

## Burglary in Tasmania: The Offender's Perspective

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The Tasmanian Institute of Law Enforcement Studies (TILES) publishes regular Briefing Papers on topics related to the Institute's research program. In our fourth Briefing Paper, prepared by our first postdoctoral candidate, Dr Vanessa Goodwin discusses the findings from her qualitative research with sixty imprisoned burglars in Tasmania. Dr Goodwin's interest in the topic of burglary arose from her employment with the Department of Police and Emergency Management, particularly her involvement in the development and implementation of a repeat burglary prevention project known as *Project Samaritan*.

*Roberta Julian, Director*

This briefing paper presents findings from an interview study with 60 imprisoned burglars in Tasmania, 49 of whom had committed ten or more burglaries in their lifetime and were classified as "experienced burglars". The study aimed to test some of the theoretical assumptions about burglary, such as the importance of the drug-crime relationship, and explore the extent to which burglars are rational decision-makers.

Official records (e.g. police charge and conviction data or prison files), can provide information about the demographic characteristics of burglars and some limited information about their patterns of offending, such as their choice of target and modus operandi. However, a much richer source of information about burglary is from the offenders themselves. By interviewing burglars it is possible to explore a whole range of issues, including their motivation for offending, their methods of target selection and their views on the effectiveness of security measures.

Various research studies involving interviews with burglars have been conducted. While most of the research has been undertaken in the United States (US) and the United Kingdom (UK), studies have also been conducted in the Netherlands<sup>19</sup>, Ireland<sup>15</sup>, Canada<sup>4</sup> and Australia<sup>17</sup>. The majority of the studies have concentrated on burglars in prison, on probation, or some combination of both. However, some researchers have successfully recruited 'active' burglars<sup>(20,7,4)</sup>.

Neer traces the history of research on residential burglary in Britain, Ireland and the United States and points out that researchers in this field (i.e. residential burglary) used a grounded approach, whereby the residential burglar, as the expert in the field, was allowed to lead the investigation. She observes that this approach resulted in significant advances in the level of knowledge and understanding of the burglar and helped to ensure that crime prevention techniques had some relevance to the burglary problem rather than just being 'dreamed up in an office with little relevance to actual criminal activity'<sup>14</sup>. Neer stresses the importance of continuing to 'exploit the offender's knowledge as probably the richest source of data for the prevention of crime'<sup>14</sup>.

One of the issues raised in relation to research with burglars in prison, or on probation, is that these offenders may not be representative of burglars in general, particularly when the detection rate for burglary is so low<sup>13</sup>. This concern is highlighted by the fact that some of the 'active' burglar samples

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have included individuals who have had minimal or no contact with the criminal justice system<sup>(20,4)</sup>. Despite this concern, it appears to be generally accepted that interviews with burglars on probation and prison can provide some very useful insights into burglary from an offender's perspective.

The interesting thing about the literature on burglars is how similar the findings are across different countries in relation to key aspects such as motivation, target selection and burglars' opinions on the effectiveness of security measures. In theory this should mean that burglars are relatively predictable and easy to catch and/or deter. However, the nature of society today is such that many houses are unoccupied during the day, leaving burglars relatively free to roam the streets looking for suitable targets without fear of being identified by neighbours or detected by the police<sup>(16,13)</sup>. Burglars also take precautions to avoid being caught, and are unlikely to be deterred when the potential reward from committing burglary usually far outweighs the risk of being caught. In many cases, dependence on illicit drugs and/or alcohol provides an added compulsion to commit burglary because it is simply not possible for some individuals to finance their habit via legitimate means<sup>16</sup>.

## METHODOLOGY USED IN THE STUDY

Sixty male prisoners with at least one conviction for burglary were interviewed as part of this Tasmanian study. The majority of the prisoners were maximum security prisoners interviewed in the main, male adult prison (Risdon Prison), but nine were minimum security prisoners interviewed at the Hayes Prison Farm.

Prior to the commencement of the interviewing phase, a target sample size of 60 offenders was set and it was agreed with the prison authorities that permission to access the prison would continue until the target was reached. The researcher was periodically supplied with a list of offenders who met the eligibility criteria. Each time the prison was visited, offenders whose names were on the list were called up to the interview area so that the researcher could ask them if they were willing to participate in the research.

The number of direct refusals was low (n=6), but it was not possible to calculate the number of indirect refusals (i.e. offenders who refused to even meet with the researcher) as it was not always clear whether it was the offender himself who did not wish to be involved, or that the non-participation resulted from a prison officer declining to release the prisoner from his work or other duties. Also, some of the individuals who indirectly refused to participate were prisoners located in the protection yards of the prison who were either reluctant to leave the safety of their yard, or who needed to be escorted to the research area by a prison officer at a time

when one was not available. The actual response rate is, therefore, unknown.

Similarly, it is not known to what extent the sample is representative of imprisoned burglars in Tasmania in general, and whether the characteristics of those interviewed are different from others who met the eligibility criteria but were not interviewed. In addition to direct and indirect refusals, a number of prisoners who met the criteria were unavailable to be interviewed because, for example, they were housed in the behaviour-management section of the prison, or in the prison hospital.

A semi-structured interview schedule was developed based on a range of themes emerging from the literature. Some of the questions were loosely derived from other studies, including an interview study of imprisoned burglars in New South Wales<sup>17</sup>. With the offenders' permission, the interviews were taped, and the tapes were then transcribed. The length of the interviews ranged from 15 minutes to 1 hour.

## SAMPLE CHARACTERISTICS

The majority of the respondents (73%) were in their twenties, with the age distribution ranging from 19-42 years. The ethnic profile of the respondents was consistent with that of the Tasmanian prison population as a whole, in that most of the respondents were Anglo-Australian. Ethnic minorities are not over-represented in Tasmanian prisons as they are in the UK and the US.

Fourteen respondents (23%) said they were in a relationship at the time of the interview, and 60% had at least one child. With regard to employment, 37% of the respondents said they had a job in the six months prior to their imprisonment, and only 15% of the sample had never been employed. The jobs mentioned by respondents were predominately manual occupations such as labouring, fruit picking, woodcutting, factory work and deck/farm hand. However, some were employed in the skilled trades and had relevant qualifications.

The legitimate income of the majority of the offenders was quite low, with 62% stating that they earned \$200 or less from legal means (eg. employment, social security) in the six months prior to their imprisonment. By contrast, when asked how much money they needed to live on per week, 48 offenders (80%) said they needed more than \$200 per week, and 18 of these offenders (30% of the sample) said they needed \$1 000 per week or more. These estimates included expenditure on food, rent, clothes, drugs and alcohol.

## Educational history and qualifications

The majority of the offenders (55%) said they disliked school, and 52% left school prior to completing grade

ten. Seventy-two per cent had been suspended from school on at least one occasion, and 42% had been expelled from at least one school. Six respondents (10%) had completed an apprenticeship, 17 (28%) had completed one or more TAFE courses and one had completed a university degree. The courses and/or apprenticeships undertaken by the offenders included: cooking, metal fabrication, occupational health and safety, carpentry, spray-painting, panel-beating, horticulture, butchery, cabinet-making, computing and scaffolding. In some cases, the courses or apprenticeships had been completed by the offender whilst he was in prison.

## Offending history

While the majority of the offenders (60%) said they committed their first crime as a teenager (i.e. between the ages of 13 and 19), 24 offenders (40%) first offended before reaching the age of 13, with nine of these offenders (15% of the sample) committing their first crime under the age of ten. The most common crime types first committed by the offenders were burglary (45%), shoplifting/stealing (23%) and motor vehicle theft (15%).

The offenders were asked how they first became involved in crime and the majority (57%) cited the influence of peers, either because they were encouraged to commit crime by their peers, they committed crime in company with their peers or they learnt by example from their peers. Other reasons for becoming involved in crime included: drugs (7%), the influence of siblings (5%), boredom (3%) and alcohol (3%).

## Offending frequency prior to imprisonment

The 60 offenders were asked how often they were committing crime in the six months prior to their imprisonment. Thirty-three respondents (55%) said they were committing crime on at least a weekly basis (referred to as 'high frequency offenders' (HFO), with 19 of these HFO offenders (32% of the sample) stating that they were offending on a daily basis. The main crime types committed by HFOs were, in order, burglary, shoplifting, motor vehicle theft, assault and armed robbery.

The 33 offenders who said they were committing crime on a daily or weekly basis in the six months prior to prison were asked how much money they were getting per week from crime. Twenty-one offenders (35% of the sample) said they were getting a \$1 000 a week or more from committing crime, and ten of these offenders said they were getting \$5 000 a week or more.

Table 7.2 Income from crime for high frequency offenders (a)

Amount	No.	%
\$200 or less	1	2
\$201-\$499	3	5
\$500-\$999	4	7
\$1 000-\$4 999	11	18
\$5 000 or more	10	17
Not getting any money	2	3

(a) Missing data = 2.

## MOTIVATION AND TARGET SELECTION

### Usual reason for committing burglary

A distinction is made in the literature between burglaries which are planned and those which are opportunistic. Bennett and Wright (1984) define opportunistic burglaries as those where the burglar makes an 'on the spot' decision to commit a burglary upon discovering a suitable target by chance rather than as a result of searching. Most researchers suggest that burglaries involve at least some degree of planning, and that relatively few are opportunistic<sup>13</sup>.

The 49 experienced burglars (i.e. those who had committed ten or more burglaries in their lifetime) were asked what usually made them decide to commit a burglary. The two most common reasons were to obtain money (43%) and to obtain drugs (41%). Other reasons for committing burglary cited by the offenders were, to obtain alcohol, to relieve boredom and for the thrill/rush it provided. One offender said he didn't really think about it, another said he committed burglaries when stressed or feeling bad about something and three offenders said they usually committed opportunistic burglaries.

Table 7.9 Usual reason for committing burglary (experienced burglars) (a)

Reason (a)	No.	%
Money	21	43
Drugs	20	41
Alcohol	5	10
Boredom	5	10
Thrill/Rush/Fun	4	8
Other	5	10

(a) Respondents could nominate more than one reason. Missing data = 1.

### Type of place

The majority of the experienced burglars (82%) had burgled both houses and businesses, but 29 burglars (59%) said that they *preferred* to burgle businesses rather than houses, and five burglars said they *preferred* to burgle houses.

### Suburbs preferred

Twenty-one of the experienced burglars (43%) said they preferred to commit burglary in one or more suburbs, or a particular type of suburb (eg. 'rich ones', 'quieter ones', 'close by ones'). The particular suburb/s named also varied according to the type of target preferred (e.g. business vs. residential) and the offender's degree of familiarity with the area. While most of the suburbs mentioned by the offenders who burgled houses were relatively close to major cities, some offenders clearly preferred to burgle houses in bush or rural settings.

These findings are consistent with others studies which emphasise the importance of the offender's familiarity with the area and the likely profitability of the burglary.

## Planning

Only ten of the experienced burglars (20%) said they usually planned their burglaries, although an additional 11 offenders (22%) said they sometimes planned them. Examples of some of the comments made include the following:

I thought about what area I was going to go to. Once you have done a few cat burglaries it is just like any other job. There are certain things you have got to do, certain precautions you have got to take.

I planned a few of them. They're the ones you don't get caught for.

Usually the jobs I would do I would know where the money was kept.

Planning included a range of activities, such as: watching the premises, discussing the burglary with co-offenders, visiting business premises when open to identify the location of alarm sensors, using radios and scanners and obtaining inside information about the premises (e.g. from people who worked there).

## Knowledge of the victim

Nearly all (98%) of the experienced burglars said their burglary victims would not usually be known to them. One offender said that he would sometimes know the victims he targeted, and indicated that he had burgled the homes of relatives. An additional two offenders mentioned that on one or two occasions they had burgled the house of someone they knew as a 'payback' or because that person had caused them some 'grief' in the past. By contrast, three offenders mentioned their own 'rule' of never burgling the house of anyone known to them.

Most of the experienced burglars (82%) said that they did not target any particular type of victim.

## Selecting a particular target

The majority of the respondents found it difficult to explain how they selected their targets. Some offenders mentioned getting a 'feeling' about a particular target or relying on instinct. Others were attracted to a particular premises because of the property they knew it contained, the way it looked (e.g. good, nice, big, rich, isolated, two storey) or because it had an alarm system.

Some of the comments made by the respondents include the following:

*How did you go about choosing a particular victim or target to burgle?*

If something looked good I'd do it. It doesn't matter where it was... I would stay away from housing commission places, old people's units. Why would you stay away from those places? Because they are battlers and chances are there was probably bugger all money in there.

If it had an alarm I would definitely do it especially if they were [name of company] alarms. Why? They are shit.

No cars, washing still on the line, things like that. Just go up and knock on the door and make out you want water for the radiator or something. Why did you pick places in the bush? Isolated, not many houses around.

Many of those who burgled houses just seemed to go from house to house knocking on doors until they eventually found one that was unoccupied. In relation to businesses, some offenders said they would become aware of a potential target via information from someone else (e.g. other criminals or inside information) or from entering the business legitimately as a customer.

## Views on the effectiveness of security measures

The experienced burglars were asked to rate the effectiveness of five security measures in preventing burglary: - dog, burglar alarm, deadlocks, window locks, Neighbourhood Watch (NHW) and property engraving.

Over half of the burglars considered that dogs, NHW, burglar alarms, deadlocks and property engraving provided at least some help in preventing burglary. In relation to NHW, this term was interpreted broadly or literally by many of the offenders to mean neighbours watching out for each other, rather than the actual program.

Window locks were not considered to be very effective with over 57% of the offenders considering them to be of no use at all. Also, 47% of the offenders thought deadlocks were of no benefit in preventing burglary.

An important finding is that 16% of the offenders said that the effectiveness of a burglar alarm depends on other factors such as the type of alarm, whether it is possible to disable it, the location of the premises, the time of day and the likely response time.

The burglars provided various insights as to how security measures could be defeated, and overall the impression gained from many of them was that if they wanted to get into a particular target badly enough they would find a way to get round the security measures.

The findings in relation to the effectiveness of security measures in this study, and ways to defeat them, are broadly consistent with the findings from other studies<sup>(20,3,7)</sup>. Some of these studies suggest that burglar alarms and dogs are more likely to deter burglars than locks<sup>(15,21,3)</sup>.

## Taking precautions to avoid being caught

The 49 experienced burglars were asked if they ever worried about being caught and/or about what sentence

they might receive. While the majority of the offenders said they did not worry about either, 19 offenders (39%) said they worried about getting caught, and 11 offenders (22%) said they worried about what sentence they might receive.

A surprising finding was that a significant minority (31%, n=15) of the burglars said they did not take any precautions, not even the most basic step of wearing gloves to avoid leaving fingerprints. Furthermore, an additional three respondents (6%) said they only took precautions sometimes. There are several possible explanations for this, such as: they may have under-estimated the risk of detection via fingerprints; due to the influence of drugs/alcohol they forgot to take precautions; or they did not take precautions because they actually wanted to get caught.

## BURGLARY AND ILLICIT DRUG USE

A common motivation for offending cited by burglars is the need to obtain drugs. Many of the burglars interviewed in St Louis, Missouri<sup>20</sup>, said they committed burglaries for the sole purpose of acquiring money to purchase drugs. Similarly, it was found that the primary motivation for offending among their sample of illicit drug using burglars was the need for money to purchase drugs or alcohol or for 'partying'<sup>7</sup>.

The findings in relation to the expenditure patterns of burglars in this study shed further light on their motivation for offending, and once again drugs feature prominently.

In the Tasmanian study, nearly all of the 60 imprisoned burglars interviewed (97%, n=58) said they had used drugs in their lifetime. Eighty per cent of the offenders said they were using drugs in the six months prior to their imprisonment. The most commonly used drugs were marijuana (45%), amphetamines (43%) and morphine (18%). Other drugs mentioned included heroin (10%), methadone (7%), cocaine (7%), ecstasy (7%) and a variety of pharmaceuticals including Rohypnol, Valium, Serepax, Ritalin and Normison. Polydrug use was not uncommon, with 23% of the sample reporting that they had used three or more different types of drugs in the six months prior to their imprisonment.

Thirty-five offenders (58%) said they were using drugs on a daily basis, with another five offenders (8%) reporting usage on a weekly basis. The offenders who indicated they were using drugs on a daily or weekly basis in the six months before they came to prison were asked to indicate how much money they were spending on drugs per week. Thirty-six per cent of the sample reported spending \$1 000 or more per week on drugs, with 8% reporting expenditure of \$5 000 or more.

These high levels of expenditure on drugs are consistent with other research in Australia where it was reported<sup>17</sup> that for the imprisoned burglars in their sample who reported using drugs during the reference period, the median expenditure on illicit drugs was \$900. For heroin users, the median expenditure was \$1 500 per week. In a study<sup>12</sup> of incarcerated male offenders in three states, the weekly expenditure on drugs for regular property offenders was estimated to be as follows: \$201 for regular cannabis users; \$986 for regular amphetamine users;

\$2 329 for regular heroin users and \$617 for regular cocaine users.

The pathways leading to crime and drug use varied among the Tasmanian burglars. Only 13% of the sample started using drugs prior to committing their first crime, the majority of the respondents (62%) committed their first crime before they started using drugs. For 20% of the sample, initiation into crime and drug use occurred around the same age making it difficult for the offenders (or indeed the researcher) to determine what came first.

Despite the fact that involvement in crime preceded drug use for the majority of the offenders, many of them clearly believed there was some causal connection between illicit drug use and crime. The following quotes are illustrative of the type of statements made:

My only reasons [for committing crimes] were to support my amphetamine habit. If I had all the drugs I needed I wouldn't commit any crime... Drugs are by far the biggest cause of crime. As the person becomes more dependent the more likely they are to commit crime.

Not many burglars in Hobart go out for money alone, most go out for money to buy drugs. If drugs were given to them they wouldn't have to do crime to pay for it.

Over 90% of the people in prison [commit burglary] to support a drug habit.

A lot of the burglaries are drug-related. People are not thinking about anything but the next taste. There has to be an acceptable rate [of burglary] in the community because I don't think you will ever get rid of it. Especially with Tasmania's unemployment.

However, this view was by no means universally held. For example, one respondent who said he was using marijuana on a daily basis in the six months prior to imprisonment pointed out that he had other reasons for committing crime:

Not all of us are here because we are drug and alcohol lunatics and just don't give a shit. There are people who do want to kick along in life but can't seem to get a break.

The respondents were asked if they had ever been drug dependent and 32 offenders (53%) reported that they had. The offenders who said they had been drug dependent were also asked if they had ever been in a treatment program or on methadone. Only 12 of the offenders reported having ever been in a treatment program or on methadone. This was less than half of those who said they had been drug dependent based on a self-assessment.

There is some evidence that drug users may go into treatment to have a rest because the drugs and crime cycle can be exhausting<sup>1</sup>. It has been observed that many drug users go into treatment for prescribed methadone in order to be *released from the spiral of thieving, 'scoring' and 'fixing'*<sup>11</sup>.

In the present study there was evidence to suggest that some of the offenders regarded prison in a similar light, as somewhere they could go to have a rest and/or go into detoxification:

I would have loved to give up the drugs when I was out there, it was just I knew it would take a week or two weeks for me to come out of it and I didn't want to go through it so I just kept going..I just wanted it to end. I didn't want to come to jail but I knew it was the only thing that was going to save me.

I just wanted out of what I was in - a break. You come in here and get off all the drugs, you get off the alcohol, you sort of get your head level again and go back out and try and make it without doing your burgs and stuff like that....In a way I did [want to get caught] - enough was enough.

## PREVENTING INVOLVEMENT IN BURGLARY

The experienced burglars were asked how they thought people could be prevented from committing burglary. The offenders provided a range of suggestions, some of which could be classified into specific types of prevention activity. For example, nine offenders suggested drug-related solutions such as increasing the availability of drugs or drug treatment programs, five offenders suggested that it might help if offenders could secure employment, three offenders suggested prison programs might help and three offenders mentioned better parenting.

Other suggestions included:

- mentoring of young offenders by reformed adult offenders;
- a community approach to dealing with young offenders;
- more support for offenders released from prison;
- more money on the dole;
- better education;
- exposure to jail when young; and
- boot camp.

The following quotes illustrate the range of comments and suggestions made by the experienced burglars:

*How do you think people can be prevented from committing burglary?*

I think once they get in here you have got buckley's hope really. Because they are probably in here for one or two and have probably got away with a hundred and two. Basically I think it has got to come down to the way they are growing up, the places they are growing up, the things around when they are growing up. You have probably got to try and nip it in the bud when they are in school, when they are young, try and get it through to them. Once they are in here it's a waste of time.

I really think that it comes down to who you hang around with. I know the seven years that I went

through without any crime at all I was hanging around with a real good class of people. It wasn't until I lost me job and me life fell apart a bit that I got in with the riff raff again and I fell back into that rut and then the drugs come along and then you just don't have any vision....I don't see jail as a cure. This jail has just got younger, it is just full of younger people. They are sneakier, they're cleverer and there is more of them. All they are doing is planning jobs. All they do is come in here, hook up with people, plan jobs and go out and do them and come back and plan more jobs.

More job opportunities....More courses [in prison] and places linked to here, like more support and like come in here and do courses and that and probably have a job waiting for you on the outside while you are in here. Like businesses can be linked to the jail and that.

Some rehabilitation in here. A lot of the people in here are career criminals, they come, they go, they come, they go and they just don't care. Whereas I think if there was some sort of rehabilitation for us in here, like more programs, qualifications, so we can get out and get proper jobs, people would think, 'Ok, I've got a job', because now people think 'No one is going to employ me, I've got a criminal record'.

## CONCLUSION

In many respects the findings from the Tasmanian study are very similar to the findings from other studies involving interviews with burglars. In particular, the Tasmanian burglars' motivation for offending, attitudes to security measures and target selection methods are consistent with those of other burglars. Because of the similarities, most of the strategies to reduce recidivism suggested by other researchers are equally applicable here and were actually suggested by some of the offenders themselves. In particular, individually tailored rehabilitative programs with elements such as job placements, drug treatment and curfews would be a good place to start. While the effectiveness of prison as a deterrent appears to be limited, it does provide a temporary respite for some offenders seeking 'time out' from the demands of their criminal lifestyle or the opportunity to overcome their addiction to drugs.

An encouraging finding is the fact that most of the offenders had experienced employment in the past, with some having completed TAFE courses and/or apprenticeships. This suggests that most of them would have the capacity to do some kind of work if it was available to them. However, their drug/alcohol addiction and other issues such as the inability to deal with traumatic events and lack of social support would need to be addressed first. The challenge would then be to find employers prepared to give them a chance given the strong prospect that they might lapse back into crime or drug/alcohol abuse. Night-time curfews and restrictions on their ability to associate with co-offenders or other known associates may help reduce the likelihood of a lapse back into undesirable behaviour.

Consistent with other studies, a significant theme emerging throughout the interviews is the relationship between drugs and burglary. For those offenders who claimed that their crime and drug use were connected, treatment may be an appropriate option. To be effective, treatment would need to identify and address underlying causes<sup>9</sup> such as the inability to deal with emotional crises, boredom, a desire to escape reality, unemployment, lack of self-esteem etc. Based on the characteristics of this sample of offenders, a 'one size fits all' approach to treatment would not be appropriate and programs would need to be tailored to meet individual needs. The relationship between the offender's drug of choice and crime should be carefully explored<sup>11</sup>.

From the interviews it appears that drug use can be so compelling for some individuals that even experiencing severe adverse effects will not be enough of an incentive for them to abstain. Treatment programs would, therefore, need to have realistic goals such as improvements in quality of life rather than total abstinence, and also be flexible enough to allow for the possibility of relapse<sup>(2,10)</sup>. Many individuals would probably also require some form of ongoing social support and/or mentoring as several lacked family support and/or positive role models to help them abstain from drugs. The importance of aftercare following treatment has been noted in a UK Home Office report on the effectiveness of drug treatment in prison<sup>5</sup>.

The extent to which burglars are rational decision-makers was explored in this Tasmanian study. According to the rational choice perspective, offenders commit crime in order to benefit themselves, and this involves the making of decisions and choices with a degree of rationality, although the offender's rationality may be subject to potential constraints in terms of time, ability and the availability of relevant information<sup>6</sup>. The rational choice approach is not intended as a theory, but as an organising framework to throw new light on criminal behaviour and decision-making<sup>6</sup>. The findings from the interviews with Tasmanian burglars support a model of limited rationality. While some of the experienced burglars exhibited a reasonable degree of rationality when discussing issues such as target selection, they were in the minority. Less than half of the experienced burglars said they usually planned their burglaries, and the methods of target selection described by most, lacked sophistication. Many of the burglars also appeared to be influenced by extraneous factors such as their moods, feelings, moral judgements and alcohol or drug intoxication.

Given that the Tasmanian research with burglars involved interviews only, rather more weight on the issue of whether or not burglars are rational decision-makers should be placed on those studies which have utilised other techniques such as photographs, videos, models and "drive-alongs" to explore these issues. These studies also support a model of limited rationality. For example, 45 commercial burglars were interviewed<sup>18</sup> and shown an aerial photograph of an industrial estate, together with a chart identifying the nature and use of each building, and asked them to comment on which of the 49 premises they were shown were likely in their view to be selected as targets. He reported that 53% of the men gave responses showing logical and methodological assessment

as opposed to the intuitive feelings and emotional reactions displayed by the rest. He concluded that burglars vary in rationality from outright "senseless" behaviour to being as rational as the circumstances permit<sup>18</sup>.

Family criminality was quite common among the sample of imprisoned burglars. The majority of the offenders (60%) had at least one relative who had committed a crime, with 31 offenders (52%) having at least one sibling who had offended, and 19 offenders (32%) having at least one parent who had committed a crime. Longitudinal surveys have established that crime tends to run in families<sup>8</sup>. The finding that offending runs in families highlights the importance of crime prevention approaches which aim to provide support to the families of burglars to try and prevent the family transmission of criminality. This suggests that the most promising programs in this regard include parent education in home visits, parent management training and child skills training, and pre-school intellectual enrichment programs with home visits<sup>8</sup>.

The findings concerning the effectiveness of security measures suggest that a continued focus on target-hardening in Tasmania is appropriate, although perhaps the burglary prevention messages should be more carefully constructed to reflect the offender's perspective on the effectiveness of security measures. Some security measures are clearly more effective than others, and members of the public should also be made aware of the techniques used by burglars to defeat security measures so that they can make more informed choices about the type of security they install. Public education campaigns should continue to encourage neighbours to look out for each other and report suspicious activity, as NHW was considered by the burglars to be one of the most effective security measures. In particular, members of the community should be advised to report any instances of suspicious door knocking in their area as this may be burglars checking the occupancy of potential targets.

A reassuring finding for residential burglary victims is the fact that most burglars do not know their victims and, in that sense, their target selection is random. However, some burglars do target particular houses or areas because they are perceived to be wealthy. There is an important message in this for people who believe that they will not be burgled because they live in a 'good area'. It is clear that burglars are primarily motivated by the need to obtain money as quickly and easily as possible and 'good areas' contain precisely the type of targets they will find attractive.

Finally, while it appeared that most of the burglars interviewed could be persuaded to desist from crime under the right circumstances, for a small minority the attraction of a criminal lifestyle would probably be quite difficult, if not impossible, to counter-balance, at least at this stage in their life. Most of these offenders enjoyed committing burglary and recognised that they could make far more money from crime than they could ever earn via legitimate employment. They had not reached the stage where they were concerned about family or relationship obligations, and were still caught up in the drug and partying scene.

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