

Sneaky Thrills

Various property crimes share an appeal to young people, independent of material gain or esteem from peers. Vandalism defaces property without satisfying a desire for acquisition. During burglaries, young people sometimes break in and exit successfully but do not try to take anything. Youthful shoplifting, especially by older youths, often is a solitary activity retained as a private memory.¹ "Joyriding" captures a form of auto theft in which getting away with something in celebratory style is more important than keeping anything or getting anywhere in particular.

In upper-middle-class settings, material needs are often clearly insufficient to account for the fleeting fascination with theft, as the account by one of my students illustrates:

[82] I grew up in a neighborhood where at 13 everyone went to Israel, at 16 everyone got a car and after high school graduation we were all sent off to Europe for the summer. . . . I was 14 and my neighbor was 16. He had just gotten a red Firebird for his birthday and we went driving around. We just happened to drive past the local pizza place and we saw the delivery boy getting into his car. . . . We could see the pizza boxes in his back seat. When the pizza boy pulled into a high rise apartment complex, we were right behind him. All of a sudden, my neighbor said, "You know, it would be so easy to take a pizza!" . . . I looked at him, he looked at me, and without saying a word I was out of the door. . . . got a pizza and ran back. . . . (As I remember, neither of us was hungry, but the pizza was the best we'd ever eaten.)

It is not the taste for pizza that leads to the crime; the crime makes the pizza tasty.

Qualitative accounts of *initial* experiences in property crime by the poor-est ghetto youths also show an exciting attraction that cannot be explained by material necessity. John Allen, whose career as a stickup man living in a Washington, D.C., ghetto will be examined in detail in chapter 6, recalled his first crime as stealing comic books from a junkyard truck: "we de-

stroyed things and took a lot of junk—flashlights, telephones." These things only occasionally would be put to use; if they were retained at all, they would be kept more as souvenirs, items that had acquired value from the theft, than as items needed before and used after the theft.²

What are these wealthy and poor young property criminals trying to do? A common thread running through vandalism, joyriding, and shoplifting is that all are sneaky crimes that frequently thrill their practitioners. Thus I take as a phenomenon to be explained the commission of a nonviolent property crime as a sneaky thrill.

In addition to materials collected by others, my analysis is based on 122 self-reports of university students in my criminology courses.³ Over one-half were instances of shoplifting, mostly female; about one-quarter described vandalism, almost all male; and the rest reported drug sales, non-mercenary housebreaking, and employee theft. In selecting quotations, I have emphasized reports of female shoplifters, largely because they were the most numerous and sensitively written.

The sneaky thrill is created when a person (1) tacitly generates the experience of being seduced to deviance, (2) reconquers her emotions in a concentration dedicated to the production of normal appearances, (3) and then appreciates the reverberating significance of her accomplishment in a euphoric thrill. After examining the process of constructing the phenomenon, I suggest that we rethink the relationships of age and social class to devious property crime.

Flirting with the Project

In the students' accounts there is a recurrent theme of items stolen and then quickly abandoned or soon forgotten. More generally, even when retained and used later, the booty somehow seems especially valuable while it is in the store, in the neighbor's house, or in the parent's pocket-book. To describe the changing nature of the object in the person's experience, we should say that once it is removed from the protected environment, the object quickly loses much of its charm.

During the initial stage of constructing a sneaky thrill, it is more accurate to say that the objective is to be taken or struck by an object than to take or strike out at it. In most of the accounts of shoplifting, the shoplifters enter with the idea of stealing but usually do not have a particular object in mind.⁴ Indeed, shoplifters often make legitimate purchases during the same shopping excursions in which they steal. The entering mood is similar to that which often guides juveniles into the short journeys or sprees that result in pranks and vandalism.⁵ Vandals and pranksters often play

with conventional appearances; for example, when driving down local streets, they may issue friendly greetings one moment and collectively drop their pants ("moon") to shock the citizenry the next. The event begins with a markedly deviant air, the excitement of which is due partly to the understanding that the occurrence of theft or vandalism will be left to inspirational circumstance, creative perception, and innovative technique. Approaching a protected property with disingenuous designs, the person must be drawn to a particular object to steal or vandalize, in effect, inviting particular objects to seduce him or her. The would-be offender is not hysterical; he or she will not be governed by an overriding impulse that arises without any anticipation. But the experience is not simply utilitarian and practical; it is eminently magical.

MAGICAL ENVIRONMENTS

In several of the students' recountings of their thefts, the imputation of sensual power to the object is accomplished anthropomorphically. By endowing a thing with human sensibilities, one's reason can be overpowered by it. To the Alice in Wonderland quoted below, a necklace first enticed—"I found the one that outshone the rest and begged me to take it"—and then appeared to speak.

[15] There we were, in the most lucrative department Mervyn's had to offer two curious (but very mature) adolescent girls: the cosmetic and jewelry department. . . . We didn't enter the store planning to steal anything. In fact, I believe we had "given it up" a few weeks earlier; but once my eyes caught sight of the beautiful white and blue necklaces alongside the counter, a spark inside me was once again ignited. . . . Those exquisite puka necklaces were calling out to me, "Take me! Wear me! I can be yours!" All I needed to do was take them to make it a reality.

Another young shoplifter endowed her booty, also a necklace, with the sense of hearing. Against all reason, it took her; then, with a touch of fear, she tossed it aside in an attempt to exorcise the black magic and reduce it to a lifeless thing.

[56] I remember walking into the store and going directly to the jewelry stand. . . . This is very odd in itself, being that I am what I would consider a clothes person with little or no concern for accessories. . . . Once at home about 40-45 minutes after leaving the store, I looked at the necklace. I said "You could have gotten me in a lot of trouble" and I threw it in my jewelry box. I can't remember the first time I wore the necklace but I know it was a very long time before I put it on.

The pilferer's experience of seduction often takes off from an individualizing imputation. Customers typically enter stores, not to buy a thing they envisioned in its particularities but with generic needs in mind. A purchased item may not be grasped phenomenally as an individualized thing until it is grasped physically. Often, the particular ontology that a possession comes to exhibit—the charm of a favorite hat or an umbrella regarded as a treasure—will not exist while the item sits in a store with other like items; the item will come to have charm only after it has been incorporated into the purchaser's life—only when the brim is shaped to a characteristic angle or the umbrella becomes weathered. But the would-be thief manages to bring the particular charm of an object into existence before she possesses it. Seduction is experienced as an influence emanating from a particular necklace, compact, or chapstick, even though the particular object one is drawn to may not be distinguishable from numerous others near it.

In some accounts, the experience of seduction suggests a romantic encounter. Objects sometimes have the capacity to trigger "love at first sight."⁶ Seduction is an elaborate process that begins with enticement and turns into compulsion. As a woman in her mid-thirties recalled:

A gold-plated compact that I had seen on a countertop kept playing on my mind. Heaven knows I didn't need it, and at \$40 it was obviously overpriced. Still, there was something about the design that intrigued me. I went back to the counter and picked up the compact again. At that moment, I felt an overwhelming urge.⁷

Participant accounts often suggest the image of lovers catching each other's eyes across a crowded room and entering an illicit conspiracy. The student next quoted initially imagines herself in control and the object as passive—she is moving to put it in her possession; but at the end of her imagining, the object has the power to bring her pocket to life.

[67] I can see what I want to steal in plain sight, with no one in the aisle of my target. It would be so easy for me to get to the chapstick without attracting attention and simply place it in my pocket. . . . I'm not quite sure why I must have it, but I must.

On the far side of "It would be so easy" is an appreciation of the object already in her pocket. Now she has imagined not just the thing and a secret, collusive relationship with it; she perceives the thing as having transcended her personal boundaries and as residing in her pocket. The thing has demonstrated its power to act in her world by bringing her pocket into experiential existence.

The ordinary customer, even one being seduced to a purchase by the charm of an object, would not be aware of the pocket in which she would place her purchase until, through inserting the object, she would sense

the activity is regarded as deviant before he begins. His initial responsibility is to master the technical requirements of the practice; the construction of the moral significance of the activity has already been taken care of by society. With sneaky, thrilling property crimes such as shoplifting, however, a conventional object, like a chapstick on a store counter, becomes fascinating, seductively drawing the would-be shoplifter to it, only and just because she is playing with imposing a deviant project on the world.

Thus, it appears that the origin of the seductive power of the objects is in the person's *origination* of the deviant character of the event. "It would be so easy" signals to her not simply that no external obstacles stand firmly in the way, but a secret, internal desire to be deviant. The person's fascination with the particularly attractive features of the object—the paint and the wall that are in irresistible proximity, the stillness of the car that could so quickly be driven away, and the chapstick on the counter—is the outside of the person's fascination in discovering his or her deviant creativity.

As the budding shoplifting project brings the object of deviance to life, the person and the object enter a conspiratorial relationship. "It would be so easy" contains a touch of surprise in the sudden awareness that no one else would notice. The tension of attraction/hesitation in moving toward the object is experienced within a broader awareness of how others are interpreting one's desires. For all *they* know, one's purposes are moral and the scene will remain mundane. The person's situational involvement in sneaky property crimes begins with a *sensual concentration on the boundary between the self as known from within and as seen from without*.

In this first stage of sneaky thrills, the metaphysical magic of the deviant project takes the person in. She knows that as she plays with appearances to manipulate others' perceptions of her, the object may come into her life in uniquely provocative ways. Depending on how she manipulates the object and the boundary between self and others, *they* may soon manipulate her as a dependent creature suddenly at their mercy, held deeply within their world. What happens depends not just on how she handles the object, but on whether others are watching it as closely as she is.

The Reemergence of Practiced Reason

Independent of the would-be shoplifter's construction of a sense that **she might get away with it** are any number of contingencies that can terminate the process. For example, the sudden attentions of a clerk may trigger an intimidating awareness of the necessity to produce "normal appearances."¹²

At some point on the way toward all sneaky thrills, the person realizes that she must work to maintain a conventional, calm appearance up to and through the point of exit. The timing of this stage, relative to others in the process, is not constant. The tasks of constructing normal appearances may be confronted only after the act is complete; thus, during the last steps of an escape, vandals may self-consciously slacken their pace from a run to normal walking, and joyriders may slow down only when they finally abandon the stolen car.

In shoplifting, the person occasionally becomes fascinated with particular objects to steal only after appreciating an especially valuable resource for putting on normal appearances. In the following recollection of one of my students, the resource was a parent:

[19] I can clearly remember when we coaxed my mom into taking us shopping with the excuse that our summer trip was coming up & we just wanted to see what the stores had so we could plan on getting it later. We walked over to the section that we were interested in, making sure that we made ourselves seem "legitimate" by keeping my mom close & by showing her items that appealed to us. We thought "they won't suspect us, two girls in school uniforms with their mom, no way". As we carried on like this, playing this little game "Oh, look how pretty, Gee, I'll have to tell dad about all these pretty things."

Eventually a necklace became irresistible.

Whichever comes first, the pull of the person toward the object to be stolen or the person's concentration on devices for deception, to enact the theft the person must bracket her appearance to set it off from her experience of her appearance, as this student's account shows:

[19] My shoplifting experiences go back to high school days when it was kind of an adventurous thing to do. My best friend & I couldn't walk into a store without getting that familiar grin on our faces. . . . Without uttering a word, we'd check out the place. . . . The whole process pretty much went about as if we were really "shopping" except in our minds the whole scene was different because of our paranoia & our knowledge of our real intentions.

Sensing a difference between what appears to be going on and what is "really" going on, the person focuses intently on normal interactional tasks. Everyday matters that have always been easily handled now rise to the level of explicit consciousness and seem subtle and complex. The thief asks herself, "How long does a normal customer spend at a particular counter?" "Do innocent customers look around to see if others are watching them?" "When customers leave a store, do they usually have their heads up or down?" The recognition that all these questions cannot possi-

bly be answered correctly further stimulates self-consciousness. As one student expressed it,

[19] Now, somehow no matter what the reality is, whether the salesperson is looking at you or not, the minute you walk in the store you feel as if it's written all over your face "Hi, I'm your daily shoplifter".

Unless the person achieves this second stage of appreciating the work involved—if she proceeds to shoplift with a relaxed sense of ease—she may get away in the end but not with the peculiar celebration of the sneaky thrill. Novice shoplifters, however, find it easy to accomplish the sense that they are faced with a prodigious amount of work. "Avoiding suspicion" is a challenge that seems to haunt the minute details of behavior with an endless series of questions—How fast should one walk? Do customers usually take items from one department to another without paying? and so on.

To construct normal appearances, the person must attempt a sociological analysis of the local interactional order. She employs folk theories to explain the contingencies of clerk-customer interactions and to guide the various practical tasks of the theft. On how to obscure the moment of illicit taking:

[44] The jewelry counter at Nordstroms was the scene of the crime. . . . I proceeded to make myself look busy as I tried on several pairs of earrings. My philosophy was that the more busy you look the less conspicuous.

On where to hide the item:

[15] Karen and I were inside the elevator now. As she was telling me to quickly put the necklace into my purse or bag, I did a strange thing. I knelt down, pulled up my pants leg, and slipped the necklace into my sock! I remember insisting that my sock was the safest and smartest place to hide my treasure. I knew if I put it in an obvious place and was stopped, I'd be in serious trouble. Besides, packages belonging to young girls are usually subject to suspicion.

Some who shoplift clothes think it will fool the clerks if they take so many items into a dressing room that an observer could not easily keep count, as this student recalled:

[5] We went into a clothing shop, selected about six garments a piece (to confuse the sales people), entered separate dressing rooms and stuffed one blouse each into our bags.

Others, like the following student, think it sufficiently strategic to take two identical garments in, cover one with the other, and emerge with only one visible:

[46] We'd always take two of the same item & stuff one inside the other to make it seem like we only had one.

Many hit on the magician's sleight of hand, focusing the clerk's attentions on an item that subsequently will be returned to hide their possession of another.

[56] [While being watched by a clerk] I was now holding the green necklace out in the open to give the impression that I was trying to decide whether to buy it or not. Finally, after about 2 minutes I put the green necklace back but I balled the brown necklace up in my right hand and placed my jacket over that hand.

In its dramatic structure, the experience of sneak theft has multiple emotional peaks as the thief is exposed to a series of challenges to maintaining a normal appearance. The length of the series varies with the individual and the type of theft, but, typically, there are several tests of the transparency of the thief's publicly visible self, as one student indicated:

[122] I can recall a sneak theft at Penny's Dept. store very well. I was about 12 years old. . . . I found an eyeshadow kit. I could feel my heart pounding as I glanced around to make sure that others weren't watching. I quickly slipped the eyeshadow in my purse and sighed heavily with relief when I realized that no one had seen. I nervously stepped out of the aisle and once again was relieved when I saw that there was no one around the corner waiting to catch me. I caught my friend's eye; she gave me a knowing glance and we walked to the next section in self satisfaction for having succeeded so far.

When the person devises the deviant project in advance, even entering the store normally may be an accomplishment. Having entered without arousing suspicion, the would-be shoplifter may relax slightly. Then tension mounts as she seizes the item. Dressing rooms provide an escape from the risk of detection, but only momentarily, as in this student's account:

[19] So, here we were, looking at things, walking around & each time getting closer to the dressing room. Finally we entered it & for once I remember feeling relieved for the first time since I'd walked into the store because I was away at last from those "piercing eyes" & I had the merchandise with me. At this point we broke into laughter. . . . We

stuffed the items in our purses making sure that they had no security gadgets on them & then we thought to ourselves "well we're half way there." Then it hit me, how I was safe in the dressing room, no one could prove anything. I was still a "legitimate" shopper.

Then a salesperson may come up and, with an unsuspecting remark, raise the question of transparency to new heights:

[19] I remember coming out of the dressing room & the sales lady looking at me & asking me if I had found anything (probably concerned with only making her commission). I thought I would die.

Finally there is the drama of leaving the store:

[19] Walking out the door was always a big, big step. We knew that that's when people get busted as they step out & we just hoped & prayed that no one would run up to us & grab us or scream "hey you"! The whole time as we approached the exit I remember looking at it as a dark tunnel & just wanting to run down it & disappear as I hung on to my "beloved purse."

Once they have hidden the booty and so long as they are in the store, the would-be-shoplifters must constantly decide to sustain their deviance. Thus, the multiple boundaries of exposure offer multiple proofs not only of their ability to get away with it but of their will toward immorality:

[5] We went into the restroom before we left and I remember telling Lori, "We can drop all this stuff in here and leave, or we can take it with us." Lori wanted to take everything, and as we neared the exit, I began to get very nervous.

Many of these shoplifters understand that clerks or store detectives may be watching them undercover, in preparation for arresting them at the exit door. They also believe that criminal culpability is only established when they leave with the stolen goods. As they understand it, they are not irretrievably committed to be thieves until they are on the other side of the exit; up to that point, they may replace the goods and instantly revert from a deviant to a morally unexceptional status. Were they to believe that they were criminally culpable as soon as they secreted the item, they would continue to face the interactional and emotional challenges of accomplishing deception. But because they think they are not committed legally until they are physically out of the store, they experience each practical challenge in covering up their deviance as an occasion to reaffirm their spiritual fortitude for being deviant. One student described the phenomenon this way:

[56] I guess I had been there so long that I started to look suspicious. I was holding a bright lime green necklace in my left hand and a brown Indian type necklace in my right. A lady, she must have been the store manager, was watching me. She was about 20 ft. away from me and on my left. I could feel her looking at me but I didn't look directly at her. . . . I remember actually visualizing myself putting back both the necklaces and walking out the store with pride and proving this bitch she was wrong and that I was smarter than her, but I didn't. . . . I started out the store very slowly I even smiled at the lady as I passed by the cash register. It was then that she started toward me and my mind said okay T. what are you going to do now. There was a table full of sweaters on sale near me and I could have easily drop the necklace on the table and continued out the door. I knew I could and I considered it but I wouldn't do it. I remember just holding the necklace tighter in my right hand. As she was coming toward me I even thought of dropping the necklace and running out the door but I continued in a slow pace even though the thought of them calling my mother if I was caught and what she would do to me was terribly frightening.

In addition to focusing on the practical components of producing a normal appearance, the would-be shoplifter struggles not to betray the difficulty of the project. This is the second layer of work—the work of appearing not to work at practicing normal appearances. The first layer of work is experienced as the emergence of a novel, analytical attention to behavioral detail; the second, as a struggle to remain in rational control, as the following statement by a student illustrates:

[19] You desperately try to cover it up by trying to remember how you've acted before but still you feel as if all eyes are on you! I think, that's the purpose of settling in one area & feeling everything & everyone out. It's an attempt to feel comfortable so that you don't appear obvious. Like maybe if I'm real cool & subtle about it & try on a few things but don't seem impressed w/ anything, I can just stroll out of here & no one will notice.

In the sensual character of the experience, the person literally embodies the issue of transcendence that is at stake. The would-be thief is attempting to prove that outsiders cannot perceive the deviance of which the thief is internally aware. Correspondingly, the thief experiences a struggle to keep her insides from becoming telltale signs on the outside. Some part of the body threatens to reveal the secret deviance; the project seems "written all over your face," knees may feel like they will give way, the stomach threatens to erupt or drop to the floor, and the heart suddenly puts the coverup at risk by racing or trying to leap out of the chest:

they typically register a kind of metaphysical shock when an arrest induces a sense that what they are doing might be treated as a *real* crime. It appears that an essential attraction of these practices is that although they are risks taken in the real world and hence not just play, they are accomplished in a playful spirit. Once an arrest occurs, the shoplifting career typically ends in response to an awareness that persistence would now clearly signal a commitment to a deviant identity.¹⁴

In contrast, boosters (professional shoplifters), who are comfortable with being seen and with explicitly seeing themselves as part of a criminal subculture, may take for granted and treat their arrest as a cost of doing business.¹⁵ Just because it is not an inevitable result for all thieves, the achievement of euphoria, which can make sneaky property crime thrilling, must be explained.

For a sneaky property crime to produce a thrill, the person must understand that it incorporates several challenges that have personal, existentially fundamental, significance outside the act of theft. The experienced profundity of the event—both as deeply moving in the moment of success or failure and as one of the rare, brief events of private life that can be recalled vividly years, even decades, later—embodies the awareness of its multiple metaphoric implications.

For the typical amateur, sneaky property crime is a symbolically protean experience that simultaneously mobilizes metaphors of (1) the self and its boundaries from other selves, (2) scoring in a game, (3) the defilement of the sacred, (4) sexual intercourse, and (5) the existential interdependence of deviance and charisma.¹⁶

THE SELF AND ITS BOUNDARIES

Sneak theft and vandalism test one's ability to bound the authentic morality of the self from others' perceptions. At stake is an exemplary experimentation with interactional metaphysics. This point is illustrated by the following account of theft of cash from a co-worker's drawer:

[91] I watched carefully as they all drove off then I ran to my desk draw [sic], got my purse out & took out the keys. I was excited. I felt I was on the verge of a new discovery. I was almost like a kid the first time he discovers something new. I was like a child looking in a mirror for the first time and discovering that the image you saw was yourself. The image did everything you did.

Sneaky property crimes are especially well constructed to transform any ubiquitous concerns about the transparency of the self that the thief may harbor into a concrete problem of situated interaction. Vandalism and shoplifting create a practical reason to worry about what others are seeing of oneself; they specify precisely what the deviance is that others might

suspect in oneself, and they delimit an occasion for transcending others' perceptions.

The young shoplifter, in particular, puts the perceptions of adults to a series of tests. By discovering that clerks and house detectives in department stores cannot prove that she has deviant intentions, the young shoplifter may acquire confidence that adults cannot detect that she harbors other forms of deviant spirit, shameful inclinations, or personal incompetence. As he invades another's boundaries of private rights, the vandal publicly proves that he can "get away with it." If successful, the vandal or the shoplifter leaves with objective proof that he or she can bound a morally unacceptable self from powers that are materially motivated to detect it.

THE LUDIC METAPHOR

Sneaky thieves do not necessarily or only consider their criminal experience to be an experiment with the boundaries of the self. If the implications of the experience are metaphysically rich, immediately the experience is a lot of "fun." One dimension of the thrill is ludic: the process is a kind of game.¹⁷

More clearly than any other crimes, sneaky property crimes resonate with the structure of ambulatory sports contests. Like games, shoplifting and vandalism can be tried again and again, with no more justification than that it seems to be fun. Like games, sneaky property crime occurs in a field of delimited space and within time constraints. Temporally, the starting and ending whistles may be blown privately, but the contest begins and ends at defined moments and locations. And like all ambulatory games, there is a provision for "time out," such as when the shoplifter retires to the safety of a dressing room.

Spatially as well, the player knows at all times whether he is in or out of risk. In all his locations, the criminal player knows he is either on or off the playing field. The analogy is perhaps strongest with such forms of theft as shoplifting and burglary in which, as compared to vandalism, a formally defined spatial boundary must be crossed to achieve victory. But even with joyriding and vandalism, the sense of a getaway implies at least an amorphous goal line.

Unlike most conventional concerns or relationships in life, sneaky property crimes produce a clear winner and loser. Like the athletic contestant, the shoplifter and the vandal know just when and where they can sigh with relief and burst into euphoria. In contrast, those who suffer from anxious self-consciousness frequently review scenes that they managed with apparent aplomb, only to raise new questions of how they might unwittingly have divulged some form of inner ugliness.

As in familiar sports contests, there is a zero-sum outcome to sneaky property crimes, as well as a way of calculating the margin of victory or

defeat. You either get away with it or you do not, and, at least in the case of success, there is a way of calculating precisely how much you have won. In each flush of victory, the margins of success among clearly independent contests can be compared in detail.

In contrast to the structure of diffuse, everyday anxieties (such as those attending membership in a social clique), the thief and the vandal, like athletes on a team, participate in a contest with relatively clear sides. In shoplifting, it is always clear which side you are on and who is on the other side. The shoplifter and the vandal, like a player guiding a ball down a field, focus on "psyching" and "faking out" perceived opponents, although they realize that they may be intercepted by surprise from a blind side.

As in games, there is an infinite variety of plays in sneaky property crimes. In shoplifting, as in all the major ambulatory sports contests in the Western world, there is a mutually agreed-on thing of value that the player tries to carry toward a goal line while the opposing side tries to frustrate him or wrest it away. Shoplifters who work in teams may devise pre-planned codes and secretly communicate defensive signals that provide warnings about their opponents' countermoves. If an opponent draws too near, a player, responding to a signal, may pass off the booty in a tricky move.

The analogy of sneaky property crimes and ambulatory sports contests becomes ambiguous if pushed too far. Property crime is likely to be treated by the opponents as more than a game. The analogy also fails with respect to the opponent's freedom to choose to play. Stores must be suited up and ready to play at all times, although they might not consider the contest fun, and vandals' victims often have no chance to adjust their defenses. In other respects, sneaky property crimes are less serious than games. As a game, shoplifting is only child's play; if the thief does not like the approaching outcome, she often assumes that she may drop the goods and call it off, like a child who takes his ball away rather than lose.

But the ludic metaphor is distinctively applicable to sneaky property crimes, as opposed to other forms of criminality. For example, drug dealers are not so sure of when and where they may be caught; the possession of contraband, financial arrangements, and distribution networks may keep them so constantly involved that they enjoy no "time out." Robbers also have no chance for "time out" once they publicly define the situation as a stickup. And unlike the ludic aspect of sneak thefts, robbery risks consequences so serious that, as I will show later, the crime must be justified as profitable. In murders of passion, the winner of a fight often regards himself as a loser only a few moments later; the calculation of success and failure is much more confusing. Unlike assailants in fights, which often erupt without forewarning, the sneaky property criminal can make up plays in advance and may estimate the magnitude of risk. Each of these other types of criminality have their own form of excitement, but the form is not as close to that of the game.

THE RELIGIOUS METAPHOR

The dramatic possibilities of sneaky property crimes are not exhausted by the metaphysical structures of games. "Property" has boundaries separating insiders, or authorized users, from outsiders, or unauthorized occupants, and these boundaries are often sensed as sacred. In many sneaky criminal acts, part of the sensuality of the sneaky thrill is that of a secret defilement; the process can be experienced as a black sacrament with identifiable stages.

In the first stage, the person secretly and in the spirit of a desecration penetrates another's world. The means of penetration vary; vandalism usually involves some "foreign" or profane object, such as a rock or paint; shoplifting, perhaps the person's hand and purse; and burglary, the person's whole body. No doubt the emotional embodiment of the spirit of violation depends, in subtle ways, on the way and the extent to which the deviant's body pierces the sanctity of the victim's world.

The spirit of violation that accompanies the penetration is derived from a tacit collective agreement between the deviant and the victim to regard the penetration as a violation. In much of the property crime committed by young people, the possibility of achieving a sneaky thrill is strongly supported by economically irrational, intensely moral sensibilities surrounding property. The criminals are likely to anticipate correctly that those they would make "victims" will so define themselves. Why the latter should do so, however, is often not immediately obvious, since the items that are taken typically are petty and the damage that is done is often only a minor nuisance to repair. The shock at finding a gang name painted on one's garage, one's car sitting on the opposite side of the street from where it had been parked, or beer cans mysteriously taken from one's refrigerator and left empty on the kitchen counter cannot be accounted for in utilitarian terms.

After the initial trespass of a boundary that has been collectively consecrated, the thief or vandal must, if he is to continue to build the drama of the sneaky thrill, do something to prove that the invasion has occurred. This is the organizing objective of vandalism, but in theft it is, perhaps surprisingly, a key step as well. On the surface, the thief's purpose is to take something away, but as I mentioned before, the targeted object is often without sacred or motivating character, independent of or outside the theft. More deeply, on the way to a sneaky thrill, the criminal's aim is to project something negative into the victim's world, deposit proof of his deviance, or create a moral stain.

One of my students described an elaborate fascination with nonacquisitive burglary. The following is my summary of her lengthy account:

When she was 13, she would enter neighbors' homes and roam around. Somehow being in a neighbor's house without express permission made

the otherwise mundane environment charged. She had been invited into all these homes before but by entering without notice through an unlocked door or an open window, she found that a familiar kitchen or living room was magically transformed into a provocative environment. The excitement was distinctly sensual. She would feel objects in various rooms; in a sense they would feel her, creating a variety of exotic sensations through her touch. But she rarely took anything. Instead she might simply rearrange the furniture. It seems she was not so much "playing house" or decorating to fit her tastes as she was trying to leave evidence that someone had been there. Many years later, recollecting her year or so of nonmercenary burglary, she thought the events were "crazy." She had never told anyone about them. But she could still recall the thrill of the experience. The pattern stopped the day that neighbors unexpectedly came home and almost caught her.

Victims of burglary often return to find human feces in the middle of their homes. Although the rhythm of excitement in the act may promote bowel movement and the circumstances may make the usual proprieties of the bathroom seem dispensable, the larger patterns in property crime suggest that some trespassers defecate to desecrate. Elliott Leyton described the following incident that may serve as an example:

Carrying a crowbar, 13 year old Tyrone entered his neighbour's new bungalow. Swinging the bar wildly, he smashed an expensive mock-antique mirror and then turned his destructive attention to every piece of glass and furniture in the house. His work completed, he squatted to leave a pile of excrement on the living room floor, and left.¹⁸

Usually the symbolism of desecration is less obvious. The shoplifter who shakes from the risk of the act anticipates shaking up the victim's world. Even if the victim never discovers that the item is missing, the thief and the vandal understand that the moral order of the victim's objective world will have been altered. Recall the shoplifter who took the brown necklace that she deemed capable, when addressed in the safety of her bedroom, of understanding her reproving speech. Within the magical world of sneaky thrills, the thief and the vandal take the objective world of their victims to be a knowing presence. If the victim never notices that the item is missing or damaged, still the *place* or the *order* of things there will retain the character of a deviant past.

Once the theft has been accomplished, the character of its place is unalterably changed in the experience of the thief. Forever (or, at least, so it seems at the time of the event) it will be the scene of the crime. Although all the clerks may change and although months or years may pass, the place has been magically transformed. It will have a special charm, perhaps tinged with the threat of discovery, whenever it is reentered. If hallowed

places convey the presence of a sacred host by their special aura, the places that are stolen from have been negatively hallowed for the thief. They remain haunted for some time after, perhaps for eternity, by the memory of his previous, deviant presence. That haunting is a continuing testimony to desecration.

THE SEXUAL METAPHOR

From a sensitivity to the sacred metaphor implicated in sneak theft, the person can, with a short step, appreciate the sexual references of the act. In many of the accounts of shoplifting, there is an experience of seduction turning into irrational compulsion, a rush of excitement as contact is made with the item and another as it is guided across personal boundaries and inserted into a private place, then a physical process of movement in which the body is guided to a point of climax. For the sophisticated perpetrator, there are phases of rest and opportunities to play with the transcendence of successive boundaries of risk. And, finally, there is the experience of shameful failure or euphoric success (which many youths naturally follow with the ceremonial smoking of a cigarette).

As one student stated, "Every time I would drop something into my bag, my heart would be pounding and I could feel this tremendous excitement, a sort of 'rush', go through me." The sexual analogy, if implicit at the time, later became obvious to some offenders:

The experience was almost orgasmic for me. There was a build-up of tension as I contemplated the danger of a forbidden act, then a rush of excitement at the moment of committing the crime, and finally a delicious sense of release.¹⁹

A necklace thief quoted earlier recalled: "It's really funny being 23 years old now and in writing this, I can't stop feeling how thrilling it was, certainly a feeling much like the anticipation of sex."

The accounts in this chapter come largely from females, and the sexual metaphor they describe may be shaped to represent sex from a feminine perspective. Various incidental features of the shoplifting accounts indicate a secret attempt to realize female sexual identity. Thus the items stolen do not represent a random collection of the things that might be stolen. Money itself is only rarely the objective. Instead, the young girls seem especially seduced by items of makeup, jewelry, and clothes: things used to cover-up the naked female self, to give the body the appearance of the mature female, and to make the self dazzlingly attractive to a world blinded to the blemishes underneath. Females take symbols of adult female identity—cosmetics, jewelry, and sexy underwear—while males take gadgets, cigarette lighters, and wallets. It is notable that female shoplifters, rarely steal items to give to men or children.²⁰

Other objects of theft implicate the body in other ways: items used on the beach, such as suntan lotion, and various forms of food that, like the proverbial forbidden fruit, become especially tasty when illegally acquired. The sexual metaphor is also implicated in criminal methods. Shoplifters hide things on their body, often beneath their clothes, in one case, in a "beloved purse." One of my students worked as a detective in the campus store. She reported an unaccountable proclivity of female shoplifters to steal underwear.

The sexual reference of shoplifting by young amateurs is doubly illicit. Not only is the young shoplifter projecting into a criminal project an experience prohibited at her age, but the form of sex is illicit. The sneaky property crime is not participating in a consensual act; the pleasure is distinctly asymmetrical. Colloquially, the thief and the vandal fuck their victims.

We may now see the richly isomorphic, extraordinarily protean symbolic structure of sneaky property crimes. Each of the metaphoric layers resonates independently with more general themes of consciousness: the metaphysical problem of bounding the self, the primitive religious dread of defilement, the fun of ambulatory games, and the development of a sexual identity. In addition, each layer resonates with each of the others. A description of the metaphysical metaphor experienced in sneaky property crime borders on a description of sexual intercourse; an analysis of the ludic structure of sneak theft could readily describe sacred spaces and ritual degradations; familiar ambulatory games recreate the imagery of sexual intercourse, as do such familiar folk phrases of double entendre as "scoring"; and so on. And there is at least one more metaphoric layer to examine.

THE INTERDEPENDENCE OF DEVIANCE AND CHARISMA

The thief who would take by stealth opts to construct a paranoia. She makes a usually abhorrent emotional condition suddenly functional: the more you are aware of how others are watching you, the more likely you are to get away with it. The thief makes herself "self-conscious" by creating a practical reason for others to suspect that she harbors a deviant spirit. One student described her thoughts this way:

[19] What kept running through my mind was this idea of self-centeredness. I felt like everyone was watching me, following me & and like the whole store was at a stand still just concentrating on my next move.

As a practical matter, this self-consciousness, which before the theft may have been only a burdensome threat to the smooth projection of a desirable self into the world, has, under the discipline of the criminal project, become a positive resource promoting theft. The positive moral

achievement of sneaky property crimes signals perhaps their most elusive metaphoric layer. The thief is not just enacting her deviance; through being secretly deviant, she is discovering charisma.

The sneak thief and the vandal achieve a resonant metaphoric relationship between positive and negative, between the capacity to violate and to transcend moral constraint, and between deviance and charisma.²¹ In the getaway, after having pulled off a particularly cunning method of faking out house detectives, the sneaky thief knows with all her being that "that was beautiful." By doing something ugly to another, the sneak thief or vandal establishes that she can bring beauty into the world. Appreciated from within, a sneaky property crime by an amateur is not a failure of social control but a personal esthetic triumph.

In the first stage of sneaky thrills, when the sense "It would be so easy" guides the person to a particular material focus for her deviant project, the seductive powers of objects sway her. Then she faces a test of whether she can maintain a personal "cool" and execute the sneaky theft through willful, calculating manipulations. If she can, she has proved that she will not "freak out" from the pressures of pulling it off. The euphoria that rewards success, then, embodies the awareness that the sneak thief can allow herself to be seduced by the world without fear. Through taking from others, sneak thieves may learn that they can let themselves go, that they can safely be taken by the secret charm and black magic in the world. Like charismatic personalities, they may discover that the mysterious forces of the universe are on their side. Others walk in fear of the unknown; they confront the unknown and walk away with the goods.

The consequences of sneaky thrills are not usually to launch criminal careers or otherwise to define the future self. On the contrary, the protagonists in sneaky property crime more often thrill to the expanded possibilities of the self, in the knowledge that they have opened up ways of being that previously seemed inaccessible.²² Social theorists have resisted strongly the recognition that deviance is not merely a reaction against something negative in a person's background but a reaching for exquisite possibilities. Researchers like to point out the popular error of considering as essentially deviant people who, whatever their crime or infraction, overtly commit deviant acts only during rare moments of their lives. But deviant persons also appreciate the economy of doing evil for characterizing the self generally: it is literally wonderful. Through being deviant for a moment, the person may portray his or her general, if usually hidden, charismatic potential.

The Sensual Metaphysics of Sneaky Thrills

Although they know they are breaking the law, nonprofessional shoplifters and vandals commonly feel when they are arrested, an irresistible protest that "this can't be happening to me!" It is as if they lived the process of the crime like a character moving in a myth or a dream. And in the emotional meaning or sensual dimension of the event, they do.

Sometimes the mythical quality of the experience is highlighted. The 13-year-old housebreaker who would enter neighbors' homes not to take things but in search of she knew not what and who would run the risk of being caught by surprise to rearrange items, is reminiscent of Goldilocks entering the home of the Three Bears.²³ More commonly, if less obviously, the mythical meaning of the event is experienced emotionally. To understand the experience of sneaky thrills, we must appreciate how the structure of everyday sensuality is continuous with the structure of fantasy worlds.

As Alfred Schutz specified, there are fundamental contrasts between experience in mundane activities and in various alternative "worlds," such as those of the theater, night and day dreams, and jokes or laughter.²⁴ Experience in the mundane world of practical reality is confined by time, space, and social boundaries. People conduct practical social action with the limiting awareness that they are acting in a specific "here," during a specific "now," and in a particular type of publicly recognizable social situation. Dreams, fantasies, and various meta-mundane worlds do not respect these limitations.

The dreamer (asleep, while daydreaming, in the theater, or caught up in listening to a fairy tale) suspends the focus of his consciousness on the historical time and the geopolitical space he is in and the socially bounded process of sleeping and dreaming that he is going through. As a member of the audience who becomes absorbed in the theatrical drama, he "suspends disbelief" on these three dimensions. He dulls his awareness of the clock time during which the drama transpires, the physical location of the theater, and the fact that he is watching a dramatization of life. The dreamer witnesses movements through time, over space, and across the boundaries that usually separate internal awareness and externally visible expression and that are inconsistent with what he rationally knows of the structures of everyday practical life.

The world of everyday practical life and dream worlds are not existentially inconsistent. (And indeed, they may always be co-present. Even in the deepest sleep, we maintain an awareness of time, space, and social situations; we are not lost to the noises around us or the pressures of our

autonomous physical selves.) Thus pilferers do not move through department stores as sleep walkers or day dreamers, but neither do they construct their sneaky crimes simply as exercises of self-reflective reason. Through their feelings and the evolving sensuality of the event, they walk through its mythical dimensions.

In a metaphysically similar way, although within a different transcendent project, so do the killers examined in chapter 1. For both the pilferer and the passion killer, a dash of reality is often an effective "cure," although in the latter case it comes much too late. Those who murder in a passionate effort to dramatize their defense of the Good, like shoplifters who are arrested, are surprisingly without emotional defenses. Many wait for the police to arrive or confess quickly; few make good on escapes. Brought to the fatal moment by a leap to a timeless, primordial version of the Good, the impassioned killer momentarily transcends the demand to relate his behavior "now" to the meaning it will have "then." When he returns to practical everyday concerns a few moments later, he realizes that he must innovate an escape if he is to have one.

Similarly, the essence of the sneaky thrill is an attempt to transcend an existential dilemma, but, in this case, the dilemma is to relate the inner to outer identity. The shoplifter goes about her sneaky efforts to see if she can get away with it—"it" being a freely drawn, playfully artificial projection of the self into the world. Must I appear to be who I know I am? Need I struggle to shape what I know about myself into an acceptable appearance to others, or can I play with it? Can I dispense, not with moral appearances but with the *struggle* to produce moral appearances? Thus, the thrill embodies an awareness that the experience is essentially a play about dilemmas of moral authenticity arranged on a public staging of the self.

Those who pursue sneaky thrills appreciate this perspective with emotional immediacy. They know it sensually, not self-reflectively. Ask, and they may cite one of the stock background explanations, such as peer pressure; find the causation mysterious; or simply state, because it's fun. To appreciate the distinctive character of this phenomenon, we must ask, Why the mystery? What explains the odd metaphysical mood of the event? How can doing *this* be fun? The immediately relevant answer lies not in the problems of personal or social group background nor in mundane material results, but in a project with distinctively transcendent pretensions.

Foreground and Background in Sneaky Thrills

ADOLESCENCE

It is tempting to move the analysis from the foreground of sneaky thrills to the background of adolescence and to suggest causes rooted in this stage of the life cycle. If the thrill of accomplishing a sneaky property crime is, in part, a recognition that the person has been successfully opaque in public, surely that is an especially meaningful message for adolescents. Through sneaky property crimes, we may easily conclude, adolescents can metaphorically enact the double dilemma that promotes their self-consciousness. They are becoming anxious about many forms of internal ugliness that it would be shameful to display—of all the unseemly things that threaten to leap out of the body into the world—from pimples to sexual desires; of manifold, unpredictably displayed, telltale signs of intellectual inferiority; and of parochial attitudes linked to ethnic or class identity. And they are becoming aware that mature moral competence in society means that they should not only maintain privacy over the ugly parts of their identities, but they should be graceful in the process, covering up the process of covering up.²⁵

Add to the extraordinary self-consciousness of adolescence the extraordinary social machinery for producing interpersonal transparency that is the school. Surrounded throughout the day with more or less the same people, the young student is forced to strip in virtually every literal and figurative way imaginable; any wart, whatever its region of physical or intellectual location, will have its moment of public display. The members of this constant audience are selected by age, neighborhood, and even intellectual level to be homogeneous and, as such, they are uniquely capable of discerning inner realities through reading external signs. There will usually be an overlap between out-of-school associates and schoolmates, which promotes a ubiquitous concern with transparency. Moreover, the same group follows the student from year to year, which fosters the accumulation of a collective memory that may never allow him to escape far from his initial reputation. If this were not enough, schools often structure time in ways that are so boring that peers have nothing more fascinating to do than to attempt telling observations.

With all this in the background, surely it is easy to understand why sneaky property crimes are especially attractive to adolescents as devices for proving that they can be deviant in society and get away with it. To test themselves on socially approved criteria of personal competence, adolescents have a multitude of socially institutionalized opportunities: courage and physical prowess may be challenged in sports, cosmetic attractiveness may be put on the line in the dating market, and intellectual

capacity may be tested in school or, perhaps more profoundly, in informal repartee. A wide and popular range of nonsneaky violent forms of crime, from reckless driving to group fights, offer adolescents additional opportunities to take risks openly and prove they are not afraid of physical harm. The distinctive appeal of the sneaky property crimes that seem to have a special salience for adolescents—shoplifting, vandalism, joyriding, and nonmercenarily breaking and entering—is the particular dialectic of being privately deviant in public places.

There are at least two reasons for resisting a quick analytical shift from the phenomenal foreground of adolescent property crime to the psychological and social structures in the background of adolescence. The first is that the apparent association may well be circular and spurious. Shoplifting may be concentrated in adolescence, but it may well peak before puberty,²⁶ and it clearly continues long after. Our enthusiasm for examining the nature of adolescence as the causal background of sneaky property crime should be restrained by the recollection that, as recently as 1964, Cameron had to argue, against a substantial body of criminological opinion, that shoplifting was not a response to a different phase in the age cycle, this one gender specific: the crisis of menopause.²⁷

For obvious reasons, preadolescents are less likely to be picked up by official statistics on shoplifting. And postadolescents may steal from employers at a higher rate than adolescents shoplift and vandalize, and from a variety of nonutilitarian attractions to the practice. When the thief is old enough to work in the shop, the crime no longer fits the category of "shoplifting."²⁸ Before we push off adult property crime as obviously more practically minded than the adolescent varieties, we should explore the contrast more closely. Like adolescent shoplifters, embezzlers²⁹ and corrupt politicians and tax frauds³⁰ often suffer intense shame on arrest and no less than adolescents, they may take from successful deceptions and cover-ups an emotionally meaningful measure of faith in their abilities to obscure areas of routine personal incompetence.

Within the context of this study, the more important reason not to move too quickly toward theorizing about the etiological background of sneaky crimes is the danger of misrepresenting the quality of the phenomenon. Explanations of the structures of adolescence may jump into the reader's mind because the data here, for reasons of convenience, were largely limited to recollections of youthful experiences. But it is not clear that the sneaky property criminals we have been examining are precisely concerned with the structures of adolescence. Indeed, the attractive power of the experience is essentially dependent on its ambiguous, indirect significance for the rest of the person's life. To preserve the emotional power of the thrill, the process should implicate more than one metaphor. A single meaning would threaten to make the practice too literal and mundane.

If sneaky property crime was simply a form of practical therapy for the dilemmas of adolescence, it would not be fun. But shoplifting, while it

tests the transparency of the self also follows the structure of a game. As a game it can be erotically evocative; however, it is not just a sexual play. The relevance of particular metaphoric frameworks varies from one form of sneaky property crime to the next. Vandalism plays up desecration and plays down the potential to prove a superior ability to manipulate perceptions of moral character in face-to-face interactions. One shoplifting episode may be structured in a particularly effective way along the lines of a sex act; another, accomplished by using the mother's presence as a shield, may carry a special message about independence. It is just because it can resonate with any and all these meanings from one moment to the next that sneaky property crime can convey the experience of a thrill.

SOCIAL CLASS

The data I have used, which come from an overprivileged group, perhaps overemphasize the irrelevance of material objectives.³¹ These shoplifters often had sufficient money in their pockets to pay for what they stole and, if not, they often knew that they could readily obtain the necessary funds from parents or friends. Even when the object was economically beyond their reach, their aim was not necessarily to use the booty. In marked contrast, studies of preadult working-class "serious" thieves emphasize the practical use of the products of sneak theft to sustain a materially improved lifestyle.³² But just as it is with age, it is easy to misconstrue the relation of economic status or social class and the thrilling quality of sneaky property crime.

Vandalism does not appear to be a class-specific form of delinquency. If this hedonistic adolescent offense runs parallel to adolescent theft, should we not reconsider the relevance of materialist motives for both?³³ Even with respect to shoplifting and burglary, at least up to the point of the initial arrest, the animating attraction toward sneaky property crimes appears to be some form of thrill, even for youths who, in middle-class eyes, must have pressing material needs. Recall the autobiographical excerpt presented earlier of John Allen, a poor black youth from Washington, D.C., who went on to a serious criminal career.

Researchers who let their subjects do the sociological analysis for them often get folk theories that emphasize material causes and objectives. In his interviews with black gang members in Philadelphia, Barry Krisberg was sometimes told that their initial thefts were done to satisfy material needs, but when he checked into official records on the events in question, he found contrary indications. For example, one interviewee claimed that he committed his first theft to feed his family, but Krisberg found in records of an arrest related to the event that the fellow had been stealing a gun to use in fights between peer groups.³⁴ And there are indications that even in desperately poor areas, adolescent thieves turn to theft for emotionally compelling rather than materially necessary reasons. A study of

the low castes in India found that the initial victims of theft were the youths' parents.³⁵

Initial experiences in sneak thefts of poor, working-class, and middle-class youths, alike, appear to be more clearly projects in constructing thrills than efforts to satisfy previously defined material needs. There is no basis for assuming any particular social-class pattern in the background of sneaky thrills.

For persistent or "serious" property thieves, repetition itself tends to undercut the experimental, discovery foundations of sneaky thrills. In a participant-observation study conducted in lower- and working-class areas in Toronto, Canada, Gordon West described "serious adolescent property offenders" who cooperate in "casing" targets, sharing tips on how to victimize, collectively arranging the "fencing" of stolen items, and lending each other money when one is down on his thieving luck.³⁶ Because they often steal to resell, these serious thieves may appear to be calling for material objectives, rather than for the thrill. In addition, they often make a calculated choice to abandon thievery at the age of majority, when penalties substantially increase. Many of these patterns were recently documented by Mercer Sullivan among poor Hispanic and black youths in New York City.³⁷ Nothing in this chapter speaks to the social-class factors that may lie behind such "serious" short-term careers or behind long-term careers in nonviolent, sneaky property crimes like burglary, boosting, and confidence games.

But even in the case of "serious" thieves, I would suggest, we should not too readily assume that material objectives are dominant. If we looked more closely at how they define material needs, we might get a different image of these "serious" thieves. West's thieves, at times, go out specifically to steal for such "needs" as buying Speed and entertaining friends in a flashy manner. The drugs and clothes differ in Sullivan's settings, but the theme is similar. In lower-class areas, adolescent theft satisfies the objective needs common to the class—buying food, paying rent, and acquiring clothes—less obviously than it supports a form of material taste that the youths can only satisfy through more theft. It is also notable that older thieves, in their recollections of "big" scores, commonly report the value of the item at its retail price rather than at the discounted price realized through fencing; the situational charm of the event to the thief apparently does not decline quite as much as does the market value of the stolen items. And although with persistent practice, the thrills of sneaky property crimes may diminish, the various metaphors that make up the thrill of the event do not necessarily become irrelevant. Rather, they may become diffused throughout a way of life in which situated property crimes, by themselves, may not be the most exciting, deviant, or risky moments. At least, this often appears to be the case for "career" stickup men, whose complex relationships between material and transcendent purposes will be taken up in chapter 6.

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Yet, for *persistent* or "serious" property thieves, repetition itself tends to undercut the experimental, discovery foundations of sneaky thrills. In a rare participant-observation study conducted in lower- and working-class areas in Toronto, Canada, Gordon West described "serious adolescent property offenders" who cooperate in "casing" targets, sharing tips on places to victimize, collectively arranging the "fencing" of stolen items, and lending each other money when one is down on his thieving luck.³⁶ Because they often steal to sell, these serious thieves may appear to be stealing for material objective, rather than for the thrill. In addition, they often make a calculated choice to abandon thievery at the age of majority, when penalties substantially increase. Many of these patterns were recently documented by Merr Sullivan among poor Hispanic and black youths in New York City.³⁷ Nothing in this chapter speaks to the social-class factors that may lie behind such "serious" short-term careers or behind long-term careers in nonviolent, sneaky property crimes like burglary, boosting, and confidence games.

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