

**FREE TO BURGLARIZE: THE AFFECTS OF PRETRIAL AND  
PREINCARCERATION RELEASE OF BURGLARS IN BURGLARY ACTIVITY**

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## INTRODUCTION

It has been proposed that burglars are among the most prolific of all criminals. Although not clearly supported, it is believed that persons often commit hundreds of burglaries prior to being arrested. Additionally, it has been hypothesized that burglars often commit many burglaries during pre-trial release, and even after conviction if released prior to incarceration. This assumption, however, has never been fully tested. In light of the many arguments concerning burglary, this study was begun to examine the question of whether burglars were likely to commit additional burglaries while on pre-trial or pre-incarceration release. This research tracked burglars in Arkansas in terms of the number and timing of burglaries committed.

All persons who committed a burglary in Arkansas between January 1, 1994 and January 1, 2000 were identified from criminal history records. The complete criminal history file was then retrieved for each of these persons. The criminal history file was then examined to determine if any of the burglars were arrested for another burglary while on pretrial release.

The results of this examination, however, did not support the hypotheses. No persons were identified in the data that had only burglaries in their criminal histories. Furthermore, few of the persons identified had a substantial history of burglary arrests. Most of the people identified in this research had a variety of arrests for crimes; and the most prolific criminals were typically not burglars, but

only had one or two burglaries in their history. Finally, there was no statistically significant difference between those people who committed one or more burglaries while on release and those who did not. Of course, all of these findings are predicated on the arrest of burglars and not their criminal activity. It is possible that many burglaries are being committed while burglars are on release that are not coming to the attention of the criminal justice system. This is not anticipated, however. The number of persons examined was quite high, and it is argued that, if there were patterns of post-release burglary activity, it would show up in the information.

Although these findings seem negative, they are actually quite important. It was anticipated that information concerning post-arrest burglary activity would be valuable to the State for the purposes of tracking and identifying changes that might be helpful in preventing burglary. For example, many new jails are proposed and/or built on the premise that they are needed for crimes such as burglary. While these efforts may be beneficial, especially in terms of keeping criminals incarcerated longer and preventing crimes during this time, there does not seem to be evidence to support an argument that pre-trial or pre-incarceration confinement of burglars prevents additional burglaries. The importance, then, of this research is in dispelling the popular notion of the activities of burglars. This may save policy makers time and citizens money in efforts to reduce burglaries.

## REVIEW OF PREVIOUS RESEARCH

This portion of the report provides an overview of relevant literature on burglars and their targets, including those who burglarize residences and those who burglarize commercial establishments. It will also explore the shift in research methodology that led to the study of active burglars. Finally, it will address the profile of a typical burglar.

The Uniform Crime Report (UCR) defines burglary as “the unlawful entry of a structure to commit a felony or theft.” (Federal Bureau of Investigation 1977, 22). Data from the 1999 Uniform Crime Report indicated that “burglary offenses were estimated at 2,329,950 nationwide in 1998, marking the seventh consecutive annual decline in volume” (Federal Bureau of Investigation 1999). The national burglary volume declined 5 percent in 1998 when compared to the previous year. An examination of five and ten year trends indicated that burglary was down 14 percent from the 1994 level and down 26 percent compared to 1989 (Federal Bureau of Investigation 1999).

By population group, the Nation’s cities experienced a 6 percent decline. Cities with populations over 1 million showed the largest decrease – 10 percent. Suburban counties also experienced a 5 percent decline.

The 1999 UCR reported that 65 percent of all burglaries in 1998 involved forcible entry, 28 percent were unlawful entries without force, and the remaining 7 percent were forcible entry attempts. Almost 53 percent of the burglaries occurred during daylight hours, with 47 percent occurring at night. Two of every three burglaries were residential. Of the commercial burglaries, 63 percent occurred during the night according to the FBI (1999).

The FBI (1999) estimated burglary losses at 3.1 billion dollars. The average loss was \$1,343. For residential burglaries, the loss was \$1,299; and for commercial burglaries, the loss was \$1,432. The 1998 figures indicated a decrease in amount of dollar value lost in comparison to the previous year.

While there has been a significant decrease in the number of burglaries committed, there are some factors that have remained constant over time. Burglary is still a crime of white males (68%), with blacks accounting for 29 percent, and other races the remainder of all burglary arrests. Also, most burglars are young, with 84 percent of all burglar arrests being for persons 25 years old or younger. This typology of burglars is further discussed in the section that follows.

### Typology

This portion of the literature review examines the change in research patterns for burglary and burglars. It also addresses a typology of a typical burglar.

Scarr’s (1973) analysis of burglary offenses focused on the characteristics of the offense as well as the relationship between social factors and the occurrence of burglary. His study compared burglary offenses in three different jurisdictions and compared the professional burglar with the casual burglar.

Scarr (1973) noted that three groups are responsible for shaping burglary patterns. First, the offender is able to commit crimes by either taking advantage of existing opportunities or creating his or her own. Citizens also increase or decrease the likelihood that they will become a victim based on the actions they take. Finally, political entities attempt to influence the

actions of the offender and the actions of the victim.

Using a cyclical path model, Scarr (1973) suggested that the burglar developed along a cycle divided into nine phases. First, the offender has needs that can be satisfied by burglary. The primary need is for money, but secondary forces acting on those needs may be addiction, gang membership, thrills, or to support a family.

The second step involves the offender acquiring the requisite skill. These skills range from simple techniques such as throwing a rock through a window to the sophisticated use of lock picks to gain entry. Amateurs will look for money, as it does not require the use of a fence; while professional burglars may have established the difference between worthless and valuable items, as well as a significant number of contacts to fence the goods.

The third step in the cycle is that the potential burglar must see an opportunity to burglarize a particular establishment. This is accomplished by a cursory search of the exterior of the establishment or household looking for a quick, easy method of entry.

The fourth step is that the burglar must perceive the act as a means to meet his or her needs. Scarr (1973) noted that burglars often lacked sufficient job skills, resulting in an inability to find employment. He also noted that some burglars had jobs but viewed the act of burglary as an opportunity to obtain some extra cash.

For his fifth step, Scarr (1973) suggested that the offender consciously chose burglary over other means to his or her end, perhaps viewing the act as having the greatest chance of success with a minimum of risk. The fifth level also involved some other choices, such as the differentiation between daytime and nighttime burglars. It is here that Scarr (1973) noted that the choices would generally be based on the environment in which the offender operated.

In the sixth step, the offender attempts the burglary. If successful, the burglar will continue the activity; if not successful, the offender will generally stop and re-evaluate the situation. One very important factor in determining whether a burglar will be successful is the level of police activity in the area.

In the seventh step, the offender, if successful in step six, will convert the items gained in the burglary to money. Scarr (1973) argued that the key to a successful burglary operation was a trustworthy fence, who provided the burglar with an outlet for stolen goods, a line of credit, and a link to the outside world. Fences also help the professional, as many amateurs are caught with proceeds from a burglary still in their possession.

In step eight, if all of the above steps have occurred in sequence, the cycle is completed and the needs of the burglar are met. Scarr's (1973) ninth and final step was the continuation of the offender into the next burglary, thereby reinforcing the previous steps and continuing the cycle until a professional burglar is produced over the course of time.

Repetto (1974) examined the patterns of residential burglary and robbery within the Boston metropolitan area. Data were obtained from several sources, including incident reports, interviews with convicted burglars, victimization surveys, and field observations of building security features. His goal was to identify, describe, and explain the rates, patterns, and correlations of the crime of burglary. His study furnished some baseline data, but focused mainly on offender attributes obtained from personal interviews. He found apprehended burglars to be young, male, nonwhite, and semiskilled. Three-fourths of the apprehended burglars planned the offenses before committing the acts, and all burglars preferred to burglarize unoccupied homes.

Pope, (1980) in his examination of the patterns connected to the offense and the actor in a burglary, reviewed the work of Scarr (1973) and Repetto (1974) as a precursor to his own. He used cluster analysis to explore the types of offenses and offender variables. The data revealed that 69 percent of all burglaries were reported to have occurred during daylight hours, compared to 31 percent having occurred between 5 p.m. and 7 a.m. Over 61 percent were residential; the remainder (39%) were commercial. Only 5 percent were characterized by the police as attempts.

He also noted that 56 percent of the burglaries studied involved the use of a tool; and property damage was a result of the burglary in 54 percent of the cases. Over 65 percent of the burglaries resulted in the theft of money, television, and stereos; in 35 percent of the cases, firearms, clothing, jewelry and drugs were stolen. Most of the structures did not have any form of security system.

Pope (1980) also noted that over half of the persons arrested were under the age of 17, 66 percent were white, and 91 percent were male. A review of criminal history files revealed that 42 percent of those arrested had a previous record, 22 percent were under supervision, 24 percent had a drug record, and 29 percent had a burglary record. He concluded that there did not seem to be a strong relationship between the characteristics of burglary offenders and the types of burglaries they committed. There were some patterns noted, but they were not substantial. He did note, however, that blacks often burglarized structures in socially disadvantaged areas while whites selected their targets from more prosperous areas. Blacks, more so than whites, were more likely to commit a burglary that involved force.

Finally, Pope proposed that individuals who did not have a criminal record were

more likely to choose non-residential targets, while those with a criminal record chose residential areas. These relationships, however, were not strong enough to establish more than a chance variation. Since the individuals apprehended did not substantially differ in the kinds of burglaries they committed, offender characteristics may be only randomly associated with offense characteristics.

Gibbs and Shelly (1982) examined the various ways of illegally acquiring and distributing commercial goods, paths of entry into commercial burglary, and the relationship between the work and lifestyle of the thief. They examined two crimes, truck hijacking and commercial burglary, focusing on how the thieves planned and carried out the acts. They further concentrated on determining how the thief learned the trade interviewing inmates in the New York State prison system.

Pettitway (1982) developed a typology that indicated that the amateur, unlike the professional, burglar relies on chance and forgoes high financial gains in favor of low risk jobs. The familiarity of the offender's immediate area of residence provides a sense of low risk; and the growth of consumer spending during recent years has made it possible for even poor homes to contain items of value. Pettitway (1982) proposed that the amateur chose the immediate neighborhood because it offered goods that are readily accessible, and it is more attractive than locations further away from the offender's residence.

Pettitway (1982) concluded that burglary is a more calculated crime when compared to robbery. Burglars needed to plan and be organized; robbers were more opportunistic. He argued that crime prevention could be successful if potential targets were identified in environments in which victimization was most likely, and crime prevention programs were designed and implemented to make

those environments less suited. This, he felt, would prevent victimization, or at least reduce the probability that a target would be victimized.

Edmonson (1991) suggested that offenders often engage in what could be considered a form of market research. The most skilled thieves will spend hours collecting information for a short break-in. He characterized burglary market research into three models. The first method is known as “smash and grab” or the ‘first opportunity’ model. Urban drug addicts who need to acquire money fast often use this method. Professional burglars used the second and third type of models in their search of targets. Those who used the “marriage” model would drive around looking for targets. If they were not successful in finding their type of house, they would lower their standards as the search lengthened. Others would use the “homebuyer” model, where the burglar developed a “short list” of potential sites (Edmonson, 1991).

Farrell, Phillips, and Pease (1995) conducted a study designed to show that a crime against the same victim may be perceived as a rational choice by the criminal. The research focused on eight crimes (domestic violence, racial attacks, physical and sexual abuse of children, physical attacks, repeated burglary, car crime, shop theft, and credit card fraud) where victimization is most likely to occur. They suggested that repeat victimizations would require less effort, have lower risk, and equivalent or greater reward when compared to first victimizations.

Farrell, Phillips, and Pease (1995) concluded that offenses against the same target were based on experiences and the perception of known risks and rewards. The rational choice is based on the offender’s knowledge of the victim, the victim’s suitability, and the likelihood that suitable

guardians are absent. As a result, crime prevention could be achieved effectively when one of these elements is absent. If the potential targets can be identified in environments prone to victimization, then crime prevention programs can be designed and implemented to make the environments less suitable.

Their findings mirrored those of Polvi et al. (1991) in that repeat victimization would occur for three possible reasons. First, offenders would return expecting other opportunities or anticipated replacement of goods stolen in the first burglary. Second, burglars would tell other burglars of the location and entry points, thereby extending the victimization a second time at the hands of a different burglar. Finally, certain characteristics of the house made it an attractive target for all those attempting a burglary, thus resulting in repeat victimizations related only by the allure of the home.

DeFronzo (1996b) evaluated the potential impacts of welfare level assistance on the variation of burglary rates among 141 American cities. These cities were selected because of the availability of data on burglary, AFDC, cost of living, and other social and economic variables. He concluded that welfare recipients were less likely to commit burglary than those individuals who did not receive welfare payments. He noted that the findings were consistent with utilizing welfare assistance to the poor as a social policy designed to limit the effects of burglary.

Robinson (1998) reviewed studies of revictimization that suggested that multiple victims may facilitate revictimization by deliberately, recklessly, or negligently placing themselves at special risk, or by failing to take reasonable precautions against crime. Between 1992 and 1994, the average rate of 94.8 burglaries per 1,000 residences in one zone studied was

substantially higher than the national average of 59.9 burglaries per 1,000 residences. Robinson (1998) concluded from his analysis that 25 percent of the revictimizations occurred within one week of the initial offense; however, as time passed, the risk diminished until the fifth month, when the risk of revictimizations virtually disappeared.

Wright, Decker, Redfern and Smith (1992) conducted a field study with active residential burglars in an effort to study burglars in their natural setting. To draw their sample, they used a snowball sampling strategy where they located an initial participant who led them to other subjects. Wright et al. (1992) established that the sample of active offenders was similar to the burglars operating in St. Louis in 1988. From a sample of 105 individuals, 42 percent had not been arrested for burglary, while 35 percent had an arrest record but no convictions. Over half of the sample (52%) admitted committing 50 or more burglaries. From that 52 percent, 40 percent admitted to committing at least 100 burglaries.

Wright et al. (1992) concluded that, within their sample, those who had never been arrested offended more frequently and committed more burglaries during their lifetime when compared to those who had been arrested. They also noted that a successful offender would not be represented in a study of arrestees, prisoners, or probationers, thus questioning the ability of official data sources to accurately represent the total population of criminals. They concluded, therefore, that field studies were important in obtaining a true picture of burglars.

Decker, Wright, and Logie (1993) compared active residential burglars with a matched control group in the St. Louis area. The burglars were recruited from the street, and none of the participants were obtained through the criminal justice system. The

original sample of 105 was subsequently reduced to 48 who had an extensive criminal background. The median age of the sample's first burglary was age 14, and they had a lifetime average of 148 burglaries. The control group was recruited from two non-profit agencies that provided job training and recreational facilities. These participants were asked a series of questions designed to measure self-reported involvement in burglary. Using this method, 47 burglars were selected for the control group. Only 8 of these were legitimately employed, seven worked part-time in fast food restaurants, and one worked full-time as a laborer. Of the control group, 9 had served time in jail or prison for burglary and 13 had been imprisoned for other crimes.

Decker et al. (1993) discovered significant differences between burglars and the control group. Burglars were more inclined to participate in a hypothetical crime than the control group, although neither based its decision on the severity of the threatened penalty. Punishment did, however, influence decision making when combined with anticipated gain or perceived risk. Where the potential danger was great and the punishment was severe, burglars were less likely to commit the offense. Decker et al. (1993) concluded that it was possible to study perceptual deterrence using active burglary offenders.

Decker, Wright, and Logie (1995) conducted research to explore what conditions active residential burglars consider when selecting places to burglarize, and if such offenders had any expertise that might assist them in the selection process. The experimental group consisted of the 47 active residential burglars recruited from St. Louis (see above). A questionnaire was used to determine the levels of criminal experience. It consisted of nine questions, four of which focused on previous burglaries and prior contact with the authorities, and

five that focused on how the burglars selected their target, if there was any drug or alcohol use, and the motivation behind committing the crimes. Next, the subjects were shown a series of photographs and asked to indicate whether a burglar would select the houses in the pictures. Afterwards, subjects were presented with a checklist of features and asked to indicate whether those features would make the target more suitable, less suitable, or would make no difference. Finally, the subjects were given an unexpected recognition memory test and asked to determine whether those photographs were the same ones presented earlier.

Decker, Wright, and Logie (1995) established that unoccupied and easily accessible houses resulted in a higher number of “yes” responses from both burglars and the control group. In addition, a dog and/or alarm system resulted in a higher number of “no” responses from both groups of subjects. Indicators of wealth had little impact on the responses of either group. More of the control group than the burglar group indicated they would not commit a burglary while a residence was occupied. Further, the control group perceived an extra lock as a deterrent while the extra lock had no effect on the burglars. Finally, the control group expressed a view that property that was marked would prevent offenders from burglarizing a house, while the burglars’ did not view property markings as a deterrent.

Decker, Wright, and Logie (1995) concluded that active criminals analyze a different set of environmental cues than control subjects. These active criminals also revealed better memory recognition of these cues. These findings suggest that burglars are using skills gained from past experience of residential burglary. Finally, crime prevention will only be successful in reducing the number of burglaries when the

efforts are based on a firm understanding of how burglars view and analyze the opportunities.

Cromwell et al. (1991) conducted research to determine how the decision making process is changed based on whether a burglar is working alone or with others. Cromwell et al. (1991) employed a snowball sampling procedure to obtain 30 active burglars, which were interviewed and observed over a 16-month period.

Cromwell et al. (1991) conducted comprehensive interviews and ride alongs which consisted of the participants reconstructing burglaries previously committed and evaluating sites burglarized by others in the sample. The burglars perceived themselves as braver and better risk takers; however, the overall effect was toward less risky behavior because members would point out “risk cues” to each other, thereby reducing the chance of being apprehended.

Cromwell et al. (1991) applied Zajonc’s theory (1965, 1980) that the presence of others increases “an individual’s general arousal or drive.” Cromwell et al. (1991) reported that “all of the participants reported greater arousal when working with other offenders and that their self-reported apprehension rate when working with partners was nearly five times greater than when working alone.”

Cromwell et al. (1991) concluded that “group polarization effects appear to contribute to even more rational behavior on the part of burglars.” In addition, the data suggested that those who work in-groups have an apprehension rate as high as five times greater than those who work alone.

Polvi, Looman, Humphries, and Pease (1991) designed their study to determine whether the probability of repeat victimization was greater than the probability of an independent offense. The data revealed that there was a greater risk of

repeat victimization for only a short period of time, and that risk disappeared after six months. Polvi, Looman, Humphries, and Pease (1991) concluded that heightened probability of repeat victimization might be considered as occurring for three possible reasons. First, the same offenders might return, having recognized neglected opportunities, or they may be in search of the previous items replaced by the homeowner. Next, another offender may burglarize the house based on comments from the first set of burglars, as certain features of the house may make it a compellingly attractive target. Finally, the most likely reason for repeat victimization is the goods left behind that entice the offender to return.

Sutton (1995) explored the possible effects of the market for stolen goods, the process of buying stolen goods, and insurance against theft on levels of burglary. Sutton (1995) contended that there is a complex relationship between buying and selling of stolen goods and burglary. The demand for certain items on the second hand market control what a burglar steals. Sutton (1995) examined the market for stolen goods and supply by theft. He suggested that the increased ownership of certain consumer products could lead burglars to the assumption that more houses contain these items.

Bowers, Hirschfeld, and Johnson (1998) conducted a case study of non-residential repeat burglaries. For a one-year period, 11,976 incidents of burglary were recorded for the area. They found that 21.4 percent of all burglaries were a result of repeat victimization. In addition, 33.8 percent of non-residential properties revictimized were burglarized three or more times compared with 14.8 percent for residential properties. Forty-three percent of the total burglaries occurred within one month of the prior incident for non-residential burglaries,

compared with 32.5 percent of residential repeat incidents.

Bowers, Hirschfeld, and Johnson (1998) concluded that, non-residential properties that experienced a repeat victimization were likely to suffer the repeat incident within the first four weeks following an initial incident. For example, it appears that educational properties suffer the majority of repeat burglaries in the first four weeks following an initial incident, whereas health care facilities only suffered for 30 percent of total revictimization in this time period. This implies that different crime prevention strategies may be appropriate for different types of non-residential properties.

### **Case Study Of A Professional Burglar**

Ridley (1977) conducted a case study of a professional burglar. Ridley focused on the Shover (1972) study and the information provided by a "professional" burglar. Shover (1972) contended that the burglary is not a crime of passion, but instead a rational crime; therefore, the success of a burglar depends upon social support from individuals such as bondsmen, attorneys, and fences. Bondsmen and attorneys are crucial if the offender is to avoid confinement. Bondsmen limit the amount of time the offender is detained after being arrested, and the attorney is responsible for getting the charges dropped or reduced, and arranging other types of plea bargaining.

Shover (1972) suggested that "the professional is known among other thieves as a good burglar and has been as least relatively successful in crime." Shover further suggested that the secret to becoming a "good burglar" is from learning, working, and stealing with "good burglars." Ridley (1977) purports that professional burglars enjoy the same respect and esteem from their colleagues, as do any professionals in other careers. Those who are professional burglars are no different from other

professionals seeking legitimate careers in that burglars seek training and show desire for the profession.

Ridley (1977) profiled Ronnie Smith, a man who admittedly had been a professional criminal for 25 years. Over 25 years, Smith was arrested 10 to 12 times, and his arrest rate did not represent 1 percent of the total number of burglaries he has participated in. At the time of the interview, he was serving a 10-year sentence for burglary. Smith, once served in the Navy, had a wife, two teenage children and had taken several criminology courses from the University of Chicago by correspondence. He had been arrested in several states, including, Alabama, Arkansas, California, Georgia, and North Carolina.

Smith maintained that he came from a good family, went to church, and participated in Boy Scouts. His reason for choosing a life a crime was the excitement of it. Smith suggested that professional burglars are no different from anyone else, except the occupation. Professional burglars "live in homes, raise children who attend school and participate in athletics and other activities, and participate in community activities." Smith contended that most burglars are not violent; Smith has no record of violence, his only motivation is capital gain.

Smith participated in a variety of burglaries. He was first charged with burglary while in the Navy, where he was charged stealing sugar by the ton. He once burglarized a brewery, but his favorite target was the safe in a commercial establishment like a department store. He utilized walkie-talkies, police scanners, and tools that cost around \$500, all of which were legitimately purchased. Smith usually worked with 2 other people. Together they spent four to

six weeks casing a store before the burglary. The group always scheduled their burglaries for Sunday morning, because that was the day there were the fewest number of police officers on duty.

Ridley (1972) concluded that if Smith was the typical professional burglar, then a great deal could be learned about the pattern the crime follows. His career pattern closely resembles the Scarr cyclical pattern on burglary: he had needs that could be satisfied through successful burglary, acquired burglary skills, perceived opportunity to burglarize, perceived burglary as a path to meeting needs, and chose burglary over another path to meet needs. He then attempted and succeeded at burglary, converted burglarized items into need meeting items, satisfied needs, and the success reinforced for him in the burglary pattern. Thus, the burglar becoming a successful or professional burglar is dependent on the offender's ability to acquire the skills necessary to not commit a burglary without being apprehended and build the needed contacts to change the stolen goods into need meeting items.

### *Conclusion*

The literature review examined the current burglary statistics regarding race, gender, and age of burglars. It also examined the different types of burglars, including commercial and residential. More specifically, this literature review showed the shift in research from the traditional method of interviewing criminals after they have been convicted to focusing on offenders who are active burglars. Finally, the review examined the profile of a "professional" burglar and applied the theory of Scarr (1973).

## METHODS

The principal portion of this research involved an examination of the criminal history files of burglars in the State of Arkansas. The Criminal History files of the Arkansas Crime Information Center (ACIC) were examined for all persons who were charged with a burglary in Arkansas between January 1, 1994 and January 1, 2000.

The procedure for gathering the data began by identifying all persons within the time frame of the examination who had been arrested for one of the burglary charges discussed in the Concepts and Operationalization section below. Criminal history records at the Arkansas Crime Information Center were then queried for all persons who were arrested for a burglary during this time frame. A total of 64,791 persons were identified using this procedure.

The complete criminal histories for those persons were then obtained, along with any history of incarceration. These people represent the population of burglars in the State of Arkansas between 1994 and 2000. Information collected on each person included their Central Systems Number (CSN), State Identification Number (SID), FBI Tracking Number, Social Security Number, Arkansas Arrest Tracking Number (ATN), arrest date, arresting agency, the Charge at arrest, type of offender, whether bail or bond was issued, the ADC Number, custody dates and release dates.

### Hypotheses, Concepts & Operationalization

The primary question of this research is: To what extent to people arrested for burglaries commit additional burglaries upon pre-trial or pre-incarceration release? The principal concepts to be dealt with in

this examination are burglary, and release. These are explored below.

### *Burglary*

In this research, burglary was defined within the criminal history files as those persons charged with either a *commercial burglary* (code 0659), a *residential burglary* (code 0658), or a *burglary, other* (code 9998). Persons were considered arrested for a burglary if they had an entry in their criminal history file. Whether a person was adjudicated for this arrest or not was not considered in the findings of this research.

### *Release*

When the project was planned, it was anticipated that release from custody could be determined from the *custody release date* and whether the person was released on *bail* or *bond*. After the data was gathered, however, it was determined that there was not sufficient data in the *bail* or *bond* fields to determine the type of release. It was decided, therefore, that pretrial or preincarceration release would be calculated from the arrest date, custody start date, and release date. Specifically, the data was examined for instances where an offender was arrested for a burglary, and prior to confinement or while on release from confinement, was again arrested for a burglary.

### Analysis Procedures

Since this data represent a population of the burglars in Arkansas during this time, descriptive statistics were used for the analysis. Measures of central tendency and dispersion were the primary statistical methods of analysis. Because of the nature

of the data, however, much of the analysis had to be undertaken by examining each of the burglar's records. Each record was examined to determine whether the person had more than one arrest for a burglary. For that subset of people, the timing of each arrest was examined to see if it appeared that subsequent burglaries were committed while the person was on release.

Other analyses attempted to determine if there were any differences between burglars who were arrested for a subsequent offense while on release and those who were not. These were undertaken by coding offenders as either having been arrested for a subsequent burglary while on release or not.

After all offenders were examined to determine if they were arrested for a subsequent offense while on release, two additional variables were added. The first variable coded each arrest for each person who was arrested for a burglary while on release as a 1 and those who were not so arrested as a 0. For the second variable, each person who was arrested for a subsequent burglary while on release was coded as a 1 and those without a post-release burglary were coded as a 0. This coding allowed post-release burglars and non-burglars to be compared using a single sample t-test.

## FINDINGS

An initial hypothesis of this research was not fully supported when the offenses were examined. Since persons in this data were chosen because they were arrested for a burglary, it was expected that the majority of crimes would be burglaries. That turned out not to be the case. The most frequently occurring crime in this dataset was theft of property with 12,346 offenses. The types of burglaries examined in this research were substantially fewer in number than this; with 5,903 "other burglaries", 1,921 residential burglaries, 1,118 commercial burglaries, and 2,395 burglaries before 1983 for a total of 11,337. Even added together, the burglaries examined in this research did not reach the number of recorded thefts. "Other" burglaries were the second highest value in the data, however, and there were only a few crimes that exceeded each type of burglary. These include:

- Theft of property 12,346
- Theft by receiving 2,366
- Drugs 3,357
- Failure to appear 2,944
- Breaking and Entering 2,030

- Battery, 3<sup>rd</sup> Degree 1,302

This is consistent, however, with Pope's (1980) finding that only 29% percent of the burglars in his research had a previous arrest for a burglary.

Admittedly, most of these offenses are related to burglary in that they are mostly property crimes. It may very well be, then, that many burglars are being charged with other or lesser crimes than burglary because it is easier to prove the elements of these offenses than it is burglary. There is no way of knowing, however, the extent to which this would have changed the results of this research.

Also, the most prolific criminals (at least in terms of arrests) were not burglars. With very few exceptions, those with the most arrests (some of which include multiple charges) committed only one or two burglaries, or if they did commit more than that, the burglaries were spread intermittently across their criminal careers; often having ten or more years between burglary arrests.

This is not to say, however, that there were no prolific criminals in this population. The maximum number of arrests for any one person was fifty arrests. These arrests were for thirteen different charges. While many of these charges were for property crimes, only four were for burglary, and these were spread out over a fifteen-year period.

### **Characteristics of Burglars**

A second hypothesis of the research was also not supported. There is a great debate in the literature on burglars concerning whether burglars see their activities as a profession such that they do not move into other types of crimes. It does not appear from the criminal history files examined in this research that burglary is a specialty crime. All of the burglars examined had charges for other, non-related, crimes. Additionally, a substantial majority of those examined had many other charges, often for several different crimes.

Seventeen offenders had more than ten burglaries in their criminal histories. The person with the greatest number of burglaries had a total of nineteen burglaries. There was also one person with fourteen burglaries. Three persons had thirteen burglaries. There were three offenders who had thirteen burglaries, two who had twelve burglaries, one had eleven burglaries, and nine persons had ten burglaries. It should be noted, however, that this is the number of charges/arrests for burglary, not the number of burglaries committed. It is certainly plausible that those in this data set committed many burglaries per arrest, as the literature suggests.

This finding is consistent with Wright et al.'s assertion that the most prolific burglars are seldom subjected to the criminal justice system. Their findings were that many of the most prolific burglars committed more than 50 burglaries. Furthermore, these burglars were not represented in arrest

reports. Following those conclusions here, it could be argued that the burglars represented by this research are only those who were not capable of remaining undetected, and the most prolific burglars have never been identified and tracked by the criminal justice system in Arkansas.

One interesting note concerning this data set is that, for many of these people, the last crime recorded in their criminal history file was a burglary. There does not appear to be any particular pattern or reason for this finding (i.e. it is not the most serious crime committed, not the last crime committed in many cases, nor is it necessarily the crime for which the person was sent to prison). This will be further tracked and explored to determine why this artifact of the data and/or collection process is occurring.

### **Burglary Activity While On Release**

The first step in this process was to examine the relationship between those offenders who were arrested for a subsequent burglary while on release and those who were not. Following that examination, burglars arrested more than ten times were examined for a more qualitative analysis of burglary activity while on release.

Although the findings of this portion of the research were not as significant as expected, they were closer to the initial hypotheses that persons on release for a burglary were likely to commit more burglaries.

#### *Comparison of Burglary Activity on Release*

The first examination was an attempt to determine if there were any differences between burglars who were arrested for a subsequent offense while on release and those who were not. As stated above, this examination used a one-sample t-test. The test value for this analysis was 0 (that the

persons would not commit a burglary upon release). If there were significant differences from this value, then the conclusion could be made that there was a trend of people committing burglaries while on release.

The first examination looked at repeat offenses. For this offense, when a person was identified as having been arrested for a burglary while on release, all of his or her offenses were coded as a 1. If the person was never arrested for a burglary while on release, then he or she was coded a 0. In effect, this analysis was weighted by the arrests for each person in the population.

The one-sample t-test for this analysis had a t value of 21.47, significant at .000. The mean difference between the test statistic (0) and each value was .31. The conclusion drawn from this is that there was a difference between those who were arrested for a subsequent burglary while on release and those who were not rearrested. The difference was not very substantial, however, meaning that the numbers of values (1,010 degrees of freedom) could have caused the difference between the two groups to be different even though there were no practical differences.

The second analysis looked at repeat offenders. For this analysis, when a person was identified as having been arrested for a burglary while on release, he or she was coded as a 1. If the person was never arrested for a burglary while on release, then he or she was coded a 0. In effect, this analysis was weighted by the persons in the population regardless of the number of offenses.

The one-sample t-test for this analysis had a t value of 8.609, significant at .000. The mean difference between the test statistic (0) and each value was .62. As with the analysis above, the conclusion that can be drawn from this analysis is that there was a difference between those who were

arrested for a subsequent burglary while on release and those who were not rearrested. Furthermore, the difference between these two groups was fairly substantial, meaning that there probably is a difference between those who burglarize while on release and those who do not. This proposition must be examined by looking more closely at the data, which is the next step in the analyses.

### *Closer Examination of Burglars*

There were a number of offenders who committed different crimes while on pretrial or preincarceration release. This is an important issue that should be addressed in future research; however, it was not the focus of this research so a discussion of these findings will not be reported here.

There were also many offenders who committed additional burglaries while on release. The findings of this analysis, however, were not as supportive of the primary question as were the tests for differences.

Interestingly, the more prolific burglars in this data were not the ones being arrested for additional burglaries while on release. For example, the person with nineteen burglaries was only arrested for one of those while on release; and the person with fourteen burglaries was arrested for only three of those burglaries while on release.

Persons with thirteen burglaries (three offenders) were typically the same as those with more, with one exception. One of the offenders with thirteen burglaries committed most of the burglaries (eleven) while on release for other burglaries. This was obviously a fairly short term career where the person committed a burglary, committed other burglaries while on release for that burglary, was rearrested, committed additional burglaries while on release following that arrest, and so on. This is the pattern that was expected at the beginning of

this research. This type of activity seemed to be the exception rather than the rule however (the other two offenders committed two and three subsequent burglaries).

Of the two persons who committed twelve burglaries, one person was more typical of the findings of this research (being arrested for only two of the burglaries while on release). The other burglar was arrested for almost half of the burglaries while on

release. The person with eleven burglaries had three arrests while on release.

Those with ten burglaries had a comparatively higher proportion of arrests while on release than the other high-burglary offenders. Of those with ten burglaries, three had four arrests while on release, one had three arrests, three had two arrests, one had one arrest, and one of the burglars had no subsequent arrests while on pretrial or pre-incarceration release.

## CONCLUSIONS

It is apparent from these analyses that burglars who are released on pre-trial or pre-incarceration release are committing a significant number of burglaries while on release. The t-tests of the difference between those who were arrested for a subsequent burglary and those who were not supports this argument.

There is little that can be determined, however, concerning patterns for those subsequent burglaries. It may be argued, for example, that there are significant differences between those who commit subsequent burglaries while on release and those who do not; but that does not mean that a significant number of people

released commit additional burglaries. To be useful in setting or changing policy, it would be necessary to know what it is that is different between these two groups and what, if anything, could be done to identify those likely to reoffend. At this time and with this research, however, there is no way to determine who will reoffend and who will not.

Because these results are complex, and somewhat conflicting, policy makers should view them cautiously. There is some support for building additional jail space to keep burglars incarcerated; but the support is not strong and more research is needed.

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