

A CRIMINOLOGICAL STUDY OF RETAIL ROBBERY

by

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TITLE: A criminological study of retail robbery.
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SUMMARY

In South Africa, there has been a steady increase in the number of armed robberies within the retail industry which have many negative consequences for the victims, their families, and the community. Materialism and economic advantage are major factors, as these robberies are very lucrative, although socio-economic factors such as unemployment, poverty, and relative deprivation can also contribute to the phenomenon. The climate of violence prevalent in South Africa, the ineffectiveness of the criminal justice system, as well as the availability of illegal firearms also contributes to this climate of lawlessness. The intense fear aroused by these robberies, as well as the extent of this crime necessitates empirical research in this regard. A literature search of South African databases reflects that no specific research regarding retail robberies has been undertaken. In order to fill this void, it was decided to investigate the *modus operandi* of retail robbers from the victims' perspective, as well as relevant situational factors, victim reactions and the consequences of these robberies. The **Model of the victim's experience after a retail robbery** (see Figure 2) was formulated to serve as a theoretical framework to give direction to the study and interpret the findings.

In order to actualise the set research expectations, various victims of retail robberies within Gauteng were selected to participate in this study. The sample was drawn according to the purposive theoretical and snowball sampling methods. The sample consisted of 20 victims. Individual interviews were conducted with these respondents.

Upon analysis and interpretation of the data, it was found that most retail robberies occur in areas with a high crime-rate. The main reason for the selection of a specific target seems to be the obtaining of money. The findings further indicate that retail robberies are committed by groups of offenders who predominantly make use of handguns during these robberies and usually have getaway vehicles waiting outside the



stores. It was also apparent in the study that verbal threats and violence are usually employed during retail robberies in order to ensure compliance by the victims and that victims are less likely to resist if the offenders are armed with firearms. Findings indicate that the robbers become more aggressive when resisted and that aggression is influenced by the size of the group.

The findings further show that stores with few customers are more likely to become the victims of retail robberies. It was found that security measures such as armed response, alarms and panic buttons do not necessarily deter retail robbers, but most stores improved their security following a robbery. Stores with no surveillance appear to be more vulnerable. Another situational factor pertinent to the study was that most of the stores' interiors were visible to passers-by from the outside. Finally, the impact of retail robberies upon the lives of the victims in terms of financial, physical, emotional and social consequences was also investigated.

Based on the findings, recommendations are made with regard to further research. Stemming from this, various suggestions concerning the prevention of retail robberies are also made.

KEY TERMS

Retail robbery

Modus operandi

Victims

Routine activities

Suitable targets

Vulnerability

Motivated offenders

Guardianship

Situational crime prevention

Target hardening



TITEL: 'n Kriminologiese ondersoek na kleinhandel roof.
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OPSOMMING

In Suid-Afrika is daar 'n geleidelike toename in die aantal gewapende rooftogte in die kleinhandelbedryf. Hierdie rooftogte hou negatiewe gevolge in vir die slagoffers, hulle families asook die gemeenskap. Aangesien dié rooftogte baie winsgewend is, is materialisme en ekonomiese voordeel belangrike faktore, alhoewel sosio-ekonomiese faktore soos werkloosheid, armoede, en relatiewe deprivasie ook kan bydra tot dié probleem. Die klimaat van geweld wat in Suid-Afrika heers, die oneffektiwiteit van die regsplegingsstelsel, asook die beskikbaarheid van onwettige vuurwapens dra by tot die klimaat van wetteloosheid. Die geweldige vrees wat deur die rooftogte veroorsaak word sowel as die omvang van dié misdaad noodsaak empiriese navorsing in dié verband. 'n Literatuursoektog van Suid-Afrikaanse databasisse het getoon dat geen navorsing oor kleinhandelroof in Suid-Afrika onderneem is nie. Ten einde hierdie leemte te vul, is besluit om ondersoek in te stel na die *modus operandi* van kleinhandel rowers vanuit die slagoffer se perspektief, asook die situasionele faktore, slagoffer reaksies en die gevolge daarvan. Die **Model van die slagoffer se ervarings na 'n kleinhandel roof** (sien Figuur 2) was ontwerp om die navorsing te rig en die bevindinge te interpreteer.

Ten einde gestelde navorsingsverwagtinge te toets, is verskeie slagoffers van kleinhandel rooftogte in Gauteng geselekteer om aan die studie deel te neem. Die steekproef is volgens die doelgerigte-teoretiese en sneeubalmetodes getrek. Die steekproef het uit 20 respondente bestaan. Onderhoude is individueel met die respondente gevoer.

Op grond van die ontleding en interpretasie van data is gevind dat die meeste rooftogte plaasvind in gebiede met 'n hoë misdadafsyfer. Die verkryging van geld blyk die primêre rede vir die seleksie van 'n spesifieke teiken te wees. Die bevindinge dui verder daarop dat kleinhandel rooftogte deur groepe oortreders gepleeg word. Hierdie



groepe gebruik hoofsaaklik handwapens tydens hulle rooftogte en het gewoonlik 'n voertuig buite om mee te ontsnap. Verbale dreigemente en geweld word ook gereedlik tydens kleinhandel rooftogte gebruik om insiklikheid van slagoffers te verseker. Bevindings toon aan dat slagofferweerstand meer aggressie by die rowers veroorsaak en dat aggressie deur die grootte van die groep oortreders beïnvloed is.

Die bevindings dui verder daarop aan dat winkels met min klante meer geneig is om slagoffers van kleinhandel roof te word. Daar is ook gevind dat sekuriteitsmaatreëls nie noodwendig kleinhandel rowers afskrik nie, maar dat winkels sonder beskerming tog meer kwesbaar is. Daar is bevind dat die meeste winkels in dié studie hulle sekuriteit verbeter het na 'n rooftog. 'n Verdere situasionele faktor wat oënskynlik nie teikenseleksie beïnvloed nie, is die sigbaarheid van die winkels van buite af. Ten slotte is die impak van kleinhandel roof op die lewens van die slagoffers in terme van finansiële, fisieke, emosionele en sosiale gevolge, ook ondersoek.

Na aanleiding van die bevindings is aanbevelings gemaak vir verdere navorsing, asook voortspruitend daaruit, voorstelle tot die bekamping van kleinhandel rooftogte.

SLEUTELWOORDE

Kleinhandel roof

Modus operandi

Slagoffers

Roetine-aktiwiteite

Geskikte teiken

Kwesbaarheid

Gemotiveerde oortreder

Beskerming

Situasionele misdaadvoorkoming

Teikenverharding

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1. HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE, DEFINITION OF CONCEPTS AND STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Although violent crime accounts for approximately only 10% of all crime in most countries, South Africa has shown an increasing trend in the level of violent crime (Schönteich, 2000:5). These crimes are closely scrutinised by the government and the media due to the intense fear it elicits as a result of the element of violence involved. As a violent crime, retail robbery is categorised under robbery with aggravating circumstances. The violent nature of these robberies, as well as their extent, necessitates empirical research in this field.

1.1 HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE

According to Wilson (1984:191) and Taylor (1998:31), robbery is a world-wide phenomenon that has been occurring for centuries. Literature (Macdonald, 1975:10; Wilson, 1984:191) from various countries such as Italy, England, United States of America, Canada, and Australia, support this statement.

1.1.1 Highwaymen, bandits and outlaws

As early as 78BC, the roads of Italy were overrun with robbers (Wilson, 1984: 191). The sea also experienced an increase in the number of pirates whose vessels would follow merchantmen at a distance, too low in the water to be seen, and attack them at night.

In 1347 and 1348 the town of Bristol, in England, was taken over by a brigand who robbed the ships in the harbour while his men roamed the streets robbing and killing people at will. The situation was still almost as bad four centuries later when bands of robbers attacked houses in the country at night and occasionally burned them down. Bands of footpads, as the robbers were known, armed with knives would attack people who looked prosperous in London's Covent Garden (Wilson, 1984:164).

In England in the 1800's, robber bands were much like small armies (Gabor, Baril, Cusson, Elie, Le Blanc and Normandeau, 1987:viii). They would often descend on a town where a fête or festival was taking place and the townsfolk felt secure. They

would take over the town, plunder the houses, set them alight and then they would leave as swiftly as they entered the town. These robber bands would not hesitate to murder anyone during these attacks.

History is full of tales of robbers who were romanticised and others who, in contrast, were crucified. Robin Hood, the thief of Sherwood Forest, is one of the legends that was romanticised. He robbed the rich in order to give to the poor and, according to legend, only harmed others in self-defence or revenge. There is, however, no factual evidence indicating that Robin Hood actually existed, and if he did exist, what his true identity was (Macdonald, 1975:5).

In England during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, bandits earned the name of “Knights of the Road” due to their gentlemanly behaviour while committing robberies (Wilson, 1984:408). Dick Turpin was one of the most successful and resourceful robbers of this time and became known as “King of the Highwaymen”. He led a gang that specialised in breaking into country houses and then torturing the inhabitants to force them to hand over any valuables. He was considered daring and brave and mention is often made of one particular hold-up in Epping Forest where he single-handedly stopped two coaches carrying over twenty passengers (Macdonald, 1975:10).

The climax of the American bandit of the Wild West occurred at the end of the Civil War in 1865. Robberies increased as people seeking fortune moved to the frontier and established small towns. These bandits targeted individuals, mail coaches, trains, as well as banks (Gabor et al., 1987:viii). Many of these bandits had spectacular but brief careers in crime. The Dalton gang, for example, started robbing banks in 1890 but were captured when they attempted to rob two banks at once in 1891 (Macdonald, 1975:12).

Many Western heroes practised their robbery profession over many years. Butch Cassidy, who held up his first train at the age of twenty, robbed his last train 22 years later. Other more successful bandits of this time that were in the limelight were the brothers Frank and Jesse James (Macdonald, 1975:15). Jesse achieved more fame than his brother and was the leader of the James-Younger band. He has been referred to as the “King of the Bandits”. Interestingly enough, neither of the James brothers were ever convicted of any crime.

The notorious couple, Bonnie and Clyde, were not as fortunate as the James brothers. They were only active for a short period of time from 1930 to 1932 and were noted more for their violence than for their success in bank robberies. According to Macdonald (1975:323), they killed between ten and twelve people, yet the largest amount they stole during a bank robbery was 1500 dollars.

Even the Ten Most Wanted Offenders of the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) in the United States of America (USA) in the past fifty years contained five robbery offenders (Fox, 1976:21). The first two of these offenders were Gerald Chapman and George “Dutch” Anderson. They specialised in jewel theft and robbed a post office truck and department store. The next robbery offender on the FBI list was John Herbert Dillinger who was primarily a bank robber. He was considered to be one of the most dangerous Depression-era criminals and gang leaders in the Midwest, having killed a total of ten men and wounding seven others (Fox, 1976:22). FBI director at the time, J. Edgar Hoover, considered the next robbery offender on the list, Arizona Clark “Ma” Barker, to have been the most vicious, dangerous and resourceful criminal the United States had ever seen. According to Fox (1976:23), she was involved in hold-ups of federal payrolls, post offices and banks. She had never been arrested for any crimes as she remained behind the scenes and sent her sons and other criminals to commit the crimes. The final robbery offender on the list was James Earl Ray, who was responsible for the assassination of Dr. Martin Luther King in 1968. Prior to the assassination, Ray had been a petty hold-up robber and specialised in the robbery of gas stations and grocery stores (Fox, 1976:24).

A well-known Canadian outlaw was Red Ryan, the Toronto gangster of the 1930’s. Fattah (1997:137) states that he was regarded as the Jesse James of Canada. After he was shot dead during the course of a robbery, his body was exhibited in a funeral parlour where approximately six thousand people filed by to see the outlaw hero.

In Australia, a bushranger by the name of Ned Kelly also achieved fame for his exploits as a bank robber between 1878 and 1880. He was known to have worn a home-made suit of armour when committing robberies in order to protect himself from bullets (Macdonald, 1975:27). He often wore disguises, such as police uniforms, to gain people’s trust.

Historical references to robbers in Southern Africa are limited (Crummey,1986:6). However, mention is made of Mashala, “the Robin Hood of the Zambians”, as well as the Hans gang of the Kalahari that robbed farmers of cattle in the Grootfontein area

between 1906 and 1930. Although no references to bandits could be found in South African history books, various legends are in circulation regarding coaches that were robbed on their way to diamond diggings.

Many of these robbers (also known as highwaymen, bandits and outlaws) were inspired by the Robin Hood legend to become professional robbers. The fact that they violated the law but represented justice of a higher order, led to them being regarded as heroes even though they were the cause of innocent people's deaths (Kooistra, 1983:214).

1.1.2 Revolutionary movements

Many revolutionary movements such as the Irish Republican Army (IRA) in Northern Ireland, the Black September Movement in the Middle East, the Tupamaros in Uruguay, the Front DeLiberation du Quebec (FLQ) in Quebec, the Black Panthers and the Weathermen in the United States (Macdonald, 1975:29) have resorted to armed robbery to obtain weapons or to finance their struggle against the government. Like the bandits, these rebels are regarded as common criminals by the authorities and as patriotic heroes by those in favour of their cause (Macdonald, 1975:29). Billingsley (1988:xi) adds that the community often supports and respects these offenders.

Members of these groups have gained both money and attention for their cause from bank robberies, skyjacking of aeroplanes as well as the hijacking of passenger ships. Passengers and crew of aeroplanes and ships are often held hostage by the rebels until they receive a ransom. This, in turn, enables them to further finance their cause as well as making their political views and motives known to the rest of the world.

1.1.3 Robbery at present

Although international comparisons are difficult, the South African crime figures for 1999, measured against those of 90 other Interpol member countries, indicate that as far as property and commercial crime are concerned, South Africa is rating quite well. In this regard, South Africa actually rates better than, for example, Canada and Australia (http://www.saps.org.za/8_crimeinfo/200112/report.html). In contrast with this, however, South Africa measures unacceptably high with regard to violence, especially robbery.

According to world-wide United Nations statistics, the number of criminal acts of robbery for the period 1986-1990 shows an increase of 63% in relation to the period 1980-1986 (<http://www.ncjrs.org/policing/cr359.html>). According to the 2001 British Crime Survey the overall level of violent crime in Britain is now 1% below that in 1991 (<http://www.homeoffice.gov.uk>). In Australia, however, statistics indicate that the rate of reported robbery more than doubled in the ten year period from 1975/76 to 1984/85 (see <http://www.aic.gov.au/publications/armedrobbery/ch1.html>).

According to Myerson (1995:15), approximately 486 people are seriously injured in South Africa every day as a result of criminal violence. He adds that in 1965 a person would have had to live 1560 years to be a probable robbery victim. In 1985, the chances of being robbed doubled and the figure decreased to 820 years. The type of robberies being committed presently have also undergone a transformation. There has been a resurgence in the number of hijackings, cash-in-transit heists, bank robberies, as well as personal robberies being committed.

Official crime statistics indicate that from January to September 2001 (http://www.saps.org.za/8_crimeinfo/200112/report.html) robbery showed a significant increase of 7,6% in South Africa. In order to comprehend the extent of the problem, definitions relevant to the phenomenon of retail robbery will subsequently be discussed.

1.2 DEFINITION OF CONCEPTS

To understand the phenomenon of retail robbery, it is necessary to define certain concepts relevant to the topic. Concepts that will be defined include the following: retail robbery, *modus operandi* and victim.

1.2.1 Retail robbery

Before the terms robbery and retail robbery are defined, the concepts retail and retail store, as they are used in the current study, will receive attention.

The Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary of Current English (1998:1003) defines **retail** as the practice of selling goods in small quantities to the general public at outlets (i.e. shops). In turn a **retailer** is the person or business that sells these goods to the public.

Retail stores, as defined in the Oxford Paperback Dictionary (1988:821), are a form of supermarket and are defined as self-service shops selling goods such as groceries, household items, as well as a wide variety of other items. For the purpose of this study, small, medium and slightly larger retailers such as cafés and supermarkets will be included. Large superstores which also sell furniture and large appliances will not be included due to the fact that it will not be possible to determine the individual impact of the retail robbery on the owner.

According to the Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary of Current English (1998:1017), **robbery** is the action or an instance of stealing. Robbery, as defined by Louw, Van Heerden and Smith (1978:71), is the unlawful, wilful and violent taking away of another person's moveable property and its appropriation without the entitled person's consent. There may be actual violence against the person, or a threat of violence.

In addition, Naudé and Stevens (1988:137) state that robbery is the wrongful and wilful use of violence to force another into allowing property in their immediate control to be stolen. Brown, Esbensen and Geis (2001:90) concur with the above definitions but add the element of fear to the felonious taking of money or goods of value from the person of another or in his¹ presence.

All the above-mentioned definitions, as well as those of Snyman (1992:516) and Bartol (1995:336), indicate that violence or threats of violence are associated with robbery. In Conklin (1972:4), the element of violence present in a robbery incident is also taken note of, but it is emphasised that theft is a just as vital component of robbery and should therefore be included in the definition thereof. Hunt (in Naudé & Stevens, 1988:163) refers more explicitly to this component and considers robbery to be the theft of property by intentionally using violence or threats of violence to induce submission to the taking of it from another.

There is often confusion as to whether robbery should be classified as a violent crime or a property crime. This confusion stems from the inclusion of violence or threats of violence, as well as the theft of money or goods in the above definitions of robbery. Due to the fact that robbery is a form of theft and that money or goods are stolen, it can be considered as a property crime. In this regard, Block (1989:235) emphasises

¹ All future references to the male gender are not gender specific and refer to both genders, except in the results.

that the primary aim of robbery is to acquire money or valuable objects and not to injure victims. Macdonald (1975:40) states that most robbers have no history of violent crime and are known as offenders who repeatedly commit property crimes. Conklin (1972:4) agrees that in robbery the primary motive is theft, whereas violence is used to facilitate the theft.

Gabor et al. (1987:206), however, are of the opinion that the physical, emotional and social consequences associated with robbery confirm that it cannot be exclusively classified as a property crime. Many researchers and most judiciaries also classify robbery as a violent crime (Cook, 1985:480).

In South Africa, robbery with aggravating circumstances is classified as a violent crime (Crime Information Management Centre, 1998:7). According to the Crime Information Management Centre (1998:58), robbery with aggravating circumstances can be defined as the unlawful, intentional and violent removal and appropriation of movable corporeal property obtained by the use or threatened use of violence towards the victim. The two central elements of robbery, namely violence and theft, are highlighted in this definition.

Based on the above-mentioned definitions of a retail store and robbery in general, the following operational definition for **retail robbery** can be formulated for the purpose of this study: Retail robbery refers to the unlawful, intentional theft of a retailer's money, goods and/or valuables against his will, with the use or threatened use of violence and force, with or without a weapon.

1.2.2 *Modus operandi*

Modus operandi is a Latin term which means behaviour, compartment or operational procedure (Horgan, 1979:57). According to the Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary of Current English (1998:750), it is also defined as a particular method of working or dealing with a task.

In a criminological context *modus operandi* refers to the career patterns of offenders (Conklin, 1972:ix), whereas Brown et al. (2001:41) simply define it as a crime method. Van Heerden (1985:10) gives a more comprehensive description of the term and regards it as the habits and techniques of criminals which have become stereotyped. He views it as a routine mode of conduct in which individualised techniques are employed.

According to Caldwell (1965:324), *modus operandi* is a means of identification which is based on the fact that many offenders tend to use the same method again when committing a crime. Barnes and Teeters (in Van der Westhuizen, 1993:32) describe it as a system to identify offenders based on the assumption that they leave behind their trademark in the form of the crime they commit and the methods they employ. The routine pattern of actions, individualised techniques and the strength of the habit combined with the success or failure of offenders are, according to Horgan (1979:57), important factors in determining the *modus operandi* of the offenders.

In addition, Marais and Van Rooyen (1990:67) state that this profile not only involves operational methods and techniques, but it also includes the masquerade techniques, secret language, writing and communication signs of criminals. Weston and Wells (1990:104) refer to this as the signature of the offender. These are the procedures an offender engages in to commit a crime successfully. It is a behavioural pattern that offenders learn as they gain experience in committing offences (Bartol, 1995:241).

According to Maree (1995:78), *modus operandi* can even be described more broadly, as it not only involves committing the crime but also the planning process preceding the crime. The various phases of the crime, namely the planning phase, the operational phase and the post-offence phase depict the *modus operandi* of the offender. The *modus operandi* is therefore indicative of the motivation for the crime, as well as the manner in which offenders execute the crime.

In conjunction with Maree (1995:78), Van der Westhuizen (1993:34-39), as well as Marais and Van Rooyen (1990:68-77), agree that references to *modus operandi* can include the following aspects:

- The characteristic actions during the planning phase (which includes determining the most suitable day and time, the target and potential reward, as well as a means of escaping from the scene).
- The characteristic actions during the committing of the crime (which includes the day, date and time when the crime was committed, the spatial distribution of the crime, the type of premises or building targeted, victim preference, the method of perpetration and instruments used, the motive of the criminal, the nature of the property involved, vehicles used during the commission of the crime, as well as personal characteristics and peculiarities of the offender).

- The characteristic actions after the offence (which includes using vehicles with which to flee the crime scene).

For the purpose of this study, the *modus operandi* of the offenders will be examined from the perspective of the victims. As the details of the planning phase cannot be supplied by the victims, the operational definition will, therefore, include only the operational and post-offence phases. On the basis of the above-mentioned discussion, *modus operandi* can be operationally defined as the routine in which individualised methods, techniques and habits are employed by offenders in the operational and post-offence phases of a retail robbery.

1.2.3 Victim

The word victim is derived from the Latin word *victima* which has two meanings, namely:

- To offer a man, animal or any object or a godly being , or to make an offering during a religious ceremony or
- a person who suffers, is harmed and or destroyed as a result of another's actions (Drapkin & Viano, 1974:13).

The last mentioned definition is applicable to criminology as the Greek word for victim, *logos*, denotes the scientific study of a victim (Schneider, 1982:60). The Oxford Paperback Dictionary (1988:910) defines a victim as a person who is injured or killed by another or as the result of an occurrence, whereas Barkas (1978:7) defines a victim as one who has directly or indirectly suffered as a result of a specific illegal action.

In 1948, Von Hentig was the first criminologist to refer to the crime victim as the injured party in his book *The criminal and his victim* (Drapkin & Viano, 1974:28; Fattah, 1992:29; Von Hentig, 1948:386). Ziegenhagen (1977:1, 5) adds to Von Hentig's description and views the crime victim as a person who is injured or suffered financial losses as a result of the violation of a law. In this regard, Fattah (1992:58) states that this violation must be intentional in nature.

Nagel (in Ziegenhagen, 1977:6) further postulates that the term victim is appropriate even if the victim is not injured and suffers no deprivation whatsoever. Verwey (1994:19) is in agreement with this statement and the victim is therefore determined

by reference to the offender's viewpoint and is the person whom the offender wishes to damage, thinks he is damaging or actually does damage.

According to Pretorius (1982:11-12) there are three different criteria for defining a crime victim, namely:

- From a legal point of view one can only be defined as a victim if a crime has occurred. This, however, excludes anti-social behaviour which is also studied within the field of Criminology.
- The experience of victimisation is evaluated and only if one experiences consequences pertaining to the act can one be called a victim. Pretorius (1982:11-12), however, states that for every empirical study a researcher should decide what type of victim they are going to include and then specifically define the victim.
- The nature of the victim does not necessarily have to be a person, but can also be a collectivity, organisation or other societies (Van der Berg, 1997:26). In this regard, Quinney (1972:320) also states that a definition is susceptible to varying definitions.

Van der Walt (1985:34) further distinguishes between two types of victims, namely the active victim who contributed to the victimisation and the passive victim who in no way, consciously or unconsciously, facilitated in the furthering of the crime. He further categorises these victims as being either directly or indirectly affected by the crime, or as being a latent victim who has the potential to become a victim.

For the purpose of this study, a victim will be defined as an individual who has been directly affected and suffered negative effects which may include financial, physical, emotional and social consequences as a result of a retail robbery.

1.3 STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Crime is directly or indirectly a threat to every member of the South African society. It has a negative effect on the victim, the offender, their families, as well as the economy and stability of the country (Kruger, 1978:460). Violent crime, such as retail robbery, gives rise to feelings of fear and insecurity in the community and hampers socio-economic development and productivity.

1.3.1 Extent of retail robbery

According to Schönreich (2000:5), the crime index of the Nedcor Institute for Security Studies indicates that violent crime in South Africa increased by almost 10% between 1998 and 1999, more than any other category of crime. In addition, every third crime reported to the police in 1999 involved violence or the threat of violence (Schönreich, 2000:5).

Statistics (http://www.saps.org.za/8_crimeinfo/200111/prov/rsa.html) indicate that in 1994, 39 958 cases of robbery with aggravating circumstances were reported to the police. In 1995, the figure rose to 40 596, then dropped to 33 691 in 1996. This amount decreased in 1997 to 31 737, thereafter increasing to 39 882 in 1998. A steady increase followed in 1999, 2000 and 2001 with the figures being, respectively, 46 383, 51 091, and finally 56 500. As previously mentioned in section 1.1.3, robbery with aggravating circumstances displayed a significant increase in 2001. Figure 1 depicts this increase, as well as the situation since 1994.

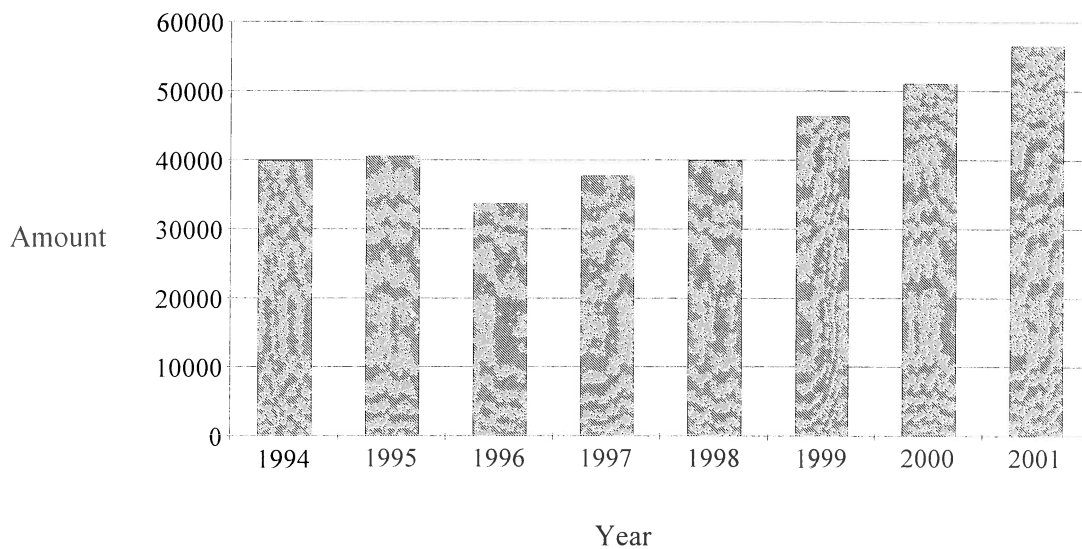


Figure 1. Robbery with aggravating circumstances in South Africa (1994-2001) (http://www.saps.org.za/8_crimeinfo/200111/prov/rsa.html).

South Africa has also shown an increase in the number of armed robbery attacks against the retail industry (Pretoria Checkers robbed, 2002:8; Pistol-whipped during robbery, 2000:6). Reports published in the media over the past two years concerning this phenomenon confirm this increase (Armed robbers steal substantial amount from Mayor's Walk Spar, 2000:3; Crime count - Germiston, 2001:2; Crime count - Meadowbrook, 2001:2; Crime count - Melville, 2000:2; Crime count - Steeledale,

2001:2; Crime count - Yeoville, 2000:2; Man held, another on the run after robbery, 2000:2; Murders, robbery in weekend crime, 2000:2; Fourty four thousand rand taken in robberies, 2000:3; Robbers arrested after they fail to get away, 2000:6; Rowers buit R6m. in besige winkelsentrum, 1999:1; Rowers vasgetrek na skietery op snelweg, 1999:4; Three suspects wounded in highway shootout, 1999:3; Two armed robberies foiled, 1999:1; Two die in shooting, 2000:3; Two men slain in robbery bid, 2000:6).

Gibbs and Shelly (1995:309) maintain that retail establishments such as supermarkets, restaurants and bars are prime targets for offenders interested in obtaining cash. The reason for this being that they are among the kinds of businesses that have been least affected by the credit revolution and the account system. They still deal in large amounts of cash and will most likely continue to do so. As a result, these businesses are soft targets for robberies. This is especially true for those who are unable to afford costly security mechanisms.

They are also targeted because their employees are merely ordinary citizens who are not equipped to defend themselves against robbers. Various other factors also play a role in the increase in retail robberies in South Africa. Materialism is a major factor, as these robberies are very lucrative. Unemployment, poverty, and relative deprivation (the gap between an individual's expectations of life and the possibilities of realising these expectations) are some socio-economic factors that may also contribute to this phenomenon (Crime Information Management Centre, 1998:63).

The climate of violence prevalent in South Africa, as well as the ineffectiveness of the criminal justice system, also give these offenders the confidence to orchestrate these daring robberies. According to the Crime Information Management Centre (1998:63), firearms smuggled into South Africa, together with the many illegal firearms already available locally, create a market in which firearms are apparently freely available. The availability of illegal firearms and the number of crime syndicates operating in the country also contribute to the climate of lawlessness and crimes of violence such as retail robbery (Crime Information Management Centre, 1998:63).

1.3.2 Aftermath of robbery

Criminal victimisation has many negative consequences for surviving victims, their families and the community. Conklin (1975:3) states that these consequences can be measured in terms of direct costs, attributable to the offences themselves, and indirect costs, attributable to the reactions to the criminal behaviour.

According to Glanz (1994:21), the impact of robberies on victims can be determined in respect of the negative effects on aspects such as quality of life, financial loss suffered as a result of the offence, injuries sustained as well as the emotional and psychological consequences thereof. Galaway and Hudson (1981:76), however, indicate that the cost of victimisation is the price that is paid for crime and is measured in terms of money, property, pain, suffering, loss of life, fear of crime and the accompanying humiliation.

Some robbery victims may suffer financially as a result of factors which include loss of cash and property, damage to property, medical costs, the loss of working hours and security costs. Due to the intense fear this crime arouses, many victims are traumatised to such an extent that they are unable to speak or continue with their daily activities after the incident (Van Zyl, 2000:5). Furthermore, this traumatic event often results in victims experiencing post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) symptoms which may include flashbacks and nightmares of the incident, sleep and eating disorders, a diminished responsiveness or psychological “numbing” to the external world, feelings of alienation or detachment from society, difficulty concentrating, and extreme avoidance of anything that reminds them of the event (Barlow & Durand, 1995:192; Gabor et al., 1987:viii).

1.3.3 Problems with the investigation of retail robbery

According to Banton (1985:43), retail robberies have a higher detection, as well as reporting rate, than street robberies. The higher detection rate is due to the fact that larger amounts of money are stolen in retail robberies than in street robberies. Retailers also report the crime more often because they have to submit a claim to their insurance company in order to replace the stolen revenue. Lack of police resources, however, hampers the investigation of these crimes. Increased policing requires revenue for the expenditure. Members of the South African Police Service (SAPS) currently have a difficult task of apprehending these offenders with their limited resources (Criminal Justice’s budget down while crime is up, 2000:6).

A major factor influencing the investigation of robbery is manpower or the number of police officers available to address this crime. Between July 1995 and April 2000 the number of SAPS employees decreased by 14%, whereas the South African population increased by about 10% over the same period (<http://www.iss.co.za/Pubs/Crime%20index/00Vol4No2/ThinBlueLine.html>). In 1999, South Africa had a civilian to police officer ratio of 408:1, meaning that for every 408 people living in this country, there

was one uniformed police officer or detective available. The situation has not changed drastically and as a result, they are unable to cope with their ever increasing case load.

A further complication is the involvement of gangs and crime syndicates in retail robbery. These robberies are usually committed by gangs consisting of between three and ten offenders (Crime count - Meadowbrook, 2001:2; Crime count - Melville, 2000:2; Crime count - Yeoville, 2000:2; Pretoria Checkers robbed, 2002:8). There is often no obvious link between the various offenders involved and/or many of them often have immunity against prosecution. The investigations are further confounded by police having to apprehend various different suspects for the same robbery. Corrupt officials also play a major role, in that the offenders often have contacts within the police or the criminal justice system and manage to avoid prosecution.

1.3.4 Problems with existing research

Extensive research on the extent, nature, consequences and prevention of robbery in general has been conducted overseas by researchers such as Conklin, Gabor et al., Duffala, Curtis, as well as Dunn. However, a literature search of South African databases, undertaken by information specialists at the University of Pretoria's Academic Information Service, indicated that no specific research regarding retail robbery as such had been undertaken on an international or national level. The fact that each form of robbery is unique (e.g. bank, cash-in-transit, personal and/or retail robbery), necessitates research into these specific forms of robbery.

1.4 LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

Due to the fact that information regarding robbery in general is available at present, this study was not purely exploratory in nature and the researcher was guided by available research on robbery in general. This enabled the researcher to compile a focused interview schedule. One of the limitations of these type of interviews, however, is the fact that these interviews do not always yield sufficiently rich data. To overcome this limitation, follow-up interviews were done to obtain information on respondents' feelings and experiences.

The size of the sample might also be viewed as limited, however, it is important to keep in mind that scepticism of research, as well as a need for confidentiality could, in

conjunction with geographical stipulations and cost-effectiveness factors, influence the response rate.

In the current study, the *modus operandi* of the offenders is determined from the victims' perspective. Although it is advised that this element would produce richer data if studied from the offenders' perspective, researchers such as Beck (1999:94) emphasise that victims are a valuable and under-utilised source of information and victim-based research can be a valuable strategy in identifying the characteristics of the *modus operandi* of offenders.

1.5 VALUE OF THE STUDY

As mentioned earlier, Beck (1999:95) is of the opinion that victims are a valuable and under-utilised source of information and victim-based research can be a valuable strategy in determining the characteristics of the *modus operandi* of offenders. Knowledge of the *modus operandi* of retail robbers from the victims' perspective may, in the first instance, lead to the formulation of various crime prevention strategies. Apart from the fact that it might assist in improving existing preventative measures employed by the businesses, new strategies could also be formulated. This study might also be beneficial in determining which retail establishments are at greater risk of becoming victims of robbery. If one can determine the risk to retail stores, then it could be possible to prevent these robberies.

Retail staff and their families live with the effects of robbery incidents on an increasingly regular basis. Reynolds (1994:180) indicates that the benefits of having knowledge of victim reactions during a robbery, as well as the consequences following the robbery, will be of value in terms of training retail staff to deal with such situations. As a result of this study, potential victims may be informed of possible precautionary measures and of the risks involved in trying to be heroic during an armed robbery. Retail robbery through the victims' eyes may lead to the discovery of information about the offender and the crime which has, as yet, gone undetected. This better understanding may even save lives in the future, as victims will be equipped with knowledge on factors that can increase their potential for injuries.

The findings that come about as a result of this research will also be advantageous to the SAPS. Police investigators may learn new facts about retail robbery which will lead to a pro-active role in the policing of this crime. More information regarding the

modus operandi of retail robbers might even transform the public's perceptions and fear of robbery, bringing about a better understanding of the violent nature of robbery.

1.6 AIMS OF THE STUDY

In light of the preceding discussion, the aims of the study are as follows:

- (i) To analyse the operational and post-offence phases of retail robberies with specific reference to the day and time of the robbery, the number of offenders involved, the weapons used, the violence or threat of violence exercised, as well as the means of escape.
- (ii) To determine the situational factors which play a role in retail robberies.
- (iii) To ascertain victims' reactions during a retail robbery.
- (iv) To determine the consequences of retail robberies for the direct victims thereof.

1.7 CONCLUSION

In order to realise the above-mentioned research objectives, the remainder of the study will be divided into various sections. The exposition of the theoretical perspectives to be applied to the phenomenon of retail robbery will be discussed in Chapter 2. In Chapter 3 existing research relevant to the study will be highlighted. Based on these two chapters research expectations of the study will be formulated in Chapter 4. Chapter 5 will entail a discussion of the research design of the study, including the sample, measuring instruments, and ethical considerations in evaluating the research expectations. The results of the study will be presented in Chapter 6, followed by a discussion of the results, conclusions and recommendations in Chapter 7.

2. THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVES

The essential purpose of theory is the explanation of things that can be observed (Williams & McShane, 1999:2). The researcher's use of theories in qualitative research is substantiated by Huysamen's (1993:2) statement that it is always advantageous for a research project to be linked to one theory or another because the generally accepted nature of theories heightens the impact of the study and prevents it from being an isolated piece of knowledge.

Various criminology theories such as Merton's anomie theory, Cohen's subculture theory, Sutherland's differential association theory, Hirschi's social control theory, the subculture of violence theory by Wolfgang and Ferracutti, as well as the conflict theories, can be applied to the phenomenon of retail robbery. However, due to the fact that the *modus operandi* of the retail robber from the perspective of the victim, as well as the situational factors that play a role during a retail robbery and not the causality of retail robbery are the focus of this study, the routine activities theory of Cohen and Felson was selected as a guideline for the research. This theory, which was selected in order to explain the victimisation risk of retail stores, states that the volume of criminal offences is related to the nature of everyday patterns of social interaction (Williams & McShane, 1999:236).

Owing to the fact that the determination of the consequences of retail robbery victimisation is also an aim of the study, three reactionary theories derived from the field of psychology will be discussed in order to serve as a background for the discussion of the experiences of the victims in Chapter 6. These reactionary theories to be highlighted include Burgess and Holmstrom's crisis theory, Heider's attribution theory and Janoff-Bulman and Frieze's theory of victim reactions. In addition, based on these three theories, a **Model of the victim's experience after a retail robbery** will also be formulated for the purposes of the current study.

2.1 ROUTINE ACTIVITIES THEORY

The development of the routine activities theory, as well as the theoretical assumptions thereof, will subsequently be discussed. Thereafter, it will also be applied to the phenomenon of retail robbery.

According to Sheley (1995:334), the routine activities theory has its roots in the ecological tradition and shares the social disorganisation theory's focus on factors that control the occurrence of crime. The study of ecology has a long history in Criminology and goes as far back as the mid-nineteenth century when Quetelet and Guerry identified regular patterns in the distribution of criminal activities. Messner and Tardiff (1985:241), as well as Williams and McShane (1999:57), state that the research of Robert Park and Ernest Burgess which led to their concentric zone model in 1925, as well as the work of Clifford Shaw and Henry McKay in 1942, reaffirmed the earlier proposition that illegal activities are systematically distributed according to geographical and social boundaries.

Lawrence Cohen and Marcus Felson, the exponents of the routine activities theory, were inspired by Amos Hawley's theory of human ecology proposed in 1950, in which he emphasised the nature of routine activities as an essential part of everyday life (Sheley, 1995:176; Williams & McShane, 1999:236). As a result they proposed the routine activities approach in 1979 in an attempt to explain the increasing crime rate in America during the 1970's (Brown et al., 2001:220).

2.1.1 Theoretical assumptions of the routine activities theory

The routine activities approach is intended to explain direct contact predatory violations (Sherman, Gartin & Buerger, 1996:96). According to Messner and Tardiff (1985:242), these violations are illegal acts which involve a direct physical encounter between an offender and a victim.

The routine activities theory essentially states that the volume of criminal offences is related to the nature of everyday patterns of social interaction. According to Williams and McShane (1999:236), routine activity means any commonly occurring social activity that provides for basic needs. Examples of these activities include formal work, leisure activities, obtaining shelter, child rearing, grocery shopping and sleeping. The bulk of these activities occur outside the home and the effect of this has been the convergence, in time and space, of suitable targets for crime and motivated offenders. According to Bonn (1984:213), spending more time outside the home places more people in more situations where they can be targeted by offenders. Routine activities thus place people at greater risk of being a victim of violent crimes such as robbery (Barkan, 1997:102; Reid, 1988:166; Sheley, 1995:176; Vito & Holmes, 1994:145).

As routine activities change, the opportunities for crime are also influenced (Williams & McShane, 1999:237). This change in routine activities therefore changes the opportunities for crime. The shift of routine activities for women, due to their increasing participation in the labour force (Bonn, 1984:213), can serve as an example hereof. As a result of this change, womens' possibility for victimisation has increased in relation to their increased exposure to motivated offenders.

According to the routine activities theory, the convergence in time and space of three variables contribute to the likelihood of a crime occurring, namely a motivated offender, a suitable target, and the absence of capable guardians (Brown et al., 2001:220). These three variables will subsequently be discussed.

- **Motivated offender**

In the opinion of Williams and McShane (1999:236), Cohen and Felson were not particularly concerned with this factor. To them, offender motivation is assumed and enough existing criminological theories, such as those of Cloward and Ohlin, as well as Merton, focus on the offenders and the influences or factors motivating them to commit a crime. Cohen and Felson wanted the focus of their theory to lie in other areas such as how the routine behaviour of individuals transforms them into suitable targets in situations where there is a lack of guardianship (Maxfield, 1987:276).

- **Suitable targets**

The suitability of targets is influenced by four components, namely the value, physical visibility, accessibility, and inertia thereof (Felson, 1998:57; Cohen & Cantor, 1980:143). The value of a target is influenced by its financial and symbolic desirability, while the physical visibility refers to the risk of being observed during the course of the crime (Dussich & Eichman, 1976:94). Accessibility indicates the ease with which a criminal can approach or leave a target without being noticed. This, in turn, can be linked to the concept of inertia which concerns the ease with which an offender can attain the desired target (Felson, 1998:57). The amount of moveable assets, as well as the resistance shown by the target or individual are taken into account here (Cohen & Cantor, 1980:143).

- **Absence of capable guardians**

Guardianship pertains to how well a potential target of crime is protected (Sheley, 1995:334). The most significant guardians in society are ordinary citizens going about their daily routines. Felson (1998:53) states that a guardian is not usually someone who brandishes a gun or threatens an offender with quick punishment, but rather someone whose mere presence serves as a gentle reminder that someone is watching. According to Lynch (1987:287), this could include people such as professional security guards or simply the mere presence of someone who may prevent the crime. Physical obstacles or technological mechanisms such as alarms, burglar bars and closed circuit television can also be considered as capable guardians.

According to Cohen and Felson (1979:592), routine activities create a convergence in time and space of motivated offenders and suitable targets, in the absence of capable guardians. If one of these three variables are missing, the likelihood of crime decreases. However, if all of these variables are present, and one of the elements is strengthened, then the probability of crime increases (Williams & McShane, 1999:237).

In addition, the routine activities theory stresses the importance of ecological factors in explaining victimisation. Barkan (1997:103) states that victimisation depends on people's routine activities, as well as on the physical characteristics of the neighbourhood. According to him, the convergence of motivated offenders and suitable targets in the absence of guardians is, due to physical characteristics of certain areas, more likely in some neighbourhoods than in others (Barkan, 1997:102). These likely neighbourhoods usually include slums and lower-class areas and specific locations within these neighbourhoods are also more vulnerable than others.

The above-mentioned areas are characterised by physical signs of incivility, such as buildings in disrepair, litter, vandalism, and abandoned buildings and cars. Among the social signs of incivility are loiterers, vagrancy, prostitution, and public drunkenness, as well as the visible sale and use of drugs (Lab, 1997:10).

According to Lab (1997:42), there is a direct link between incivility and crime, since incivility may lead to the deterioration of an area. In addition, incivility also causes fear of crime and creates the image that residents are not concerned and therefore

“ripe” for crime. Sherman et al. (1996:96) refer to these areas as hot spots of predatory crime.

2.1.2 Application of the routine activities theory to retail robbery

The routine activities theory can be applied to the phenomenon of retail robbery due to the fact that it may be seen as a direct contact predatory violation. Predatory violations, according to Messner and Tardiff (1985:242), entail the direct physical contact between an offender and a victim, or between the offender and an object which the offender intends to steal or damage.

Landau and Fridman (1993:167) confirm that robbery, as well as murder, can be classified as direct contact predatory violations. According to the routine activities theory, direct contact predatory violations such as robbery may occur when a motivated offender and a suitable target converge in a specific time and place in the absence of capable guardians. Routine activities also affect the exposure of persons and property to risk, which in turn provides varying opportunities for robbery victimisation (Maxfield, 1987:277). Variations in the everyday routine activity patterns of individuals can therefore increase or decrease the possibility that a motivated retail robber and suitable store will converge at a specific place and time in the absence of capable guardians (Maxfield, 1987:276).

The routine activities theory is applicable to retail robbery once the emphasis is placed on the situational opportunities that arise when a motivated retail robber and a suitable target converge in the absence of capable guardians at a specific place and time (Brantingham & Brantingham, 1978:115). The above-mentioned three variables will subsequently be applied to the phenomenon of retail robbery.

- **Motivated offender**

In accordance with the routine activities theory, the presence of a motivated offender is assumed. It can be accepted that there are sufficient motivated offenders with the ability and expertise to rob a retail store.

Barkan (1997:275), as well as Landau and Fridman (1993:168), state that the primary motivation for robbery is economic or monetary gain. For the robber, a hold-up of a commercial establishment, such as a retail store, will generally net a vast sum of money (Conklin, 1981:296). Although Conklin (1972:69), as well as

Feeney and Weir (in Gabor et al., 1987:27), agree with this statement and money is widely accepted as the primary motive for robbery, Katz (in Barkan, 1997:276) contends that the amount of money that persistent robbers gain from their robberies is too small for economic gain to be their primary motive. He states that respect from their peers may also be a motivational factor. In spite of disagreement amongst researchers concerning the main intent for robbery, the fact that there are individuals whom are motivated to rob a retail store is acknowledged.

- **Suitable targets**

As mentioned previously in section 2.1.1, target selection is influenced by four components, namely the value of the target, physical visibility, accessibility and finally, inertia. Due to the assertion that the primary aim of robbery is economic gain, it can be assumed that the value of the target would play an important role in target selection (Landau & Fridman, 1993:168). Barkan (1997:276) states that retail robberies have increased because retail stores usually have a fair amount of money. According to Brown et al. (2001:220), the increased availability of luxury items in retail stores associated with societal affluence also contributes to a greater suitability of these targets.

Professional robbers - whether gangs or individuals - usually rob persons who, as part of their employment, are in charge of money or goods. They view themselves as taking from the company, not from the actual individuals involved (Beirne & Messerschmidt, 1991:101). The target should also be vulnerable, meaning that the store should have staff who would offer no resistance, have few clients in the building, as well as easily accessible escape routes (Naudé & Stevens, 1988:170).

The physical visibility of retail stores refers to the risk of being observed during the course of the crime (Dussich & Eichman, 1976:94). It is essential for businesses such as retail stores to be visible to all in order to attract customers and to earn money. This visibility, however, could also enable potential robbers to see everything that is happening inside the store and thus make the store a more suitable target.

A retail store has pre-determined working hours every day of the week. The store opens at a specific time and closes at a specific time. This routine increases the risk of victimisation for the owner or manager who unlocks and locks the store. Visibility, therefore, also plays a role in that the offender may be aware of the

times when the store is not busy. Knowledge of the stores' peak trading hours may provide the potential robber with a notion of the time when there will be the least amount of people to observe the offender and the crime.

Retail stores are often open until late in the evening which also increases the vulnerability of the store. This factor can also be linked to the component of accessibility for the reason that the offender has knowledge of when the store would be the most accessible for the robbery to be committed.

The proximity of a store to a major highway, which is an ideal escape route, may also play a role in its vulnerability to robbery. According to Gabor et al. (1987: 183), these routes not only allow offenders to leave the area of the crime quickly, but also provide them with the cover of other traffic.

The next component is inertia, which refers to the ease with which the target can be obtained. In the case of a retail robbery, inertia is also directly linked to the accessibility of the store. The accessibility of retail stores could influence the offender's decision to commit the crime because gaining access would require more effort on the offender's part.

Professional robbers, as identified in Conklin's typology of robbers (to be discussed in Chapter 3), usually strike at banks and businesses, stealing large sums of money. These offenders are committed to robbery because it is direct, fast, and sometimes very profitable (Bartollas & Dinitz, 1989:263). When a robber has to choose a target, he prefers a victim who has a large sum of money, such as a retail store (Barkan, 1997:275; Vetter & Silverman, 1986:98). This relates to the concept of inertia as it can be used immediately, whereas other items such as jewellery have to be sold first, increasing the possibility of the robber being caught.

The success of a robbery also rests upon the ability of the offenders to approach the target without drawing attention to themselves. Robbers must act quickly in order to obtain their goal, while the amount of resistance offered by the target will influence the ease with which a robbery is carried out. In this regard, Brown et al. (2001:220) also mention that products have become increasingly compact and mobile, further facilitating the task of robbers.

Retail store owners, managers and personnel are also vulnerable to robbery because their employment involves face-to-face contact with large amounts of

people on a routine basis. According to Lynch (1987:295), the risk of victimisation or exposure to motivated offenders is greater for these employees than for those less accessible to the public, such as the store accountant. Lynch (1987:295) also states that individuals who handle money as part of their job, as many retail store workers do, face a greater risk of victimisation than those who do not.

- **Absence of capable guardians**

Einstadter (1995:81) suggests that robbers plan their robberies and select targets which they have been observing over a period of time. These observations enable robbers to determine if there is an absence of capable guardians at their desired target. As mentioned in paragraph 2.1.1, people, as well as technological mechanisms, serve as guardians to property. Individuals that act as guardians to a store may be the owners, managers, employees or the clients of the store. Physical protection by security guards or the patrolling of the area surrounding retail stores by guard dogs may also serve as guardians.

Cohen and Cantor (1980:144) state that the presence of police patrols, traffic officers, security guards, as well as members of a neighbourhood watch, have an important influence upon the offender's decision to commit a certain crime at a specific time and place. Retail robbers must therefore take the actual or perceived presence of protection or guardians into account when attempting a robbery. The presence of eye-witnesses who could observe the crime being committed may, for example, influence the offender not to carry out the intended crime.

Technological mechanisms which could increase the guardianship of retail stores may encompass mechanical and electronic locks, automatic light switches, automatic telephone diallers (which dial through to the police when pressed during a robbery), alarm systems and closed-circuit television (Naudé & Stevens, 1988: 220). These mechanisms, however, are expensive, and not every store owner is able to afford the added security. If this is the case, then the vulnerability of the store increases.

Guardians could have a negative effect on target suitability and complicate the robbery for the offender. The suitability of the target could be affected by the presence of alarms or surveillance cameras, which would increase the visibility of the offender and hamper accessibility. The store owner, manager or any bystander

in retail stores could also have an influence on target suitability for the reason that they may be capable of resisting the offender, or even be in possession of a weapon (Lynch, 1987:294).

In light of the above discussion, the assumption can be made that the daily routine activities of a retail store, its owner or manager and its clients, influences the convergence of three elements, namely a motivated offender, a suitable target, and the absence of capable guardians necessary for a direct contact predatory violation to take place.

2.1.3 Evaluation of the routine activities theory

The most important contribution of routine activities theory is probably the argument that crime rates are affected not only by the size of the supply of motivated offenders, suitable targets, or lack of guardianship, but also by the factors affecting the frequency of their convergence in time and space (Sherman et al., 1989:30). In addition to this, Vito and Holmes (1994:411) state that the application of the routine activities theory can provide a framework according to which crime patterns can be studied and crime rates subsequently decreased. Brown et al. (2001:221) have contended that it holds more meaningful implications for crime prevention than ideologically driven theories of crime (Brown et al., 2001:221).

In emphasising both social disorganisation and ecology, the routine activities theory is considered to be a continuation of the Chicago school of Criminology (Williams & McShane, 1999:236). Messner and Tardiff (1985:242) consider the principal contribution of the routine activities approach to be that it organises the insights and observations from the broader ecological tradition into a coherent analytical framework. In other words, it provides an integrated explanation for the many diverse findings of past research on the spatial and temporal distribution of crime.

Williams and McShane (1999:236) state that the popularity of the routine activities theory was the result of a growing interest in victimology and an ecological approach to crime prevention. This theory does not explain why offenders commit crime, but focuses on victimisation and the elements necessary for a direct contact predatory violation to take place. The theory has also made an important contribution to Criminology, due to the reawakening of assumptions about the rational nature of humans and the ability of offenders to select vulnerable targets.

The approach also presents an explanation for recent changes in societal crime rates (Messner & Tardiff, 1985:242). In addition, the routine activities theory can be used to explain rates of victimisation for specific crimes. Certain individuals, based on differences in their routine activities, will be more susceptible to robbery than others. Similarly, certain locations are more susceptible to crime because of the type of prevalent activities and the amount of social activity present (Williams & McShane, 1999:237). Retail stores are examples of locations that are more susceptible to crime as a result of the above reasons.

According to Vito and Holmes (1994:145), the routine activities theory can also be potentially beneficial in situational crime prevention. In their theory, Cohen and Felson mentioned the importance of architectural planning and environmental design through which guardianship may be increased and the amount of suitable targets decreased (Williams & McShane, 1999:222). Guardianship can, for example, be increased by increasing the observation by police patrols as well as bystanders, whereas target hardening, such as security guards at retail stores, aids in decreasing the amount of suitable targets available to offenders.

Sociologists such as Carroll and Jackson (in Reid, 1988:16), have, however, questioned the assumptions of the routine activities theory. They raised the possibility that the dispersal of routine activities away from the home does not necessarily have a direct effect on the crime rate. They state that routine activities are rather a process that influence the structural factors motivating offenders to commit direct contact predatory crimes.

Miethe, Stafford and Lang (1987:185) consider the major limitation of the theory to be the lack of testing with ecological data at actual places where offenders, targets, and weak guardians converge. As they point out, most tests of the routine activities theory lack independent measures of the lifestyles in question and substitute presumed demographic characteristics for them. Although Cohen and Felson do provide data on the personal risks of victimisation in different places, they do not link those individual risks to variations in the amount of time individuals spend in different types of places. Sherman et al. (1989:31) believe that due to Cohen and Felson's emphasis on the spatial and temporal ecology of crime, the most appropriate unit of analysis for the routine activities approach would be places.

Massey, Krohn and Bonati (in Brown et al., 1996:274) also criticised the assumption of motivated offenders on both theoretical and methodological grounds. Due to the

difficulty of measuring this concept, they suggest replacing it with a measurement of “potential offenders”. Brown et al. (2001:222) state that the assumption of a pool of motivated offenders is perceived by some as neglecting the factors that cause crime. Furthermore, they found that this perspective may blame the victim for putting themselves in hazardous positions as a result of their choices of routine activities and their lifestyles.

Several other matters remain in dispute, namely whether lifestyle better predicts violent or property victimisation, whether target attractiveness and the lack of guardianship are more indicative of victimisation than living near high-crime areas, and even whether time spent away from home predicts robbery (Maxfield, 1987:278; Barkan, 1997:103).

Kennedy and Baron (1993:93) add that the origin of criminal opportunities can only be fully understood if there is knowledge of the motivations or decisions made by the offender, the target and the guardian, prior to the convergence of these three elements. They maintain that these decisions or motivations not only affect their routine activities, but also their actions upon convergence.

There has also been some question as to the validity of the routine activities theory. Barkan (1997:104) states that white-collar crime can not be explained by the routine activities theory. It has also been maintained that the routine activities theory may not explain all violent crime victimisation. Violent crimes are often expressive, irrational acts that require a confrontation between an offender and a victim. It was found, as mentioned previously, that the routine activities theory does not explain the risk of violent victimisation for high-risk groups such as males, low-income individuals, the single, and the young (Vito & Holmes, 1994:146).

Marked discrepancies in victimisation among certain social groups have also been recognised. According to Maxfield (1987:278), recent research has attempted to determine whether these differences can be accounted for by variation in routine activities or lifestyle. Clarke, Ekblom, Hough and Mayhew (in Maxfield, 1987:278) found that, taking into account the amount and type of leisure activity, people over the age of 60 are at a lower risk of victimisation than younger persons are. At the other extreme, Riley (in Maxfield, 1987:278) found that similar lifestyles are associated with victimisation and delinquency amongst adolescents.

According to Lynch (1987:294), the socio-demographic characteristics that are generally associated with victimisation are not influential in predicting the risk of a work environment, such as a retail store. Similarly, Cohen and Felson focus on victimisation resulting from direct contact predatory offences, such as those that occur in a retail store environment (Maxfield, 1987:277).

Sykes and Cullen (1992:132) maintain that an explanation of victimisation based on lifestyle or routines has an intuitive appeal, but lacks specificity. They state that it is necessary to know which routines are associated with different kinds of crimes, and the extent to which the influence of lifestyles or routines might be outweighed by the ill fortune of simply being in the wrong place at the wrong time.

According to Lynch (1987:284), the measurement of the routine activities theory is also questionable. As lifestyles can include any number of activities undertaken on a routine basis, routine activities should be more narrowly defined in order to simplify empirical research. In spite of this, the emphasis of the pre-requisite variables necessary for a crime to be committed and the fact that offenders select their targets according to the target suitability and absence of guardianship, are of value to the present study.

2.2 VICTIM EXPERIENCES

The following theories will be used to provide a theoretical backdrop for the experiences of the victims, as well as the consequences suffered as a result of retail robberies.

2.2.1 Crisis theory

The first theory developed to explain victim reactions was the crisis theory (Resick & Nishith, 1997:40). The exponents of the crisis theory, Burgess and Holmstrom (1986:353), propose that following an event that is beyond a person's normal resources and abilities to cope, they experience psychological distress (Lurigio, Skogan & Davis, 1990:76). As indicated by Notes (www.angelfire.com/ns/southeasternnurse/crisistheory.html), there are four phases of a crisis, namely:

- Phase I is where the person has an increase in anxiety in response to a traumatic event. If the person's coping mechanisms work, there is no crisis, but if the coping mechanisms are ineffective, a crisis occurs.
- Phase II is where the anxiety continues to increase.
- In phase III the anxiety continues to increase and the person asks for help. If the individual was emotionally isolated before the trauma they probably will not have adequate support and a crisis may occur.
- Phase IV is characterised by the active crisis where the person's inner resources and supports seem to be inadequate. The person often ruminates about the incident and wonders what they did or how they could have avoided the trauma. Relationships with others suffer and they view others in terms of how they can help solve the problem such as listening to the person's ruminations about the incident and giving advice. They often verbalise that it feels like they are losing their mind.

Reynolds (1994:69) maintains that post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) is often diagnosed under these circumstances. Where an individual has experienced a psychologically traumatic event outside the limits of normal experience that involved a serious threat to the person's life or physical integrity for example, a life-threatening situation, the destruction of one's home, seeing another person mutilated or killed, or being the victim of physical violence, PTSD can develop (Carson & Butcher, 1992:156). Sue, Sue and Sue (1994:192), however, state that not everyone who is exposed to a traumatic event develops PTSD and that other factors such as the person's individual characteristics, their perception of the event, and the existence of support groups also have an influence. They further state that victims of trauma whose experience leads them into developing a generalised perceived loss of control are likely to develop the most severe PTSD (Sue et al., 1994:192). PTSD is usually characterised by the following symptoms:

- The traumatic event is persistently re-experienced by the individual and they may have intrusive, recurring thoughts or repetitive nightmares about the event.
- The individual persistently avoids stimuli associated with the trauma; for example, they try to avoid activities related to the incident or block out the memory of certain aspects of the experience. Situations that recall the traumatic experience provoke anxiety.

- The individual may experience persistent symptoms of increased arousal, such as chronic tension and irritability, often accompanied by insomnia, the inability to tolerate noise, and the complaint that “I just can’t seem to relax”.
- The individual may experience impaired concentration and memory.
- The individual may experience feelings of depression. In some cases they may withdraw from social contact and avoid experiences that might increase excitement and this is commonly manifested in the avoidance of interpersonal involvement, loss of sexual interest, and an attitude of “peace and quiet at any price” (Carson & Butcher, 1992:156).

Carson and Butcher (1992:156) note that it is important to keep in mind that the criteria for PTSD specify that the reaction last for at least one month; if the length of the reaction is less than that, it would be considered a “normal” stress reaction to a clearly threatening situation. They further state that in all cases of post-traumatic stress, conditioned fear - the fear associated with the traumatic experience - appears to be a key causal factor in developing PTSD symptoms (Carson & Butcher, 1992:159).

Resick and Schnicke (in Resick & Nishith, 1997:42) proposed that PTSD often results from an inability to integrate the event with prior beliefs and experiences. They state that when new, incompatible events occur, the person either alters the new information to fit prior beliefs (assimilation) or alters the prior beliefs to accept the event (accommodation). Over-accommodation to the event is also possible, with victims making statements such as “No one can be trusted” or “I am never safe”.

Lurigio et al. (1990:76) indicate that if new attempts to cope with the traumatic event are ineffective, the agitation and symptomatology of a victim will increase. However, it has been proposed that such distress is limited - within four to six weeks, the person will resolve the crisis either adaptively or maladaptively (Lurigio et al., 1990:76).

When a person feels competent to handle a stressful situation, a task-oriented response is typical and involves adaptive behaviour that is directed primarily at dealing with the requirements of the stressor (Carson & Butcher, 1992:147). Typically, this response means the individual objectively appraises the situation, works out alternative solutions, decides on an appropriate strategy, takes action, and evaluates feedback. Carson and Butcher (1992:147) state that task-oriented responses may involve making changes in one’s self, one’s surroundings, or both, depending on the situation. The

action may be overt, as in showing one's spouse more affection, or it may be covert, as in lowering one's aspiration and not expecting too much of the world. The action may involve retreating from the problem, attacking it directly, or trying to find a workable compromise. Carson and Butcher (1992:147) consider any of these actions to be appropriate under certain circumstances. Janis (in Carson & Butcher, 1992:177), however, also found that individuals who are outwardly calm and appear to feel invulnerable to real danger are likely to have more post-crisis problems than individuals who have been "part-time worriers" beforehand.

When a person's feelings of adequacy are seriously threatened by a stressor, a defence-oriented response tends to prevail, that is, behaviour directed primarily at protecting the self from hurt and disorganisation, rather than at resolving the situation (Carson & Butcher, 1992:147). Carson and Butcher (1992:147) indicate that there are two common types of defence-oriented responses. The first consists of responses such as crying, repetitive talking, and mourning that seem to function as psychological damage-repair mechanisms. The second type consists of the so-called ego- or self-defence mechanisms and include such responses as denial and repression which relieve tension and anxiety and protect the self from hurt and devaluation (Burgess & Holmstrom, 1986:356). These mechanisms protect an individual from external threats, such as failures in work or relationships, and from internal threats, such as guilt-arousing desires or actions (Carson & Butcher, 1992:147). They also appear to protect the self in one or more of the following ways:

- by denying, distorting, or restricting an individual's experience;
- by reducing emotional or self-involvement; and
- by counteracting threat or damage (Carson & Butcher, 1992:147).

The above defence mechanisms are ordinarily used in combination rather than singly, and are often combined with task-oriented behaviour. However, ego-defence mechanisms are considered maladaptive when they become the predominant means of coping with stressors (Carson & Butcher, 1992:148). The individual's reaction is considered maladaptive if they are unable to function as usual or if the person's reaction to the particular stressor is excessive (Carson & Butcher, 1992:151) and may include inappropriate coping strategies such as denial or alcohol abuse (Burgess & Holmstrom, 1986:361).

Through either of the above strategies, overt distress should be alleviated within approximately six weeks (Lurigio et al., 1990:76). Resick and Nishith (1997:40)

indicate that a victim of crime should try to resolve the crisis as quickly as possible and avoid developing maladaptive coping strategies. However, the crime victim's pre-victimisation adjustment is also a strong predictor of the measure to which the victim will adjust after victimisation. Burgess and Holmstrom (in Lurigio et al., 1990:54) state that victims with pre-existing emotional and psychological problems such as anxiety attacks, will have more difficulty than those whose social functioning and emotional state were normal prior to victimisation. Furthermore, being a previous victim of crime is an important life stressor that can also affect victim recovery and is generally associated with serious symptoms as well as poorer adjustment following victimisation.

2.2.1.1 Application of the crisis theory to retail robbery

Zedner (1994:1223) states that crime and violence cause psychological trauma and, it is assumed for the purposes of this study, that robbery is no exception. The crisis theory indicates that a victim would experience psychological distress after a retail robbery as this would be beyond his/her normal resources and abilities to cope (Lurigio et al., 1990:76). As retail robbery entails violence or the threat of violence (as discussed in section 1.2.1), the threat to a victim's life could result in them experiencing PTSD symptoms after the robbery which may include flashbacks; nightmares; painful memories of the retail robbery; a psychological "numbing" to the external world; feelings of alienation from society; sleep and eating disorders; and avoidance of anything that reminds them of the event (Barlow & Durand, 1995:192; Gabor et al., 1987:viii; Nomoyi, Davis, Theron & Klopper, 2000:98).

The impact of the retail robbery depends, in part, upon the ability of the victims to deal with the resulting emotional trauma and their adaptive or maladaptive coping strategies (see **Model of the victim's experience after a retail robbery**, section 2.2.4). Various factors would influence a retail robbery victim's choice of coping strategy as either adaptive or maladaptive. Carson and Butcher (1992:147) state that an adaptive strategy includes task-oriented responses which may involve making changes in one's self, one's surroundings, or both, depending on the situation. In terms of retail robbery, this task-oriented response may involve the victims becoming more cautious or vigilant, improving the security measures in their stores or changing their cash pick-up routines.

2.2.1.2 Evaluation of the crisis theory

In terms of the time frame for recovery proposed by the crisis theorists which is that the crisis should be resolved within four to six weeks, it has been found that the majority of improvement occurs within the first three months following a crime (Lurigio et al., 1990:76). However, in a study conducted by Friedman, Bischoff, Davis and Person (in Lurigio et al., 1990:57), it was found that robbery victims were still plagued by disturbing and repetitive thoughts of the incident three months following the crime. Furthermore, many rape victims continue reporting problems with fear, anxiety, depression, social adjustment, sexual dysfunctions, and self-esteem for years after the event (Resick & Nishith, 1997:40). Rape victims report experiencing distress in a study done by Friedman, Bischoff, Davis and Person (in Lurigio et al., 1990:57) longer than six weeks after the incident, meaning they have not become symptom-free in six weeks.

Burgess and Holmstrom (1986:355) state that it should be kept in mind that research on adaptation to stress is still a relatively new field and that one major problem appears to be the lack of a classification system to organise data on adaptive responses. Cohen (1987:285) adds that researchers, health practitioners and the public want to know which coping strategies are most adaptive, but that question cannot be simply answered. Cohen (1987:286) further notes that the context must also be considered when assessing adaptiveness and that a particular strategy may be adaptive in one situation but not in another. The possibility, however, also exists that continuous life changes and serious life stresses may equip the victim with more effective coping strategies, thus facilitating post-crime adjustment and recovery (Lurigio et al., 1990:76).

Lurigio et al. (1990:76) further argue that the crisis theory does not explain why particular symptoms are developed by victims. They also state that it does not predict which victims are more likely to have more problems with recovery or what variables may affect the reactions and recovery of victims. Despite this criticism, the crisis theory can be used in conjunction with the next theory to serve as theoretical background for victim's experiences and reactions after a retail robbery.

2.2.2 Janoff-Bulman and Frieze's theory of victim reactions

Janoff-Bulman and Frieze's theory of victim reactions after victimisation is based on the premise that all individuals have three basic assumptions namely, the belief in

personal invulnerability; the perception of the world as meaningful and comprehensible; and the view of the self in a positive light (Janoff-Bulman & Frieze, 1983:3). They state that criminal victimisation may result in a victim questioning these assumptions and by doing so destroy the stability with which these victims are ordinarily able to function. Subsequently, assumptions are shattered and victims of crimes are no longer able to see their world as safe. Janoff-Bulman (1992:51) affirms that this traumatic event has a profound effect on a victim's fundamental assumptions about the world, while Wortman (1983:199) adds that these assumptions can indeed affect an individual's reaction to a victimising experience.

- **The assumption of invulnerability**

According to Janoff-Bulman (1992:51), each person maintains an illusion of invulnerability. Indestructibility and the continuity of a secure existence are taken for granted by most individuals and Janoff-Bulman and Frieze (1983:4) state that this illusion of invulnerability is based on the belief of most individuals that "It can't happen to me". They contend that this perception of invulnerability can be maladaptive (see discussion in section 2.2.1, the crisis theory) if it keeps people from engaging in effective preventive behaviours or causes them to be slow to recognise that a crime is taking place. Such a person might take longer to initiate coping strategies to deal with the crisis, and might therefore cope less effectively with crises that demand immediate action (Wortman, 1983:209).

The experience of victimisation may shatter a victim's assumption of invulnerability and they can no longer say that it will never happen to them. The destruction of this assumption manifests itself in the victim's pre-occupation with the fear that they will be victimised again (Janoff-Bulman & Frieze, 1983:3). Symptoms of psychological distress such as feelings of intense anxiety and helplessness may accompany the victim's lost sense of safety (Janoff-Bulman & Frieze, 1983:4; Perloff, 1983:42; Wortman, 1983:197).

Perloff (1983:42) distinguishes between two types of vulnerability namely, unique vulnerability (more vulnerable than the average person) and universal vulnerability (equally as vulnerable as everyone else). She asserts that victims with perceptions of unique vulnerability may be more prone to maladaptive coping and anxiety, low self-esteem, and depressive symptoms than victims with perceptions of universal vulnerability (Perloff, 1983:42). Perloff (1983:42) further suggests that victims with a sense of unique vulnerability should be more likely to attribute the

misfortune to internal causes (e.g. personal traits or behaviours), while victims with a sense of universal vulnerability should be more likely to attribute the misfortune to external causes (e.g. chance or environmental factors)(see section 2.2.3, attribution theory).

- **The world as meaningful**

The assumption of invulnerability rests, in part, on the basic belief that events are comprehensible and orderly and, therefore, controllable. An example of this would be the belief that misfortune can be prevented by engaging in sufficiently cautious behaviours. According to Lerner's just world theory (in Janoff-Bulman & Frieze, 1983:5), individuals believe that people get what they deserve and deserve what they get. The world is considered to be meaningful because people know what to expect and why negative events occur.

The world, however, does not appear meaningful to victims who feel they were cautious and are good people. Being victimised, therefore, does not make sense to them and destroys their feelings of stability and safety. Janoff-Bulman and Frieze (1983:6) state that this loss of meaning seems to focus on the question "Why did this event happen to me" and result in victims developing coping strategies to restore their previous assumption.

- **Positive self-perceptions**

People generally operate under the assumption that they are worthy and maintain a high level of self-esteem (Van der Berg, 1997:57). The experience of being victimised may lead to a questioning of these self-perceptions. The trauma of victimisation often activates negative self-images and victims may then see themselves as weak, helpless, needy, frightened and out of control. Victims of crime invariably experience a profound threat to their autonomy which upsets their equilibrium in life (Janoff-Bulman & Frieze, 1983:6). Victimisation interferes with a positive self-image by creating a feeling of unworthiness, impurity and self-blame (see attribution theory, section 2.2.3 for discussion) and thus changing the positive self-image into a negative one.

As a result, victims often develop certain coping strategies to restore the above assumptions and find meaning in the incident. Cognitive restructuring is a coping mechanism in which victims re-interpret their experience to reduce the adverse effects of the incident. According to Wortman (1983:207), there are five cognitive mechanisms that may minimise the impact of victimisation, namely:

- finding meaning in the episode;
- engaging in downward comparisons (e.g. thinking of themselves as being better off than other victims);
- amplifying the incident;
- evaluating the event as a personal growth opportunity or believing that it will bring some or other benefit.

Victimisation examines the emotional power of victims and has an impact on the personal assumptions they hold about the world around them. Through cognitive restructuring these assumptions are restored and victims obtain meaning from the negative incident. Research by Silver, Boon and Stones (in Lurigio et al., 1990:60) indicates that if victims understand their victimisation or make sense of it, they report less psychological distress, greater self-esteem and better social adjustment. Thus, if victims believe that they are better off than other victims, or learn something positive out of the incident, recovery and adjustment after victimisation are facilitated.

2.2.2.1 Application of Janoff-Bulman and Frieze's theory of victim reactions to retail robbery

According to Perloff (1983:42), one of the most common reactions to victimising events such as crime is a drastically heightened sense of vulnerability. It is, therefore, postulated that the assumptions that victims of retail robberies have about the world around them may be shattered as a result of the robbery. In accordance with Janoff-Bulman and Frieze (1983:4), prior to the robberies victims may have felt that robberies only happen to other people and this would, therefore, denote the victims' shattered assumption of invulnerability. Awareness of the possibility of death or serious injury is made painfully obvious in violent victimisations such as robbery (Perloff, 1983:42). Janoff-Bulman (1992:61) affirms that the confrontation with real or potential injury or death breaks the barrier of complacency and resistance in a victim's assumptive world, and a profound psychological crisis is induced. Subsequently, victims of retail robberies may suffer emotionally because all their existing assumptions regarding their invulnerability, the world as meaningful, and

their own positive self-perceptions regarding their environment have been destroyed as a result of victimisation. Due to the shattering of the assumption of invulnerability, robbery victims also often endure psychological distress (Van der Berg, 1997:58) and, as a result, may experience symptoms that are characteristic of PTSD (Nomoyi et al., 2000:98).

In addition, robbery victims who feel they took all the necessary precautionary and security measures, such as alarms, security guards, armed response and panic buttons, might be unable to understand why their stores were selected as targets. In this regard, they may also experience negative self-perceptions and wonder what they could have done differently to prevent the robbery.

McKendrick and Hoffman (1990:25) also note that the violence associated with retail robbery can have far-reaching effects upon the quality of life of the individual victim as well as the community as this violence creates fear which disrupts social interaction in the community, as well as destroying interpersonal and intergroup relationships. In this regard, Janoff-Bulman and Frieze (1983:4) state that individuals who have been robbed report being more afraid of another robbery than their neighbours and they feel distrust towards some individuals, especially strangers. Janoff-Bulman (1992:78) declare that robbery is a crime that involves offenders who intend to harm and the victimisation is, therefore, human-induced. As a result of this intentional, human-induced victimisation, the victim suddenly views the world as malevolent, not simply because something bad has happened, but because the world of people is now seriously tainted and trust in others is also severely disturbed. In response to human-induced victimisation such as retail robbery, many victims experience anger, rage, and an intense desire for revenge but this is often compromised by the victim's self-questioning which is particularly apt to follow human-induced victimisation (Janoff-Bulman, 1992:79).

Victims who survive violent robbery attacks also often sustain serious injuries requiring long-term or even permanent medical treatment (Glanz, 1994:21). These victims may have difficulty considering the world as meaningful and having been victimised may not make sense to them. Macdonald (1975:50) states that great expenses are incurred by retail robbery victims to improve security measures which safeguard their stores, thereby restoring the assumption of invulnerability.

A number of media articles (Armed robbers steal substantial amount from Mayor's Walk Spar, 2000:3; Murders, robbery in weekend crime, 2000:2; Pistol-whipped

during robbery, 2000:6; Two die in shooting, 2000:3; Two men slain in robbery bid, 2000:6) depict these devastating negative consequences of retail robberies which result in a shattering of positive self-perceptions, a loss of meaning and the assumption of invulnerability previously felt by the victims thereof. These negative consequences include great financial loss, physical injuries and loss of life, as well as an increased fear of repeat victimisation. According to Janoff-Bulman (1992:79), the foundations of social harmony are fractured in victims of crimes such as retail robbery and their sense of community and social order are radically disturbed.

Victims of retail robberies may make use of cognitive restructuring to adaptively minimise the impact of the victimisation. These cognitive coping mechanisms could include victims finding meaning in the retail robbery that would otherwise be incomprehensible or by feeling lucky to be alive when other robberies have resulted in the death of victims. Victims can also amplify the retail robbery and make it seem much worse than it actually was. The impact of the retail robbery can also be minimised by victims believing that the robbery was a personal growth opportunity and that they can now make changes to prevent a future robbery from occurring.

2.2.2.2 Evaluation of Janoff-Bulman and Frieze's theory of victim reactions

Wortman (1983:198) indicates that there is a growing consensus that such assumptions as stipulated in Janoff-Bulman's theory may play an important role in the coping process of the victim, since they are likely to have a profound influence on how a victimising experience is initially appraised as well as on behaviour and coping attempts following a crisis. Wortman (1983:200) further notes that little research has been done in this regard and that in subsequent research on the role of assumptions in the coping process, it would be useful to assess whether particular assumptions are adaptive or maladaptive when crises are experienced.

Taylor, Wood and Lichtman (in Wortman, 1983:208) have questioned whether cognitive restructuring mechanisms are in fact adaptive. They declare that the ability to see things in a positive light may lead a person to accommodate to situations that are quite undesirable and those who are skilled in the use of these cognitive mechanisms may have little motivation to take coping actions that would improve their situation in the long term (Wortman, 1983:208).

2.2.3 Attribution theory

An area which has generated a great deal of research attention among social psychologists concerns the impact of a person's attributions of causality for a victimising experience on subsequent coping and adjustment (Wortman, 1983:198). Wortman (1983:198) further mentions that Heider's attribution theory has been one of the most influential topics in social psychology for the past four decades, it is not surprising that it should capture the attention of researchers working on reactions to victimisation.

Attribution theorists such as Janoff-Bulman and Frieze (1983) and Perloff (1983) have contributed to understanding of why the victims of crime, both direct and indirect, experience difficulties to cope subsequent to victimisation (Lurigio et al., 1990:127). These theorists argue that any attempt to understand human behaviour must take into account the attributions, or reasons, that people ascribe to events. In order to understand why certain reactions occur among both direct and indirect victims of crime, it is important to examine what actually happened to the victim, their attributions for why it occurred, and what they think it means (Lurigio et al., 1990:127).

In terms of criminal victimisation, Janoff-Bulman and Frieze (1983:3) argue that being the victim of crime changes an individual's attributions about the safety and just nature of the world, often creating intense feelings of vulnerability. In response to these feelings, victims may develop certain coping strategies (see previous discussion, section 2.2.2)

According to Miller and Porter (1983:151), any account of the victimisation process must consider the phenomenon of self-blame. Self-blame refers to the victims' tendency to attribute the victimisation to personal factors. Miller and Porter (1983:139) further indicate that there are two counter-intuitive findings relating to self-blame namely, that the victims of negative events are often found to exaggerate the extent to which they are responsible for their fates and that the degree of self-blame evidenced by victims of negative events has been found to correlate positively with subsequent coping. Wortman (1983:203) states that blaming oneself may be more tolerable than the conclusion that no one knows who is to blame, and/or that the person is living in a meaningless, chaotic world where events occur at random.

There are two types of self-blame, namely behavioural self-blame, where the victims attribute the causes of victimisation to their own actions or behaviour, and characterological self-blame which takes place when victims attribute their victimisation to personality traits and inadequacies (Lurigio et al., 1990:58). Friedman (in Lurigio et al., 1990:58) states that crime victims who attribute their victimisation to their own actions or behaviour manifest less psychological disturbances than victims who attributed their victimisation to personality traits and inadequacies. Wortman (1983:204) adds that behavioural self-blame may even be quite adaptive. Characterological self-blame leaves victims with little confidence that future victimisation can be prevented, while behavioural self-blame opens up the possibility of controlling or preventing future victimisation through behavioural changes. Characterological self-blame is also often associated with depression and helplessness (Miller & Porter, 1983:147). If external factors which are within the victims' control are to be blamed for victimisation, future victimisation can also be controlled.

2.2.3.1 Application of the attribution theory to retail robbery

In accordance with the attribution theory, it is assumed that victims of retail robberies would make attributions about why the robbery occurred and they may question their attributions regarding the safety of their store. Lurigio et al. (1990:58) confirm this by stating that being the victim of crime changes an individual's attributions about the safety and just nature of the world and often creates intense feelings of vulnerability.

Retail robbery victims could perceive their personal characteristics, such as gender or race, to be the cause of their robbery victimisation. Researchers (Barkan, 1997:274; Block, 1977:49; Bonn, 1984:206) have determined that robbery is an inter-racial phenomenon in that individuals from different racial groups victimise one another, meaning that individuals are at risk for victimisation due to their racial characteristics. According to Miller and Porter (1983:147), this characterological self-blame is presumed to undermine the perception of control and thus lead to the victim of retail robbery experiencing feelings of helplessness and depression.

In addition, retail robbery may also result in victims attributing the robbery to their own actions or behaviour, such as having a set routine, a lack of vigilance, lack of security mechanisms such as armed response, closed-circuit television and panic buttons, insufficient personnel present in the store, or being a Lotto retailer (Lotto-geld lok skurke glo, 2002:4). It is also possible, however, that the victims may blame themselves for the losses suffered as a result of them not attempting to resist the

robbers. In addition, if victims resist the robbers, they may attribute the severity of the victimisation to the fact that they resisted. The victims may also attribute the victimisation to external factors in their control, such as being situated in a high-crime rate area, or the store being visible from the outside thereby enabling robbers to monitor activity within the store without entering it. Through this behavioural self-blame retail robbery victims may feel capable of controlling or preventing future victimisation by making behavioural changes. The above factors are all within the control of the victims, but there are also factors which are out of their control to which the robbery could be attributed, such as infrequent police patrols in the area and only a few customers being present in the store at the time of the robbery. The victims can not control this and it may lead to more intense feelings of vulnerability and fear.

2.2.3.2 Evaluation of the attribution theory

Miller and Porter (1983:149) maintain that it has become increasingly popular to view causal explanations or attributions as important determinants of affective and behavioural reactions to negative life events. The strength of the relation between a person's explanation for a negative life event and his or her reaction to the event, however, may depend to a large extent on the nature of the event itself (Miller & Porter, 1983:149).

According to Miller and Porter (1983:140), the functional analyses of self-blame all have the virtue of being able to account for both the existence of self-blame and its positive consequences, but these accounts are not easily separated conceptually or empirically. They moreover state that future work in this area may sharpen the conceptual distinctions among these explanations and provide empirical evidence that helps assess their differential validity. The questions of when self-blame occurs, what forms it takes, and its relation to the coping process are just some of the important issues that Miller and Porter (1983:151) feel should be addressed by future researchers, in addition to consulting a wide range of victim groups when considering attribution and self-blame.

2.2.4 Model of the victim's experience after a retail robbery

In order to understand the experiences of the victims and the consequences of retail robberies, a **Model of the victim's experience after a retail robbery** is formulated for the purpose of this study.

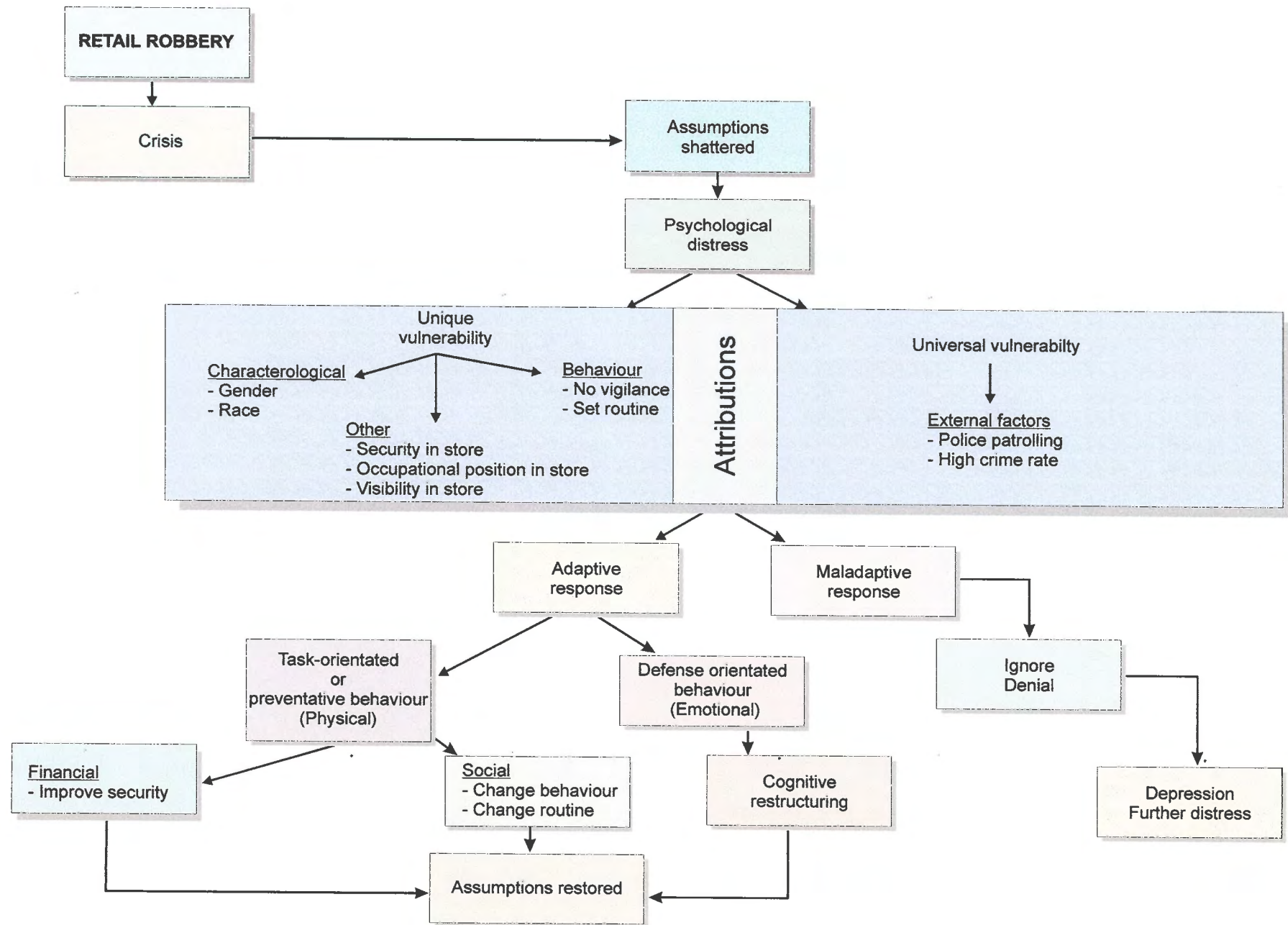


Figure 2. Model of the victim's experience after a retail robbery

The crisis theory, the attribution theory, and Janoff-Bulman and Frieze's theory of victim reactions form the basis of the **Model of the victim's experience after a retail robbery**. This model is based on the assumption that when individuals experience a crisis or traumatic event which causes psychological distress, they develop adaptive or maladaptive coping strategies. Victims make certain attributions (or find certain reasons for the retail robbery) and develop adaptations in order to deal with the shattering of three basic assumptions namely, the assumption of invulnerability, the world as meaningful, and the individual's positive self-perception.

Prior to a robbery victims may have felt that robberies only happen to other people and this would, therefore, denote the victims' shattered assumption of invulnerability. Subsequently, victims of retail robberies may endure psychological distress because their existing assumptions regarding the world as meaningful, and their own positive self-perception regarding their environment have been destroyed as a result of victimisation. Symptoms of psychological distress such as feelings of anxiety and helplessness may accompany the victim's lost sense of safety due to the shattering of these assumptions. The threat to a victim's life could also result in them experiencing PTSD symptoms after the robbery which may include nightmares; painful memories of the retail robbery; feelings of alienation from society; sleep and eating disorders; and avoidance of anything that reminds them of the event (Barlow & Durand, 1995:192; Gabor et al., 1987:viii; Nomoyi, Davis, Theron & Klopper, 2000:98).

In addition, robbery victims who feel they took all the necessary precautionary and security measures, such as alarms, security guards, armed response and panic buttons, might be unable to understand why their stores were selected as targets. In this regard, they may also experience negative self-perceptions and wonder what they could have done differently to prevent the robbery. The destruction of the assumption of vulnerability may further manifest itself in the victim's pre-occupation with the fear that they will be victimised again.

The vulnerability of victims can be distinguished as either unique vulnerability (more vulnerable than the average person) or universal vulnerability (equally as vulnerable as everyone else). Victims with perceptions of unique vulnerability may be more prone to maladaptive coping and anxiety, low self-esteem, and depressive symptoms than victims with perceptions of universal vulnerability (Perloff, 1983:42). However, victims with a sense of universal vulnerability should be more likely to attribute the retail robbery to external causes which are chance or environmental factors beyond their control, such as the presence of police patrols or the crime-rate in the area. Retail

robbery victims are unable to control these aspects and it may lead to more intense feelings of vulnerability and fear.

The victims may also attribute the victimisation to external factors in their control, such as a lack of security mechanisms such as armed response, closed-circuit television and panic buttons, their occupation or position in the store, insufficient personnel present in the store, or the store being visible from the outside thereby enabling robbers to monitor activity within the store without entering it. The victims' reaction is considered maladaptive if they are unable to function as usual (Carson & Butcher, 1992:151) and may include inappropriate coping strategies such as denial, repression or alcohol abuse (Burgess & Holmstrom, 1986:361).

Victims with a sense of unique vulnerability are conceivably more likely to attribute their misfortune to internal causes (e.g. personal traits or behaviours). As mentioned earlier, criminal victimisation such as retail robbery may change an individual's attributions about the safety and just nature of the world, often creating intense feelings of vulnerability. In response to these feelings, victims may develop coping strategies which may include self-blame which refers to the victims' tendency to attribute the victimisation to personal factors. There are two types of self-blame, namely behavioural self-blame and characterological self-blame. Behavioural self-blame is where the victims attribute the causes of victimisation to their own actions or behaviour. Retail robbery may result in victims attributing the robbery to their own actions or behaviour, such as having a set routine, a lack of vigilance, or being a Lotto retailer (Lotto-geld lok skurke glo, 2002:4).

Characterological self-blame takes place when victims attribute their victimisation to personality traits and inadequacies (Lurigio et al., 1990:58). Retail robbery victims could perceive their personal characteristics, such as gender or race, to be the cause of their robbery victimisation. Barkan (1997:274), as well as Bonn (1984:206), have determined that robbery is an inter-racial phenomenon in that individuals from different racial groups victimise one another, meaning that individuals are at risk for victimisation due to their racial characteristics. This characterological self-blame is presumed to undermine perceptions of control and may contribute to feelings of helplessness and depression. As a result of this behavioural self-blame, some retail robbery victims may also feel more capable of controlling or preventing future victimisation by making behavioural changes.



Carson and Butcher (1992:147) state that victims often develop adaptive coping strategies which may include task-oriented responses such as making changes in one's self, one's surroundings, or both, depending on the situation. In terms of retail robbery, this task-oriented response may involve the victims improving the security measures in their stores, or changing their behaviour for example, by becoming more cautious or vigilant, or changing their cash pick-up routines, thereby restoring the assumption of invulnerability.

When a person's feelings of adequacy are seriously threatened by a stressor, a defence-oriented response might also prevail, that is, behaviour directed primarily at protecting the self from hurt and disorganisation, rather than at resolving the situation (Carson & Butcher, 1992:147). Carson and Butcher (1992:147) indicate that there are two common types of defence-oriented responses. The first consists of responses such as crying, repetitive talking, and mourning that seem to function as psychological damage-repair mechanisms. The second type consists of the so-called ego- or self-defence mechanisms and include such responses as denial and repression which relieve tension and anxiety and protect the self from hurt and devaluation (Burgess & Holmstrom, 1986:356). These mechanisms protect an individual from external threats, such as guilt regarding the victims' responsibility for the robbery (Carson & Butcher, 1992:147). However, ego-defence mechanisms are considered maladaptive when they become the predominant means of coping with stressors (Carson & Butcher, 1992:148).

Cognitive restructuring is another adaptive coping mechanism in which victims re-interpret their experience to reduce the adverse effects of the incident. There are various cognitive mechanisms that may minimise the impact of victimisation, the first being finding meaning in the retail robbery. If victims understand their victimisation or make sense of it, they are more likely to experience less psychological distress, greater self-esteem and better social adjustment. The second mechanism of cognitive restructuring entails victims believing that they are better off than other victims of retail robberies. Finally, if victims evaluate the robbery as a personal growth opportunity or believe that it will bring some or other benefit, their recovery and adjustment after victimisation are facilitated. Through these cognitive restructuring mechanisms the basic assumptions of the victims of retail robberies are restored (Lurigio et al., 1990:60) and victims come to terms with the victimisation and resume normal functioning.

2.3 CONCLUSION

In Chapter 2, one criminology theory and three theories from the field of psychology were discussed with the aim of providing structure to the study on retail robbery. The routine activities theory which examined how variations in the routine activities of individuals may affect the possibility that a motivated retail robber and suitable target will converge at a specific time and place in the absence of capable guardians, was highlighted in order to provide a framework to indicate which stores and victims are at greater risk for retail robbery.

Reference was also made of psychology theories that were relevant to the current study in terms of the victims' experiences and reactions after victimisation. These theories included the crisis theory, Janoff-Bulman and Frieze's approach to victim reactions and the attribution theory. These theories stated that when an individual experiences a crisis or traumatic event which causes psychological distress, they make certain attributions and develop adaptive or maladaptive coping strategies in order to deal with the shattering of three basic assumptions namely, the assumption of invulnerability, the world as meaningful, and the individual's positive self-perception. Based on these theories and existing research on robbery in general, a **Model of the victim's experience after a retail robbery** was formulated to serve as a framework for the current study.

3. EXTENT, NATURE AND PREVENTION OF ROBBERY

In this chapter existing research and literature relevant to the extent, nature, consequences and prevention of robbery will be considered. Research on retail robbery per se is limited, therefore, robbery in general will be explored in this chapter. Where possible, the few available studies pertaining specifically to retail robbery will be referred to. This information will, in conjunction with the theories discussed in Chapter 2, serve as a guideline for the remainder of the study.

3.1 EXTENT OF ROBBERY

As indicated by the first national commercial crime survey in South Africa, businesses are the victims of a varied number of crimes, including robbery, but the type and level of victimisation is influenced by the type of business, the business location, the risks that they are exposed to, as well as the crime prevention measures employed by these businesses (Naudé, Prinsloo, Maree, Ladikos & Joubert, 2000:80). Crimes like retail robbery require special attention due to the negative influence they have on South Africa's image abroad and the negative consequence of this on foreign investments, tourism and the value of the local currency (http://www.saps.org.za/8_crimeinfo/200112/report.html). Upon studying the perceptions of various businesses regarding certain problems faced by them, it was determined that these crimes are generally regarded as the most serious problem facing the South African business sector (Joubert, Ladikos, Maree, Naudé & Prinsloo, 1999:90). According to Naudé et al. (2000:74), the financial burden of businesses is increased by crimes such as retail robbery in terms of higher operating costs, such as insurance, security costs and, subsequently, reduced profits.

Statistics obtained from the Crime Information Analysis Centre (http://www.saps.org.za/8_crimeinfo/200112/report.html) show that the chances of becoming a victim of a serious violent crime against the person, such as robbery, are just above one out of ten crimes reported to the police, while the chances of becoming a victim of property related or commercial crime are nearly seven out of ten crimes reported to the police. As is the case with any crime, there is the possibility that a dark figure exists for retail robbery. In this regard, Block (1989:233) and Ruback (1994:424) state that victims often only report crimes that were successfully completed. Retail robberies, however,

will have a higher report rate than some crimes due to insurance claims that require docket numbers. Burke and O’Rear (1993:18), Cook (1987:367), as well as Zimring and Zuehl (1986:3, 4), emphasise that the incorrect classification of crimes in police statistics may also account for dark figures. In South Africa retail robbery is classified as robbery with aggravating circumstances along with various other crimes such as carjacking, the hijacking of trucks, cash-in-transit robberies, and bank robberies. However, since 1996 these four crimes are also recorded separately whereas retail robbery is not. This increases the difficulty in determining the real extent of this phenomenon.

A spatial analysis of robbery with aggravating circumstances in South Africa indicates that robberies occur most frequently in the Metropolitan areas of Gauteng, Greater Durban and Greater Cape Town (http://www.saps.org.za/8_crimeinfo/200112/report.html). This finding correlates with a statement made by Laub (1997:16), namely that those people who live in urban areas are more afflicted by crime than are residents of rural or suburban areas. Research (Bard & Sangrey, 1986: 177; Block, 1977:61; Hough, 1986:127; Normandeau, 1981:4; McClintock & Gibson, 1961:vii; Pratt, 1980:96) indicates that this pattern is particularly relevant to robbery in that it mainly occurs in urban areas. Table 1 depicts the number of robbery with aggravating circumstances cases reported to the police from January to September 1994-2001 (http://www.saps.org.za/8_crimeinfo/200112/crime/roba.html).

Table 1

Robbery with Aggravating Circumstances (1994-2001)

Province	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001
Eastern Cape	5005	4469	3695	3799	4649	5231	5698	6108
Free State	2221	2138	1859	1486	1667	1604	1455	1677
Gauteng	28200	26527	20952	22444	29534	33192	37490	41305
Kwazulu-Natal	12538	13261	12190	11682	14150	16058	17215	17707
Mpumalanga	2918	2714	2767	2628	2756	3294	3682	4037
North West	3610	3405	2442	2384	2967	3254	3817	4220
Northern Cape	461	729	509	276	276	293	301	323
Limpopo	2967	2358	1983	1842	1976	1909	2331	2490
Western Cape	4957	4753	4017	3865	5457	5975	7572	9743
RSA	62877	60354	50414	50406	63432	70810	79561	87610

As is evident from Table 1, Gauteng has by far the highest incidence of robbery with aggravating circumstances with a total of 41 305 for the year 2001. Robbery with

aggravating circumstances in Gauteng accounts for approximately 47,15% of the total figure in South Africa. In comparison with the 1994 figure of 28 200, this figure has escalated by 13 105. The anonymity of city life, as well as the virtually unlimited targets in urban areas such as Gauteng, may account for the higher incidence of robbery in the city.

Further reasons why Gauteng has the highest rate of robbery are as follows:

- This Metropolitan area is the largest in South Africa and has the highest population density. Felson (1998:32) states that high density fosters many small grocery or retail stores which are easy to rob when patronage is light. There are, therefore, a variety of targets to choose from (Crime Information Management Centre, 1998:61).
- Gauteng has the highest unemployment rate and as a result, retail robbery can be viewed as an alternative means of acquiring money (see section 3.1.1).
- Accessibility to highways facilitate the escape of the robber.

Various other reasons, however, could also have an effect on the increase in retail robbery on a national level.

3.1.1 Reasons for the increase in robbery

The following reasons contribute, individually or in conjunction with one another, directly or indirectly to the high retail robbery rate in South Africa.

- **Economic advantage**

Conklin (1998:308) states that the economic advantage that a specific crime holds, as well as the expressive rewards such as excitement, respect within the peer group and/or a feeling of power that the offender achieves from committing a crime such as robbery, can serve as a motivation for the crime. Research regarding armed robbery (Conklin, 1972:5) supports the view that robbery is a fast, direct and rewarding means of obtaining money or goods (Fourty four thousand rand taken in robberies, 2000:3; Rowers buit R6 m. in besige winkelsentrum, 1999:1).

According to Wright and Rossi (1986:143), the financial gains that often accompany a robbery, can be an important motivational factor to commit this crime. As mentioned previously in section 2.1.2, the economic advantage that an individual can obtain from

a retail robbery is the primary motive (Beirne & Messerschmidt, 1991:98) behind the increase in retail robbery in South Africa (<http://www.jrsa.org/pubs/forum/archives/Sept97.html>; Landau & Fridman, 1993:168; Vold, 1958:221).

- **Poverty**

Due to the fact that this social phenomenon usually goes hand in hand with unemployment, low income, high inflation and a rise in the price of consumer goods, it could lead to an increase in crimes such as retail robbery. Landau and Fridman (1993:168), as well as Bartollas and Dinitz (1989:263), reported a relationship between robbery and unemployment. Barkan (1997:275) confirms that aspects such as poverty, real or relative economic deprivation, unemployment and a decrease in work-force opportunities (legitimate means of financial success) can precipitate retail robbery. In agreement with the above statement, Nel (1996:2) emphasises that crimes such as retail robbery will be difficult to prevent unless aspects such as economic inequality are dealt with. He also states that the gap between the haves and the have nots must be reduced.

However, it has been pointed out (<http://www.aic.gov.au/publications/armedrobbery/ch2.html>) that socio-economic factors such as poverty and unemployment are not always reason enough for committing crimes such as armed robbery. According to Vold (1958:171), unemployment is a contributing factor, a predisposing condition for involvement in robbery, but rarely the main reason for involvement in this crime. In this regard, Felson (1998:34) also states that too much crime is committed by people who are not poor and that many poor nations have low crime rates. If poverty was the only cause of crime, then poor countries would have the highest number of robbers. This, however, is not the case.

- **Urbanisation**

According to United Nations reports (<http://www.acdi-cida.gc.ca/xpress/dex/dex9802.html>), urbanisation can also influence the violent crime rate of a country. They assume that the growth of industry and cities often results in social disruption that produces alienation and ultimately crime. According to the Crime Information Analysis Centre (<http://www.polity.org.za/govdocs/reports/crime96.html>), the factors that follow are associated with urbanisation and may lead to an increase in retail robbery:

- ⇒ An increase in squatter areas that are difficult to police.
- ⇒ Unemployment.
- ⇒ Loss of family structure.
- ⇒ An increase in relative deprivation.
- ⇒ The development of needs and expectations that cannot be realised.
- ⇒ The availability of opportunities to commit crime.

By generating new social problems, the migration from rural to urban areas complicates the relationship between economic development, crime and social control (<http://www.acdi-cida.gc.ca/xpress/dex/dex9802.html>). Moving to cities leads to fundamental changes in traditional structures and customs. The family and the church as agents of social control are particularly challenged by emerging new value systems, and can no longer reinforce norm-conforming behaviour, especially among adolescents.

The people who migrate to the cities first are the youngsters (18-30 years), only to find massive unemployment. The distinction between rich and poor in the city is stark and at the same time the material possessions of the rich become the measure of success (Pelser & De Kock, 2000:86). A strong and vicious cycle of rising expectations is created and the only support many of them may find is their peer group. The vast difference between themselves and the more privileged sector of the population, as well as economic deprivation, may drive them to become involved in criminal gang activities (Pelser & De Kock, 2000:86).

- **Relative deprivation**

Relative deprivation refers to the gap between an individual's expectations of life and the possibilities of realising these expectations. The larger this gap, the greater the relative deprivation and possible involvement in property related crimes such as robbery.

According to Ekpenyong (1989:31), as well as Katz (1996:172), the emphasis that is placed on materialism plays a significant role in crimes such as retail robbery. Unrealistic material expectations that are positioned upon individuals are often impossible to achieve in a legal manner which results in them utilising illegitimate means of obtaining material possessions. In this regard, it can be postulated that armed robbery will continue as long as there is a need for material possessions.

Pelser and De Kock (2000:88) state that since large numbers of disillusioned South Africans perceive the new government to be failing in its mission to “create a better life for all”, unmet expectations and relative deprivation are likely to continue to contribute significantly to violent crimes and other forms of violent conflict in South Africa.

- **Climate of violence in society**

The climate of violence prevalent in South Africa, as a result of the apartheid regime, is a further factor that can lead to violent crimes such as retail robbery. Various researchers (Esterhuysen, 1997:18; Katz, 1991:280; Stavrou, 1993:70) agree that the political, social and economic changes since 1994; the transformation to a democracy; unrealistic material expectations that are created by members of the community and that cannot be achieved; political conflict; the unique socio-economic circumstances of South Africa; as well as the history of apartheid, serve as a breeding ground for violence. It has also been found that violent crime rates in developing countries, like South Africa, have doubled since the 1970's and 1980's. This could be due to political instability within these countries (<http://www.acdi-cida.gc.ca/xpress/dex/dex9802.html>).

According to the Inter-departmental Strategy Team (1996:4), the climate of violence in South Africa may lead to violence becoming an accepted means of resolving social, political and even domestic conflict. In support of this, Stavrou (1993:70) postulates that South Africa is caught up in such a destructive pattern of violence that it is viewed as normal and as a way of dealing with conflict. This view is in accordance with the subculture of violence theory of Wolfgang and Ferracuti (1982:161) which is based on the assumption that individuals have a favourable attitude towards the use of violence. These theorists state that, with time, individuals become members of a subculture of violence where violence is deemed appropriate in certain situations and acts as a means of handling conflict. To deprive someone violently of their money or possessions might, therefore, be viewed as only part of the robber's “normal” acquired behaviour.

- **Dehumanisation, discrimination and marginalisation**

According to Fattah (1976:108), dehumanisation can also lead to an increase in violent crimes such as robbery. As a result of dehumanisation and, therefore, a disregard for life, offenders are more willing to turn to violent crimes that may result in the death of

the victim. This dehumanisation is evident from the fact that victims are often seriously injured or even killed during a retail robbery, even though that was not the primary motive of the robbery.

Pratt (1980:165) warns that discrimination or the labelling of a potential victim as belonging to a specific ethnic group or gender may also precipitate robbery. In regard to this he stresses that robbery is often the result of racial discrimination. Gabor et al. (1987:11) support this opinion by indicating that a significant number of robberies are rationalised on the grounds of exposure to racial discrimination.

The historical marginalisation and experiences of powerlessness of black South Africans who were socially, politically and educationally marginalised often contributed to severe feelings of rejection. Naudé (1999:3) states that the Bantu Education Act of 1953 subjected black youth to inferior education. Since 1976 many youths went without the benefit of a proper formal education for almost two decades. Parents and schools became unable to socialise, discipline or control the youth. The political situation also undermined the central position occupied by the youth and many youths found new identity in gangs and other criminal activities (Naudé, 1999:3). At present, even with new legislation in place, the youth is still in a disadvantaged position.

- **Other criminogenic factors**

Peer pressure, alcohol and drug abuse, various biological factors (e.g. abnormal testosterone levels) and psychological factors (e.g. uncontrollable aggression and impulsiveness) can also be linked to retail robbery.

The use of alcohol and drugs leads to a lowering of inhibitions. These lowered inhibitions cause individuals to do things that they would not usually do and, therefore, facilitate the commission of crimes such as retail robbery (Conklin, 1995:298). In addition, once an individual has become dependent on alcohol or other drugs, they have formed an expensive habit. In order to obtain the necessary money to support their addiction or dependence, robberies are often committed (Gabor et al., 1987:27).

The influence of the media, particularly in terms of reporting about the ease with which robbers commit and get away with their crimes, may also motivate potential robbers to become involved in these crimes (Burke & O'Rear, 1993:21; Macdonald,

1991:253-269; Myerson, 1995:5, 6). According to Levi (1994:345), the learning from violent role models on television, as well as from increasingly dysfunctional criminal families and neighbourhoods, teach people how to respond negatively to tension. This aspect, in addition to the differences in individual temperament and life circumstances, play a major part in accounting for variations in the degree of violence involved in robberies. These variations are as a result of the combination of the above-mentioned factors and their influence upon the level of violence involved in each retail robbery. In addition, Naudé et al. (2000:77) state that factors such as deliberate choice, opportunity, as well as routine activities also play a contributing role.

- **Ineffectiveness of the criminal justice system**

The ineffectiveness of the criminal justice system and insufficient punishment with regard to serious crimes may, according to the Crime Information Management Centre (1996:27), influence the increase in robbery. The shortage of police personnel and resources, resulting in large docket loads due to these shortages, makes effective policing increasingly difficult. These factors, as well as a poor relationship between the police and the community, which has its origin in the apartheid years, all contribute to a high robbery rate and low arrest figures (<http://www.polity.org.za/govdocs/reports/crime96.html>). Prinsloo, Joubert, Ladikos, Maree and Naudé (2000:6) confirm that a poor relationship exists between the police and the community and mention that the limited role played by the police in community education, particularly in advising businesses on security matters, supports the public's apparent negative attitude towards the police.

The Nedcor Project on Crime, Violence and Investment (1996:5) indicates that for every 1000 crimes committed in South Africa, approximately 450 are reported, 230 solved, 77 offenders prosecuted, and 36 offenders sentenced to prison of which only eight serve a sentence longer than two years. The low arrest rate, light sentences, the ease with which offenders receive bail and the early release of prisoners on parole all contribute to punishment not being a deterrent for potential robbers. These factors often also influence the amount of bravado associated with robberies as well as the frequency at which they are committed.

- **Availability of firearms**

The legal and illegal import, use, distribution, dealing and ownership of firearms and ammunition is an important factor that gives rise to high robbery rates in South Africa

(Brewer, 1994:133; Crime Information Management Centre, 1998:63; Inter-departmental Strategy Team, 1996:4). In addition, Morrison and O'Donnell (1994:1) state that there is a firmly established relationship between robbery and the use of firearms.

Wright and Rossi (1986:14) indicate that, in order to seize arising opportunities but also to defend against surprise attacks, violent predators such as retail robbers maintain a constant readiness for violence. They often literally sleep with a firearm under their pillow and drive with one in their glove compartment.

Myerson (1995:14) agrees with the above and states that there has been a noticeable increase in the number of robbers acquiring firearms to commit robbery. The weapons are employed for instrumental purposes, namely to gain access to money and goods with relative ease and less resistance; to protect themselves from armed victims; and to ensure a safe escape from the crime scene (Conklin, 1995:304). The availability of legal as well as illegal firearms and ammunition make it easier for criminals to commit crimes, such as retail robberies, which would otherwise have been very difficult or even impossible (Burke & O'Rear, 1993:23).

According to Cook (1987:366), robberies of commercial establishments such as retail stores, are more likely to involve a gun than other forms of robbery such as street robbery. This may be due to the fact that retail robbers have to subdue a greater number of victims simultaneously during a retail robbery (Rowers buit R6 m. in besige winkelsentrum, 1999:1).

According to Kirsten (1997:12), firearms used during crimes such as robberies are usually obtained illegally in the following ways:

- ⇒ By smuggling firearms from neighbouring countries. Countries such as Mozambique and Swaziland are the largest suppliers of illegal firearms to offenders in South Africa. In particular, firearms are smuggled directly or via Swaziland into South Africa (<http://www.polity.org.za/govdocs/reports/crime96.html>).
- ⇒ By illegally importing the firearms.
- ⇒ As a result of theft and loss of firearms by private persons and members of the SAPS.

The poor control of aspects such as official weapons arsenals, the issue of weapons to security forces, and existing legislation controlling firearms, facilitate the above-mentioned factors. In addition, the illegal importing and smuggling of firearms in South Africa, as well as the fact that firearms are stolen during other crimes, such as farm attacks, vehicle hijackings and residential burglaries, contribute to more and more firearms being in illegal possession. Four million of the 13 million firearms currently in circulation in South Africa are estimated to be in the possession of illegal owners (Davis, 1999:113). In some cases, firearms are bought from friends, firearm dealers or the owners of pawn shops. A large number of firearms are also bought on the black market (Davis, 1999:113).

It was found that in 1998 a total of 29 694 firearms had been reported stolen to the SAPS, including those lost or stolen from police and defence force members. A disconcerting fact is that of the almost 30 000 firearms reported stolen, only 1 764, or 6%, had been recovered during the same 12 month period (<http://www.iss.co.za/Pubs/Crime%20Index/Vol%203%20No%202?Firearms.html>). Presently, this figure may have escalated even higher.

- **Availability of targets**

The greater availability of targets such as retail stores can also influence the crime rate for robbery (Conklin, 1972:88; Vito & Holmes, 1994:79). Conklin (1972:39) notes that an increase in these targets offers more opportunities for retail robbery. This assumption is in agreement with the routine activities theory of Cohen and Felson which states that the availability and visibility of targets increases the risk of crime (Felson, 1998:58). The vulnerability of the victim (see section 2.1.2), as well as the victim being unaware of the risk of retail robbery, can influence the accessibility of the victim and the availability of targets, thereby facilitating victimisation.

3.2 NATURE OF ROBBERY

The *modus operandi* that robbers follow while committing a robbery, as well as the profiles of robbers and their victims, will be discussed next. This will be done by means of the analysis of relevant existing literature available on robbery and, where possible, retail robbery specifically.

3.2.1 *Modus operandi* of the robber

Modus operandi refers to the routine in which individualised methods, techniques and habits are employed by offenders in the committing of a retail robbery. Due to the fact that the *modus operandi* of the offender is indicative of the motivation for the crime and is depicted in various phases of the crime, namely the planning, operational and the post-offence phases (Van der Westhuizen, 1993:34-39), existing literature regarding the planning phase will, in spite of the fact that the focus of the study is only on the operational and post-offence phases, be included in the subsequent discussion as it provides valuable background information on styles of career robbery and target selection.

3.2.1.1 Planning phase

Landau and Fridman (1993:168) state that robbery is a rational mode of behaviour, one that usually requires careful planning in order to achieve its goal of monetary gain. Glick (1995:219) points out that offenders make certain decisions and exercise strategic choices in order to minimise the risk of failure and arrest. The identification of a suitable target, the day, time, place and means of committing the crime, attaining weapons, the choice of co-workers as well as the various roles allocated to each of them are some of the aspects that are taken into account in the planning phase before the commission of a crime such as robbery (Letkemann, 1982:219; Marais & Van Rooyen, 1990:69; Snow, 1995:78).

The possibilities that the physical environment offers in terms of traffic flow, the absence of police patrols and/or other guardians as well as the ease with which the offender can leave the crime scene are also considered in the planning phase (Horgan, 1979:262). Obtaining special material such as guns, masks or other special clothes, and a getaway car also forms part of the planning phase (Livingston, 1996:166).

The presence of bystanders is also taken into account by most robbers (Maree, 1995:171). Possible identification by the victim, as well as the presence of more than one person in a retail store, can, for example, discourage a criminal to rob a specific store. The physical danger that a crime like retail robbery holds, or the chances that a criminal can be physically injured or killed in confrontation with the victim, are all taken into account when planning a robbery (Conklin, 1995:304).

Gabor et al. (1987:60) emphasise that leaving or escaping from the crime scene often holds more danger for the offender than what the actual committing of the crime does. In a media article (Robbers arrested after they fail to get away, 2000:6), six armed robbers robbed a retail store of R50 000. The money and all six robbers were captured shortly afterwards in their getaway car in the vicinity of the retail store, illustrating this risk and indicating the importance for retail robbers to consider various escape routes.

Planning and decisions regarding the above-mentioned factors, prior to committing the crime, usually determine the offender's actions while committing the crime. According to Einstadter (1995:70), the amount of planning and the behaviour of the criminal can influence the style of robbery. The following styles of career robbery, which are also relevant in the case of retail robbery, can be identified:

- **The ambush**

This type of robbery is the least planned of all and depends almost entirely on the element of surprise. All participants literally attack an establishment guerrilla fashion and attempt to obtain whatever might be found in cash or other items of value. The chances of violence are high in this type of robbery. As a rule it is a style employed by less systematic robbers (Einstadter, 1995:81).

- **The selective raid**

The selective raid is characterised by minimal planning. Sites are tentatively selected and cased - even though very briefly. Site conditions are analysed to some degree before the robbery is attempted (Einstadter, 1995:81). There is a tentative plan of approach, however, the planning may be accomplished very casually and several robberies may be committed in rapid succession.

- **The planned operation**

Planned operations are well planned and well structured robberies where all aspects are considered and each participant knows what their role during the robbery is. According to Einstadter (1995:81), there may be rehearsals or "dry runs" in order to ensure that all possible conditions are taken into account and risks are held at a minimum.

The time spent on planning varies from person to person and is influenced by aspects such as previous criminal experience, despair due to personal circumstances, the number of individuals involved in the crime, the availability of weapons as well as the presence of an immediate opportunity to commit a crime (Morrison & O'Donnell, 1994:5). It appears that gangs may, on average, spend more time and effort in planning a robbery than individual robbers.

Although a lack of planning often reflects the lack of security in the places robbed (<http://www.aic.gov.au/publications/armedrobbery/ch3.html>), a spontaneous decision may also be made by robbers to commit a robbery (Gabor et al., 1987:59, 201). In this case prior planning is limited. Gabor et al. (1987:59, 201), however, add that most robbers who commit robbery on the spur of the moment or when the opportunity arises have previously decided that they are prepared to commit a crime. A spontaneous robbery is usually associated with the fact that robbers came across a suitable target at a specific time.

3.2.1.2 Operational phase

The circumstances prevalent when robberies occur, for example the day, time, and place, as well as the various methods and instruments used during robberies will now be discussed.

3.2.1.2.1 Days on which robberies occur

An Australian study indicated that weekends are the most popular days to commit robbery (<http://www.aic.gov.au/publications/armedrobbery/ch3.html>). Although no reason was given for this, it might be assumed that this is also applicable to South Africa (Murders, robbery in weekend crime, 2000:2) and retail robbery per se. However, since research regarding retail robbery per se is limited and it is not classified separately from other forms of robbery (see section 3.1), no certainty exists as to which day of the week poses the greatest risk for retail robberies.

3.2.1.2.2 Times at which robberies occur

Approximately half of all violent crimes take place at night, with the largest proportion occurring between 6pm and midnight (Laub, 1997:16; <http://www.aic.gov.au/publications/armedrobbery/ch3.html>). Although research in this regard is limited, media articles have indicated that retail robberies often occur during these times

(Armed robbers steal substantial amount of money from Mayor's Walk Spar, 2000:3; Pretoria Checkers robbed, 2002:8; Robbers arrested after they fail to get away, 2000:6; Two die in shooting, 2000:3). However, many articles also indicate that retail robberies occur during the day (Man held, another on the run after robbery, 2000:2; Murders. robbery in weekend crime, 2000:2; Rowers vasgetrek na skietery op snelweg, 1999:4).

3.2.1.2.3 Areas where robberies occur

As mentioned previously in section 3.1, robbery is an urban phenomenon occurring mainly in large urban cities in areas known as hot spots (Sherman, Gartin & Buerger, 1989:39). This may be due to the fact that offenders are clustered in certain areas of the city and that there are virtually unlimited targets in these urban areas, such as Gauteng (Punch, 1979:151; Rhodes & Conly, 1981:169)

According to Duffala (in Jeffery, 1977:205), areas targeted for retail robbery often display the following characteristics:

- Proximity to main or through routes which provide fast escape routes.
- Little traffic on the streets.
- Few or no other traders to act as guardians.

Retail robbers often pick establishments that are set back from the street where there are few or no other traders or they position themselves inside the store so as to be invisible from the street. Visibility from outside is an important factor that is taken into account by retail robbers and they often place "lookouts" outside the store to report any threat of intrusion (Conklin, 1981:298).

Although some experienced robbers prefer to rob stores that are near police stations because they feel that storekeepers in such locations do not install security devices or have weapons because they assume that they are significantly protected by the closeness of the police, some offenders avoid stores located in a heavily patrolled area (<http://www.aic.gov.au/publications/armedrobbery/ch3.html>).

Duffala (in Sherman et al., 1989:29) also found that stores near vacant land or away from other places of commerce are more likely to be robbed than those in dense commercial areas.

3.2.1.2.4 Victim-offender relationship

It has been found by various researchers (Barkan, 1997:274; Beirne & Messerschmidt, 1991:98; Bonn, 1984:206; Conklin, 1972:viii; Cook, 1987:365; Curtis, 1974:48; Glick, 1995:216; Landau & Fridman, 1993:168; Laub, 1997:17; Macdonald, 1975:175; Vito & Holmes, 1994:261) that the majority of violent crimes are committed by strangers. Karmen (1996:63) states that strangers are preferred targets because they will have greater difficulty in providing descriptions to the police and identifying suspects from pictures or line-ups. Crimes committed by strangers differ from crimes committed by non-strangers in that stranger-to-stranger crimes, such as retail robbery, are more likely to involve two or more offenders and the presence of a weapon (Karmen, 1996:64; Laub, 1997:17).

3.2.1.2.5 Number of offenders involved in robberies

Robberies are more likely to involve multiple offenders, meaning two or more offenders (Beirne & Messerschmidt, 1991:98; Curtis, 1975:92; Pretoria Checkers robbed, 2002:8). Laub (1997:17), as well as Karmen (1996:64), agree and state that this is a characteristic regularly encountered in robberies.

3.2.1.2.6 The role of threats and violence during robberies

Robbery is unique in its direct confrontation with the victim where a convincing show of force and the demonstration of total control of the encounter are crucial variables essential to its successful completion (Einstadter, 1972:20). As mentioned previously in section 1.2.1, one of the major elements of robbery is that it entails violence or threats of violence.

According to Luckenbill (1980:364), violence during a robbery can manifest itself in three ways:

- In the first instance, the offenders can threaten with violence by means of verbal threats or symbolic signals, such as cocking their firearms, indicating that injury will follow unless the victims comply.
- Secondly, the offenders can make use of prodding force which means that the victims will be marginally physically injured to convince them not to take the threats lightly.

- Finally, the offenders can also use incapacitating force in which the victims are immediately put out of action by hitting, stabbing or shooting them.

An offenders' decision whether to use threats and violence or not during a robbery is influenced by aspects such as the offenders' morals, as well as the nature and characteristics of the selected target (Morrison & O'Donnell, 1994:51). These and other factors influencing the use of violence will be discussed at a later stage.

- **Use of weapons**

Robbery, as defined in Myerson (1995:17), refers to the stealing of goods, money and/or valuables with the threat of violence, physical harm and force, with or without a weapon (see section 1.2.1). The two forms that robbery can assume, namely armed and unarmed robbery, can be inferred from this definition (Macdonald, 1975:38). Armed robbery (where a weapon is used for instrumental purposes to intimidate, threaten or injure) as well as unarmed robbery (where a person is verbally or physically threatened without the presence of a weapon) are both associated with an element of violence, even though nobody is actually injured (Beirne & Messerschmidt, 1991:98; Pettway, 1979:2).

The use of firearms has significantly increased the level of violence associated with crime in South Africa (Inter-departmental Strategy Team, 1996:30). It has been found that commercial robbery offenders are more likely than other offenders to use weapons due to their willingness to participate in violence (Beirne & Messerschmidt, 1991:98; Cook, 1987:366; Dunn, 1976:4).

The above-mentioned is confirmed by media articles (Armed robbers steal substantial amount from Mayor's Walk Spar, 2000:3; Pistol-whipped during robbery, 2000:6) indicating that weapons and, more specifically, firearms are used to commit retail robberies in South Africa. Research by Macdonald (1975:293), Normandeau (1981:304), as well as Wright and Rossi (1986:108), confirm that approximately four out of every five armed robbers make use of firearms.

Most robbers only show their weapon to ensure that the victim relinquishes money without an argument. Maree (1995:134), as well as Morrison and O'Donnell (1994:58), however, emphasise that if offenders are prepared to take firearms to a crime scene, they will also be motivated to use it if the circumstances require it. For

this very reason it is essential to understand the reasons why offenders bring a firearm to a crime scene and sometimes make use of it.

According to Inciardi and Pottieger (1978:62), weapons are considered as tools of the trade, whereas researchers like Thio (1988:176) consider weapons to be instrumental in the achievement of a specific goal, namely obtaining money. Conklin (1995:304) agrees with Thio and states that robbers usually employ weapons to acquire money more easily and with less resistance; to protect themselves from armed victims; and to ensure a safe escape from the scene of the crime. According to Conklin (1972:110-112) a weapon serves four functions during a robbery:

- Firstly, it creates a buffer zone between victims and offenders. It instils fear in the victims and allows the offender to keep the victims at arm's length. Offenders can also cover a large area and control more than one victim with the aid of a firearm.
- Secondly, a weapon is used to intimidate and frighten victims to such an extent that they will offer no resistance (Kleck & DeLone, 1993:56).
- In the third instance, offenders make their intentions known and indicate the seriousness of the situation by displaying their weapons. If they do not succeed in intimidating the victim, they often increase the level of intimidation by additional methods such as cocking the firearm, placing it against the victims, or using the blunt instrument to hit the victims.
- Finally, a weapon facilitates and ensures the escape of the offenders and decreases the risk of capture (Gabor et al., 1987:88; Luckenbill, 1980:367). According to Beirne and Messerschmidt (1991:99), a weapon helps to keep victims, witnesses and the police from hindering a rapid escape.

A firearm also influences the power relationship between the victim and the offender in the sense that it is a credible threat and can be used to kill the victim. The fact that a firearm poses a great threat for the victim, as well as heightening the chances of success, are the most important reasons why most robbers use firearms (Kleck, 1991: 172).

The presence of a weapon, however, has the effect of causing assaultive acts that would not otherwise have occurred. This phenomenon is referred to as the "weapons effect" (Van der Hoven, 1998:32). The mere sight of a weapon can elicit aggression

from angered persons, because of the learnt association between weapons and aggressive behaviour (Van der Hoven, 1998:33). Conversely, the presence of a weapon can have the effect of compliance without an actual physical attack on a victim.

Although handguns like pistols and revolvers are popular choices due to their easy handling and ability to be concealed, AK 47's, R-1 and R-5 rifles are often used in retail robberies (Myerson, 1995:101). Other weapons, such as knives and pangas are also used in these robberies.

- **Injuries associated with robberies**

It is assumed that the possession of a firearm may increase the likelihood of the death of victims. As mentioned previously, a firearm may elicit aggression from angered persons because of the learnt association with aggressive behaviour. According to Kleck and DeLone (1993:61), sixteen prior studies have found that robbers with weapons are less likely to injure their victims than unarmed robbers due to the fact that victims are less likely to resist an armed robber (also see victim resistance and precipitation, section 3.2.1.2.7).

Approximately one out of three victims of violent crime suffers some form of physical injury (Barkan, 1997:274; <http://www.ojp.usdoj.gov/bjs/pub/ascii/wv96.txt>). The case fatality rate for gun robbery is three times as high as for robberies with knives, and ten times as high as for robberies with other weapons (Conklin, 1995:304; Cook, 1987:366; Cook & Moore, 1995:273). Cook (1987:359) also found that one in every 750 robbery victims is killed, and one in every 40 is seriously injured. Serious injuries like gunshot wounds, knife wounds, broken bones, and loss of consciousness are less common during a robbery (Laub, 1997:21). Research conducted by Conklin (1981:57) found that 80% of all robbery victims usually escape without injury. Some may require hospitalisation, even if only for a brief time, because of injuries they sustained during the robbery. Media articles (Murders, robbery in weekend crime, 2000:2; Two die in shooting, 2000:3; Two men slain in robbery bid, 2000:6) indicate that staff in retail stores are quite frequently physically assaulted, and are sometimes killed, during robbery attacks.

Myerson (1995:98) states that although injury and death is not the primary motive of robbery, some victims are often injured without reason. The presence of bystanders

and the type of weapon used are situational factors that might influence the degree of violence, brutality and injury during a robbery (Beirne & Messerschmidt, 1991:99).

The age of robbers also affects the level of violence in a robbery in that young robbers are more likely to use force to injure victims than older and more experienced robbers (Curtis, 1975:92). Although Sykes and Cullen (1992:157) support this statement, they also warn that older, more experienced robbers will not hesitate to use force if the circumstances necessitate it.

The size of the group committing the robbery also influences the degree of aggression and violence employed (Macdonald, 1975:139; Maree, 1995:133). In addition, Myerson (1995:97) emphasises that if more than one offender is involved in a robbery the risk of injury is significantly increased. Cook (1985:483) also confirms that when three or four persons participate in a robbery the risk of injury increases due to the fact that group dynamics lead to heightened violence.

3.2.1.2.7 Victim resistance and precipitation

Victim resistance can be defined as actions by the victim that encourage or precipitate a behavioural response or arouse emotions in the offender that increase the chance of victimisation (Laub, 1997:18). The victims' decision to offer resistance depends upon their assessment of the robber's ability to injure them (Karmen, 1996:63):

As mentioned earlier, research (Cook, 1985:483; Gabor et al., 1987:104; Inciardi & Pottieger, 1978:62) indicates that victims are less likely to resist when an offender is armed with a firearm. According to Block (1989:237), as well as Karmen (1996:66), individuals who are confronted by two or more robbers are also less likely to offer resistance. In general, men offer resistance more often than woman do, and young people more than older persons (Macdonald, 1975:201). Previous exposure to robbery victimisation also influences resistance in that individuals are more immune to the fear associated with robbery the second time around (Gabor et al., 1987:104).

Victims can and do resist their assailants in a variety of ways. Almost three out of four victims of violent crimes take some form of self-protective measure, ranging from trying to reason with the offender to using a weapon. Laub (1997:19) found that the most common form of self-protection among victims is non-violent resistance and evasion. He also found that victims using non-forceful methods of resistance during a

robbery reduce the risk of robbery completion and suffer less attack and injury (Laub, 1997:19). Victim resistance may also increase the likelihood that the robber will be delayed or detained long enough for the police to arrive and capture the robber (Kleck & DeLone, 1993:56).

Beirne and Messerschmidt (1991:98), as well as Kleck and DeLone (1993:59), however, state that those resisting more forcefully are likely to precipitate further violence by the offender. In this regard, Gabor et al. (1987:88) mention that victims resisting armed robberies are three times more likely to be seriously injured than those who do not resist. Victim resistance, or the lack thereof, however, can not guarantee that the victim will not incur any injuries (Macdonald, 1975:29). In one instance, a manager tried to resist robbers and as a result he was kicked and punched, sustaining only minor injuries (Armed robbers steal substantial amount of money from Mayor's Walk Spar, 2000:3). In another incident, one customer was killed and another two wounded when they resisted robbers (Two armed robberies foiled, 1999:1).

3.2.1.3 Post-offence phase

One of the most important aspects of the post-offence phase is successfully leaving the scene of the robbery. According to Maree (1995:111), robbers take various factors into account when leaving a crime scene. These factors include road signs such as stop signs, robots, yield signs and mini-circles; accessibility to highways; danger zones like sharp bends, pedestrian crossings, bus stops and dead-end streets; as well as the prescribed speed limit for the specific route.

Prior to the robbery, a getaway vehicle is usually stolen for use during the robbery (Livingston, 1996:166). After the robbery is completed, this vehicle is disposed of or abandoned in a secluded area. On occasion, weapons and additional accessories such as disguises or special outfits are also disposed of.

As mentioned previously, the primary goal of robbery is monetary gain (Landau & Fridman, 1993:168). On completion of the robbery, in the case of more than one offender, the financial spoils are also divided amongst the various participants.

3.3 OFFENDER PROFILE

Due to the fact that it is not possible for victims to conclusively ascertain offender characteristics, such as their exact age, the determination of the offender profile in retail robberies was excluded as a goal of the study. Although research concerning the profile of offenders involved in retail robbery is limited, available information regarding the gender, age and race of robbers in general, will be discussed as a means of background information to the study. Conklin's typology of robbers (1972:69) will also receive attention in the following section.

3.3.1 Gender

The assumption that robbery offenders are in most cases male, is in concordance with research (Barkan, 1997:274; Bonn, 1984:206; Dunn, 1976:12; <http://www.ojp.usdoj.gov/bjs/pub/ascii/wv96.txt>; Karmen, 1996:64; Reid, 1988:232; Weston & Wells, 1990: 351; Wolfgang & Ferracuti, 1982:259) indicating that robbery-related crimes are most often committed by males. Women are both less violent and less frequent offenders than men (Gelsthorpe, 1996:139). According to Fox (1976:265), women seldom commit robbery, although they may occasionally be used as decoys or participate with men in other manners, such as to act as look-outs.

3.3.2 Age

Persons under the age of 25 account for almost two-thirds of robbery arrests (Barkan, 1997:273; Reid, 1988:232; Vetter & Silverman, 1986:98). Although research (Bonn, 1984:206; Cook, 1976:175; <http://www.aic.gov.au/publications/armedrobbery/ch2.html>; Karmen, 1996:64; Macdonald, 1975:125; Stevens, 1999:64) confirms that robbery is a crime that is primarily committed by younger persons, it is also possible that these crimes are committed by older individuals.

3.3.3 Race

It appears that black people are involved in robbery more often than white people (Barkan, 1997:274; Karmen, 1996:64; Pettitway, 1979:277; Reid, 1988:232; Vetter & Silverman, 1986:98). In the USA, however, robbery offenders are predominantly white (<http://www.ojp.usdoj.gov/bjs/pub/ascii/wv96.txt>). This could be attributed to the fact that in America blacks are a minority group, whereas in South Africa they are

the majority population. In South Africa 97,1% of all violent offences are committed by blacks, while they constitute 75% of the total population (Naudé, 1998:9).

Restricted and isolated from the institutionalised means to achieve the dominant goals (see section 3.1.1), many blacks in South Africa are also caught up in what Cloward and Ohlin refer to as the differential opportunity structure. The concept of differential opportunity refers to the uneven distribution of legal and illegal means of achieving economic successes in society, especially as access is divided disproportionately by social class or status (Kratcoski & Kratcoski, 1996:56). These youths are, therefore, more likely to commit crime (Kratcoski & Kratcoski, 1996:56; Wolfgang & Ferracuti, 1982:264).

3.3.4 Use of alcohol and drugs

There is substantial evidence of a correlation between alcohol and drug use and violent crime (Conklin, 1995:298; Goldstein, 1989:22; Reynolds, 1994:54; Stevens, 1999:65). According to Goldstein (1989:23), as well as Karmen (1996:64), robbery arrestees often test positively for the use of drugs or alcohol (Goldstein, 1989:23; Karmen, 1996:64). A three phase survey was conducted in police holding cells by the Medical Research Council, the Council for Scientific and Industrial Research, the Institute for Security Studies, and the Human Sciences Research Council in South Africa, in conjunction with the Crime Information Analysis Centre of the SAPS. Results from the third phase of this survey indicate that in Gauteng, 36,7% of all persons arrested for violent offences during 2000 tested positive for drugs (<http://www.saps.org.za/media/brief2001091.htm>).

As mentioned previously in section 3.1.1, one explanation that has been offered to explain this correlation, is that alcohol and drugs may reduce inhibitions and trigger law-violating behaviour in some individuals (Conklin, 1995:298). Another possible explanation is that crimes like retail robbery are often committed to obtain money for more drugs and alcohol (Gabor et al., 1987: 27).

3.4 CLASSIFICATION OF ROBBERS

Robberies that are similar in appearance may be, as noted by Conklin (1972:60), committed by quite different types of offenders. He developed a standard classification for robbers as professionals, opportunists, addicts, and alcoholics which

can be applied to the phenomenon of retail robbery. These various classifications will be discussed next.

- **Professional robbers**

Professional robbers have a long-term commitment to robbery because it is direct, fast, and sometimes very profitable (Bartollas & Dinitz, 1989:263). Although little skill is required, these offenders often employ sophisticated planning in their robberies, exhibiting greater skill than other robbery offenders (Barkan, 1997:275; Beirne & Messerschmidt, 1991:101).

Their planning includes the neutralisation of security measures near the target, and the investigation, prior to the robbery, of all possible escape routes (Beirne & Messerschmidt, 1991:101; Conklin, 1972:64). They undertake their robberies as a group in which each member has an assigned role. However, the structure of their gangs is generally temporary and fluid (Vetter & Silverman, 1986:98). Targets tend to be commercial establishments such as retail stores, and firearms are usually employed (Curtis, 1975:92). They seek out profitable targets (“big scores”) and typically commit four or five robberies per year (Barkan, 1997:275).

The goal of professional robbers is typically to obtain money to support a lavish lifestyle which indicates a degree of hedonism (Bartollas & Dinitz, 1989:263). Since these robbers are generally unemployed, they also depend upon robbery for their livelihood (Vetter & Silverman, 1986:98). Once their funds are nearing depletion, planning for the next “score” is initiated. In the USA, professional robbers are fewer in number than other types and tend to be white, in their mid-twenties, and from middle- or working class backgrounds (Bartollas & Dinitz, 1989:263; Conklin, 1972:69; Curtis, 1975:92). Conklin (1972:64) identified two types of professional robbers. The first commits robbery almost exclusively, whereas the second commits other types of crime in addition to robbery.

- **Opportunist robbers**

Opportunist robbers, on the other hand, are rarely committed to robbery (Vetter & Silverman, 1986:98). As their name implies, these men commit robberies when they have the opportunity to do so (Barkan, 1997:275). Conklin (1972:70), in reference to the USA, noted that opportunist robbers, usually young lower-class blacks, are probably the most common type of robbers (Bartollas & Dinitz, 1989:263). The

robberies they commit are not elaborately planned and frequently involve non-commercial or smaller targets, such as cafès (Vetter & Silverman, 1986:98). They are not dependent upon robbery as a primary source of income, and therefore the money they acquire from these offences can be considered a supplementary income (Curtis, 1975:92; Vetter & Silverman, 1986:98).

These offenders rarely use weapons of any kind, but because they tend to commit these robberies with accomplices, the group itself becomes the “weapon” (Vetter & Silverman, 1986:98). In addition, Curtis (1975:92) found that they employ force more than professional robbers. When an opportunity arises (e.g. a small retail store where there is limited guardianship with few customers and employees), these offenders will strike.

- **Addict robbers**

Addict robbers also display a low commitment to robbery, preferring less risky forms of property crime to acquire cash. However, in desperation for funds to support their habit, they are occasionally forced to engage in robbery (Barkan, 1997:275; Bartollas & Dinitz, 1989:263; Vetter & Silverman, 1986:98). Barkan (1997:275) as well as Curtis (1975:92) state that addict robbers generally plan their robberies less carefully than professional robbers, but more carefully than opportunist robbers. According to Curtis (1975:93), the day-to-day tension and instability associated with addiction does not lend itself easily to learning and maintaining professional skill or gaining the trust of partners in a carefully planned, high-risk robbery. Their desperation, however, may result in little planning and a careless selection of targets, which increases their chances of being apprehended. If an addict robber carries a weapon it is likely to be an unloaded gun (Vetter & Silverman, 1986:98).

- **Alcoholic robbers**

Alcoholic robbers rarely consider how much money they will steal or what they will do with it once they have it (Bartollas & Dinitz, 1989:263). The alcoholic robber is debilitated by alcoholism and is intoxicated when perpetrating the offence. Barkan (1997:275), as well as Bartollas and Dinitz (1989:263), mention that commitment to robbery is low, and that the crime often occurs as an afterthought to an assault.

Firearms are usually not employed unless the offender routinely carries one (Barkan, 1997:275). Alcoholic robberies are not planned and robbers are less likely to take

precautions. For this reason alcoholic robbers are caught a higher proportion of the time than other robbery offenders (Bartollas & Dinitz, 1989: 263).

3.5 VICTIM PROFILE

Certain categories of people, in terms of attributes like gender, age and race may be burdened by crime much more than others (Karmen, 1996:77). The successful completion or the failure of retail robberies is dependent upon certain demographic characteristics of the victims in conjunction with their actions during the robbery. In this regard, Hindelang, Gottfredson and Garofalo (1978:241) have stated that the routine activities of individuals are related to their demographic characteristics. Existing research regarding the profile of robbery victims will subsequently be discussed.

3.5.1 Gender

According to Bonn (1984:206), robbery tends to involve more female victims because they are less likely to offer resistance. However, other research (Barkan, 1997:274; <http://www.ncjrs.org/policing/cr359.htm>; Karmen, 1996:77; Macdonald, 1975:1999; Zedner, 1994:1212) indicates that robbery victims are more often men than women and that the rate of physical injury is greater for males (Laub, 1997:21).

Gabor et al. (1987:183) ascribe the high victimisation rate of men to their lifestyles. In conjunction with the routine activities theory, they postulate that men are more accessible as a result of their lifestyles and routine activities which usually involve work away from home. Widom and Maxfield (in Maxfield, 1987:278), however, indicate that in cases where women report patterns of behaviour and lifestyles similar to those of males, personal victimisation of women is much higher.

3.5.2 Age

The victims of robbery are usually older than the individuals who victimise them (Bonn, 1984:206; Macdonald, 1975:199). In this regard, data from the 1998 British Crime Survey (Zedner, 1994:1212) shows that robbery is twice as likely to occur to those under 45 years of age. Meadows (1998:94), however, states that individuals that are 35 years and older have a lower victimisation rate than those in younger age groups. Karmen (1996:80) agrees that younger persons, specifically between the ages

of 12 and 24, suffer higher personal robbery rates. Persons aged 19-24, according to Laub (1997:21), are also more likely to sustain physical injuries during the course of a robbery because they tend to offer resistance.

Lynch (1987:294) is of the opinion that younger individuals working in highly accessible areas such as retail stores are at less risk of injury than would be expected by virtue of their age and setting. This may be due in part to their robustness relative to older individuals. Potential offenders may think twice about robbing a store where younger people work who are perceived to be capable of greater resistance and pursuit (Lynch, 1987:294).

3.5.3 Race

Rates of victimisation also vary by race. Research (Sheley, 1995:73) indicates that robbery is an intra-racial phenomenon. This implies that individuals from the same racial group are more inclined to victimise one another. Barkan (1997:274), Block (1977:49), Bonn (1984:206); Conklin (1972:33), Cook (1987:365), and Curtis (1974:161; 1975:90), however, regard robbery as an inter-racial phenomenon in that individuals from different racial groups victimise one another. They also indicate that black robbers are more inclined to target white people for robbery. Dunn (1976:15) supports this opinion and states that commercial activity and money is concentrated mainly in the white sector. Curtis (1975:90) also states that robbery is “an ideologically straightforward way of redistributing income, of grasping at what has been economically withheld”.

However, due to their numbers, as well as their lifestyles, the rate of violent victimisation is higher for blacks than for whites. Research (Barkan, 1997:274; Karmen, 1996:89; Laub, 1997:15; Vetter & Silverman, 1986:98) has indicated that black males have the highest rate of victimisation for crimes such as robbery and white females the lowest rate. Vito and Holmes (1994:145) state that a higher victimisation rate for inner-city blacks is partly a function of their lifestyle that increases the probability of crimes like robbery.

3.5.4 Occupation

Widom and Maxfield (in Maxfield, 1987:278) found that people working in particular jobs suffer disproportionately from certain crimes. Persons in the labour force have a higher risk of victimisation than persons who stay at home (see routine activities

theory, section 2.1.2), but it is unclear exactly what about work exposes one to victimisation (Lynch, 1987:286). Attributes of the occupational role itself can be a source of differences in victimisation rates. Certain occupations make their incumbents attractive targets for robbery (Lynch, 1987:286). If an individual's employment, for example, involves face-to-face contact with large numbers of people on a routine basis, their risk of victimisation is greater than those who are less accessible to the public. If an individual handles money as part of their job, they are at greater risk than people who do not (Lynch, 1987:295; Reynolds, 1994:15). A retail store employee would therefore be at great risk of robbery victimisation.

3.6 CONSEQUENCES OF ROBBERY

As a result of media articles (Fourty four thousand rand taken in robberies, 2000:3; Murders, robbery in weekend crime, 2000:2; Pistol-whipped during robbery, 2000:6; Two men slain in robbery bid, 2000:6) indicating some of the negative consequences of retail robberies for the victims, it was decided to also include a section on the consequences of robbery in general.

3.6.1 Financial consequences

Victims whose property is destroyed or damaged as a result of a robbery often suffer great financial losses. These financial losses are even greater if the victim is underinsured or has no insurance at all. This may then force retail owners to close the store and move to another location, thereby reducing the supply of goods to local customers and raising the prices charged by remaining stores (Conklin, 1975:6).

According to Macdonald (1975:50), those victims who sustained serious physical injuries may also face expensive medical costs. Victims are largely responsible for these costs as the coverage of medical aid schemes is often limited. In the case of the victim's death as a result of the incident, the loss of economic support for the family and dependants, as well as funeral costs, represent other financial consequences (Macdonald, 1975:50).

Many victims are also unable to return to work for some time, if ever, after a robbery. In addition, considerable expenses are incurred by victims to improve security measures safeguarding their houses or businesses. These measures may include security guards, bullet-proof glass and surveillance cameras (Macdonald, 1975:50).

Expenses such as these are in turn made possible by increasing consumer prices, which means that the man in the street is affected. Furthermore, taxes are used to sustain the criminal justice system, as well as to maintain South Africa's prisons, which respectively prosecute and then house the very criminal responsible for the victim's declining financial situation (Conklin, 1975:6).

3.6.2 Physical consequences

Victims who survive violent robbery attacks often sustain serious injuries requiring long-term or even permanent medical treatment (Glanz, 1994:21). Cuts and bruises, as well as broken bones, are the most common injuries resulting from robberies (Barkan, 1997:107). Long-term injuries could also include being paralysed and confined to a wheelchair as a result of a gunshot or knife wound, or having a speech or hearing impediment as a result of a blow to the head.

In instances where firearms are employed by offenders, and victims do resist, offenders often increase the level of intimidation by cocking the firearm, holding it up to the victims' heads, or using the blunt instrument to hit the victims. According to Conklin (1995:304), this type of behaviour may lead to serious injury or death.

3.6.3 Emotional consequences

Crime and the violence associated with robbery may cause psychological trauma for the victims (Zedner, 1994:1223). Many robbery victims experience symptoms that are characteristic of the post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) (Nomoyi et al., 2000:98). This disorder is diagnosed after a person has experienced a traumatic event outside the limits of normal experience that involved a serious threat to the person's life or physical integrity (Reynolds, 1994:69).

Victims often experience the following PTSD symptoms after a robbery: flashbacks where they relive the entire event; recurrent dreams or nightmares; painful and intrusive memories of the traumatic event; a diminished responsiveness or psychological "numbing" to the external world; feelings of alienation or detachment from society, difficulty in developing close relationships with others; problems with sleeping; loss of appetite; being easily startled; difficulty concentrating; and avoidance of anything that reminds them of the event (Barlow & Durand, 1995:192; Gabor et al., 1987:viii; Nomoyi et al., 2000:98).

3.6.4 Social consequences

According to McKendrick and Hoffman (1990:25), the violence associated with robbery can have far-reaching effects upon the quality of life of the individual victim as well as the community. They noted that violence creates fear which disrupts social interaction in the community, as well as destroying interpersonal and intergroup relationships. In addition, violence restricts lifestyles due to the fact that people turn their homes and businesses into forts as a result of fear.

Conklin (1972:2) concluded that robbery is the most feared crime due to the fact that it entails a double element of fear, namely losing one's property and, especially, risking the loss of one's life. It is this intense fear which may prompt community members to take the law into their own hands and turn to vigilantism or people's courts. Violence and fear of violence often leads to dehumanisation and alienation from others. The extent of violence in the country also desensitises people, leading to moral decay where people no longer feel the need to question violent actions such as those associated with retail robbery (McKendrick & Hoffman, 1990:29).

Crime reduces trust and attachment to neighbours and to the community as a whole. Conklin (1975:9) stresses that by reducing solidarity, informal social control in the community, which is probably more effective in preventing crime than formal methods of social control such as the police, is weakened.

3.7 PREVENTION OF ROBBERY

The prevention and control of violent crime is one of the most important and most difficult priorities of the state and, in particular, the community. Various strategies that can be employed in the prevention of robbery and specifically retail robberies will be discussed in this section.

3.7.1 An effective state policy on community and social development

The state has the specific responsibility to establish an effective urban development policy which should be aimed in particular at cleaning up squatter areas, providing adequate housing, public transport systems and recreational facilities, especially for young people (Naudé, 1999:5). An adequate public health and education policy; an effective criminal justice system; economic and job-creation policy; as well as

assistance and support programmes for problem families and high-risk individuals, are other important functions of the state in the fight against crimes like retail robbery. High-risk individuals should be identified early so that they may receive the necessary psychological and medical treatment to prevent violent behaviour. This is a long-term crime prevention strategy focusing specifically on primary prevention of violent and other crimes.

Two of the pillars of the National Crime Prevention Strategy (Inter-departmental Strategy Team, 1996:68) also make provision for the implementation of adequate urban planning in order to limit opportunities for crime as well as for promoting community values and education (Naudé, 1999:5).

3.7.2 Effective law reform

Effective law reform focuses in particular on adequate and fair legislation, which has unfortunately not always been the case in South Africa in the past. McKendrick and Hoffman (1990:472) point out that structural violence, which is violence sanctioned by the state, has been a feature of South Africa's recent past.

Racial discrimination enforced by legislation during the apartheid era is another important reason for inter-group and political violence that remain a problem in some parts of South Africa. The freedom struggle that resulted from such legislation and the general culture of violence and disregard for the law associated with the struggle, are still important reasons for the current high incidence of violent murders and robberies in South Africa (Naudé, 1998:111).

Cook (1987:375), as well as Gabor et al. (1987:173), are of the opinion that stricter legislation and effective sentencing are important strategies in the prevention of crimes like retail robbery. Block (1977:101) adds that changes in law enforcement techniques and stricter punishment can have a preventative influence on robberies, especially in cases where they are planned.

Naudé (1998:111) states that the following measures, many of which are currently being investigated, can be applied to decrease the robbery rate in South Africa in view of the country's high incidence of violence:

- **The death penalty as compulsory sentence for certain offences**

Legislation that makes the death penalty compulsory for the most brutal violent crimes, is something that is often mentioned in crime prevention circles. It could also be applied to cases such as a murder committed during the course of a retail robbery. The death penalty, however, was abolished in South Africa in 1995 because it denied the unqualified right to life and was considered an irrevocable form of punishment (Neser, 1998:58). Although there is considerable community pressure for the re-introduction of the death penalty, Naudé (1998:112) states that research findings on the deterrent effect of the death penalty have been contradictory and at present it is assumed that it has no deterrent effect.

- **Legislation regarding firearms**

According to Zimring and Zuehl (1986:38), any law, regulation or policy that decreases the use of firearms during the course of violent crimes will also significantly decrease the number of deaths associated with these crimes. The control of firearms involves a wide variety of legal measures that restrict the purchase, possession, use and sale of firearms and is an important strategy in reducing deaths as a result of violent crime (Robin, 1991:1). In addition, Inciardi and Pottieger (1978: 48) state that even a partial disarmament would significantly decrease the rates of violence present in society. In this regard, South Africa recently passed the Firearms Control Act (Act 60 of 2000) which restricts gun ownership by limiting the amount of firearms allowed to be purchased by individuals.

According to Robin (1991:14), firearms should be controlled as follows:

- ⇒ A waiting period and investigation of the applicant's background in order to prevent firearms being issued to incompetent people, people who represent a high risk, criminals and drug abusers, should be compulsory.
- ⇒ The imprisonment of offenders using a firearm while committing an offence should be compulsory.
- ⇒ Special legislation should also be promulgated granting permission only under special conditions for people to carry a firearm on their person outside their homes or places of work.
- ⇒ A ban should be placed on dangerous firearms, such as snub-nosed handguns.
- ⇒ The sale of plastic handguns that render the use of metal detectors futile should be prohibited.

Schönteich (in Naudé, 1998:17), however, maintains that the focus should rather be on controlling illegal firearms and heavy penalties for the use of firearms in offences. According to him, it is a common misconception that high levels of ownership of legal firearms give rise to violent crime involving firearms, such as retail robbery. However, the theft and loss of firearms by private persons and SAPS members (as mentioned in section 3.1.1) are a major source of firearms used in robberies.

The South African government has identified crimes committed with firearms as priority crimes within the National Crime Prevention Strategy and efforts such as joint operations with Mozambique, improved border control and breaking organised crime rings have made some progress in reducing the number of illegal weapons entering the country (<http://www.iss.co.za/Pubs/Crime%20Index/Vol%203%20No%202/Firearms.html>).

- **Effective law enforcement**

Effective law enforcement is another measure with which to address violent crimes such as retail robbery. These measures may include visible policing in high risk areas in terms of heightened police activity, road blocks and patrolling and can act as a short-term deterrent to retail robbers. Increased visibility of the police, however, may also cause the displacement of retail robberies to other less guarded areas.

However, the possibility of improving law enforcement and policing in general is minimal, due to the limited human resources available in South Africa for active police work (see section 3.1.1). Policing is impeded by limited manpower in high risk areas in Gauteng where the ratio of police officers to residents is 1:249, thereby making the prevention of crimes such as retail robbery a difficult task (Davis, 1999:143). The fact that only a small percentage of retail robbers are therefore apprehended by the police, strengthens the public's view of the police as ineffective.

- **Compulsory minimum sentences**

Legislation should make provision for compulsory minimum sentences in the case of offences involving a firearm, as well as cases involving armed career criminals and habitual violent offenders. This is especially important in South Africa due to the fact that offences involving firearms are considered priority crimes. Federal legislation in America provides for a person who has been convicted of three violent crimes or serious drug offences and who was in possession of an illegal firearm, to be sentenced

to at least 15 years of imprisonment without the possibility of parole (Naudé, 1998:112). In 1997, South Africa passed similar legislation stating that offenders convicted of crimes involving firearms would face mandatory sentences .

- **Legislation to strengthen pretrial detention**

A 1988 study in America on the pre-trial release on bail of alleged violent offenders has shown that 18% of such defendants reoffended while on bail (US Department of Justice, 1992:1). This type of “revolving-door justice” has a very negative effect on the public’s confidence in the judicial system, as well as on the ability of the police to obtain the co-operation of the community to report offences. South Africa’s number of prisoners awaiting trial are approximately a quarter of the total prison population (Oppler, 1998:15).

In 2001, Inspecting Judge Fagin (National Symposium on Correctional Services, 1 August, 2000) played an integral part in the release of awaiting trial prisoners whose bail was set at R1000 or less. This was done in order to ease the overcrowding in South African prisons, as 35,8% of the total prison population serves a sentence of less than two years. It has been advised that diversionary measures such as community based corrections should be considered as an alternative to prison. In this regard, Inspecting Judge Fagin (National Symposium on Correctional Services, 1 August, 2000) made a reference to Robert Gangi, the Executive Director of the Correctional Association of New York, who stated that “building more prisons to address crime is like building more graveyards to address a fatal disease”.

- **Restrictions on early release on parole**

Despite the problem of overcrowding in South African prisons, it is essential to restrict the early release on parole of violent offenders such as retail robbers and to introduce longer prison sentences. Research in America has shown that violent offenders serve only about 37% of their sentences, and that 51% of violent offenders are released within two years and 76% within four years, despite the fact that a number of studies have shown that people on parole have a high rate of recidivism (US Department of Justice, 1992:7). In South Africa, it is estimated that between 85% and 94% of released offenders will reoffend within five years (Muntingh, 2001:6). In spite of the problem of overcrowding in prisons, South Africa reviewed its parole conditions and the recommendation has been made that serious offenders be required to serve at least half of their sentence before there can be any possibility of parole (Naudé, 1998:112).

- **Improved training of justice personnel**

Another strategy for fighting rising rates of criminality is to improve the training and education of justice personnel. Police, lawyers, judges and corrections officials need training to raise their skill levels in terms of interaction with victims. International meetings for the exchange of knowledge and experience can help in this process, enabling criminal justice systems to work better. Countries need to improve training, collect better data, develop prevention strategies and give more priority to policy development and research. However, funds for training are scarce, thereby ultimately contributing to the heavy burden of rising crime (<http://www.acdi-cida.gc.ca/xpress/dex/dex9802.htm>).

The US Department of Justice (1992:42) has recommended improved training of public prosecutors in order to ensure a greater number of convictions for serious crimes such as robbery. In South Africa, the training of public prosecutors has been improved in terms of their knowledge of the law in order to increase their efficiency and, therefore, ensure speedy trials. Naudé (1998:13) further suggests that judges should also have access to sufficient support equipment such as computers to increase their effectiveness. Moreover, an electronic centralised database would avail immediate and reliable data on hardened offenders to all of the role players in the criminal justice system.

3.7.3 Situational crime prevention

Situational crime prevention involves the manipulation of a situation to reduce the incidence of crime (<http://www.aic.gov.au/publications/armedrobbery/ch1.html>). It is based on the assumption that people actually choose to commit crime and that the decision to do so is a rational one. Offenders are seen as rational decision makers who weigh up the risks and expected profits of crime before deciding to become involved. Therefore, the aim of situational crime prevention is to increase the risks and decrease the profits of a crime in order to discourage potential offenders (http://www.aic.gov.au/publications/armed_robbery/ch1.html; Lab, 2000:146). According to Lab (2000:149), opportunity-reducing measures could include target hardening, removing the means for criminal activity, or increasing surveillance. As most retail robbers are assumed to be rational offenders who weigh the pro's and con's of committing a crime situational crime prevention could be used to prevent this crime (Walklate, 1996:303).

Clarke and Mayhew (in Walklate, 1996:303) describe situational crime prevention measures as:

- being directed at specific crimes;
- managing, designing or manipulating the immediate environment in which crime occurs;
- ensuring that these measures are systematic and permanent;
- reducing overall opportunities for crime.

Territoriality is also an important aspect of situational crime prevention and refers to the ability of legitimate users of an area to lay claim to the area (Lab, 2000:27). It entails creating a sense of ownership and belonging, which results in social control being established. In this regard, the position of a legitimate users' retail store site and the buildings on the site can play an important role in the vulnerability and risk of the business with regard to crime (Naudé & Stevens, 1988:209). This aspect, as well as other factors that appear to influence an offender's selection of stores for robbery will subsequently be discussed.

3.7.3.1 Choice of surroundings and site

In the case of large commercial establishments, it is essential that management carry out thorough research with respect to the site of the business. The small businessman, however, has a more difficult task in that most cases he alone has to decide on the location. Naudé and Stevens (1988:209) note that aspects such as vulnerability, risk and cost-effectiveness must be kept in mind when making a location choice.

According to Keogh (in Naudé & Stevens, 1988:210), the following factors must be considered when a suitable location for a retail store is sought:

- **The crime rate in the neighbourhood**

It is important for the prospective businessman to check the crime rate of the neighbourhood in which the site is situated. If the crime rate is high, the crime risk for the retail store will also be high (Naudé & Stevens, 1988:210). This also means that the risk to employees will increase with the result that they will be hesitant to work for such an establishment.

- **Police patrols**

The close proximity of the police to the robbery target appears to act as a deterrent for many offenders (refer to guardianship in the routine activities theory, section 2.1.2). Police patrolling in the area of the target seems to have a stronger effect than does a nearby police station (<http://www.aic.gov.au/publications/armedrobbery/ch8.html>; Pretoria Checkers robbed, 2002:8).

Police presence could take the form of either foot patrols or mobile patrols, and would be most effective during the times favoured for retail robberies (see section 3.2.1.2.2). However, since the police mainly patrol residential areas (J. van der Linde, personal communication, 2 April 2002), criminals are given the opportunity to rob businesses situated in more isolated areas.

Although patrolling may act as a deterrent, it may also influence the choice of site. An area which is patrolled could be an indication that there is a high crime rate in the neighbourhood, resulting in fewer businesses operating in the area.

- **The presence of juveniles**

Naudé and Stevens (1988:210) warn that the presence of adolescents can present problems to a small commercial establishment like a retail store. They do, however, add that not all juveniles are criminals, but that the greater the concentration of juveniles in the streets of a neighbourhood, the greater the possibility that crimes like robbery will occur. This view is supported by research conducted by Pelser and De Kock (2000:86)(previously discussed in section 3.1.1).

Lab (2000:149) suggests deflecting offenders by offering alternatives to undesirable actions. These alternatives may include a meeting place for youths away from highways or businesses. These alternatives may, therefore, provide other activities with which the youth can occupy themselves, instead of turning to criminal activities such as robbery.

- **Access to highways**

Many small businesses are dependent on motorists who use highways. Naudé and Stevens (1988:211) indicate that this can also be a risk factor because highways offer the criminal an efficient and easy escape route (see section 3.1).

- **Other businesses**

According to Naudé and Stevens (1988:211), one of the best methods of establishing how safe an environment is, is to contact other businesses and ask them what they think of the area the store is situated in. Most businessmen will readily discuss any robberies or problems that they may have experienced. The precautionary measures of other businesses can also be taken note of, as prior robberies may have resulted in businesses employing additional safety measures. These increased safety measures may therefore be indicative of a higher risk of retail robbery.

3.7.3.2 The buildings

As in the case of the choice of the site, safety aspects are often not taken into account with respect to the buildings on the site. Aspects such as the aesthetic appearance of the building often take precedence over safety features such as alarms, cameras, wiring and reinforced doors and windows.

Hemphill (in Naudé & Stevens, 1988:211) stresses that a building should be designed in such a way that it will protect the business against damage from within as well as from without. To accomplish this, he makes the following recommendations:

- **Situation of the building**

When a building is being planned, the architect should bear in mind the situation of the building on the site. The building must be situated in such a manner that police cars and other passers-by are afforded the maximum view of it. Naudé and Stevens (1988:212) note that it would be advantageous, if possible, for the interior of shops to be visible from the outside. Although high visibility enables an offender to case the interior of the store without going inside, high visibility into the interior of shops enables passing pedestrians to observe a robbery in

progress. This may act as a deterrent for some offenders (<http://www.aic.gov.au/publications/armedrobbery/ch8.html>).

- **Layout of the terrain**

As far as the layout of the terrain is concerned, big trees and thick shrubs, in particular, can be hindrances because they afford the prospective robber the cover he requires and prevent the criminal from being visible from the street. It is therefore better to plant low shrubs near a building and in such a way as to provide maximum visibility of the buildings (Naudé & Stevens, 1988:212). Van der Schyff (2002:63) agrees with the above and emphasises the importance of eliminating any hiding places for robbers, as well as potential escape routes that may be used.

- **Lighting**

In the opinion of Naudé and Stevens (1988:212), as well as Van der Schyff (2002:63), lighting, both interior and exterior, remains one of the most effective deterrents against armed robbery. Gabor et al. (1987:182) suggest increased lighting immediately outside the store. Regular inspections are necessary to check that the lights are in working order because lights are often deliberately smashed to provide the necessary cover for robbers. It is therefore advised that outdoor lights are covered in wire mesh to prevent their bulbs from being broken (Naudé & Stevens, 1988:213).

3.7.3.3 Target hardening

The hardening of robbery targets through the installation of security measures have the potential to decrease the incidence of robbery (<http://www.aic.gov.au/publications/armedrobbery/ch10.html>; Lab, 2000:149). Target hardening refers to the physical protection of a target (Gabor et al., 1987:182) and could entail the use of safety devices such as alarm systems, television cameras and security personnel.

Research conducted on the impact of alarms (Lab, 1997:35) has indicated that this measure has a valuable deterrent effect on household burglary. The impact that alarms have in the deterrence of retail robberies has not been determined.

Although the deterrent effect of formal surveillance measures (Lab, 2000:149), such as cameras, has not been proven yet (<http://www.aic.gov.au/publications/armedrobbery/ch10.html>), and such technology, according to Van der Schyff (2002:63), rather assists in damage control and in later apprehending the robbers than preventing these crimes, closed-circuit television is one form of target hardening being used increasingly in retail stores. In the event of a robbery, the robber will most likely be photographed on one of the store's cameras - this will facilitate the identification of the offender. However, the quality of the picture for this purpose has to be good and the technical level and standard of equipment is not always satisfactory.

Security guards are costly, especially for smaller retail stores. During an armed robbery the possibility of violence is often increased as a direct result of the use of security guards, especially armed guards (<http://www.aic.gov.au/publications/armedrobbery/ch10.html>). However, they are an important deterrent to robbery and may increase the employees' sense of security (Naudé & Stevens, 1988:220; Van der Schyff, 2002:63).

According to Hemphill (in Naudé & Stevens, 1988:221), patrol services cost less than hiring full-time security personnel, but are less effective. The observant robber becomes aware of the routine of the patrol and can rob the store between patrols. It is therefore advised that patrolling not be carried out according to a fixed routine. Gabor et al. (1987:183) support the above statement and suggest that changing routines, such as the times at which cash deposits are made to the bank, can keep offenders off guard.

3.7.3.4 Example of a situational crime prevention programme

In 1976, the Southland Corporation, owners of the 7-Eleven retail stores, established a successful seven step preventative programme against armed robbery (Gabor et al., 1987:189). These steps incorporate simultaneously the considerations of increased surveillance, target hardening, territoriality and profit reduction:

- Step one encourages employees to look vigilant and in control of the store. They are encouraged to look active when the store is empty and to keep it clean, uncluttered and the shelves well stocked. Such behaviour is said to signal to would-be robbers the fact that those running the store are in command. This is basically the principal of territoriality (Jeffery, 1977:45).

- Step two aims at heightening the visibility of robbers from outside the store. Surveillance of the area immediately surrounding the cash register is particularly important here. This can usually be achieved through simple physical design manipulations, such as by making sure that there are no signs or objects obstructing the view of the cash register from outside the store.
- During step three employees are encouraged to be active in monitoring people inside or in the immediate vicinity of the store. Employees are told to take an active stance in response to suspicious behaviour. Gabor et al. (1987:189) suggest that persons loitering or observing a store are to be stared down or, if this does not work, the police are to be called (Van der Schyff, 2002:63).
- Step four also involves active surveillance. Employees are encouraged to greet people entering the store and to establish sufficient eye contact with them. Such behaviour is said to make potential offenders feel more conspicuous and make them fear later identification.
- Step five is designed to discourage potential robbers by indicating that a robbery would not be profitable for potential robbers. Employees are told to place large bills into a drop box or safe as soon as they receive them. This is to be done as conspicuously as possible so that the public and potential robbers will realise that there is little to be gained by robbing the store. Signs on the store window stating that the key to the safe is not kept in the store are also a means of indicating that a robbery of the store will not be profitable.
- Step six focuses on special measures to be taken at night. Employees are advised to ensure that the amount of money in the cash register is at a minimum and that there is good illumination around the store. In this regard, it has been found that cash reduction measures, such as having a minimum amount of money on the premises, have been effective in the prevention of crimes such as retail robbery (<http://www.aic.gov.au/publications/armedrobbery/ch10.html>).
- Step seven insinuates that lying to robbers can be dangerous and that fraudulent security devices and signs do not fool robbers. According to the programme, telling the truth means safety to the employees (Gabor et al., 1987:190).

Research (Gabor et al., 1987:190) indicates that programmes of this nature can be beneficial both in terms of bringing about a reduction in robberies and in decreasing the amount of money taken in the incidents that have taken place.

Critics of situational crime prevention strategies claim that, although it may prevent crime from occurring in a particular area or on a particular target, crime may be displaced in terms of time (temporal displacement), place (spatial displacement), mode of operation (tactical displacement), as well as target (target displacement) (Cornish & Clarke, 1987:935; Lab, 1997:75).

The type and extent of displacement resulting from a particular crime prevention strategy is difficult to determine. It will depend on a whole range of factors which include, among others, the commitment of the offenders to the robbery, the skills possessed by the offenders, and the reasons for their involvement in the crime. Despite the above criticism, it is important to keep in mind that displacement is by no means the inevitable outcome of situational crime prevention measures. (<http://www.aic.gov.au/publications/armedrobbery/ch1.html>). Furthermore, the value of situational crime prevention lies in the fact that it entails the manipulation of the environment which can be controlled and, therefore, adapted to suit specific individual situations.

3.8 CONCLUSION

The first part of this chapter concerned various factors that directly or indirectly contribute to the robbery rate in South Africa. Based on the fact that robbers tend to follow a confirmed routine in the commission of their crimes, the *modus operandi* that robbers usually follow before, during and after a retail robbery, were elaborated upon. The profile of the robbers, the victims, and subsequently, research pertaining to the consequences of robbery in general were highlighted. Various strategies that could possibly make a contribution in the prevention and control of robbery, were also emphasised.

4. RESEARCH EXPECTATIONS

According to De Vos (1998:116, 247), data obtained by qualitative methods can be analysed by quantitative means. In the case of an exploratory descriptive study such as this one (see section 5.1), Huysamen (1993:10), in conjunction with the above, indicates that in a relatively new area of research it is common to pose questions regarding the relationship between variables. Due to the fact that quantitative methods are also employed in this study, certain research expectations are set which are relevant to the current study. Mouton and Marais (1988:163) consider these questions or expectations regarding the research as a means of assigning direction to the study. Therefore, in order to fulfil the aims of the study as set out in Chapter 1 and based on the fact that existing literature on robbery in general can be used as a guideline, certain research expectations with regard to the characteristics of the *modus operandi* (specifically the operational and post-offence phases) of the retail robber from the victims' perspective are formulated in this chapter. Certain situational factors that are of importance will also receive attention as these factors often influence the course of a retail robbery. Furthermore, research expectations regarding the consequences of the retail robberies for the victims thereof, as well as their reactions, will also be included in this chapter. These expectations are based on a framework of existing literature, theory and research regarding robbery in general. A rationale is supplied for each research expectation in order to clarify how the expectation stemmed from existing theory and research.

4.1 RESEARCH EXPECTATIONS REGARDING THE *MODUS OPERANDI* OF RETAIL ROBBERS

The *modus operandi* of retail robbers is evident from the various phases of the crime, namely the planning phase, the operational phase and the post-offence phase (Van der Westhuizen, 1993:34-39). Gabor et al. (1987:57) state that an offender's *modus operandi* is never stagnant and that they continuously refine and adapt their techniques and methods.

Research (Macdonald, 1975:62; Marais & Van Rooyen, 1990:25-26; Weston & Wells, 1990:104), however, indicates that most offenders have a characteristic means of action and certain preferences in the commission of a crime. In order to coincide with the set aims of the study and the operational definition of *modus operandi* formulated

in paragraph 1.2.2, the research expectations with regard to the operational and post-offence phases of the *modus operandi* of retail robbers, as reported by the direct victims, will subsequently be highlighted.

4.1.1 Research expectations regarding the operational phase

Research expectation 1

Retail robbers select certain days of the week on which to commit the robbery.

Research expectation 2

Retail robbers select certain times of the day at which to commit the robbery.

Rationale for research expectations 1 and 2

Glick (1995:219) points out that offenders make certain decisions and exercise strategic choices in order to minimise the risk of failure and arrest. According to Letkemann (1982:219), as well as Marais and Van Rooyen (1990:69), the identification of the day and time at which the robbery will be committed, are some of the most important factors that are taken into account in the commission of this crime.

Research expectation 3

Retail robbers work in groups.

Research expectation 4

Retail robbers make use of firearms during robberies.

Rationale for research expectations 3 and 4

For the purpose of this study and based on existing research on robbery in general, it is assumed that it is necessary for retail robbers to plan their robberies to some extent prior to the commission of the robbery. According to Letkemann (1982:219), Marais and Van Rooyen (1990:69), as well as Snow (1995:78), attaining weapons, the choice of accomplices, as well as the various roles allocated to group members, are some of

the aspects that are taken into account by retail robbers in the commission of the crime.

Due to the fact that robbers usually employ weapons to acquire money more easily and with less resistance; to protect themselves from armed victims; and to ensure a safe escape from the scene of the crime (Conklin, 1995:304), firearms are used when businesses such as retail stores are robbed. Firearms can also be seen as a facilitating factor that could ensure a successful robbery. As the robbery of retail stores entails greater risk than the robbery of an individual (personal robbery), one can assume that more than one offender is necessary to ensure success (Dunn, 1976:4; Normandeau, 1981:304).

- **Research expectations regarding the violence associated with retail robberies**

Research expectation 5

Retail robbers make use of verbal threats in order to ensure compliance from victims.

Research expectation 6

Retail robbers make use of violence in order to ensure compliance from victims.

Research expectation 7

When victims resist, retail robbers are more likely to use force.

Rationale for research expectations 5 to 7

According to Burke and O'Rear (1993:18), one of the elements of robbery is that it entails violence or threats of violence. In the case of retail robbery, there should thus be no exception. Luckenbill (1980:364) indicated that violence during a robbery can manifest itself in various ways namely, with violence by means of verbal threats, physical injury of the victim to convince them not to take the threats of the offender lightly, and finally by incapacitating the victim.

Kleck and DeLone (1993:59) further state that victims who resist offenders forcefully are likely to precipitate further violence from the offender. Gabor et al. (1987:88) also

found that victims who resist armed robberies are three times more likely to be seriously injured than those who do not resist.

Research expectation 8

The larger the group of offenders involved in a retail robbery, the greater the degree of violence exhibited towards victims.

Rationale for research expectation 8

With regards to the size of the group committing the robbery, Macdonald (1975:139) and Maree (1995:133) both state that it influences the degree of aggression and violence employed by the offenders. Cook (1985:483) confirms that when more than one offender is involved in a robbery, the victim's risk of injury increases due to the fact that the group dynamics lead to heightened violence.

4.1.2 Research expectations regarding the post-offence phase

Research expectation 9

Retail robbers usually have a getaway vehicle waiting outside the store.

Rationale for research expectation 9

Letkemann (1982:219), as well as Marais and Van Rooyen (1990:69), indicate that the choice of an escape route following a robbery is one of the aspects that are taken into account by robbers. In order to ensure a fast and effortless getaway, robbers often have a car waiting outside in which to flee from the crime scene. For the purpose of this study it can thus be assumed that this would also be applicable to the phenomenon of retail robbery.

4.2 RESEARCH EXPECTATIONS REGARDING SITUATIONAL FACTORS THAT MAY INFLUENCE RETAIL ROBBERIES

Research expectation 10

Retail robberies are concentrated in high crime-rate areas.

Rationale for research expectation 10

In accordance with the routine activities theory, the convergence of motivated offenders and suitable targets in the absence of capable guardians, is more likely in some neighbourhoods than in others (Barkan, 1997:102). Furthermore, specific locations within these neighbourhoods are more vulnerable than others. Sherman et al. (1996:96) refer to these high crime-rate areas as hot spots of predatory crime.

Retail robbery is a direct contact predatory crime (see section 2.1.2) and, therefore, would be more prevalent in certain hot spots. Kennedy and Baron (1993:93) are in agreement and add that a store's proximity to crime, as well as suitability in terms of attractiveness of the store (for example, a jewellery store), has an effect on the victimisation of the store.

Research expectation 11

The vulnerability of retail stores for retail robbery is increased if there are a limited number of staff present in the store.

Research expectation 12

The vulnerability of retail stores for retail robbery is increased if there are few customers present in the store.

Research expectation 13

Stores with poor security are most often the targets of retail robbery. Based on this statement, certain sub-expectations are formulated. At the time of the robbery, the retail store:

- 13.1 did not have security guards
- 13.2 did not have armed response
- 13.3 did not have an alarm system
- 13.4 did not have panic buttons
- 13.5 did not have closed-circuit television.

Research expectation 14

At the time of the robbery, the interior of the store was not visible from the outside.

Research expectation 15

At the time of the robbery, the area where the store is situated was not regularly patrolled by the police.

Rationale for research expectations 11 to 15

Sheley (1995:334) states that guardianship is a key element of the routine activities theory and refers to how important it is for a potential target to be protected. Felson (1998:53) states that a guardian is something or someone whose mere presence serves as a gentle reminder that the store is protected.

According to the routine activities theory, situational circumstances often provide opportunities that are conducive to criminal activities (Cohen & Cantor, 1980:114). These situational opportunities usually arise when a motivated offender comes across a suitable target at a given time and place, in the absence of capable guardians (Brantingham & Brantingham, 1978:115; Felson, 1987:913).

In this regard, Maree (1995:171) indicates that the presence of guardians can also influence the outcome of a robbery. Physical obstacles can, for example, act as guardians. These physical obstacles may include technological mechanisms such as alarms, burglar bars and closed circuit television that would provide protection from robbery (Lynch, 1987:287). According to Lynch (1987:287), guardians could also include people such as professional security guards or simply the mere presence of someone who may prevent the crime such as employees or customers. The possible identification of the offender by the victim, as well as the presence of more than one person in the store, can discourage an offender to rob a certain store.

In their theory, Cohen and Felson (in Williams & McShane, 1999:222) also mentioned the importance of architectural planning and environmental design through which guardianship as well as visibility may be increased and the amount of suitable targets decreased. If the interior of the store is visible from the street, passers-by will, for example, be able to see if there is a robbery in progress inside the store (also see section 3.7.3). Regular police patrols could also decrease the opportunities for retail

robbery as the close proximity of police to a robbery target appears to act as a deterrent for many offenders (Lynch, 1987:287).

4.3 RESEARCH EXPECTATIONS REGARDING THE VICTIMS' REACTIONS DURING THE RETAIL ROBBERIES

Research expectation 16

Victims are less likely to resist during retail robberies if offenders are armed with firearms.

Research expectation 17

Victims are less likely to resist during retail robberies if there is more than one offender present.

Rationale for research expectations 16 and 17

Resistance by victims depends upon their assessment of the robber's ability to injure them (Karmen, 1996:63). In this regard, various researchers (Cook, 1985:483; Gabor et al., 1987:104; Inciardi & Pottieger, 1978:62) have determined that victims are less likely to resist an offender that is armed with a firearm. In addition to this, Block (1989:237), as well as Karmen (1996:66), indicated that victims who are confronted by two or more robbers during a retail robbery are also less likely to resist offenders.

4.4 RESEARCH EXPECTATIONS REGARDING THE CONSEQUENCES OF RETAIL ROBBERIES

Retail robberies have a significant impact upon the victims in terms of the financial, physical, emotional and social consequences suffered by them as a result of a retail robbery.

Research expectation 18

Victims of retail robbery are likely to suffer financial consequences as a result of retail robbery.

Rationale for research expectation 18

According to Prinsloo (in Van der Westhuizen, 1993:34), the execution of a robbery usually includes not only the observation of employees and security measures, choosing a suitable target, determining the most suitable time and escape routes, but also determining the potential loot and financial advantages thereof. Landau and Fridman (1993:168) have found that the primary goal of robbery is monetary gain. In this regard, Wright and Rossi (1986:143) further mention that the financial gains that can accompany a robbery are considered to be an important motivational factor to commit a crime such as retail robbery.

According to Macdonald (1975:50), those victims who sustained serious physical injuries may face expensive medical costs for which they themselves are largely responsible for. Many victims are also unable to return to work for some time, if ever, after a robbery. In addition, victims who survive violent robberies often sustain serious injuries requiring long-term or even permanent medical treatment (Glanz, 1994:21).

Macdonald (1975:50) further states that, subsequent to a retail robbery, considerable expenses are incurred by victims to improve the security measures in their businesses. These measures may include the utilisation of armed response groups, security guards, as well as the installation of bullet-proof glass, surveillance cameras and alarm systems.

Research expectation 19

Victims of retail robberies are likely to suffer physical injury as a result of the robbery. Certain sub-expectations are set in this regard, namely that:

- 19.1 male victims are more vulnerable to physical injury during retail robberies than female victims.
- 19.2 retail cashiers are more vulnerable to physical injury during retail robberies than other employees.

Rationale for research expectation 19

Based on Laub's (1997:21) finding that the rate of physical injury is higher for males than for females due to their willingness to offer resistance against offenders, it is also

postulated that during retail robberies male victims are more vulnerable to physical injury.

It is the opinion of Lynch (1987:286) that certain occupations are attractive targets for robbery. If an individual's employment involves face-to-face contact with large numbers of people on a routine basis as well as the handling of money, their risk of victimisation is greater than those who do not deal with a lot of people and money. As retail robbers would have to interact with the cashiers in a retail store in order to obtain their objective of money, a retail store cashier would be at greater risk of physical injury during a retail robbery than other employees would be.

Research expectation 20

Victims of retail robberies are likely to suffer emotionally as a result of the robbery.

Rationale for research expectation 20

According to Glanz (1994:21), the impact of robberies on victims should also be determined in respect of the negative effects on aspects such as the emotional and psychological consequences following the incidents. Crime and violence usually cause psychological trauma (Zedner, 1994:1223). The crisis theory proposes that following an event, such as robbery, that is beyond a person's normal resources and abilities to cope, they experience psychological distress (Lurigio et al., 1990:76).

After a robbery, victims are likely to experience symptoms which are characteristic of post-traumatic stress disorder (Barlow & Durand, 1995:192). Janoff-Bulman and Frieze's (1983:3) approach also states that criminal victimisation of this nature may result in a victim questioning their basic assumptions and by doing so destroy the stability with which they are ordinarily able to function.

Research expectation 21

Victims tend to suffer social consequences as a result of retail robberies.

Rationale for research expectation 21

According to Glanz (1994:21), the impact of retail robberies on victims also affects their quality of life following the incident. In addition, McKendrick and Hoffman

(1990:25) are of the opinion that the violence associated with robbery can have extensive effects upon the quality of life of the individual victim, as well as the community. They contend that violence creates fear which disrupts social interaction in the community and restricts the lifestyles of victims.

According to Janoff-Bulman and Frieze (1983:4), the experience of criminal victimisation may shatter a victim's assumption of invulnerability and they can no longer say that it will never happen to them. Being the victim of crime changes an individual's attributions about their safety and feelings of intense anxiety and helplessness may accompany the victim's lost sense of safety. Individuals who have been robbed report being more afraid of another robbery than their neighbours and they feel distrust towards some people especially strangers (Janoff-Bulman & Frieze, 1983:4). In response to these feelings, victims may develop coping mechanisms which may include self-blame and cognitive restructuring (see section 2.2.3, attribution theory)(Lurigio et al., 1990:58).

4.5 CONCLUSION

In the preceding chapter, various research expectations that focused on the *modus operandi* of the retail robber from the victims' perspective, situational factors that may influence retail robberies, the experiences of the victims during the robberies, as well as the consequences of the robberies for the direct victims, were formulated in order to serve as a framework for the study. The research expectations were accompanied by relevant rationales for the formulation of these expectations. Although the findings will be discussed in Chapter 6 according to the above-mentioned expectations, any other findings that are not relevant to these research expectations, but are significant to this study, will however, also receive attention and be interpreted accordingly.

5. RESEARCH DESIGN

The research methodology that was followed in order to test the research expectations, as set out in Chapter 4, will subsequently be discussed. Furthermore, the measuring instrument that was developed, the manner in which sampling took place, the methods used in the collection of data, as well as the techniques according to which the data was processed and analysed will receive attention in this chapter.

5.1 METHODOLOGICAL JUSTIFICATION

In order to make a detailed study of the *modus operandi*, specifically the operational and post-offence phases, followed by the offenders during retail robberies; the situational factors that played a role; the reactions of the victims during the retail robberies; as well as the consequences thereof, it was decided to make use of a two-phase model incorporating a quantitative and qualitative methodology. According to Creswell (1998:17), combining both quantitative and qualitative approaches is not a new idea and is often used if the quantification of results in terms of percentages and tables, as well as rich, descriptive data is needed.

Due to the fact that numerical assignment to values will be utilised in order to assist in the analysis of qualitative data (frequency distributions and percentages), facets of the quantitative paradigm will serve to compliment the qualitative nature of this research. However, it remains important to note that exploratory qualitative research emphasises the uniqueness of perceptions, feelings and behaviour, as well as the meaning and interpretation individuals attach to certain situations, whereas explanatory quantitative research strives to generalise. As the incorporation of quotes to provide participants' perspectives is an important part of qualitative research (Creswell, 1998:17), direct quotations that capture the victims of retail robberies' personal perspectives and experiences, will be included in the discussion of the findings. It is this recording of events and interviews that makes the data so richly significant in order to comprehend the phenomenon of retail robberies.

Although information on retail robbery per se is limited (see section 1.3.4), robbery in general is not a "new" crime and existing literature on robbery could be consulted for the purpose of this study. In light of this and the fact that the researcher wants to

describe certain aspects of a retail robbery, an exploratory descriptive approach will be used for the current study.

5.2 MEASURING INSTRUMENT

In order to test the research expectations relevant to the study, an interview schedule (Appendix I) was compiled. The compilation of this interview schedule was for the purpose of conducting semi-structured focused interviews with victims of retail robberies. This type of interview is used to analyse hypothetically important elements, patterns and structures beforehand in order to establish a framework for order and progress (Mouton & Marais, 1988:251).

5.2.1 Interview schedule

Interviewing is a primary data collection technique in qualitative research (Joubert, 1998:20). Although McBurney (1994:199), as well as Neuman (1997:253), indicate that interviews are time consuming and costly in terms of travel expenses, this form of data collection also has many advantages. Rosnow and Rosenthal (1996:112) state that face-to-face interviews provide an opportunity to establish rapport with the respondent, as well as observe their body language. Face-to face interviews also allow the researcher to elaborate further on certain questions and in the process obtain rich, detailed information from the respondent. During an interview, an interviewer is also in the position to clarify certain questions for the respondent (Babbie, 1992:269; Rosnow & Rosenthal, 1996:112). The focused interview specifically holds the advantage that question content and not the question wording as such is fixed in advance and the answers regarding retail robberies are, therefore, comparable.

The interview schedule used in the present study aims to determine, from the victims' perspective, the *modus operandi* followed by retail robbers in the operational and post-offence phase, the situational factors that might play a role during retail robberies, the victims' reactions during victimisation and the consequences of retail robberies. Questions put to respondents are divided into three sections, namely:

A. Biographical information

Section A concerns biographical information of the respondents such as gender, age, race, as well as their occupation.

B. Information regarding the robbery

Questions regarding the *modus operandi* followed by robbers during operational and post-offence phases of retail robberies are included in this section. This section also contains questions concerning various situational factors relevant to retail robberies and includes aspects such as the crime rate in the area; the number of staff and customers present at the time of the robbery; the security measures of the store; the visibility of the store; and the regularity of police patrols. Furthermore, questions regarding the reactions of the victims during the robbery were also included.

C. Consequences of the robbery

The aim of this section is to determine the financial, physical, emotional and social consequences of retail robbery upon the direct victim.

Closed-ended questions (where the respondent is required to select an answer from a choice provided), as well as open-ended questions (where questions are answered in the respondents own words) were included in the interview schedule (Babbie, 1992:147). Although Babbie (1992:147) is of the opinion that closed-ended questions are easier to code and therefore to process, Hagan (1982:81) indicates that they do not contain the richness of information necessary for qualitative research. It is for this reason that both types of questions were incorporated in the interview schedule.

In order to ensure honest answers and internal validity, various control questions were built into the interview. An example of these control questions is question 40 concerning the reactions of the victims during the retail robberies. In addition, due to the fact that owners and managers might be blamed for not taking the necessary precautions to prevent retail robbery, questions were formulated in such a way so as not to create the impression that they are responsible for the robbery.

The interview schedule is in English and although it was not the mother tongue of all of the respondents who participated in the study, they all indicated that this language was acceptable for the interview. However, where respondents were not certain of terminology, the researcher was able to translate into Afrikaans.

5.2.2 Pilot study

McBurney (1994:185) defines a pilot study as a tentative, small-scale study done to pretest and thereafter modify the design and procedures of the study. In agreement with the above definition, Rosnow and Rosenthal (1996:113) indicate that the pilot test of the interview schedule is the final step before going into the field.

The interview schedule underwent informal testing by an academic in the Department of Criminology at the University of Pretoria. The measure in which the interview schedule ensures detailed information relevant to research expectations; the sequence of questions, as well as the relevance of the questions were critically analysed. Based on the recommendations, certain technical and content amendments were made to the interview schedule. Most amendments concern the alteration of questions that were vague or double-barrelled. An example is the amendment of question 13 regarding the use of firearms to an open-ended question. It was further recommended that questions 14, 16, 27, 35, and 50 be changed from closed-ended questions to open-ended questions in order to ensure richer data.

A formal pilot study was also conducted with two individuals who have been the victims of a retail robbery. Due to the limited size of the sample of victims of retail robberies (see section 5.3.2), these respondents were included in the final sample. The time frame necessary for the completion of the interview schedule was taken note of during these interviews. This was done in order to plan the amount of time necessary for future interviews and the amount of time allowed was sufficient.

5.3 SAMPLING PROCEDURE AND DATA COLLECTION

Due to the fact that not all victims of retail robbery could be included in the study, it was necessary to draw a sample from this population (Neuman, 1997:202). The sampling strategy that was followed, the composition of the sample, as well as the manner in which the data was collected, will be further discussed.

5.3.1 Sampling strategy

As a result of the lack of availability of a framework for a sample of victims of retail robberies, the probability that each of these victims would have an equal opportunity of being included in this study, could not have been determined. Consequently, a

non-probability sampling strategy was chosen for the purposes of this study (Babbie, 1992:230).

5.3.2 Composition of the sample

Due to the fact that the universe of victims is unknown to the researcher, the victims were selected according to the purposive-theoretical and snowball sampling techniques (Beck, 1999:93). The value of purposive-theoretical sampling lies in the fact that elements that are of relevance to the research design are included in the sample because they have been selected by the researcher (Babbie, 1992:230), while the snowball technique is valuable when individuals are bound together in an informal communication network. With the latter technique, the sample would “snowball” as each of the interviewees suggest other individuals who may be willing to participate in the research (Babbie, 1992:292).

Owners and employees of thirty eight retail stores in the Gauteng area, specifically Alrode, Brackendowns, Brackenhurst, Bryanston, Faerie Glen, Glenvista, Hatfield, Kliprivier, La Montagne, Meyersdal, Meyerspark, Moloto, Montana, Randhart, Silverton, Sunnyside, and Wapadrand, were purposively and upon the suggestion of interviewees approached by the researcher whereupon the enquiry was made as to whether the stores had fallen prey to retail robberies in the past four years. Of these stores that were approached, 17 of the owners or employees consented to be interviewed by the researcher. Three also referred the researcher to three other stores that were victimised in the same way.

During April 2002 and May 2002, an appeal was also made, via the media, to owners or employees who had been victims of retail robberies in the past four years to contact the researcher and take part in the research. The researcher decided to include stores who had been robbed in the past four years because a longer time may have resulted in victims having selective or unclear memories. Advertisements were placed in two newspapers, namely the *Beeld* and *Rekord* and a security magazine (*Security Focus*) urging the public to contact the researcher. Pamphlets were also put up in nine stores throughout Gauteng (Brackenhurst, Glenvista, La Montagne, Meyersdal, Meyerspark, Montana, Silverton, Sunnyside, Wapadrand) requesting the participation of victims.

Only one individual responded to these advertisements, but could not be included in the study as a result of geographical boundaries due to the fact that she was located in Potchefstroom. Stores outside of Gauteng could, due to cost-effectiveness, not be

included in the sample. As indicated in Chapter 3, Gauteng has the highest robbery rate in South Africa. For this reason, the decision was made to only include victims in this province.

In the end, 20 owners or employees who have been victims of retail robberies were included in the sample. The stores in which the retail robberies took place consisted of one function hire retailer; one fast food outlet; one computer store; one teddy bear shop; four small cafés; three medium-sized cafés; two medium-sized garage shops; and seven larger supermarkets selling grocery and household items.

Eleven of the above stores were situated in shopping complexes and nine were located directly along a road. Only one of the eleven stores was situated in a shopping complex in a city centre, while one of the nine stores was along a road in a city centre. The remaining stores were all situated in areas surrounding the city.

Although this may seem to be a very small sample, it is important to keep in mind that victims' scepticism of research, as well as a need for confidentiality could, in conjunction with the above-mentioned geographical and cost-effectiveness factors, influence the response rate. Five of the thirty eight stores who were approached to participate in the study stated that they had not been robbed yet, while seven of the individuals who were approached and who admitted they had been robbed, indicated that they feared that the disclosure of details of the robberies would elicit a negative reputation with consumers. It is also possible that the events were so traumatic for the victims that they are unable to discuss these incidents. This was evident by the fact that six respondents who were approached and who acknowledged that they had been robbed, stated that they did not want to participate in the research due to the latter reason.

5.3.2.1 Interviews

Individual interviews were conducted with the 20 respondents during the last week of April 2002 and the first week of May 2002. Based on Babbie's (1992:270) recommendation to be friendly at all times, and in order to establish rapport with the subjects, the researcher politely introduced herself to the respondents and produced proof of her identity in the form of her student card. An introductory letter from the Department of Criminology (Appendix II) stating the fact that empirical research in this regard is being undertaken, was also presented to respondents. Thereafter, respondents were informed of the aim of the research and the expected duration of the

interview. All the respondents were also ensured that the information gained during the interview would be used strictly for research purposes.

The respondents were asked to give detailed information and they were assured that there are no right or wrong answers. Since in-depth information is often lacking when using a semi-structured focused interview (Babbie, 1992:254), the researcher made use of occasional probing to elicit further responses from respondents, particularly in open-ended questions. In the first week of October (five months after the initial interviews), follow-up interviews were conducted telephonically with four of the respondents to clarify some of their responses.

Although the use of a tape recorder during the interviews would ease the concentration on responses (Phillips, 1985:240), researchers such as Kerlinger (1970:183) are of the opinion that the presence of a tape recorder may inhibit the responses during interviews. Based on the above, the researcher decided not to make use of a tape recorder, but to take down detailed notes. Flanyak (1999:61) highlights the value of written notes as a tool to record meaningful interaction during interviews.

According to Rosnow and Rosenthal (1996:116), questions may yield inaccurate answers when the respondents are asked to rely on memory. However, the respondents indicated that their recollection of the events were sufficient to participate in this study as ten of the retail robberies occurred in 2002, eight in 2001 and two in 1999.

Due to the fact that the interviews were conducted during working hours, interviews were, where possible, limited to 20 minutes. The working environment of the retail store, as well as interruptions by other employees or customers, however, occasionally lengthened the duration of the interviews to approximately 30 minutes.

5.3.2.2 Description of the sample

The biographical characteristics of the sample will subsequently be set out. These biographical characteristics include the gender, age, race, as well as the victims' occupation.

- **Gender**

Table 2
Gender of the Victims

Gender	N	%
Male	11	55
Female	9	45
Total	20	100

According to Table 2, 11 (55%) of the victims are males and nine (45%) females. Although the distribution is relatively even, more males formed part of the sample due to the fact that males are usually the owners or managers of retail stores. This finding is in agreement with research (Barkan, 1997:274; Karmen, 1996:77; Macdonald, 1975:1999; Zedner, 1994:1212) indicating that the victims of robbery are more often men than women.

- **Age**

Table 3
Age of the Victims

Age	N	%
20-29	9	45
30-39	2	10
40-49	4	20
50-59	4	20
60-69	1	5
Total	20	100

The youngest and oldest respondents in the sample group are, respectively, 20 and 62 years of age. Table 3 indicates that most of these respondents (45%) are in the 20-29 age category. The reason for this distribution may be that this age group is more active in the labour market.

The victimisation of respondents in the 40-49, as well as the 50-59 age groups, have four (20%) individuals each. The 30-39 category has two (10%) respondents, whereas only one person indicated that he is in the 60-69 age group.

- **Race**

Table 4
Race of the Victims

Race	N	%
Black	-	-
White	20	100
Coloured	-	-
Asian	-	-
Total	20	100

It is evident from Table 4 that all the respondents in this study were white. This could be attributed to the fact that the stores were mostly situated in traditionally white suburban areas. Another reason might be that whites are still more often the owners of retail stores than other racial groups. This aspect corresponds with findings by Dunn (1976:15) which state that commercial activity and money is concentrated mainly in the white sector. In South Africa, despite affirmative action, wealth is still localised in the white business sector.

Various researchers (Barkan, 1997:274; Block, 1977:49; Bonn, 1984:206) regard robbery as an inter-racial phenomenon in that individuals from different racial groups victimise one another. All the respondents indicated that the robbers were black which lends support to the findings of the above-mentioned researchers.

- **Occupation**

Table 5
Occupation of the Victims

Occupation	N	%
Owner	10	50
Manager	4	20
Assistant manager	1	5
Consultant	1	5
Cashier	3	15
Secretary	1	5
Total	20	100

As is evident from Table 5, most of the respondents (50%) are the owners of retail establishments. The category with the second highest amount of respondents, namely

four (20%), are managers. Three (15%) of the respondents are cashiers, while one assistant manager, a consultant, and one secretary also participated in the research.

One reason why there are so many owners in the sample may be that 12 (60%) of the stores were small establishments where the owners prefer to do the work themselves instead of employing managers. They may also have participated in the research because they suffered financially and wish to prevent future victimisation. As the number of staff members present during the robbery are directly related to the size of the retail store, it is also important to note the sizes of the retail stores under investigation. Due to this, the owners might be more vulnerable to victimisation. A possible reason for the victimisation of cashiers, might be the fact that this category is more vulnerable due to their direct handling of money in a retail store (Lynch, 1987:295; Reynolds, 1994:15).

5.4 TECHNIQUES FOR THE ANALYSIS AND INTER- PRETATION OF DATA

Since only 20 victims of retail robberies were involved in the study, it was not necessary to process the information gained from the interviews by means of a computer. Although open-ended questions are often difficult to code, categorise and compare (Babbie, 1992:147), the detailed results were interpreted in terms of the frequency of and correlation between characteristics and certain main themes.

Based on Festinger and Katz's (1953:440) statement that in the analysis of qualitative data one can determine frequencies and establish quantitative relations and Mouton and Marais' (1988:44) emphasis on the fact that this type of classification forms the basis of descriptive research, the information obtained from the interview schedules was interpreted according to the stated research expectations, analysed in terms of percentages and, where relevant, highlighted in table form. In order to give direction to the present study, a response rate of 50% and more supported a research expectation whereas less than 50% served to reject a research expectation.

5.5 CONCLUSION

In this chapter the research design of the study was detailed. Methodological justification was given for the use of qualitative and quantitative research methods and

the inclusion of frequency distributions, percentages and tables. The measuring instrument and the pilot study were subsequently explained, as well as the sampling strategy and the composition of the sample. The manner in which the interviews were conducted and the profile of the sample group were also discussed. In addition, the techniques for the analysis and interpretation of the data were highlighted and an exposition of the results of the study, obtained with the aid of the interview schedule, will subsequently be given in Chapter 6.

6. ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION OF DATA

In this chapter the data obtained from the interviews is analysed and interpreted in terms of the research expectations set in Chapter 4. The results are, therefore, discussed in four sections, namely the *modus operandi* of the robbers, the situational factors which play a role in retail robberies, the reactions of the victims during the incident, as well as the consequences of the robberies for the victims.

Owing to the fact that the study is exploratory descriptive in nature from the victims' perspective and that information could generate further hypotheses or research questions, findings are highlighted with individual respondents' remarks, opinions and commentary, as well as with relevant tables and comparative percentages. In this regard, Joubert (1998:5) notes that there is the mistaken belief that qualitative research conforms to a single approach and adheres to a set of fixed principles, however, this is not the case as quantification may also occur in a qualitative study. Huysamen (1993:216) also indicates that tables can be used to summarise results, while De Vos (1998:249) notes that it often happens that data obtained by qualitative methods are analysed by quantitative means.

6.1 RESEARCH EXPECTATIONS REGARDING THE *MODUS OPERANDI* OF RETAIL ROBBERS

Due to the fact that the victims of retail robberies cannot provide information regarding the planning phase, only the operational and post-offence phases will receive attention in the discussion of the *modus operandi* of retail robbers.

6.1.1 Research expectations regarding the operational phase

6.1.1.1 Research expectation 1

In research expectation 1 it is postulated that certain days of the week are selected by robbers to commit retail robbery. Table 6 indicates the degree to which certain days are selected to commit retail robberies.

Table 6
Days on which Retail Robberies are Committed

Days	N	%
Monday	4	20
Tuesday	2	10
Wednesday	6	30
Thursday	1	5
Friday	-	-
Saturday	4	20
Sunday	3	15
Total	20	100

From Table 6 it is evident that most retail robberies, namely six (30%), take place on a Wednesday. The second most popular days are Mondays and Saturdays, both with 20%. Three (15%) retail robberies were committed on a Sunday, followed by two (10%) on a Tuesday and one (5%) on a Thursday. Not a single robbery was found to have been committed on a Friday. Although a preference for certain days is noted, there is only a 30% response for Wednesdays, which implies that the research expectation is not supported.

One respondent indicated that a possible reason for why Wednesdays and Saturdays are preferred by robbers might be the bi-weekly Lotto draws that take place on these two days and the presence of Lotto machines in retail stores (“It was a rollover for lotto”) (Robbers turn on Lotto retailers, 2000:6).

According to another respondent, “Mondays are usually quiet and businesses often have not yet banked their weekend money”. Two (10%) of the respondents stated that they were targeted on a Monday because they had not banked their cash. The respondent who was robbed on a Thursday indicated that they pay wages on this day and were therefore vulnerable (“We pay our wages on a Thursday and they must have known about this”). This response is in accordance with the assumptions of the routine activities theory which indicate that the vulnerability of stores may be increased as a result of potential offenders’ knowledge of the routine of the stores, such as the days on which wages are paid or when the stores are most accessible to them.

6.1.1.2 Research expectation 2

In research expectation 2 it is assumed that retail robbers select certain times during the day to commit retail robberies. An exposition of these times is given in Table 7.

Table 7
Times at which Retail Robberies are Committed

Times	N	%
00h00-01h59	-	-
02h00-03h59	1	5
04h00-05h59	-	-
06h00-07h59	1	5
08h00-09h59	2	10
10h00-11h59	1	5
12h00-13h59	1	5
14h00-15h59	3	15
16h00-17h59	4	20
18h00-19h59	4	20
20h00-21h59	3	15
22h00-24h00	-	-
Total	20	100

Table 7 indicates that the periods from 16h00-19h59 are peak times for retail robberies with eight (40%) respondents indicating that the robberies occurred at these times. Thereafter, with three (15%) respondents each, are the times 14h00-15h59 and 20h00-21h59. Based on these findings, research expectation 2 is also not supported by the findings. A possible reason for this might be the size of the sample and further research with larger samples may result in conclusive findings in this regard.

It is, however, important to take note of the fact that responses indicate a trend in that 70% of the robberies took place between 14h00 in the afternoon and 21h59 in the evening. According to one respondent, “the fact that there is usually more money available in a store later on in the day might be a reason why they prefer these times”. Another respondent, a retail store owner whose store was robbed after closing time, also stated that “there is usually a lot of money available after closing time” and robbers can obtain it with little effort as there are no customers or passers-by.

6.1.1.3 Research expectation 3

In research expectation 3 it is assumed that retail robbers work in groups. The amount of offenders involved in the retail robberies in the current study, is depicted in Table 8.

Table 8
Number of Offenders

Offenders	N	%
1-2	-	-
3-4	10	50
5-6	2	.10
7-8	1	5
9-10	5	25
11-12	1	5
13-14	-	-
15 and more	1	5
Total	20	100

Table 8 indicates that the majority (50%) of retail robberies are committed by three to four offenders. Not one of the respondents indicated that the robbers worked individually or in pairs in the retail robbery. The fact that three and more offenders were involved in all 20 (100%) of the retail robberies, supports research expectation 3. As stated by Einstadter (1972:18), robbery tends to emerge as a group product or in gangs. This finding is also in accordance with separate research (Beirne & Messerschmidt, 1991:98; Curtis, 1975:92) indicating that robberies are usually committed by groups or gangs.

According to Marais and Van Rooyen (1990:69), robbers may prefer to work in groups in order to ensure a successful robbery. The success of a robbery is ensured by the allocation of specific roles to each member of the group (Letkemann, 1982:219). In the present study it was found that group members are usually divided into two groups, namely those responsible for gathering money or goods, and those who administered orders to personnel and customers within the store during a retail robbery. One respondent explained the roles allocated to group members in the following way: “Some of them were getting money from the tills and customers and there were others telling everyone what to do”. This may also be an explanation for why retail robbers prefer not to work alone.

It is, however, also important to take note of the fact that the second largest category of offenders indicated by respondents with five (25%) cases, is nine to ten offenders. According to media articles (Pretoria Checkers robbed, 2002:8), the appearance of such large gangs of retail robbers is not only on the increase, but is also a disturbing trend. Although all five (100%) of these robberies were in larger grocery stores and one can assume that the strength of the group and the enforcement of authority acted as the motivational factor for working in large groups, scientific research regarding group dynamics and the specific roles allocated to group members in these large groups, is necessary.

6.1.1.4 Research expectation 4

Research expectation 4 reads that retail robbers use firearms during robberies. Evidently, firearms are the predominant weapons used during retail robberies as all the respondents confirmed the use of firearms. Research expectation 4 is, therefore, supported.

This finding concurs with research done by Cook (1987:366) indicating that robberies of commercial establishments are more likely to involve firearms than any other weapons. The use of alternative weapons does not fulfil the same instrumental functions as firearms, such as ensuring the intimidation and co-operation of the victim. The use of firearms is also in agreement with media articles (Armed robbers steal substantial amount from Mayor's Walk Spar, 2000:3; Pistol-whipped during robbery, 2000:6), illustrating the use of firearms during retail robberies in South Africa. According to one respondent, the fact that the robbers were all armed acted as a facilitator and made it easy for robbers to commit the crime and obtain money.

From the findings it was determined that handguns are the weapon of choice for most retail robbers. These firearms were used in 19 (95%) of the robberies. As indicated by Conradie (1994:4), Davis (1999:259), as well as Myerson (1995:101), eight (40%) of the respondents intimated that a possible reason for this preference may be that it is easier to handle and hide when entering a retail store. Five (25%) respondents expressly mentioned that the robbers did not enter the store with the weapons visible to the staff or customers. This facilitated the element of surprise present in most of the robberies. The robbers then exposed their weapons and proceeded to intimidate the victims or to use the weapons either by hitting the victims or shooting them.

In one (5%) instance a shotgun was used and in another two (10%) cases they had AK47's. Since this information was obtained from victims and not confirmed first-hand with the offenders, it is possible that more shotguns and long-barrelled guns were used (e.g. in getaway vehicles), but that the victims were not able to see all of the accomplices and the types of firearms used. One respondent indicated "I was lying face down on the ground and couldn't really see what guns they had:.....I was too scared to look". This, however, is a factor which should be investigated in further studies involving the offenders (see section 7.2.1).

Four (20%) of the respondents indicated that the firearms were fired during the retail robberies. According to two (10%) of these respondents, this was done to ensure co-operation, whereas another stated that the firearms were fired in order to escape the crime scene ("They shot so they could get away quicker"). In this last instance, the offender was surprised by a customer that entered the store during the robbery ("A customer came in and the guy got a fright and almost shot him, he was shouting at him to get down on the floor"). This is in agreement with Conklin's (1995:304) view that firearms ensure a safe escape from the scene. According to Conklin (1995:304), firearms also ensure compliance from victims. In this regard, the fourth respondent indicated that her husband did not provoke the offender in any way and that "they shot him for no reason, no provocation" as an example of what would happen if the other victims did not comply with their demands.

Research by Kleck and DeLone (1993:56) also indicates that firearms are often used to evoke fear in the victims. This statement is confirmed by the immediate reactions of the victims after being confronted with a firearm. According to one respondent, she was wondering the whole time if, and where, the robbers are going to shoot her ("waar gaan hulle my skiet, in die lyf of in die kop").

- **Research expectations regarding the violence associated with retail robberies**

6.1.1.5 Research expectation 5

In research expectation 5 it is stipulated that retail robbers make use of verbal threats in order to ensure compliance from victims. The validity of this statement is substantiated by the fact that 11 (55%) of the respondents indicated that the robbers made use of verbal threats during the retail robberies. Research expectation 5 is thus supported by these findings.

According to Morrison and O'Donnell (1994:51), verbal threats usually ensure that the victims comply with the demands of the robbers. The respondents in the current study indicated that various verbal threats were made by the robbers, such as "I'm going to shoot you", "I'm going to kill you", "I'm going to kick you", "I'll shoot this one", "Down on the floor", "I'm going to cut that finger off if you don't give me that ring", and "If everyone does what we say, you're not going to get hurt".

Although no research expectation was set in this regard, it was found that other types of non-verbal threats were also employed by the robbers. Eighteen (90%) of the respondents indicated that non-verbal threats such as cocking firearms, pushing or hitting the victims occurred in conjunction with the verbal threats. One respondent stated that a robber "cocked the gun at a customer who came in and told him to lie on the ground". According to Davis (1999:256), this is a common method used by robbers to intimidate or threaten victims.

In nine of the cases no verbal threats were made by the robbers. A possible reason for this may be that the robbers felt it was not necessary to use threats as they were armed with guns.

6.1.1.6 Research expectation 6

In research expectation 6 it is assumed that robbers make use of violence to ensure compliance from victims. Research expectation 6 is supported by the fact that violence was employed in 13 (65%) of the 20 cases. This violence varied according to the seriousness thereof. In two instances individuals were "pistol-whipped", and in another case the owner of the store was stabbed three times, his partner was physically beaten and an old lady who was a bystander, was, according to the store owner, "doused with paraffin". A little girl was hit through her face because she would not stop crying, while the owner of another store was shot as the robbers entered the store. Other descriptions of the violence experienced by victims included "hitting and kicking" and being "pushed around".

According to Einstadter (1972:20), robbers employ violence as a means of gaining control over a situation and ensuring that victims do not offer any resistance during retail robberies. Four respondents mentioned that victims were used as a lesson to the others as to what would happen if they did not co-operate with the robbers.

The fact that violence was used in 13 (65%) of the cases also reflects the existing culture of violence in South Africa. Researchers (Esterhuyse, 1997:18; Katz, 1991:280; Stavrou, 1993:70) indicate that the climate of violence in South Africa has led to violence being an integral part of these violent crimes.

In seven (35%) of the robberies no physical violence was used. A possible reason for this might be because all the offenders were armed and they deemed this as sufficient to guarantee control of the victims. Further research in this regard should, however, be conducted directly with the offenders. In four of these seven cases there were no customers present in the stores, and consequently no need for physical violence. However, in two of these cases there were, respectively, approximately 49 customers and 16 staff members and 20 customers and 10 staff members present. Although there were seven robbers involved in the first case, and these robbers were all armed with firearms, no other reason for the absence of violence could be given by either of the two respondents.

6.1.1.7 Research expectation 7

In research expectation 7 it is postulated that the robbers demonstrate more violence when resisted by victims. Only six of the 20 respondents indicated that they resisted the robbers during these robberies. In all six cases (100%), the robbers became more aggressive when resisted by victims. This finding, therefore, supports research expectation 7. This finding is also in agreement with the findings of Burke and O’Rear (1993:18), as well as Morrison and O’Donnell (1994:28), which state that resistance by the victim may lead to further violence by the offender.

In five of the cases respondents resisted the robbers by “not co-operating” with the robbers’ demands. One respondent indicated that she also “talked back” to the robbers. In the other instance, a respondent states “I tried to hide some of my jewellery, resulting in me being the target of the robbers’ aggression”.

The increased aggression of the robbers primarily took the form of hitting. Respondents descriptions vary from “they used their weapons to hit, like a baton”, “they were angrily waving their guns around, irritated”, to “we were hit and pushed around and the gun was aimed at us”. When one respondent resisted the robbers, a “scuffle” ensued between her and the robber. According to her, the fact that she eventually complied with his demands probably saved her life.

6.1.1.8 Research expectation 8

It is postulated that the degree of violence associated with retail robberies is related to the number of offenders involved. The expectation is that the larger the group of offenders, the greater the degree of violence towards victims during a retail robbery. Table 9 depicts the size of the retail robber groups and the use of violence during the robberies.

Table 9
Size of Retail Robber Groups and the Use of Violence

Number of offenders	Violence		No violence	
	N	%	N	%
1-2	-	-	-	-
3-4	6	30	4	20
5-6	-	-	2	10
7-8	1	5	-	-
9-10	5	25	-	-
11-12	1	5	-	-
13-14	-	-	-	-
15 and more	1	5	-	-
Total	14	70	6	30

As mentioned previously in section 6.1.1.4, it is possible that more offenders may have participated in the robberies, but that they were out of the victims' sight acting as lookouts or waiting in the getaway vehicles ("I was too scared to look"). The findings in Table 9 thus reflect the offenders that were visible to the respondents during the robberies. For the purpose of this study, the respondents all agreed that groups consisting of one to four offenders can be considered relatively small. It was also indicated in Table 8 (section 6.1.1.3) that ten robbery groups consisted of four and less than four offenders, while ten (50%) were comprised of larger groups. In six (30%) of the cases, the groups consisting of four and less than four members used violence, whereas the larger groups used violence in eight (40%) of the cases.

Although the research expectation is not supported, this finding supports research done by Curtis (1975:92) indicating that the larger the group of offenders, the greater the degree of violence towards victims. It also confirms Cook's (1985:483) conclusion that robberies involving more than one offender may precipitate heightened violence which might then result in the victim's risk of injury increasing as a result of the group dynamic. Although the age of retail robbers and the size of the robber

groups might influence the use of violence, a factor such as dehumanisation may also play a role in the violence employed during robberies. As mentioned in section 3.1.1, dehumanisation can lead to not only an increase in violent crimes, but also to violence itself (Fattah, 1976:108). This factor, as well as the availability of firearms and firearms' association with retail robberies, necessitates further investigation with larger samples.

6.1.2 Research expectation regarding the post-offence phase

6.1.2.1 Research expectation 9

According to research expectation 9, it is believed that retail robbers usually have a getaway vehicle waiting outside the stores in order to ensure a speedy escape from the crime scene. Eleven of the stores in this study were situated in shopping complexes and only one of these had an under-roof parking structure adjoined to the complex making it impossible for the victims to see the manner in which the robbers escaped. The presence of getaway vehicles, however, is apparent by the responses stating that robbers had getaway vehicles waiting outside the stores in 17 (85%) of the cases. Research expectation 9 is thus supported by the above results.

According to Maree (1995:111), one of the most important aspects of the post-offence phase is successfully leaving the scene of the robbery. She specifically refers to the availability of a getaway vehicle in which to escape from the scene when planning a robbery. In one of the instances where the robbers did not have a getaway vehicle, the respondent was unable to see outside as the store was in a shopping complex with an under-roof parking structure adjoined to the complex (as mentioned in the above paragraph). It is therefore possible that they may have had a vehicle waiting some distance away from the complex.

In the other two instances, the victims saw the robbers run away. One of these robberies involved three offenders who fled on foot to a township situated about 500 metres behind the store ("They went across the veld right into the township"). The proximity of the township could possibly be the reason why these offenders did not require a getaway vehicle. Although no research expectation was formulated with regard to the apprehension and prosecution of the retail robbers, it might be interesting to note that the victims' son followed the offenders into the township and the police then captured and arrested two of the robbers. According to the owner of the store, these two robbers were subsequently sentenced to 28 years in prison for attempted

murder, assault, robbery, and being in possession of illegal firearms. The third robber, however, evaded police capture and managed to hide in the township.

6.2 RESEARCH EXPECTATIONS REGARDING SITUATIONAL FACTORS THAT MAY INFLUENCE RETAIL ROBBERIES

6.2.1 Research expectation 10

According to research expectation 10, retail robberies are assumed to be concentrated in high crime-rate areas. The validity of this assumption is supported by 15 (75%) respondents indicating that the robberies occurred in high crime-rate areas. The finding, therefore, supports research expectation 10 and is in accordance with research by Sherman et al. (1989:39) who have indicated that robbery is an urban phenomenon occurring mainly in areas known as hot spots.

The reasons given by respondents for stating that they were situated in high crime rate areas included the fact that they had been the victims of previous robberies (“This was approximately my fifth robbery in the past few years”; “We’ve been robbed eight times already”; “This time was the worst”), as well as having knowledge of other crimes in the area (“A friend of mine’s shop was also robbed”). These statements are indicative of universal vulnerability and the victims’ tendency to attribute their victimisation to external factors that are beyond their control (see **Model of the victim’s experience after a retail robbery**, section 2.2.4).

One of the five respondents who indicated that their store was not in a high crime-rate area, stated that “we were just not vigilant and that made us vulnerable for robbery”. The mere fact that this store is situated in an area that is not characterised by incidents of crime contributed, according to this respondent, to their feeling of safety and therefore being less alert (“You never hear about any crime here, so I guess we didn’t expect it”). This concurs with Janoff-Bulman and Frieze’s (1983:4) contention that a victim’s perception of invulnerability is based on the belief of most individuals that “it can’t happen to me”. This lack of vigilance would also, according to the routine activities theory, make them a suitable target for victimisation. In terms of Conklin’s (1972:60) typology of robbers, opportunistic robbers may be aware of the lack of vigilance of owners with stores in areas with a low crime-rate and seize the opportunity to rob a retail store.

It is, however, important to take note of the fact that an area that is viewed as a high crime rate area by a victim may not be seen as such by the police. The fact that the respondents were victimised, as well as their fear of crime as a result of previous victimisation, may influence their responses in this regard. Research conducted by Lab (1997:6) indicates that the level of fear often exceeds the actual levels of crime in society. However, further research regarding the influence of the fear of crime is necessary.

6.2.2 Research expectation 11

Research expectation 11 reads that the vulnerability of retail stores for retail robbery is increased if there are a limited number of staff present. The finding of the study in this regard is illustrated in Table 10.

Table 10
Number of Staff

Staff	N	%
1	3	15
2-5	4	20
6-9	4	20
10-13	3	15
14-17	4	20
18-21	1	5
More than 21	1	5
Total	20	100

According to Table 10, stores with limited staff members present are more often the targets of retail robberies. In 11 (55%) of the cases there were less than 10 staff members present in the stores. The other nine stores had between ten and 25 staff members present when the stores were robbed. However, due to the fact that not one category elicits a response of more than 50%, the research expectation is not supported.

Although stores with fewer staff present are more vulnerable than stores with a larger number of staff, this vulnerability, however, is also dependent upon the size of the store. Sherman et al. (1989:30) state that stores with more than one clerk on duty are less likely to be robbed than stores with only one employer. In accordance with the routine activities theory, the presence of more staff would increase the guardianship of the store (Felson, 1998:53), thereby deterring robbers. This may be due to a

perception that it will be easier to obtain and maintain control of fewer people during a robbery.

As the sizes of the above-mentioned 11 stores varies (five were medium-sized supermarkets and six were small retailers who all stock grocery items, except for two who specialised in computers and teddy bears), and sufficient staff is a relative concept, a definite conclusion regarding sufficient staff members is not possible.

In spite of this, it is, however, important to note that the three stores who had one staff member present during the robberies, as well as one of the four who made use of two to five staff members, were medium-sized supermarkets. This necessitates the use of more staff members to act as guardians. It might thus be that the presence of too few staff could influence the vulnerability of a store (“Maybe they saw we were only a few people, I don’t know”). If this is the case, the question may be asked why retail stores with 21 and more staff members are targeted by retail robbers, in spite of the guardianship presented by these people. One respondent indicated that a possible reason for this might be as a result of the use of firearms.

Research (Macdonald, 1975:293; Normandeau, 1981:304; Wright & Rossi, 1986:108) confirms that approximately four out of every five armed robbers make use of firearms, and that the use of firearms enables offenders to cover a large area and control more than one victim at a time (Conklin, 1972:110-112). A large group of robbers, in this case 15, would also facilitate control of a large group of victims (see section 6.1.1.3). In the two cases where more than 18 staff members were present during the robberies, 10 and 15 offenders were respectively involved in the robberies, confirming that a large group of offenders is needed to control a large number of victims.

6.2.3 Research expectation 12

In research expectation 12 it is postulated that retail stores with few customers present are more vulnerable to robbery than stores with a large amount of customers. This tendency is indicated in Table 11.

Table 11
Number of Customers

Customers	N	%
None	6	30
1-9	10	50
10-19	-	-
20-29	2	10
30-39	-	-
40-49	2	10
50 and more	-	-
Total	20	100

Table 11 indicates that in six (30%) of the cases respondents stated that there were no customers present in the store. In ten instances (50%) there were between one and nine customers present. For the purpose of this study, less than ten is considered to be few and research expectation 12 is, therefore, supported. This finding concurs with the routine activities theory, in which it is stated that customers can act as guardians for retail stores.

According to Einstadter (1995:81), robbers select targets which they have been observing over a period of time. Robbers often become familiar with the routine of the stores and the observation of stores enables them to determine if there is an absence of capable guardians at their desired target. One respondent mentioned that “they must have been casing my shop for a while”. In the six cases where no customers were present, three (50%) of the stores had already closed, two were owned by women who were alone in the stores, and the other one was robbed in the afternoon just before 16h00 when the store was particularly quiet.

The presence of a larger group of victims may also increase the likelihood of identification of the robbers. Fear of recognition may, therefore, also have played a role in the offenders’ decision to target retail stores with few or no customers present.

In two (10%) of the cases there were between 40 and 49 customers present when the stores were robbed. Six to seven robbers were involved in the first of these cases and 15 robbers in the other. According to one respondent, “because they were shopping we didn’t pay much attention to them”. Firearms were also used in both these cases which confirms a previous possibility that firearms and large groups of offenders facilitate seemingly difficult robberies. The possibility also exists that the size of the group of customers present in the stores may also have influenced the target selection.

One respondent made the statement that robbers are arrogant and know that the police would not open fire on the robbers when there are a number of customers and personnel present in the store. The chances of a successful robbery may, therefore, also have increased in the eyes of the offenders. In addition, it is also possible that guardianship of the stores was not sufficient (or the employees were not vigilant) and as a result robbers seized the opportunity to rob the stores (see section 6.4.1). As this study is exploratory descriptive, first-hand information obtained from robbers themselves would shed more light in this regard (see section 7.2.1).

6.2.4 Research expectation 13

In research expectation 13 it is stated that retail stores with poor security are most often the targets of robbery and do not have measures such as

- 13.1 security guards
- 13.2 armed response
- 13.3 alarms
- 13.4 panic buttons
- 13.5 closed-circuit televisions.

Table 12 depicts the security measures taken by the owners or managers of the retail stores under investigation.

Table 12
Security Measures of Retail Stores

Variable	Yes		No	
	N	%	N	%
Security guards	9	45	11	55
Armed response	15	75	5	25
Alarm	13	65	7	35
Panic buttons	14	70	6	30
Closed-circuit television	8	40	12	60

From Table 12 it can be deduced that the majority of stores had some security measures in place. Nine (45%) of the stores made use of security guards, 15 (75%) had armed response, 13 (65%) had an alarm, 14 (70%) had panic buttons, and eight (40%) possessed closed-circuit televisions. According to these findings, there is no support for research expectations 13.2 to 13.4. As indicated in Table 12 most stores, 11 (55%) to be exact, do not make use of private security guards, while 12 (60%) do

not have closed-circuit television in their stores. As a result, research expectations 13.1 and 13.5 which state that retail stores with poor security are most often the targets of robbery are supported.

According to the routine activities theory, technological mechanisms may serve as guardians and may prevent the occurrence of retail robberies. Although Naudé and Stevens (1988:220) state that these mechanisms are expensive and not every store owner is able to afford the added security, it is evident from the study that retail store owners do invest in preventative mechanisms.

Despite these extensive security measures, these stores were still the victims of retail robberies. One respondent was very despondent and noted in frustration that “with all this they still rob me”. This statement is supported by Janoff-Bulman and Frieze’s (1983:5) approach which asserts that individuals have the belief that misfortune can be prevented by engaging in sufficiently cautious behaviours. From the findings it appears that robbers are not deterred by armed response and the presence of security devices such as alarms and panic buttons. A possible reason might be the element of surprise involved in a robbery, in which retailers are unable to set the alarms off and push panic buttons in time. According to one respondent, it often happens that bystanders do not react on alarms due to a fear of the offenders or apprehension at becoming involved in the criminal justice system (“People just don’t want to get involved, they’re scared”). Another two respondents intimated that they did not have time to activate the buttons (“We didn’t expect it”). In addition, the robberies take place so quickly that armed response companies usually arrive after the robbers have fled the scene.

Three of the nine stores that had security guards only had one guard, while the other six had two or more guards on duty during retail hours. All these guards were situated just inside the doors of the stores. Due to the speed with which these crimes are committed and the fact that the offenders attacked quickly, in three instances the guards did not see the robbers approaching the stores. In eight cases the guards were subdued by the robbers first, while in the other case the robbers were already in the store pretending to be customers and, therefore, pointed their weapons at the customers first.

Of the 11 stores that did not make use of security guards, eight of them were in high crime-rate areas. According to the respondents, seven of these 11 stores were also situated in areas that are not regularly patrolled by the police (“They don’t patrol so

much”). In this instance, it is possible that potential offenders were aware of the lack of guardianship in and around these stores and seized the opportunity to commit robbery. As mentioned previously, further research with offenders regarding target selection and the role of guardianship is recommended in this regard.

Although Van der Schyff (2002:63) notes that the presence of security cameras does not seem to have much of a deterrent effect, but may facilitate the identification of offenders after the robberies, research done by Whitcomb (Lab, 1997:35) revealed that closed-circuit televisions often acts as a deterrent. The fact that employees and owners incorporate surveillance into their normal work routine and make a point of utilising the closed-circuit televisions adds to the preventative value of these security mechanisms. However, for these mechanisms to function successfully they must be managed effectively by people. The eight (40%) stores in the study who did have closed-circuit television only had cameras installed inside the stores and, therefore, could not see the robbers approaching. One respondent stated “our cameras are here to see shoplifters inside the shop”. It would, therefore, be beneficial if retail stores also had cameras outside which focused on approaching individuals.

As 12 (60%) of the stores in the present study did not have closed-circuit televisions, and the research expectation in this regard is supported, one can assume that this opportunity-reducing measure might aid in the prevention of retail robbery. The fact that retail store employees will be able to identify potential offenders beforehand, as well as after the robberies, might deter rational offenders who weigh the advantages and disadvantages of committing retail robbery.

Although the role of lighting was not included in the interview schedule, it appears that poor lighting might facilitate robbery in stores that are open after dark as one respondent attributed their robbery to “bad lighting outside”. Another interesting finding was the response of one retail store owner of a larger grocery store who indicated the store’s “security was not up to scratch” in spite of the fact that he had security guards, an alarm, armed response, panic buttons, and closed-circuit televisions. This remark is a reflection of individuals’ tendency to blame their behaviour or actions for circumstances that are out of their control (see the attribution theory, section 2.2.3 and the **Model of the victim’s experience after a retail robbery**) (Lurigio et al., 1990:58).

6.2.5 Research expectation 14

According to research expectation 14, retail stores that are not visible from the outside are more vulnerable to robbery than those who are visible. Eleven of the 20 stores in the study were situated in shopping complexes and nine were located directly along a road. The information gained from the respondents indicates that research expectation 14 is not supported due to the fact that 14 (70%) of the stores were visible from the outside.

The six stores that were not visible from the outside were so due to painted-over glass entrances. The above finding contradicts research done by Naudé and Stevens (1988:212) indicating that it is advantageous for the interior of shops to be visible from the outside as it enables passers-by to observe a robbery in progress. A possible reason for the occurrence of the robberies, in spite of high visibility, is that visibility enables an offender to case the interior of the store without going inside. In four (28,6%) of these cases, the respondents mentioned that there were no customers inside the store, while another two (14,3%) respectively indicated that only one staff member was present during the robbery. This limited guardianship is in accordance with the routine activities theory which indicates that the absence of capable guardians is a consideration for criminal activity (Felson, 1998:53). In addition, the last two staff members mentioned were both females and, according to Bonn (1984:206), robbery tends to involve more female victims because they are less likely to offer resistance. One of these respondents stated “I was a female alone so I was an easy target”. This statement is indicative of characterological self-blame due to the fact that the victim is attributing the victimisation to her gender (Miller & Porter, 1983:147)(see **Model of the victim’s experience after a retail robbery**, section 2.2.4).

A further reason why this research expectation is not supported might be the behaviour of the public. According to Lab (1997:30), the impact of surveillance, to a large extent, relies upon the ability of the public to observe suspicious individuals or behaviour, as well as their ability to assess the need to contact the police or take action themselves. Windows and clear views are only valuable in terms of crime prevention if someone chooses to use them. The success of surveillance thus relies upon the behaviour and attitude of the public.

Robbers, however, know that bystanders are hesitant to get involved during a robbery (Davis, 1999:244). They are also aware of the fact that they are feared by the public and that bystanders will not intervene even if they have been sighted by the robbers.

One respondent confirmed this and mentioned that passers-by saw what happened, but did not intervene (“People just don’t want to get involved, they’re scared”).

Three of the six stores that were not visible from the outside had already closed, thus it was clear that there were only a few staff members still inside. In one instance, a group of 15 armed robbers entered the store. The strength of the group, as well as the fact that they were all armed, might be another reason why offenders enter stores that are not visible without hesitation. As mentioned earlier, more research directly with robbers will shed more light in this regard.

6.2.6 Research expectation 15

As postulated in research expectation 15, the areas in which retail robberies occur are not regularly patrolled by the police. The data obtained from the respondents indicates that 15 (75%) of the robberies occurred in areas that were regularly patrolled by the police. The finding therefore does not support the research expectation.

It is evident from the research that the presence of patrols does not act as a deterrent to retail robbers. This is in opposition to research by Cohen and Cantor (1980:144) stating that visible policing is an effective form of deterrence. It also does not correspond with findings which indicate that police patrols act as an inhibiting factor for offenders (Cornish & Clarke, 1987:940).

A possible reason for this might be that store owners may neglect other security measures because they assume that they are significantly protected by the closeness of the police and are, therefore, invulnerable (Janoff-Bulman & Frieze, 1983:4). Four of the 11 respondents whose stores did not make use of security guards, mentioned that regular police patrolling resulted in them not employing security staff. The respondents may also have felt that they are just as vulnerable as any other store and may, therefore, attribute their victimisation to external factors that are beyond their control such as the presence of police patrols (see **Model of the victim’s experience after a retail robbery**, section 2.2.4).

Robbers may also become familiar with the patrolling routine of the police and strike just after they have patrolled the area. Three respondents indicated the areas were patrolled, but not on a regular basis (“They don’t patrol so much”). It is therefore possible that offenders know that patrolling does not take place on a regular basis due to a lack of police resources (see section 3.1.1).

A further reason for the above might even be the arrogance of offenders. When offenders are armed and operating in large groups, the possibility exists that they do not even fear the police. A respondent stated that “they’re not scared of the police, the police do nothing”. Further confirmation of this should, however, be obtained directly from offenders.

6.3 RESEARCH EXPECTATIONS REGARDING THE VICTIMS’ REACTIONS DURING THE RETAIL ROBBERIES

6.3.1 Research expectation 16

According to research expectation 16, it is the expectation of the researcher to find that victims are less likely to resist robbers who are armed with firearms. As mentioned in section 6.1.1.7, only six of the respondents resisted the robbers. Table 13 indicates the reasons why 14 of the respondents did not offer resistance to retail robbers.

Table 13
Reasons for Not Resisting Retail Robbers

Reasons	N	%
Robber(s) had firearms	8	57,1
Fear of being killed	3	21,4
Too many robbers	3	21,4
Fear of being injured	-	-
Total	14	99,9

Note. As a result of the decimal figures, the percentages do not total 100%.

Table 13 indicates that eight (57,1%) of the 14 respondents who did not resist, did so because the robber(s) had firearms. Research expectation 16 is thus supported. This finding concurs with Conklin’s (1972:110-112) statement that firearms are used by robbers to instil fear and prevent resistance by victims. In three (21,4%) instances, victims feared that they would be killed by the robbers if they resisted them. The offenders were armed and this potential threat influenced the victims’ decision not to resist. One respondent stated “I didn’t try to be a hero”. The climate of violence may also have played a role here, as victims are aware that offenders in South Africa do not hesitate to shoot victims if required to do so (Davis, 1999:265). A respondent confirmed this by saying “I knew they would’ve shot us if we fought back”.

In three (21.4%) other cases, victims did not resist the robbers because there were too many of them. This factor will be discussed in more detail in the next section.

Although no research expectation was set with regard to the vigilance of employees and the fact that the watchfulness of employees might prevent a retail robbery from occurring, the reaction of the respondents is relevant to this section. It was discovered that in 19 of the cases vigilance did not play a role. This is due to the fact that the offenders “stormed into the store and attacked quickly”. In one instance, however, “the robbers were already in the store pretending to be shopping” before they attacked. Despite the fact that it is not always possible to distinguish between potential customers and retail robbers, the possibility exists that the retail store employees were not vigilant enough and did not notice the robbers prior to them robbing the store. As a result, one of the store owners blamed himself for not being more vigilant and observant of what was happening in and around his store. This is in accordance with the attribution theory and the **Model of the victim’s experience after a retail robbery**, specifically behavioural self-blame where the victims attribute the causes of victimisation to their own actions or behaviour and their positive self-images are transformed into negative ones (Lurigio et al., 1990:58)(see **Model of the victim’s experience after a retail robbery**, section 2.2.4). Further research directly with offenders, concerning the manner of entry to the stores and the role that employees can play in the prevention of retail robbery, is necessary.

6.3.2 Research expectation 17

As stated in research expectation 17, victims are less likely to resist if there is more than one retail robber. This assumption is portrayed in Table 14.

Table 14
Number of Offenders and Resistance by Victims

Offenders	Resisted			
	Yes		No	
	N	%	N	%
2 or less	-	-	-	-
3-4	5	25	5	25
5-6	-	-	2	10
7-8	-	-	1	5
9-10	-	-	5	25
11-12	1	5	-	-
13 and more	-	-	1	5
Total	6	30	14	70

Table 14 indicates that all 14 (70%) of the respondents who did not resist, were attacked by two or more offenders. This finding thus supports research expectation 17. This finding also corresponds with the findings of Block (1989:237), as well as Karmen (1996:66), which affirm that victims confronted by two or more robbers during a retail robbery are less likely to resist the robbers. Of the six respondents who resisted, five (25%) resisted non-violently against three to four offenders and one (5%) respondent resisted violently against 11 to 12 offenders.

Non-violent resistance includes negotiating with the offender, escaping and/or screaming and is the most commonly used form of self-defence (Lurigio et al., 1990:39). Violent resistance implies physically attacking or fighting with the offender - either armed or unarmed. Research (Lurigio et al., 1990:39) indicates that, on the one hand violent resistance by the victim includes the possibility that the crime will not be carried out successfully, while on the other hand it indicates that the risk of a physical attack is drastically increased. Lurigio et al. (1990:39) indicate that the risk for the completion of a robbery can be decreased by making use of non-violent resistance methods. They further state that if it is certain that resistance occurred during victimisation, it remains difficult to establish whether or not the resistance was a mere reaction to the offender's behaviour or if the offender responded to behaviour originally shown by the victim.

According to one respondent, he resisted because he thought that he "would be able to overpower" the robbers and prevent them from getting away with all the stores' money. Of the 14 stores who had customers in, four resisted the robbers. Three of these respondents resisted against three offenders and the other one resisted against 11 to 12 offenders. When one of these respondents resisted the robbers, a "scuffle" ensued between her and the robber. According to her, the fact that she eventually complied with his demands probably saved her life.

Furthermore, the reactions of the victims during the retail robberies are relevant to this section and are reflected in responses which include feelings of helplessness, terror and shock ("Frustrating", "Like in a dream", "Disbelief and I just wanted them to get it over with", "Terrified"). Seven (35%) respondents indicated that they were gripped by fear during the robberies, while five (25%) were surprised by what was happening. Three (15%) retail store owners mentioned that they were indifferent to the whole incident as they had been robbed before. A further four (20%) respondents stated that they were angry with the robbers for targeting their stores. This is in agreement with Janoff-Bulman's (1992:79) statement that in response to human-induced victimisation

such as retail robbery, many victims experience anger. Furthermore, one (5%) respondent intimated that she was paralysed during the robbery. This finding concurs with the **Model of the victim's experience after a retail robbery** (see section 2.2.4), as well as Janoff-Bulman and Frieze (1983:4), who state that feelings of anxiety and helplessness may accompany the victim's lost sense of safety.

6.4 RESEARCH EXPECTATIONS REGARDING THE CONSEQUENCES OF RETAIL ROBBERIES

6.4.1 Research expectation 18

In research expectation 18 it is stated that the victims of retail robberies are likely to suffer financial consequences. It is clear from the victims' responses that the gains from retail robberies are monetary in nature as all 20 of the respondents (100%) reported that money was stolen during the robberies. The research expectation is therefore supported.

According to Beirne and Messerschmidt (1991:98), the economic advantage that an individual can obtain from a retail robbery is the primary motive for this crime. This finding also supports research done by Wright and Rossi (1986:143) which indicates that the financial rewards that are associated with a crime such as retail robbery can be an important incentive to commit these crimes and can be seen as a facilitating factor in the decisions made by a retail robber.

The largest amount that was stolen during the robberies was approximately R100 000 and the smallest amount was R500. The average amounts stolen were between R3 000 and R5 000, with six stores having losses of between R30 000 and R50 000.

Although more research in this regard is necessary, the nature of the stores and the type of merchandise they sell, could have facilitated target selection, but also contributed to them being viewed as "suitable targets". The fact that 17 (85%) of the retail stores under investigation stock grocery items - goods that the public need on a continuous basis resulting in available cash in these stores, as well as statements made by victims such as "They know we always have money", confirms the assumptions made by the routine activities theory, namely that the type of merchandise stocked influences the suitability of a store.

Despite the fact that all the stores suffered direct financial losses, other items were also stolen by the robbers. In eight (40%) of the cases, victims were forced by the robbers to take off their jewellery and in five (25%) instances, cellphones were stolen. Other items that were also taken were cigarettes, clothes, phone cards, a music centre, and some groceries. Regardless of the fact that items such as cigarettes, clothes, phone cards and groceries may have been looted for personal use, the possibility exists that more valuable goods such as jewellery and sound systems are stolen for exchange purposes in order to increase the direct monetary gain of the robbery. This was confirmed by one victim who stated that “They go and sell it at a pawn shop”. Further research in this regard should, however, be conducted.

In addition, two of the respondents’ firearms were also stolen during the robberies. According to one of these respondents, his firearm was underneath the counter but he did not have a chance to use it as the robbers entered the store shooting and told everyone to keep completely still. They found the firearm under the counter and took it with them. The other respondents’ firearm was not on him but in a drawer in his office. He stated that “The robbers found my gun when they searched my office and forced me to open the safe and give them the money”.

All the respondents’ insurance premiums were also raised following the robberies, further increasing their financial losses, especially if they are the sole proprietor of a small business. Three respondents indicated that these financial losses left them feeling helpless and worried about their futures.

In accordance with the **Model of the victim’s experience after a retail robbery** (see section 2.2.4), 11 (55%) of the respondents had displayed a task-oriented response, and victims employed behavioural self-blame by attributing their victimisation to insufficient security. This is also in accordance with the crisis theory (Lurigio et al., 1990:76) and insinuates that adaptive coping strategies were employed by the respondents by engaging in preventive security measures. Thus, installing additional mechanisms also resulted in further financial losses. This finding concurs with research conducted by Macdonald (1975:50) which states that considerable expenses are incurred by victims of robberies to improve the security measures in their businesses, thereby restoring their assumption of invulnerability.

It appears that the most common method of improving security was to employ security guards (three respondents) and to install panic buttons (five respondents) in the stores. Other security measures, according to the respondents, included “systematically

changing the routine of the guards”. “by having security guards all day long”. “extra cameras”. “buzzer gate”. “roller shutter doors, two extra alarms with panic response”. “armed response, alarms, electric fencing”. One respondent stated “I now have a security guard, panic buttons and armed response, I hope this works”. This might be an indication of how the respondent’s assumption of invulnerability and the feeling of being in control was restored.

In spite of the fact that retail robbery is a violent crime which often results in physical injuries, only six (30%) of the respondents required medical treatment after the incident. Research conducted by Conklin (1981:57) found that 80% of all robbery victims usually escape without injury. Some may require hospitalisation, even if only for a brief time, because of injuries they sustained during the robbery. In one instance, a man was shot in the leg because there was no safe or guns in the store, another respondent needed stitches in the back of his head as a result of being hit, while a third respondent indicated that he was stabbed three times. A fourth respondent was shot twice in his abdomen and was admitted to hospital for surgery. He also underwent a scan to see if the bullets had damaged any major organs. One respondent was also in traction for two weeks after being severely beaten by the robbers. The old lady who was doused with paraffin was in hospital for a week and stated that “I’m now too scared to go back to the store”. These injuries also often place an enormous financial burden upon the family of the victim (Greenberg & Ruback, 1992:3).

6.4.2 Research expectation 19

In research sub-expectation 19.1 it is presumed that male victims are more vulnerable to physical injury than female victims of retail robbery. As mentioned earlier, only six (30%) of the respondents sustained physical injuries during the retail robberies under discussion. Of these six respondents who were injured, five (83.3%) were males and only one (16.6%) was a female. Research sub-expectation 19.1 is therefore supported.

As stated by Laub (1997:21), the rate of physical injury is indeed greater for males than for females. In this regard, Davis (1999:231) indicates that since men are strong and are inclined to offer resistance, the undermining of these victims often gives the offenders a feeling of victory, thereby making males more vulnerable to physical injury as a result. In accordance with the **Model of the victim’s experience after a retail robbery** (see section 2.2.4), males therefore have a unique vulnerability for physical injury as a result of a retail robbery.

One respondent confirmed the above finding by stating “they did it so I wouldn’t put up a fight”. In two (40%) of the five cases the respondents, however, resisted the robbers and as a result sustained physical injuries. These injuries include the owners’ toenail coming off during a physical struggle (“My toenail came off and I can’t remember how”), as well as a respondent being in traction for two weeks as a result of a beating. In accordance with Janoff-Bulman (1992:61) and the **Model of the victim’s experience after a retail robbery**, the confrontation with real or potential injury or death shatters a victim’s assumptive world, and a profound psychological crisis is induced. One respondent confirmed this by stating “It was traumatic...I’m living in fear”.

In research sub-expectation 19.2 it is assumed that retail cashiers are more vulnerable to physical injury during a retail robbery than other employees. Table 15 indicates whether this is indeed the case.

Table 15
Rate of Physical Injury of Cashiers

Variable	Physical injury			
	Yes		No	
	N	%	N	%
Physical injury				
Owner	5	25	5	25
Manager	1	5	3	15
Assistant manager	1	5	-	-
Consultant	-	-	1	5
Cashier	-	-	3	15
Secretary	-	-	1	5

Table 15 indicates that the owners of retail stores are more vulnerable to physical injury than cashiers. Owners of retail stores were physically injured in five (25%) cases, whereas cashiers were not injured at all. Research sub-expectation 19.2 is, therefore, not supported in this instance.

According to two (10%) respondents, one possible reason for this finding (the fact that owners were targeted more often than cashiers might be due to the fact that the offenders were aware of who the owners were prior to the robberies, indicating that the targets were selected beforehand for their suitability. This is in accordance with the routine activities theory which states that motivated offenders select suitable targets for their criminal activities (Cohen & Cantor, 1980:143). One respondent

indicated “They must have been casing my shop for a while”, while another one stated “The men were in the shop before”. Another store owner was shot at and injured in order for the robbers to gain access to the safe which was situated in the office and to which only the manager had a key. The robbers threatened to fatally wound him (“If you do not co-operate we will kill you and find the key ourselves”).

In this study, 10 of the respondents (50%) were store owners of which five resisted during the robberies. The reason for this might be due to them wanting to protect their assets and the potential financial losses they may have suffered as a result of the robbery. In these five cases only one respondent was physically injured, whereas in the five cases where owners did not resist, there were four respondents who suffered physical injuries. According to one respondent, these injuries may have been inflicted in order to ensure co-operation by the rest of the victims present in the stores. If the owners, who are accepted as being in charge in the stores, were under control, it would be easier to control customers and other employees.

6.4.3 Research expectation 20

This research expectation states that victims usually suffer emotional consequences as a result of retail robberies. Eleven (55%) respondents indicated that they were emotionally affected by the robberies. Research expectation 20 is, therefore, supported by these findings. The robberies impacted on the respondents’ lives in various ways. One respondent stated that “something like this affects your work and social life” whereas another had “nightmares and nervous problems” afterwards. Another respondent indicated that she was “living in fear and I distrust everyone”. The above statements are all indicative of symptoms of PTSD in terms of nightmares, normal functioning being affected, fear of repeat victimisation, and an inability to trust others (see **Model of the victim’s experience after a retail robbery**, section 2.2.4)..

According to research (Lurigio et al., 1990:51) the emotional effects that crimes like retail robbery have upon the victims is often worse than the physical effects. Seven (35%) respondents had to seek psychological treatment following the robberies. Two of these respondents went for trauma counselling to “help deal with what happened”. Four sought aid from psychologists and one of these also had to have “sedative injections” to help her sleep. The little girl who was hit was the store owners’ granddaughter and also had to be taken to a psychologist because she was so traumatised that she could not sleep at night. One respondent’s wife accompanied him to counselling because she was also “having difficulty coming to terms with what had

happened” to him. This is characteristic of cognitive restructuring where the problem can be solved by talking to people about the incident and thus finding meaning in the robbery. This corresponds with the crisis theory (Lurigio et al., 1990:76; Reynolds, 1994:69), the attribution theory (Lurigio et al., 1990:127), as well as the **Model of the victim’s experience after a retail robbery** (see section 2.2.4) which state that in order to formulate adaptive coping strategies and to understand why certain reactions occur among both direct and indirect victims of retail robbery, it is important to examine what actually happened to the victim, as well as their attributions for why it occurred.

The emotional impact highlighted by respondents is in agreement with Glanz’s (1994:21) statement that the impact of robberies can be determined in respect of the negative effects on aspects such as the emotional and psychological consequences thereof. One respondent stated that he was “morbid and negative”, while another mentioned “we were just not vigilant and that made us vulnerable for robbery”. These statements are also illustrative of Janoff-Bulman and Frieze’s (Janoff-Bulman & Frieze, 1983:6) theory stating that positive self-perceptions are affected by the trauma of retail robbery resulting in negative self-images within the victim.

Of the respondents who stated that the retail robberies had no emotional impact on their lives one said that it had just made her “more cautious and suspicious of others”. “I was affected for a few days after but nothing serious” was another response. One respondent summed up her feelings by saying “It’s difficult but I must carry on”. The latter two respondents had been robbed recently prior to the interviews and it is possible that they are displaying a maladaptive response in terms so-called ego- or self-defence mechanisms which include such responses as denial and repression which relieve tension and anxiety and protect the self from hurt and devaluation (Burgess & Holmstrom, 1986:356). These mechanisms protect an individual from internal threats, such as guilt-arousing desires or actions regarding the robbery (Carson & Butcher, 1992:147)(see **Model of the victim’s experience after a retail robbery**, section 2.2.4).

6.4.4 Research expectation 21

Research expectation 21 postulates that victims tend to suffer social consequences as a result of retail robberies. Only four (20%) respondents indicated that the robbery had any social consequences for them, therefore, disproving the research expectation. Two individuals said that the event was very traumatic for them with one saying that she

was “living in fear and I distrust everyone” while the other stated that she was “always scared”. One respondent who was robbed of R30 000 stated that as a result of the robbery he removed his safe and gun from the store (“No safe or gun...It’s not safe because they can use your own gun to shoot you”). The respondent, therefore, displayed task-oriented behaviour by changing his own behaviour (see **Model of the victim’s experience after a retail robbery**, section 2.2.4). He removed his safe because he felt that the presence of a safe would endanger his life even more if he were to be robbed again, thereby also displaying a fear of repeat victimisation (see section 2.2.2, Janoff-Bulman and Frieze’s theory of victim reactions and the **Model of the victim’s experience after a retail robbery**, section 2.2.4).

Another respondent intimated that she felt vulnerable and mentioned “I’m more wary and cautious”, signifying a change in behaviour (see attribution theory, section 2.2.3). The above statements furthermore concur with McKendrick and Hoffman’s (1990:25) opinion that violence creates fear and restricts the lifestyles of victims.

One respondent indicated that he had “become a racist, my relationship with people...I hate them, I don’t trust anyone, I’m morbid and negative and I have no quality of life”. This respondent felt that he had been targeted because he was white, indicating characterological self-blame as depicted in the **Model of the victim’s experience after a retail robbery** (see figure 2). The respondent’s opinion that he was targeted by black robbers because of his race is confirmed by research (Barkan, 1997:274; Bonn, 1984:206) indicating that robbery, in general, is an inter-racial phenomenon. These statements are also in line with the crisis theory in that the victim is over-accommodating to the robbery and altering prior beliefs to accept the event (Resick & Nishith, 1997:42). The victim further stated that he was too scared to go on holiday or leave his business alone in the event that it might be robbed again while he was away. According to Janoff-Bulman and Frieze (1983:3), the respondent, therefore, changed his behaviour or routine by means of a task-oriented response. The destruction of the assumption of invulnerability often manifests itself in the victim’s pre-occupation with the fear that they will be victimised again.

It was also intimated by another respondent that “the whole experience has brought the family closer together” thus having a positive benefit (see **Model of the victim’s experience after a retail robbery**, section 2.2.4). Janoff-Bulman (1992:144) also emphasises the importance of this social support and its association with psychological well-being and positive adjustment after victimisation.

6.5 CONCLUSION

In this chapter the results, obtained by means of an interview schedule, were set out and, where relevant, were illustrated with tables. These results were then analysed and interpreted according to the research expectations set in Chapter 4. The measure in which the results supported the research expectations were also indicated by means of percentages. The results were also linked to the theories and the **Model of the victim's experience after a retail robbery** which were highlighted in Chapter 2. A number of recommendations concerning the phenomenon of retail robbery and future research, in conjunction with some concluding remarks, will be given in Chapter 7.

7. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Despite the serious nature of retail robberies, limited scientific research has been conducted concerning this phenomenon. As indicated in section 1.3.4, no specific research regarding the *modus operandi* of retail robbers from the victims' perspective has been undertaken in South Africa. Based on existing literature concerning robbery in general, as well as the theoretical background discussed in Chapter 2, various research expectations were formulated in Chapter 4 to serve as guidelines for the study. Information was obtained by means of interviews with victims after which this data was analysed and interpreted in Chapter 6 according to the research expectations.

It will subsequently be determined to what degree the resulting findings of this research succeeded in fulfilling the aims of the study, as set out in Chapter 1. Diverse themes will also be identified for the purposes of further research. In addition, various recommendations which can serve as rationale for crime prevention strategies, will be made.

7.1 CONCLUSIONS REGARDING THE ACHIEVEMENT OF THE AIMS OF THE STUDY

- **Aim 1**

The first aim of the study was to analyse the operational phase of retail robberies which would include, inter alia the number of offenders, the weapons used, the violence exercised, and the means of escape in the post-offence phase. The purpose of this aim was to determine the characteristics of the *modus operandi* of retail robbers. The research findings indicate that the most popular days for retail robberies were found to be Wednesdays, Saturdays and Mondays, however, the research expectations in this regard were not conclusive. Wednesdays and Saturdays are preferred by robbers because they are days on which Lotto takes place and there is, therefore, more money available in retail stores. Stores are targeted on Mondays because they often have not yet banked their earnings from the weekend. The peak times for retail robberies were found to be from 14h00 in the afternoon to 22h00 in the evening due to the fact that there is more cash at retail stores later in the day. At these times there are also fewer passers-by who might interfere with a robbery. Most of these robberies also occurred in high crime-rate areas.

In addition to the preference for certain days and times, retail robbers also prefer to make use of accomplices. Robbery tends to emerge as a group product and the majority of retail robberies are committed by three to four offenders. These offenders predominantly make use of firearms, specifically handguns, during retail robberies. Firearms are mainly used in order to ensure co-operation from the victims and to convey the intentions of the robbers.

It was found that robbers make use of verbal threats during the retail robberies. In 18 (90%) of the cases, non-verbal threats were also employed by the robbers. These threats primarily include holding a firearm against the head or back of the victim and then cocking it. It was also determined that robbers employ varying degrees of violence during retail robberies. The degree of violence or aggression is determined by the resistance of the victim and the number of offenders involved in the robbery.

Finally, it was discovered that in the post-offence phase retail robbers make use of vehicles to escape the crime scene. Due to the fact that the operational and post-offence phases are an integral part of the *modus operandi* of retail robbers and that these phases were investigated in this study from the victims' perspective, aim 1 was successfully achieved.

- **Aim 2**

The purpose of the second aim of this study was to determine the situational factors that play a role in retail robberies. In summary, it would appear that only a few situational factors significantly influence retail robberies. It was discovered that aspects of guardianship, such as regular police patrols, security guards, alarms, armed response, and panic buttons did not inhibit offenders from robbing a retail store. The visibility of the store from the street also did not deter robbers, as 14 (70%) of the stores were visible from the street. It appears that in the case of retail robbery, this high visibility rather enabled the robbers to case the store beforehand, as six of the stores had no customers and few staff members present. However, it was found that the presence of a closed-circuit television, as well as a large number of customers, had a deterrent effect upon retail robbers. The above-mentioned factors play a role in the determination of the characteristics of the *modus operandi* of the offender. It is, therefore, determined that aim 2 was successfully achieved. However, it should be noted that, due to the size of this study, generalisations cannot be made regarding the above factors.

- **Aim 3**

It was the third aim of this study to ascertain what the reactions of victims are during a retail robbery. The findings indicated that eight of the 14 respondents who did not resist, did so because the robber(s) had firearms. This finding affirms that firearms are used by robbers to instil fear and prevent resistance by victims. In three (21.4%) instances, victims feared that they would be killed by the robbers if they resisted them. The offenders were armed and this potential threat influenced the victims' decision not to resist. All 14 (70%) of the respondents who did not resist, were attacked by two or more offenders. In addition to the set research expectations, it was found that seven respondents' reactions during the robberies was fear, while five were surprised by what was happening. A further four indicated that they were angry, another was paralysed by fear, while three stated that they were indifferent as they had been robbed previously. Due to the fact that the reactions of victims during a robbery were determined, aim 3 is successfully achieved.

- **Aim 4**

The final aim of this study was to determine the consequences of retail robberies for the direct victims. With regard to the financial consequences of these robberies, it was found that the gains from retail robberies are monetary in nature. Despite the fact that all the stores suffered direct financial losses, other items were also stolen by the robbers. These items included jewellery, cellphones, cigarettes, clothes, phone cards, two firearms, a music centre, and some groceries. As a result of the robberies, most of the respondents indicated that they had improved the security measures in their stores. These security measures included changing the routine of the security guards, installing panic buttons, armed response and alarms, additional surveillance cameras, security gates, roller shutter doors, and electric fencing.

Six (30%) of the respondents required medical treatment which means that the research expectation was not sufficiently supported by the findings. It is, however, important to take note of the fact that the violence involved in retail robberies often results in physical injuries. The various injuries suffered by the victims included being shot, stabbed, hit and beaten. Seven (35%) of the respondents also had to seek psychological treatment following the robberies. Since research (Lurigio et al., 1990:51) has indicated that the emotional effects that crimes like retail robbery have upon the victims is often worse than the physical effects, the researcher recommends

that further research with regard to the physical and emotional consequences of retail robberies be conducted in a larger scale.

Nine (45%) of the respondents indicated that they were strongly affected by the robberies and two (10%) were mildly affected while the remaining nine respondents indicated that the robberies did not impact on their lives at all. The above impact was experienced in a number of ways which included the victims' work and social life being affected, nightmares, poor quality of life, fear, negative self-perceptions, and distrust of others. To the extent that the consequences of retail robberies for the victims can be determined by means of the measuring instrument, aim 4 was fulfilled. As mentioned in aim 2, generalisations cannot, however, be made due to the limited size of the sample.

7.2 RECOMMENDATIONS

Various recommendations regarding future research, as well as the prevention of retail robbery, will subsequently be discussed.

7.2.1 Recommendations regarding future research

Due to the fact that this study is exploratory descriptive in nature and that generalisations cannot be made from information gained from 20 respondents, themes for future research have been identified. Themes arising from the study which justify further research include the following:

- ***Modus operandi of retail robbers***

It is recommended that research concerning the *modus operandi* of retail robbers should involve the robbers themselves in order to ensure first-hand and unfiltered information directly from the robbers. In this way, myths and stereotypes can be expelled from research. Since robbers are most knowledgeable concerning retail robberies, it is recommended that information obtained in this study is verified with retail robbers per se and that the identified themes which justify further research should also be researched first-hand.

Although the resulting findings from this study indicate that the primary goal of retail robberies is financial gain, further research regarding motivational factors is

warranted. Additional investigation should also be made into what the offenders do with these financial gains after the robberies. Research should be conducted with a larger sample and should consider the motives, incentives, inhibiting factors, and defence mechanisms that may prevent a retail robber from committing such robberies. Since the present study included the victims of retail robberies, it cannot be determined whether the information obtained concerning robbers is representative of this population.

Further research regarding the personality profile of retail robbers can be conducted in order to determine the factors which influence the decision-making and cost-benefit analysis of these offenders. Kennedy and Baron (1993:93) add that the origin of criminal opportunities can only be fully understood if there is knowledge of the motivations or decisions made by the offender, the target and the guardian, prior to the convergence of these three elements. They maintain that these decisions or motivations not only affect their routine activities, but also their actions upon convergence.

Furthermore, since research findings indicate that retail robbery is a group activity, investigation should be made into the group dynamics involved. An in-depth study should be made into the structure of the group, group cohesion, and the division of roles during retail robberies. Further research concerning the influence that the size of the group and the use of firearms has upon the amount of violence employed in these robberies is warranted. The age structure within these groups should also be examined in order to determine its effect upon the use of violence. In addition, it would be beneficial to researchers and victims alike if research were to be conducted with robbers regarding the types of firearms they used in retail robberies, as well as their manner of entry to the stores.

Further research should be conducted regarding the taking of hostages during a retail robbery. The possibility exists that hostages are taken, but that companies are hesitant to participate in research as they fear that their reputations may be tarnished by the publication of this kind of information.

In the current study only one respondent indicated that the robbers seemed to be under the influence of an abused substance. However, this is a difficult factor to determine and the size of the sample does not allow generalisations, therefore, a larger study should be carried out with regard to this phenomenon. According to Walsh (1986:41), decision-making is often influenced by abused substances such as alcohol and drugs.

The influence of these substances on decisions made by offenders during retail robberies is another aspect that should be further explored. The possibility of a correlation between abused substances and retail robbery is not excluded.

- **The influence of situational factors**

Large-scale research should also be conducted in terms of the impact that situational factors have in the decision-making process of retail robbers. It is recommended that this research should be conducted directly with the offenders and should examine how the vulnerability of stores is influenced by the characteristics of the area, a police presence nearby, the use of private security companies, the number of potential witnesses, security devices, and the visibility of the store. The present study found that retail robbers were not deterred by police patrols, security measures, or high visibility of the stores. As the motivation of robbers to disregard or heed the above situational factors is deemed to be important in the formulation of an effective crime prevention strategy, these factors or so-called guardians, according to the routine activities theory, should be further investigated.

A comparison should also be made between retail stores situated in high crime-rate areas and those that are not. Those which are not in these high risk areas may even be more vulnerable to robbery because they have a sense of security and can, therefore, be easily surprised during a robbery. In this regard, the security measures of large superstores should be compared to those of small stores, such as spaza shops in townships, in order to determine their risk for retail robbery. The guardianship and vigilance in the store should also be explored.

Victim complicity should be examined and a determination made of the extent to which owners contribute to their own victimisation. Care should be taken not to blame the victim in this regard and the aim should only be to make these potential victims aware of their risk for robbery. An investigation could also be made into the role of the employees in terms of passing inside information to potential robbers. Furthermore, the reactions of the victims during a retail robbery should also be further explored.

The effect of the training of staff could also be examined to establish if it enables staff to cope more effectively with retail robbery incidents. In addition, research could be conducted on internal policies and programmes which are presented to retail personnel in order to improve their observation skills prior to, as well as during, a robbery.

7.2.2 Recommendations regarding the prevention of retail robberies

Retail robbery is a violent crime that is influenced by a number of factors. Some of these factors include the legacy of the apartheid regime, the climate of violence prevalent in South Africa, as well as various socio-economic conditions such as poverty and unemployment. It is evident that there is no instant solution and that these diverse influences require diverse preventative measures. Due to the fact that the ineffectiveness of the South African criminal justice system was identified as one of the primary reasons for the increase in violent crime (Crime Information Management Centre, 1996:27), the role of more effective law enforcement and legislation will be mentioned first. Thereafter, recommendations will be made regarding situational crime prevention and the means by which physical opportunities for criminal activity could be diminished.

7.2.2.1 More effective law enforcement and legislation

The findings in the current study indicate that regular police patrols do not act as a deterrent to retail robbers. However, this finding cannot be generalised as police presence is considered to, in accordance with the routine activities theory, increase guardianship in an area (Cohen & Felson, 1979:592). Visible policing is also emphasised by Pratt (1980:169) as an important consideration in situational crime prevention. Although increased visibility of the police may lead to various forms of displacement in terms of the place, time and manner in which the crime is committed, the omnipresence of the police may decrease the existing opportunities that are available for retail robberies, as well as increasing the possibility of arresting offenders. It is, therefore, recommended that policing should be increased at recognised “hot spots” and during the identified peak hours in which retail robberies are committed, despite a deficiency of resources.

Crime statistics, according to Steenkamp (1997:1), indicate that a limited number of offenders are arrested and convicted and that the criminal justice system is not effective in the prevention of crime (see section 3.1.1).

Myerson (1995:2) summarises this problem as follows:

With our laws and punishments being so protective towards the criminal, society at large has little chance of regulating crime, and if South Africa's crime rate continues to grow, it will reach a point where crime and violence itself will begin to regulate society...

In light of the above statement, it is also recommended that stricter legislation should be considered regarding compulsory minimum sentences, bail and parole conditions of individuals arrested for retail robberies. As crimes committed with firearms are considered as one of the seven priority crimes in South Africa, according to the National Crime Prevention Strategy, it is important that, in conjunction with various divisions of the criminal justice system, the SAPS should devise operations by which the number of illegal firearms currently in circulation in South Africa will be decreased. The SAPS and Mozambique already have such a project, known as “Operation Rachel”, in action. Normandeau (1981:300), who is a supporter of stricter legislation and heavier sentences, particularly for armed robbery, emphasises that stricter legislation will only have an impact if the deterrent value of punishment is increased.

7.2.2.2 Situational crime prevention strategies

According to Reynolds (1994:180), common sense and judgement, as well as good observation skills, natural curiosity and certain levels of suspicion may be helpful in the prevention of retail robberies.

The need for action, such as increased observation skills, in order to address all forms of violent or aggressive behaviour is widely recognised by staff who work in high-risk settings such as retail stores (Reynolds, 1994:180). Both staff and their families live with the effects of robbery incidents on an increasingly regular basis. In the longer term, Reynolds (1994:180) indicates that the benefits of taking action and being prepared for the eventuality of robbery include:

- A better trained and more highly skilled workforce. Staff will have the ability to cope more effectively with robbery incidents while they are taking place, and respond more positively afterwards. As a result, their stress levels will be lower and their morale higher.
- Enhanced team spirit amongst staff members. An implication of group de-briefing and training is that it significantly develops group cohesion. Groups who have experienced adversity and who have satisfactorily negotiated any after-effects of traumatic events such as robberies, become much closer and stronger as a consequence.

Although it might be argued that none of these benefits are measurable in terms of the “bottom line” (costs and profits), they are nevertheless highly significant, leading to improved staff performance both during and following incidents. Perhaps the most convincing argument in favour of taking action can be found in the retailers who carry out policies and practices to help staff who are at risk (Reynolds, 1994:180). Counselling is one example of these practices.

Van der Schyff (2002:63) is of the opinion that training is the crux of successful pro-active and reactive armed robbery response. While armed robberies in South Africa are on the increase, he suggests that businesses will do well to train their staff to deal with robberies, increase their physical security and increase the level of difficulty involved in retail robberies.

7.2.2.2.1 Training on how to respond in the event of retail robberies

According to Reynolds (1994:180), training is about preparing staff in the event of an incident, equipping them with the skills to cope at the time and providing them with knowledge and skills to help themselves afterwards.

In many retail stores violent incidents such as robberies pose a high risk for front-line staff. Where this is the case, training in how to respond should be a high priority. In terms of training objectives this means that staff should be able to do the following:

- Respond in a way that minimises danger to themselves or others and, at the same time, minimises loss to the retail store.
- Operate any security devices, such as alarms, cameras and panic buttons. As mentioned in Chapter 6, panic buttons and alarms were not utilised by staff due to the sudden attack of the robbers. This highlights the importance of training in this regard.
- Implement personal strategies that help to minimise the psychological impact of an incident.
- Implement organisational policy, such as filling in check lists, with regard to post-robbery procedures.

Beyond this, a few ideas for exercises to help staff consolidate this information, as well as an incident procedure regarding robbery, could include the following:

- Using workplace-based practical exercises or simulations to “dry-run” the robbery procedure in absolute safety. However, it is important to remember that these exercises will need to be repeated several times to ensure that staff can respond automatically. In the present study, none of the respondents indicated that they simulated dry-runs.
- Exercises to help staff visualise what they would be thinking and what actions they would take in the event of a robbery. In particular, staff should be assisted in developing their own personal coping strategies.
- An exercise to help staff develop their powers of observation for noting important features which may help in the identification of the robbers. Although no question with regard to this was included in the interview schedule, none of the respondents had measures or policies concerning the observation of identifying features of offenders.
- Simulation exercises to rehearse the implementation of an immediate post-incident response, such as the filling in of check sheets detailing the robbery events, as well as the characteristics of the robbers.

As this type of training is highly workplace specific, it is generally most effective when carried out in the normal working environment. Furthermore, it is important that retail staff need to be able to carry out all of the incident procedures in their normal workplace.

Further steps that may be taken by staff in anticipation of a retail robbery are the following:

- **Reporting suspicious circumstances**

Staff should be alert and focused at all times and should constantly be checking for loiterers or people watching the store. By training staff to be vigilant and to report their suspicions, potential robbers may be deterred either immediately before carrying out a robbery or when “casing” the premises. One of the respondents in the present study indicated that he noticed suspicious people in his shop prior to the robbery. These robbers were pretending to be shoppers while observing the activities of the retail staff and customers. In addition, employees should be trained to never provide any information to unknown callers regarding the whereabouts of managers or the times and dates of cash pick-ups or deposits (Van der Schyff, 2002:63).

- **Limiting the impact of a robbery**

It is important to make sure that staff know what to do in the event of a robbery. As proven in the current study, personnel are less likely to get hurt if they co-operate with the robbers' demands. It is therefore recommended that frequent information sessions are held where staff are advised not to make sudden movements and that they should speak calmly. Van der Schyff (2002:63) indicates that even the breathing of a victim can influence the outcome of a robbery. According to him, staff should also be trained to regulate their breathing by taking long slow deliberate breaths.

The alarm should only be activated if it can be done so secretly (Van der Schyff, 2002:63). In this regard, people are necessary for design actions to be effective. In section 6.2.4, the role of alarms was highlighted and it was determined that this measure does not act as a deterrent due to the fact that staff are not able to activate the alarms during a robbery.

The robbers should not be looked at directly in the face as many people have been shot because robbers tried to prevent themselves from being recognised by their victims. In a study (Davis, 1999:267) on vehicle hijacking, one hijacker stated that "It's not about killing, it's about eliminating witnesses". In eight of the cases in the present study, the victims were told to lie down on the floor, possibly so that they would not be able to see the offenders clearly.

Staff should also be trained to observe details about the robbers such as hair and eye colour, height, build, clothing, sound of voice or accent. According to Van der Schyff (2002:63), this significantly improves the chances of detection, makes staff feel less helpless and gives them confidence that they are fighting back. In addition, staff must try to get a description of the vehicle and the direction of travel, but only when it is safe to do so.

Additional training of retail staff may include aspects which would increase the physical security of the store, as well as increasing the level of difficulty for potential robbers. These aspects will be briefly discussed in the following section.

7.2.2.2.2 Increasing the level of difficulty for retail robbers

One possible way to decrease the incidence of robbery would be to stop offenders choosing robbery in preference to other forms of crime. Assuming the choices are

rational, this might be achieved by increasing the risks and decreasing the profits of robbery. The most frequently mentioned advantage of robbery is that it involves dealing in cash. This is seen as an advantage due to the difficulties associated with converting stolen goods into money. This cash advantage, therefore, has to be removed.

- **Reduction of rewards**

To make robbery less attractive to potential offenders, there is a need to reduce the amount of money available to robbers and to make it more difficult to obtain. However, it is possible that decreasing the average amount of money taken during robberies may actually increase the number of robberies. This is based on the assumption that the need for money will not decrease simply because the amount obtained in a particular robbery decreases. As such, offenders will need to commit more robberies for the same rewards. Possible measures of reducing the rewards and increasing the level of difficulty of retail robberies will subsequently be discussed.

Retailers should keep as little cash as possible at all times by regularly transferring it to somewhere more secure. As indicated in section 6.4.1, the average amount stolen during the robberies was R3 000 to R5 000. This is, however, a substantial amount for a small retailer. Posters stating that only a small float is kept in the till can be a useful preventative measure on its own. Larger shops often use sophisticated ways of clearing cash regularly, for example using vacuum tubes.

According to the routine activities theory, a retail store which involves a high cash turnover is going to be a more attractive target to robbers (Conklin, 1981:296). In this case the use of credit accounts should be encouraged in order to limit the amount of cash on the premises. Again, the fact that limited cash is kept in the till should be displayed on the store window.

In the event of a robbery the robber's demands should be complied with by handing over cash bags filled with low denomination decoy money. These cash bags must be ready for just such an emergency and may result in only minimal loss to a store during a robbery. It may also be useful to purchase a special cash-carrying case or bag that gives off smoke and spray dyes which are set off in a robbery attempt. In certain circumstances, these bags might be checked by the robbers before they leave the stores, this would then most likely precipitate violence towards the victims.

- **Handling of money**

A cost-effective way of making robbery more difficult is to train staff in cash handling routines. These routines would include aspects such as not leaving drawers open longer than absolutely necessary, ensuring that there is more than one member of staff at hand when money is moved, and counting cash in a secure area in the store (<http://www.aic.gov.au/publications/armedrobbery/ch2.html>). In the present study, one retail store owner whose store was robbed after closing time, stated that there is usually a lot of money available after closing time and robbers can obtain it with little effort as there are usually only one or two staff members present to cash up. Although money was not moved or counted prior to the 20 robberies under investigation, it is something to keep in mind. The use of cash-carrying specialists should also be considered. This measure does not necessarily prevent a robbery taking place, but it puts the store's cash into the hands of companies that are better equipped to protect themselves. Although this is not always viable for small businesses, it is always an option for large retail stores.

- **Utilising staff**

It is advisable to always have at least two clerks working at opening and closing times. As indicated by findings in the present study, the presence of limited staff in a store make it more vulnerable to robbery (see routine activities theory, section 2.1.2). The more staff that a store can afford to have in the shop, the greater the deterrent against robbers. It should be ensured that the clerks' duties do not take them away from the cash register area for long periods of time. Staff should also check offices, back rooms and rest rooms before closing time to ensure that there are no potential robbers hiding inside. The chances of a successful robbery are also reduced by ensuring that different staff members are responsible for holding different keys, particularly by separating the shop key holders and the safe key holders.

- **Target hardening**

As mentioned in Chapter 6 (section 6.2.4), target hardening is one way of preventing crimes such as retail robbery. Various measures can be taken in hardening a target and these measures will be briefly discussed. By installing solid anti-grab screens around the till drawer it is more difficult for anyone other than the till operator to reach in when the drawer is open. By increasing inertia (see routine activities theory, section 2.1.1), the potential for violence may, however, also be increased. In addition, another

way to increase inertia is in the way that some tills are programmed to also limit the time that a till drawer remains open and accessible to a robber. In this regard, some retailers with vulnerable businesses in high risk areas have resorted to installing solid floor to ceiling screens between the customers and the staff.

Retail stores that are located in high risk areas may consider installing double doors which allow staff to restrict entry. This is an air lock entry system and robbers can be effectively trapped in the 'air lock' between the doors when trying to leave the scene. Some high value stockists, such as jewellers and certain antique shops, may prefer an alternative approach where only one door is used, but it is kept locked and customers are admitted via a buzzer and electric lock release. However, it is important to keep in mind that target hardening in terms of safety doors does not guarantee that a store will not be robbed. It often happens that these stores are robbed in spite of these security measures. A possible reason for this might be that retailers are unable to distinguish between a customer and a potential robber.

Another useful method which increases the level of difficulty involved in retail robberies is to install a small safe or 'cache' under the till, securely built into the counter. In this way cash can regularly be taken from the till and dropped into the 'safe' so that neither the till operators nor robbers have access to the money. If this method is adopted it should only be known to the owner and manager.

In this study, one respondent indicated that he had removed his safe from his store because he felt that it would endanger his life in the event of a robbery. However, his safe was a loose-standing safe which stood on his office floor. Safes that are built into external walls, accessed by cash collection companies from outside the store, will reduce the risk of robbers harming staff or customers. By using time-lock safes that can only be opened at specific preset times, or by making cash collection companies the sole key holders to the safe, staff cannot hand cash over during a robbery. These safes can be fitted with roller-trap lids so that staff can deposit cash but not remove it. Once again, there should be a sign indicating that staff do not have access to the safe.

Research conducted by Whitcomb (in Lab, 1997:35) revealed that closed-circuit televisions often acts as a deterrent. As 12 (60%) of the stores in the present study did not have closed-circuit televisions, it may be assumed that these cameras aid in the prevention of retail robbery. As a result, in retail stores where large amounts of cash are collected, special attention should be given to the cash handling area. Retailers should, therefore, consider installing video surveillance cameras, reinforcing the

doors, walls and ceilings, using “one way mirrored” and bullet resistant glass and putting in entry control mechanisms into these areas.

- **Increased visibility**

The store should be designed in such a manner to make it less attractive to robbers. Cash desks can, for example, be positioned so that robbers are unable to keep all the retail staff in their line of sight, or are unable to back out or escape without obstruction. The success of environmental design actions of this nature have been known to academics for a long time (Lab, 1997:27).

In the present study, it was found that, in accordance with the routine activities theory, the presence of more customers would increase the guardianship of the store (Felson, 1998:53), thereby deterring robbers. Robbers would thus be deterred by a larger number of possible witnesses, so it should be ensured that the window display and shop fittings allow a clear view of the shop interior from the street, so that the cash desk is easily visible to passers-by. Care should be taken in the positioning of a store’s till because if it is too far back it will not be visible from the outside of the shop, but if it is too close to the door it may attract robbers as they can dash in and out quickly. The six small retailers who were included in the present study all had their tills positioned near the doorways, and as a result robbers were able to rob the store with relative ease.

Opportunities for crime need to be reduced and these opportunity-reducing measures could include target hardening, removing the means for criminal activity, or increasing surveillance (Lab, 2002:149). This increased surveillance also includes increasing the observation skills of retail store employees in order to identify potential offenders beforehand and thereby aiding in the prevention of robbery.

Retailers who do not have surveillance systems should consider installing closed circuit television cameras to record all who enter the store or the vulnerable areas within the store. This has been indicated to act as a deterrent to potential robbers. As mentioned previously in section 3.7.3.3, good quality equipment is necessary to increase the chances of video evidence being used to get a conviction. Recordings should also indicate the date and time at which the robbery occurred. It would help if cameras were situated low enough to get a clear, rather than a foreshortened, picture.

If a retail store is situated in a high risk area, it is more vulnerable to attack if it has late closing hours. This is due to the cover that darkness provides, the fewer the number of passers-by and the fewer shops open for robbers to target. For this reason it is important for a retail store to have good lighting installed inside, as well as outside the store, especially if it stays open until after it is dark. In this regard, Wright, Heilweil, Pelletier and Dickinson (in Lab, 1997:32) found significant reductions in violent crime in areas where lighting has been improved.

- **Additional preventative measures**

Although it was found, in section 6.2.4, that panic buttons did not make a difference in the present study due to the fact that the victims were surprised by the robbers and did not have an opportunity to press the buttons, this finding should be confirmed with larger samples. Panic alarms can be linked via an intruder alarm system to summon police assistance. These alarms can be activated by foot or hand switches, or within till drawers by, for example, removing the last note from a money clip. Also consider installing less sophisticated alarms ('doorbells' or personal attack alarms) that can summon help from the public, other parts of the store or from other shops.

According to Van der Schyff (2002:63), research has proven that a visible guard on the premises is the best deterrent to retail robbers. In the present study, nine of the 20 stores made use of security guards which, according to the routine activities theory (see section 2.1.2), aided in the guardianship of these stores. The presence of trained, uniformed security staff is likely to deter less 'professional' robbers, but the cost of this measure may make it impractical for smaller stores. If such an option is employed, it must be ensured that these security staff are properly recruited and trained. Some of these preventive measures may make access to cash more difficult for robbers but may equally put staff, and sometimes customers, more at risk if they cannot comply with a robber's demands.

7.2.3 Victim support

The staff of a retail store that has been robbed are likely to have suffered considerable trauma. This statement is confirmed by research conducted by Barkas (1978:149) which indicates that victims of violent crime will be traumatised by their experience. This is also in agreement with the victim reaction theories applied in this study, namely the crisis theory, the attribution theory, Janoff-Bulman and Frieze's theory of victim reactions, as well as the **Model of the victim's experience after a retail**

robbery. Trauma counselling is therefore recommended in order to prevent the debilitating effects of post-traumatic stress.

According to Reynolds (1994:156), staff who are aware of the effects of violent incidents such as retail robberies, as well as what to do to help themselves, will as a general rule, recover more quickly than staff who are not aware. Although paradoxical, it further follows that training before an incident is an important aid for recovery afterwards, as well as the development of adaptive coping strategies (see section 2.2.1, crisis theory)(Lurigio et al., 1990:76).

Janoff-Bulman (1992:144) maintains that social support is strongly associated with psychological well-being and positive adjustment after victimisation. The aim of victim support, therefore, is to provide skilful support of victims to enable them to successfully work through the trauma caused by the robbery and to prevent secondary victimisation by the criminal justice system. The second aim is the prevention of retail robberies by advising and guiding victims towards preventative measures and by creating an awareness among the public and the risks of such a crime.

7.3 CONCLUSION

With the aid of an interview schedule, interviews were conducted with 20 retail staff who had been the victims of robberies. Information was obtained from the victims' perspective regarding the operational and post-offence phases which are characteristic of the *modus operandi* of retail robbers. The violence associated with retail robberies was also highlighted. Information regarding the situational factors that may influence these robberies was likewise gathered. In addition, the reactions of the victims during the robberies including the consequences of the retail robberies for these direct victims was also established. The above information was interpreted, analysed and, where relevant, theories were applied to the results. These theories included the crisis theory, Janoff-Bulman and Frieze's approach to victim reactions and the attribution theory which stated that when an individual experiences a crisis or traumatic event which causes psychological distress, they develop adaptive or maladaptive coping strategies, make certain attributions and develop adaptations in order to deal with the shattering of three basic assumptions namely, the assumption of invulnerability, the world as meaningful, and the individual's positive self-perception. On the basis of these theories and existing research on robbery in general, a **Model of the victim's**

experience after a retail robbery was formulated to serve as a framework for the study.

Based on the research findings, it was recommended that larger samples be used to verify the findings of this study. Further information on aspects such as the *modus operandi* of the offenders, the group dynamics involved in retail robberies, as well as the violence associated with these robberies should be obtained first-hand from retail robbers. It was further suggested that a large scale study be conducted concerning the influence of situational factors in the decision-making processes of robbers.

Various recommendations were also made regarding the prevention of retail robberies. These recommendations included more effective law enforcement and legislation, the implementation of situational crime prevention strategies, such as the training of retail staff, and increasing the level of difficulty for robbers, as well as strategies for the support of victims of retail robberies.

Although the current study was exploratory descriptive in nature and entailed the use of semi-structured focused interviews which do not always yield sufficiently rich data, the aims of the study were successfully achieved. In conclusion, it is therefore hoped that the findings of this research, as well as the various recommendations made, will broaden scientific knowledge of retail robberies in South Africa and that further, much needed research of this phenomenon will be stimulated as a result of this study.

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APPENDIX I

INTERVIEW SCHEDULE – VICTIMS OF RETAIL ROBBERY

Please note: If you were robbed more than once, the questions refer to the latest incident.

Instructions: Please answer all the questions.

A. BIOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION

1. Gender:

Male	1
Female	2

2. Age: _____ years

3. Race:

Black	1
White	2
Coloured	3
Asian	4

4. Occupation (Position in store): _____

B. INFORMATION REGARDING THE ROBBERY

5. During which month did the robbery occur?

January	1
February	2
March	3
April	4
May	5
June	6
July	7
August	8
September	9
October	10
November	11
December	12

6. On which day of the week did the robbery take place?

Monday	1
Tuesday	2
Wednesday	3
Thursday	4
Friday	5
Saturday	6
Sunday	7



7. At what time did the robbery occur?

06h00-08h00	1
08h00-10h00	2
10h00-12h00	3
12h00-14h00	4
14h00-16h00	5
16h00-18h00	6
18h00-20h00	7
20h00-22h00	8
22h00-24h00	9

8. How many robbers were there? _____

9. Did you know the robber(s)?

Yes	1
No	2

If no, go to question 11

10. If yes, explain how.

11. Was/were the robber(s) armed with weapons?

Yes	1
No	2

If no, go to question 17.

12. If yes, how many of them were armed? _____

13. What weapon(s) did the robber(s) have?

If no firearms were used, go to question 17.

14. If a firearm was used during the robbery, which type of firearm(s) was/were used?

15. Did the robber(s) attempt to fire the firearm(s)?

Yes	1
No	2

If no, go to question 17.

16. If yes, for what reason(s) was/were the firearm(s) fired?



17. Were any verbal threats made by the robber(s)?

Yes	1
No	2

If no, go to question 19.

18. If yes, what did the robber(s) say?

19. Were any other type of threats used (e.g. weapon aimed at you or anyone else)?

Yes	1
No	2

If no, go to question 21.

20. If yes, what threats were used?

21. Did the robber(s) use violence?

Yes	1
No	2

If no, go to question 23.

22. If yes, what was the nature of the violence?

23. Did you or anyone else try to resist the robber(s)?

Yes	1
No	2

If no, go to question 27.

24. If yes, how did you or someone else resist the robber(s)?

25. When you/someone else resisted, did the robber(s) become more aggressive?

Yes	1
No	2

If no, go to question 27.



26. In what way did the robber(s) become more aggressive?

27. If you did not resist the robber(s), why did you decide not to resist?

28. Did the robber(s) have a vehicle outside in which to escape?

Yes	1
No	2

If no, go to question 30.

29. If yes, explain.

30. Does this area have a high crime-rate?

Yes	1
No	2

If no, go to question 32.

31. If yes, explain.

32. How many employees were in the shop at the time? _____

33. How many customers were in the shop at the time? _____

34. Why do you think this shop was selected as a target?

35. What security measures did the store have at the time of the robbery?

36. Was the inside of the store visible from the outside?

Yes	1
No	2

If no, go to question 38.

37. If yes, elaborate.



38. Do the police patrol the area regularly?

Yes	1
No	2

If no, go to question 40.

39. If yes, explain your answer.

40. What was your reaction during the robbery?

C. CONSEQUENCES OF THE ROBBERY

41. What was stolen by the robber(s)?

42. Has the store's security measures been improved since the robbery?

Yes	1
No	2

If no, go to question 44.

43. If yes, in what way?

44. Did you or anyone else sustain any physical injuries during the robbery?

Yes	1
No	2

If no, go to question 48.

45. If yes, what was the nature of these injuries?

46. Did you or anyone else receive any medical treatment after the robbery?

Yes	1
No	2

If no, go to question 48.



47. If yes, explain?

48. Did you need psychological or psychiatric treatment after the robbery?

Yes	1
No	2

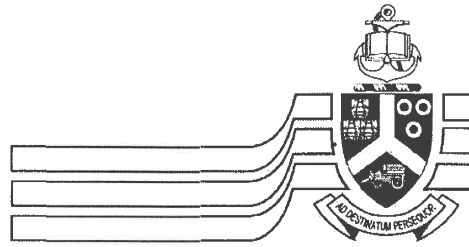
If no, go to question 50.

49. If yes, elaborate.

50. What impact did the robbery have on your family and social life?

51. If any aspect, which could contribute to this research has been omitted in the interview, please discuss it with me.

Thank you for your willingness to participate in the research.



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Faculty of Humanities

April 2002

Dear Sir/Madam

I am a researcher associated with the Department of Criminology at the University of Pretoria. We are conducting research on retail robbery and the focus of the study is to determine the *modus operandi* of retail robbers. Knowledge of the *modus operandi* of retail robbers will enable a pro-active approach in the prevention of this crime in order to assist others who find themselves in the same situation.

I wish to conduct interviews with employees or customers who were present when a retail store was robbed. These robberies must have occurred in the Gauteng area in the past four years. The actions of the robbers as experienced by the victims will be of great value to the study. These interviews are informal and will take no longer than half an hour. The anonymity of all respondents will be ensured and the interview results will only be used for research purposes. I assure you that all the information obtained from these interviews will be confidential and handled with ethical correctness.

For further enquiries please contact Nadine Stewart at 082 3255 758 or Dr. Linda Davis at (012) 420-2030.

Yours Sincerely

Nadine Stewart
Department of Criminology