An Analysis of the Factors Affecting the Target Choices of Residential Burglars

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AN ANALYSIS OF THE FACTORS AFFECTING
THE TARGET CHOICES OF RESIDENTIAL BURGLARS

A Dissertation
Submitted to the School of Graduate Studies and Research
in Partial Fulfillment of the
Requirements for the Degree
Doctor of Philosophy

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May 2013
We hereby approve the dissertation of

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This study is based on hour-long interviews that were conducted with 102 inmates in three rural county jails in western Pennsylvania. The sample included 52 inmates who committed burglary, and a comparison group of 50 inmates who had no history of burglary. During each interview, inmates were shown photographs of houses and indicated which ones were suitable for burglary. Hierarchical Generalized Linear Modeling (HGLM) was used to examine the influence of personal characteristics (e.g., low self-control) and home features (e.g., newspapers on the porch) on the target choices of both burglars and non-burglars. Additionally, the results of the photographic method were compared to the results of a more traditional survey to evaluate the possible existence of methodological effects. Notable features of this study include a dependent variable that distinguished between immediate and delayed burglary, examination of the effect of empathy cues, and consideration of whether survey methods about individual home features produce different findings than photographic methods.