulted on the matter were more or less representative of the offences with which the police are usually faced. For the sake of brevity they will hereinafter be referred to as "the 50 offences".
  - 3) For a more detailed treatment of the "Gravity assessment investigation" see the report entitled "The Gravity of Offences": Opinion and Assessment"; a final version of this report will be published at the beginning of 1976. The most important results of the investigation are given in Annex 1 of the present report.

So there actually were differences between the five groups. The difference between the public and the public prosecutors was quite considerable while the three police groups occupied intermediate positions. The differences could in principle have been caused either by there being a small number of offences on which opinions differed widely or by the circumstance that we were dealing with small systematic differences in respect of all the offences. Which was it? To reply to this question we ascertained for each of the 50 offences to what extent the public prosecutors, the police and the population differed in their judgement. It appeared from the statistical analysis that the variations observed could certainly not be explained by differences in opinion on the gravity of a small number of offences.

On the contrary, we found a fairly systematic trend. The public prosecutors for instance rated more than 40 of the 50 offences submitted significantly less harshly than the public and the regional groups of the National Police did. The Municipal Police and the Districts Divisions of the National Police occupied an intermediate position. Even here, however, the differences in opinion compared with the public prosecutors were considerable. In well over 30 of the 50 offences the public prosecutors attached less weight to the offences.

4. Gravity ratings by public prosecutors, the police and the public compared

As stated in the preceding paragraph, there were marked differences between the average gravity ratings awarded by the five sample groups for a great number of offences. It is every bit as important, however, to know whether the sample groups classified the 50 offences in the same order of gravity; shoplifting for instance was given a gravity rating of 1.7 by the public prosecutors while it was given a rating of 3.1 by both National police groups. Although the absolute gravity ratings differed, the public prosecutors and both of the State Police groups gave this particular offence the lowest rating, so the gravity ratings of all these groups were relatively the same.

What was the position as regards to the other offences ? We adopted the following procedure to answer this question. The offence with the highest gravity rating in each group was given the serial number 1, the offence with the next highest gravity rating was given the serial number 2 and so on. In other words, the 50 offences were listed in descending order of gravity as evaluated by each group. The serial of the public prosecutors and the three police-groups were seen to be very similar. The serial number for any particular offence did not differ by more than 3 or 4 places in any of the groups. The high degree of similarity also appeared of the sequence correlation coefficients calculated for the four groups. None of the coefficients was below 0.94 which may be regarded as very high (complete correlation is expressed by the coefficient 1). The similarity between the population group sequence and those of the four other groups was slightly less. The correlation coefficient for the public prosecutors and the public was 0.82.

Broadly speaking, we may therefore say that the five groups came up with the same sequence. This does not mean that there were no differences of opinion on the subject. For this reason it might be interesting to consider the number and nature of the offences concerned.

Our analysis showed that for 13 offences the serial numbers given by the public prosecutors differed by more than 10 places from the serial numbers given by the public. The three police-groups again occupied an intermediate position. The serial numbers given by the latter were mostly halfway between the extremes, i.e. those of the public prosecutors and those of the public.

What was the nature of the offences ? Did they have something in common or were they widely differing matters with hardly anything in common? They certainly had something in common. We believe that some of the 13 offences can be regarded as representative of a particular kind of offence. In the first place, there were some sexual offences among them. "Exhibitionism" (Offence no. 46) was given the serial number 16 by the public, number 46 by the public prosecutors and number 36 by the regional groups of the National police. "Sexual offence against a 12-year-old" (offence no. 6) was also placed more than 10 places

higher on the list by the public than by the public prosecutors. Two of the remaining offences were "the sale of 5 grams marihuana" (offence No.13) and "the use of heroine by an addict" (offence No. 26). In effect, therefore, the public prosecutors judged certain forms of sexual deviation<sup>1)</sup> and certain forms of offences involving drugs much less harshly than does the average citizen.

A third group of offences which the public placed much higher on the list than the public prosecutors was made up of offence No. 24, "fraudulent conversion of funds collected for the blind"; offence No. 25, "battery of wife", and No. 31, "stealing a colleague's tools". What these three offences have in common is that they are not serious if considered solely in the light of the gravity of the resulting damage or injury.

Perhaps these offences are regarded as so grave because they are infringements of a secondary norm of decency. The fraudulent conversion of funds collected is abuse of the charity of others, beating a woman is a offence against the code of gentlemanly conduct and stealing from a colleague is usually regarded in most working communities as a very serious offence indeed.

Standards of fair play seem to weigh much more heavily with the public when evaluating offences than with the public prosecutors.

The public invariably attaches greater weight to the offences referred to above than do the public prosecutors. As might have been expected, the public placed a number of other offences much lower on the list than did the public prosecutors. Three offences involving violence or the threat of street-violence belong to this category, i.e. No.'s 16,30 and 45. The common contention that the public regards this particular kind of offence as relatively grave indeed appears to be incorrect. The relative weight which the public attaches to these offences is less than that of the public prosecutors.

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1) One of the offences which was placed much lower on the list by the public than by the public prosecutors was offence No.27, "blackmailing a homosexual". The fact that the gravity ratings given for this offence by the 2 groups differ also proves that the public considers sexual deviations more serious than the public prosecutors do.

## Conclusions

The public prosecutors' ratings of the 50 offences and those of the three police corps exhibit great similarity. In general, the public's ratings correspond as well, though the public's evaluation of certain sexual offences, drug offences and offences which involve contravention of what could be called a secondary norm of decency differs considerably from that of the public prosecutors.

The public considers these three types of offences to be much more serious than the public prosecutors do. The opposite is true of offences of the "violence on public roads" type; the public attaches less weight to this type of offence than do the public prosecutors.

### 5. Differences in rating within the public prosecutors group, the police and the public

In the preceding paragraphs we compared the rating by one group with that by another; we shall now look at any differences there may be within the five groups.

First of all let us examine the evaluations within each group and see whether any differences might be attributed to personal criteria such as age, rank, length of service or region. The following main points emerge.

- 1) The public prosecutors appear to be a very homogeneous group in which such factors as age, areas of jurisdiction or length of service cannot be correlated to the rating.
- 2) The police were a less homogeneous group. The younger officials (from 18-30 years of age) attach much greater weight to 34 of the 50 offences than does the group aged 51 to 64. The 31- to 50-year group's evaluation is closer to that of the older than to that of the younger group.
- 3) A breakdown according to rank also reveals great differences. The lower ranks (constable, constable 1st class and comparable ranks) attach greater weight to 44 offences than do the intermediate ranks (sergeant, sergeant 1st class and comparable ranks). There is little difference between the ratings of the middle ranks and the highest ranks (i.e. from inspector upwards).

- 4) The absolute rating by the police also varies according to region. Police in Amsterdam consider many offences to be less serious than do their colleagues in other areas.

The most important conclusion to be drawn from the foregoing is that the younger (18-30 years of age), less experienced police officer with a low rank tends to attach greater weight to most offences than does his elder, more experienced colleague with a higher rank. Accordingly, it might be assumed that the difference in the public prosecutors' rating and that of one of the 3 police groups is due to the difference in the age structure of the four groups (the average age of the regional groups of National Police is relatively low while the average age of the public prosecutors is indisputably the highest). On closer examination, however, we see that the differences in the four groups' ratings can only be attributed to a very slight extent to the difference in age structure.

A similar analysis of a sample of the general public was also carried out to find out if there was any connection between the rating and personal factors such as age, sex and the size of the place of residence (i.e. the extent of urbanisation). There was hardly any correlation between the size of the place of residence of the persons interviewed and their rating. Apparently the inhabitants of rural areas judge the various offences in exactly the same way as people in urban areas do. The rating of female respondents scarcely differed at all from that of the male respondents. The average absolute rating of the male half of the population was 6.5 while the women's average rating was somewhat higher, viz. 6.7. There did appear to be some correlation between the weight of the rating and the respondent's age. The 18-24 group had an average rating of 6.4, the average rating of the middle group was 6.5 and that of the group of 50-69 years old was 6.8, so there appears to be a very slight positive connection between the respondent's age and the weight of his rating: the older the respondent the heavier the rating. Within the police groups we also found a connection between age and weight of rating but in the opposite direction: the older the police officer the lighter the rating. Combination of the two results leads us to conclude that the relative mildness with which the older police officer rates many offences is mainly due to his long experience of crime.

6. Criteria used in rating an offence

In principle, an offence may be rated by various criteria. We have tried by means of an certain technique called 'factor analysis'<sup>1)</sup> to determine what features of the 50 offences respondents felt to be decisive when rating the latter. Seven decisive factors came to light, viz.:

- I. Causing injury or damage through disorderliness or negligence;
- II. Injuring a person intentionally;
- III. Contravening codes of sexual morality;
- IV. Causing intentionally material damage (usually for one's own benefit);
- V. Manslaughter;
- VI. Failure to observe a statutory regulation (i.e. illegal acts which the offenders themselves probably do not regard as real offence);
- VII. Instrumental violence (i.e. violence aforethought used to achieve a particular aim).

Analysis of the outcome by factors was carried out in the light of the overall ratings of the 50 offences by all the respondents and of the ratings by the public prosecutors, the three police groups and the public. It transpired that broadly the same seven factors were distinguishable in each group. In other words, the public prosecutors, the police and the public apply the same criteria when judging the gravity of offences.

7. The weight attached to each of the seven criteria by each sample group

The fact that people apply the same criteria when judging the gravity of certain offences does not necessarily mean that they all attach

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1) A more detailed description of "factor-analysis" and a summary of the results obtained with the method will be found in the report entitled "The gravity of Offences: Opinion and Assessment". It should be stressed that we are not dealing with criteria which according to the investigators should or could have been applied to the assessment of the gravity of the 50 offences but with criteria actually adopted by the respondents as revealed by the analysis. We indicated in Annex 1 which factor was the most decisive in rating each offence.

the same weight to the criteria. What was the position here? Unfortunately, factor analysis cannot supply the answer. Nevertheless, we can obtain a certain impression of the relative weight attached to the seven criteria, because the results of the factor-analysis do show which groups of variables are closely connected with a certain factor. Consequently, we now know which of the seven criteria loomed largest in the assessment of each offence. By determining the average rating of the seven groups of offences we can now obtain some indication of the absolute weights of the criteria (or components of the rating). By arranging the average ratings obtained in this manner in descending order we can get some idea of the relative weights of the criteria. The relative weights of the criteria are particularly interesting because it may be assumed that the same criteria will generally be applied when assessing offences. What we wish to find out is whether there is any correlation between the weights which the various sample groups, (public prosecutors, police and public) attach to the criteria. If there is, we would have a useful framework within which to formulate a policy on official police reporting. Can we produce a framework of this kind?

Table 1 shows the order in which the five sample groups rated the seven factor groups. The factor group with the highest average rating heads the list; the one with the lowest appears at the bottom. The average ratings are in brackets.

Table 1: Relative ratings of the seven factor groups by the five sample groups

| The public prosecutor | municipal police | national police districts divisions | national police regional groups | public    |
|-----------------------|------------------|-------------------------------------|---------------------------------|-----------|
| V (8,6)               | V (8,7)          | V (8,7)                             | V (8,8)                         | V (8,7)   |
| VII (7,3)             | VII (7,5)        | VII (7,4)                           | VII (7,4)                       | III (7,6) |
| II (5,9)              | II (6,5)         | II (6,5)                            | III (6,8)                       | VII (7,5) |
| I (5,7)               | III (6,4)        | I (6,2)                             | I (6,6)                         | I (7,2)   |
| III (5,3)             | I (6,2)          | III (6,1)                           | II (6,5)                        | II (6,9)  |
| IV (4,4)              | IV (4,8)         | IV (5,0)                            | VI (5,4)                        | IV (5,9)  |
| VI (4,3)              | VI (4,8)         | VI (4,9)                            | IV (5,2)                        | VI (5,9)  |

Table 1 shows that the public prosecutors, the municipal police and the National Police district divisions place the seven factor groups in almost the same order of gravity. Evidently, the seven criteria corresponding to the seven factor groups are accorded about the same weights by the public prosecutors and the police.

The relative ratings of the seven factor groups by the National Police regional groups and the public, however, differ from the relative ratings of the public prosecutors. Criterion III, "Contravening sexual morality", carried a proportionally greater weight with both these groups than it did with the public prosecutors.

The opposite was the case with Criterion II, "Intentional injury"; it was accorded greater weight by the public prosecutors<sup>1)</sup>.

The five sample groups attached little weight to Criterion IV, "Intentional material damage", and Criterion VI, "Failure to observe a statutory regulation". The five sample groups all agreed that the offences rated mainly according to one of these two criteria were the least serious.

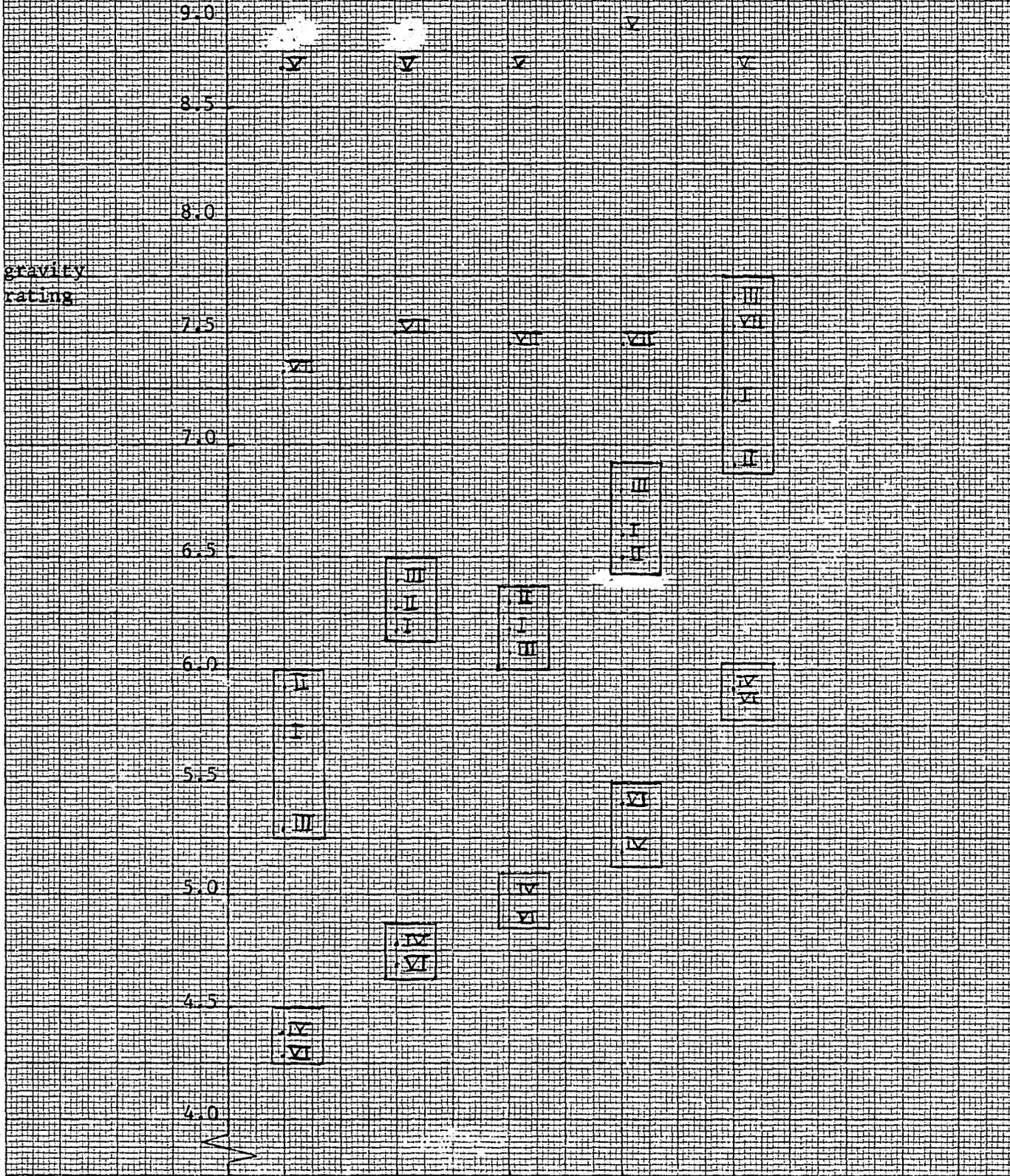
The graph in Figure 1 shows the weights attached to the seven criteria by the sample groups. Evidently, Criterion V, "Manslaughter", carried by far the heaviest weight with all the groups. The ratings of the offences assessed according to this criterion are far above all the rest. All the sample groups except the public attach the same weight to Criterion VII, "Instrumental purposeful violence"; it occupies second place. With the public it occupies third place. Criteria II, "Intentional injury", I, "Wanton or negligent injury or damage", and III, "Contravening codes of sexual morality", occupy intermediate positions in all groups.

All the sample groups attached less weight to these criteria than they did to the first two (i.e. IV and VIII); on the other hand, they attached considerably more weight to them than they did to Criteria IV and VI, which are dealt with below. Criterion IV, "Intentional material damage", and VI "Failure to observe a statutory regulation", carried the least weight in the opinion of all the sample groups.

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1) In paragraph 4 we compare the relative ratings of the 50 offences by the sample groups. Even there it is already evident that the public attaches relatively greater weight to certain sexual offences and rates certain violent acts committed on the streets as less serious than the public prosecutors did.

Figure 1. Breakdown of gravity rating by the seven factor groups of the five sample groups of respondents.



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I - Causing bodily harm or damage through vandalism or negligence

II - Intentional injury

III - Contravening the sexual morality

IV - Intentionally causing damage

V - Manslaughter

VI - Failure to observe a statutory regulation

VII - Failure to observe a statutory regulation

The absolute weights which the five sample groups attached to the seven criteria differed widely. The absolute weights attached to Criteria V and VII were the only ones that were about the same. The police ratings of all the other criteria were definitely higher than those of the public prosecutors, and those of the public were higher still.

The knowledge that all the sample groups attach the least weight to Criteria IV and VI could be a great help when formulating a police reporting policy. There would be very little opposition to a restrictive or selective reporting policy from the police and the public if that policy were to be adopted primarily for such offences as vandalism, shop-lifting, theft from cars, drug usage and social security frauds. A selective policy with regard to certain sexual offences on the other hand would probably not be readily accepted by either the public or the police.

The ratings also show that the assessments by both the police and the public of plain theft depend to a great extent on the value of the goods stolen. The offences involving the theft of goods worth less than 75 guilders (offences Nos. 3, 20, 21, 32, and 44) all belong to the group of 10 offences which were considered to be the least serious. This result again confirms that it is precisely in the assessment of these offences that a framework for a selective police reporting policy may be found.

## 8. The simulation experiment

### Introduction

Within the framework of the research project "policy on the official reporting of offences" a simulation experiment in which ten actual complaints were submitted to a group of 486 police officials was carried out. The complaints concerned shoplifting, stealing from a colleague, stealing out of a parked car, extortion, damaging of a neighbour's fence, conversion of funds collected, burglary, battery of a pub owner, the theft of a moped and attempted rape.

The respondents were asked to select the information they required to enable them to decide on the procedure to be followed. The information they requested was recorded together with the decision they finally took. An additional question put to the respondents was in what order they would investigate the ten cases. We refer the reader to the report entitled "Police R . . . . ."

and Decision-making" (Verbaliseringsgedrag: Informatie en Beslissing) for a more detailed description of the investigation and a comprehensive report on the results. We wish to confine our attention here to results which have some bearing on the formulation of a policy on the reporting of offences by the police.

#### Decision-making

Respondents could select one of the following alternatives to indicate how they would deal with a complaint:

1. No action at all on receipt of complaint;
2. Record only;
3. Record complaint and pass through routine administrative procedures;
4. Record complaint and initiate low priority investigation;
5. Record complaint and initiate high priority investigation.

Any alternative could if required be supplemented by a decision to attempt to arbitrate in the matter or to refer the matter to some other organisation. Analysis of the results showed that there was little difference in the decisions taken by the three groups of police officers. However, the municipal police were clearly less inclined to investigate - whether with high or low priority rating - than were the National Police.

Many municipal police officers considered that especially "stealing from a parked car", "damaging the neighbour's fence" and "theft of a moped" did not merit an investigation. The Municipal Police were also somewhat more inclined to abstain from recording some of the offences and considered that an attempt at personal arbitration was sufficient.

Were decisions differed, efforts were made to ascertain if there was any correlation with other factors such as the nature of the information selected, the age and rank of the respondent, etc. Hardly any correlation was found but there was a very marked connection between the individual respondents' ratings and their final decisions. This finding enhances the significance of the results of our investigations into the police officers' ratings of the 50 offences.

#### Priority

As stated in the introduction the respondents were asked at the end of the experiment to give the order in which they would investigate

Also here there were no very great differences between the three sample groups. All the groups, for instance, gave the highest average priority to the extortion case and the lowest priority to theft from an unlocked car. A check was made to ascertain the extent to which the priority given to a complaint by each respondent depended on his views on:

- a. the gravity of the offence;
- b. the likelihood of his bringing the matter to a conclusion;
- c. the weight the public attached to the offence;
- d. the likelihood of the public prosecutor dropping the case;
- e. the degree of personal satisfaction he would derive from dealing with the case.

In six of the ten cases the closest correlation was found between the gravity of the offence and the priority given to investigation. Analysis of the correlation between the five variables named above and the priority given to investigation in which all ten offences were considered together showed that the seriousness-rating was the most important variable (the probability that the correlation found was due to chance was smaller than 1 in 1,000). A second important variable appeared to be the likelihood of success. Here it appeared that the cases in which the likelihood of the respondents being able to bring the matter to a satisfactory conclusion was greater were tackled sooner than the others.

### Inference

The decisions taken by the respondents in the simulation experiment involving dealing with and detecting or investigating ten offences exhibited a high degree of similarity. Where the decisions differed, however the differences were largely due to differences in the participants' ratings of the offences. The results of the investigation concerning the ratings of the three sample groups of police officers have consequently gained considerably in importance.

## 9. Conclusions

On considering the most important results of the investigation we believe we may draw the following conclusions.

- 1) The opinions of the various sample groups of respondents (police officers, public prosecutors and the public) on the gravity of the

offences concerned are noticeably different. The public regards the majority of the offences submitted to them as more serious than do the public prosecutors. This is particularly true in respect of certain sexual offences, offences involving drugs and offences which entail the contravening of what may be called a secondary standard of decency.

- 2) As a group the public prosecutors are very consistent in their judgment. Differences, if any, were slight. The opinions of the police, on the other hand, differed considerably. The greatest differences were those between the views of the regional groups of the national police and those of the municipal police officers. It also appeared that older, more experienced police officials were inclined to consider many offences less serious than did their younger, less experienced colleagues.
- 3) In spite of all the differences in the opinions on each individual offence, seven criteria could be distinguished, all of which were of approximately the same relative weight to the various sample groups.
- 4) The gravity rating of an offence appeared to have an essential bearing on the decision as to whether or not an official report on the offence should be submitted.

The reader may be wondering what the link is between these results and day-to-day detection, investigation and prosecution policy practice. The authorities are already having to sift offences before taking any action owing to the fact that it is impossible to investigate all of them and/or prosecute every offender<sup>7)</sup>. There are understandable norms but improper motives may also play a part, and this can give rise to a variety of difficulties. It is the duty of the working group responsible for formulating policy to find out whether there are any remedies. Can the results of this opinion poll offer any solution? We have two points to make before we answer the question.

The first is that a policy decision to set priorities for the official reporting and prosecution of offences can never be based solely on the results of this investigation. The formulation of any such policy plan will always be essentially a political matter. The second point we wish to make is that the outcome of any investigation into the rating of offences is bound to depend to a certain extent on the choice of the offences to be assessed. While the 50 descriptions of offences used

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7) The norms used when sifting offences are not always different.

in the present poll may be deemed to be more or less representative of the kind of offences with which the Netherlands police forces are confronted nowadays, ratings given by the respondents to the various offences listed will often have been influenced by certain characteristics of the "cases" submitted. Consequently, no general conclusions concerning, say, the gravity of the offence of defrauding the social security department can be formulated in the light of the single case we selected.

However, the likelihood that respondents' ratings will have been influenced by the choice of the offences submitted to them is very much reduced if the average rating of several offences which represent a particular type is considered. In view of the fact that in interpreting the information obtained from the investigation we have almost exclusively considered the ratings of types of offences, we believe that the results presented provide a useful tool for testing any proposals concerning a selective policy for the official reporting of offences. The first item which may be used as an aid in formulating policy is the evidence obtained from the investigations that the public prosecutors, the police and the public rate offences by virtually the same criteria and that these criteria have relatively the same weight for each of the groups.

Another item which might serve to make the first more precise is the fact that in several instances the public prosecutors, the police and the public have different opinions on the gravity of a particular offence. This part of the investigation serves to highlight the controversial offences, i.e. those which require a careful approach. A third item that might be useful is the evidence that personal factors such as age and professional experience influence ratings. Finally, the results of the simulation experiment might be of some importance. These points are dealt with at greater length in the following pages. Let us start with the latter point, viz. the results of the simulation experiment. The importance of this investigation was that it showed that the gravity rating was the factor that tipped the balance when it came to deciding what steps to take with regard to official reporting and investigation. This emphasises once again that the method by which the gravity ratings of the offences were obtained was sound. This information, however, would only carry weight in the formulation of policy if it could be established that the gravity ratings of the public prosecutors, the police and the public provided evidence of consensus of opinion.

Without some such consensus the formulation of a more selective policy would be a risky undertaking. It would be only too easy to create a situation in which the public prosecutors decided on the basis of their criteria not to prosecute certain offences or kinds of offences while the police on the basis of their criteria would do exactly the opposite and devote much attention to the detection or investigation of such offences. It need hardly be stressed that such a situation might cause considerable frustration. What has the opinion poll taught us in this respect? Factor analysis of the information brought to light about seven criteria on which the various groups broadly concurred. They were, in descending order of gravity:-

|     |    |                                             |
|-----|----|---------------------------------------------|
| I   | 1. | Manslaughter                                |
|     | 2. | Instrumental violence                       |
| II  | 3. | Intentional injury                          |
|     | 4. | Injury or damage resulting from hooliganism |
|     | 5. | Contravention of sexual morality            |
| III | 6. | Intentional material damage                 |
|     | 7. | Failure to observe a statutory regulation   |

It should be noted that there are two offences on which the public's opinion differs from that of the public prosecutors and the police: the public attaches greater weight to sexual offences and place intentional injury lower down the list. Closer study of the information obtained therefore makes it clear that selectivity will have to be limited to the offences the rating of which was chiefly determined by the components "intentional material damage" or "failure to observe a statutory regulation" (there is no difference of opinion concerning their relative positions). Offences the rating of which was mainly determined by one of the other components found by us are less suitable for selective reporting, because the poll shows that on the whole such offences are regarded by and large as much too serious by the public prosecutors and certainly by the police and the public. In concrete terms this means that a less stringent policy with regard to official police reporting can only be safely adopted in respect of offences such as vandalism or plain theft at the one end of the scale and certain contraventions of such legislation as the Drug Act, the Road Traffic Act or the Social Security Acts at the other.

It should in no way be assumed, however, that the expedient pursuing of a less stringent policy with regard to these offences solves all our problems. We have seen that within the general criteria the opinions of the police and the public prosecutors on individual offences do differ, so careful manoeuvring will still be required to avoid the frustrations described above. Minor offences involving money which entail the contravening of a secondary standard of propriety are still regarded as very serious indeed, especially by the public.

Nevertheless, if such limitations are borne in mind, the adoption of a rational selective policy within the framework described would appear quite feasible. In practice, the public prosecutors will probably act as a kind of "trendsetters" in the sense that the police will adapt their investigation and reporting policy to the prosecution policy of the public prosecutors.

The difference between the two groups may not become too great, however, otherwise frustrations will ensue. It may be taken for granted that the risk is greatest in rural areas, where the regional groups of the National Police hold views very different from those of their colleagues in urban areas, which far more nearly approach those of the public prosecutors.

Even at this early stage it may be assumed that the differences of opinion between the public prosecutors and the police will set up certain tensions, simply because differing ideas concerning the gravity of offences may cause the police wrongly to believe that in certain cases the public prosecutors erred in not prosecuting.

The last point we have to deal with is an incidental result of the opinion poll. The poll shows that among police ranks the gravity rating was strongly influenced by the age factor. On the whole, younger policemen adjudge offences more harshly than do the older ones. Expansion of the Police Corps might well lead to a drop in the average age. An influx of inexperienced personnel could well result in offences being given heavier ratings; this would increase the existing differences between the views of the police and those of the public prosecutors. It would be a good thing if we started taking this into account.

AVERAGE GRAVITY RATING AND SERIAL NUMBER OF EACH OFFENCE

| Serial number | Description                              | Municipal police |      | National Police regional groups |      | National Police Districts Divisions |      | Public Procurators |      | Population sample |      |
|---------------|------------------------------------------|------------------|------|---------------------------------|------|-------------------------------------|------|--------------------|------|-------------------|------|
|               |                                          | GR               | SN   | GS                              | RN   | GS                                  | RN   | GS                 | RN   | GS                | RN   |
| Factor        |                                          |                  |      |                                 |      |                                     |      |                    |      |                   |      |
| 1. VII        | Hold-up (service station)                | 8.1              | 4.5  | 8.0                             | 4.0  | 8.0                                 | 4.5  | 7.8                | 5.5  | 7.9               | 7.0  |
| 2. IV         | Smashing cash register                   | 5.4              | 33.0 | 5.8                             | 31.0 | 5.7                                 | 28.0 | 5.3                | 27.5 | 6.5               | 32.0 |
| 3. IV         | Shoplifting (coat)                       | 3.5              | 45.0 | 4.1                             | 43.5 | 3.8                                 | 45.0 | 2.5                | 48.0 | 5.1               | 41.0 |
| 4. IV         | Theft of car                             | 5.7              | 26.5 | 6.3                             | 20.5 | 6.0                                 | 23.0 | 5.7                | 21.0 | 7.1               | 18.0 |
| 5. IV         | Misappropriation of funds (petrol money) | 4.5              | 39.0 | 5.1                             | 39.0 | 4.9                                 | 38.0 | 4.1                | 36.0 | 5.9               | 30.0 |
| 6. III        | Sexual offence against boy               | 7.3              | 9.0  | 7.6                             | 7.0  | 7.1                                 | 10.0 | 6.1                | 16.0 | 8.2               | 4.0  |
| 7. II         | Stabbing bartender                       | 7.4              | 7.0  | 7.5                             | 8.5  | 7.5                                 | 7.0  | 6.9                | 7.0  | 7.6               | 11.0 |
| 8. IV         | Smashing fence                           | 3.0              | 49.0 | 3.6                             | 47.5 | 3.3                                 | 49.0 | 2.7                | 47.0 | 4.7               | 43.0 |
| 9. V          | Manslaughter of barkeeper                | 8.5              | 2.0  | 8.5                             | 2.0  | 8.4                                 | 2.0  | 8.3                | 2.0  | 8.6               | 2.0  |
| 10. VII       | Rape                                     | 8.2              | 3.0  | 8.2                             | 3.0  | 8.2                                 | 3.0  | 8.0                | 3.0  | 8.4               | 3.0  |
| 11. VII       | Purse snatching                          | 6.4              | 15.0 | 6.2                             | 25.0 | 6.2                                 | 19.0 | 5.8                | 19.0 | 6.8               | 25.0 |
| 12. VI        | Illegal possession of shotgun            | 3.5              | 45.0 | 4.0                             | 45.0 | 3.6                                 | 46.5 | 3.4                | 42.5 | 4.5               | 47.0 |
| 13. VI        | Drug pushing (5 gr. marihuana)           | 4.8              | 38.0 | 5.7                             | 33.5 | 5.0                                 | 36.5 | 3.4                | 42.5 | 6.9               | 24.0 |
| 14. VI        | Running gambling den                     | 3.5              | 45.0 | 4.6                             | 41.0 | 3.9                                 | 43.0 | 3.7                | 39.0 | 4.7               | 42.0 |
| 15. IV        | Burglary                                 | 6.1              | 18.0 | 6.3                             | 20.5 | 6.2                                 | 19.0 | 5.9                | 17.5 | 7.1               | 19.0 |
| 16. II        | Molesting passer-by                      | 6.5              | 14.0 | 6.5                             | 17.0 | 6.6                                 | 14.0 | 6.2                | 14.0 | 6.7               | 28.0 |
| 17. IV        | Fraud (forged cheques)                   | 5.9              | 23.0 | 6.6                             | 14.5 | 6.2                                 | 19.0 | 6.2                | 14.0 | 7.3               | 15.0 |
| 18. VI        | Abuse of social security                 | 3.8              | 42.5 | 4.1                             | 43.5 | 3.9                                 | 43.0 | 4.0                | 37.0 | 4.6               | 45.0 |
| 19. I         | Pollution (oil)                          | 5.8              | 24.5 | 6.2                             | 25.0 | 5.7                                 | 28.0 | 5.6                | 23.0 | 6.9               | 22.0 |
| 20. IV        | Shoplifting (foodstuffs)                 | 2.7              | 50.0 | 3.1                             | 50.1 | 3.1                                 | 50.0 | 1.7                | 50.0 | 4.4               | 49.0 |
| 21. IV        | Theft from parked car (Fls.70)           | 3.9              | 41.0 | 4.3                             | 42.0 | 4.0                                 | 41.0 | 3.4                | 42.5 | 4.6               | 46.0 |
| 22. IV        | Theft of moped                           | 5.4              | 33.0 | 5.8                             | 31.0 | 5.6                                 | 31.0 | 5.0                | 31.5 | 6.8               | 27.0 |
| 23. III       | Attempted rape                           | 5.5              | 31.0 | 6.2                             | 25.0 | 5.5                                 | 32.5 | 5.4                | 26.0 | 6.9               | 23.0 |

|         |                                           |     |      |     |      |     |      |     |      |     |      |
|---------|-------------------------------------------|-----|------|-----|------|-----|------|-----|------|-----|------|
| 24. IV  | Conversion of funds collected for charity | 5.6 | 29.0 | 6.3 | 20.5 | 5.7 | 28.0 | 4.9 | 33.5 | 7.2 | 17.0 |
| 25. II  | Wife beating                              | 6.1 | 18.0 | 6.5 | 17.0 | 6.3 | 16.0 | 5.3 | 27.5 | 7.5 | 12.0 |
| 26. VI  | Drug addiction (heroin)                   | 5.0 | 36.5 | 5.3 | 38.0 | 5.0 | 36.5 | 3.4 | 42.5 | 6.5 | 31.0 |
| 27. VII | Blackmail of homosexual                   | 6.3 | 16.0 | 6.2 | 25.0 | 6.4 | 15.0 | 6.6 | 9.5  | 6.8 | 26.0 |
| 28. II  | Assaulting bartender                      | 5.6 | 29.0 | 5.8 | 31.0 | 5.5 | 32.5 | 5.2 | 29.5 | 6.4 | 35.0 |
| 29. II  | Assault (stabbing)                        | 7.3 | 9.0  | 7.2 | 11.0 | 7.1 | 10.0 | 6.5 | 11.5 | 7.4 | 13.0 |
| 30. VII | Offering unwanted protection              | 7.0 | 11.5 | 7.1 | 12.5 | 7.3 | 8.0  | 6.6 | 9.5  | 6.9 | 21.0 |
| 31. IV  | Theft from colleague                      | 5.7 | 26.5 | 5.9 | 28.5 | 5.8 | 25.0 | 4.6 | 35.0 | 6.6 | 30.0 |
| 32. IV  | Theft from parked car (Fls. 5)            | 3.3 | 48.0 | 3.4 | 49.0 | 3.5 | 48.0 | 2.4 | 49.0 | 3.9 | 50.0 |
| 33. IV  | Damaging bicycle tyre                     | 3.4 | 47.0 | 3.6 | 47.5 | 3.6 | 46.5 | 3.1 | 45.0 | 4.5 | 48.0 |
| 34. IV  | 5 burglaries                              | 6.0 | 21.0 | 6.3 | 20.5 | 6.2 | 19.0 | 5.9 | 17.5 | 7.0 | 20.0 |
| 35. VII | Shoplifting with violence                 | 8.1 | 4.5  | 7.9 | 5.0  | 8.0 | 4.5  | 7.8 | 5.5  | 7.9 | 8.0  |
| 36. I   | Damaging cars                             | 6.0 | 21.0 | 6.6 | 14.5 | 6.1 | 22.0 | 5.5 | 24.5 | 7.3 | 14.0 |
| 37. VII | Hold-up                                   | 7.8 | 6.0  | 7.8 | 6.0  | 7.7 | 6.0  | 7.9 | 4.0  | 7.6 | 9.0  |
| 38. IV  | Breaking into school                      | 5.4 | 33.0 | 5.6 | 36.0 | 5.3 | 35.0 | 4.9 | 33.5 | 6.3 | 36.0 |
| 39. VI  | Driving under the influence of alcohol    | 6.0 | 21.0 | 6.5 | 17.0 | 6.2 | 19.0 | 5.7 | 21.0 | 6.5 | 34.0 |
| 40. I   | Causing fatal road accident               | 7.0 | 11.5 | 7.4 | 10.0 | 6.9 | 12.0 | 6.7 | 8.0  | 7.9 | 6.0  |
| 41. III | Incest with under-age daughter            | 7.9 | 9.0  | 7.5 | 8.5  | 7.1 | 10.0 | 6.5 | 11.5 | 8.1 | 5.0  |
| 42. IV  | Picking pockets                           | 6.1 | 18.0 | 5.9 | 28.5 | 5.7 | 28.0 | 5.5 | 24.5 | 6.7 | 29.0 |
| 43. IV  | Joy riding                                | 3.8 | 42.5 | 3.8 | 46.0 | 3.9 | 4.30 | 3.5 | 40.0 | 4.7 | 44.0 |
| 44. IV  | Theft from till                           | 4.4 | 40.0 | 5.0 | 40.0 | 4.7 | 39.0 | 3.8 | 38.0 | 5.8 | 40.0 |
| 45. II  | Assault after provocation                 | 5.8 | 24.5 | 5.6 | 36.0 | 5.4 | 34.0 | 5.2 | 29.5 | 6.0 | 38.0 |
| 46. III | Exhibitionism                             | 5.0 | 36.5 | 5.6 | 36.0 | 4.4 | 40.0 | 2.8 | 46.0 | 7.2 | 16.0 |
| 47. IV  | Proffering forged currency                | 5.6 | 29.0 | 6.2 | 25.0 | 5.9 | 24.0 | 5.7 | 21.0 | 6.5 | 33.0 |
| 48. IV  | Knowingly receiving stolen goods          | 5.2 | 35.0 | 5.7 | 33.5 | 5.7 | 28.0 | 5.0 | 31.5 | 6.1 | 37.0 |
| 49. VI  | Driving under the influence of LSD        | 6.7 | 13.0 | 7.1 | 12.5 | 6.7 | 13.0 | 6.2 | 14.0 | 7.6 | 10.0 |
| 50. V   | Robbery with violence                     | 8.8 | 1.0  | 8.8 | 1.0  | 8.8 | 1.0  | 8.8 | 1.0  | 8.8 | 1.0  |
|         | Average rating                            | 5.7 |      | 6.0 |      | 5.8 |      | 5.3 |      | 6.6 |      |

**END**