CONCEPTUALISING THE TREND IN BURGLARY IN ENGLAND AND WALES[1]

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Our effort to understand crime rate change is hampered by governmental thinking about crime, and the vested interest governments have in favourable (popular) outcomes. At least as practised in the United Kingdom, thinking about burglary often assumes a 'top-down' approach, placing most of the drivers of crime rate change in the hands of government; while reducing private citizens to passive, isolated individuals, and civil society and its institutions to a wasteland devoid of intention, morality and purpose (Hope and Karstedt, 2003). Not surprisingly, the increasing use of crime statistics as a source for governmental performance measurement (Matrix and Hope, 2006) tends to reinforce government's own self-image that it has (or ought to have) the dominant influence over society's crime (Garland, 2001) [2]. Because of this, governments find it difficult to come up with narratives to explain the changes in crime rates observed in their own national statistics: reluctant to take responsibility when crime goes up, at a loss to explain why it goes down. Part of their difficulty rests in failing to acknowledge sufficiently the active role played by private citizens and civil institutions within society (Hope and Karstedt, 2003). This paper, which tries to account for the trend in burglary in England and Wales since the start of the 1980s, attempts to correct the balance somewhat, weighing the governmental perspective against a more 'market-oriented' or 'civil society' perspective.

Understanding the trend in burglary

A considerable effort has been put into modelling the post-war recorded crime trend of residential burglary in England and Wales. Simon Field's influential analysis introduced a number of innovations in the study of historical crime dynamics and their relationship to economic and demographic variables (Field, 1990), including use of a wider range of economic indicators than hitherto (which had tended to focus primarily upon gross unemployment rates), in particular, measures of personal consumption; and in seeking to model both long-run and short-run change dynamics. Subsequently, Field (1999) produced a revised 'equilibrium model', explaining long-run trends in terms of the stock of *crime opportunities* (represented by real consumer expenditure) and the *number of young males* (presumably proxying a supply of potential offenders). Short-run growth in burglary appeared to be self-correcting towards the

[2] Thus, Home Office Public Service Agreement 1 (PSA1) is "…to reduce crime by 15% and further in high crime areas" (HM Treasury, 2004).

equilibrium trend, while rapid short-run consumption growth tended to depress property crime growth, and *vice versa*.

Much of the post war period had seen sustained growth in the rate of residential burglary, and the model appeared to produce a good fit to the trend, at least while growth continued (Field (1999; Dhiri et al., 1999). Consequently, Figure 1 illustrates forecasts predicting a 26 per cent rise in burglary for the period 1998 to 2001 (Dhiri et al., 1999). Unfortunately, Figure 2 shows that the opposite happened – residential burglary recorded by the police declined by around 20 per cent (Walker et al., 2006, Table 2.04) during this specific period and, since 1995, there has been a 62 per cent decline in burglary reported to the British Crime Survey (Walker et al., 2006, Table 2.04).

Figures 1 and 2 here

Broadly, there are two possibilities to account for this dramatic change of events. In the first place, the reversal of predictions could have been due to the effect of government policy. Neither the long run nor the short-run models are able to incorporate specific, programmatic crime prevention interventions: the former because the time-span is too long, the latter because it is too short. The duration of government programmes – a matter of two to three years – makes of them 'semi-fixed' effects, whose 'intensity of impact' is difficult to measure or model[3]. During the 1990s, Government attempted programmes of targeted burglary reduction, aimed specifically at reducing so-called 'repeat victimisation'. In 1998, the Government launched its Crime Reduction Programme, which ostensibly ran until 2003, a substantial component of which was its Reducing Burglary Initiative. Nevertheless, evidence is presented in this paper suggesting that these programmes, despite unprecedented investment and coincidental reductions in burglary, probably have had a negligible impact, in themselves, on the general reduction in burglary that has occurred.

[3] For a discussion see Hope et al., 2004.

The second possibility is that the models are wrong or at least no longer appropriate. Of course, burglary rates have been falling in the last decade in many countries comparable to England and Wales, which suggests that specific government programmes cannot have had an impact by themselves. Yet be that as it may, this does not undermine the possibility of *any* governmental action, since the timing of onset of the reduction varies between countries (and started in the USA in the mid-1970s), and that all states maintain criminal justice systems that *constantly* intervene in crime (albeit with uncertain and haphazard effects). Attribution of cause remains extremely difficult.

Nevertheless, various technical deficiencies of the models have been observed which provide some clues for explanation. In the first place, Deadman's updated and revised model of the post war property crime trend finds that the long-term model (including the assumptions of error-correction and equilibrium process) are more deficient in their predictive power than is the short-run model – that is, short-run change is more predictive over the long-run (because it is more predictive of the short-run) than a forecast specifically modelled on the long-run (Deadman, 2003). Second, Ormerod et al., (2003) argue cogently for non-linear models of crime rates, though the most appropriate form and specification of these remains unresolved, requiring perhaps a greater attention to social and criminological theory than is customary amongst economists (see Marris, 2003). Finally, Osborn (1995) identifies a 'ratchet effect' of short-run change over the longer-term trend – the trend being asymmetric such that increases (or decreases) in the trend do not lead to commensurate reversals, at least that would be consistent with a fully equilibrating model. In this respect, Hale (1998) also identified a number of epochal step-changes in the post war property crime trend relating to step-changes in economy and demography. In sum, not only have doubts arisen about validity, especially of the long run, linear, equilibrium model, but the nature of these doubts, it will be suggested below, provides some clues as to the factors that influence the trend in burglary in England and Wales, and how they might be conceptualised.

Targeted governmental action

The stimulus for governmental action to reduce burglary since the 1990s comes from

a seminal paper by Trickett et al. (1992; see also Trickett et al., 1995a) which introduced a novel way of conceptualising crime victimisation rates based upon the British Crime Survey. Figure 3, calculated from BCS data (see Hope, 2001 for details), illustrates the distribution of two household property crime victimisation rates[4]:

1. The *incidence* rate – that is, the *per capita* number of household crime victimisation incidents within samples from each PSU. In Figure 1, these PSUs are ranked according to deciles (from low to high) and the average crime incidence rate computed for each decile.
2. The *prevalence* rate – that is, the proportion of the PSU samples that experienced one or more victimisation incidents, again computed as decile means.

From these two rates, a third can be computed:

3. The *concentration rate* – that is, the number of crime victimisation incidents per victim.

These rates are related arithmetically (Trickett et al., 1992)[5]. The distribution of household property crime victimisation incidence rates in Figure 3 has also been modelled statistically from micro-level household and area-contextual data (Osborn and Tseloni, 1998) providing powerful support for the hypothesis that the distribution observed in Figure 1 represents the distribution of crime victimisation across the population. Consequently, it was hypothesised that a substantive, non-random relationship might underlie the arithmetic relationship observed between the three crime rates – a combinational process termed *crime-flux* (Barr and Pease, 1992).

This conceptual apparatus promised both to provide a basis for evaluating hypotheses about empirical change in crime victimisation (Hope, 1995) and new insights into the distribution of crime victimisation between constituent communities within the general population (Farrell et al., 1996). The shape of the distribution (in Figure 3) appears to suggest that if resources could be concentrated on high crime areas, this would lead to greater reductions, relative to effort, in the national crime rate (Pease,

[4] Household property crime includes: burglary, theft from dwelling, and criminal damage to property associated with the dwelling, its contents or grounds.

[5] If the number of victims = V, the size of the population = P and the count of the number of victimisation incidents = C; then: Prevalence = V/P; Concentration = C/V; and Incidence = (V/P) x (C/V).

1993). Further, since the crime concentration rate appears to exert a disproportionate influence on the crime (incidence) rate, especially in the highest crime areas, then efforts to affect concentration in these areas might achieve an even greater efficiency gain in reducing the national average. Similarly, since it seems that in most areas there are fewer victims than would be expected if crime victimisation was randomly distributed amongst their populations (Trickett et al., 1992), then concentrating effort on those fewer number of victims upon whom victimisation appears to be concentrated – so-called 'repeat victims' – would produce yet more efficiency gain for prevention effort (Farrell and Pease, 1993). Extrapolating the cross-sectional distribution to a dynamic form, suggests that changes in concentration rates may exert an influence on the level of the crime incidence rate. Consequently, micro-level targeting of crime prevention on repeat victimisation prevalence would bring about macro-level change in crime concentration rates (Laycock, 2001; Pease, 1993). This hypothesis has been advanced in policy-making not only through individual prevention projects (Farrell, 2005) but, since *circa* 1995, by also inserting the goal of reducing repeat victimisation into national police performance management in England and Wales (Laycock, 2001).

Nevertheless, while the burglary victimisation rate rose to a peak in the mid-1990s, and has fallen subsequently, Figure 4 suggests that changes in the national crime victimisation rate may have been driven chiefly by changes in prevalence rather than concentration. During the period, the rate of crime concentration has remained relatively stable, apparently exerting a negligible influence on the trend in the crime incidence rate.

Figures 3 and 4 about here

As a characteristic of a crime trend, the concept of crime-flux remains something of an enigma. It remains the case that victims are relatively rare amongst the general population at any one time; and repeat victims are even rarer. If the absolute number of repeat victims in a population is also dependent upon the total number of victims, then the smaller the latter, the lower the prevalence of repeat victims in the population, and hence the less of a contribution they could make to the incidence rate (that is, via the concentration rate). So, given the observed relationship between the

two rates (Figure 1, see also Osborn and Tseloni, 1998), for the incidence rate to be determined by the concentration rate, a decline in the concentration (frequency) rate of victimisation would have to be substantial to overtake the effect of a reduction in the prevalence (exposure) rate, since the latter is simultaneously reducing the (small) number of victims who would be exposed to further victimisation. Although it has been possible to observe variant patterns of crime-flux in local survey data (Hope, 1995; 2002), at the national-level, Figure 4 suggests a more stable pattern; with the concentration rate remaining relatively constant while the incidence rate appears to be driven by prevalence. In sum, the role of repeat victimisation in driving crime rates via the concentration rate remains questionable. Still, whatever the reality of repeat victimisation, the BCS has registered a substantial decline in household property crime that seems to have occurred *notwithstanding the crime concentration rate*, nor the apparent policy effort put in to address it.

Reflexive securitization

Given the apparent failure of a directly-targeted burglary reduction approach, some other explanation of the observed reduction in burglary is needed, preferably one that overcomes the deficiencies of the governmental explanations; that is, a revised model that could account for the failure of previous models (discussed above) to anticipate the reduction in crime, that also emphasises the role played by the prevalence rate.

In England and Wales, burglary is, first and foremost, an offence of trespass (a violation of private property rights), and only consequentially an offence of theft or damage (or in its aggravated form, of violence)[6]. Table 1 suggests that the contemporary profile of burglary gained from the British Crime Survey comprises two roughly equally-sized forms of the offence, together accounting for just under 90 per cent of the BCS total estimate: first, *With-Loss Burglary* – that is, burglaries involving the theft of property; and second, *Attempted Burglary* – where entry was not effected to the dwelling[7]. The period 1981-1991, which saw a spectacular increase of 84 per cent in total burglary during the 1980s, was accompanied by only a modest rise in the proportion of With-Loss Burglary and no change in the proportion of Attempts.

[6] Trespass is the defining characteristic of the offence in England and Wales; the Theft Act, 1968, abolished the need for evidence of 'forced entry'.

[7] This distinction says nothing as to the motives behind so-called 'attempted burglaries'. A residuum, around 10 per cent, consists of with-entry burglaries where no property was stolen.

Conversely, the period 1991-2003/04 saw a marked decline in burglary of 46 per cent, which was accompanied by a decline in the proportion of With-Loss Burglary of around 14 per cent, and an increase of 18 per cent in the proportion of Attempted Burglaries. Therefore, while the increase in burglary over the 1980s would seem to have been a continuation of the general profile of the offence, which may have persisted in the past, the period since the mid-1990s – which has seen a reduction in burglary - has been accompanied by a qualitative change in the composition of burglary in England and Wales. It seems plausible to infer that this qualitative change is an indicator of a diminishing return for offenders from burglary (reflected in the declining number of burglaries committed), resulting from an increase in the failure rate of burglary – a greater and related likelihood of failure both of initial trespass and subsequent theft. Equally plausible is that this change has much to do with an increase in the relative security of property.

Table 1 about here

Both van Dijk (1994) and Philipson and Posner (1996) propose essentially similar variants of a general process of *reflexive securitization*. At any one time, a crime rate is an aggregate outcome of a multitude of individual transactions between populations of offenders and victims. Since both populations interact and react to each others' actions, the general form of a crime rate trend is likely to follow that of a cycle of 'boom and bust': first, as with conventional criminological explanations, crime rates may rise primarily due to the actions of offenders - opportunities for crime may increase, or costs of committing crimes diminish, or rewards from conformity may seem less attractive, etc. – leading to the increasing victimisation of citizens. Essentially, the source of these influences is exogenous to the model (i.e. exogenous to the interaction between offenders and victims) reflecting changes in economy and society, playing through into socially structured incentives for deviance or conformity bearing both upon the standing motivation and the contingent offence-structuring decision-making of offenders. Secondly, however, citizens respond by taking private security actions to avoid or protect themselves from crime risk, for example, by not visiting city centres in their cars, target hardening their homes, joining-in with their neighbours in mutual surveillance, or moving to a safer neighbourhood. Such actions reduce the social and spatial proximity and accessibility of potential victims to

potential offenders, thus limiting the opportunities for the latter to commit crime against the former. As a result of the security and avoidance behaviour, which removes citizens from risk, following an increase, crime rates will reduce subsequently. Key parameters of such models will include, on the one hand, elasticity in the respective preferences for crime (on the part of offenders) and for security (on the part of victims), and, on the other hand, by the supply of crime-facilitating goods and services to offenders, and of security-producing goods and services to citizens. These are provided by 'third parties' of various kinds, including but by no means exclusively limited to the statutory agencies of criminal justice (Hope, 2006)[8].

The outcome, aggregate trend of reflexive securitization is likely to exhibit endogeneity since citizens' avoidance and security behaviour is 'learned' from their direct and indirect knowledge of the actions of the offending population (however imperfect that knowledge might be). The crime victimisation rate is thus produced interactively and reflexively, albeit with actors operating with imperfect information[9], and is more likely to take a non-linear rather than a linear form – including cyclical fluctuations of 'boom-and-bust'. Again, since interactive 'learning' is incorporated into the model, it is likely that short-run changes will have more influence than long-run trends and, possibly, that the influence of predictors will be asymmetric on the trend in burglary since immediate past experience may play a significant defining role in the next period, and so on. Thus, short of further endogenous 'shocks' to the system, the trend may develop longer-term entropy, giving only the appearance of a long-term, error-correcting trend[10]. In sum, it is possible that an elaboration of the theory of reflexive securitisation might provide the basis for a better model of the post-war burglary trend than hitherto, especially in its promise that it might more adequately account for the 'boom-bust' cyclical pattern that appears to have characterised the trend over the past twenty-five years.

[8] For example, as suggested below in the case of domestic burglary, the loss-reduction interests of household insurers, or the marketing capacities of private security providers may be as much, if not more, influential in shaping the probability of victim-offender transactions as the role of public police (Hope, 2006).

[9] Imperfect information, of course, can result in citizens consuming more security than may be commensurate with their actuarial risk, and a greater offence failure rate for burglars.

[10] This interpretation is consistent with Deadman's (2003) model, discussed above and that of Hale (1998), which identified a number of epochal step-changes in the post-war recorded crime trend.

Private security consumption

One arm of the theory of reflexive securitization emphasises growth in *private security*. In terms of supply, the market for private security has grown extensively, with an almost *five-fold* increase in the turnover of British security equipment manufacturers between 1983 and 2003[11]. The BCS also provides data periodically on individual and household *private security consumption* which now appears to exert a significant influence on the risk of burglary: for example, 82 per cent of the general population have window locks compared to only 38 per cent of burglary victims; while households that had experienced an attempted burglary also had higher security levels than those where a burglar had gained entry. (Dodd et al., 2004). In recent cross-sectional, multivariate models, home security protection and membership of Neighbourhood Watch (NW) schemes now appear as significant predictors of a lower likelihood of burglary and household theft (Tseloni, 2006; Walker et al., 2006), and this is a marked difference from models estimated on earlier sweeps of the BCS (cf. Ellingworth et al., 1997; Trickett et al., 1995b). The BCS also records considerable increases in home security consumption since the early-1990s (Simmons and Dodd, 2003).

Hope and Lab (2001) identified three distinct domains of private security behaviour relating to household and dwelling security crime prevention activity: In each case, respondents' propensity to adopt a domain of private security behaviour reflected a combination of their experience or perception of *crime victimisation risk* and the *resources available* to them to facilitate the activity. For each of the household security domains [12], respondents were more likely to: think they had a high likelihood of burglary; be burglary victims; live in high crime areas; and live in detached dwellings [13]. Consistent with American research, a greater take-up of security was found amongst the more affluent: having higher incomes, educational levels and more

[11] Information available from the British Security Industry Association.
[12] These were: *Neighbourhood Watch* (consisting of activities that relied upon assurance from risk including membership of a watch group, property-marking, informal neighbourly watching and household insurance); *Technological Security* (consisting of surveillance measures such as alarms and timer lights); and *Fortress Security* (consisting of physical resistance measures including locks, bolts, and bars) (Hope and Lab, 2001).
[13] A type of property identified in BCS data as at greater risk of burglary (Hope, 1999; 1984).

types of goods liable to theft; and being home owners, older and more likely to be married (Hope and Lab, 2001). Thus, while it would seem that the experience or threat of crime has encouraged a greater level of private security consumption, it would seem likely to have benefited most the better-off and more established members of society (Hope, 2001a; 2001b).

Whereas NW might have been regarded once as a direct crime prevention measure, nowadays it tends to be regarded as having an indirect effect as a delivery mechanism for disseminating crime prevention information (Laycock and Tilley, 1994). From a set of models of BCS data, Hope and Trickett (2004) estimated that households' participation in NW may be prompted by two ostensibly countervailing factors: on the one hand, a sense of risk and worry about crime; on the other hand, a sense of neighbourly reciprocity. Generally, high fear goes along with high risk and diminished community satisfaction and reciprocity but households' actual participation in NW (as distinct from its availability) depends upon *both* perceived risk *and* actual resources being present. These resources are as much 'social' as they are economic. Interpreting these data, it is amongst the better-off sections and communities that these tendencies come together (Hope, 2000). While economic capital can purchase freedom from risk, few except the very rich have sufficient quantities to isolate themselves so completely that they do not need the security efforts of their neighbours. Yet there is a need to retain these efforts for the benefit of all residents of the neighbourhood. The additional, *social capital* of middle-class suburbs is to be found in their networks of weak, overlapping ties. The web of social reciprocity[14] in middle-class suburbs not only indicates the availability of social capital – deriving from assured, trust relations - but also its capacity to be transformed into collective action. Such groups' success in sustaining themselves - thus countering free-riding - is that continuing access to the benefits of belonging to the 'security club' depends not simply on residing in a conducive area of like-minded people but is also reinforced by the benefits accruing from membership or support of other community groups delivering social and cultural benefits. Thus, a key variable that differentiated the *Neighbourhood Watch* domain from the other household protection activities was whether the participant was also involved in other community social

[14] Proxied here by BCS respondents' perceptions of reciprocity amongst fellow residents (Hope and Trickett, 2004).

groups (Hope and Lab, 2001; see also Skogan, 1988). With the kinds of social sanctions available, members can trust that their fellow-members will continue to contribute to the collective generation of private security goods and that they will not free-ride (*cf.* Olson, 1971), thus undermining and diluting the efforts of those who do participate in private security production.

The externality benefits produced by private security action in the exclusive suburb or urban enclave thus become a *club good*, retained for the benefit of the membership (Hope, 2000). The pooling of these benefits within a network of social capital is also likely to intensify their effects. Social capital leads to greater efficiency in the security accumulation process: social sanctions become less necessary the more exclusive the club since membership exclusivity ensures that the externalities of individual private security efforts will be retained within the club for the benefit of club-members only and will likewise not suffer from the threat of congestion and dilution of the club's security goods from external parties wanting a share of the benefit. Generally, the price-mechanisms of the housing market tend to ensure that the more affluent suburbs are the most exclusive, usually through increased social and spatial 'distance' placed between themselves and the perceived sources of risk; membership exclusivity is preserved, and security remains undiluted, through insulating the club's boundaries against encroachment (Hope, 1999). Fear of crime thus plays a socially productive role not only prompting security consumption but also stimulating and reinforcing it [15]. Economic resources affect entry to exclusive club goods and serve to ration security production, while the social capital resources accruing from club membership operate to intensify the investment. As such, private security consumption becomes enriched and, arguably, more effective as a deterrent: security externalities are preserved, while negative, criminogenic externalities are excluded.

The theory of reflexive securitisation would seem a plausible way of linking burglary victimisation and private security trends [16]. The residential clubbing and consequent intensification of private security, may affect mid-range communities the most: very

[15] Ewald (2000) describes a productive role played by fear of crime in helping citizens of the former GDR adjust to the reunification of Germany.

[16] Declining rates of burglary seem now to be the norm across the western advanced economies, and have been in long-term decline in the United States since the mid-1970s, accompanied in many cases by increasing private security consumption (van Dijk, 2006).

low crime communities have an excess of community over risk, and thus an excess of immunity; their investment in private security may be primarily symbolic. In contrast, high crime neighbourhoods have an excess of victimisation (Figure 2), which negatively affects trust and social capital formation (Skogan, 1988). Only perhaps where countervailing forces of immunity and victimisation are in 'constructive' tension are security club goods likely to be generated (Hope, 1988). Transformations in the housing market – particularly counter-urbanisation, an increasing exclusivisation of suburbs and an urban enclavisation - may all have had the latent effect of insulating boundaries to preserve security goods and repel outsiders (Hope, 1999). Rather than a concentration of crime and poverty, the reduction may indicate the secession of the successful from burglary risk, resulting in a polarisation of residential risk between rich and poor (Hope, 2001). This may help to explain an apparent paradox uncovered in Field's original model: that increases in the proportion of households in owner occupation were found to be *inversely* related to growth in recorded residential burglary during the following year (Field, 1990: 47). In other words, some part of the decline in burglary may have been introduced asymmetrically into the trend by the socio-spatial distancing between victims and offenders brought about by the changing ecology of tenure in the UK over the period (Hope, 1999; 2001). Thus, reflexive securitization may explain why the bulk of burglary reduction has come about through a reduction in prevalence, since a large number of erstwhile victims may have been removed from risk, and thus would be eligible no longer for selection as repeat or multiple victims.

Public versus Private Action

If the reduction in burglary has been brought about largely through reflexive securitisation, to what extent can this be attributed directly to the crime prevention policies of government? In the first place, it has always been notoriously difficult with non-experimental data to isolate the effect of governmental crime prevention publicity, and recent efforts (e.g. Bowers and Johnson, 2003) are plagued with methodological error (Hope, 2004). Second, drawing upon the results of a thorough evaluation of local burglary prevention projects run by statutory partnership agencies, the likelihood appears slim of governmental action having a *direct* reductive effect on burglary risk, at least following current practices (Hope et al., 2004). In a recent paper

(Hope, 2006), I have described, in qualitative theory, some of the possible components and interactions of a reflexive, interactive model of burglary, focussing particularly upon the influences shaping the individual citizen's (non-offender's) side of the equation. In broad terms these comprise: on the one hand, those resources and incentives available for security and protection derived from governmental action, provided by virtue of citizenship; on the other hand, those resources and incentives available from the private sector or civil society, obtainable either by individual private contract or informal collective agreement. The alternative possibility, then, is that burglary has reduced since the mid-1990s due to private security consumption, reinforced by the loss reduction policies of the British insurance industry.

Considerations of Loss

The consideration of loss is a significant driver of the official recorded burglary rate, and indicative of the impact of the private security-insurance nexus on burglary. It has been claimed that the rise in official, recorded burglary during the 1970s was driven primarily by increased insurance claiming, which in turn was driven by growth in the number of private household contents insurance policies, irrespective of any growth in the underlying level of burglary, which remained unmeasured in the absence of a national crime victimisation survey for the period (Litton and Pease, 1984). As a consequence of their interest in loss reduction, insurers typically require victims to report the offence for which a claim is sought - this would seem to be a measure aimed chiefly at the victim, as a deterrent for fraudulent claiming (the investigation of which would otherwise cost insurers more in loss adjustment). The police have always acquiesced with this requirement. Although there is no legal obligation for them to comply, it would seem prudent for the police to record allegations of burglary with loss, since otherwise the enquiries of insurers would risk uncovering police non-compliance in crime recording. Considerations of insurance claiming remain a major determinant of victims' propensity to report burglary, and of the police propensity to record it as an offence: 78 per cent of BCS burglaries with loss are reported to the police, with 98 per cent of these recorded by the police (Table 2); while only 49 per cent of attempts and no loss burglaries are reported to the police, with merely 44 per cent of these recorded by the police (Table 3). In effect, then, the insurance industry has been able to secure a subsidy from the public police that reinforces its loss

reduction interest and reduces its costs of loss adjustment, including fraudulent claiming. The consequence of this policy is an inflated recorded burglary rate[17].

Tables 2 and 3 about here

The impact of this loss reduction policy can be inferred from an analysis of the changing composition of burglary reported to, and recorded by, the police[18]. Previously, it has been inferred that the changing composition of with loss burglary indicates an increase in the offence failure rate (Table 1). Tables 2 and 3 give an idea of how loss, victim reporting and police recording may have interacted over the period. Particularly for burglary involving loss, in the first period (1981-1991), victim's propensity to report burglary to the police increased yet this was matched by a reduction in the police propensity to record with loss burglary offences reported to them. Conversely, in the second period (1991-2003/04), the public's propensity to report with-loss burglaries declined, while the police propensity to record such offences reported to them increased. It is tempting to interpret these interactions as indications of how considerations of loss affect the recorded crime rate[19]: in the first period, victims' propensity to report burglary increased when With-loss burglary was also increasing, presumably reflecting a greater take-up of insurance, and its associated loss-reduction requirements; in the second period, since victims' propensity to report with-loss burglary declined at the same time as with-loss burglary as a whole was declining suggests, perhaps, a greater likelihood of victims consuming less household insurance (because of a diminishing risk), or claiming less (perhaps because of an increase in insurers' premiums and deductibles, and the cost of their remedial security requirements).

In contrast, changes in police recording propensity may reflect adjustments to workload in the face of changing public demand: in the first period, the police may have been 'cuffing' (i.e. deliberately not recording) proportionately more of the increasing amount of burglary reported to them (notwithstanding the insurers' loss

[17] For example, residential burglary comprises 7 per cent of BCS crime but 12 per cent of the comparable basket of recorded crime (Walker et al., 2006).
[18] The advent of the British Crime Survey has afforded this opportunity.
[19] A much less marked, though essentially similar pattern is followed with respect to Attempted Burglary (Table 3)

adjusting requirement) in an effort to manage their workload and to deflate the rising recorded crime rate, which would reflect badly upon them and the government [20]. In the second period, in the relative security of a decline in the underlying rate of burglary, the police can afford to record proportionately more of the burglary reported to them. That they have changed their recording propensity may have been due also to the increased pressure upon them: it is possible that the insurers have tightened-up their loss adjustment practice; and it is clear that the Government's introduction of the National Crime Recording Standard in 2000, and the associated external auditing which has gone with it (Matrix and Hope, 2006), may have given the police less scope to cuff crime than hitherto – indeed, nowadays the police record virtually all the with-loss burglary reported to them (Table 2)[21].

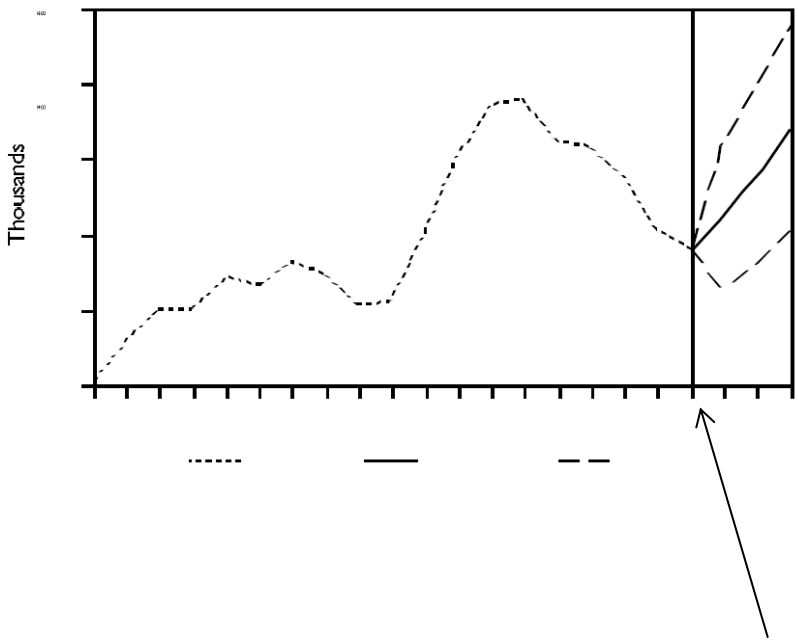
Conclusion

As a result of a conjunction of interests between private sector loss reduction and public sector crime prevention, it would seem that the 'market' for burglary in England and Wales, and its resulting aggregate outcome, is now shaped by a mutual interest amongst the main third parties to the victimisation event. Both insurers, private security suppliers and government have an interest in *stimulating the consumption of private security* (Hope, 2006); and it is only rational that citizens should comply, regardless of whether this might result in their over-consumption of private security, the increased profits of the providers of private security, who benefit from the inelasticity of demand induced by consumer insecurity, or the electoral fortunes of Government in taking the credit. It is a matter of governance as to whether it is right or justifiable for Government, and its police service, to claim responsibility for bringing down burglary. But it is a matter of public probity if counterfactual evidence remains unexamined, or worse, distorted or suppressed (see Hope, 2004). Yet, the win-win situation in which all the main third parties conspire militates against close examination and, to that extent, the remarkable drop in burglary may remain, at least in England and Wales, largely a mystery.

[20] Although the recorded crime rate still spiked dramatically in 1990-1992.
[21] Of course, we cannot predict whether this would continue were there to be a rise in the underlying burglary rate.

Figure 1

Figure 5: Long-run model for burglary

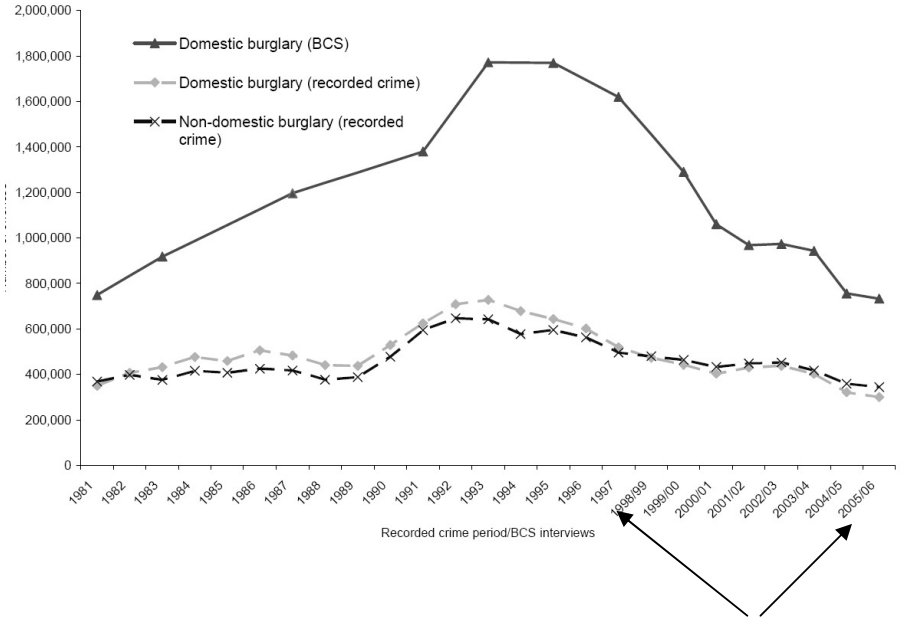


Home Office forecast, 1998-2001

Source: Dhiri et al. (1999) Figure 5.

Figure 2

Figure 6.2 Trends in BCS and police recorded burglary, 1981 to 2005/06



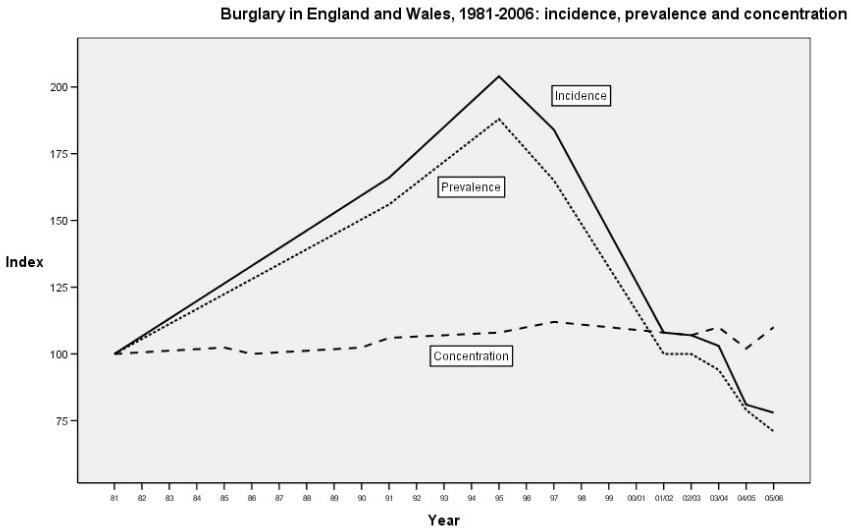
Reduction:
40% recorded burglary, 1998 – 2006;
58% BCS burglary, 1997-2006

Source: Walker et al. (2006), Figure 6.2

Figure 3

Source: British Crime Survey, 1992

Figure 4


Burglary in England and Wales, 1981-2006: incidence, prevalence and concentration
Index
200
175
150
125
100
75
Incidence
Prevalence
Concentration
81
82
83
84
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87
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89
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91
92
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97
98
99
00/01
01/02
02/03
03/04
04/05
05/06
Year
Indexed data (interpolated) 100 = 1981. Source: British Crime Survey (HOSB 12/06, Tables 2.02, 2.03)

Table 1

Domestic Burglary in England and Wales, 1981-1991, and 1991-2003/04: with loss, reported to police, recorded by police – proportions, and percentage changes in proportions

BCS burglary	1981	1991	2003-04	Δ 1981/91	Δ 1991/2003-04
With loss	.498	.516	.442	3.6	- 14.3
Attempted (no entry, no loss)	.368	.370	.435	-0.5	18.2

Source: British Crime Survey. Dodd et al., 2004.

Table 2

With loss Domestic Burglary in England and Wales, 1981-1991, and 1991-2003/04: reported to police, recorded by police – proportions, and percentage changes in proportions

With loss BCS Burglary	1981	1991	2003-04	Δ 1981/91	Δ 1991/2003-04
Reported to police as a proportion of all BCS burglary with loss	.847	.921	.779	7.4	-15.4
Recorded by police as a proportion of reported	.870	.744	.982	- 14.5	23.8

Source: Dodd et al., 2004

Table 3

Attempts and No Loss Domestic Burglary in England and Wales, 1981-1991, and 1991-2003/04: reported to police, recorded by police - percentages

Attempts and No Loss BCS Burglary	**1981**	**1991**	**2003-04**	**Δ 1981/91**	**Δ 1991/2003-04**
Reported to police as a proportion of all BCS attempted and no loss burglary	.484	.530	.485	9.5	-8.5
Recorded by police as a proportion of reported	.401	.410	.439	2.2	7.07

Source: Dodd et al., 2004

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