Appendix 5: Crime prevention (Social)

Key research: Wilson and Kelling (1982) *Broken Windows*

**Background**

- A variety of crime prevention strategies exist
- 1970s – 28 US cities, police officers were taken from ‘patrol cars’ to ‘walking beats’
- Foot patrol presence did not have a significant impact on crime rates. However, it did serve the function of ‘order maintenance’ and made communities feel safer.

**Early experimental research**


- Group 1: Car without license plates parked with bonnet up on a street in the Bronx. Group 2: Same as group 1 but in Palo Alto, California
- Found that the car in group 1 was vandalised quickly followed by random destruction (e.g. parts torn off, upholstery ripped). However in group 2 the car was untouched for more than a week until Zimbardo intervened by smashing it with a sledgehammer. He found that within a few hours the car was vandalised
- Zimbardo concluded that all residential areas are vulnerable to ‘criminal invasion’ where there is a breakdown of community controls.

**Broken Windows theory**

- To focus on serious crime as a method of crime prevention is misleading
- Serious crime is seen as a long-term consequence of disorder in communities
- Neighbourhoods with disorder/unrest/vandalism/rowdy children/abandoned properties can lead to fear in communities. This then leads to withdrawal from the community which can lead to further unrest and no maintenance of order
- Disorder when left unchallenged can lead to crime.

**Implications of Broken Windows theory**

- Assigning officers to foot patrol in neighbourhoods with high crime rates is not always beneficial as these are not always the most vulnerable to criminal invasion
- Officers should be assigned to communities where they can make the most difference
- Maintenance of order is the most important role of the police in crime prevention
- Zero tolerance.

**Evaluation**

- Lack of empirical evidence – too theoretical?
- Lack of distinction between ‘crime’ and ‘disorder’.