

## 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	%
<b>Physical injury</b>				
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.