

## UNDERWORLD GAMES

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With the infiltration of the "helping" professions into the courts, probation departments, and correctional facilities, and with increasing sophistication of criminologists and the law enforcement officers, it is important for those concerned to be aware of the more common games which are prevalent in the underworld, both in prison and out of it. These include "Cops and Robbers".

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### COPS AND ROBBERS (C & R)

THESIS: Because many criminals are cop-haters, they seem to get as much satisfaction from outwitting the police as they do from their criminal gains, often more. Their crimes are games which are played at the Adult level for the material rewards, the take but at the Child level it is the thrill of the chase; the getaway and the cool off.

Curiously enough, the childhood prototype of Cops and Robbers is not cops and robbers but hide-and-seek, in which the essential is the chagrin at being found. Younger children readily betray this. If father finds them too easily; the chagrin is there without much fun. But father, if he is a good player, knows what to do; he holds off whereupon the little boy gives him a clue by calling out, dropping something, or banging; thus he forces father to find him, but still shows chagrin, only this time he has had more fun because of the increased suspense. If father gives up, instead of feeling victorious the boy feels only disappointment. Since the fun was there, evidently that is not where the trouble is. What he is disappointed about is not being caught. When his turn comes, father knows he is not supposed to outwit the little boy for very long; just long enough to make it fun; and he is wise enough to look chagrined when he is caught. It soon becomes clear that being found is the necessary outcome.

Hence hide-and-seek is not a mere pastime, but a true game. At the social level it is a battle of wits, and is most satisfying when the Adult of each player does his best; at the psychological level, however, it is set up like compulsive gambling, in which White's Adult has to lose in order for his Child to win. Not being caught is actually the antithesis. Among older children, one who finds an insoluble hiding-place is regarded as not being a good sport, since he has spoiled. Such an effective one has eliminated the Child element and turned the whole thing into Adult procedure. He is no longer playing for fun. He is in the same class as the owner of a casino, or some professional criminals, who are really out for money rather than sport.

Habitual criminals seem to fall into two distinctive classes: those who are in crime primarily for profit, and those who play it primarily as a game, with a large group in between who can handle it either way. The "compulsive winners", the big money makers whose Child really does not want to be caught, rarely are, according to reports; they are the untouchables, for whom the fix is always in. The "compulsive losers" on the other hand, those who are playing Cops and Robbers, seldom do very well financially, and when they do it often seems to be sheer luck rather than skill; and they usually end up as their Child requires, squawking rather than riding high.

The C & R player, with whom we are concerned here, in some ways resembles the Alcoholic. He can shift roles, from Robber to Cop and from Cop to Robber. In some cases, he may play the Parental Cop during the day, and the Child Robber after dark. If he 'reforms' he may play the role of Rescuer, becoming the social worker or a mission worker; but the Rescuer is far less important in this game than it is in Alcoholic. Ordinarily, however, his role as Robber is his destiny, and each has his own modus operandi for getting caught. He may make it tough or easy for the cops.

The situation is similar with gamblers. At the social or sociological level, a "professional" gambler is one whose chief interest in life is gambling. But at the psychological level there are two different kinds of people who are professional gamblers. There are those who spend their time gaming, i.e., playing a game with Fate in whom the strength of the Adult's desire to win is exceeded only by the strength of the Child's need to lose. Then there are those who run gambling houses, and who actually do earn a living, usually a very good one, by providing opportunities for gamblers to play;

they themselves are not playing, and try to avoid playing although occasionally under certain conditions they will indulge themselves and enjoy it, just as a straight criminal may occasionally play a game of C & R.

This throws light on why sociological and "psychological" studies of criminals have been generally ambiguous and unproductive; they are dealing with two different kinds of people who cannot be adequately differentiated in the ordinary theoretical or empirical frameworks; and similarly with gamblers. Transactional and game analysis offer an immediate solution for this. They remove the ambiguity by distinguishing transactionally below the social level, between "players" and "straight professionals".

Let us now turn from this general thesis to consider specific examples. Some burglars do their jobs without any waste motion. The Cops and Robbers burglar leaves his calling card in gratuitous acts of vandalism, such as spoiling valuable clothing, with secretions and excretions. The straight bank robber, according to all accounts, takes every possible precaution to avoid violence; the C & R bank robber is only looking for an excuse to vent his anger. Like any professional, a straight criminal likes his jobs to be as clean as circumstances permit. The true professional is said never to operate until the fix is in; the player is willing to take on the law barehanded. Straight professionals are well aware in their own way of the game of C & R; if a gang member shows too much interest in the game, to the point of jeopardizing the job, and particularly if his need is to be caught begins to show, they will take drastic measures to prevent a recurrence, according to all accounts. It is just because straight professionals are not playing C & R that they are so seldom caught, and hence rarely studied sociologically, psychologically and psychiatrically, and this also applies to gamblers. Hence nearly all of our clinical knowledge about criminals and gamblers refers to players, rather than straight professionals.

Kleptomaniacs (as opposed to professional shoplifters) are trivial examples of how widely C & R is played. It is probable that a very large percentage of Occidentals, at least, have played C & R in fantasy, and that is what sells newspapers in our half of the world. This fantasy frequently occurs in the form of the "perfect murder", which is playing the hardest possible game and whitewashing the opposition.

Variations of C & R are Auditors and Robbers, played by embezzlers with the same rules and the same payoff; Customs and Robbers, played by smugglers, etc. Of special interest is the criminal variation of Court-Room. Despite all his precautions, the professional may occasionally be arrested and brought to trial. For him, Court-Room is a procedure, which he carries out to the best of his ability, but for the lawyers involved it is a game in which the object is to win not to lose.

The antithesis of Cops and Robbers is the concern of qualified criminologists, rather than psychiatrists. The police and judiciary apparatus are not antithetical but are playing their roles in the game under the rules set up by society.

One thing should be emphasized, however; research workers in criminology may joke with the idea that some criminals behave as though they enjoyed the chase and wanted to be caught. Or they may read it and agree in a deferential way. But they show little tendency to consider such an "academic" factor as decisive in their "serious" research. For one thing, there is no way to unmask this element through the standard methods of psychological research. Such vicious circles do not lend themselves readily to Chi squares as George Devereaux might say. The investigator is therefore faced with the choice of either overlooking a crucial point because he cannot work it with his research tools, or else changing his tools. The fact is that those tools have so far not yielded one single solution to any problem in criminology. Researchers might therefore be better off throwing away those tools and tackling the problem with their bare hands. Until C & R is accepted not merely as an interesting possibility, but as the very heart of the matter in a significant percentage of cases, much "serious research" in criminology will continue to deal with trivialities.

## ANALYSIS

**Thesis** Thesis: See if you can catch me

Aim: Reassurance

Roles: Robber-Cop (Judge)

Dynamics: Phallic intrusion, e.g.,

Examples: (1) Hide-and-Seek, Tag  
(2) Crime

Social Paradigm: Parent-Child

Child: "See if you can catch me"  
Parent: "That's my job"

Psychological Paradigm: Parent-Child

Child: "You must catch me"  
Parent: "Aha, there you are"

Moves: (1) W: Defiance-B Indignation  
(2) W: Concealment-B Frustration  
(3) W: Provocation-B Victory

Advantages:

Internal Psychological: Material indemnification for old wrong

External Psychological: Counterphobic

Internal Social: See if you can catch me

External Social: I got away with it

Biological: Notoriety

Existential: The world must give me my due