

LII



A first step towards
VICTIMOLOGICAL RISK ANALYSIS

Carl H.D. Steinmetz

85679

Ministry of Justice The Hague - Netherlands

A FIRST STEP TOWARDS VICTIMOLOGICAL RISK ANALYSIS

A conceptual model for the
prevention of 'petty' crime

NCJRS
SEP 10 1982
ACQUISITIONS

CARL H.D. STEINMETZ^{x)}

U.S. Department of Justice
National Institute of Justice

This document has been reproduced exactly as received from the person or organization originating it. Points of view or opinions stated in this document are those of the authors and do not necessarily represent the official position or policies of the National Institute of Justice.

Permission to reproduce this copyrighted material has been granted by

Ministry of Justice
The Hague, NETHERLANDS

to the National Criminal Justice Reference Service (NCJRS).

Further reproduction outside of the NCJRS system requires permission of the copyright owner.

^{x)} The author is a researcher with the Crime Development Section of the RDC, Research and Documentation Center of the Dutch Ministry of Justice

CONTENTS

=====

	page
1. Introduction	1
2. Towards a theoretical framework	
2.1 Introduction	5
2.2 The risk model and the backgrounds to 'petty' crime	6
2.3 Summary	11
3. Experience with practical experiments in prevention	
3.1 Introduction	13
3.2 Discussion of prevention experiments	13
3.3 Conclusions	17
4. The possible roles of the public and the police in crime prevention	18

1. Introduction

Up to the beginning of the seventies criminologists tended to favour the offender-oriented approach in studying developments in crime. Criminological theory put the emphasis on the individual offender, his or her psychological characteristics, and the social environment in which criminal behaviour developed.

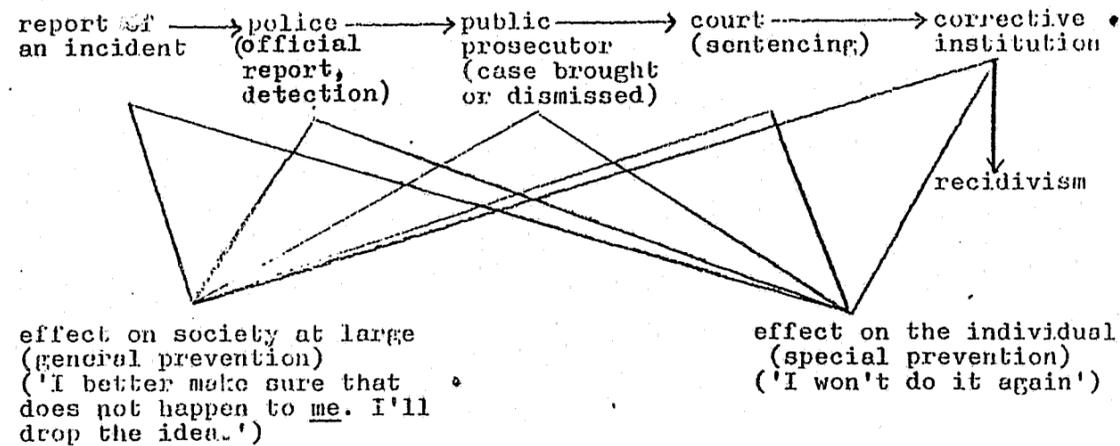
This approach was closely related to the traditional approach of the police and the public prosecutor, and indeed originated from it historically. Since the beginning the criminologist has been someone who writes reports about the offender for the court.

The traditional approach is based on the premise that law enforcement and conviction in the courts are adequate deterrents to stop potential and known offenders from committing crimes. According to J.P.S. Fiselier (1978) this premise derives from the assumption that 'crime is essentially the behaviour of individuals (offenders) who have come to the conclusion that the anticipated advantages outweigh the possible disadvantages'. According to this view it is the task of the Ministry of Justice to make the disadvantages as great as possible.

Criminal lawyers and criminologists use the terms 'general' and 'special' prevention when discussing deterring people from crime. General prevention in the narrow sense (Denkers, 1975) aims at deterring those who have never committed crimes, while special (individual) prevention (Van der Werff, 1979) is more offender-oriented.

General prevention in the wider sense can operate in four ways: a. through deterrence; b. through the creation of norms; c. through preventing people from taking the law into their own hands; d. through rendering harmless. See: Generale Preventie, drs. F.A.C.M. Denkers, Rijksrapport Cahiers voor Criminologie, 1975.

FIGURE 1



It has gradually become clear, as reflected in a large number of articles and much research, that the high hopes originally held of general and individual prevention have not been fulfilled. Van der Werff (1979) has shown that neither short prison sentences nor fines have any special preventive effect. It has already been known for some time that longer prison sentences certainly do not have the desired effect. Denkers (1975) has outlined the dubious nature of the general preventive effect. The problems associated with the general preventive effect are clear enough in themselves, but the results of research reveal 'a complex of factors within which it is not easy to detect any causality'. The studies of Denkers lead to two inter-related conclusions: it is not possible to show that the general preventive effect exists, or that it does not exist.

The failure of the deterrent mechanisms of detection and conviction combined with the increased pressure of work have caused the police and the public prosecutors, under heavy social pressure, to revise their view of the basic procedure of prosecution, sentence and treatment as the one and only remedy.

At the local level (e.g. police experiments in the Hague, Utrecht, Amsterdam and Hoogeveen, etc.) and at the decentralised national level, this change of view has led to crime prevention being accepted as a new and equally important part of crime control.

According to Alderson (1977), a chief constable of police in the U.K., the existing police forces are likely to interpret their new task of crime prevention in the most obvious way, so that it will take the form of more or less incidental publicity campaigns about methods for safeguarding property, etc. Alderson regards giving information about security methods through the mass media or in schools or directly to the public as a form of secondary prevention. In his view other police duties such as surveillance, providing assistance and traffic control also belong to this category. He argues that informing the public about prevention is a form of secondary prevention because it 'does nothing directly or systematically about the causes of crime'. He sees a great danger that crime prevention in this form, like some other more traditional forms of police activity, will only serve to alleviate the effects of a situation which has got out of hand. Alderson argues in favour of a form of primary prevention by which the community, possibly at the initiative of the local police force, would attempt to create a social climate in which the development of crime could be prevented.

A prerequisite for the kind of primary prevention proposed by Alderson is adequate insight into the (changing) background reasons for crime. The acceptance of crime prevention as a new police task thus leads inevitably to a new appeal to criminologists to throw light on the backgrounds to the most frequently occurring offences.

In recent years a number of interesting studies have been made of the increase or decrease of crime in the Netherlands (Dessaur, 1977; Van Dijk, 1974; Junger-Tas, 1978; Haafs and Sanis, 1979; Steensma, 1976). Without exception these studies are exercises in aggregated statistics, e.g. correcting the crime figures to allow for population growth, the proportion of men under the age of 30, the rise in standards of living, etc.

Despite the apparent differences in approach, these studies are also alike in being based on the figures for recorded crime. Another feature they have in common is that the development of recorded crime is related to one or more social developments regardless of the lack of a more comprehensive theoretical framework. Just as in the heyday of psychological criminology, when all manner of personal characteristics were treated as causal factors on the grounds of statistical correlations (Cohen, 1970), social situations and developments are now being described as 'crime-generating' on similar grounds. The danger of this kind of eclectic, multiple factor approach is that trends in crime will be detected and prognosticated on the basis of connections which may later prove to have been illusory.

Meanwhile the Dutch press has been devoting considerable space to discussion of the question of whether or not security equipment and devices work (Buikhuisen, 1979). This discussion was prompted by a newspaper report that research had shown that they did not. Understandably, the newspaper reader, as a potential buyer of security devices, is anxious to know whether he is going to get value for his money, but the only possible conclusion that this discussion can lead to is that it is impossible to answer this question in a theoretical vacuum.

To make it possible to draw up programmes for general prevention, there is an urgent need for a general theoretical framework for the interpretation of changes in the level of crime. The major requirement of course is for a framework that offers starting points for actual prevention. In our view a useful first step in this direction would be to analyse the factors determining the individual's risk of becoming the victim directly or indirectly of an offence (victimological risk analysis).

This approach is based on the idea of primary prevention, since it is concerned both with the potential offender (the offender-oriented approach) and with the opportunity which makes the thief. In this article an attempt is made to take a first step towards a broader theoretical

framework for 'petty' crime and to discuss the effect of existing measures in the light of this model. In the final section the roles of the public and the police in crime prevention are considered in more detail.

2. Towards a theoretical framework

2.1 Introduction

The main premise of victimological risk analysis is that an offender must have an opportunity to commit a crime. Cohen and Felson (1978) say that for a crime to occur there must be in addition to a motivated criminal an opportunity to commit the crime; in other words there must be a suitable target (a person or object) which is inadequately protected or guarded. Moreover, they assume that the presence or absence of these elements will often occur at more or less the same time. This simultaneous occurrence will depend on time and surroundings.

From the point of view of victimology, opportunity is the occurrence of interactions (contacts) between potential offenders and potential victims. The nature and extent of these contacts will play an important role in the committing of a successful crime.

Hindelang (1978) states that interactions between potential victims and potential offenders do not occur at random. They depend on place (e.g. whether or not a large city), time (e.g. whether or not at night) and/or the area (e.g. whether or not a centre for night life).

These interactions need not necessarily involve coming into contact; they may indeed consist of the absence of the victim for example (burglary while the occupants are on holiday).

Finally, the result of these interactions will depend on the extent to which people and objects are protected or guarded.

Which factors play a major role in bringing about the contacts between potential offenders and potential victims?

which result in punishable offences? Which social developments have an effect on these victim-generating factors?

2.2 The risk model and the backgrounds to 'petty' crime

In a report on surveys of victims between 1974 and 1979 carried out by the Scientific Research and Documentation Centre (WODC) of the Ministry of Justice, Van Dijk and Steinmetz (1979) made a first attempt to determine the factors which relate to the objective risk of petty crime in the Netherlands. 'Risk' is defined as the objective chance of becoming the direct or indirect victim of a punishable offence (a chance of one equals 100% risk).

Proximity factor

The first factor is proximity, which has a geographic aspect (spending time or living in the vicinity of potential offenders) and a social aspect (the number of contacts with potential offenders resulting from a particular way of life). The importance of geographic proximity of potential offenders is related to the known fact that they generally prefer to operate close to home because of the cost factor and their special knowledge of life in the area. Albert J. Reiss Jr. (1978) states that offenders try to keep the distance between the home and the scene of the crime to a minimum, and that younger offenders operate closer to home than older ones. No doubt there are exceptions to these general rules. Pick-pockets, for example, tend to hang around the anonymous crowds in busy shopping centres, while professional burglars concentrate on quiet, deserted residential districts.

Nonetheless the work of Dr. C. van der Werff (C.B.S.-tapes, 1966) has confirmed that the general rule applies in the Netherlands. His study showed that most petty crime was committed in the district in which the offender lived, and that in the large cities in the Netherlands a relatively high proportion of the inhabitants have been convicted of an offence. For this reason we may assume

that the inhabitants of large cities run a higher risk of becoming victims, and this was in fact confirmed by the WODC surveys of victims.

Which social developments may positively or negatively affect geographic proximity? The most relevant developments would seem to be the growth of socially mixed residential areas (the mixing of the 'haves' and the 'have nots'), and the further segregation of home, work and recreation. This segregation makes necessary frequent journeys back and forth. Both of these developments can lead to an increased number of contacts between individuals who are unknown to each other. The possessions of one of them may be an attractive target for the other.

Social proximity is chiefly determined by individual or collective life-styles. According to Hindelang (1978) and Van Dijk and Steinmetz (1979), the risk of becoming the victim of petty crime is to a large extent dependent on the individual life-style. Some life-styles, which in turn are related to the individual's social role (young or old, married or single, high or low social class; etc.), may more often lead to contacts with potential offenders than others.

For example, young people and adolescents spend an average of 60 hours per week on leisure activities, of which 47 hours are spent outside the home (evenings out). The average for the population as a whole is 47 hours leisure time, of which 14 hours are spent outside the home. Regardless of place of residence, social class or sex, young people as a group are almost 3.5 times more often the victims of crime than the elderly, almost 2.5 times more often victims than people aged between 40 and 65, and almost 1.5 times more often victims than people aged between 25 and 40. In the three largest cities in the Netherlands, being young and spending time in places of entertainment (pub, disco, etc.) in fact means spending time in the night life subculture with a group of unknown people (who prefer to remain unknown).

It must be said that the importance of social proximity as a factor in the risk of becoming a victim varies according to the type of offence. It can be deduced from the WODC

surveys of victims that social proximity and individual life-style largely affect the chances of being a victim of typical street crimes such as indecent assault, physical assault and theft of bicycles. The WODC studies showed that burglary and theft of mopeds and cars were less influenced by life-style.

It is also reasonable to expect that risk-taking behaviour produces a further differentiation (i.e. a higher or lower chance of victimization than the average risk for the group) of social proximity classes. It is assumed that young people (who are more often victims anyway) with certain personality characteristics run an extra high risk of being mistreated.

Which social developments can be identified as relevant to the factor of social proximity? Firstly, it is clear that the amount of leisure, and particularly that of young people, will increase. This will lead to a corresponding increase in the number of contacts between offenders and potential victims. Secondly, we expect the emancipation of women to lead to an increased number of contacts between potential female victims and offenders. This tendency has already been partially confirmed by studies of victims which showed a relatively sharp rise in the risk run by women. Thirdly, the growing urbanisation of Dutch society inevitably leads to more contact with strangers, and thus with offenders.

Geographic and social proximity together make up the proximity factor, but proximity alone does not account for the risk of being the victim of crime. There must be a motive for the crime to be committed and, of course, opportunity.

The great mass of criminological literature deals with the motives of offenders. The most obvious motives are having to pay ever rising prices for heroin in the case of addicts (drug-related crime), the desire for goods as status symbols, and more psychological reasons such as boredom, showing off and sexual adventure. In addition, in certain categories of offenders psychological disturbances may play a role (Buikhuisen, 1979).

Motives of this sort have always been present, probably no more, and certainly no less, so in the present society

than in the past. Rising unemployment will increase the need of adolescents to gain status and a sense of self-respect in an unconventional way. Clearly, research into the development of the motives of offenders is of great practical value, but here we would like to focus attention on the characteristics of the potential victims which have contributed to these motives resulting in criminal actions.

Attractiveness factor

In a sense the victimological counterpart of the motive is the attractiveness factor. This is the extent to which someone or something clearly represents an attractive target for potential offenders. Attractiveness is determined by the possession of valuables (antiques, jewellery, etc.), certain sexual characteristics (young, good looking) or characteristics which arouse aggression. Here again the importance of this factor varies according to the type of crime. Possession of valuables, for example, will largely be a determinant of crimes such as burglary and theft.

Significant developments in this context are the rising numbers of people owning cars and electronic apparatus (Felson, 1978). These developments will affect the nature of contacts. These days there is simply a great deal more to steal and vandalise than there was in the 1950's.

Exposure factor

Mixing with strangers has led to the loss of all kinds of natural social inhibitions, and, as mentioned above, it has increased as a result of the lack of integration between home, work and recreation. Offenders need have little fear of the repercussions when they operate among strangers. Moreover, people are less inclined to rush to each other's assistance in an impersonal and anonymous atmosphere. So in effect they offer each other less protection than may have been the case in the past. This is an obvious example of the opportunity helping to make the thief.

This third factor is known as the exposure factor. This is the extent to which an offender is given an opportunity to commit an offence when he or she comes into contact with an attractive target. Particularly as regards the

opportunity offered, we would expect to find differences between various offences, and risk-taking behaviour is also likely to play an important role.

A distinction can be made between the technical and the social aspects of the exposure factor. The technical aspects are failure to lock up houses and cars adequately and carrying one's purse on top of an open shopping bag. Such technical measures are not without importance, and are referred to as 'technoprevention'. The possession of large amounts of cash is another aspect of the technical exposure. These matters have been dealt with in detail in an earlier WODC publication (Buikhuisen, 1976) and elsewhere, so we will not devote much space to them here.

The social aspects of the exposure factor are the degree to which one or other form of protection or guard is present. One example of guarding would be the preventive patrols carried out by the police. Being away from home or absent on holiday increases the risk of being the victim of burglary. It will be obvious that, particularly as regards detecting burglary and possibly intervening, neighbours can contribute to the protection of the home and property. In urban areas the prospects for this kind of protection or informal social control are poor. This is underlined by the results of an American field experiment (Takooshian and Bodinger, 1978) in eighteen cities. During this experiment¹ hardly a single passer-by intervened or even said anything (only 3% did do this) when they saw someone breaking into a car in broad daylight and stealing various goods (televisions, cameras, etc.). Almost everyone looked and then continued on their way. It was not uncommon for even policemen to simply walk on. There was no reason to be afraid of physical violence since more than half of those playing the part of the criminal were women.

¹There is reason to believe that repeating the same experiment in for example Amsterdam would produce similar results. See e.g. G.J. van Os, Het Hux: een opvangcentrum voor heroïne verslaafden in de Spuistraat, Dissertation in sociology, March 1979.

Another remarkable result was that some of the passers-by actually helped to commit the crime or asked for 'hush money'. In another field experiment similar reactions to physical assaults in the street were observed.

The chief characteristic of the urban environment is the absence of formal and informal social control. Changes in urban areas have led to environments (e.g. at home, work and school) where everyone used to know everyone else becoming dominated by anonymity and impersonality. Gardiner (1978) suggests that the increased density and clustering of means of transport (roads and railways, etc.) and of systems for the provision of goods and services has resulted in social segregation, which in turn is the most evident reason for impersonal and anonymous environments. Examples of this include small streets which become busy routes connecting one part of the city with another, and schools and neighbourhood shops which become school complexes and large shopping centres. The combination of various socioeconomic and physical processes (high-rise and low-rise building, semi-private and public gardens, etc.) has resulted in safety (as regards crime, traffic, children, police, etc.) not being achieved to the same extent throughout the Netherlands.

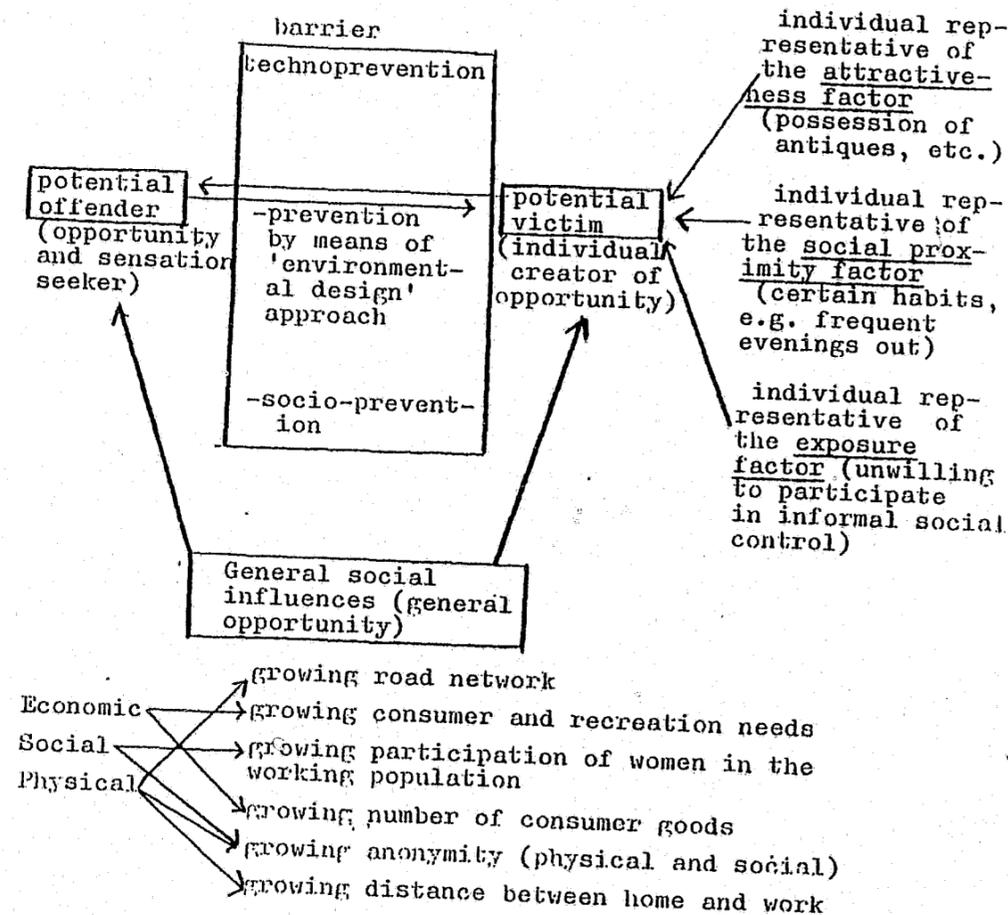
2.3. Summary

In view of the social developments described above, we can expect to see a continuing increase in the number of contacts between potential offenders and potential victims and/or their possessions, together with growing opportunities to commit offences. The offenders' motives for committing crimes will at least remain constant. At the same time we conclude that the theoretical framework outlined above (proximity factor, attractiveness factor, and exposure factor) reveals a large number of widely varying backgrounds to the interactions between potential offenders and potential victims. The range of significant interactions between the different elements of the model is such that for future analyses a systems theory approach will have to be used. This is the only approach which would seem to offer adequate possibilities for describing optimally

the dynamics of the social and physical ecology involved. We may also conclude that this theoretical framework provides starting points for primary crime prevention. It will make it possible to systematically determine the socioeconomic, physical and social components in the structure of society which generate crime, and to see at which points barriers might be placed between potential offenders and potential victims, or at least greater obstacles created.

Such barriers are termed 'technoprevention', 'socio-prevention' and 'crime prevention through environmental design' (see the diagram below).

FIGURE 2



3. Experience with practical experiments in prevention

3.1 Introduction

What has been the experience with practical experiments in prevention? To what extent do the results of these experiments correspond to the theoretical framework outlined above?

As stated above, the study of the interactions between the physical and social environment on the one hand, and the interactions between potential offenders and potential victims on the other demands a comprehensive theoretical framework. This means that experiments in this field must have as broad a scope as possible. This is clearly true in the case of a project in Devon and Cornwall in England (Alderson, 1977). In this experiment projection of subsets is used to establish the relations between where potential offenders live, where crimes are committed, the times at which they are committed, the characteristics of the victims, and the physical and social demographic characteristics of the scenes of crimes. However, this project lacks a theoretical framework so that the method remains highly empirical.

The other experiments discussed here were all aimed at influencing one or at the most a few of the possible interactions between environment and the offender-victim interactions. When relating the results to the theoretical framework outlined above, we must bear in mind that the factors listed have only been operationalised to a very limited extent in the prevention experiments carried out so far. This applies particularly to the attractiveness factor and the social proximity factor. In the case of the latter, it must be questioned whether it is generally possible or desirable to make people change their lifestyle in order to reduce the risk of petty crime. The exposure factor and the geographic proximity factor are the easiest to influence, and in fact practical experiments in prevention are generally concerned with these factors.

3.2 Discussion of prevention experiments

The significance of the exposure factor is emphasized in the work of Angel (1968), Jane Jacobs (1961), Oscar Newman

(1976) and Jeffery (1977). In the pioneering phase Angel put forward the hypothesis that there was little crime in very quiet streets, and that in very crowded streets informal social control ensured that there was also little crime. Moderately busy streets would most often be the scenes of crimes. Nowadays the presence of informal social control in large cities must be doubted in view of the results of the American experiment described above. This showed that it was possible to steal valuable goods such as televisions, cameras and fur coats from parked cars in eighteen cities without the police or passers-by doing or saying anything.

Oscar Newman has focussed attention on the relation between surrounding buildings and crime. He found that a clearly visible design and clearly delineated territorial limits encouraged social control and created psychological barriers for potential offenders. The creation of defensible space would thus lead to a reduction in crime. However, Sheena Wilson (1978) repeated Newman's studies in London and found no evidence of a difference in crime rate in high-rise and low-rise buildings, especially as regards vandalism. The differences in crime rate between high- and low-rise buildings proved to be misleading and were in fact directly related to the density of the child population in each block of flats.

Pat Mayhew (1979) points out that intelligent building design is not the only possible key to a crime-free environment. There are many other factors to be taken into account, including the sort of inhabitants, the number of local offenders, the density of the child population, and the way in which the environment is managed by the public and the authorities. None of these factors can be translated into architecture.

Mayhew stresses the importance of the geographic proximity factor (the number of local offenders) and the social exposure factor (supervision of children) from the above theoretical framework. In general it can be said that the results of these studies reveal yet again how poorly informal social control functions, particularly as regards control of children and the readiness of people to participate in control of their own neighbourhood. In this

context we might also mention the findings of Junger-Tas and Van der Zee-Meffkens (1978) that in the cities people are less inclined to alert the police when petty crimes are committed in the neighbourhood than they are in the country.

Waller (1978) has shown that a so-called 'block watch' proved to be a good method of preventing burglaries in daytime in Canada, but it does depend on the willingness of people to cooperate in the scheme (in the long term this willingness tends to decrease).

A Home Office study (No. 49, 1978, 'The impact of closed circuit television on crime in the London underground') showed that formal social control produced a considerable reduction in theft and robbery in the London underground.

The reduction of technical exposure, or technoprevention, which at first sight would seem to be the simplest topic, has not yet been considered. In the WODC report on 'Criminaliteit en technopreventie' (Buikhuisen and van Bergeijk, 1976) the possibilities for technoprevention are reviewed at length and it is suggested that the use of cash should be further limited. It is interesting that this suggestion is in accordance with the finding of Richard Block (1978) that differences in the extent of pick-pocketing and purse thefts might be related to the victim carrying cash instead of credit cards or cheques.

This example illustrates the complex nature of crime prevention. Given that at present (1979/1980) there are signs of an increase in cheque and giro frauds in the Netherlands, it is clear that discouraging the use of cash would only be a temporary solution, and that a new situation demands a new, creative approach. Prevention of purse thefts leads to the creation of an attractive target for a new form of crime, i.e. cheque fraud.

If there is to be any control of the present boom in sales of security equipment, the development of the industry will have to be critically studied and made the subject of public debate. The government could possibly play a role in the task of establishing norms. This statement should not be taken to indicate opposition to technoprevention or the security industry; it is simply an early warning against the growth of an

uncontrollable technology spiral. The same problem has been raised in a slightly different context by E.J. Tuininga (1979). According to him, it might be said that the technology was originally developed at the meso-level (commerce and industry), but that now the consequences of technological developments are affecting the micro- (individual) and macro- (society) levels.

Obvious examples of technical protection are the steering column lock in cars and the crash helmet for moped-riders. Mayhew (1975) reported on the anticipated and actual effects of the introduction of steering column locks. It was expected that thefts of cars would be reduced, but research showed that in fact the introduction of the steering column lock had more effect on joy-riding (unauthorised taking).

In the same article Mayhew points out that one of the effects was a shift of attention. The results showed that joy-riders and car thieves began to concentrate on older cars which had no steering column lock.

It is now clear that in the planning of general strategies of prevention and in the introduction of similar protective measures, the shift or displacement effect will have to be taken into account. On the basis of opportunity structures, Repetto (1976) distinguishes between five forms of displacement: a) to another time, b) to another tactic (modus operandi), c) to another area (nearby or a little further away, and d) so-called functional displacement to another crime.

The effects of making crash helmets compulsory for moped-riders are mentioned in the WODC surveys of victims. It would not surprise us to discover that these effects were largely due to a decrease in joy-riding. In 1978 the percentages of victims (and thus the chance of becoming a victim of this offence) again increased. This rise may indicate a change in the modus operandi (potential joy-riders stealing helmets or both moped and helmet).

Apart from these technical preventive measures, there is the matter of reliable locks on doors and windows. This kind of prevention (including locking bicycles and mopeds, etc.) has two drawbacks which have not yet been solved.

The first is what Waller (1979) describes as the 'security illusion'. The installation of good locks gives the occupants the illusion that they are safe, although the houses are still vulnerable if there is no improvement in the way in which they are guarded. It must be made clear to the public that locks are only a first barrier and as such a useful aid in the functioning of informal social control. If no one reacts when an alarm bell rings, there is little point in installing one.

The second drawback is the following. The WODC victim surveys of the last three years show that most people are aware of the existence of technical protective devices. Furthermore, they intend to make use of them. In practice, however, they frequently fail to do so. In 30% of cases the victims had not used any technical prevention, e.g. they failed to lock their bicycles or left windows or doors open. This contrast between good intentions and actual behaviour can be better understood if we remember that the population group running the greatest risk, i.e. young people, is by nature more inclined to take risks. It should also be borne in mind that the reward (reduced risk) for making the effort to apply technical measures at all times is rather abstract and uncertain.

In our view something can be done about these problems by making the public aware of how the risks are divided over the population. Young people in particular should be encouraged to take preventive measures. Ways should also be sought to make the taking of such measures directly rewarding, although this will not be an easy task.

A similar idea lay behind a Home Office study of wilful damage and vandalism in double-decker buses. It turned out that damage could be limited by locating the conductor

in the centre of the bus. This enabled the conductor to control the social situation in the bus. This measure had immediate advantages for all concerned and at the same time reduced vandalism.

3.3 Conclusions

Research has already produced some evidence for the value of an approach in which the physical, social and technical

measures complement each other. On the basis of the learning theories of psychology, it would seem to be of great importance in crime prevention that a link is made with the general welfare situation. Crime prevention is not a matter of technology alone. It requires adaptation of certain habits and social developments. The chances of success in achieving the necessary adaptations will be significantly greater if they contribute to the general welfare as well as preventing crime.

In order to remove, or at least allow for, a number of drawbacks, the model will have to include in its calculations the level at which measures can be taken and the appropriate cost-benefit analysis. The latest report on the RDC victim surveys distinguishes between measures at the micro-(individual), meso-(district or local authority) and macro-(government) levels. The micro- and meso-levels are closely interrelated since in general these are the levels at which the welfare debate is pursued. One example is the relation between technical preventive measures and individual willingness to participate in e.g. a block watch system on the one hand, and general coordination to encourage formal and informal social contact (help for the aged, holiday registers, etc.) in a neighbourhood on the other. Measures taken at the macro-(government) level have the obvious advantage that displacement of punishable offences nationally is unlikely to follow automatically.

Our main conclusion however is that improvement of (informal) social control offers the best hope. This implies a reorientation of the urban way of life. For those who are critics of the big-city culture the advantages of such reorientation are evident: 'greater welfare and less crime'. For others the advantage of crime prevention will have to be weighed against the disadvantages such as 'less freedom' and 'greater obligations to the neighbours', etc.

4. The possible roles of the public and the police in crime prevention

It has already been argued at length that the prevention

of crime must involve informal social control. We will now consider the question of informal social control in detail and in particular the related issue of the roles of the public and the police. This leads us to pose the following questions.

Who are our fellow citizens? What do they expect from each other and what subcultural differences in attitude affect their judgement of each other's expectations? The feasibility and effective range of a strategy of prevention based on the three-factor model described above will to some extent be determined by differences in priorities as regards home, work and recreational needs, and differences in the perception of the social system and, not least, of the degree of individual freedom (anonymity).

To give an intuitive indication of subcultural differences in expectations we quote the following passage from 'In the city park', a short story by Herman Pieter de Boer (1979).

"The policeman on the beat had already walked past them three times. The leather of his new boots creaked and squeaked noticeably, but the ladies were not to be distracted. Their embrace continued, with sighs, kisses and whispers. The policeman made his decision, cleared his throat and took up a position in front of the couple with his hands behind his back. 'What's all this, ladies?' They looked up. 'Don't you recognise us?' asked the blonde in surprise. She had thrown her dotted veil back over her hat so that she could kiss unimpeded. 'Not the faintest idea,' said the policeman in his provincial accent. They looked at each other and burst into laughter. 'Where on earth are you from?' asked the other lady. 'That's beside the point,' he replied, rocking forward on his shoes the way policemen do, 'but if you really want to know...' The blonde said, 'You're new to this city.' 'Quite correct,' said the policeman, 'but...' 'Well then, you couldn't know,' she said. She treated him to a forgiving smile and added, while waving him on his way, 'No hard feelings, officer!'

Sighing, the ladies sank back into their embrace, and were promptly lost to the outside world. The policeman

furrowed his brow in an effort to gain more authority, opened his mouth and did not know what to say. He shifted his feet a few times and went on looking. But his ears were beginning to burn. He felt light-headed and was troubled by emotion.

Some distance away he saw a naked man climb out of the pond holding a duck by the neck. The policeman stood motionless for a few seconds, his eyes screwed up tightly. He took a deep breath and then walked on at a steady regulation pace. He did his best to look like a real city policeman, with an expression on his face of 'Yes, oh well, we know all about that.' Something on those lines, that kind of expression."

This passage gives a striking illustration of the differences in attitude between the provinces and the city, as represented in the way the policeman changes. Why is he no longer a provincial? Perhaps because nothing surprises him any more, and because this is his frame of reference when operating in the 'big city'. The story also provides an implicit definition of a territory. The ladies wish to be left in peace as they kiss and cuddle in the city park. In the country there are no parks for recreation, and security and peace and quiet are experienced completely differently. In agrarian communities security or peace is dictated by all-or-nothing participation in the form of informal social control in operation there.¹ This forced participation in community life results in relatively strong social cohesion. On the other hand, it should be remembered that social roles, position, status and professional mobility are much less differentiated (less specialised) in the country than in the large cities. One might say that the rural population is more homogeneous in composition. In particular, the low level of specialisation

¹G.D. Suttles (The social construction of communities, University of Chicago Press, 1972) has made use of ethological studies to define various territories, and refers to the 'zero-sum territory': you either belong there or you do not:

makes possible the operation of informal social control in the classic sense (small scale). This produces a defensible environment in which strangers, fellow inhabitants and children are kept an eye on quite regularly and constantly, and are exposed to criticism.

It is possible that the concept of a defensible environment, in which children could grow up in peace and quiet, would be valid for densely populated areas in large cities, but it is highly unlikely, and would certainly not be valid for urban and suburban communities in general.

Urban and suburban societies generally involve strict segregation between the home and the place of work, the home and the shops, the home and the place of recreation, and between the place of work and the shops. In addition, there is a high degree of occupational specialisation. These factors make it difficult to define territories in terms of defensible environments. The level of general mobility is so high that it is a case of each individual having multiple varying territories.

It may even be questioned whether in this situation these terms have any meaning. Suttles calls urban and suburban communities administratively pyramidal territories, which as a whole are designed to achieve security and peace. Other examples of such administratively organized pyramidal territories are city districts, municipalities, nations, and Western Europe, etc.

The achievement of aims such as security and peace in these administrative, bureaucratically organized contexts is a problem. In general this task is entrusted to professional specialists in organizational units such as the army and the police.

A similar form of professionalisation is found in the way schoolchildren are cared for and looked after. At home the parents, guardians or others are responsible for the behaviour of the children. At school the teaching staff are responsible, while on the street school crossing patrols and the police watch over their safety. This example illustrates how informal social control has to a large extent had to give way to professional and formal networks of social control. The protection

of a natural group territory by the inhabitants of a particular area has been replaced by separate aims linked to separate institutions, e.g. the maintenance of law and order, and ensuring children's safety, etc. Separate aims and institutions were required because people wanted guarantees of relative safety and peace at home, at work and during recreation.

What conclusions can we draw from this in relation to crime prevention and what is to be the role of the public in this? At the risk of repetition, let us state firstly that the present degree of informal social control is inadequate. The low level of control undertaken by the individual citizen is partly accounted for by the idea that crime control is the exclusive responsibility of government. There are two reasons why this is no longer a practical idea. In the first place, the results of victim surveys clearly show that the police force is not in a position to stem the tide of petty crime. In the second place, the idea is theoretically unsound: without a high degree of support from the population no police force can possibly control petty crime.

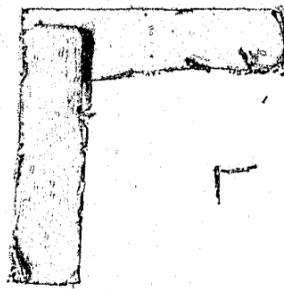
In the Netherlands the sixties saw the rise of the neighbourhood organization, the district committee, and other kinds of community bodies for democratisation and power sharing. Through participation or sharing responsibility these bodies try to influence decisions taken at the level of central government which affect local interests.

It seems to us that the public should make use of the possibilities available to strengthen or in some cases create networks for informal (and to some extent formal) social control. In the context of a decentralised welfare policy the public will have to try through participation or pressure groups to raise the question of public safety with the authorities concerned. In the view of Alderson (1977, *Communal Policing*) the police can play a leading role in supporting such public initiatives. If the police are to do this, they must be properly informed of crimes. This information can only be obtained if the public is ready and willing to report incidents. This again shows how the different tasks of

the police should complement each other. The new task in the field of crime prevention does not make the traditional job of detection less important. The increase in the number of offences reported will mean that, unless the police have more success in solving crimes, an even greater number of people will be frustrated by the apparent inability or unwillingness of the police to take action. Apart from adopting a more effective approach (e.g. problem-oriented) to crime, the police could however probably avoid a good deal of frustration by giving people a realistic picture of the progress of their case and by honestly admitting where necessary that nothing can be done for the time being.¹

It is important to point out in this context (primary prevention) that preventing crime must be the concern of many different parties: the police, the office of the public prosecutor, the authorities (the mayor and aldermen), town planners and architects and, above all, the public at large.

¹ Confidence building; see 'Reduction of fear of crime: strategies for intervention', Jeffery, Henig and Michael G. Maxfield, *Victimology*, Vol. 3, 1978, nos. 3-4, pp. 297-313, 1979.



END