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**A First Step towards Victimological Risk Analysis.
A conceptual model for the prevention of "petty" crime**

Abstract: 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.

Keywords: crime: prevention; victimological risk; model; criminology.

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 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) aims at deterring those who have never committed crimes, while special (individual) prevention (Van der Werff) is more offender-oriented.

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 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 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 re-

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search reveal 'a complex of factors within which it is not easy to detect any causality'. The studies of Denkers lead to two interrelated 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, 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 this 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, Van Dijk, Junger-Tas, Naafs and Sanies, Steensma). 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), 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 discussing the question of whether or not security equipment and devices work (Buikhuisen). 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.

The main premise of victimological risk analysis is that an offender must have an opportunity to commit a crime. Cohen and Felson 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 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?

The risk model and the backgrounds to "petty" crime

In a report on surveys of victims carried out by the Scientific Research and Documentation Centre (WODC) of the Ministry of Justice, Van Dijk and Steinmetz 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. 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 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 not'), 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 Hinaelang and Van Qijk and Steinmetz, 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 urbanization 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).

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 owing cars and electronic apparatus (Felson). 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) 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) in eighteen cities. During this experiment 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 they 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.

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 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.

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.

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Первый шаг к анализу виктимологического риска. Концептуальная модель предотвращения «мелких» преступлений

Аннотация: Мотивы правонарушителей к совершению преступлений, по крайней мере, останутся неизменными. В то же время мы приходим к выводу, что изложенная выше - теоретическая основа (фактор близости, фактор привлекательности и фактор воздействия) раскрывает большое количество широко варьирующихся фонов взаимодействия между потенциальными правонарушителями и потенциальными жертвами. Диапазон существенных взаимодействий между различными элементами модели таков, что для будущего анализа придется использовать подход теории систем. Это единственный подход, который, казалось бы, предлагает адекватные возможности для оптимального описания динамики рассматриваемой социальной и физической экологии.

Ключевые слова: преступление; предотвращение; виктимологический риск; модель; криминология; профилактика.

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