

What works in preventing domestic burglary?



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By using the conceptual model and outlining the situational, individual and criminal justice system prevention crime reduction methods, the essay will review what works in preventing domestic burglary using the correct terminology, and theories based on the nature of the offence (Tilley, 2009). Under section 9 of the Theft Act 1968, domestic burglary is described as an individual being guilty of burglary by entering a building or part of a building as a trespasser with intent to steal, impose grievous bodily harm or do unlawful damage to the building or anything in it. Throughout the essay, the extent of the problem will be analysed as well as looking at what motivates an offender and the impact it can cause to a victim. By criticising the strengths and weaknesses of theories, approaches and existing research the essay will focus on the ways in which burglary can be prevented as well as the factors in which struggle to prevent it. To support the knowledge applied, theories and legislation such as the Theft Act 1968, the Kirkholt Burglary Prevention Project and Cornish and Clarke 2003 will be explained.

As a problem, domestic burglary has massively decreased since the 1990s although it is still an issue within society. Around the 1990s, the amount of burglaries hit its peak of 2, 445, 000 compared to 2017 which hit a record low of 650, 000. Between 2014 and 2015, the police recorded a total of 197, 021 domestic burglaries as well as 214, 433 non-domestic burglaries.

Domestic burglary is when there is intention to the break-in in an 'inhabited dwelling' (Newburn, T). England and Wales experience a burglary or an attempt approximately every 40 seconds which shows how security of buildings and homes should be improved to prevent the increase of this

number (Office for National Statistics). In March 2017, it is thought that around 2 in every 100 households had been a victim of domestic burglary; comparing this to December 1995, it was every 9 out of 100 households being victim to it. This shows how homes are four times less likely to be a victim of domestic burglary than in 1995, although it is 'estimated that between 2% and 3% of homes experience burglary in any one year' (Crime Survey for England and Wales).

The situational crime prevention approach looks at reducing the opportunities for a burglary to take place (Tilley, 2009). It 'comprises a range of measures that highlight the importance of targeting very specific forms of crime in certain circumstances' (Clarke, 1997). Both Cornish and Clarke (2003) see how the situational or environmental factors of a specific type of crime need controlling, identifying and manipulating. The routine activities theory, crime patterns and the rational choice theory all link together explaining how for a crime to be committed, there needs to be a motivated offender, an appropriate target and the 'absence of a capable guardian' (Clarke, 1997). According to Sutton, Cherney and White (2008) when society changes, opportunities for crime to be committed can appear. Clarke (2005) explains how offenders can be influenced by communities to find opportunities for crime in their everyday lives whereas, the rational choice theory looks at how the offender gets involved in crime or a specific event. This includes them processing the risks and rewards related with offending. Clarke's 25 techniques of situation prevention and target hardening table looks at increasing the effort and risks, reducing the rewards and provocations before removing excuses (Clarke, 2005; 1997). One key

study by Oscar Newman (1972) compared the creation of physical expression of composite demographics and improving opportunities for surveillance to 'ownership' and how 'public spaces needed to be both observable and used in order for social control to flourish'. Supporting Newman's work was his four ways in reducing crime being 'territoriality' which was for home owners to 'protect their areas, to indicate authority and to discourage outsiders from entering'. Secondly, 'surveillance' being that observation around a property is easy and effective. Next is 'image', avoiding what is 'normal' in society as to a typical household and making vulnerability invisible to others and lastly, 'environment' which means 'juxtaposing public housing with 'safe zones' in adjacent areas' (Newman, 1972).

Different theories that have helped in reducing crime and explaining the situational crime reduction approach can be the broken windows theory (Wilson and Kelling, 1982) for example which suggests that higher levels of physical disorder will result in higher crime rates. As well, problem orientated policing (Goldstein, 1990) which looks at effective response strategies to fight specific crime and disorder problems. Lastly, spatial and environmental theories (CPTED) analyse crime patterns and building layouts of a residential environment to ensure it is secure (Jeffery., et al, 1971: 2008).

The situational crime prevention approach looks at the materialistic factors which can be put into place to reduce and prevent a domestic burglary from happening (Tilley, 2009). These types of factors can be making sure that doors, windows and sheds are locked securely, keeping keys away from the letter box as some burglars carry a device to lift keys out, burglary alarms,

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CCTV, outside lighting and sensors, keeping lights on timers especially when nobody is home which gives off the effect that somebody is, storing valuables away and shutting blinds at night as for anybody walking past it makes it visible to see what devices are inside such as televisions and computers (Police. UK). Other factors of protection see how some individuals use their pets, usually a dog, to warn off people from entering. As well, the USA allow guns for protection.

These methods are all effective in preventing domestic burglary; although, only to a certain extent. This is when the situational crime prevention method compares the impact domestic burglary has on victims and the types of victim support available to those who have been targeted. For any person or group of people victim to a crime, it can leave a lasting effect meaning they may need emotional, material and social support to overcome their experience (Cook, 2016). This could be counselling, medical or financial assistance, court guidance, talking about it with family and friends and property repairs. Especially for those present through the burglary, it can be a traumatic experience where emotional support may well need providing. Depending on the severity of the incident, it can leave a person with mental health problems, lower levels of happiness and personal well-being (Cohen, 2008). The organisation, Victim Support, can arrange home visits for example through its Witness Service (Goodey, 2005). Super Cocooning explains how for anybody victim to burglary becomes at a higher risk of being a victim again meaning support is necessary to the victim and neighbouring houses so that advice on protecting property and preventing crime is put into action. According to Johnson and Bowers (2014), the

neighbouring houses and those houses within 400 metres of a victim of burglary are all at a higher risk for the following month.

This links onto offender motivation and the individual crime prevention approach. The individual crime prevention approach targets burglars and prevents the chance of them becoming a repeat offender (Tilley, 2009). Factors such as cognitive behavioural treatment, drug treatment (Holloway and Bennett, 2004) and 'Communities that Care' can all help in the rehabilitation of an offender. When evaluating the ways in helping an offender overcome criminal behaviour, treatment must only be compulsory as for some individuals it will not work. Additionally, there is a lot of speculation as to whether offenders should be getting the treatment that non-offenders (public) struggle to get.

Majority of domestic burglary offences are motivated by financial needs, this made be for paying off debt or for drugs and alcohol (Wright and Decker, 1995). Langman (2005) puts the domains of influence into four categories being family, school, personal and neighbourhood. Family sees how not just how an offender has been brought up but family conflict, low income and poor housing for example. Schooling can relate to poor behaviour, low grades or lack of commitment. Personal looks at an individual's personality like social awkwardness for example or friendship group. Lastly, the neighbourhood an offender lives or has grown up in. This can link to community disorganisation or low collective efficiency. Hearnden and Magill's (2004) research found that most offenders motives were the 'influence of friends, to fund drug use, and boredom'. This research saw how getting money for drugs was the main reason behind burglary as it was

costing offenders around £100 per day. This is supported by Cromwell's (1991) findings who suggests that regular drug users have an increasing reliance on finding valuables in other's households to maintain their habit. This type of offender will most likely be experienced in committing house burglary without being detected. The individual and situational crime prevention approaches link together when evaluating what an offender looks for in an appropriate building, this could be making sure there are valuables inside, suitable entrance and exit of the household, making sure there is nobody inside and checking there are no cameras or alarms around the building (Hearnden and Magill, 2004). Factors such as CCTV do not always prevent burglary as there are ways in which a burglar cannot be tracked like covering their face and hands.

The reasons behind burglary can be supported by research of the Kirkholt Burglary Prevention Project, Safer Cities Programme and the Crime Reduction Programme. These schemes overlap between the situational and individual crime prevention approaches because of the information collected from former offenders and the ways in which crime was reduced. The Kirkholt Burglary Prevention Project (Forrester et al., 1988) was based on a council estate in Rochdale which had a very high level of domestic burglary. It found how 95% of offenders were male, unemployed and lived in council accommodation. The project took a problem-solving approach to upgrade security, replace electricity and gas pre-payment meters, victim support and to have a system of 'cocoon neighbourhood watch' which was to have informal surveillance. Burglary fell by 40% in the first five months, but it was impossible to stop as around 70% of offenders had 'addictive problems' and

two-thirds were struggling with employability. The Safer Cities Programme by the Home Office (1988-1995) aimed to reduce crime, reduce fear of crime and create 'safer cities where economic enterprise and community life can flourish'. The programme was argued that Safer Cities "suffered a 'democratic deficit'" and that it was 'a vehicle for the dissemination of government ideology' (Crawford, 1998). Lastly, the Crime Reduction Programme (1999-2002) was a cost-effective £400 million initiative to use 'hard evidence' for the reduction of vehicle crime, burglary and robbery. Maguire (2004) said how the initiative was 'the most comprehensive, systematic and far-sighted initiative ever undertaken by a British government to develop strategies for tackling crime'. These schemes have all worked in preventing burglary, not just putting strategies in place but to this day, it has also given people an understanding of what burglars look for and to prevent the likelihood of a burglary taking place at their property.

The Criminal Justice System crime prevention approach is when efforts are applied by the government to reduce crime, enforce laws and maintain a trustworthy criminal justice (Tilley, 2009). This becomes effective in a burglary when the police decide they can investigate. For domestic burglary, investigations can take a long time or never get solved because of the difficulty in tracking down the offender or the lack of evidence. Over the years, it has always been the responsibility of home owners to reduce the risks of burglary themselves because it is thought that the police, prison service and courts for example do not make up the means for protection (Tilley, 2009).

There are five direct criminal justice mechanisms into reducing domestic burglary. The first direct mechanism is 'incapacitation'. This provides control over the offender through having different imprisonment periods, in this case it could vary from a community order to 6 years' custody (Sentencing Council), for different crimes meaning it precludes hurtful behaviour from society and deters them from offending again when released (Lab, 2010). The next two direct approaches are 'specific deterrence' and 'general deterrence'. 'Specific deterrence' focuses on the offender and reducing the possibility of committing again mainly through punishment (Tilley, 2009), whereas 'general deterrence' focuses on the public so that they do not commit the same crime. The fourth direct mechanism of reducing crime is 'restorative justice'. According to Kurki (2000), it is about relationships and how they are harmed by crime but also how they can be rebuilt to promote recovery and healing for victims. Green (2007) describes restorative justice as 'effective closure for victims'. The final approach to reducing burglary is 'disruption'. This involves using intelligence like identity patterns and criminal organisations to interrupt any ongoing criminal activity. These approaches into reducing domestic burglary aim to punish the offender and make the public aware of what the consequences of committing the same crime are, supporting the victim and targeting crime to decrease the possibility of it happening again.

Summarising what works in preventing domestic burglary, the situational, individual and criminal justice system crime prevention approaches have given an understanding into the measures that can be taken to catch offenders, cut down on future burglaries and the factors that the public can

put into place to stop burglars entering there building. To prevent burglary, it consists of long-term developments with targeted expenditure and strong correspondence. This means communities must work together consistently whether this is through government schemes or not. The rise of routine activity theory, rational choice theory, criminal justice system, situational and individual crime prevention approaches and related practises have marked a shift in how the government explore how existing and new evidence might be utilised to reduce offending behaviour. The research found has shown how domestic burglary has massively decreased over the past 30 years although, it has not stopped as for some individuals offending is part of their behaviour and addiction. To reduce domestic burglary, both criminals and victims must be supported. This can deter people away from criminal activity. As well, integrating crime prevention and the rights and wrongs of life into social and educational polices, it gives the possibility of reducing crime in the future.

Word Count:

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