

## **Introduction to the Special Issue**

The Netherlands is a small country of 15,000,000 inhabitants. Although crime has never been of particular concern to Dutch citizens, the increase in crime since the 1960s has placed the crime problem high on both the public and the political agenda.

Between the 1960s and the 1980s crime has increased substantially. In absolute figures recorded crime has increased almost 10-fold. In 1960 130,000 offenses were recorded by the police, and in 1980 about 1 million. Rates per 1000 inhabitants also increased: since 1975 recorded offenses per 1000 (traffic offenses excluded) rose from 38 to 76, an increase of 100%. The rise has been greatest in offenses covered by the criminal code, such as theft and burglary. There has also been a steep increase in willful damage of property. Our biannual victim surveys, carried out since 1975, show that crimes such as breaking and entering private premises and the destruction of private property have almost doubled since 1975 (van Dijk and Junger-Tas, 1988).

A parallel and partly overlapping development can be seen in the rise of juvenile delinquency since the end of the 1950s. Crime rates for 12 to 17 and 18 to 20 year olds started to rise in 1955, the year that has been characterized as the takeoff of prosperity. Since that year the percentage of convicted juveniles in the total population has doubled: from 0.3% in 1955 to 0.6% in 1970 for the age group 12-17 years and from 0.7 to 1.65% for age group 18-20 years. As far as the nature of the delinquency is concerned, it should be stressed that the bulk of it is accounted for by property offenses and vandalism, with some increase in aggressive offenses of a nonserious nature (Jongman and Cats, 1974).

However, there are signs suggesting a reversal of this trend over the last 10 years. Victim surveys show a stabilization of the number of victims since 1983 and a steady decline of victimization for about the past 4 years. Most kinds of theft, including burglary, have decreased.

Police statistics show that property crimes is the largest category of all crimes recorded by the police. Half of these consist of aggravated theft, and one-third of simple theft. About 25% of all crimes are traffic offenses, in most cases drunken driving.

The falling birth rate since the 1970s has seriously reduced the youth population. As a consequence, juvenile delinquency has diminished considerably since 1982. Among juveniles, property crimes account for 75% of boys' delinquency and 85% of girls' delinquency. Violent offenses (5% of all juvenile crime) consist essentially of nonserious assaults.

There is some concern about the slightly increasing violent crime rate. Among adults this is related to organized (drug-related) crime; among juveniles, to somewhat more assaults and thefts with violence.

The Netherlands has eight universities, of which two are denominational—one Roman-Catholic and the other Protestant—and three are higher-technology universities. Unlike in the United States, higher professional training, such as social work or nursing, is not incorporated in the university curriculum but takes place in specialized educational institutions. All universities are financed entirely by the state, and those who work at universities are in fact civil servants.

Traditionally every university had its own criminological institute or research department in the law faculty, which had two essential tasks: lecturing and conducting research. Since the 1980s budget cuts have reduced empirical criminological research and some of the specialized institutes have been closed. Recently, the Ministry of Justice has reserved funds to encourage policy-relevant criminological research at the universities.

Social science research in the Netherlands is generally funded by three main sources:

- (A) The first funding source is the university itself: in view of its research mission, it has an obligation to fund some research programs. Universities allocate funds on the basis of faculty research programs and of criteria referring to theoretical innovation and the quality of the research design.
- (B) Special foundations, such as the Dutch Foundation for Fundamental Research (Nederlandse Stichting voor Wetenschappelijk Onderzoek), constitute the second source. Most of these foundations are bureaucratic organizations and funding decisions are made slowly.
- (C) The third source of money is government departments, such as the Ministry of Health and Social Work, the Ministry of Labour Relations and Employment, the Ministry of Education, and, in the case of criminology, the Ministry of Justice.

Universities and foundations tend to subsidize mainly fundamental theoretical or empirical research, while government departments are interested mainly in applied research, which helps solve important criminal policy problems.

Throughout the 1950s and 1960s, criminological research in the Netherlands was purely academic and theoretical. Criminology professors generally had a penal law background and virtually no interest in, or experience with, empirical research. This changed in 1966 with the appointment of Wouter Buikhuisen as a professor of criminology at Groningen University; his dissertation reported the results of an empirical study of Dutch marginal youth groups [somewhat similar to the English "teddy boys" (Buikhuisen, 1965)]. Buikhuisen was very interested in criminal policy, believing that social science research in general should be of some use to policy makers. Moreover, he emphasized the importance of empirical research as well as a more practical orientation in criminology. He was one of the first to conduct studies on the relationship between alcohol consumption and the visual perception of specific traffic situations, on the characteristics and recidivism of drunken drivers, and on the effectiveness of police campaigns in improving car safety. He was also the first to introduce studies on self-report delinquency and drug use among students. Buikhuisen was instrumental in foregrounding empirical criminology in the Netherlands.

Since 1974 a strong policy-oriented research center has operated within the Ministry of Justice in conjunction with an expanded welfare state and the consequent growth of government involvement in the sixties and seventies. Policy decision makers realized that many problems in the field of public order and crime control were wider in scope than penal law or criminal justice. Moreover, they wanted to know how effectively and efficiently the different constituting elements of the criminal justice system functioned. At that time universities were not interested in conducting policy research; one reason is because they were afraid of losing their academic independence, and in fact they looked down on this type of "applied" research.

The need for its own research unit led the Minister of Justice to invite Professor Buikhuisen to set up such a center. Buikhuisen agreed, on the condition that guarantees were given for the center's independence. These guarantees materialized in the following policies: the center has the final responsibility for the content of research reports, all research reports are published, a research plan is published every year, and researchers can publish freely in their own name and have contacts with the media. The basic assumption underlying the creation of a specialized policy research center is that the objectives of criminal justice policy are reasonably clear and consistent and that the application of the scientific method in solving policy problems will assist in achieving these objectives in a more rational way.

Dutch social science research in general has been strongly influenced by the Anglo-Saxon empirical research tradition. This is also apparent in criminology, where the legalistic and mainly qualitative orientation is slowly being replaced by a much more quantitative orientation. There remain a

number of scholars producing historical studies, such as the history of the prison system or studies on the prosecutor system in the 19th and 20th centuries. There also exists a phenomenological tradition inspired by German and British scholars and by cultural anthropology. Their studies are centred mainly on drug users and their drug abuse careers, on the study of what the Americans call "vice," and on crime among ethnic minorities.

What can we say at this moment about the main trends in Dutch criminology? We distinguish three important fields of research activity:

- (A) First, with respect to theory development, Dutch criminology has made some modest contributions. The Research and Documentation Centre (RDC) has developed victimization surveys as well as testing elements of opportunity theory in relation to survey findings. There has been an extensive test of differential association theory on a large sample (see the paper by Bruinsma in this issue). The Criminology Institute at the University of Groningen has specialized in a large number of studies on social inequality and its effects on the prosecution and sentencing of lower-class and unemployed persons by the criminal justice system. Social control theory has been tested a number of times on Dutch youth samples (see the papers by Junger-Tas and by Junger and Polder in this issue). There have also been efforts at the University of Leyden to develop a sociobiological research orientation. Research has been undertaken on aggression and on children with severe behavioral problems, although this area of research has not received the support of Dutch society.
- (B) Second, there have been efforts to develop better methods of measurement and analysis. Dissatisfied with police statistics as the only measure of crime developments, the RDC improved and refined measures of victimization for national use. The center also constructed instruments to be used at the local level by police departments and community leaders. In 1989 it took the initiative for an international crime survey among 14 countries. Self-reported measures of crime are now being used in national delinquency studies on a regular basis. The RDC also launched an international comparative self-report study, including 10 countries and several U.S. states.

Time-series analysis and multilevel analysis are some methods introduced rather recently at the Universities of Twente and Utrecht.

- (C) Finally, there is a flow of policy evaluation studies, conducted at both the RDC and the universities. Two main fields are currently evaluated: (1) alternatives to prison and pretrial detention, such

as community service, training projects, "coerced" treatment, and diversion, and (2) crime prevention projects, of which great numbers have been set up by local authorities recently.

In this issue of the *Journal of Quantitative Criminology* we chose to present to the reader a fair image of quantitative Dutch criminology as it is practiced today, both from the viewpoint of research concerns and from the viewpoint of areas of interest. This means that we have, on the one hand, articles testing specific theories and, on the other hand, articles exploring new areas of interest or trying out a new method of analysis. Moreover, we cover different criminal justice aspects: sentencing to prison, macroanalysis of crime rates, crime prevention in the education system, criminological research, juvenile delinquency, and delinquency among minority groups.

One of the most popular criminological theories in the Netherlands is the social control theory of Travis Hirschi. This theory was utilized as a theoretical basis for the Dutch crime prevention policy during the last 5 years in order to strengthen the bond of (delinquent) youngsters with society. The RDC has already established a kind of tradition in empirical tests of control theory on boys and girls in the Netherlands. Two of those studies are presented in this issue (by Junger-Tas and by Junger and Polder). Junger-Tas focuses on the relationship between the social bond and delinquency. A random sample of 2500 juveniles enabled her to test the relationships between family integration (direct parental control, communication with parents, family activities, and family climate), school integration, leisure, (delinquent) peers, and norms and the self-reported delinquency of boys and girls. On the whole, she concludes that social control theory has been confirmed by her study. An interesting theoretical and empirical feature of her study is that her data are from a panel study. This dynamic research design enabled her to study, with the aid of a Lisrel model, changes in family integration over time in relation to the occurrence and continuation of delinquent behavior.

Bruinsma's study starts from the differential association theory of Sutherland. This theory is not so popular anymore among criminologists worldwide, but here the author takes for his empirical test a modified and extended version of the theory published by the German methodologist Karl-Dieter Opp. Data on 1196 boys and girls in the age range of 12 to 17 years show that the four complex hypotheses are fairly well confirmed. Bruinsma looks more closely at the influence of parents and peers on youngsters. In exploring the nature of the impact of significant others, he formulates some new and additional theoretical specifications, followed by empirical tests. The study emphasizes that the deviance and the frequency of contacts with friends are both very important for the development of positive definitions of delinquency and the frequency of communications about relevant techniques.

Special analyses show that several propositions about the interaction processes favor the theory.

Junger and Polder explore rival criminological theories (strain, social control, cultural dissonance, and traditionalism) on a random sample of three groups of ethnic minority boys (Moroccans, Turks, and Surinamese) and a control group of comparable Dutch boys. Their study tries to answer two questions: whether involvement in crime is higher for minority boys and whether the causes of crime are similar among the boys or specific to their culture or their immigrant status. Using self-reports and official data, Junger and Polder conclude that, overall, the findings support social control theory (family, school, leisure time, and peers) over the rival theories.

While Junger-Tas finds that school failure is a good predictor of future delinquency, Baerveldt asks which school features have the most impact on the delinquent behavior of students. Combining elements of Hirschi's social control theory and of Bruinsma's differential association theory, he tests a conditional social theory. He uses data such as half-structured interviews, structured observations, surveys of students and teachers, and sociograms of classrooms in order to connect the individual and the aggregational level of analysis. His findings suggest that the theory of conditional social control is globally supported: school integration is negatively correlated with delinquency, and the more peers in the students' networks commit offenses, the more offenses students will commit themselves. In order to explain some contradictory empirical findings, Baerveldt develops a multilevel analysis model with which he is able to weight the relative impact by the school, the different grades, and individual variables on the delinquency index.

Not just the family, the peers, and the school are found to be relevant factors for crime and delinquency; the neighborhood structure can also be included in this list. However, only a few ecological studies have been executed in the Netherlands. One of them was by Hesseling, who studied the relationship among neighborhood structure, police records, and offender mobility in the city of Utrecht. His empirical findings suggest a correlation between neighborhood characteristics (opportunity structure, socioeconomic status, housing type, and percentage of single households) and the number of petty crimes, vandalism, burglaries, and offender rates. Furthermore, Hesseling gives relevant information on offender mobility. His findings suggest that the opportunity structure of inner-city neighborhoods attract offenders from elsewhere.

The last two contributions concern macroanalyses of crime in the Netherlands. van Tulder investigates the relationship among official crime rates, detection rates, and the costs and benefits of the police and the criminal justice system. His study supplements microlevel research. Using time-series analysis he investigates the crime level in the Netherlands from 1950 till 1981

and links these rates with social, demographic, and economic variables and with the performance of the police and the criminal justice system. Both regional differences and time series are explored. One conclusion is that the per-capita numbers of youth, divorced people, and unemployed contribute significantly to the crime rate.

In the last contribution in this issue, Fiselier tests the Blumstein hypothesis of the stability of punishment against Dutch prison data. After some comments on this hypothesis, he describes some trends in the level of punishment in the Netherlands from 1846 till 1987. Using regression analysis, an advanced Box–Jenkins time-series analysis, and analysis of a few dynamic models, the author concludes that the Dutch prison figures ambiguously support the stability of punishment hypothesis of Blumstein *et al.* In his concluding comments, Fiselier suggests some improvements in the models, taking into account equilibrium processes operating in the criminal justice system.

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