



Organizational Activities and Property-Crime Victimization

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Summary

Corcoran and colleagues (2020) focus on extending Routine Activities Theory beyond a focus on the victimization of individuals to a focus on the victimization of organizations as well. Using religious congregation data from InfoUSA, Corcoran and colleagues sought to investigate how congregational activities influenced the occurrence of property crimes at these places of worship. Data was collected through the administration of surveys and ultimately a sample size of 1,380 congregations was formed. The analysis of data collected revealed that routine activities were positively associated with theft from congregations and external vandalism to the places congregations use. Ultimately, this study contributed to the literature surrounding Routine Activities Theory by showing that the theory is applicable to a context that focuses on organizations and not just individuals. Future directions on the necessity of studying Routine Activities through the context of an organization are discussed.

Methods

The data for the current study were collected through the distribution of mailed surveys to different congregations found in InfoUSA's database on religious congregations. Ultimately, the sample for the study was composed of data from 1,380 different congregations. A variety of different measures are used to measure concepts such as crime occurrence, use of congregational space, proximity to motivated offenders, how attractive of a target the congregation is, and the presence of guardianship. Additionally, demographic information such as the racial makeup, overall economic status, and religious identity of congregations were recorded. Correlation and regression statistics were calculated to examine the significance of the relationship between different variables and crime occurrence in congregations.

Results

Results from this study revealed that congregations that engage in hosting a soup kitchen/food pantry and hosting community festival activities are significantly more likely to experience vandalism and theft both inside and outside their place of worship as compared to congregations that engage in a variety of other routine activities. More specifically, congregations that offered more routine activities were at greater risk of experiencing exterior vandalism. Contrary to exterior vandalism, neither the overall number of routine activities nor any of the individual routine activities themselves were associated with a greater likelihood of experiencing interior vandalism. Finally, the total count of the number of routine activities held by a congregation were associated with greater odds of both exterior and interior theft occurring.

Implications

This study, with a theoretical foundation based on Routine Activities Theory, provides a unique account of how organizations can be considered victims of property crime. Results point to the idea that the same factors that influence individual victimization - frequency and type of routine activities, target attractiveness, and proximity to motivated offenders - also influence the ways in which organizations are victimized. Overall, this study expands the context to which Routine Activities Theory can be applied. With this being said, more research on how other organizations (schools, businesses) experience victimization is necessary.

For more information, see Corcoran, K. E., Scheitle, C. P., & Hudnall, E. B. (2020). Organizational Activities and Property-Crime Victimization. *The Sociological Quarterly*, 61(1), 164-186, DOI: 10.1080/00380253.2019.1583047