How Prolific Thieves Sell Stolen Goods:

Describing, Understanding and Tackling the Local Markets in Mansfield and Nottingham

A Market Reduction Approach[1] Study

By Mike Sutton[2]

"*If the police want to stop crime then they should get intelligence. Talk to people like me, like you are doing here. Like if I was a police officer I'd clean up my area in weeks. You know what I mean. They must be stupid or don't have that mentality - live totally different lives from the criminal - you know what I mean. So they don't have that mentality to understand.*"
(N9)

"I've got different people about the place that I'll take different types of items to. Like electrical goods might go one place, power tools or whatever goes to another place - to whichever person that can sell that type of thing. And do my deal with him and then he'll do his deal with whoever he does his deal with."
(M2)

"I always think that everybody gets their comeuppance, know what I mean, society's going to have a look at these places sooner or later."
(N5)

[1] The Market Reduction Approach (MRA) was conceived by Dr Mike Sutton while working in the UK Home Office Research and Statistics Directorate's Policing and Reducing Crime Unit. The MRA is a UK Home Office recommended crime reduction strategy.

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1. Introduction

Aiming to reduce acquisitive crimes and associated offending, Nottinghamshire Constabulary is considering adopting the Market Reduction Approach (MRA) to tackle stolen goods markets in order to reduce theft. As a first step, this report provides a review of findings from a study of local stolen goods markets in Nottingham and Mansfield. The study examined the ways that local stolen goods markets operate and their influence upon local theft levels and criminal careers. Funding for the study was provided by Nottinghamshire County Council's Communities Department.

The findings in this report come from in-depth interviews conducted in the summer of 2006 with 20 offenders under supervision by Mansfield and Nottingham's prolific offender units. Some interviewees admitted that they were active offenders. Others were making a concerted effort to remain out of trouble. Most had recently completed a spell in custody.

Theft levels in context

Against a background of nationally falling theft and burglary levels in the UK since 2005, it is important to note when thinking that this must be good news that crimes are not evenly distributed and are often highly concentrated in particular local administrative areas such as electoral wards, and even more so within notorious neighbourhoods. Just because national or local crime analysis that lumps neighbourhoods together by economic and demographic criteria finds that levels of crime are falling, does not mean that crimes are necessarily falling in notorious neighbourhoods. Differential crime concentration is not revealed by broad homogenised statistics that look at the national or regional figures. More specifically, locations where different types of acquisitive crimes are concentrated depend upon the type of theft being examined. Thefts from motor vehicles, street robbery, commercial burglaries and domestic burglaries will almost certainly have different hot-spot locations that are dependent upon: 1 where the victims or suitable targets of theft are; 2 where the suitably motivated offenders live, hang-out and travel through; and 3 where there is an absence of capable guardianship (Felson 1998). All of this is discussed again in greater depth in Chapter 5 of this report, within the context of using the MRA to tackle theft rates.

Many key factors outside of policing and other crime reduction initiatives influence increases in theft and its reductions, incidence, prevalence and concentration rates (Farrell and Pease 1993). For example, much depends upon what point in time serves as the base-line for measuring the particular crime trends of interest. If the start point, for example, is one where theft levels were particularly high then it is likely that they will fall anyway - as crime levels, like many things in life, generally tend to go only so high before they inevitably fall. This is a phenomenon known as regression to the mean (Anslin et al 2000). Other reasons why national and/or local high-volume theft levels rise and fall include a combination of possible factors including the number of males aged between 15 and 25 currently in the population, the economy, unemployment levels, trends in both licit and illicit drugs consumption (including alcohol), and the availability

and vulnerability to theft of highly sought after and relatively expensive goods alongside an existing or potential illicit market for them (Sutton 1995). This last factor, the impact of stolen goods markets on the behaviour of thieves and upon levels of theft, is the main focus of this report. The report also includes how the MRA (Sutton 1998, 2001, 2004a, 2005) might be used in routine and systematic ways to reduce particular types of market in order to reduce theft and criminality and to crack-down upon the crimemongers (Sutton 2007) who motivate thieves and facilitate their offending. Before moving on to examine what is currently known about the shape and day-to-day trading dynamics of stolen goods markets it is useful at this point to examine the relevant criminal law.

The law and its focus upon complicity in handling stolen goods cases

Many people are not aware that the offence of handling stolen goods carries a maximum penalty of 14 years, which is as high as that available for domestic burglary – the intention of the legislation (Section 22 of the Theft 1968) being to punish and deter those creating a demand for stolen goods – and therefore motivating thieves to steal. And yet this intention has been strangely neglected by all but the handful of social commentators, police officers lawyers and criminologists who have raised the issue of stolen goods from time to time.

This intention of the legislators is arguably, not being met by current criminal justice prosecution and sentencing practice. Burglars know that in reality they will receive a much lesser penalty for handling than for burglary. Consequently, when caught in possession of goods that they have stolen – goods that provide a direct trail of evidence to the crime – they will frequently opt to admit to handling stolen goods if the police will not pursue the burglary charge. One prolific burglar from Mansfield (M2), in the following excerpts from his dialogue with the author Mike Sutton (MS), explained how this happens:

M2 had stolen two black bin bags of silverware during a domestic burglary. On his way to sell it 2 days later, his car was stopped by police officers and searched. He said that this was because he was *generally suspected* because he was as a known criminal:

> **M2** - " 'Cause I wasn't caught with it within a certain amount of time of which the theft or burglary had actually taken place, then they couldn't charge me with the actual burglary."
>
> **MS** - "What made you plead guilty to handling rather than the burglary?"
>
> **M2** - " Burglary is a worser charge – you get a longer prison sentence for it. Er, so basically I was caught with the stuff so it was about damage limitations, getting the lesser charge that I could. I got a hundred and fifty days [imprisonment]."
>
> **MS**: What do you think you would have got for burglary?

M2 "Anything between 18 months and three years[3]."

M2 said that he knew that handling carried an equally long or longer sentence than burglary, but he said that such sentences were only imposed in extreme cases: "…not in a minor case like this."

Compared with other areas of offending, such as burglary and robbery, there has been relatively little research into who buys stolen goods and the factors that influence demand for them. One thing is certain though, and that is that most stolen goods are sold - as opposed to disappearing into the homes of a hidden army of property fetishists and kleptomaniacs. The hard reality is that most goods stolen from houses and cars, or from businesses such as shops, are sold within half an hour of the theft. They are then openly enjoyed in other houses, cars or else on the streets. This very fact is at the root of earlier studies and general written accounts of stolen goods markets, where authors are concerned about the level of criminal complicity among buyers. From the criminal law and justice perspective, complicity is important because it reflects: 1 the prerequisite guilty mind and guilty action; and 2 the fact that knowing buyers, or reckless buyers, of stolen goods are at the very least anti-social with regard to the impact of their behaviour on the victimisation of others.

Establishing proof of complicity is difficult because the current law in England and Wales treats the offence of handling stolen goods with particular caution. Section 22 (1) of the Theft Act 1968 requires guilt to be established on the basis of 'knowledge' or 'belief' that goods are stolen and the jury or magistrate must infer from the circumstances of the case whether the defendant had such 'knowledge' or 'belief'. Judicial interpretation of the statute has been such that a mere suspicion that goods are stolen is not enough to lead to a conviction for handling unless the defendant either knows or is virtually certain that they are stolen goods (Hall 1952). In this connection, Glanville Williams (1985) stressed the need to understand the meaning of *belief* within Section 22 that goods are stolen as: '…the sort of belief we would associate with a devout religious believer' not as a belief that the goods are probably stolen. In supporting such a strictly narrow interpretation Williams argues: '…people must be allowed a margin of safety. If they cannot buy goods that they know to be probably stolen then they cannot safely buy goods when there is an appreciable possibility that they are stolen, because no one knows when lawyers, judges and juries between them may not turn possibilities into probabilities.' This consideration, above all others, places severe constraints on what can be achieved in the way of controlling theft and burglary by purely legal measures aimed at receiving. That said, perhaps police services should make more use of the little-used section 27 of the Theft Act 1968 when dealing with known and previously convicted prolific thieves and handlers. This section allows for joint prosecution of those suspected of stealing and/or handling stolen goods. More importantly under section 27 it is possible, for the purpose of proving that a person knew or believed goods to be stolen, to present evidence of earlier convictions for theft or handling stolen goods. In this way, section 27

[3] The last time M2 was sentenced for burglary he received 18 months.

can be used to streamline the process of proving criminal intent of theft or handling for those who have been convicted of theft or handling within a five year period prior to a current charge – and who has in their possession stolen goods from a theft occurring no more than 12 months prior to that current charge. In addition, several police constabularies and councils, including Nottinghamshire, have been behind the implementation of local Acts of Parliament to add new rules and powers. These include additional requirements for dealers to show due diligence regarding the provenance of goods bought from the public and creating a legal obligation upon dealers to record where/from whom they purchased second-hand goods. The Nottingham City Council Act 2003 requires that those who buy from dealers to have their addresses recorded by those dealers (See Appendix 1).

Where consumers of stolen goods purchase them directly from a thief, they are more likely to face the risk of coming within the ambit of section 22, since such buying at the doorstep, workplace, pub or friend's house has less of the outwardly legitimate qualities associated with the type of seemingly legitimate retail outlet used by a professional fencing operation. So that those consumers buying stolen goods from a seemingly legitimate retail establishment, even if they know or believe the goods to be stolen, face less risk of prosecution. As Klockars (1974) writes: '…one may obtain a bill for whatever one buys …such a bill serves as a ticket to legitimize the purchase.' In other more dubious situations, when selling and buying items which they know or believe to be stolen people tend to use a number of linguistic *guilt neutralisation clichés* such as: "It fell off the back of a lorry"; "It's bankrupt stock"; "Ask no questions and get told no lies"; "It came from a friend of a friend who works in the business" "Don't look a gift-horse in the mouth" (Henry 1977, 1978, 1981; Ditton, 1977; Hobbs 1989).

To add to the complexity of stolen goods markets and issues of complicity – sellers sometimes pass goods off as stolen when they are not. The street hawker sells goods out of a suitcase on London's Oxford Street - talks rapidly and acts nervously, employing lookouts to stand on wastebaskets to see above the heads of the crowd to warn of approaching police officers. He sells cheap gold looking necklaces and chants: 'All stolen, they're all stolen.' According to Henry (1978): 'He is in fact a conman who buys second-rate, inferior goods in order to sell them at a price higher than their true value. He does this by falsely claiming that the goods are stolen and relies on this to explain their cheap price.' The same point is picked up by Walsh (1977): 'Once the greed of the customer takes over, his own perceptions of the situation will make him more interested in striking a bargain than in inspecting the quality of the merchandise at issue'[4] (For other examples see also Klockars 1974 and Steffensmeier, 1986).

An early writer on this theme is the London magistrate Patrick Colquhoun (1796), who set out to examine the degree to which eighteenth century buyers of stolen goods had guilty knowledge regarding the provenance of their purchases. Noting the existence of professional *Criminal Receivers* as dealers in stolen goods Colquhoun also distinguished between *Careless Receivers* and *Innocent Receivers*. The first of these three types of

[4] As another example, one of the Nottingham respondents explained how on one occasion he and a friend bought cheap watches from a warehouse and sold them for a profit in local pubs pretending that they were 'hot stolen property.'

buyer is the most serious offender – the middleman of the theft business and knowing crime facilitator. The second type have a reckless disregard for the origin of goods – asking no questions and purchasing whatever they want that is on offer. As the name states, the last type innocently purchase stolen goods – believing them to be legitimately bought by the seller.

Two centuries later, the important distinction between 'professional fences' and those who purchase stolen goods in the workplace or over the doorstep was again emphasized in Jerome Hall's (1952) three-fold typology: the *Lay Receiver* – 'one who knowingly buys stolen property for his own consumption'; the *Occasional Receiver* – 'one who buys stolen property for resale but very infrequently'; the *Professional Receiver* – 'the dealer in stolen goods'. Hall's aim was to reform the law in the United States of America by emphasising the role of the professional receiver in the marketing of stolen goods and his typology has been criticised because of this (Klockars, 1974): '…his images of lay and occasional receivers are unduly sparse and flat. They suggest nothing of the trade in stolen property among amateur thieves and dabbling dealers which thrives in bars, schools, factories and neighbourhoods.'

Colquhoun's description of receivers probably better described the fuller picture of the type of buyer in stolen goods markets. What is most needed for a policy oriented approach to the problem of stolen goods markets is a description that includes an understanding of complicity and one that is based upon systematic research into the variety of stolen goods markets and how they actually operate. This means examining the social dynamics of the *trading side* of the stolen goods business – who does what to/with whom, where, when, why, in which way and with what effects. This is covered in this report, starting with some important results from earlier research before moving on to examine the stolen goods markets in Mansfield and Nottingham. The report concludes with recommendations for reducing these markets with the MRA.

Trading dynamics: understanding the impact of stolen goods markets on theft and criminal careers

When the author first examined the role played by stolen goods markets in theft generation, answers to two main questions were sought (Sutton 1993):

i) Does demand for stolen goods explain the rate of theft, and does an increase in demand cause an increase in theft?
ii) What happens to stolen goods? In particular, what proportion of stolen goods is processed by professional fences and what proportion by other receivers?

Fourteen years later these questions have been answered. The answers came from a review all the available literature, interviewing in-depth over 150 prolific thieves and designing stolen goods questions and analysed their answers for the 1994 British Crime Survey (Sutton 1998)[5].

[5] Where 9646 respondents were asked about buying stolen goods.

The answer to the first question is that it is impossible to say that theft is demand led – or supply led for that matter. Rather than simply stealing to order, research reveals (Sutton 1998) that prolific thieves such as burglars, shop lifters and others who steal from vehicles frequently *steal to offer*. More local research in this area, such as the information contained within this report, reveals new ways to reduce theft by reducing demand for stolen goods by reducing criminal opportunities at the places where thieves sell them. While some thieves do steal to order (Sutton 1998) this does not mean that individual burglaries, for example, are simply the direct result of a burglars' knowledge of what items are inside a particular home. In fact, research shows that individual ownership of "suitable targets" (Cohen and Felson 1979) is a poor predictor of burglary risk because many burglars do not know what items a dwelling contains before breaking in (Mieth and Mier 1990). Therefore, in cases where burglars do not know their victim the crime may well be demand-led. However, the reasons why particular houses belonging to strangers are selected for burglary – e.g. less risk of detection or apprehension (Bennett and Wright 1984) - are not the same as those that influence a burglar's decision to steal particular items from a stranger's home once they are inside. Although the increase in things worth stealing in peoples homes over the past few decades is likely to be important (Witte 1993, Sutton 1995). As Johnson et al (1993) and Clarke (1999) point out; offenders have a hierarchy of goods that they prefer to take. And most houses contain at least some of those hot products (Sutton 1995). Since most prolific burglars steal from strangers because they want money, top of their list is cash, followed by items that can be easily sold for relatively high prices such as jewellery and hi-technology home entertainment equipment that is in demand. All of this suggests that it is stolen goods markets, then, and knowledge of what can be sold in them that motivate thieves because most steal goods to sell for cash, irrespective of whatever they want to spend that cash on.

From this, it seems reasonable to suggest that the general increase in ownership of lightweight consumer durables and associated products such as CDs and DVDs, laptops, I-Pods, flat screen TVs and portable satellite navigation systems is leading burglars and other thieves to quite rightly assume that many properties are likely to contain these 'suitable targets' for theft. In addition to increased numbers of things worth stealing from peoples homes over the past five decades or so, levels of acquisitive crime have been linked to both recessions in the economy and high birth rates in the population (Field 1990). At such times, these factors may have an impact on the thief's motivation via their customers' decreased financial resources and increased material wants and needs. For this reason, among others, studies of annual theft rates regularly show overall patterns of increase and decline that have little to do with successful policing or crime reduction measures.

If there is a greater demand for cheap second-hand goods among new families or during a recession, more people will – innocently, recklessly or knowingly – buy stolen property (Sutton 1995). In recent years the UK economy has been stronger and more stable and stolen goods markets may not have been so driven by sudden increases in relative depravation. However, demand for drugs among those with problem drug 'habits' does appear to be playing an important role since some 29 percent of arrested thieves are

heroin or cocaine users. Regular users of these drugs are currently the most prolific offenders, probably responsible for more than three fifths of illegal income generated by thieves selling stolen gods in England and Wales (Bennett et al 2001). It is not surprising then that so many crime experts now see drug use as the root of the theft problem. However, in-depth interviews with prolific thieves (Sutton 1998; Sutton et al 2001) also reveal that drug dealers are usually reluctant to exchange goods for drugs. Thieves know they can get more drugs if they sell their stolen booty and buy drugs with cash, rather than taking hot goods to their drug dealer where the exchange rate is at best poor and more usually the dealer will not be interested in trying to sell the goods when selling drugs offers a higher margin of profit and less hassle.[6] Ultimately, this means that stolen goods markets play as important a part as regular hard drug use in explaining high theft rates. Logically then, these markets represent an important opportunity for crime reduction initiatives.

Arguably, the most valid predictor of what burglars choose to steal is whether or not they believe an item can be sold easily for a good price. This means knowing who wants to buy what and knowing how much they will pay. While weight and portability of items will be considered by thieves, this will only happen if they believe the goods to be saleable once removed (Sutton 1995). Considerations regarding weight and portability will be balanced against prices. Motivation to remove more difficult objects is likely to rise along with demand for them. By way of example, many new home cinema-type widescreen television sets outweigh smaller models of a few years ago but they are being stolen because they are valuable. As more expensive and desirable lightweight flat plasma screen sets come onto the market, and less expensive but cutting edge LCD sets become the must have item in the living room and bedroom they will be very high up the offenders' *mental loot lists* – along with laptop computers, jewellery, credit cards and CD/DVD collections.

Both Ron Clarke and Marcus Felson, in their highly influential earlier works on SCP and Routine Activities Theory (RAT) (Cohen and Felson 1979), had 'taken for granted' the existence of motivated offenders prior to the publication of a paper in the British Journal of Criminology that criticised them for this (Sutton 1995) followed by the Home Office Handling Study (Sutton 1998). So they had not capitalised on the fact that stolen goods markets could be tackled with a series of strategies to increase the risks and reduce the rewards of selling and buying stolen goods in ways that fit perfectly with, and build upon, the philosophy of both SCP and RAT[7].This is an important point because tackling theft in this way might satisfy the demands of writers and crime prevention practitioners who wish to deal with the underlying causes of criminal motivation as well as the vulnerability of victims' possessions (Sutton 1996). The ways that this can be achieved with the MRA are set out in the following sub-sections and chapters of this report that describe the social dynamics of the stealing and dealing process, who is involved, why, how, what effect this has on theft, and how best to reduce the markets they deal in. The aim of all

[6] Interestingly thieves regularly report that when drug dealers do except goods in exchange for drugs it is when they want the goods – such as gold jewelry and designer clothes for their own use (Sutton 2004).

[7] Both Clarke and Felson have now addressed this issue in their later work and clearly recognise and highlight the importance of knowing about and tackling stolen goods markets.

this is to identify points of intervention for reducing theft as well as prosecuting those who facilitate crime yet evade punishment by the criminal justice system.

2. What do stolen goods markets look like?

Although they might share some of the characteristics of legitimate markets, stolen goods markets are different because they are illegal. Stolen goods markets are small and fragmented – just like many other types of illicit market. By focusing on particular types of illegal markets in the USA, such as bootlegging and gambling operations, Reuter (1985) explains the reason why they cannot expand in the same way as legal operations:

> *The most immediate consequence of product illegality, stemming from the costs of asset seizure and arrest, is the need to control the flow of information about participation in the illegal activity. That is, each participant must structure his or her activities, particularly those involving other participants, so as to assure that the risk of the police learning of his or her participation is kept low.*

As Reuter (1985) goes on to explain, legitimate markets, on the other hand, are able to expand their enterprise by recruiting employees, a difficult thing to do in illegal operations because employees may have knowledge of their employer's criminal activities, which puts crime bosses and all types of criminal business people – including small local retailers - in a particularly vulnerable position since employees can provide the police with enough information to make an arrest and put together a prosecution case.

Stolen goods markets are similar to heroin markets in that they involve transactions that are conducted at 'arms length.' Illicit markets like both of these types operate at lower levels than legitimate markets. For example, stolen goods markets rarely involve large integrated organizations of stealing, dealing, warehousing, wholesaling and retailing. Although Reuter (1990) never looked at stolen goods markets, research finds that they share many of the same characteristics of the various illegal markets he studied. In particular, the Home Office Handling Study (Sutton 1994) reveals such characteristics in the five types of stolen goods market. These five have subsequently been updated and expanded to six in order to include the more recent trend of E-trading in stolen goods:

1. *Commercial Fence Supplies*

   Goods are sold by thieves to business owners (fences[8]) with shops, websites, E-bay trading profiles or other businesses. Here business owners are most usually approached directly by thieves where sales are made in private – away from customers and CCTV security cameras.

2. *Commercial Sales*

   The fence for a profit sells goods – either to the consumer or to another distributor who will seek to sell again for additional profit. Consumers buying in this market are unlikely to know or believe that goods are stolen because Commercial Fences usually

[8] The term fence probably derives from the middleman being the thief's and the customers "defence" against detection and prosecution.

sell to innocent members of the public, being able to use legitimate retail outlets, market stall, glossy commercial websites or other dealerships.

3. Residential Fence Supplies

Fences operating out of their own houses are approached directly by thieves or their associates. All transactions are conducted in private.

4. Network Sales

An initial friend (who may charge a small commission) is approached and the item for sale is shown or described. Word is then passed on along friendship networks until a consumer is found and the sale is made in private. Many Residential Fences sell stolen goods in this way.

5. Hawking

Thieves approach and sell directly to consumers of the stolen goods. Transactions in pubs and on the streets are semi private. Doorstep sales are private.

6. E-trading

E-trading in stolen goods, by selling them on auction sites such as E-Bay, may be done by Residential Fences, wholly Cyber Fences, Commercial Fences, or possibly even the thieves who stole the goods.

As these updated findings show, it is wrong to think in terms of a single market for stolen goods (see also Walsh 1977, Maguire 1982 and Reuter 1985). A thief selling to a fence constitutes one market; a thief selling directly to consumers represents another market; and a fence selling to consumers is another market again. And the Internet is this latest marketplace for stolen goods and poses a new challenge for law enforcement (Mann and Sutton 1999).

Findings from the 1994 British Crime Survey (Sutton 1998) revealed that over 10 percent of those questioned admitted that they had knowingly bought stolen goods in the past five years. Clearly then, a significant proportion of the general public are engaging in offending that carries a maximum penalty of 14 years. The Home Office Handling Study (Sutton 1998) reveals the role that stolen goods markets play in motivating thieves, while the above prevalence figures reveal the extent of the problem nationally. To do something positive at the local level, information is required that will enable detection and crime reduction initiatives to pinpoint where best to focus resources to reduce handling offences in order to reduce theft, curtail criminal careers and ensure that justice is done to *crimemongers* (Sutton 2007). This report so far has described some general characteristics of those who admit to buying and selling stolen goods and how they do it. To reduce crime markets, however, we need to focus upon the local dynamics of the stealing and dealing process. This involves asking the following questions (Sutton 2005):

who does what with/to whom, where, when, why, in what way and with what effect? With this knowledge it is possible to tailor solutions to the nature of specific local markets that generate theft.

The need to understand the dynamics of demand and *stealing to offer*

Concentrating on the arrest and incarceration of local thieves often makes only short-lived improvements in local levels of crime. Reductions often do not even last until the remanded or sentenced offenders are released, because other offenders take their place (Sutton and Simmonds 2004). The same is true of drug treatment programmes. Even though more and more criminally active illegal substance misusers enter and remain in treatment programmes and are reported to reduce their drug intake, there is rarely a directly attributable corresponding reduction in local crime rates. This raises some important theoretical questions[9]: does this point to a crime and offender displacement *Archimedes Principle* dynamic at work? Or is it the crime equivalent of nature disliking a vacuum? If so then what sets the water level? Or what causes the vacuum that sucks in new offenders to take the place of inactive ones? Research (Sutton 1998) suggests that demand for stolen goods and the vibrancy of local markets (Sutton and Simmonds 2004) may be a force that determines the numbers and activity of local thieves and subsequent crime levels. Other writers who have evaluated the MRA (Harris et al 2003) believe that tackling markets for stolen goods in order to reduce theft is based on sound theoretical principles. However, to have a realistic chance of impacting upon theft the systematic and routine MRA principles (Sutton et al 2001) need to be correctly followed. And this is covered in more depth in Chapters 5 and 6.

One of the main principles of the MRA involves routine and systematic collection of data on local stolen goods markets. Questions that focus on the dynamics of trading in stolen goods markets are useful because they:

- Reveal previously unknown motivational factors for particular offending choices
- Identify the risks for potential victims and types of property
- Help to assess the importance of particular crimemongers
- Provides key information to inform strategies for dealing with theft

To begin to describe the dynamics of the markets for stolen goods in the areas of Mansfield and Nottingham an in-depth qualitative interview schedule was designed (Appendix 2). Answers to the general topic areas that are outlined in Appendix 2, reveals:

- the type of offenders that are dealing in particular types of stolen goods
- where markets exist for particular types of stolen goods
- what type of markets exist, and what is sold in them
- the ease with which stolen goods are bought and sold, including
    - offenders perception of risk of dealing

[9] Thanks are due to Sergeant Dave Simmonds – currently seconded to Derby Community Safety Partnership for posing these questions.

- offenders perception of rewards from dealing
- the ease/speed of dealing
- cultivation of new dealers/consumers
- strategies to evade detection

3. Dynamics of Selling Stolen Goods in Mansfield and Nottingham

The Sample of interviewees

Nottinghamshire prolific offender units in Mansfield and Nottingham recruited a total of 20 prolific offenders/recent ex-prolific offenders[10] with a history of burglary or shoplifting in the local areas. Eleven interviewees lived in Mansfield and nine in Nottingham. All 20 were interviewed in-depth about their offending and how they sold stolen goods in their local area and beyond. All interviews were conducted in complete privacy in an office, with assurances of confidentiality. Every Interview was taped, with the majority lasting over 40 minutes. All interviewees in this sample are male and nearly all used regularly illegal drugs or have in the recent past been problem users of heroin, cocaine and/or amphetamines. One interviewee was a problem gambler.

In this report, direct quotations from Mansfield interviewees are preceded with the letter M (M1-M11[11]) and those form Nottingham with an N (N1-N9). Findings from these interviews are explored next.

The significance of living in a generally *bent society*

The prolific offenders interviewed had served a range of custodial sentences for theft offences. During the interviews they were asked very directly how they felt about the fact that they had been imprisoned for stealing while those they sold to remained free from the attentions of the criminal justice system. Some clearly did not understand the question while others did no appreciate the point of the question and several explained quite firmly that such questions are not relevant to their own situation or local stolen goods markets and theft issues – and so felt unable to discuss the issue. Overall, it is clear that many of those interviewed in Nottingham and Mansfield do no exactly see themselves as *crooks* and society as *straight*. This general finding does not really come as a surprise since is in line with earlier work by Ditton (1977); Mars (1982) and Sutton (1998), which reveals that many offenders see themselves as one person among many providing an essential, albeit criminal, service in supplying the wants of a bargain seeking general public. Most of those interviewed did not even claim to recognize the hypocrisy of a society that condemns and imprisons the thief, including large numbers of young offenders, while its other adult citizens regularly encourage and profit from his crimes while remaining free and easy in the community.

Generally, it seems that prolific offenders in Nottingham and Mansfield do not seek to neutralize their guilt at any point before, during or after their stealing with the variety of

[10] A minority of interviewees admitted continuing to offend.

[11] Only 10 full interviews were completed in this Mansfield sub-sample. M10 claimed he was wrongly arrested and sentenced. He said that he has never been a thief. The interview was terminated after several minutes, as he was adamant that he knew nothing about stolen goods markets.

techniques that are outlined by Sykes and Matza (1957). Feelings of moral guilt are not obviously present. These prolific thieves do not solely see themselves as *doing business* (Hobbs 1989) by going to work and stealing, they also view themselves as illegitimate suppliers to important local economies. They describe supplying local business people so that both they and the businesses owners can make a profit from stolen goods. They also explain how they see supplying cheap stolen goods as helping people in their neighbourhoods buy items that they could not otherwise afford, or wish to buy at high street prices. In effect, their prolific stealing and selling is simply a mundane part of the day-to-day reality of living in relatively less affluent areas. If there are any problems that they do identify with their stealing and dealing activities it is that their stealing, selling stolen goods, problem drug consumption and chaotic lifestyle eventually leads to unacceptable levels of their own physical endangerment, imprisonment, financial poverty and ill heath. Many interviewees expressed a firm desire to step outside of this crime lifestyle, to keep out of trouble, to gain legitimate employment and lead a life that keeps them away from the obvious risks of imprisonment that result from prolific thieving. Sometimes this involves not offending or else becoming better at evading arrest. One respondent (M12) when asked very directly if he had ever thought about the injustices of fences and other buyers of stolen goods remaining at large while he was imprisoned, replied in a way that typifies the answers of many: "You think about the crime that you've done and you think about what you can do to stop yourself getting in that situation again." When asked again, very simply and clearly, to reflect specifically upon whether he thought it was unfair he replied simply: "No because I took the goods anyway."

Those who wish to stop stealing are seeking to move away from the risky front-line of crime. Their ambition is to survive by finding work or else simply surviving by keeping their heads down and avoiding trouble. This does not necessarily mean not breaking the law. What it means is not engaging in such risky law breaking as burglary and shoplifting. The majority of those interviewed do not express a simple wish to *go straight* because this simple *straight-crooked complex* does not make sense in their less affluent neighbourhoods where so many people of all ages routinely break the law by stealing, buying and trading in stolen goods and drugs. In more affluent areas also, this *good-bad-hat* dichotomy does not reflect everyday criminal, deviant behaviour. Those living in more affluent areas appear also to have elastic value systems where residents might knowingly buy stolen goods from or through relatives, friends and associates in the pub, at the workplace or in their day-to-day interactions with customers at their own places of business as shop owners, taxi-drivers, builders or other work.

Since most prolific offenders see themselves as stealing to fulfill their own needs while also servicing the wants and needs of others in their neighbourhoods and elsewhere this should be addressed, particularly with regard to the type of schemes that could be tailored to their situations and value systems. Various types of reparation scheme, for example, may not be suitable options if the offenders placed on them comply while not recognizing the ethos. Similarly, RAT-ON-A-RAT type programmes may be aimed at target audiences that do not exist in neighbourhoods where both dealing in and the enjoyment of stolen goods is seen as normal and at worst morally neutral.

As an introduction to the many themes that follow, attitudes of interviewees to the line of questioning about *bent society* provide very useful initial insights of the offender's world from their own point of view. These insights range from those who see *bent society* as an acceptable fact of life that is of no concern to them, to those seeing it as unjust but acceptable in what could be described as a loosely construed Zen Buddhist sense - in that those involved should not be condemned but will inevitably one day have to face the consequences of their own actions. None of those interviewed condemn those who trade in stolen goods and none express a wish to see the criminal justice system focus upon dealers or buyers as much at it does upon thieves.

By way of introduction to the realities of the stealing and dealing process in Mansfield and Nottingham, the words of interviewees themselves need no further commentary on this particular subject.

Non – judgmental: *Bent society* as a simple and acceptable fact of life

> "I don't think about that because I was addicted to a drug you see. I just think about getting money. I don't think about what the buyers are doing next and all that. Once it's out my hands, I don't care."
> M6

> **"**At the end of the day wherever in the world you go there will always be a black market, guaranteed. Because I mean, say for arguments sake the lad down the street, he's not got much money and he's a law- abiding citizen, he wants good things in his house. He can buy a wide-screen television for £800 or he can see the local lad on the corner and get one for £300. There will always be a market."
> (M2)

> "It's like everybody some way or another is involved in some sort of crime. Whether it's buying cheap fags or buying cheap "bacca." Somewhere down the line that's covering money for something else, something else. And if you are buying stolen goods, in my eyes it don't really matter if you can get something cheaper than in the shops, like a Play Station II for a kids birthday. I mean you can go to a shop and pay hundred and eighty quid for one with ten games and a joy pad, or you can buy one from a local fucking criminal for eighty quid with twenty games.
> (M5)

> "You think about the crime that you've done and you think about what you can do to stop yourself getting in that situation again."
> (M12).

> When asked to reflect back on the time he spent in prison while those who bought from him, including fences, always remained free and he was asked whether he ever thought, now or when he was imprisoned, about the fairness or unfairness of that. He replied simply: "No because I took the goods anyway." (M12)

"We're getting out of it what we want to get out of it, which is a quick sale. We get our money and get our score. At the end of the day they helped me out. Took the stuff off me quick. Took it off me hands."
(N1)

"It's all about money. It's like bullshit talks, money walks. And it's like to me, you know what I mean, everybody works in this society right now - you know what I mean? If they can make a dime they're happy with it. No matter who you are nowadays right now, two thousand and six, if they know you've got something and you're on drugs, they know they can get it for absolutely fuck-all and make some dollars on it."
(N3)

"I just think that they're trying to make a quick bit of money, I don't know. I got the things for nothing, y'know what I mean. If I sell something, I could sell a laptop and few other things, know what I mean, and he'd say: What do you want? And I'd say: I want £100 for the lot. And anyone could do it you know what I mean – if you've got a shop or not. It's not like you need a shop. You're an individual person yourself."
(N9)

If you go into town today they buy stuff, you know what I mean, and you can go to car boot sales and they sell stuff. They sell snide DVDs, you know what I mean." "Everyone's got their limits and if you're gonna make a pound you're going to do it, car boot sales, shops. Even bank managers in the pub buy stuff. You know what I mean?"

Bent society **as a simple hypocritical fact of life**

"I suppose it's wrong, but if you're not living well you gonna want a bargain, y'know what I mean, and if you can't afford something then you gonna want it cheap y'know what I mean? I suppose if you see it like that then you're not doing no wrong. If you can't afford it you're not really bothered where it's coming from."
(N9)

" I've got a theory that the government that they are all into something really."
(N4)

"I always think that everybody gets their comeuppance, know what I mean, society's going to have a look at these places sooner or later."
(N5)

Exploring Market Dynamics: Offer and acceptance in stolen goods markets

The stolen goods market types 1 to 5, described in Chapter 2 exist in both Mansfield and Nottingham[12].

The effect of offers on people's willingness to buy stolen goods is important for the way stolen goods markets operate. If consumers do not seek out stolen goods, then accepting offers is the only other way that they can knowingly buy them. For consumers of stolen goods this is fundamentally linked with the concept of crime as opportunity (Mayhew et al 1976). They may respond to random offers to buy, or offers based upon their past buying behaviour (see Sutton 1998), utilize local knowledge to seek out thieves, or ensure that thieves have regular opportunities to find them and offer them a bargain.

Research shows (Sutton 1998) that stolen goods are in demand and fetch high prices when the retail price is high, but when high-street prices fall the illegitimate demand for these as stolen goods falls since those on low incomes can then afford to buy the goods new from legitimate sources. This process has been seen many times in stolen goods markets. Products such as 1970's colour television sets, VCRs, Hi Fi equipment, PCs, PC memory chips, car cassette player stereos and DVD players have all been hot products in the past but are no longer worth stealing. Mobile phones, it seems, are now going the same way. The latest hot products are laptop computers, I-pods, flat-screen TVs and in-car satellite navigation equipment.

Elasticity of demand

Supply and demand factors have an import bearing on the way that stolen goods markets operate. Inelastic demand means that a relatively high increase in price will not substantially lower sales volume. This is what is called a sellers market. Elastic demand, on the other hand, has the opposite effect and creates a buyers market. Stolen goods, in general, are likely to be quite elastic in that a substantial increase in the asking price by thieves will deter buyers who have to break the law by knowingly buying stolen goods, pay in cash and risk that the goods may be faulty with no consumer protection. Markets for stolen jewellery, however, are influenced by world bullion prices and so are much less sensitive to local demand and supply.

Responding to Specific Demand: stealing to order

In both Nottingham and Mansfield interviewees said that they had been involved in stealing to order. Sometimes this follows a request to steal a specific product for a specific time, such as a Play Station for a Christmas or birthday present. Sometimes it might even be a particular make and model of car. In such cases, it is normal practice to store the request away in the mind, keep your eyes open and simply wait until the opportunity arises to steal the item or become aware of another thief selling one:

[12] None of those interviewed mentioned E-trading in stolen goods.

> "If you've got it you've got it. If you've not, you've not. Basically you just keep your ears open. When you are on heroin it's like you've got a close circle of friends. They call it graft. They says there's a good graft here. And that's how you hear. If there is two heroin addicts, and one knows where there's an x-box[13], and if the other is willing to sort them out when they have the money, then that's how they do it."
>
> "I'm always getting people asking me for stuff, mainly house stereos. People used to ask me to nick 'em cars. You know, diesels, stuff like that. You know, ringing the cars and stuff. But they'd only be prepared to pay two and a half and three hundred pound. You know you get an eleven grand car and they're ringing it and they're selling it as a family car in the paper for six grand. Nah I'll have nothing to do with that me. I refused to do that. The only time would be if someone asked me for a car, I'd keep it in mind if we've gone out. Once someone asked me for a Mark V Escort, soft top, in cream. It just so happened that three months later we nicked a white one. I rang em up and asked if they were still looking for an Escort soft top. They said 'yeah'. I said well we've got a white one here. They said 'yeah just as good, we'll have it.' "
> (M7)
>
> "It's like I had so many orders in my head before I got locked up. And I was like burgling for over two years and I still could not complete that list."
> (M3)

Sometimes stealing to order can influence types of crime committed. For example, M7 explained how he met one relatively wealthy Residential Fence who encouraged him to steal cigarettes. The fence had got his brother in law a job. When M7 picked his brother in law up from work he was approached and asked to steal cigarettes in bulk. Prior to this he had been shoplifting, but consequently embarked on a series of commercial burglaries to steal cigarettes from petrol station shops.

Afraid there was a greater risk of being detected as a consequence of selling to strangers some interviewees said they only ever stole to order. One burglar said that people he knew would call him over and tell him what they needed. He said that he only ever sold to people that he knew. When asked why he was wary of strangers he relied: "Because there are too many under-cover coppers." On receiving an order, he said that he would not go out looking immediately, but would keep the order in his head until later: "If I go out that night and come across what someone needs – I'm taking it." (N3)

More usually however there is a general understanding that particular people, usually *Commercial* or *Residential fences*, will purchase as many units of a particular hot product that respondents were able to steal. Sometimes the items that thieves always know they can rely upon to raise money are not top of their *mental loot list* of things to steal. One

[13] Type of game consol.

respondent (M1) would break into garden sheds to steal garden strimmers, but only if he had been unable to identify a suitable house to burgle the day before. While a strimmer or two would invariably sell for £20 the thing that makes them less desirable is the fact that they are difficult to transport on foot without raising suspicions.

One respondent (M3) regularly stole whiskey from supermarkets to sell to his friends. Although he said he 'never liked' stealing whisky because of the perceived risks, he would regularly do so because he could sell it within 30 minutes to people he knew would buy it for their own consumption. Others, e.g. M6, regularly stole meat to order - such as chops from supermarkets.

Once people in the neighbourhood know that a thief can supply particular items he is regularly approached with orders. Speaking about how he went about selling stolen power tools, one interviewee stressed the fact that he did not need to go about looking for new buyers that he did not know:

> "Once you are known for being able to get one specific thing then people know to come to you for it, and word of mouth travels and they come to you."
> (M2)

> "If somebody knows you're into thieving you're always getting somebody who's asking you for this and asking you for that. And you might come across a certain thing that they've asked for – maybe six months, maybe sooner, later. That's how I do it. If I come along something I grab it and if that person [a buyer] takes it then nine times out of ten they say: 'If you get any more – we'll have as many as you can get[14]'."
> (M7)

Commercial Fences most frequently coach offenders to ensue that their selling behaviour in the place of business does not alert the fence's legitimate customers, the police and general public to what is happening (Sutton 1998). This usually involves either thief or fence telephoning one another beforehand, dealing from the boots of cars away from the business premises, dealing via the back-door or dealing out of business hours.

Sometimes, however, fences compromise the liberty of offenders in their enthusiasm to secure more hot products. One interviewee, (M7) explained how he sold stolen cigarettes in bulk to a newly discovered Commercial Fence. Careful to protect his identity he never told the fence where he lived. The fence, who owned five shops, wanted to buy more of the same, but as he had not heard from M7 for a week he started asking people on the street if they knew where M7 lived. And when he had the address he called at 6 pm. As a result of this demand for stolen cigarettes M7 was able to increase prices to £2 per packet so that he received £1000 for every 10,000 cigarettes stolen.

[14] M7 said that such people may be Residential Fences, corner shop owners, or *ordinary* members of the public.

The fact that potential thieves know they have a ready and willing buyer for particular products, who will buy as many as they can steal, can be a factor that influences offending careers to take off in the first place, or for offenders to specialize in stealing certain items or to steal more frequently (Sutton 1998). One commercial burglar recounted how he sold to a Commercial Fence (take-away fast food shop keeper), who then encouraged him to steal more:

> "I've sold to one guy that I sold to a lot. I didn't know him at first. I just went into his shop[15] and asked him and his mates if they wanted to buy some stuff. But he said to go around the back of the shop. I took him some stuff and he bought it - car stereos and CDs. He said 'if you get any more of this stuff, I'll have everything off yer.' So I took more or less the same stuff around again. Generally, a lot of people …takeaways and taxi-ranks buy a lot of stuff because they know people to sell it onto."
> (N4)

Some of those interviewed said that they would not wait until all of their money or drugs had been consumed before re-offending as they did not wish to become desperate and take risks in stealing that would increase the likelihood that they would be caught, or have to sell for lower than the usual price. However, not all problem drug using prolific offenders respond to sure-fire-demand in this way. One interviewee said that he only stole when his drugs ran out, simply because he saw this as a sensible strategy for playing the odds to minimize the risks of detection:

> "If I had drugs and money in me pocket and someone asked me for something I wouldn't do it anyway. I'd wait till I started to run out of money and drugs and that and then I'd go 'round and ask him if he still wanted it. Then I'd do it if he still needed it."
> (M8)

Only the stealing-to-order risk-reduction explanation of waiting until existing drugs and money are gone is new here. Notably, as long ago as 1796, the London Magistrate Patrick Colquhoun wrote: "It rarely happens that thieves go upon the highway, or commit burglaries, until the money they have previously acquired is exhausted" (see also Johnson et al 1993: 213-14, Bennett and Wright 1983:32). This is what might reasonably be expected, of course, since most prolific thieves are not master criminals (Gottfredson and Hirschi 1990), nor are they amassing fortunes in investments.

Many of those interviewed said that their own neighbours would ask them to steal certain items because, being known heroin addicts, they would sell them stolen items cheaply:

> "A heroin addict will sell most things dead cheap and that's why people turn to them for shoplifting and stuff. Drink, bathroom towel sets and toiletries and children's clothes." (M9)

[15] This was a takeaway fast-food kebab shop.

However, if thieves were unhappy with the price offered they would often accept it simply in order to get rid of the goods quickly and to avoid the risk of detection through carrying or otherwise transporting them around. However, some said that they would not sell to that person again. If they thieves found a good buyer then they would use them regularly.

Although thieves might set out on a mission to complete an order for certain items, they remain flexible and can simply *revert to opportunism* when thwarted by security. One interviewee explained that he had been asked to shoplift certain clothes from a particular shop and set out to do so. However, on that day he stole large bars of chocolate instead. When asked why he said:

> "Because sometimes you can't get what you go out for because of shop security, and members of staff in that shop. So you just take something that you can get. Like aftershaves or games. Take something else in the shop."
> (N4)

In this case, however, the original order was remembered and the theft was completed the following week.

Knowing the market in advance: *stealing to offer*

> "If I come across something, the first thing I think of before I take it is can I sell it. I mean I'm not going to take it if I can't sell it, its no good to me. So when I'm taking that, I know exactly where it's going.
> **(M2)**

Stealing to offer more usually takes place in Hawking Markets (Sutton 1998) but it can also take place regularly in Network Sales, Residential Fence Supplies and when first dealing with a new commercial fence in Commercial Fence Supplies Markets.

In Mansfield, M11 explained how he would go about sounding out a market trader he did not know by simply walking up to them and asking: "Do you buy owt mate?"

Many utilized their own Network Sales Markets - taking stolen goods around to different people they knew would buy for their own consumption. In Nottingham, N4 knew a number of people, who would buy shoplifted items, whom he described as: "…women on housing estates who want certain stuff like kids clothes to sell-on to other friends or else sell to a dealer." There were similar ways of selling in Nottingham and Mansfield:

> "On the estates – doesn't matter where you go, Nottingham or anywhere, they will buy anything."
> (N5)

> "I would have roughly between 8 –10 regular buyers of electrical goods –either for private use, for gifts, or to sell on."
> (M11)

> "It's always been easy to sell in Nottingham. Just go to a taxi rank."
> (N4)

One of the unusual characteristics of these network sales in Nottingham is that interviewees would spot their known buyers on the streets and approach them with offers to sell stolen goods, whereas in many other cities network sales tend to take place in off-street locations (Sutton 1998).

Several interviewees explained how they had a number of regular buyers (ranging from 6-10) of stolen goods. These buyers include varies types of fence as well as neighbours and friends who bought for their own use:

> "I had six or seven who tend to buy different things."
> (M1)

The ways of selling stolen goods are particularly diverse in both Mansfield. In contrast to those using Network Sales and Hawking Markets in the ways described above, other interviewees preferred to sell everything they stole to just one buyer. One respondent (M4), for example, explained how he would phone up one person in order to dispose of the varied contents of a house burglary. He sold to this same person throughout his criminal career and never ever went knocking on doors to sell. He knows a lot of people who buy stolen stuff – but having just one person meeting him somewhere is more convenient. He described this buyer as: "…a person on benefits." The goods were sold for cash and M4 was always happy with the price he got. Among the thieves known to M4, such relationships are exclusive in that everyone has their own buyer and does not introduce new thieves to them. M4 claims that, in contrast to himself and other illegal drug using but "non-drug addicted" thieves, heroin *addicts* would not keep their dealer to themselves in this way because they could make some money by introducing someone to their buyer and taking a cut[16]. Although M4 used heroin himself he said that he never swapped goods for drugs and bought his heroin in slightly larger quantities.

Dealing with fences

The slang term fence has it origins in archaic English criminal parlance as *the thieves defence* from the attentions of the criminal justice system. The fence buys discretely from the thief and so protects him from the risks of being detected while trying to convert stolen property into cash. Thieves in both Nottingham and Mansfield sold stolen goods to Residential Fences and Commercial Fences. These two market types: Residential Fence Sales and Commercial Fence Supplies are examined in turn.

[16] Since all they are concerned with is immediate money, rather than ensuring they continue to get a good price in future dealings.

Residential Fences

Unlike many other cities where stolen jewellery tends to be sold almost exclusively to jeweler's shops, or else on occasion to drug dealing Residential Fences for their own use, many thieves in Nottingham and Mansfield sold jewellery to Residential Fences.

As M4 explained in the previous section, he always sold stolen goods to one Residential Fence. He first met this fence when he was just ten years old. Despite this early introduction, M4 does not depict his fence as a Dickensian *Fagin-type* groomer of young criminals, and claimed that knowing his fence did not make him begin stealing, steal more – nor did it protect him from the attentions of criminal justice system. M4 said that he knows that he would never be *grassed-up* by his fence. If they did not trust each other then they would not deal with each other in the first place. He says he is not sure if neighbours know that they have a fence living nearby. His fence did not endeavor, as far as M5 was aware, to keep M5 away from the attentions of the police. Such a secure relationship does, however, create a more secure criminal environment for both parties:

> "Whatever I've done I've always had my buyer lined up. Never take it to pubs or owt like that. Coz that is just daft. Because if I went to a pub and sold jewellery or a laptop and the police straight away went into that pub – they [the buyers] will point me out straight away because they don't want the hassle, so they are going to straight dob you in it. But I got a buyer who gets busted, who aint gonna say my name, who keeps me out of the picture yeah."

M5 explained how stolen jewellery is sold to buyers living on council estates. He refers to their houses as *council estate pawnshops* that "snatch all the gold". They give scrap value for it and never ask whether it is stolen:

> "You take a jewellery box in and say '…it,s fucking off my woman, I fallen out with her, she aint takin' my money off me, fuck her. I want to pawn it in.' " [Interviewer (MS)]: *"Do you think they know it's stolen?"* M5: "Yeah, bound to aint they. Young lad goes in, know what I mean. Looks like he's on drugs, bags under his eyes and taking a full jewellery box in. Know what I mean. It looks dodgy."

M5 claimed that he would not take a jewellery box to a pawnshop unless he was in 'dire straights' and needed the money straight away. He prefers to deal with his Residential Fence, who operates out of his own house. He says that the fence is known only to certain people who are drug users: "… but not those in scruffy clothes that you see around Mansfield with their hands out. Only those with decent clothes on because of the money they earn." He says that neighbours do not report the activities of Residential Fences because ask for certain items themselves for children's birthdays etc. He says that Residential Fences: "…keep their neighbours sweet" by selling them stolen goods at bargain prices.

According to M5 Residential Fences, like the one he dealt with, use associates to melt down gold jewellery . Fences like these deal drugs. He says they sit back and others handle the drugs: "They sit at home with their feet up and get others to take the risks." They don't have drugs or drugs paraphernalia in the house.

M5 also explained that Residential Fences refuse to buy from strangers in the same way that anybody else would be reluctant to commit a crime with a stranger:

> "If a stranger knocked on your door with half a carrier bag full of gold you would not buy it. You'd go "fuck-off daft cunt, I don't do nowt like that. Get yer sen gone."

Like M5, another interviewee (M7) also met a fence during his childhood and started selling stolen items from residential burglaries to the fence – who was a neighbour. He said he was aware that with the prices she paid him that she clearly "ripped him off." After his friend's older brother told him about her and what she did, the woman became known to him as a well known fence in the neighbourhood. The fence's own brother also used to buy goods on her behalf. Aged 12 or 13, M7 was already burgling houses and getting money for the stolen goods from both the fence and her brother.

M7 described how he sold to Residential Fences who would buy all kinds of electrical goods and stolen cigarettes. He said they sold the stuff-on through *the street* to people that they knew. According to M7 there are a lot of people like this in Mansfield and their neighbours are aware of what they are doing. At one time M7 used a Residential Fence who owned his own business:

> "The person I know lives on a posh estate in a posh area and has his own business. Obviously I don't ask him where his stuff goes. I now sell him DVDs. He is like straight everyday people who live in a council house. Funnily enough most of the people I sold to I knew [them] before I started taking stuff to them."

While some Residential Fences are careful not to buy from strangers, there is considerable variation in Mansfield and Nottingham in terms of the degree of caution exercised in their buying behaviour, just as there is in the selling behaviour of thieves. N1 talked about selling stolen goods to a Residential Fence who operated out of his car and house and was less cautious because he would:

> "…buy from anyone. Good prices. Everything sold for half price. Jewellery camcorders, Playstations and DVD's."

Another interviewee (M11) said that the neighbours of residential fences know what is going on. He says that some of these dealers had jobs so that they would 'look *legit*'. Some were drug dealers, some not.

Residential Fence drug dealers

> "Its like, if you're on drugs and you've done a house and you can't get cash out of there but obviously you've got jewellery and you take that jewellery to your drug dealer and you say. 'Look, I've got this are you interested?' He might take a few bits out and you say give us one of each then – heroin and crack. And the best is when you have a smoke and its like 'right let's go sell this stuff now'. And you go round the people on your estate who likes the gold."
> (N3)

M9 explains how drug dealers occasionally bought stolen goods such as DVD players from him, but that the thing they most wanted, after cash, was gold, followed by designer clothes that they would keep and wear. Sometimes these goods were stolen to order:

> "They'd rather have cash [for the drugs] but if it's decent enough they'd get it [the stolen goods] for a really low price. You'd get a worse deal, but you just wanted to sort yourself out. They are after the decent clothes, the jewellery , the chains, the watches - just to look smart."

Another, (M8) said that he would steal for drug dealers in order to fund his £40 per day habit. He recalls on one occasion getting a DVD player and Playstation II for a drug dealing Residential Fence. Once asked to get something - he would go looking for it straight away.[17] He would look through the windows of houses to see if the goods were in them: "I'd just go and burgle every house until I got what I needed to sell." Interviewee M3 said that he would swap stolen whisky for drugs with a dealer. Another (N1) was asked to steal clothes, good mobile phones, trainers, laptops camcorder and jewellery – all for the dealer's own use, or for the use of another dealer.

Commercial Fence Supplies

> " I used to know a shop that would take anything off you, absolutely anything."
> (M1)

One interviewee explained how being involved in other illicit markets led to his subsequent involvement in stealing to fund his drugs habit. M1 began funding his drug use by undertaking what he described as "…cross-channel duty-free runs for cigarettes and beer." Despite the fact that he made good money from doing this, as his drug use increased, it became too much like hard work. He then began selling stolen goods to the shopkeeper to whom he had been selling the contraband alcohol and tobacco.

Mansfield shoplifter M11 sold shoplifted alcohol to pub landlords. He said that he would 'sound them out in advance' to see if they were interested. If they were, then they would agree a price and he would fetch it. He said that in Mansfield pubs he would just go in and ask them – he did not need to be introduced. The alcohol was sold to the landlord at

[17] Compare this to M7 who would just store the request away for future reference when the theft opportunity occurred.

the back of the pub (not in the public area). He said that it was easy money, but you could not do it regularly as the shops would get wise to the amount being stolen and take extra precautions, which made it more risky to steal.

There was a much greater degree of confidence when selling to Commercial Fences. Many of those in Mansfield in particular said that they would not fear approaching unknown corner-shop owners with offers of stolen goods for sale. Although making it clear that they did not wish to appear racist, two interviewees (M1, M9) specifically mentioned the readiness of Asian corner shop owners in Mansfield to buy stolen goods, particularly cigarettes stolen from commercial burglaries. Corner shops also buy alcohol (even that stolen from domestic burglaries) and toiletries. N1 who sold stolen alcohol and cigarettes to corner shops said that he knew that a particular shop keeper was buying stolen goods and so would buy from him because he had seen shoplifters going in and coming out all the time.

One interviewee (N6) dealt with a particularly well organized and ambitious Commercial Fence. He was introduced to this fence for the first time when he had a lot of gold from a commercial burglary. The fence, who owned a number of shops, bought the gold but told N6 that it was cigarettes he wanted and told N6 what the set price was. Once they had been dealing together for a short time the fence bought cars to be used in commercial burglaries and told the thieves what shops to steal from. While N6 was not completely happy with the price he was getting, he knew that the fence would buy the stolen cigarettes straight away and without any delay no matter how much money was involved. This was a reliable and organized fence, a *Crimemonger*, who facilitated many of the commercial burglaries carried out by a team that included N6.

While many Commercial Fences appear to be rational in offending and dealings with thieves, the same is not always obvious from the ways that some thieves offend – or in their dealings with fences. One Mansfield interviewee (M7), for example, said that even though he was making good money doing commercial burglaries he continued to do housebreaking for the buzz that he got from earning money from that as well.

During the same period when he was regularly doing commercial burglaries, M7 was also selling cannabis and acting as a Network Sales Fence for other burglars by selling stolen jewellery to a jeweler on their behalf. M7 said that he would not always sell jewellery for the scrap value of the gold. If he felt that a particular piece was valuable – such as a ring with a stone - he would have it appraised. But if it was mass-produced jewellery he would mangle it and cut it up before weighing it in with the fence:

> "Your everyday jewellery – just get a pair of pliers on it and twist it. Because you're only going to get scrap for it anyway and its just his [the Commercial Fence's] way of conning you out of money because he will salvage it and polish it up and put it on a tray."

So what M7 appears to be saying here is that he made run-of-the-mill gold jewellery into scrap gold in order to receive personal satisfaction in reducing the fence's possible undeclared profit in selling it on as a complete item:

> "He's only going to offer me scrap saying its mass produced and that and that he does not want that to sell on."

While at first this mangling of the jewellery might appear to serve no real function, other than the desire to ensure that the fence does not say one thing and do another[18] in order to maximize his profits. M7 gets the same price but does not want to feel ripped off. This does, in fact, actually serve an important function in the dynamics of selling stolen goods to a Commercial Fence. By cutting up mass produced jewellery himself prior to weighing it in with his fence M7 says that he is showing the jeweler that he knows: "…what is what" regarding prices. So that when he does, on other occasions, enter the jeweler's shop with just one diamond ring he has let the fence know in advance that they both know that this is not in the same category as scrap gold. While many burglars would most often get around £50 for a diamond solitaire ring, M7 has created a position of strength for himself whereby he can ask £200 for it.

Domestic burglars sell stolen DVD collections by taking them into town and selling them to shops in the town centre. Computer shops and taxi firms buy stolen PCs, computer games and games consoles. One interviewee in Nottingham (N4) said that shop keepers never asked where goods came from. Others asked him not to bring goods into the shop but to wait outside: "They'd tell you to wait around the back. Or say 'if you come again don't come in – send someone else'." As a point of contrast, M7 said that his Commercial Fence jeweler knew that the goods were stolen and would on occasion ask where something came from. He would tell the jeweler exactly where the ring was stolen from and therefore advise the jeweler not to sell it locally.

One interviewee (M5) claimed that he was in a way employed by a Commercial Fence (owner of a mobile phone shop) in the sense that he was given £300 for every laptop that he stole regardless of the model, so that he could comfortably fund his drug habit. On the face of it this might seem difficult to believe. However, it is plausible for two reasons. Firstly, he had developed an MO that involved waiting outside conference hotels. He would watch for business people attending a conference who were arriving in executive cars. On leaving their cars, if they did not walk into the hotel with a laptop case he new there was a good chance they had one in the car boot. He would then break into the boots of the cars belonging to those people who fitted this *suitable victim* profile. This meant that he was in all likelihood stealing a very high ratio of top of the range and latest model equipment. Secondly, and linked to the first point, his fence would want to keep M5 as a regular supplier because he was prepared to sell, without haggling over prices, top-of-the-range makes and models. This £300 per-any-model deal probably represented *good business practice*, while also suiting M5's immediate *needs* perfectly.

[18] That is – say he will scrap it when in reality he intends to sell it as a second-hand (or even new) piece in his shop window.

According to M5, prices paid for stolen laptop computers are currently much lower than in the past because of what he describes as "scruffy-smack-head-down-and-outs" who are "rattling[19]" and prepared to sell them for just £80 because they are both desperate and do not have the businessmen contacts that he had.

Selling Jewellery to Commercial Fences – Jewelers, pawnbrokers and cash-converter and other second-hand shops

Jewellery stolen during domestic burglaries is sold in a variety of ways depending upon the items stolen and the knowledge and expertise of thieves with regards to the value of an item and how best to sell it. For example, N6 explained that jewellery tends to be sold around the estates in Nottingham. He says that you get the same price for a 9crt chain on a housing estate that you get for an 18crt. So it is best to sell expensive jewellery to a jeweller but 9crt gold on an estate where most jewellery is sold.

Similarly, N8 said that he generally sold cheap jewellery in bulk to a drug dealer or other people with a bit of money. He would often swap jewellery with dealers for both drugs and cash. However, if he "found" [stole] a good ring he'd take it to a jewelers. But he did not feel he could regularly go to a jeweler since: "Most of them, I've found, are trying to protect themselves from buying stolen goods." He said the jewelers in Nottingham are "…open and up-front and trying not to break the law."

Again in contrast, however, N9 said that he could sell jewellery to anyone, including jewelers: "Everyone likes a bit of jewellery don't they…take the stuff to a shop to get it valued."

While M11 also sold cheap gold by hawking it around the estates in Nottingham, he sold more expensive items to a pawnshop. He found out about this Commercial Fence through word of mouth that the pawnshop was buying. He explained how it was common practice for stolen gold to be sold to the fence around the back of the pawnshop and then put in the shop window for double the price paid to the thief.

Thieves in Nottingham sometimes use high street jewelers to sell expensive gold. In Mansfield M7, who had a complicit relationship with his Commercial Fence jeweler, said that it is the "backstreet" jewelers in Mansfield who are buying stolen jewellery . Another Mansfield burglar (M8) explained how he would snap gold chains in order to then sell them to a jeweler for their scrap value because: "They always ask you where it's come from – so you just say it's a broken chain." In order to sell to a jeweler, M8 would: "…get dressed up in shirt and trousers." In contrast to M7, he did not know of any jewelers in Mansfield who would knowingly buy stolen jewellery .

[19] In need of a drug fix.

The type of shops that specialize in cashing cheques, pawn brokering and buying and selling second-hand goods are sometimes used by Nottingham thieves to sell stolen jewellery :

> "A lot of people use them Cash Generators now, because they will take anything. You know what I mean. If you are stuck with something, then that's the place you'll go."
> (N5)

N5 explained that even though such shops ask for ID and take photographs, that the usual MO is for the thief to send in another person to sell the goods. He says that once a person's details have been recorded, the shop does not have to do it again and simply keeps and refers to a record of each transaction with that person.

Interviewee (M1) said that he would get better prices for goods in their original packaging if he sold them to a pawnshop rather than a Residential Fence. Another Mansfield interviewee said that: "… the majority will buy unless they want to run a legitimate business." When asked whether this might be risky for the pawnshop owner he did not think it was, because they could tell who was a genuine thief: "They know by the way that he acts and is talking that he is not an undercover cop."

From the interviews conducted it appears that pawnshops are used more by burglars in Mansfield than in Nottingham. One prolific Mansfield burglar (M9) regularly sold stolen jewellery to pawn shops for scrap value. He said that although he would pawn it on the basis that he appeared to want to buy it back, he never collected it. He felt he got a good price. This interviewee thinks that the Mansfield pawnbrokers that he sold to do suspect that the jewellery sold to them by burglars is stolen, but they never ask. He knows of only two pawnbrokers in Mansfield who knowingly buy stolen jewellery . He said that he knew it was better to sell to pawnbrokers than to jewelers because he had, from the age of 17, seen his cousins do the same.

Second hand shops in both Mansfield and Nottingham were named as places where stolen goods could be sold, particularly electrical goods stolen from domestic burglaries. In Nottingham, one interviewee (N9) explained that current Nottingham Act procedures to reduce illicit selling were not effective because he believed that the police do not check on transactions in these shops:

> "Computer games and stuff like that you can take them to games shops and stuff. They take ID, and if asked you say that they are not stolen. They want photo ID and I just use my own ID."

Market stall holders

Two interviewees in Mansfield (M1 and M5) emphasized the ready market for stolen DVDs and CDs provided by certain market stall holders in the town:

> "If you know someone (a stallholder who has bought from other thieves) that does buy them, you go up to them and say: 'Oh so and so says its all right for you to have a look at these' you know what I mean?"
> **(M1)**

And

> "If you go to any stall holder selling such stuff and name your price – they will haggle and the sale is usually made. They buy and sell around the back of the market."
> **(M5)**

Another Mansfield interviewee (M12) said that car boot sale dealers would buy whatever he had to sell. He would take the stolen goods to the dealers house - selling them shoplifted deodorant or big jars of Nescafe coffee[20]. According to M12:

> "When you are car-booting and that, the alibi is always that you bought it off another car boot."

Risk of Selling: Current perceptions among thieves in Mansfield and Nottingham

One of the aims of the MRA is to make the risk of selling stolen goods as risky as the act of stealing (Sutton et al 2001). Where MRA initiatives are introduced, one useful measure of effectiveness is whether prolific thieves believe that selling has since become more difficult. The reasoning here is that more risky and difficult sales may deter some novice thieves from embarking on 'criminal careers' and may, through attrition, eventually encourage existing prolific offenders to seek treatment for their problem drug use and find easier legitimate sources of income.

Currently many thieves in Mansfield and Nottingham do not feel particularly concerned about the risk of being detected selling stolen goods:

> "Sometimes you felt on edge, but ninety eight percent of the time it would not put you on edge. But these big operations that are going on like now [by the police], you've got people around that you've never seen before in your life. You get a bit worried until you see them again and think they are alright."
> (M5)

One Nottingham interviewee said that he sold stolen goods through Network Sales selling door to door, but he would only knock on the doors of people he knew:

[20] The coffee was bought from him for £2 a jar.

> "Like on certain estates yeah, people know what's going on. People buy anything, because they know they can get it cheaper. You know what I mean. And they know it's stolen, but it's like – 'who cares.' "
> (N3)

This respondent provides insight into the simple-risk management strategies that frequently do operate behind a problem drug using prolific offender's hedonistic and nihilistic persona. N3 at first claimed that he had absolutely no fear of *being grassed up:*

> "Because at the time you don't think about it. You just think about cash, drugs, cash, drugs. That's all you think about. You don't care if they are going to grass you up because proving it is the hardest thing."

Yet in his next sentence, he said that he would not sell to jewelers because: "… after taking drugs for a while you get paranoid."

Another Nottingham interviewee (N4) had been stealing power tools from builder's sites and vans and then selling to other builders working on building sites. When asked if he thought there was a risk that a builder might report him for selling stolen goods he replied:

> "Erm, yes there is always that [risk], but ninety percent will buy and the remainder will not inform on you."

Others (M6 for example) felt 100 per cent sure that their Residential Fences would never *grass* on them. M6 said that as long as he got a good price, he was not worried. While this interviewee was aware of police crackdowns on shoplifters, he said it never stopped him from stealing. While he was aware also aware of increased security in shops, and police presence in town centers, he said that he: "…just sneaked about to overcome it". He is aware of the Shopwatch initiative in Mansfield. To overcome its effects whenever he was identified as a thief, he would simply shoplift outside of town by going to Kirkby in Ashfield. An important point here, picked up during interviews with other prolific thieves in other cities (Sutton et al 2001), is that this shoplifter returned back to his own neighbourhood to sell to the same buyer. One of the most likely reasons for this is that thieves know that large retail shops do not differ from one city to the next. Once you can effectively steal from one particular branch of a national chain you can steal from them all. However, fences and other stolen goods markets have local characteristics that require local knowledge to negotiate. Using this knowledge, an MRA initiative might seek to apprehend known shoplifters bringing stolen goods back into their own city (perhaps on buses or trains). Cracking down on a shoplifter's own, or familiar, markets builds on the philosophy of Felson's Routine Activities Approach to crime (Felson 1998) in that it seeks to make their offending more difficult, more time consuming, more risky and less rewarding. As mentioned earlier, the aim here is to speed up their exit from the lifestyle of the prolific thief and, in the meantime, to slow down their rate of offending.

From the interviews conducted in Nottingham and Mansfield, it appears that there is ample scope to increase the risk and perceived risks associated with buying and selling stolen goods. At present, offenders (e.g. M8) see the risks of crime in terms of being *detected through the stealing* rather than being *detected through the selling.* Another Mansfield respondent (M9) explained why he had confidence he would not be *detected through the selling.* He said that his Commercial Fences are the owners of shops in neighbourhoods where he grew up and so he has known them for years. When asked how he would know it was safe to sell stolen cigarettes etc to corner shops, he explained matter-of-factly:

> "Because I've seen it done before. I've watched the other generation do exactly the same. Selling beers, like a big box of whisky's and all that kind of stuff. So I knew I could sell the stuff before I even got into crime."
> (M9)

M9 went on to describe how he sold stolen cigarettes to corner shops and that these shop owners would then sell them from a chain of corner shops owned by their family. This created what was effectively an insatiable Commercial Fence Supplies Market demand for stolen cigarettes in Mansfield. The thief felt secure in his relationship with this fence, since it was based on years of mutual trust and local understanding. M9 explained that because he grew up with crime he knows that the rules about not grassing would protect him and the shopkeeper. He says that a few shopkeepers have said to him that if he ever gets caught that the deal [purchase of stolen goods] *never happened*.

In Nottingham, N1 said that his Residential Fence lived in a cul-de-sac and here he believed that everyone living in the cul-de-sac was involved in various criminal activities, and that:

> "They all knew what he [the fence] was up to, so nobody said nothing. They all borrowed money off him. He used to lend money out and charge double back."

Once the thief and fence relationship was formed, N1 dealt only with this Residential Fence. In the past he sold to a number of people that he knew and so again then, like now, he also had no fear of being informed on.

Even when thieves know their fences are caught by police officers, they do not generally fear that the fence will inform on them. One Nottingham informant (N2) knows of several known handlers who have been caught by the police but that none of them has received a custodial sentence – merely a fine or community service. He does not worry, therefore, that a detected fence would *grass on him.* By contrast, in Mansfield, M11 remembers being prosecuted following a police operation that involved the police following burglars to see who they sold stolen goods to, and then prosecuting both thieves and their fences. He said that there was "…quite a bit of fear of grassing." M11 also claimed that he was "…*grassed-up* by a buyer…" on another occasion. From a

police operations perspective this important information, about the point of view of the thief, suggests that custodial sentences should be sought in MRA operations against fences – in order to introduce more fear and associated attrition into the stealing and dealing process.

Some interviewees developed precautionary measures to reduce the risk of being detected. One interviewee in Mansfield (M7) would tell his jeweler Commercial Fence exactly where a ring came from to avoid the jeweler selling it locally. He had no fear of detection arising from selling to his fence because he knew the way a police *set-up* [operation] might work. According to M7, in a *set up* the jeweler would ask him to bring it back at a later time. This had never happened to M7 – but he said that two of his mates had been *set up* in this way by a jeweler seeking to help the police in order to avoid being prosecuted himself as a handler. When asked how this knowledge impacted upon him, M7 cast it in a uniquely positive light in that it helped him avoid being detected while selling: "There's nowt wrong with a bit of paranoia."

These interviews clearly reveal that there is a wide range of concern among prolific offenders about risks of detection from the selling of stolen goods – with most interviewees, however, saying they felt confident selling. Variations in fear mean that any MRA strategies will most likely have a varying degree of impact upon individual thieves. Since research studies of crime reduction programmes reveal that uncertainty is the enemy of the criminal, MRA initiatives may *disturb and disrupt* more offenders who are currently confident, as opposed to those with existing high anxiety levels. But an *already anxious* thief, with MRA strategies targeting their markets, will have even more things to worry about and deal with when selling stolen goods. The MRA theory here is that this will make it even more difficult to continue with their daily high frequency of offending.

Fear of buying among fences

Some interviewees (e.g. M8) said that, in their experience, fences never worried about the risks of being caught and took few precautions. Many in Nottingham and Mansfield, as with those interviewed elsewhere in earlier studies (Sutton 1998, Sutton et al 2001), were more wary and utilized a number of subtle strategies to minimize risks to their fences as well as to themselves. In Mansfield, M6 said that he had a few people he sold to, and that he would go back to these people to sell on more than one occasion during the day. He said that he believed that the fences were never afraid that they would be detected as a result of these frequent visits because they trusted him to be careful. If M6 encountered other thieves with things to sell and no buyer for them he would, alone, take those items to his own Residential Fence and sell them for an agreed share of the proceeds. He said that he did this mainly to keep the buyers exclusively *close to himself*. However, it was also explained as a deliberate strategy to protect fences from detection because: "… the buyers would be *put under threat*…" by him taking strangers around to their houses.

In many cases threats were never made about the importance of not grassing. Thieves were considerate and used initiative to protect their fence and this was, in turn, matched

by other precautions that were taken by the fence during dealing. Nottingham interviewee N6 explains how this worked by talking about a particularly cautious Commercial Fence who bought stolen cigarettes:

> "He knew we wouldn't, obviously, say anything to the police, but, he used to, erm, like before when he knew we were coming with cigarettes, we'd have to phone him first and he'd turn the cameras off in his place. And, erm, he'd buy the cars for us [used for commercial burglaries] and make sure nothing ever came back to us. He'd get rid of the cars."

This interviewee went on to explain in detail how in dealings with his fence he deliberately projects ("*…gives off… "*) the impression that he is a trusted thief, and the fence conveys the same impression. In stable dealing relationships, such as between N6 and his Commercial Fence, there is no necessity for either party to make threats about the importance of not *grassing*. Fence and thief play out the roles of honourable men to enable them to raise their status, legitimize their offending, and enter an unmentioned pact of criminal silence that is meant to protect them from both detection and prosecution. As N6 explained, in his dealings he *gives off* the impression that he is 'solid' - a *trusted thief* - and his fence *gives off* the impression that he is an organised professional fence with a reputation to maintain. In such relationships, to mention outright the need for trustworthiness is inefficient, because mentioning the importance of not *grassing* is patronising, disrespectful and shows a lack of *criminal class* associated with untrustworthy amateurs.

When he was arrested, N6 was questioned by police officers wanting to know who had bought the stolen cigarettes. He said that he never informed on his fence and simply made up a story. N6 is not aware of anyone he knows ever informing on a fence. While he knows, anecdotally, that it happens, it is not part of his personal experience. Neither is he aware of any instances of fences *grassing* on thieves - not ever.

Fences can be less subtle when warning thieves of the importance of not *grassing*. This happens mostly in new dealing relationships, where parties to the transaction might be deliberately, or habitually, inarticulate and mangle English grammar to help project a *badass* attitude (Katz 1998). For example, Nottingham interviewee N1 remembered an instance in his first dealings with a Commercial Fence (shopkeeper). He said that the shopkeeper was nervous until he saw the goods, at which point he warned: "…if any questions are said – I don't know you."

Another Nottingham thief (N2) who never actually experienced any *grassing* between buyers and thieves repeated a similar line from his own experiences: "You go to sell things and you know they say - 'you aint sold this to me' - that sort of thing. It's friendly though."

Another Nottingham interviewee (N9) dealt in stolen goods whenever he found fellow thieves who could not sell their loot. He was never prosecuted for handling and did not

think it was a risky activity. He in turn, would then meet his own buyers for the stolen goods by making phone calls from a phone box to arrange a meeting to take place on the street:

> "I'd say to someone, y'know what I mean, I didn't sell you this. It did not come off me, y'know what I mean. They would not say something, y'know what I mean, unless they was a grass or something, y'know what I mean. And the person I'm selling to don't want no one to know anyway, y'know what I mean."

N9 explained how his services as middle man were often utilized by other thieves only as a last resort. But one way or another, markets for the stolen goods were found:

> "I'd see them on the street it's not like an everyday thing, y'know what I mean, its like the odd occasion like twice a week and maybe on the weekend as well. I'd see them on the street and I'd say: 'What have you got?' You know what I mean. They'd tell me what they've got and would not want what I offered. They'd [then] try to sell it themselves. Then I'd see them again and they've not sold it. I'd sell it to someone else. I'd go and make a phone call and sell it for them."

Hawking

Hawking stolen goods door-to-door, shop-to-shop, around pubs or by approaching people on the street is clearly the most risky way for a thief to sell stolen goods. Many of those interviewed said that they had never, or only rarely, sold in this way. Some would sell in this way, but never to total strangers. Others did sell to strangers, but usually only within certain occupational groups or neighbourhoods that they were familiar with. In Nottingham one thief (N4) would sell power tools to builders on buildings sites:

> "I'd go around these building sites and ask builders if they wanted any of these tools for a low price like and then they've bought some and then their mates bought some."

In Mansfield, another one of the interviewees (M9) would hawk around pubs bottles of alcohol that had been stolen by shoplifters. He said that he was asked to do this by other shoplifters because he was better dressed than they were and because, unlike them, he is not bared from the pubs. A friend would come up to him and say: "…take this into the pub and I'll sort you out once I get the money." He said that he sold branded spirits only, obtaining, for example, £5 in a pub by hawking a large bottle of Bells Whiskey that usually retails for around £15. He explained that spirits were sold to customers only and never to landlords. These sales would take place at anytime during opening hours.

Another Nottingham interviewee (N5) regularly sold shoplifted clothes by knocking on the doors of strangers in familiar neighbourhoods - and has one time only been on the receiving end of disapproving residents telling him off for hawking stolen goods.

One Mansfield interviewee (M5) said that he believed that 95 per cent of stolen goods were sold by thieves in pubs:

> "If you aint got a specific buyer, you aint gonna get a good price for 'em, and you take whatever you can. And the majority of them, if somebody gets a mobile phone, car stereo, food, clothes, owt[21], all the same, they are just going to take them into pubs. I could go into a pub, any pub down Mansfield anywhere. Walk in a pub with a bag full of stuff and it'll be gone by the time you walk out."

While some landlords are said to "kick a bit of a fuss up" M5 said that all the thief has to do is order a pint of beer for it to be ok for him to sell in the pub: "If you're in there and spending money they seem not to mind. They let you crack on with it."

Another explained in a somewhat convoluted way how bartering with customers in pubs is integral to the stealing and dealing process in Nottingham:

> When you live on an estate and the estate is bad because people are doing whatever they are doing – drugs and that - they all know the people in the pubs. Know for a fact that if this person comes in tonight, and I missed him last night, if he comes in tonight I'll see what he's got. You know what I mean. 'Cause he's spent all his time and effort to get to the pub and he's like I'm not paying that man. Take this man. Coz he's like spent a lot on a few beers and I'm feeling intimidated because all I'm thinking about is the next score. That's all it's about, money and drugs.
> **(N3)**

Here stolen goods were being sold not only because of the absence of capable guardians (Felson 1998) but because the local drinkers, as suitably motivated offenders in their own right, ensured that any capable guardians stayed away so that thieves could sell, and buyers buy, without risk of detection and prosecution.

> "It's a local pub, and if there was a stranger in there and the stranger was to say anything [about the thief selling and people buying] the locals would say 'look mate get the fuck out.' You know what I mean. And by the time the police come it's all gone. People are wise to it man. It's common sense, init."
> **(N3)**

Network sales

In Mansfield one respondent (M8) explained how he managed to sell a number of DVDs from a house burglary by calling upon different people that he knows to ask which titles they would like to buy. These people typically bought them at half their normal retail price knowing that they were stolen. People who wanted stolen DVD's for their own use would regularly ask for more of the same. He also sold stolen jewellery through his

[21] Anything.

network of contacts in the same way. He said he believed that most of them kept the jewellery for personal adornment or else passed it on as Christmas and birthday presents. Sometimes he would give them a story about the jewellery belonging to members of his family. He felt that most just needed a story, but did not necessarily believe it. This interviewee sold mostly to family and friends and said that these people would take it unless they already had it. But even if they already owned the item, some would take it and sell it on. He said that such people would deal in stolen goods for other people as well and these few were Residential Fences employing network sales techniques. M8 said that he felt confident that there are few risks in bringing any friend who is a thief around to meet buyers and introducing them.

Some Nottingham and Mansfield burglars sold jewellery to jewelers and porn-brokers, another Nottingham interviewee (N2) would occasionally sell jewellery to friends on the street, but more usually to Residential Fences who he describes as just normal people, many of whom do not work and all are known to Nottingham burglars:

> "What it is - when you do a place and you get a load of stuff you sell it all to one person most of the time. You don't go here and there selling bits and bobs. You go to one person."

In Mansfield, a shoplifter (M6) sold meat in his neighbourhood to people in their houses. He was not sure if they were eating it themselves or selling it on. He said that the same people regularly bought stolen spirits from him. These people would buy from him on a daily basis. M6 had grown up in the area where he sold these stolen goods. He had known the buyers all of his life, never sold to strangers.

Stashing and transporting

Earlier research (Sutton 1998; Sutton et. al 2001) revealed the extent to which some burglars and shoplifters would stash stolen goods as part of their stealing and dealing repertoire. Burglars often leave goods taken from homes in nearby bushes, woodland, wasteland, inside wheelie bins or in black bin bags beside them, or up alleyways. Buyers may then be bought to the goods, often in the buyer's car. Or an accomplice or fence may pick up the goods. Shoplifters, not wanting to be caught in one shop with any number of items stolen from other shops, routinely stash clothes and other stolen items around retail areas until they have finished stealing for the day. These stashing places vary from town to town and may include the shoplifter's car, areas within car parks, parks and back-alleyways. In Nottingham, the author has in the past witnessed someone retrieving in broad daylight, at shoulder height and arms length, a large plastic bag containing new items of clothing from deep within the ivy-covered walls outside of Nottingham Castle - indicating what appears to be a stashing area close to the city centre.

Sutton (1998) and Sutton et al (2001) recommend that MRA initiatives identify, monitor and disrupt stashing activities in order to bring greater levels of friction attrition, through risk of detection, into the daily lives of prolific thieves. Additionally, it is important to

conduct anonymised in-depth interviews with known and active offenders to regularly monitor stashing and transporting behaviour; because if thieves have to stash goods for longer periods, lose stashes, or take longer to find or reach safe stashing areas this may indicate that MRA initiatives are slowing down their rate of theft. Evidence of impact here may come from what thieves say about making changes in their stashing and transporting methods, switching to different crime targets due to increased fears of detection, from the theft statistics, associated prosecutions and from what offenders say about general increased difficulties involved in stealing as a source of income. If they have to stash goods for longer periods – or transport goods for longer distances or periods of time - then their risk of detection in possession increases. Realization of illicit income should, theoretically, take longer and may be reduced – which should reduce problem drug taking and their frequency of offending. Only careful monitoring of impact though regular in-depth interviews with thieves, supported by police recorded routine and systematic, opportunistic research (*ERASOR*) intelligence (Sutton et al 2001) will provide accurate answers about the effect of MRA initiatives on theft.

To provide initial background information for future MRA initiatives in Nottingham and Mansfield, interviewees were asked questions in order to provide a better understanding of current offender dynamics. They were asked about ways of stashing and transporting stolen goods to buyers, or getting buyers to goods, and the current risks and difficulties involved in these two areas of the stealing and dealing process.

Stashing

Not all thieves stash stolen goods, as some will take only what they can carry (e.g. M8). Others would stash goods only when they felt they had to – e.g. when the site of the crime was a long way from their fence (eM11**).**

The first person interviewed for this study (M1) was a prolific house burglar from Mansfield. He explained how sometimes he left items such as large television sets stashed in bushes not far from the site of the burglary because he did not have a ready buyer. Once the set is stashed he attempts to sell it by describing it to potential buyers. The television is retrieved only when a buyer is found. M1 explained how the TV would be transported in the daytime because it looks less suspicious than it would be to do so after dark. M1 and a co-offender would ask the buyer to pull his car up nearby and they would go and inspect the item for sale. At other times they might use a shopping trolley to take the heavy item to the buyer's car or house. M1 had never found another offenders stash, neither had his own stash ever been taken by someone else.

M1 said that he would regularly stash smaller items in less public places because they could be transported safely away from the scene without arousing suspicions. He took items such as jewellery , CD players, games consoles and games etc and stashed them in a friend's garden shed.

Another Mansfield interviewee (M3) explained how he would break into garden sheds to steal tools. He would stash items such as garden strimmers in hedges because they were

too conspicuous to carry openly. He would then find buyers to pick up the item for themselves. He found another thief's stash once, but on another occasion a mate "nicked" his stash.

Mansfield interviewee (M6) used a car for shoplifting sprees and sometimes stashed stolen goods in the car before entering each shop. On other occasions he just took, transported and sold items. At first he said that he was not sure why he sometimes stashed and sometimes never did. On reflection, he said that he realised that he stashed when wanted more money and when the target was easy. M6 believed that his stashes were always safe and he had never found another thief's stash.

Stashing dynamics employed by burglars were the same in Nottingham and Mansfield. One interviewee (N2) would burgle a house and then stash the stolen goods inside hedges in streets near to the burgled house. Or he would just as often put goods in a wheelie bin nearby the burgled property. From there, he would ask people "on the street" if they were interested in a particular stashed item, tell them what he wants for it and take them to the stash (often in the potential buyers car). He did this so that they could examine their potential bargain before deciding whether or not to buy. And at this point, the final price is agreed and the buyer usually takes the item away in their own car.

In Nottingham a house burglar (N8) said that he stashed goods to avoid walking around carrying them when he was not using a car. He said he would sometimes show a buyer a catalogue picture to let them know what he was selling. However, with some items such as DVD players he said that retail price was irrelevant because an expensive DVD player selling for £100 in high street shops sells for the same knock down price in stolen goods markets as a £15 *supermarket special*. N8 said that the same was true of television sets.

Transporting

Some house burglars will take a large item only when they have a buyer lined up for it. In Nottingham, N8 explained that if he was asked for a certain item such as a large television set then he would not go out looking for it straight away. Rather, he said he would just carry on stealing until the opportunity arose: "You would only take a TV knowing you could sell it. Then he would take it in his own untaxed and unregistered car to the dealer, take it out of the boot and deliver it to the buyer.

As in other parts of the country (Sutton 1998; Sutton et al 2001) some Nottingham taxi firms and licensed hackney carriage[22] drivers were integral to the dynamics of the stealing and dealing process. A Nottingham shoplifter (N4) sold stolen aftershave and chocolate to drivers waiting in taxi ranks. Another interviewee (N3) would do a burglary and then phone a local taxi firm. He explained that even if he did not know the driver, all drivers would know he was a burglar by the characteristics of the situation; as he would get them to drop him off at a house nearby to the one he was actually going to burgle and ask them to wait. Sometimes the cab driver would buy the stolen goods from him. That

[22] Taxi drivers and cars licensed to pick up customers on the street without prior bookings.

said, N3 explained that this was not his preferred MO as: "Cab drivers are your last resort, if you've not got transport." While he felt that using unknown cab drivers was a risky strategy and that there was a high chance of being caught in possession while transporting he said that due to his drug-taking lifestyle that: "…after a while I didn't give a fuck. I just didn't care."

Speed of selling

To repeat the point already made in relation to stashing behaviour, Sutton et al (2001) explain that successful MRA initiatives are expected to impact on the speed of selling stolen goods by increasing the actual and perceived risks of selling and of buying stolen goods. The theory is that thieves will take longer to find buyers. By introducing MRA friction into the stealing and dealing process, the theory is that thieves will steal less, retire from stealing sooner and that fewer young offenders will become prolific offenders.

To gather initial data to inform future MRA initiatives, and the monitoring of their impact, interviewees were asked about how long it took them, typically, to convert stolen property into cash – starting from the moment they had the goods in their possession.

One Mansfield burglar (M8) said that from the time of the theft, it took him about an hour to sell jewellery , DVD's and computer games. He knew where he was going to sell the goods before setting off to find his buyer. For most interviewees an hour would have been a long delay. In Nottingham one burglar (N3) said that from the time of theft, he could sell in less than five minutes, because he would sometimes have the buyer waiting outside the very house he was burgling. Another (N2) said that from the stashing of stolen goods from a burglary to selling takes just half an hour.

Others went into more detail if their theft to selling times varied for different reasons. In Nottingham, N3 explained that on return from a night-time burglary he would sell goods first to a pawnshop as soon as it opened in the morning. He knew that the price was lower than he would get selling around his neighbourhood but as it was early and he needed to get the money straight away for his drugs[23]. Selling around his area he would get twice the price offered by a pawnshop. He said that the pawnshop owner would know that the goods were stolen.

The first interviewee from Mansfield (M1) said that it took between 30 and 45 minutes from stealing to selling stolen goods to his residential fence. If it had been a particularly "good" haul, the goods would not be sold at once. Once they have sold some items, bought and taken their drugs and so are "feeling better," M1 and his accomplice get the rest of their booty and decide how to set about selling it. Most of those interviewed in Mansfield confirmed that they usually sold stolen goods, ranging from generators to laptop computers, within 30 minutes of the theft.

[23] Perhaps police could monitor pawnshops first thing in the mornings to see who is selling on a regular basis. at this time.

One interviewee (M7) said that this was true for items stolen during house burglary even in the early hours of the morning – particularly when he used a stolen van to transport the goods and wanted to abandon it before it was reported stolen:

> "If I got a lot of stuff I'd nick a van and clear the stuff out and knock a few people up even at three in the morning. If they're making a profit they don't mind. If it's three in the morning it's three in the morning."

One Mansfield burglar (M5), however, who burgled homes across a wide area of Nottinghamshire found a particularly good market in Nottingham and so for him the 30 minute rule did not strictly apply. He claimed to be able to get twice as much by selling the stolen goods in Nottingham rather than in Mansfield:

> "It all depends on where I've done the burglary or done the crime, 'cos a lot of me stuff went to Nottingham, to Snenton, and a bit to Hyson Green[24]. But the majority was to Snenton.

Another (M9) used a stolen car to transport goods from household burglaries. He described it like a military operation:

> "Drive off [away from the scene of the crime]. Unload the stuff into a legit car in lane. Transport goods to legit car and burn out the stolen car. Would have people who were being supplied to order. So it was easy to get rid of.

This interviewee went on to explain that he took the property back to his own place first. Then within half an hour he could sell the goods by making phone calls to people who had put in orders:

> "You'll go with someone who goes around to sell something at a house and the person there – he or she will turn around and say ' I want this for my lad or I want this for my wife' So when you come across it you'll take it 'round."
> **(M9)**

Interviews for the Mansfield sample took place in Mansfield's main police station. One interviewee (M2) said from that location he could sell stolen goods within ten minutes. He described how, for example, house burglars would sell a haul of 50 DVDs as a job lot. He said he could do this within 10 minutes if he was to start out with them from Mansfield police station. He said that DVDs are one of the top items on domestic burglars' *loot-lists* and that typically they are sold to both businesses and Residential Fences, to second hand shops and local small shops that rent them out. He says that many Residential Fences are often market traders as well and will sell stolen DVDs on their market stalls..

[24] Snenton and Hyson Green are both areas within Nottingham that are within 10-15 minutes walking distance of the city centre.

Hot Property – what is top of the loot-list and why?

When deciding how best to spend limited resources in a MRA initiative Sutton et al (2001) recommend using crime data analysis to determine which goods are most likely to be stolen during particular types of acquisitive crime, and to determine at any given point in time which goods are associated with causing existing crime levels and those that are about to start-up new crime waves. In addition to recording[25] and analyzing this police-data, regular in-depth interviews with thieves and use of ERASOR principles (see Sutton et 2001) will provide valuable qualitative and quantitative information about hot property, and more importantly what goods are currently most sought after.

In-depth anonymised and ERASOR interviews should reveal important information about the offending dynamics of where it is being sold, why it is sold there, in which way and to whom it is being sold.

Offenders are very aware of the effects of market trends upon the stealing and dealing process. As one Mansfield interviewee (M4) put it:

> "Owt[26] comes out brand new and nobody's got it then obviously the first persons to start bringing them in is going to make the money aren't they. Basically they'll [buyers will] say: 'Look, if you come across any of these fetch me some.'

M4, like others interviewed in Mansfield and Nottingham, was keen to stress that thieves were not being 'run' by their fences or by their drug-dealers to take extra risks. He stressed that the effect of high demand for hot products did not mean the fence saying: "You go out and get me some." Rather it was more a case of: "Just if you come across any."

Another prolific offender from Mansfield (M11) believed that gold jewellery and also DVDs, DVD players, Plasma and LCD television sets and "…whatever is first coming out on the market" are all hot products worth stealing. Like M4, M11 said that he "…would take them opportunistically." By this he meant, not that the burglary was necessary opportunistic rather than planned, but that he did not target the dwelling with prior knowledge of what was inside. He said that only on one occasion did he steal to order, and that the buyer had: "… pointed to the address to steal it from." M11 said that he stole the targeted television whilst wearing an electronic ankle tag – imposed following an earlier conviction for burglary!

N2 talking about what he knows of the market for stolen in-cat satellite navigation (sat nav) equipment:

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[25] Changes may need to be implemented to recording practices so that particular items are more precisely and consistently recorded. So that, for example, an in-car sat. nav. system is not recorded simply as 'other electrical'.

[26] Anything.

> "People who buy them sell them on. The thief gets £80. He knows that the Tom Tom[27] is the one everyone wants, so this attracts £80. The ones with the map of Europe are the ones that are most in demand."

Another Nottingham thief (N3) also mentioned this particular hot product:

> "Tom Tom sat navs are sold to pawn shops[28]. They are straight in and then out the back. It's like they don't give a shit who comes in and sells them what because at the end of the day it's all about money."

N3 said that a £250 sat nav is worth £50 to the thief. N3 knew that pawn dealers generally sold the equipment it to their own friends through Network Sales Markets.

Nottingham burglars, more so than those in Mansfield, were well tuned into the latest hot property trends and many had knowledge of hot-products cooling. One (N2) said that all brand new electrical goods were good sellers in Nottingham. His new and used loot-list included camcorders and DVD players, LCD and plasma television sets, laptop computers,

Wider ownership of plasma and LCD screen televisions, as has been the case with colour TVs in the 1970's and VCR recorders in the 1980's, appears set to fuel a new domestic burglary crime wave (see Sutton 1993; 1995). One Nottingham interviewee mentioned demand for this hot product:

> "Plasmas like they're the newest thing. But I don't even know what's what now [after being in prison for 14 months]. Everybody wants them, they're the newest thing. They're expensive. So they're [the public is] going to get them on the cheap aren't they."
> (N7)

Commercial burglars in Mansfield were less tuned into the latest hot products from domestic burglaries and theft from vehicles and more aware of the markets for larger volumes of stolen goods such as cigarettes that hey could sell to Commercial Fences:

> "Cigarettes, anything. I mean if you had a lorry-load of toilet paper you could sell it. I mean people always want cheap items. A lot of the stuff from overseas has got the tax mark on it. But if you go and burgle a shop and steal cigarettes you could take them to the dodgy person in the corner shop or the dodgy person in the high street shop and they'll buy them through the back door at a decent price because they're stolen and they sell them at top price on the shelf and no one knows any difference."
> (M2)

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[27] Popular and superior Sat. Nav. brand.

[28] This particular interviewee clarified that his use of the term "pawn shops" covers general second-hand dealers as well as pawn brokers.

This interviewee also specialized in stealing power tools such as cordless drills, petrol fueled equipment and plant machinery. He sold this equipment to builders who use it themselves and he also sold to fences.

Another Mansfield commercial burglar (M7), describing the selling of stolen cigarettes in bulk to shops owners who then sold them over the counter to an unsuspecting public, explained succinctly why cigarettes were hot property:

> "We sell 'em at £2 a packet and fags is a fiver now [retail]. So if they pay us – if we sold it a £2.50 a packet – they sell it over the counter at a fiver. So if we sell it to them at six grand they get twelve back. Most shops have about 10,000 in the fag[29] counter."

This demand for cigarettes led one Mansfield shoplifter (M9) into commercial burglary. He was a shoplifter when he moved in to share a house with other problem drug users who were doing commercial burglaries to steal cigarrettes. They would break into garages either through windows or with a crowbar on the back door. They knew these properties were alarmed but they were after the cigarettes in the "fag counter" knowing that each counter often stored 20,000 cigarettes. They knew they had three minutes before the alarm was activated. They were never caught.

M9 said they would drive out of the area to steal and that the smallest haul he can remember was 10,000 cigarettes. He said that corner shop owners, who sold them on for almost £5 a packet, would pay the gang between £1 and £1.50 a packet. According to M9, the least he ever received for his share in the sale of cigarettes was £300, while more often than that he received around £800.

The first Nottingham interviewee was a prolific shoplifter. Like those who specialized in meeting the demand for stolen cigarettes, N1 targeted Gillette Mach3 razorblades:

> "People [buyers] went crazy for these when they first came out and they still are crazy for them. People [shoplifters] used to put 10 or twenty in their jacket and get £5 a packet…easy."

N1 sold by hawking to taxi-drivers. He would just walk up to them and ask them if they wanted to buy. For about two months N1 specialized in meeting this new and incredible demand for stolen razor blades at cheaper than retail. He said he could sell these razor blades to:

> "…anybody, just anybody. You could walk into pubs with a carrier bag full and all the blokes would take 'em off yer. Everyone who shaves has a Mach3 razor. They [buyers] could get them off you without having to pay the full-whack.

[29] British slang for cigarette.

> Everybody everywhere was into them. Every single shop that sold them, I stole from them."

With all this shaving going on, combined with the heavy marketing and growing popularity of male grooming products, it is hardly surprising that expensive aftershave is in demand as a staple hot product. Nottingham shoplifter and commercial burglar (N4) explains:

> "A lot of people will buy aftershaves, a lot of people. You are almost guaranteed to sell that in the pub, or whatever [wherever]."

He said that he would ask £15 for a £30 (retail price) bottle of after shave and take £10 as the lowest offer. Using this bartering technique, while hawking around Nottingham, he could easily get £10 for a £30 bottle.

Mansfield shoplifter (M6) said electrical stores were the best places to go to steal the hottest property earning the most income. M6 stole DVD players to order. He said you walk in take DVD players and walk out. Although this would set off the alarm, he would just run with it. M6 said he would then get half the retail price for it. During the time he was snatching DVD players in this way he was also routinely shoplifting meat. When asked which product was the most risky to steal he said that the DVD players were more risky than stealing meat. When asked: 'So why not just steal meat?' he replied: "More money in't it. Same offence - shoplifting."

M6 had at various times responded to the vagaries of local hot property demands among those who bought stolen goods. At one time he specialized in toiletries and clothes. He would steal these items to order, explaining that he got a better price that way. In his latest shoplifting forays, M6 specialized in stealing sports clothes - again selling them for half their retail price.

Also in Mansfield, one interviewee (M9) remembers further back when designer male deodorant as well as aftershave was the hot product[30]:

> "This was in 1994. Every one was going crazy and wanted expensive deodorants for like a fiver a bottle- even the testers. Even if they was half full we would still get the fiver."

Mansfield burglar M8 believed that jewellery and DVDs were the hottest property to sell locally. When stealing DVD's during a house burglary he would take as many DVDs as he could carry while being selective in choosing the best films and leaving whatever he thought there was no market for. He said that in this way, following a house burglary, he

[30] This may have had something to do with the ecstasy fuelled dance scene around that time.

would often have between 30 and 40 DVDs. All of these would be sold to a number of people within an hour.

Knowing that there is a market for certain items is not always going to motivate thieves if they don't know where or how to find a buyer. M8 knew that laptop computers could fetch quite a lot of money, but said he would not know who to sell them to in Mansfield. He explained that he only took what he knew he could sell. Like most of those interviewed in Mansfield and Nottingham, for much of the time M8 was merely responding to the familiar and solid local market demands.

By way of contrast, in Nottingham another interviewee (N7) had the laptop market worked out:

> "Everyone wants a laptop. A Pentium 4 will fetch £150. Make a few phone calls. See a few dodgy people. Go to a few pubs. Mums and dads will buy it. People's Grandmas will buy it. Sometimes people call [other] people until a buyer is found. A laptop will sell in 20 minutes."

The Xmas Effect

Annually, national crime statistics for England and Wales reveal that acquisitive crime rates increase over the build-up to the Christmas period. Past attempts to explain this have focused upon burglars possibly being aided by shorter days and darker evenings (See Sutton et al 2001 for a brief overview of this work). Another explanation, gained not from such seemingly reasonable speculation but from in-depth interviews with prolific thieves, is that demand for stolen goods among the present buying, bargain hunting, public surges at this time of year and that thieves, prolific and otherwise, are there to meet it (Sutton 1998, Sutton et al 2001). Interviews with offenders in Nottingham and Mansfield, as with earlier research conducted elsewhere by the author revealed that what people want for Christmas, and what people want to give them[31] is a major part of the *hot property stealing and dealing equation* between November and December 25th.

Parents of children, and others in the know, will be familiar with the seasonal nightmare phenomenon of the must have toy that is in short supply over the Christmas period. This problem has dogged doting parents for decades – with sudden seasonal shortages of toys for younger children such as Ninja Turtles action figures, Thunderbird's Island and Furbies[32], right up to the latest games console just released. Before Christmas, the most in-demand toys that cannot be bought in the shops are at the top of *mental loot-lists* and finding them is a cinch for the burglar unwrapping presents early from under other people's Christmas trees.

[31] These are often at variance, as we all found from the time we first learned or worked out the truth about Father Christmas explanations for all those presents.
[32] A furry noise-making toy.

Mansfield burglar M1 talked about the *Xmas Effect on Theft*. If the *must have* for Christmas items were not in shops, then he could get the retail price for them by selling directly to parents or to Residential Fences. These buyers always know that the goods are stolen. He contemplated the irony of this only when in jail, where he realised that: "…parents were feeding the market for other children to have their presents stolen[33]".

Mansfield thieves in particular talked about an *Xmas Effect*. M8 said that Christmas time was the best time to steal. At Christmas time there is a big demand for computers and computer games and DVD's, with what he described as: "…the demand period" starting around mid November.

Another (M12), who was a prolific shoplifter, went into more detail by explaining that what is hot property at any given time depends upon the time of year. At Christmas time he specialized in targeting shops to steal presents for children. Remote control cars and computer games were the hot products. M12 would take orders for children's toys from parents who wanted them for their own children. He said that usually he would only take the item if he happened to see it, rather than seeking it out because he had an order for it. However, sometimes he did target specific goods if the price and demand was right. At one time he said that a lot of people were asking for DVD players that came with 100 DVDs in a box and were being sold in Co-op mini-supermarkets. He was selling them for £40 to one buyer and targeting the same Co-op shop. He did this about 10 times. The buyer was a business owner who was selling on to friends.

One of the Nottingham interviewees mentioned the *Xmas Effect* upon stealing to order:

> "We always had big lists of things that people wanted, especially near Christmas time, children's toys and chocolates. They'd ask for camcorders, good gold chain, music CDs, or a stereo. Stuff like that."[34]
> (N1)

Whether the Xmas Effect is caused by prolific thieves – or whether seasonal amateurs are a major cause remains unclear. Without better, and valid and reliable, data from thieves it is only possible to speculate in this area. Since in-depth interviews with offenders shows that prolific thieves rarely go out stealing until the proceeds from their last theft foray is all gone (See Sutton 1998)[35], it may be in part that problem drug using prolific offenders

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[33] There may be scope for implementing some form of novel moral exhortation programme with burglars in jail over the Christmas period along with some kind of very carefully designed *Don't Let a Cinch Pinch Christmas* advertising campaign to change attitudes among buyers. However, a note of caution is due here - badly designed attitude change campaigns can have opposite to desired effects (Sutton et al 2007 – in press).

[34] Several interviewees also made a profit in this way by selling on items stolen by other thieves.

[35] Nottingham interviewee N1 described how following a lucrative burglary he would spend £1,000 a day between three people on heroin crack and takeaway food etc. Also, his drug habit increased after he began dealing with an organised Commercial Fence. Similarly in Mansfield, M9 said that the £800 he typically received for a haul of stolen cigarettes would be spent within three days. The more demand from buyers, the more he would steal to buy drugs and clothes. Like N1 he never ever stole when he had money in his pocket, but the money was soon gone.

use more drugs and/or need more money to spend on other things during the Christmas period and/or it may be fuelled in total or in part by seasonal offenders. To provide one example of this enigma: Mansfield house burglar (M8) said that there was a big demand for computers and computer games over the Christmas period and that prices were higher. Yet he would not do more burglaries over this period. The reason was simply because he just wanted the same amount of heroin

Cold property

While certain items such as cash and gold jewellery remain staple hot property in the thief's *mental loot lists* (Sutton et al 2001*),* other items lose this status long before they become obsolete technology. Back in 1995 when the author began interviewing thieves about hot property, in-car hi-fi systems including Alpine and Sony radio cassette players sold in shops for between £500 and £1000 and were top of the list for many thieves. An insatiable demand for what was then cutting-edge, expensive and desirable equipment fuelled a boom in theft from motor vehicles at the time (Sutton 1998). In the new millennium, however, very few people would steal a radio cassette player, simply because no one would buy it. The rule is simple – hot property goes cold. In MRA initiatives, this is an important phenomenon to monitor using *ERASOR* techniques (Sutton et al 2001) alongside regular in-depth interviews with prolific offenders. Doing so should help to ensure that scarce resources are not wasted by targetting declining or obsolete markets at the expense of newly emerging crime waves.

In both Nottingham and Mansfield many of those interviewed believed that the golden days of selling stolen electrical goods were over. The reason they gave was that the market had been swamped over the past two years by too many problem drug users who were prepared to sell expensive equipment cheaply and so were driving prices down in these areas. As these interviews represent the first of a series of intended interviews it is difficult to assess the accuracy of this information. Only by interviewing active prolific offenders at regular intervals is it possible to monitor real local trends in prices. Those implementing MRA initiatives should be aware of the possible pitfalls of relying solely on beliefs, and rose-tinted memories of newly released offenders about *the good old days two years ago when you could get £300 for a stolen laptop, but not anymore,* etc, because such beliefs in the decline of a golden age for thieves being due to problem drug users swamping the market with cheap goods is a story that offenders from all over England and Wales have been telling the author for the past fourteen years. The most likely explanation is that goods that were once hot property become *cold* either because the technology becomes obsolete or else the legitimate retail prices fall so low that it no longer makes sense to buy that particular item buy from a thief.

In Nottingham, N5 spoke about stealing laptop computers from cars. He used to look for cars driven by company representatives, believing that any car with a suit hanging in it is most guaranteed to have a laptop in the boot. He would cruise the streets looking for a car with a suit hanging in it. If the car had a hatchback he would look to see if he could see a laptop in the boot. Even if the car was alarmed and it was 2am he would break into it. What he needed most was to see some evidence of a laptop - such as a plug and adaptor.

N5 said that in the past he would receive £300 for a stolen laptop. Now he says the market has fallen off and that this is due to oversupply. Today he says that the thief to a fence would sell a £1200 laptop for £30: "People say you get £100 for them but you don't. They are easy to sell but the price is low." Although the price may have dropped they can be sold within 20 minutes of the theft. He says that if someone asks for something like a laptop then they must have the money ready: "You do get times when they don't have the money, but you aint going to leave a laptop in someone's house. So you say: 'You can piss off'."

In Mansfield, M5 said something very similar: "It's like a laptop now. I would not waste my time. It's not worth it now. It's drug takers rattling[36] that are happy and content with £40."

Nottingham burglar (N8) believes that market prices have fallen for stolen camcorders, laptops and Sony Play Stations. In the past he would sell these items to drug dealers or other contacts. In Mansfield, M4 recalls the time when camcorders were what everybody wanted. He remembers that it just got to a point where he could no longer sell them for a decent price. In the end he would only take a brand new digital one.

Not all blamed heroin addicts for swamping the markets with cheap stolen goods. Others, such as N3 were aware that rapid reductions in high street prices for new technology had an impact on both prices and demand for stolen goods:

> "It's like in 2003, DVD players were on top of the market. Then it was nice and cheap [prices dropped in the high street] and people always had a DVD player. And you would do a house [burglary] and you'd think. Wow, there's nothing in this house, it's shit. And so you'd do the DVD player and you'd be stuck with it for a few days because everyone you go to has got one."

Two Nottingham interviewees in particular thought that the market for many types of stolen goods was not what it used to be. N2 used to steal car CD players, which he stole to order, or else sold through friendship Network Sales, before the market stopped. Now he says that he is no longer asked for them. While N3 said that he made a rule of never stealing what he could not sell he recalled that in the past that he had thrown unsold car stereos out of a moving car's window. Although no longer active as a criminal, since joining the prolific offender unit's Sherwood Project, N3 said that he has learned that the Nottingham markets for property from burglaries are very poor at the moment - because the goods in all the shops are so cheap. As a result, he says that domestic burglars are switching to commercial burglary:

> "Now I know a person who is doing factories – plasma TVs, laptops, brand new boxed stuff. When I was burgling in 2003, 2004 I was guaranteed to get money

[36] Suffering from drug dependent withdrawal symptoms.

> out of the house as well as things. And its just today it's just phew, it's different. The market for DVDs themselves is off. It's because they are so cheap to buy and you can buy a brand new film for a fiver."

N5 explained that changes in security technology appear to have reduced what was just two or three years ago a lucrative home market in stolen mobile phones to a less lucrative overseas market:

> "Mobiles used to be good but they can be switched off now. They can be shipped abroad where they will work. The dealers tell you that they have to be shipped abroad. "Shops buy them. I know two phone shops that buy mobile phones and they are going abroad."

N5 said that these dealers know that the phones are stolen, buying them from theives for about £10 each. He said the home market in stolen phones ended very suddenly. Where in the past he could get £100 for a phone, overnight "…you can get a tenner if you are lucky, but most people wont even have them because you know they get switched off."

N8 had a similar story to tell about the rapid demise of the market for stolen DVD players. He said that when DVD players first came out, if they were £250 in the shops he could get £100 for one. Rather than seeing this as a consequence of the emergence of cheap supermarket specials N8 blamed what he saw as an increase in the number of heroin addicts selling goods for next to nothing:

> "At one point, out of a burglary you could get anything – you would not leave with less than £1,000 from a burglary. Now you would be lucky to get £50 to £100."

4. Avoid Bad Practice in Crime Reduction - Don't Reinvent the Flat Tyre

In England and Wales, new knowledge of the practice of *stealing to offer* was first used to create an initial menu of situational tactics designed to reduce theft through the MRA (Sutton 1998). The menu was further developed to form the core element of a report that provides a strategic and systematic 'toolkit' for reducing stolen goods markets with an aim to reduce theft (Sutton et al 2001). The MRA is now Home Office approved practice in their crime reduction toolkit recommendations.

The MRA solution to local theft problems comes from a process of lateral thinking or *lateral strategy* (Sutton et al 2001). This involves working back from the particular local crime problem to devise or adopt suitable crime reducing tactics. In many cases, however, police forces and other agencies employed to reduce all kinds of crimes seek to apply a *favourite solution*, such as, for example, using various types of property marking (e.g. 'invisible marking, engraving, stamping, micro-dotting and 'smart water') in an attempt to reduce theft problems. Such off-the-peg solutions as this are not likely to be genuinely and measurably effective in areas where thieves steal marked property, people buy it and the police intercept less than 1 per cent of it (Sutton et al 2001).

Research suggests that property marking has never been shown to be effective against theft because thieves steal marked property just the same as fences and the general public buys it.

Stolen goods sting operations are another example of *flat-tyre initiatives* that are best avoided. Research in Canada by Langworthy and Lebau (1992) found that it is a big mistake for police officers to set up sting operations, even though they bring the police excellent publicity and meet with widespread public approval (Felson 2002). Whether run by criminals or set up as stings by police, local fencing operations actually increase, rather than decrease, local theft rates because thieves do not, as a general rule, like to travel far with stolen goods in their possession – it increases their risk of being caught – and a 'good and fair' fence will increase the incidence of theft (Sutton 1998).

Nottingham interviewee (N5) said that he knew that a police sting operation in Nottingham's Hyson Green had furnished offenders with money to buy drugs by purchasing items from them that were not even stolen:

> "They would take absolutely anything. You could take something broken in and they would take it. You know what I mean. A few people said it must be dodgy [a sting] but sold to them anyway."

No one could put it more plainly than Felson (2002: 81) who knows that it is necessary for those who implement law enforcement to take note of the facts learned from research: 'Providing a convenient fence is probably one of the worst ideas that law enforcement has ever come up with.'

If fencing sting operations are the worst idea tried out by police officers, then property marking must come a close second place (see Knutsson 1984; Sutton 1998) and in third place come initiatives that seek to return stolen goods to their rightful owners; they cost a relative fortune to operate, do not make sense in terms of reducing crime and do not even work (See, for example, Whitehead an Gray 1998).

None of the interviewees in Nottingham and Mansfield were at all concerned about Smartwater or any other property marking initiatives. The majority of those interviewed dismissed questions about property marking and Smartwater as a waste of time. For them such initiatives were not even worth talking about – they were so inconsequential. Some such as M3, M4 and M8 had never seen any marked property and were unaware of any police marking initiatives ever having taken place.[37] Even those that had seen marked property (e.g. M1) were unconcerned because it is quickly sold and out of their hands:

> "The buyers still buy it, and it's not us that the police are going to go into our house and find it."

Another Mansfield interviewee (M5) said that he was never affected by property marking, saying that he stole it anyway:

> "…the criminals is always one step ahead of them [police]. It doesn't take long for someone to sit there with a bit of brain on 'em and fuckin figure out how to fuckin decode it, get rid of markings or whatever. And you always know somebody like that. There is always going to be somebody like that [who could remove property marking or security features for the thief or fence]. When you've got a proper buyer [Commercial Fence] who spends money getting it sorted out he will."
> (M5)

Prolific Mansfield thief (M7) has come across marked property, but said that he could and would always steal it and sell it. Marked property made no difference to him, other thieves or buyers:

> "Because it would not put the next person off. If owt comes on top [police get involved] the person buying 'em obviously knows the score. They're asking for a cheap thing, so they know the score. But if they get pulled with it they say they just bought it from a man in the pub."

[37] M4 said he thought such operations were a joke – they did not make him more careful. He just did not care about them - and if he had ever come across any marked property he would still have taken it.

In Nottingham, one of the interviewees (N2) talked about a friend who had been caught through the use of a police Capture Car after breaking into it to steal a satellite navigation device:[38]

> He took a sat. nav. system and the capture cars were used, and the police followed him to his house. They put stuff in the car so that when you walk past you see it. And when you steal it they just track you to where you're going."

This interviewee said that the use of Capture Cars and tracking devices does not put thieves off. Similarly, he said that property marking does not put him off taking marked property. He had seen marked property in the past: "It was like yellow paint but it never bothered me. I just scratched it off." He said that Smartwater was not a worry because he never had enough information about it and so he never worried about it.

While Nottingham interviewee N8 never knowingly stole marked property, he said that it was never an issue for him anyway. He never worried about smart water: "…because you can't see it![39]"

To conclude on this theme then: In the light of past research and the findings in this study in Nottingham and Mansfield, although property marking is one of the easiest initiatives to undertake; it is unlikely to be cost-effective in reducing theft and should not be undertaken as part of an MRA project unless it forms part of a local strategy that will genuinely and significantly increase the likelihood of thieves and handlers being caught in possession of marked goods and handlers being caught in possession of marked goods.

[38] Planted – sting – cars that are under constant surveillance. They act as an allurement to thieves and are used to either detain thieves once they are inside, or else contain property with tracking devices fitted.

[39] Part of the intended *projection of* 'paranoia' among thieves in the use of Smartwater is that its invisibility means they cannot know whether or not they are vulnerable to detection. However, its very invisibility might mean that for the short-run-hedonist thief – 'what you can't see can't hurt you'.

5. Tackling Stolen Goods Markets with the MRA: Building upon existing theories and approaches to crime control

One of the most popular crime reduction methods in the UK is Situational Crime Prevention (SCP). SCP involves the deployment of discreet managerial and environmental change to reduce the opportunities for crimes to occur and is particularly useful for designing solutions to prevent specific crime problems in the places where they usually happen (Clarke 1997). The MRA builds upon Clarke's work in looking for ways to tackle the roots of theft Sutton (1995). This is important because tackling theft by reducing stolen goods markets might satisfy the demands of policy makers, writers and crime reduction practitioners who wish to deal with the underlying causes of criminal motivation as well as the immediate vulnerability of victims' possessions (Sutton 1996).

Most crimes require convergence in space and time of likely offenders, suitable targets and the absence of capable guardians (Cohen and Felson 1979). The MRA fits the philosophy of Cohen and Felson's RAT in the following ways:

1. **Motivated offenders**

- Motivated *thieves* (selling stolen goods), *dealers* (Buying/selling), *consumers* (buying/owning)

2. **Suitable targets**

- Stolen goods for sale – and when sold, similar goods become suitable targets for theft.

3. **Absence of capable guardians**

- Low level of policing (public and private policing or citizen control) of stolen goods markets

Stolen goods markets motivate thieves, because most thieves steal to sell goods and thus obtain cash. Market demand[40] for particular goods clearly plays a role in motivating some people to steal items that they know others will buy. In the UK, new knowledge of the importance of the practice of *stealing to offer* in maintaining local stolen goods markets was first used to create an initial menu of *situational* tactics designed to reduce theft through the MRA (Sutton 1998). The menu was further developed to form the core element of a report that provides a strategic and systematic 'toolkit' for reducing all types of markets for stolen goods (Sutton et al. 2001). The influence of Clarke's work can be seen in the following matching of the MRA to three of the main elements of situational crime prevention philosophy:

[40] Or, more accurately the saleability of certain items.

1. **Increasing the effort of offending – focusing upon the:**

Thief

- Making it as hard to sell stolen goods as it is to steal them

Dealer (fence)

- Making it difficult to 'safely' buy and sell stolen goods

Consumer

- Reducing opportunities to buy and thereby deflecting consumers to legitimate markets – or alternative illegitimate markets where they will have to work harder to find the items they want – to the point where the expense/effort of searching becomes intolerable.

2. **Increasing the risks of offending – focusing upon the:**

Thief

- Making it as least as risky to transport and sell stolen goods as it is to steal them.

Dealer

- Making it much more risky to knowingly buy, transport store and trade in stolen goods.

Consumer

- Making it much more risky to knowingly buy, transport and own stolen goods.

3. **Reducing the rewards of offending – focusing upon the:**

Thief

- Reducing the price received for stolen goods because they are no longer so desirable – due to impact of moral exhortation and increased risks (no longer a sellers market).

Dealer

- Reducing the profit margin on stolen goods due to the increased risks faced in inter-trader dealing and the perceived risks that the consumers face. Fewer stolen goods in circulation – no longer core source of income.

Consumer

- Risks/guilt of purchasing and ownership outweigh the enjoyment of possession and use of stolen goods.

The MRA should be seen as a large-scale-local theft reduction strategy, not simply as a way to reduce illicit trading, because each essential attempt to reduce illicit markets is also essentially targeting both the theft process and loot trading process. Systematically and routinely seeking to detect those engaged in handling stolen goods and applying legal sanctions against them is also helping to ensure that offenders have less chance of profiting from the misery of victims of burglary and other thefts.

Harris et al (2003) undertook an independent evaluation of two MRA projects that were funded under the Home Office Targeted Policing Initiative (TPI). They found that while the theory behind the MRA is clearly not flawed, some of the recommended MRA tactics nevertheless proved difficult to implement and that the police services involved had not always adopted the most promising tactics that are recommended by Sutton et al (2001):

> 'The problems encountered by the projects all related to operationalising the theory. …While implementation has been difficult there is certainly not sufficient evidence from the two projects to suggest that the compelling logic of the theory of market reduction is unsound.'

Harris et al (2003) conclude that the two projects evaluated should be seen as forerunners for future MRA initiatives. Others can now draw upon their experiences: "Perhaps in this light, progress should be viewed less in terms of crime reduction outcomes but more in terms of lessons about the process through which market reduction approaches should be implemented." Building upon the valuable lessons that Harris et al have identified, and taking on board a series of recommendations from their evaluations, any future MRA projects in Mansfield and Nottingham will, hopefully, prove cost effective in terms of reducing the extent of handling – with an aim to reduce acquisitive offending.

6. Tackling Crime Facilitation: the need to survey the role of local crimemongers

Ex Home Office crime scientist Gloria Laycock (2005) cites Ron Clarke (Clarke and Eck 2003) to usefully summarise the concept of what is currently understood to be a *crime facilitator* and explains the difference between three types of crime facilitator – physical, social and chemical:

1. Physical facilitators – e.g. tools used by the burglar, or the gun in an armed robbery, spray paint for vandals etc.
2. Social facilitators –e.g. interactions of young men in a group may encourage rowdyism.
3. Chemical facilitators, which are often disinhibitors such as alcohol, are clearly implicated in many offences including domestic assault.

Paul Ekblom (1997), yet another ex-Home Office criminologist, uses the term *crime promoters* to refer to people who are in effect *social crime facilitators* and describes how these individuals provide aid to criminals either unwittingly, carelessly, recklessly or deliberately.

Social crime facilitators have a role in maintaining and increasing crimes (Sutton 1998). They can, for example, reinforce criminal behaviour with rewards for stolen property and other illegitimate goods and services and they regularly create an aura of legitimacy around criminal behaviour by merging it in their own minds and blurring it in the minds of other offenders with legal/ethical mercantile practices. All of this plays a roll in encouraging early criminal careers and facilitating continuance in criminal activities. As such, some social crime facilitators are in effect traders and dealers in something unpleasant. These dealers continue to trade and hence to profit from facilitating crime while national crime surveys report on, police focus upon, and the criminal justice system incarcerates or otherwise punishes, tens of thousands of young people and the other more 'vulnerable' *usual suspects* every year. An accurate, if somewhat disparaging description, is that these crime facilitators are *crimemongers* (Sutton 2006*)* who should be focused upon by national crime surveys and police and community safety initiatives, such as The Nottingham Act, so that we can know more details about the day-to-day dynamics of their shady dealings in order to decide how best to seek to curtail these *unusual suspects*.

Businesses engage in a range of *crimemongering* activities that include manufacturing and selling speed camera detection and radar blocking equipment[41], stealth alcohol drink containers[42], electronic lock picks, [43] cocaine taking kits including a mirror, razor blade and straw that are sold as snuff taking kits. Other *crimemongers* legally sell the paraphernalia of marihuana cultivation[44] and use, including seeds, UV lamps,

[41] See: www.motaman.co.uk/online catalogue radar detectors 26.html
[42] See: www.thebeerbelly.com
[43] See: www.devonlocks.com/lock-picking/pick-guns.htm

[44]See: www.skunkmarket.com/index.php?cpath=27

hydroponics kits and equipment for smoking. So called 'evidence eliminator' software can be bought to wipe incriminating data from computer hard drives and is advertised as being so effective that police officers cannot recover the deleted data.[45] And, apart from the numerous examples of Commercial Fencing activities outlined in-depth in this report, there are *crimemongering* websites that facilitate stolen goods sales, counterfeit product sales, software, film and music piracy. All of these things, while not always illegal are just a few examples of *crimemongers*: businesses that knowingly facilitate and encourage crimes.

The important argument being made here is that national crime surveys should conduct regular and systematic reviews of *crimemongering*. The Home Office has been criticized mercilessly for not doing so (Hillyard et al 2004).

Understanding and tackling the seductions of crime

Perhaps one potentially useful way to re-focus national crime surveys upon the *unusual* as well as the *usual suspects* at the root of various crimes is to consider the causes of crimes in terms of Jack Katz's seductions of crime – that is the foreground rather than the background factors that precede offending[46]. In looking for new questions to improve national crime surveys we could begin by asking the following question: In what ways are various types of crime such as for example violent crimes, fraud, hi-tech crimes, drug taking, drug dealing, theft, buying and selling stolen goods, crime opportunity hunting, crime readiness and financial rewards from crime all parts of the *seduction of crimes?* Are these elements of criminal behaviour interwoven with seductions that are inherent in getting the 'buzz', sneaky thrills and the aura of respect, power and practices of legitimate businesses that lead many offenders to think and talk in terms of committing crimes as a personal *smart-work* identity in what is arguably not a straight but a generally *bent society*?'

This report reveals that friends, relatives, neighbours and other associates ask offenders in Mansfield and Nottingham regularly for stolen goods. Understanding such causal and supportive criminal social dynamics - frequently described by offenders as *just doing the business* (Hobbs, 1989; Foster 1990) - as well as the dynamics of victimisation, we can know more about who does what with/to whom, where, when, why, how and with what effect. With rich data of that kind we can more finely tune policing initiatives and crime and harm-reduction policy making to fit better the realities of social systems and interpersonal interactions that motivate and facilitate various crimes.

Before beginning to frame national and local crime survey questions aimed at unearthing offender and victim dynamics, it is necessary to conduct new qualitative research and study also the results of existing qualitative work. To date, the author's own on-going research with offenders into the dynamics of stolen goods markets, to inform the MRA,

[45] www.softplatz.com/software/evidence-cleaner/

[46] This is also something that Clarke's Situational Crime Prevention approach and Felson's Routine Activities Theory both do by looking at the immediate situational precursors of crimes rather than the social and psychological attributes of offenders.

includes interviews with over 150 prolific thieves. These interviews reveal some particularly subtle findings about how prolific thieves, and the businesspersons they deal with, are *seduced* by their respective 'outlaw' and 'respectable' identities and activities. As well as stealing and selling property to fund their drugs use, prolific thieves are seduced at turns by legitimacy, illegitimacy, excitement, local usefulness and reputation – theirs and their buyers. Thieves also *seduce* otherwise legitimate businesspeople into offending by offering them forbidden extra tax-free profits that come from selling stolen goods. And business owners themselves provide motivation for thieves by providing money for stolen goods, information about potential victims and promises of regular income from crime.

While findings from national crime surveys currently tell us only about crimes committed by thieves and sometimes about purchasing patterns of fences and of otherwise respectable members of society, to date they tell us nothing about the seductions of crime and where these seductions occur, how they occur, why they occur, how often and where they are likely to occur in the future. Yet these root-level social-seductions, which are undoubtedly relatively subtle compared with other more usual and perhaps statistically (at national level) robust crime predictors such as birth rates, income levels and state of the economy, are likely to be valuable predictors of the causes of crimes, impending crime waves and other offending patterns that are crucial determinants as to where scarce local resources need spending, and how best to implement crime reduction and offender-change programme types, to make areas such as Nottinghamshire safer and improve the quality of life. Looking at crime in this way involves the type of lateral thinking championed by Pease (2005) and the Foresight reports (2000 I; 2000 II).

Finally, it is important to revisit the point made in the introduction to this report, that crimes are not evenly distributed and are often highly concentrated in particular local administrative areas such as electoral wards, and even more so within notorious neighbourhoods. Nottingham and Mansfield both have, arguably, more than their fair share of such neighbourhoods. While it is not the purpose of this report to stigmatize those places further by naming them here, what we have learned from talking to prolific offenders who live in these areas is that so called 'ordinary law abiding members of those communities' including residents, shopkeepers, businessmen and other so called 'pillars of the community' play a core role in keeping the *stealing and dealing process* going by knowingly buying stolen goods. More research is needed to obtain demographic, social and in-depth qualitative data on these people in order to determine how best to deal with this problem. The best way to do this is through a combination of anonymous in-depth interviewing research, *ERASOR* police intelligence (Sutton et al 2001) and local crime surveys (Sutton 2007).

This approach to data gathering is needed because differential crime concentration is not revealed by broad homogenised statistics from surveys such as the British Crime Survey that look at the national or regional figures and are not able explain the nuances of offending inside the precise boundaries and hot-spots that exist within known high crime notorious neighbourhoods. More specifically, locations where different types of acquisitive crimes are concentrated depend upon the type of theft being examined. Thefts

from motor vehicles, street robbery, commercial burglaries and domestic burglaries will almost certainly have different hot-spot locations that are dependent upon: 1 where the victims or suitable targets of theft are; 2 where the suitably motivated offenders live, hang-out and travel through; and 3 where there is an absence of capable guardianship (Felson 1998). The point here is that these three elements are needed for burglary and other thefts to occur, but most importantly the same three elements are also needed for stolen goods markets to exist and thrive; and the very existence of these markets is what motivates offenders, drives the theft rate, and provides income that in turn fuels other markets that are causing great social harm and more offending in Nottingham and Mansfield: illegal drug markets, street level prostitution and firearms markets.

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Appendix 1

The following information was taken directly from a source available online at:
http://www.nottinghamcity.gov.uk/guidance_notes.doc (checked 12 April 2007)

Nottingham City Council Act 2003 – Guidance Notes for Dealers in Second-hand Goods

The Nottingham City Council Act was passed to make it more difficult for criminals to sell stolen goods and to reduce crime within the city. It is a local Act of Parliament, covering the City Council area. It was promoted by Nottingham City Council, with the full co-operation and support of the local Police.

Dealers in second-hand goods have to register with the Council and keep records of some of the goods they buy and sell. Legitimate traders have nothing to fear from the Act, and in fact stand to gain in both trade and reputation as dishonest traders are forced out of the market.

The Act also regulates any occasional sales within the City, such as car boot sales, antique fairs and computer fairs; and squat trading.

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When did the Act come into force?

The part of the Act that deals with second-hand goods dealers came into force from 1st January 2004.

The part of the Act that deals with occasional sales and squat trading came into force from 1st April 2004.

Why does it only cover the City of Nottingham?

A local authority only has the power to promote legislation in its own area. Several other local authorities around the country have already got similar laws, and they find it a useful tool to help in the fight against crime. As there are no plans for national legislation on this subject, the City Council decided to promote the legislation itself.

What are the main requirements for dealers in second-hand goods?

- The provisions will apply to anyone who deals in second-hand goods in Nottingham in the course of a business, with a few exemptions (see below).
- Dealers will need to register both themselves and their business premises. The registration is free of charge and will last for three years. If any of the details on the registration form change, the dealer must inform the Council within 14 days.
- They will be provided with a registration certificate, which must be displayed when trading from a business premise, which includes a vehicle or stall.
- Registered dealers will have to keep records of some of the goods they buy and sell. These records must be kept for two years.
- It will be an offence to buy second-hand goods from someone who is under the age of 16.
-

All of these points are dealt with in more detail further on in these Guidance Notes.

What is the definition of a dealer in second-hand goods?

The definition in the Act is a "dealer in second-hand goods means a person who carries on a trade or business, the whole or part of which consists of transactions in second-hand goods". This means that the Act applies to people who buy or sell second-hand goods as part of a business, not private individuals who sell their own property.

"Trade or business" is not defined, but the same words are used frequently in other consumer protection laws and there is a lot of case law that deals with the interpretation. To work out whether someone is a dealer, Trading Standards and the courts would take into account how often someone sells goods, how long they had the goods before they sold them, how they got the goods and the motivation for selling – for example whether they bought them to sell on at a profit.

Someone will be classed as a dealer in second-hand goods when only part of their business operates in this way. For example, a jeweller and a mobile phone shop often sell both new and second-hand goods.

Any dealer in second-hand goods who trades within Nottingham will have to be registered, whether or not they have premises here. This includes dealers who trade at fairs and car boot sales.

Are any businesses exempt from the Act?

Some businesses do not have to register or keep records of transactions. This is either because they are already covered by other similar legislation, or because the goods they sell are very rarely stolen and sold on. You do not have to register if you are:

1. A person engaged in a business registered as a charity under section 3 of the Charities Act 1993, or excepted from registration under subsection (5) of that section;

2. A person registered as a scrap metal dealer under the Scrap Metal Dealers Act 1964 or as a motor salvage operator under the Vehicles (Crime) Act 2001, in respect of his business as a scrap metal dealer or motor salvage operator;

3. A person who deals in waste paper, cardboard, textiles, plastics in bulk or second-hand clothes, in respect of his business as such;

4. A person engaged in financing the acquisition of goods by hire-purchase or credit agreements;

5. A pawnbroker, in respect of his business as such;

6. A person engaged in a business which is primarily concerned with supplying new unused goods and to which the supply of second-hand or used goods is merely incidental. An example would be a shop selling new electrical goods. If they occasionally collect an old fridge for disposal when they deliver a new one this does not mean they deal in second-hand goods;

7. A dealer in second-hand books, in respect of his business as such;

8. A dealer in animals, in respect of his business as such;

9. A person of a class which is excluded from these requirements by resolution of the Council.

10. In 2, 3, 7 and 8 above, people are only excluded from the requirements in respect of their business as a dealer in those particular goods. If they also buy and sell other goods, then they will have to register and keep records of the goods that are not excluded. For example, a bookseller may also sell CDs. This person would have to register and keep records of the CDs, but not of the books.

If a pawnbroker buys and sells second-hand goods as well as operating as a pawnbroker, they would have to register and keep the required records.

How do I register?

There is a form included in this information pack. Please complete it and return it to Trading Standards – there is no fee or charge. The registration will last for three years. If any of the details on the form change over the next three years you will have to inform the Council within 14 days.

You will be sent a registration certificate. You must display this certificate on your business premise, which includes a stall or vehicle.

What premises need to be registered?

The Council will consider business premises to be where second-hand goods are bought and sold. If a dealer buys and sells goods from home, then that premise will be regarded as a business premise and must be registered.

Will my address be shown on the registration certificate?

Registration certificates will not show the private address of a dealer.

What do I have to record when I buy, acquire or take charge of second-hand goods?

You will need to keep records no matter how you acquire goods. This includes when you buy them, get them free or swap them for other goods. It also applies when you take charge of goods, for example an auctioneer does not own the goods sold at auction but does take charge of them. In all these circumstances you will have to record:

1. The date of the transaction.
2. A description of the item(s) that can be used to identify them, where this is reasonably possible. For example, it is not enough to record 'bicycle', 'television' or 'necklace' – you would need to include a description. A description should include, where appropriate:
    a. The number of articles;
    b. The type of material from which each article is made;
    c. The colour of each article;
    d. The artist's name, brand name or manufacturer's identity if shown by any symbol or mark on each article;
    e. The serial number of each article;
    f. Any distinguishing mark or feature of each article;

g. Any stock number or other information which you use to distinguish articles from each other.

3. The name and address of the person from whom the articles were acquired OR the person's registration number under this Act OR the name and address of the auctioneer if the goods were bought at auction.

4. For motor vehicles, you must record the registration number and the reading on the odometer (mileage indicator).

5. Where the article is plant, a motor vehicle which does not have a registration number or a vehicle other than a motor vehicle, you must record the serial number or vehicle identification number marked on the item.

Will I have to record every single item I purchase?

The purpose of the Act is to make it harder for thieves to sell the goods they steal. Therefore goods that are stolen most frequently must always be recorded – for example electrical items and CDs. Goods which are stolen less often only have to be recorded when they are worth more than a set amount. This is to make it easier for dealers – they do not have to record most low value items. Any items that will be disposed of for no value or thrown away need not be recorded.

This table shows the circumstances when you must keep **purchase** (or acquisition) records:

These goods must always be recorded
Electrically or battery powered goods Any medium on or by which sound, images or other data are or may be stored or recorded – for example video cassettes, compact discs, computer discs and games, DVDs, console games
These goods must be recorded if, in the reasonable opinion of the dealer at the time of the transaction, they will be sold or offered for sale for more than £10
Vehicle parts Jewellery Watches Photographic equipment Sports equipment Equestrian equipment Boating equipment Musical instruments Tools Bicycles Optical equipment

Firearms Gardening equipment
These goods must be recorded if, in the reasonable opinion of the dealer at the time of the transaction, they will be sold or offered for sale for more than £50
All goods not previously mentioned

The figures of £10 and £50 can be increased by the City Council in the future, to keep pace with inflation.

What do I have to record when I sell goods?

It is important that the police are able to trace stolen goods and return them to their original owners. The Act says that dealers must keep records of the purchasers of higher value goods for this reason. You must record the name and address of the person to whom the goods were sold OR the person's registration number under this Act OR the name and address of the auctioneer if the goods were sold at auction.

The table on the next page shows the circumstances when you must keep **sale** records:

Sales of these goods must be recorded when the article (or set of articles) is sold for more than £100
Electrically or battery powered goods Vehicles and vehicle parts Plant Jewellery Watches Photographic equipment Sports equipment Equestrian equipment Building materials Boats and boating equipment Musical instruments Gardening equipment
Sales of these goods must be recorded when the article (or set of articles) is sold for more than £500
All goods not previously mentioned

In what form do the records have to be kept?

There is a sample form included in this pack that you may use as a template for the records you keep.

The Council will also accept any form of record, including computer records, which include the required information. Existing VAT records, or any other record system which contains the information, or which you can adapt to include the information, would be acceptable.

How long do I have to keep the records?

Records of transactions must be kept for two years. If you use a book, this means two years from the date of the last entry in the book.

Will I have to keep records when buying or selling outside of Nottingham?

Registered dealers will have to keep the relevant records of all transactions they make, whether or not they occur in the city, unless:

- The goods are acquired outside the city AND
- They are not sold or offered for sale in the city AND
- They are not kept within the city.

Therefore records must be kept of any transaction that takes place in Nottingham and for all goods that are on sale or stored in the city.

This also means that registered dealers who trade in Nottingham occasionally but whose business is usually outside of the city will have to keep records of all transactions that take place in the city and of anything that is on sale here, for example on a stall at a fair or car boot sale. But they will not have to keep records of goods that never come into the city for sale or storage. For example, a dealer with a shop in Leicester or Newark will not have to keep records of the goods in their shop if these goods were not bought in Nottingham and are never put on sale in Nottingham. However, if that dealer attends a trade fair in Nottingham, they will have to show the relevant records for the goods they have on sale here in the same way as a dealer based in Nottingham.

Can I buy goods from children?

The Act makes it illegal for a registered dealer to buy second-hand goods from children under the age of 16. In practice, if a child wishes to sell something they will need to bring a parent or guardian with them who will be able to give their name and address.

I don't have a shop – I trade on the internet. How does the law affect me?

You will have to be registered and keep the required records in the same way as other dealers. Please note that if you sell on the internet or through mail order, you must comply with the Distance Selling Regulations. You can find out more about this on the website of the Department of Trade and Industry at www.dti.gov.uk/ccp/topics1/guide/distsell.htm

How does the law affect house clearances?

Items that are to be disposed of as waste do not need to be recorded. Otherwise, you will need to keep records as detailed on pages 4-5.

What is the situation regarding auctioneers?

Auctioneers are caught within the definition of a 'dealer in second-hand goods' and will therefore need to register and keep records.

What is the situation for book sellers and clothes shops?

If a second-hand dealer only sells books and magazines, or clothes and textiles, they do not have to register or keep records. If they also sell other goods, such as CDs, pictures, jewellery or household goods they will have to register – but they will only have to keep records of these other goods, not of the books or clothes.

Surely a thief selling stolen property will provide a false name and address?

The record keeping requirements will cause problems to dealers prepared to handle stolen goods. If thieves provide false names and addresses it means a dealer may have many false entries or entries without enough detail. This will raise suspicion and become worthy of further investigation. Also, the customer commits a criminal offence if he or she gives a false name and address.
Although it is not a specific requirement of the legislation, it is recommended that dealers ask for proof of identity in order to protect their own interests. Requesting identification will help to show due diligence – please see page 9.

What should I do if a customer does not wish to give their name and address?

Most people will understand that the law is to protect them and the rest of the community from burglary and other thefts. Many dealers already keep the required records for other reasons or just to protect their own interests. For many goods, including most antiques, the requirement to record purchasers' details will only apply to those sold for more than £500. This is already a record keeping requirement for those dealers who are registered for VAT and operate on the Margin Scheme.

Posters and leaflets that explain the requirements of the Act to your customers are available on request.

What are the specific offences and penalties under the Act?

The table shows each offence, the level of fine on the standard scale and the maximum fine for each level. These maximum fines are set nationally and may change in the future.

Offence	Penalty	Max. fine
Dealing in second-hand goods in Nottingham without being registered	Level 4	£2,500
Failing to keep the required records	Level 4	£2,500
Not retaining the records for 2 years	Level 4	£2,500
Not producing the records to an authorised officer or constable	Level 4	£2,500
Failing to inform the Council within 14 days of any change of details on registration form	Level 2	£500
Knowingly or recklessly making false records	Level 4	£2,500
Failing to display registration certificate	Level 2	£500
Acquiring second-hand goods from a person under 16 years of age	Level 4	£2,500
Any person giving a false name and address to a registered dealer	Level 4	£2,500

What powers will authorised council officers and police officers have?

An authorised officer of the City Council or a police officer has the right to enter your business premises and inspect your goods and records at all reasonable hours. Under this legislation, they cannot enter a private dwelling, even if this is used as a business premise, without either the consent of the occupier or a warrant.

It is an offence not to produce your records on demand, unless you have a reasonable excuse. If trading away from your business premises then you should have your records with you but if your records are computerised then you will be expected to make them available by arrangement.

If an authorised officer or a police officer has reasonable cause to suspect that an offence has been committed, he or she may take copies of any records; and if there is reasonable cause to believe an offence has been committed then goods can be seized. Goods and records can also be seized if they are needed as evidence in proceedings under the Act. Trading Standards Officers already have the same statutory powers to enter business premises, inspect records and seize goods under other consumer protection laws such as the Trade Descriptions Act.

Trading Standards, as well as other City Council enforcement teams, has an Enforcement Policy based on the Government's Concordat on Good Enforcement. It sets out what businesses, individuals and the community can expect from us. It commits us to good

enforcement policies and procedures. Please contact us if you would like a copy, or you can read it on our website.

How can I make sure I comply with this law?

Like most other consumer protections laws, all offences under this law are strict liability. This means that a criminal offence may be committed even though it was not intended. To balance this, the law recognises genuine efforts to comply with the legislation by including a defence known as a 'due diligence' defence. A business or person will have a defence to any charge if they can prove that:

- They have taken all reasonable precautions or steps

AND

- Exercised all due diligence to avoid the commission of the offence.

This means that the person must prove that they have a system to ensure compliance with the law (reasonable precautions or steps) and a method to ensure that the system is followed correctly (due diligence). Both parts of the defence must be proved to be successful. Trading Standards and the Police investigating an offence will consider these aspects, which will affect any decision whether to prosecute. It is not possible to describe in detail what systems will satisfy the defence. Ultimately a court of law will decide on the facts in each case.

Examples of the systems and methods which may show a due diligence defence:

- If you employ staff, records showing that they have been trained in the requirements of the law will show a system. Records of any action you have taken to check that they are keeping the required records of purchases and sales will show a method.

- If you keep records when you have refused to purchase something, either because you suspected the person was not who they claimed to be, or because you thought they were under 16, this will be evidence that you are doing your best to comply with the law.

You can read more about due diligence defences in the leaflet 'Ensuring Compliance with Trading Standards law' which is available from Trading Standards.

What other areas does the Nottingham City Council Act cover?

The Act will also impose controls on occasional sales and squat trading. (Squat trading is where access is gained to empty retail premises without the permission of the owner or agent, and trading takes place for a few days or weeks, before the traders move on.) Organisers of occasional sales, and the owners of the premise where the sale will take place, will have to notify Trading Standards of the sale or trading, 21 days in advance. They will have to give their names and addresses on the notification forms, and also publicise these on posters at the sale and in any publicity for the sale/trading. These rules also apply to organisers of squat trading.

Organisers of occasional sales where there is more than one seller, for example car boot sales or trade fairs, will also have to keep records of the names, addresses and vehicle registration numbers (where appropriate) of each seller. This is to help Trading Standards and the Police find unregistered dealers in second-hand goods, as we will be able to compare the records of sales to see if the same sellers appear at more than would be usual for a private individual.
These provisions came into force on 1st April 2004. There are detailed guidance notes for premise owners and sales organisers. Please let us know if you would like a copy.

Supplementary guidance for dealers in collections of second-hand goods

Collections of sound, image and data media
This section covers CDs, DVDs, videos, computer software and games, records and tapes, games for consoles and any other medium on or by which sound, images or other data are or may be stored or recorded.

These goods are stolen very frequently; therefore the Nottingham City Council Act requires records to be kept whenever they are purchased (or otherwise acquired). You will need to keep a record of the date of the transaction and the name and address of the person you bought or acquired the goods from, as detailed in the Guidance Notes above. However, Trading Standards recognises that some dealers buy large collections of these types of goods. We feel that it would not necessarily help to reduce crime if you recorded each item individually, and would put an excessive burden on your business.
We would therefore like you to record a good description of each collection. This should include the number of items and a general description of the collection. In addition, you should make a note of any unusual or valuable items. This should assist the Police in tracing any stolen collections. For example –

- 30 LPs. Mixed pop/rock including 3 Madonna, 4 Bruce Springsteen. Includes David Bowie Aladdin Sane gatefold.
- 20 CDs. Classical, mainly Beethoven, Mozart & Bach.
- 42 VHS videos. Mainly action/adventure including 6 Bruce Willis.
- 15 games for PC. Includes Sims, SimCity and TombRaider.

You can record each item individually if you prefer.
You have to keep records of sales of these goods when they are sold for more than £500. This does not mean a person who buys £500 worth of goods, but an individual item or set of items (such as a boxed set) sold for more than £500.

Collections of other goods

This section covers the acquisition of any collections of goods such as stamps, cards, toys and medals. Most of them will fall into the category of having to be recorded if they will be sold for more than £50. However, please check the detailed list on page 5 above.
You should keep records when you buy items, which in your opinion at that time, you will sell either individually, in sets or as a whole collection for more than £50. If you are not sure of the value at the time of purchase, we advise that you keep a record.

You should record a good description of each collection. This will include the number of items, where possible, and a general description of the collection. In addition, you should make a note of any unusual or valuable items and any identifiable subset.
You have to keep records of sales of most of these goods when they are sold for more than £500. (However please check the list on page 6 above.) This does not mean a person who buys £500 worth of goods, but an individual item or set of items sold for more than £500.

Supplementary guidance for recycling centre traders and car boot traders

Following discussions with various traders who sell at car boot sales and the Cattlemarket, we have decided to change the advice we give. The purpose of the Nottingham City Council Act is to make it harder for thieves to sell stolen goods. We do not think that it will help this for traders to keep records of goods that have been thrown away. We want to work with all legitimate dealers to make Nottingham a safer place to live and work, rather than make their businesses impossible to manage.

We would like to remind all businesses that they are liable for all relevant legislation covering the goods they sell, for example safety and Sale of Goods. Trading Standards publishes a booklet which covers these issues in some detail – please ask for a copy of 'Selling Safe Goods'.

Recycling Centre Traders

If you run a recycling centre at an official waste disposal site, and then sell the items at the Cattlemarket or any other sale in Nottingham, you must register as a dealer in second-hand goods. You must display the registration certificate whenever you are selling within Nottingham.

However, you do not have to keep records of any goods you acquire that were taken to the recycling centre for disposal.

If you acquire goods in any other way – for example, if you buy them from another dealer or from a member of the public – then you should keep full records as outlined in the above Guidance Notes.

Car Boot Traders

If you buy job lots from a recycling centre trader, you should keep a record of the date, and a basic description of the goods, for example "Miscellaneous items - £60". If you buy anything that is unusual or valuable you should keep a separate record of it. You can record the trader's number under the Nottingham City Council Act, shown on the registration certificate, rather than their name and address.

When you buy from other sellers, you must keep individual records as outlined in the above Guidance Notes. The only variation to this is when buying from a private seller at

a car boot sale. We realise that they will probably be reluctant to give you their name and address. Therefore you can record the seller's car registration number instead.

Will the records that I am required to keep mean that I will have to notify (register) under the Data Protection Act?

If you keep any records that include personal details about people, such as their names and addresses, on a computer you may have to notify your intention to process data to the Information Commissioner for inclusion on his register. Normally if you only use your data for the management of your accounts and staff details you will not need to notify but if you use CCTV this negates any exemptions. Currently, if records are only kept manually they do not have to be notified to the Information Commissioner – however all the other requirements of the Act still apply.

If you want to use your records for any purpose other than those of the Nottingham City Council Act, for example to send out a mailing list or to sell the names and addresses to a mail order company, you would need the consent of the people concerned before using the information.

This information applies to all records you keep that relate to individual people, not just those for the Nottingham City Council Act.

Please note that you can notify directly with the Office of the Information Commissioner at a cost of £35. Do not be misled by businesses that offer to register for you at a much higher cost. You can get more information and advice on registration and the requirements of the Data Protection Act from the Information Commissioner:

Information Commissioner's Office
Wycliffe House, Water Lane
Wilmslow, Cheshire SK9 5AX
Tel: 01625 545 745
Fax: 01625 524 510
Internet: www.informationcommissioner.gov.uk

How can I get more information about the Act?

These guidance notes explain what you need to know to comply with the Act. You can buy a copy of the Act, price £3.50, from The Stationery Office, through their website www.tsoshop.co.uk or by phoning 0870 242 2345. You can also download it free of charge from the internet – there is a link from our website.

If you would like any further advice please contact Trading Standards.

Nottingham City Council Trading Standards
Lawrence House
Talbot Street
Nottingham NG1 5NT
Tel: 0115 915 6559
Fax: 0115 915 6120
Email: trading.standards@nottinghamcity.gov.uk
Website: www.nottinghamcity.gov.uk/tradingstandards

Appendix 2 – Interview Guide

1. What were you sentenced for/last offence in relation to stolen goods?

2. What kind of things did you steal?
CD's, DVD's, clothes, computer stuff, jewellery, power tools, vehicle parts

3. Where from?
Houses, shops, businesses, schools

4. How often?

5. How did you decide what to take?

6. Did you know what you were going to do with the stuff you stole before you took it?

Typically how is this done?

7. What did you do with what you took?
Take buyer to goods?
Take goods to buyer?

Is buyer known to you – were you approached by this person/did you approach them?

How did you know who/where to sell to?
Why easier to sell to this person/place?
How did you learn the best ways to sell stolen goods?

8. Where do particular types of stolen goods get sold?
Jewellery
Electrical goods
Shoplifted items (clothes, cigarettes, food)

9. How many different people do you sell to?

10. For each type of stolen goods – how do you sell?
Hawking – public place - door-to-door, pubs or car boot?
Network sales
Commercial fence supplies – what kind of business? Corner shops, jewelers, pawnbrokers, second hand shops,
Residential fence supplies - family, friends, acquaintances

Are they bought without asking any questions about where they came from/proof of identity?
Do you think the shopkeepers knew the goods you were selling were stolen?

11. How easy is it to sell each type of stolen goods?
Fence/dealer ever been caught
Needed to dump goods

12. How do you know where to take stolen property?

13. How long does it take you to get rid of property?

14. If you have to store/stash goods where do you do that?
Own home
Friend/relative/partner's house
In a vehicle
Lock ups
Empty houses

15. How do you transport what you take?
Use car
Use public transport
On foot
Bicycle

Other dynamics

16. Have you ever swapped goods for drugs? Or traded stolen goods for anything else?
Work alone/with someone
Is money shared with someone?

17. Has someone ever asked you to steal to order?
What sort of property?

18. Have you ever asked someone else to sell something for you? Who? (Don't want to know names)
What sort of property?

Career as a thief

19. What do you do with any money you get from what you take?
Feelings of importance – people depending on you to provide stuff?
What do community members think of buying stolen goods – do they ask? Do they turn a 'blind eye'?
Dependence upon drugs /drink /gambling
Kicks?
Party... bling-bling lifestyle?

Perception of risk of selling

20. Are you aware of the police when you are doing this, do you take precautions not to get caught?
Any strategies taken to ensure buyers are not going to inform police?
Knowledge of police operations against thieves and dealers?
Fear of detection
Time to sell goods
Experience of markets closing down (as a result of police intervention)

Aware of any increased police interest in where stolen property is sold?

Property marking

21. Does is deter you from stealing?
What do you do to deal with it?
Is it really an issue?
Are there particular types of marking eg smart water, which deter you more than others?

Prices

22. Do you get good value for goods you sell?
Have prices for particular goods gone up? If yes… does this affect what you steal?
Have prices for particular goods gone down? Did this stop you from stealing such things?

23. What do you think effects price changes?
Market gets swamped with stolen stuff
High street prices go down
Changes in fashion
Fear of detection
Any relevance to new thief proof mobile phones?

24. Ever done repeat burglaries?
Why?

More chance of being broken into when a place is up for sale/just moved in. Do you know much about this?

25. Were you guilty of the last offence for which you charged?