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A RESEARCHER'S VIEW ON  
CRIME PREVENTION  
IN THE NETHERLANDS

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Ministry of Justice The Hague - Netherlands  
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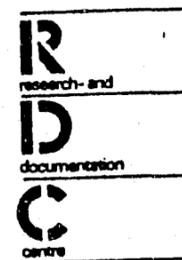
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A RESEARCHER'S VIEW OF CRIME PREVENTION  
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1. Introduction

An increasing number of the 140-odd Dutch municipal police forces established since the 1950s contain a crime prevention department. In the late 1960s a number of police chiefs expressed the desire that local crime prevention efforts should be professionalized and supported and should be extended to a national level. The December 1979 decree on Police Crime Prevention issued by the Ministers of Justice and of Home Affairs should therefore be regarded as a response to these police requests. It requires every municipal police force, the 17 state police districts, the air police and the motorway police to nominate one or more crime prevention officer (CPO). This was done in 1980, although about half the total of 167 crime prevention officers are currently working on a part-time basis. These local CPO's are supported by regional bureaus in all the 22 police regions which were created recently. Each bureau is made up of four officials: one regional crime prevention co-ordinator; one specialist in target hardening devices; one specialist in socio-preventive measures and one bureau assistant.

Lastly a national inter-departmental bureau has been established, headed by the National Crime Prevention Coordinator, and consisting of nine people: one sociologist; three police officers; one information specialist; two researchers; one bureau assistant and one political scientist. It is responsible for building up, supporting and coordinating the regional crime prevention bureaus and for the acquisition and production of informational material such as printed material, audiovisual programmes, exhibitions and an information bus, which can be used by local crime prevention officers. In 1980, this organisation was officially established to reduce both relatively and absolutely the risk of offences being committed and to

limit the material and non-material damage that may arise from offences, including the fear of crime. Since 1973 the risk of being a victim of a crime such as damage to property, hit and run accidents, bicycle theft, moped theft, assault in a public place, theft by a pickpocket, theft of or from a private car, indecent assault, and burglary has been estimated using the results of national victim surveys conducted among a representative sample of 10,000 people. The Research and Documentation Centre (RDC) commissioned a nationwide survey of the Dutch public's experiences of crime from the Dutch Institute for Public Opinion and Marketing Research (NIPO). It is now possible, therefore, to base conclusions about victim risk trends for all these offences in the Netherlands over the last few years on population surveys rather than on police and court records. Victimological risk analysis can be used for various other purposes as well. First of all, it is possible to identify specific groups at risk in respect of various types of offence. Even non-experts can determine objectively whether they belong to a particular risk group or not. In the case of sections of the population such as the elderly and inhabitants of smaller communities, such an objective estimate of the risk they run could soothe feelings of insecurity. Secondly, such an analysis provides the typical risk groups with a basis for crime prevention strategies. These strategies will be discussed below on a theoretical basis.

In order to lay the foundations for a national crime prevention organisation, nationwide media campaigns were conducted in 1977 and 1978, the main objective being to increase the willingness of individuals to take precautions against certain common crimes. The campaigns were drawn up and evaluated by the Government Information Service (RVD 1977). However, the RDC had the opportunity to include a few questions on taking precautionary measures in the annual victim survey (Van Dijk and Steinmetz, 1980). In this article<sup>1)</sup> the survey data will be used to evaluate selected issues in the national media campaigns.

In order to make crime prevention more available to the public the RDC undertook to experiment with alternative methods of crime control. In 1978 the Public Prosecutions Department agreed on a series of local experiments in alternative crime control methods, which were to be carried out by local police forces under the joint supervision of the local

public prosecutor, the chief of police and the burgomaster, in tripartite consultations. The RDC presented a list of proposals to several local tripartite forums, and subsequent discussions led to the implementation of seven different projects in 1980 and 1981, the majority of which may be described as crime prevention programmes. Most of the programmes combine personal instruction in crime prevention and foot patrols i.e. instructive patrols. In this article we shall report the key findings of the evaluation<sup>2)</sup> of the programmes in The Hague, Amsterdam and Hoogeveen.

The RDC also carried out observations and field studies related to the prevention of bicycle theft. To begin with several precautionary measures were tested; the intervention behaviour of possible witnesses of a bicycle theft was observed. Some of the key findings<sup>3)</sup> of the later projects are discussed below.

## 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, depending on time and surroundings.

From the point of view of victimology, opportunity consists of interactions or 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 contacts between potential victims and potential offenders do not occur at random. They depend on place (e.g. in a large city or rural area), time (e.g. during the day or at night) and/or the area (e.g. a centre for night life).

An interaction need not necessarily involve coming into contact; indeed it may consist of the absence of the victim: for example burglary while the occupants of a house are on holiday.

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

The following section attempts to establish which factors help to bring about contacts between potential offenders and potential victims which lead to offences being committed. It also examines the social developments which influence these factors.

## 2.2 A victimological risk model for 'petty' crimes

In a report on victim surveys between 1974 and 1979 carried out by the Ministry of Justice Research and Documentation Centre (RDC), Van Dijk and Steinmetz (1979) attempted to determine the factors governing the objective risk of being a victim of petty crime in the Netherlands. 'Risk' is defined as the objective chance of becoming the direct or indirect victim of an offence; a risk of 100% is equivalent to a risk factor of one.

### Proximity factor

The first factor is proximity, that is spending time or living in the vicinity of potential offenders as a result of 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. Pickpockets, 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 of the RDC has confirmed that the general rule applies in the Netherlands. Her study showed that

most petty crime was committed in the district in which the offender lived, and that a relatively high proportion of the inhabitants in major cities have been convicted of an offence. We may therefore assume that the inhabitants of large cities run a higher risk of becoming victims, and this was in fact confirmed by the RDC victim surveys.

The developments with the most significant effects on geographic proximity would seem to be the growth of socially mixed residential areas (the mixing of the 'haves' and the 'have nots'), and further segregation of home, work and recreation, which involves frequent journeys between home and work and so on. Both developments can lead to an increased number of contacts between individuals who are unknown to one another. The possessions of one may be an attractive target for another.

Social proximity is chiefly determined by individual or collective lifestyles. 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, (through age, marital status, social class, etc.), may lead to contacts with potential offenders more often 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. 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 than people aged between 25 and 40. In the three largest cities in the Netherlands, young people who spend time in places of entertainment (pub, disco, etc) find themselves in the night life subculture with 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 RDC victim surveys that social proximity and

individuals' life-styles largely affect the chances of being a victim of typical street crimes such as indecent assault, physical assault and bicycle theft. The RDC studies showed that burglary and the 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) within social proximity classes. It is assumed that young people (who are more often victims anyway) with certain personality characteristics run an extra high risk.

A number of social developments can be identified as affecting the social proximity factor. First, it is clear that the amount of leisure will increase, particularly among young people. This will lead to a corresponding increase in the number of contacts between offenders and potential victims. Secondly, changes in the social position of women may well lead to an increased number of contacts between potential female victims and offenders. This tendency has already been partially confirmed by the RDC victim surveys which showed a relatively sharp rise in the risk run by women. Thirdly, the growing urbanisation of Dutch society will inevitably lead to more contact with strangers, and thus with offenders.

Geographic and social proximity together make up the proximity factor, but this alone does not account for the entire risk of being the victim of a 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 the need for addicts to pay ever rising prices for heroin (drug-related crime), the desire for goods as status symbols, and more psychological reasons such as boredom, showing off and sexual adventure. In addition, psychological disturbances may affect the behaviour of certain categories of offenders. (Buikhuizen, 1979).

Motives of this sort have always been present in society, probably no more, and certainly no less, at present than in the past. Rising unemployment will increase adolescents' need 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 particular characteristics of the potential victims which may help these motives to produce actual crimes.

#### 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 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 electrical appliances (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 restrictions, 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 repercussions when they operate among strangers. Moreover, as people are less inclined to rush to each other's assistance in an impersonal and anonymous atmosphere, 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 in contact with an attractive target. It would seem probable that offences would vary, particularly with regard to the opportunity offered, and risk-taking behaviour is also likely to be a significant factor.

A distinction can be made between the technical and the social aspects of the exposure factor. The technical aspects include failure to lock up houses and cars adequately, carrying one's purse on top of an open shopping bag and being in possession of large amounts of cash. Measures to reduce this kind of exposure are not without importance, and are referred to as 'technoprevention'. As these matters have been dealt with in detail in an earlier RDC publication (Buikhuizen, 1976) and elsewhere, it is not necessary to devote much space to them here.

The social aspects of the exposure factor are the degree to which some form of protection or guard is present. One example of guarding would be preventive police patrols. Being away from home or absent on holiday increases the risk of being the victim of burglary. It is obvious that neighbours can help to protect a dwelling and its contents particularly by detecting a burglary and perhaps by intervening. 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 experiment hardly a single passer-by intervened or even said anything (only 3% did do this) when they saw people breaking into cars in broad daylight and stealing consumer goods (televisions, cameras, etc.). Almost everyone looked and then continued on their way. It was not uncommon for even policemen simply to walk on. There was not a strong reason to be afraid of physical violence since more than half of those committing the offences were women. 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 were observed to physical assaults in the street.

The chief characteristic of the urban environment is the absence of formal and informal social control. Changes in urban areas have led to environments where everyone used to know everyone else, such as the home neighbourhood, work and school, 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 obvious reason for impersonal and anonymous

environments. Examples of this include small streets which become busy roads 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 social, economic and physical processes, the development of high-rise buildings, semi-private and public gardens and so forth, has meant that safety standards of all kinds are now lower than in the past.

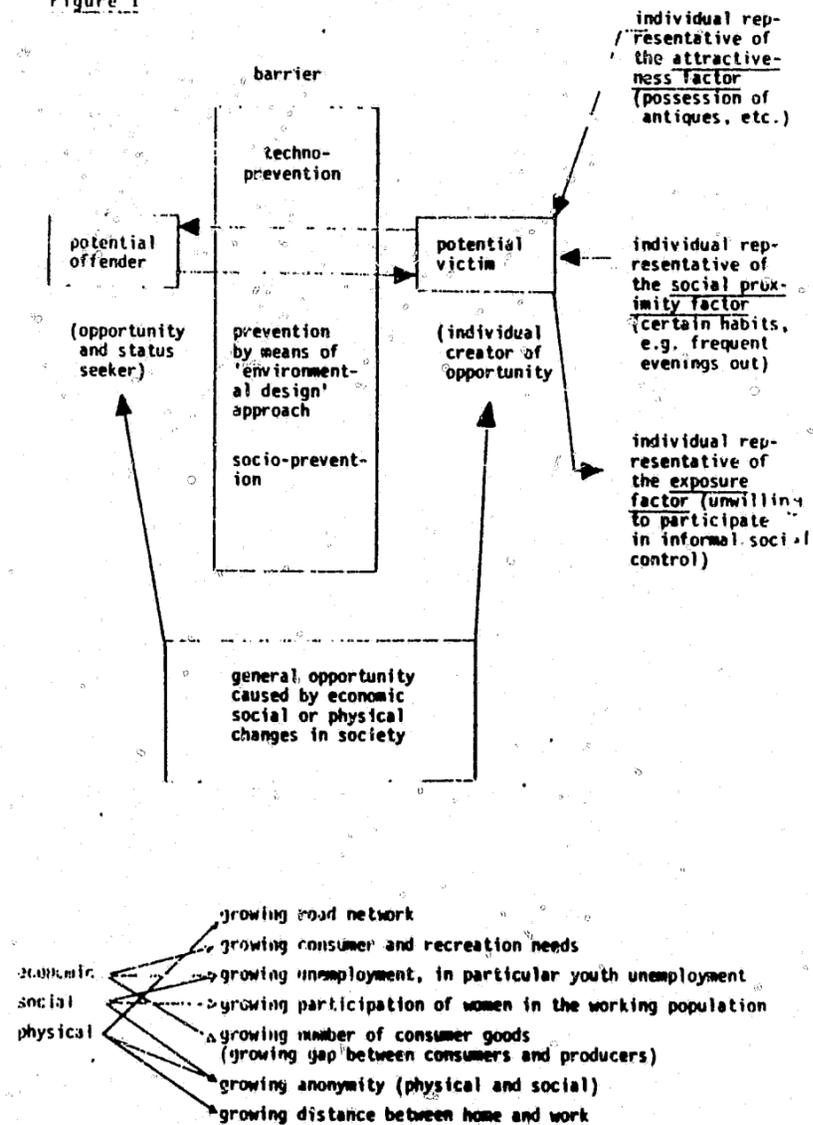
### 2.3 Summary

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 opportunity crimes (petty crimes) will at least remain the same: a desire to possess various kinds of consumer goods, either for material reasons or as a means to show off to their peers. At the same time we may conclude that the theoretical framework outlined above (the proximity, attractiveness and exposure factors) 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 an adequate opportunity for describing the dynamics of the social and physical ecology involved.

We may also conclude that this theoretical framework provides for primary crime prevention<sup>4)</sup>. It will make it possible to determine systematically the economic, 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', 'socioprevention' and 'crime prevention through environmental design' (see the diagram below).

Figure 1



### 3. Practical experiments in crime prevention and an evaluation of crime prevention media campaigns in the Netherlands

In the discussion of Dutch experience with crime prevention a distinction will be drawn between levels of precautionary measures. This distinction has been developed for crime prevention officers and shows the possible precautionary measures for each group at risk, on the level at which the highest precautionary effect might be expected. Preventive measures can be implemented at individual level (micro-level), neighbourhood level (meso-level) and governmental level (macro-level). Examples of the possible steps at micro-level are moving to a smaller community or a safer district, changing spending patterns (no more buying of antiques or expensive electronic equipment), fitting target hardening devices, changing the pattern of leisure time activities (going out less often, or in company) and changing the mode of travel. Examples of precautionary measures at a meso-level are improving street and other lighting, encouraging active social mixing in the district and establishing neighbourhood help. At a macro-level one might consider legal measures such as minimum security requirements with which cars and dwellings must comply at the time of purchase. Further governmental measures might include regular checks of the deterrent value of target hardening devices. Several of the Dutch crime prevention experiments will be discussed in this context. The most important question for the National Crime Prevention Bureau was, however, whether the Dutch public is aware of the existence of target-hardening security devices and willing to use them.

#### Crime prevention campaigns

The decision to take precautionary measures in order to prevent the theft of a bicycle, moped or car, or theft from a car and/or burglary turns out to be based on a more or less realistic assessment of the objective risk people run. The risk was established using a scale assessing the following characteristics of the respondents in victim surveys: population density at the place of residence; age; sex; frequency of evenings out; social class; past victimization experiences (Van Dijk and Steinmetz, 1980). There are

no indications that such a decision derives from a strong emotionally coloured attitude of fear of offenders, in contrast to other forms of precautionary behaviour such as not opening the door to strangers or not walking alone at night. These findings - that there is a fairly rational basis for practical precautionary behaviour - will enable the government information service to offer appropriate advice.

The surveys provided some indications that the national information service campaigns in 1977 and 1978 concerning the incidence of crime had a positive effect on people's preparedness to take precautionary measures and on the extent to which they took them. It would appear that the campaigns were certainly successful in this respect. They did not contribute, however, to a more balanced distribution of precautionary measures throughout the population as a whole. Certain sections of the lower social classes and certain groups of young people in the major cities take little heed of the crime prevention measures which would be appropriate since they are very much at risk. Since the publication campaigns on crime prevention did not reach these particular population groups, they may be comparatively more at risk than before.

The results indicate that people with a high degree of precautionary preparedness run slightly less risk of becoming a victim. People who say they will take precautionary measures do not always carry out their intentions. If they do, there is a fairly strong indication that this will provide a certain degree of protection from crime.

The final question to be considered is whether the lower risk run by people who do take preventive measures can improve crime control on a national or regional scale. In our opinion, a fairly high general level of precautionary measures must be achieved among the target population at risk before the crime rate is likely to fall. If only a minority of the public take preventive measures, the majority will still be at risk and so the incidence of crime will not be reduced. Like Block (1980), we have the impression that a relatively low proportion of the population takes preventive measures. Accordingly no reduction in the crime rate may be expected for the time being.

These findings provide a basis for a governmental approach. Central government is probably the only administrative body which can afford to maintain a reasonably high level of precautionary awareness among the population. Public awareness of the existence of target hardening devices is necessary before a higher proportion of the population will be willing to take preventive measures. Accordingly local crime prevention officers are able to conduct a follow-up campaign to improve public awareness of such devices. The large sum of money spent by central government on crime prevention media campaigns therefore seems to be justified. It would seem advisable to repeat the campaigns at intervals.

#### Police experiments

As mentioned in the introduction, the RDC conducted a number of police experiments to find alternative methods of crime control. These were carried out on a meso-level, in a quasi-experimental form, with a control area and measurements carried out before and after the experiments. Two of the experiments involved an alternative way of deploying the police and personal crime prevention education in districts of Amsterdam and The Hague, while the third experiment took place in a small town in the northern part of the Netherlands (Hoogeveen).

The results of the first experiment showed that the team had only a marginal impact on the public's goodwill towards the police and the crime related attitudes of local people, as expressed by an increased willingness to report an incident or to take preventive measures etc. The main reason for this was police reluctance to carry out foot patrols and personal crime prevention instruction. Stronger incentives for the police could, perhaps be introduced by eliminating the team's criminal investigation work altogether and by imposing stricter limits on its use of police cars. It would be generally recommended to select a somewhat smaller urban district, to draw up more detailed guidelines for the team's activities and to organize more extensive training for the police officers involved. The members of the Moerwijk police team, on the other hand, concluded that the programme should be extended to include other crimes apart from burglary.

In Amsterdam the municipal police agreed to replicate the experiment in The Hague. All the suggestions mentioned above were incorporated in the form. In 1980 a team of eight patrol officers, a senior officer and a detective covered a district measuring 0.9 km<sup>2</sup> and containing about 10,000 residents by means of foot and bicycle patrols. Their work involved crime prevention instruction relating to property crimes. The district selected was Osdorp. The deployment of this special team required the available officers to be reassigned, but no increase in numbers was necessary.

The experiment in Hoogeveen which has a population of 35,000 cannot be described as a replication of the one in The Hague. It consisted of an increased effort by a special team to patrol high crime areas in the town by car and on foot. The force appointed a full-time crime prevention instructor, who had no connection with the team.

The Amsterdam and Hoogeveen experiments were both evaluated by means of population surveys before and after the experiment. In Amsterdam a control district was included as well.

The results of the Amsterdam police experiment were superior to those of the others. In Osdorp (Amsterdam) 66% of the inhabitants said that they were aware of the special efforts of the police in their neighbourhood (44% in The Hague, 54% in Hoogeveen). More than half of the Amsterdam respondents had become personally acquainted with the team and only a quarter were familiar with the team through media reports. The experiments in The Hague and Hoogeveen showed contrasting results, in that awareness of the team was largely derived from the media. As a result of its personal contacts alone, the Amsterdam project was particularly successful at reaching women, the elderly and groups with low socio-economic status. Foot and bicycle patrols were principally responsible for this success.

During the Amsterdam/Osdorp project, public willingness to report crimes, especially crimes of violence, increased significantly in the experimental district but not in the control area. The results in Hoogeveen were less positive. When improved surveillance and crime

prevention instruction were kept separate they appear to have had no impact at all in this regard.

The findings in Hoogeveen show a significant increase in willingness to use more than two preventive measures to prevent burglary from private dwellings. In Amsterdam/Osdorp, on the other hand, the percentage of persons taking no measures at all decreased significantly. The latter result is probably due to the personal contacts of the team with the elderly and persons from lower social classes. Analysis shows that the Hoogeveen results were mainly transmitted via the media, and they support the prior interpretation of the results of the experiment in The Hague. There was no significant effect on the level of measures taken to prevent other types of crime in either The Hague or Hoogeveen. This probably resulted from the fact that devices to prevent crimes other than burglary were not widely available.

The public's general opinion of the police in Amsterdam/Osdorp and Hoogeveen showed a significant improvement after the programmes. Foot patrols and crime prevention instruction in Amsterdam and crime prevention instruction in Hoogeveen were particularly welcomed. Improvements in police-community relations can apparently be achieved both by a media-mediated approach and by means of direct contact between the police and the public.

Two indirect effects which have not been discussed thus far are the effect on crime rates and the effect on people's feelings of insecurity. The effect on crime rates will be discussed first so that we may close this discussion on an optimistic note. No significant reductions in victimization rates or reported crime rates were observed in Amsterdam/Osdorp or in Hoogeveen as compared with the control areas. The experiments apparently did not bring about observable decreases in the actual crime rate in the short term. The small decrease observed after the experiment in The Hague can probably be interpreted as an effect of large-scale media coverage, which may have deterred local gangs or recidivists from committing offences in this particular area during the experiment.

In all three cities the target population's awareness of crime was raised, in that people held more conversations about crime. However, only the Amsterdam/Osdorp experiment succeeded in bringing about a significant reduction in people's feelings of insecurity. The percentage of respondents in Amsterdam/Osdorp who stated that they felt safe in their neighbourhood showed a remarkable rise of 10% ( $X^2 = 35$ ;  $df = 1$ ;  $p < 0.001$ ), while the control neighbourhood showed stable percentages. Again these findings suggest that the success of the Amsterdam experiment was due to its higher profile particularly as regards women, the elderly and people from the lower social classes.

To sum up, the Amsterdam programme, consisting of foot and bicycle patrols combined with personal crime prevention instruction reached large sections of all the population groups in the neighbourhood. It resulted in an increased willingness to report crimes to the police, and to use at least one anti-burglary device, and in a much higher opinion of police performance in general. The programme also succeeded in reducing people's feelings of insecurity. Although no immediate reduction in crime rates has been observed, the positive results will probably help to check local crime in the long run.

The programmes in The Hague and Hoogeveen consisted of a more general effort to improve police surveillance by means of car or foot patrols, combined with the introduction of crime prevention instruction. Both programmes reached their target groups mainly by means of media reports, which severely restricted their influence on women, the elderly and people in lower socio-economic status groups. Consequently, the team members were less successful in increasing the willingness both to report crimes and to use crime prevention devices, and did not succeed at all in reducing the public's feelings of insecurity. On the other hand, both these programmes were effective in improving public awareness of crime and the general image of the police. Presumably because of its extraordinary press coverage the experimental programme in The Hague has also been instrumental in bringing local burglary rates down, though perhaps only for the time being.

The results of the national media crime prevention campaigns and the police experiments point to the general conclusion that local or national media campaigns can be effective in raising awareness of crime but do not reach all sections of the population. The impact of personal contact with the police is wider and more effective reaching all sections and reducing people's feelings of insecurity. Relations between the police and the public can be improved by both types of programme, which means that the public is willing to give the police the benefit of the doubt. Local crime prevention officers in the Netherlands are adopting both lines of approach, first by estimating the amount of crime in their area. Detailed analysis of victimization data helps CPO's to identify the specific groups at risk in their area. The second stage is to establish priorities after taking into consideration the modus operandi of local offenders. These two steps are generally followed by publicity campaigns and further personal instruction for the public.

#### The effectiveness of target hardening

The work of most crime prevention officers is still concentrated on providing the public with information about target hardening devices. Technological preventive measures are the first step in the development of a prevention strategy. In most of the studies focussing on these devices, the researchers did not investigate their actual preventive value. In Amsterdam, Röell (1982) of the RDC studied the practical effectiveness of devices to prevent bicycle theft.

Since 1973, the probability of being a victim of bicycle theft has doubled in the Netherlands (from 4% to 7.6%), while in Amsterdam in 1979 and 1980 it was about 20%, which means that one out of every five people in Amsterdam has been the victim of a bicycle theft. Only about 10% of these ever see their bicycle again.

Stealing a bicycle is not very difficult. Very few bicycle locks can resist an attempt to break them. A check in the centre of Amsterdam showed that 2% of bicycle owners were not using a lock at all, while a similar check in a smaller village (Leiderdorp) revealed that 19% did not use a lock. The author concluded that Amsterdam bicycle owners were apparently using locks conscientiously but to no great avail.

Two possible conclusions could be drawn from these results. First, not every lock is as strong as the consumer might expect. Secondly, the strength of a lock is not the only factor affecting the number of bicycle thefts. Some offenders prefer to take bicycles to a safe place where tools are available for breaking the locks. The author therefore decided to conduct a field experiment in Amsterdam. Between January and April 1981, 30 bicycles were put out in the centre of Amsterdam, in pairs, to ensure that all the environmental influences were the same for both bicycles. The bicycles in each pair differed in only one respect: for example if one was locked, the other was not; if one was new, the other was old; if one was isolated, the other was placed among other bicycles, etc.

The results of this unusual piece of research can be summarized by drawing the following conclusions for the centre of Amsterdam. First of all a security lock is better than no preventive measures at all. Secondly the quality or strength of the lock does not make any difference to its preventive value. Chaining a bicycle is better than using a strong security lock. A new bicycle is much more likely to be stolen than an older one. Lastly an isolated bicycle in a quiet spot is less likely to be stolen than one which is with a number of others.

It must be remembered that these results apply mainly to the centre of Amsterdam. One might expect, however, that they could apply to people in other large cities who have to leave their bicycles outside. In particular, the experiment revealed that a special security bicycle lock approved by the Royal Dutch Touring Club (ANWB) with a combined insurance membership did not prevent the bicycle from being stolen more effectively than an ordinary lock or a chain.

These results also shed some light on one of the most remarkable findings of the evaluation of the media crime prevention campaigns which revealed that the groups most at risk were relatively unwilling to take preventive measures. According to Van Dijk and Steinmetz (1981), the high risk groups were young people of under 24, who spend their leisure time mainly outside the home, residents of the major cities, members of higher social classes and people who have been victims in the past. Given

that security devices have so little value their unwillingness to take preventive measures is understandable. They might have been disappointed in the past by numerous failures of devices used by themselves, members of their family or acquaintances. These results may serve as a warning to government agencies such as the National Crime Prevention Bureau which promote the use of target hardening devices. The Bureau will therefore have to conduct a thorough investigation into the preventive value of such devices.

#### Intervention by bystanders in bicycle thefts

This field experiment was conducted in The Hague, one of the three largest cities in the Netherlands, and in several rural villages in the province of South Holland. The researchers observed intervention by bystanders in bicycle thefts using three different methods. In the first place, chained bicycles were stolen by a man in his early thirties using a bolt-cutter. This was repeated in the presence of police officers. Thirdly the researchers ensured that the public knew that the person who took away the bicycle was not the owner.

The results provide the following picture: 55% of the passers-by looked at the thief, 25% waited around and watched, but only 3% spoke to the thief or intervened in any other way.

The presence of the police made a difference to the public's reactions in The Hague, where nine per cent of the passers-by went to the police. A similar experiment in a small village, a suburb of Leiden, produced different results. Nobody told the police that a bicycle had been stolen. If however the police clearly expressed a general willingness to have contact with the public, people were more willing to report the theft.

More detailed analysis gave the impression that there was no difference between major cities and rural areas, between different age groups or between women and men. The analysis formed a basis for two further hypotheses: first, the "authority" hypothesis. Individuals in positions of some formal authority (e.g. waiters) seem to be more willing to react if they see a bicycle theft than others.

It is also noteworthy that the results indicate an increased willingness among young men to intervene if they are accompanied by a girlfriend: could this be ascribed to the "chivalry effect"?

These results show that bicycle theft is quite easy, both technically and socially. As long as so little social control is exercised by witnesses it will remain difficult to keep bicycle theft under control.

#### 4. Discussion

A time-series analysis of victimization percentages from 1975 to 1981 indicates that the incidence of assault in a public place, vandalism and bicycle theft is rising steadily. In those six years, the incidence of assault rose by 170%, from 1.5% to 4.1%; vandalism by 100%, from 5.0% to 10.4% and bicycle theft by 70%, from 4.5% to 7.6%. The incidence of other offences such as moped theft, car theft and indecent assault remained fairly stable. Pickpocketing, theft from cars and breaking and entering in private dwellings showed very irregular patterns while hit and run accidents seemed to increase as well. The same trend can be seen in the proportion of victims of one or more offences among the population. The percentages for the years 1976, 1977, 1978, 1979 and 1980 were 18%, 18%, 19%, 23% and 22% respectively. This means that one in every four people was confronted with a crime in 1980.

The RDC victimological risk analysis showed that the probability of being a victim was not evenly distributed over the population as a whole. Certain groups fall in high risk categories, while others are less frequently victims. High risks are characteristic of the inhabitants of the major cities, young people who go out late at night and members of the higher social classes. Previous victimization experiences increase the probability of being a victim again. People combining all these characteristics may have a risk factor of 60% or more while those with the contrary characteristics, such as persons living in rural areas, run almost no risk of being the victim of an offence.

Over the same period, feelings of insecurity followed a similar pattern to some extent. In particular, "cognitive" feelings of insecurity such as

thinking about personal victimization (1979: 44%; 1980: 49%) or forecasting increasing crime rates (1974: 40%; 1980: 44%) were on the increase. The more "affective" insecurity feelings such as "being afraid to be at home during the night" (1974: 15%; 1980: 14%) remained stable, while the number of citizens who experience fear at certain places in the city increased (1978: 27%; 1980: 32%). An increase was also visible in "cognitive" insecurity feelings such as "not opening the door for strangers after 10 o'clock at night" (1974: 41%; 1980: 49%).

The National Crime Prevention Bureau's main goals are to reduce objective and subjective risks both relatively and absolutely. It also intends to reduce the damage caused by the commission of crimes. The inter-departmental organization is very decentralized, comprising regional and local crime prevention officers with specific technical and socio-preventive duties. The organisation was officially inaugurated in 1980. Its principal objectives may well prove illusory, as they are too abstract to enable local crime prevention officers to lay down rules for application in practice.

The RDC has therefore developed a theoretical model to understand objective and subjective risk and the various levels at which preventive measures can be taken. The first stage in this process was a descriptive model of the objective risk of being a victim of petty crime. Three factors were distinguished in this model: attractiveness, proximity and exposure. The chances of being a victim of petty crime are high in the case of, for instance, someone with a fair amount of ready cash who frequently goes out in urban districts where a number of known or potential offenders operate. Attractiveness is the extent to which someone or something clearly represents an attractive target for potential offenders. Proximity has two components: social proximity and geographical proximity. Social proximity derives from a life-style which leads to frequent contacts with known or potential offenders. Geographical proximity means living in the vicinity of a number of potential or known offenders.

The RDC is still developing an explanatory model for feelings of insecurity. It will probably distinguish between a proximity factor and an

information factor. National studies by Cozijn and Van Dijk (1975) and Van Dijk (1977) showed that feelings of insecurity are strongest among women, the elderly and residents of the major cities.

Crime rates are higher in the major cities than in rural areas. The differences in crime rates between larger and smaller cities are reflected in people's feelings of insecurity. Van Dijk's 1977 results can still be applied to more recent findings (1978 and 1980). The more delinquents there are in a neighbourhood the more insecure local residents will feel and this is definitely the case in the major cities. This factor will be called the geographical proximity factor. The elderly in our society live rather isolated in comparison with other sectors of the population, and the same is true of women, who often live a protected life in a domestic environment. Such a life-style gives these groups little sense of control over the environment outside their domestic activities. This, the second factor contributing to feelings of insecurity, will be called the absence of social proximity factor. This sense of powerlessness is probably encouraged by the exaggerated reports about crime in the media. Generally speaking the elderly and women do not read, say, financial or political news as carefully as they read crime reports.

Besides these theoretical considerations it was felt that crime prevention officers required more practical guidelines. The RDC therefore drew up a scheme with details of the different levels at which preventive measures can be taken. The first of these is the macro-level, at which government can act to prevent members of the public from committing offences by means of the law and the dissemination of information. In our opinion the government should also monitor the devices supplied by the security industry. At meso-level, improvements can be made in police performance, street lighting and neighbourhood contacts. Measures at micro-level are less easy to implement, however. Individuals, for instance, should not go out so frequently (perhaps parents could organize more parties for their children at home).

At the same time the RDC and the National Crime Prevention Bureau investigated practicable preventive measures, first by evaluating the national publicity campaigns about crime prevention. The results were

encouraging to a certain extent, in that the public proved willing to take preventive measures, and this willingness seemed to affect victimization risk, although the word-deed relation was consistent but poor. The same study revealed that media campaigns reach only respondents from the higher social classes and not respondents from the lower social classes or younger people in the major cities who run a fairly high risk. In the long term these media campaigns cannot be expected to halt the rise in the crime rate.

Secondly, several forms of alternative crime control by means of a more concentrated use of police forces were the focus of three police experiments. These showed that police patrols on the beat and personal instruction of the public about preventive measures can change people's attitudes and reach the lower social classes and the other groups who cannot be reached through media campaigns. These changed attitudes were a greater public willingness to take preventive measures and to notify the police of offences. The experiments also revealed that active contacts between the public and the police had an impact on the insecurity feelings of women and the elderly, who were not as afraid as they were before the experiment (Amsterdam/Osdrorp). Improvements in police performance were shown to lead to an improvement in relations between the police and the public.

Lastly, part of the RDC's research was concerned with the value of target hardening devices and with intervention by passers-by in the case of bicycle thefts in a normal daily environment. These experiments showed some remarkable results, revealing that certain preventive measures do not protect bicycles from being stolen as well as might be expected. This particular result points to the necessity for checks or research in a natural environment by the government crime prevention agencies. The studies of intervention by passers-by showed that most people do not react if they see a bicycle theft even if the police are present at the scene. About 25% of passers-by stopped to stare at the bicycle thief. It is the duty of research to find out how this potential group of notifiers can be used. Better relations between the police and the public would be one possible avenue to investigate.

All this research showed that there are many policy instruments through which the objective and subjective risk of becoming a victim of crime can be reduced, for society and for individuals. One of the problems is still that we have to rely too much on the results of expensive victimization studies. Crime registered by the police is still a database which cannot be used for policy purposes on a local level. Local crime prevention officers are in need of such instruments, before they will be able to develop a prevention strategy to combat crime and the resulting feelings of insecurity.

NOTES

1. A full report on this research can be found in the article 'Crime prevention; an evaluation of the national publicity campaigns' by Van Dijk and Steinmetz, 1981 (RDC nr. XL)

2. A full report on the findings can be found in a report 'External effects of a crime prevention program in The Hague; experiences and opinions of citizens - with a comparison of similar programs in The Netherlands' by Van Dijk and Spickenheuer, 1981 (RDC nr. LI)

*Both of these articles are published in a book about crime prevention of the Swedish National Council for Crime Prevention. The same applies to the theoretical frame we used in this article, which is a part of an article by Steinmetz, 1980, entitled 'A first step towards victimological risk analysis, a conceptual model for the prevention of petty crimes' (RDC nr. LII)*

\* This result is in agreement with the outcomes of the Newark Foot Patrol (George L. Kelling et al, The Newark Foot Patrol Experiment, Police Foundation, Washington, USA, 1981).

3. A full report on the findings of these research projects will be published in the Dutch Journal of Criminology (Tijdschrift voor criminologie, 1982) by A. Roëll, Steinmetz and Van Dijk. (RDC nr. LXIII)

4. The term 'primary prevention' is adapted from Alderson

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