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Exploring and Understanding Differences Between Deliberate and Impulsive Male and Female Burglars

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Abstract

Relying on rational choice theory, we compare burglars' varying levels of offense planning to understand differences among types of burglars. Surveys were collected from a sample of incarcerated male and female burglars in three states. Participants answered questions detailing aspects of a burglary including motivations, target selection, deterrents, and techniques. Comparisons were made between 119 deliberate (32%) and 257 impulsive (68%) burglars. Deliberate burglars focused on obtaining cash, whereas impulsive burglars were more motivated by drug habits. Impulsive burglars were more easily dissuaded from a target when multiple obstacles are present. Burglars consider how many obstacles they may have to overcome, providing support for rational choice-based, situational crime prevention efforts. Differences in burglar motivation emerged and are discussed.

Keywords

burglary, burglar, offense planning, situational crime prevention, rational choice

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Introduction

Decades of research attempting to understand the decision-making processes among burglars has identified common motivations, target selection methods, factors that deter offending, and techniques used during the commission of a burglary. Studies of burglars themselves have revealed that burglars operate under a rational decision-making system that guides them through the process of deciding whether or not to commit their crimes. The literature in this area has paved the way for targeted efforts, such as situational crime prevention, to reduce criminal opportunities.

Although it is understood that certain burglars are more opportunistic than others, comparisons among distinct patterns of offense planning have not been fully explored. This study adopts a typology of burglar decision-making in an effort to understand the differences among various types of offenders and their subsequent burglaries. The present study utilizes surveys to capture the decision-making processes of incarcerated male and female burglars in three states. These data allow for a comparative look at similar offenders (i.e., burglars) with varying levels of planning commitment in an effort to understand the differences between those who typically plan an offense (*deliberate burglars*) versus those who report seldom planning an offense (*impulsive burglars*). Such findings allow us to address three research goals: (a) to take a crime-specific look at rational choice by examining burglary, (b) to parse out differences in offender decision-making among burglars by examining offense planning, and (c) to examine the effectiveness of crime prevention efforts for varying offenders.

Theoretical Framework and the Rational Choice Perspective

Researchers have explored decision-making among criminals in an attempt to understand what influences the planning of a crime. The prevailing theory is that criminals operate under a rational model, which stems from Cesare Beccaria and Jeremy Bentham's concept of rational choice that posits that individuals willingly act in a way to maximize their pleasure and minimize any consequences (Beccaria, 1963; Bentham, 1962). In this sense, criminals must determine that their actions outweigh the risks associated with their proposed crime.

Modern rational choice perspective asserts that criminal behavior is purposive, rational, and crime specific. Under this perspective, criminal actions, although intended toward a particular crime, may not be purely rational, but more so limited or bounded by time or ability. Clarke and Cornish (1986) introduced the idea of "the reasoning criminal," or one that operates under a heightened rational choice approach. Under this notion, criminals act, through

a process of decisions and choices, in ways that primarily benefit them. They developed a framework that emphasizes the need to understand the offender, not only the crime, and considers situational variables at play during the decision-making process.

As initially proposed by Clarke and Cornish (1986), the rational choice perspective has been extended to specific types of offenders. Of those who initially utilized rational choice to understand the decision-making of burglars, many suggested a sort of limited rationality (Rengert & Wasilchick, 1985; Reppetto, 1974; Scarr, Pinsky, & Wyatt, 1973; Walsh, 1980). Such studies claimed that burglary resulted from opportunity rather than rational planning, which gave rise to the notion that many burglars are generally impulsive and typically act on opportunities. Later works reveal a much different type of burglar, one who is rational and methodical, yet the image of the impulsive and opportunistic burglar often remains (Bennett & Wright, 1984; Nee & Meenaghan, 2006; Rengert & Wasilchick, 1985; Wright & Decker, 1994).

Understanding Decision-Making from the Offender's Perspective

Matza (1970) observed that the obvious answer in understanding criminality is to look directly at the source, or the offender. Researching the offender's perspective allows an authentic look at an offender's criminal activity (Nee, 2004). Offenders are able to provide researchers with accounts of their unique histories, lifestyles, and offense patterns (Copes & Hochstetler, 1996). Furthermore, offenders can describe their unique motivations to commit a crime, their thought processes in determining whether to engage in a crime, and their views with respect to deterrence measures (Miethe, McCorkle, & Listwan, 2001). These perspectives are imperative in understanding decision-making processes. Although there may be concerns with whether incarcerated offender accounts can be taken as factual, self-reported criminal activity is typically a valid and reliable measure as supported by comparisons of offender's self-reported crimes with official records (Junger-Tas & Marshall, 1999; Krohn, Thornberry, Gibson, & Baldwin, 2010).

Offense Planning Among Burglars

In their preliminary work on burglary, Bennett and Wright (1984) developed a three pronged typology of burglaries: the opportunistic offense, the search offense, and the planned offense. Each typology is characterized by a burglar's pattern of offense planning and is differentiated from the others based on whether a time gap exists between when the decision to offend is reached, when a target is selected, and when the offense is carried out. The opportunistic

offense is defined by virtually no time gap between the decision to offend, target selection, and offense. These burglaries are not planned but rather occur "there and then." The search offense is represented by a time gap between the decision to offend and target selection, with no time gap between the target selection and the offense. The planned offense is further divided into two subcategories: (a) the opportunistic-planned offense and (b) the sought-planned offense. Both subcategories have a time gap between target selection and the offense and both types of planned offenses indicate forethought regarding the burglary. Subsequent studies have reported offense planning patterns similar to those described by Bennett and Wright (1984). Such studies, however, have not examined differences among differing offense planning styles; rather, they report a percent of the sample that indicated one style or the other (Cromwell, Olson, & Avary, 1991; Nee & Taylor, 1988; Palmer, Holmes, & Hollin, 2002; Rengert & Wasilchick, 1985; Snook, Dhami, & Kavanagh, 2011; Taylor & Nee, 1988; Wright & Decker, 1994; Wright, Logie, & Decker, 1995).

More recently, Fox, Farrington, Chitwod, and Janes (2013) introduced a new look at burglary offense styles by analyzing burglary crime scenes. They describe four types: the organized offense, the disorganized offense, the opportunistic offense, and the interpersonal offense. Organized burglaries indicate premeditation and these burglaries are often financially motivated. Disorganized burglaries characterize crime scenes that are "left in a state of disarray" (Fox et al., 2013, p. 4). These burglars may be impulsive, reckless, and motivated by substance use. Opportunistic burglaries are spontaneous and based on targets selected due to a presented opportunity. These burglars "do not bring burglary-specific tools to the crime scene, and will generally be scared off easily" (Fox et al., 2013, p. 5). Interpersonal burglaries are different in that the target is a person with the purpose to cause them harm, such as taking something of value to the victim. These burglaries are also unique because the victim is often present. Fox et al. (2013) state that "[e]ach of the offense styles are committed by burglars with a unique set of traits and criminal histories" (p. 3). This new burglar/burglary framework guides our study in that we believe there to be differences between the burglars who indicate premeditation (the organized) and those who do not (the disorganized and/or opportunistic). Such a distinction may be important in evaluating the effectiveness of crime prevention efforts.

Background on Burglars and Burglary

Burglary Motivations

Studies suggest that the main motivating factor in deciding to commit a burglary is to acquire cash (Bennett & Wright, 1984; Cromwell et al., 1991;

Palmer et al., 2002; Rengert & Wasilchick, 1985; Reppetto, 1974; Scarr, 1973; Wright & Decker, 1994). What varies more widely is what motivates an offender to need such cash. Whereas many claim they burglarize to meet basic, everyday financial needs, others indicate the money would be used for substance use, gambling, and entertainment (Bennett & Wright, 1984; Scarr, 1973). Likewise, Wright and Decker (1994) found that 75% of burglars spent their take to support a partying lifestyle that included illicit drugs. It is important to note that many burglars also decide to commit a burglary while under the influence of drugs or alcohol, often in an effort to continue their substance use (Forrester, Chatterton, & Pease, 1988; Hochstetler & Copes, 2006; Nee & Meenaghan, 2006). Wright and Decker (1994) also found that almost half of their burglars used their money for "keeping up appearances" or on status items to project a specific image. Although some offenders burglarize and use the money solely for subsistence and daily expenses, most are motivated by superficial factors (Shover & Honaker, 1992; Wright & Decker, 1994). Some burglars even report psychological motivations such as revenge or excitement (Cromwell et al., 1991; Reppetto, 1974; Walsh, 1980).

Burglary Target Selection

Once a burglar has the motivation to commit a burglary he or she must then decide on a target. In searching for an optimal target, burglars must make certain determinations regarding their selected target's probable reward, potential risk, and ease of access (Bennett & Wright, 1984; Wright & Decker, 1994). This calculated process is facilitated by environmental and situational cues that assist the burglar in making an assessment of the attractiveness of the anticipated target. In determining the potential for reward associated with a specific target, the most common cue considered by burglars tends to be perceived affluence. Such cues indicating affluence may include size of the property, condition of the property, and the types of vehicles present (Bernasco & Luykx, 2003; Hakim & Blackstone, 1997; Hakim, Rengert, & Shachmurove, 2001; Nee & Meenaghan, 2006; Rengert & Wasilchick, 2000; Walsh, 1980; Wright & Decker, 1994; Wright et al., 1995). In assessing risk and ease of access, many burglars consider cues regarding a target's vulnerability. Burglars prefer targets that allow them to remain unseen, such as locations with fences or natural covers that block entryways and buildings with fewer nearby neighbors (Bennett & Wright, 1984; Bernasco, 2006; Bernasco & Luykx, 2003; Coupe & Blake, 2006; Cromwell et al., 1991; Hakim & Blackstone, 1997; Palmer et al., 2002; Rengert & Wasilchick, 1985; Walsh, 1980). Such cues indicate a higher level of accessibility for the burglar to enter and exit a target undetected.

Burglary Techniques and Deterrents

As target occupancy is a primary concern for burglars, many burglars will probe occupants to reassure that the home or business is unoccupied before entering (Cromwell et al., 1991; Hakim et al., 2001; Nee & Meenaghan, 2006; Palmer et al., 2002; Rengert & Wasilchick, 2000; Wright & Decker, 1994; Wright et al., 1995). Burglars may approach a target in a disguise, such as a painter or other service worker, which may allow them to remain unnoticed when probing a target (Wright & Decker, 1994). Potential targets that do not exhibit optimal characteristics, such as lack of occupancy, may rather exhibit certain undesirable characteristics that act as deterrents. For example, burglars tend to be deterred by intentional security measures such as alarms and dogs (Cromwell et al., 1991; Garcia-Retamero & Dhami, 2009; Hakim et al., 2001; Lee, 2008; Wright & Decker, 1994). Target hardening also reduces burglary by blocking prospective opportunities for burglary through physical barriers. This includes increasing physical security, such as reinforced materials including locks, bolts, screens, and safes (Clarke, 1983, 1995, 1997). Such measures create more obstacles, which in turn lead to an increased perceived risk of a burglar and/or reduced likelihood of the event occurring.

Once a target has been selected, burglars may use screwdrivers, crowbars, or other tools to assist in entering a location (Rengert & Wasilchick, 1985; Wright & Decker, 1994). Upon gaining entry into a target, a burglar must then decide what to take. While most burglars will immediately take cash, burglars will also take items that can quickly be exchanged for cash such as electronics or jewelry (Nee & Meenaghan, 2006; Palmer et al., 2002; Rengert & Wasilchick, 1985; Schneider, 2005).

The Current Study

Through decades of research from the offender's perspective, we have an idea of the decision-making process many burglars use when planning and carrying out their offenses. Guided by rational choice theory and "the reasoning criminal" (Clarke & Cornish, 1986), we apply a crime-specific approach in stating burglars invoke a decision-making process, which considers situational factors with the overall goal to maximize benefits and to avoid consequences (i.e., being detected). We believe this decision-making process reflects offense planning. More specifically, individuals will vary in their actions when planning and subsequently carrying out offenses. We consider two groups: one which is more rational, employs premeditation, and will, therefore, consider more situational factors when planning an offense. The second group is less rational, more impulsive or spontaneous, may consider

fewer situational characteristics, and be limited by factors such as time or ability. In regard to offense planning, we term these two groups deliberate burglars, who typically plan an offense, and impulsive burglars, who rarely plan an offense.

Although we acknowledge that a two-group distinction may not fully encompass the range of offense planning styles employed by burglars, prior research repeatedly indicates a distinction between premeditation and opportunistic/impulsive. With our theoretically based offense planning groups in mind, we examine five hypotheses.

Hypothesis 1: Deliberate burglars will be more financially motivated and will spend money on everyday needs than will impulsive burglars.
Hypothesis 2: Impulsive burglars will be more motivated by drugs than deliberate burglars.
Hypothesis 3: Deliberate burglars will consider more situational and environmental factors when selecting a target than impulsive burglars.
Hypothesis 4: Impulsive burglars will be more easily deterred from a target than will deliberate burglars.
Hypothesis 5: Deliberate burglars will employ more techniques (tools and probing) than impulsive burglars.

We explore such distinctions in an effort to parse out differences among burglars who exhibit varying levels of offense planning. We also seek to examine the effectiveness of common crime prevention efforts for differing styles of offenders.

Method

Data

We provide an abbreviated summary of the data and methodology here, but a full description is available elsewhere (Blevins, Kuhns, & Lee, 2012). Survey data were collected from inmates in state prisons in Kentucky, North Carolina, and Ohio who were sentenced on a burglary charge. Each Department of Correction provided the researchers with an initial sampling frame containing identification and facility information for all adult inmates currently serving incarcerated for burglary. From these lists, investigators were able to select facilities of varied security levels that had ample numbers of potential respondents. Four prisons in Kentucky and Ohio and 10 prisons in North Carolina were selected based on accessibility and population.

Specific efforts were taken to include as many female inmates as possible in the current sample. At the time of data collection, there were 129 females

serving a prison sentence for burglary in North Carolina and 124 in Kentucky, so the entire populations of these inmates were included in the sample. In Ohio, there were 212 females convicted of burglary who were housed at the women's reformatory, so 120 inmates were randomly sampled. Male inmates were randomly selected from the other facilities in each state (n = 350 in Kentucky and North Carolina and n = 440 in Ohio[1]). The final list of invited respondents (n = 1,513) consisted of a mix of minimum, medium, and maximum security male (n = 1,140) 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 Correction 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, talked to them about the purpose of the study, and distributed and discussed the informed consent document. Self-administered surveys (and informed consent forms) were then distributed to inmates who agreed to be a part of the project. Survey questions included a combination of fixed response and open-ended questions. Each specific data collection site (prison) was visited one to three times, resulting in 90 usable surveys from Kentucky and 236 from Ohio. In North Carolina, prison officials suggested that mail surveys would be the most efficient means of data collection. Investigators mailed packets containing the approved informed consent document, instructions for completing and returning the survey, the survey instrument, and a business reply return envelope to each potential respondent. A total of 90 completed instruments were returned from inmates in North Carolina.

Survey Response Rate

A total of 422 completed surveys were collected from the sample of 1,513 incarcerated burglars (a 28% response rate). Response rates varied across prison systems given the variability in inmate access, institutional cooperation, data collection procedural requirements, and data collection protocol. 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% is somewhat low, it is not unusual when studying

incarcerated populations, especially if incentives are not offered (Gaes & Goldberg, 2004; Hensley, Rutland, & Gray-Ray, 2000).[2]

Measures

Offense Planning

Although we could not replicate Bennett and Wright's (1984) original typology, we created a new typology inspired by Fox et al.'s (2013) recent profiles based on what a specific type of burglar may look like. We based our measure on a determined distinction between premeditation (the organized burglary) and impulsivity (the disorganized and opportunistic burglaries). We did not differentiate the interpersonal burglary described by Fox et al. (2013).

Offense planning was measured by the question "[d]o you typically plan a burglary ahead of time or is it spur of the moment?" Participants chose one of three answers: I plan the burglary, it is spur of the moment, or it varies. For this study, those answering "I plan the burglary" are classified as deliberate burglars (51). Participants who indicated "it is spur of the moment" are classified as impulsive burglars (172). Those who answered "it varies" were divided based on their answer to a follow-up question that asked "[i]f you plan a burglary, about how much time is there between selecting the target and the actual burglary?" Participants chose one of seven answers: It happened immediately (within 24 hr), 1 to 3 days, 4 to 7 days, about 2 weeks, about a month, more than a month, and other. Those who selected "other" wrote in a time frame. Participants who selected (or wrote an answer similar to) "it happened immediately" were classified as impulsive (85) and others were classified as deliberate burglars (68).

To establish measurement validity, we utilized an additional question to assess whether a participant's response to the offense planning measure was consistent with other responses that assessed extent of planning. The additional question asked, "[t]hinking back to your most recent burglary (current offense), did you collect information about the place before deciding whether to burglarize it?" Participants answered yes or no. Reliability between the offense planning measure and this additional planning variable was examined to ensure that the two groups (deliberate and impulsive burglars) were accurately distinguished from one another. Results of this test are discussed below.

Motivations

Motivation for burglary was assessed by asking "[w]hat is your top reason for commiting burglaries?" Participants were able to write in their answer and those narrative answers were then systematically coded by the

original research team into four broader categories: drugs, money, drugs/money, and other. The category other included reasons such as thrills, foolishness, and revenge. These four categories are mutually exclusive so that the drug and money categories are separate from the drug/money category (i.e., a participant indicated both motivations).

A second question asked, "[h]ow do you spend income generated from burglaries." Participants were able to select from living expenses/bills, clothes/shoes, drugs, gambling, partying, gifts, and other (please explain). Multiple responses were allowed for this item.

Target Selection and Deterrents

Target selection was assessed with the question, "[w]hat types of things do you think about when deciding whether to burglarize a place?" Participants were able to choose from as many as 23 situational and environmental items and also had the option to write in another response. The items included whether there is a dog, cars in the driveway or parking lot, a security sign, outdoor cameras/surveillance equipment, a beware of dog sign, outdoor lighting, indoor lights are on, people are in the house, how close neighbors are, if there is an alarm, if there is some place to hide (e.g., bushes), where will enter the house, how far the target is from other houses/businesses, possible escape routes, a police officer nearby, neighborhood watch signs, traffic in the area, newspapers are piled up, mailbox is full, people are walking in the area, the types of doors/windows, distance from a major road, steel bars over doors/windows, no trespassing signs, and other (please explain). A scale was created based on how many items the respondent chose and ranged from 0 to 24.

Participants answered yes or no to the question "[d]o alarms in buildings make a difference when choosing a target?" Participants were also asked, "[i]f you decide to burglarize a place, and then learn that there is an alarm in the building, will you . . . :" Response options were always, sometimes or never attempt the burglary. An additional question asked, "[i]f there was an alarm on the building, did you attempt to disable it?" with response options being never, sometimes, or always. Last, participants were asked, "[a]re you usually effective at disabling alarms," with response options yes before they are activated, yes after they are activated, or no.

Offender Techniques

Offender techniques were first measured with an item asking "[w]hat items do you prefer to take during a burglary." Available responses were electronics, jewelry, cash, clothing/shoes, prescription medication, illegal drugs, and other

(please explain). Multiple responses were allowed for this item. Participants were also asked "[d]o you cut telephone wires?" and "[d]o you cut alarm wires?" Answer choices for both questions were always, sometimes, or never. Next, participants were asked "[w]hat tools do you typically take with you when you burglarize a place?" Participants were able to choose from as many as 10 items and also had the option to write in another response. The items included crow bar, screwdriver, mask/disguise, bump key, lock picking kit, window punch, hammer, bag/container to carry items, electronic tool or other tools to assist in disabling alarms, other tools, and other (please explain). A scale (0-11) was created based on how many items the respondent selected. Last, participants were asked, "[i]f you come in contact with another person during the commission of the burglary, do you . . . :" answer options were pretend to be a delivery person, a maintenance worker, a neighbor, an employee, run away, or other (please explain). Participants were able to indicate multiple responses.

Analytic Strategy

We first determine how many and which offenders can be categorized as deliberate or impulsive burglars, as well as assess reliability and validity among offense planning responses. Almost 71% of deliberate burglars indicated that they collected information before committing a burglary whereas only 25.6% of impulsive burglars indicated doing so, a statistically significant difference. Next, we utilize chi-square cross-tabulations and *t* tests to compare group differences related to demographic characteristics, criminal histories, burglary motivation, target selection and deterrents, and offender techniques for the two types of burglars. Last, we utilize a broad range of multivariate regression techniques (logistic, ordinal, and ordinary least squares [OLS]) to test the stability of bivariate findings and to examine what factors can be used to predict whether an offender will be a deliberate or impulsive burglar.

Results

Our recoded sample yielded a total of 119 (32%) deliberate and 257 (68%) impulsive burglars. Forty-four participants did not answer one or both of the original offense planning questions and, therefore, could not be recoded. Those in each profile generally answered the question about collecting information as expected (i.e., deliberate burglars collected information before engaging in a burglary), thus ensuring consistent and reliable groups. There are no differences in burglar groups across the three states. Comparisons of demographics and criminal histories for the two groups are displayed in Table 1.

Table 1. Demographic Characteristics and Criminal Histories.

Variables	Deliberate burglars % (*n*)/*M* (*SD*)	Impulsive burglars % (*n*)/*M* (*SD*)	χ^2/t
Offense planning			
Deliberate	31.65 (119)	—	
Impulsive	—	68.35 (257)	—
Collect info			
Yes	70.94 (83)	25.59 (65)	
No	29.06 (34)	74.41 (189)	68.70***
Survey state			
Ohio	61.34 (73)	50.97 (131)	
North Carolina	17.65 (21)	26.07 (67)	
Kentucky	21.01 (25)	22.96 (59)	4.21
Gender			
Male	78.99 (94)	57.98 (149)	
Female	21.01 (25)	42.02 (108)	15.71***
Race			
Caucasian	71.19 (84)	69.02 (176)	
African American	21.19 (15)	24.71 (63)	
Other	7.63 (9)	6.27 (16)	0.70
Marital status			
Single	65.25 (77)	59.12 (154)	
Married	10.17 (12)	10.12 (26)	
Other	24.58 (29)	29.96 (77)	1.20
Most serious crime charged with			
Burglary/breaking and entering	60.68 (71)	54.62 (136)	
Robbery	8.55 (10)	14.06 (35)	
Homicide/attempted murder/manslaughter	5.98 (7)	9.24 (23)	
Other	24.79 (29)	22.09 (55)	3.76
Current age	30.42 (9.21)	33.67 (9.42)	−3.12***
Age first burglary: committed	20.13 (7.11)	21.84 (7.99)	−1.85
Age first burglary: arrest	21.68 (7.60)	23.83 (7.70)	−0.248*
Times arrested	10.81 (14.67)	12.92 (71.80)	−0.27
Times arrested for burglary/ breaking and entering	2.74 (3.97)	2.52 (4.09)	0.46
Substances: last 6 months	4.43 (2.99)	4.81 (3.26)	−1.07
Substances: ever used	5.45 (3.44)	5.84 (3.50)	−0.99

Note. Table displays column percentages.
*$p < .05$. **$p < .01$. ***$p < .001$.

Table 2. Motivation Comparisons for Deliberate and Impulsive Burglars.

	Deliberate burglars	Impulsive burglars	
Variables	% (*n*)	% (*n*)	χ^2
What is your top reason for engaging in burglary?			
Drugs	24.14 (28)	35.98 (86)	
Money	51.72 (60)	31.38 (75)	
Both drugs and money	16.38 (19)	20.50 (49)	
Other	7.76 (9)	12.13 (29)	14.00**
How do you spend income generated from burglaries?			
Living expenses/bills	66.95 (79)	48.96 (119)	10.35**
Clothes/shoes	47.46 (56)	29.46 (71)	11.22**
Gambling	6.78 (8)	4.98 (12)	0.49
Drugs	68.64 (81)	75.93 (183)	2.16
Partying	38.98 (46)	40.66 (98)	0.09
Gifts	22.88 (27)	18.26 (44)	1.07
Other	14.41 (17)	9.54 (23)	1.89

Note. Percentages represent proportion of burglars who indicate each individual motivation or spending indication. Participants can indicate more than one spending option.
*$p < .05$. **$p < .01$. ***$p < .001$.

Demographically the two groups of burglars were similar in terms of race and marital status. Females were significantly more likely to be impulsive; deliberate burglars were predominately male. Deliberate burglars tended to be slightly younger than impulsive burglars. Criminal histories were comparable across the two burglar groups, with deliberate burglars reporting a slightly younger age of first burglary arrest. Lastly, both burglar groups reported similar levels of substance use, and only crack cocaine use was significantly more prevalent among impulsive burglars than deliberate burglars (58.4% and 45.8%; $\chi 2 = 5.2$, $p < .05$).

Motivations

When asked "[w]hat is your top reason for commiting burglaries," deliberate burglars were significantly more often motivated by money, whereas impulsive burglars were more motivated by drugs, both drugs and money, and for other reasons. In addition, deliberate burglars were more likely to spend the money on living expenses/bills and clothes/shoes than were impulsive burglars. Results are displayed in Table 2.

Table 3. Target Selection and Deterrents Comparisons for Deliberate and Impulsive Burglars.

Variables	Deliberate burglars % (*n*)/*M* (*SD*)	Impulsive burglars % (*n*)/*M* (*SD*)	χ^2/t
Mean number of factors considered when deciding to burglarize a place	10.96 (6.52)	8.01 (6.58)	4.06***
How do you deal with locks?			
I try to avoid dealing with them	37.25 (38)	49.13 (85)	
I smash them	42.16 (43)	43.93 (76)	
I try to pick them	20.59 (21)	6.94 (12)	12.04**
Do alarms in buildings make a difference when choosing a target?			
Yes	64.96 (76)	77.33 (174)	
No	35.04 (41)	22.67 (51)	5.99*
If you decide to burglarize a place and then learn that there is an alarm in the building will you			
Never attempt the burglary	36.13 (43)	55.70 (127)	
Sometimes attempt the burglary	47.90 (57)	32.46 (74)	
Always attempt the burglary	15.97 (19)	11.84 (27)	12.05**
If there was an alarm in the building, did you attempt to disable it?			
Never	69.37 (77)	85.27 (191)	
Sometimes	18.02 (20)	8.93 (20)	
Always	12.61 (14)	5.80 (13)	11.75**
Are you usually effective at disabling alarms?			
Yes, before they are activated	21.70 (23)	9.90 (20)	
Yes, after they are activated	9.43 (10)	4.95 (10)	
No	68.87 (73)	85.15 (172)	11.40**

Note. Percentages represent proportion of burglars who indicate yes for each item.
*$p < .05$. **$p < .01$. ***$p < .001$.

Target Selection and Deterrents

When asked to select from a list of 24 situational and environmental factors to consider (i.e., presence of a car, lights on) when deciding to burglarize a specific place, there was a significant difference in the number of items selected by deliberate burglars versus impulsive burglars (see Table 3). In choosing a target, the presence of an alarm makes more of a difference for

impulsive burglars than deliberate burglars, indicating that impulsive burglars are more likely to abstain from burglarizing when an alarm is present. Also, in deciding to burglarize a place and then learning of the presence of an alarm, significantly more impulsive burglars will never attempt the burglary. Although the majority of both impulsive and deliberate burglars would never attempt to disable an alarm once it was discovered, more deliberate burglars will sometimes or always attempt to disable the alarm. Although the majority of both impulsive and deliberate burglars stated they are not usually effective at disabling alarms, more deliberate burglars indicated that they were effective at disabling alarms both before and after they are activated. Deliberate burglars also were significantly more likely to report attempting to pick a lock.

Offender Techniques

Although most burglars will never attempt to cut telephone or alarm wires, deliberate burglars are significantly more likely to either sometimes or always attempt to do so. Deliberate burglars will, on average, take more burglary tools than will an impulsive burglar. When coming into contact with another person while committing a burglary, deliberate burglars were also significantly more likely to have a prepared, prefabricated story ready (e.g., pretend to be a delivery person, a maintenance worker, or an employee). Results are displayed in Table 4.

Multivariate Analyses

We next tested the stability of the bivariate relationships using logistic regression. Our dependent variable is type of burglar (0 = impulsive or 1 = deliberate) and we included age and gender as control variables (Table 5). Model 1 first includes demographics, Model 2 tests each individual motivation, and Model 3 tests the other significant target selection and technique findings from before. As shown in Model 1, age and gender were significant predictors of being a deliberate burglar in that deliberate burglars are predicted to be younger and male. Other demographic factors were not significant in any of the multivariate models. In Model 2, when individually examining drug, financial, drug/money, and other motivation, money motivation was the only motive for committing a burglary that remains significant, suggesting that deliberate burglars are more likely motivated by money. Gender and age remain significant in that deliberate burglars are likely to be younger and male. In Model 3, spending money on neither clothes nor bills remained

Table 4. Technique Comparisons for Deliberate and Impulsive Burglars.

Variables	Deliberate burglars % (*n*)/*M* (*SD*)	Impulsive burglars % (*n*)/*M* (*SD*)	χ^2/t
Do you cut telephone wires?			
Never	70.09 (82)	86.27 (201)	
Sometimes	21.37 (25)	9.87 (23)	
Always	8.55 (10)	3.86 (23)	13.17**
Do you cut alarm wires?			
Never	63.48 (73)	87.50 (203)	
Sometimes	27.83 (32)	10.78 (25)	
Always	8.70 (10)	1.72 (4)	28.45***
Mean number of tools typically take	3.01 (2.08)	1.86 (0.10)	5.72***
Come in contact with another person			
Pretend to be a delivery person	9.65 (11)	4.05 (9)	4.212*
Pretend to be a maintenance worker	14.91 (17)	4.05 (9)	12.44***
Pretend to be a neighbor	23.68 (27)	17.57 (39)	1.78
Pretend to be an employee	12.28 (14)	5.86 (13)	4.21*
Run away	47.37 (54)	57.21 (127)	2.93
Other	36.0% (410)	31.5% (70)	0.669

Note. Percentages represent proportion of burglars who indicate yes for each item. Participants can indicate more than one option when asked about contact with another person.
*$p < .05$. **$p < .01$. ***$p < .001$.

significant. The measure of tools taken and whether alarm wires are cut all remained significant, as did gender. Collectively, the models further support the bivariate findings and indicate that gender is the most consistent and significant predictor of having a deliberate offense planning style.

We also measured offense planning in two additional ways: as a four-category dependent variable and as an interval-level dependent variable (results available upon request). First, in constructing a four-category variable, we created a measure based on how participants answered both original offense planning questions ("Do you typically plan a burglary ahead of time or is it spur of the moment?" and "If you plan a burglary, about how much time is there between selecting the target and the actual burglary?"). Participants who answered "spur of the moment" and "it happened immediately (within 24 hours)" were

Table 5. Logistic Regressions Predicting Being a Deliberate Burglar.

	Model 1		Model 2		Model 3	
	Coefficient	*SE*	Coefficient	*SE*	Coefficient	*SE*
State	0.012	.154	0.076	.161	0.141	.170
Gender	−0.963***	.268	−0.836**	.282	−0.638*	.294
Marital	0.007	.140	0.026	.143	−0.012	.157
Race	−0.068	.197	−0.164	.209	−0.069	.221
Age	−0.037**	.014	−0.034*	.014	−0.025	.016
Constant	0.773	.720				
Drug motiv.			0.802	.685		
Money motiv.			1.53*	.661		
Drug/money motiv.			0.948	.706		
Other motiv			0.580	.760		
Constant			−0.473	.986		
Spend: bills					0.413	.277
Spend: clothes					0.206	.282
Think Scale					0.036	.020
Tool Scale					0.152*	.072
Cut alarm					0.858*	.351
Constant					−1.16	.839
	N = 370		*N* = 370		*N* = 334	

*$p < .05$. **$p < .01$. ***$p < .001$.

coded as super-impulsive. Participants who answered "it is spur of the moment" and any other time frame option were coded as semi-impulsive. Participants who answered "I plan the burglary" and any time frame other than "it happened immediately (within 24 hours)" were coded as super-deliberate. Participants who answered "I plan the burglary" and "it happened immediately (within 24 hours)" were coded as semi-deliberate. Participants who answered "it varies" were divided among the semi-impulsive and semi-deliberate groups based on their answer to the time frame question. We then utilized ordinal regression to examine differences among more narrowly divided planning groups. Using the same three models as before, analysis revealed that males were more likely to fall within the super-deliberate group and these burglars were more likely to be slightly younger, consider more environmental/situational factors, and use more tools. None of the motivation categories were significant in the analysis. Separate analysis for the super-impulsive group revealed that females were more likely to fall in this group and the group was older. This group considered fewer environmental/

situational factors and used fewer tools. They were also less likely to spend money on clothes. Interestingly, drug, money, and drug/money motivation were all significant, however, with negative coefficients. This makes pinpointing a super-impulsive burglar's motivation difficult; it is possible that motivation for this group changes as opportunities arise.

We next considered offense planning as a continuum by creating a variable that multiplied values assigned to the two original offense planning questions, such that a higher score indicated a higher degree of planning. Answers to the original questions were coded as 1 = it is spur of the moment, 2 = it varies, 3 = I plan the burglary, and 1 = it happened immediately (within 24 hours), 2 = 1 to 3 days, 3 = 4 to 7 days, 4 = about 2 weeks, 5 = about a month, and 6 = more than a month. Those who answered "other" as their time frame were recoded into which group their answered most closely fit (i.e., an answer of "that day" was recoded as "it happened immediately"). Other answers that did not closely correspond to predefined categories (e.g., "it depends" or "n/a") were recoded to the mean. This process created an interval-level measure with scores ranging from 1 to 18 where 18 represented the highest level of offense planning. We utilized OLS regression to examine differences among offense planning. Again, using the same variables that were in the logistic regression models, we found similar results in that males typically had higher offense planning scores. OLS analysis also revealed that money motivation was highly significant as offense planning increased. Also, still significant were spending money on clothes and the use of tools.

Discussion

Both theory and policy implications can be derived from knowing how decisions to offend vary by types of offender. We have provided a crime-specific look at rational choice perspective by comparing burglars' varying levels of deliberation and planning to understand the differences among deliberate burglars versus impulsive burglars. We compared the motivations, target selection strategies, factors that may deter, techniques, and tools used during burglary. Also, the current data set included more female burglars than prior studies, which allow aspects of female burglary to be further explored. This is especially important given our persistent finding that females are more impulsive burglars.

We find overall support for rational choice-based situational crime prevention efforts for two varying groups of burglars. By comparing target selection, factors that deter, techniques used, we find that burglars actively consider how many physical and crime-preventive obstacles they may have to overcome to succeed in their burglary. Just as Clarke and Cornish (1986)

stated when describing "the reasoning criminal," burglars, even impulsive ones, operate under some level of rational choice. Impulsive burglars are much more easily dissuaded from a target when multiple obstacles are present. Although deliberate burglars are likely to consider more aspects of a target during selection, they still report being deterred by details that would make the burglary riskier, such as presence of a lock or alarm and whether it seems like the target is occupied. Although deliberate burglars are more likely to engage in creative techniques and use tools during their burglary, more often than not they will avoid unnecessary risks and attempt to locate a target with fewer obstacles to overcome. This implies that elements as outlined within situational crime prevention, such as target hardening, increasing surveillance, and removing targets through environmental management, are effective in deterring burglars from a potential target (Bennett & Wright, 1984; Clarke, 1983, 1995). Such measures work best against the impulsive burglar, but still are effective deterrents for the deliberate burglar as well. These findings provide overall support for Hypotheses 3, 4, and 5.

Also, our findings yield further support for prior studies of burglars and burglary. In general, burglars are motivated by a need for money, they select targets based on visual cues surrounding the target, may have intricate techniques for committing a burglary, and are typically deterred by some crime prevention measures. Although the prevalence of high and low levels of offense planning seems to vary by study (Bennett & Wright, 1984; Cromwell et al., 1991; Nee & Meenaghan, 2006; Wright & Decker, 1994), we found that about a third of our sample of incarcerated burglars indicated some level of planning prior to engaging in burglary. Unlike prior studies that merely note the prevalence of deliberate, impulsive, or even search burglars, we examined common elements of a burglary for two distinct types of burglars. We find evidence for a "unique set of traits" among such burglar groups as purported by Fox et al. (2013, p. 5) when considering motivation, target selection, and deterrents as well as techniques. Also, we find consistent evidence of gender differences in offense planning. Females were more likely to be impulsive across our analyses. Interestingly and contrary to Fox et al. (2013), we find few differences in criminal histories in our burglar groups, perhaps given our incarcerated sample. Burglars who have not been incarcerated may have varied criminal histories.

Our findings extend what we have learned from prior studies and reveal that primary motivations differ for deliberate and impulsive burglars, supporting Hypotheses 1 and 2. Results indicate that deliberate burglars are much more likely to be focused on obtaining cash to pay living expenses or items such as clothes and shoes, whereas impulsive burglars are more motivated by drug use habits. Although this finding has less utility for

preventative measures, it reveals that individuals' correctional and treatment services rendered by the criminal justice system could be very helpful in preventing recidivism by burglars. Specifically, deliberate burglars may benefit from vocational training and other programs designed to increase levels of employability. Such programs may provide the necessary skills for these individuals to find and maintain legitimate employment. Outcomes regarding impulsive burglars, which comprised more than two thirds of this sample, suggest that substance use treatment should be a priority for offenders in this category. In fact, impulsive, drug-motivated burglars are highly likely to continue offending in the absence of substance abuse treatment.

This study presents a few limitations that should be discussed. First, offense planning is not likely a dichotomy. Although we have attempted to examine offense planning in a number of ways, future studies and varying methods should further explore differences in the decision-making process among burglars. Also, it is possible that criminal expertise may influence the decision-making process for offenders (Nee & Meenaghan, 2006). More seasoned burglars, or experts, may require less time to plan and make decisions to commit a burglary. The present exploratory analyses cannot assess criminal expertise, therefore, more research is needed in this area to further understand differences in offender decision-making with regard to criminal expertise. In addition, the distinction between drug and money motivations may not be mutually exclusive. Despite efforts to separate such motivations by carefully recoding an open response measure and including a second measure on how money is to be spent, some burglars may still be motivated by money to fuel a drug habit/lifestyle (Wright & Decker, 1994). Next, this study uses information collected from incarcerated burglars only; burglars who are not incarcerated, or who have not been caught, may have different motivations and/or use different target selection and burglary techniques (Bennett & Wright, 1984; Cromwell et al., 1991; Wright & Decker, 1994). Future ethnographic studies may reveal additional differences among burglars with varying levels of offense planning.

Other suggestions for future research include examining gender differences among burglars. Our findings indicate that females are much more likely to be impulsive burglars than males. Further research should examine what about female burglary is a mostly impulsive domain. Also, as we found that offense planning styles and subsequent motivations can vary by burglar, such differences may also be present for other types of crime. Future research should explore these possible differences for a variety of crimes and offenders.

Appendix

Population and Sample Demographic Comparisons.

All states	Recoded sample (n = 376)	All respondents (n = 422)	Sampling frame (n = 2,709)	Significant differences
Gender				More males and fewer females in the sampling frame than both groups of respondents
Male	64.6%	65.2%	82.9%	
Female	35.4%	34.8%	17.1%	
Race				
Caucasian	69.1%	66.6%	67.0%	None
African American	23.4%	25.4%	31.0%	More African Americans and fewer Other races in the sampling frame than both groups of respondents
Other	6.6%	8.1%	2.0%	
Average age	32.65	32.88	34.96	None
Kentucky	(n = 84)	(n = 90)	(n = 948)	
Gender				More males and fewer females in the sampling frame than both groups of respondents
Male	56.0%	55.8%	86.9%	
Female	44.0%	44.2%	13.1%	
Race				
Caucasian	71.4%	72.1%	76.2%	None
African American	25.0%	24.4%	23.0%	None
Other	2.4%	2.3%	0.8%	None
Average age	36.29	36.04	36.04	None
North Carolina	(n = 88)	(n = 96)	(n = 532)	
Gender				More males and fewer females in the sampling frame than both groups of respondents
Male	55.7%	54.2%	75.8%	
Female	44.3%	45.8%	24.2%	
Race				
Caucasian	64.8%	59.4%	52.4%	None
African American	22.7%	29.2%	43.0%	More African Americans in the sampling frame than both groups of respondents
Other	11.4%	10.4%	4.6%	None
Average age	36.06	36.08	37.43	None
Ohio	(n = 204)	(n = 236)	(n = 1,229)	
Gender				More males and fewer females in the sampling frame than both groups of respondents
Male	72.1%	72.9%	82.8%	
Female	27.9%	27.1%	17.2%	

(continued)

Appendix (continued)

All states	Recoded sample (n = 376)	All respondents (n = 422)	Sampling frame (n = 2,709)	Significant differences
Race				
Caucasian	70.1%	67.4%	66.1%	None
African American	23.0%	24.4%	32.0%	More African Americans in the sampling frame than both groups of respondents
Other	6.4%	7.2%	1.9%	None
Average age	29.71	30.09	31.41	None

Authors' Note

The observations and opinions presented in this article are those of the authors and do not represent the official policies or conclusions of Alarm Industry Research and Education Foundation (AIREF).

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Notes

1. 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.
2. We compared demographic characteristics for the sampling frame (2,709 cases), all survey respondents (422 cases), and the sample used for the present study (376 cases). Comparisons across the three samples for all states and each of the three states are available in the appendix. Most comparisons yielded no significant differences, with some exceptions. In North Carolina and Kentucky, there were slightly more African Americans and fewer "Other" races in the sampling frame, but the number of Caucasian respondents was consistent across all comparisons. Also, there were more males and fewer females in the sampling frame than in both groups of respondents; however, this was an intentional outcome of our sampling decision because we wanted more females in the sample to observe potential gender differences. Finally, the average age was consistent across all comparisons.

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