

SHOPLIFTING
IN
MIDLAND FOODSTORES

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SYNOPSIS

SHOPLIFTERS possess characteristics which distinguish them criminologically from other thieves. More women than men are convicted, the reconviction rate is low, and the offenders have a higher average age and come from more diverse socio-economic backgrounds.

SHOPLIFTING has been investigated from psychiatric and sociological standpoints. It is frequently associated with a stress situation in an otherwise law-abiding individual. He may then disregard the criminality of his act for the sake of its therapeutic effect. It can be carried out successfully without the support of a criminal subculture, but that support may be essential if the offender is to continue once discovered.

RESEARCH to date is concerned mainly with the convicted shoplifter - but many who are apprehended are never convicted, since this depends primarily on the readiness of the store to instigate proceedings against them. Although few stores keep reliable records about those they apprehend, one firm made 382 such records available for analysis. From this a descriptive report was made, and a comparison drawn between those apprehended and those convicted. Additionally, since the gravity of the offence in terms of amount stolen was known, a further comparison was made between the sentences imposed by the eleven magistrates' courts in the areas concerned.

A SUMMARY of the research findings is given in Chapter 7.

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Preface

Criminology - the study of human behaviour which is punishable by criminal law - is principally based on knowledge of the convicted offender and his offence. The offender is identified by his conviction, he is categorised, and relevant information about him is available in court, police and penal records.

However recognition that convicted offenders represent only the tip of the delinquent iceberg brought with it associated problems. These were concerned with the accuracy with which convicted offenders represented those who were undiscovered; the extent to which the ratio between crimes known and crimes committed might vary between offences, at different times, and in different social environments; whether accidents of detection, reportability and social status alone separated the adjudged criminal from the undiscovered lawbreaker; and what tools could be devised with which to estimate the full extent of unrecorded crime.

Two such tools depend on the subjective judgements, defective memories and veracity of the respondents to the appropriate questionnaires, since "self-report" studies and "victim surveys" rely on the offenders' or the victims' assessment of each separate incident. They do, however, open up exciting possibilities of exploring the extent of hidden crime within a community.

For some offences there is an intermediate stage between total concealment and official recognition. Independent agencies

become aware of the commission of certain types of offence, and may record information about the culprits, while refraining from invoking the machinery of law enforcement against them all. Since these offenders are eligible for criminal status, and are "known" to the agency, they may be thought of as a "grey" rather than a "dark" figure. If the private records are accurate, objective, systematic and available the size of the "grey figure" can be satisfactorily ascertained, and it is possible to compare the characteristics of those who were convicted with the characteristics of those against whom no proceedings are taken. In these cases that which is being examined is the result of a process of deliberate selection carried out by the agency, and not the result of a fortuitous combination of circumstances influencing reportability and detection. It is nevertheless an attempt to compare the designated criminal with the unconvicted offender.

One offence which is recognised to have low reportability is occasionally recorded by a private agency with accuracy and consistency sufficient to support a meaningful analysis. It is popularly known as shoplifting, and affords the material for this study.

Chapter 1

SHOPLIFTING IN PROFILE

People go shopping. The majority never take goods without paying for them, but a few are tempted and steal. They may steal frequently or occasionally, or perhaps only once or twice in their lives. Mostly they are amateurs, often casual or impulsive thieves, but some, using skill and planning to a professional degree, organise themselves to steal for the most profit and at the least risk. Many escape undetected, some are caught, and a few are eventually prosecuted. All, while seeming to be genuine customers, have taken goods offered for sale and left without paying for them, and with the intention of not paying for them. This by definition is shoplifting.

This is a form of simple theft, an indictable offence which is classified in the Criminal Statistics, England and Wales, under Class III "Offences against property without violence" as No. 46 "Larceny from shops and stalls". Class III is made up of a heterogeneous group of property offences which together account for by far the largest proportion of all indictable offences. The figures for 1968 show that of the 257,327 persons who were found guilty of indictable offences as many as 171,850 were found guilty of Class III offences, and of these 32,676 were for offences of shoplifting. However as Jepson (1968) pointed out, in spite of its numerical significance, the criminological examination of this group of offences, has remained relatively neglected*.

* see footnote on page 2

Shoplifters account for less than one fifth of all Class III offenders yet they have attracted interest both academically and in the popular press. Compared with other offenders they appear to possess socially and criminologically distinguishing characteristics. Popular interest is aroused from time to time by the appearance of a defendant in court. In contrast with other property offenders, she is frequently a mature woman of good appearance and respectable background, who shows considerable shame and distress at her predicament. Her offence is entirely out of character and she is correspondingly most unlikely to have any previous criminal record. Moreover, police records show that such offenders very rarely reappear before the court, whether charged with shoplifting or with any other crime.

Criminologically shoplifting differs from all other property offences in the sex ratio, age structure, social background, criminal record and rate of recidivism of the offenders, and in the number of offences cleared up. This can be demonstrated either by reference to the Report on the Criminal Statistics, England and Wales**, or from information about offenders laid before the court or lodged in police

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* (A further 1,319,541 persons were found guilty of non-indictable offences during 1968, but these offenders are generally disregarded in criminological discussion, because many of them have broken the law by acts which have little or no criminal content, such as minor motoring offences or regulatory infringements.)

** Henceforth referred to as the "Criminal Statistics", or the "official statistics".

records. These differences stem partly from the personality and circumstances of the offenders, and partly from the nature of the offence and the methods by which it is cleared up. They and the more immediate explanations offered for them are discussed in this chapter. The results of previous research will be reported in Chapter 2.

The sex ratio for different offences shows considerable variation, but in most instances the male outnumbers the female. Thus in 1968 in the magistrates' courts, for each female convicted of a similar offence 102 males were convicted of stealing from vehicles (No. 45), but only 5 males falsified accounts (No. 52). The 196,445 males and 33,487 females convicted of indictable offences during the year gave an overall ratio of 5.9 to 1, with which the shoplifting figures of 14,539 males to 17,859 females can be compared. Since they give a reverse ratio of one male to every 1.23 females Barbara Wootton's comment -

"if men behaved like women and boys behaved like girls, the courts would be idle and the prisons empty" (Wootton 1959 and 1970) clearly cannot be applied to shoplifters, at least in so far as the courts are concerned.

Why does the "crime-free" sex steal from shops in large numbers? Explanations put forward include the suggestion that women find shoplifting easy because it can be carried out, at least at the amateur level, without physical prowess or special skills, and depends neither on collaboration with others nor on elaborate forward planning. Contact with the criminal

subculture is generally more difficult for women than for men, but it is not essential to the commission of this offence. Neither inside information nor organised outlets are required. The goods are readily available and are usually stolen for immediate use.

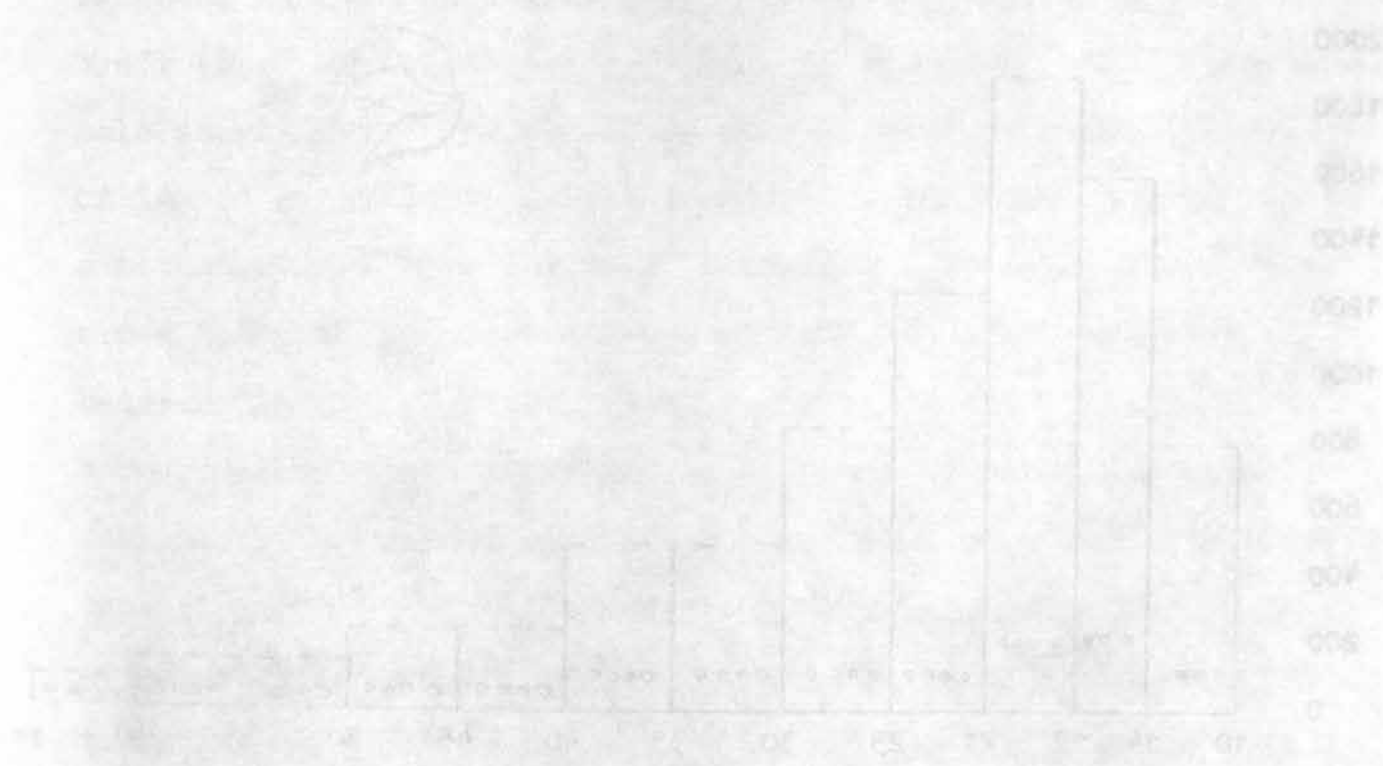
However these aspects of the offence should facilitate its commission whatever the sex of the offender, therefore it is thought that the extra opportunity afforded to women may be a further and significant contributory factor. The hypothesis that given the right opportunity women are as capable of crime as men can be supported by reference to the sex ratio for crimes such as cruelty to children, procuring abortions and brothel keeping, where the women convicted outnumber the men. (Walker 1965 and Pollack 1960.) Men are known to pilfer frequently from their places of employment (Martin 1962), and it may be that women also pilfer at their "work" - as they do their routine shopping. Not only are they at risk for longer periods than men, but they may also be subjected to the greater temptation, if, for instance, they consider it their duty to supply the household with luxuries, which cannot easily be afforded. When the electricity power cuts of December 1970 increased the opportunity to steal and diminished the risk of detection, many shops reported exceptional losses of stock. Some closed during the blackouts, in self defence, and others reported a 50% increase in the number of offenders apprehended.

It is probable that shoplifting is far more widespread in the community than has been recognised. Applying the Hood and Sparks estimate (1970) that 30 shoplifting offences are committed

Number per 100,000
of age group

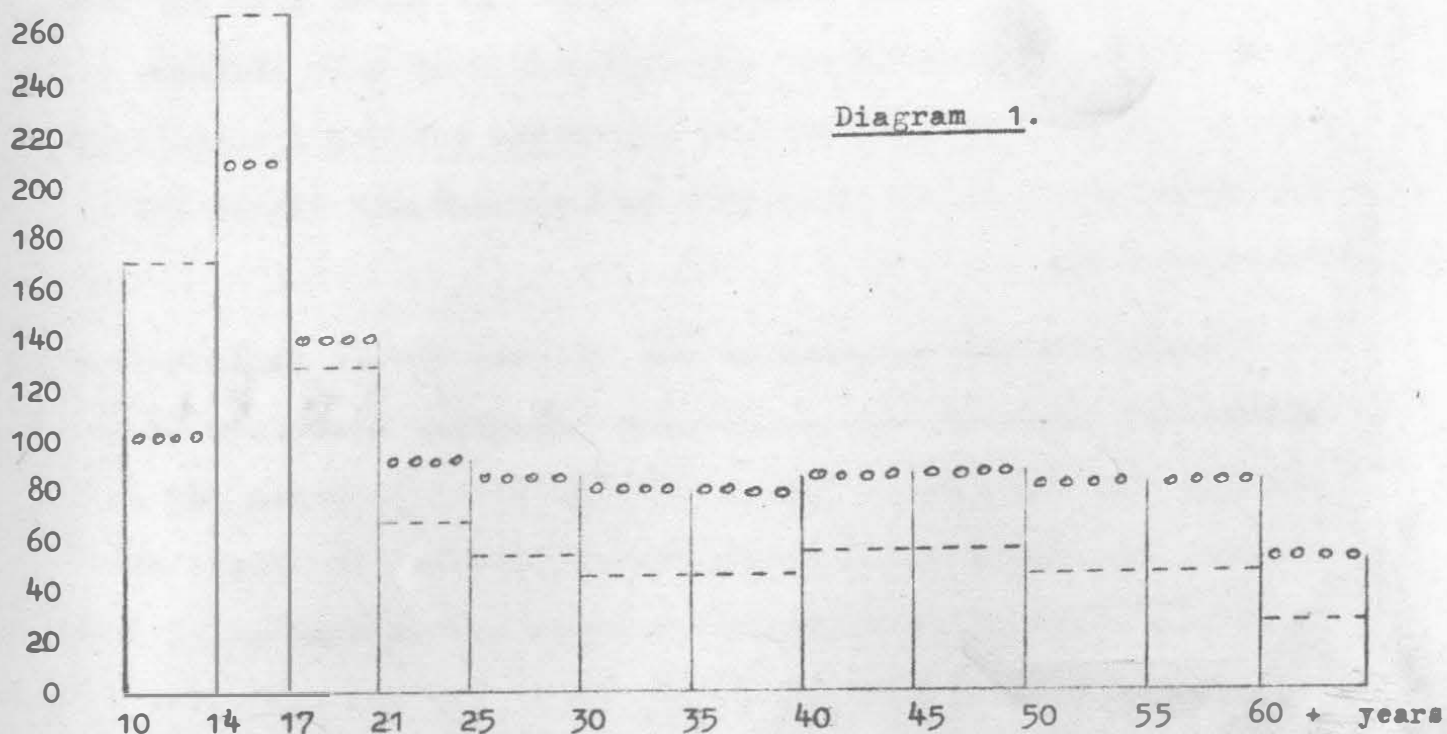


Age distribution of male (1950) and female (1950) population by age group (1950)

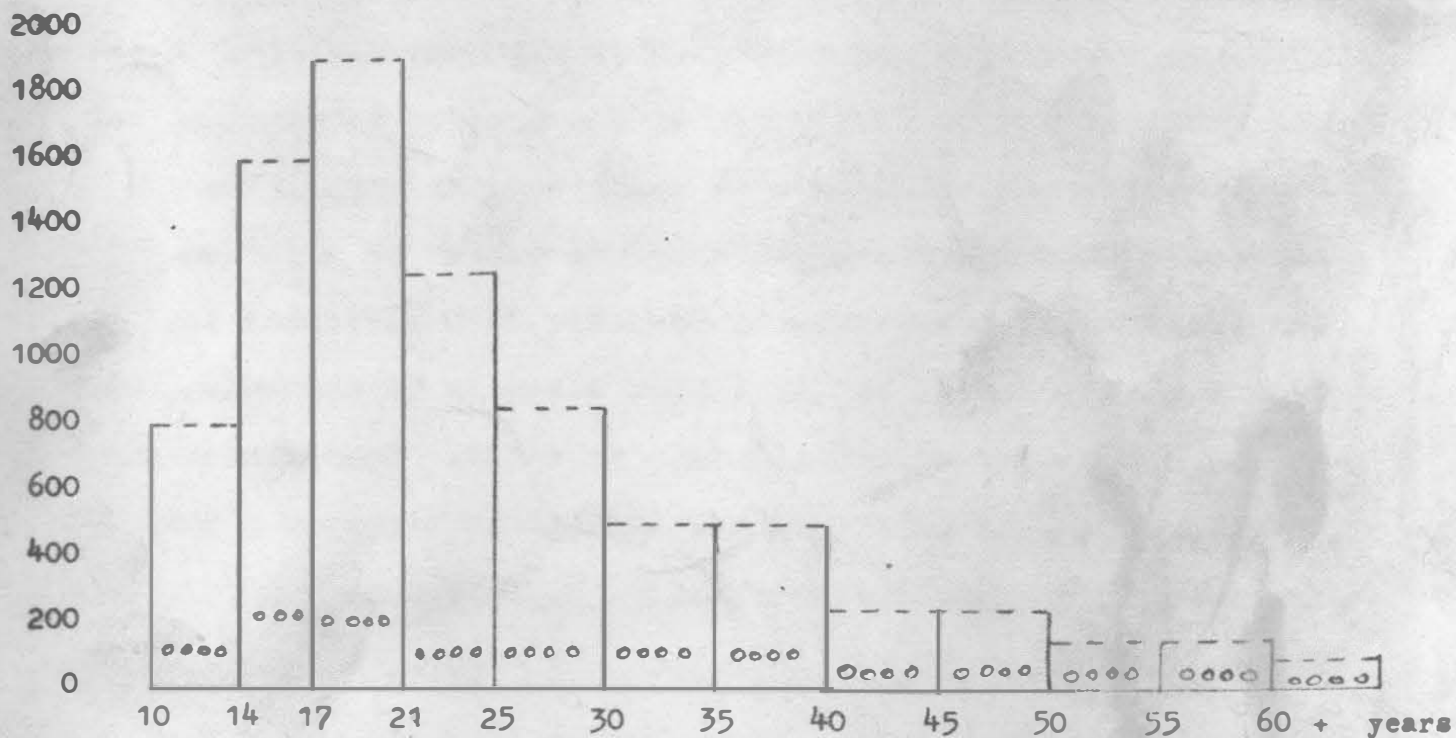


Age distribution of male and female population by age group (1950)

Number per 100,000
of age group



a. Age distribution of male (---) and female (ooo) shoplifters convicted before Magistrates Courts (England and Wales 1968)



b. Age distribution of Male and Female thieves (Class III other than No;46) convicted before Magistrates Courts (England and Wales 1968)

for each person convicted, to the official figures for 1968, it appears that for the 18,000 females convicted a further 540,000 may have committed the offence - a total of 558,000 in a female population of 21,000,000. This gives one shoplifter in every 38 females over the age of eight! Much investigation into shoplifting, and particularly that which is psychiatrically orientated, has been concerned with what other precipitating factors besides ease of commission and opportunity may cause a woman to steal in this way. The results have shown that many shoplifters were suffering from varying degrees of social, psychological or physiological stress in the period immediately preceding the offence. The influence of such conditions will be considered more fully in Chapter 2.

In age distribution shoplifters differ from other thieves (Diagram 1). Only during the teens, when the young male offender is disproportionately responsible for all types of theft (West 1967), do the age patterns coincide. There are more male shoplifters per 100,000 of the age group between the ages of 14 and 16 than at any other age for either sex, but it may be a method of stealing favoured by younger less experienced boys, since the peak age for other male thieving is rather later, between the age of 17 and 20 inclusive. Throughout adulthood more women than men are convicted of shoplifting. The normal decline, with increasing age, in the number of offences committed barely occurs with shoplifters of either sex, and there is an actual increase in the number of offences committed by men and women aged between 40 and 50 yrs. Shoplifters therefore have a higher average age than other property offenders.

The increase in the number of offenders convicted in middle age has caused particular comment. The suggestion that the stresses of the menopause may cause the middle aged woman to shoplift has received considerable support in medical and psychiatric circles, and has been exploited by many a defending solicitor. Whether the corresponding increase in the number of male offenders can also be explained in this way depends on the persuasiveness of the arguments for some form of male menopause. Other explanations put forward are similar to those offered for why women find this a feasible method of stealing: that physical skill and stamina, which may be waning in middle age, are not required for this crime. Gibbens (1962) suggested that many an old lag has fallen back on shoplifting once other forms of theft have become too demanding. Shoplifting may be the last resort of the ageing thief, but such an explanation is applied less convincingly to women for two reasons. The mature woman shoplifter is thought not to have started as a juvenile, since the latter have been shown to grow out of it by their late teens. She will probably be a "latecomer to crime" - a late first offender, and her way of life and social background will be entirely different from that of the man who is a habitual petty thief.

Most criminals come from the Registrar General's Social Classes IV and V, but a high proportion of female shoplifters belong to classes I and II and have correspondingly law abiding and respectable backgrounds. This type of shoplifter appears to be able to steal and yet maintain her self respect just as long

as she can avoid recognising that she is actually committing an offence. Motives stemming from the psychopathology of the offender may lead her to suppress the law-breaking quality of her act, until she is caught and forced to face up to it; or she may commit the offence in order to attract attention to herself, hoping thereby to resolve some other difficulty. Many women in such a frame of mind will steal from shops which seem wealthy and impersonal, but they would never steal under more personal circumstances. Mannheim (1940) reported a similar attitude. Men who would never steal from other persons nevertheless thought the (then) new automatic vending machines fair game. It is doubtful whether many of these women are caught on the first occasion, but it seems that the shock of being discovered is usually a sufficient deterrent in itself. Deterrence in these cases is not thought to depend on subsequent prosecution.

Nor is prosecution inevitable. It depends on decisions made by the store management and the police. The discussion at this point is no longer concerned with the characteristics of the offender. It turns to the methods by which shoplifting is detected and reported, - methods which are to some extent peculiar to this offence. Other types of offence are normally reported to the police, officially recorded, and then investigated before they can be cleared up. Their reportability depends on the evaluation of the offence by the victim or by a third party, - "victim induced", trivial and "hidden" crimes have low reportability. Whether they are officially recorded will depend

primarily on their gravity. The thoroughness of the subsequent investigation will depend not only on their gravity but also to a lesser extent on such factors as the amount of police manpower available, the climate of public opinion, and the likelihood of catching the offenders. This combination of circumstances produces very different "clear up" rates for different offences. The "clear up" rate for shoplifting is always high - for instance in 1968 the average rate for all Class III offences was about 40%, but for shoplifting it was 87%.

Different methods are used in the detection and reporting of shoplifters. Detection comes first. The offender must be caught "red-handed", and the responsibility for this lies with the shop. Moreover shops generally ignore those who are not very strongly suspected since they are wary of injuring their reputations, or leaving themselves open to civil action for damages, by making mistaken arrests. Once a shoplifter is detained his further disposition is at the discretion of the store, and only if it decides to prosecute is the offence reported and the offender simultaneously handed over to the police.

Cases of undetected shoplifting are rarely reported, since the stores cannot estimate with any accuracy how much of their inventory loss is due to shoplifters, how much to pilfering by employees, and how much to bookkeeping errors. They vary widely in their tolerance of "shrinkage rates", some accepting as reasonable 1% to 2% of inventory, while others tolerate figures higher than 10%; but since many keep no records relating to

shoplifting, or none of sufficient accuracy, their estimates of losses incurred are rarely more than informed guesses (Reiss 1967). Sellin (1937) first attempted to estimate how much was lost in this way by three Philadelphia department stores, and how many shoplifters were involved. Other estimates have been quoted from time to time (Cameron 1964 and New Scientist January 1971), but this is still a hopelessly inaccurate field of enquiry.

In its dealings with the shoplifter the store experiences a conflict of interests, and is forced to play several roles. The offence itself can be considered to be partly "victim induced", for many stores, particularly the larger ones, aim to encourage impulse buying, and this for some people may not be so very different from impulse stealing. The warmth, lighting and background music induce a sense of unreality, and modern sales techniques backed by high pressure advertising thrust the merchandise at the customer - indeed a sale is considered to be almost achieved once the customer has handled the goods. In this the self service stores are particularly culpable. They leave no barriers between the customer and the goods offered for sale, and their floor layout provides adequate cover for the potential thief. These stores have proliferated since 1960 and are held mainly responsible for the rapid increase in the numbers of known shoplifters. Between 1950 and 1968 the number of convictions for this offence nearly trebled (from 10,759 to 32,676). This increase was disproportionately greater than that for non-fraudulent Class III offences (Nos. 37 to 49, including 46) which only doubled (73,219 to 147,009). It is not, however,

possible to estimate the proportion of this increase which is due to an absolute increase in the number of shoplifters. Other factors intervene - methods of detection have become more efficient, and many shops are now more willing to prosecute.

Many stores are also ambivalent towards their detective and deterrent roles. Some stores actually expect a high level of shoplifting, considering it indicative of the success of their display techniques. Others do not fully accept their roles as private police, and since they take few steps to catch the offenders they erroneously conclude that they have no shoplifting problems. One such firm was persuaded to hire security staff for Saturdays only, and it found that an average of six shoplifters were arrested on each of the first three afternoons. But detection, if carried out by special security staff or by means of electronic equipment, may well be considered disproportionately expensive except in the larger shops. Some deterrents, such as extra sales staff, uniformed guards, and the conspicuous use of closed circuit television may be equally so. Other measures which physically protect the goods may deter the customer as well as the thief: for instance the glass counter tops which had been installed on police advice in some branches of one chain store had to be removed after three months because of the steep drop in sales (private communication). The more simple deterrents include the use of convex mirrors, and notices warning that all shoplifters will be prosecuted, but Dickens (1969) found that many shops considered the most effective deterrent to be a successful prosecution followed by a heavy sentence which was then given wide publicity.

Many shops state that they would rather deter than prosecute, but once an offender has been caught the store has to decide what further action shall be taken, and whether the offender shall be handed over to the police. The attitude of the stores towards their quasi-judicial role has been investigated, notably by Reiss (1967) and Dickens (1969), and their findings are reported in Chapter 2. Clearly the ultimate effect of this is that not all shoplifters appear before the court, and that those who do have been pre-selected to do so by the decision of the store.

Convicted shoplifters have been shown to possess criminologically distinguishing characteristics, and the explanations offered as to why some people shoplift are largely based on these characteristics. But do stores prosecute a random sample of all known shoplifters? Evidence from Reiss and Dickens points the other way. Therefore the question remains - how representative of all known shoplifters are those who are convicted? In order to try to establish this point, an analysis was carried out of the shoplifting records taken from a number of self-service foodstores in the Midlands, and the results are reported in the second part of this thesis. However it is first proposed to examine a number of previous research findings, some of which have already been mentioned briefly in the course of this introduction.

Chapter 2

PREVIOUS STUDIES

The current literature about shoplifting is not extensive. It contains a small number of comprehensive studies, the most recent of which are those by Gibbens (1962) and Cameron (1964), and some shorter works by authors who have investigated selected aspects of the subject. Moreover, since the study of criminology is multi-disciplinary, these investigations were carried out from the standpoint of each writer's particular academic discipline. Thus Gibbens is particularly concerned with the psychiatric factors, and Cameron with a sociological interpretation. The physiological and medical conditions associated with shoplifting have been discussed by writers such as Epps (1962) and Dalton (1964), and the legal and procedural aspects have been dealt with by others such as Dickens (1969) and Reiss (1967).

The shoplifter as a compulsive thief appears from time to time in the literature of psychopathological theft during the nineteenth century, but all earlier references traced have been descriptive and historical. A lively account written as early as 1597 shows that organisation and techniques were by then already well developed, (Judges 1930). These early references however apply to shoplifters who were professionals. They still continue to flourish, but are rarely noticed amongst the many amateur shoplifters of the twentieth century. However, since they are a distinct group with distinctive criminological features, they, and such literature as there is about them,

will be considered separately in Chapter 3.

The studies to be discussed in this chapter are concerned principally with amateur shoplifting, and have been published during the last two decades. They include reports of the two major research projects, a number of more specialised papers, and some minor references which have been derived from secondary sources. Since the texts of two earlier major studies were not obtainable these unfortunately could not be used as original source material. In the first of these Sellin (1937) drew attention to the large number of shoplifters who were not proceeded against although they were known to the store, and attempted to estimate the losses incurred through shoplifting by the three Philadelphia stores concerned. In the second Arieff and Bowie (1942) made a comprehensive psychiatric survey of shoplifters.

No other major research was carried out until that undertaken by Gibbens in 1959-60. From his work originated a psychiatrically orientated monograph (1962) which has remained the principal point of reference in all subsequent criminological discussion of the shoplifter. Consequently much of this chapter is taken up with a discussion of his work and its conclusions.

Almost concurrently with Gibbens, Mary Owen Cameron was making a study of shoplifting in a large departmental store in the United States of America. Since she was a sociologist of the Chicago school, and strongly influenced by Sutherland, her work was designed to be not only a type study of the shoplifter

but also a contribution towards the assessment of the effect of private administrative procedures on the level of crime recorded against offenders in the higher socio-economic classes. That part of her thesis which was subsequently published as a book (1964) is discussed in the course of this chapter.

Loren E. Edwards, for many years the chief security officer of the store where Cameron carried out her enquiry, made his own contribution to the literature. Although his book (1958) is principally a Store Protection Manual his wide experience of the shoplifter and his knowledge of shoplifting techniques make this work one of considerable interest to the criminologist.

A number of more limited investigations into shoplifting were reported from the Continent and the U.S.A. during the 1960s. Of these the most informative is that by Loitz (1965). Approaches to the subject which have more in common with Sellin than Gibbens have been made in the U.K. by Hillary Bennet (1968) and Bernard Dickens (1969) independently, and in the U.S.A. by Albert Reiss Jr. (1967). In each case they have been principally concerned with the prosecution policies of stores, and with the attitudes of store managers and security officers towards the shoplifter. Reiss also considered shoplifting in relation to other crimes committed against businesses and organisations.

An examination of literature not specifically concerned with shoplifting, but thought likely to shed incidental light on the subject, such as Slater, Cowie and Cowie (1968) or the Home

Office Research Unit report on Female Delinquency (1967), proved relatively abortive. Where shoplifting was mentioned it was considered as a constituent part of the wider category of theft, and frequently in order to make a comparison between female thieves and female sexual offenders. Discussion of shoplifting in the general criminological literature was sparse and was found in almost every case to be based on the Gibbens study. The consideration of this study in some detail would therefore appear to be the essential starting point.

"SHOPLIFTING". T.C.N. Gibbens and Joyce Prince. 1962.

Gibbens considered that many shoplifters possessed characteristics which would repay systematic study, since they were of particular interest to the psychiatrist and the criminologist. He was also aware that the psychiatrist knows individual shoplifters well, but normally sees only a highly selected few. His study of a much wider sample of shoplifters was undertaken in 1959-60.

His purpose was to determine the social and criminological characteristics and psychiatric symptoms of the adult woman shoplifter, and he took as his main sample the 532 women who had been convicted of shoplifting before three Greater London courts in a thirteen month period in 1959-60. (This will be referred to as the "1959 sample".) He compared their distribution on the socio-economic scale with that of the general population, and their criminality with that of one hundred other thieves convicted by the same courts and matched as closely as possible with the shoplifters.

A further investigation into the pattern of recidivism and the degree of crime specificity of the shoplifter was carried out by comparing the criminal records of a hundred shoplifters with those of a similar number of matched other thieves, all of whom had been convicted in the same courts ten years previously. (This will be referred to as the "1949 sample".) By this means it was hoped to establish whether shoplifters were distinguishable from other property offenders.

Some 234 males and 175 juveniles were convicted of shoplifting during the same period and before the same courts (or in the case of the juveniles the same court areas) as the "1959 sample", and sufficient information was available about them to enable an attempt to be made to determine whether their criminal behaviour approximated more closely to that of female adult shoplifters or to that of ordinary petty thieves.

A contributory investigation^{was} carried out by Dr Epps, who was then Medical Officer at Holloway Prison. She compared the social and medical histories of two hundred women shoplifters, who were in the prison either under sentence or on remand, with those of fifty other women convicted of offences against property in order to test the theory that shoplifting is more likely to be committed during certain phases of the female biological cycles.

Gibbens eventually came to four principle conclusions, which he set out as follows:-

1. "Shoplifting is commonly committed by women over forty."
2. "If they commit further offences, these are likely to

consist of further shoplifting, and this crime specific tendency increases with age. A recidivist career in shoplifting can begin quite late in life. Of the two sorts of woman thief committing a first offence over 40, the shoplifter is the more likely to recidivate."

3. "Children and teenagers convicted of shoplifting are rarely convicted of it in later life"
4. Where a young woman has persisted in an apparently professional career of shoplifting, "the tendency has been to turn to a more lucrative form of theft - i.e. stealing the handbags of other women shoppers....."

Before considering these and the more detailed findings of the survey it is felt that the following reservations should be made:

The entire study was based upon information about convicted offenders - those who had already been selected twice over by the store management and the police, on their way from the counter to the court. In addition the "1949 samples" numbering 100 each were rather small. They tended on analysis to splinter into statistically unsatisfactory subgroups (vide Table 14, p. 27 in Gibbens 1962). However the most serious reservation applies to the method by which Gibbens selected his "1959 sample". Indeed any extrapolation from this study of convicted shoplifters to convicted shoplifters in general may be less than valid because of the method by which this sample was collected. All the women shoplifters convicted by three Greater London courts in a given period were included and the three courts were carefully selected to cover a representative range of city,

suburban and semi-rural areas, each containing a wide variety of shops and customers, but the total sample emerged heavily biassed in favour of the court which convicted shoplifters apprehended in the West End. Altogether nearly 70% of the sample was drawn from the records of this court, and only 21% and 9% from the suburban and semi-rural courts respectively. It follows then that any peculiarities which might be specific to shoplifters appearing before the West End court will be reflected throughout the sample. There is then the danger that they may by inference be attributed to shoplifters throughout the country, and it is here suggested that the West End of London has shops, shopping conditions and customers which are not typical of the country as a whole. One specific and atypical subgroup was recognised by Gibbens and considered separately - that of the young foreign student or au-pair girl, who appeared almost exclusively before the West End court and actually accounted for nearly 30% of the total sample of women convicted in 1959-60. This group was readily identified, but other shoplifters who appeared before the West End court may have possessed social characteristics which were in fact more closely associated with the type of person who shops in the West End than with the type of person who steals from shops. A case in point might be that of the very high proportion of women in the sample who were found to be living alone, since this could be attributable to the existence of London's large bedsitter population.

Despite these reservations about the method of selection of the sample they do not diminish in any way the contribution

made by this work towards the understanding of the shoplifter.

The Women

Gibbens was principally interested in women shoplifters. He examined the social, criminological and psychiatric characteristics of his 1959 sample, and found that many of them were suffering from a constellation of social and domestic difficulties which could have precipitated the offence. Moreover shoplifters for whom this was a first conviction differed from recidivist shoplifters, and from the sample of "other thieves", and the shoplifters disclosed a wide range of recurring motives and psychopathological conditions. The extent to which the women of the 1959 sample differed socially and criminologically from the general population and from other female thieves is outlined in this section. The psychological differences are discussed in a later section which deals with the psychological interpretation of abnormal theft.

Information was obtained about the current social status, personal history, family relationships and work record of the shoplifters, and about the extent to which they had been exposed to situations involving social or domestic stress. An assessment could then be made of the influence of factors such as loneliness, isolation, age, poverty or comparative affluence.

Many of the women shoplifters were found to be living essentially alone. Some were acting as caretakers or housekeepers, and some had dependent children with them, but the proportion of women who had been separated, divorced or widowed

early was very much higher in the 1959 sample than in the population as a whole. (Widows over sixty were not over-represented, but evidence from the Foodstore survey, p. 122 suggests that this may be due to changes in the prosecution policies of the stores towards persons of this age.) The shoplifters lived alone more frequently than the women 'other thieves'. These 'other thieves' were on average considerably younger than the British born shoplifters, and a large proportion of them were either single or married, contrasting with the number with broken marriages in the shoplifter sample. When appraising this apparent relationship between shoplifting and living alone Gibbens concluded that "aloneness is a contributory factor in the offence, rather than that the offence has excluded them from family society" (ibid p. 38)

The social status and income of the shoplifter was taken as that of the chief wage earner in the family. In many instances this was the shoplifter herself. A disproportionately large number came from the professional or teacher or clerical classes, thus lending support to the hypothesis that shoplifting differs from most other offences in being practised unusually often by Social Classes I and II. Nevertheless a small number of shoplifters were living on very low incomes. Those actually living on National Assistance formed a small somewhat atypical group of socially maladjusted girls and mentally disordered middle aged women, whose previous convictions gave a much higher rate of recidivism than that of any other group of shoplifters. Poverty alone was not considered to be a sufficient reason for

shoplifting since rather more than half the women of the 1959 sample had sufficient money on them to pay for the goods they obtained. Many of the women may however have been tempted to steal "something extra", possibly something more expensive than they could normally afford whilst making their usual purchases. The offences did not appear to have been precipitated by a drop in income, nor could much support be found for the converse hypothesis that an increase in income tempts the housewife by overstimulating her desire for material possessions.

An assessment of intelligence was possible in about half the cases, and suggested that the British shoplifter who was a first offender was more intelligent than the recidivist. Is then, the delinquent of low intelligence caught more frequently, or does some other connection exist between low intelligence and delinquency? Opinions are divided. Eleanor Glueck (1935) compared two groups of delinquents of differing intelligence and suggested that duller children do not get caught more easily than brighter children, but Stott (1952) concluded that brighter children tend to escape detection by the use of their superior intelligence. Opinions also vary about the general relationship between low intelligence and delinquency, and Woodward (1963) did not consider it to be an important causal factor. Lewis (1944) however attached considerable importance to the part played by low intelligence in recidivism, although Rourke (1950) denied that any such relationship could be established.

The recidivist shoplifters were found not only to be less intelligent than the first offenders, but also to have been

exposed to a greater degree of social stress, marital friction, boredom and loneliness. They appeared to be less able to manage their own affairs and to be less honest than either the foreign or the British-born first offenders. They also had poorer work records, but Gibbens concluded that job instability, which is recognised as a generally reliable predictor of further crime, was not as reliable when applied specifically to shoplifters.

The shoplifters, whether first offenders or recidivists, were shown to have different criminal characteristics from those of the sample of matched "other thieves". The shoplifters were on average older and their age of onset of crime was later. They were much less likely to earn a living anti-socially, and rarely had any record of sexual offences, whereas the "other thieves" were frequently involved in prostitution. Altogether the adult female shoplifters of the Gibbens study exhibited very few of the symptoms which are commonly associated with criminality, and shoplifting apart many appeared to be responsible law-abiding members of society. But they were not fully representative of law-abiding society, since among them there was a preponderance of women aged between 40 and 60, and of women who lived alone, and a disproportionate number who belonged to the higher socio-economic strata. In an attempt to explain the apparent vulnerability of these groups Gibbens turned to the psychiatric aspects of the problem, but before these are discussed the characteristics of the remaining shoplifters will be considered.

The Immigrants

The "1959 sample" included so high a proportion of foreign-born women (30%) that they were eventually treated as a distinct subgroup. Within this subgroup two separate types of immigrant were identified. Many were visiting au pair girls, foreign students and overseas visitors, who were staying for relatively short periods, but a minority, making up about one fifth of the total number, were people who had been born abroad but had subsequently become semi-permanent residents in this country.

Gibbens considered that the short-term visitors were more vulnerable than the long-term residents since the latter, once they were absorbed into their own subcultural groups, escaped potential isolation and the collapse of their own cultural standards. In contrast the young visiting foreign girls who were here on a short-term basis were often especially vulnerable because of the conditions under which they lived or worked. Some resented their working conditions, and many suffered from relative poverty, isolation, or the sense of social detachment which is virtually inherent in the life of a foreign student or au pair girl. Others were overwhelmed by the profusion of goods in the shops, and some had been told by others, even before they arrived in London, that shoplifting was easy and that all au pair girls did it. This attitude was often reinforced by the sense of irresponsibility which can be induced by living away from home.

The presence of so many foreign women in Gibbens' sample

emphasises the point that a sample of shoplifters appearing before the London courts may differ in composition from a sample of shoplifters convicted elsewhere in the country. Certainly as far as could be established from the limited data available (ult. p. 87) the Foodstore sample was made up almost entirely of British-born shoplifters.

The Men

The fact that men are convicted of shoplifting less frequently than women was clearly demonstrated. A total of 234 men were convicted by the same courts and during the same period as the 532 women of the 1959 sample. This proportion of one man to every 2.3 women appears to be fairly constant. It is similar to that obtained from the official statistics for 1968, and also to that found in the convicted component of the Foodstore sample in 1969. (ult. p. 117)

Relevant information about the men was limited to that derived from court and police records, but it was sufficient to show that the male shoplifter had characteristics more in common with those of the general criminal population than with those of the woman shoplifter. Key factors such as the age of onset of crime, the age at which the shoplifting offence was committed, the extent of any previous criminal record, and the type of offences previously committed emphasised these sex-related differences. The age of onset of crime and the age at which most offences were committed was much lower for men shoplifters than for women. Gibbens placed the peak age for male shoplifting at 21 - 30 years, compared with the female peak of

51 - 60 years, but his figures indicate that it was even earlier. Referring to Table 68 (p. 130 Gibbens 1962) a total of 31 men were convicted in the four-year age range 17 - 20 years, compared with 56 men convicted in the ten year age range 21 - 30 years. One half of the men, as against one quarter of the women (excluding the immigrants, whose criminal records could not be checked) had criminal records. Their records were longer and their offences more varied. Thus it was possible to conclude that shoplifting is crime specific in women but not in men. Neither did there appear to be any association in the men's records between shoplifting and any other crimes which are thought to originate from similar motives, such as fraud, false pretences or sexual offences.

Homosexuals are thought to have a tendency to shoplift. A very small number of men stole women's clothes, and may have stolen them for fetishistic purposes, but they may equally well have stolen them as presents. Most men stole food or books, but between 1949 and 1959 the number stealing books declined and many more took to stealing food. Many of the latter were retired or out of work and Gibbens suggested that they may have stolen because of poverty. He recognised that more men may steal food than was suggested by the sample, since older men are less likely to be prosecuted. This was supported by the Foodstore Survey (ult. p. 122) where it was found that none of the thirty men aged over sixty was convicted.

Book stealing appeared to be an almost entirely masculine habit (in the 1959 sample only one woman as against 60% of the

men stole books) but the books were frequently stolen by men whose jobs did not indicate a high intellectual status, and by men who had just come out of prison. Gibbens suggested that these books were being collected and hoarded, for hoarding is a particularly masculine trait. Although a few compulsive hoarders were identified in the male sample however, Gibbens concluded that the majority of the men belonged to the general criminal population. They were often persistent offenders or elderly recidivists whose previous convictions were for other offences and for whom shoplifting might be considered an offence of last resort, affording them a modest augmentation of income from the casual sale of stolen articles.

The Juveniles

Boys and girls were represented in equal numbers in the 1959/60 juvenile sample and this Gibbens considered very unusual. He pointed out that 100 boys and 60 girls had appeared before the same courts in 1949, and that the 1958 Criminal Statistics for England and Wales had showed that 92% of all juveniles found guilty of indictable offences were boys. A one-to-one sex ratio was, however, to be found again in the numbers of juveniles apprehended and convicted in the Foodstore survey (ult. p. 122).

The distribution of the two sexes differed between the three court areas. Like the adult women most girls appeared before the West End court, but the boys were more evenly distributed. Findings about the juveniles were based on information contained in the court and police records, and in

about half the cases on evidence from the probation service. From this information Gibbens concluded that the sex-related criminological characteristics of adult offenders can already be distinguished in adolescents. For instance although both sexes reached a peak of activity at 14 the boys had first appeared in court some 18 months earlier than the girls, and had been found guilty of a greater variety of offences. Girl shoplifters tended only to have findings of guilt for shoplifting. The girls, like the women, stole more clothes, while the boys tended to steal toys, and already showed the predilection for books noted amongst the men.

Like the adult offenders the juvenile shoplifters were found to come from backgrounds which were markedly less criminal and less disturbed than the other delinquents with whom they were compared. But since the two groups of delinquents selected for comparison either came from one of two London remand homes (Scott 1960, and MacLay, 1960) or had appeared before a juvenile court in south east London (Watton 1960) this result could have been anticipated. The shoplifters also had better health and employment records, and the child-parent relationship and the between-parent relationship were both much more satisfactory for them than for the other delinquents. The parents of the shoplifters appeared on the other hand more authoritarian and undemonstrative, so that their children may have been subjected to a greater degree of emotional pressure.

Compared with children in the general population a higher

proportion of the juvenile shoplifters had parents in the professional or clerical classes. This may help to account for a result which Gibbens found most remarkable: that a high proportion of the juvenile shoplifters attended grammar or technical schools. Many of the boys were highly intelligent and had attained a high level of performance at school, but the girls, who were on average older than the boys, tended to run into more difficulties at school and did not perform so well academically.

Psychologically the boys divided into two numerically equal groups. The first group contained the "marauding" daredevil boys, who hunted in packs through the stores, aiming to build for themselves a reputation for boldness and resourcefulness. With them went weaker boys who were persuaded that this was the thing to do. The second group consisted of boys with all levels of psychological difficulties, from those who were disturbed to those who showed serious maladjustment, and included some who had homosexual difficulties.

The psychological characteristics of the girls differed from those of the boys. They tended to have passive or inhibited personalities, and were less able to express their dissatisfaction with life in ways possible to their more "wayward" female contemporaries. Disturbed girls were also found to have more criminal contact within their families, and to come more frequently from overtly disturbed family backgrounds than boys.

Gibbens concluded that emotionally disturbed juvenile

shoplifters show clearly some of the motives revealed in greater complexity by adults, and this he summed up in the following terms:

"One motive may predominate but in many the offence successfully fuses all three elements. (1) The crime is an act of defiance against restrictive or unsympathetic parents, and by publicly shaming them punishes them for their lack of understanding. (2) It is an appeal for help and may lead to removal from home or some improvement in circumstances. (3) It is preceded by a period during which the offender has felt guilty of provoking her parents, has felt depressed and worthless, no better than the sort of people who do this, so she might as well do it too. The practical need for the goods, which may be quite strong or relatively slight, lies on the surface of such undercurrents." (p. 122)

The Psychiatric Interpretation

Gibbens' major contribution to the understanding of the shoplifter was made through his discussion of the psychological factors involved. He considered that in many cases, especially where the person at risk was an older woman, these factors were of crucial importance. About one quarter of the book is taken up by a discussion of the psychological explanations of shoplifting, and consequently there is a danger that the psychiatric aspects may have been over-emphasised, to such an extent that shoplifters are now principally thought of as middle aged women with psychiatric difficulties, at least at the depressive level.

About 42% of the 1959 female sample were subject to social investigation, and in all cases where any sign of psychotic disorder was noticed a referral was made for further

investigation. It was established that of the total sample 18.9% had a clear psychiatric disorder, 9% had a physical disorder, and another 5% were suffering from "anxiety and stress", but it was also considered that if all the shoplifters could have been investigated many more would have been found to show "anxiety and stress". Despite the large number of shoplifters included in the sample several of the psycho-pathological theories discussed could not be exemplified without recourse to cases which had been referred from other sources. From this it may be deduced that some psycho-pathological causes of shoplifting are in practice rare.

Attempts to explain the psychopathology of abnormal stealing had been thoroughly reviewed by Schmidt (1939). Gibbens discussed the modern relevance of these historical theories, and showed how they fitted in with the case histories of his shoplifters, but before doing so he warned:

".... as elsewhere is the psychopathology of crime, it is futile to look for a specific cause of any particular crime. A number of motives are combined in very different ways and the situation can only be understood by reference to conflicting personal relationships from childhood onwards which have usually been resolved in a similarly unsatisfying way for some time past. Nor is there any sharp division into black and white, or into dishonest and deliberate thieves on the one hand, and honest 'kleptomaniacs' on the other." (p. 78)

Psychiatric interpretations of abnormal theft date from the first half of the nineteenth century. In 1838 Marc first identified the "Kleptomaniac" or compulsive thief, - a condition which in its extreme form is rare. Here pathological stealing

is related to obsessive-compulsive symptoms, and the act of stealing is only a "criminal splinter in the edifice of a compulsive personality" (Guddens 1907). No case of this sort of compulsive stealing was identified in the Gibbens' survey, although he considered that careful examination would have been necessary in order to detect it. Many of the women did however show similar symptoms to a lesser degree. They had highly conscientious, mildly obsessional personalities, and in a number of cases their impulse to steal had been sudden, recurrent and irrational, with compulsive overtones.

Abnormal theft can also be a symptom of sexual abnormality, but there appeared to be little connection between shoplifting and stealing clothes for fetishistic purposes, however clothes which are stolen to this end have generally been used and are frequently taken from clothes lines. Remarkably few of the men stole women's clothes for any purpose. Nor did any member of the Gibbens' sample report experiencing direct sexual excitement during the act of shoplifting, but the excitement of doing something wrong was frequently mentioned. However Gibbens did consider that among the cases actually accepted for treatment, there was plenty of indication that sexual frustration played an important part, and that a number of conscientious and respectable women, to whom infidelity would be unthinkable, may have received a quasi-sexual thrill during the act of shoplifting.

The development of psycho-analysis gave further impetus to the sexual interpretation of theft. It was suggested that women

stole to achieve a symbolic penis, or a replacement of lost love, or a substitute for the earliest source of infant satisfaction. This was not supported by evidence from the Gibbens' sample. Men, not women, stole fountain pens, and only eight out of the 532 women stole possible penis symbols.

Neurotic theft as an overcompensation for inferiority was emphasised by the Adlerian school. The thief enjoys a sense of triumph and does not feel responsible for his act. Gibbens reported that many of the shoplifters clearly suffered from feelings of inferiority, and that these were frequently coupled with a sense of triumph.

There was evidence of a masochistic element in some of the shoplifters. They were bitterly ashamed on being caught, but they also experienced the highest satisfaction. Some of the wives appeared to use the predicament of a court appearance to provoke husbands, whom they may have thought too quiet or passive, into expressions of positive interest in them. Amongst the younger shoplifters the desire to maintain prestige with their companions, or the need to foster self assurance were contributory factors. Nevertheless only a few women actually expressed pleasurable excitement, and many reported experiencing tension, anxiety or acute fear.

The psychiatric evidence obtained from the shoplifters led Gibbens to conclude that the personalities of the shoplifters and their motives varied with age. The majority of girls in their teens and early twenties showed signs of general social maladjustment, and the theft was often in character with their

other activities. However this was not the case for a minority of the girls of this age. They were suffering from neurotic difficulties. The woman aged between 25 and 40 and otherwise of good character was thought to be showing a vigorous response to frustrations, especially sexual ones. The "most significant group" was made up of those aged between 40 and 55, many of whom had lived honest and active lives, in which theft was out of character even though the goods stolen were of practical use. It was found that many in this group suffered from persistent anxiety and tension, if not from serious depression, and their mental state was often masked by physical ill-health. The oldest group, those over 55, was considered more difficult to interpret. Poverty, distress and impulse were frequently found to be contributory factors, and the act was often accompanied by confusion and shame.

Other recurring motives and attitudes were identified amongst the women. Depression was common, and it appeared that many women were seeking to gain attention through the offence. The motive in these cases has been likened to a miniature or moral suicide - a cry for help. Do these women then need to be caught, and do they persist until they are caught, or act so openly that discovery is inevitable? Women with immature and poorly integrated personalities were frequently found to suffer from resentment, and this was especially common amongst the recidivists. Other shoplifters stole in order to keep up appearances, or in an attempt to improve their material status beyond their income level. Some otherwise honest women stole through meanness. They were often living on a tight budget, or

had such a passion for saving that any unnecessary expenditure painful.

Some women appear to shoplift to comfort themselves, or to obtain temporary relief from anxiety. When faced by the temptations offered by the store their resistance is lowered and the deed is quickly done. These women may either persuade themselves that the store is wealthy and impersonal and the goods will not be missed; or they may not recognise that their stealing is a criminal act until they are caught and forced to face up to it.

Physiological Influences

The theory that physiological changes occurring during periods of menstruation, pregnancy and the menopause may precipitate acts of shoplifting was investigated by Dr Epps, in her contributory study. Her findings did not support this theory, and she claimed that this was in accordance with Neustatter's opinion (Gibbens 1962, p. 135).

Writers on other occasions have also considered that the evidence was insufficient. Dubuisson (1901) found that only fifteen out of 120 women shoplifters were pregnant, menstruating or menopausal. Of the total Loitz sample of 1321, 52% were adult females, but only 3 were pregnant, and although those aged between 50 and 60 constituted the largest group, and some of them may have been late menopausal, Loitz came to the overall conclusion that: "In the majority of cases, unlawful greed was the motive for the act." (Loitz 1965) Mey (1966) also concluded that evidence of any correlation between the female biological

cycles and shoplifting remains to be presented; and Cameron (1964) considered that the theory that the crimes of women are related to the menopause was not substantiated. She suggested that women shoplifters of this age predominated only because they usually reached this age before they had sufficient spare time to spend idly round the shops.

Writers who consider that some causal relationship does exist include Pollak (1960) and Von Hentig (1947) in the field of general criminology. They pointed to a distinct rise in female delinquency during the premenopausal and menopausal phases, and considered that the accompanying emotional disturbance made women more prone to commit crime. Tegel (1964) also concluded that the physiological changes of the menopause were closely associated with criminality. In the medical field Dalton in particular (1961 and 1964) has strongly supported this theory, but she also suggested that the lethargy which accompanies the premenstrual syndrome may make women more liable to be caught! (1964).

Dickens (1969) when examining the prosecution policies of some ten and a half thousand shops in England and Wales found that while 60% would not prosecute women who were visibly pregnant, only 25% were lenient towards women of menopausal age. In the present Foodstore survey only 2% of the total female sample were excused specifically because they were pregnant, and the conviction rate for women aged between 41 and 50 was actually higher at 62% than the average of 48% for women of all ages.

It has been suggested that the resistance to temptation may be lowered during certain other temporary physiological states, such as those induced by hunger, lack of sleep, drunkenness, analgesics or drugs. Isolated cases with these symptoms could be found in Gibbens' sample, but these states were not thought to have been particularly associated with shoplifting and were accordingly discounted.

However Edwards (1958) emphasised the great increase in drug addiction in the United States since the second world war. In his experience many girls shoplifted while under the influence of drugs, and "pushers" taught girls to shoplift, and to return the goods to the store for cash, or sell them elsewhere. The money was then used to buy more drugs. Bearing in mind that the taking of drugs has increased enormously in the United Kingdom since Gibbens carried out his study, it is possible that a similar situation has developed here, and an up to date survey of the criminal records of younger shoplifters and of those convicted of drug offences might usefully be undertaken in order to determine how many offenders had convictions for both types of offence.

THE FOURTH INTERNATIONAL CRIMINOLOGICAL CONGRESS 1960

This congress took as its theme the psychopathological aspects of criminal behaviour, and one of the sub-sections was concerned with "Thefts in Department Stores". Interest centred mainly on the Gibbens study which was then nearing completion, and which was reported in some detail. Papers were also submitted by Peijster from the Netherlands, Doleisch from

Austria, Epps from the United Kingdom, and Jacomella from Switzerland. Unfortunately it has not proved possible to trace the text of these papers since they were submitted late and are not included in the official transactions. However the derivative discussions were reported and contain some relevant material. In the main, interest centered on the classification of the shoplifter, and on methods of prevention and treatment, in a psychiatrically orientated discussion.

In the course of his introductory address as General Rapporteur Gibbens reported on his (then) current study, and defined four types of shoplifter: the professionals, who planned their thefts with care and often worked in groups; the more general delinquents, including many children, who were easily tempted and had relatively simple motivation; the middle aged women of good character who "steal from what are clearly unusual motives" and amongst whom were to be found symptoms of anxiety, tension and depression; and finally the definitely repetitive thieves, whose only objective was the act of stealing itself, and who were under considerable impulsion, if not compulsion, to keep on stealing.

Scott (Great Britain) also separated shoplifters into four categories, and suggested appropriate methods of treatment for each. He considered that some shoplifters operated at the subcultural level, doing what is done in their community. These he suggested should be dealt with by the application of sanctions, since supervision and psychotherapy would be wasted on them. Probation he considered would be suitable treatment for the second group, those who were of weak character and who

were easily led into temptation. The other two groups were defined psychiatrically. There were those who "have learned a negative lesson and are trying to compensate for it", and who have neurotic patterns and character disorders needing some form of psychotherapy. Finally there were the "maladapted patients" who had suffered such a high degree of frustration that their learning processes had broken down. These presented a problem, since they were unaffected by punishment, and difficult to handle, and psychotherapy was useless to them.

These categories do not exactly correspond to those defined by Gibbens, since shoplifters operating at the sub-cultural level are not necessarily professionals, and Scott appears to lay even more emphasis on the psycho-pathological factors which may be involved. However, both Scott and Gibbens agreed that the juvenile offenders most frequently belonged to groups one and two of the Scott classification.

Doliesch (Austria) considered that a more severe sentence for the first offence would act as a deterrent. He based this opinion on a number of interviews he had had with recidivist women shoplifters in prison. Since the rate of recidivism at least amongst female shoplifters is low, (Gibbens 1962, Cameron 1964,) this poses the practical problem of how to identify - even with diagnostic reports, the few potential recidivists among the many first offenders, and raises the issue of using discriminatory sentences for similar offences, unless all first offenders who steal from shops are to receive overtly deterrent sentences! (It may be however that such a discriminatory policy

is more easily implemented in Dr Doliesch's own country, under an inquisitorial system of justice.)

Neustatter (Great Britain) strongly advocated that offenders should be taken before the court. He considered it quite possible that what is pathological shoplifting on the first occasion may become mercenary shoplifting when the offender finds she can get away with it. Hysterics, he felt in particular should be made to suffer the disagreeable consequences of their symptoms, otherwise they will tend to repeat their behaviour.

".... it is my belief that a lot of shoplifting is not strictly a psychiatric problem".

The psychologist sees the pathological offenders because they are sent to him, and in these tension and depression are the conditions most often found. For the majority of shoplifters the precipitating factor is not to be found in psychiatric disorder but in the "ease of taking things".

Although the psychiatric examination of the motivation of the shoplifter dominated the discussion, it was recognised that shoplifting was a rapidly growing problem which had been exacerbated by the steady increase in the number of large departmental and self-service stores. From this it may be deduced that ease of access to the goods, and degree of opportunity available to the shoplifter, were also recognised as contributory factors precipitating the act, even when cause and motivation were looked at from a strictly psychiatric standpoint.

SHORTER WORKS 1960-69

During the last ten years some shorter studies of shoplifting have been published on the Continent and in the United States, and a number of articles have been written about the growing incidence of the offence and its effect on retail trade. None of these was a definitive work, nor did they appear to add anything fundamental to the understanding of the problem, and apart from the Loitz study (1965) they can be reviewed together. The subjects most commonly discussed include explanatory hypotheses, often psychiatrically based, and descriptive analyses of the offence and of the offenders sometimes based on questionably small numbers. To these can be added explanations for the rapid increase in the amount of shoplifting, and suggestions for ways in which it could be prevented.

There was general agreement that women shoplift more than men, but Robin (1964) considered that this had been much overestimated. Mey (1966) followed this by suggesting that evidence that it is principally a female offence would not be conclusive until the ratio between the numbers of men and women shoppers had been established. Some attempts have been made to estimate this ratio but they show considerable variation. Peijster (1960) showed that twenty five women enter large departmental stores in the Netherlands for every man, but other writers have suggested different proportions, even as low as two women to every man, which would more nearly approximate to the usual proportions in which they are arrested.

Concern was expressed about the steady increase in the amount of shoplifting. The large departmental stores had previously attracted the greatest number of shoplifters, but the self-service store was now responsible for a further increase, and especially in the amount of food stolen. An American trade paper (NCCD News 1966) contained an article which asserted that shoplifting was eroding the profit margin to such an extent that prices were having to be increased. Bennett (1968) reported a supporting case. One store was so laid out and staffed as to make shoplifting inevitable, and yet it allowed a "shrinkage" rate of only 0.4%. The remedy, resorted to by staff and manager alike, was to sell goods above the official price or to overcharge at the till. Prevention is considered to be all-important. The aim is to reduce opportunity and deter the potential offender without discouraging the customer. Various solutions are offered by NCCD News (1966, Bennett (1968), Mey (1966) and "Law and Order" (12.7.64), many of which are now being put into practice by security-conscious stores. They include better store layout, designed to reduce the opportunities and to increase the ease of surveillance; more staff, although this would have to be costed against the shrinkage due to shoplifting; better service on the part of the staff; closed circuit television; two-way mirrors; and the gathering and pooling of information by retail security officers.

The detailed incidence of shoplifting was found to be very variable within any one shop. Robin (1964) in the United States and Loitz (1965) in the Federal German Republic came to broadly the same conclusions. Shoplifting occurred most frequently

during the afternoon, but declined in the last hour before closing. More took place towards the end of the week, and Saturday was the peak day. Moreover a steady rise was detected in the pre-Christmas period. Apart from this increase before Christmas these patterns have something in common with those of the Foodstore survey (Diagrams 5, 6, and 7 - facing pp.106-8-9ult.).

References to the motivation of shoplifters were found in several of the articles, but they added nothing substantial to the contribution already made by Gibbens. Mrowka (1966), having carried out an investigation into shoplifting by "female minors", decided that this type of offence was usually opportunist. Their motives were rooted not in need but in the urge to show off, and the stimulus of the unusual was often the determining factor. The influence and example of "experienced" girl friends was thought to be of great importance. Loitz, too, considered that the effect of influence and example should not be overlooked, and said that: "the observation of thefts committed by others is considered to be no small stimulation to committing a similar act."

Some conclusions from Loitz (1965) have already been mentioned, but his study is sufficiently comprehensive to repay separate consideration. In it he claims to have investigated some 1199 cases of shoplifting involving 1321 shoplifters in the Federal German Republic. He found a very similar distribution between urban and rural areas to that found by Gibbens. 70% of Loitz' sample came from the large cities, 20% from towns with populations between 20,000 and 100,000, and 10% from more rural areas. Gibbens' figures were 70%, 21% and 9%. The similarity

may be coincidental, but is surprising when it is realised that the two studies were carried out five years apart and in different countries. Loitz found that the majority of goods were stolen from self-service stores, and again the item most frequently stolen was food. This accounted for 54.6% of the cases, clothes for 18% toys for 14.4% alcohol for 8.5% and sweets for 4.5%.

From the composition of the Loitz sample it appeared that women were convicted of shoplifting rather more than twice as often as men - proportions again roughly similar to those found by Gibbens. In their occupations 43.3% of the Loitz sample were housewives, 16.8% workmen and 18.4% were at school, which compares closely with the Foodstore figures of 42% housewives, 10.5% employed men and 17% juveniles. Loitz found an even lower rate of recidivism than Gibbens. The records of 697 offenders showed that 106 had one previous conviction, and only 35 had more than one.

As in other studies more boys than girls were caught shoplifting before the age of 18, but about this age the predominance of the female over the male begins to emerge. Amongst the adults the largest number of shoplifters were aged between 50 and 59. This again is in line with Gibbens, although the Foodstore survey was to show slightly higher numbers between 31 and 50.

Loitz was not concerned with the mental condition of the offenders, except in the extreme cases of those who were judged not to be legally responsible. He found that only nine women

between the ages of 20 and 64 came into this category. It is not clear, however, how many of his 1321 cases were investigated in detail. He stated at one point that only three women were pregnant. In another place he said that out of 230 cases investigated as many as 165 had sufficient money with them to pay for the goods, while the number of cases investigated for recidivism was 697. It would appear that different numbers of cases were available at different points in the study.

In all Loitz came to the two conclusions already quoted; that in the majority of cases the principal motive for shoplifting was "unlawful greed", and that the observation of an act committed by others may precipitate the offence. These two conclusions have little in common with either the psychopathological interpretations of Gibbens or the sociological explanations offered by Cameron.

THE BOOSTER AND THE SNITCH (Cameron M.O. 1964)

This is the second comprehensive study of shoplifting to be published since 1960, and it is very different from the Gibbens study. Its author was an American sociologist who stated that she had been strongly influenced by the works of Cohen, Cressey, Lindsmith, McKay, Ohlin and Scheussler, and that she had made use of their theories in her attempt to explain some of the phenomena of shoplifting.

Starting from Sutherland's (1949) classic statement that "persons of the upper socio-economic class engage in much criminal behaviour; that this criminal behaviour differs from

the criminal behaviour of the lower socio-economic classes principally in the administrative procedures which are used in dealing with the offenders; and that variations in administrative procedures are not sufficient from the point of view of the causation of crime"; Cameron concluded that further information about the functioning of private agencies of law enforcement could usefully be collected. She therefore approached a large Chicago department store, and asked if such relevant data as had been collected on shoplifting could be made available for statistical analysis. The result was a research report with two sides: a type study of shoplifting, and a limited analysis of the function of a private police agency.

A close comparison between the Gibbens and Cameron studies would not have been feasible even if their approaches had been more similar. Gibbens drew his sample from among shoplifters who had been convicted by a magistrates court in the United Kingdom in 1959, while Cameron took hers from the records of a large department store in Chicago, U.S.A., between 1943 and 1950. There were therefore three basic differences between them - those of time, place and selection. The difference of place was significant since it determined the overall moral, social and economic environment in which the shoplifters lived, and the legal process to which they were subject. More significant was the difference in the choice of where in the sequence of events which can overtake an apprehended shoplifter the sample should be drawn. Gibbens selected the "end product": the remnant which had been sifted through the screening processes

of the store and the police; but Cameron had taken her sample from those who had been apprehended by the store personnel. Their only admission of guilt might have been the signing of a waiver of suit (which may not have been fully understood) against the store, absolving it from blame in apprehending them.

Cameron's data was eventually acquired from three sources. Her main sample consisted of every fourth chronological arrest made between 1943 and 1950 by a Chicago Store which had arrested 4,600 shoplifters in this period. The information available about each shoplifter was limited but specific, and resembled that obtained in the Foodstore survey (Chapters 5 and 6). Sex, age, address, time of day, date, alias, occupation, accomplices, disposition of the case, value of goods stolen, and involvement with other stores are common to both, but the Chicago Store also recorded information about marital status, spouse's employment, previous record, weight, height and race. While acquiring this information Cameron was able to spend several months in the store observing the shoplifters and their reactions to being arrested, discussing problems of store protection with the security personnel, and watching their procedures during and subsequent to making an arrest.

Her second sample was taken from the Chicago municipal court records for the years 1948 to 1950. All women charged with misdemeanors in Chicago appeared before this particular branch of the court for at least an initial hearing, and of the 1319 women charged with larceny as many as 873 were shoplifters. The previous police records of 78 of these women were examined and compared with the records of 34 male shoplifters from a

downtown court. The number of convicted shoplifters studied by Cameron was thus much smaller than that studied by Gibbens.

The information collected from these two samples was first presented in a doctoral dissertation, and eventually formed the basis of her book (Cameron 1964). Since it is not possible to present a report on the whole work in detail here the discussion will be confined to a description of some of her basic data, a summary of her principal conclusions, and the arguments on which these were based.

Predictably many more women than men had been caught shoplifting in the Chicago Store. In the total sample the sex ratio was one man to every 1.5 women, but most of the males must have been juveniles since women accounted for as much as 83% of the adult sample - a proportion of one man to every 4.9 women. Cameron offered three explanations for the preponderance of women. The extra time and opportunity available to women has already been noted. Additionally Cameron suggested that this particular Store sold goods which would attract women rather than men, and that men employed methods of shoplifting which left them less open than women to detection. It is thought that both men and women shoplift in the way that they shop. Men tend to go directly for the goods they want, steal them and leave the store immediately, thus minimising the time they are at risk. Women on the other hand almost invariably take their time, change their minds frequently, and eventually select several articles before they leave the store. Their chances of being observed on any one expedition are therefore considerably greater than in the case of the men. In support of

this theory Cameron noted that while many men stole single articles of high value, women tended to steal a number of articles of lesser value. This difference in the number and value of items stolen by men and women was also apparent in the Foodstore survey (ult. p. 99).

The age distribution of the shoplifters was sex-related and similar to that found in other studies. Boys and girls under 18 had been arrested in approximately equal numbers, but the boys began younger. They had reached the overall peak rate for males of nearly 100 arrests per year of the age range , by the early age of 10, while the peak rate for females of 133 arrests per year, occurred at the age of 15. After the age of 18 the number of male arrests dropped off rapidly to a rate of between 15 and 20 arrests per year, rising again to a slight peak of 35 arrests at about the age of 50, after which it fell off steadily. The increase in male shoplifting in middle age was not large but was detectable in this study. It was found again, and much more markedly, in the Foodstore survey (ult. p. 82).

In the female sample the peak at the age of 15 was followed by a steady fall to a low of 60 per year between the ages of 24 and 34. There were two further peaks in middle age, each of 85 arrests per year, at the ages of 44 and 54, with a trough of 65 per year between them. After the age of 54 the numbers began to drop off, but not as quickly as they had in the case of the men.

Shoplifting with accomplices was almost entirely carried out by juveniles. This Cameron did not consider remarkable,

since most juvenile activities, both deviant and non-deviant, are carried out in cliques. She did, however, suggest that juveniles shoplifting in cliques could have one important long-term consequence. She considered that the adult shoplifter who has led an apparently blameless life may have first learned the "folkways" of shoplifting as a passive member of a juvenile group. She has then continued to shoplift alone, considering it "naughty" rather than illegal, until she is finally caught, when she has to recognise her thieving for what it is. This theory that juvenile shoplifting is sometimes continued through to adulthood is in conflict with Gibbens, who considered that the juvenile grew out of it, and that the adults were usually late-comers to crime.

In terms of social class the customers of the Store were thought to be a representative cross section of the population of Chicago, and those customers whose addresses had been recorded by the Store's "Lost and Found" bureau were taken to be fairly representative of all customers. When the ecological distribution of these customers was compared with that of the shoplifters it was found that the two did not coincide. The shoplifters had the lower socio-economic residential distribution and although this distribution did not show "the usual concentration of crime in the slum area at the centre of the city", it was found that those who were actually charged by the Store tended to live in areas with a high level of arrests for general crime. These findings are by implication very different from those of Gibbens, who concluded that shoplifting was frequently practised by people in the higher socio-economic

strata.

Less than 1% of the women had previous criminal records, and any previous offences recorded were for shoplifting, or for shoplifting together with gambling or prostitution: a combination of offences which was not found in the Gibbens survey. Of the men 12% had records for a wide variety of crime, including violence, narcotics addiction, receiving and fraud. This supports Gibbens' conclusion that male shoplifters recidivate more frequently than females, and approximate more closely to the general criminal population in the variety of offences they commit. The recidivism rates for both males and females are much lower in the Cameron than in the Gibbens study, but this is most probably due to the fact that these rates refer to samples taken from apprehended and convicted shoplifters respectively, and the convicted shoplifter can reasonably be expected to have the worse record.

In further contrast with Gibbens, Cameron did not consider that shoplifters committed the offence during periods of anxiety, distress, or physiological upset. A peak in the number of women of menopausal age undoubtedly existed in her statistics, but she preferred to account for this in terms of the increased opportunity to visit shops accorded to women of middle age, and argued that women suffering from the "uncomfortable symptoms" of the menopause were unlikely to undertake the considerable journey to the Store. Moreover Cameron found little support in her data for theories of psychiatric impulse. She considered that the truly impulsive offender who is caught on the first and



only occasion on which she steals is rare, and supported her opinion by showing that only 10% of the women in her sample had made purchases at the time that they committed the offence, and that almost all the women had stolen several articles. She maintained that if neurotic compulsion had been a common cause of shoplifting the rate of recidivism would have been much higher, because truly neurotic offenders will be neither "cured" nor deterred by their first arrest. Of the 873 women who had been charged by the Store only 5% were psychiatrically examined, and of these only 12 were committed to hospital. From this and other evidence Cameron concluded that shoplifting was rarely occasioned by mental disorder.

Cameron's principal conclusions can be summarised as follows. Shoplifting is a frequent crime, and most shoplifters are non-commercial pilferers whose shoplifting appears to be systematic and habitual and shows evidence of sophistication in technique. They are not, however, thought to be professional criminals, since the information available about crucial factors such as their addresses, occupations, amounts stolen, lack of knowledge of arrest procedures, and behaviour subsequent to arrest makes it clear that they cannot have had any contact with a criminal subculture.

Cameron offered the following explanation of why shoplifting is carried out by "respectable" people, and why once caught many never repeat it again:

"Pilferers (shoplifters) differ in one outstanding respect at least from other thieves: they generally do not think of themselves as thieves".

Once arrested the

"Pilferers expect no in-group support for their behaviour"
and

"Arrest forces the pilferer to think of himself as a thief"
therefore

"Because the adult pilferer does not think of himself, prior to arrest, as a thief and can conceive of no in-group support for himself in that role, his arrest forces him to reject that role".

Thus either the shoplifter does not see his behaviour as it will be defined by representatives of the law-enforcing culture, or he accepts himself as a thief, provided this does not isolate him from his primary group and community contacts. After he has been arrested there is the likelihood that he will be isolated and that he will lose his respectability - therefore he will cease.

"He will cease even though his satisfaction from the crimes had been great, his motivation to continue his theft had been strong, his emotional adjustment weak, or inadequate and infantile, or 'he' is a woman suffering from an involuntal reaction".

It has not proved possible or necessary to report Cameron's work in full, and discussion has been restricted to her more basic findings about the shoplifter. Her analysis of the function of a private police agency has been omitted largely because two more recent studies by Reiss and Dickens have specifically examined the attitudes of shops towards shoplifting and shoplifters, and towards their role as the agent who must

first decide whether or not the offender shall be proceeded against. These studies are to be considered in the following and final section of this chapter.

A SURVEY OF CRIMES AGAINST BUSINESSES AND ORGANISATIONS

(Reiss, A.J. Jnr. 1967)

SHOPLIFTING IN MIDTOWN (Bennett, H.M. 1968)

SHOPS, SHOPLIFTING AND LAW ENFORCEMENT (Dickens, B.M. 1969)

These three articles examined the procedural aspects of shoplifting. Their authors investigated the varying attitudes of shops towards shoplifters, and how the losses they incurred in this way were assessed. They considered the different measures available to the shops when dealing with shoplifters, and showed how these measures were related to the changing role of the shop, which is cast in turn as victim, security agent, and adjudicator; and then finally, but optionally, as prosecutor.

When seeking to determine the shops' awareness of the problem the authors considered the accuracy with which store records were kept and the amount of "shrinkage" which was tolerated. They examined the preventive and deterrent measures taken by the stores against shoplifters. These measures included the power to prosecute, therefore, the criteria used by the different stores to decide on each occasion whether or not this power should be used were also investigated.

One difficulty inherent in these studies is that enquiries were being made about matters of procedure and opinion rather

than about hard fact, and in areas where information is sometimes scarce and frequently incomplete. It was therefore important that when questionnaires were used the definitions on which they were based should be clearly understood by the respondent, and remain constant throughout the enquiry. This was difficult when the respondents were scattered and heterogeneous, ranging from small shopkeepers to headquarters personnel of multiple retail firms, and often had no more than a peripheral interest in shoplifting. Both Reiss and Bennett demonstrated the difficulty of obtaining reliable information. Reiss considered that many of his respondents' replies, officially termed "estimates", were no more than informed guesses; and of the eight store managers interviewed by Bennett about their attitudes to shoplifting and methods of prevention none kept shoplifting records, or employed store detectives.

The Reiss enquiry into shoplifting was a subsidiary part of a more general investigation into the amount of crime committed (officially and unofficially) against businesses and organisations in eight high crime-rate areas of Boston, Chicago and Washington D.C. Only 65% of the wholesale and retail establishments in his sample reported that shoplifting had taken place on their premises. This is a low figure, which Reiss considered an underestimate. He blamed the shops' lack of awareness of the problem on their insufficient surveillance of the shopfloor, and on their poor inventory control and record keeping. Moreover of those shops which did report some shoplifting 23% were unable to assess their losses, and most of the other estimates were thought to be approximations only.

The range of these estimates was wide. Two fifths of all the stores considered their losses to be less than 1% of inventory, and another tenth estimated them at more than 10%, but, excluding those firms which could not estimate, the median loss was found to be between 1% and 2%. This approximates to the figure most frequently quoted as acceptable shrinkage in the United Kingdom.

The estimated number of occurrences of shoplifting against any one firm during the year beginning January 1965 again varied widely between the stores, with 27% estimating from one to four incidents, against 35% which estimated over one hundred incidents. These figures would, however, have been more meaningful if they had been related to sales floor area and number of security personnel employed, but no such information was offered.

Opinions about the proper treatment of an offender differed amongst the stores. One third stated that they would call in the police for juveniles as well as adults; a further 4% would report adults only; 40% did not call in the police but insisted that adults and children alike paid for what they had stolen; and 11.7% insisted that the offender never again returned to the store.

Reasons given by the stores for not reporting all apprehended shoplifters to the police fell into three categories. About a quarter of the stores considered that the official response was inadequate: the police could not or would not take action, and the courts were too lenient. 38% of the stores had evaluated the consequences of further action and decided that

they did not want to become involved - either too much valuable time would have been taken up by staff attending court hearings, or the consequent publicity would have damaged the public image of the store. A further 11% of the respondents said they preferred to handle the matter personally. These reactions led Reiss to conclude that:

"It seems reasonably clear that business men in their behaviour prefer to handle shoplifting by informal non-legal rather than by formal legal means".

Bennett (1968) published a shoplifting study centred on shops' prevention policies and the detection of shoplifting in a Midland town. Her stated intention was to study "the reasons why people shoplift as a reflection of the attitudes and ideas of those involved with the crime in some way". Her information was limited as none of the eight stores whose managers she interviewed kept shoplifting records. Figures supplied by the central police station were analysed in the form of percentages, but they would have been more informative if the actual number of shoplifters in the sample had been specified. It is surmised that the sample could not have been large, since Bennett herself when reporting a 20% rate of recidivism, added that the numbers were too small for significance. She came to the conclusion, however, that her results did not substantiate the popular belief that shoplifting was almost entirely the crime of young boys and middle-aged women.

Dickens (1969) described the measures taken by shops against shoplifters as instances of "private interests taking security arrangements which disclose the commission of offences

culminating sometimes in the instigation of private prosecution." His approach as has been previously pointed out has something in common with Cameron, who described her study as being in part a "limited analysis of the function of a private police agency."

The attitude of different firms towards the use of their powers of private prosecution, and their readiness to report shoplifters to the police varies between firms. Dickens investigated these variations, and the reasons given by different firms for preferring some courses of action to others. In so doing he provided the point of departure for the Foodstore study, which set out to examine the effect of the implementation of an individual firm's prosecution policies on a sample of shoplifters it had apprehended.

The Dickens survey was addressed to two hundred and fifty leading multiple retail groups, representing in all some 10,438 shops in England and Wales. The groups were questioned about their attitudes and practices when arresting, reporting and prosecuting shoplifters. Their replies showed that all the firms were scrupulously careful in apprehending offenders only when they were virtually certain that they had committed an offence. Many firms chose to employ ex-police officers as security personnel, and their methods were therefore very similar to those used by the regular police. By practising vigilance and avoiding precipitate action they were able to minimise the number of mistaken arrests.* Once arrested most

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*The employment of a store detective with inadequate training and experience resulted in Regina v. O'Rourke, Birmingham Q.S., April 1970.

shoplifters either made voluntary confessions or were found to be carrying incriminating evidence.

The degree of autonomy enjoyed by branch stores when deciding whether or not to proceed against a shoplifter varied between firms. 18% had to consult headquarters about the prosecution of each individual case. A further 54% followed general directives laid down by headquarters, and store managers or detectives were able to use their own discretion fully in only 28% of the firms.

Where the offence was reliably suspected the managements of 82% of the stores said they would prefer to inform the police, and would then accept their advice as to who should prosecute - the police or the store. If the police declined to act only 18% would initiate a private prosecution. Not all shops realised that when their representative signed the police charge he was appearing as a private prosecutor. Many shops preferred not to prosecute, and their reasons were similar to those identified by Reiss. Some were deterred by the expense involved, especially as the award of costs by the court can be unreliable and is often insufficient. As many as 11.3% of the stores expressed a lack of confidence in the magistrates' courts. They considered that frequently the fines were nominal, and that some lay justices even disapproved of the prosecution of shoplifters. The smaller groups of shops, especially those operating in circumscribed areas, did not welcome the publicity attendant upon a successful prosecution. They considered that it could damage their local goodwill. In contrast the large national networks expected no loss of trade to follow a successful

prosecution, and considered that any associated publicity would have a beneficially deterrent effect on other shoplifters.

Despite the figure of 82% quoted above it clearly was not common practice to report all shoplifters to the police. About 65% of the shops kept a record of the customers they had investigated for shoplifting and only 45% of the offenders had been reported to the police, a proportion which was to correspond very closely to that found later in the Foodstore survey. One nationwide group however had deliberately adopted a stricter policy. It preferred to report all suspects, since it considered that the proper body to decide what to do with suspects was the police, and the proper authorities to decide what should be done with offenders were the courts.

When considering whether or not to proceed against a shoplifter all shops said they would take into consideration the number of articles stolen and their value, but only 2% said they would be lenient to people taking two or more items even if the total value was less than £1. These were not necessarily the deciding factors. Special considerations mitigating against prosecution included age and ill health, and 5.7% of the sample would only prosecute a customer if he had previously been under suspicion. 84.5% would not prosecute children under 14, and the elderly were excused by 78%. If the offender was physically or mentally ill this was frequently accepted as a sufficient reason, provided the condition was easily recognisable. Visibly pregnant women were not prosecuted by 60% of the shops, although only 25% were lenient to women of menopausal age. In general there was a tendency in favour of

leniency towards anyone likely to be confused or harmfully affected by a court appearance.

Many shops maintained that their policy was to prevent shoplifting rather than to prosecute shoplifters, and that a prosecution was only useful if it acted as a deterrent. This attitude may account for some of the complaints expressed about the inadequacy of the fines imposed by some magistrates' courts. Many of the shops also considered, as Cameron did, that a stern reprimand coupled with a warning was usually sufficient to deter the offender, unless he had been previously suspect or was thought to be taking goods on a large scale.

Self-service stores and large departmental stores are recognised as being the most vulnerable targets for shoplifters, and the Dickens survey gave a comprehensive picture of the attitudes and practices of these firms with respect to the prosecution of offenders. It showed in what proportions they decided to prosecute different types of offender, and demonstrated that some shoplifters were disregarded by almost all stores. These shoplifters rarely appear in the official statistics, but when shops keep accurate records of all the shoplifters they apprehend, there exists an ascertainable "Grey Figure" of shoplifters; those who are known by the stores as offenders, although they are not officially designated as lawbreakers.

It was never the purpose of Dickens' study to attempt to discover the extent of this Grey Figure, or the proportion of shoplifters from the stores in his sample who were actually

convicted. Neither could he determine how the shoplifters who were known to the store differed, when taken as a group, from those who appeared before a court. Since these points remained open it was decided that a further study could usefully be undertaken with the main purpose of elucidating precisely these points. It was thought that the most relevant subject for this study would be a sample of shoplifters apprehended by a group of shops whose prosecution policies were similar to those reported most frequently by Dickens, and who sold the commodity thought to be most frequently stolen - food. The results are set out in the report of the Foodstore survey in Chapters 5 and 6.

Before turning to this report one final group of shoplifters has to be considered separately. These are the professionals, whose skill is such that they are rarely caught, and who when caught are not always recognised for what they are. Consequently they have not appeared to any extent in the studies of shoplifting already reviewed. Nor do they figure in the Foodstore survey, where it is thought they were only represented by two offenders who worked together. Professional shoplifters form a small, elusive but highly predatory group with specialised techniques and a distinctive vocabulary, and as such they are dealt with in the following chapter.

Chapter 3

THE PROFESSIONAL SHOPLIFTER

a) Characteristics

Most modern shoplifting is carried out by amateurs, and very few of the offenders whose characteristics were described in Chapter 2 could claim any other status. Professional shoplifters are thought to be rare, and are highly skilled at avoiding detection. Therefore it is unlikely that they will be adequately represented in any sample of apprehended shoplifters. Although Gibbens found that 6.2% of his shoplifters were professionals he was of the opinion that they were professional criminals practising a wide variety of crime rather than professional shoplifters. Indeed he tended to doubt the existence of the professional specialising in shoplifting. He suggested that anyone choosing to make a living by crime would be expected to graduate very quickly to something more profitable. Similar doubts were expressed during a BBC programme in 1962, and these led Parr (1963) to carry out an independent investigation. His findings in the United Kingdom, together with those of Tegel (1963) on the Continent, and Edwards (1958) and Cameron (1964) in the United States show that organised shoplifting can be a highly lucrative occupation, which is generally carried out by level-headed and business-like people, who show none of the symptoms of social or psychological maladjustment described by Gibbens.

The four writers mentioned above defined professionals as shoplifters who steal goods in order to sell them. This

distinguishes them from the amateurs who steal mainly for their own use, or that of their friends. The professional is the more predatory and is also far superior to most amateurs in his use of techniques and in his organised teamwork. However, no clear distinction can be made on these points. Regular systematic pilferers frequently copy the skills and terminology of the professionals, who are reputed to be largely abandoning the paraphernalia of their craft in the hope of being taken for amateurs if they should be caught (Cox 1968). Professionals frequently steal for a prepared market and aim to fulfill orders which specify size, colour, style and type of article required, and they may have well organised permanent outlets for stock in hand. They are accustomed to making a careful assessment of the risks involved in any lifting expedition, and take steps to minimise them. They may avoid individual shops which operate efficient security systems, or areas of cities where the risk of detection or of being handed over to the police is high, and they may travel frequently - even daily - from town to town to avoid being recognised. Thus by the use of care and tactics the professional shoplifter can survive for long periods without being caught.

b) Techniques

Every person involved in the prevention of shoplifting has his own collection of stories about hoisting and boosting, about lifters' techniques, and about their audacity and low cunning. Many such stories are recounted by Cameron, and by Edwards (1958), who during the course of twenty years in Store Security in the

U.S.A. had had ample opportunity to collect them. Security officers in the United Kingdom and individual members of the police force supplied further information informally during the preparation of this thesis. Some of it was in the form of films which demonstrated clearly the varied techniques of the shoplifter. These films are now used during the training of security staff.

Careful teamwork is the professional shoplifter's key to success, and three is the optimum number for a well organised team. One member watches to see that her colleagues are not being observed, or creates a diversion - by making a scene, or handling goods in a deliberately suspicious manner - so that sales and security staff alike are distracted away from the real action. The second member makes a screen, usually by lifting and examining other garments, behind which the third member can rapidly hoist the articles to be stolen and skillfully secrete them about her person. The three then leave the store separately, but should there be any attempt to intercept the shoplifter the other two, while appearing to assist the staff, will manage to hinder them and so facilitate the escape of the one member who is actually in possession of the goods. A few professionals, on the other hand, prefer to work alone. They manage to create their own diversions. One woman made herself so obnoxious to all the sales staff that they deliberately avoided seeing her and moved to the far end of the counter - leaving her to steal undisturbed.

Many of the "props" used by professionals are equally

familiar to the security staff, and possibly for this reason as well as for that previously mentioned (that they provide irrefutable evidence of deliberate intent) they are thought to be used less frequently than before. The "props" are either intended to conceal stolen goods by means of deliberate artefacts within or under clothing, or they are designed to make illegitimate use of articles of legitimate appearance. They include coats fitted with double linings or large "poacher" pockets; "booster bloomers" which are very capacious and have tight fastenings around the knee - these are usually worn under full skirts with elastic tops, and are capable of holding large quantities of stolen goods; and hooks fastened under the armpits or around the waist to which clothes, stolen while still on their hangers, may be attached. Ostensibly innocent articles may be used as containers. The False Parcel - empty but carefully wrapped ready for the post - can conceal numerous small valuables, which are slipped in through a loose flap at one end. A one-sided cigar box similarly wrapped can be dropped over small books and used to transfer them to the pocket. The simplest device of all, frequently used by amateurs, is the "Bad Bag". This is a store bag or carrier which may initially have been acquired with a legitimate purchase, but on subsequent occasions, in the same shop, it can be used to give stolen articles the superficial appearance of having been bought. However to the perspicacious eye the "Bad Bag" can often be identified by its crumpled appearance.

An unfurled umbrella is a ready container for small goods which are slipped over the edge of the counter, but is far too

conspicuous to an alert store detective on a fine day. More unusual and elaborate devices were demonstrated by practised shoplifters in the training film. One wore a false arm carefully splinted and supported across the chest. This enabled her to pilfer surreptitiously with her third hand under the cover of a loose coat. Another efficiently demonstrated the technique of a "crotchworker". She placed a small vacuum cleaner on the floor, stepped over it, and immediately whipped it up under her skirt. She then held it by her thigh muscles while she walked normally out of the store. It is said that months of training are necessary to perfect this technique and to strengthen the muscles, and a term in prison is sufficient to weaken them to a serious extent! "Crotch workers" are thought to be much more common in the United States than in Britain.

c) Status and "Profession"

Professional shoplifters deliberately steal goods to sell in order to make an income. To be successful they must combine good organisation with skill in the art of stealing and concealing. Is this sufficient to secure their status as "professional thieves"? - and by what definitions can theft be considered a "profession"?

These two points were discussed by Sutherland (1937) who examined the various criteria by which a professional thief might be identified. The criteria he chose were technical skill, status amongst other professional thieves, differential association, and organisation.

He found that the professional shoplifter, or "booster",

was in fact recognised as a professional thief by other professional thieves, but that his status was poor because he was considered "small time" on the basis of the stakes for which he played. Sutherland quotes a "big time" confidence man who wrote this about a shoplifter:

"While he is undoubtedly a professional thief, I should a few years ago . . . have been ashamed to be seen in the street with him."

". . . simply because for business reasons I feel that my reputation would have suffered in the eyes of my friends to be seen in the company of a booster." (Lee Furman Inc. 1936)

Edwards (1958), Cameron (1964) and Parr (1963) quote case histories of professional shoplifters to whom most of Sutherland's criteria can be successfully applied. One large and highly organised group of men and women ran a very successful retail business whose entire stock was procured systematically through their shoplifting activities. This business supported some twenty six participant members, but in another equally successful case one woman worked alone. For many years she maintained a respectable home, and educated her children through private school and university. She did this entirely from the profits of her shoplifting expeditions, and managed to conceal the source of her income from her children throughout.

However professional shoplifting is not confined to the United States. Parr in 1963 discovered a group of "hoisters" working in the United Kingdom who would have experienced no difficulty in meeting Sutherland's criteria. This group was made up of a middle-aged man and twelve women. The man had a

long criminal record and acted as their driver and protector. The twelve women split up into four teams of three, and each had her own duty - to act as a lookout, or as a screen, or to steal the goods. Monday was considered a bad day for "trade" as the shops were not sufficiently busy, so Monday was used for planning the week's activities. This was done in a London public house, but the group always worked outside London in places where they were less likely to be detected, and generally visited a different town each day. In this way they successfully cleared a van load of goods each week, and had been doing so for many years.

Finally Sutherland took the definitions of a profession set out by Carr-Saunders and Wilson (1933) and asked whether theft as a whole could be considered to fall within them. From evidence which perhaps could be found more readily in Chicago in the 1930s than in Britain at the present day he came to the positive conclusion that:

"The profession of theft has most of these characteristics. It has technical skill, an exclusive group, immunity from punishment which amounts almost to a licence from the state to steal, (and) a degree of monopoly growing out of their exclusive group relationships."

Thus Sutherland concluded firstly that the professional shoplifter could be considered a professional thief, albeit one of low status, and secondly that theft could be considered a profession because it came very near to meeting the requirements laid down for other more legitimate professional associations, even if those requirements were less formally fulfilled.

d) History of the Profession

The organisation and techniques of the professional shoplifter have been documented for at least the last four hundred years, and have remained essentially unchanged, except that women are not recorded as shoplifters until the beginning of the eighteenth century. Byrnes (1886), Farley (1876), Eldridge and Watts (1897), Hayward (1735/1920), Judges (1930) and Smith (1926) record case histories of earlier shoplifters, and some of these were referred to by Cameron (1964) and Edwards (1958).

Planning and team-work appear at an early date. This is demonstrated in one of the earliest accounts, written in 1597 and quoted in full by Cameron from A.F. Judges' "Elizabethan Underworld". In this account, two well-dressed gentlemen entered a shop which sold valuable merchandise. The first man, who deliberately wore nothing under which goods could be concealed, discussed purchases with the merchant while he considered what he would steal. He then made an enquiry which caused the merchant to turn away, quickly picked up the goods he had chosen ("clouted his garbage") and slipped them to the second man to hide under his cloak. The second man signalled to a third who had remained outside. This man then walked rapidly past the shop. The second man called to him and hurried after him as if to speak to him, and so handed the goods to a man who had never entered the shop and who speedily carried them away.

A century and a half later women had joined in the

shoplifting game. During the 1720s the London merchants had suffered such losses because of the activities of a team of shoplifters that they offered a reward for information leading to their arrest. One of the three women involved turned informer, so that in 1726 the other two women and their receiver, the notorious Jonathan Wild, were apprehended, tried and executed. At that date recidivism was impossible, yet one of the women had survived into her seventies, and both admitted to having practised organised shoplifting over a period of many years. They had used techniques designed to distract the merchants from their merchandise, and with specialised carrying equipment worn under their skirts they were able to conceal a bolt of material at a time. (Hayward 1735)

The history of shoplifting is the history of the professional. It was not for the amateur when organisation, technique and audacity were essential, when opportunity had to be made, and when the consequence of being caught was inevitable and severe. By the first half of the nineteenth century however, both opportunity and temptation appear to have been increasing. In the Report of the Police of the Metropolis for 1828 a witness complained of "the increased competition in trade, and consequent exposure of property offering temptation to persons to commit crime" (Minutes of Evidence p. 67).

Highly competitive selling conditions in the mid-twentieth century favour professional shoplifters still further. Temptation selling offers ease of access, and economies in the employment of floor staff facilitate their operation. Should they be caught

and convicted the penalties normally imposed have little deterrent effect, and any fines incurred can be set against profits. This situation has not only made the conditions under which they operate much easier, but it has also led to a marked increase in the number of amateurs and they, being more numerous and more obvious, have attracted the attention of the store staff away from the more predatory activities of the professionals. The resulting under-representation of the professional in the samples of apprehended shoplifters normally studied by research workers, including their absence from the Foodstore survey, has already been commented on.

Chapter 4

FOODSTORE SURVEY - INTRODUCTION

The literature reviewed in Chapter 2 disclosed the existence of a "grey figure" of apprehended but unconvicted shoplifters. It also showed that many shops are selective in their choice of persons against whom proceedings are not to be taken. Many of the reasons given for not prosecuting offenders are common to most shops, but the number of people excused on the various grounds remains uncertain. Dickens estimated that the total might be as much as 55% of all known offenders, but in spite of this, most research findings are based on studies of the other 45% who are convicted. An examination of the "Grey Figure" would therefore be worthwhile. The characteristics of those who were apprehended but not convicted could then be compared with the characteristics of those who were also convicted. Such a comparison would naturally depend for its validity on the accuracy of the records of the store concerned.

The Foodstore Survey is designed as a small step in this direction. As far as the available data will allow it contains a descriptive analysis of all the shoplifters who were apprehended during 1969 in thirteen Midland branches of a self-service supermarket selling food and other consumables. It compares the proportions in which different categories of shoplifter were prosecuted, and examines the reasons given in each case where there was no prosecution. In this way it is possible to determine for this particular group of shops the extent to which those shoplifters who were convicted were representative of all who were apprehended. Since the total

sample had been taken from several branches of the Foodstore, and decisions about prosecution had been made by the individual Branch Managers, it was also possible to judge whether the directives from headquarters under which these decisions were made had been evenly applied by all the branches.

The records contained details about the disposal of those cases who were prosecuted. As these were dealt with by eleven different magistrates' courts for the areas concerned it was possible to make a subsidiary study of sentencing. It could be presumed that the nature of the offence was similar in all cases, that its magnitude could be measured at least in terms of the amount stolen, and that the offender, if female, was unlikely to have a previous record (Gibbens 1962, Cameron 1964). It was therefore considered that the sample was sufficiently homogeneous to justify an examination of the sentences received, and to allow a comparison to be made of the sentences passed by the different courts.

Self-service shops selling food were thought to be most suitable for the study, since Reiss, Bennett and Loitz had all found that shoplifting was most commonly committed in this kind of shop. The records of 382 shoplifters were made available for analysis. These records had been kept systematically. They had been completed by the store detective responsible for making the arrest, and the information appearing on the form had been checked as far as possible, usually by reference to other documents, before being recorded. But the store detective was not aware at the time that the records would subsequently be used for research purposes.

The thirteen branches of the Foodstore were served by a team of detectives co-ordinated by an Area Security Officer, who was himself responsible to the Head Security Officer. Almost all the team had police training and experience, and both the Area and the Head Security Officers had held senior posts in the police force. This, it was considered, argued a high level of competence and reliability in the observation and apprehending of shoplifters, and of accuracy in the compiling of records, This presupposition was positively confirmed during the course of a day conference with both Security Officers and their teams. Since the members of the team were moved frequently from one store to another each store was under observation from each detective in turn, with the consequence - important for the survey - that the records of the separate shops were independent of any particular perception of "the shoplifter" held by an individual store detective.

The records contained the following information:

The branch in which the offence took place;

The name, address, sex, age and occupation of the offender;

Similar information about any accomplices;

The date and time of the offence;

The number and total value* of the items purchased;

The number and total value* of the items stolen;

The method of stealing;

* The original records were in £.s.d., and were coded as shillings and decimals of shillings for analysis. All the tables have been left in this form, but the equivalents in decimal currency have been quoted where necessary in the text.

Whether the offender also had in his possession goods stolen
from any other shop;

The disposal of the case:

Offender not proceeded against - reasons recorded;

Police caution;

Prosecution - with Court of appearance, plea, sentence
and costs.

The data ^{was} ~~was~~ deficient in two particulars. Apart from recording his occupation nothing was known about the social background of the shoplifter, and no information was available about any previous criminal record, nor could this information be obtained from other sources. Although the addition of this information would have widened the scope of the enquiry, its absence was not felt to defeat its major purpose.

The information extracted from the records of the 382 shoplifters in the sample was coded and transferred to punched cards. Sorting was carried out first on a sorting machine, and later by means of a computer program. Because a small proportion of the records had not been completely filled in some slight discrepancies in total numbers were inevitable when comparing one characteristic with another. Such missing data were always scored as "not known" in the coding, and were omitted from the totals.

The sorting program was designed to split the data up into a number of sub-groups according to any chosen characteristic - for example one set of three sub-groups comprised those who had been 'not charged', 'cautioned' and 'convicted' respectively. A complete description of each sub-group was then obtained by

running through all the other characteristics - such as the sex ratio, age distribution, value of goods stolen, sentence if convicted, and so on.

Complete profiles were obtained for sub-groups based on the following characteristics: sex, age, occupation, branch of store involved, value of goods stolen, value of goods purchased, whether acting alone or in a group, and whether not charged, cautioned or convicted. Many other categories could have been devised, but it was thought that these provided a sufficiently detailed analysis of the data.

Chapter 5

FOODSTORE SURVEY - DESCRIPTIVE ANALYSIS

The Shoplifters

Three hundred and eighty two persons with ages ranging from eight to eighty were caught stealing in thirteen Midland branches of the Foodstore during 1969. Besides selling the usual range of food, sweets and domestic aids, the shops also sold wines, spirits and tobacco under conditions of rather closer supervision. These in particular may have attracted the men, as they tended to steal fewer items than the women, but those items were of greater individual value. Twice as many women as men were apprehended. The largest proportion were housewives. Schoolchildren and the over sixties formed the next biggest groups, but amongst the others were to be found representatives of all sections of society - a company director, people holding professional positions, clerical and domestic workers, shop assistants, skilled and unskilled workers, and some who were out of work and some who had no fixed abode. When grouped into major categories by "occupation", however, they were all found to have one thing in common - they had all tried to steal items which were more expensive than those for which they had paid, and for most of them the total value of the stolen goods was greater than that of their purchases. Except for the children most of the offenders were alone, and very few were caught with goods they had stolen elsewhere. One man was already an inpatient in a local mental hospital, but few other instances of physical or mental illness were recorded. The offences

occurred most frequently at the end of the morning, in the middle of the afternoon, and towards the end of the week - at times when people are most likely to go shopping - but the increase which might have been anticipated before Christmas was not observed. Less than half the offenders appeared before a court, and they proved to be a non-representative group. The analysis of the complete sample of apprehended shoplifters indicates that shoplifting is endemic in the population, and that it is frequently carried out in such a way as to nullify excuses of oversight, mistake, or "sole occasion".

Presentation of Data

Information available about the social background of the shoplifters was very limited, but the sex ratio, age distribution and range of occupations of the sample could be established. Regrettably no useful ecological study could be based on the addresses, because the offenders were too thinly scattered through several Midland towns. However a separate study which compares the ecological distribution of shoplifters with that of other thieves in a Midland conurbation is in course of preparation.

Other information was available about factors which may, when grouped together, give some indication of the degree of intention to steal exhibited by the shoplifters. These factors included whether or not the offender was working with others, or had stolen goods elsewhere, and whether he had travelled some distance to the store, or had stolen goods of much higher value than those he bought. These points are discussed in the

second section of this chapter. The third and last section contains a brief study of the incidence of shoplifting in the Stores, based on data about the date and time at which each offender was arrested.

Further information was recorded about the disposal of the case. When the Store took no further action beyond administering a warning the reasons for this were recorded, and the effect of this decision on the composition of the sample of offenders who were prosecuted is to be examined in Chapter 6.

I. SOCIAL BACKGROUND

Sex ratio and Age

131 males and 251 females were apprehended, which gave an overall ratio of 1 male to every 1.9 females. This is similar to the Loitz ratio of 1 to 1.6, but it varied considerably at different ages. (Table 1)

Table 1. Sex ratio. Number of females apprehended in each age group as a proportion of the number of males.

<u>Age</u>	<u>Male/Female ratio</u>
0 - 9	1 : 0.2
10 - 16	1 : 1.0
17 - 20	1 : 3.5
21 - 30	1 : 2.7
31 - 40	1 : 4.9
41 - 50	1 : 1.7
51 - 60	1 : 3.0
61 - 70	1 : 1.9
71 - 80	1 : 1.9
80 +	1 : 1.3

As could be expected from previous studies the boys started shoplifting at an earlier age than the girls. Indeed the sex ratio for those under 10 years is one male to every 0.2 females, but the numbers are very small (Table 2). Over the age of criminal responsibility boys and girls were apprehended in virtually equal numbers as they were in the Gibbens 1959 sample. There was also a similarly rapid fall-off in the proportion of males apprehended during their late teens. This is reflected in the ratio of one male to 3.5 females between 17 and 20 and establishes the pattern of female dominance throughout adulthood. Once over the age of sixty the ratio again narrows even though the proportion of men in the population of that age has fallen by about a third. An adjustment which takes this into account shows that men over sixty are almost as likely to shoplift as women.

If, as has been suggested, shoplifting were practised most frequently by menopausal women, the widest sex ratio could be expected between the ages of 40 and 60. Evidence on this point in the Foodstore survey is inconclusive, if not negative. The sex ratio between 41 and 50 is as close as one to 1.7, and at one to 3.0 it is not at its widest between 51 and 60. The widest ratio, and the only one similar to Cameron's figure for adult shoplifters of one to 4.8, occurs in the pre-menopausal age group of 31 to 40.

The fact that there is no great preponderance of women over men in middle age is not due to a lack of increase in the number of women but to a similar increase in the number of men. (Table 2 and Diagram 3a).

Diagram 2. Age distribution of Foodstore shoplifters.

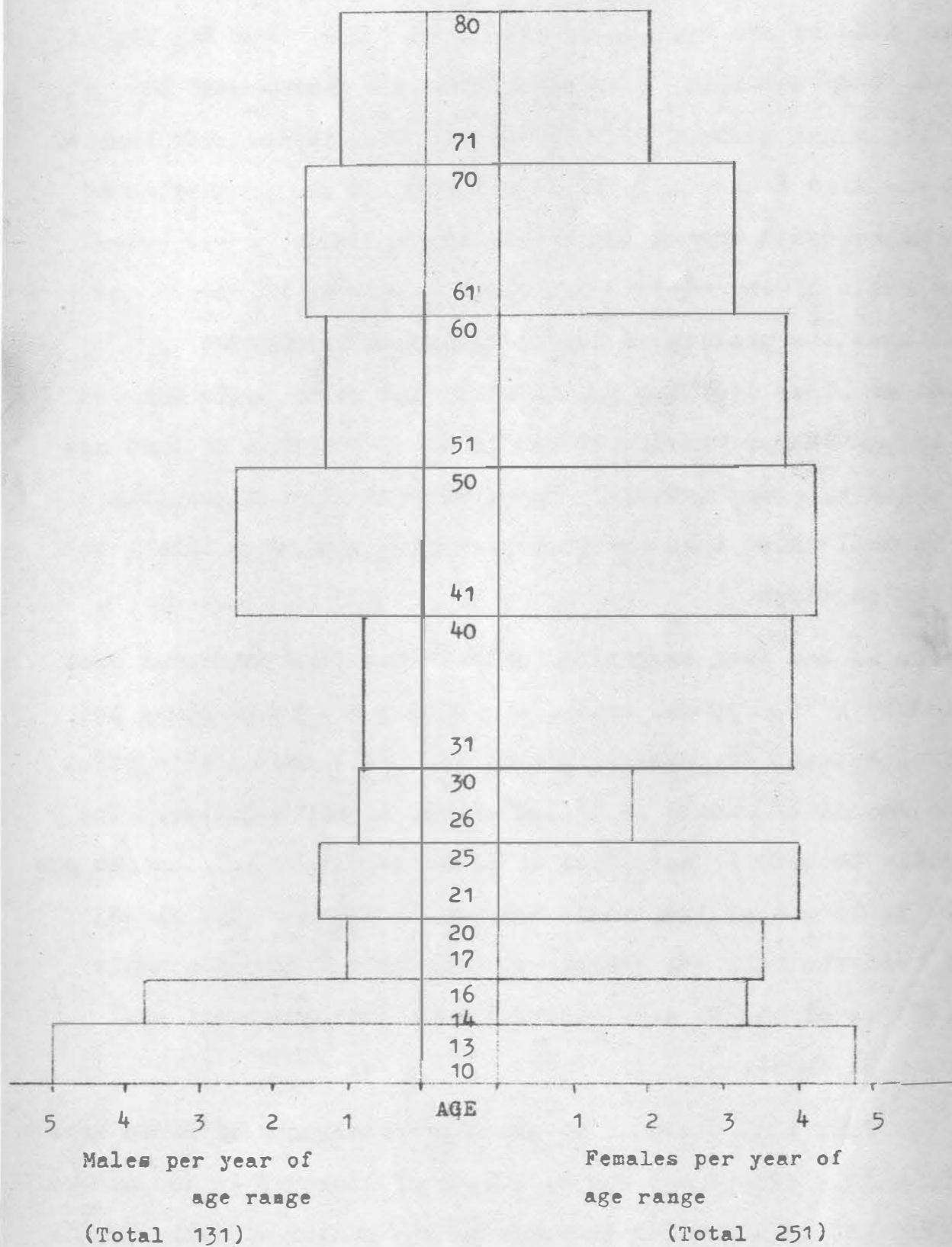


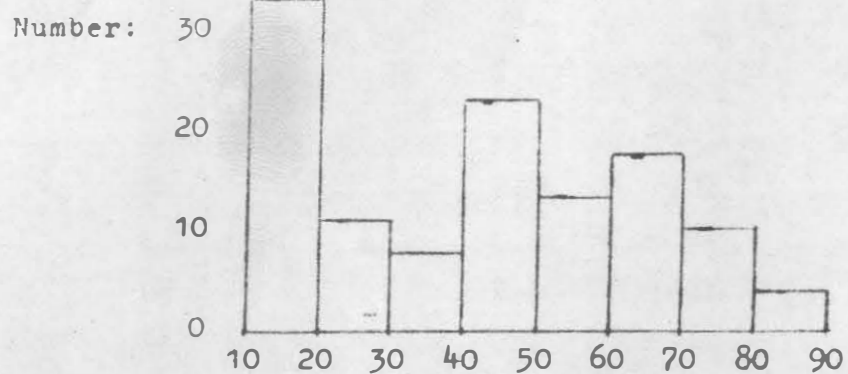
Table 2. Age distribution in male and female samples.

AGE	MALES		FEMALES	
	%	No.	%	No.
0 - 9	4%	5	0%	1
10 - 13	15%	19	8%	19
14 - 16	8%	11	4%	10
17 - 20	3%	4	6%	14
21 - 25	5%	7	8%	20
26 - 30	3%	4	4%	9
31 - 40	6%	8	16%	39
41 - 50	19%	25	17%	42
51 - 60	10%	13	15%	38
61 - 70	13%	17	13%	32
71 - 80	9%	10	8%	19
81 +	3%	4	2%	5
not known		4		3
Total	100%	131	100%	251

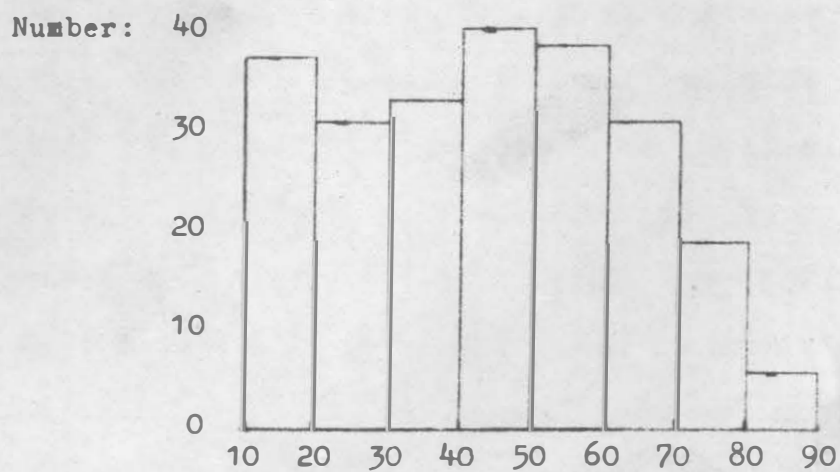
More men apprehended were in their forties than in any other ten year age group except that between 10 and 20, so that people of this age actually made up a higher proportion of the male sample (19%) than they did of the female sample (17%). The explanation of this male peak is not immediately obvious. Cameron (1964) and Bennett (1968), while indicating similar masculine peaks at about this age, did not account for them, and Gibbens found no such increase in his 1959 male sample. He suggested that shoplifting was a typical offence of the elderly recidivist, but this hypothesis does not fit in with the marked decrease in the number of men in the next age group, 51 to 60, since the habitual offender is expected to continue in his petty thieving (West 1963). It is just possible, however, that at the later age either he has become more practised in avoiding detection,

Diagram 3. Age distribution in Ten - Year periods.

a. Males.



b. Females.



or he resembles less closely the store detectives' "image" of a shoplifter, and being watched less carefully he escapes more frequently (Mannheim 1940).

Alternatively it has been suggested that men experience a psychological equivalent of the female menopause, but it is thought to take place rather later than 41 to 50, and at a time when the man begins to realise that he has no hope of further promotion or that he is nearing retirement. While it is possible that this may account for an increase in the number of male shoplifters in middle age no discussion of this idea has been traced.

In one respect the sample corresponded well with criminological theory. The largest single group was male and was at the age at which males are known to be responsible for most offences of theft. Boys aged between 10 and 17 accounted for 23% of the male sample, and at 4.3 per year of the age group they were fractionally more numerous than women between 41 and 50. Girls between 10 and 17 accounted for only 12% of the female sample. More girls however were caught in their late teens, so that the number of females aged between 10 and 20 proved to be similar to the number in the ten-year ranges over 31. (Diagram 3b). Taken in ten year periods up to the age of 70 the age distribution of the female sample is fairly even. It is much more so than that of the male. (Diagrams 3a and 3b). This would seem to indicate that while women of all ages have a similar tendency to shoplift, which only diminishes in later life, the tendency in men flares up from time to time for reasons

most probably connected with youthful delinquency, age, spasmodic opportunity or declining skill in thieving.

Over the age of 60 there were many more shoplifters than would have been expected either from the official statistics or from previous research. The official statistics for 1968 show that 6.1% of all males and 8.1% of all females convicted of larceny from shops and stalls were over this age. Gibbens in his "1959 samples" found that 9.7% of the men and 10% of the women were over 60, and these samples included no juveniles, so that the proportion of older people was accentuated when compared with the Foodstore survey. In this, however, as high a proportion as 25% of the males and 23% of the females apprehended were over 60. This distinct difference is mainly due to the fact that the Foodstore sample consisted of shoplifters known to the store. Only a very small proportion of those apprehended in this age group eventually appeared in the official statistics, reducing the figures to levels more in line with those of Gibbens and the Official Statistics themselves (see Chapter 6).

In conclusion, no single group by age or sex could be said to dominate the sample. Middle-aged women, men and women over 60, girls under 20 and young boys all appear to be equally likely to shoplift. The lowest incidence for both men and women was found between the ages of 20 and 40, and it may be that at this age men and women are least vulnerable. Most men and some women are at work. Mothers are preoccupied with young children, and practised thieves are not yet reduced to shoplifting.

Occupation

Owing to the preponderance of young and old, a minority only of either sex was employed (Table 3). 30.5% of the males and 13.6% of the females were at work. It had been hoped that some indication of the social status of the shoplifters might have been obtained by reference to their type of employment. Amongst the men at work the number claiming professional or managerial positions nearly matched the number who fell into any one of the three manual categories, which tends to support Gibbens' conclusion that "shoplifting differs from most other offences in being practised unusually often by social classes I and II" (p. 41). Most of the employed women appeared to be either white collar workers, semi-skilled manual workers or domestic workers in fairly equal proportions. Indications of social instability could be found amongst the men, since 4% were of no fixed abode and 9.6% were out of work. Twelve men out of work against 40 men employed gives the high unemployment rate of 23% - one very much higher than that of the general population. It is possible that the unemployed man not only has greater opportunities and greater need to shoplift, but his unemployment may be one of several criminogenic factors which incline him to steal more readily.

By far the largest groups were those who had no employment as such: the housewife, the schoolchild and the pensioner. For these, information such as that available to Cameron and Gibbens about the occupations of husbands or parents would have been invaluable. However the data for this study was obtained after

Table 3. Classified Occupations

<u>"Employed"</u>	<u>Men</u>		<u>Women</u>	
	No.	%	No.	%
Managerial/Professional	8	6.1	3	1.2
Self-employed	2	1.5	0	
Clerical	0		6	2.4
Skilled manual	10	7.6	1	0.4
Semi-skilled	9	6.9	10	4.0
Unskilled	11	8.4	3	1.2
Female service			2	0.8
Domestic			9	3.6
Full time education	36	27.5	29	11.6
<u>"Not employed"</u>				
Housewife			163	65.2*
Out of work	12	9.2	6	2.4
Retired	30	22.9	3	1.2*
Physical ill-health	0		0	
Mental ill-health	3	2.3	0	
Pregnant, unmarried mother, etc.			4	1.6
Unknown reasons	10	7.6	12	4.8
Total	131	100.0	251	100.0

* Almost one third of the housewives were over 60.

it had been collected by the store detectives, and it was not possible to ask for this extra information.

Nearly two thirds of the women were housewives, whose ages ranged from the late teens to the eighties. They dominated the female sample and were later reclassified into three subgroups according to age for further analysis. This

incidentally resolved the problem of whether a woman over 60 should still be considered a "housewife" or should be classified with her male contemporary as "retired".

The sample contained very few who were "unemployed" because they were physically or mentally ill, or because they were pregnant or unmarried mothers with young children. A "foreigner" was recorded on one occasion only, and very few of the surnames indicated foreign origin - in contrast to Gibbens who found that 30% of his "1959 sample" was made up of female immigrants.

Those receiving full time education accounted for 27.5% of the male and 11.6% of the female samples. A very small number of these were older students, but for the purpose of this study they were grouped with the schoolchildren. Since they were all fully occupied for a specified period each day during the term they did not enjoy the freedom of some groups to shop when they pleased. Therefore they were classified as "employed".

Applying this criterion to the total sample as many as 64% were without "employment". These, being less restricted in their movements, could be exposed to temptation for longer periods and so have more frequent opportunities for shoplifting. Bearing in mind that schoolchildren were excluded from this group, a large proportion of the total sample was without restriction. This in turn may indicate a causal connection between the availability of opportunity and the incidence of shoplifting.

The initial breakdown of occupations set out in Table 3 had two intrinsic disadvantages. It was not sufficiently discriminatory over the very large category of "housewives", and

some other categories were too small for further useful analysis. This was overcome by a regrouping of the data. Eight main categories of shoplifter were selected by a combination of sex, age and occupation, and they form the basis of much of the subsequent analysis. The categories were as follows. Each will be denoted by the same roman numeral throughout the study, and the figure in parenthesis is the number of individuals in each group.

I	Schoolboy	(36)	V	Housewife 21 - 40	(54)
II	Schoolgirl	(29)	VI	Housewife 41 - 60	(56)
III	Employed male	(40)	VII	Housewife 61 +	(52)
IV	Employed female	(34)	VIII	Retired male	(30)

2. INDICATORS OF INTENT

Some writers, particularly those in the psychiatric field, have sought to demonstrate that in many cases shoplifting can be attributed to reasons less blameworthy than the desire to possess something without paying for it. Confusion, senility, the genuine mistake, sudden temptation, a nearly compulsive desire to relieve tension, or the unrecognised need for comfort or reward have all been put forward as reasons why the apparently law abiding sometimes steal from shops.

As conditions of this sort require investigation in depth before they can be accurately identified it was entirely outside the scope of this analysis to attempt to determine whether any member of the Foodstore sample was so affected. The only approach

which could be made was through an examination of the reasons given by the store management for deciding not to proceed against some shoplifters (Chapter 6).

Conversely, some factors when associated with shoplifting may indicate that the act is intentional and even premeditated. It is not suggested that the presence of any one of these factors in itself precludes the existence of other precipitatory causes such as impulse or confusion, but they increase the likelihood that the offender clearly understood what he was doing, at the time that he was doing it, and that he did it with deliberate intent. Five such indicators of intent may be devised from the data of the Foodstore sample:-

- did the offender also have in his possession articles for which he had not paid, belonging to some other store, or was he caught in another store with goods stolen from the Foodstore on him?
- was he shoplifting with accomplices?
- was he operating on his home ground, or had he travelled some distance to where he would be less well known?
- what was his method of taking and secreting the items?
- how did the number and value of the goods he had stolen compare with that of the goods he had bought?

(i) The extent to which other shops were involved

If an offender was apprehended with goods from another store in his possession, the incident in the Foodstore was not his first act of shoplifting. He may even have been a deliberate thief interrupted in the course of a normal shoplifting expedition. This would also apply if he were caught in another

Table 4a Age distribution in groups and alone

AGE	IN GROUPS		ALONE	
	%	No.	%	No.
0- 9	4.0	3	0.9	3
10-13	36.0	27	3.8	12
14-16	12.0	9	4.1	13
17-20	13.3	10	2.5	8
21-25	17.3	13	4.4	14
25-30	4.0	3	3.1	10
31-40	5.3	4	14.5	46
41-50	1.3	1	21.4	68
51-60	2.7	2	15.7	50
60+	0.0	0	28.0	89
Total	100.0	75	100.0	318

Table 4b Amount stolen in groups and alone

TOTAL VALUE SHILLINGS	IN GROUPS		ALONE	
	%	No.	%	No.
0- 5	41.3	31	37.7	120
6-10	0.0	0	16.0	51
11-20	16.0	12	17.3	55
21-50	25.3	19	18.6	59
51-100	12.0	9	8.2	26
101-200	2.7	2	1.9	6
201-400	0.0	0	0.3	1
401+	2.7	2	0.0	0
Total	100.0	75	100.0	318

store, and was carrying goods stolen from the Foodstore. However, the number of such instances recorded was very small indeed - only 6 men and 9 women were known to have stolen elsewhere. Three were housewives under 40, two were employed women, and five were schoolchildren. Older offenders and employed men were not represented. This provided very little evidence that the people who stole from the Foodstore were engaged in systematic shoplifting at the time.

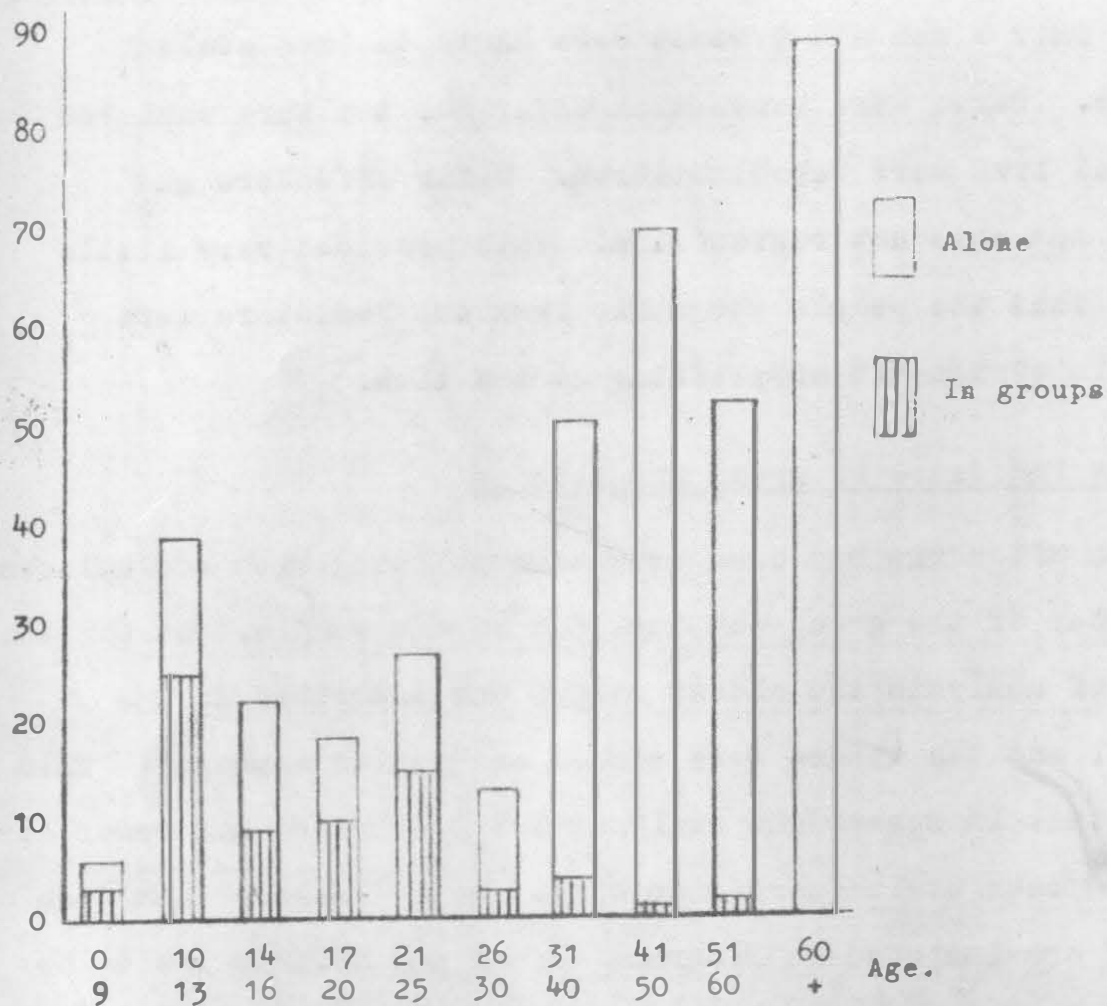
(ii) The incidence of group shoplifting

When offenders had been caught shoplifting with accomplices each member of the group was included in the sample, but for the purpose of analysis the oldest member was described as the "leader", and the others were scored as "junior members". This ensured that in subsequent analyses the goods were not recorded as having been stolen more than once. Both "leaders" and "junior members" are included in Diagrams 4a, 4b and 4c. As was to be expected from the findings of Cameron and Gibbens, most offenders shoplifting together were young - in fact between the ages of 10 and 13 more juveniles were caught in groups than alone (Diagram 4a). However shoplifting with accomplices was not entirely confined to juveniles. Amongst those aged between 17 and 25, when the shoplifting activities of the young are reputedly petering out, it was found that the number of offenders acting with others virtually matched the number acting alone (Diagram 4a, and Table 4a).

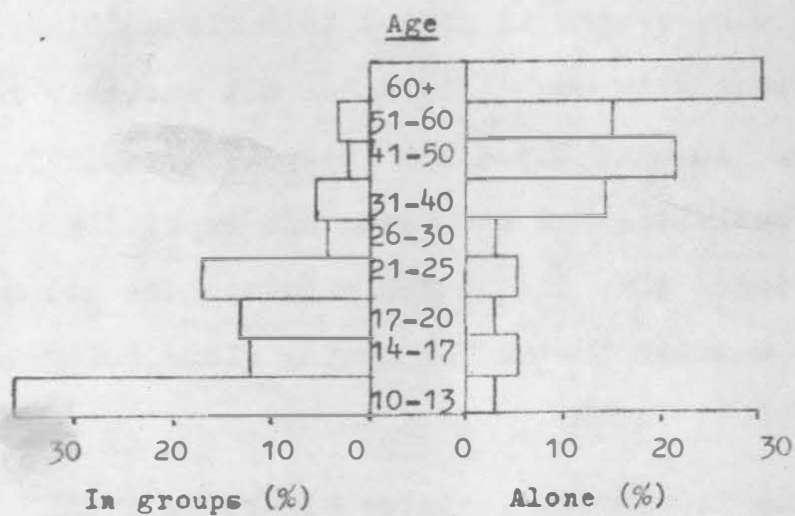
There was a single recognised instance of professional shoplifting with accomplices. The two men were later identified

Diagram 4. Age distribution of shoplifters acting alone and in groups.

a. Number in each age group



b. and c. Age distributions of those acting together and alone.



as professional thieves, but this was first suggested by a combination of factors in the data - such as those of sex, age, amount stolen and joint enterprise. It was later confirmed by the Area Security Officer who filled out their story. They had been arrested in the town centre, and a number of bottles of spirits stolen from the Foodstore had been found concealed in poacher pockets in their great-coats. Later their flat was searched, and a quantity of domestic articles and clothing recently stolen from other shops was discovered. However their shoplifting had been ancillary to more ambitious forms of theft, and the Foodstore incident was eventually taken into consideration when they received prison sentences on more serious charges from the Higher Court.

Mothers have been known to encourage their young children to take goods "by mistake" (Edwards 1958), but only one instance was found of a child under 10 being recorded as a shoplifter when he was with an adult. Two other young children were caught stealing with older children, and the remaining three were alone.

The 22 males and 50 females who were accompanied made up one fifth of the total sample, and gave a sex ratio of one male to every 2.3 females, compared with that of one to 1.9 in the sample as a whole. This slightly higher proportion of women would not have been obtained if shoplifting in groups had been mainly carried out by schoolboys. The groups consisted almost always of two people. 72% contained a leader and a friend, 10% a leader and a relative, and only five groups contained more than two people. Three out of the four unmarried girls who were

pregnant or who had children were shoplifting with others, as were 9% of the housewives and 59% of those in full-time education. The employed were represented by one clerical and one unskilled manual worker only, and those who were retired or in poor health were completely absent from the group sample.

Indications of more purposeful stealing could be found amongst those who stole with others. 6.6% had been involved with other shops, compared with 2.8% in the total sample, and when the average number and value of items stolen and purchased were examined it was found that those who stole in groups were more likely to buy nothing, or fewer articles of lesser value, and to steal more goods of greater value, than those who stole alone (Tables 4b and 4c).

Table 4c. Number and total value of items purchased/stolen on average per head, for those in groups and those alone.

<u>Shoplifters</u>	<u>Accompanied</u>	<u>Alone</u>
No. buying nothing	28 (37%)	76 (23%)
Average No. items purchased	5.5	6.7
Average value items purchased	7.5/-	12.6/-
Average No. items stolen	4.8	3.3
Average value items stolen	40.1/- (24/-)	19.6/-

(Note to Table 4c: The average value of items stolen by those acting together was inflated by the presence of the two professionals who stole goods to the value of £30. The elimination of this figure reduced the average from 40/- to 24/-, but left it substantially higher than the average value of the goods stolen

by people acting alone.)

At the time neither the store management nor the police appeared to recognise the general trends exhibited by these figures, since those shoplifting in groups were found to be no more liable to prosecution than those acting alone.

(iii) Proximity of home address to store

Professionals and experienced amateurs are thought to operate further from home, and to make frequent changes of locality, in order to avoid being recognised should they be suspected a second time. An attempt was made to identify those in the Foodstore sample who had travelled some distance from their home addresses to the shop, as this could be an indication that a deliberate shoplifting expedition had been planned in advance. However it was recognised that they might equally well have had a legitimate explanation for the journey.

It was estimated that 21% of the male sample and 30% of the female sample were caught stealing in shops at some distance from their homes. These figures were arrived at by the application of somewhat arbitrary criteria involving a combination of estimated distance on the map and type of location: whether it was a country town or a conurbation, but they could not take into account other extraneous factors such as the convenience of local bus routes.

Younger housewives (aged 21 to 40) and working men had most often travelled some distance to the store, their representation in the "travelled" group being higher than in the total sample, and since they stole more and bought less, ^{proportionally,} than other categories

of shoplifter (ult. p. 99) it is also possible that they chose their store with more deliberation. Most working men however stole between 13.00 hrs. and 14.00 hrs., or after 17.00 hrs., therefore it is equally probable that they had travelled to their work, and were based there. Schoolgirls and women at work were more likely to steal from stores near their homes, but schoolboys and retired men were found both near to home and further afield.

(iv) Methods of stealing

The usual procedure for buying goods in a self-service supermarket was followed in the Foodstore. Customers were expected to take goods from the shelves, place them in a wire basket or trolley provided by the firm, and transfer them into their own receptacles only after they had been paid for at the checkout points. Therefore taking goods from the shelves was legitimate, but placing them anywhere but in the trolley, or removing them from the trolley before passing through the checkout, would be considered highly suspect, even though the act of shoplifting would not be deemed to have taken place until the customer had left the store without paying for the goods.

In view of the fact that confusion, mistake or absent-mindedness are the most frequent defences put up against a charge of shoplifting, it was decided to carry out a brief examination of the methods used by the various categories of shoplifter.

Since shopping bag and wire basket are frequently carried together in order to leave one hand unhampered it would be comparatively easy to take articles from the shelf and place them

Table 5a % of Categories Stealing by Each Method

Cate- gory	REMOVED FROM		PLACED IN			Price changd.	Not hiddn
	shelf (i)	trolley (ii)	bag (iii)	pockt. (iv)	clothes (v)		
I	64	33	17	56	14	0	8
III	40	58	13	63	20	3	0
VIII	40	57	20	67	10	0	0
II	83	10	34	48	10	0	3
IV	35	62	76	9	9	0	0
V	20	70	89	4	2	0	0
VI	25	70	61	20	9	4	4
VII	21	77	69	27	0	0	0

Table 5b Average Number of Items Stolen by Each Category

Category			Category		
I	Schoolboy	1.6	IV	Employd Fmle	3.9
III	Employd Mle	2.2	V	Hsewife 21-40	6.5
VIII	Retir'd Mle	2.5	VI	Hsewife 41-60	4.3
II	Schoolgirl	2.8	VII	Hsewife 60+	2.6

"REMOVED FROM" Column (i) - the % of each category taking goods from the shelf and hiding them immediately. Column (ii) - the % first placing goods in a wire basket or trolley and subsequently concealing them before passing through the checkout point.

"PLACED IN" Column (iii) - the % of each category concealing goods in a shopping bag; column (iv) - % placing them in their pockets; column (v) - the % hiding the items elsewhere in their clothes.

"PRICE CHANGED" - offenders who attempted to pay less for the items by switching the price labels.

"NOT HIDDEN" % of offenders who attempted to walk out of the

store unobserved.

(Categories are identified in Table 5b)

in the shopping bag as the result of a genuine oversight. It is argued here, however, that the act of stealing appears more deliberate if the goods are secreted elsewhere immediately they have been taken from the shelves, or if they are removed and concealed after they have been placed in the trolley. The number of articles involved is also taken as an indicator, since each article requires a separate act of concealment. (Table 5b.)

Table 5a shows the proportion of each category of shoplifter taking goods by the two most frequent methods - direct from the shelf, or via the wire basket or trolley. It also shows what proportion placed the items in their shopping bags or pockets, or hid them in their clothing (swimming trunks and towel proved to be a favourite with small boys), and what proportion tried to pay less by switching price tags, or just walked out of the shop without hiding the goods and without paying. Table 5b shows the variation between the groups in the number of items stolen per head.

Some distinct differences between the categories emerged, but they were probably more connected with habit and convenience than with anything more premeditated. 83% of the schoolgirls, 64% of the schoolboys and 40% of the men concealed goods immediately they had been taken from the shelves. They stole a small number of items, and placed them in their pockets or elsewhere in their clothes - but they do not normally carry shopping bags. Adult women, who would be expected to shop with a basket or trolley, tended to utilise it for stealing as well. 70% first placed goods in their trolleys and later transferred

them to their own bags. They stole on average a greater number of items in this way, and middle-aged housewives actually used a wider range of hiding places than any other group in the sample. From the data available, however, it was clear that no group of shoplifters contained a large proportion of offenders who took goods from the shelf and placed them directly and possibly unintentionally in the shopping bag rather than in the wire basket. Most of the acts of shoplifting therefore appeared to be deliberate in so far as they involved an act of concealing independent of the movements required to make a normal purchase. For all categories except that of the schoolboy (I) more than two such acts were performed.

(v) To buy or to steal?

The individual who steals a large number of articles, or articles to a high value, is not inevitably acting more deliberately than the person who steals less. He may be influenced by factors which make him more liable to temptation. However when a number of persons are considered together, as in the selected categories of shoplifter, it is possible to set up as a criterion of culpability the relationship between the average number and value of goods stolen per head and the average number and value of goods purchased. Other information from the data suggests that the store management and the courts adopted a similar measurement of culpability, but based it mainly on the value of goods stolen.

The shoplifter and the shop can be expected to hold different views about the extent to which the value of goods purchased should be regarded as compensatory. To the shoplifter the total

Table 6a Number and Percentage Buying or Stealing Items to the Values Indicated (Males and Females Separately - All Ages Together)

Value shllgs ITEMS BOUGHT	No.	%	Value shllgs ITEMS STOLEN	No.	%
<u>Nil</u>			<u>Nil</u>		
Males	60	46.0	Males	-	-
Females	44	16.5	Females	-	-
<u>1 - 5</u>			<u>1 - 5</u>		
Males	26	19.0	Males	56	43.0
Females	49	20.5	Females	91	36.0
<u>6 - 10</u>			<u>6 - 10</u>		
Males	14	11.0	Males	14	11.0
Females	44	17.0	Females	37	15.0
<u>11 - 20</u>			<u>11 - 20</u>		
Males	13	10.0	Males	22	17.0
Females	58	23.0	Females	42	17.0
<u>21 - 50</u>			<u>21 - 50</u>		
Males	14	11.0	Males	27	21.0
Females	47	19.0	Females	48	19.0
<u>51 - 100</u>			<u>51 - 100</u>		
Males	3	2.0	Males	7	5.0
Females	6	2.0	Females	27	11.0
<u>101 - 200</u>			<u>101 - 200</u>		
Males	0	0.0	Males	2	1.4
Females	0	0.0	Females	6	2.0
<u>201 - 400</u>			<u>201 - 400</u>		
Males	0	0.00	Males	1	0.7
Females	0	0.0	Females	0	0.0
<u>400 +</u>			<u>400 +</u>		
Males	0	0.0	Males	2	1.4
Females	0	0.0	Females	0	0.0
<u>Not known</u>			<u>Not known</u>	Nil.	
Males	1	0.7			
Females	2	1.0			
<u>TOTAL</u>			<u>TOTAL</u>		
Males	131	100.0	Males	131	100.0
Females	251	100.0	Females	251	100.0

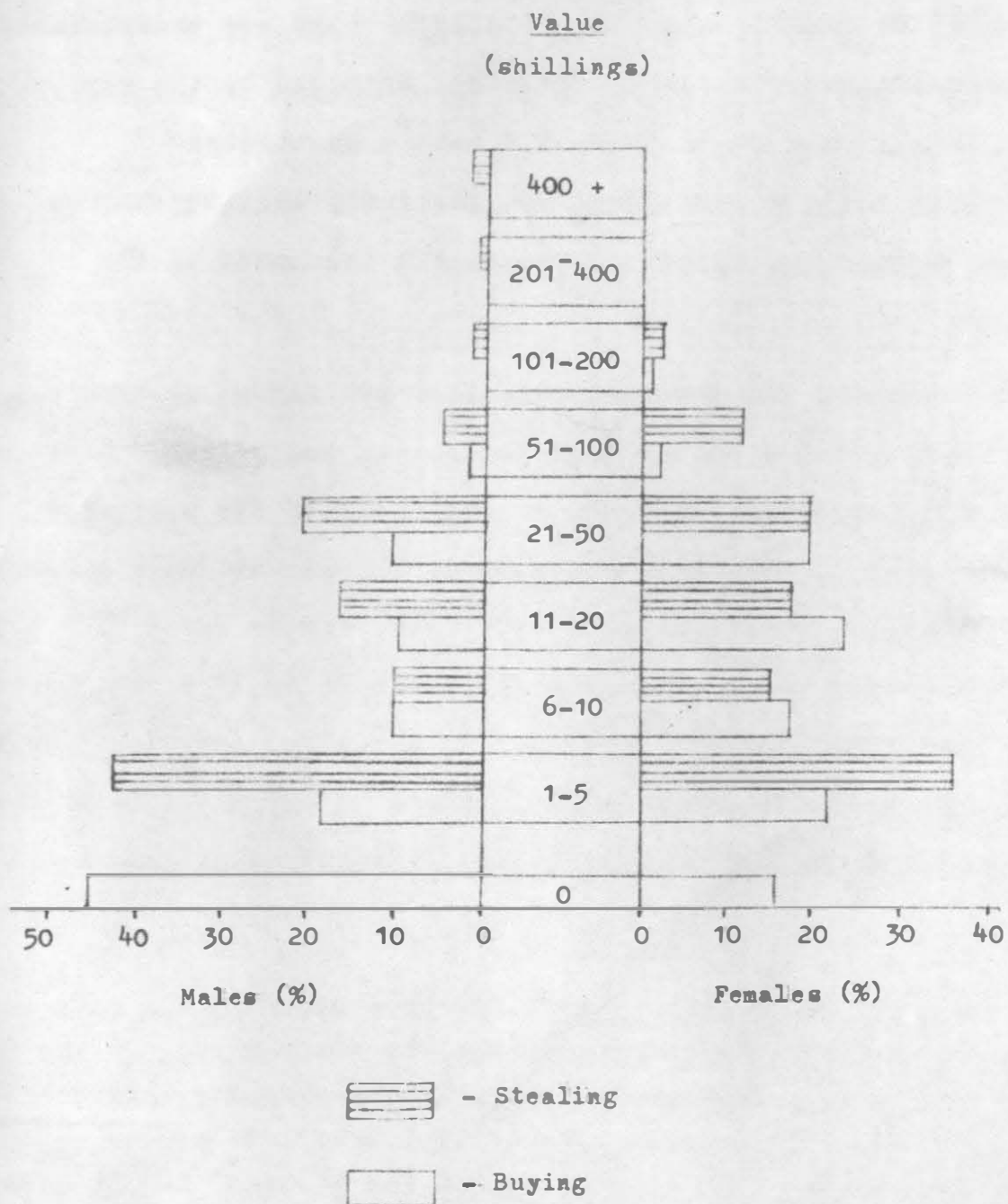
cost of the goods bought has been paid out in hard cash, and he may say in rationalisation that he has only added a little extra to his legitimate purchases. However to the store an article stolen is a total loss, but an article bought is only a gain by the margin of profit. Therefore although there are considerable differences between the value of goods purchased by the various categories of shoplifter these will have a contracted significance only to the store. Consequently they may not be taken in mitigation during the subsequent treatment of the offenders.

The value of the goods bought or stolen varied widely, but the overall tendency was to steal more than was bought. Many bought nothing at all, and only 9 people out of 279 paid more than 50/- (£2.50) for what they bought, whereas although a large proportion (147 persons) stole articles of little value (5/- (25p or less) as many as 45 persons stole goods worth 50/- (£2.50) or more. The amounts bought or stolen by the total male and female samples are shown in Table 6a and Diagram 5, and they are analysed more thoroughly for the eight selected categories of shoplifter in Table 7.

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Note Table 6a and Diagram 5 show the proportion of the male and female shoplifters who made purchases, or stole goods, to the values indicated. Neither table nor diagram implies that a person who bought goods of a certain value will also have stolen goods of the same value. The composition of the 'bought' and 'stolen' groups will be entirely different.

Diagram 5. Proportions buying and stealing goods of value indicated.



The males bought very little or nothing at all, 65% paying less than 5/- (25p). In this they differed from the females, only 37% of whom made similarly small purchases. It might have been expected that the young (through mischief) and the old (through poverty) would be the most likely to steal without buying at the same time, but this was not entirely the case. (Table 6b)

Table 6b. Proportion of males and females in each age group buying nothing.

Age	Males	Females
11 - 20	65%	40%
21 - 30	64%	3%
31 - 40	38%	17%
41 - 50	52%	15%
51 - 60	23%	6%
61 +	23%	13%

Note: The numbers in some of the groups are small, but the difference of pattern between men and women is clearly significant.

The young male in particular showed a tendency to make no purchases, but the over sixties were much less likely to do so. As the men get older they tend to make more purchases, but this trend is broken by the 41 - 50 age group - a group which has already attracted attention because it contains so high a proportion of the adult males. A much smaller and more evenly distributed proportion of the women bought nothing, and between the ages of 21 and 30, and 51 and 60 the figure was remarkably low. The average amount stolen per head by the males and females who bought nothing was high - 20.3 shillings (£1.01) for the women and 36.3 shillings (£1.81) for the men. This latter figure

Table 7 Amounts stolen and purchased by Categories

	I	II	VII	VIII
No. in category	36	29	52	30
No. buying nothing	25	16	7	6
% buying nothing	69%	55%	13%	20%
Av.No.Items purchased	2.2	3.1	6.3	4.3
Av. Value purchased	2.8	4.3	14.0	13.4
Total value purchased	79	125	728	402
Av.No.Items stolen	1.6	2.8	2.6	2.5
Av. Value stolen	5.3	6.6	11.0	25.9
Total value stolen	191	191	572	777

	IV	III	VI	V
No. in category	34	40	56	54
No. buying nothing	5	15	6	5
% buying nothing	14%	37%	11%	9%
Av. No.Items purchased .	9.2	5.8	9.1	10.2
Av. Value purchased	15.6	11.6	16.7	14.0
Total value purchased	530	232	935	756
Av. No. Items stolen	3.9	2.2	4.3	6.5
Av. Value stolen	25.9	23.5	22.4	32.5
Total value stolen	881	940	1254	1755

All Values are in shillings.

The categories are arranged in order of the Total Value Stolen, which corresponds with Ranking R7.

Categories:	I	Schoolboy	V	Housewife 21 - 40
	II	Schoolgirl	VI	Housewife 41 - 60
	III	Employed man	VII	Housewife 61+
	IV	Employed woman	VIII	Retired man

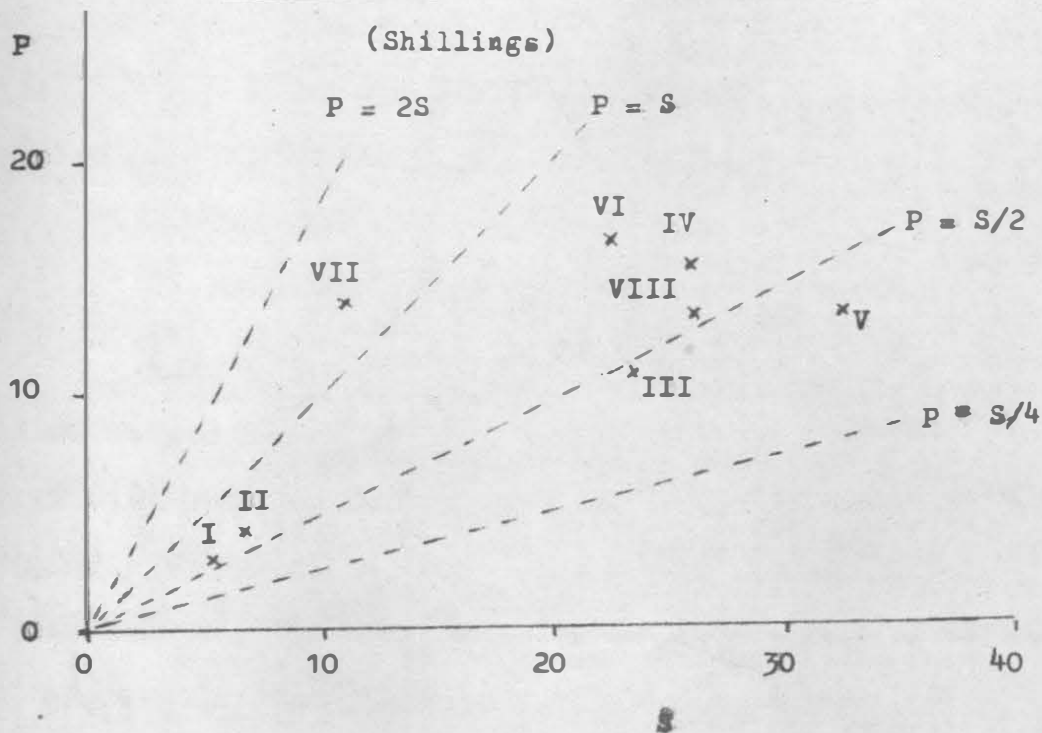
was higher than the average value stolen by any of the eight defined categories of shoplifter (Table 7), but it was inflated by the (legitimate) inclusion of the two "professionals" who bought nothing but stole goods to a very high value (Inf. p.92). A recalculation which omitted these two men reduced the average amount stolen by males who bought nothing from 36.3 to 16.9 shillings (85p), which was a comparatively low figure.

The young and the old were modest in their stealing. Amongst those stealing goods valued at 5/- (25p) or less, 70% of the males and 55% of the females were under 17 or over 60. Over half the shoplifters stole goods valued at less than 10/- (50p). Men and women stole in approximately equal proportions for all values up to 50/- (£2.50), but a higher proportion of females stole to values between 50/- and 100/- (£5.00) (Table 6a). The three individuals who stole the most were men. Of the twelve men stealing goods over 50/- (£2.50), three men were retired and the others had a variety of occupations. Of the 33 women in this group two thirds were housewives, which corresponds with their representation in the total female sample, and the other third were employed.

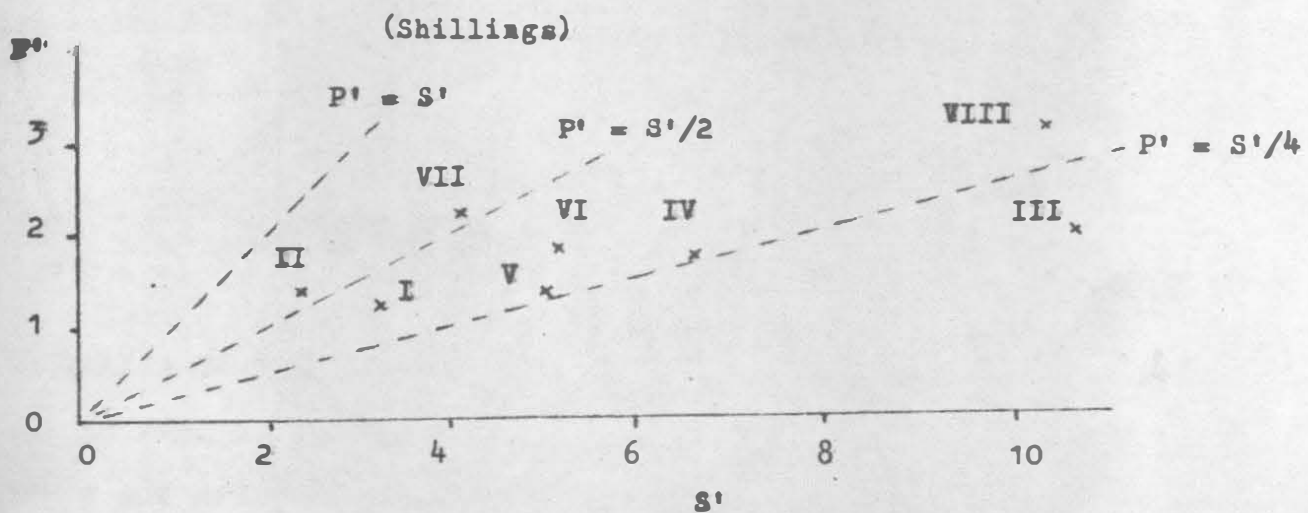
Whether shoplifters in the eight main categories intended principally to buy or to steal could be answered in part by comparing the value of the goods they had bought with the value of those they had attempted to steal. The average amount stolen per head by each category (S) was plotted against the average amount purchased (P) (Diagram 6a), and a similar comparison was made between the average value per item stolen (S') and purchased (P') by the different categories. (Diagram 6b). A ranking of the

Diagram 6. Comparison of Buying and Stealing
by Categories.

a. Average Value per head of goods Purchased (P) and Stolen (S)



b. Average Value per item Purchased (P') and Stolen (S')



Key:

I	Schoolboy	V	Housewife 21-40
II	Schoolgirl	VI	Housewife 41-60
III	Employed Man	VII	Housewife 61 +
IV	Employed Woman	VIII	Retired Man

categories in terms of predatoriness, as measured by the average buying and stealing performances of their constituent members, could be established from these graphs. This ranking is used as a reference scale when the proportions in which the various categories were prosecuted, cautioned or set free are examined in Chapter 6.

When the average values per head of the goods purchased (P) or stolen (S) were compared between categories considerable differences were found (Diagram 6a). The smallest average amounts were stolen by schoolchildren (I and II) and housewives over 60 (VII). Young housewives (V) stole the most, and men over 60 (VIII) stole on average the second highest amount, thus lending no support to the theory that they are usually engaged in very minor pilfering.

Putting the categories in ascending order of the average value of the goods they stole (Table 7) gives the following ranking:

I, II, VII, VI, III, IV, ^IVIII, V (R1)

Supposing that the shoplifter considered that the amount he spent in the shop compensated to some extent for the amount he stole - (he may argue that he has been overcharged, or is taking a little extra) - then the value of the goods purchased assumes some significance in any attempt to assess the relative culpability of different categories of shoplifter. On this reckoning the older housewife (VII) had the least culpable performance. Hers was the only group where the value of goods purchased was greater than the value of goods stolen ($S < P < 2S$).

The middle-aged housewife (VI), the schoolgirl (II), the employed woman (IV), the schoolboy (I) and the retired man (VIII) purchased goods of less value than they stole, but not of less than half that value ($S/2 < P < S$), but the record of the employed man (III) and the young housewife (V) was the worst. For them P lies between $S/2$ and $S/4$. (Diagram 6a).

Schoolchildren, making up 17% of the total sample, stole nearly twice as much as they bought. Compared with the young housewife (V), the middle aged and older housewives had a much lower ratio of goods stolen to goods purchased. This tended to support Gibbens' suggestion that the middle aged housewife may steal a little to augment her weekly shopping, although in the Foodstore sample even she steals more than she buys. The record of the young housewife in contrast suggests that she prefers to combine a little shopping with her weekly stealing.

Ranking the categories on the basis of increasing S/P ratio (Diagram 6a) gives the following sequence:

VII, VI, II, IV, I, VIII, III, V (R2)

People may be more tempted by individual items which are either too expensive for them, or whose purchase they cannot readily justify (c.f. Gibbens' "mean" housewife). Therefore the average values per item purchased (P') and stolen (S') were calculated for each category. (Diagram 6b).

Schoolchildren (I and II) and older housewives (VII) stole items of small individual value. Men (III and VIII) stole goods of high value - much higher than those stolen by the women. Although the actual nature of the goods stolen is not recorded,

it is surmised that the men were more tempted by wines, spirits and tobacco and less by food. The young housewife, on the other hand, who had stolen goods to the greatest total value (S) in all probability stole everyday foodstuffs as each item was of small value in itself (S').

Ranking the categories simply in the order of the increasing value of the individual items stolen gives the following:

II, I, VII, V, VI, IV, VIII, III (R3)

All categories of shoplifter were found on average to steal items of greater individual value than those they bought. This would suggest that they were all well aware of what they were doing, and of its financial advantages to themselves, since they offered to pay for the less expensive items and attempted to make off with those which would have cost more. Some categories, however, were less ambitious in what they attempted than others. Older housewives (VII) and schoolgirls (II) stole individual items worth more than those they purchased, but worth less than twice that amount ($P' < S' < 2P'$) and for most other categories P' lay between $S'/2$ and $S'/4$. Employed men however stole items whose individual value was over four times that of those they purchased.

A ranking order of the ratio S' to P' gives the following:

II, VII, V, VI, VIII, V, IV, III (R4)

The rankings were devised in an attempt to determine whether some categories of shoplifter exhibited more predatory habits than others by using the four values S, P, S' and P' in various

combinations. Those already set out show some similarities, and it seemed informative to combine them in pairs. A ranking which takes into account both S and S', but takes no account of the amount purchased, reads as follows:

I, II, VII, VI, IV, V, III, VIII (R5)

One which combines the S/P ratio and the S'/P' ratio, and so gives an order which takes both the values stolen and the values purchased into account, reads as follows:

VII, II, VI, I, IV, VIII, V, III (R6)

A comparison between R5 and R6 shows that the relative positions of some categories are altered once the amount purchased is taken into account. Older housewives (VI and VII) and the retired men (VIII) become less predatory, but the schoolchildren (I and II) move further up the scale because they make few purchases. Working women (IV) retain the same position, but employed men (III) and young housewives (V) give the worst performance on either scale, stealing a large amount and making few compensatory purchases. However, as was previously noted, they differed in the number of articles each attempted to steal.

It seems then that various categories of shoplifter may differ in the number and value of the items they steal. A final point remains to be considered. If the offenders had not been caught, how great would have been the total loss suffered by the store through the depredations of each category? The loss suffered depends not only on the category of offender involved, but also on the number of offenders in each category. The shop may not be accurately aware of the relative nuisance value of different types of shoplifter but it may have formed some

Table 8 Ranking of the categories according to stealing and buying performance

S	=	I	II	VII	VI	III	IV	VIII	V	R1
S'	=	II	I	VII	V	VI	IV	VIII	III	R3
S+S'	=	I	II	VII	VI	IV	V	III	VIII	R5
S:P	=	VII	VI	II	IV	I	VIII	III	V	R2
S':P'	=	II	VII	I	VI	VIII	V	IV	III	R4
R2+R4	=	VII	II	VI	I	IV	VIII	V	III	R6
T	=	I	II	VII	VIII	IV	III	VI	V	R7

S = average value of goods stolen per head per category.

S' = average value per item stolen per head per category.

P = average value of goods purchased per head per category.

P' = average value per item purchased per head per category.

T = Total amount which would have been stolen from the Store by each category.

(All rankings read from left to right - lesser to greater.)

I	Schoolboy	V	Housewife 21-40
II	Schoolgirl	VI	Housewife 41-60
III	Employed Male	VII	Housewife 60+
IV	Employed Female	VIII	Retired Male

subjective impression, and this may indirectly influence its attitude when it considers a prosecution. Therefore a final ranking was made, again in ascending order, of the total loss which would have been inflicted on the store, by each category:

I, II, VII, VIII, IV, III, VI, V (R7)

Some notable changes in ranking have now taken place. Retired men (VIII) up to this point have always appeared towards the more predatory end of the scale but they are now placed next to the three groups who throughout have had low rankings: the schoolchildren and the housewives over 60. On the other hand the middle-aged housewives (VI) who, with the employed women (IV) have remained almost unremarked in the middle of the scale, are now found to have caused a loss to the store second only to that of the young housewives (V), and greater than that caused by the employed men, although they individually have always shown a more adverse performance.

At a later stage (ult. p.126) these categories will be ranked according to the proportions in which they were released by the store with a warning, cautioned by the police, or prosecuted. The results will then be compared with the "performance" rankings of this chapter (Table 8).

3. THE FREQUENCY OF SHOPLIFTING

Previous writers, notably Gibbens, Cameron, Loitz, and Edwards, demonstrated that more shoplifters were caught at some times than at others. The number of arrests made at any one time depends largely on the number of people who are in the shop, and who therefore are potential shoplifters, and on the numbers

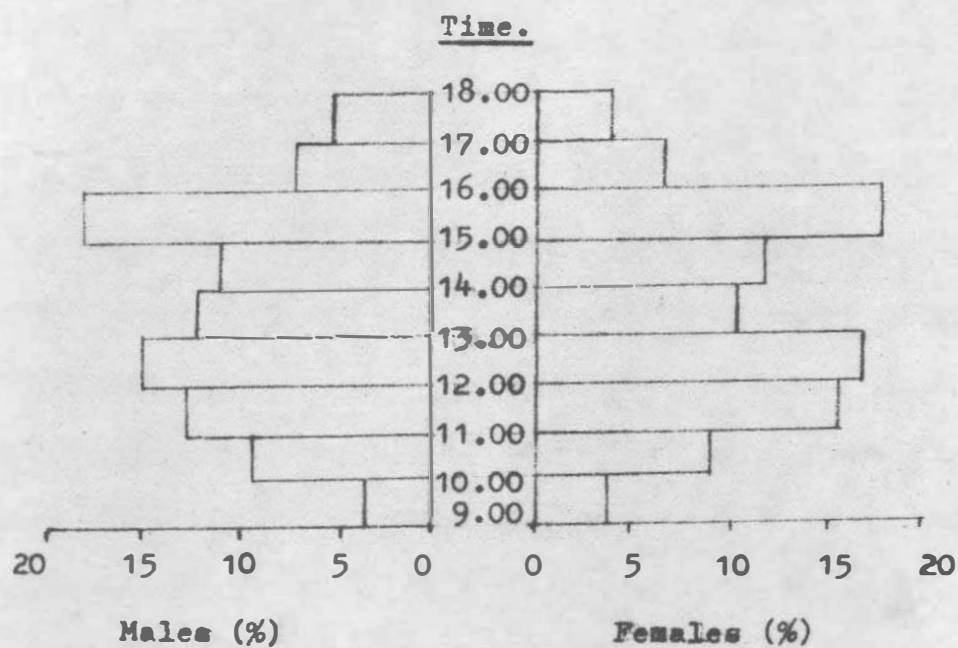
and vigilance of the store detectives on duty. Other factors are thought to precipitate the act particularly if the offender is already vulnerable by reason of age, health, worry or example, and these may operate more strongly at some times than others. The most common of these include increased opportunity, particularly when combined with increased chances of remaining undetected, increased temptation, and increased awareness of need. The first two occur most readily during the seasonal sales, when the shops are overcrowded and the sales staff overwhelmed, and all four can be found in the period before Christmas, when the merchandise is particularly attractive. Real need, however, might be apparent in the Foodstore survey if there were a definite increase in the number of housewives arrested just before payday. Bearing in mind all these factors it was thought that the timing of arrests within the Foodstore sample might prove informative. This was carried out for each sex separately and for each of the eight categories of shoplifter.

(i) Time of day*

Arrests in the Gibbens 1959 sample had taken place fairly regularly throughout the day, the peak discernable in the 1949 sample between 15.00 and 17.00 hrs. having disappeared. Housewives, however, tended to get caught between 10.00 and 16.00 hrs., and the single employed girl either during her lunch hour or after 17.00 hrs. The Foodstore figures compare more closely

*Administrative arrangements may have had an effect on the numbers arrested before 10.00 hrs. and after 17.00 hrs. For similar reasons Monday could not be included in the daily analysis.

Diagram 7. Proportion of male and female shoplifters apprehended each hour.



with those of Edwards (1958). He plotted the time of arrest for 700 cases, and found a steady rise to a peak at about 12.00 hrs., followed by a slight fall, then a rise to a second peak at 15.00 hrs., a slow drop to 17.00 hrs., and finally a steep drop.

In the Foodstore survey the numbers of shoplifters apprehended showed marked increases during the second half of the morning and between 15.00 and 16.00 hrs. The proportion of males and females arrested in any hour remained however very similar (Table 9 and Diagram 7).

Table 9 % of males and females apprehended per hour

Time	09.00+	10.00+	11.00+	12.00+	13.00+	14.00+	15.00+	16.00+	17.00+
% male	3	9	13	15	12	11	18	7	5
% fmle	4	9	16	17	11	12	18	7	4

64% of the sample were neither at work nor at school, and so presumably could choose their own time to go shopping. These comprise categories V to VIII, and an analysis by categories was carried out to determine whether these groups were jointly responsible for the overall pattern, or whether specific differences could be found between them and the employed categories I to IV (Table 10).

As was to be expected differences emerged. Men and women at work (III and IV) were arrested between 13.00 and 14.00 hrs. in what was probably the lunch hour. Less predictably the employed men (III) were also frequently arrested at the general peak hour of 15.00 to 16.00 hrs., and they were more likely to be arrested after 17.00 hrs. than any other category. Schoolchildren (I and II) were frequently caught during school

Table 10 Number apprehended per hour by category

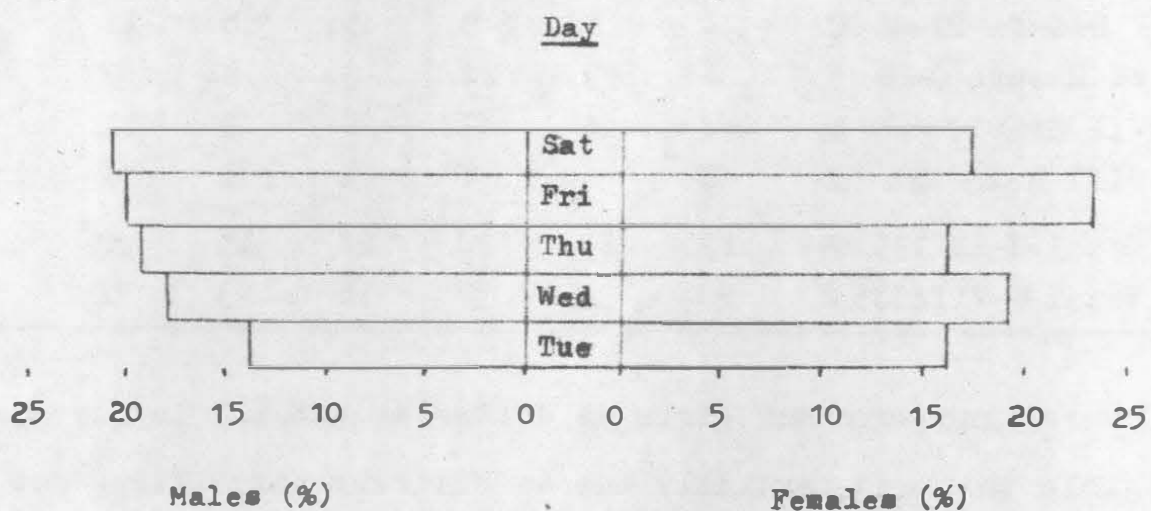
Time	09.00+10.00+11.00+12.00+13.00+14.00+15.00+16.00+17.00+								
I Schboy	1	2	7	7	3	5	3	5	1
II Schgirl	1	3	1	4	6	1	9	2	2
III Emp Male	2	4	3	4	8	5	6	2	5
IV Emp Fmle	1	3	4	5	7	4	2	4	3
V Hsewfe 21-40	0	4	9	9	5	8	11	5	2
VI Hsewfe 41-60	5	6	9	14	3	5	7	3	2
VII Hsewfe 60+	2	4	10	7	6	8	11	0	1
VIII Retd Mle	1	6	6	7	4	2	2	1	0
Total I-IV 135	5	12	15	20	24	15	20	13	11
Total V-VIII 185	8	20	34	37	18	23	31	9	5

hours, and boys and girls at different times. In the case of girls this was partially due to Saturday activities, but in the case of boys it may have been coupled with truancy.

Most arrests were made between 12.00 and 13.00 hrs. All categories of offender, especially the middle aged housewives (VI), appear likely to shoplift during this early lunch-time period, but there was a drop in the number of arrests after 13.00 hrs. A secondary peak occurred in the middle of the afternoon, between 15.00 and 16.00 hrs. Schoolgirls (II), young housewives (V) and older housewives (VII) were apprehended most frequently at that time. Older men however (VIII) show a stronger tendency to shoplift during the morning.

There were 135 "employed" (categories I to IV) offenders and 185 "non-employed" (V to VIII) offenders in all. If these two groups had been evenly represented during the day their hourly figures would have been roughly in the proportion

Diagram 8. Proportion of male and female shoplifters apprehended each day (not Mon.)



of 3 to 4. (Table 10). On this basis the "employed" were under-represented between 9.00 and 13.00 hrs., very over-represented from 13.00 to 14.00 hrs., down at 14.00 hrs., about even at 15.00 hrs., and very definitely over-represented after 16.00 hrs. This ties shoplifting very clearly with opportunity for the employed, and perhaps with convenience for the non-employed.

(ii) Day of the week

There was a steady increase in the number of males apprehended through the week, but the number of females fluctuated (Table 11 and Diagram 8).

Table 11 Number and % apprehended each day

	Tuesday		Wednesday		Thursday		Friday		Saturday	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Males	18	14	24	18	26	20	27	21	29	22
Females	42	17	49	20	43	17	60	24	45	18
Total No.	60		73		69		87		74	

Most females were caught on Friday - the traditional shopping day - but a large number were also caught on Wednesday, when money could be running short. These figures therefore only partly support Gibbens' conclusion that the housewife is most at risk after pay day when making her normal weekend purchases, rather than beforehand, when her immediate need could be greater. Housewives of all ages (V to VII) were caught most frequently on Friday, schoolgirls (II) notably on Saturday. Employed men (III) on Friday and Saturday, and employed women (IV) and schoolboys (I) with some regularity throughout the week. (Table 12).

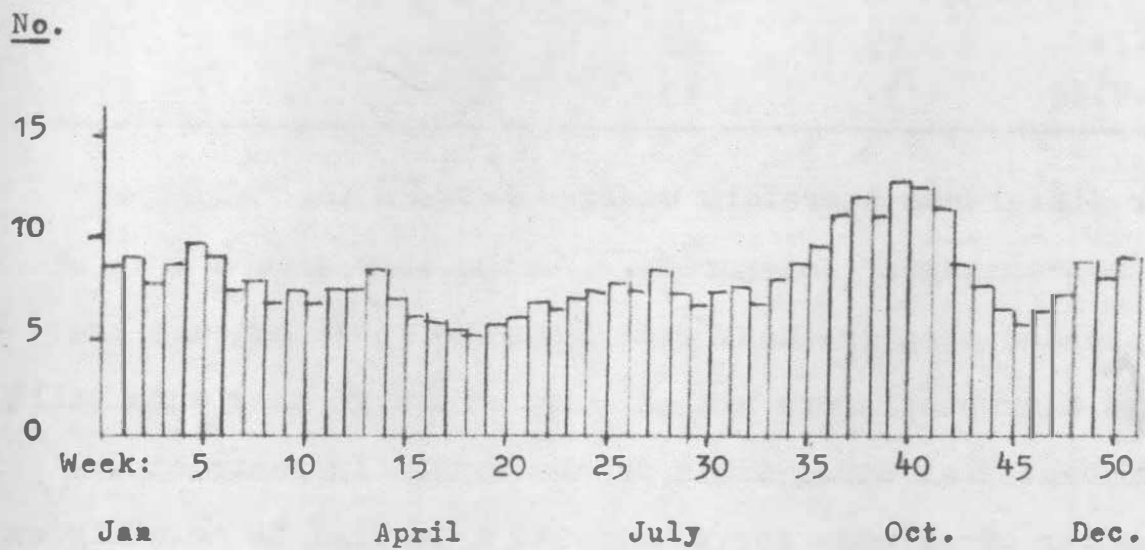
Table 12 Number apprehended per day by category

	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
I Schoolboy	4	9	8	6	9
II Schoolgirl	4	5	7	2	11
III Emp Male	2	8	7	10	10
IV Emp Female	5	7	4	7	7
V Hsewfe 21-40	11	9	7	15	10
VI Hsewfe 41-60	11	6	12	17	8
VII Hsewfe 60+	7	14	8	17	4
VIII Retd Male	7	4	4	7	4
Total I-IV	15	29	26	25	37
Total V-VIII	36	33	31	56	26

A further difference therefore emerges between the "employed" and the "non-employed" categories. Predictably groups I to IV are apprehended most frequently on Saturday, when schools are closed and many people are not at work, although they were still well represented at other times of the week. In contrast the lowest number of arrests for categories V to VIII is actually on Saturday, and for these the peak day is Friday, when fewer "employed" arrests were made. The employed and the non-employed were thus arrested most frequently at times when it would have been most convenient for them to be in the shops, and when they may have been doing their routine shopping. But it has already been seen (inf. p. 99) that with the exception of the older housewife all categories stole goods of greater value than those they purchased. Consequently their stealing cannot be considered incidental to their shopping. It may well have been an acceptable ancillary to it, have taken place with much the same regularity, at least until, as Cameron has suggested, the occasion on which they are caught.

Diagram 9. Number of shoplifters apprehended each week.

(running mean of fives)



(iii) Time of year

The number of shoplifters apprehended each week is shown in Diagram 9, where a running mean of five weeks at a time has been taken to smooth out the sharper variations in the numbers, in order to reveal any overall trends or seasonal variations.

Seasonal peak periods for shoplifting are expected during the half-yearly sales and in the weeks before Christmas. The Foodstore did not hold sales and the need for food is continuous, but it might have been presupposed that an increased demand for luxury goods just before Christmas, or the extra opportunities for juvenile pilfering during school holidays, would have been reflected in the number of arrests made at certain times of the year. This does not appear to have been the case. The only marked peak occurred towards the end of September, which is neither during school holidays nor in the pre-Christmas period. Neither can the depressions in April, May and November be explained in terms of industrial holidays, when many people might be away. However the number of people apprehended each week may have been too low to demonstrate any positive trends, or the level of surveillance by the security staff may not have been sufficiently constant, owing to administrative arrangements over the employment of staff or the timing of holidays. Information on these points cannot be obtained from the data.

Conclusions from Chapter 5

Shoplifting in the Foodstore was not confined to juveniles and women in middle age. All sections of the community were involved, although they differed in the value of the goods they stole and the way they stole them. There were admittedly fewer men than women, but the circumstances suggested that men are frequently prevented by extraneous factors from shoplifting, and that women are not drawn to it only at crisis periods of their lives. When the opportunity for shoplifting was similarly restricted, as for men and women at work, the number of men apprehended was actually greater than the number of women. There was some support for Gibbens' conclusion that male shoplifters approximate more closely to other thieves, in that the men, had they not been caught, would have achieved higher profit for less risk. Another of Gibbens' principle conclusions was supported by the figures - shoplifting was committed frequently by women over forty - but the figures also showed that it was committed nearly as frequently by women under forty and by women up to their seventies.

The juvenile shoplifter is supposed to give up during her late teens. The fall in the female figures between 25 and 30 occurred rather late to support this contention, and up to this age the numbers had increased steadily. How many of those in their early twenties were "juveniles" who had delayed making the break, and how many were starting an adult career in shoplifting at an early age? The group of younger housewives (aged 20 to 40) presented particular problems. They showed strongly predatory tendencies, buying little and stealing a large number of articles

of high total value. They are the first generation of women to have grown up with supermarket shopping. Consequently they may have a different attitude towards the obligation inherent in making a purchase. Older housewives who have bought over the counter for a large part of their lives will be clearer about the relationship between seller and buyer, which accepts that the goods are the property of the vendor until they have been paid for. If the younger housewife does not appreciate this clearly she may become skilled in shoplifting at an early age and will be unlikely to give it up of her own accord. An increase in the number of young adult shoplifters for reasons such as these may have distorted the age distribution, and masked the female peak at menopausal age, but as this cohort itself ages and is joined by those whose first offence takes place after forty the menopausal peak may again become more pronounced.

A very large number of women were over 50, which suggests either that some women are very late starters, or that they have been in practice for some years. It was impossible to estimate how many were genuine first offenders, or whether this was the first time that they had been caught. One can only make a hypothetical estimate. A first-timer would presumably be more tentative about her stealing - one article would be sufficient. Confidence and stealing articles in greater number would follow a successful first attempt. This argument is viable in one direction only: an offender making her first attempt is unlikely to steal more than one article, but a repetitive thief may still be satisfied with single articles of high value. No more than

61% of any one category stole one item only, over half the older women made multiple thefts, and throughout a higher proportion of men than women restricted themselves to single articles. (Table 13). It therefore seems unlikely that a majority of the offenders had been caught stealing on their first attempt.

Table 13 Numbers stealing single articles only

<u>Category</u>	No.	% of group
<u>Male.</u>		
I Schoolboy	22	61.1
III Employed	22	55.0
VIII Retired	14	46.7
<u>Female</u>		
II Schoolgirl	12	41.4
IV Employed	13	38.2
V Housewife 21 - 40	13	24.1
VI " 41 - 60	22	39.3
VII " 61 +	21	40.4

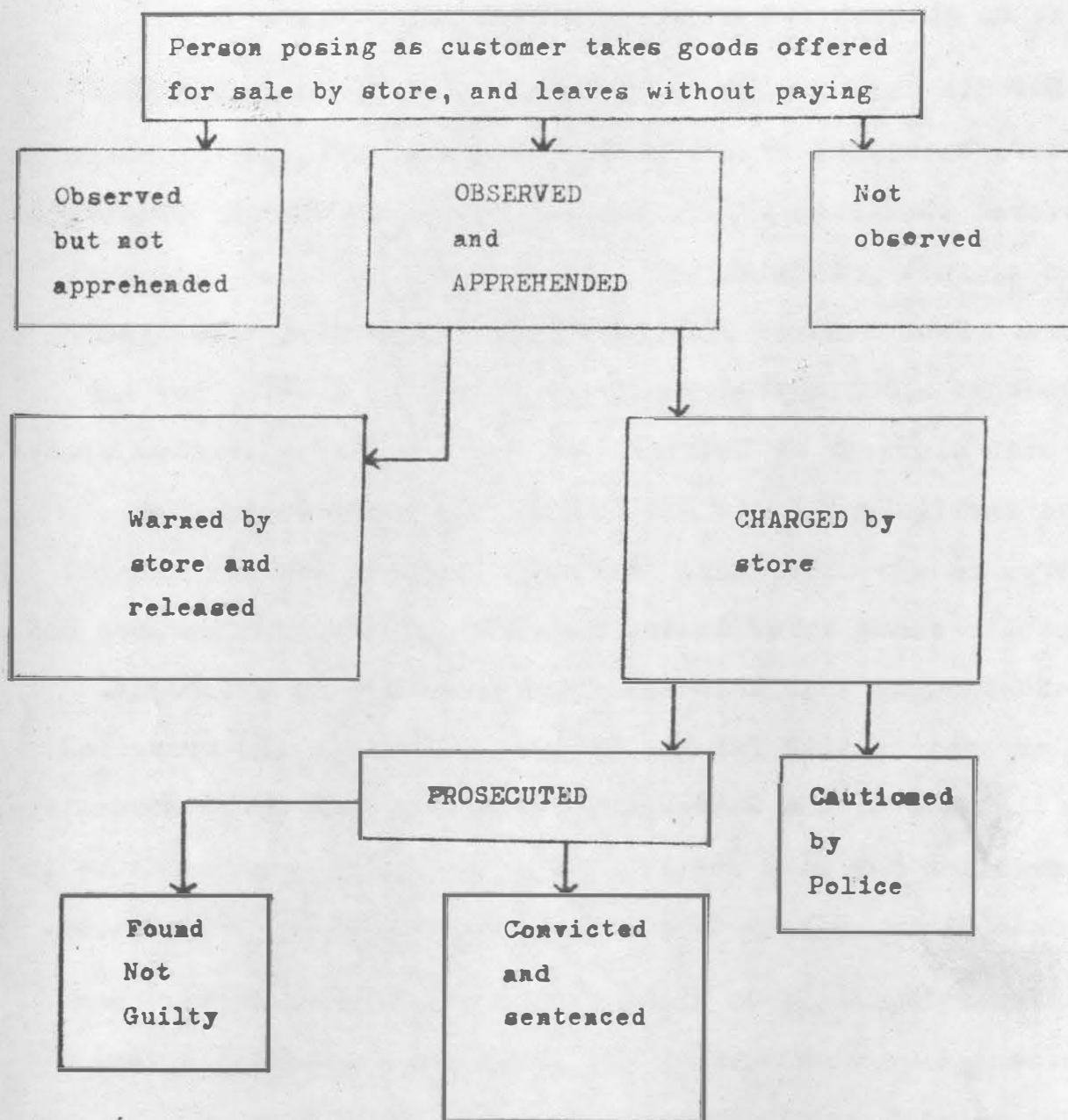
There may be very little guilt attached to stealing from a Foodstore. Most articles have a small individual value, and getting away with it could be morally the equivalent of avoiding paying a bus fare. Jepson likened it to "urban orchard raiding" (1968), and the cleverness of getting something for nothing is part of the moral climate of the mid-twentieth century. Cameron considered that offenders needed to be forced to face up to the seriousness of what they had done, and recommended that the security staff should treat it as a shameful and despicable act. The goods might have remained on the shelves if those who stole from the Foodstore had realised at the time that they were committing a crime which rendered them liable to a penalty whose

maximum is a fine of £400, which can be either coupled with or used as an alternative to six months imprisonment.

Nor did they expect to be found out. Although the most effective deterrent of all is the apparent certainty of being discovered (Skelhorn 1970), the Store took no overtly deterrent action against potential shoplifters beyond the use of convex mirrors. Four hundred offenders were caught during the year, but another 6,000 may have got away (inf. p. 4). They may have been cleverer or luckier, but until a self-reporting study can be carried out it is not possible to say whether they differed in any other way. For many of those who were caught the public shame ended in the manager's office, and Cameron and Gibbens thought that this was often a sufficient deterrent. This may not be true for the younger housewife. She travelled some distance to the Store more frequently than other housewives, and her reaction may be a resolve not to be caught a second time in the same Store, rather than a decision to abandon shoplifting.

Fewer than half of those caught appeared in court. How representative they were of all those who were known to the Foodstore will be discussed in the next chapter.

Diagram 10. Flow Chart: Possible consequences for the Shoplifter.



Chapter 6

FOODSTORE SURVEY - THE CONVICTED COMPONENT

After the offender had been apprehended the first decision about his disposal was made at the Store level, and it could be conclusive. The Store could warn the offender and release him, taking no further action against him, or it could hand him over to the police for such action as they thought appropriate.* In the following discussion those against whom no further action was taken will be referred to as "warned", and those who were handed over to the police as "charged". Once charged the offender was subject to a second decision taken either by the police or, less usually, by the prosecuting solicitor's office. As a result of this he could be given an official caution, or he could be prosecuted and, if convicted, sentenced.** Offenders who fell into these latter categories will be referred to as those "cautioned" and "convicted" respectively. The complete range of alternatives which can follow a shoplifting incident is set out in Diagram 10.

1. "Warned", "Cautioned" or "Convicted"

The Report of the Departmental Committee on Criminal Statistics commented that "amongst property offences often not

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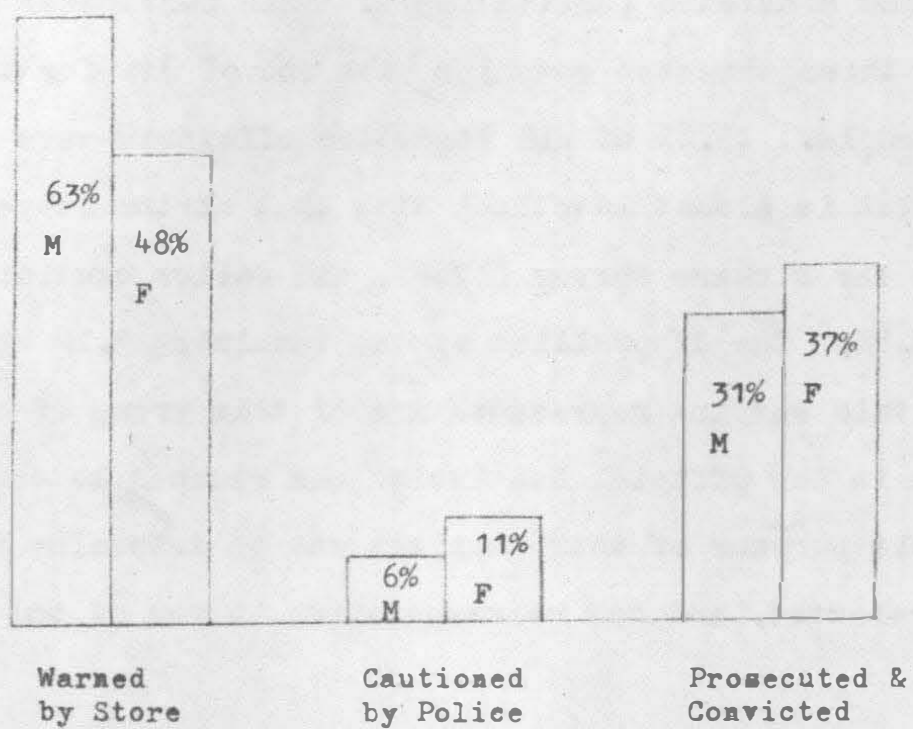
* The question of privately instigated prosecution (Dickens 1968) does not arise with the Foodstore.

** About 1% of the apprehended shoplifters were found "Not Guilty" of the offence. They have not been included at any stage in the analysis.

reported one of the commonest has been shoplifting" (para. 26 Cmd. 3348. 1967). This had been previously emphasised by writers such as Pollack (1960), Sellin (1937) and Bishop (1931). Between the years 1928 and 1933 an average of 5,151 thefts per year had been known to three Philadelphia stores, but the store detectives had made only 1,190 arrests, and of these 235 were prosecuted and convicted (Sellin 1937). This conviction rate of only 20% of those arrested compares with one of 34% for the Foodstore sample. 45.6% of all Foodstore offenders were charged, a figure which is almost identical with that of the stores reported in the Dickens survey (1969), and police cautions were issued to 8.5%, The disposition of the remaining 3.1% was not known. In this way the representation of this group of shoplifters in the Official Statistics was reduced to one third. The principle purpose of this analysis was to determine how this third was selected, and how representative it was of the other two thirds.

It was immediately established that the sexes had not received parity of treatment. The Store warned 63% of the males but only 48% of the females - a difference in leniency which was statistically significant ($\chi^2 = 6.0, 0.05 < P < 0.01$). This was partially offset by the police, who cautioned 5% more females than males. Eventually 31% of the males and 37% of the females were convicted, and in this way the original predominance of the female over the male in the apprehended sample was accentuated among those who were recorded in the official statistics. The sex ratio for the sample as a whole was 1 male to every 1.9 females, for those warned it narrowed to 1 to 1.4, but for those

Diagram 11. Proportions of males and females warned, cautioned and convicted.



100% males = 130

100% females = 238

The final disposition of a further
14 cases charged by the Store was
not recorded.

convicted it was 1 to 2.3. This ratio for the convicted component is identical with that found in Gibbens' 1959 samples of adult convicted shoplifters. (Diagram 11.)

The reasons given by the Store for not proceeding against certain offenders were recorded, and although they were somewhat stereotyped they will be discussed in the following section. It was also surmised that the gravity of the offence, as measured in terms of the value of the goods stolen, would differ between the three categories of persons warned, cautioned and convicted, and this proved to be so. (Table 14)

Table 14 Average stealing and buying performance of those warned, cautioned, convicted.

	WARNED		CAUTIONED		CONVICTED	
	Male	Fmle	Male	Fmle	Male	Fmle
No. in each sub-group	82	119	7	27	41	92
Buying nothing	40 (48%)	25 (21%)	3 (42%)	1 (3%)	17 (41%)	15 (16%)
Av. No. items purchased	3.5	6.5	4.1	10.6	4.4	8.7
Av. No. items stolen	1.7	2.4	3.3	3.3	4.0	6.6
Av. Value itms purchased. shlgs	9.0	12.5	5.4	17.7	6.5	13.4
Av. Value itms stolen. shlgs	12.4	7.4	28.7	16.6	59.1	38.1

There is an increase in the value of goods stolen for both males and females through the categories, but it does not account for why males received the more favourable treatment throughout. Had males and females been convicted on this basis a reversed ratio

of about three males to two females would have been expected among those convicted. In any one category the average value of goods stolen by the males was much greater than that stolen by the females, and more nearly approached that stolen by the females in the next higher category. It is difficult to account for the more severe treatment of females at this stage. Possibly the larger number of items stolen may have influenced the Store against them. Dickens (1968) reported that only 2% of the shops in his sample were prepared to be lenient towards persons taking more than two items, and the Foodstore showed greater tolerance than that. It is also possible that those women who stole a large number of articles had more difficulty in convincing the Store that their pilfering was accidental, and some may have adopted a truculent attitude when taken to the manager's office. Previous writers, notably Cameron, have remarked that the attitude of the offender on arrest materially affects the likelihood of his being charged.

Reasons recorded by the Store for not proceeding against all offenders

A general directive issued by Headquarters outlined the circumstances under which an offender need not be charged. This was implemented by the Branch managers, who took direct responsibility for individual decisions, and the reasons for these decisions were recorded. They were usually based on the age of the offender, and on the value of the goods stolen. Physical illness or handicap, and mental illness, although vaguely defined, were equally valid reasons, as was pregnancy or the condition of unmarried motherhood. A small group of people were not charged

for a miscellany of other reasons, and in one case a woman was specifically let off because she was foreign. (Table 15).

Table 15 Males and females warned by the Store for given reasons

	Males		Females	
	No.	%	No.	%
Youth	16	12%	19	8%
Age	12	9%	18	7%
Youth + Value	11	8%	7	3%
Age + Value	11	8%	20	8%
Low Value only	18	14%	35	14%
Illness	6	5%	8	3%
Pregnant etc.	0	0%	4	2%
Miscellaneous	6	5%	3	1%
Not known	2	1.7%	2	6%
% of total M/F		63%	48%	

The main reason for not charging offenders was the low value of the goods they had stolen. 14% of each sex was let off for this reason alone. It could also be coupled with the age of the offender and it was then considered sufficient grounds for warning 30% of the males and 25% of the females - a difference of 5%, in the total difference of 15% between the proportion of males and females charged. (Diagram 11). "Youth", "Age" and "Value" were not actually defined, and it has been shown that a decision to make a charge was taken at a lower average value for females than for males. (Table 14). A further 21% of the males and 15% of the females were released with a warning simply because of their youth or age - this accounts for a further 6% of the difference between the proportions of males and females warned.

During a discussion the Store detectives were found to be

fully aware of the problem of the shoplifter who is suffering from physical or mental illness or other forms of stress. They thought it unlikely that an offender clearly suffering from any of these conditions would be charged. Nevertheless the number of persons in the Foodstore sample who were warned for any of these reasons was very small, and actually contained a higher proportion of males than females. It can therefore be inferred that only a small proportion of the persons apprehended exhibited any of these symptoms. Alternatively, should they have been prosecuted in any number, despite directives to the contrary, this could have been reflected in the number of "compassionate" or "welfare" sentences passed by the courts (Orders of Discharge, Probation Orders, or Orders under the Mental Health Act 1959). There were not, however, sufficient sentences of this type to justify this hypothesis (Table 21), and from the data available it is concluded that very few of the shoplifters apprehended by the Foodstore were suffering from difficulties which were serious enough to attract the sympathy of the Store or the courts.

Police Cautions

Shoplifters are cautioned with a frequency second only to those committing motoring offences. Bennett (1968) stated that in 1966 12.2% of all shoplifters were cautioned, and this compares with a figure of 20.0% of those in the "charged" category in the Foodstore sample whose disposition was recorded. The specific grounds on which the police cautioned these offenders are not known. Direct information from police sources

indicates that they would normally take into consideration the absence of a previous criminal record and the amount stolen; the sex and age of the offender, his physical and mental state and his attitude towards the offence. These factors could, however, be overridden by official changes of policy, and a firmer stand against shoplifters is often taken in the period before Christmas. The police, like the Store officials, can also be mindful of the "welfare" potential of the court, and therefore on occasion they may bring an offender to trial, mainly with the intention of attracting the attention of the court to his (or more usually her) difficulties, hoping thereby to obtain a supportive sentence or the appropriate medical treatment.

Differences between Age Groups

There was a great deal of variation in the proportions of the age groups who were warned, cautioned or convicted. (Table 16). The Store warned over 90% of the juveniles, but the degree of leniency dropped to less than 15% for women in their thirties. The proportion of men charged by the Store was greater than the proportion of women in two age groups only - from 26 to 30, and from 51 to 60, and had it not been for the operation of police cautions, the proportion of women convicted would have been greater than the proportion of men at almost every age. Since police cautions can only be administered to those whom the Store has charged, they are more limited in their application. Nor were they applied evenly throughout the sample. A high proportion of girls in their late teens were cautioned, and there were marked differences in the treatment meted out to men and

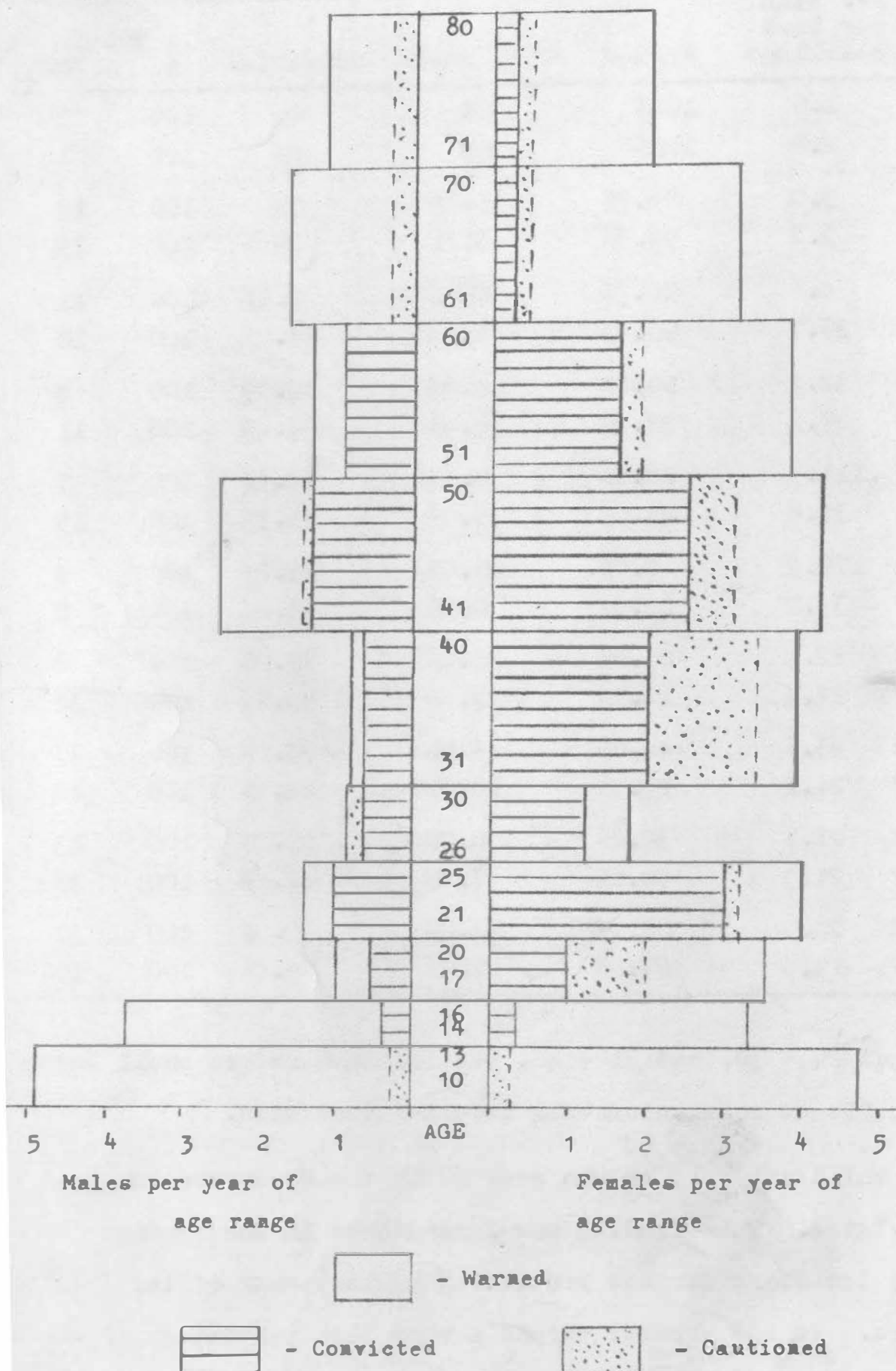
Table 16 % Warned, Cautioned, Convicted, by age groups

Age		Av. stln per head shillings	Warned	Cautioned	Convicted	%	Total No.
0- 9	M	1.6	100%	0%	0%	100	5
	F	2.0	100%	0%	0%	100	1
10-13	M	5.0	94.7%	5.3%	0%	100	19
	F	5.2	94.7%	5.3%	0%	100	19
14-16	M	4.1	90.9%	0.0%	9.1%	100	11
	F	20.7	90.0%	0.0%	10.0%	100	10
17-20	M	32.2	50.0%	0.0%	50.0%	100	4
	F	27.6	27.3%	36.4%	36.4%	100	11
21-25	M	111.9	28.6%	0.0%	71.4%	100	7
	F	32.8	21.0%	5.3%	73.7%	100	19
26-30	M	179.2	0.0%	25.0%	75.0%	100	4
	F	33.2	25.0%	0.0%	75.0%	100	8
31-40	M	22.1	25.0%	0.0%	75.0%	100	8
	F	27.4	14.7%	26.6%	55.8%	100	34
41-50	M	23.6	44.0%	4.0%	52.0%	100	25
	F	26.2	27.5%	10.0%	62.5%	100	40
51-60	M	21.5	30.8%	0.0%	69.2%	100	13
	F	21.3	50.0%	7.8%	42.1%	100	38
61+	M	25.5	86.7%	13.3%	0.0%	100	30
	F	11.6	83.6%	7.3%	9.1%	100	55

women aged 26 - 30, and 31 - 40, but the numbers are small and few significant conclusions can be drawn from them.

No child under 14 or man over 60 in the Foodstore sample was convicted. This finding was foreshadowed in the reasons given by the Store for not proceeding against many of the offenders. It had already warned a very high percentage of the

Diagram 12. Proportions warned, cautioned and convicted in each group. (Ages)



persons in these age groups, and those not warned by the Store were cautioned by the police. Among those over 60 a slight bias against women was again noted. Five persons were convicted out of a total of 85 and all were women.

Women between 41 and 50 constituted the largest group and had one of the highest conviction rates. Other groups with even higher rates contained very few people, and they were thought to be those with less opportunity to shoplift. The vulnerability of women of menopausal age is therefore demonstrated. Not only are they apprehended in the greatest numbers, possibly because they have most opportunity to shop, but also their chances of being warned by the Store were less than those of any other group except that of the women immediately their junior, and their chances of being convicted were higher. This indicates that shoplifting women of menopausal age may be over-represented in the Criminal Statistics, compared with shoplifters of other ages. Although a similar proportion of the men were of this age, they were warned much more frequently than the women, and their conviction rate was therefore lower by 10%.

Diagram 12 displays the information set out in Table 16. As the age ranges are unequal the area of each block is proportional to the total number of shoplifters apprehended in the age group, and its length shows the number apprehended per year of the age group. Differential shading within each block indicates how many of those apprehended were either cautioned or convicted.

Differences between Categories

The categories as defined by occupation were also age-related, therefore the differences between them will bear some relation to the results obtained in the previous section. The proportions warned, cautioned and convicted are set out in Table 17, together with the average amount stolen per head.

Table 17 % Warned, Cautioned, Convicted, by Category

Occupation	Av. stln per Head Shillings	Warned	Police caution	Conviction	Total %	No.
I Schl boy	5.3	94.4%	2.8%	2.8%	100	36
II Schlgrl	6.6	93.1%	6.9%	0.0%	100	29
VII Hswf 60+	11.0	84.6%	7.7%	7.7%	100	52
VIII Mle Ret	25.9	83.3%	13.2%	3.3%	100	30
VI Hswf 41-60	22.4	37.5%	8.9%	51.8%	100	56
III Empd M	23.5	35.0%	5.0%	60.0%	100	40
IV Empd Fml	25.9	26.5%	5.9%	67.6%	100	34
V Hswf 21-40	32.5	14.8%	16.7%	68.5%	100	54

The categories are listed in order of the proportion in which they were warned, and they clearly fall into two groups. Over 80% of the schoolchildren and of the men and women over 60 were warned by the Store and their highest conviction rate was only 7.7%, which compares with conviction rates varying from 51% to 69% for the other four categories. It was noticed however that police cautions did not operate more in their favour than they did for other groups. The position of the retired male (VIII) attracts comment. He stole articles to a total average value in line with that of the categories incurring the higher rates of conviction, but the Store was particularly lenient towards him,

obviously weighing "age" against "amount stolen". He then received an additional benefit from the police cautions, and so finished with a conviction rate very similar to that of the schoolboy.

The predatory habits of the young housewives (V) may have been obvious to the Store since it warned very few women in this category. However the number of police cautions tended to redress the balance, and the resulting conviction rate was only a little higher than that for the employed woman (IV) despite her less adverse record.

When the housewives aged between 41 and 50 are combined with those between 51 and 60 to form category VI the high conviction rate remarked upon in the previous section for women of this age range is masked. However this would not affect their representation in the Official Statistics, which are grouped entirely by age and in ten-year periods. In the two categories which were not age-related, and which contained persons who were thought to have fewer and more equal opportunities to shoplift - the employed men (III) and the employed women (IV) - there were actually more men shoplifters than women. But again, as with the over-sixties, a higher proportion of the women were convicted, so disguising this trend in any official figures.

The categories have been ranked previously according to (S) (S') (P) and (P') and according to the total loss which each would have caused the Store (T). (inf. p. 104).

Two final rankings can now be established. They are based

Table 18 Ranking of the categories according to stealing and buying performance - and according to % charged and % convicted

S	=	I	II	VII	VI	III	IV	VIII	V	R1
S'	=	II	I	VII	V	VI	IV	VIII	III	R3
S+S'	=	I	II	VII	VI	IV	V	III	VIII	R5
S:P	=	VII	VI	II	IV	I	VIII	III	V	R2
S':P'	=	II	VII	I	VI	VIII	V	IV	III	R4
R2+R4	=	VII	II	VI	I	IV	VIII	V	III	R6
T	=	I	II	VII	VIII	IV	III	VI	V	R7
%C	=	I	II	VII	VIII	VI	III	IV	V	R8
%C'	=	II	I	VIII	VII	VI	III	IV	V	R9

S = average value of goods stolen per head per category.

S' = average value per item stolen per head per category.

P = average value of goods purchased per head per category.

P' = average value per item purchased per head per category.

%C = %charged.

%C' = %convicted.

T = Total amount which would have been stolen from the Store by each category.

(All rankings read from left to right - lesser to greater.)

I	Schoolboy	V	Housewife 21-40
II	Schoolgirl	VI	Housewife 41-60
III	Employed Male	VII	Housewife 60+
IV	Employed Female	VIII	Retired Male

on the proportions in which the categories were charged (%C) and convicted (%C'), and read as before in ascending order:

%C -	I	II	VII	VIII	VI	III	IV	V	R8
%C' -	I	II	VIII	VII	VI	III	IV	V	R9

These two rankings were compared with each of the others in turn. (Table 18). Spearman's Rank Correlation Coefficient was calculated and the values are set out in Table 19.

Table 19 Comparisons of Rankings

1) Correlations with R8 (% Charged)

	Spearman's Rank Correlation Coefficient	Significance
R7	0.91	1%
R1	0.90	1%
R4	0.81	5%

2) Correlations with R9 (% Convicted)

R7	0.86	1%
R1	0.79	5%
R4	0.75	5%

No other rankings were significantly correlated with R8 or R9.

Only three of the rankings based on amounts stolen and purchased show any significant correlation with R8 and R9. They are R7, based on the total loss to the Store, R1, based on the amount stolen per head, and R4, based on the relative value of individual items stolen and purchased. Despite the high correlation with R7 it is extremely unlikely that the Store or the police had any conscious knowledge of which type of

shoplifter caused the greatest loss to the Store, and it seems likely that both were more strongly influenced by the amount stolen to give the high correlation with R1. The correlation with R4, although lower, does just attain significance, and appears to reflect a quite separate type of response on the part of the Store. It suggests, in human terms, that persons stealing more expensive items while buying cheaper ones are more likely to be charged and prosecuted. However the purchase of goods to a comparatively high total value, as in the case of the middle-aged housewife (VI), does not appear to have any compensatory effect, as there is no correlation whatever with R2 which is based on the ratio of S to P.

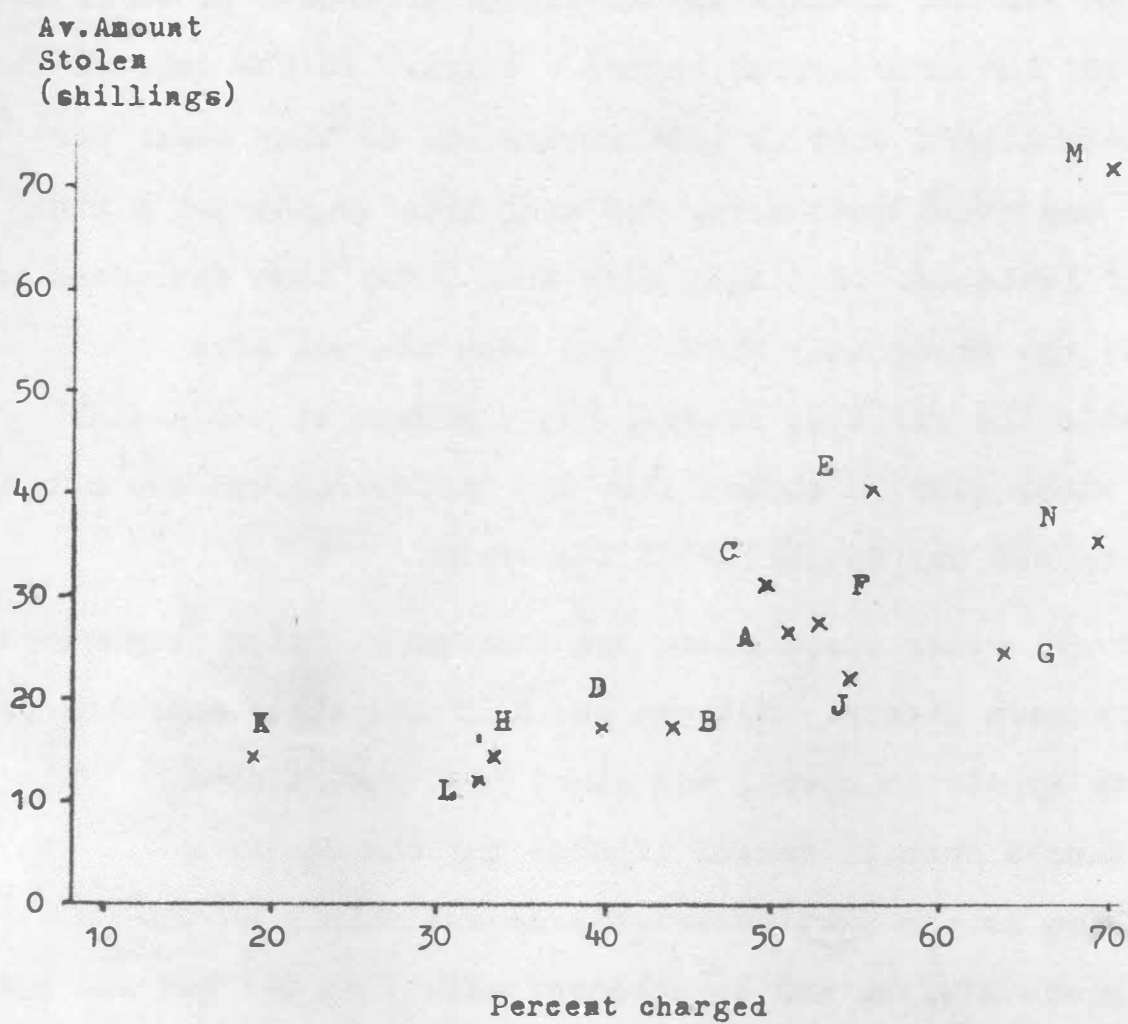
Women clearly outnumber men overall, but this preponderance may be further exaggerated by the conviction rates. Housewives from 20 to 60 are in a highly vulnerable position. Shoplifting is almost an occupational hazard, and these women are particularly liable to prosecution. It is not surprising that they are well represented in the Official Statistics. Their reputation for being particularly prone to shoplifting may have been created in this way, and may have influenced the store detective's preception of the typical shoplifter. She may now watch this particularly vulnerable section even more closely and so arrest a disproportionate number of its offenders, thus confirming the popular supposition that shoplifting is principally committed by (middle-aged) housewives. Mannheim (1940) observed this in its negative form. He suggested that because men are less suspect they are less closely watched than women, and therefore have a greater opportunity to escape detection.

A large number of shoplifters are children or men and women over 60, but through the screening processes of Store and police very few ever appear before a court. In the case of the women and children this is less remarkable as they steal very little. Men steal much more, but seem able to attract a high degree of leniency. Had they been much older than the women in this same age group they might have been treated more sympathetically for that reason, but a glance at the actual ages of those over 60 showed that the difference was too slight to have caused any disparity of treatment.

For all other shoplifters the chances of being prosecuted were very much higher. Between one half and three quarters are likely to appear in court, but apart from exceptional circumstances such as mental illness the chances of a prosecution in any particular case depend mainly on the value of the goods stolen, and to a lesser extent on the sex and age of the offender.

Such evidence as there is in the Foodstore survey would suggest that only a tiny proportion of all shoplifters are suffering from ill health or mental disturbance, and that those referred to the psychiatrist by the courts form a small, highly selected and atypical subgroup. Other conclusions previously cited, such as those of Loitz: "unlawful greed" is the motive behind much shoplifting, Neustatter: the precipitating factor for many is not to be found in psychiatric disorder but in the "ease of taking things", and of Walker: "women outnumber men among shoplifters, chiefly no doubt because their daily life

Diagram 13. Proportion charged by each Branch, compared with average value stolen.



takes them into shops for a much larger part of their day", appear to be more clearly supported in this survey.

2. Variation between Branches and Police Areas

Although the shoplifters had all been arrested by the same group of store detectives and have been treated as a single sample so far in this account, they were in fact apprehended in 13 Foodstore branches situated in 11 Midland towns. They were warned or charged under the same general directives, but the Branch manager in each case had been responsible for the decision as to whether or not to charge the individual offender. This could have given rise to discrepancies between branches, and accordingly a comparison of the data for each was undertaken.

Some comparisons between branches would not have been informative. The number of offenders apprehended is a case in point: the shops varied in size, and their capacity and turnover were not known. Moreover those which had bad records for pilfering were policed more thoroughly than the rest, thus increasing the differences between them.

When the differences between occupational categories were discussed (inf. p. 126) it was shown that the average value of goods stolen was closely correlated with the proportion of offenders charged (rankings R1 and R7). The same comparison was made between branches (Table 20a) and the figures are plotted in Diagram 13. Although the proportion charged by the branches ranged from 19% to 64% it again proved to be closely correlated with the average value stolen. As it was known that age had

Table 20a Numbers apprehended and charged by the different branches

Branch	Av. Amount Stolen Shillings	Total No. Apprehended	No. Charged	% Charged
L	10.6	61	18	29.5
K	12.7	21	4	19.1
H	12.8	29	10	34.5
B	15.1	44	19	43.2
D	15.3	64	25	39.1
J	19.3	18	9	50.0
G	21.9	37	23	62.2
A	25.2	29	13	44.8
F	27.9	28	15	53.6
C	32.2	20	10	50.0
N	33.8	19	0	0
E	41.3	14	5	35.7
M	71.6	28	18	64.3

Table 20b Numbers cautioned and convicted in the different police areas

Branch	Total No. Charged	No. Cautioned	No. Convicted	No. Cautnd x100 No. Charged
H	10	10	0	100%
A+B+C	42	15	27	36%
K	4	1	3	25%
D	25	5	20	20%
E	5	1	4	20%
L	18	3	15	17%
F	15	2	13	13%
M	18	2	16	11%
J	9	1	8	11%
G	23	1	22	4%

also been taken into consideration when deciding whether or not to charge an offender, the figures for the branches were examined to see whether there were any differences of average age which would affect the interpretation of the figures, and it was concluded that there were none of any importance. It seemed clear that the branches had all applied much the same criteria when deciding whether or not to charge an offender, and that these were mainly based on the value stolen.

The criteria on which police cautions were based may have been less uniform, although the numbers involved are small (7 men and 27 women) and any conclusions must be very tentative. Cautions would have been administered by the local police and there are marked differences between the proportions cautioned in the different areas (Table 20b) which cannot be fully explained by differences in the average value of goods stolen. In Branch H only a third of the offenders had been charged and they all received police cautions, with the result that no-one apprehended in that branch during the year appeared before a court. This could hardly be explained in terms of minimal shoplifting problems: in number of offenders apprehended and in average value of goods stolen Branch H was very similar to several others (Table 20a). In contrast with H, the police in Area G cautioned only 4% of the offenders charged, and as this was coupled with a low frequency of warnings from the Store the result was a conviction rate of 60% for this branch. Even with the small numbers involved the proportion of cautions in Area H was significantly higher than that in the area with the next highest rate - that covering Branches A, B and C (Chi-square = 13.3, $0.01 < P < 0.001$ and the caution rate in this area, was

again significantly higher than that in Area G (Chi-square = 7.9, $0.05 < P < 0.01$). It can therefore be concluded that police cautions are administered more readily for offences of shoplifting in some areas than in others.

3. The Offender in Court. Pleas, Costs and Sentences

Of the original 392 offenders, forty two men and ninety two women were prosecuted. Virtually all were sentenced by the local Magistrates' Court, and apart from Branches A, B and C, which were in the same Petty Sessional Division, the branches were in separate court areas. The courts will therefore be identified by the same reference letters as those allocated to the corresponding Foodstore branches.

Pleas

Shoplifters who insist that they are innocent are normally proceeded against - otherwise the Store risks facing a suit for civil damages. Therefore "Not Guilty" pleas are likely to be at a maximum. The proportions of such pleas were very similar for men and women. 15% of the men and 14% of the women who were convicted pleaded "Not Guilty", and "Guilty" pleas were recorded for 56% and 50% respectively. Pleas were not recorded for 29% of the men and 36% of the women convicted, but if these are redistributed according to the Guilty/Not Guilty ratio already known, the result would be a hypothetical "Not Guilty" plea for 23% of the men and 25% of the women convicted. On this reckoning approximately 27 offenders had claimed that they had not stolen from the Store, but had not been upheld by the court. A further 6, who were not included in this survey, are known to

Table 21 Pattern of sentencing compared with that for "larceny from shops and stalls" in Official Statistics

		Expected Percentage	Expected Number	Foodstore Number	Chi Square
<u>Sentence</u>					
Cond. Disch.	M	19.8%	7.9	3	3.04
	F	17.7%	16.3	11	1.72
Probation	M	13.8%	5.5	5	
	F	12.1%	11.1	16	2.16
Fines	M	55.7%	22.3	27	0.99
	F	52.3%	48.1	59	2.47
Prison	M	4.9%	1.9	2	
	F	0.5%	0.4	2	
Suspended	M	5.7%	2.3	1	
	F	2.5%	2.3	1	
Mental Health Acts	M	0.02%	0.0	1	
	F	0.09%	0.1	3	

Note: The "Expected Numbers" in the Foodstore sample have been taken to one decimal place to allow values of chi-square to be calculated. None of these reaches significance - i.e. the sample does not deviate significantly from the proportions expected from the official figures.

have been found to be "Not Guilty" so that in only 1.5% of all the cases apprehended was the Foodstore shown to have made an arrest in error. It can be assumed that the offenders who were warned had admitted their guilt, - if they are added to the estimated total of those pleading "Guilty" it appears that 90% of all the offenders apprehended were prepared to admit they had taken the goods.

Costs

Previous writers, including Dickens, Bennett, Reiss and Bishop, have concluded that many shops are deterred from prosecuting shoplifters because of the costs involved, and the amount of time taken up by the appearance of their staff in court as witnesses. Moreover the shops had found that costs were not reliably awarded by the courts, and if awarded at all they were frequently insufficient. The Foodstore data may not have been complete on this point, but an award of costs by the court was only recorded on seven occasions, which can be taken to support the complaint.

Sentences

The distribution of the different types of sentence received by those convicted in the Foodstore survey was found to be very similar to that for Class III, No. 46 offenders (Larceny from Shops and Stalls) in the official statistics for 1968. This was established by first calculating the proportion of people receiving each type of sentence from the national data. The separate figures for males and females appear as "Expected Percentage" in Table 21. From these the number of Foodstore

Table 22a Sentences, according to sex and value stolen

<u>Amount stolen</u> <u>Shillings</u>	Males					Females					Totals		M/F Ratio
	1+	6+	11+	21+	51+	1+	6+	11+	21+	51+	M	F	
<u>Sentence</u>													
Cond. Disch.			2	1		2	3	2	4		3	11	1-3.7
Probation	2		1	2		1	1	6	8		5	16	1-3.2
Suspended				1					1		1	1	1-1
Fines													
£ 0- 5	2	1	1	1		1	2	4	1	1	5	9	1-1.8
£ 6-10			3	2		2	6	7	11	4	5	30	1-6
£11-20		1	4	7	4			3	7	6	16	16	1-1
£21-30				1					2	2	1	4	1-4
Prison													
3 months			1		1						2		2-0
6 months									1	1		2	0-2
6 months+					2*						2*		2-0
Detention				1							1		1-0
**M. H. A				1		1		1	1		1	3	1-3
Overall ratio													1-2.3

* Shoplifting offence taken into consideration with more serious offences

** Mental Health Act 1959 S60

offenders expected to receive each type of sentence was calculated, and this was compared with the actual numbers found. Where the number found appeared to differ from that expected - as in the case of males conditionally discharged - a value of chi-square was calculated, but in no case did this attain significance. The Foodstore sample thus appears to be similar to the national population of shoplifters in those characters which would influence sentences, and the sentencing policy of the courts involved would seem to be roughly in line with that of magistrates in general.

The fine is the single penalty most frequently imposed, (Table 22a), and in the Foodstore survey 68% of the males and 64% of the females were fined. The two largest single groups were men stealing goods valued at between £1.00 and £2.50, who were fined between £11 and £20, and women stealing goods in the same range of values who were fined between £6 and £10. This trend in fines - that the men are fined more for similar values stolen - persists for all except the lowest value of goods stolen (Table 22b).

Table 22b Average fines imposed according to value stolen

<u>Value stln shillings</u>	1+	6+	11+	21+	51+
Av. fine M	£3	£8	£12	£13	£16
Av. fine F	£4	£7	£8	£12	£13

High fines were unusual. Two women were fined £30, but the value of the goods stolen in a foodstore is not high compared with the value of clothes or luxury goods stolen from other types of shop. Gibbens (1962) could consider the "new class of

food thieves" to be of little consequence in 1959, but the value of food stolen has increased since then, and the number of offenders has escalated.

Probation orders were made against 5 men and 16 women only, and in the case of women the orders were made where the value of the goods stolen was at its highest. Gibbens had emphasised the high incidence of social, physical and mental distress present amongst female shoplifters, but the Store, although expressing its willingness to be lenient to persons in these states, had warned very few offenders on these grounds (Table 15). It was therefore thought that a number of such offenders might have appeared before the court and then attracted "compassionate" or "welfare" sentences - such as orders of conditional discharge or probation, or orders under the Mental Health Act 1959. There is a slight tendency for more women than men to receive sentences of this sort. The sex ratio in the whole convicted sample is 1 man to every 2.3 women, but in the case of conditional discharge it is 1 to 3.7, in the case of probation 1 to 3.2, and for treatment under the Mental Health Act 1959 it is 1 to 3.0. Only if these three types of sentence are taken together are the women significantly better represented than the men (Chi-square = 4.46, $0.05 < P < 0.01$). Gibbens found that nearly 30% of his female sample was suffering from either psychiatric or physical disorder. This proportion would be matched by the women in the Foodstore sample only if all those receiving non-punitive sentences were assumed to be similarly afflicted.

Table 23 Sentences, according to Categories

Sentence	Males			Females			
	I	III	VIII	IV	V	VI	VII
Cond. Disch		1	1	1	1	4	2
Probation	1			3	7	3	1
Fines:							
£ 0- 5	1	2		4	1	4	
£ 6-10		4		5	13	9	
£11-20		13		8	2	5	
£21-30		1		2	2		
Prison							
3 months		1					
6 months					1		
*M.H.A.					1		
Average fine:		£13		£12	£11	£9	
Use of Probation		0%		13%	24%	7%	

Note: Category II (Schoolgirls) had no prosecutions.

The totals are smaller than in Table 21a because a number of offenders were not included in the eight Categories.

* Mental Health Act 1959 S60

The different categories of shoplifter incurred different penalties (Table 23). The old and the young (VII, VIII and I) were treated leniently. Middle-aged housewives (VI) - the reputedly typical menopausal shoplifters - attracted a lower percentage of Probation Orders than did employed women (IV) or younger housewives (V) but they attracted rather more orders of Conditional Discharge. This suggests that in the view of the court very few of the middle-aged women were in need of supportive sentences. The employed men (III) incurred the heaviest fines, and no probation orders were made in their case. The heavy fines might have been expected from the relatively high value of the goods they stole. The young housewives (V) had equally adverse shoplifting records but were treated less severely. Their average fine was lower and they attracted the highest proportion of probation orders of any category - which couples with the fact that women were more frequently placed on probation when the value of the goods stolen was high (Table 22a). Compared with the young housewives the employed women (IV) incurred a higher average fine and were less likely to be placed on probation, but it can be assumed that their means were generally greater than those of the young housewives so that they were able to pay heavier fines.

A final comparison was made between the sentences given by the different magistrates' courts sitting for the Petty Sessional Divisions in which the branches were situated. Although the pattern of sentences passed on the sample, ^{as a whole} is not significantly different from that of the sentences passed on shoplifters throughout the country (Table 21) there were marked differences

Table 24 Sentences, according to Court Area

<u>Branches involved</u>	<u>A.</u>	<u>B.</u>	<u>C.</u>	D	E	F	G	J	K	L	M	N
Sentence												
Cond. Disch.	4	2				2	1			2	1	2
Probation	2	8		3			2	3	1			2
Suspended						1	1					
Fines:												
£ 0- 5				2			8	1		2	1	
£ 6-10	4	5				1	7	2	2	5	5	3
£11-20	8					10	1	1		5	4	3
£21-30	4										1	
Prison:												
3 months	1						1					
6 months	2											
6 months+											2*	
Detention								1				
**M.H. A				2				1				
Total sentenced	25	19		3	14	21	9	3	14	14	10	

* Shoplifting incident taken into consideration with more serious offences.

** Mental Health Act 1959 S60.

Note: Offenders proceeded against from Branches A.B.C appeared before the same magistrates' court.

between the ten courts (Table 24). In particular the court covering the area in which Branches A, B and C were situated appeared to pass more severe sentences than any other. It gave a higher proportion of conditional discharges, but the fines imposed were heavier, the probation orders fewer and the prison sentences more frequent than for any other court. It also covered the biggest area of population and the largest number of offenders from the sample appeared before it. This court undoubtedly sees many more shoplifters each year than any other court in the sample, and it is known to make infrequent use of remands for social and medical reports when dealing with them. In this it contrasts sharply with court D, which is known to make full use of such reports (Private communication). The sentences passed by court D are significantly different from those passed by court ABC. Conditional discharges, probation orders and orders under the Mental Health Act 1959 accounted for 60% of the sentences passed by court D, and for only 22% of those passed by court ABC (Chi-square = 6.94, $0.01 < P < 0.001$). From this it may be deduced that further information about the offender led to a more sympathetic adjudication.

Although court ABC passed comparatively heavy sentences, the branches and the police in that area had been moderately tolerant towards those apprehended, warning 54% of those apprehended and cautioning 36% of those charged respectively. However in area G, which is comparable in size and composition with area D, there is some indication of a harder attitude to shoplifters at all levels. The Store charged 62% of the offenders, and the police cautioned only 4% of these, thus leaving a high

proportion to appear in court, and once in court the sentences
nearly
passed were comparable with those passed in court ABC.

Before sentence is passed the Sentencers are enjoined to have "regard to the circumstances, including the nature of the offence and the character of the offender" (Criminal Justice Act 1948). Many factors have to be taken into consideration and of these only the type and gravity of the offence, and the sex, age and occupation of the offender could be established from the Foodstore data. It might also be surmised that for 50% at least this was a first court appearance. With such limited information available it has only been possible to comment on the broader patterns of sentencing, as reflected in the differences between categories of offender and between courts, and in the relationship between the sentence and the amount stolen.

Chapter 7

SUMMARY

The shoplifters of this study were known to a single group of shops situated in a fairly wide but nonetheless circumscribed geographical area. It was therefore necessary to ask whether they were a sufficiently representative sample to support useful conclusions. Several pieces of evidence suggest that in fact the sample was satisfactory. The choice of type of store was supported by reference to previous writers who had found that during the last decade stealing food had become one of the most common forms of shoplifting. It was therefore thought to be as typical a single-type shop for small scale pilferers as could be chosen. The study also overlapped several previous studies at a number of points, and at these points the results were found to be satisfactorily similar. For instance - the Foodstore proceeded against its shoplifters in a proportion virtually identical with that reported from shops on a national scale by Dickens - and in the sex ratio of its convicted component it matched that of Gibbens' 1959 samples. Moreover when the range of sentences imposed on offenders from the Foodstore was compared with that recorded in the Report of the Criminal Statistics for the preceeding year for shoplifters in general they were found to be not significantly different. This may be taken to suggest that the Foodstore offenders did not differ markedly from offenders in the country as a whole. It was therefore considered that the sample was sufficiently representative, for the results of the study to be of reasonably

wide interest.

A summary of the principal results of the data analysis follows.

Chapter 5

1. 131 males and 251 females were apprehended in 13 Midland branches of the Foodstore during 1969, giving an overall sex ratio of 1 male to every 1.9 females, compared with the national ratio for indictable offences of approximately 6 males to every female. The ratio varied between the age groups from 1 to 1 for juveniles between 10 and 16, to 1 to 4.9 for men and women between 31 and 40. At 1 to 1.7, it was not, as might have been expected, at its widest during the menopausal years.

2. 52% of the males and 35% of the females were either under 17 or over 60 years of age. The peak in the female figures expected during the menopause was very slight, being within 2% of those for both older and younger age groups (51 - 60 and 31 - 40). The peak in the male figures at this age was much more pronounced, and was proportionately greater than that for the females.

3. Children, housewives and persons over 60 dominated the sample. Only 30% of the males and 14% of the females were employed. The employed men belonged to the professional/managerial category as frequently as to any one of the three manual categories, but a number of men were out of work or had no fixed abode. The women were mainly clerical, semi-skilled manual or domestic workers.

The number in each type of employment was too small to allow any useful further analysis, and the descriptions of the non-employed were too amorphous for satisfactory identification. Therefore most of the sample was reorganised into eight categories defined by a combination of sex, age and occupation. It was found that 64% of the total sample was without employment and was therefore considered to have had greater opportunities to enter shops. In those categories where opportunities were more limited - the schoolchildren and people at work - the number of males apprehended was greater than the number of females.

4. Five aspects of the shoplifters' behaviour were examined in order to establish, as far as possible, the extent of their deliberate intention to steal.

(i) Only 0.5% were known to have stolen goods from other shops, either before or after the Foodstore incident.

(ii) One fifth of the sample were shoplifting with accomplices. Many but not all were juveniles. Compared with those who stole alone, those accompanied tended to be involved with other shops more frequently and to steal goods of a higher average value.

(iii) It was estimated that less than one third of the sample stole from shops at a distance from their homes, and in the main this third was made up of employed men and younger housewives (21 - 40). Schoolboys and retired men could be found with equal frequency near home or further afield.

(iv) Schoolchildren preferred to take goods from the shelves and conceal them immediately. The majority of all other

categories first used the wire basket or trolley provided. Women tended to hide goods in their shopping bags, men and children in their pockets or clothes - methods closely tied with habit and convenience. Only in a few cases were goods taken from the shelves and placed directly in the shopping bag - the manouvre which is most easily attributable to oversight.

(v) The average value per head of goods stolen or purchased varied between the sexes, the age groups, and the eight "occupation" categories. In all instances except that of the housewife over 60 the average value of goods stolen per head was greater than that of those purchased, and in all cases the average value of individual items stolen exceeded that of those purchased. Men tended to steal fewer items than women, but the items were of greater individual value. The categories were ranked according to their purchasing and stealing performances. The employed men and the younger housewives (21 - 40) were found to have the most adverse ratio of goods stolen to goods purchased.

5. The frequency with which arrests were made varied. Peak periods during the day occurred at the end of the morning and in the middle of the afternoon, but the different categories tended to operate at different times. The men were apprehended in gradually increasing numbers during the week, while women were most frequently arrested on Friday (the traditional shopping day) and Wednesday (the day before pay day). The level of arrests varied throughout the year, but in a seemingly random way. They were not seasonal, and could not be explained in other obvious ways - for instance there was no marked increase just before Christmas.

6. The descriptive analysis of the apprehended shoplifters disclosed that this offence is committed by both sexes and at all ages. It is not specifically tied to the menopausal period, but at that age men appear to be at least as liable to shoplift as women. It appears to be deliberate, and the articles are chosen so as to give the greatest gain to the offender. Juveniles and women over 60 steal very little, in contrast with employed men and young housewives, who are the most serious offenders.

Chapter 6

7. The Foodstore charged 45.6% of all the offenders apprehended. The police cautioned 8.5% and 34% were convicted (the disposition of 3.1% was not known).

8. All shoplifters were not equally represented among the group who were convicted: - the proportion of males not proceeded against by the Store was significantly higher than the proportion of females; the police cautioned 5% more females than males; and eventually 31% of the males and 37% of the females were convicted. The average value of goods stolen increased between the categories of warned, cautioned and convicted, but in each case the value was higher for males than for females.

9. The reasons recorded by the Store for not proceeding against ("warning") individual offenders were based most frequently on the value of the goods stolen, and/or on the youth or age of the offender. Other reasons, considered equally valid, were recorded much less frequently. These included the mental and physical state of the offender. Although the Store detectives were well aware of the reputed effect of such

conditions, and were correspondingly sympathetic, very few of the records disclosed that the offender was thought to have been suffering from them.

10. (i) At different ages the proportions warned, cautioned and convicted varied considerably. Of the juveniles 90% were warned, but only 15% of the women in their thirties. The Store charged a higher proportion of women than men at all ages, although police cautions partially offset this.

(ii) Police cautions generally were applied somewhat erratically throughout the age groups - but the total numbers involved were too small for significant conclusions to be drawn.

(iii) Through the exercise of Store and police discretion no child under 14 or man over 60 was convicted. The number of women over 60 who were convicted was very small. At all other ages the conviction rate was much higher and could reach the 75% level. Women of menopausal age had a high conviction rate. A similar proportion of the men were of this age but their conviction rate was 10% lower, which would tend to produce an over-representation of the menopausal women in the Official Statistics.

(iv) The proportions warned, cautioned or convicted in the various categories were similar to those shown in the age distribution. Schoolchildren and women over 60 stole little and were treated leniently. Men over 60, had a much more adverse record of shoplifting, but also were leniently treated. Conviction rates for all other categories were over 50%. The shoplifting performance of the young housewives (21 - 40) was the most predatory and this was apparently recognised by the Store, for

they were very frequently charged. However they then attracted a larger number of police cautions.

(v) The categories were ranked according to the proportions in which they were charged and convicted, and these rankings were compared with those from Chapter 5 based on shoplifting performance. They were found to correlate significantly (Spearman's rank correlation) with the performance rankings based on the average value of goods stolen per head, and on the total loss caused to the Store by each category. They were also correlated with the ranking based on the comparison of the value of the individual items stolen and purchased.

11. (i) The shoplifters were treated as a single sample, but they had been apprehended in 13 branch stores situated in 11 towns. It was concluded that the general directives under which they had been processed had been reasonably evenly applied, since the proportion of offenders charged by each Store correlated with the average value of the goods stolen from it.

(ii) There were, however, marked differences between the proportions cautioned in the different police areas, and this did not relate to the average value of the goods stolen. The police cautioned between 4% and 100% of the shoplifters charged, with a median rate of about 20%.

12. (i) Virtually all the 42 men and 92 women prosecuted appeared before the local magistrates' court.

(ii) After an adjustment had been made for the pleas not recorded it appeared that 23% and 25% of the men and women respectively had pleaded not guilty. Six reputed shoplifters

had their "Not Guilty" pleas upheld by the court and were excluded from the sample. The Store had thus made a mistaken arrest in only 1.5% of the total sample.

(iii) Costs awarded by the court were recorded on seven occasions only.

(iv) The sentences received by the offenders were very similar in pattern to those imposed on all shoplifters throughout the country as reported in the Official Statistics.

(v) The fine was the penalty most frequently imposed, but for any particular value of goods stolen the men were fined more heavily than the women.

(vi) Probation orders were made for 5 men and 16 women only, and in the case of the women where the value of goods stolen was at its highest. Women of menopausal age were placed on probation less frequently than employed women or young housewives. There was little in the sentences to suggest that the courts found a high proportion of the offenders in need of support from a probation officer, or treatment under the Mental Health Act 1959 S60 or the Criminal Justice Act 1948, S4.

(vii) There were marked differences in the sentences passed by the eleven different magistrates' courts. In one court the level of fines imposed was distinctly higher than average. This court, which imposed comparatively severe sentences, made little use of remands for social and medical reports, but a second court known to make full use of such reports was shown to make a significantly higher proportion of probation orders and orders of conditional discharge. In yet another town the attitude of the Store, the police and the court toward the shoplifter appeared

consistently more severe than in any other

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This study has indicated several areas where further research could be carried out:

1. An attempt has here been made to compare shoplifters who were convicted with the total sample of known shoplifters from whom they had been selected by Store and police decision. A self-reporting study could now be usefully carried out, - preferably on a random sample of people shopping in that particular Foodstore, or at least living in the main conurbation included in the study - in an attempt to determine how representative of all shoplifters are those who are apprehended.
2. Other writers particularly in the United States of America, have suggested a causal connection between drug taking and shoplifting. Evidence as to whether this is now occurring in the United Kingdom could be obtained from an examination of the criminal records of those convicted of either offence.
3. Police cautions appeared to be unevenly administered - the criteria applied should be investigated.
4. Shoplifters appear to differ from other minor property offenders, but apart from Gibbens' numerically limited comparison little work has been done on the details. A comparative study of a larger group of shoplifters and other thieves, drawn from a large and heterogeneous single court area, has been initiated and is designed to include an ecological study of both types of offender.

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The simple conclusion to emerge is that shoplifting is endemic in the population and is, as Pollack (1960) and Walker (1965) have suggested, an offence of opportunity. Two practical problems thus arise: to what extent should the initiative in law enforcement be left to the discretion of the store, and what are the implications for the treatment of the offender?

The consequences of regarding shoplifting lightly could be cumulative, especially as self-service stores proliferate, selling techniques become increasingly temptation oriented, and staff are reduced to a minimum for economic reasons. Moreover a pattern of shoplifting once established in a community is likely to persist, and the habit is very easily passed on to others. The first agency to be aware of the offence is the store, yet it may well have precipitated the offence, and be for a number of reasons unwilling to proceed against offenders indiscriminately. It combines the roles of tempter, victim, detective, police, adjudicator in the first instance, and prosecutor - yet it may keep no records and have no clearly considered policy. Moreover it is unlikely to have available the information necessary in each case for an appropriate decision.

Should the shoplifter appear before the court there is the further dilemma. Shoplifting is a frequent offence in large urban areas, but so are many other forms of crime and the court often has a heavy list of cases to be dealt with. Compared with most indictable offences shoplifting is neither weighty nor in itself compelling of special attention. It may therefore be adjudicated as petty theft and handled with despatch. However psychiatrists seek to educate the court to consider the offence

as a signal of distress in the case of a number of offenders. Should then the machinery of social and medical investigation be set in motion in all cases so that the few who may be in need of help do not get lost amongst the many who are greedy or opportunist?

Mindful of these problems the following plan is submitted for the organised handling of shoplifting in busy urban areas.

All juveniles apprehended should be reported to their parents and headteacher. All the stores in the area should keep uniform records of everyone they apprehend. From these records a local central index could be established. The stores could refer to this each time an offender was apprehended, and would be expected to supply the information needed to keep it up to date. By this means it would be comparatively easy to find out whether or not this was the first occasion on which the offender had been caught. At his first store arrest the offender would be offered inclusion in the index as an alternative to prosecution. If he agreed, he would be advised that his name would remain there for the following three years, and he would be required to sign a standard form of consent. If he did not agree, or protested his innocence, it would be open to the store to prosecute him. Discovery is reputed to be, for many, a sufficient deterrent in itself, and should it emerge that the offender has already been recorded in the index, he may be regarded as a persistent thief. Therefore unless the circumstances are exceptional, prosecution should follow automatically. This arrangement is not to preclude a store

decision to prosecute on the first occasion an offender is apprehended if so warranted.

First offenders before the court could be 'put back' for a preliminary interview with the probation officer on duty, who would then indicate any need for a fuller social enquiry. In the case of offenders with previous convictions for shoplifting the courts should seriously consider a remand for social and medical reports, and should these disclose no factors deserving of special consideration, a deterrent sentence might be considered appropriate. Unfortunately it is doubtful whether any sentence for shoplifting can be sufficiently severe to deter the really persistent offender in person, and others like him, without being completely out of line with the gravity of the offence. On a comparatively small scale the profits to be gained from shoplifting are considerable, especially when weighed against the chances of discovery. Given manifold opportunity and the current climate of moral opinion, it seems inevitable that shoplifting will increase, criminologically and penologically a minor, but nonetheless persistent problem.

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