

CASE STUDY

THE TEEN BURGLAR

A news story from the spring of 2012 reported that a 14-year-old boy had been arrested in Tennessee in connection with nearly 100 burglaries in the north Nashville area of Tennessee.¹ Officers said the teen was linked to these burglaries over the previous two years (making him 12 when he started offending). According to police, he had a specific and consistent modus operandi, or method of operation. Specifically, he would kick in back doors, enter, and steal whatever he could grab quickly, such as flat-screen TVs or video games. Officers noted his creativity and innovation, which included using a go-kart as his getaway vehicle, driving from house to house through back alleys. The police also mentioned that he had lost both parents and likely didn't have much guidance or anyone looking out for him. They had evidence tying him to the burglaries, such as fingerprints and items found inside his home, which likely is the reason he admitted to many of the break-ins. It is unfortunate that this boy had such a poor family life and so little parental supervision, but one must wonder

what inspired him to commit more than 100 residential burglaries, starting when he was 12 years old! We will revisit this case in our conclusion, with additional insight into why he may have committed these crimes.

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THINK ABOUT IT

1. Have you ever met or known about a child this young in your neighborhood doing so many crimes before the age of 10? If so, what do you think was the cause(s)?
2. How much do you think having poor parental supervision contributed to his crimes? Do you think he would have been prevented, or do you think he was driven to commit these crimes regardless of family supervision?
3. What do you think of his method of operation (i.e., modus operandi) in how he committed his burglaries? Do you see some intellectual skill in how he did it, given that he wasn't caught for 2 years?

