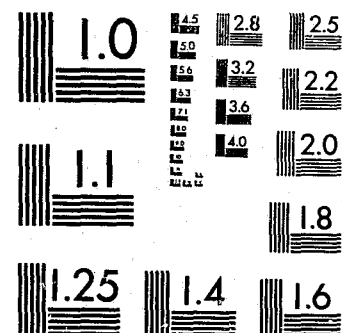


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RETAILERS AS VICTIMS OF CRIMES

DENNIS
CHALLINGER



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RETAILERS AS VICTIMS OF CRIMES

DENNIS CHALLINGER

NCJRS

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ACQUISITIONS

RETAIL TRADERS' ASSOCIATION OF VICTORIA

Melbourne

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FOREWORD

I am pleased to support the research into retail crime undertaken by Dennis Challinger from the Criminology Department of the University of Melbourne. This is the second study of retail security completed by Mr Challinger. The first was under the auspices of the Australian Crime Prevention Council in 1977, entitled "Studies in Shoplifting".

In this latest study of over 1800 retailers in Victoria the author has again provided valuable data as a basis for preventative action by employers, insurers, police, educators, etc.

The RTAV, and I am sure, other retail associations which co-operated in the responses to this survey, will welcome this research and, at times, its controversial conclusions as a basis for discussion and action. The RTAV and other industry associations do not necessarily agree with all the comments made, or the recommendations, but remain supportive of this type of professional examination of a major source of loss to the industry and to the community.

After all, it is the customer who pays for retail losses through crimes against retailers. This is based simply on the adage that costs of business must be covered in order to survive.

I urge retailers and those with specialised interests in retail loss reduction to study carefully this detailed work. Officers of this Association will be pleased to hear comments and suggestions for remedial action. The RTAV Security Committee which includes senior police in its membership, will continue to develop appropriate methods to combat crime in this industry.

K.E. MACDONALD,
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR.

RETAIL TRADERS ASSOCIATION OF VICTORIA
January 1982.

1. INTRODUCTION

Retailers are well represented amongst the many members of the Victorian community who are victims of crime. Estimates vary as to the extent and the value of crimes committed against retailers but most notable amongst them is theft from shops by customers. (Commonly called shoplifting in the past, that term understates the gravity of the act so the offence will be referred to throughout this report as shop-theft.) Retailers are also the victims of such crimes as robbery, burglary, vandalism, employee theft, fraud through bad cheques and stolen credit cards, extortion, price tag switching, blackmail, sabotage by disgruntled or malicious employees, confidence tricks and misrepresentation of goods by manufacturers. By the very nature of retailing, any economic loss suffered through such crimes has to be passed on to consumers, that is, all members of the community. These economic losses are startling; the average Australian family may pay \$30 a year extra to cover retailers' losses through shop-theft alone. A conservative two percent of goods lost through shop-theft means an overall annual loss of the order of \$100 million for Australia, and \$40 million for Victoria. As some retailers estimate that up to five or six percent of all goods leave their premises without full payment being made, the above figures are most conservative. However, they do indicate that crime suffered by retailers is a most important area for study. This particular research project aims to reveal clearly the extent of the problem faced by the 40,000 retailers in Victoria.

A United States Department of Commerce report "Crime In Retailing" (1979) suggests that the four crimes most often suffered by small retailers (the majority of Victorian retailers could be called "small") were: robbery, burglary, shop-theft (by customers) and internal theft (by staff). The first of these is indubitably well reported to the police, but not so the others.

It was, therefore, decided to send victimisation questionnaires to samples of Victorian retailers. Such questionnaires ask respondents to indicate their experiences as victims of crimes, and are becoming increasingly used to measure crime independently of the police, or

2.

official criminal justice system statistics. They have many faults which have been well documented in the criminological literature. Notwithstanding those, asking retailers, with a guarantee of anonymity, about their experiences is certainly one way of gathering data about retail crime that avoids the pitfalls of using official information alone.

Two criteria were used to determine which offences were to be included on the Victimization questionnaire. These were:

- (i) that the offence was apparently frequent; and
- (ii) that the offence was most likely under-reported.

After discussion with local retailers, burglary, vandalism, internal theft, bogus cheque passing and shop-theft were used in this survey.

2. RESEARCH METHOD

In November and December 1980, questionnaires with accompanying letters and post-paid return envelopes were distributed to samples of Victorian retailers through two methods. Firstly, the co-operation of six trade organizations allowed questionnaires to be included in the organization's regular mailing to their members. Thus retailers who did not bother to read their organization's magazine or newsletter probably would not have found the questionnaire. And although all organizations had sufficient copies of questionnaires in November, one in particular did not mail until mid-December, causing the questionnaire to arrive well into the retailers' very busy Christmas trading period.

Secondly, a selection of retailers received questionnaires posted directly to them after their addresses were gleaned from the Victorian Yellow Pages telephone directories. This was not a completely random sample of retailers as, for example, chemist shops were receiving questionnaires through the Pharmacy Guild mailing, so were excluded from this direct mailing.

The total number of questionnaires actually despatched through the first method is not confidently known since:

- (1) not all addresses on organizational mailing lists are actually retailers; and
- (2) it has been established that organizations asked for more questionnaires than they actually mailed.

3.

Overall, in the region of 5500 questionnaires were probably successfully targeted through the organizational distribution. And after allowing for mail "returned to sender", 510 questionnaires were mailed direct to Yellow Pages retailers. There were quite different, but not completely surprising, response rates for questionnaires distributed through different organizations and the direct-mailing sample. These are documented in Table 1.

TABLE 1
RESPONSE RATES FOR DISTRIBUTION METHODS

Distribution Through	Number of Responses	Approximate Response Rate
Direct Mailing	255	50%
Pharmacy Guild (Victorian Branch)	628	48%
Hardware Retailers' Association of Victoria	119	40%
Victorian Authorised Newsagents Association	234	33%
Retail Traders Association	377	30%
Master Grocers' Association	139	19%
Retail Confectionery and Mixed Business Association (sample only)	112	16%
<u>TOTAL</u>	1864	34%

The members of the last two organizations listed above are milk bars, mixed businesses and small independent grocers. Such retailers may simply be too immersed in the day-to-day business of running their shops to find time to answer questionnaires, may have seen little value in doing so or may have been less likely to be victims of crime (although this seems unlikely). On the other hand, pharmacists with their tertiary education may have had a greater empathy with a University researcher. Overall the retailers approached through the direct mailing responded best. Generally speaking that sample comprised small shops and it appears that such retailers may have had more free time, or were more interested in the research, than their colleagues in bigger and busier (?) stores.

4.

The letter that accompanied the questionnaire pointed out that police statistics showed retail-related crimes increasing faster than all reported major crimes. It was pointed out that the current research aimed to establish whether those statistics indicated the true extent of crime against retailers and it was stressed that the questionnaire should be returned even if responses were negative to all the questions, that is, even if the retailers had suffered no crimes in the past twelve months. Retailers were asked to return one questionnaire for each shop they operated. It is not known whether non-respondents in this research are different from those who did respond as it is impossible to check this in an anonymous survey. Generally speaking retailers' responses reflect a concern about crime in the retail area, and on the face of it, questionnaires seem to have been conscientiously completed. An exception to this is provided by the retailer who returned a blank questionnaire with the comment:

"Statistical data of this nature proves absolutely nothing and by the time something is done to arrest crime, criminals will have taken over the country."

The questions posed on the questionnaire asked variously:

"In the last twelve months

- has your shop been broken into (burgled)?
- has your shop been maliciously damaged (vandalised)?
- have you been the victim of thefts by employees, delivery men, etc?
- have you lost money through persons passing bad cheques?
- have you caught any shop-thieves (shoplifters)?"

A positive response required the respondent to indicate how many times he had been the victim, and then to indicate the value of the financial loss suffered as a result of those particular offences. A further question asked retailers to indicate the number of customers whom they had detected stealing from their shop in the last 12 months. Details were then solicited with respect to characteristics of the last three of these detected shop-thieves. These comprised the thief's sex and age, the value and type of goods stolen and the action taken by the retailer. The action taken by retailers against shop-thieves was deliberately left undefined on the questionnaire. As expected this produced a range of actions varying from the very formal (that is, taking the shop-thief to Court) to the quite

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informal (such as "making" the child offender work in the victimised shop). Space was provided on the questionnaire for respondents to elaborate upon their answers or make any comments about crime and retailing. This produced many valuable comments and some of these are reproduced in this report.

Further data was collected from the retailer; his description of his shop-type, its physical position (in shopping centre, etc.), its postcode, and the number of staff employed in it. These were collected in order to analyse victimisation data with respect to these objective variables. In order to analyse the vast amount of data that was collected it was necessary to group types of shops and the way in which this was done appears in Table 2.

Table 2 indicates that the working sample of retailers, or more specifically retail outlets, in this research is 1851. This is less than the 1864 responses indicated in Table 1 as thirteen returned questionnaires actually covered the collective experience of 352 separate shops. As it is not possible to isolate the individual victimisation of each of those shops, these 13 responses are not included in the statistical tables that follow, but their total experiences are incorporated in the text where they are referred to as the "retail chains".

There are two further points that need to be made about the sample in this research. First, it will be seen that chemist's shops constitute over a quarter of the working sample of 1851. In no way does this represent the Victorian retail scene. Secondly, Department stores comprise only a small percentage of the sample. This too is not an accurate reflection of their contribution to local retailing. Thus the 1851 retail outlets forming the data-base for this study do not accurately reflect the Victorian retail community. While this lack of representativeness does not allow broad conclusions, the data collected safely indicates some of the features of crime against Victorian retailers in 1980.

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TABLE 2

GROUPING OF 1851 RETAIL OUTLETS FOR WHICH
INDIVIDUAL RESPONSES WERE RECEIVED

Chemist (N=628)	Pharmacies 628
Newsagency (N=217)	Newsagencies 208; Stationers 7; Greeting card shops 2.
Hardware (N=147)	Hardware stores 136; Suppliers of: Tools 1; Building materials 6; Plumbing goods 1; Farm supplies 3.
Luxury (N=171)	Retailers of: Sporting goods 30; Toys 23; Sewing supplies 2; Photographic goods 10; Books 15; Records and Musical goods 11; Electronic goods 7; Pets 2; Car accessories 20; Camping goods 4; Giftware 33; Glassware 3; Travel goods 3; Sheepskins 7; Cosmetics 1.
Clothing (N=153)	Retailers of: General clothing 58; Women's fashions 8; Children's wear 11; Fabrics 6; Footwear 24; Fashion accessories 1; Jeans 2; Lingerie 3; Men & Boys wear 40.
Homeware (N=135)	Retailers of: Bedding 3; Curtains 4; Floor coverings 7; Furniture 29; Paint and wallpaper 7; Manchester 5; Haberdashery 5; Electrical goods 3; Cookware 2; Drapery 70.
Supermarket (N=119)	Grocers 61; Supermarkets 58.
Mixed business (N=224)	Milkbars 108; Mixed businesses 31; General stores 56; Delicatessens 4; Snack and sandwich bars 18; Cake shop 1; Health food shops 6.
Department Stores (N=57)	Department stores 57.

3. LEVELS OF VICTIMISATION

The reported levels of victimisation for the five offence types about which retailers were asked appear in this section. Each offence type is considered separately.

3.1 BURGLARY

Overall 21 percent of respondents indicated that they had been the victims of burglaries during the previous twelve months; as can be seen from Table 3. More chemists and hardware shops reported having

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been burgled, while mixed businesses were less frequently burgled as, surprisingly, were clothing stores. An explanation for the low burglary rate in clothing stores may follow from the fact that clothing stores in this research were usually small boutiques and men's outfitters. As such they would not have the range of goods available in larger shops and therefore, would not be as attractive a target, at least for professional burglars. The low victimisation rate for Department stores would seem best explained by their investment in security hardware and the associated increased likelihood of detection.

TABLE 3

RETAILERS' VICTIMIZATION THROUGH BURGLARY

Shop Type	Percentage Admitting Burgled	Average Value of Goods Stolen
Chemist	28	\$731
Newsagency	17	\$504
Hardware	31	\$1184
Luxury	25	\$1489
Clothing	7	\$1870
Homeware	12	\$1036
Supermarket	18	\$810
Mixed Business	14	\$422
Department Store	9	\$1880
<u>TOTAL</u>	21	\$893

The average value of goods stolen in these burglaries was \$893 but many respondents pointed out that in fact they had suffered no loss at all, to the extent that their insurance company covered the cost of their losses. Consequently, they entered a zero value in response to the question, and these have been excluded from the calculation of average values in Table 3. Another small group also entered zero values after admitting they had been burgled (even though they had legally not been). These comprise retailers who indicated that their security alarms had apparently frightened away offenders before any merchandise had actually been removed.

8.

These figures do not include the cost of making good any property damage resulting from the burglary. Undoubtedly the actual financial loss suffered by a burgled retailer would considerably exceed the figures shown in Table 3. The experience of one retailer is provided in the following comment.

"The sliding plate glass door smashed to effect entry (as well as the main window for the hell of it) with the intention of a quick grab at the most handy (and expensive) items of grog. They were not planned burglaries designed to clean out the premises of all valuable stock."

This comment also indicates a belief that burglaries are often committed impulsively but another retailer suggests:

"The current trend is towards less often breakings but on a larger scale with more stock taken that is the work of adults or professionals. Probably due to better security devices." (sic)

The increased use of security devices is plain from further respondents' comments. One points out that he believes putting bars on his rear windows had caused him not to have been burgled. And another retailer points out two burglaries on his shop were foiled by:

"A very complex and efficient alarm system. Although these systems are fairly costly my own feeling is that stores, shops, etc., should be encouraged to install them to effectively stamp out breaking and entering."

When the 16 burglaries reported by the retail chains are added to the figures in Table 3, only 18 percent of 2203 Victorian retail outlets admitted being burgled over a 12 month period, but the average value of goods stolen in these shop-burglaries amounts to \$914.

This finding can be extended to the Victorian retail community by using the Department of Labour and Industry's 1980 Annual Report which shows 38,313 shops registered in Victoria. Extending the 541 separate burglaries reported by the 2203 retail outlets in this study, would give a total Victorian estimate of 9409 shop-burglaries for the year.

9.

This is higher than the Victoria Police Statistical Review of Crime's 6669 shop-burglaries, and 444 smash-grabs, reported to them in 1980. Such official statistics are usually understatements of the real situation due to the reluctance of many victims of crime to report their misfortune to the police. It appears this may be the case here as there is no reason for retailers to inflate figures in responding to the victimisation questionnaire. At face value it does seem that retailers in this study are responding seriously to it.

3.2 VANDALISM

Nineteen percent of respondents reported having suffered some act of vandalism (Table 4). However, some respondents pointed out the great difficulty in determining whether acts of damage to their property had actually been wilful or malicious; some respondents may simply have been victims of accidents. Details of losses suffered were again affected by insurance companies covering the cost of the damage. Excluding these, and instances where the value of damage done was omitted, leaves 480 separate acts of vandalism with an average value of \$494.

TABLE 4
RETAILERS' VICTIMISATION THROUGH VANDALISM

Shop Type	Percentage Admitting Vandalism	Average Cost of Goods Damaged
Chemist	20	\$312
Newsagency	19	\$228
Hardware	24	\$1716
Luxury	18	\$381
Clothing	12	\$370
Homeware	17	\$355
Supermarket	24	\$337
Mixed Business	18	\$530
Department Store	12	\$349
<u>TOTAL</u>	19	\$494

The value of losses suffered by retailers in this way ranged from \$8 for a broken pane of glass to a huge \$75,000 for a deliberately-lit fire that destroyed the premises. This last event caused hardware stores' vandalism events to average \$1716, and draws attention to the difficulty in using these average values without due consideration.

Instances of vandalism which were elaborated upon by respondents were restricted to damage to display windows. One retailer set out clearly the source of his particular problem:

"We are in a particularly bad area for vandals. We have a hotel approximately half a mile away, also a hamburger shop which stays open until 1 a.m. or 2 a.m. on Friday and Saturday. It appears to be a meeting place for the area and there can be up to 40 to 50 people on the corner at 1 a.m. to 2 a.m. on a Saturday night."

Data provided by retail chains produces only another six acts of vandalism costing \$4200. This reduces the overall rate of vandalism to 16 percent but increases the average value of damage done to \$497. The use of security services by larger stores probably explains the low incidence of malicious property damage to those particular outlets, although smaller shops might simply comprise a less 'feared', and therefore more popular, target.

3.3 INTERNAL THEFT

The extent of internal, or staff, theft within retail outlets is one of the dark areas of retailing. Staff can steal from their employers through such methods as straight theft of goods or money, under-charging accomplices for purchases or making deals with delivery-men. Yet staff theft still seems to be a source of some amazement for retailers. One who has been in business for many years says the following:

"Over the years I have employed hundreds of girls but it is only recently that this sort of trouble has been so bad ... you know I have had them ... girls who with little compunction tickle the peter - nice girls from nice homes, good savers - but when short - then you can bet on the till being short, it does not worry them that the register is a complicated one."

More realistically another retailer points out:

"There are so many areas we can be taken and it is probably that at management level we are only aware of the tip of the iceberg. ...How any big organization gets on is anybody's guess. It is likely that it could go on to such an extent that it results in the complete loss of any profits made."

None of the retailers who took the opportunity of elaborating on this issue actually described the ways in which they dealt with it. It seems, from their comments, that the following most accurately reflects their views.

"Staff helping themselves to goods is wide-spread although the value of items taken is usually small."

Overall 19 percent of respondents indicated that they believed they suffered internal thefts during the previous 12 months, but only 69 percent of them could give any precise details about those thefts. Such thefts were less likely to be reported by shops in small shopping centres, and more likely to be reported by shops in large retail complexes. Department stores indicated the highest occurrence of this problem but their security staff are regularly employed to investigate it. The high victimisation rate for newsagents is explained by petty pilfering by young newspaper deliverers who are present in the shop for periods of time without much supervision. Many Department store and supermarket thefts may also be accounted for by the influx of casual staff at busy periods.

The lower rates for clothing, homeware and luxury shops seem to be explained by many of them being staffed (often exclusively) by their owners, however, all of them have very high value losses when some sort of internal theft does occur. The average of such thefts amounts to \$244, but when the retail chains are added this value reduces to \$133. This data raises the overall victimisation rate to 20 percent of the 2203 shops.

TABLE 5

RETAILERS' VICTIMISATION THROUGH INTERNAL THEFT

Shop Type	Percentage Admitting Theft	Average Value of Goods Stolen
Chemist	14	\$382
Newsagency	31	\$96
Hardware	20	\$424
Luxury	14	\$344
Clothing	14	\$435
Homeware	15	\$562
Supermarket	29	\$83
Mixed Business	17	\$119
Department Store	35	\$158
<u>TOTAL</u>	19	\$244

3.4 BAD CHEQUES

Apart from customer theft, being passed a cheque for which current funds are not available is the offence most frequently reported by retailers. There is a problem of intent with respect to the 'bounced' cheque in that the cheque-passer may not intentionally be out to defraud the retailer. Notwithstanding that, the retailer does suffer some financial loss (albeit temporary). Some respondents pointed out that they were able to eventually recover the amount involved in the passing of some bad cheques, and subsequently suffered no loss as a result of it. Table 6 shows that supermarkets and hardware stores were most frequently the victims of these particular offences, although Department stores also had a high rate of victimisation. Retailers in major shopping areas, such as the City, were more likely to provide details of being victims of bad-cheque passing. The extent of this practice amongst the 'larger' stores is illustrated by instances of bad cheques being provided by 58 percent of the 352 chain stores. The victimisation figure for all 2203 retail outlets then becomes 40 percent. This is an amazing

figure and seems to indicate that the desire to make a sale has eclipsed many retailers' wariness of accepting cheques from strangers.

It is not possible to isolate from consideration those retailers whose policy it is never to accept or cash cheques to which extent the figure of 40 percent of retailers being victims of this practice is not representative of the retailer population. As this figure is then an underestimate of this practice it indicates a huge problem. In monetary terms the problem is also substantial; the average 'bounced cheque' reported by the original sample is \$86. When retail chains are included the figure rises slightly to \$88. Thus over \$200,000 worth of bad-cheques were reported in this study. Plainly the majority of these were not reported to the police but even though some retailers did eventually regain their losses there is a major financial burden in this area for the retailer.

TABLE 6

RETAILERS' VICTIMISATION THROUGH BAD CHEQUES

Shop Type	Percentage Admitting Bad Cheques	Average Value of Bad Cheques
Chemist	35	\$48
Newsagency	24	\$62
Hardware	50	\$83
Luxury	43	\$107
Clothing	42	\$76
Homeware	25	\$199
Supermarket	56	\$80
Mixed Business	27	\$57
Department Store	46	\$125
<u>TOTAL</u>	36	\$86

Some retailers who did eventually have their bad-cheques honoured pointed out how they were often required to track down the offenders

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and "knock on their doors" or "make threatening noises on the telephone" to do so. The attitude of banks with respect to retailers' problems seems to leave something to be desired. One retailer points out that banks do not seem to treat the matter as urgent or serious and they offer little or no help with known people who pass bad cheques. Another retailer suggest that banks should apply stricter credit restrictions on their cheque account customers and recall the cheque books of people who are frequent passers of cheques for which there are no funds. One retailer is particularly aggravated by the Reserve Bank and its attitude. He points out that unemployment cheques are often not notified as dishonoured until up to six months after their presentation.

This offence is probably no worse than others with respect to the difficulties faced by retailers in a court case. But the following indicates one retailer's experience:

"A couple of years ago I had a bad cheque from a professional who even worked banks. I reported it to the police and the woman was taken to court. I would never do this again as I was out of pocket and went under a lot of strain with a three day court case. She did a lot of people - in future I would just write off the loss."

3.5 DETECTED SHOP-THEFTS

The question on the questionnaire relating to customer theft from shops presumes the universality of this practice in the retail area; a quite reasonable assumption given the literature on the topic. However, the main problem, faced by respondents was that the question asked about persons caught, and many sadly pointed out that they simply had not caught anybody. This problem is typified by the following response:

"We, of course, have a number of people who we suspect have shop lifted here but have not caught them and are unable to prove our suspicions."

Table 7 indicates that 8 percent of all respondents knew that they were losing goods through thefts by customers even though they had not detected anyone.

"We currently have a lady stealing stockings from the shop and at this time are unable to catch her. We know this because the empty carton is left in the shop after she has been." (sic)

15.

And

"Although we have only caught one person we know there have been other incidents but have left them because of difficulty in proving e.g., how do you get someone to undress to prove they are not wearing stolen goods underneath, etc."

are typical comments from retailers in this group.

TABLE 7

DETECTION OF SHOP-THIEVES

Percentage reporting:

Shop Type	No shop-thieves caught	Shop-thefts occurring but nobody caught	Detected shop-thieves	Average no. of shop-thieves caught
Chemists	64	11	25	2.29
Newsagency	25	8	67	5.65
Hardware	68	12	20	2.73
Luxury	53	11	36	3.03
Clothing	75	5	20	1.87
Homeware	76	7	17	1.35
Supermarket	30	7	63	6.92
Mixed Business	52	4	44	3.90
Department Store	37	0	63	58.44
<u>TOTAL</u>	56	8	36	6.29

Overall 56 percent of respondents indicated they had not caught any shop-thieves in the previous twelve months, while 36 percent said they had caught at least one shop-thief. Over 4000 shop-thieves were claimed to have been caught by these last 657 respondents. The retail chains detected 121 shop thieves in the 352 stores covered by their data. Details relating to 1401 of all these shop-thieves provided the data for the discussion that follows in Section 5.

16.

The average number of customer thefts reported from all shops who had detected shop thieves overall was 6.92. Department stores admitted detecting large numbers of shop-thieves and they are responsible for this high average figure. Newsagencies with 5.65 and supermarkets with 6.92 were significantly higher than the other small shops in this regard. Each of those outlets, of course, has merchandise attractive to the young, and small enough to be well concealed by a customer. Conversely, homeware and clothing stores all have significantly lower average numbers of detected shop-thieves and they too have some small items on sale. It may simply be that staff in those shops are less vigilant with respect to looking out for shop-thieves. The number of staff employed in a shop is very well correlated with the number of shop-thieves detected ($r=0.86$). That is, the more staff the more shop-thieves. This may be because bigger shops attract more shop-thieves, or it may be that the more staff in the shop the higher the likelihood of a shop-thief being detected. This data does not assist in deciding which of those is more likely but Section 5 does provide a more thorough commentary on shop-thefts through an analysis of characteristics of some detected shop-thieves.

4. OVERALL VICTIMISATION

Some idea of the extent of victimisation of retailers is provided by examining Table 8. It indicates that 26 percent of all respondents reported that they had not been the victims of any offences. (For the purpose of this table an expressed belief that a respondent had been the victim of shop-thieves even though none had been caught, is counted as one victimisation.)

Given the documented extent of shop-thefts in particular, this is a somewhat surprising result. Because of the slight confusion about the wording of the question about shop-thefts this result should be read guardedly. Many of these retailers may have admitted being the victims of customer theft had they been directly asked that question. An alternative way of looking at the result is that it does indicate that over two-thirds of respondents had been the victims of crimes over a twelve month period. By any account this indicates a considerable problem, not only a social problem but also an economic one that affects every citizen through increased retail prices.

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This last point is vividly demonstrated by one retailer's explicit comments that thefts by customers

"...amounted to a loss of approximately 2% in gross profit margin. Having security staff to try and stop this loss was more costly so we have to accept the loss. This results in a higher pricing policy in order to try and retain lost profits."

The extent of a retailers victimisation can be gauged from consideration of the 'average victimisation score' shown on Table 8. A retailer who reports no victimisation would have a score of 0, whereas a retailer who had suffered all five offences would have a score of 5. The average such score for all respondents is 1.38, so supermarkets with a score of 1.97 are clearly the group of shops most often victims. High scores for newsagencies and department stores indicate them to be frequent victims while homeware and clothing stores report less victimisation.

TABLE 8

Shop Type	<u>RETAILERS' REPORTED VICTIMISATION</u>		Average Victimisation Score
	Percentage of Retailers Who Were Victims of:		
	No Offences	Four or Five Types of Offence	
Chemists	25	3	1.33
Newsagency	17	9	1.66
Hardware	22	7	1.57
Luxury	21	5	1.47
Clothing	39	2	1.01
Homeware	42	3	0.93
Supermarket	19	13	1.97
Mixed Business	31	2	1.25
Department Store	17	4	1.63
<u>TOTAL</u>	26	5	1.38

This measure also allows some comments about other factors. Shops in formal shopping complexes such as Northland report a victimisation score of 1.60 compared with small shopping centres comprising less than 10 shops (1.20). City or metropolitan shops are more heavily victimised (1.55) than are shops in the country areas (1.16). And small shops, as measured by numbers of staff, report less victimisation than do large shops. There obviously is some intercorrelation between these factors but even so the results are important.

These results tend to support the notion that bigger, less personal stores constitute an anonymous victim for shop-thieves in particular. This view receives some support from the following comments by respondents.

"I think people may be less likely to steal from me when they think of it being a small personal friendly business."

"I am surprised that small things do not disappear. My theory is that because the shop has a 'homy' atmosphere, and personal attention, it does not attract the criminal element."

It is also supported by Angenent's (1981) review when he states that the customer in a large store is not only an anonymous individual but "is treated as such by the store. The customer does not identify himself with the store and so the difference between 'mine and theirs' becomes less important to him". It appears that interested sales staff could play an important crime-prevention role.

Any lack of interest in customers displayed by sales staff can actually help a shop-thief. As Walsh (1978) puts it:

"modern 'grubbing and foraging' type of shopping, where shoppers hunt desperately and despairingly for an article ... watched with lethargic indifference by statuesque shop assistants immersed in their own dream-world"

provides a shop-thief with an environment in which to go about his business. Plainly smaller stores with more personalised attention do not provide this same opportunity.

5. SHOP-THIEVES

A major difficulty in researching theft from shops is the selectivity of the data that is available. It is well known that details of shop-thieves drawn from police statistics do not necessarily represent the characteristics of all shop thieves. Similarly, information from particular retailers may well be dependent on the selective nature of their apprehension and recording practices. Rojek (1979) investigated this issue by inspecting in-store records relating to apprehended shop-thieves. He did this in two matched department stores for each of six retail chains in the United States. Only sex and age of shop thieves were reliably collected in the internal store data and he found that there was considerable variation, not only between each pair of stores but between types of department stores, ranging from discount stores through to department stores selling higher priced goods. When he then compared the police statistics relating to those particular stores he discovered, unsurprisingly, that the confusion continued and that those who were referred to the police were significantly different from those noted within the store records. This is an unsurprising result as there are numerous other studies indicating that there are considerable differences between retailers with respect to their apprehension and prosecution practices.

May (1978) illustrates the highly selective process by which some juveniles are formally treated by retail security staff. He shows that "powerless low status groups" are more likely to be dealt with formally. There are many other studies that support this finding by indicating, for instance, that neat as distinct from sloppy, and short haired as distinct from long haired customers, are less likely to be stopped by sales staff (Mace 1972) or to be reported by other customers (Steffensmeier 1975).

In this research details were solicited from respondent retailers with respect to the characteristics of shop-thieves they had caught within their establishments. The results of this particular part of the research are presented in Table 9. Reference to that table indicates that, of the 1401 detected shop-thieves for which respondents provided details, 45 percent were female, their average age was about 22 years and they stole an average \$18.21 worth of

TABLE 9
CHARACTERISTICS OF DETECTED SHOP-THIEVES

Shop Type	Percent Female	Average Age (Years)	Average Value of Goods Stolen
Chemist	63.6	22.9	\$19.93
Newsagency	31.4	18.3	\$7.45
Hardware	20.5	30.4	\$14.85
Luxury	22.5	19.3	\$36.60
Clothing	78.6	23.9	\$92.46
Homeware	79.0	30.8	\$48.05
Supermarket	50.2	34.2	\$6.92
Mixed Business	34.1	16.6	\$3.90
Department Store	59.1	22.1	\$31.28
<u>TOTAL</u>	44.8	22.5	\$18.21

goods. Examination of Table 9 clearly shows that there is great variation with respect to those who are detected stealing in different types of shops. Young males are most often detected in newsagencies and milkbars/mixed businesses stealing low value items (mostly magazines and confectionery respectively). Older female thieves are prevalent in clothing and homeware shops. Department stores detect slightly more females of all ages stealing an average of \$31 worth of goods. Supermarkets show equal numbers of male and female thieves, older in age and stealing about \$7 worth of goods on average. Some number of them were over 60 years of age, possibly confused or absent-minded shoppers, pensioners in need, or just intentional thieves banking on their advanced years to avoid prosecution. Detected female shop-thieves had an average age of 26.4 years compared with males' 19.4 years.

It cannot be emphasised enough that these facts do not describe the average shop-thief (if indeed there is such a creature). Recall the retailers who frankly admitted that they had no doubt they were losing considerable amounts of stock through theft by customers, most commonly discovering empty boxes or wrapping in their shops. The undetected shop-thieves responsible for such situations may be

entirely different from those who are caught. And there is no doubt the undetected shop-thief exists. One country retailer said:

"In the past 22 years we have never caught and prosecuted any shoplifters. Over the years we have had thousands of dollars of goods shoplifted most of the shoplifters are not caught but being located in a small country town we always know who has taken something, but how can you catch them after the event?"

In the metropolitan area, and apparently especially in large shopping centres, such familiarity with customers is, of course, lacking. One metropolitan retailer admitted:

"Although we have not actually apprehended any shop thieves, on no less than four separate occasions in the past year the police have returned stock that they have confiscated from shop thieves apprehended in other shops in the area."

The situation is then, that those shop-thieves formally dealt with either internally or externally by retailers are not in any way representative of all shop-thieves. It has been strongly argued that all shop-thieves should be formally dealt with by the police as this is the only way in which others may be deterred from stealing. But, apart from the obvious overloading of the police and court system that such action would cause, there is also the issue of what such formal action might do to the shop-thief himself. Klemke (1978) used self-reports of shop-thieving behaviour amongst adolescents to test this point. He found that youths who had been earlier apprehended for stealing from a shop, reported more subsequent stealing than youths who had not been apprehended. Further, he found that youths who were "exposed to police contact" reported more subsequent offending than those who were handled within the store. These results are consistent with the labelling perspective that says, if a person is identified and labelled by some formal process, then that person will continue to act according to that label. Klemke's results are by no means completely convincing. However, if it is true that over-reacting by calling the police to very minor thefts, would or could increase that person's subsequent offending, then the issue of across-the-board police action needs to be very carefully considered.

The variety of ways in which respondents dealt with shop-thieves they had caught is set out in Table 10 which shows the way in which 'actions taken' were grouped for ease of analysis. The distinction between 'some action' and 'minor action' is the distinction between persons other than the shop-thief being made aware of the offence, and only the shop-thief knowing. One difficulty with this data is that retailers responding 'no action' may, nevertheless, have taken 'minor action' but have simply not taken the opportunity of describing precisely what they did on the questionnaire.

Notwithstanding this, in less than half the reported cases were the police or some other party made aware of the shop-thief's activity. The 'minor action' group is dominated by retailers warning, threatening or reprimanding detected thieves. It is most reasonable to assume that in all those cases the retailer also retrieved his merchandise or extracted payment for it. In 73 cases retailers reported they had banned offenders from returning to their shops. Not surprisingly this practice was most often reported by country retailers; one general store proprietor commented

"The practice of not permitting young shoplifters to be served again has always proved to be a good deterrent in our isolated area because:

1. Not good to have to travel for much needed articles.
2. News then spreads quickly among other children.
3. When not able to shop for parents they then have to find out why."

This indicates that immediate practical considerations are obviously most important with respect to retailers' action in dealing with a detected thief. Table 11 clearly indicates the wide variation in the way particular retailers deal with the shop-thieves they detect. Most notably Department stores and clothing shops pass the majority of their shop-thieves to the police. But overall only 29 percent of thieves are dealt with in that way. Mixed businesses are significantly unlikely to proceed in such a way. At the other end of the spectrum, just on a quarter of all clothing shop-thieves are not subject to any action by their retailer-victim, the figure for the sample overall being 14 percent.

TABLE 10

GROUPING OF 'ACTION TAKEN' BY RETAILERSWITH DETECTED SHOP-THIEVES

Group Title	Comprising	
Formal Action (N=401)	"Police Notified"	186
	Reported to Police (Often after reprimand, etc)	80
	Charged	98
	Court Appearance	37
Some Action (N=251)	Parents Notified	191
	Husband Notified	1
	Warned & Parents Notified	29
	Parents & School Notified	15
	School Notified	15
Minor Action (N=547)	Warning/Reprimand	295
	Warning/Threat	19
	Banned from Shop	73
	Reported To Centre Security	5
	"Pursued"	18
	Goods Paid for	63
	Goods Returned	46
	"Physical Action"	17
	Apprehended	8
	Made Work in Shop	1
No Action (N=204)	No Action	204

Newsagencies and milk bars are more likely to use 'some action', and that generally involves informing parents or informing the school. This is scarcely surprising as it is clear that the majority of detected shop-thieves in newsagencies and mixed businesses are juveniles. But more juveniles may be caught there because retailers believe them to be a particular concern, and focus attention on them. That this is so can be seen from the following respondent's comments:

"I am constantly plagued with young people who spend time in my shop with the obvious intention of shoplifting. Vigilance by my staff and myself keep shoplifting to a minimum, however, we do lose a considerable amount of stock in this way. The usual practice is for many, 8 or 10 or so to enter the shop and to disperse to various parts of the shop and to handle the stock and create a degree of confusion for the staff."

TABLE 11
ACTION TAKEN BY RETAILERS AGAINST
DETECTED SHOP-THIEVES

Percentage dealt with by:

Shop Type	Police Action	Some Action	Minor Action	No Action
Chemists	20	19	44	17
Newsagency	20	25	40	15
Hardware	25	18	50	7
Luxury	47	9	35	9
Clothing	61	7	23	9
Homeware	50	5	21	24
Supermarket	33	13	39	15
Mixed Business	12	22	47	18
Department Store	66	13	17	4
<u>TOTAL</u>	29	18	39	14

This apparent planning by groups of juveniles is not the least of their negative characteristics. Another retailer says:

"We have kept a tighter watch out for the group we thought to be responsible and have now confirmed our views that the young girls shoplifting, even though they must have been aware of our attitude and counter measures, still took the goods and the risk regardless."

A further retailer agreed:

"The most obvious thing is the sheer blatantness of young women offenders. Having been in business for over 7 years the last 2 years have been very noticeable inasmuch as they make no effort to hide their stealing."

Small wonder then that retailers are moved to take action such as described in the following:

"All were told off by my husband, who threatened to give them a damn good hiding before handing them over to the police if they were caught again. Never tried it again so far."

Some retailers point out that their troubles may only just be starting when they detain children. One relates:

"On one occasion in the past, when three offenders were detected and police action commenced, the parents of one child made an abusive phone call to me. The parents of one of the other girls also made an abusive phone call and also threatened to withdraw substantial support from the business, the other parents phoned to apologise for their daughter's behaviour."

Overall, some degree of dissatisfaction with parents was illustrated by respondents' remarks, but more worrying was the apparent lack of moral education of children. One retailer said:

"I have also noticed that the children seem not to understand that the merchandise should not be taken or played with. It indicates that they are not being told by their parents or teachers that it is wrong."

Notwithstanding these comments, juveniles are far more likely to be dealt with directly by retailers who find them stealing. (See Table 12). This is particularly true for the unexpected group of shop-thieves under the age of eight years. Some of these appear to be younger siblings of other detected shop thieves, but some are not. As persons under the age of criminal responsibility there is no way that the Police could formally proceed against these children. In half of all these cases no other party became aware that the child had been stealing from a shop. A retailer's reprimand might dissuade some youngsters from re-offending but it is by no means certain. It is plainly important that a youngster's illegal activities become known to others, notably parents.

It is not intended here to point out all the features of these tables, but two important facts stand out. Firstly, as distinct from official Victoria Police statistics which show 52 percent of officially dealt-with shop-thieves being female, the majority (55%) of all detected shop-thieves in this study are males. Secondly, and more importantly, the fact that only 29 percent of detected offenders finish in the hands of the police indicates that the official police statistics can safely be multiplied by three and a half to give a truer indication of the level of thefts within Victorian retail establishments. The 1980 Victoria Police Statistical Review of Crime

records 7828 identified shop-thieves for that year, the above data would suggest that 27,400 shop-thieves would be a more realistic figure. But even that figure understates the real situation as only a fraction of all shop-thieves are ever detected. Multiplying it by ten would not be unreasonable and that gives an estimate of over a quarter of a million shop-thieves, which in a population of 3.5 million is a very high offending rate.

TABLE 12
ACTION TAKEN AGAINST DETECTED SHOP-THIEVES BY
THEIR AGE AND VALUE OF GOODS

Age of Detected Shop-thief	Percentage To Police	Action Taken		
		Percentage Some Action	Percentage Minor Action	Percentage No Action
8-17 (N=845)	23.1	27.0	36.1	13.8
18-25 (N=147)	43.5	3.4	38.8	14.3
26-40 (N=165)	43.6	0.6	37.6	18.2
Over 40 (N=212)	32.5	0.9	51.9	14.6
Under 8 (N=32)	3.1	46.9	34.4	15.6
<u>TOTAL</u> (N=1401)	28.6	17.9	38.9	14.6
Average value of goods stolen	\$38.52	\$8.19	\$11.36	\$8.93

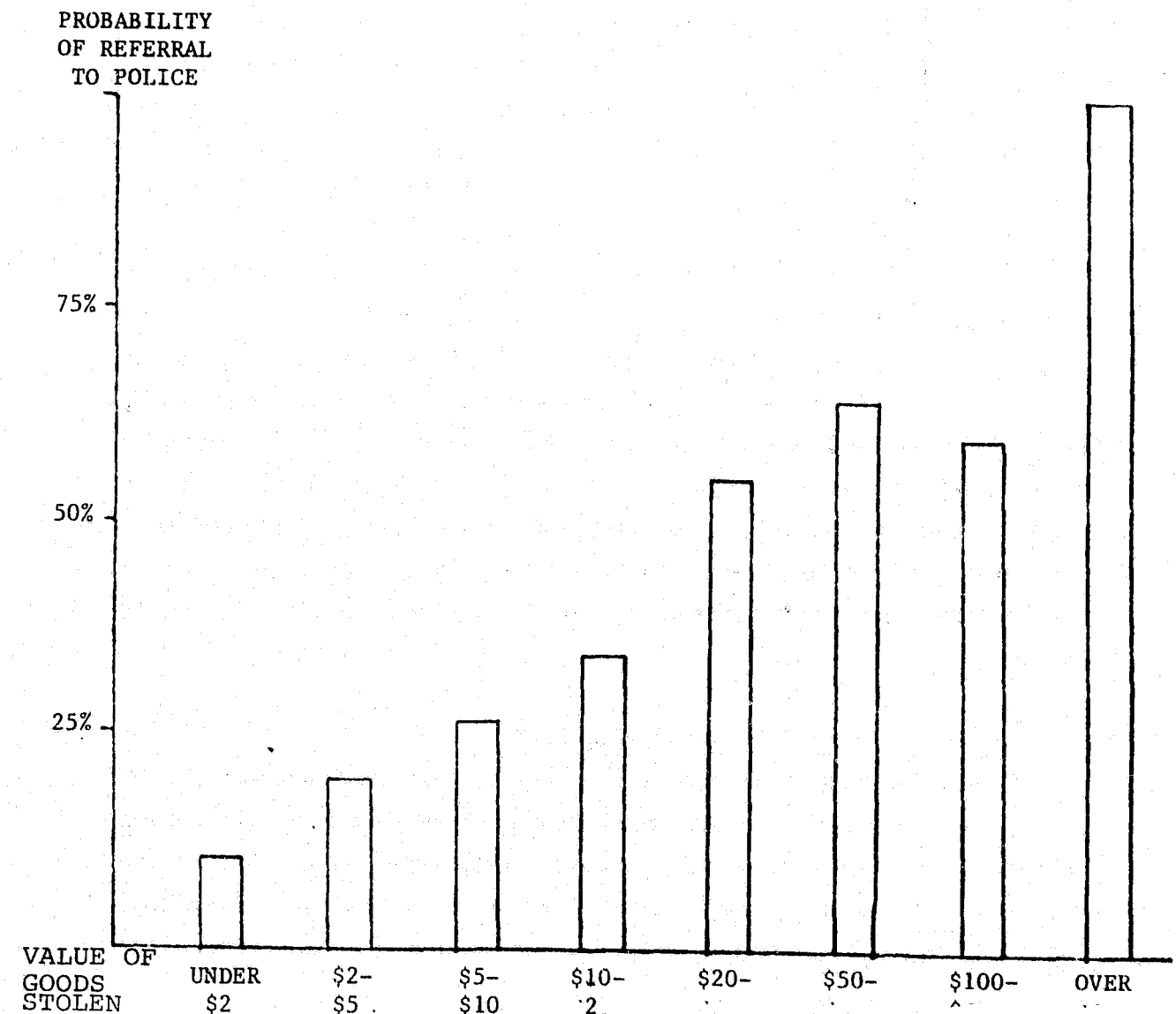
Other research has revealed that the value of the goods stolen and the age of the thief are two factors that most seem to explain whether the police are called or not. Thus younger thieves stealing items of little value would seem to be less likely to be referred to the police. Table 12 addresses this issue, and confirms the above. Firstly, young adults from 18 to 25 years and those in the 26 to 40 years age group are far more likely to be taken to the police by retailers, while juveniles, are far more likely to suffer some direct action at the hands of retailers. A slight anomaly occurs in that a higher-than-average percentage of shop thieves in the 26 to 40 years age group in fact suffer no action at all. A possible explanation for this is that the retailer victim may not be completely sure that

a theft has taken place and may be less likely to try and confront a person in this particular age group than they would a younger or an older person.

The difficulty of proving that a theft has occurred is in fact an issue that occupies the minds of a great number of retailers. Many retailers seem to adopt a fairly pragmatic approach to a customer whom they are fairly certain has stolen goods. More than one newsagent in this state adopts a similar approach to the following:

"If you find a customer with an expensive magazine tucked inside a 15 cent newspaper, all you can say is, 'Oh I didn't charge you for that magazine', and collect the cost of it."

FIGURE 1



While the sex of the thief, is not shown on Table 12, it is significant to the extent that 32 percent of females were taken to the police compared with only 26 percent of the males ($\chi^2=4.27$; $p<0.05$). This is mainly due to the fact that females were significantly older than the males in this sample. But it is the value of goods stolen that most explains whether a shop-thief will be handed to the police. Figure 1 shows this quite dramatically. Table 12 indicates shop-thieves referred to the police have stolen an average \$39 worth of goods compared with only \$8 to \$11 in the other groups. This confirms again that Victorian retailers appear more likely to act formally against those who steal higher priced goods (See Tenni and Challinger, 1976).

It should be remembered that Figure 1 does not indicate the probability of a shop-thief being detected, but the probability of that detected shop-thief being handed to the police. Low value goods are stolen more by younger persons and it is therefore, not surprising that Figure 1 takes the form it does. But changes in the Figure can be expected at any time. For instance, if shop-thefts become particularly prevalent in one area a concerted campaign by retailers to hand all shop-thieves to the police would cause many more small value thefts to come to official attention.

Table 12 indicates that retailers currently have a reluctance to refer young thieves (most probably of low value goods) to the police. Undoubtedly, many retailers do not want to react too harshly to an apparently minor offence. But when they become aware that young first offenders will be officially cautioned rather than be taken to court, their referral practice might change and Figure 1 will quickly become quite misleading. Further, when retailers appreciate that referring young shop-thieves to the police is the only sure way of identifying persistent offenders, their referral practices should change.

6. THE IMPACT OF CRIMES AGAINST RETAILERS

The data collected from retailers in this research appears to be sound; all the results summarized above certainly accord with common sense. The comparison of burglary responses with the police statistics produced a result consistent with victimisation surveys, that is, that more offences actually occur than are reported to the

police. All this leads to confidence in extrapolating the above results to the total Victorian retailer population, and this is done in Table 13.

TABLE 13
EXTRAPOLATION OF THIS RESEARCH DATA TO
VICTORIA'S 38,313 SHOPS

Offence	Reported Frequency in this Study	Average Number of Offences Suffered	Average Monetary Loss in Study	Victorian Monetary Loss by Extrapolating Results from this Study
Burglary	18.25%	1.59	\$914.41	\$10.2 million
Vandalism	16.06%	1.46	\$496.80	\$ 4.5 million
Internal Theft	19.56%	3.59	\$132.95	\$ 3.6 million
Bad Cheques	39.81%	3.11	\$ 88.00	\$ 4.2 million
Shop-theft	44.00%	6.92	\$ 18.21	\$ 2.1 million

The total estimated loss to Victorian retailers through these five offences alone amounts to \$24.6 million. But this figure is certainly an understatement of the real situation, mainly because of the low incidence of shop-theft reported by respondents in this study. Existing research and retail security personnel's experience indicate a far higher victimisation rate for shop-theft than 40 percent. However, increasing the shop-theft victimisation rate to 100 percent produces a figure of only \$4.8 million - a statistic far below retailers own estimates of \$40 million. This last figure is based on 2 percent of turnover and is generally accepted as a realistic estimate of losses.

An immediate way of interpreting the data in Table 13 then is to suggest that it shows that thieves are detected for only 5 percent of all the goods that are stolen. This would be in accord with the literature that suggests only an occasional shop-thief is actually detected. And if a loose connection between value and number of shop-thefts is assumed, it leads to the conclusion that only 1 in 20 Victorian shop-thieves may actually be detected. While this situation is quite discouraging it is not at variance with overseas studies and a similar figure is probably true for internal thefts

too. Total losses for internal and customer thefts in the above table can then be multiplied by twenty to produce better estimates of annual losses of \$40 million, and \$72 million respectively. This produces a total retailers' loss of over \$110 million each year for the five offences considered in this study.

Despite the discrepancy between the retailers' figures and those collected in this study there are two important points to be made about Table 13. First, \$24.6 million is still a large sum that has to be passed on to customers through increased prices. Secondly, the contribution of shop-thefts to total losses is fairly modest. That is, the other offences in this study are more important by way of financial losses than is customer-theft. It appears that retailers' security budgets should first be directed towards burglar-proofing and internal policing if they are keen to reduce the level of losses they suffer through crime.

7. MAJOR ISSUES IN RETAIL CRIME

As explained earlier the five offences that were the focus for this research are particularly prevalent amongst small retailers. There are, of course, a great many other offences to which retailers fall victim. Amongst those specifically noted by respondents in this research were: theft of newspapers and magazines left outside a newsagency by a delivery truck early in the morning; theft of newspapers from the 'honesty' box at the railway station; loss of goods being transported by rail; the opening and consumption of food stuffs by customers in the store; swapping price tickets from cheap to expensive articles of a similar sort; and confidence tricksters claiming they tendered high value notes when in fact they did not.

Most of these are variations of theft and it is issues relating to shop-theft in particular that will be discussed in the following. Not the least of these is the increasing tendency towards violence in incidents of shop-theft. There are sufficient documented cases now of security staff and other retail employees being assaulted and this scarcely encourages sales staff to take a very active role with respect to apprehending shop-thieves. One respondent in the sample relates his last incident with a shop-thief:

"Alarm was activated, customer followed into the street by a staff member and requested to return to the store. At same time the other staff member on duty rang the police. Customer began to run away from staff member who proceeded to follow her. When customer became short of breath she turned and drew a knife. The staff member ceased following and returned towards our store. She met the police on the way back and in their company searched the streets for the customer. After 30 minutes the search was abandoned."

Fortunately, such events are still a small percentage of all shop-theft incidents, but there are other important issues relating to shop-thefts in particular, and retail crime in general, that are raised in the following.

7.1 POLICE-RETAILER RELATIONSHIPS

Many comments by respondents in this research indicated a general disillusionment with police. It was often commented that it was not worth calling the police for a minor theft, partly because of the waste of time for they themselves, and partly because the police seemed to be unconcerned about such offences. Consider the following:

"The unfortunate part of shoplifting with regards to prosecution is that if they strike during peak trading periods one is tempted not to notify the police if the value of the goods taken is relatively small. The time taken in holding the person concerned until police arrive causes the security officer to be off his job for up to one hour and during this time many other offences can go undetected."

And:

"Police have never been able to do anything. A comment from one officer was, 'shops like yours are considered fair game'."

It is clear then that the views of retailers towards police are not formed in isolation. That is, retailers have called police and the consequent interreaction seems to have convinced retailers that the police do not care.

"The police are not interested in petty thieves. They go so far as to come and see you and take notes but we have been told that it involves too much paper work and the caught culprit only gets a rap across the knuckles."

Some retailers obviously feel quite bitter about the role of police, especially with respect to shop-thieves.

"Police should be working to prevent crime by patrolling during hours of trading when people are made aware of their presence not during the early hours of the morning when people are snoozing."

"I am sure the police would be better employed for the community at large patrolling the shopping area instead of hiding behind trees trying to catch motorists exceeding the speed limit by a few kilometers per hour."

These last comments are not, of course, unique to retailers, and it would be unfair to suggest that all retailers hold these views of the police. One says:

"I have not reported thefts to police because they have never been large amounts and they have enough problems."

And a more explicitly supportive role is provided by another retailer who says:

"I always involve the police because of experiences I have had in the past when trying to handle this matter myself."

A particular source of aggravation for retailers who do report thefts to the police is that the stolen goods are invariably held by the police until after the case has been disposed of by the Court. As this may take a few months those goods which do represent a financial investment by the retailer may well be unsaleable. This can happen because the goods become superseded models or out-of-season garments, packaging may have been damaged, perishables may be out-of-date code or have been inappropriately stored.

The immediate solution to this obviously aggravating situation is the use of photographic evidence in Court. A recent Victoria Police memorandum has alerted officers to the possibility of using photographs of stolen property if "it is clear that the property need not be produced as an exhibit" at court. But the procedures to be undertaken and the decision to produce such secondary evidence are further responsibilities for the police informant.

For shop-thefts in particular it would seem more appropriate for instant polaroid photographs of stolen goods to be taken at the victim's premises. Such a photograph of goods appropriately certified by the confessed offender, the complainant and perhaps even a Justice of the Peace should be sufficient evidence for the Court and legislation should be enacted to guarantee that. It would be warmly greeted not only by retailers who will be able to market their goods, but also Police and possibly Court staff who will be saved a cumbersome task.

7.2 POSSIBLE POLICE-RETAILER ACTIVITY

The best way of improving the relationship between police and retailers is through joint initiatives. While the Victoria Police are making some inroads in this regard with its Community Policing programme in Frankston, more could be done.

A particularly successful example of a police-retailer joint attack on shop theft is provided by the 'Croydon Project' in England. Set up by the local Chief Superintendent of Police, the local police crime prevention officer and the secretary of the Chamber of Commerce, it involved a full-time paid co-ordinator who provided a focal point for the project. He had a room within the shopping area with communication by phone and radio to the outside. Two hundred local retailers were visited, briefed, given posters and signs, trained by the co-ordinator, and linked to an early-warning group, that effectively being an intelligence source. The Press were informed and gave the project publicity and the local police set up a special squad to deal with shop-thieves. The result of that project was a considerable reduction in the detected level of shop-theft within that particular shopping area. The Croydon Project has been replicated in many other English cities and clearly indicates what can be achieved through a common approach. There seems no doubt that Victorian retailers have a lot to gain by participating in such a venture; the Victoria Police would, no doubt, be glad to co-operate.

A further example of this sort of co-operation is provided by Engstad (1980) who describes how a shoplifting ring in an English town was stealing merchandise from some shops and exchanging it for cash refunds later:

"The shoplifting rings were successful in carrying out this operation primarily because the stores' policies regarding cash refunds for returned merchandise varied greatly and were otherwise easy to defeat."

A senior police officer convened a meeting of all local retailers and as a result of that group meeting, a standard refund policy was developed within the city's shops which cut off the avenues by which thieves could realize their gains.

In this instance the police were the initiators but needed solid support from retailers. The result was, of course, particularly pleasing to the retailers and the lesson is a simple one. Co-operation, and enthusiastic support by retailers for police is essential. And police personnel should be doing their bit to foster that co-operation.

7.3 RETAILERS AND THE COURTS

Respondents in this research had nothing positive to say about the Courts. There were numerous comments about the futility of light sentences, and a general call for harsher treatment, but these are not surprising reactions from victims, especially if they see no relief from their victimisation. It is the actual experience of participating in a court case that seems to cause most annoyance. One retailer relates:

"The police did prosecute one of my customers with myself as witness. However having been made to feel that I was such a monster, and terrible person, while the confessed shoplifter was such an innocent victim of circumstances, going back to such things as her daughter's fall off a swing at school, etc., I vowed never again to go to Court over shoplifting."

Another similar experience:

"The last time I charged a person for shoplifting he was convicted after ten previous convictions and let go with a warning. It cost me \$80 to put a manager in my business while I appeared in court. I vowed I would never prosecute again. What is the point?"

A more general comment on the same theme:

"The reason for letting my shoplifters go free is that our courts, barristers and British law generally, is so pathetically incapable of protecting the innocent, yet so incredibly capable of protecting the guilty from conviction, or adequate penalty that it is good sense to avoid being denigrated in court by a defence counsel."

While one cannot generalize from these few responses, discussions with other retailers have not revealed any retailer who is entirely happy with the consequences of proceeding in court against a shop-thief.

At the moment Courts do not appear to appreciate the anger that retailers feel about Court proceedings. Losing time and, therefore, money is a major disaster, especially for small retailers. Larger retailers suffer even greater losses if their security personnel are required to waste hours and hours waiting outside court-houses, instead of patrolling their employer's premises. Two moves seem necessary. Firstly, court case scheduling should be considerably improved and secondly, that compensation provisions in Magistrates' Courts should be extended. Indeed making a compensation payment to the retailer for effective loss of profit should become mandatory in shop-theft cases.

A further legislative change which might help alleviate some retailers' reluctance to proceed formally through the police and courts would be the Hand-up Brief. Such a device enables a Magistrate to decide the disposition of the case without the necessity for all witnesses and the informant to be present. If the offender agrees to plead guilty the documentation relating to his case is the material on which the Magistrate will accept that plea. The offender is not deprived of the right to have counsel make a plea for him, or to introduce mitigating factors prior to sentencing. But it does save the waste of time about which many respondents have complained.

7.4 FORMAL ALTERNATIVES FOR DEALING WITH SHOP-THIEVES

Alternative formal methods for dealing with shop-thieves have been initiated in various places, most notably for the young. Table 12 indicated that the young Victorian shop-thief is less likely to be

taken to the police, presumably because retailers entertain some concern about what may happen thereafter. This concern about 'overkill' is misplaced however, in that Victoria Police Standing Orders require youthful first offenders to be given an official police caution rather than be taken to Court. Retailers' ignorance of this alternative police procedure could explain their reluctance to involve the police. But English research into juvenile theft indicates that young thieves are particularly concerned about police being called to their offence (Belson, 1975), so calling the police may, therefore, be the most efficient way of dealing positively with a young shop-thief.

Notwithstanding this, there are undoubtedly retailers who believe that an alternative way of dealing with the young, exclusive of police action, would be best. Such an alternative is provided by an entirely voluntary 'Shoplifting Reduction Programme' run by a Juvenile Probation Department in California (Casey & Shuman, 1979). As an alternative to formal court processing it involves offenders and their parents attending evening sessions at the Department for "interchange of information" and "open exchange of opinions". The programme is focussed on education and emphasising "parental and child responsibility". Separate records are kept of programme participants and they are destroyed after two years.

These records have enabled a modest evaluation of the programme through re-offending data. It was discovered that only 5 percent of the first offenders who attended the programme had re-offended within a year compared with 11 percent in a small first-offender group who had been formally processed. In addition to this, the cost of processing an offender through the alternative programme was obviously less (figures of \$836 vs \$1923 for the 'traditional' methods are quoted). These, plus the fact that self-evaluation provides a valuable learning experience makes such a programme an attractive option.

While it would be foolhardy to simply import such a programme to Victoria, there is a real argument for working towards such an alternative in Victoria. There is an obvious analogy with the lecture evenings run by the Victoria Police and others for convicted drunken drivers, although a programme for detected shop-thieves may

be more appropriately administered by, say, honorary probation officers as part of their expanded role.

7.5 RETAILERS' RESPONSIBILITIES

The foregoing discussions about the police and courts give a good indication of why so many retailers do not report shop thieves to the police. (It does not, of course, explain all such omissions to report.)

But it is not right to suggest that the problem of shop-theft is somehow exacerbated only by the criminal justice system's operation. Retailers have a responsibility for the growth in shop-thefts which has to be acknowledged. Angenent's 1981 review of the shop-theft literature includes references to retailers providing temptation to steal, thus making them jointly responsible for shop-thefts, if not guilty of inciting offences.

A particularly strong critic of retailers' own contribution to their victimisation is Adley (1979) who points out that "shoplifting is bringing into the net of the criminal classes many people who have never previously committed any crime". He shows that increased use of self-service retail outlets coincides with increased shop-thefts, and suggests that in the absence of any massive defect in the English population the increase in shop-thefts is, therefore, easily explained. The trend to self service shopping was "simultaneously a joyride for criminals and a snare for the forgetful, the weak and the confused". It is these "unintentional" shop-thieves about whom Adley is most concerned; they are confused or intimidated by modern retailing techniques. Adley's major recommendation will be discussed later.

Most retailers budget for losses through shrinkage, which includes theft by customers. It appears that deterrent security equipment is often only installed when losses through shrinkage becomes damaging to the economic viability of the retailer. Clarke (1980) points out that many shops

"... which could reduce shoplifting by giving up self-service methods and employing more assistants or even store detectives have calculated that this would not be worth the expense, either in direct costs or in a

reduction of turnover. Morally dubious as this policy might at first sight appear, these shops may simply have learned a lesson of more general application, that is, a certain level of crime may be the inevitable consequence of practices and institutions which we cherish or find convenient, and the cost of reducing crime below this level may be unacceptable."

The English Home Office report (1973) makes the guarded conclusion that "it does appear that where losses can be kept below 2% many retailers are not much concerned about preventing them". But Jackson (1972) in his discussion of theft from shops, is most alarmed by that attitude:

"On any reckoning of social values it must seem a poor thing for thefts to be disregarded and in effect condoned because in money terms it does not pay to set in train legal process; instead of the deterrent that should result from the case going to court the thief learns that thieving is easy, profitable and most unlikely to result in anything really unpleasant, even when he is caught red-handed."

While Jackson does not appreciate the practical reality of retailing it is true that retailers have an obligation to engage in some attempt to protect their own property. The average Victorian driver knows that it is an offence for him to leave his vehicle with the keys in the ignition, as it provides an opportunity for a car thief. But, on the face of it at least, a retailer not only does not have to protect his own property, but he openly flaunts it. The way in which retailers might be forced to consider these issues is, of course, a difficult problem. However, the following is an imaginative suggestion by Pease (1979). He suggests that police availability be dependent upon the payment of a premium. Thus:

"...The owner of a supermarket who places goods on open display and has no evident security devices but a large security staff is likely to call the police many times each year to deal with shoplifters. It is possible to calculate on the basis of the store's arrangement what the expected cost of police time is during the year. Let us say that the shopkeeper is likely to have 20 shoplifters prosecuted each year, and the cost of each prosecution is (\$200). Under the scheme the shopkeeper is required to pay an annual premium of (\$4000) before he is allowed to call the police for a shoplifting incident. A shopkeeper who takes adequate security precautions and who is likely to call the police once or less per year, will be required to pay no premium at all. This provides a real incentive for shopkeepers to prevent shoplifting."

Interestingly one respondent in the current research provides a comment relevant to this issue. He relates how he wished to take additional security precautions and was given a quote from a security firm of \$2000,

"...a lot of money for a small store to outlay. We contacted the insurance company to enquire as to how much the security system would decrease our premiums by. They informed us that the total decrease in premiums would be \$2. We therefore decided because of the little difference it made to the insurance company, it was not worth the large outlay of money to make the store secure. It is cheaper for me to have the merchandise stolen and then claim the amount of loss from the insurance company. I would be interested to know how many other small businesses are confronted with this same problem."

Plainly such a retailer should receive encouragement to protect his own property. If he cannot get it through a business arrangement, the Government should provide it. After all the Government encourages social responsibility in other ways - for instance it encourages conservation of energy resources by offering tax concession for home insulation, and reduces petrol consumption by keeping the cost of LP gas low, thus encouraging motorists to convert their cars. Alternatively, legislation requiring certain minimum standards could be implemented. Victoria has such legislation requiring steering locks on motor vehicles, and the use of safety belts within them. There are obvious precedents for Governmental muscle to be used to produce socially-desirable behaviour.

Pease's suggestion is obviously intended to encourage discussion on this point - it must be pursued. But physical and material considerations are not the only way in which retailers can exercise their responsibility to prevent shop-thefts in addition to trying to detect those active in that pursuit. One retailer with 30 years retail experience and 200 successful shop-theft prosecutions over the last three years suggested that:

"Customer service of the highest quality and the numbers of staff to handle this at all times, is the only effective method of keeping this problem to an absolute minimum."

And many other retailers support his view, emphasising such things as, "supervision and old fashioned personal service", encouraging staff to "hound shoplifters" or simply carefully watching believed shoplifters and "not giving them opportunities". Such approaches may well have been developed as defensive techniques against customer thefts, but one retailer explains her rationale thus:

"After one bad experience of trying to catch a shoplifter, I do not try anymore. We just try to prevent, even to the extent of being rude to some people."

One particularly emphatic view was provided by a retailer with over 40 years experience. He supports the views expressed in this section with great enthusiasm. He was:

"Brought up on the assumption it was the retailer's job to employ sufficient staff to stop shoplifters. Also not to put temptation in front of poor people by displaying high priced goods within easy reach. Today in large chain stores in particular these basic principles are not overlooked, they are not even known by a new breed of executives who know no humanity. They only put large signs telling the public shoplifting is a crime, while they tempt them by no staff and high priced goods for the reaching. In most shoplifting cases I would charge the store concerned with aiding and abetting crime similar to a hotel serving a drunk. I suggest that if such a law was passed, where stores had to prove reasonable security or face prosecution alongside the shoplifter then justice would be served."

7.6 EDUCATION AND PUBLICITY

Increasing community awareness of the extent and consequences of shop-thefts is a common theme expressed by many respondents. This could be done through media campaigns directed at the whole community, or through more formal educational programmes aimed at the young. One retailer suggested the thrust of the latter should be along the following lines:

"There is a great need for education at secondary level and at community level to get the community to respect retailing as a community necessity and that to function it must make profit, and not incur losses. If the losses exceed the profit it ceases to exist."

An apparent community disdain for retailers and the inappropriateness of the word "Shoplifting" are often seen as targets for any campaign:

"The term shoplifting has induced people to believe that shop thieving is not really thieving, that is a crime, but that it falls more into the category of a prank. Shop thieving has to be approached in a more serious manner by both retailers and the judiciary in order that the practice does not become endemic in our society."

"There appears to be a general feeling in the community that shoplifting is not the same as stealing - that it is in some way a very minor offence and that the retailer is largely responsible because of the open way goods are displayed."

One retailer who sees education as desirable, nevertheless suggests that it may be most difficult to achieve because of community mores. He says:

"I believe that shoplifting at the amateur level is often motivated by the same thoughts that prompt people to cheat on their tax returns:

1. They have already got plenty out of me.
2. They owe me.
3. It is worth the try since the chances of getting away with it are high.
4. It serves them right for making it so easy and putting temptation in my way."

Recent research by Ray (1981) suggests that this depiction of community mores is mistaken. He found that his small samples of disparate Australians were "strongly disapproving of shoplifting". Retailers' experiences of the commonness of theft by customers seems at odds with Ray's general findings that "Australians have become thoroughly bourgeois in their attitude to crime", and that "there is very little social support for shoplifting in present-day Australia". Notwithstanding these comments it is certain that some educative campaigns would be useful, and there are many instances of media (educational) campaigns aimed at alerting the public to the problem, and hoping to reduce that activity. Hiew (1981) provides a good example of a multi-pronged approach. The city of Fredericton in Canada declared one week as 'Anti-shoplifting Week' in the city. Prior to that week, students in local schools were given lectures, participated in an essay contest, designed posters for later use and completed questionnaires about shop-thefts. During the week itself, posters were prominently displayed in shops, employees in those shops wore special buttons, 20,000 placemats were distributed to restaurants and 10,000 bookmarks to bookstores and libraries. Radio jingles, TV interviews, talks to service clubs, local newspaper

articles and a display in the local shopping centre were all implemented in order to saturate the local community. Hiew's figures indicate reduction in both apprehension of shop thieves and their prosecution after this massive campaign.

Less vigorous campaigns in Australia have produced similar results, but apparently only in the short-term. Thus it seems such campaigns need to be run with some regularity to keep community interest (and responsibility) high. These campaigns, however, are expensive and financial support for them needs to be found. Most commonly retailers fund them, and that is consistent with retailers exercising some responsibility, and should therefore be applauded. But there is also a role for the Government Treasury if shop-thefts are the great problem they appear to be. Government directly funds massive campaigns against drink driving, and for healthy exercise. Each of these is aimed at securing the well-being of the electorate. An infusion of funds into campaigns encouraging social responsibility is most important. The budget of the Victoria Police Crime Prevention Unit scarcely allows them to engage in the activities they professionally believe worthwhile. As it is, community groups such as the Lions Club through their "Speak Up" campaign, are making more inroads on the local community than the poorly funded police unit is able to do.

This argument is put forward in full knowledge of the latest English work that indicates that changes in actual behaviour are unlikely as a result of a media campaign (Clarke and Mayhew 1980). For instance, there it has been discovered that a concerted campaign against vandalism increased community awareness of the problem, but did not actually reduce vandalism activity to any great extent.

Specifically in the area of shop-theft Bickman (1975) mounted a campaign aimed at encouraging shoppers to report shop-thieves. He found changes in people's attitudes and their intentions after being subjected to the campaign, but no change in the way they actually behaved. The criticism of these generally negative findings is that they only tested behavioural changes over comparatively short periods of time. Most commercial advertisers know that they need to keep their campaigns going for some time in order to change people's

(buying) behaviour. So too, should an anti-shop-theft campaign be conducted over a long period.

A further dimension of the publicity argument relates to publicising details of detected shop-thieves. Considerable support for this action was expressed through respondents' comments. Thus some retailers suggested that names of convicted people should be published in all newspapers though whether or not this would be a deterrent is, of course, a moot point. A more positive view with respect to such publicity is that the public would become more aware of the high occurrence of these offences and the fact that culprits were not only being caught, but formally charged. One retailer suggested that:

"Catching the offenders and showing them up in front of other people and telling them not to come to the shop again (was) the best way to handle them. It works."

This action is far more personalised "publicity" than, for instance, photographing shop-thieves and publicly displaying such photographs, and/or thieves' addresses in the shop. Kaiser (1976) describes this sort of action as "Lynch Law" which aims "without exception, to take revenge and deter offenders". There seems no doubt that the first aim is achieved, but the second is unproven. Most literature on deterrence indicates that the risk of apprehension is the most important factor with respect to deterring offenders. It may well be that even when a lot of photographs are displayed in a store, an incoming shop-thief may believe he will still not be caught and has nothing to worry about.

7.7 LEGAL REMEDIES

Legal remedies to the increasing occurrence of shop-thefts are not immediately easy to suggest. In West Germany the increasing numbers of detected shop-thieves caused the Government to adopt new methods of dealing with them. Huber (1980) describes how the Public Prosecutor there is able to decide not to take an offender to court with an option of himself levying a monetary penalty against such an offender. Victoria, of course, has no Public Prosecutor and it is the police who effectively decide whether to press charges.

With respect to juveniles in particular, the police do have an option of formally cautioning the offender, but they do not, nor should they, have the option of inflicting some particular penalty. Critics of the German system have argued that shoplifting and other petty forms of criminality with low danger to society, should be taken out of the criminal law and transferred into the realm of administrative infractions. As Huber points out

"... Probably the most important difficulty would be where and how to draw the line between decriminalized shoplifting handled by administrative authorities with non-penal sanctions and the crime of theft from a shop, punished by a court."

Adley's (1979) main recommendation after considering the plight of the "unintentional" shop-thief, is to implement a separate complaint of "taking goods from a shop without authority and without making payment", in addition to the criminal offence of theft. He describes this new procedure as a

"...civil complaint leading to a finding of complaint proved. It would not amount to a criminal conviction or an offence of dishonesty and an intention to steal would not be a necessary ingredient of the proof required. The sanction would be an order for the return of goods to their rightful owner together with an order for the payment of costs against the respondent."

An obvious objection to Adley's recommendation is that it could open the floodgates to shop-thieves by ensuring that, at least initially, they would not render themselves liable to a criminal conviction. But in a situation where, as has been shown, the majority of detected shop-thieves are not dealt with in any formal criminal jurisdiction anyway, that argument lacks strength. Having such a complaint proven would become relevant to any future prosecution for shop-theft, and would certainly be considered by the Court at that time.

Adley's main concern is that innocent but absent-minded or forgetful shoppers are caught in an inappropriate criminal net. But the percentage of all shop-thieves who could be described as unintentional must surely be low. Retail security staff and police personnel consider all cases before proceeding to Court, it is not unreasonable to expect them to exercise appropriate discretion with a thief who they believe really is unintentional.

Adley's suggestion has the effect of introducing another filter into the criminal processing procedure, and in effect it has much in common with the "Alternative Draft for an Act Against Shoplifting", mentioned by Huber. That involves punishing an offender

"...only if he has committed his third shoplifting offence within 2 years or if the value is (substantial)... For the first two thefts the victim can charge by way of restitution demanding an amount up to the price of the stolen goods... If the offender wants to keep the goods the victim can demand double the price for it."

That suggestion is virtually reducing shop-theft to minor deviance, and it is getting close to suggesting on-the-spot tickets for shop-thieves. As Victoria currently has such devices for speeding motorists and litterbugs it is very possible that this suggestion might be made seriously in the future. But that would be a bad move. Shop-theft is after all theft, and to officially condone small, or first, thefts would create a most unhealthy society.

A simple change to the legislation relating to theft is also worth consideration. In the manner of some American legislation, adopting concealment as sufficient proof of intent to steal from a shop might be a useful way to help retailers with the issue of intent. Thus, any customer who conceals goods for which he has not paid would be seen as having the intention of stealing them from the shop. The majority of shoppers do not conceal by placing in bags or pockets, goods for which they intend to pay. Absent minded or unintentional shop-thieves (for whom Adley has such concern) may also not necessarily conceal goods for which they might presently be charged with stealing. Thus, an old man who wanders absent mindedly out of a store whilst holding in his hand goods for which he had every intention of paying would not be proceeded against for theft. Obviously concealment itself needs careful definition to allow, say, a supermarket customer to use her own shopping bag in preference to a heavy trolley. And retailers would have to publicise the situation to shoppers. But considered legislation of this sort could clarify this difficult issue.

A most interesting contribution to this discussion is the 1981 Victorian Crimes (Classification of Offences) Act. That Act provides

a new section 326 for the Crimes Act that defines a new offence of concealing an offence "for benefit". However the new section 326(2) states that

"it is no offence ... to fail to disclose the commission of any (theft)... if the only benefit accepted in return for failing to disclose (it) is the making good of any loss or injury caused by its commission or the making of reasonable compensation."

This means that a retailer who detects a shop-thief with \$10 worth of his stock can make good his loss - that is, demand payment of \$10 - without himself committing an offence of concealing another's offence. The data presented earlier clearly indicates that this is an option currently exercised by some Victorian retailers. This legislation thus allows for the victim and the offender to resolve their differences without the intervention of any outside (criminal justice) agency. This return to the old concept of conciliation between the aggrieved parties has much to recommend it. But a major disadvantage of the procedure is that a prolific (or professional) shop-thief may not be identified due to his activities not being recorded in any central location, for instance, in official police records.

In allowing for "reasonable compensation", the new Act, might allow retailers to demand payment from a detected shop-thief over and above the cost of the stolen goods. The validity of such a practice would need to be legally tested in the Courts, but if allowable it would effectively permit retailers to impose their own de-facto fines. Thus a detected shop-thief who admits his guilt could, after having relevant information noted about him, be charged a processing fee to compensate the retailer for the time and energy that has been wasted dealing with him. It would have the effect of reducing criminal justice to the private level unless diligently monitored by a Government agency which should control the level of processing fees and prevent abuses.

7.8 POSSIBLE MOVES FOR RETAILERS

Generally speaking retailers move more slowly with respect to security matters than they do with respect to merchandising techniques. Nevertheless, they have implemented moves such as using

some uniformed security staff, to tackle retail crime. Prominent changes have also occurred in physical security equipment used by retailers including the electronic cash-register (which monitors stock levels), one-way mirrors, pressure-mats, invisible ray detectors, loop-alarm systems and magnetic pricetagging. Recent research by Hastings (1981) suggests that while most customers are aware of such equipment, they do not find them "off-putting". A possible exception is closed circuit T.V. which is seen as obtrusive by 15 percent of a small random sample of English shoppers. Overall, however, there seems little customer opposition to security devices, an argument often advanced by retailers for not installing increased physical security equipment. Apart from this equipment there are, other low-cost moves they could make especially with respect to reducing shop-theft. Some examples follow.

Firstly, the identification and special labelling of high-risk goods could be a worthwhile practice. In a well organized experiment McNees et al (1976) found that by placing general signs about shop-theft around a high-risk (women's clothing) selling area, there was a reduction in stealing from it, as measured by stock loss rather than by numbers of detected shop-thieves. Particular identification of high-risk goods by large and prominent signs on display stands holding such goods were found to have an even greater reducing effect on the level of theft. It appears that potential thieves were deterred by those notices which indicated that the retailer was well aware of potential thefts and, by implication, was probably watching out for them. A subsequent experiment by Thurber and Snow (1980) however, concluded that special signs might encourage rather than discourage shopthieves. Their research found that disappearance of cigarettes from a supermarket increased when the sign "CIGARETTES are the items most often SHOPLIFTED in this store" was displayed over the cigarette carton display. They suggested that young shoppers may have seen that sign as a challenge, but an equally viable explanation is that internal thefts increased in the belief that customers were the focus for security staff's attention. If anything these conflicting studies indicate that retailers need to evaluate the appropriateness of measures they might institute to reduce shop-thefts.

Most retailers have identified some high-risk goods they carry and have placed them under special security and made them harder to steal. This trend towards physical security has also produced such variations as installing dummy equipment such as television cameras which give an intending shop-thief the idea that security is tight. Placing doubt in the minds of potential shop-thieves could also be achieved by the quaint practice of hiring actors to pose as shop-thieves who are then taken away by store security in full view of shoppers, or by installing dummy mirror-windowed observation booths, which may or may not be empty, on the selling floor.

Another direction in which retailers could currently move is towards enlisting the co-operation of honest shoppers. An English retailer recently solicited the public's help by placing an advertisement in the local paper offering \$50 reward for help in identifying a shoplifter whose photograph was reproduced from a video tape still. (Victorians are accustomed to posters of this sort, asking for assistance in identifying bank robbers.) Such an advertisement firstly helps in tracking down an offender, secondly, it indicates to the community that shop-thieves are serious offenders, and thirdly that retailers would be grateful for assistance in tackling this problem.

Another imaginative way of enlisting support from honest shoppers would be through implementing a reward system for them. McLaughlin (1976) has suggested that discount cards valid for say, six months could be given to such people. Specifically, a shopper reporting a shop-thief might earn a 9 percent card, and one who testifies at a shop-thief's court hearing might earn 15 percent. Knowledge of such a reward system might cause a potential shop-thief to transact his business elsewhere on the grounds that everybody in the shop is a potential detector of his behaviour. Increasing a shop-thief's perception of the likelihood of his being caught, seems to be a most useful avenue of approach.

8. EPILOGUE

While this research has indicated the relatively high level of criminal victimisation of retailers, and has made some suggestions about possible measures that might be taken, the retailer's problem with shop-thieves remains considerable. Nothing short of a general

revision of community attitudes towards shop-theft will achieve any but a minor change in levels of shop-theft activity. The prospect of changing those attitudes seems unlikely but that is no reason not to continue trying to.

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