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UNDERSTANDING DECISIONS TO BURGLARIZE FROM THE OFFENDER'S PERSPECTIVE

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Building on past research, this study closely examined the decision-making processes of 422 randomly-selected, incarcerated male and female burglars across three states (North Carolina, Kentucky, and Ohio). The central research questions that guided the project included the following:

1. What motivates burglars to engage in burglary?
2. What factors are considered by burglars during target selection?
3. What deters burglars from burglarizing specific targets?
4. What techniques do burglars use when engaging in burglary?
5. Are there gender differences in burglary motivations, target selection and techniques?

In addition, this study was designed to specifically assess the deterrent effect, if any, of burglar alarms on offender's decisions to burglarize. To address these research questions, we relied on a self-administered survey data collection process using an instrument designed specifically for this study. The following are some of the central findings:

1. What motivates burglars to engage in burglary?

- First, it is clear that many in our sample of burglars were seasoned offenders. The overall sample of respondents reported being arrested from 1 to over 100 times in the past (mean = 12.9 arrests). Age of first burglary arrest ranged from 9 to 50 (mean age = 23.6) while the reported age when first engaging in a burglary ranged from 6 to 50 (mean age = 21.8).
- It is also evident that some burglars were involved in other forms of serious crime over the course of their offending careers. About 8% reported that they had been charged with homicide, 12% with robbery, and 7% with assault at some point in their past. On the other hand, over 54% reported that burglary/breaking-and-entering was the most serious crime that they had been charged with to date.
- Past literature suggests there are multiple motivations for engaging in burglary including drugs, money, foolishness, and thrill-seeking. Within this sample it was quite apparent that drug and alcohol use were, at minimum, correlated to involvement in burglary and, in many cases, the direct cause, and a primary motivator, for males and females alike.
 - Within the entire sample, 88% of respondents indicated that their top reason for committing burglaries was related to their need to acquire drugs (51%) or money (37%), although many reported needing the money to support drug problems. Crack or powder cocaine and heroin were the drugs most often reportedly used

by these offenders and these substances were often being used in combination with other substances, including marijuana and alcohol, during burglary attempts.

- When asked how income accumulated from burglaries would be spent, drug use was the most frequently reported answer (64%) followed by living expenses (49%), partying (35%), clothes/shoes (31%), gifts (17%), and gambling (5%).

2. What factors are considered by burglars during target selection?

- About half of the burglars reported engaging in at least one residential burglary and about a third reported engaging in at least one commercial burglary during the year before their most recent arrest.
- Most of the burglars relied on the use of a vehicle; more often it was their own, but sometimes the vehicle belonged to a family member or a friend. About one in eight reported using a stolen vehicle during the course of a burglary.
- There was substantial and wide variation in the distance driven prior to engaging in a burglary, with some traveling hundreds of miles or across state lines (presumably in an effort to minimize identification and capture) and others reporting walking or driving just a couple blocks away (range .5 miles to 250 miles).
- Just under a third of the offenders reported that they collected information about a potential target prior to initiating a burglary attempt, suggesting that most burglars are impulsive to some degree.
 - About 12% indicated that they typically planned the burglary, 41% suggested it was most often a “spur of the moment” event/offense, and the other 37% reported that it varied.
 - When considering the amount of time dedicated to planning, when planning did occur, nearly half (49%) suggested that the burglary occurred within one day and 16% indicated that the planning process took place for 1-3 days. There were not significant differences in substance use involvement between those who were more deliberate planners and those who were not.
- Just over a fourth of burglars typically worked alone and approximately the same proportion reported never burglarizing alone. Among those who worked with others, most committed burglaries with friends and/or spouses/significant others, although nearly one in eight reported working with other family members.

3. What deters burglars from burglarizing specific targets?

- Close proximity of other people (including traffic, those walking nearby, neighbors, people inside the establishment, and police officers), lack of escape routes, and

indicators of increased security (alarm signs, alarms, dogs inside, and outdoor cameras or other surveillance equipment) was considered by most burglars when selecting a target.

- Within a broad set of potential target hardening deterrents, alarms and outdoor cameras and other surveillance equipment were considered by a majority of burglars.
- About 60% of the burglars indicated that the presence of an alarm would cause them to seek an alternative target altogether. This was particularly true among the subset of burglars that were more likely to spend time deliberately and carefully planning a burglary.
- Most burglars would try to determine if an alarm was present before attempting a burglary. Among those that determined that an alarm was present after initiating a burglary, about half would discontinue the attempt.

4. What techniques do burglars use when engaging in burglary?

- Most burglars reported entering open windows or doors or forcing windows or doors open. Only about one in eight burglars reported picking locks or using a key that they had previously acquired to gain entry.
- About one in five burglars reported cutting telephone or alarm wires in advance.
- Screwdrivers were the most commonly reported tool that burglars carried, followed by crow bars and hammers.
- Most burglars (79%) reported an interest in acquiring cash during their burglaries, followed by jewelry (68%), illegal drugs (58%), electronics (56%) and prescription drugs (44%).
- About 65% of those who stole items worked to dispose of those items immediately. For those that held onto items, most were usually stored at a friend's house or, less often, stashed somewhere else including a storage unit or an empty building or vacant house.
- In terms of item disposition, most burglars reported selling the items to strangers, pawn shops or second-hand dealers, or friends or trading the items for something else. Smaller numbers of burglars reported selling items online, to family members, or at auctions, and still others reported trading the items directly for drugs.

5. Are there gender differences in burglary motivations, target selection and techniques?

- There were some broad similarities between male and female burglars in this study and some substantial differences as well. In terms of past criminal involvement, males and females were fairly equivalent.

- Male burglars often planned their burglaries more deliberately and carefully and were more likely to visit a potential target ahead of time to gather intelligence. Female burglars appeared to be more impulsive overall, perhaps as a result of being more involved in, and possibly motivated by, substance use problems.
 - Drug use was the most frequently reported reason given by females (70%) for their engagement in burglary; for males their top reason was money.
- Females clearly preferred to burglarize homes and residences in the afternoon timeframe, while males preferred to focus on businesses in the late evenings.
- Significantly fewer female burglars were likely to spend time planning, more females were likely to report engaging in burglaries on the “spur of the moment”, and more females were likely to complete a burglary that day if they did spend any time planning.
- Male burglars reported being deterred from targeting a particular location by a lack of potential hiding locations, steel bars on windows or doors, proximity of the target to other houses or businesses, availability of escape routes, and distance to the nearest road (which is consistent with their interest in nighttime offending).
 - A larger proportion of females than males indicated that alarms, outdoor cameras, outdoor lighting, and indications of neighborhood watch programs were effective deterrents.
 - The impact of alarms and surveillance equipment on target selection did not vary across gender, although male burglars were less often dissuaded from attempting a burglary if they noticed signs suggesting that a particular location was protected by alarms. Further, male burglars who tended to plan more carefully were also more willing to attempt to disable an alarm that was found at a target location.
- Significantly more females reported engaging in burglaries with spouses/significant while significantly males reported doing so with friends.
- More males reported being likely to steal illegal drugs, cash and jewelry during burglaries while more females were most likely to seek out prescription medications.

INTRODUCTION

Research seeking to understand the criminological factors associated with burglary and burglars' decision-making processes has been conducted through victimization surveys, interviews or surveys with active or incarcerated offenders, and analyses of crime, census, and land use secondary data (e.g., Bennett & Wright, 1984; Coupe & Blake, 2006; Maguire & Bennett, 1982; Tseloni, Witterbrood, Farrell, & Pease, 2004; Tunnell, 1992; Wilcox, Quisenberry, Cabrera, & Jones, 2004). While the contribution of knowledge gained through these techniques is significant, the number of studies concerning burglary is limited, many studies have been conducted in countries other than the United States, and few studies examine differences based on demographic characteristics such as gender. Using a sample of convicted burglars in North Carolina, Ohio, and Kentucky, the purpose of the current study is to add to the knowledge base concerning the motivation and techniques used by burglars as they select targets and carry out their crimes. Additionally, this research will examine what factors, such as burglar alarms or locks, may deter burglars from committing the act. Importantly, the current study will collect data from both male and female burglars, which will provide significant insight into the similarities and differences in motivations and actions based on gender.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Many factors can influence a burglar's decision when he or she is deciding where, how, and whether to commit the crime. Burglars have different motivations for their crimes, and some are more likely than others to be deterred by the threat of punishment. Drugs and alcohol might

also influence the decision to burglarize, as will the availability of desired targets. The following discussion summarizes the existing literature concerning these issues.

Motivations for Burglary

The various factors that motivate individuals to commit burglary are fairly common and consistent (Cromwell & Olson, 2006; Cromwell, Olson, & Avary, 1991, Nee & Meenaghan, 2006; Tunnell, 1992; Wright & Decker, 1994). The need for money is the primary reason offered by offenders in both ethnographic research and offender interviews (Forrester, Chatterton, Pease, & Brown, 1988). The money is predominantly used to purchase drugs and alcohol and maintain a glamorous lifestyle (Cromwell et al., 1991; Wright & Decker, 1994). However, some burglars acknowledge the need to meet daily expenses including food, shelter, and monthly bills (Wright & Decker, 1994). Burglary provides a means to quickly obtain a desirable amount of money or valuable goods in a short period of time.

Individuals may also become involved in burglary, whether for financial or other reasons, through social interactions. Cromwell and Olson (2006) note that social contributors include gangs, delinquent subcultures, peer approval and status. Hochstetler (2001) shows that involvement in street life leads to criminal activity through complex interaction effects of peer encouragement and collaboration. Criminal collaborations may be especially important for inexperienced or part-time offenders and for females (Cromwell et al., 1991; Mullins & Wright, 2003; Nee & Meenaghan, 2006; Rengert & Wasilchick, 2000; Wright & Decker, 1994). Examples of such collaborations include co-offending, sharing or receiving information about potential targets, and fencing of goods.

The use of drugs and alcohol is commonly associated with burglary and the need to support a party lifestyle or drug addiction is frequently cited as a motivation (Cromwell et al., 1991; Wright & Decker, 1994). The decision to commit a burglary is often made while under the influence of drugs or alcohol or during periods of substance abuse (Forrester et al., 1988; Nee & Meenaghan, 2006). Also, offenders state that using substances prior to a burglary helps to reduce fear (Cromwell et al., 1991; Hochstetler & Copes, 2006). However, being under the influence is also a common excuse when they are arrested because they believe their mistakes derived from impairment (Rengert & Wasilchick, 2000). Overall, it is clear that drugs and alcohol impact some decisions to commit burglary.

Deterrence

Little evidence is offered in support of the deterrent effect of punishment offenders in general and for burglary offenders in particular (Cromwell & Olson, 2006; Decker, Wright, & Logie, 1993; Piquero & Rengert, 1999; Rengert & Wasilchick, 1985; Wright, Caspi, Moffitt, & Paternoster, 2004; Wright & Decker, 1994). Hochstetler & Copes (2006) argue that fear of criminal consequences for property crime ranked lower as a deterrent than fear of injury or confrontation with the occupants. Working in groups is also reported to reduce anxiety of punishment and co-offending is common among burglars (Hochstetler, 2001). Mullins and Wright (2003) indicate that females, in particular, discount their risk of punishment due to the belief that society is not likely to punish males and females equally. Forrester et al. (1988) reported that the majority of their sample of offenders did not consider the risk of punishment in offending decisions. Yet, these studies also present evidence that some offenders attempt to reduce their risk by carefully studying and selecting their targets.

Overall, burglary offenders are not likely to be deterred by the perceived risk of punishment. Many of the reviewed studies analyze the behaviors of individuals who have been engaged in criminal social networks for extended periods of time. The lack of apprehension and subsequent punishment reinforces the belief that they are less likely to be detected or formally punished. As offenders further engage in burglary, enhanced knowledge and expertise additionally decreases fear. Furthermore, offenders often work in groups and this interaction is shown to reduce anxiety as offenders learn from one another. Overall, among individuals already participating in burglary, the risk of punishment is not an influential factor in the decision-making calculus, especially when the probability and amount of financial gain are high.

Gender Differences

While the body of research exploring gender roles among offender has grown significantly, relatively little research regarding burglary specifically has been conducted (Mullins & Wright, 2003). Burglary is generally considered a male-dominated crime. Only a few earlier ethnographic samples report a small percentage of female offenders (Cromwell et al, 1991; Wright & Decker, 1994). Mullins and Wright (2003) utilized data from Wright and Decker (1994) in order to specifically study the gender structure, perception, and expectation of burglary offending and conclude that several gender differences do exist. First, females are predominantly introduced to burglary by their significant other (Mullins & Wright, 2003), while males become involved through peer networks (Hochstetler, 2001). Some females claim that they were initially unaware of their partners' burglaries, but eventually began participating.

Among females who willingly engage in burglary, their motivations fail to significantly differentiate from males, except that women more often report using the proceeds to support

their children, in addition to partying. Target information gathering differs slightly as males exploit their legal occupations (landscaping, construction, service workers, etc.) or use their social networks (peers, fences, etc.), while females rely on intimate or social relationships with males or on sexual manipulation of potential victims. Females prefer to work in groups and their roles are generally limited unless the group is all female. However, performing a lesser role is considered valuable, as they believe their limited participation will be legally viewed as less incriminating. Yet, the risk of getting caught and being incarcerated is not an instrumental factor in their decision-making.

Empirical differences between male and female burglary offenders are infrequently the focus of research. However, several key findings emerge from the select body of available research. First, both males and females are drawn to burglary to obtain money. The need for money often results from drug and alcohol addictions. Target selection is relatively the same; except that males are able to generate more information from their legal occupations or their social networks. Furthermore, the perception of risk for apprehension and prosecution are relatively low for both groups. Crime rates for both males and females tend to fluctuate together and are strongly correlated to poor social and economic factors. Overall, evidence suggests that male and female offenders are relatively similar.

Target Selection: Desirable and Undesirable Characteristics of Targets

Wright & Decker (1994) observed that many burglars in their sample typically selected targets in advance using knowledge of the people or property that was already gathered. This information is generated in three general ways: by knowing the victims, from receiving a tip, or through observations. The majority of the offenders indicate that observation is their most

common means of selecting a target. However, most offenders admit to occasionally acting on impulse by choosing a residence and immediately committing the burglary. In any case, offenders often survey the target for attractive features and potential risks.

Many burglaries, however, are not committed using information gathered in advance, but rather when opportunities arise that are too appealing to resist (Rengert & Wasilchick, 2000; Wright & Decker, 1994). These opportunities occur when the individual happens upon a suitable target and takes advantage of the moment. The offender does not have to be motivated to burglarize prior to encountering the opportunity, but rather must be prepared to engage quickly. Rengert & Wasilchick (2000) state spontaneous opportunities are more characteristic of amateur offenders and urban burglaries rather than suburban burglaries that rely on increased preparation. However, Cromwell et al. (1991) suggest that opportunistic offenses are not specific to amateurs as even the most rational and professional burglars can determine the value of a random opportunity.

When a burglar comes across a potential target, whether planned or spontaneous, he or she generally uses some type of rational calculation process in determining whether or not to commit the burglary (Cromwell et al., 1991; Hakim, Rengert, & Shachmurove, 2001; Rengert & Wasilchick, 1989; Tunnell, 1992; Wright & Decker, 1994). This process involves weighing potential gains and rewards against risks, and the calculation of gains and rewards usually involves consideration of particular features of the structure that are seen as attractive. An appearance of affluence is commonly cited as a selling point (Bernasco & Luykx, 2003; Hakim & Blackstone, 1997; Rengert & Wasilchick, 2000; Wright & Decker, 1994). The size of the residence, condition of the property, and the types of vehicles driven by the occupants are other indicators of valuable assets contained within the home (Wright & Decker, 1994).

Offenders perceive the visibility of the property to be a high risk factor, in addition to occupancy (Cromwell et al., 1991; Hakim & Blackstone, 1997; Wright & Decker, 1994). Visibility during entry or departure significantly increased the perceived risk of apprehension. Residences with fences, large trees, or bushes (natural covering) that block the view of doors or windows are considered more attractive (Bennett & Wright, 1984). Dwellings built within a close proximity of each other are less suitable for fear of being heard or seen; therefore detached single-family residences are preferred. Furthermore, corner houses have fewer neighbors and more options for escape (Hakim, 1980; Hakim et al., 2001).

Commercial establishments also have certain appealing characteristics that may heighten their vulnerability to burglary. Again, perceived affluence is the strongest attraction to an offender (Hakim & Blackstone, 1997). A second characteristic, though less prominent, is the business's location in relationship to the concentration of community businesses. Offenders prefer a lower concentration of businesses and traffic and shy away from major intersections or highly patrolled areas. Businesses located on corners have a higher risk of burglary as they offer multiple directions for escape. The types of businesses with the highest burglary rates are office park suites, retail establishments, and single office buildings. In addition, visibility is an important factor when selecting a business target. Businesses with increased lighting and less natural cover often have lower burglary rates.

Potential targets might also have characteristics that deter burglars. Occupancy of the target is the greatest concern for burglars (Cromwell et al., 1991; Garcia-Retamero & Dhimi, 2009; Hakim et al., 2001; Logie, Wright, & Decker, 1992; Rengert & Wasilchick, 2000; Wright & Decker, 1994; Wright & Logie, 1988; Wright, Logie, & Decker, 1995). Many burglars take great measures to ensure they will not encounter any person upon entering the home. They fear

potential injury to themselves, being apprehended, or risking more punishment if they harm residents. Aside from monitoring the occupants' routines, many will utilize other techniques to determine whether anyone is home. Some report ringing the doorbell and if no one answers after several attempts, they feel the residence is vacated. Others will retrieve identification information in order to locate a phone number and subsequently call the home. Should the resident answer the door or phone, the offender will have a story prepared to justify their presence. Other cues such as accumulating mail or newspapers, closed windows, or the lack of air conditioning on hot days signals vulnerability. Cromwell et al. (1991) also state that more seasoned burglars will probe the occupancy of neighbors as well. A few burglars report being unaffected by residents being at home, or see it as more exciting.

Security measures such as alarms and dogs may serve as substitutes for occupancy. Most offenders report being highly deterred by such security measures (Cromwell et al, 1991; Wright & Decker, 1994; for extensive review of existing studies, see Lee, 2008). Previous studies consistently have found that alarms are beneficial to individuals as well as neighborhoods (Buck, Hakim, & Rengert, 1993; Garcia-Retamero & Dhami, 2009; Lee, 2008; Wright et al., 1995). Signs or stickers that advertise alarm ownership are also effective deterrents. If a burglar does choose to enter a home while unsure of an alarm (silent or audible), they often stall for a select period of time in case police or occupants respond. Among those offenders not deterred by alarms, they project either being confident they will depart before the police will arrive or capable of disabling the alarm. Of the offenders that accept the risk associated with dogs, many attempt to either befriend or do away with them. Like alarms, however, only a small percentage of burglars will proceed with the event when confronted with dogs. Overall, alarms and dogs

seem provide an effective means of deterrence for burglars, though alarms are cited as more of a deterrent than dogs (Hakim et al., 2001).

Commercial establishments can also employ effective measures to deter criminals. Hakim and Blackstone (1997) argue that alarms, particularly advertised by alarm signs, are effective at reducing the likelihood of victimization. As many offenses are conducted at night while the dwelling is likely unoccupied, the use of cameras substitutes for witnesses (Hakim & Blackstone, 1997). Furthermore, businesses can use motion detectors and pressure mats to detect the presence of potential offenders.

Locks on doors and windows are not often visible during the initial target selection process. Most offenders encounter these measures after already deciding to commit the burglary. However, this does not imply that locks are not effective. Dead bolt locks, especially double-cylinder dead bolts, are overwhelmingly disliked but can still be circumvented with tools or physical force (Wright & Decker, 1994). Cromwell et al. (1991) argue that the effectiveness of dead bolt locks depend on the type of burglar. Rational offenders will use other means of entry when faced with perceived physical barriers. However, opportunistic offenders will be more deterred and some may proceed to a more vulnerable target. Other devices, such as bars on windows and storm doors, are also unattractive features for offenders. In addition, Hakim and Blackstone (1997) recommend placing pins in windows. The key to physical guardianship is to actively utilize the measures, as burglars often simply enter through an open or insecure window or door instead (Cromwell et al., 1991; Hakim & Blackstone, 1997; Maguire & Bennett, 1982; Wright et al., 1995).

Considering the Temporal Dimensions of Burglary

Analyzing temporal patterns is critical for offenders (Cromwell et al., 1991; Hakim & Blackstone, 1997; Rengert & Wasilchick, 2000). Most residential burglaries are committed on a weekday in the daytime (Coupe & Blake, 2006; Cromwell et al., 1991; Goodwill & Alison, 2006; Hakim & Blackstone, 1997; Rengert & Wasilchick, 2000); fewer are committed at night or on the weekends. Of those committed at night, the offenders generally are acquainted with occupants and are confident the premise is vacated. Businesses, however, are more likely to be targeted at night when most are closed. Research suggests that residential burglars favor suburban neighborhoods because the routines of the occupants (particularly females) are considerably more predictable (Rengert & Wasilchick, 2000). Traditional housewives are the principal guardians of the home during the day and their habits can generally be characterized into time blocks of running errands and transporting spouses and children to and from work, school, and various activities. Working females also have consistent routines throughout the week that extend into the weekend. They find that the most vulnerable times are between 9-11 a.m. and 1-3 p.m., when most females are out of the home. In addition, Hakim and Blackstone (1997) add that most burglaries (residential or commercial) occur within the first year of occupancy, between May and September when more residents spend greater amounts of time away from home, particularly in August and September. Coupe and Blake (2006) also considered the types of dwellings targeted during different time periods. During the day, single-home dwellings with greater cover are more likely to be targeted; at night townhouses or attached residences are more susceptible.

Considering the Spatial Dimensions of Burglary

Many burglars offend within close proximity to their own residences (Bernasco & Luykx, 2003; Hakim & Blackstone, 1997; Goodwill & Alison, 2006; Rengert & Wasilchick, 2000; Wright & Decker, 1994). Goodwill and Alison (2005) also report that offenders commit subsequent burglaries close to the location of their initial offense. Reasons for operating close by include a lack of transportation, lack of money for gas, or poor quality of personal vehicles. More importantly, offenders feel more comfortable in familiar environments or where they can blend into the demographics of the neighborhoods, which is common among commercial burglars as well (Hakim & Blackstone, 1997). The chance of residential burglary also increases within a restricted but highly accessible distance from major roads and highway exits (Bernasco & Luykx, 2003; Hakim & Blackstone, 1997; Hakim et al., 2001). However, commercial burglary is most likely to occur further away from high traffic areas. Wright and Decker (1994) suggest that burglars refrain from areas with elevated police presence, such as hot spots for drug markets, though Rengert and Wasilchick (2000) argue that this position is debatable as criminals are attracted to opportunities around the drug market.

Burglary and Repeat Victimization

Prior victimization increases the risk of future victimization for burglary. Offenders often admit to targeting the same residence multiple times (Wright & Decker, 1994). Victimization studies also report a higher risk of repeat victimization either by the same offender or different offenders in the United States as well as other nations (Bowers & Johnson, 2005; Forrester et al., 1988; Tseloni & Farrell, 2002; Tseloni et al., 2004). In addition, dwellings near the victimized property with similar layouts are at higher risk as burglars find the familiarity of

the target particularly attractive (Bowers & Johnson, 2005; Bowers, Johnson, & Hirshfield, 2003; Nee & Meenaghan, 2006).

SUMMARY

Decisions made by burglary offenders are shaped by economic and social factors. While the choice to commit burglary is a calculated deliberation, the full scope of information for risks and benefits information is limited. Bounded rationality is further complicated by drug and alcohol abuse. Burglars operate in the present, with little thought to the future. Consequently, deterrence measures seem to have little effect on curbing their behaviors. Although males often dominate the study of burglary and street crime, the role of female offenders has recently caught the attention of researchers. Socioeconomic factors that traditionally lead males into crime are also being linked with females, and this evidence questions the opinion that females are better shielded in society from the consequences of disadvantaged conditions.

Existing literature suggests that burglars tend to target residential or commercial dwellings that are perceived to be affluent. Offenders often operate within a short distance of their own residences, but choose targets with easy access to major roads or highways and have various potential escape routes. Residences with greater natural coverage and reduced visibility to neighbors will be at higher risk. Also, businesses situated in more remote areas with less commercial traffic are more desirable targets. Most residential burglaries occur during the day, but commercial offenses predominantly happen at night. Both of these timeframes are indicative of periods when the dwellings are least likely to be occupied.

Cost-effective measures have been shown to reduce residential burglary. First and foremost, burglar alarms are reported as having the greatest impact in deterring offenders. In

addition, signs that advertise the ownership of an alarm also decrease the attractiveness of the residence. However, research has yet to discern the impact across specific types of alarm technology for residential burglaries. The presence of dogs significantly reduces the risk of burglary. Other types of effective target-hardening devices may include dead bolt locks, window locks and pins, window bars, and storm doors since they are perceived to increase the entry time and risk of detection.

Building on past research, this study will contribute to the existing body of literature concerning the decision-making processes of burglars by gathering information related to the following research questions:

1. What motivates burglars to engage in burglary?
2. What factors are considered during target selection?
3. What deters burglars from burglarizing specific targets?
4. What techniques do burglars use?
5. Are there gender differences in burglary motivation, target selection and technique?

METHODS

Sampling

The target population for this study was all inmates in state prisons currently serving time for burglary in Kentucky, North Carolina, and Ohio. These three states were selected based on their proximity to the research team and willingness to participate in the study. The research team worked with the Institutional Review Boards (IRBs) at their respective universities and at the Departments of Corrections¹ in the three target states to determine appropriate sampling and data collection techniques for each site. Because of the intricacies and resources involved with distributing the survey, IRB representatives requested that investigators limit the number of facilities used in this research and the prison system was equally supportive of limiting state-wide access.

Each Department of Corrections provided the researchers with an initial sampling frame list that contained identification and facility information for all adult inmates currently serving a prison sentence for burglary. From these lists, investigators were able to select facilities of differing security levels that had ample numbers of potential respondents. Once the facilities were chosen, the final sampling frame was created using the inmates within these selected institutions, and the sample of potential respondents was selected from this list.

The initial objective was to select 500 inmates in each state (n=350 males and 150 females) and ask them to participate in the study. Four prisons were selected in Kentucky and Ohio, and 10 prisons were selected in North Carolina. At the time of data collection, there were less than 150 females serving a prison sentence for burglary in North Carolina (n=129) and

¹ The generic “Departments of Corrections” used in this report refer to the Kentucky Department of Corrections, the North Carolina Department of Public Safety, and the Ohio Department of Rehabilitation and Correction.

Kentucky (n=124), so the entire populations of these inmates were included in our sample. In Ohio, there were 212 females convicted of burglary who were housed at the women's reformatory, where 120 inmates were randomly sampled and data were collected. Male inmates were randomly selected from the other facilities in each state (n=350 in Kentucky and North Carolina and n=440 in Ohio²). The final list of invited respondents (n=1513) consisted of a mix of minimum, medium, and maximum security male (n=1140) and female (n=373) inmates in each state. The 1,513 invited participants were selected from a total incarcerated population of 2,709 burglars in the three states at the time of sampling.

Data Collection Processes

Departments of Corrections in Ohio and Kentucky requested that researchers distribute and collect the surveys on-site. In these two states, potential participants were notified about the study via informed consent letters and memorandums distributed by correctional staff members. They were asked to report to a specific location (e.g., chapel, classroom, or cafeteria) at a certain time on the date of data collection if they were interested in learning more about the study. Investigators met with potential respondents on the specified day, talked to them about the purpose of the study, and distributed and discussed the informed consent document. The informed consent document included statements of confidentiality, risks and benefits of participating in the study, assurances that participation was completely voluntary, that there were no incentives or rewards for participating, that there were no consequences for not participating, and that volunteers were being asked to complete a 30 to 45 minute questionnaire during which they could skip any items to which they did not feel comfortable responding or stop taking the survey at any time. At this time, self-administered surveys (see **Appendix A**) were distributed to

² Data collection efforts in Ohio occurred after the other two states, so more males were sampled to try to increase the overall number of valid responses.

inmates who agreed to be a part of the project. Each specific data collection site (prison) was visited one to three times and these visits resulted in 90 usable surveys from Kentucky and 236 from Ohio.

In contrast, prison officials suggested that mail surveys would be the most efficient means of data collection for the North Carolina facilities. Therefore, investigators mailed packets containing the approved informed consent document that contained an additional section with instructions for completing and returning the survey, a copy of the survey instrument, and a pre-addressed business reply envelope to each potential respondent. A total of 90 instruments were returned from inmates in North Carolina. Our time and resources did not allow for reminders and any such reminders would have been impossible to deliver given the anonymous nature of the data collection process, concerns with inmate transfers and releases, and other logistical challenges.

Response Rate

A total of 422 completed surveys were ultimately collected using an overall sampling frame of 1,513 incarcerated burglars (for a 28% response rate) that was comprised predominantly of randomly selected males in each state and females in Ohio, or which included all female burglars who were incarcerated in NC and KY at the time of data collection. Response rates varied somewhat across prison systems given the variability in inmate access, institutional cooperation, data collection procedural requirements, and data collection protocols (in-person dissemination of surveys versus mailed surveys).

The study sample therefore represents 15.9% of the total population of incarcerated burglars at the time of data collection. Although the overall response rate of 28 percent is somewhat low, it is not unusual when studying incarcerated populations. Many prison studies

that deal with criminal behavior or sensitive issues report response rates of 25 percent or less, especially if incentives are not offered (Gaes & Goldberg, 2004; Hensley, Rutland, & Gray-Ray, 2000; Hensley & Tallichet, 2005). Further, there is little reason to assume that respondents are different from non-respondents in this study. During on-site data collection, correctional staff members reported that many potential respondents indicated that they would like to participate in the research, but they were unable to do so because of work assignments or educational classes that they were not allowed to miss during the preset data collection times.

RESULTS

Demographic Characteristics of Subjects

About 56% of the 422 surveys were completed in Ohio, 23% were completed in North Carolina and the other 21% were completed in Kentucky. The inmates that participated ranged in age from 18-64 (mean = 32.9). Approximately 65% of the final sample was male (we targeted 70% but ended up with a slightly larger sample of females). Two thirds (67%) of the sample respondents were Caucasian, 25% were African American, and the rest were mixed or other races. About 63% reported being single and never married at the time of the current arrest, 7% were separated, 9% were married, and 13% were divorced (see **Table 1**).

Table 1. Demographic Characteristics of 422 Burglars

	Frequency	Percentage
Survey State		
Ohio	236	55.9
North Carolina	96	22.7
Kentucky	90	21.3
Gender		
Male	275	65.2
Female	147	34.8
Race		
Caucasian	281	66.6
African American	107	25.4
Hispanic	2	0.5
Native American	8	1.9
Other	20	4.7
Marital Status		
Single (Never Married)	266	63.0
Separated	30	7.1
Married	39	9.2
Divorced	55	13.0
Widowed	4	0.9
Other	26	6.2

Mean Age = 32.9 (range = 18 – 64)

1) WHAT MOTIVATES BURGLARS TO ENGAGE IN BURGLARY?

Criminal History and Extent of Burglary Involvement

This sample of burglars appeared to be broadly involved in crime and consistently involved in burglary. The overall sample of respondents reported being arrested from 1 to over 100 times in the past (mean = 12.9 arrests) and respondents from NC and KY (OH subjects were not allowed to answer this question and some other questions per Ohio DOC policy) reported being convicted

from 1 to 60 times (mean = 6.8 convictions). More specifically, respondents indicated that they had been arrested for aggravated burglary, burglary or breaking-and-entering anywhere from 0 to 90 times (mean = 3.0) and convicted of these offenses from 0 to 90 times (mean = 2.5) during their lives. Age of first burglary arrest ranged from 9 to 50 (mean age = 23.6) while the reported age when first engaging in a burglary ranged from 6 to 50 (mean age = 21.8).

More than half (54%) of respondents reported that burglary or breaking and entering was the most serious crime they had been charged with to date, though some had been involved in other forms of serious crime during their offending careers. Specifically, about 8% reported that they had been charged with homicide, 12% with robbery, and 7% with assault at some point in their past. Based on these responses, it seems clear that this sample of offenders was engaged in a fair amount of crime and was continually involved in burglary specifically.

Drug and Alcohol Use among Incarcerated Burglars

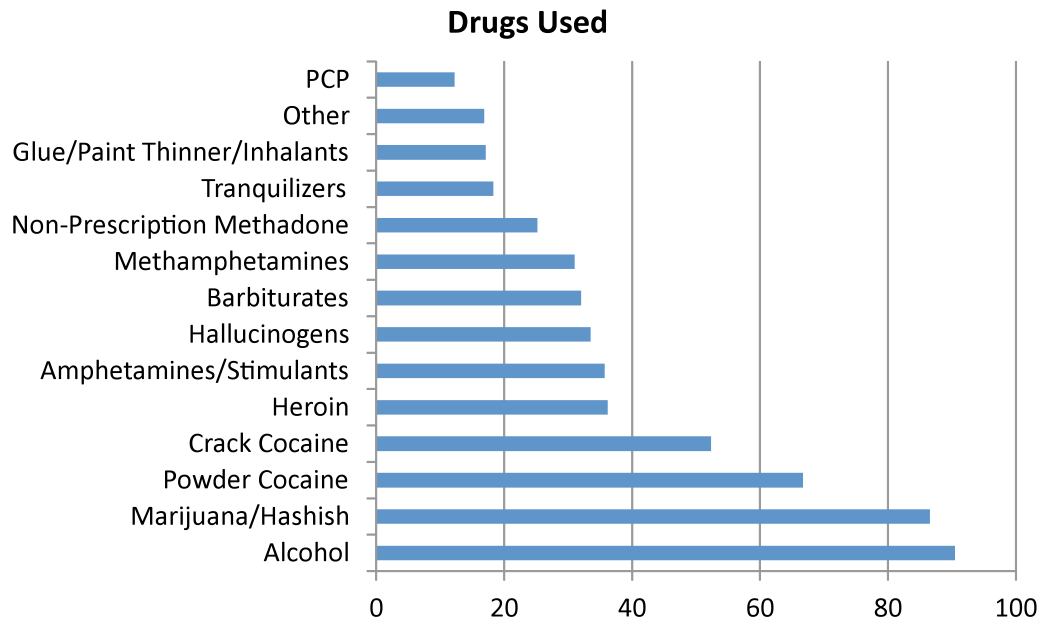
Our self-reported survey data confirms findings from prior studies of burglars which suggest that drug and alcohol use are, at minimum, correlated to involvement in burglary and, in some cases, the direct cause of it (and a primary motivator) for males and females alike. First, among the 409 subjects who answered the series of drug use questions, only four reported not using any drugs or alcohol in their lifetime and only 38 reported only using one of the substances in their lifetime. More than half of the burglars had used alcohol, marijuana, and powder or crack cocaine in their lifetimes (see **Figure 1**). Further, half of the sample reporting using more than five drugs to date (mean = 5.5; range = 0 to 14+ depending on contingency questions).

Second, 73% of the sample indicated that they had used drugs and/or alcohol while engaged in a burglary at some time in the past and many respondents reported using multiple

drugs and/or alcohol while doing so. Crack or powder cocaine and heroin were the drugs most often reportedly used by these offenders and these substances were often being used in combination with other substances, including marijuana and alcohol, during burglary attempts.

Third, we also asked the respondents more specific questions about their substance use in the six month period prior to the arrest for their current offense using a 7-point Likert scale (0 = never used, 1 = less than 4 times a month, 2 = about once a week; 3 = 2-6X a week; 4 = about once a day; 5 = 2-3 times a day; and 6 = 4 or more times a day). In summary, 79% had used marijuana, 55% used cocaine, 47% used crack, 30% used stimulants, 32% use heroin, 26% use methamphetamines, 27% used non-prescription methadone, 31% used barbiturates, 17% used tranquilizers, 10% used PCP, 24% used hallucinogens, and 11% used inhalants within the past six months. But a large number also reported using a wider range of other drugs that included Ecstasy, bath salts, cough medicines, Oxytocin, and a variety of other prescription-based substances.

Figure 1
Percent of burglars indicating which drugs they have used (N=409)



Later in the survey protocol, we also asked how the offenders typically spent the income that was generated from burglaries. Among other expenses, 64% indicated that they would spend at least some portion of the money on drugs. More directly, we asked the subjects to report their top reason for engaging in burglary (see **Table 2**). About 44% (N=187) who answered this question indicated that the influence of drugs and/or the need to purchase drugs was their primary motivation, although this is likely a lower-bound estimate given that many others (particularly males) indicated that their primary motivation was to get money (some of whom would likely use it to purchase drugs). Within the entire sample, 88% of respondents indicated that their top reason for committing burglaries was related to their need to acquire drugs (51%) or money (37%). We also asked the offenders how they would spend the income

they accumulated from burglaries. Drugs again was the most frequently reported answer (64%) followed by living expenses (49%), partying (35%), clothes/shoes (31%), gifts (17%), and gambling (5%).

Table 2. Reasons for Engaging in Burglary and Use of Burglary Income

	Frequency	Percentage
Top Reason for Engaging in Burglary		
Drugs	187	44.3
Money	136	32.2
Thrills	16	3.8
Foolishness	20	4.7
Revenge	8	1.9
How Burglars Spend the Income		
Drugs	271	64.2
Living Expenses	205	48.6
Partying	148	35.1
Clothes/Shoes	130	30.8
Gifts	73	17.3
Gambling	21	5.0
Other		

2) WHAT FACTORS ARE CONSIDERED DURING TARGET SELECTION?

Target Selection

We asked respondents a series of questions about burglary targeting, specifically focusing on interest in residential (including houses, apartments, mobile homes or other places where people lived) versus commercial establishments (that included businesses, churches, schools and government buildings). About half (192) of the subjects reported engaging in at least one residential burglary (ranging from 1 to 300 with a mean of 8.8) and about 31% reported engaging in at least one commercial burglary (ranging from 1 to 100 with a mean of 2.7) during the year before their most recent arrest. These are likely to be lower-bound estimates since some subjects

responded to this open-ended question with answers such as “more than I can count” or “too many to remember.”

We also asked about other types of places that offenders may have burglarized, including government buildings, schools, churches, cars, constructions sites, storage facilities, and hotel/motel rooms. While a small number of offenders occasionally burglarized these different targets, most offenders preferred to enter either homes or businesses for a wide variety of reasons related to potential payouts, perceived risk of detection and capture, ease of access, limited security measures, and overall seclusion.

Evidence of Offense Planning

For those subjects that reporting committing residential or commercial burglaries prior to their current arrest, most (62.3%) relied on the use of a vehicle; more often it was their own (35.5%), but sometimes the vehicle belonged to a family member (9.2%) or a friend (22%). About one in eight (12.6%) reported using a stolen vehicle during the course of a burglary.

Some prior evidence suggests that burglars tend to offend in close proximity to their own home. In this sample of burglars, there was actually substantial and wide variation in the reported distance driven prior to engaging in a burglary, with some offenders reporting traveling hundreds of miles or across state lines (presumably in an effort to minimize identification and capture) and others reporting walking or driving just a couple blocks away (range .5 miles to 250 miles) in some cases.

Importantly, just over a third (36.5%) of the offenders reported that they collected information about a potential target prior to initiating the burglary attempt, suggesting that some

burglars are more impulsive to some degree while others are indeed more deliberate in their approach and planning efforts (see the discussion about gender differences below). In response to a different, but related question, 12% indicated that they typically planned the burglary, 41% suggested it was most often a “spur of the moment” event/offense, and the other 37% reported that it varied at times. When considering the amount of time dedicated to planning, when planning did occur, nearly half (49%) suggested that the burglary occurred within one day and 16% indicated that the planning process took place for 1-3 days. A smaller proportion took more than three days to plan some burglaries.

Just under a third of the offenders indicated spending time “casing the place” ahead of the burglary. Slightly less than one in five received information from an insider or an informant prior to burglarizing and another one in five received information from a friend ahead of time. Other burglars reported assessing the viability of targets based on the presence of locks, dogs, alarms, and nearby residents or workers.

About 28% of burglars typically worked alone and approximately the same proportion reported never burglarizing alone. Among those who worked with others, most engaged in burglaries with friends and/or spouses/significant others, although nearly one in eight reported working with other family members (again, note the gender differences below).

Finally, about 60% of the burglars reporting engaging in more than one burglary in a single day or night at least sometimes, with about 10% reporting doing so often or always. Approximately 40% reported that they would only commit one burglary within a single day or night.

3) WHAT DETERS BURGLARS FROM BURGLARIZING SPECIFIC TARGETS?

A number of questions focused on the types of security, target-hardening devices or security strategies that are considered during burglary target selection. When examined in rank order from high to low (high indicates that a larger percentage of respondents reported thinking about this specific factor or security measure when gauging their willingness to burglarize), we separated the responses into two broader groups representing less (see **Figure 2**) and more (see **Figure 3**) effective deterrents.

External indicators of target suitability (mailboxes were full of mail, newspapers were left in the driveway), isolation of the target (distance from the road or others), lighting (both inside and outside), potential hiding places, and some target hardening, preventive measures (steel bars, dog or neighborhood watch signs) were generally considered by less than a third of the burglars as they contemplated a particular target. This is not to suggest that these factors do not influence ultimate target selection, but rather that most of the burglars in this study reported that they do not consider these factors while planning or engaging in a burglary.

Figure 2
Perception of Effectiveness of Burglary Deterrents According to Burglars:
% of sample indicating they considered these factors (N=373)

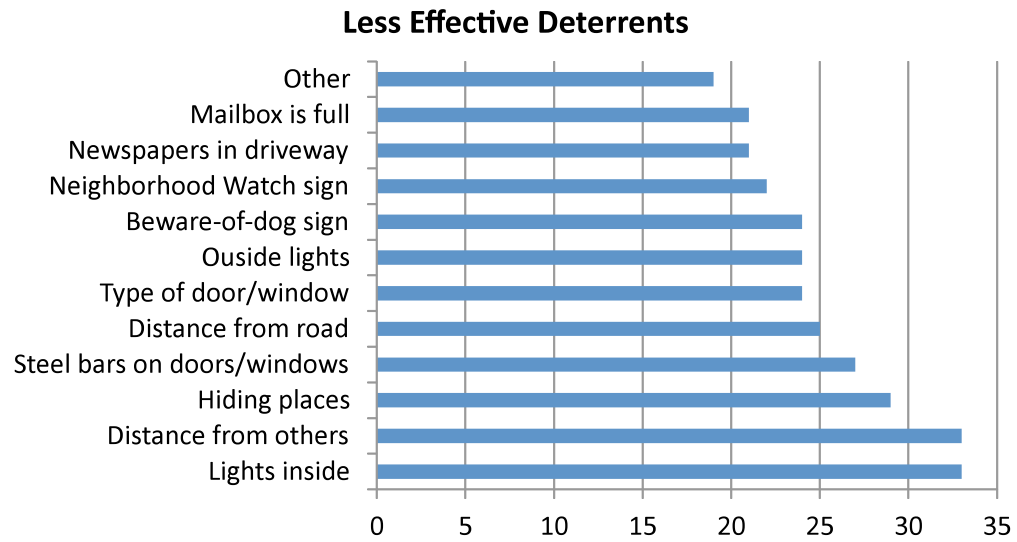
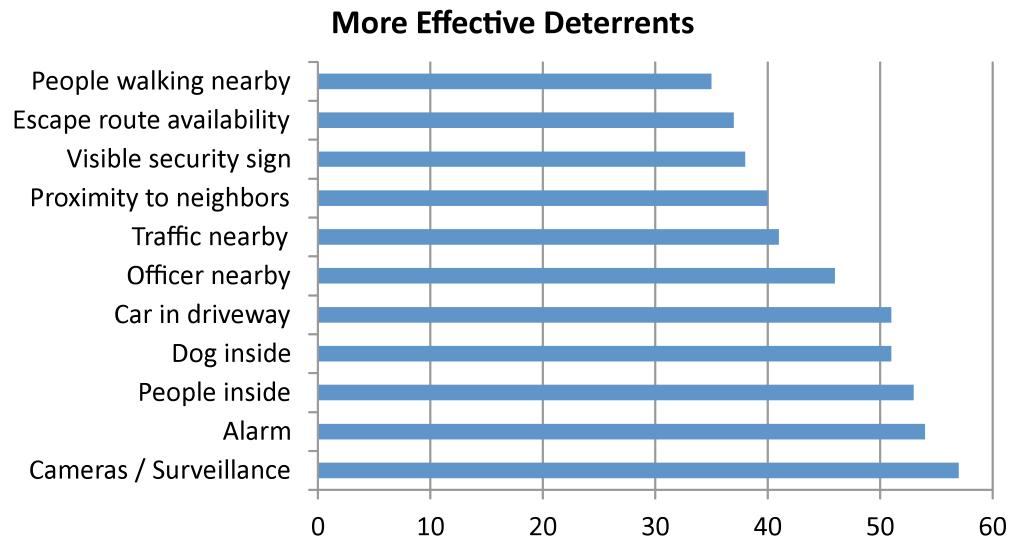


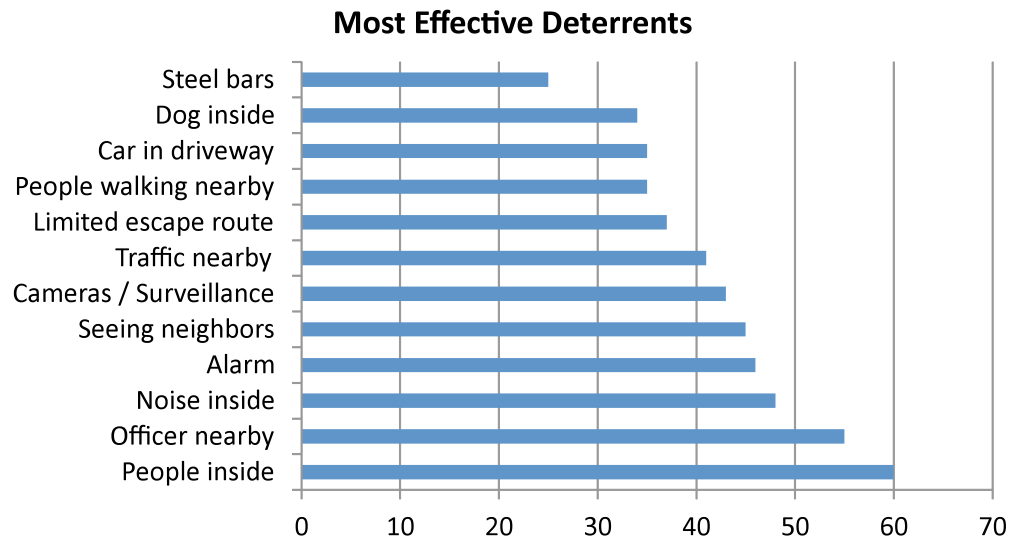
Figure 3
 Perception of Effectiveness of Burglary Deterrents According to Burglars:
 % of sample indicating they considered these factors (N=373)



On the other hand, close proximity of other people (including traffic, those walking nearby, neighbors, people inside the establishment, and police officers), lack of escape routes, and indicators of increased security (alarm signs, alarms, dogs inside, and outdoor cameras or other surveillance equipment) was considered by more burglars when selecting a target. Within this broad set of potential target hardening deterrents, alarms and outdoor cameras and other surveillance equipment were considered by a majority of burglars.

The survey also included a separate set of questions that attempted to determine, among a limited subset, which deterrent factors would cause an offender to ignore a particular target and move on to the next potential house or business (see **Figure 4**).

Figure 4
 Perception of Effectiveness of Burglary Deterrents According to Burglars:
 % of sample identifying factors that would cause them to avoid a target
 (N=360)



Generally, the presence of residents or workers (or noises indicating that someone was there), visible police officers, neighbors, others walking nearby, and dogs are primary deterrents for burglars. In addition, alarms, outdoor cameras and other forms of surveillance often deterred potential offenders from a specific location according to these offenders.

In a separate question later in the survey, we asked respondents if alarms in particular dissuaded them from burglarizing a particular establishment. About 60% of the burglars indicated that an alarm would cause them to seek an alternative target. In addition, about 83% of offenders would attempt to determine if an alarm was present before attempting a burglary. For those that initially decided to burglarize an establishment, and then subsequently determined that an alarm was present, half reported that they would discontinue the attempt, 37% would

sometimes continue, and 13% would always continue. A smaller percentage (16%) of burglars would attempt to disable an alarm and this group reported some effectiveness at doing so (see **Table 3**).

Table 3. The Impact of Alarms on Burglar Decisions

	Frequency	Percentage
Does an Alarm Make a Difference in Target Selection?		
Yes	255	60.4
No	96	22.7
How Often Do You Continue a Burglary After Determining an Alarm is Present?		
Never	181	50
Sometimes	134	37
Always	47	13
If I Find an Alarm after Deciding to Burglarize What Do I Do?		
Never Attempt	181	42.9
Sometimes Attempt	134	31.8
Always Attempt	47	11.1
How Often Do You Attempt to Disarm an Alarm?		
Never Attempt	281	80.3
Sometimes Attempt	41	11.7
Always Attempt	28	8.0

About 63% of the respondents indicated that they considered whether security personnel or police would respond if an alarm was triggered, although the vast majority feared a police response more than a security response. About half of the burglars indicated that they were aware that alarm calls sometimes needed to be verified prior to police actually responding, and about half of that group considered this response protocol within the context of their target selection and offending decisions.

Finally, just under half of burglars (48%) considered the likelihood of getting caught while engaged in the burglary and just over half (53%) thought about this after engaging in the crime. Still, only half of the burglars reported that they would desist from engaging in a burglary even if they thought there was a good chance of detection and apprehension. Over a third did not at all consider the type of punishment they could potentially receive if caught.

4) WHAT TECHNIQUES DO BURGLARS USE?

Entry Planning and Preparation

When attempting to burglarize a home or a residence, most burglars reported entering open windows or doors or forcing windows or doors open. About one in eight burglars reported picking locks or using a key that they had previously acquired to gain entry. These preferences were fairly consistent for those offenders who reported burglarizing businesses as well.

About one in five burglars reported cutting telephone wires in advance of an event and about the same proportion reported cutting alarm wires ahead of time. Screwdrivers were the most commonly reported tool that burglars carried, followed by crow bars and hammers. About one in eight burglars reporting carrying lock-picking tools and nearly a quarter indicated that they disguised themselves in some way prior to initiating the burglary. Most of the burglaries were quick (less than 10 minutes) although some lasted over an hour. Burglars were equally likely to commit their crimes in the daytime or nighttime, although early morning and late at night were often preferred times.

Stolen Item Preferences and Disposal Strategies

Regarding item preferences, most burglars (79%) reported an interest in acquiring cash during their burglaries, followed by jewelry (68%), illegal drugs (58%), electronics (56%) and prescription drugs (44%). About 65% of those who stole items during the course of a burglary reported that they worked to dispose of those items immediately, although some would hold onto and store some or all of the items for some period of time. Stolen items were usually stored at a friend's house or, less often, stashed somewhere else including a storage unit or an empty building or vacant house. Many burglars indicated that they would not store stolen items in their own home or even with family members. In terms of item disposition, most reported selling the items to strangers (44%), pawn shops or second-hand dealers (40%), or friends (32%) or trading (29%) the items for something else. Smaller numbers of burglars reported selling items online, to family members, or at auctions, and still others reported trading the items directly for drugs.

5) GENDER DIFFERENCES IN BURGLARY MOTIVATION, TARGET SELECTION AND TECHNIQUE

Motivation

There were some broad similarities between male and female burglars in this study and some substantial differences as well. First, males and females in this study had comparable criminal arrest and conviction records overall and with respect to burglary specifically, although males tended to report higher numbers of arrests in their past.

However, female burglars appeared to be more involved in, and possibly motivated by, substance use problems than males. Although males and females were equally likely to report drug use as a top reason for burglarizing, it was the most frequently reported reason given by females (70%) for their engagement in burglary; for males their top reason was money. Females

also reported using significantly more drugs on average (6.4) than males (4.8) suggesting broader exposure to substance use experiences. Further, significantly more females reported spending the income derived from burglaries on prescription medications (presumably some of which was both legal and illegal), although significantly more males (70%) reported spending burglary income on illegal drugs than females (59%). Finally, more females (67%) than males (47%) indicated that the availability of substance abuse treatment programs (and religious or faith-based programs) in prison would help reduce their chances of future involvement in crime following release from prison, suggesting some recognition that substance use problems facilitated such activities in the past. Males indicated that educational programs would be more useful in preparing them for future desistence (see **Table 4**).

Table 4. Overall Sample and Male-Female Differences in Burglary Motivation, Target Selection and Technique^a

	Overall %	Female %	Male %	Significance
Motivations				
Top Reason				
Drugs	31.5	41.2	25.8	34.5**
Money	37.9	19.1	48.7	-
Drugs & Money	18.8	27.2	14.0	-
Other	11.8	12.5	11.4	-
Items Taken				
Electronics	63.5	60.3	65.3	0.9
Illegal drugs	65.9	58.8	69.9	4.6*
Jewelry	77.8	69.5	82.4	8.2*
Cash	90.0	84.7	92.9	6.3*
Clothing/Shoes	18.4	18.3	18.4	0.0
Prescription drugs	50.5	58.0	46.4	4.5*
Criminal Justice Response Preference				
Educational	34.7	28.3	38.4	4.0*
Vocational	62.4	59.4	64.0	0.8
Drug treatment	54.2	66.7	47.1	13.5**
Life Skills	52.3	55.8	50.8	0.8
Religious/Faith	35.3	42.0	31.4	4.3*
Anger Management	24.5	29.0	21.9	2.4
Target Selection				
Homes	72.5	77.5	68.4	1.8
Businesses	30.3	22.5	36.7	4.2*
Govt. buildings	2.8	0.0	5.1	4.2*
Schools	3.4	1.3	5.1	2.0
Extent of Planning				
Immediately (<24hrs)	59.1	68.6	54.3	6.7*
1-3 days	19.4	13.6	22.4	3.9*
4-7 days	6.6	2.5	8.6	4.7*
~2 weeks	3.1	3.4	3.0	0.0
1 month or more	3.4	1.7	4.3	1.6
Deterrence Measure Effectiveness				
Police Nearby	64.4	63.5	65.0	0.1
Indications of Alarms	53.3	58.7	50.4	2.3
Outdoor Cameras	50.3	51.6	49.6	0.1
Outdoor Lighting	15.8	15.9	15.8	0.0
Neighborhood Watch	12.8	15.1	11.5	0.9
Security Sign	24.7	24.6	24.8	0.0

* p < .05; **p < .01

^a Comparisons were between male and female burglary. Overall sample statistics are also included for reference.

Target Selection

In terms of targeting, females clearly preferred to burglarize homes and residences. In fact, significantly more females indicated that they had burglarized or attempted to burglarize homes/houses, and significantly more males reported that their attempts and completed burglaries targeted stores/businesses, government buildings, schools, and churches. These patterns were generally consistent when examining a separate set of “preferred target” questions.

Fewer female burglars were likely to spend time planning burglaries, more females were likely to report engaging in burglaries on the “spur of the moment”, and more females were likely to complete a burglary that day if they did spend any time planning. More males were likely to spend several days or more planning a particular burglary, and males who planned their crimes were more likely to visit a potential target in advance to gather information. These data, and other indicators below, suggest perhaps increased impulsiveness among female burglars.

With respect to security and deterrence measure effectiveness, more male burglars reported being deterred from targeting a particular location by a lack of potential hiding locations, steel bars on windows or doors, proximity of the target to other houses or businesses, availability of escape routes, and distance to the nearest road. These responses are consistent with the other planning data and suggest a more deliberative process of target selection among male burglars than female burglars. The impact of alarms and surveillance equipment on target selection did not vary across gender groups, although male burglars were less often dissuaded from attempting a burglary if they noticed signs suggesting that a particular location was protected by alarms.

Planning Strategies and Techniques

While there were no gender differences regarding whether offenders preferred to burglarize alone or with one or more others, significantly more females reported engaging in burglaries with spouses/significant (46% of females versus 7.5% of males), while significantly more males reported doing so with friends (71% of males versus 53% of females) or colleagues (16% of males versus 3% of females). Significantly more males also indicated receiving information from friends about potential targets.

More males reported walking or riding a bike to a potential burglary location, although males and females were equally likely to use a car. More males reported engaging in multiple burglaries within a single day or night. Males also were more likely to proactively enter a location through an open window, force open a closed window, enter through an unlocked door, or force open a door or a window to facilitate a burglary. Other proactive steps among significantly more male burglars, which further suggest a greater degree of planning, included cutting telephone or alarm wires. Interestingly, more males were likely to steal illegal drugs, cash and jewelry during burglaries while more females were likely to seek out prescription medications. Again, these data suggest males and females were often motivated by substance use problems although the nature of those problems may vary.

Significantly more males were also likely to bring along burglary tools including crowbars, screwdrivers, disguises, lock-picking kits, alarm disabling tools, and even bags and containers to carry stolen goods. Additionally, males who planned their burglaries were more willing to attempt to disable an alarm that was found at a target location. More females reported engaging in afternoon burglaries, which is consistent with their interest in targeting

homes/houses that are more often empty during these times. Significantly more males preferred engaging in late evening burglaries, again perhaps in an attempt to avoid detection while focusing on businesses and other non-residential establishments.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

The purpose of this study was to explore the motivations, target selection strategies, factors that deter, techniques used during burglary, and gender differences among a sample of 422 randomly selected incarcerated burglars in three states. Consistent with previous research (Cromwell et al., 1991; Forrester et al., 1988; Wright & Decker, 1994), many burglars in this sample reported committing their crimes in order to directly or indirectly acquire drugs or cover living expenses.

Similar to previous findings (Rengert & Wasilchick, 2000; Wright & Decker, 1994), most burglars in this sample did not plan their crimes in advance. Specifically, about two-thirds of these offenders said their crimes were “spur of the moment” offenses. Of those that did plan their burglaries, the planning phase was a relatively short one to three days. Comparisons of individuals who planned their burglaries in advance to those who did not plan their crimes revealed no significant differences in patterns of substance use.

Regardless of whether the crimes were planned in advance, the majority of these burglars indicated they would consider a number of factors before committing a burglary. The largest proportion of respondents considered cameras/surveillance equipment, followed by alarms, people inside the structure, dogs, and cars in the driveway. They said they tended to avoid targets that had people inside, a police officer nearby, noise inside, alarms, or if they saw

neighbors. Notably, both the planners and those who did not plan were likely to seek alternative targets if they detected the presence of an alarm.

When asked specifically about alarms, the vast majority of burglars said they never attempted to disable alarms, while only 8% indicated they always tried to disable an alarm. Further, approximately a majority of these burglars said that the mere presence of an alarm would cause them to seek a different target. Only one in ten burglars said they would always attempt a burglary if an alarm was present, but over 40% of said they would discontinue a burglary that was already in progress if they discovered an alarm. These findings are consistent with previous research (Cromwell et al., 1991; Hakim & Blackstone, 1997; Lee, 2008; Wright & Decker, 1993) and indicate that, although alarms are not always an effective deterrent, they do act as deterrents for many burglars.

Once the decision has been made to burglarize a structure, these burglars reported most often entering the premises through windows or doors (either already open or forcing them open). Only a few respondents reported picking locks or other entry methods. The most common tools carried by these burglars were screwdrivers, crow bars, and hammers. Once inside the target, sample members reported the most desirable items to obtain during burglaries as cash, jewelry, illegal drugs, electronics, and prescription drugs. After a burglary was committed, most offenders indicated they would try to dispose of items immediately by selling them to strangers, pawn shops, or second-hand dealers. Only a small percentage of the sample said they sold stolen items online or to family members.

Male and female burglars in this sample tended to plan and operate in similar manners. Females, however, were significantly more likely than males to cite drugs as the primary motivation for burglary, while males cited money as the top motivating factor. Additionally,

females were significantly less likely than males to be involved in commercial versus residential burglaries. Females also reported spending less time planning their burglaries. Further, as expected based on extant literature (Hochstetler, 2001; Mullins & Wright, 2003), females tended to commit burglaries with a spouse or significant other and males tended to commit their crimes with friends.

Overall, the results of this study of incarcerated burglars in North Carolina, Kentucky, and Ohio are consistent with various samples of burglars in other states and countries as found in prior research. Still, we cannot be sure whether these findings can be generalized to the total population of burglars in these and other states. Specifically, it is not known if the patterns established from this sample would apply to burglars who have not been caught and/or incarcerated for their crimes. For example, active or former burglars who have not been apprehended for their crimes may have different motivations, spend more time planning their crimes, consider different factors when choosing targets, or use different techniques during crime commission as compared to those who have been arrested and convicted for burglary. If possible, future research should investigate possible differences among burglars who have and have not apprehended.

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APPENDIX A: SURVEY INSTRUMENT**Official Information**

1. How old are you? _____
2. What is your gender?
 - 🍏 Male
 - 🍏 Female
3. What is your race?
 - 🍏 Caucasian
 - 🍏 African American
 - 🍏 Hispanic
 - 🍏 Asian
 - 🍏 Native American
 - 🍏 Other (please specify) _____
4. How many times in your life have you been arrested? _____
5. How many times in your life have you been convicted? _____
6. How many times in your life have you been arrested for burglary or breaking and entering? _____
7. How many times in your life have you been convicted for burglary or breaking and entering? _____
8. What is the most serious crime you have ever been charged with?

9. For which offense(s) are you currently serving time?

10. What is your most serious current offense? _____

11. How old were you the first time you were arrested for burglary? _____

12. At the time you were arrested for your current offense, were you:

- ☐ Single (never married)
- ☐ Separated (married but not living together)
- ☐ Married (and living together)
- ☐ Divorced
- ☐ Widowed
- ☐ Other (please explain) _____

13. How old were you the first time you committed a burglary? _____

14. Please circle any of the items below that you have *ever* used:

- Alcohol
- Marijuana or hashish
- Powder cocaine
- Crack cocaine
- Amphetamines or other stimulants
- Heroin
- Methamphetamine
- Non-prescription methadone
- Barbiturates
- Tranquilizers
- PCP
- Hallucinogens or other psychedelic drugs
- Glue, paint thinner, or other inhalants
- Other non-prescription drugs (please explain) _____

14a. Think about the six months before you were arrested for your current offense. In the list below, please check how often you used each of the drugs listed during these six months.

[illegible]

_____ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐

15. Have you ever used drugs or alcohol when you committed a burglary?

☐ No

☐ Yes, Which drug(s) were you using? _____

16. Over the past year, how many times did you break into a house, apartment, mobile home, or other place where someone lived? _____

17. Commercial establishments include places like businesses, churches, schools, and government buildings. How many commercial burglaries would you say you committed in the 12 months before your arrest? _____

18. In previous burglaries, did you use a car?

☐ No

☐ Yes (*complete 19a and 19b*)

18a. If you used a car, was it your own vehicle, a family member's vehicle, a friend's vehicle, or a stolen vehicle?

☐ Own vehicle

☐ Family member's vehicle

☐ Friend's vehicle

☐ Stolen vehicle

☐ Other, please explain _____

18b. How far did you drive to commit the burglary? _____

19. Which types of places have you burglarized or attempted to burglarize? (please check all that apply)

☐ Homes or other places where someone lived

☐ Stores or other businesses

☐ Government buildings

☐ Schools

☐ Churches

🍏 Other (please explain) _____

20. Which types of places have your burglarized or attempted to burglarize most often?
(please check all that apply)

- 🍏 Homes or other places where someone lived
- 🍏 Stores or other businesses
- 🍏 Government buildings
- 🍏 Schools
- 🍏 Churches
- 🍏 Other (please specify) _____

21. Which type of place do you prefer to burglarize (please check choose your favorite target)?

- 🍏 I prefer to burglarize a house or other place where someone lives
Why? _____
- 🍏 I prefer to burglarize a store or other business
Why? _____
- 🍏 I prefer to burglarize government buildings
Why? _____
- 🍏 I prefer to burglarize schools
Why? _____
- 🍏 I prefer to burglarize churches
Why? _____
- 🍏 I prefer to burglarize some other type of building
Please explain what type of building _____
Why? _____
- 🍏 I do not have a preference

22. Do you typically plan a burglary ahead of time or is it spur of the moment?

- 🍏 I plan the burglary
- 🍏 It is spur of the moment
- 🍏 It varies

23. If you plan a burglary, about much time is there between selecting the target and the actual burglary?

- ☐ It happens immediately (within 24 hours)
- ☐ 1 to 3 days
- ☐ 4-7 days
- ☐ About 2 weeks
- ☐ About a month
- ☐ More than a month
- ☐ Other (please explain) _____

24. What types of things do you think about when deciding whether to burglarize a place (please check all that you consider)?

- ☐ Whether there is a dog
- ☐ Whether there are cars in the driveway or parking lot
- ☐ Whether there is a security sign
- ☐ Whether there are outdoor cameras or surveillance equipment
- ☐ Whether there is a beware of dog sign
- ☐ Whether there is outdoor lighting
- ☐ Whether indoor lights are on
- ☐ Whether I can see people in the house
- ☐ How close the neighbors are
- ☐ Whether there is an alarm
- ☐ Whether there is a place to hide (e.g., bushes) where I will enter the house (e.g., doors or windows)
- ☐ How far the target is from other houses or businesses
- ☐ Whether I have several possible escape routes
- ☐ Whether there is a police officer parked nearby
- ☐ Whether there are neighborhood watch signs
- ☐ The amount of traffic in the area
- ☐ Whether there are newspapers piled up in the yard
- ☐ If the mailbox full of mail
- ☐ Amount of people walking in the area
- ☐ The types of doors and/or windows
- ☐ The distance from major road
- ☐ Whether there are steel bars over windows or doors
- ☐ Whether there are no trespassing signs
- ☐ Other (please explain) _____

25. Do any of the following cause you not to burglarize a particular place (please check all that apply):

- 🍏 An alarm
- 🍏 A dog
- 🍏 Cars in the driveway or parking lot
- 🍏 A security sign
- 🍏 Outdoor cameras or surveillance equipment
- 🍏 A beware of dog sign
- 🍏 Outdoor lighting
- 🍏 Indoor lights are on
- 🍏 Noise coming from the house
- 🍏 Seeing people in the house
- 🍏 Seeing neighbors
- 🍏 No cover (e.g., bushes) at the place you will enter the building
- 🍏 Police officer parked nearby
- 🍏 Neighborhood watch signs
- 🍏 Steel bars over the windows or doors
- 🍏 No trespassing signs
- 🍏 Other (please specify) _____

26. Thinking back to your most recent burglary (current offense), did you collect information about the place before deciding whether to burglarize it?

- 🍏 Yes
- 🍏 No

27. If you collected information about your most recent burglary, where did you get the information?

- 🍏 I went there and watched
- 🍏 I saw or heard advertisements about the place
- 🍏 An inside person or informant gave me information
- 🍏 I got information from friends
- 🍏 Other (please specify) _____

28. Do heavy-duty locks on windows and doors make a difference when deciding whether or not to burglarize a place?

- 🍏 Yes – I prefer not to burglarize a place with heavy-duty locks
- 🍏 No – I will go ahead and burglarize a place with heavy-duty locks

29. During a burglary, how do you deal with locks?

- 🍏 I try to avoid dealing with them
- 🍏 I smash them
- 🍏 I try to pick them
- 🍏 Other (please specify) _____

30. Do alarms in buildings make a difference when choosing a target?

- 🍏 Yes – I prefer not to burglarize a place with an alarm
- 🍏 No – I will go ahead and burglarize a place with an alarm

31. How often can you determine there is an alarm in the building before attempting to burglarize it?

- 🍏 Always
- 🍏 Sometimes
- 🍏 Never

32. If you decide to burglarize a place and then learn that there is an alarm in the building, will you:

- 🍏 always attempt the burglary
- 🍏 sometimes attempt the burglary
- 🍏 never attempt the burglary

33. How many of the buildings you have attempted to burglarize have alarms?

- 🍏 None of them
- 🍏 A few of them
- 🍏 Half of them
- 🍏 More than half of them but not all of them
- 🍏 All of them

34. If there was an alarm on the building, did you attempt to disable it?

- 🍏 Always

How did you attempt to disable it? _____

🍏 Sometimes

How did you attempt to disable it? _____

🍏 Never

34a. Are you usually effective at disabling alarms?

- 🍏 Yes, I can disable them before they are activated
- 🍏 Yes, I can disable them after they are activated
- 🍏 No

35. Do you consider whether police or security guards will respond if the alarm is activated?

- 🍏 Yes
- 🍏 No

35a. Are you more concerned with getting apprehended by private security guards or police?

- 🍏 Private Security Guards
- 🍏 Police

35b. Are you aware that some police departments will not respond to alarms unless the call is verified?

- 🍏 Yes, and I consider this when deciding whether or not to burglarize a place
- 🍏 Yes, but I do not consider this when deciding whether or not to burglarize a place
- 🍏 No

36. When planning a burglary, do you think about how likely you are to get caught?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

37. Do you think about the likelihood of getting caught *while* you are committing the burglary?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

38. Do you think about the likelihood of getting caught *after* you commit the burglary?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

39. If you feel that there is a good chance of getting caught during or after the burglary, are you less likely to commit the burglary?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

40. When you first attempted to commit a burglary, what punishment did you think you would receive if you were caught?

- ☐ Prison
- ☐ Some local jail time
- ☐ Probation
- ☐ I did not even consider what the punishment would be
- ☐ Other (please specify) _____

41. How do you spend the income generated from burglaries (please check all that apply)?

- ☐ Living Expenses/Bills
- ☐ Clothes/Shoes
- ☐ Drugs
- ☐ Gambling
- ☐ Partying
- ☐ Gifts
- ☐ Other (Please explain) _____

42. How much profit do you usually make from an average burglary of a house or other place where people live? _____

43. How much profit do you usually make from an average burglary of a store or other business? _____

44. About how much of a profit do you think you have you made from all of your burglaries combined? _____

45. After you commit a burglary, what do you typically do with the items?

- ☐ Get rid of the items immediately
- ☐ Hold on to the items until a good profit can be made
- ☐ Get rid of some items and hold some items

46. If you do not get rid of items immediately, where/how do you store the stolen items?

- ☐ In my home
- ☐ In a family member's home
- ☐ At a friend's home
- ☐ Stashed somewhere outside (e.g., bushes)
- ☐ In a storage facility
- ☐ In an empty home or building
- ☐ Other (please explain) _____

47. What do you usually do with the stolen items?

- ☐ Keep the items for myself (do not sell/trade them)
- ☐ Sell to a family member
- ☐ Sell to a friend
- ☐ Sell to a stranger
- ☐ Sell at a market or garage sale
- ☐ Sell online
- ☐ Sell at an auction
- ☐ Sell to a pawn shop or second-hand dealer
- ☐ Trade the items for other items
- ☐ Other (please explain) _____

48. Of the burglaries you have committed, how many of them do you commit alone?

- 🍏 None of them
- 🍏 A few of them
- 🍏 Half of them
- 🍏 Most of them
- 🍏 All of them (skip to Q52)

49. When you worked with others, how many other people helped you commit the burglaries?

- 🍏 1
- 🍏 2
- 🍏 3
- 🍏 4
- 🍏 5
- 🍏 More than 5

50. If you work with others, who are these individuals?

- 🍏 Spouse/Significant Other
- 🍏 Family Members
- 🍏 Friends
- 🍏 Colleagues
- 🍏 Other (please specify) _____

51. Would you rather burglarize places that are empty or that have people in them?

- ☐ I prefer to burglarize places that are empty
- ☐ I prefer to burglarize places that have people in them

52. How do you identify the places you want to burglarize?

- 🍏 Other burglaries were committed at the same place
- 🍏 I check for signs of an alarm
- 🍏 I check for signs of a dog
- 🍏 I check for locks
- 🍏 I check for any signs of someone being in the place (e.g., lights on, car parked)
- 🍏 I check to see how many cars are in the street and people are on the sidewalk
- 🍏 A friend tells me about it
- 🍏 I check for signs that no one has been around (e.g., newspapers in driveway, solicitations on door, unmowed/untidy lawn)
- 🍏 Other, please specify _____

53. If you see a sign of the grounds of a building that an alarm system exists, do you attempt to burglarize the place?

- ☐ Always
- ☐ Sometimes
- ☐ Never

54. If you see alarm equipment on the outside of a building, do you attempt to burglarize the place?

- ☐ Always
- ☐ Sometimes
- ☐ Never

55. How do you typically get to the place you want to burglarize?

- ☐ I walk
- ☐ I ride a bike
- ☐ I drive
- ☐ Other (please explain) _____

56. If you come in contact with another person during the commission of the burglary, do you:

- ☐ Pretend to be a delivery person
- ☐ Pretend to be a maintenance worker
- ☐ Pretend to be a neighbor
- ☐ Pretend to be an employee
- ☐ Run away
- ☐ Other (please explain) _____

57. When you were burglarizing a home or other place where people live, how did you get in (please check all that apply)?

- ☐ I broke a window
- ☐ I used an opened window
- ☐ I forced a window open
- ☐ I used an unlocked front door
- ☐ I used an unlocked back door
- ☐ I picked the lock on the front door
- ☐ I picked the lock on the back door
- ☐ I forced the front door open
- ☐ I forced the back door open
- ☐ I got a key to the building
- ☐ Other (please specify) _____

58. When you were burglarizing a store or other business, how did you get in (please check all that apply)?

- ☐ I broke a window
- ☐ I used an opened window
- ☐ I forced a window open
- ☐ I used an unlocked front door
- ☐ I used an unlocked back door
- ☐ I picked the lock on the front door
- ☐ I picked the lock on the back door
- ☐ I forced the front door open
- ☐ I forced the back door open
- ☐ I got a key to the building
- ☐ Other (please specify) _____

59. Prior to breaking in to a place, do you cut telephone wires?

- ☐ Always
- ☐ Sometimes
- ☐ Never

60. Prior to breaking in to a place, do you cut alarm wires?

- ☐ Always
- ☐ Sometimes
- ☐ Never

61. When you are looking for a place to burglarize, what type of place are you looking for?

62. What type of neighborhood do you look for when deciding on a place to burglarize?

63. What items do you prefer to take during a burglary (please check all that apply)?

- ☐ Electronics
- ☐ Jewelry
- ☐ Cash
- ☐ Clothing/Shoes
- ☐ Prescription Medication
- ☐ Illegal Drugs
- ☐ Other (Please Specify) _____

64. What tools do you typically take with you when you burglarize a place (please check all that apply)?

- ☐ Crow Bar
- ☐ Screw Driver
- ☐ Mask/Disguise
- ☐ Bump Key
- ☐ Lock Picking Kit
- ☐ Window Punch
- ☐ Hammer
- ☐ Bag/containers in which to carry the items you obtain
- ☐ Electronic tool to assist in disabling an alarm
- ☐ Other tool(s) to assist in disabling an alarm
- ☐ Other(s) (please specify) _____

65. Think about the amount of time that passes from the time you enter a building for a burglary until the time you leave the building. How long does it usually take you to commit a burglary?

- ☐ Less than 5 minutes
- ☐ 5 to 10 minutes
- ☐ 11 to 15 minutes
- ☐ 16 to 20 minutes
- ☐ 21 to 30 minutes
- ☐ 31 minutes to one hour
- ☐ More than one hour

66. What is your top reason for committing burglaries?

67. How often have you committed more than one burglary in a single night or day?

- ☐ Always
- ☐ Often
- ☐ Sometimes
- ☐ Never

68. Do you prefer to commit burglaries at night (when it is dark), in the day time, or both?

- ☐ At night
- ☐ During the day
- ☐ Both

69. What time of day or night did you most often attempt to commit burglaries?

- ☐ Morning
- ☐ Afternoon
- ☐ Evening
- ☐ Late at night

70. What programs or services would be effective in preventing you from further criminal activity upon release from prison?

- ☐ Educational program (get GED)
- ☐ Vocational program (to help develop skills and get a job)
- ☐ Life skills program (to help develop skills such as financial management and communication)
- ☐ Participation in faith-based groups/religious programming
- ☐ Anger management
- ☐ Substance abuse treatment
- ☐ Other (please specify) _____

71. How has your incarceration in prison changed your thoughts about whether you will commit burglaries after you are released?

- ☐ I will never commit another burglary
- ☐ I will think twice before committing another burglary
- ☐ I will continue to commit burglaries because I have learned from other inmates how to not get caught the next time
- ☐ I will still commit burglaries as I did before coming to prison because I will need to in order to support myself

72. If your thoughts about committing burglaries have changed, how has being caught and sent to prison impacted this change (please check all that apply)?

- ☐ I do not want to come back to prison because it is terrible being incarcerated
- ☐ I know I will get a much longer sentence to prison if I am convicted again
- ☐ I have received programming in prison that has changed me as a person (please explain) _____