

Stealing on the job: Opportunities afforded by specialized access

Nerea Marteache, Ph.D., Kayla Arroyo, Erin Berk, Megan Chiatovich, Alison Lugo

“Given its obvious importance, we find it interesting that there has been so little systematic research on the role that opportunity plays in the employee theft equation.”
Hollinger & Davis 2006, p. 211

EMPLOYEE THEFT IN THE LITERATURE

Prevalent:

- Accounts for 39% of retail inventory shrinkage
- \$48.1 billion dollar loss per year
- 25-50% of employees with easy access to cash and hot products steal
Global Retail Theft Barometer 2015, Hollinger & Clark 1983, Wimbush & Dalton 1997

Difficult to estimate and to study in depth:

1. Lack of agreement on definition and classification
2. Theoretical approach has not included opportunity theories
3. Lack of data
→ Underreporting, informal consequences, classification issues

THIS STUDY

Goal:

To understand the opportunity structure of theft by employees in different types of jobs, and the relationship between types of duties and opportunities.

How challenges are addressed:

1. Definition: Crimes of Specialized Access (Felson & Eckert 2015)
2. Opportunity theories: RAT, RCT
3. “Inside” information obtained by employees trained in opportunity theories

Participants

- 110 college students enrolled in Environmental Crime Prevention
- Class assignment 1: identify theft opportunities at their jobs
- Class assignment 2: crime prevention measures (future analysis)

Descriptives

- Median age = 24
- 42.7% male
- 76.7% work part time
- 61.7% have worked at that job for over a year

DATA

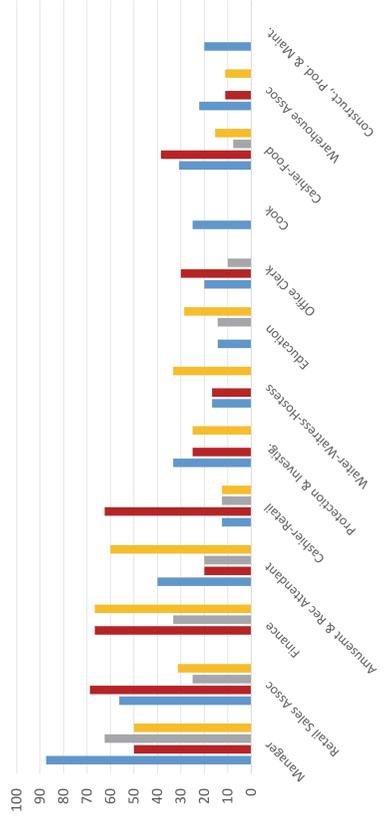
“Empirical research is needed to teach us how each occupation provides access to crime opportunities. Which positions handle money? How much and in what form? Exactly what jobs have access to computer accounts, files, keys, passwords, or confidential information? [. . .]
Research needs to answer four basic questions:

- Exactly what did the specialized-access offender do?
- Were there co-offenders?
- Who were the victims?
- How did specialized access make the crime possible?”

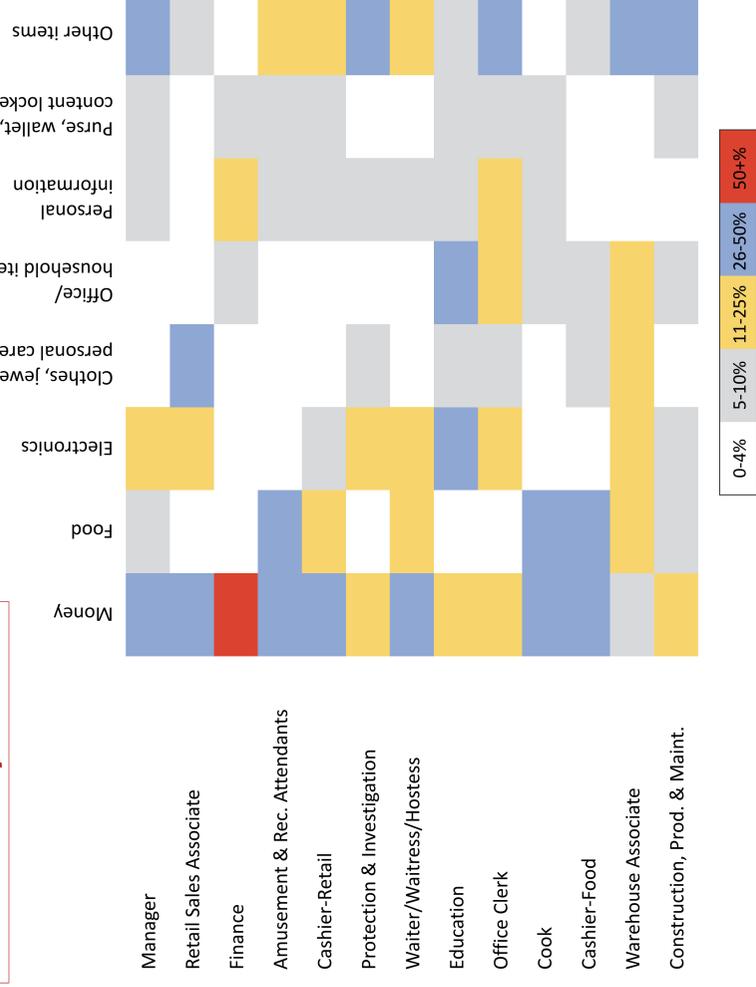
Felson & Eckert 2015, Crime and Everyday Life, p. 175

What type of specialized access does your job provide?

Percent of Employees with Privileged Opportunities to Commit Theft, per Job Category

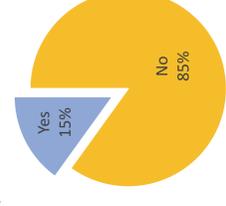


What would you steal?



Would you need an accomplice?

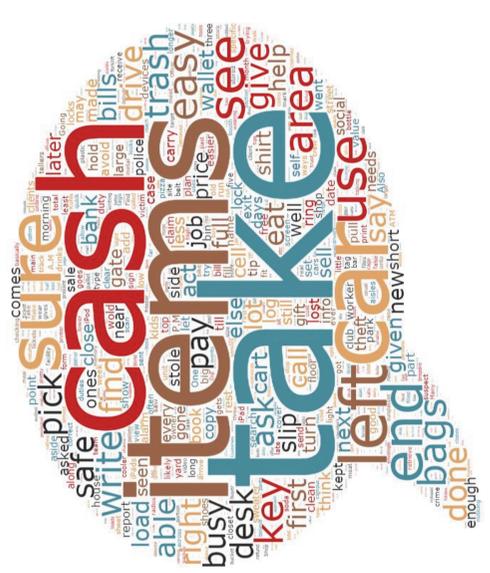
Accomplice needed to commit the theft



Who would be the victim/s?

Victim of the theft	%
Employer	70.5
Clients	21.7
Coworkers	22.6
Other	1.5

Percentages do not add up to a 100% because some thefts affect more than one type of victim



How exactly would you do it?