Decision Making by Burglars: A Qualitative Study in a Korean Context

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ABSTRACT

The relation between crime and its physical context continues to be the focus of a growing body of research within environmental criminology. The research design and methodology employed in the study consisted mainly of qualitative research techniques adjusted to suit the specific needs of the study. A purposive sampling method was used to select the fifty-two subjects interviewed. The majority of the subjects came from the Incheon Metropolitan City area, and all of them had committed one or more residential burglaries. A central focus of the study was the subjects’ target-selection methodology, and they were queried as to how they went about identifying a suitable residential target for burglary. Special attention was given to the extent to which the subjects in the study sample utilised rational processes to select a potential burglary target, and what situational conditions and features they used as discriminative cues in this target-selection process.

1. Introduction

In the Republic of Korea crime is viewed as a threat to the stability of the country and as an impediment to economic development. Since the 1990s crime prevention has emerged as a key challenge facing the Korean Government, and various initiatives have been undertaken to strengthen the country’s law enforcement capabilities and to encourage the private sector and research institutions to assist in the task of crime prevention. In this context, recognizing the need for research on the ‘crime problem’ in the Republic of Korea, it was decided to focus this study on a specific form of crime that has significant impact on the daily lives of many citizens, namely, residential burglary. Under the provisions of Section 330 of the Korean Criminal Code (2012), residential burglary is defined as the unlawful entry of a house or similar structure, with the intent to commit a theft on the premises.

Residential burglary represents not only an intrusion of privacy and the theft of private property; it also fosters a climate of fear and anger in the community. This situation poses a challenge to the safety and security of ordinary citizens. Law enforcement agencies; however, tend to regard residential burglary as less serious than some other forms of crime, due to its non-violent nature. Specifically, burglars are rarely encountered by their victims unlike in the case of robbery. Furthermore, the facts that most stolen property is never returned to the owners and property protection primarily falls within the domain of private security have contributed to underestimating the importance of controlling residential burglary [1]. Despite this tendency, in the Republic of Korea, residential burglary remains as one of the most frequent crimes and its rising cases are expected to continue to the foreseeable future, calling for viable measures to solve the lasting societal issue by which the country has been plagued for decades. Most of the crime research registered at the Korea Research Foundation has been directed towards forms of crime other than residential burglary.

Thus, it is clear that at present there can only be a limited understanding of the situational dynamics and context in which any particular burglary event takes place; and that consequently, a poor scientific basis exists on which to build appropriate preventative measures against the occurrence of such burglaries. In order to better understand residential burglary, it is important to explore the following question: how do offenders make decisions and identify their targets? This study seeks to answer that question.

2. Empirical Studies on the Burglar’s Viewpoint

During the 1970s, a few notable descriptive studies on burglary (e.g., [2], [3], [4], [5]) were carried out; these researches placed a great emphasis on the situational cues in understanding the patterns of residential burglary. Although these studies deserve credit for providing remarkable insight into burglary prevention, they failed to analyze the viewpoint of the offenders at a profound level and little was discovered on the burglars’ decision-making processes in regard to the alteration of situational features.

In the following decades, a number of offender-based researches examined the target selection and decision making of the residential burglars. By combining the accounts of the offenders and the research findings, the authors of these studies examined the validity of the assumptions of Situational Crime Prevention Theory; and [6], [7], and [8] have had a major influence on the present research. The findings
of the three studies suggest that burglars go through a type of rational evaluation process before executing their offences and recognize certain cues before finalizing their decisions to offend. Particularly, the burglars tend to weigh the costs and benefits associated with committing their crime and deliver their actions when the benefit outweighs the cost.

Maguire and Bennett interviewed forty persistent burglars and identified a variety of environmental cues that offenders used in their target selection. They suggested that the typical burglar was far less opportunistic than had previously been assumed, with the majority demonstrating discrimination and expertise in the selection of targets rather than responding impulsively to random opportunities. When selecting an area in which the burglary was to occur, burglars were concerned with the familiarity of the area and the type of property they were looking for. Once within what they considered a suitable area, the primary concerns for most burglars were occupancy of the target residence and the degree of cover offered by walls, trees, shrubbery or other buildings [6].

Bennett and Wright interviewed more than three hundred burglars in prison, focusing on how burglars planned their crime. In planning burglaries, cues associated with the target residences were used and they were divided into three distinct categories: risk, ease and reward. The risk factor included burglar alarm, occupancy, dogs, cover, presence or proximity of neighborhoods and others. The ease factor included locks and design of potential entry points. The reward factor was not broken down into any specific components. However, the risk factor seemed to be the most important one. The respondents often mentioned ‘surveillability’ and ‘occupancy’ as the most important cues [7].

Both studies by Maguire and Bennett and Bennett and Wright used the prison-based samples. However, [8] examined the decision making of active burglars. They interviewed thirty persistent burglars and found that a burglar’s decision to commit a crime was based primarily on environmental cues. Based on their findings, they divided environmental cues into three categories. The first category consisted of cues that indicated the surveillability of the target residence. This factor referred to the extent to which a residence was overlooked by neighbors or passers-by. The second category was made up of cues that indicated whether the residence was occupied. Most burglars tried to avoid residents. The third and final category was comprised of cues that indicated the degree of difficulty that might be expected in the actual commission of the burglary into the target residence [6], [7].

The present research relates both methodologically and conceptually to the above-mentioned studies. As was the case in these earlier studies, personal qualitative interviews with residential burglars are utilized in the present study to yield the type of information required to answer the key research questions. In addition, the present research also focuses on burglars’ decision making with special attention on the extent to which burglars make rational choices, as did the earlier studies. Thus, the overall objective of the present research is to look at burglars’ decision making processes in another context (i.e., in Korea) to see if similar patterns can be identified, and to look more closely at what type of situational cues are central to burglars’ target selection in the Korean context. Therefore, the research question in the present study is similar to the key questions considered by these earlier offender based studies.

3. Research Methods

3.1 The Qualitative Approach

By reviewing the past studies, it can be noted that the criminals’ decision making processes and the situational factors that affect them are best understood through examining the offenders. According to Berg, qualitative studies are suitable for revealing the meanings assigned to the experiences by individuals. Moreover the emotions, motivations, empathies, and other subjective aspects can be understood at a deep level through utilizing such method [9].

In order to undertake a qualitative study of the burglary process, it is necessary to adopt a research method that will ensure an in-depth understanding of the situational criteria that can influence the course of that process. Qualitative interviewing is appropriate for this purpose, since such interviewing provides the intellectual framework for learning about events and activities that are not observable directly. In this type of interviewing, the people interviewed are informants, in the truest sense of that term. Acting as observers - the eyes and ears in the field - for the researcher, they bring him or her, information. The role of such informants is not simply to reveal their own views in relation to an event, but in particular, to describe what actually happened.

In this study, the technique of the semi-structured form of interview was used as the method of acquiring information from the people selected for interviewing. The interview schedule consists of a mixture of closed and open questions that was organized into three sections. In Section One, (which was effectively the ‘structured’ part of the schedule), demographic information about the subject was sought through closed questions. In the remainder of the schedule, (which comprised the ‘semi-structured’ part of the interview), information was first sought through closed questions on target selection (Section Two) and method (Section Three); and then these closed questions were supplemented by open ones inviting subjects to ‘explain’, ‘describe’, or otherwise ‘elaborate’ upon, their initial answers.

Throughout the application of the schedule, subjects were encouraged to be open and to speak spontaneously about issues, using their own language rather than language imposed by the researcher. It was considered important that the interview schedule should facilitate spontaneity, rather than inhibiting or obstructing it. Towards this end, the semi-structured format of the interview schedule allowed the order of questions to be varied in accordance with the direction and ‘flow’ of any given interview. The purpose of the interviewing process was to attempt to access the perspectives of the subjects, rather than those of the interviewing researcher; and the less structured form of the interview allowed subjects to define the world in their own individual and unique ways.
In a qualitative study, the researcher is the primary instrument of inquiry, rather than functioning as some form of inanimate mechanism [10]. In this study, therefore, there was minimal psychic distance between the researcher and the participating subjects, a situation that is quite different from that which prevails in a quantitative process, where researchers maintain an impersonal research format in their approach, together with a maximal psychic distance between themselves and the subjects participating in the study. Because of the close relationship achieved between the researcher and participating subjects within the interview operation, it was possible to gain an in-depth understanding of burglars’ target selection.

3.2 The Geographical Area of the Study

The study was carried out in the Incheon Metropolitan City area, where the researcher had worked as a police officer for several years prior to undertaking this study. Incheon is located on the Yellow Sea coast, on the western side of the Korean peninsula, about halfway down the peninsula, and only a short distance west of Seoul. The city displays an urban-type industrial structure, characterized by the level of tertiary industry being relatively greater than that of primary or secondary industry. The current administrative unit of the metropolitan city covers a total area of 986.45 sq. km, or 0.98% of the entire area of South Korea and it is divided into eight districts and two counties. As of December 2011, the city had a total population of 2,853,489. Incheon is the third largest city in Korea, after Seoul and Busan respectively [11].

The neighborhoods in the Incheon area appear, in terms of general public perception, to be less affluent than those of other commuter areas also lying in the larger region around the capital, Seoul. A number of different types of burglary are thought to take place in the Incheon area, and the police believe that burglaries in Incheon are committed both by local offenders and by offenders travelling from Seoul for that specific purpose - a feature that is common among many satellite cities on the fringes of metropolitan areas. Although the area investigated in the present study cannot be regarded as representative of the country as a whole, nevertheless, it is typical of many other commuter areas that also have a high incidence of burglary.

Comparing all types of crime in Korea that are reported to the police, burglary has one of the highest incidences nationally. At a provincial level, four provinces in the country, namely, Seoul, Kyunggi, Inchoen, and Busan, exceeded the average burglary rate for 2011, and Incheon had the third highest residential burglary rate per annum (321 for every 100,000 people) in Korea [12].

3.3 Selection of Sample for Interviewing

The goal of sample selection was to seek subjects who had experience in the phenomena in question, namely, the burglary process and the target selection that is involved in that process. No restrictions were imposed regarding the sex, age, socio-economic background, employment, or marital status of the subjects. The sample size was determined by the factor of redundancy in the information gathered; i.e., when responses to interview questions became repetitious, indicating that sufficient coverage of the topics involved had taken place, sample selection stopped. Approaching interview number forty, it was noticed that a state of critical mass was being reached, and that, although each new respondent’s life history and experience were always fascinating, in practical terms, new information on burglar decision making was becoming rare. As a result, when fifty interviews were reached, the process of conducting interviews was concluded, since sufficient information had been obtained from the subjects for the effective illustration of the phenomenon of burglary.

The primary source of data was a selected sample from among suspects who were detained in the Detention Centre at the Incheon Public Prosecutor’s Office. With the objective of exploring the decision making process of the burglars to be interviewed, the criteria of a non-probability or purposive sampling method were used to select the fifty-two burglar suspects that came to constitute the sample. The purpose of sample selection in a qualitative study is to obtain an accurate understanding of meaning, and to establish possibilities, rather than to achieve a generalisation of findings. In accord with this principle, the subjects were purposely chosen as being best able to answer the research questions.

The subjects at the detention centre provided a diverse sampling frame of residential burglars with easily accessible records. Subjects were selected based on the crime for which they were being detained, and their records were reviewed in order to determine that each subject met the sample criteria. Access to potential subjects’ files was made possible for this purpose, by the chief of the detention centre. If, as a result of this procedure, potential subjects were determined as satisfying the sample criteria, their participation was sought. Finally, in order for a subject to be selected, they had to be willing to correctly describe themselves as having committed at least one residential burglary of a house. All of the fifty-two subjects interviewed in the study were male. The age range of the subjects was between 13 and 59 years old. This yielded an average subject age at the time of the interviews, of 25.1 years.

4. Burglary Decision Making

Until the recent past, most theories of criminal behaviour did not focus much attention on offenders’ decision making. This omission was attributable to the apparent conflict between concepts of decision making and the prevailing determinism of most criminological theories [13], that have traditionally been concerned with explaining the criminal ‘disposition’ of particular individuals or groups. In those theories, the criminal is portrayed as a relatively passive figure in the offending process [13]. The central problem with this deterministic approach is that while it is useful in explaining the development of criminal dispositions, it is generally unhelpful in explaining how individuals make specific decisions with respect to offending. A different theoretical approach that seems more useful in explaining criminal decision making is the Rational Choice Perspective. This perspective has been applied to the conceptual framework of this study, which is based on the idea that potential offenders are rational in their target selection, and that, therefore, they can be viewed as acting as a result of their weighing the risks and rewards associated with any prospective burglary. It follows that, if the rational-choice model has value, its operation should be evident in the process of the actual selection of targets by burglars.
When burglars are searching for a prospective target, they have to decide on a suitable area for their search, and further, to select a specific residence to burgle within that area. Maguire suggested that in respect of the decision to burgle, the initial choice made by the burglars is their selection of the area in which the burglary is to take place [14]. This suggestion was borne out by research done by Winchester and Jackson, who found that once the area had been established, then the burglars would select a target residence within that specific area to burgle [15]. Consequently, in the present study, the subjects were asked to identify and then explain, the causal factors that led them to choose, firstly a specific area, and then a specific residence within that area, as the target for their burglary.

Familiarity with an area played an important role for the subjects in the study, in determining their selection of the area. Their search seemed to be influenced by limitations imposed on them by their knowledge of any given area that they might consider as viable for target location. Those areas that a subject would frequent formed the dominant portion of his awareness space, and targets proved to be often selected from within the subject’s awareness space. Furthermore, 40.3 per cent of the subjects said that their knowledge of the area in which the eventual target would be situated, was the most important factor in their selection of that area. They believed that their being familiar with the area selected could reduce the likelihood of any surprises occurring during the burglary.

Always remember one thing about burglars. They like areas they know. They feel more comfortable there because they know of one or more possible escape routes and hiding places. (Respondent 32)

When I do a burglary, I know where I am going. If the police approach me in an area that I know pretty well, I can give quick and calm answers. I don’t want to do anything that could draw suspicion. (Respondent 37)

Because I knew the layout of the Bupyung area, I always went there and searched back streets, keeping away from the police…. Back streets in the Bupyung area were too narrow for patrol cars to pass. There was no patrol in the back streets. (Respondent 41)

Most of my burglaries were committed in the area where I was born. I no longer live there, but I am familiar with people who live in the area. So I know where to go for burglaries. (Respondent 8)

According to the Rational Choice Theory, the commission of a crime requires that rational offenders have the requisite knowledge and information that will allow them to weigh the respective costs and benefits of offending at a specific place, at a specific time [16]. In particular, the offender seeks to minimize risk and maximize reward [16]. In the present study, the factors most frequently mentioned by subjects, as encouraging them to select a particular area in which to search for their specific burglary target, related to their familiarity with the area in question. Overall, familiarity with a given area led the subject to feel comfortable or safe when operating in that area. This key finding suggests that the burglars’ decision to choose a particular area is, for the most part, based primarily on the perceived risks associated with any area that they may have under consideration. Thus, the subjects ruled out areas that were unknown to them, believing that such areas posed a risk that was higher than the subjects were willing to assume in the commission of a burglary.

These findings with respect to the importance of the factor of familiarity with an area are supported by previous research. For example, Maguire and Bennett found that many burglars in their own study were reluctant to target residences in territory that was totally unknown to them; and that burglars in the study also felt more comfortable in relatively familiar surroundings, where they knew either the layout of the streets and alleyways in the area, or the general habits of the people living there [6]. Also, Wiles and Costello examined offender crime patterns by analyzing geocoded, police-recorded crime statistics, in England; and their results confirmed the findings of previous studies [17]. They demonstrated that, in the case of the vast majority of offenders they examined, the movements of the offender were quite short in distance. For instance, in the example of offenders based in Sheffield, England, police-recorded crime data showed that over a third of the crime trips involved were less than one mile long; over half were more than one, but less than two miles in length; and only slightly more than one-tenth (11 per cent) required travel that was greater than ten miles. When analyzing burglary offences in relation to the burglar’s most recent address, it was found that offences were most concentrated in the areas of the burglar’s current residence. These were followed by offences in areas in which the burglar had previously lived; and finally came offences in areas which, although the burglar was neither currently or previously resident, were, nevertheless, well known to him/her [17].

In the present study, young subjects (i.e., those under 21 years) showed a particularly strong and consistent tendency to seek targets only in the neighborhood in which they lived. Beyond the constraints that have been identified above, most youthful subjects did not have access to reliable transportation. Other related factors favoring their own ‘home area’, included that they often had knowledge of those homes near their own that were unoccupied during the daytime; and that they believed that other neighborhoods were unsafe for them to operate in, because their presence there could cause trouble for them with the local youth gangs operating in those neighborhoods. Hence, the burglaries that the young subjects committed were often within an area in close proximity to where they lived. This key insight yielded by the study, therefore, would suggest that in the case of juvenile offenders, their burglaries occur disproportionately in those areas in which they carry out their routine patterns of daily-life activity.

I would do my neighborhood and the two or three surrounding neighborhoods.... There is no reason to go too far, if you can go just round the corner. (Respondent 11)

Because I do not have a car, I don’t go to a distant area. If I walk with all the stuff, the police on patrol would ask me where I got all that stuff. That’s too risky. (Respondent 26)

If gang members in other neighborhoods see me walking down the street, they will hurt me. They are tough, and I am always trying to stay away from them. (Respondent 45)
The findings from prior research, however, are not consistent regarding the relation between the age of the burglars and their mobility. Reppetto found that age was an important factor in determining where the burglars operated [4]. Juveniles tended to operate in their own neighborhood. Eighteen- to twenty-five-year-olds would move out of their own neighborhood to operate, for at least half of their jobs. The over-twenty-five-year-old burglars, who were more concerned with the factor of the affluence of any given neighborhood, would travel in order to burgle in a more favorable area. Reppetto’s study was carried out in the United States. However, Baldwin and Bottoms, in a study carried out in England, found that although, in general, adult burglars would travel further in order to commit a burglary, than would juveniles, there was no clear-cut age distinction in this respect [18].

When subjects in the present study were asked what made them choose a particular area as the one in which to select a burglary target, the first and most important factor was their knowledge of, and familiarity with, the area in question. The second most important factor that subjects identified as determining their choice in this context was the “better pay-off” factor. Over a quarter of the study subjects (28.8 per cent) arrived at selecting a specific burglary target, only after first having evaluated the general affluence of a prospective area. The subjects believed that the more affluent areas would provide residences for burglary that would yield far greater rewards than would residences in less affluent areas. This aspect will be dealt with in detail in the following chapter.

A third factor determining the choice of a target area, as expressed by the study subjects, was that the chosen area was an isolated one. In this connection, several of the study subjects (15.4 per cent) said that they sought targets that were in isolated areas. Advantages of an isolated area that were mentioned by these subjects, included that police response time was usually slower in such areas; and that in such areas there was a reduced likelihood of there being passers-by who might spot or possibly interrupt a burglary. These subjects preferred their targets to be located in areas with very light pedestrian and vehicular traffic, and more-isolated areas answered that description.

The house was in a little corner in a quiet neighborhood. It [the neighborhood] was very dark and very isolated. There was hardly anyone walking around the area that might see the burglary. (Respondent 39)

There was no police station in the town. This gave me enough time to get into the house and get away before the cops or security officers arrived. (Respondent 23)

In most of the cases, I went to Gangwha because there are more isolated neighborhoods in the area.... In isolated areas like there are in Gangwha, I am going to have more time for escape if something goes wrong. (Respondent 42)

The subjects in the study also cited a number of other factors influencing their preference for a specific area as the one in which to locate their burglary target. These factors included the degree of planning required; the type of people involved in the burglary process; getting even with the residents; no equipment or partner being required; the degree of accessibility to prospective targets; the degree of security of prospective targets against burglars; the influence of alcohol on the subject; and other related or similar factors. However, only a few subjects mentioned any one or more of these other factors; and the factors did not appear to be very important to the other subjects, who did not mention them. Indeed, sometimes these other factors did not seem to be very important even to those subjects who did mention them.

Burglars not only executed decision making when they chose a ‘suitable area’ to commit their crimes, but also when selecting a target that could best suit their need within the chosen area. In this study, it was found that the burglars chose their specific targets with a basis on the risk assessments related to their situational conditions. For example, the research subjects showed a tendency to assess the situational conditions associated with possible target residences, and excluded those which could cost them more than could offer benefits; and the major situational conditions included in burglars’ target selection were occupancy, detectability, and physical barriers.

Over the recent decades, the rational choices made by the burglars in committing their crimes have received much attention from the scholars in the related fields (e.g., [19], [8], [7], [6]). The representative studies generally confirmed that burglary is a result of the cost and benefit calculation by the possible offenders. In agreement with the past findings, this study disclosed that the participants had developed a clear conception on what they perceived as a ‘suitable target’. Most study subjects seemed to weigh the risks and rewards involved in all instances in which they made a decision in judging the suitability of a possible target. Moreover, they viewed their target selection processes as a rational choice, thus regarding burglary as a reasonable act.

Despite the support from the past research findings, committing burglary should not be considered a completely rational act, because there is no clear evidence to argue that the participants of the researches took into account every other alternatives and different situational factors. Rather, it would be more accurate to state that the subjects in the study sample may have exercised what is designated as ‘bounded rationality’. Specifically, it indicates that the decisions of the burglars are typically made on the basis of examining a small number of situational aspects or factors. Besides in the case of the present study, other criminological research, too, has found the concept of ‘bounded rationality’ useful in helping to explain criminal decision making. In this connection, Walsh, for instance, examined the victim-selection procedure of economic criminals (including burglars), and in the concluding remarks to his study, he stated,

Reading all the target selection comments from the interviews together, we find that each man mentions rational facts.... Yet closer examination shows that rather than each criminal covering all the points for his crime, considering their target, victim defenses, and so on, what is happening is that each man has a bee in his bonnet about particular items and disregards others totally.... The concept we are fumbling for... is perhaps limited, temporal rationality (p.50). [20]
5. Conclusion

Despite the importance of understanding the function of residential target selection by burglars, as part of the broader context of the development of relevant crime prevention strategies, no study has previously attempted to analyze the processes involved in such target selection, and the criteria used to determine such selection, in relation to the Korean context. The present study, therefore, constitutes the first attempt to identify, analyze, and assess the role of the various criteria that, in the context of crime in Korea, burglars use in the selection of their residential burglary targets. Thus, potentially, the findings of the study carry important practical implications for law-enforcement officials and for homeowners.

The most important findings of the study, having far-reaching policy implications, are that offenders conducting residential burglary are, to some extent, rational in their burglary decision making; and that burglars’ selection of their residential targets is, for the most part, not random, but rather, is based upon certain identifiable criteria that are related mainly to the features of the residential target. The question that naturally follows from these two major findings is what action can be taken to reduce the attractiveness to burglars, of those residences that constitute their potential burglary targets.

One popular response to this question is that attempts should be made to deter potential residential burglars through the employment of greater legislative and judicial threats or sanctions against them. This response, at least in part, derives from the belief, held by economists and jurists of the classical school that individuals engage in criminal activity because it is profitable. Proponents of the classical school argue, if the risks attached to crime, in terms of the punishment, are increased enough so that such risks would significantly outweigh the anticipated rewards, this could deter criminals. As Cook argues:

*The threat of punishment is, in effect, a government-imposed tax on criminal activity: the higher the tax, the fewer the criminal activities that will be deemed worthwhile by potential criminals (p.81), [21]*

The problem with this approach is that many criminals consider punishment for their crime, irrespective of how severe that punishment may be, to represent only a relatively slight, and thus an acceptable, degree of risk when evaluated in comparison to the immediate gains that are derivable from their crime. For these subjects, simply to impose more severe punishment for the offence of burglary, without ensuring certainty of apprehension might, in fact, prove counterproductive, from the point of view of the authorities trying to achieve greater deterrence and prevention. For, by ‘upping the stakes’ in terms of punishment, the authorities might, inadvertently, increase the excitement and appeal of residential burglary for those offenders, attracted to it, by the opportunity it provides to show off their criminal skills and courage. Current legislative and judicial attempts to deter burglary, in Korea, through increased punishment take insufficient account of the actual factors and conditions that, in practice, determine burglar decision making.

A more promising approach to the objective of reducing the attractiveness of potential residential targets to burglars, and thereby helping to deter those burglars from selecting the residences in question, in the first place, might be offered through the employment of techniques of physical deterrence. This approach, as Fattah explains, appears more promising than legislative or judicial deterrence.

*There is no doubt that in many of the cases where punishment fails or is likely to fail, as a deterrent, physical deterrence can be an effective means of dissuasion (p.70) …… Physical deterrents, which render the commission of certain crimes more difficult and less tempting, seem to be more effective in reducing the incidence of these offences than is the threat of punishment (p.100), [22]*

This approach to crime deterrence and prevention, employing techniques of physical deterrence, is based on the view that the motivation to criminally offend is, to some extent, determined by environmental factors. In terms of this view, the offender is seen as someone who actively chooses to offend, in response to certain environmental stimuli that are present in the given context of the proposed crime. Consequently, within this approach, to deter potential offenders, the environmental stimuli in question must be reduced or nullified in terms of their effects. That is, the target and its environment must be engineered in such a way, that the commission of the given form of crime in question becomes difficult or impossible [23].

In this study, subjects looked for residential design features that conformed to their description of what constituted a ‘good’ residential target. Therefore, the attractiveness of any given potential residential burglary target was shown to depend on the immediate characteristics of the target in question as perceived by the subject. A number of such specified characteristics were found to attract subjects to potential targets. However, it is possible, in terms of burglary prevention, to manipulate some of the other features that belong to a potential targeted residence. A potential residential burglary victim could review the list of factors that have been established as constituting significant deterrents against burglary; and then, could introduce any features associated with these factors, in an effort to minimize the risk of the victimization of that residence.
References


