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**LA THÈSE A ÉTÉ
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THE PREVALENCE OF SHORT-CHANGING CUSTOMERS
AMONG CONVENIENCE AND CONFECTIONARY
STORE CLERKS: AN EXPERIMENTAL STUDY

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Submitted to the Department of Criminology,
University of Ottawa, in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of
Master of Arts. April, 1984.



UNIVERSITÉ D'OTTAWA
UNIVERSITY OF OTTAWA

DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated to my mother, without whose love and encouragement this work would never have been completed.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Current criminological theories which examine why some individuals commit crimes and others remain law abiding are many and varied. Explanations are sought in genetic differences (eg. chromosomal anomalies), psychological factors affecting personality and development, or in sociological influences such as goal frustration or the labelling process. Despite voluminous research into the "things that make a difference" no one theory is adequate to explain why some individuals become offenders and others do not, and the criminologist is still left wondering who gets involved with crime and what proportion of the population participates in criminal activity?

Using a variety of measurement techniques, criminologists have attempted to discover the perpetrators of crime in the hope that by determining and understanding the motivating force behind deviant action they can establish appropriate social policies and legal reforms to reduce crime. The statistics examined or generated by most criminological studies have focused on the "incidence" of crime (Nettler, 1978:135), which generally tallies the number of "events", such as arrests or convictions, during a relatively limited time span. Incidence figures do not count "persons", nor do they give us a reliable reflection of the amount of criminal activity in society for they merely document deviance which has been recognized by official agencies of the criminal justice system. Incidence rates of particular crimes can fluctuate because changes in the priority and seriousness attached to certain law violations may produce changes in the number of police officers assigned to certain types of crime, or may produce variations in their arrest policies. Thus, incidence rates can increase or decrease in response to modifications in policing patterns and concerns.

In contrast, a measure of crime "prevalence" uses persons as the unit of measurement and constitutes an offender rate. Point prevalence expresses the proportion of a given population which exhibits a deviant act at a particular time.

Prevalence figures are important because by knowing the proportion of individuals who engage in deviant activity we can develop more appropriate criminal justice policies to contend with this behaviour. Our knowledge of prevalence can serve as the impetus for major law reforms. For example, if a large number of individuals are participating in a particularly serious crime then perhaps what is needed are stiffer legal sanctions for the existing law may not reflect the seriousness, nor the extent of the problem. Legal penalties should serve an educative function for the general public whereby people internalize the process of a prohibited act resulting in an unpleasant consequence, and function as a deterrent for the most persistent offenders. Alternatively, if a large number of individuals are engaging in an "offence" which has overwhelming community acceptance or tolerance (eg. homosexuality laws), then perhaps this acceptance or tolerance should be reflected in our statutes.

Traditional crime prevention strategies may also be affected by our knowledge of prevalence. For example, as witnessed in Canada in recent years, to reduce the high proportion of drunk drivers on the road, instead of merely relying on increasing legal sanctions to remedy the problem, special intervention programs were developed. An extensive mass media blitz aimed at the general public, focusing on the potential debilitating effects of such behaviour, were implemented to reduce the high rate of persons involved.

The present study was undertaken to establish the prevalence of honesty and dishonesty within a Canadian framework. According to Nettler (1982:1), "honesty" is defined as being honourable, truthful, and genuine, whereas the concept of dishonesty encompasses three dimensions: lying, cheating, and stealing. "Property" is seen as a conditional right, enforced by custom or law, to exclusive use of valued resources, and any discussions of theft depend upon a culturally limited conception of property. Nettler (1982:1) further explains that the notion of deceit rests on a conception of truth, which, in turn rests on a conception of reality.

In terms of the present study the concept of honesty was based upon a behavioural manifestation elicited by the clerks (that is, the returning of the proper change due to the investigators posing as customers). In the present buyer-seller transaction the investigators' conception of reality was founded in the belief that their rightful monies would be returned (herein, our culturally limited conception of property), and the notion of deceit lay in whether or not the clerks performed the expected positive response.

The investigators sampled 125 convenience and confectionary outlets in an eastern Canadian city. Store clerks were given the opportunity to withhold change due to customers. The test of honesty was based upon

the number of subjects who returned the overpayment. Examined were possible age and sex-related differences in honesty among the clerks, differences between clerks related to the owner and salaried clerks and whether gender differences would affect the likelihood of victimization.

Chapter II of the text reviews some of the existing criminological literature on prevalence rates. The studies are categorized according to the type of data from which they are derived. Chapter III contains the methodology, Chapter IV highlights the findings and Chapter V provides an analysis of the evidence obtained in this study.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

The present chapter will review the existing evidence on the prevalence of offenders within given populations. The specific focus will be on age and sex differentials for, as Nettler (1978:120) points out, "of the many correlates significantly linked with violations of the law, two of the most striking and persistent conditions associated with the risk of committing serious crimes are being young and being male."

The Correctional Service of Canada (1982) reveals that 1.7 million Canadians have a criminal record. The national crime statistics in this country have predominantly reflected officially reported incidents of crime-*ie.* the number of court cases or arrests counted in single,

separate years. Such information is limited in that it tells us nothing about how many times a single individual may re-appear as a repeat offender in the yearly statistics.

There are three principal data sources for examining prevalence rates or the total number of criminals of a given type present in a given population during a specified period of time. These sources are: official police statistics, self-report studies, and direct observation of behaviour.

OFFICIAL STATISTICS

In the United States, Christensen (1967), calculating prevalence on the basis of the 1965 Uniform Crime Reports, estimated that 50% of American males and 12% of females would be arrested for a non-traffic offence during their lifetime. Similarly, Farrington (1981:173-175), in his recent analysis of prevalence rates in England and Wales, reports that if current conviction rates for non-traffic offences continue, the lifetime probability that an English or Welsh male will experience a conviction will eventually be about 44%.

The primary method used to study the issue of offender prevalence through the use of police data has been the longitudinal approach. This approach involves repeated measures of a group of individuals over a specified period of time. These studies are particularly useful in

determining who is formally known to participate in criminal activity for in their extended coverage of a sample population they can establish the incidence and prevalence of official delinquency at different ages, the peak ages for criminal activity and the relationship between juvenile delinquency and adult crime. According to Farrington (1979:289), longitudinal research has also been used "to predict the onset of convictions, recidivism, and the ending of criminal careers; to study the effects of penal treatments and other events such as marriage on delinquency and to investigate the transmission of criminality from one generation to the next."

A number of studies have revealed prevalence statistics for their respective cohorts as to what proportion of their groups have ever been arrested or convicted. The British National Survey of Health and Development, reporting results by Douglas et al. (1966) and Wadsworth (1979), found that 18% of males and 2.5% of females were convicted or officially cautioned before their 21st birthdays. When minor traffic violations were excluded from the calculations the prevalence figure for males was reduced to 15%. Miller (1974) and his associates, in their sample of 1,142 children born in Newcastle in May and June of 1947, discovered that 22% of the males and 3.7% of the females had been convicted by their 17th birthday, a prevalence figure higher than the British National Survey. A Cambridge, England study, beginning in 1961-62, surveyed 411 males, aged 8-9, in six state primary schools in a working-class area of London. West and Farrington (1973, 1977) reported that

20% of males were found guilty in court for more serious (indictable) offenses by their 17th birthdays. Towards the end of 1974, when the majority of the sample had reached the age of 21, a Criminal Records Office search revealed that 30.8% had become officially delinquent.

Wolfgang, Figlio and Sellin (1972:244), interested in "all boys born in 1945 who lived in Philadelphia at least between their tenth and eighteenth birthdays", found that 35% of the male cohort were arrested before their 18th birthdays. A follow-up of the sample (Wolfgang, 1977) revealed that 43% were arrested by the age of 27 and 47.3% of the cohort sample had an official record of police contact by age 30. In another Philadelphia study undertaken by Savitz (1970) in a high delinquency and predominately black area, it was discovered that 59% of these boys, living in Philadelphia for the full period between their 7th and 18th birthdays, had juvenile court records.

In Racine, Wisconsin, Shannon (1978) sampled 333 out of 1,352 children born in 1942 and followed them up in records to 1973. He reported that almost 70% of males and 24% of females had a least one recorded police contact for a non-traffic offense by age 31. In another U.S. study Hathaway (1960) and his associates found that 34% of boys in a large sample representative of the whole state of Minnesota had police or court records by age 17. Ball et al. (1964), determining prevalence with data from the Lexington, Kentucky, Standard Metropolitan

Statistical Area (SMSA) for the year 1960, estimated that 20.7% of the boys and 5.2% of the girls would appear in court by their 18th birthdays.

With respect to age differentials and deviant behaviour, Boland (1980), commenting on the criminal justice system's inability to restrain active young offenders, examined a sample of all adults arrested in the District of Columbia in 1973 for an index crime (except larceny) with at least one prior arrest. It was found that the youngest group of offenders (aged 18-25), when controlling for prior record, committed many more felonies per year, on the average, than criminals aged 30 and over.

Retrospective longitudinal surveys are usually based upon official statistics and have been criticized by the fact that there is a built in bias at work for people "distort past events in order to make sense of the present state of affairs." (Farrington, 1979:320) Prospective longitudinal surveys, which initially do not know who will become officially delinquent, can minimize this bias because "information is often recorded contemporaneously with events before later outcomes of interest (such as convictions or reconvictions) are known. (Farrington, 1979:321).

There are some practical difficulties which are associated with any type of longitudinal research. Due to the fact that they cover a very lengthy time span it is dubious as to whether these studies will secure a guarantee of extended funding. Also, it is often not possible for staff members to commit themselves to only one long-term project in the fear they will restrict their career advancement. In addition, the attrition of longitudinal subjects is yet another difficulty hindering successful completion of such projects because those who are lost are not a random sample of all subjects.

SELF-REPORT STUDIES

Aside from official data, self-report studies can also determine prevalence rates for specific populations because by asking people to confess their violative behaviour such inquiries reveal who has committed, how much, of which crimes. In light of research generated by such studies there is general agreement among investigators that almost everyone has broken some criminal law, but people who commit crimes are better described as representing a continuum, as having committed more or less crime, rather than simply being 'delinquent' or 'non-delinquent' (Nettler, 1978:98).

Austin Porterfield (1943), conducting a statistical comparison between the delinquencies of college students and children in juvenile court in Forth Worth, Texas, demonstrated the universal prevalence of

past delinquency among college men and women. Several hundred college respondents admitted that during their youth they had committed acts chargeable in juvenile court. The average number of such acts was 17.6 for males and 4.7 for females, however, these offenses were not reflected within court statistics.

Short and Nye (1958) compared the self-reported delinquent behaviour of U.S. students in three midwestern high schools and three western high schools to that of juveniles in midwestern training schools. They found that the training school adolescents had engaged in these behaviours with greater frequency than the high school students. While 3.8% of both the midwestern and western boys admitted to taking things of medium value (\$2-\$50) more than once or twice, 61.4% of the training school boys confessed to committing this offense more than once or twice. Seventeen and a half percent of the midwest boys and 8.2% of the western boys indicated that they had engaged in deliberate property damage more than once or twice, but 49.7% of the training school boys confessed to this more than once or twice.

Erickson and Empey (1963), in their study of delinquency in Utah, similarly documented Short and Nye's results in that a higher frequency of offenses was found when combining and comparing non and one-time offenders to repeaters and boys who were confined. The cumulative violations of the latter group exceeded those of the former by the thous-

ands. Comparative examples include: theft (20,836 versus 2,851), property violations (10,828 versus 1,450), and violations of the person (8,569 versus 457).

Elmhorn (1965) distributed questionnaires to 950 male Stockholm school children between the ages of nine and fourteen in 1959. Ninety-two percent reported committing at least one offense and 50% admitted to a least one of the more serious crimes listed on the questionnaire. Those who had made entries averaged six offenses. One boy in every three committed either shop thefts or thefts from a person.

West and Farrington (1973, 1977), interviewing 389 youths at age 18-19 (out of the 411 in the original Cambridge, England sample), about offenses they had committed once in the last three years, found that 68.9% admitted to receiving goods known or suspected of being stolen and only 1.5% had been convicted for it, while 21.1% admitted to damaging property but only 11% were convicted. Nineteen percent confessed to stealing from slot machines and 15.4% had been involved in shoplifting and the taking and driving away of vehicles, however, 5.4%, 8.3% and 38.3% respectively, had ever been convicted for these offenses. For the percentage of youths admitting to burglary (10.8%), 61.9% had been convicted of the offense.

Gold and Haney (1973), comparing a Flint, Michigan sample of 522 teenagers and a National Survey of 847 youths, 13-16 years of age, found that while males were significantly more delinquent than girls, for certain offenses, a fairly equal proportion of boys and girls admitted committing them. For example, in the Flint sample, 60% of the boys and 30% of the girls confessed to committing theft at least once in the three years prior to the interview. Similarly, the National Survey revealed 54% of the boys and 31% of the girls admitting to theft.

Clark and Haurek (1966), in their study of 1,116 public school students in an unnamed American city ranging in age from 11-19, also found that the ratio of males to females who admitted committing certain offenses could be fairly proportionate depending on the offense. Their data indicated a male/female sex ratio of only 1.4:1 for the category of major theft.

Belson (1975), in his sample of 1,425 London boys aged 13-16 years, examined the extent of stealing among them. All of the boys admitted to at least some stealing and there was no class of theft behaviour among the 44 categories that was confessed to by less than five percent. Eighty-eight percent had stolen something from school and 70% had stolen from a shop. About one-fourth of the sample had committed 25 or more of the 44 listed acts at least once, and the average boy about 18 of them.

While most self-report data focuses upon juveniles, Wallerstein and Wyle (1947), sampled 1,700 adult respondents from New York City. They found that 99% of those individuals indicated they committed at least one of a possible 49 offenses contained in the questionnaire. The mean number of offenses was 18 and none of the sample had been classified as criminal.

Self-report studies can reveal a great deal about who violates the law, however it is possible that inconsistent or incorrect answers are given because the respondent may be interpreting a question differently from its intended meaning or the questions themselves may not accurately reflect or measure the amount of crime which respondents have committed. Subjects may also fabricate responses to try and impress an interviewer. According to Edwards (1957) the 'prestige' of a question and the 'social desirability' of its content has a well-documented impact upon the kind of answer given to it.

An additional point to consider is the fact that many self-report studies have been conducted among high school students who are in attendance on the day the test is administered. Those students who are truant from school do not complete the forms and thus these studies may miss a very large percentage of individuals who are especially prone to delinquency.

Yet another problem with self-report measures is that too much of this research concentrates on very trivial offenses and individuals are classified as delinquents even if they admit to only one or two of these offenses. Therefore, many respondents are identified and labelled as delinquent in spite of their minimal involvement in very minor acts of delinquency.

Although self-report studies do seem to conclude that law violation is a rather common happening in any stratum of society, and can establish prevalence figures for a given population, as Nettler (1978:107) points out, "asking people about their behaviour is a poor way of observing it."

OBSERVATIONAL STUDIES

The direct observation of behaviour, in specifically designed conditions in which certain situational aspects are held constant and other aspects are intentionally varied, is yet another mode of research yielding prevalence estimates within a population. This technique, encompassing both laboratory and field experiments, has been popularized by such behavioural scientists as Milgram (1963), Asch (1951, 1956), Sherif (1956) and Zimbardo (1973).

A variety of field experiments have been conducted to ascertain which kinds of people are more or less honest. Hartshorne and May (1928:30), in their measure of honesty, gave 7,000 American school children numerous opportunities to lie, cheat, and steal. The researchers found that the amount of cheating increased as it became easier to do so, with less risk of being caught, and as it produced success. Burton (1963), in a recalculation of Hartshorne and May's data found that this was significantly associated with a child's age and social status. Higher status children became more honest, and lower status children became more dishonest with age.

In another field experiment Feldman (1968) and his associates examined the relative honesty of French, Greeks, and Americans in a variety of test situations in which there was an opportunity to cheat fellow citizens and foreigners. One method employed was to overpay cashiers in stores and observe who kept the change. In Paris, 54% of clerks kept the money from both compatriots and foreigners. In Athens, the overpayment was not returned to the compatriot 50% of the time and the foreigner 51% of the time. In Boston, the money was kept 38% of the time from the compatriot and 27% of the time from the foreigner. In the same study, where individuals were given the opportunity to falsely claim money from a stranger, 6% of the Parisians made such claims, and 13% of Athenians and 17% of Bostonians did so.

Riis (1941a,b,c) reported on a series of tests conducted for The Reader's Digest where couples deliberately submitted "jimmied" automobiles, radios or watches for repairs in order to determine the honesty of the shops through the number of false repairs. Out of 347 garages visited, 63% were dishonest, of the 304 radio repair shops visited, 64% were dishonest, and of the 462 watch repair shops visited, 49% were dishonest. The results of this survey have been criticized on the grounds that the poor business climate at the end of the depression may have induced this fraud and what may have appeared to have been fraud could really have just been incompetence.

Merritt and Fowler (1948) tested the honesty of citizens in certain American cities by dropping postcards and envelopes on the street to see how many of them would be mailed. Some of the envelopes contained a lead coin which resembled a 50 cent piece. It was found that 72% of the postcards were mailed, 85% of the envelopes containing letters were mailed, but only 54% of the letters containing the false coin were posted.

Bickman (1971) tested the effects of social status (as denoted by a stimulus person's style of dress) upon the honesty of individuals, by pretending to inadvertantly place a dime in a phone booth and observing who would return it to a stimulus person. Of the 206 subjects tested at Grand Central Station and Kennedy Airport in New York City, when the stimulus person was dressed in low status attire 38% returned the dime.

However, when the stimulus person was dressed in high status attire, 77% of the subjects returned the dime. In addition, the sex of the stimulus person did not affect the proportion of subjects returning the dime.

Sroufe et al. (1977), using a similar procedure to Bickman, found that a female confederate's physical attractiveness affected how honest others were toward her, in that 87% of tested subjects returned the dime in the attractive condition, compared to only 64% in the unattractive condition. In contrast, Franklin's (1973) Atlanta sample failed to support Bickman's findings, for 90% of the high status stimulus persons and 80% of the low status stimulus persons had their "lost" dimes returned.

Korte and Kerr (1975), when studying altruistic opportunities in urban and non-urban settings in the United States discovered that 80% of non-urban store clerks returned cash overpayments while only 55% of urban clerks did so. Farrington and Kidd (1977), giving people on the streets of Cambridge, England the opportunity to dishonestly accept a coin, found that 36.9% of their sample falsely claimed the money.

In a later study by Farrington and Knight (1979), sixty stamped, addressed, apparently lost letters were left on the streets of London. Each letter contained either £1 or £5 in cash or no money at all. The apparent victim was a female pensioner. The non-return rate increased

with the amount of money in the letter from 5.6% in the no money condition to 27.8% in the £1 condition and 42.1% in the £5 case. Nearly half (47.4%) of the 19 male subjects stole, in comparison to only 22.2% of the 18 female subjects, however, this male/female difference was only apparent in the condition with the larger amount (£5).

CONCLUSION

Prevalence figures are one of the most fundamental of all crime statistics because they directly relate to "persons" as a unit of measurement. These rates indicate the proportion of a group that has ever been arrested or convicted.

The data on prevalence reflected in the preceding studies demonstrates that criminality knows few boundaries for violative behaviour and appears to be a very universal occurrence within society. The rates of prevalence indicated by the studies reported herein show a wide range, from a low of 15% of males and 2.5% of females being convicted or cautioned before their 21st birthday (the British National Survey of Health and Development 1966, 1979), to a high of over 90% committing law violative behaviour as revealed by self-report studies (Wallerstein and Wyle, 1947; Elmhorn, 1965). Confessional measures and observational experiments generally reveal higher prevalence rates than studies using data of the criminal justice system, for they do not rely on police contacts, arrests or convictions.

Although studies on prevalence have been conducted worldwide, cross-national comparisons of these rates is difficult because of differences in official processing. While the vast majority of arrests of adults in England are followed by court appearances and convictions, this is not necessarily the case in Canada and the United States. In addition, the disposition of juvenile offenders varies from country to country. When delinquents are handled by child welfare authorities (as in the Scandinavian countries), prevalence rates may be lower than those in England or North America where delinquents are more often dealt with by the police and the courts (Farrington, 1979:296).

A great deal of the evidence contained herein focuses on sex differentials and criminal behaviour. Age differences in respect to deviant activity are also mentioned because of the many correlates linked with law violative behaviour, being young and being male are two variables highly associated with the risk of committing serious crime (Nettler, 1978:120). Although the preceding prevalence rates generally indicate that young males do seem to be more criminally active than females, the disparity in crime rates between the sexes fluctuates from culture to culture, over time, and the kind of crime in question. For example, Nettler (1978:122) states that "the rate for males of crimes

against the person exceeds the rate for females in Canada and the United States by more than 8 to 1, but the rate for males of crime against property exceeds the rate for females by about half that, something on the order of 4 to 1 in recent years."

Taken as a whole, the studies in this chapter indicate that a large proportion of the public is engaged in at least property crimes and minor forms of deviance. Males are far more likely to violate the law than are females and the young seem to be more criminally active than their elders. There is also some indication, from experimental studies, that the decision to engage in deviance may be dependent upon the characteristics of the victim and the potential pay-off. It may be that persons are more reluctant to victimize an attractive individual and are more likely to engage in theft as the pay-off increases.

CHAPTER III

THE STUDY

Because of the extensive range of prevalence of criminality worldwide, the following chapter will examine the dimensions of honesty and dishonesty to determine the applicability of previous international prevalence studies, to prevalence in a Canadian context. An experimental, observational study was designed and conducted to specifically test the extent of theft from customers perpetrated by cashiers in convenience and confectionary stores. Special attention was given to sex and age-related differences in honesty among the subjects, differences in honesty between cashiers who were salaried employees and those related to the proprietor of such a business, as well as whether gender differences affect the likelihood of victimization.

An increasing number of studies within the criminological literature have indicated a high volume of employee theft. Jaspán (1960:10), the head of an engineering consulting firm, found that "in more than 50% of assignments involving engineering projects with no hint of dishonesty, white collar crime was uncovered. In addition (in 1959 alone) our staff has unearthed more than \$60 million worth of dishonesty with more than 60% attributable to supervisory and executive personnel."

A number of sources claim that business profit shrinkage is attributable to internal (employee) cheating and stealing. The American Management Association (1977) and the U.S. Department of Commerce (1972) have suggested that employee theft of money, merchandise, and property from business is a wide spread and rapidly growing problem. Goode (1978) noted that employee theft, fraud, and embezzlement impose a greater financial burden upon the public and taxpayers than robberies and burglaries. Jaspán (1968) estimated that at least 30% of all business failures each year are due to employee theft and dishonesty.

Estimates of the extent of work place crime among employees are varied. It has been suggested that one-half of all participants in the industrial work force are currently engaged in theft (Industry Week, 1972:45-47). Estimates of employee theft in other work settings have ranged from below 50% to over 90% (Henry, 1978:124-129).

The prevalence of this phenomenon is obscured by the fact it often goes undetected. As Merriam (1977:380) states: "In the outer space of crime statistics the dark figure of conventional crime is a supernova in comparison with the black hole of employee theft." Merriam (1977:383) explains that "one of the difficulties in determining employee theft's contribution to shrinkage is that it may be benign factors such as the procedural 'phantom' of bookkeeping error, spoilage, and breakage."

In one particular U.S. study, Terris and Jones (1982) examined various aspects of theft in the convenience store industry. One purpose of this project was to document convenience store managers' and retail clerks' opinions on how and why employees steal. A survey revealed that the most frequently used theft technique involved various ways of stealing cash from a register. When expressing opinions about how employees steal, 13% of the managers were of the belief that employees deliberately overcharged or shortchanged customers while 15% of the cashiers felt this to be the case. The major reasons for employee theft were financial need, low wages, revenge against the boss or company, and fun or thrills. Since convenience stores are open long hours (some 24 hours a day), with frequent periods of one person coverage, they present one of the greatest inducements for employee theft-that being opportunity (Terris and Jones, 1982).

PROCEDURES

The present observational study was conducted to determine the prevalence of dishonesty among convenience and confectionary store clerks/cashiers. Three graduate criminology students in their mid-twenties, enrolled in a university located in a medium-sized eastern Canadian city functioned as the investigators in this project. One Caucasian male and one female separately visited 85 convenience stores of the chain-type (40 and 45 respectively), while one male of East Indian descent visited 40 family operated confectionaries or grocery-type outlets.

The yellow pages were consulted to distinguish chain-type operations (eg. Mac's, 7-Eleven)-there were multiple listings of franchises-from single operations which tended to be listed under family or given names. Varying the type of ownership was considered important as this might affect the disposition of the cashier to retain the overpayment.

The age and sex of clerks and cashiers was of particular interest to the investigators because of the belief, supported by the evidence presented in Chapter II, that persons differing on these characteristics have a differential propensity to violate the law. The use of a stratified sampling technique ensured a virtually equal representation of subjects in the age and sex categories examined. The 125 stores visited covered all divisions of the city so that no one area was

disproportionately represented. In fact, nearly every convenience store and confectionary in the city was visited. The investigators, who posed as potential victims in the study, were also varied according to gender to determine whether this variable would affect the likelihood of an infraction.

In each test situation, the investigator walked into a store, picked up the same item (a local newspaper costing 30 cents) and paid for it, in each case, with a single Canadian dollar bill. The investigator, then, feigning absentmindedness, proceeded toward the door without awaiting the change. His/her pace was sufficiently slow to afford the cashier the opportunity to inform him/her of the ostensible mistake. The pace, however was fast enough as to avoid suspicion or the impression that the investigator was, indeed, waiting for the change. The test of dishonesty among the cashiers was how many of them stopped the investigator on his/her way out of the store in order to return the overpayment. Following this action, the investigator returned to his/her car and noted the estimated age (whether under or over 25) and sex of the cashiers, as well as which of them kept the overpayment. Furthermore, the investigator recorded any non-routine comments made by the cashier and any extenuating circumstances, such as distracting events in the store, which may have led to the mistaken conclusion of dishonesty when, in fact, the cashier simply erred.

The stores were visited mostly during mid-morning hours (10:00 a.m.-12:00 p.m.), mid-afternoon (2:00-4:00 p.m.), or early evening (7:00 p.m.) to avoid large crowds and lineups at the cash, as the physical presence of other customers might be a source of distraction and otherwise alter the clerks' behavior. The investigators wanted the clerks, and not the customers, to point out they were walking away without their change. It is also possible that the presence of other customers might pressure the clerk into handing back the change.

The research design can be summarized as follows:

- 1) A total of 125 convenience stores and confectionaries were visited.
- 2) Eighty-five were of the chain-type, 45 of which were visited by a female and 40 by a male.
- 3) The remaining 40 stores were family operated confectionaries and were visited by a male.
- 4) For each of the three situations-a female visiting a chain store, a male visiting-a chain store and a male visiting a confectionary-the age and sex of the cashier was varied to produce an equitable distribution of males and females under and over the age of 25.

The distribution of experimental conditions is illustrated in Table I.

TABLE 1: The Three Sets of Experimental Conditions and the Distribution of the Sample.

FIRST SET OF CONDITIONS

The Number of Chain-Stores visited by a Female
by the Age and Sex of the Cashier

		<u>SEX</u>	
		male	female
<u>AGE</u>	under 25	12	10
	over 25	11	12

SECOND SET OF CONDITIONS

The Number of Chain-Stores Visited by a Male
by the Age and Sex of the Cashier

		<u>SEX</u>	
		male	female
<u>AGE</u>	under 25	10	10
	over 25	10	10

TABLE 1 - CONTINUEDTHIRD SET OF CONDITIONS

The Number of Proprieter-Operated Stores Visited by A Male
by the Age and Sex of the Cashier

<u>AGE</u>	<u>SEX</u>	
	male	female
under 25	10	10
over 25	10	10

CHAPTER IV

THE RESULTS

The following chapter reviews the evidence obtained from an observational study conducted to determine the prevalence of honesty and dishonesty among convenience and confectionary store clerks/cashiers. The quantitative results are displayed within the text for the variables examined, however, no tests of significance were performed due to the low cell counts.

The results of the present study show that out of 125 test situations, 20 victimizations occurred, reflecting 16% of the total stores sampled (Table 11). Individuals under the age of 25 kept the overpayment almost twice as often as those over the age of 25 (13 young persons as compared to 7 adults). Males under the age of 25 were twice

TABLE II: The Total Number of Victimizations by the Sex and Age of the Cashier (N=125)

		<u>SEX</u>	
		male	female
<u>AGE</u>	under 25	6	7
	over 25	4	3

as likely to commit theft as females over 25 (six young males versus three older females). No gender differences were found among the clerks sampled, as an equal number of males and females (10 in each case) did not return the change. Most likely not to return the change were females under 25, followed by males under 25, followed by males over 25, and finally, females over 25.

Of the 40 chain stores visited by a male investigator (Table III), eight infractions were recorded. Young people appeared to be more dishonest than older persons, however no gender differences were found between the clerks as the preponderance of males and females keeping the change-due was the same (4 males and 4 females). Males under the age of 25 were more likely than those over that age to victimize a male.

When the female investigator visited the 45 chain stores, she was victimized only four times (Table IV). This constitutes slightly less than 10% of the stores she visited. No age differences were found among the clerks who kept the overpayment. Male clerks, however, were more likely than females to victimize a female.

Among the 40 family-operated outlets visited by a male (Table V), eight (20%) withheld the change due. Clerks under the age of 25 were three times as likely to withhold the change than those over the age of

TABLE III: The Total Number of Victimizations in Chain-Stores Visited by a Male by the Sex and Age of the Cashier (N=40)

		<u>SEX</u>	
		male	female
<u>AGE</u>	under 25	3	2
	over 25	1	2

TABLE IV: The Number of Victimizations in Chain-Stores Visited by the Female by the Sex and Age of the Cashier (N=45)

		<u>SEX</u>	
		male	female
<u>AGE</u>	under 25	2	0
	over 25	1	1

TABLE V: The Number of Victimizations in Proprietor-Operated Stores Visited by a Male by the Sex and Age of the Cashier (N=40)

		<u>SEX</u>	
		male	female
<u>AGE</u>	under 25	1	5
	over 25	2	0

25. This is due to the fact that young females, in particular, were more likely to cheat the male investigator.

When comparing the number of male and female victimizations overall, Table VI reveals that the male investigators recorded 16 violations out of a possible 80, while the female investigator experienced 4 out of a possible 45. Thus, when all stores visited by males are considered together, the male investigators were victimized 20% of the time and the female investigator was victimized less than 10% of the time. Female clerks were responsible for 9 of the 16 male victimizations, while males were responsible for three of the four female victimizations. Thus, females were more likely to steal from male customers and males were more likely to steal from female customers. Females under the age of 25 were more likely to victimize the males and younger males were more likely to victimize the female.

Table VII reveals the results of a comparison between franchise and family-operated store violations. Twelve infractions occurred among the 85 chain-stores visited and eight occurred in the family businesses sampled. Clerks in family-owned stores withheld the change 20% of the time, while chain-store salaried employees did so 14% of the time. Thus, family operations were slightly more likely to withhold the change from customers than chain-stores.

TABLE VI: The Total Number of Infractions Recorded by Male Investigators (N=80) and Female Investigator (N=45) by the Sex and Age of the Cashier

<u>AGE</u>	<u>SEX</u>		<u>MALE INVESTIGATORS</u>
	male	female	
under 25	4	7	
over 25	3	2	

<u>AGE</u>	<u>SEX</u>		<u>FEMALE INVESTIGATOR</u>
	male	female	
under 25	2	0	
over 25	1	1	

TABLE VII: The Total Number of Infractions in Chain (N=85) and Proprietor-Operated Stores (N=40) by the Sex and Age of the Cashiers

<u>AGE</u>	<u>SEX</u>		<u>CHAIN STORE</u>
	male	female	
under 25	5	2	
over 25	2	3	

<u>AGE</u>	<u>SEX</u>		<u>PROPRIETOR OPERATED</u>
	male	female	
under 25	1	5	
over 25	2	0	

Comparing the results of the male and female investigators in the chain-store situation (Table VIII) reveals that when we control for type of store, the male was more than twice as likely to be victimized than the female-the male investigator lost his change in eight instances but the female investigator only lost her change in four circumstances. Males and females had an equal likelihood of stealing from the male, but males were more likely to steal from the female.

The results of an examination of Table IX comparing chain and family stores while controlling for the gender of the investigator, shows that for both types of stores the total number of victimizations was the same (eight each). Thus, there was no difference in the number of infractions between chain and family-type operations when the gender of the victim is held constant.

In summary, taking all the stores together, the change of the investigator was not returned in about one-sixth of the cases. Females under the age of 25 were most likely not to return the change and females over 25 represented the category most likely to do so. The age of the store clerk/proprietor and the sex of the victim were the two major factors affecting the results of this study. Younger clerks were almost twice as likely to fail to return the change than their elders and males were about twice as likely to be victimized as females. Interestingly, females were more likely than males to victimize the males and males were more likely than females to victimize the female investigator.

TABLE VIII: A Comparison Between the Total Number of Chain-Store Infractions Recorded by a Male Investigator (N=40) and Female Investigator (N=45) by the Sex and Age of the Cashier

<u>AGE</u>	<u>SEX</u>		<u>MALE INVESTIGATOR</u>
	male	female	
under 25	3	2	
over 25	1	2	

<u>AGE</u>	<u>SEX</u>		<u>FEMALE INVESTIGATOR</u>
	male	female	
under 25	2	0	
over 25	1	1	

TABLE IX: A Comparison Between the Total Number of Chain (N=40) and Proprietor-Operated (N=40) Store Infractions Recorded by Male Investigators by the Sex and Age of the Cashier

<u>AGE</u>	<u>SEX</u>		<u>CHAIN STORE</u>
	male	female	
under 25	3	2	
over 25	1	2	

<u>AGE</u>	<u>SEX</u>		<u>PROPRIETOR OPERATED</u>
	male	female	
under 25	1	5	
over 25	2	0	

In general, the investigators believed that most of the clerks sampled in this study did not withhold the change deliberately or intentionally, a fact born out in the jovial manner and humorous comments offered by the majority of clerks visited, when returning the overpayment. Some clerks jokingly referred to the "nice tip" they would have received, while other laughed and said, "Seventy cents isn't worth keeping." In the case of the East Indian investigator some clerks assumed he was a foreigner and in a helping manner went on to explain to him that a newspaper cost only 30 cents in this country. One cashier went so far as to point out the virtue of his character by telling the female investigator, "See what an honest guy I am", however, in one instance with the East indian investigator, a clerk checked his arms to make sure he was only carrying one newspaper but still did not return the change!

CHAPTER V

SUMMARY AND DISCUSSION

Due to worldwide variations in crime prevalence rates, this study served as an attempt to establish the prevalence of honesty and dishonesty within a Canadian context. The investigators gathered evidence from 125 convenience and confectionary outlets in an eastern city. A test situation was created in which store clerks were given the opportunity to withhold change due to customers. The determination of honesty was based upon the number of subjects who handed back the overpayment. The age and sex differentials among the clerks were the two major variables examined because the evidence in Chapter II revealed that distinct differences do exist between the prevalence rates of males and females as well as among different age categories. Also examined was the effect of the clerk's relationship to the proprietor on his/her

behaviour and whether victim selection would differ for the two sexes.

The findings of the present study showed that approximately one-sixth of the total stores sampled neglected to return the change to the investigators. Younger cashiers failed to return the change almost twice as frequently as did the older clerks, and males were almost twice as often victims as females. In general, the investigators felt that the majority of the clerks sampled did not deliberately or intentionally retain the overpayment. This was due to their jovial manner and their humorous comments (eg. "Nice tip!") expressed when they handed back the change.

The prevalence of dishonesty found in this study (16%) is considerably lower than the rates cited in most studies. This might be due to the fact that many of the previously cited studies examined a multitude of criminal acts as opposed to a single event, therefore, higher prevalence rates were found. Also, the subjects sampled in the present study were only observed at one point in time. There are many reasons to believe that this study underestimated the actual situation. These reasons will be discussed later in this chapter.

Contrary to the criminological literature reviewed in Chapter II, no gender differences were found to exist overall in the prevalence rates of honesty and dishonesty. An equal number of males and females withheld the payment due. Although it is generally true that males have

higher crime rates than females, the sex ratios for criminal activity are not constants and can be affected by a variety of variables (Nettler, 1978:122-123). One reason to explain the equivalent number of infractions committed by the male and female subjects of this study is the Convergence Hypothesis which assumes that as the social roles of the sexes are equalized, the differences between the sexes in terms of crime rates is diminished (Nettler, 1978:124).

Fox and Hartnagel (1976), when testing this hypothesis by analyzing Canadian crime rates from 1931 through 1968, used women's participation in the work force and postsecondary educational degree attainment as measures of more equal sex roles. They found that the work education factor was positively associated with women's involvement in crime, particularly in connection with convictions for theft. It must also be realized that this conclusion refers to correlated changes in a population and not to individual cases, where it might also be assumed that educated, working women may be more prone to theft, when, in fact, they are not. Although the above authors are hesitant to generalize their results, there is other evidence to support the suggestion that as the social roles of men and women equalizes, their respective crime rates may do the same. As Radzinowicz and King (1977) report, that in Germany, during World War II, when women took over a number of traditional male roles, female crime rates rose to nearly the same levels as male rates. When women returned to more traditional female roles after the war, their crime rates dropped to prewar levels.

Another major result of the present study reveals that males were twice as likely to be victimized as females. This finding has considerable support within the victimology literature from studies conducted in the United States and Canada (Curtis, 1970; Koenig, 1974; National Crime Panel, 1975). One possible explanation may lie in the different conduct norms existing for men and women in our society. Generally, early socialization conveys the message that women should be treated more delicately than males and should not be preyed upon; therefore, it is likely that stealing from a male victim did not seem as disrespectful or as bad as stealing from a female victim. While this fact was borne out in the results, strangely enough, it was young female clerks who stole more frequently from males and older male clerks who stole more frequently from females. Thus, while traditional behaviour dictates that chivalry is not dead, it certainly did seem to be forgotten among the older male cashiers visited by a female investigator.

The results overall did reveal a higher proportion of young cashiers keeping the change more often than older clerks. Although a great deal of criminological literature focuses on juveniles propensity for crime, perhaps the young clerks of this study did not really view their actions as violative behaviour. It is possible that as the investigator walked away without his/her change the young clerks merely shrugged off the incident thinking "Well, it's the customers' mistake" or "Is that customer ever stupid". These clerks may have had no

criminal intent and perhaps did not even realize a law violative act was occurring. As Hood and Sparks (1970:64) point out "whether an act can be regarded as delinquent rather than naughty or stupid or 'deviant', depends upon the social situation in which it is committed, and the person who is making the judgement." In addition, these young clerks may have excused or justified their actions by neutralizing any feelings of guilt. This neutralization of morality, as recognized by Matza (1964), allowed these clerks to argue that their behaviour was not really criminal. The argument denies the responsibility of the clerks ("It was the customer who walked away"), denies the possibility of injury ("It was only 70 cents, they can afford it"), and condemns the condemners ("Well, everyone is crooked anyway").

Cameron (1964:159, 161, 168) pointed out that non-professional shoplifters often deny that their actions constitute theft, and tend to rationalize their behaviour as "merely naughty or bad" or as "reprehensible but not really criminal." Chambliss and Seidman (1971:71) state that "It is a truism that every person arrested for crime perceives himself as an innocent, for there are always circumstances which to him seem to place his actions outside the appropriate definition of the crime."

Although the results of the present study did not reveal rampant dishonesty among employees, according to the report Crime In Service Industries by the U.S. Department of Commerce-Domestic and International

Business Administration (1977), so many employees are stealing so much that employee theft is the most critical problem facing business today. Researchers in the area of security often note that three factors—opportunity to steal, need to steal, and tolerant attitudes towards theft—must be present for an employee to steal (Bologna, 1980:112-113). Merriam (1977:387), explaining the causes of employee theft, suggests that it is the interdependency of personnel, workplace, and external factors which may precipitate deviant activity on the job. The employee has a personal referent in an internalized set of norms and values (which may or may not condemn theft), but is also influenced by conduct standards within the work setting and external pressures (eg. debts, or the frustration from the desire for material goods but the inability to attain them).

It often becomes easy for an employee to rationalize theft when he observes waste by others. He then knows that his theft is of relatively little economic consequence. Also, the daily use of items at work can facilitate a rationalization of possession, thus, an employee may covet his employer's property without feeling any sense of committing theft. Sometimes an employee may be pressured into stealing because it is accepted and common behaviour among his fellow workers. If he does not conform to their patterns of deviance he may be alienated from them. When an employee observes managerial dishonesty this exemplifies the positiveness or tolerance of criminal conduct norms as it is the upper echelon which is seen as setting the behavioural standards. In this

study the clerks may not have made great efforts to hand back the change because they believed it was the customers' mistake for walking out without it. Perhaps these clerks had the knowledge that any cash overages in their registers would merely be put towards an employee coffee fund or would balance out any cash shortages that had occurred or might occur. It is possible that the managers of these outlets did not view overages too seriously, and so the clerks did not as well.

Attempts to alleviate the problem of employee theft must be centered around the workplace for it is the source of worker satisfaction and dissatisfaction, is influential in the development of value and normative systems, and as Merriam (1977:397) points out, "it is the arena within which the most practical control efforts can be made." Pragmatic policies need not produce a 'police state' when minimizing employee deviancy. In fact, oppressive security measures such as polygraph tests, closed circuit T.V. and searches of briefcases, handbags, and lunchboxes may serve to alienate the employees and provide them with the evidence that their employer expects theft and views them as thieves.

First among preventive interventions is improved screening processes for hiring potential employees. Employers should solicit and check a candidates references and background thoroughly, and conduct extensive interviews so better assessments of an employee's maturity and value can be reached. Additionally, an employer must provide firm leadership and a good behavioural example. If you want your employees to stay honest,

don't cart home merchandise or supplies. Also, when training new employees the standards by which they will be expected to perform should be emphasized, as well as the importance of security procedures. Salaries and benefits might be regularly reviewed.

Employers should also establish open lines of communication with their workers to avoid the development of an "us against them" attitude. An unreasonable or obstinate employer can produce desperate, angry and vengeful employees. Delegate responsibilities so they are encouraged to perform and make decisions without experiencing work overload. The installation of job incentives (eg. bonuses, profit-sharing; employee-of-the-month awards) will enhance their job satisfaction and make them feel as though they are a valued worker, important to a successful business operation.

Increasing the frequency of physical inventories will possibly deter potential thieves or will reveal more quickly possible losses. The installation of computer cash registers can limit employee mistakes as they are designed to record the amount tendered and proper change due. Additionally, they provide employers with detailed receipts on the daily transactions. Establishing a usage schedule of supplies will help to isolate irregularities. Also, do not allow one employee to perform too many functions and obtain control of the operation-separate purchasing, receiving, and accounts payable. Finally, emphasize that any dis-

covered theft will be investigated thoroughly, and, if necessary, employees will be prosecuted. The assurance of prosecution may not only deter prospective criminals but will demonstrate that theft will not be tolerated.

In the present experiment a test situation was created in order to tempt clerks to commit theft, however, a customer walking out without his or her change is not an unlikely occurrence in the type of stores visited. The creation of certain factors in the experimental design—specifically, a vulnerable target and an appropriate opportunity—stresses the importance of situational forces in crime. By emphasizing that crime is often as much a matter of immediate circumstances, as of background and upbringing, helps to redirect preventive action away from social and psychological causes to the situational setting in which the crime occurs (Clarke, 1983:232). Thus, the implementation or improvement of the aforementioned practical solutions can aid in eliminating or reducing employee theft and can help create a productive work environment.

The results of this study and other empirical works raise an interesting issue. Research tells us that many individuals have engaged in theft and other dishonest acts. In light of this evidence are we not selectively enforcing laws in a discriminatory manner against those who were unfortunately caught and then prosecuted? Additionally, if most

individuals in society have engaged in some type of theft then what purpose do sanctions against this activity serve?

The answer to the first question lies in the fact that while most individuals may have engaged in theft, only a small percentage are persistent offenders. Therefore, while selective enforcement may serve a purely symbolic function of 'seeing justice done', it also acts as a deterrent against this activity. Although the general citizenry and situational criminals are more easily deterred by the enforcement of theft laws, such legal measures are necessary in order to deal with persistent offenders.

The issue that remains is the extent to which our figure of 16% reflects the actual level of dishonesty among the clerks in our sample. There are equally compelling reasons to believe that we underestimated or overestimated the true picture. Following are some points reinforcing both of these positions. It is left to the reader to decide which he considers most compelling.

Important to consider is the fact that many of the stores operate on a computer cash/inventory system. It is possible that this type of system acts as a sort of target-hardening device, as many of these registers tell exactly the amount tendered and the change due. Perhaps this made it more difficult for the clerks to steal. The walking pace of the investigator may also have altered the clerks' behaviour. If the

victim hesitated for an instant the clerk might not have perceived an opportunity to steal and hence, may have returned the change more frequently than is the norm.

One likely contingency which might explain why those sampled hesitated to retain the overpayment, when they might do so under other circumstances, is because they had face-to-face contact with the investigator, as victim. Smigel and Ross (1970) have shown that the more distant, diffuse and anonymous the victim of theft, the more people will steal from it. This helps to explain why theft from companies, corporations, and governments seem easier to rationalize than theft from an individual. With respect to the present study, it is very likely that the clerks did not keep the overpayment more frequently because at any moment the investigator may have stopped walking out of the store, turned around and demanded the change. Thus, the investigators in this project may have served as deterrents for the crime of theft.

An additional factor to consider is whether the monetary incentive in this study was sufficient enough to encourage theft. "Honest action is probably distributed in large populations in the same fashion as is foolish action. To rephrase Lincoln, some people are honest all the time, some are honest none of the time, and most people are honest some of the time." (Nettler, 1982:15) Assuming that the value of any deceitful gain is not equal for all people and that individuals have different needs and will be prompted to lie, cheat, or steal at different levels

(Nettler, 1982:21), then it is reasonable to assume that the miniscule financial amount to be gained by the clerks in this study was not sufficient inducement for them to behave dishonestly more frequently than was observed. As Farrington and Knight (1979) have shown, stealing is greater when the amount of money is increased. Indeed, one of the clerks returning the change did comment that "Seventy cents isn't worth keeping."

Another explanation as to why the prevalence of dishonesty might be underestimated by this project is because, among the salaried employees, in their consideration of a cost/benefit analysis of the net minimal gain from stealing versus the risk of apprehension and job loss, their desire for steady employment served as an inducement to behave honestly. Also, in limiting the operational definition of honesty and dishonesty to only one dimension (change returned or not), the prevalence of this phenomenon may be distorted, as there may be other, more rampant forms of theft occurring that were not looked at by the design of this study.

Factors which may have led to our overestimation of dishonesty includes the possibility that by the time the clerk made the decision to hand back the change, the investigators were already out of the store. In addition, although deliberate attempts were made to enter the store when as few persons as possible were inside, this was not always the case. It is conceivable that the presence of other customers may have

altered the clerks' behaviour sufficiently enough to yield a lower change return rate. The clerk may have wanted to shorten the waiting time of other customers in the store and just did not bother to take the few extra moments to stop and call back the investigator. He/she may also have made a genuine error if distracted by other customers.

Although the results of this study did not reveal alarming prevalence figures of dishonesty it is possible that by adopting future modifications to this research design, by specifically altering the level of inducement, the prevalence of this phenomenon will be more accurately reflected. In any event, the study shows that the propensity toward dishonesty rests within a far larger group of citizens than those processed by the criminal justice system.

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ABSTRACT

The statistical focus of most criminological studies has centered on "incidence" rates of crime, as opposed to "prevalence" figures (Nettler, 1978). Incidence rates usually tally the number of arrests or convictions, which merely document law-violative behaviour which has been recognized by official agencies of the criminal justice system. On the other hand, prevalence data uses "persons" as the unit of measurement and hence, provides a more reliable reflection of the actual amount of criminality occurring in society.

Due to worldwide variations in crime prevalence rates, and the extensive range of employee theft (from below 50% to over 90%), as noted by Henry (1978:124-129) in the white collar crime literature, this study served as an attempt to establish the prevalence of employee honesty and dishonesty within a Canadian context. Three graduate criminology students gathered evidence from 125 convenience and confectionary outlets in a medium-sized eastern city. A test situation was created in which store clerks were given the opportunity to withhold change from customers. The determination of honesty was based upon the number of subjects who returned the overpayment. The age and sex differentials among the clerks were the two major variables examined because it has been suggested that being young and being male are two correlates

strongly linked with law-violative behaviour (Nettler, 1978). Special attention was also given to differences in honesty between cashiers who were salaried employees and those related to the proprietor of such a business and whether victim selection would differ for the two sexes.

The results of the present study showed that approximately one-sixth of the total stores sampled neglected to return the change to the investigators. Younger cashiers failed to return the change almost twice as frequently as did the older clerks, and males were almost twice as often victims as females. Interestingly, female clerks were more likely to victimize male customers and male clerks were more likely to victimize female customers. In general, the investigators believed that most of the clerks sampled in this study did not withhold the change deliberately or intentionally, a fact born out of the jovial manner and humorous comments offered by the majority of clerks visited, when returning the overpayment.