

HOME OFFICE RESEARCH STUDY NO 63

Crime Prevention Publicity: an assessment

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REPORT

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HOME OFFICE RESEARCH STUDIES

'Home Office Research Studies' comprise reports on research undertaken in the Home Office to assist in the exercise of its administrative functions, and for the information of the judicature, the services for which the Home Secretary has responsibility (direct or indirect) and the general public.

On the last pages of this report are listed titles already published in this series, and in the preceding series *Studies in the Causes of Delinquency and the Treatment of Offenders*.

Foreword

Despite consistent support given to crime prevention advertising by governments both here and abroad, no comprehensive assessment has been made to date of its effectiveness in reducing crime. Such an overview is attempted in this report, prompted by the results of some recent empirical investigations which have formed part of the Research Unit's programme of crime prevention research. An assessment of a police publicity campaign in Plymouth to increase car security has already been published in *Crime Prevention and the Police* (Home Office Research Study No. 55). The present volume reports two further evaluations: one of an anti-vandalism campaign mounted in north-west England in 1978; the other of a car security campaign conducted in the north of England a year later. The first study showed that advertising failed to produce a reduction in the incidence of property damage, while the second confirmed the results of the study undertaken in Plymouth in showing no improvement in vehicle security or police figures on car theft.

The present organisation of crime prevention publicity in the United Kingdom is described in Chapter 1, together with a review of what the major campaigns have achieved in the way of behavioural change. It is concluded that, although there is evidence of some improvement in knowledge and attitudes, publicity has had little success in modifying the behaviour of either potential victims or offenders in ways likely to have reduced crime. It is argued that crime prevention advertising, as presently conceived, faces a difficult problem in convincing people that the risks of victimisation or detection are such that they should follow advertising recommendations. A further problem is that the behaviour which advertising is seeking to influence may be determined more by immediate situational factors than by underlying beliefs and good intentions. It is proposed that changes might usefully be made in relation to the content of publicity, and that greater reliance should be put on publicity as an aid to the implementation of other crime prevention measures than on its ability to change behaviour in its own right.

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In relation to the study on the 1979 autocrime campaign reported in Chapter 3, we should like to thank the chief constables of the Durham, Merseyside, Nottinghamshire, South Yorkshire, Greater Manchester, Northumbria, West Midlands and West Yorkshire forces for their co-operation in providing ready access to crime reports on vehicle thefts. In addition, the last four forces generously carried out for us two separate security checks on parked vehicles, for which we should particularly like to record our appreciation.

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1 Introduction

Central government supports crime prevention publicity designed to encourage potential victims of crime to take better security precautions, and to remind potential offenders of the consequences of their behaviour. Apart from its obvious purpose of reducing crime rates, such advertising is seen as valuable in showing official concern about crime. It is also felt to have benefit in shifting attitudes irrespective of any quantifiable effect on behaviour; in reinforcing and sustaining the behaviour of those who normally act in accordance with advertising recommendations; and in providing a better 'climate of opinion' in which legislative and other action can be taken by central and local bodies to reduce crime.

It follows from this that the task of assessing the value of crime prevention publicity is a complex one, in which it would be difficult to draw conclusions about the extent to which these wide-ranging objectives are achieved. To date, evaluation has centred on three issues most subject to quantifiable assessment: whether i. after exposure to publicity people's attitudes to the subjects covered change in a positive way; ii. knowledge and awareness of advertising recommendations increase; and iii. claimed or actual behaviour changes in ways that may make offending less likely. Since behavioural change represents the major focus of publicity in the crime prevention field, the present assessment confines itself largely to the third issue. More emphasis is put on actual rather than claimed behavioural change where it is difficult to avoid the problem of audiences being swayed to report greater compliance after seeing publicity which stresses the social desirability of following its recommendations (cf. Samuels, 1977).

While it is difficult to calculate the total expenditure on crime prevention publicity, the Home Office alone has spent some £1.5m over the past five years in this area. This is not a large amount in relation to commercial advertising, though it excludes money spent on local campaigns and does not take into account some 'subsidised' costs referred to later. Despite this investment in crime prevention advertising, no overview has been presented to date of the effects of publicity in the United Kingdom. Silverman and Sacco (1979) have recently looked at North American victim-oriented publicity, while in Canada evidence on publicity linked with legislation is incorporated by Vidmar (1978) in a discussion of 'public education' campaigns. In this country, crime prevention publicity has been discussed briefly by Heal and Burrows (1979) in the wider context of what Samuels (1977) calls 'social persuasion' advertising, where an attempt is made to deter people from behaviour (such as smoking) which is seen as socially irresponsible and/or harmful to the individual.

In the first chapter, more detailed consideration is given to the effects on behaviour of recent advertising campaigns in the crime prevention field. This draws in part on three evaluations conducted recently by the Home Office Research Unit. Two of these studies (see Chapter 3 in this volume and Burrows and Heal, 1979) were concerned with campaigns to encourage motorists to be more careful about securing their vehicles. In this respect, they are pertinent to one important theme of recent Home Office Research Unit work: namely, the degree to which easy opportunities for crime can be minimised to reduce offending (see Mayhew *et al.*, 1976). The third study (reported in Chapter 2) examined the effectiveness of a Home Office campaign which aimed to deter youngsters from committing vandalism through increasing the degree of supervision given by parents and through increasing the youngsters' fears of being caught.

While publicity is a term which can be applied to various forms of communication, it is used throughout this volume to refer mainly to poster and leaflet campaigns, or advertisements on television and in the press. Particular attention is paid to the results of the main Home Office campaigns (and to certain initiatives sponsored by the Department of Transport), though reference is also made to other domestic and some relevant campaigns abroad. This review is not meant to be exhaustive (by and large only campaigns run in this country in the 1970s are covered) but intends rather to highlight the chief advertising themes and the main behavioural results.

As regards the types of campaigns covered, the criterion adopted has been one of crime-relatedness: i.e. the behaviour concerned either comes under the scope of the law (offender-oriented advertising), or is thought to create opportunities for crime (victim-oriented advertising). Some other 'social persuasion' campaigns (e.g. in the fields of fire prevention and public health) bear some similarity to crime prevention initiatives, but these are not dealt with here. Two somewhat marginal areas are included however: i. road safety campaigns aimed at dangerous or careless driving (the point being that such behaviour is open to prosecution); and ii. campaigns directed at increasing levels of seat belt use (on the grounds that non-wearing of belts is an offence in a number of other countries, and has been the subject of recent moves in this country to legislate on the matter). The evidence reviewed strongly suggests that crime prevention advertising has, in itself, failed to produce changes in the behaviour of potential victims and offenders, and a number of factors are identified later in an attempt to explain this.

Major themes and types of advertising

Within the field of victim-oriented publicity, advertising has been chiefly concerned with directing people's attention to the opportunities for crime created by careless behaviour, and has offered advice on counter-measures to be taken in specific circumstances without giving away information which might be helpful to would-be offenders (cf. Vader, 1979). The principal subjects of victim-

oriented campaigns, conducted for the Home Office by professional advertising agencies working on behalf of the Central Office of Information (C.O.I.), have been car theft¹ and burglary in private houses. The emphasis of these campaigns has been on 'target hardening', for example, locking doors and windows and fitting anti-theft devices. Some attempts have also been made to encourage the public to report suspicious behaviour to the police, thereby attempting to improve the detection of offenders. Campaigns such as those on the theme *Dial 999 if you see anything suspicious* are relevant here, although their effects remain largely untested.

In the area of offender-oriented publicity, advertising has warned that offending is likely to incur costs for society as well as for the individual himself in terms of social stigma and financial penalties. Campaigns directed at offenders have focused primarily on drinking and driving and other road safety themes (these being sponsored by the Department of Transport, again in conjunction with C.O.I.), in which stress has also been placed on the increased risk of being involved in a traffic accident. Offender-oriented publicity in the United Kingdom has also been directed at vandalism, and at television licence evasion, where campaigns have been sponsored by the Home Office in conjunction with the B.B.C. and the Post Office. Also under the heading of offender-oriented publicity are various types of warning notices (e.g. *Shoplifters will be prosecuted*). Although their specific usefulness has not been examined directly in this country, two American studies (Decker, 1972 and McNees *et al.*, 1976) are discussed later.

In addition to the major campaigns sponsored by central government, there is considerable background crime prevention publicity. This includes local initiatives, such as those organised by police crime prevention departments and crime prevention panels^{2,3} in which both victim and offender-oriented themes have been the subject of poster displays, local radio and press coverage, leaflet hand-outs and so forth. These local campaigns are usually organised on low budgets, taking advantage of the willingness of local authorities, businesses and news media to disseminate crime prevention advice at little or no cost. Due to their relatively small scale, these initiatives have not generally lent themselves to evaluation. The same is true of two further types of background advertising: i. crime prevention television 'filler' films which are shown free of charge by all television companies, usually at 'off-peak' times (in 1978, almost 20 different 'fillers' were shown on a total of over 2000 occasions); and ii. on a rather smaller scale, crime prevention posters (e.g. *Look out, there's a thief about*) displayed in shops, offices and schools.

¹ 'Car theft' refers to thefts and unauthorised takings of motor vehicles together with thefts from vehicles. These offences are also referred to in this chapter as 'autocrime'.

² Crime prevention panels, first established in 1968, represent an attempt to increase community involvement in crime prevention by providing a forum for regular discussions between crime prevention officers and appointed members of local institutions and organisations.

³ The Local Government Information Office (no longer in existence) produced a series of crime prevention leaflets and posters for use by local authorities, mainly on vandalism themes. The best selling poster was that with the message *Who pays for this damage—your parents!*

Victim-oriented campaigns

Although by no means all campaigns on the subject of car theft and household burglary have been evaluated, the evidence available suggests that such advertising has not been successful in promoting improved security behaviour. In relation to car theft, there have been evaluations of three large-scale advertising campaigns conducted recently. A four month national press and poster campaign mounted by **C.O.I.**, on behalf of the **Home Office** at the end of 1976¹ produced some improvement in drivers' knowledge of the risk of theft and in attitudes to car-locking, but there was no evidence of a campaign effect either in terms of claimed car-locking or actual vehicle security as measured by the number of cars found secure in physical checks carried out before and after the publicity (Research Bureau Limited, 1977). (There were fewer autocrime offences recorded by the police in the second half of 1976 than expected on the basis of past trends, but there is no strong evidence that this was attributable to the campaign: other property crime remained stable in 1976 and vehicle thefts themselves were higher during the campaign quarter than in preceding months.)

Similar results emerged from a Home Office campaign run in the north of England in 1979, a particular feature of this being the use of television in one region and press and posters in another.² The evaluation by the Home Office Research Unit (reported in Chapter 3) produced no evidence in either area that the advertising had any positive effect on actual car-locking behaviour, or on the level of offences recorded by the police. Work done by N.O.P. (1979) again showed no improvement in claimed levels of locking behaviour, and although there was some *overall* indication of positive attitude change, no individual attitude item registered any statistically significant change. Finally, a specially-mounted police campaign run in Plymouth for five weeks in 1977 was also shown, in a Home Office Research Unit study (Burrows and Heal, 1979), not to have influenced the number of car thefts known to the police or the proportion of drivers locking their cars; this despite an unusually high level of local coverage.

These negative results stand somewhat in contrast to claims about a number of local initiatives mounted by crime prevention panels in conjunction with the police—for example, those in Reading (Home Office, 1974a), Southampton (Home Office, 1974b), Durham (Home Office, 1975a) and Sunderland (Sunderland Crime Prevention Panel, 1975). Some caution, however, is required in interpreting these results. By and large, evaluations of local campaigns have focused only on police statistics, and little or no attempt has been made to take into account normal variations in crime over short periods of time, extraneous influences on the level of crime in the campaign area, or the incidence of the 'target' offences in comparable areas not receiving publicity. In two other local campaigns in Nottingham (Home Office, 1974c) and Bath (Home Office, 1975b), changes in the extent to which drivers locked their car doors were examined as

¹ The cost of this was £250,000, equivalent to a national campaign costing £1.3 million at 1980 prices.

² This campaign cost £100,000, equivalent to a national campaign costing £2 million at 1980 prices.

well as police crime statistics. Although in both cases it was claimed that cars were more frequently locked-up, Burrows and Heal (1979) suggest that inadequate methodological precautions may have been taken in comparing locking levels before and after the campaign.

A study by Marplan (1973a) stands as the only evaluation of a Home Office campaign directed solely at household burglary.¹ (The effects of local campaigns on this theme appear not to have been measured.) This involved a comparison of the relative effectiveness of three different ways of communicating advice, mainly in relation to household security. The crime prevention booklet *Protect Your Home*, produced by the Home Office early in 1973, was distributed to each household in two parts of south-west England, additional television back-up for the leaflet being provided in one of the areas. In a third, nearby, area a television campaign on the same theme, but not mentioning the booklet, was transmitted alone. The evaluation found that security awareness was improved after the booklet was distributed with television backing, and that recall of advertising content was better with the booklet (especially in combination with television) than television advertising alone. Security behaviour, measured in terms of claimed adoption of the recommended precautions, did not change in the areas where the booklet or television advertising was used alone, though it changed marginally in the area where the booklet had television support.

Two evaluations of Home Office campaigns aimed at both car thefts *and* household burglary have produced similar results.² An evaluation by Marplan (1973b) of a two-month national television and press campaign in 1972 showed that although there was a high level of recognition of the campaign slogans, detailed recall of the advertising content was poor and measures of claimed behaviour showed no improvement in the extent to which precautions recommended in the advertising were followed. Another Marplan (1973c) evaluation of a joint-theme television and press campaign in the Midlands in the spring of 1973 produced identical results, despite the fact that by the end of the spring campaign, the Midlands had been exposed to advertising on car theft and household burglary for almost six months, taking into account the national campaign at the end of 1972.

Offender-oriented publicity

Evidence on the effects of offender-oriented publicity mounted in the United Kingdom emerges mainly from evaluations of campaigns on vandalism, tele-

¹ A three week national television campaign was mounted in 1974 (with the theme *If it opens—lock it!*) and in 1973-74, 19 million copies of the crime prevention booklet *Protect Your Home* were distributed to households in England and Wales. Neither of the campaigns was evaluated. A Home Office campaign on household burglary was conducted in the Harlech T.V. area at the beginning of 1980, after this report was written. Results of an evaluation by Research Bureau Limited and others are awaited.

² Outside the Home Office, a large-scale £80,000 publicity campaign was mounted by the Metropolitan police at the end of 1977 aimed at improving security in respect of a number of different crimes including car thefts, residential and commercial burglary, and thefts from the person. No firm evaluation was made of this particular initiative.

vision licence evasion, driving after drinking, and careless driving (e.g. dangerous overtaking). Further evidence emerges from other countries regarding the use of seat belts and—from the Netherlands—the replacement of defective tyres on cars. In brief, and this is to anticipate the discussion below, the known effects of these campaigns suggest that advertising which attempts to deter offenders by reminding them of the personal or legal consequences of transgression has been generally unsuccessful. In contrast, campaigns which have been intended to increase the fear of detection by informing their audience of changes in legislation or law enforcement practice appear to have had much greater success.

In relation to vandalism—the subject of a number of campaigns organised by police forces, crime prevention panels, local authorities, and such bodies as British Rail—the available evidence indicates that publicity has had little effect. From information presented to the Home Office in 1975 by 47 police forces on a variety of anti-vandalism measures, the over-riding feeling (see Home Office, 1975c) was that publicity was of 'little or doubtful' value, and was more likely than not to be counter-productive. Unpromising results also emerged from the 1978 Home Office vandalism campaign, which attempted to deter young boys from committing damage by increasing their fear of being caught, and (by means of a different television commercial) by encouraging parents to exercise greater control over their sons' activities. An evaluation by the Home Office Research Unit, reported in full in Chapter 2, showed no effect of the publicity, as measured by Post Office records of damage to telephone kiosks, police statistics for the offence of criminal damage, or local authority repair records of damage to schools. The evidence from records of damage to council housing was slightly more equivocal. A separate evaluation by Research Bureau Limited (1978) showed little evidence of a campaign effect in terms of changes in attitudes or claimed behaviour on the part of parents. As something of an exception, marked success was claimed for one police campaign, run by the Devon and Cornwall force in 1975, concerning vandalism to schools during the holidays. Here, unpaid publicity in the local press urged greater control by parents and teachers, stressing the fact that a number of school buildings were being fitted with what was seen to be a practical deterrent—intruder alarms. It was reported that schools suffered little damage compared with previous years (Home Office, 1976).

A number of internal Home Office evaluations of television licence evasion campaigns have registered a notable success in terms of the number of new licences issued during or after a period of advertising (e.g. Home Office, 1979). Such campaigns, which usually combine television and press advertising, typically publicise the use of detector vans which seem a highly efficient means of effecting compliance, presumably because those without a licence perceive a higher risk of detection (cf. Mawby, 1979). Publicity without the use of detector vans, as was used in some regions covered by the 1978 anti-evasion campaign, has been shown to have a similar effect, no doubt because the target audience would have assumed that detector vans had been put into use.

Road safety campaigns conducted in the United Kingdom which have not been accompanied by legislative change appear to have achieved relatively limited success in persuading motorists to drive more responsibly (a result which, according to Vidmar (1978), is in line with virtually all similar campaigns in the United States). A campaign run between 1968-70, aimed at reducing the number of accidents caused by careless overtaking, was found to have little effect on drivers' observed behaviour (Morris, 1972). A later campaign aimed at increasing the distance between following vehicles (Waters and MacAfee, 1976) did not change driving patterns (as measured on film) in conditions of fast driving on which the campaign had focused, although people interviewed in parallel surveys made some claim to have improved their driving.

Compared with the publicity accompanying the Road Safety Act, 1967 (the 'breathalyser' legislation), subsequent campaigns to reduce drunken driving seem individually to have had less success in changing behaviour or reducing road casualties (a cumulative effect of the advertising cannot be entirely ruled out in view of a small decline in alcohol-related road deaths since 1976). A large-scale television campaign conducted in 1964 had no effect on casualty rates (see Ross *et al.*, 1970), nor on the proportion of drivers who sometimes had a drink before driving (Sheppard, 1968). Similar results emerged from another campaign run in all but one television region at the end of 1976 and in early 1977. An evaluation of this (Samuels and Lee, 1978), run against a background of now familiar police 'breathalyser' practice, showed that although the average amount of alcohol reported to have been drunk before driving showed a small decrease, patterns of claimed driving behaviour (for example, arranging for someone else to drive after a night out) showed some unexpected deterioration. Attitudes to the offence seemed to be unaffected by the advertising: an examination of the blood alcohol levels of drivers involved in accidents, and the number of accidents which occurred during the late evening, showed no changes which could be attributed to the campaign. The evaluation of a similar campaign run in 1977/78 found that it did not change claimed behaviour, although some hardening of attitudes towards driving under the influence of alcohol was detected (P.A.S. Research Ltd., 1978). A further campaign in 1978/79, which also evidenced some attitude shifts, seemed more successful in reducing the reported incidence of driving after drinking (P.A.S. Research Ltd., 1979), although the absence of data from 'control' region leaves the interpretation of the findings somewhat open to question.

The limited success of persuasive advertising concerned with irresponsible driving contrasts with the impact of publicity providing information about changes in legal sanctions or law enforcement. In the United Kingdom, the most important source of evidence relates to the introduction of the Road Safety Act, 1967 which was accompanied by a publicity campaign stressing the dangers of driving with excessive blood alcohol and presenting information on the new legislation. A study conducted before and after the campaign (Sheppard, 1968) showed minimal changes in drivers' attitudes towards drinking and driving, but

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a positive effect on claimed behaviour with most respondents reporting that they were aware of the increased risks of being caught. A subsequent analysis of road accident statistics (Ross *et al*, 1970) showed an 11% drop in casualties in 1968 which was attributed to the 'breathalyser' legislation, but a decline in its effect soon after.

The initial impact of the 'breathalyser' legislation and its attendant publicity is echoed in recent evidence on the effect of a widely-publicised 'crackdown' on drinking drivers in New South Wales.¹ Further support for the effectiveness of publicity accompanying changes in law enforcement practice comes from a campaign conducted in the Netherlands to encourage drivers to replace illegally worn tyres on their cars (Buikhuisen, 1974). This campaign took the form of alerting the public in one city (Groningen) to the fact that the police were about to take action against motorists who failed to renew worn tyres. It was found that defective tyres on cars in Groningen were twice as likely to be renewed as those in a control city where no special publicity or police activity was mounted. Some time after the campaign, interviews were conducted both with motorists who had changed their worn tyres and with those who had not. These suggested that non-compliers rated the risk of detection as being lower, although the possibility is considered that their lower financial status was also responsible for their continuing to drive with defective tyres.

Finally, the fact that in a number of places (notably Australia, New Zealand and parts of Canada) the wearing of seat belts by drivers and front seat passengers has been made compulsory by law provides a special case whereby the effectiveness of publicity timed to coincide with new legislation can be compared to campaigns which have attempted to increase the wearing of belts by underlining the risk of personal injury or disfigurement, an arguably powerful theme.

Research prior to a number of different regional campaigns in the United Kingdom in the early 1970s (Levens and Rodnight, 1973) indicated that the great majority of drivers accepted the effectiveness of belts, though the proportion claiming to wear them was larger than that observed. Campaigns on Tyne-Tees Television and in the Lancashire, Yorkshire and London television areas, were able to raise the level of belt use from around 15% to a maximum level of about 30%, the increase being closely related to the weight of advertising employed. A reduction in the use of belts was evident soon after the television campaigns ended, although this did not fall to original levels. Subsequent campaigns have met with varying degrees of success in terms of observed increases in belt-wearing. The most recently evaluated campaign showed that a statistically significant increase in wearing levels from 31.3% to 33.0% had to be put down to seasonal variations in journey patterns (Research Services Limited, 1979). To what extent the higher levels of belt wearing during the course of more recent campaigns can be attributed to continuing publicity effort is unclear: it un-

¹ Personal communication from Mr Ross Homel, School of Behavioural Sciences, Macquarie University, Sydney.

doubtedly reflects in part the higher proportion of cars fitted with inertia-reel belts which appear to encourage belt use.

In the United States and those parts of Canada where it is not an offence to drive without a seat belt, advertising seems to have done less well than in the United Kingdom (see Robertson *et al.*, 1974, for instance, for an evaluation of American campaigns). However, campaigns aimed at increasing the wearing of seat belts by informing the public of the legal sanctions for non-compliance have contributed to levels of use in the region of 75% (Andreassand, 1972)—paid publicity here no doubt being augmented by other media discussions likely to accompany legislative change. In the Canadian province of Ontario, for instance, where seat belt legislation was timed to coincide with a national campaign in 1976, both reported and observed belt use showed significant increases (Pierce *et al.*, 1976), though in provinces without supporting legislation, improvements were apparent only in the extent to which belts were seen as providing protection (Rochon, 1977).

Explaining the results

The evidence reviewed in the preceding sections indicates that crime prevention advertising in the United Kingdom to date has not been strikingly successful in promoting changes in behaviour likely to lead to a reduction in crime. This appears true of all victim-oriented publicity, and of publicity directed at offenders which emphasises the risk of injury to self or others, or the consequences of detection. Something of an exception have been offender-oriented campaigns which have publicised changes in legislation and/or law enforcement intended to increase the risks of being caught. (Examples of these in the United Kingdom are television licence evasion campaigns and the 1967 drinking and driving initiative; from abroad, examples are provided by campaigns on drinking and driving in New South Wales, seat belt use in Australia and Canada, and worn tyres in Holland.) These general conclusions are in line with such other assessments as have been made by Vidmar (1968), Silverman and Sacco (1979), and Heal and Burrows (1979).

In contrast to these results concerning changes in behaviour, some, though not all, campaigns have been found to result in increased knowledge of campaign recommendations or positive shifts in attitudes (e.g. Marplan, 1973a; Research Bureau Limited, 1977). These findings have been seen as encouraging to the extent that changes in attitudes and awareness: i. promise behavioural change in the longer term; and ii. are valuable in their own right (for instance, in moulding normative standards). No doubt the second view has some validity, though the first may be rather optimistic in view of the uncertainty as to whether shifts in attitudes herald behavioural change at all. Thus, it is usually maintained (e.g. Fishbein and Ajzen, 1975) that attitudes to precisely-defined statements (e.g. concerning the advisability of locking a kitchen window when one is out in the afternoon) will have a bearing on behavioural predispositions. At the same time, general attitude statements of the sort usually incorporated into publicity

research are seen as rather unreliable predictors of behaviour, as evidenced in the present review by a number of evaluations where shifts in attitudes have been unaccompanied by behavioural change. It is doubtful, moreover, whether behaviour will change after time if it does not alter during, or immediately after, publicity campaigns. Intuitively, one might expect the greatest effect to be apparent in the shorter rather than longer-term, even though 'sleeper' effects have sometimes been claimed in the field of commercial advertising. Furthermore, such evidence as is available with regard to social persuasion advertising shows maximum effects to be apparent early on. The seat belt campaigns conducted in the early 1970s, for instance, where the duration of advertising effects was specifically examined, showed that behavioural effects diminish soon after exposure to publicity, unless reinforced by further initiatives.

At the end of the day, there is little way of telling whether new standards for crime prevention publicity would produce desired changes in behaviour on the part of either potential victims or offenders. Leaving aside the question (which is taken up later) of whether sufficiently persuasive messages have been relayed, there seem good grounds for thinking that in other respects advertising standards have been set at very adequate levels. Most major campaigns, for instance, have been given quite substantial budgets and consistent attention has been paid by C.O.I, to ensuring that money is sensibly spent. Pre-campaign surveys are undertaken to ensure that the chosen publicity is understood and communicated clearly. It also seems that campaign penetration is high (with campaign awareness levels typically in the region of 90%) even if smaller proportions actually remember specific publicity recommendations. Government expenditure on advertising certainly tends to be in 'bursts' rather than on the basis of continuous publicity, but background initiatives mentioned at the beginning of the chapter may serve to keep issues alive, and there is in any case some evidence (e.g. Levens and Rodnight, 1973) to suggest that 'bursts' work best. Whether greater gains would follow if advertising 'weight' could be increased is something of an open question but strict limits of cost will always impose limitations in the public sector. In any case, one might ultimately confront a problem of diminishing returns when too intensive coverage merely results in boredom and over-exposure (cf. Mendelsohn, 1973).

In terms of evaluation, there is little reason to think that some campaigns have had effects on behaviour which have not been successfully measured. Short-term evaluations may be incapable of measuring longer-term effects or those apparent only after a lapse of time, but it has already been argued that the case for expecting such effects is not a strong one. Secondly, although larger-scale evaluations might mean that smaller effects would attain significance, the scale of campaign assessments has in general been matched to the size of the expected changes in attitudes and behaviour, which are seen to be worthwhile only if of reasonable magnitude. Thirdly, it is sometimes contended that, in the field of victim-oriented publicity in particular, attention drawn to specific offences may increase levels of reporting to the police, thereby obscuring any positive effect of

publicity on the number of crimes with which the police have to deal. While it is difficult to test this proposition, it would seem a serious possibility only in relation to residential burglary: victims of car theft already report most offences to the police on account of insurance requirements. Even in regard to burglary it is unlikely that crime reduction effects have been concealed because of increased reporting: the evidence from most burglary campaigns indicates little change in security behaviour likely to lead to a lower incidence of crime.

Discounting, then, potential limitations in the current standard of crime prevention advertising or in the way it is evaluated as reasons why advertising has not been shown to produce appropriate behavioural change, it would appear that more fundamental causes are implicated. It is suggested below that two basic factors need to be considered, each of which relate to the two types of publicity under discussion. In brief, the factors are: i. the nature of the risks upon which crime prevention publicity is focused; and ii. the competing immediate influences on behaviour in specific situations which may undermine the weight of underlying beliefs and good intentions.

i. Victim-oriented publicity

While central government and the police might hope that victim-oriented publicity will reduce the volume of crime, the main 'selling point' of such publicity has been the consequences of crime borne at a personal level. In this respect, the supposed indifference of the public in complying with security recommendations may be partly explained by the fact that the 'costs' of compliance are unlikely to be matched by its 'rewards'. Particularly relevant here is that victims may perceive the actual likelihood of victimisation as remote. In fact (though there is little empirical evidence on this) many people—particularly those who are already careful about security—may exaggerate the chances of being a victim of the offences which have been the major targets of publicity. However, the realities of the situation—more consistent perhaps with the perceptions of 'negligent' members of the public—are telling. In relation to car theft, for instance, Burrows and Heal (1979) have estimated that cars without steering column locks (some ten times more at risk than cars with them) stood a 1:18 chance of being stolen in 1977. At first sight this figure may appear high, but turned on its head it indicates, more strikingly, that *on average* an owner of an unprotected car will be a victim of theft only once every 18 years (a longer period than the car is likely to last). With regard to household burglaries, it would seem that an 'average' household will fall victim only once every 35 years, assuming here that only half the offences committed are reported to the police.¹

¹ This is a figure based on American evidence (e.g. N.C J.I.S.S.. 1977) used in the absence of large-scale victimisation data relevant to Great Britain. One victim survey in London (Sparks *et al.*, 1977) suggests that the reporting rate may be lower in this country—which would make the burglary risk higher than 1:35. This does not accord with the police view, however, and may be due to the unrepresentativeness of London householders with respect to reporting behaviour.

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While such relatively low probabilities of victimisation may go a long way towards explaining public 'apathy', the impact of many offences will also be considerably softened by insurance cover, and many potential victims may not greatly fear the consequences of crime. In relation to burglary, for instance, people may exaggerate its harmful effects (Maguire and Bennett, 1979), though at the same time they will often say about their own homes that there is nothing worth stealing. (In fact, the average loss in nearly 45% of household burglaries in England and Wales in 1977 was under £25, *Criminal Statistics, 1978*.)

Within the context of general expectations about the risks and costs of victimisation, there may be other situational factors¹ that are important in explaining lax security behaviour. The study by Research Bureau Limited (1977) suggests that when motorists leave their cars unlocked, they take into account the length of time they expect to be away and the place in which the vehicle is parked, as well as the inconvenience of securing doors and windows and the degree of protection they believe this will provide. Along the same lines, the greater number of car windows left open during the summer probably reflects the fact that drivers prefer to face what they might see as a marginally increased risk of theft than enter an uncomfortably hot vehicle.

ii. Offender-oriented publicity

While publicity may reinforce the moral constraints that keep most people on the right side of the law for most of the time, there seem weaker grounds for thinking that it will alter, in the light of conflicting everyday experience, perceptions of the risk of detection on the part of those without strong moral qualms about law-breaking. Without being provided with new information about the risks of detection, the latter may feel that the penalties are not worth bothering about given that they have previously evaded detection anyway.

One example is provided by Decker's (1972) study which examined the introduction of new warning labels on some parking meters in New York reminding motorists that using 'slugs' was an offence; this failed to have any effect on slug use, presumably because detection of the offence is very difficult. Similarly, a careful study by McNees *et al.* (1974) showed that shoplifting signs posted in a high-risk area of a department store in Tennessee had only a small effect, although warning signs attached to certain types of clothing which pointed out that these were often stolen reduced shoplifting to near zero. This may have been because potential thieves were made to think that greater vigilance would be exercised over people looking at and trying on these clothes. In relation to drinking and driving, it would seem that campaigns not coinciding with a 'crackdown' may have failed because some drivers will stick to the belief that their driving is not seriously impaired by alcohol and will have had this borne out by the many journeys they have made after drinking which have not ended up at

¹ This is not the place to enter into any full discussion of the importance of situational contingencies in explaining behaviour, for which see, for example, Mischel (1968).

a police station or in a ditch. The small risk of detection is illustrated by a Swedish study (National Swedish Council for Crime Prevention, 1975) which calculated that given current policing levels (unlikely to be very different from those in this country), a motorist with a blood alcohol level in excess of the permitted maximum could, on average, drive 7 kilometers to and from the centre of Stockholm once a week for 25 years before being detected.

While a person's previous experience and perceptions of risk may be a stronger determinant of behaviour than publicity appeals, he may also be tempted to infringe the law by immediate situational pressures. In the case of those who drive home after a party, it may be that their good intentions are undermined by drink itself, by their reluctance not to appear 'soft*' in front of their friends, by their not being able to get a mini-cab, or by the fact that their prospective driver did not keep to the bargain to remain sober. These are not mitigating factors, but rather the realities of life in which decisions to 'take a chance' are taken. The failure of vandalism publicity, as another example, may be understandable given that easy opportunities (e.g. unoccupied buildings) prompt a lot of damage which is committed by groups of boys for whom destructive behaviour is an important way of demonstrating toughness and masculinity (Opie and Opie, 1969; Gladstone, 1978). At an even more obvious level, the marked decline in seat belt use in winter observed in one large American study (Robertson *et al*, 1974) may be accounted for at least in part by the additional discomfort of wearing a belt over bulky outdoor clothes.

The implications

This chapter has illustrated and attempted to explain the apparently limited usefulness of crime prevention advertising in achieving changes in behaviour likely to lead to a reduction in crime. The wider value of such publicity, however, remains considerably more open to question, given the broad range of objectives it seeks to achieve. A commonly expressed view is that, as Marplan (1973b) puts it, "... regular if spasmodic exposure to crime prevention publicity acts in much the same way as water wearing away a stone". This in itself may defy evaluation, but it is nevertheless true that the case for continuation is bolstered by the fact that publicity is both easy to do and likely to protect local and central government from a charge of complacency about crime. Advertising might also be seen as helping to fulfil a government responsibility to ensure that victim negligence and offender culpability cannot be put down to ignorance of the risks being run. Crime prevention publicity is also sometimes thought to have a role in sustaining the behaviour of those who act in accordance with its recommendations and related to this, finally, is the belief that general normative standards can be reinforced by publicity—aiding at the very least the acceptability to the public of legislative and other action taken to reduce crime.

While acknowledging these arguments, it would nevertheless seem that changes in the field of crime prevention advertising are needed in three respects relating to: i. the content of publicity and the way in which the objectives it is designed to

achieve are reached; ii. the need for a greater appreciation of the role publicity may have in aiding the implementation of other crime prevention measures; and iii. the need for official attitudes to be modified about the extent to which publicity is useful in changing behaviour.

i. Advertising content

Improvements in two respects might be aimed for in relation to the content of crime prevention publicity. First, a greater emphasis might be placed on the beliefs of those who are most 'deviant' with regard to the subject of individual campaigns, recognising here the need to tailor advertising messages to those most resistant to change (Bauer, 1974). Whilst pre-campaign testing is carried out to check whether commercials are understood and perceived as relevant, more might be done to attend to the beliefs about security and risk held by those who are most likely to disregard campaign recommendations. Although there may be some danger here that heavy emphasis for the benefit of non-compliers might irritate others and thus diminish the 'consciousness raising' effect of publicity for them, there nevertheless may be some scope for directing advertising messages more specifically to the beliefs of the more unwilling audience (Tuck, 1979). More dramatic advertising, presenting the consequences of non-compliance, suggests itself as one possibility, though there are limitations here. Not all fear-arousing messages are particularly effective (e.g. Vidmar, 1978) and, in relation to victim-oriented publicity, these may provoke an unrealistic fear of crime (a point which Maguire and Bennett (1979) argue applies even to current burglary publicity). Obvious ethical problems would also be associated with portraying victimisation or detection levels as higher than they are (cf. Henig and Maxfield, 1978) and these would in any case lack credibility after a time. Even presenting 'true' risks in more explicit forms may be counter-productive to the extent that these are lower than many people imagine at present.

In terms of improving advertising content on the second front, there is reason to think that messages may be successful which offer some simple constructive steps for the audience to follow, or which demand an overt response. Outside the context of crime prevention publicity, the marked success of a fat-pan fire campaign conducted in the United Kingdom in 1976 in reducing the number of fires to which brigades were called (Rutstein and Butler, 1977) may have been due to the simple but explicit advice given as to how to deal effectively with a fire, as well perhaps as to the relative novelty of the theme. Another example is provided by the American National Drivers' Test campaign. Aimed at reducing public indifference to the problems posed by bad driving, this campaign offered people the opportunity to check their driving skill on a test question form. The resulting 300% increase in enrolments at driver training centres was attributed to the novelty of the pencil-and-paper test which demanded active participation from readers and to the fact that it helped convince people that their driving was at fault (Mendelsohn, 1973).

There nevertheless may be limits to how far this principle can be applied. Persuading drivers that they perform poorly on the road might be helped by constructive advertising, though in stimulating the desire for learning and action one must also provide the means for this to be followed through. Also, it is unclear whether the 'constructive' principle can be applied further than it is at present to other offender and victim-oriented publicity. Thus, while most household burglary campaigns, for example, offer advice as to what security equipment should be found in the home and what other precautions should be taken, each household is likely to have rather different requirements in terms of security hardware.

ii. Publicity and other crime prevention measures

From what has emerged so far, it would seem that one of the most useful roles publicity can play is in aiding the implementation of crime prevention measures involving new legislation and stiffer law enforcement. As well as providing information about what is to happen, it may help to justify the introduction of initially unpopular new measures through highlighting the social and personal costs of irresponsible behaviour. It would seem, in fact, that the publicity accompanying the 1967 'breathalyser' legislation—not a popular measure at the outset—had a role to play in this respect. It might also be that publicity would prove useful should action ever be considered in this country to make careless victim behaviour subject to greater legislative control (in Greece, for example, it is an offence to leave a vehicle unlocked). In regard to seat belt use, even if publicity has not succeeded in persuading the majority of motorists to protect themselves, it may have contributed to the fact (as evidenced by some opinion polls) that the public would not now be opposed to compulsory use.

iii. Publicity in a new perspective

Despite the constructive suggestions made above, it would seem that official expectations need to be modified about the role publicity can play in changing behaviour in ways which might reduce crime. Heal and Burrows (1979) have already argued that although advertising is important in aiding communication, the difficult task the government has of 'stimulating new forms of behaviour and stopping established habits' will be better fulfilled through other forms of intervention—for example, through direct methods of crime prevention which make it more difficult for victims to be careless and for potential offenders to commit crime. People's security habits, for example, might be changed more effectively by putting better security equipment into houses at the building stage, or by improving locking devices on cars. (The compulsory fitting of steering column locks on all cars in West Germany in 1963 resulted in a dramatic decrease in offences (Bundeskriminalamt, 1973), while more advanced electronic security equipment to protect cars from theft will become increasingly feasible as micro-processor technology develops (Ekblom, 1979).)

The promise of what has been called 'physical' (Mayhew *et al*, 1976) or 'situational' (Clarke, 1980) crime prevention measures should not be laboured here

except to the extent that they put the role of publicity in a better perspective. They are premised on an understanding of the relationship between criminal behaviour and the features of the setting in which it occurs, and in fact operate in accordance with the theoretical views advanced in this chapter that crime prevention initiatives need to take into account immediate influences on behaviour and the associated importance of risk. The main objection to physical crime prevention solutions is that offenders may simply go to greater lengths to break into homes and cars, or—recognising that some targets will be less secure than others—switch their attention to where protection is least evident. The potential limitations arising from this 'displacement' of offences, however, also apply to much existing victim-oriented publicity insofar as this will fail to persuade everyone to take better precautions and insofar as improved security will fail to divert the determined thief. At the same time, although there is little direct evidence regarding the extent to which displacement occurs as a result of reducing opportunities for specific offences, such evidence as there is suggests that making crime physically more difficult for offenders to commit will deter some individuals at least. As Wheeler *et al.* (1976) put it:

Much of the rest of our lives is governed by a kind of economy of effort, whereby desired activities can become so difficult to complete that the effort is no longer made, and there seems no clear reason why criminal activities should not be governed by analagous principles.

With regard to offenders, publicity may be of some benefit in reinforcing normative standards, for instance, but, to achieve direct behavioural change, there is reason to think that exhortation and often unrealistic threats of punishment will be less successful than direct preventive strategies which increase the risk of detection and make some crimes less easy to commit. Reference can be made to the virtual elimination of thefts from telephone kiosks when the Post Office replaced aluminium coin boxes with much stronger steel ones. Again, a simple lesson emerges from measures taken to reduce the use of 'slugs' in parking meters in New York (Decker, 1972): the introduction of new meters with a slug rejector device worked; new warning labels did not. These, as effectively as many other possible examples, suggest that whatever other benefits crime prevention publicity may have, its apparently limited ability to change behaviour calls for some hard rethinking amongst its advocates.

2 An evaluation of a campaign to reduce vandalism

This chapter describes an evaluation of an anti-vandalism television campaign conducted in north-west England early in 1978 as a preliminary to a possible national campaign. The local campaign was funded by the Home Office at a cost in excess of £200,000, equivalent to a national campaign costing £1.3 million at 1980 prices. As a topic for crime prevention publicity, vandalism is somewhat unusual, the only previous initiatives being locally-based ones involving press and poster coverage. The present campaign was also notable in being double-edged, aimed at both deterring youngsters from vandalism through emphasising the risk of being caught, and at instilling in parents the need for closer supervision of their children. For these reasons, it was of particular interest to see whether the 1978 television vandalism campaign appeared any more effective in changing behaviour than other publicity initiatives (see Chapter 1) aimed at reducing crime either through encouraging potential victims (of car theft, for instance) to be more security conscious, or through deterring people from breaking the law.

The campaign, transmitted by Granada Television, took the form of two television 'advertisements' each lasting approximately 45 seconds. The first of these was known as *Police Visit* and was aimed at boys aged between 9 and 13 years. The film was intended to highlight the serious consequences of being 'found out' for damaging property and featured the nervous reaction of a young boy to an unexpected visit by the police to his home. The 'voice over' on the film ran as follows:

'If you are a young lad and you spent the afternoon with your mates breaking windows and smashing telephone boxes. . . then you will know what it's like to dread every knock on the door... but one of these nights it really is going to be the police ... so if you've been out damaging property today, remember, it could be your turn tonight'.

The second film, known as *Front Room*, was aimed at the parents of young boys and attempted to increase the extent to which parents controlled what their children did outside the home. The advertisement featured a group of young boys vandalising the interior of one of their homes. The 'voice over' ran as follows:

'Most of us think that vandalism in the streets has nothing to do with us. But just for a minute imagine if it happened in our own home. Spraying our walls, ripping our phones out... and generally smashing up our things. Well, this is exactly what our children are doing out in the streets. And it's up to us to make them understand, but to stop them. They're our children'.

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Although the campaign was originally scheduled to run for a continuous period of eight weeks, there was a three-week break in the broadcasts due to an industrial dispute at Granada. The advertising was in fact transmitted in two 'bursts': one of three weeks from 1 February to 20 February and one of five weeks from 27 March to 30 April. In total, *Police Visit* was transmitted on 69 occasions and *Front Room* on 57 occasions making the campaign a comparatively heavy one. This is borne out by the findings of a survey for the Central Office of Information (C.O.I.) by Research Bureau Limited (R.B.L., 1978) in which 96% of parents interviewed claimed to have seen one or the other advertisement at least once.

The effectiveness of the Granada campaign was assessed in three studies. The Home Office Research Unit evaluation reported here examined a number of measures to see whether the publicity had any effect on the level of vandalism in the campaign area. The other two studies, which were conducted for C.O.I. at the request of the Home Office by outside research organisations, are discussed briefly later. The more extensive of the two examined whether the publicity changed parents' attitudes to vandalism and their claimed control over their childrens' leisure activities.

The study

The basic design of the study was a comparison between the levels of four measures of vandalism during the campaign period (1 February 1978-30 April 1978) and those during the equivalent period in 1977, attention also being paid to the monthly levels of vandalism in the interval between these two periods. This comparison was made for selected places in north-west England where the publicity was transmitted ('test area') as well as for a 'control'⁷ area in north-east England (where Granada television is not transmitted) to take account of factors (such as the weather) which might have influenced the level of vandalism in the north of England independently of the publicity in the north-west. It was assumed that if the campaign was effective, there would be a proportionately smaller increase (or greater decrease) in vandalism in the test area compared with the control area.

Four measures of damage were taken to examine the effect of the publicity. The two principal ones were based on local authority repairs of damage, recorded as vandalism,¹ to i. schools and ii. council housing. These covered the number of

¹ The issue of the reliability of vandalism records kept by public bodies has been taken up by Clarke (Ed.) (1978). There is no doubt that there are a number of difficulties in distinguishing between vandalism (as wilful acts of damage) and damage due to wear and tear or boisterous play. However, whilst there is no way of knowing for certain the extent to which the local authority and Post Office records examined in this study accurately portrayed the level of deliberate damage, there is no reason to think that inaccuracy or mis-recording would vary substantially over time, or that significant reductions in vandalism would not be reflected in such records.

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repair visits made and the cost of repairs carried out.¹ Together council housing and school vandalism repairs probably account for over 90% of local authority spending on vandalism.² Post Office data on repairs for vandalism to telephone kiosks were examined as a third measure.³ Both campaign films mentioned damage to telephones (*Front Room* highlighting damage to telephones in the home, and *Police Visit* featuring damage to telephone kiosks) and, as it has been suggested (e.g. Home Office, 1975c) that publicity aimed at youngsters might encourage imitative behaviour, it was felt that Post Office records might be particularly useful in assessing whether the 1978 campaign had any such counter-productive effect. Finally, an examination was made of police statistics for the number of offences of criminal damage recorded by the police.⁴⁻⁵ Although Sturman's (1978) study revealed that less than 7% of incidents of vandalism committed in a local area found their way into police records, they were nevertheless included for completeness.

In the case of local authority data, the test and control areas were Manchester and Bradford respectively. The selection of these areas was dictated largely by the fact that the vandalism records kept by these local authorities were more suitable than those kept elsewhere in the north-west region or in the Yorkshire region where the controls for the R.B.L. evaluation referred to later were chosen. Also, there was some anticipated advantage in paralleling the Marplan study, also referred to later, which had been commissioned in Manchester and Bradford. On the incidence of damage to telephone kiosks, figures were readily available from the Post Office for the whole of the north-west region (the campaign area) and for the north-east region (taken here as the control). For the number of offences of criminal damage recorded by the police, data were obtained for the forces of Greater Manchester and Merseyside within the campaign area and for the South Yorkshire and West Yorkshire forces which were taken as controls.

¹ In both Manchester and Bradford local authorities (the test and control areas respectively), it is the policy of the council to repair vandalism damage as quickly as possible on the grounds that such damage often invites further attack and causes considerable inconvenience to users of the property concerned. Accordingly, since each incident is dealt with as it arises, it was felt reasonable to assume that local authority repair documents would tend to relate to separate incidents of vandalism.

² It was recognised that there would inevitably be a small number of repairs carried out in the three-month period from February to April which related to vandalism incidents committed before the beginning of the period. However, it was clear from an early examination of the repairing systems in Manchester and Bradford that at least 90% of repairs related to vandalism committed in the 'target' period.

³ Again, there is reason to think that most of the repairs for vandalism carried out by the Post Office in the 'target' periods relate to vandalism incidents committed in these periods.

⁴ There is no statutory offence of 'vandalism', but most of the deliberate or malicious damage to property commonly referred to as vandalism could be prosecuted under Section 1 of the Criminal Damage Act, 1971 and would appear in the *Criminal Statistics* under 'criminal damage'.

⁵ The figures examined in police records exclude the very small proportion of criminal damage offences involving arson, criminal damage endangering life, or threat to commit criminal damage.

Results

i. School vandalism

The data concerning school vandalism repairs do not provide any indication that the number of vandalism incidents was influenced by the publicity campaign. Although the number of repairs fell by 7.1% in the test area, a similar reduction (8.5%) took place in the control area (see Table 2:1). That this result is not 'masking' a difference in the actual amount of damage repaired is indicated by a broadly similar change in the total expenditure on school vandalism in Manchester and Bradford. In addition, analysis of the vandalism data relating to the months between January 1977 and January 1978 indicated that the changing patterns of vandalism in Manchester and Bradford were similar.

Table 2:1
The effect of the campaign on vandalism to schools

	<i>Test area (Manchester)</i>			<i>Control area (Bradford)</i>		
	<i>February– April 1977</i>	<i>February– April 1978</i>	<i>Change</i>	<i>February– April 1977</i>	<i>February– April 1978</i>	<i>Change</i>
Number of repair documents issued	1133	1052	–7.1% ^a	667	610	–8.5% ^a
Total expenditure on school vandalism	£49020	£58777	+19.9%	£29967	£36086	+20.4%
Average expenditure per repair	£43.27	£55.87	+21.9%	£44.93	£59.16	+31.7%

a. $\chi^2 = 0.03$, 1 df, ns.

ii. Housing vandalism

The interpretation of the housing data is rather more complex, as can be seen from Table 2:2.

Table 2:2
The effect of the campaign on vandalism to council housing

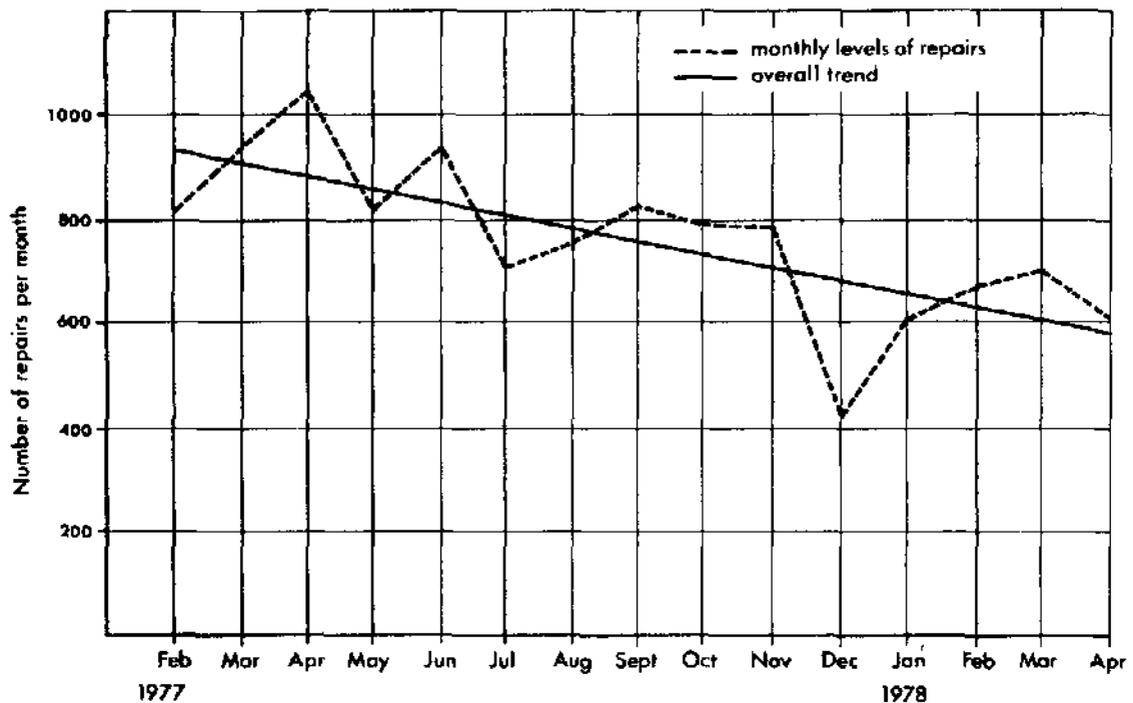
	<i>Test area (Manchester)</i>			<i>Control area (Bradford)</i>		
	<i>February– April 1977</i>	<i>February– April 1978</i>	<i>Change</i>	<i>February– April 1977</i>	<i>February– April 1978</i>	<i>Change</i>
Number of repair documents issued	2787	1968	–29.4% ^a	358	466	+30.2% ^a
Total expenditure on housing vandalism	£86715	£94243	+8.7%	£5689	£6648	+16.9%
Average expenditure per repair	£31.11	£47.89	+53.9%	£15.89	£14.27	–10.2%

a. $\chi^2 = 65.06$, 1 df, p = 0.001.

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The number of vandalism repairs to local authority dwellings and surrounding property decreased in the test area during the campaign period by 29%, whereas in the control area it increased by 30%. Whilst this is consistent with a campaign effect, analysis of the vandalism repairs over the period February 1977 to January 1978 reveals that there was a tendency ($p < 0.02$) for the number of repairs in Manchester to decrease over the period, the level of repairs in the campaign period continuing the overall trend (see Figure 2:1). In Bradford over the same period, there was no consistent trend in the level of repairs: monthly figures over the year preceeding the campaign suggest that the apparently large percentage increase in vandalism during the campaign is a reflection of the unusually low level of damage during the control period in 1977 rather than an exceptionally high level during the campaign period in 1978. Taking both these factors into account, there is no reliable evidence that the advertising campaign influenced the level of housing vandalism repairs in Manchester.

Figure 2:1
Manchester housing vandalism: number of repairs per month



In addition, there were rather different changes in the average expenditure per repair in Bradford and Manchester. In Bradford, an analysis of the distribution of actual repair costs (which was not practicable in the case of the Manchester data) indicated that the unexpected decrease in the average repair cost resulted from a considerable reduction in the proportion of very expensive repairs. The 54% increase in the average repair cost to Manchester may have been due in part

to the effects of inflation on maintenance costs (estimated from the schools data to be about 30%). In addition, however, the decrease in repair documents issued in Manchester may indicate some 'bunching' of the amount of work appearing on a single repair document, which would also have increased the average amount spent per repair. Unfortunately, the nature of the repair data kept in the local authority records did not allow this possibility to be checked directly.

Hi. Telephone kiosk vandalism

In the case of acts of 'wilful damage' (the Post Office classification of vandalism), the change in kiosk damage (shown in Table 2:3) can be seen to be comparable for the test and control areas; this provides no evidence that the campaign had any impact on telephone kiosk damage.

Table 2:3
The effect of the campaign on telephone kiosk vandalism

Total number of incidents of 'wilful damage'

	<i>February– April 1977</i>	<i>February– April 1978</i>	<i>Change</i>
Test area (north-west)	8683	7552	-- 13.0%
Control area (north-east)	7480	6537	12.6%

$\chi^2=0.04$, 1 df, ns.

jv. Recorded offences of criminal damage

Police data on the number of recorded offences of criminal damage are shown in Table 2:4.1

Table 2:4
The effect of the campaign on the number of offences of criminal damage recorded by the police

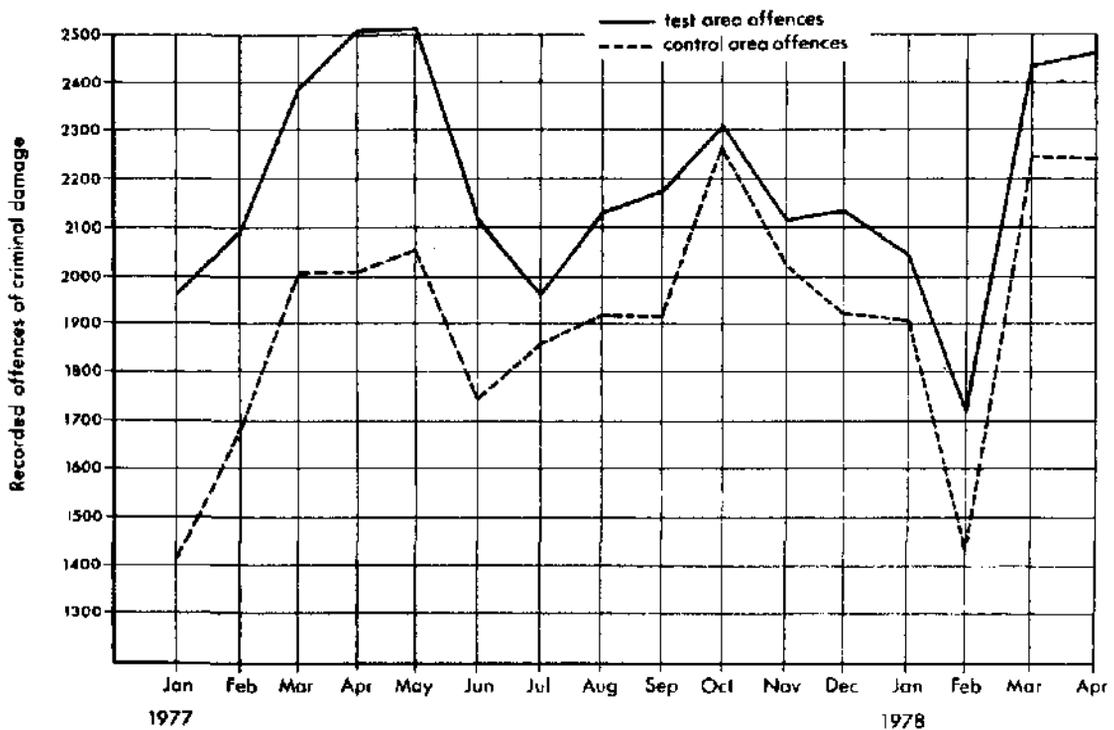
	<i>February– April 1977</i>	<i>February– April 1978</i>	<i>Change</i>
Test area (Greater Manchester + Merseyside)	7002	6603	-- 5.7%
Control area (South Yorkshire + West Yorkshire)	5694	5961	+ 4.7%

$\chi^2=17.02$, 1 df, $p<0.001$.

¹ See footnote 5 on page 19.

Comparing the campaign period with the equivalent period a year earlier, it can be seen that in the test area recorded offences fell by 5.7%, whereas in the control area offences rose by 4.7%. Although at first sight this suggests a campaign effect, the general trends in the data in the year preceding the campaign cast some doubt on this. Analysing the number of recorded offences of criminal damage on a monthly basis from January 1977 to January 1978 reveals that, in addition to a marked seasonal pattern in both the test and control areas, there was a significant tendency ($p < 0.005$) for the difference in the monthly figures between the test area and the control area to decrease (see Figure 2:2). While it is not clear whether such variations reflect changes in the reporting of such incidents, the implication here is that the number of recorded offences in the two areas during the campaign period compared with the same period a year earlier reflect this statistically significant trend rather than any effect of the campaign.

Figure 2:2
Recorded offences of criminal damage in the test and control areas



In retrospect, the different underlying trends in the test and control areas in the data relating to housing vandalism and offences of criminal damage may have important implications for the interpretation of changes in vandalism rates during the campaign. Against a background of apparently falling levels in the test area relative to the control area, the effect of a campaign, if any, would not readily be discriminated from such a general trend and would, in consequence, probably fail to be detected using analyses limited in scope by the data available.

Nevertheless, given the lack of campaign effects apparent in the school vandalism and Post Office data, there is little reason to think that there would have been discernible campaign effects even if these underlying trends in the test and control areas had been comparable.

Evaluations by Marplan and Research Bureau Limited

In addition to the present evaluation, two other campaign assessments were carried out for the Home Office, co-ordinated by CO.I. The first of these, by Marplan, was an observational exercise using householders to record the number of new items of vandalism that were observed in their local area over the campaign period (see Marplan, 1978).

In the Marplan study, one area (Manchester) from the test region was matched with a control area (Bradford). Two wards were selected from within each of these cities and 38 observers were recruited from within each ward. These observers covered individual groupings of 3-4 streets and were instructed to note such incidents of 'vandalism' as broken milk bottles and graffiti in their assigned areas on a regular weekly basis. The focus of the Marplan evaluation was a comparison of the rate of new incidents of vandalism in the nine weeks following the commencement of the campaign.¹ This comparison showed that in both Manchester and Bradford the incident levels remained fairly constant throughout the campaign period, although no statistical analysis was carried out on this data by Marplan who were of the opinion that their survey data were insufficiently reliable. Subsequent analysis of the Marplan data (such as it was) by the present authors showed that there was not a statistically significant difference between vandalism levels in Manchester and Bradford.

The second study, by Research Bureau Limited, focused mainly on claimed supervision of, and expressed interest in, children's leisure activities by parents in social classes C1, C2, D and E (R.B.L., 1978). The pre- and post-campaign surveys closely bracketed the actual campaign, being conducted in January and May 1978 respectively. The surveys in the test area were conducted in Greater Manchester and Merseyside and those in the control area in South and West Yorkshire; there were approximately 300 interviews in each of these four Metropolitan counties at each stage of the two-part survey. In interpreting their results, R.B.L. considered the difference, before and after the publicity campaign, between the test and control areas in terms of the percentage of parents who, for example, claimed to be aware of their sons' activities outside the home or to have discussed vandalism with their sons.

Parents were asked, amongst other things, how often there was an adult at home when their son returned from school and how often the son was left alone with-

Although the Marplan study was initially scheduled to cover the whole of the campaign period, because of certain operational difficulties, the evaluation was not extended to allow for the three-week break in transmission. The Marplan observations, therefore, terminated about three weeks before the campaign ended.

out an adult. In response to both questions, parents in the test area showed a significantly greater tendency after the campaign to leave children on their own. This, on the face of it, is a particularly unexpected finding in view of the fact that the *Front Room* commercial was typically interpreted by parents as showing the consequences of leaving children alone. In addition, the campaign did not appear to influence the extent to which boys were allowed to go out alone after getting home from school, though it seems to have increased the extent to which parents claimed to know where their son was going. In terms of what parents in the test area claimed to have discussed with their sons, there was also a significant increase in discussions of damage to bus and train seats, hanging around with gangs and breaking into empty houses. The apparent increase in vandalism-related discussions is somewhat unexpected in view of the finding that 94% of parents interviewed at the pre-campaign stage agreed with the statement 'I'm sure my son behaves himself when he's out of the house'. In addition, there were increases in discussions of truancy and ringing 999 as a joke, which were unrelated to the advertising.

The interpretation of this rather inconsistent set of findings is not immediately obvious. The significant *net* shifts detected by R.B.L. typically rested on minimal changes between the pre-and post-campaign surveys in the test area being compared with much larger changes, frequently in contrary directions, in the control area. This suggests that many of the positive effects attributed to the campaign by R.B.L. may simply reflect variations between the parents sampled in the pre-and post-campaign surveys in the control area. There is the additional possibility that, since the R.B.L. questionnaire involved a relatively large number of items on which conclusions about the campaign might be based, it could be expected that, on average, about five of the questions would show a campaign effect purely by chance alone (assuming a significance level of 0.05 and a one-tailed test). Thus, neither at the levels of attitudes nor claimed behaviours was there any unequivocal evidence of a campaign effect.

Conclusions

None of the three publicity campaign evaluations discussed above provides any reliable evidence that the advertising in the Granada Television area had a significant effect on parents' attitudes to vandalism or on the amount of vandalism committed. In the present evaluation, the data relating to schools and telephone kiosks showed clearly that there were comparable decreases in the level of vandalism in both the test and control regions. In the case of the housing data, the large variation in the average cost per repair between Manchester and Bradford meant that the changes in the number of repairs could not be directly compared. However, on the basis of analysis of the trends in the data, it was concluded that the evidence did not support the idea that housing vandalism in Manchester had been influenced by the campaign. Similarly, although the level of criminal damage recorded by the police appeared to be lower where the publicity was televised than where it was not, this was interpreted in terms of the

trend, pre-dating the campaign, towards decreasing numbers of recorded offences in the test area relative to the control.

The present campaign is the first one on vandalism conducted by the Home Office. Its largely negative results in changing behaviour are consistent with the findings of other offender-oriented advertising campaigns (see Chapter 1) which have relied on persuasion to deter potential wrongdoers, unaccompanied by changes in legislation or law enforcement. In Chapter 1, two reasons were suggested to account for the failure of purely persuasive offender-oriented campaigns: firstly, that potential offenders are unlikely to be moved by exhortation or generalised threats unless they have reason to believe that the actual risks and consequences of detection are worsened; and, secondly, that remote advertising messages may stand little chance of competing with the immediate pressures operating at the time an offence is being considered.

In relation to the present campaign, it may have been that the risks and undefined consequences of contact with the police over an act of vandalism emphasised in *Police Visit* did little to convince young boys that their vandalism days were numbered. In contrast, the claimed success of a series of vandalism campaigns mounted by the Devon and Cornwall Constabulary in 1975 (Home Office, 1976), which urged parents and teachers to warn children of the installation of intruder alarms in a number of schools, is consistent with children believing that the odds involved in damaging school property had changed against them. In relation to competing influences on behaviour, the fact that the present campaign failed to influence children's behaviour may be understandable to the extent that vandalism amongst young boys often arises out of easy opportunities for damage (see Clarke (Ed.), 1978) and takes place in a group situation where there are strong pressures to demonstrate toughness and masculinity in destructive behaviour (Opie and Opie, 1969; Gladstone, 1978). The ease and rewards of vandalism, in other words, win the day.

3 An evaluation of a campaign to reduce car thefts

Reference was made in Chapter 1 to a number of car theft advertising campaigns run in the United Kingdom over the past few years, the most important of which was the 1976 national press and poster campaign sponsored by the Home Office and organised by the Central Office of Information (C.O.I.)- There is little reason to think that this campaign produced savings in the number of offences the police had to deal with, despite the fact that autocrime (the term used throughout this chapter to refer to thefts of and from motor vehicles) increased to a smaller extent in 1976 than in previous years. The limited impact of the 1976 campaign is matched by the results of a study conducted by the Home Office Research Unit (Burrows and Heal, 1979)—also discussed in Chapter 1—which assessed the effect on car-locking behaviour of a specially mounted police autocrime campaign run in Plymouth at the end of 1977. Other local and generally smaller-scale initiatives also fail to provide any sound evidence of positive campaign effects on car locking or vehicle thefts, though a number of claims have been made to the contrary on the basis of apparently inadequate analyses of variations in the level of autocrime offences known to the police.

Despite this somewhat negative picture, growing concern over the amount of police resources taken up in dealing with thefts of and from vehicles (together accounting for 25% of all the indictable offences known to the police in 1978)¹ provided the grounds for a fresh Home Office initiative in the early part of 1979, again organised by C.O.I. This campaign has been the subject of two evaluations. One of which—dealt with in this chapter—was conducted by the Home Office Research Unit and assessed the impact of the campaign on police autocrime statistics, as well as on the extent to which parked vehicles were left secure by their owners. In a separate study, conducted by N.O.P. Market Research Limited for C.O.I., the effectiveness of the campaign was further evaluated in terms of changes in motorists' attitudes to car theft, their beliefs about the risks involved and their reported car-locking behaviour. The results of this survey are discussed briefly later.

¹ The average amount of police time spent in dealing with a reported theft of a motor vehicle including the prosecution of offenders has been estimated to be approximately six man-hours. Costing this conservatively, and taking into account the number of reported incidents of vehicle theft in England and Wales in 1978, the 'cost' to the police of thefts of motor vehicles alone is in excess of £8 million a year. The cost of dealing with incidents of theft of property from cars may be less than this, but still substantial.

The campaign

The campaign took the form of two separate advertising projects. Both were directed mainly at the owners of older cars without steering column locks, although the main recommendation never to leave one's car unlocked was relevant to all motorists. The first used television advertisements on Tyne-Tees Television in north-east England; the second used the more usual form of auto-crime publicity—press and poster advertisements—in north-west England. It was anticipated that differing degrees of effectiveness might be apparent from the two media, which would provide some useful pointers for future campaigns. Both campaigns ran for eight weeks starting on 28 February 1979 and together cost in the region of £100,000, equivalent to a national campaign costing £2 million at 1980 prices. The main aim of the campaign was to reduce the number of stolen vehicles (a rather optimistic reduction of 10% in the number of stolen vehicles in the campaign areas during 1979 was hoped for, calculated to provide a 'saving' of some £200,000). Although more secure vehicles might also be expected to reduce the incidence of thefts of property from cars (virtually the same in number as thefts of cars), this was not a factor which featured in the advertising content.

The television campaign

The television publicity took the form of two different advertisements both on a humorous theme in which a motorist, apparently unconcerned about locking his car, leaves it with a 'Please steal me' sign on the car roof. The commentary ran as follows:

'If you don't lock your car you might as well put a big sign on top of it. Especially if you've got an older model. Of the hundreds of cars stolen each day, 80% are T registration or earlier. Remember, an unlocked car is an open invitation. Lock it.'

The television advertisements also showed a simple anti-theft device being used to secure the steering-wheel of a car with the clear implication that this was a further way in which motorists without steering column locks on their cars could protect their vehicles.

The press and poster campaign

A number of national newspapers print different regional editions and these were used to restrict the display of the campaign press material to the target area in north-west England. The newspaper advertising took the form of rather more detailed advice to motorists than was given in the television commercials. A typical press advertisement read as follows:

It only takes two seconds to lock a car, and not much longer to steal an unlocked one. Every day a thousand cars are stolen. So if you're not locking your car you might as well place a sign on the roof. Many cars are stolen from car parks, or when the owner was 'only gone a minute'. 80% of stolen cars are over 7 years old, and cars of that age don't usually have steering locks. If your car doesn't have a steering lock, you can buy a simple but effective anti-theft

device for a few pounds. It won't cost as much as your no-claims bonus. But the most basic form of security still consists of remembering to wind up all your windows and lock all your doors when you leave your car. Then when you get back there'll be more than just an empty parking space. AN UN-LOCKED CAR IS AN OPEN INVITATION. LOCK IT.

The newspaper publicity was additionally supported by displays on poster sites and buses.

The study

It was considered that the most direct way of measuring the success of the 1979 campaign—given the emphasis of the advertising on vehicle security—was to examine directly whether drivers were more careful after the campaign than before it about locking their cars. This involved physical checks on a total of over 25,000 vehicles. In addition, account was taken of the number of thefts of¹ and from vehicles recorded by the police,² as the campaign also had the objective of reducing police workload, and as potential offenders might be deterred by the attention given to autocrime even if drivers' security behaviour was not improved.

In order to take account of the fact that any observed changes in the campaign areas may have been due to factors operating independently of the publicity, police statistics and vehicle security were also examined in a 'control' area not exposed to any publicity.

For the two types of police records examined (see below), a comparison was made between February and March 1979 when the advertising was shown and the following month of April—together referred to as the *campaign period*—and the same period of 1978—referred to as the *pre-campaign period*. For the physical checks on cars, observations were made immediately before and at the end of the campaign.

In detail, the three measures of campaign effectiveness which were used in the present evaluation were as follows:

i. Criminal statistics

Firstly, the number of recorded offences of thefts of and from motor vehicles were obtained for police forces within the campaign and control areas, for the the campaign and pre-campaign periods. Also, since changes in the overall

¹ The term 'thefts of, which is used throughout, includes the police categories of vehicles 'stolen' (which are not recovered within a set period of time) and those 'taken without authority' (which are).

² While statistics may have some limitations in measuring changes in the level of autocrime, figures for thefts of cars in particular are much more reliable than some other police data as far as the reporting of offences is concerned because of the requirement that the police are notified when an insurance claim for theft is made and because of the owner's dependence on the police to help recover the vehicle.

tendency to crime in a given area might be expected to influence the number of autocrime offences independently of any publicity, the total numbers of indictable offences other than autocrime were analysed. In the press and poster campaign area these data were obtained for the police forces of Greater Manchester, Lancashire and Merseyside; in the T.V. campaign area for the Durham, Cleveland and Northumbria forces; and in the control area for the Nottinghamshire, South Yorkshire, West Midlands and West Yorkshire forces.

ii. Police crime reports

A second measure was derived from detailed information on police crime reports recording the theft of a motor vehicle¹ (thefts from vehicles were not considered). Since the campaign was directed specifically at the owners of older vehicles not fitted with integral steering column locks, it might have been expected to influence these owners more than those with newer vehicles. To take this into account, the vehicle registration suffix letter appearing on each police crime report was used to infer the year of registration of stolen vehicles.² For the press and poster campaign area, details of crime reports relating to stolen vehicles were obtained from the Greater Manchester and Merseyside forces, and for the T.V. area from the Durham and Northumbria forces. The control area was the same as that used in the analysis of criminal statistics.

iii. Police checks on parked cars

Vehicle security checks were carried out by police officers on parked cars in January 1979 before the campaign began and in March 1979 at the end of the campaign. The cars checked were those parked in suburban streets where there was little or no garaging of cars. Checks were carried out in suburban areas since it was felt that this would maximise the proportion of vehicles included in both

¹ Crime reports relating to thefts of motor cycles, mopeds and heavy goods vehicles were excluded from the analysis.

² The registration suffix letter indicates the 12-month period (1 August-31 July of the following year) in which the vehicle was first registered for use. Older vehicles were taken to be those with a registration suffix letter of 'H' or earlier, indicating that the vehicles were registered prior to 1 August 1970. Newer vehicles were taken as those with a suffix letter of T to 'R' indicating that the vehicles were registered between 1 August 1970 and 31 July 1977. As steering column locks were made compulsory on all cars manufactured in and imported to this country from January 1971, it is possible that some T registered vehicles were without steering column locks. The numbers of these, however, may not be very great as manufacturers were fitting improved locks on cars for some time before the 1971 measure, in anticipation of it. Since for the period February-April 1978, 'S' registrations were still continuing and, of course, there were no 'T' vehicles, comparisons of the vehicle 'populations' in 1978 and 1979 omit consideration of 'S' and 'T' registered vehicles. In addition, there are a number of instances when the registration suffix will not correspond with the age of the vehicle—for instance, in the case of second-hand imported vehicles and 'personalised' registrations. There is no reason, however, to suppose that these (infrequent) exceptions would have differed between the test and control areas, or over time.

stages of the exercise. The streets in which cars were checked were selected by the co-operating police forces. The checks were made after midnight in order to reduce the chance of motorists locking cars because they had observed the police checking vehicles. The registration number of each vehicle checked was recorded in addition to the number of doors (including the boot) or windows left insecure; it was also noted whether the vehicle was fitted with an anti-theft device other than an integral steering column lock. On the basis of the car registration suffix, separate quotas were established for the checks on older (pre-T registration) and newer vehicles, permitting an assessment of the effect of the campaign on each group of vehicles. In the press and poster campaign area, the police checks on vehicles were carried out by the Greater Manchester force, in the T.V. campaign area by the Northumbria force, and in the control area by the West Midlands and West Yorkshire forces. In all, over 25,000 vehicles were checked by the four forces involved which each carried out approximately 3,000 checks both before the campaign and at the end of it.

Results

i. Autocrime offences recorded by the police

Table 3:1 shows, for each of the campaign areas and the control area, the number of recorded offences during February-April 1978 and in the same period in 1979, relating to (i) theft of a motor vehicle, (ii) theft from a motor vehicle, and (iii) the total number of other indictable offences.

In relation to both thefts of motor vehicles and thefts from motor vehicles, the number of recorded offences showed the largest decrease in the *control* area rather than in either of the test areas. Taking the two test areas together, thefts of vehicles fell by less than 1% and thefts from vehicles by less than 2%, compared with decreases in the control area of over 13% and 10% respectively.

However, since the recorded number of autocrime offences may be expected to be related to overall changes in the level of crime independently of any advertising campaign, account must also be taken in each of the three areas of changes in the level of other indictable crime. The changes in the number of autocrime offences in each test area expressed as a percentage of the total number of other, non-autocrime, offences were compared with those in the control area. This indicated that in the press and poster campaign area, changes in both thefts of and thefts from motor vehicles were not statistically significantly different from the corresponding changes in the control area. In the T.V. campaign area, while the change in thefts from motor vehicles was not significantly different from that in the control area, recorded thefts of vehicles relative to the control area constituted a significantly higher proportion of other indictable offences during the campaign period than during the same period in 1978. Thus, it would not seem that publicity directed at autocrime served to produce any gains for the police.

Table 3:1
The effect of the campaign on the number of autocrime offences recorded by the police¹

	<i>Theft of a motor vehicle</i>			<i>Theft from a motor vehicle</i>			<i>Total of other indictable offences</i>		
	<i>February– April 1978</i>	<i>February– April 1979</i>	<i>Change</i>	<i>February– April 1978</i>	<i>February– April 1979</i>	<i>Change</i>	<i>February– April 1978</i>	<i>February– April 1979</i>	<i>Change</i>
Press and poster campaign area	14173	13321	6.0%	9273	9039	-2.5%	60863	63570	+4.4%
T.V. campaign area	4697	5439	+15.8%	4476	4487	+0.2%	32506	32761	+0.8%
Control area	15324	13306	-13.2%	11353	10193	-10.2%	82596	79331	-4.0%

¹ Recorded offences also include those relating to motor cycles, mopeds and heavy goods vehicles.

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ii. Police crime reports relating to thefts of 'old' and 'new' motor vehicles

The number of police crime reports recording the theft of a motor vehicle assumed to be with ('new') and without ('old') steering column locks are presented in Table 3:2 for the test and control areas, in each of the campaign and pre-campaign periods. In this table the number of vehicles 'on the road' in the old and new age-groups has been taken into consideration by adjusting theft figures in each area by the percentage change in the registered number of older and newer vehicles between the pre-campaign and the campaign period.¹

Table 3:2
The effect of the campaign on the theft of 'old' and 'new' vehicles

	'Old' vehicles*			'New' vehicles		
	February– April 1978	February– April 1979	Change	February– April 1978	February– April 1979	Change
Press and poster campaign area	7075	5965	–15.7% ^a	3444	4064	+18.0% ^b
T.V. campaign area	1561	1572	+0.7% ^c	790	1185	+50.0% ^d
Control area	6822	6073	–11.0% ^{a,c}	2585	2785	+7.7% ^{b,d}

*Note: The classification of 'old' and 'new' vehicles is explained in footnote 2, page 30.

- a. $\chi^2 = 4.71, 1 \text{ d.f.}, p < .05$
- b. $\chi^2 = 6.37, 1 \text{ d.f.}, p < .025$
- c. $\chi^2 = 9.46, 1 \text{ d.f.}, p < .005$
- d. $\chi^2 = 38.18, 1 \text{ d.f.}, p < .001$

Table 3:2 shows that, in the press and poster campaign area relative to the control area, there was a statistically significant decrease (–15.7%) in thefts of older vehicles but a significant increase (+18%) in thefts of newer vehicles.

In the T.V. area, relative to the control area, there were significant increases in thefts of both newer and older vehicles and, thus, apparently no evidence that

¹ This information was obtained from the Department of the Environment motor vehicle census in June 1978 and in December 1978. The changes over this six-month period were doubled to provide an estimate of the annual changes between June 1978 and June 1979, an interval approximating to that between the campaign period in 1979 and the corresponding period in 1978. Decreases in registrations over this interval were taken into account by increasing the actual number of recorded offences by the annual percentage change, and vice-versa.

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the campaign was successful. As may be seen in Table 3:1, there was an increase in overall crime levels relative to the control area. Whilst this may go some way towards accounting for the increase in thefts of older vehicles in the T.V. campaign area relative to the control area, it is clearly insufficient to account for the much larger percentage increase in the number of thefts of newer vehicles.

Analysis of police crime reports suggests at first sight, then, that in the press and poster campaign area the autocrime advertising may have had some success in reducing the number of thefts of older vehicles. This finding can be contrasted with statistically significant increases in thefts of newer vehicles in that area and with significant increases in thefts of both older and newer vehicles in the T.V. area. However, just as attributing the observed *increases* in motor vehicle thefts to the campaign would seem to be counter-intuitive and unlikely to be justified, it may be similarly unwise, in view of the overall evidence here, to attribute the reduction in thefts of older vehicles in the press and poster campaign area to the effects of the advertising. In addition, such selectivity in the effects of the advertising is arguably improbable. Rather, the decrease in thefts of older vehicles in the press and poster area may simply represent an unsystematic seasonal variation in the thefts of older cars in that region, although in the absence of relevant data this remains untested. The suggestion derives some support, however, from the results of the vehicle security checks reported in the following section which, to anticipate their presentation, fail to show any consistent evidence of a change in motorists' actual car-locking behaviour.

Hi. Police checks on parked vehicles

The results of the vehicle checks were analysed in a number of different ways, for older and newer vehicles separately.¹ The analyses were based on:

- i. the number of completely secure vehicles;
- ii. the total number of points of insecurity;
- iii. the number of vehicles with secure driver's doors; and
- iv. the number of vehicles fitted with an additional anti-theft device (that is, a device other than an integral steering column lock).

In addition, since two vehicle security surveys were conducted, both in the same general area, there were a number of vehicles which were examined by the police twice. Analysis of the checks on this subset of vehicles, presented later, provides an opportunity to assess the effects of the advertising campaign minimising the problems of sampling variations.

i. THE NUMBER OF COMPLETELY SECURE VEHICLES

Table 3:3 presents the proportions of both older and newer vehicles found to be *completely* secure (i.e. with no doors or windows insecure) in the two surveys in the two campaign areas and in the control area.

¹ Older vehicles are taken to be those with a registration suffix of "H" or earlier. Newer vehicles are those with a suffix Idler from T to T\.

Table 3:3
The percentage of vehicles found to be completely secure

	<i>'Old' vehicles</i>		<i>'New' vehicles</i>	
	<i>Before campaign</i>	<i>End of campaign</i>	<i>Before campaign</i>	<i>End of campaign</i>
Press and poster campaign area	84.7% (1487)	81.1% (1525)	88.4% (1752)	87.0% (1789)
T.V. campaign area	81.3% (1777)	80.7% (1555)	86.2% (1990)	88.1% (1863)
Control area	78.0% (2350)	77.3% (2283)	86.2% (3882)	86.4% (2956)

Note: The number of vehicles involved in each check is given in parentheses.

In neither the press and poster campaign area nor in the T.V. area was there any statistically significant increase in the proportion of vehicles found completely secure in the second check.¹ The proportions of vehicles which were secure, incidentally, compares well with the security levels observed in the Plymouth study (Burrows and Heal, 1979); older vehicles were less secure and the slightly higher overall number of secure vehicles in the present exercise (83.9%) than in Plymouth (79.8%) can probably be explained by the fact that owners leaving their cars parked overnight are more likely to secure them than owners parking in the late evening.²

ii. NUMBER OF POINTS OF INSECURITY

An analysis of changes in the number of points of insecurity found in the vehicle surveys was included to allow for the possibility that, while the proportion of secure and insecure vehicles might remain unaltered by the advertising, the total number of points of insecurity might decrease.³

In the press and poster campaign area, there were statistically significant reductions at the end of the campaign period in the number of points of insecurity for both older vehicles (falling from 386 to 285 compared with a decrease from 826

¹ Vehicle security may be expected to be affected to some extent by weather extremes in that cars may be unused for longer intervals during periods of adverse road conditions. The change, however, in the weather in the test and control areas was roughly comparable between the two stages of the vehicle survey and is unlikely to have exerted a significant bias on the extent to which owners locked their cars.

² A few other surveys involving checks on cars parked during the *daytime* (e.g. R.B.L., 1977) have shown security levels to be between 60% and 65%.

³ Account was taken, of course, of differences in the number of vehicles checked by the police in each survey; and a check was also made that the proportion of two- and four-door vehicles checked did not differ significantly in the two surveys.

to 790 in the control area) and newer vehicles (falling from 419 to 311 compared to a decrease from 681 to 677 in the control area). In the T.V. area, there was also a significant decrease in the case of newer vehicles (falling from 356 to 286 compared to the decrease from 681 to 677 in the control area), but not for older ones. These apparently positive effects of the advertising are not, however, consistent with the result of an additional analysis, discussed below, on the subset of vehicles which were checked by the police in both surveys.

iii. NUMBER OF VEHICLES WITH SECURE DRIVER'S DOOR

As the advertising may have been expected to have had maximum impact on the number of vehicle owners locking the driver's door—the most likely point of unauthorised entry—a check was made on the proportion of vehicles with a secure driver's door in the two surveys. There were, however, no statistically significant changes in either test area, the proportion of cars with secure driver's doors remaining fairly high at around 93%.

iv. ADDITIONAL ANTI-THEFT DEVICES

Although the advertising was designed to encourage motorists owning vehicles without an integral steering column lock to fit extra security devices, the proportion of older vehicles found to be protected by such a device varied remarkably little between the two surveys in both the campaign areas and in the control area. In the press and poster area, about 8% of older vehicles had security devices in the two surveys; in the T.V. and control areas the figure was about 11%. For newer vehicles in the T.V. and control areas, about 6% had extra devices in the two surveys. In the press and poster area, 5.3% of newer cars were found to have additional protection at the end of the campaign compared to 11.5% at the beginning. This is more likely to represent a sampling difference in the vehicles checked in the two surveys rather than an actual decrease in the use of security devices.

Cars checked twice

The analysis of checks on vehicles involved in both security surveys¹ provided an additional measure of the effects of the publicity in which sampling variations between the two groups of vehicles were completely controlled.

Vehicles checked twice can be placed in one of four categories:

- i. completely secure on both checks;
- ii. insecure on both checks;
- iii. insecure on first check but secure on the second; and
- iv. secure on the first check but insecure on the second.

¹ For the four forces carrying out the surveys the average number of vehicles which were checked twice was 445.

If the campaign had been successful, there would have been a significantly greater number of vehicles falling into the third category than into the fourth. Table 3:4 below, indicates that this was not the case for either older or newer vehicles in either the press and poster campaign area or the T.V. area. (The result for older vehicles in the T.V. area is not statistically significant.) These findings confirm the conclusion, based on the results of the complete set of vehicle checks, that the advertising was not successful in increasing the number of vehicles which were found by the police to have all doors and windows secure.

Table 3:4
The security of vehicles checked twice

	<i>Number of 'old' vehicles</i>				<i>Number of 'new' vehicles</i>			
	<i>Secure both checks</i>	<i>Insecure both checks</i>	<i>Insecure first check, secure second</i>	<i>Secure first check, insecure second</i>	<i>Secure both checks</i>	<i>Insecure both checks</i>	<i>Insecure first check, secure second</i>	<i>Secure first check, insecure second</i>
Press and poster campaign area	318	25	45	61	399	18	47	60
T.V. campaign area	308	25	64	58	284	9	23	29

The apparent decrease in the number of points of insecurity for both vehicle groups in the press and poster campaign area and for newer vehicles in the T.V. campaign area is not supported by the corresponding analysis on vehicles checked twice. The number of vehicles with fewer points of insecurity on the second check than on the first was compared with the number of vehicles with a greater number of points of insecurity on the second check than on the first. Clearly, if the publicity had been successful in reducing the number of points of insecurity, the number of vehicles in the first category would have been *greater than* the number in the second. In the press and poster campaign area, the corresponding figures were 49 vs. 72 for older vehicles and 55 vs. 65 for newer ones. Similarly, in the T.V. area the numbers were 70 vs. 65 for older vehicles and 25 vs. 31 for newer ones. None of these four differences indicates a statistically significant *decrease* in vehicle insecurity. A similar analysis for vehicles checked twice of the use of additional anti-theft devices indicated no increase in the use of such devices for older cars in either of the campaign areas. This again reinforces the earlier result based on the complete sets of vehicle checks.

Conclusion

In summary, none of the three measures used to evaluate the 1979 autocrime campaign showed that there were any benefits which could be unequivocally

attributed to the advertising. In the first place, while the number of recorded autocrime offences fell somewhat in the press and poster campaign area, this was less than in the control area and has to be set against an increase in offences in the T.V. area.

Secondly, the analysis of crime reports relating to stolen vehicles, which examined the effects of the advertising on older and newer vehicles separately, indicated that, in the press and poster campaign area relative to the control area, there was a significant decrease in thefts of older vehicles but a significant increase in thefts of newer vehicles. This latter finding may be partly attributable perhaps to the greater increase in the rate of other indictable offences in the test area. The reduction in thefts of older vehicles, which may have reflected an unsystematic seasonal variation in the number of offences relating to such vehicles, was contrasted with the negative results of the police security checks on parked cars. In the T.V. campaign area, relative to the control area, there was no apparent reduction in thefts of either older or newer cars.

The security checks on parked cars, thirdly, produced no consistent evidence that the autocrime advertising encouraged car owners in either of the campaign areas to be more conscientious about locking their vehicles. In the press and poster area, certainly, there was a decrease for both older and newer vehicles in the number of points of insecurity at the end of the campaign period. Set against this, however, is the apparent failure of the press and poster advertising to effect any improvement in vehicle security as measured by the percentage of completely secure vehicles, the percentage of vehicles with secure driver's doors, or the percentage of vehicles fitted with an additional security device. Further, the results of checks on vehicles which came to be included in both the police surveys in the press and poster area do not provide any indication of an increase in security. The results of the checks in the T.V. area indicated that only for newer vehicles was there a decrease in the number of points of insecurity at the end of the campaign period. Again, however, the security checks in the T.V. area showed that the advertising had no measurable effect on the percentage of completely secure vehicles, the percentage with a secure driver's door, or the percentage of vehicles fitted with an extra anti-theft device. Nor was there any indication from newer (or older) vehicles checked twice by the police in the T.V. area of an increase in vehicle security.

N.O.P. survey

Fieldwork by N.O.P. Market Research Limited was carried out on behalf of C.O.I, before and after the campaign was run in both the press and poster and the T.V. areas (see N.O.P., 1979). Different samples of respondents at the two stages were asked about how they behaved with respect to securing their vehicle. In addition, a series of attitude statements (for example, 'A car is reasonably safe unlocked if it's only left for a minute') were read to respondents who were asked how far they agreed or disagreed with each statement. Those interviewed also indicated how likely they thought it was that their car would be stolen.

AN EVALUATION OF A CAMPAIGN TO REDUCE CAR THEFTS

In brief, the N.O.P. surveys found no statistically significant improvements in claimed car security behaviour, perceived risk of car theft, or in any of the attitude measures taken singly. However, N.O.P. were prepared to conclude on the basis of the data for the complete set of attitude statements that, in both campaign regions, attitudes registered a 'very slight but fairly consistent shift' in a positive direction.

In conclusion, then, the findings of the evaluation reported in this chapter suggest that the 1979 autocrime campaign met with little success either in achieving improvements in car-locking behaviour or in reducing the number of recorded car thefts. This finding is in close agreement with the results of other victim-oriented campaigns on residential burglary and autocrime discussed in Chapter 1, insofar as these have measured direct changes in behaviour on the part of victims. Following the arguments laid out there, it is suggested that the present campaign failed to produce discernible improvements in vehicle security for two main reasons. Firstly, security habits appear to reflect subjective perceptions of the overall risk of car theft and the risk faced in particular situations (for example, when a car is parked for a short time or in seemingly 'secure' conditions—cf. R.B.L., 1977). In this respect, the present campaign may not have improved security behaviour because it failed to produce large enough changes in perceptions of risk either generally or in relation to specific parking situations, a point confirmed by the results of the N.O.P. survey. While the campaign pointed out that secure locking (particularly for 'older' cars without steering column locks) reduces the chance of having one's car stolen, the advertising was not designed to promote the idea that an individual motorist stood a greater chance of having his vehicle stolen after the campaign than before it if he left his security habits unchanged. Secondly, the advertising may have done little to overcome other beliefs supporting non-compliance with the campaign recommendations. Personal views about the ineffectiveness of car-locking may not be much altered simply by the expression of a contrary position: many motorists, for instance, feel that thieves will resort to duplicate keys even if a car is locked (cf. Burrows and Heal, 1979). Moreover, the advertising in this case may not have upset the feeling that the consequences of theft are often minimised by insurance protection, or more important perhaps, that the risk of autocrime is remote in any case—a view no doubt well-based on personal experience in most cases.

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