

How Robberies Succeed or Fail: Analyzing Crime Caught on CCTV

Anne Nassauer¹

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Abstract

Objective: This article analyzes how convenience store robberies work and why some take an unexpected turn and fail. It examines the situational dynamics of crime by studying behavioral and emotional dynamics between clerks and perpetrators during robberies comparatively. The focus is on perpetrators' displays of threats and clerks' seemingly irrational acts of noncompliance and resistance. *Method:* The sample is comprised of 20 successful and failed robberies in the United States between 2010 and 2016. By qualitatively analyzing closed-circuit television (CCTV) recordings, the study assesses what happens during such crimes. Analyzing footage uploaded to online video platforms such as YouTube, the study uses growing databases so far unexplored by sociological and criminological research. Findings suggest that successful store robberies follow specific situational rituals in which actors display adequate behaviors and emotions. Rituals are broken if perpetrators or victims act out of character and display, even unintentionally, unexpected behaviors or emotions. *Conclusion:* This exploratory study suggests that microlevel factors play a crucial role in what manifests as a robbery versus attempted robbery. Further, it highlights

¹ Department of Sociology, John F. Kennedy Institute, Freie Universität Berlin, Berlin, Germany

Corresponding Author:

Anne Nassauer, Department of Sociology, John F. Kennedy Institute, Freie Universität Berlin, Lansstraße 7-9, 14195 Berlin, Germany.

Email: anne.nassauer@fu-berlin.de

challenges and advantages of analyzing CCTV recordings uploaded online when studying crime caught on camera.

Keywords

crime, store robberies, sociology of crime, visual data, qualitative research, research methods

A masked person enters a store and points a gun at the clerk. The situation is clear—this is a robbery. An implicit interaction ritual prescribes that the clerk hands over money in exchange for not being hurt or killed (Luckenbill 1981:31). Even if a clerk has never been in a robbery, she or he knows to be in one when a perpetrator enters with gun in hand. This ritual is understood universally, and clear rules exist in people's minds regarding what needs to be done and how to behave—or so one would assume.

Of the 327,374 robberies that occurred in the United States in 2015, 5.7 percent occurred in convenience stores (Federal Bureau of Investigation 2016). And although most clerks are fearful for their lives during a robbery, research suggests that 30 percent do not comply or even take defensive action (Luckenbill 1981:34; Wellford, MacDonald, and Weiss 1997:27). As this article will discuss, closed-circuit television (CCTV) footage shows clerks laughing at armed robbers or telling them in an annoyed tone that they are on the phone. Why do some clerks behave so unexpectedly? How do robberies fail even though the interaction ritual, and the power balance, is clear? And what does this tell us about what constitutes a successful robbery?

As research increasingly points to the relevance of situational aspects of crime (Athens 1980; Collins 2008; Felson and Steadman 1983; Luckenbill 1981; Wright and Decker 1997a), I argue that these aspects can now be studied by employing recently available CCTV data. Moreover, Internet platforms such as YouTube and LiveLeak offer so far unexplored databases of recordings for criminology and sociology. I use these novel data pools to study U.S. convenience store robberies caught on camera and propose to combine micro-sociological approaches (Blumer 1986; Collins 2005; Goffman 2005; Katz 1988) and criminological research (Luckenbill 1981; Wellford et al. 1997; Wright and Decker 1997a) for a CCTV-based analysis of store robberies.

A Situational Perspective of Store Robberies

Studies of store robberies have generated vital insights, for example, regarding why people chose to commit a store robbery, how perpetrators prepared

and chose a store (Conklin 1972; Gill 2000; Katz 1991; Petrosino and Brensilber 2003; Wellford et al. 1997), and choice of weapon (Felson and Steadman 1983; Kleck and DeLone 1993). However, most studies do not analyze what happens once a crime has started—once offenders enter the situation and engage their victims (Luckenbill 1981). These approaches are therefore criticized for ignoring that humans construct actions *vis-à-vis* a situation (Athens 1980).

More specifically, while research highlights that robbers force a robbery onto clerks through threat of force (Luckenbill 1981), we know little about what threatening behaviors look like during the microsituation. Studies report that 41.8 percent of convenience store robberies involve a firearm (Federal Bureau of Investigation 2016: table 19) and suggest that in stickup robberies guns are commonly used to achieve the “illusion of impending death” (Wright, and Decker 1997a:1). While they are often displayed in convenience store robberies too, robbers rarely fire their guns (Wellford et al. 1997:27). Yet, we know little about what firearm display must look like to prompt the intended effect.

An increasing number of criminological studies point to situational aspects being key to assess crime, with research stressing that once in the situation, a perpetrator’s actions are guided by the victim’s behaviors. Lindgaard, Bernasco, and Jacques (2015:45) interviewed offenders involved in street robberies, finding that expectations regarding how a victim might behave play a crucial part in how offenders enter the situation. Studies also suggest that robbery victims do not comply when they perceive that an offender’s capacity to inflict injury and intent to use violence are low (Luckenbill 1981:34) and that situational interactions matter to risk of injury (Katz 1991; Petrosino, Fellow, and Brensilber 1997). Yet, we know little about what microsituational factors—the second-to-second time line of robbery interactions—look like and if they impact whether a robbery is successful.

I argue that a microsociological perspective can help study these aspects. Microsociologists, concerned with everyday social interactions between individuals or groups, argue that researchers must get closer to a situation to better understand social phenomena. First, scholars argue that people follow certain (conscious and unconscious) interaction rituals when maneuvering through sequences of situations on a daily basis (Goffman 2005). When engaging in these rituals, they play certain roles vital to sustaining the ritual—being a mother, friend, pilot, or wife—depending on with whom the person interacts with throughout the day (Goffman 1959, 2005). During these rituals, people engage in specific behaviors associated with the ritual and their role.

Second, microsociologists stress that people express emotions that are considered culturally adequate in a situation (Hochschild 2012; Turner 2009). They do so verbally and through bodily and facial expressions: Scholars have estimated that humans transfer only about 30 percent of information verbally, while most information is transferred nonverbally (e.g., Birdwhistell 1970:158). By perceiving and evaluating their counterparts' body language and facial expressions in specific situations, humans adapt and react to social life (Argyle 1972; Birdwhistell 1970; Collins 2005; Hatfield et al. 2014; Mazur et al. 1980).

In short, studies of criminology and sociology suggest that when examining robberies, researchers must understand a perpetrator's and victim's actions based on their definitions of the situation (Athens 1980; Blumer 1980:x; Collins 2005; Katz 1988). This study does so by applying a micro-situational perspective to shed light on criminal behavior. It examines how micro-situational aspects influence store robberies, whether situational patterns cause robberies to fail and what constitutes successful robberies. Underlying questions are how do perpetrators display threats and what consequences does their behavior have for the outcome of a robbery? and how and why do clerks resist during a robbery?

The Present Study

Cases: Convenience Store Robberies in the United States

Store robberies provide an interesting setting in which to examine situational dimensions of crime. First, store robberies are widely known interaction rituals, with clear roles that both actors must act out. The offender enforces these roles onto a clerk from the start and throughout the encounter (Luckenbill 1981:31-38). Second, the actors likely did not interact prior to the robbery, as is the case in other forms of crime caught on CCTV (e.g., brawls). Perpetrator and clerk are together in a confined space, in a highly intense social situation, in which they must make the ritual work as a team. Without knowing each other, they have to rely on each other so that neither is arrested, injured, or killed. This means they must read and interpret the other person's actions and emotions within split seconds and react to them adequately. To interpret the situation, they have to rely on what they expect to happen and how they think one should behave during a robbery, although one part of their team, the clerk, has not necessarily ever been in the situation before. This raises the question of how both actors make things work.

Data: Employing CCTV to Study Criminal Behavior

What happens once actors are in a criminal incident remained a black box for decades; the incident's internal workings were not understood since it was impossible to capture such crimes in great detail. Recently, we are able to look into this black box by analyzing CCTV recordings. Although commonly used data types such as participant observations and interviews with perpetrators, bystanders, and victims of crimes provided meaningful insights to criminal behavior (Athens 1980; Lindegaard et al. 2015; Wright and Decker 1997a), witnesses face difficulties when it comes to recalling situational dynamics. First, people experience problems remembering details of everyday situations (Bernard et al. 1984:509), and more so when it comes to highly emotional events (Collins 2008; Grossman and Christensen 2008). Second, interview data and document data cannot provide microsituational details on how events unfolded second by second (Bernard et al. 1984; LeCompte and Goetz 1982; Vrij, Hope, and Fisher 2014).

Like other visual data that capture behaviors as they occur, CCTV footage shows in detail what happened with which actors and at what time, frame by frame. As Nassauer and Legewie (2016) point out, such visuals allow examination of highly chaotic and complex events in slow motion and in numerous replays. They allow researchers to study movements, and facial and bodily expressions, to examine actors' actions, interactions, and emotion expressions, in each millisecond during a crime. Such visuals can therefore help to refine existing approaches to crime and other social phenomena (see Collins 2008; Nassauer 2016).

Simultaneously, visual data have recently and increasingly been uploaded to Internet platforms such as YouTube and LiveLeak. Such data are easily accessible to researchers. In addition—and in contrast to CCTV obtained by police or courts—data uploaded online represent a collective good. Researchers can provide links to recordings that were analyzed and every reader worldwide can access it freely. This strongly favors transparency and the replicability of research findings (Nassauer and Legewie 2016).

Sample: Successful and Failed Robberies

To study how robberies evolve, thrive, or fail, I comparatively analyze successful and failed store robberies in the United States (Appendix 1). *Successful* means that a robber got the money and escaped, and *unsuccessful* means that the robber did not get the money.¹

To identify patterns for successful versus failed robberies, the sampling process included several steps. The goal was to compile a sample of 20 cases to be able to study each case in depth and in great situational detail, while at the same time having enough cases for a systematic comparison of similarities and differences across cases (Ragin 1994). Further, since research has shown that rules only tend to become evident once broken (Garfinkel 2005), focusing on successful routines alone might not reveal their driving forces. Rather, examining how everyday rituals are broken and fail is critical to understanding how they normally work. I therefore over-sampled failed robberies (15 of the 20 cases).

To then identify 15 failed and 5 successful robberies, I made use of recently available online sources that amass enormous amounts of data but are so far untapped by researchers (Nassauer and Legewie 2016; see also Nassauer 2016). For instance, 158,000 results are shown for the search term *CCTV store robbery* on YouTube alone (January 2017), and more recorded incidents can be found using additional key words and/or other platforms (e.g., LiveLeak). Employing these data sources, I applied several criteria: (1) I selected cases only from the United States to keep cultural routines, gun access, and sentencing comparable, (2) I prioritized recordings by reliable sources (e.g., larger news channels and police), and (3) I included only cases that showed the entire robbery interaction (see validity below).

Further, since the goal of the analysis was exploratory, that is, to develop first insights on patterns of robbery success and failure, concepts and hypotheses for theory building needed to be developed from the data. I therefore applied theoretical sampling to select specific cases (Corbin and Strauss 1990). Theoretical sampling means choosing cases with the goal of theory building. It entails including cases deviant from those already in the sample or cases that challenge prior findings (rather than including numerous cases in the sample that show the same pattern) to maximize variation in the explanatory factors (i.e., situational aspects during the robbery). This strategy of continuously challenging preliminary findings strengthens the rigor of the study and aids building more encompassing theories on robberies grounded in the data.

For instance, if a selected case shows someone falling on the counter and this seems to change the robbery's dynamic and results in a failed robbery, I would first look for other cases that show this dynamic, which would indicate a pattern. At this point, I would not continue adding further cases with the same dynamic to the sample as this would add only limited explanatory value. Rather, for exploration and theory development, it makes more sense to maximize variation by selecting cases that either showed

(1) interactions similar to the explanatory factor (e.g., “falling on the counter”) and the same result (a failed robbery), but in which the interaction differed slightly (e.g., stumbling over other objects, like running into a door at the counter); (2) an entirely different kind of interaction that seemed to be connected to success or failure in a robbery (e.g., drawing an uncommon weapon); or (3) cases that showed the same dynamic (e.g., falling on the counter) but a different outcome (a successful robbery). A case from the first group would allow broadening the concept to a more encompassing category “mishaps” that captures interactions of a similar kind and that have the same impact on a robbery’s dynamic (see below). A case from the second group would broaden the view to new aspects in a robbery’s dynamic that also impact its outcome (unexpected weapons). A case from the third group would allow falsifying the working theory of “falling on the counter can lead to failed robberies” and improve upon it.

As a consequence of this approach to case selection, further research would either use the exact same data (provided by the author, see Appendix Table A1) or initiate a theoretical sampling procedure of their own in an effort to enhance, refine, or challenge the presented findings.² Using YouTube for case selection offers a number of advantages in this regard. It contributes to open sciences because every researcher can see the data firsthand to check and replicate the analysis of the 20 cases (see below). Moreover, YouTube footage also provides immediate access to the field, which facilitates selecting additional cases to add to a past study. Using the same platform (e.g., YouTube, LiveLeak) and the same key words allows assembling additional samples that could assess the representativeness of the sample analyzed here. Studies could employ some form of randomized selection for a larger sample of robberies or study a different sample to identify additional patterns that lead to success or failure in robberies.

Analysis: Video Data Analysis (VDA)

I used VDA (Nassauer and Legewie 2016). VDA is an analytic strategy and tool kit for a novel trend when studying situational dynamics caught, for example, on mobile phones, drones, body cameras, or CCTV. Employing VDA means analyzing what the visual captures about social life.

When using VDA, a researcher must ensure validity of data regarding two criteria. First, the researcher must assess whether videos show natural behaviors (Nassauer and Legewie 2016). This is an important component for the present analysis since online video platforms might feature spectacular or unusual cases or staged behaviors. Although these cannot be ruled out,

many of the videos analyzed were uploaded by police departments or police gave them to TV channels that broadcasted them to identify perpetrator(s) or report local news (for a list of uploaders, see Appendix Table A1). Recordings were therefore unlikely to show particularly spectacular robberies or staged events. In addition, the analysis suggests that the cases did not contain outliers of human behaviors since specific patterns in situational dynamics from successful versus unsuccessful cases were found.

Second, to ensure validity, researchers conducting VDA must strive for complete capture of an event of interest so no essential details potentially determining an encounter are missing (Nassauer and Legewie 2016). Generally, CCTV recordings of convenience store robberies provide information on the entire crime in a confined space.³ They presumably even capture the entirety of the time the actors spend together during their lives.

Yet, researchers must be aware that videos might be edited or scenes might be cut out. Although 17 of the 20 videos in the sample were uploaded as recorded, 3 videos were edited (Appendix 1, cases A1, B2, and B5). Still, modification to the content was unlikely since recordings were edited by major news channels to cut in reporters' opinions or short interviews, before continuing the CCTV recording. Further, most videos show the entire interaction sequence from one CCTV angle, though others show several angles. Since CCTV frequently records the date and millisecond of the time of day, a researcher can assess whether a cut to another camera angle skipped a second so she or he can either avoid such recordings or discuss their limitations.⁴

I coded all 20 robberies using Atlas.ti, 7 (1.5.4.), a program for qualitative data analysis. The program includes tools to assign codes freely at any point in time during a video. Codes were developed to be mutually exclusive (see Appendix 2). For each frame during a robbery, one code was assigned to each clerk and perpetrator visible during the recording. I then comparatively analyzed the sequence of codes per case (e.g., frequencies of behaviors and emotion expressions, who initiated actions and who reacted, speed of changes in behaviors and emotions, and rhythms of action and reaction). One type of code referred to behaviors such as movements (e.g., moving forward, backward, or standing still) or action (e.g., hands up and picking something up). Other types referred to universal emotions, that is, cross-culturally understood emotions identifiable in a person's facial expressions, body postures, movements, and voice (Birdwhistell 1970; Ekman 2003; Ekman, Friesen, and Ellsworth 1972; see coding scheme, Appendix Table A2). Since faces could not always be seen during an entire recording due to positioning of actors, body postures and tone of voice provided the most important cues for emotion expression coding. Detailed

observations of each instant of a recording helped trace the unfolding of a crime step-by-step to explain successful and failed robberies through constituent factors (see Gerring and Thomas 2006). The goal of this exploratory study was to generate hypotheses regarding situational dynamics of crimes caught on camera.

Findings: How Store Robberies Succeed or Fail

In a way, all robberies are a type of situational bluff; robbers are usually not motivated to shoot someone, otherwise they would enter a store, shoot the clerk, and take the cash. Yet, what appears to matter to robbers is not to shoot someone but make it a believable threat that they would shoot someone if a victim did not comply (Luckenbill 1981). Findings suggest that robberies follow a ritual in which a threat is both successfully constructed by a perpetrator and believed by a victim. Successful rituals imply that actors have clear roles as perpetrator and victim, which they follow during the robbery. If these rituals were broken, robberies in the sample failed. In successful cases, by contrast, each played their roles by engaging in adequate behaviors and expressing adequate emotions—meaning emotions and behaviors that are expected as part of a robbery routine. I found these patterns across the seven-year period of the sample.

In the following, I provide numerous case descriptions to discuss findings and illustrate the rich detail CCTV data provide on these types of crime. In these descriptions, I focus on coded movements, actions, verbal accounts, and emotion expressions from perpetrator(s) and victim(s). More information (e.g., date and location) can be found in Appendix Table A1 or when watching the footage (e.g., clothing, bystander behaviors; see links in Appendix Table A1). The reader is encouraged to watch the recordings before and/or after reading this article.

Adequate Behaviors

For a crime to be successful, findings suggest that all actors (i.e., perpetrators and clerks) must display distinct behaviors that are expected culturally during a robbery. As the following sections will show, these crimes do not seem to work if perpetrators or clerks break expected routines by carrying out actions belonging to other rituals or if they do not stay in character.

Staying in character. In the sample, staying in character appeared vital for a robbery to work. The perpetrators needed to convincingly play the criminal

(Luckenbill 1980, 1981) by displaying to be highly motivated and capable of hurting the clerk seriously in case of noncompliance. The clerks engaged in submissive behaviors and “played” the person who was robbed and who was fearful for her or his life. The perpetrators had to play the criminals, without knowing the clerk and thus without knowing whether threats were believed.

CCTV footage of robberies provides a detailed look at how threats are made believable and in which instances they are disbelieved. Cross-case comparisons suggest that robbers in successful cases displayed immediate strong dominance, which continued throughout the entire interaction ritual. Perpetrators usually entered with vigor and angry looks on their faces, displaying strong body postures (e.g., upright, making themselves big). Robbers who were in character showed that they decided which behaviors were acceptable and what would be done subsequently.

Perpetrators in successful cases often used a moment of surprise to ensure that a clerk realized that the situation changed drastically and that they were now in charge.⁵ Luckenbill (1981:29) found that in 65 percent of cases, offenders displayed normal appearances and then started the offense. Today, CCTV footage allows researchers to observe what this switch in behavior looks like. Consider a robbery in Los Angeles (LA), California (A2), uploaded by the LA Police Department in 2011:

Three men casually enter a small convenience store. All of them wear everyday clothes. The clerk is sitting behind the counter, leaning back. Two of the perpetrators directly walk to the back of the store. They pretend to be customers, but presumably check if anyone else is in the store. Their partner stands in front of the counter near the exit, waiting for them. The clerk gets up from his chair to attend to the customers and stands around with a relaxed body posture. His shoulders are down; he is not paying much attention to the perpetrator standing in front of the counter. The latter briefly talks to his partners. He then turns and looks at the clerk's face, the first time since he entered the store. The perpetrator's facial expressions indicate anger and aggression (see below) when he pulls a firearm with vigor (minute 0:34–0:36). He points the weapon at the clerk, his arm straight. The clerk flinches and displays bodily expressions of being frightened. He moves backward a little, his shoulders tighten and go up, he raises his hands, and holds them up high. He nods at the perpetrators. He understands what is about to happen and confirms that he complies. His actions suggest that he knows what is expected of him. While the second perpetrator jumps the counter, the clerk already opens the cash register. The clerk's legs appear tense, his body posture is immobile. Once the register is open, the perpetrator pushes the heavier clerk with ease. The clerk shows no resistance, low emotional energy (e.g.,

passivity and shrinking postures; see Appendix Table A2), and stumbles sideways. The second perpetrator takes the money from the register, while the first one stands in front of the counter pointing his gun. After his partner collects the money, he moves to the side, so the former can jump back over the counter. They flee with the money.

Similarly, perpetrators of a successful robbery in Dallas, TX, in 2011 created a moment of surprise to show that the situation had changed (Appendix 1, case A4). This case shows the same situational sequence as the LA robbery (A2), excepting that the perpetrators' positions were switched; the perpetrator holding the gun was behind the counter, and the one collecting the money was standing in front leaning over. Both cases were successful. The robbers in LA obtained the money 44 seconds after entering, and the Dallas robbery lasted one minute. These instances reflect the majority of successful robberies; they are brief and dense (Faulkner, Landsittel, and Hendricks 2001:708; Petrosino et al. 1997:415).

As the LA example illustrates, clerks display characteristics of being the victim. Across cases, CCTV footage shows clerks with shoulders drawn up, flinching, moving backward, complying with what is demanded, and showing low emotional energy. If a clerk's face is visible during successful cases, it usually has a frightened look.⁶ Clerks usually display submissive behaviors because they are scared that a perpetrator might harm or kill them, sometimes to the extent of long-term psychological consequences (Bobic, Pavicevic, and Gomzi 2007). It seems unreasonable that clerks would not display fear or submissive behaviors during such situations, but cases do show perpetrators and clerks acting out of character. Cross-case comparisons suggest that this can lead to a breakdown of the ritual and failure of a robbery, even though the robber possesses a gun and could kill the clerk.

Acting out of character. A store robbery in Manassas, Virginia, (B4) illustrates what it means to drop out of character. The CCTV tape shows December 28, 2010, as the date.⁷

The perpetrator enters the store carrying a large wooden stick. The stick is about 6 feet long and 4 inches thick. He points it at the clerk and threatens to hit him with it. He then raises it above his head with both hands. The clerk is a shorter, elderly man. He moves backward when seeing the perpetrator and initially shows compliance and fear. The perpetrator swings the stick in the clerk's direction but misses, scattering items lying on the counter to the floor. The clerk briefly moves forward and grabs a small hammer from under the counter. He tries to make himself bigger and moves up to his toes (second

0:19). Just like the perpetrator, the clerk holds his weapon high over his head ready to attack. Both go back and forth, holding their respective weapons, the big stick and the small hammer, over their heads for nearly three minutes. Meanwhile, both sides constantly mirror the other's behavior—one going back, the other advancing, both pausing, etc. They maintain their distance to each other almost the entire time. Finally, the perpetrator jumps the counter and wrestles the clerk to the floor. After a short struggle, the clerk hands the perpetrator the key and the latter goes to check the back of the store for money (presumably there is a safe) since the cash register is empty. When the perpetrator leaves the camera's angle, the CCTV shows the clerk grabbing the keys to the front door, running outside, and locking the perpetrator in to call the police.

Although the strange weapon⁸ and appearance of the perpetrator may cause the clerk to grab the hammer (see details below), he still initially reacts to being in a robbery: He resists but is fearful. What is surprising is that during the extended period during which both maintain their distance, the perpetrator and clerk occasionally move out of the robbery ritual entirely. This is visible particularly in the way they handle the items placed on the counter between them. Since the elderly, shorter clerk with the hammer is not complying with the robbery at second 24:69 (03:16:30 a.m. in the CCTV recording), the perpetrator uses the stick to push some boxes of convenience store items toward the clerk. The action was presumably to frighten the clerk and show him that he needs to comply. The boxes fall to the floor right in front of the clerk, who looks down at them and briefly extends a hand to catch them (second 25:73). He lowers his hammer while doing so. In this instance, he is not behaving as the (resisting) victim in a robbery but, in a reflex, tries to catch the items as a clerk. Less than a second later, he snaps out of this behavior as clerk and is back in character as the resisting victim. He looks frightened at the robber, both arms up, hammer ready. Their mirroring behavior continues.

At second 58, the perpetrator again attempts to hit the clerk with the stick and leans over the counter while doing so. This causes him to unintentionally shove several of the remaining items on the counter with his upper body so they almost fall to the other side. The clerk now initially stays in character as the resisting victim (indicators of fear in his face and body posture, yet hammer still in hand), but the perpetrator drops out. He stops his attempt midswing and takes one hand from the stick above his head. He holds on to the items and prevents them from falling. He carefully puts them back on the counter and moves back (0:58–1:00). Watching the perpetrator putting the boxes back in place, the victim reacts to their changed ritual. He raises his hands, palms up, and looks at the items and the robber in

annoyed disbelief, as if complaining that the boxes almost fell. Two seconds later (1:00), both perpetrator and victim are back in character in the robbery ritual and continue trying to hit each other.

We can assume that the perpetrator in Manassas did not initially enter the store with the goal not to damage anything. After all, he is robbing the store and threatening to hit the clerk with the stick. Moreover, he intentionally shoves items to the floor at the beginning of the encounter. Considering extant research on emotion recognition (e.g., Ekman 2003; Hatfield, Cacioppo, and Rapson 1993), we can assume that the perpetrator noticed that the clerk nearly tried to catch the falling items in the first instance and therefore tries to hold on to the boxes during the second incident. Since the perpetrator seems to be entrained in the same rhythm as the clerk (see below), he apparently “catches” his counterpart’s emotions (Hatfield et al. 1993), adapts his behavior, and acts out of character as well.

This pattern of dropping out of character is visible across the sample in cases that failed. Analysis suggests that if one side drops out of character, the other follows at least briefly, which can have strong implications for the subsequent encounter. Consider the example of a robbery attempt in a store in California in 2013 (B8).⁹

A robber enters the store, his face covered. He points a gun at the clerk. The clerk is standing behind the counter, speaking on a landline phone. A transparent screen separates the counter from the remainder of the store. The clerk moves forward and puts both hands on the counter, the phone squeezed between her shoulder and ear. The robber apparently does not speak until she asks, “Is that real?” referring to the handgun. “Yes,” he mumbles. She moves back and slightly sideways, as if she believes him and tries to get some distance between herself and the gun. She says in a skeptical tone, “That’s real. Why would that be real and you point it at me?” She puts the phone receiver between her other shoulder and ear. Her posture is relaxed; she moves freely and stands up straight. This question seems to confuse the perpetrator. His posture becomes stiffer. After a pause, he mumbles, “30 seconds!” and then repeats it louder. “Huuuh?” she says in a rude tone, leaning forward. “C’mon. 30 seconds,” he states more forcefully. “For what?” she replies. He continues responding to her questions: “The change!” he says slightly annoyed and with less force in his voice, while pointing toward the cash register with his gun. “I ain’t got no money,” she replies and shakes her head. “C’mon, ma,” the robber replies. His voice now sounds querulous and slightly frustrated. He puts his gun down. “I ain’t got no money,” she repeats. “Open that up!” he shouts. “I ain’t got no money.” “Open that up!” “I ain’t got no money.” “Open that up!” She pauses (one second) before she replies,

"I ain't got no money!" "Open that up," he tries again. "I'm on the phone with somebody right now!" she tells him casually and slightly annoyed, as if speaking to a rude customer. He reacts by pushing the gun barrel through the service hatch pointing it at her. Immediately, she grabs the barrel with one hand, trying to point it away from her. With the other hand, she puts the phone receiver down. While the conversation continues, she manages to pull his gun toward her and turns his hand on her side of the service hatch. He asks her to let go, but she confidently shakes her head and calmly responds, "I ain't let go shit." She manages to get the gun and he runs off.

In this case, acting out of character is even more drastic than in the Manassas stick robbery. Although the clerk surely feels protected by the glass initially (other clerks do not have this advantage), it is remarkable that the clerk does not (or at least pretends not to) understand the ritual, and the fact that she is now the victim in a robbery and might be killed. She begins by questioning whether the gun is real. Early on, she makes the offender respond to her questions. When the perpetrator says, "30 seconds!" she replies "For what?," not accepting the obvious ritual (0:26). He plays along by telling her what he wants from her—"The change!"—even though the problem was presumably not that she did not understand. This allows her to get the upper hand during the encounter. He is not deciding what will happen, she is. Numerous times she blocks his attempts to make the situation a robbery. Instead of being startled or showing fear, she states casually that she has no money but feels no need to show him an empty cash register, or to put her phone away, until 40 seconds into the robbery. Soon he tells her, "C'mon ma,!" (0:31), begging her for her compliance rather than forcing it. Completely out of character for a robber, his body posture and tone of voice remind of a person asking someone for a favor; he displays low emotional energy (see Appendix 2) and his voice is querulous. Presumably, this encourages her to keep her unfazed tone with him.

Both then repeat the same sentence several times and in the same manner (0:32). Microsociological research suggests that this makes it more difficult for a perpetrator to establish dominance. When the emotional level remains stable, boredom sets in, which counteracts establishing dominance (Collins 2008, 2009:570-575). The last time they repeat their sentences, she pauses before she replies with emphasis, "I ain't got no money!" (0:36). As Klusemann (2009:7) points out, such pauses dramatize power stratification since they let the listener experience unease and show that the interaction will continue when the speaker wants it to (see also Collins 2005). She is thereby indicating that she is the one dominating the ritual. When the perpetrator states his request one

more time, she reinforces that she is out of character as the victim by responding, “I’m on the phone with somebody right now!” (0:38). The content of the sentence, her body posture, and tone of voice imply that she is busy. She treats him like a rude customer instead of a potentially lethal criminal.

These examples illustrate a pattern found across the data set. Not acting according to the ritual has severe implications for the actor who drops out and for the counterpart who is trapped in the situation with them. Although the distribution of physical dominance is clear, these rituals are fragile if emotional dominance (Collins 2009:571) is not established at the microlevel. Although perpetrators have decided to rob a store, obtain a weapon to do so, decide on a place and time, sometimes cover their faces, bring a bag for the stolen goods, and then enter the store with the intent to carry out the crime, situations can break down. Clerks might refuse to accept their roles or slip out of them unintentionally. The question remains: Why do clerks drop out of character in these situations even though they could lose their lives? I identify several situational aspects that might cause these reactions. They relate to the perpetrator’s weapon, mishaps, and rhythm and movement in the store.¹⁰ A later section discusses the relevance of emotion expression.

Weapon type and size. Researchers argue that as a symbol of dominance, a weapon is an essential feature of impressing and scaring a victim (Collins 2009:574; Wright and Decker 1997a). My analysis suggests that one pattern due to which clerks fail (or refuse) to recognize the ritual as a robbery is that the weapon does not meet the clerk’s expectations. An example that illustrates this pattern occurred in Riverbank, CA, 2012 (B2):

Two robbers enter the Circle C Minimart. One carries a large assault rifle, an AK47. The perpetrator holding the firearm moves along the counter to get behind it, while the other remains in front of the counter next to the entry. On seeing them, the clerk behind the counter stands up from his chair and puts his hands up, indicating submissiveness. The elderly store owner is in the back of the store and sees the perpetrators enter. Apparently, he finds the rifle absurdly big, thinking it is a joke to rob such a small store with such a large gun. His facial expressions suggest this interpretation, and he confirms this in an interview with a reporter after the robbery. Thus, he casually walks to the front of the store laughing at the robbers, his shoulders relaxed, pointing the palms of his hands up as if asking them whether they are serious. The perpetrator standing in front of the counter turns around and is startled on seeing the elderly, stocky man laughing at them. He runs away seeming confused and in panic. The other perpetrator freezes, is tackled by the store owner, and is later arrested by police.¹¹

After the arrest, police discover that the perpetrators have robbed numerous stores. What stopped them this time was the elderly man laughing (0:07). This reaction was so out of character for a victim that it apparently perplexed both robbers. It caused the perpetrator closer to the door to run and abandon his partner, and it caused the other perpetrator to be overwhelmed by the unarmed clerks. He would have had many other options, like shooting or attempting to flee, but he did none of those things. What caused the clerk to laugh was the exaggerated size of the gun.

Case comparisons suggest that weapons can immediately appear to be out of place because they are too big or too uncommon for what is expected during a robbery (e.g., using a big stick rather than a baseball bat, as in case B4, or an AK47 rather than a handgun, as in case B2).¹² Findings suggest that choice of an unusual weapon or gear can disrupt a perpetrator's threatening appearance and breaks the ritual before it begins.

Perpetrator mishaps. In other failed cases, it seems that clerks simply did not believe that the perpetrator was a threat because the perpetrator stumbled or fell over natural obstacles. Consider a robbery in Lexington, Kentucky, (B5) a case that involved several mishaps that challenged the perpetrator's position as the strong, dominant person in the situation. For instance, when the perpetrator tried to enter the area behind the counter, he forcefully walked against a small swinging door that opened only to his side. He had to take a step back to open the door to advance (0:14). Thus, when he entered the area behind the counter, his role of the threatening offender was already damaged. His mishaps continued until the young female clerk grabbed his gun (0:30) and chased both perpetrators away.

A further natural obstacle can be the counter, and jumping a counter looks different in cases that are successful versus those that fail. In successful cases, perpetrators slid across or jumped over counters quickly and with ease (A2 and A4). Part of this might be training, but a large part of handling such natural obstacles seems to be situational confidence. Confident movements display the behavioral role of the perpetrator being in charge and visibly scare clerks. Yet, if perpetrators are unable to manage such natural obstacles confidently and, for example, fall on the counter (B7 and B12), this challenges their role. Case comparisons suggest this encourages a clerk to act out of character and, for example, grab a perpetrator's gun (B5) or their own weapon (B7 and B12) and chase the perpetrator away.

The observation that clerks tend to reach for their own guns after mishaps by a perpetrator is interesting to a discussion of whether situational dynamics have stronger relevance than personality traits and motivations

for leading to social phenomena (see Collins 2016). If personality traits and motivations are essential, clerks would be likely to instantly reach for their own weapons and we would see some actors react differently from the start. However, most clerks take their own weapons after specific situational patterns in which a perpetrator acts out of character. From the outside, the clerk's situation is unchanged since she or he is still in a robbery situation and confronted with an armed perpetrator. Still, she or he seems to take the perpetrator less seriously and accordingly does not continue behaving like a victim.

Movement and rhythm. Findings suggest that perpetrators also drop out of character, usually unintentionally, because they do not coordinate their flow of interactions in the confined space of a store well. Bad coordination and movements contradict a perpetrator's threatening appearance. Perpetrators in successful cases (A1 and A2) use space as if it is theirs, move in a relaxed manner, and coordinate their actions well. In failed cases, perpetrators are less coordinated, like in a failed robbery in Dallas (B12), where a perpetrator struggled to jump a counter, with his partner in the way (see also case B5).

While moving in space, perpetrators during successful robberies enforce a rhythm and dominate the situation; they move while a clerk stands stiff and still (A1 through A5). Cross-case comparisons indicate that distinct rhythms exist across failed cases. As described above, the perpetrator and clerk in the Manassas stick robbery moved as if they were dancing. They kept their distance, adjusting to their counterparts' moves to maintain a relative position to each other.

This finding can be explained by a human tendency to fall into shared rhythms, for example, in conversational turn-taking, but also in behavioral dynamics (Collins 2005:65-78., see 2009:569). Research suggests that humans tend to automatically mimic and synchronize movements with each other and thereby converge emotionally (Collins 2005; Hatfield et al. 1993). Due to being entrained in the same rhythm, even small movements are noticed by a counterpart. For instance, during the Manassas stick robbery, the perpetrator and clerk are very perceptive of the other's behaviors while moving through the store, reacting even to barely noticeable actions by the counterpart (e.g., holding on to the boxes on the counter). Although the pace of the rhythm varies, case comparisons suggest it is difficult for a perpetrator to break out of such rhythmic entrainment during failed robberies to achieve emotional dominance over a clerk (B1, B11, and B13).

Adequate Emotion Expressions

My analysis suggests that emotional display and recognition are further vital components to sustaining or breaking a robbery ritual. A display of adequate (i.e., expected) emotions by a perpetrator and clerk favors store robbery success.

Clerks' emotional display. All successful cases (A1 through A5) included not only submissive behaviors but also displays of fear and/or low emotional energy by a clerk (see Appendix 2). In some cases, fear was observed in actors' facial expressions by raised eyebrows, raised upper eyelids, tense lower eyelids, and mouth stretched back (Ekman 2003:160–171). Other videos did not show all actors' facial expressions (or not the entire time) but included shrinking body postures, leaning away, and hands touching or covering face, eyes, or mouth (Appendix 2). Some victims also showed heavy breathing, which can indicate that they were nervous and afraid (A3). Across successful cases, clerks stood immobile, looked left to right, and showed drawn-up shoulders, tense legs, leaning backward, and hands up over the head or defensively in front of the chest (A1 0:23–0:40; A2 0:38–0:50; A3 0:47–0:50; A4 2:24–3:24; and A5 0:20–0:40).

Yet, some clerks showed uncommon emotions, which seemed to immediately confuse the perpetrator. In some cases, perpetrators entered with high emotional energy, but clerks did not show signs of fear. This caused perpetrators to display signs of fear only 0.5 seconds after seeing that their victims were unafraid.

In a robbery in New York (B1), the perpetrator enters the store with a gun and bag, face covered. He moves quickly toward the clerk with arm stretched horizontally, body posture displaying confidence. He points the gun at the clerk's head, but the clerk shows no sign of fear. He is still leaning forward, arms calmly resting on the counter. Immediately, the perpetrator stops and moves backward to a safer distance, shoulders up, indicating tension (0:10–0:12).

Similarly, in a robbery in Davies, Oklahoma (B3), the perpetrator pulls a gun, and yet the elderly clerk continues to behave casually toward him, as if he is a regular customer. Numerous times the clerk calmly pushes the gun that is in front of his face to the side (0:09, 0:28, and 0:42). Shoulders relaxed, he moves around and rests his hands on the counter occasionally. Both cases end similarly. The New York clerk draws a machete and runs toward the armed robber (B1), and the Davies clerk, after being hit in the face, calmly but confidently starts walking around the counter toward the perpetrator (B3). In both cases, the perpetrator flees.

Comparisons suggest that uncommon emotional display, like clerks not reacting to the ritual (B1 and B3) or a clerk's laughter in a minimart in Riverbank (B2), breaks the routine and can catch even experienced robbers off guard. A common pattern in failed robberies is that clerks underline their emotional states of noncompliance by shaking the head "no" (e.g., B3 0:46, 0:56, and 1:01; B8 0:30 and 0:48) or crossing their arms in front of the chest (e.g., B3 01:06–01:22).

Perpetrators' emotional display. Perpetrators' emotional display seems to further influence the unfolding of a robbery. Perpetrators usually show high emotional energy in successful cases and often display indicators of anger (Appendix 2). This is, for example, visible in the perpetrator's face in the LA robbery (A2), when he pulls a gun and points it at the clerk (0:35:03–0:36:45): His eyebrows are pulled down and together, his upper eyelid raised, hard stare, and lips pressed together (Ekman 2003:134). His body posture is upright and confident.

Comparisons suggest that robberies fail if perpetrators display a lack of confidence or emotions unexpected during a robbery. Perpetrators might, for example, display happiness when pulling a gun (B3 and B7). In my sample, this caused clerks to drop out of character as the victim and resist. Consider a robbery in Burke County, Georgia (B9):

When pretending to pay, a perpetrator suddenly pulls a gun. He is displaying microexpressions of happiness (e.g., smirking and smiling; 0:03.60; 0:05.74, 0:09; 0:10). The clerk apparently notices these expressions. On seeing the gun, she is initially startled and moves backward (0:09). However, when she looks up and sees the perpetrators' face, she moves forward again and displays facial expressions that indicate anger (0:11–0:19). The perpetrator displays fear when she shoves his firearm away (0:14.69), and he shows fear and sadness when she starts struggling with him (0:15.77). When he tries to reach over the counter to grab the money, she hits him several times on the back of the head with the cash register drawer until he runs away.

In an interview with a news station that aired the CCTV recording, the clerk later stated that she had "called his bluff when he pulled the gun out." While hindsight rationalization of such emotional instances is problematic, the CCTV recording supports her account. On seeing the emotional expression on the perpetrator's face, her behavior indicates that she did not believe him anymore. She did not play the role of the victim because she was unafraid of the smirking offender. She got angry and resisted.

Lastly, the tone of voice transmits emotions and can therefore influence whether a robbery is successful. In successful cases, perpetrators displayed dominance partly through a calm and decisive voice (A 3). In contrast, the voice of the robber in California (B8) contradicted the display of dominance and threat when stating “C’mon, ma!” in a soft, querulous tone. In a failed robbery in Broward County, Florida (B6), the perpetrator’s sad tone of voice and shrinking body posture (he interrupts himself, sighs, and touches his mouth and face numerous times [02:39; 03:15], all indicators of low emotional energy) apparently caused the clerk to try to cheer him up. After some interaction, she looked into his eyes and said, “You know what? You [unintelligible]. You have a beautiful life” (01:33). They discussed the perpetrator’s money problems for nearly four minutes and then he left without the money.

In short, case comparisons suggest that when a perpetrator shouts decisive orders at a clerk, the clerk is more likely to be quiet, stand still, and show fear (A5). Yet, when perpetrators’ emotional displays, through facial expressions, body postures, and voice, indicate, even unwillingly, that they are sad about committing the crime, the clerk might start trying to cheer them up (B6). When a perpetrator appears undecided, the clerk might talk to him in a decisive tone (B8), and when a perpetrator displays that he is happy and proud, a clerk might get angry or ignore him (B7 and B9). In addition to the behaviors that break routines discussed above, emotion expressions seem to influence robbery success or failure.

Discussion and Conclusion

My exploratory, comparative analysis of successful and failed U.S. store robberies caught on CCTV suggests that how a situation unfolds matters to the success of a crime. Despite being in a situation with a clear distribution of power, actors involved in a robbery—perpetrators and clerks—must display a distinct set of behaviors and emotions, and avoid other types of behavior and emotions, that would break the ritual. Results suggest that actors must play their roles from the beginning. Despite robbers being armed, I found no case in which a perpetrator regained dominance during a robbery, once it was lost.

Findings offer two main implications to future research: (1) They stress the relevance of situational patterns for crime and (2) highlight the usefulness of CCTV recordings uploaded online for studying crime.

First, they question whether a perpetrator’s motivations and opportunities are sufficient for committing a successful crime. Presumably, all perpetrators initially wanted to rob the store, but numerous failed. Although it is easy to assume that perpetrators would simply shoot clerks or hit them in

cases of noncompliance, this study suggests that perpetrators are more likely to run away when challenged. Further, we might assume that some clerks might immediately resist and act out of character since they are more confident than others, but findings suggest that most clerks change their behaviors after specific situational patterns.

Although information on character traits and perpetrators' personalities could not be obtained for these cases, these situational patterns apply regardless of whether the clerk looked much younger or older than the perpetrator, looked fitter and stronger, or the contrary. Situational patterns apply to both male and female clerks in the sample (all perpetrators in the sample were male). Specific situational patterns occurred systematically and consistently, suggesting that the situation itself is highly important to robbers obtaining money and that emotional, not physical, dominance is essential. Although these findings are subject to further analysis, they suggest that the microlevel is crucial to causing what manifests as two types of crimes—a robbery or an attempted robbery.

Hence, findings point to a need for studies that verify and identify additional microsituational patterns. Studies that examine situational dynamics across a larger set of cases would be useful to analyze whether we find causality at the microlevel of such crimes and whether temporal patterns (e.g., sequential action trees leading to successes or failures) can be identified across larger sets of cases. Moreover, studies that include data on personality traits and robbers' degree of experience, local data on injuries, the amount of money taken, and subsequent arrests would be particularly interesting. Systematic comparisons of offender-clerk ratios for robbery success would also be fruitful, as would studies examining whether similar patterns exist in other types of criminal interactions (e.g., street robberies).

Second, results highlight that CCTV footage provides novel insights into understanding crime. It allows researchers to unravel the microsituational dynamics that underlie criminal behaviors by providing evidence of emotions, interactions, and timing (see Nassauer and Legewie 2016). CCTV recordings open the black box of crime and can help to refine extant theories on crime that emphasize situational components.

Furthermore, the study indicates that YouTube and LiveLeak can be valid data sources for criminological and sociological research, allowing analysis of increasing numbers of recorded crimes. Since they can be shared with readers worldwide, online data sources allow other researchers to reproduce and verify findings, ensuring high levels of transparency and reproducibility. This opportunity for valid, transparent, and reproducible research is promising to future studies of crime caught on camera.

Appendix

Table A1. Sample.

Case ID	Where	When	Perpetrator:		Uploader/Provider	Link (YouTube or LiveLeak)
			Clerk Ratio	Ratio		
1	A1 Modesto, CA	December 12, 2011	4:1		Modesto News	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bLhXAQjioUk
2	A2 Newton, CA	2011 ^a	3:1		Los Angeles Police Department Online	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0JhG7TiuKyw
3	A3 Seattle, WA	2011 ^a	1:1		Associated Press	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=labUUsejrh4U
4	A4 Dallas, TX	April 18, 2011	2:1		Dallas Police Department	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UzmlJclh_XU
5	A5 Hillsborough County, FL	2010 ^a	1:2		Hillsborough County Sheriff's Office (HCSO)	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Yea8B3PhK4
6	B1 New York, NY	2013 ^a	1:1		The Guardian	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=z0HH59xCA1E
7	B2 Riverbank, CA	January 2012	2:2		Fox40 News	http://www.liveleak.com/view?i=637_1381161000
8	B3 Davis, CA	2011 ^a	1:1		Individual	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BG-vEAGeMWM
9	B4 Manassas, VA	December 28, 2010	1:1		YouTube channel "HQ Videos"	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GXILVPwAQW8
10	B5 Lexington, KY	February 27, 2015	2:1		Individual	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Zqp88VifxAE
11	B6 Broward County, FL	July 23, 2010	1:1		New York Post	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KqsTz75Dio8
12	B7 Fresno, CA	June 27, 2014	2:2		Individual	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QbV5YVgNjCU
13	B8 California	2013 ^a	1:1		YouTube channel "Ministry of CCTV"	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5werq8tTU
14	B9 Burge County, GA	2016 ^a	1:1		Fox54 News	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YswFblCEOY
15	B10 Ambridge, PA	2013 ^a	1:1		Telegraph UK/Ambridge Police Department	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MLFEpaSAWVK
16	B11 Philadelphia, PA	January 16, 2016	2:2		Philadelphia Police Department	http://www.liveleak.com/view?i=214_1453319895
17	B12 Dallas, TX	October 8, 2011	2:2		Individual	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=H17_u1AUeE4

(continued)

Table A1. (continued)

Case	Case ID	Where	When	Perpetrator:		Link (YouTube or LiveLeak)
				Clerk Ratio	Uploader/Provider	
18	B13	Seffner, FL	April 27, 2015	1:1	HCSO	http://www.liveleak.com/View?l=414_1462376149
19	B14	Philadelphia, PA	2013 ^a	2:2	YouTube channel "Police Center"	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=19HZqqFH_54
20	B15	Eureka, CA	March 14, 2014	1:1	Individual	http://www.liveleak.com/View?l=661_1458072424

Note. CCTV = closed-circuit television.

All cases with an "A" case ID are successful robberies, cases with a "B" case ID are failed robberies.

Sample: Comparing cases within the United States, we can assume actors' behavior is comparable in several regards: First, all perpetrators in these cases know that they are likely to be filmed. Further, perpetrators and victims have similar understandings and expectations of robberies that they rely on when interacting in a robbery: Although variations exist within the United States, perpetrators have comparably similar access to firearms and can expect similar legal consequences when caught. Lastly, actors are likely to display similar emotional dialects, which favors the comparison of emotion expression (Effenbein and Ambady 2003; see also Ekman 2003; von Scheve 2012).

CCTV recording: Three of the 20 CCTV videos include the original sound (A3, A5, and B6), 10 videos include no sound (A1, A2, A4, B1, B4, B7, B11, B12, B13, and B14), and 7 include comments by journalists, uploaders, or music (B2, B3, B5, B8, B9, B10, and B15). These cases were put on mute for the analysis. Two of the videos in the analysis were edited, visibly omitting seconds of footage (B2 and B5). In some of the cases (e.g., B7 and A2), the clerk cannot be seen the entire time.

Content/demographic: The 20 cases examined occurred from 2010 until 2016, across eight US states, involving a total of 57 robbers and clerks. In all 20 cases, the perpetrators were male. Perpetrators' ages ranged from approximately 18 to 60 years of age, some perpetrators covering their faces before entering, others not wearing disguises. Perpetrators' numbers ranged from four to one per robbery, with a total of 32 perpetrators involved in the 20 cases. Of the clerks in the 20 cases, 18 were male and 8 female: Five of the six clerks in the five successful robberies were male. Out of the 20 clerks involved in the 15 failed robberies, 13 clerks were male and 7 female. Clerks were of ages between approximately 20 and 60 years. They were standing or sitting behind the counter when the perpetrator(s) entered (in robberies with two clerks, usually only one was behind the counter). Between one and two clerks were present per robbery, with a total of 25 clerks present in the 20 robberies. All but case B4 (stick robbery) involved a perpetrator with a firearm. In seven cases (B1, B4, B7, B9, B10, B12, and B15), victims pulled a weapon during the robbery or an everyday item to use it as a weapon: a machete, a hammer, three guns, and two everyday items (e.g., cash register) were used by clerks.

^aRefers to the year of the upload, since the date of event is not indicated by the uploader.

Table A2. Coding Scheme on Universal Emotions and Emotional Energy.

Anger	Facial and bodily expressions and/or voice of a person indicate that the person is angry toward/about someone or something	<p><i>Body language:</i> Moving firmly, leaning forward, clenched fists, confident body posture, and high energy.</p> <p><i>Facial expressions:</i> Brows lowered and drawn together, tensed upper and lower lid, direct hard gaze, and lips firmly pressed together or open and tensed.</p> <p><i>Facial expressions:</i> Lip corner tightened and pulled back and upward on one side of the face, narrow lip corner, and wrinkles and/or a bulge at the lip corner.</p>	Anger can be distinguished from fear and sadness, as it is visibly a more active emotional state. Anger can overlap with acting confidently (and from a strong power position), can be distinguished based on context: information.
Contempt	Facial and bodily expressions and/or voice of a person indicate that the person is contempt toward/about someone or something	<p><i>Facial expressions:</i> Skin along the sides of the nose is pulled upward toward root of the nose, wrinkles along the sides of the nose and nostril wings may widen and raise, corners of the lips pulled down, and lower lip pulled down toward the chin.</p> <p><i>Body language:</i> Struggle for control; hand touches or covers face, eyes, and mouth; postures and movements that are shrinking; fumbling; avoiding gaze (head down or turned to side, lowering and closing eyes); contracting muscles, and stiff stance.</p> <p><i>Facial expressions:</i> Brows lowered, inner, and outer brow raised; raised upper eyelid; tense lower eyelid; tensed or stretched lips; and lips parted, jaw may drop.</p>	Contempt is the only unilateral facial expression, that is, the only expression indicating a universal emotion on one part of the face only.
Disgust	Facial and bodily expressions and/or voice of a person indicate that the person is disgusted toward/about someone or something	<p><i>Facial expressions:</i> Skin along the sides of the nose is pulled upward toward root of the nose, wrinkles along the sides of the nose and nostril wings may widen and raise, corners of the lips pulled down, and lower lip pulled down toward the chin.</p> <p><i>Body language:</i> Struggle for control; hand touches or covers face, eyes, and mouth; postures and movements that are shrinking; fumbling; avoiding gaze (head down or turned to side, lowering and closing eyes); contracting muscles, and stiff stance.</p> <p><i>Facial expressions:</i> Brows lowered, inner, and outer brow raised; raised upper eyelid; tense lower eyelid; tensed or stretched lips; and lips parted, jaw may drop.</p>	Disgust can be distinguished from the other universal emotions, since it occurs exclusively on a horizontal line in the middle of the face.
Fear	Facial and bodily expressions and/or voice of a person indicate that the person is fearful toward/about someone or something	<p><i>Facial expressions:</i> Skin along the sides of the nose is pulled upward toward root of the nose, wrinkles along the sides of the nose and nostril wings may widen and raise, corners of the lips pulled down, and lower lip pulled down toward the chin.</p> <p><i>Body language:</i> Struggle for control; hand touches or covers face, eyes, and mouth; postures and movements that are shrinking; fumbling; avoiding gaze (head down or turned to side, lowering and closing eyes); contracting muscles, and stiff stance.</p> <p><i>Facial expressions:</i> Brows lowered, inner, and outer brow raised; raised upper eyelid; tense lower eyelid; tensed or stretched lips; and lips parted, jaw may drop.</p>	Fear can be distinguished from anger and happiness, as it is visibly a more passive emotional state. Fear can be distinguished from sadness based on context information and body movements: In sadness, the body is less tense and usually less hectic movements occur than in fear.
Happiness	Facial and bodily expressions and/or voice of a person indicate that the person is happy toward/about someone or something	<p><i>Body language:</i> Relaxed body posture, shoulders down, moving closer to each other, and body contact.</p> <p><i>Facial expressions:</i> Cheeks are raised and lip corners pulled up, muscles around the eyes tightened, wrinkles around the eyes, and mutual eye contact (no gaze aversion).</p> <p><i>Body language:</i> Gaze aversion, shrinking body posture, struggle for control, and hand touches or covers face or eyes.</p> <p><i>Facial expression:</i> Brows are raised, inner corners of eyebrows are raised, corners of the lips are down or the lip is trembling, and upper eyelid may be is raised.</p>	Happiness can be distinguished from fear and sadness, as it is visibly a more active emotional state. Happiness can be differentiated from surprise and fear relying on context information. The actors' facial expressions are more relaxed.
Sadness	Facial and bodily expressions and/or voice of a person indicate that the person is sad toward/about someone or something	<p><i>Body language:</i> Relaxed body posture, shoulders down, moving closer to each other, and body contact.</p> <p><i>Facial expressions:</i> Cheeks are raised and lip corners pulled up, muscles around the eyes tightened, wrinkles around the eyes, and mutual eye contact (no gaze aversion).</p> <p><i>Body language:</i> Gaze aversion, shrinking body posture, struggle for control, and hand touches or covers face or eyes.</p> <p><i>Facial expression:</i> Brows are raised, inner corners of eyebrows are raised, corners of the lips are down or the lip is trembling, and upper eyelid may be is raised.</p>	Sadness can be distinguished from anger and happiness, as it is visibly a more passive emotional state. Sadness can be distinguished from fear based on context information and body movements. In sadness, the body is less tense and usually less hectic movements occur than in fear.

(continued)

Table A2. (continued)

Surprise	Facial and bodily expressions and/or voice of a person indicate that the person is surprised toward/about someone or something	<p><i>Facial expressions:</i> Raised inner and outer brows (curved and high); upper eyelid raised, lips part, teeth, and gums may be exposed; skin below the brow may be stretched; horizontal wrinkles across the forehead; and eyelids opened (no tenseness).</p> <p>Surprise can be distinguished from fear and sadness, as it is visibly a more active emotional state. To differentiate surprise from fear, I rely on context information and body movements: Fear tends to go hand in hand with shrinking body postures or struggle for control. In surprise, there is no tension or stretching of mouth as in fear.</p>
High emotional energy	Facial and bodily expressions and/or voice of a person indicate that the person has high emotional energy and confidence in the situation	<p><i>Body language:</i> Strong physical presence by making oneself large, moving firmly, taking space, taking initiative in interactions, and standing erect and/or hands on hips—in strong power position.</p> <p><i>Facial expressions:</i> Neutral, anger, happiness may be displayed.</p> <p><i>Voice:</i> Loud, firm voice; talking over other person or shouting; interruptions; threats; and ultimatums.</p>
Low emotional energy	Facial and bodily expressions and/or voice of a person indicate that the person has low emotional energy and low confidence in the situation	<p><i>Body language:</i> Stiff stance; passivity; postures and movements that are shrinking, hesitant, or withdrawing; leaning away from other person; avoiding gaze (head down or turned to side, lowering and closing eyes); struggle for control such as hand touches or covers face, eyes, and mouth; and fumbling (e.g., fingering of the clothing).</p> <p><i>Facial expressions:</i> Neutral, sadness, fear may be displayed.</p> <p><i>Voice:</i> Soft speech, irregular rhythm, self-interruption, sounding sad or without energy, fragmented speech, frequent and long pauses, stammering, and vagueness.</p>

Note. The coding scheme is a modified version of Klusemann's coding scheme on emotions (2009:9) with added information based on research by Ekman, Friesen, and Ellsworth (1972; Ekman, Friesen, and Hager 2002) and Collins (2005; 2008). The author holds expert-level certificates in the analysis of facial expressions, so-called microexpressions and subtle expressions (very short flashes of facial expressions, indicating emotional states), from the Paul Ekman Group.

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Notes

1. Arrests at a later point in time (and time until arrest) are not part of this definition, as numerous additional factors can impact a later arrest.
2. Replication of the sample would be difficult to achieve because of the constantly increasing number of uploads to YouTube, which means that the pool of relevant cases is constantly expanding.
3. Although they cannot capture smells (e.g., if a person smells of alcohol), they get as close to the situation as possible to allow observations of microsituational detail. Additional information on drug use in cases might be interesting since it might inhibit or disinhibit some behaviors (see Wellford et al. 1997:29). Behavioral cues that result from being on drugs can, however, be observed in recordings. The nature of such cues (e.g., clumsiness or drunkenness) might be secondary to the clerk.
4. See case A1, during which one camera angle stops recording at 7:57:13 p.m. and the video cuts to another camera angle starting at 7:56:59 p.m., creating the ideal case of a short overlap.
5. Although extant studies suggest that many perpetrators use violence to establish dominance at the beginning of a robbery (Luckenbill 1981:32), only one of the cases in this study (B12) showed this pattern.
6. Closed-circuit television cameras are frequently mounted behind a clerk, so I relied on body postures to code emotional expressions.
7. Several sources uploaded this video. The link used here shows the uncut event but runs in double speed. YouTube settings as well as Atlas.ti allow slowing down the speed of a video, which can be helpful for analysis.

8. Since a stick is presumably less effective at creating an “illusion of impending death” (Wright and Decker 1997b:10) than a gun, clerks might be more likely to resist. Still, the robber is armed and appears physically stronger than the clerk, yet the clerk resists (for a discussion of uncommon weapons, see below).
9. While this recording is uncut and includes sound (both favoring complete capture, see above), it is part of a compilation of videos uploaded online. Such compilation videos need to be treated with caution to ensure that natural behavior is captured (see above). Further, the commentary of the uploader needs to be muted or ignored during the analysis.
10. These findings are not exhaustive, and future research might identify additional patterns.
11. Perpetrator 1 and clerk 2 move out of frame for the last seconds of the encounter, but the context is provided by the news team, which aired the footage.
12. An uncommon disguise might provoke a similar reaction, as case B13 illustrates.

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Author Biography

Anne Nassauer is an assistant professor at Freie Universität Berlin, Germany. Her research combines microsociology with social psychology, criminology, and behavioral sciences and focuses on deviant behavior, collective action, emotions, visual data, and social science research design. Currently, she is conducting research on collective emotions, crowd policing, and rampage school shootings among other projects.