

**A fear that is close to home:**

**Perceptions of personal safety, internal processing and indirect exposure to  
violent crime.**

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## **ABSTRACT**

This study aimed to explore the manner in which 14 young (early to late 20s), middle class adults (9 female, 5 male), living in Johannesburg perceive the safety of the environment in which they live. The project thus more specifically sought to determine whether Indirect Exposure to trauma stimuli and three selected aspects of Self Capacity appear to bear any relationship to Perceptions of Personal Safety. The study employed a longitudinal design that involved the assessment of the variables of interest by participants, through self-report questionnaires, at 3 month intervals over a 9 month period. The data was analysed through Correlation, Mixed Procedure in SAS and basic content analysis methods. Findings indicate that despite positive relational trends between the variables no significant relationships could be established. Explanations for these findings are explored with the help of previous literature and recommendations for future research are discussed.

## **DECLARATION**

I declare that this dissertation is my own work. It is submitted for the degree of Master of Arts (Clinical Psychology) at the University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg. It has not been submitted before for any other degree or examination at any other university.

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\_\_\_\_ day of July, 2009.

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## **CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION AND RATIONALE**

### **1.1. Introduction**

“There can be few South Africans who have yet to become a crime statistic. In our divided land, it is the one experience we have all shared” (Altbeker, 2007, p.17)

As Anthony Altbeker suggests, in his book *A Country at War with Itself : South Africa’s Crisis of crime*, being a member of South African society one is neither a stranger to crime nor to the unyielding discourses it ignites. It is a subject that invokes a multitude of strong emotions (for example anger, fear, anxiety, aggression, disillusionment) and looms over dinner tables, is woven into newspaper and magazine editorials, has fuelled a rapidly thriving private security industry and produced parliamentary debates, but remains unremitting with the related feelings remaining unsoothed. As a student in the field of psychology and a member of this ‘crime infested’ community I was curious about where the ‘emotions’ associated with a prominent awareness of crime are located. How does the population of South Africa, exposed to an unrelenting barrage of crime stimuli, maintain an emotionally healthy existence and is this possible? How does the experience of this crime coverage and exposure impact our perceptions of our country and what factors modulate and inform the manner in which we internalise and process these thoughts and emotions? This study was designed in an attempt to explore some of these questions recognising the complexity of the context. The study was thus primarily designed as an exploratory attempt to systematically understand some of the lived experience of surviving in a society with high, manifest levels of crime.

## **1.2. Research Rationale**

In 2006 during his department's budget debate in the National Assembly, the then Safety and Security Minister, Charles Nqakula suggested that South Africans who complain about crime are “whingers” and “should leave the country” (as cited in Da Costa, “Crime whingers can leave, says Nqakula”, 2006, p. 1). In spite of the fact that recent police statistics suggested that violent crime had decreased by 6% a year since the end of 2002, public perception was that high profile crime was increasing (Benjamin, 2007). In the media and other forums this perception was attributed to the apparent increase of robberies (hijackings, cash-in-transit heists, shopping mall robberies and home break-ins) since 1994 and the lack of public faith in South African Police Services (“Break-ins at home feared most, crime survey finds”, 2007, p.6; Altbeker, 2007; Benjamin, 2007). To better qualify his explanation for this, Altbeker compared the trends related to South Africa’s murder rate to those of the robbery rate over an eleven year period (1995/6 – 2006/2007). His findings indicate that the ratio of occurrence of robbery to murder has doubled from a ratio of five to one to that of ten to one (Altbeker, 2007) with the rate of robbery increasing and that of murder decreasing over this period.

The comparison of South Africa’s murder rate, a prevalence rate that appears to be decreasing annually, to that of the murder rate of other many other countries internationally provides another basis for understanding the lack of impact of the decrease in crime rates generally on the perceptions of personal safety of the South African population. With South Africa consistently topping or being in the top three countries in the world in terms of murder rates a 6% decrease in violent crime would not necessarily translate into a ‘low’ crime environment. “In

1998 the average murder rate for the 111 countries referred to on Interpol's website was 8 per 100 000. By comparison, South Africa's murder rate in 2004/05 (the lowest rate since 1994) was 40 per 100 000" (Louw, 2006, p.236). The high volume of murders, 38.6 per 100 000 (2007/2008) and armed robbery 247.3 per 100 000 (2007/2008 Crime Statistics [www.saps.gov.za/statistics/reports/crimestats](http://www.saps.gov.za/statistics/reports/crimestats)) that occur annually in South Africa may be too overwhelming for any reduction in crime to be appreciated at the level of perceptions of risk and vulnerability. It is also apparent that some types of crime, such as house robberies, have not decreased and may contribute to a felt sense of danger. However, it should be appreciated that there is not necessarily a completely rational correlation between public perceptions of personal safety and/or fear of crime and the presence of risk as evident in statistics of reported crime.

Every day people live and work in cities like Johannesburg, inundated by statistics, stories (media or personal), debates and experiences of crime. It has been suggested that levels of crime in Johannesburg are particularly high relative to most other cities in the world, for example the murder rate is still 8% higher than the international norm (Altbeker, 2007). This means that the citizens of Johannesburg to some extent live in a climate of perpetual, albeit indirect, traumatisation considerably increased by the randomness of crime and the fear of the eventuality of being next (Glanz 1995, Friedland, 1999).

It thus seems relevant to explore some aspects of the manner in which people assimilate this influx of traumatic stimuli and to question in what way this and the proximity of the trauma to the self may affect their perceptions of their general sense of safety and personal well being. In responding to traumatic events it has been established that both 'external' aspects relating to

characteristics of the traumatic stimuli, as well as 'internal' aspects, such as personality style, play a role in whether and how a trauma response develops (Garland, 1998). It has also been established that people can be indirectly, secondarily or vicariously traumatised by exposure to accounts of other's traumatisation. The study thus aimed to explore both internal aspects of functioning and external aspects of trauma stimuli exposure in order to establish a possible relationship with an aspect of indirect traumatisation, in this instance 'Fear of Crime' or a compromised 'Perception of Personal Safety'.

### **1.3. Research aims**

This research project aimed to explore the manner in which young, middle class, Johannesburg adults perceive the safety of the environment in which they live. Although not victims of trauma themselves they are living with the constant, indirect exposure to violent crime, from various sources, both personal and general. The aim of this project was thus to determine how both aspects of reported internal processing and a person's proximity to criminal events relate to perceptions of personal safety.

### **1.4. Outline of report**

The research report is structured as follows. Chapter 2 provides an overview of the literature covering some of the different theoretical approaches to understanding the three variables indicated in this study. Firstly the five theoretical models used to define and describe Fear of Crime are summarised and then applied to a South African context. Secondly Internal Processes is defined according to the progression from Freud's notion of the ego to McCann and Pearlman's description of Self Capacities (the concept operationalised for the purposes of this study). Thirdly Indirect Traumatisation is explored as it evolved from the literature on direct trauma.

Chapters 3 to 5 outline the method and findings of the present study. Chapter 3 introduces the research questions that directed the statistical analyses performed, and then provides details of the methodology employed, and an overview of the instruments utilised and statistical procedures implemented in the research study. Chapter 4 summarises the results of the statistical analyses carried out on the data collected. Chapter 5 provides an evaluation and discussion of the findings of the study in light of available literature. Chapter 6 then closes off the report with a brief overview of the limitations of the present study, implications for future research and concluding comments.

## **CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **2.1. Introduction and Orientation**

This chapter is intended to serve as a review of the literature related to the study as a whole and the three variables considered in this study, namely: Fear of Crime/Perceptions of Personal Safety, Internal Processing (as operationalised in terms of the notion of Self Capacities) and Indirect Traumatization (exposure to external stimuli). The author has sought to do justice to both describing the theory in each area as well as addressing the debates and points of contestation. The researcher will attempt to introduce and orientate the reader to some of the history behind and commonly held views of the three constructs, but will ultimately seek to show the perceived connectivity that led to the conception of this research.

### **2.2. Review of Literature**

#### **2.2.1. Fear of Crime/Perceptions of Personal Safety**

Writing about Fear of Crime in his recent text Anthony Altbeker compellingly describes the experience as “terrifying and devastating in its own right, but it is also an unambiguous confirmation of one’s powerlessness, of the precariousness of one’s existence. And the awareness of the powerlessness reinforces the trauma and terror of the act itself” (Altbeker, 2007, p. 64). Fear of Crime is a topic of much debate currently in South Africa with some voicing their suggestion that it is a construct exaggerated in the media, by megalomaniacal politicians or rather by people who are predisposed to neurosis and anxiety, whilst others argue that it is a condition that has legitimately preoccupied the minds of many modern populations as a result of the violent climate they live in daily. The fact that Fear of Crime is, to a considerable extent, based on subjective perception, has led to much exploration into the various factors that

may influence such perceptions. The following section explores the manner in which Fear of Crime affects one's sense of personal safety in one's environment.

### *Theoretical Models*

Research into the 'Fear of Crime' construct spans over sixty years and includes both empirical and theoretical perspectives. During this time, some authors (Bennett, 1991, Hale, 1996 and most recently, Farrall et al, 2007) have attempted to compile summaries of the plethora of knowledge that has arisen from the writing of various authors, in various environments, for various reasons. Chris Hale's (1996) attempt to summarise the material divided the research to date according to four main themes: vulnerability, victimisation, environmental, and psychological underpinnings. Farrall et al (2007) added to this formulation in light of more recent knowledge and restructured these headings in their review, but argued that it should be recognised that most of the theoretical work done on the construct of Fear of Crime had occurred in Hale's time frame. Farrall et al suggest that the decline in new investigations into the subject, with respect to western authors is due to a paradigm shift in that researchers no longer seeks to understand, but rather now seek to "tackle" and thus mitigate the affects of Fear of Crime (Farrall et al, 2007).

Farrall et al's (2007) review of the literature appears to be the most up to date, thorough and concise synthesis of theory available and thus is used predominantly to introduce the various streams of thought held about the 'Fear of Crime' construct. Farrall et al divide the information under five themes, each of which will be briefly elaborated below.

*The victimisation perspective* was one of the first and more simple theories introduced to attempt to describe the presence and persistence of the Fear of Crime phenomenon. The theory in this area suggests that community members' Fear of Crime is born out of the actual occurrence of crime in their environment and the manner in which this affects actual community members. According to this perspective Fear of Crime is therefore underpinned by the "risk of crime and direct personal experience of victimisation" (Farrall et al 2007). The extent to which people are anxious about crime is therefore understood as being proportional to actual victimisation or the likelihood of actual victimisation in their area (Lewis and Salem, 1980, Liska et al., 1988 Skogan, 1987, as cited in Farrall et al. 2007). When one considers a climate like that of South Africa where, despite the decrease in crime statistics, the murder rate still surpasses that of the USA and China with significantly larger populations (China's population is 30 times that of South Africa) (Altbeker, 2007, p.37) one might begin to see support for this theory in the Fear of Crime amongst South Africans as the likelihood of falling victim to criminal activity is proportionally higher than in many other places in the world. The set of theories falling under this heading therefore argue that exposure to real life events is what produces Fear of Crime and thus places considerable emphasis on objective data. The argument is generally that the higher the direct exposure to others' experiences of crime and the more severe their distress the higher the fellow community members' Fear of Crime. The theory does perhaps presuppose relatively small or close knit communities where first hand exposure would be high. However, in most large contemporary cities the transmission of such information might still occur, but more impersonally, such as through media reporting and word of mouth accounts as explored under the next sub-heading.

*Imagined victimisation and the psychology of risk* is the heading used to describe a second, well documented (Ferraro 1995; Hale, 1996) assertion that the communication of other's experiences of crime (friends, acquaintances or people with similar identifying characteristics) results in people imagining themselves as falling victim to the same fate. Skogan and Maxfield (1981) found that direct victimisation was not the most common manner in which people learnt of criminal activity (cited in Forde, Weinrath and Clarke, 2007). They asserted that most knowledge of crime was ascertained through media or anecdotal means and divided exposure into 'direct and indirect victimisation' in parallel to 'primary and secondary knowledge of neighbourhood crime' (Skogan, 1986). Taylor and Hale (1986) suggested that it is 'indirect victimisation' that acts as a crime multiplier as it is through the 'broken telephone' of anecdotal retelling and mass media reports that news of criminal activity is spread. It is thus through the hearing of and exposure to other's traumas that one's own personal perceptions of risk may be stimulated (Jackson, 2006).

Killias (1990) identified three variables that must be present to create and modulate one's sense of vulnerability to crime. He identified these as: "exposure to risk, the anticipation of serious consequences, and the loss of control ('that is, lack of effective defence, protective measures and/or possibilities of escape')" (cited in Farrall et al, 2007, p.4). These variables each represent and are related to different aspects of vulnerability namely: physical, social and situational stimuli and affects. Empirical research undertaken within this theoretical framework (Ferraro, 1995; Warr, 1984, 1985 Tulloch, 2003; Jackson, 2004, 2007a, 2007b) pointed to the intensity of sensitivity to the impact of victimisation and the sense of level of control over occurrence (cited in Farrall et al 2007) as important in predicting Fear of Crime, as well as the interaction of these

two features. Thus it seems that those whose response to ‘stories’ of other’s victimisation is intense and is coupled with the anticipation of little control over whether they might themselves be exposed to such incidents are inclined towards high levels of Fear of Crime. This more refined understanding of indirect exposure makes intuitive sense. Since the current study focused on indirect exposure to crime through the accounts of others as well as the media and the relationship of this exposure to Fear of Crime it could be seen as contributing to this body of theory within the Fear of Crime literature. However, the other perspectives are also important to appreciate in order to gain a comprehensive picture of the theory in the area.

*Environmental Perceptions* is the heading of the third theme and it explores the manner in which social and physical cues, suggesting neighbourhood collapse and the perceived decline of social controls, influences the public’s sense of vulnerability to criminal risk. Ferrall et al list numerous authors (Skogan and Maxfield, 1981; Wilson and Kelling, 1982; Taylor et al., 1985; Ferraro, 1995; Rountree and Land 1996a, 1996b; Taylor, 1999; Innes, 2004; Robinson, et al. 2003; Jackson and Sunshine, 2007) who have explored how an observer’s Fear of Crime is linked to their experience of social and physical ‘disorder’ where this term is defined as “any aspect of the social and physical environment that indicates to the observer (a) a lack of control and concern, and (b) the values and intentions of others that share the space” (Farrall et al, 2007, p.8) . Thus the level of security experienced is determined by the level of control that is perceived to have been enforced. The proportional relationship suggests that the more control exerted the greater the sense of security or safety fostered in the observer.

Ferraro (1995, p. 15), describes this concept as stemming from what he terms ‘incivilities’, suggesting that these ‘low-level breaches of community standards’ indicate a departure from or dissolution of conventionally held social practices and ideologies. His studies (including ‘nationally representative’ surveys of US citizens) demonstrate the relationship between these incivilities and people’s perceptions of their vulnerability to victimisation. In his book *Fear of Crime: Interpreting Victimisation Risk*, Ferraro (1995) explores and describes how this sense of risk (of victimisation) is in turn related to the level at which people express Fear of Crime.

Taylor et al (1985), in investigating the relationship between fear and environmental cues, explored the manner in which neighbourhood residents interpreted signs of physical decay in their communities. Their findings showed that the socio-economic status of the area was an important influencing factor. In communities on either end of the spectrum (high and low income neighbourhoods) it was found that urban decay and social decline were not very influential in predicting Fear of Crime as these areas were either experienced predictably as overtly safe or expectantly dangerous (Taylor et al, 1985). It was the middle classes who were most subject to such influences. “In the neighbourhoods where socio-economic status is neither so high as to guarantee confidence, nor so low as to guarantee pessimism, a good or bad physical environment has a crucial impact on how people view the neighbourhood” (Taylor et al 1985 cited in Farrall et al, 2007, p.12-13). Thus it appears that it is only within a particular spectrum of a population that the link between environmental degradation and poor regulation and potential risk of crime is experienced. People in impoverished neighbourhoods appear to be accustomed to such decay and the most wealthy feel inured to such effects.

As Farrall et al (2007) suggest the *environmental perceptions* model works on two planes to describe the relationship between the micro-environment and the Fear of Crime: that is, directly, as signs of crime are viewed as evidence of the presence of crime, and indirectly, through the symbolic representation these cues offer of the level of informal social control and containment the neighbourhood exerts. Thus these incivilities or cues are not frightening or dangerous in their physical existence, but rather through the interpretation placed upon them as evidence of criminal activities and the lack of social censure of crime and related activities. The so-called 'broken window' policy adopted in New York to combat crime could be seen as motivated by this kind of environmental understanding. Despite political and social change in South Africa, the country remains one where the disparity between rich and poor is still clearly evident in the physical environment, for example in the comparison between township and wealthy city neighbourhoods. People's fear for their personal safety seems to be reinforced by failing public services, deteriorations of natural recreational spaces and, in many cases, the absence of adequate security. In wealthier areas with their cordoned off neighbourhoods or "gated communities", armed guards, electric fences and high walls, this environmentally based Fear of Crime may be somewhat ameliorated. However, it is apparent that in public discourse this apparent link between infrastructural and service deteriorating and 'rampant' crime is certainly fairly widely entertained, sometimes couched as both emblematic of post transition ineptitude. This links to the next theme.

*Structural change and macro level influences on Fear of Crime* is the approach in which much of what was described as influencing 'Fear of Crime' at a micro level is extrapolated and viewed in its wider macro level context. Thus thoughts around 'structural changes' are extended to include

residents' feelings around, for example, the changed or perceived change in racial composition of their neighbourhoods (Skogan, 1995; St John and Herald-Moore, 1996) or the economic climate of the country as it pertains to the resident's community (Greenberg, 1986) and their perceived status in the rest of the world (Taylor and Jamieson, 1998).

These kinds of variables have been explored and linked to the politics of the time and the rhetoric of the governance or would-be governance structures of the United States and the United Kingdom. Jackson (2004) described how citizens' sense or identification of 'incivilities' or of urban and social decay was generally influenced if not constructed by political attitudes and argued that it was overreaching political beliefs that influenced Fear of Crime (Farrall et al, 2007). Garland (2001) focused on the manner in which politicians' emphasis on crime shifted the onus for creating and maintaining safety from the government onto the public (in the form of private security firms, alarms and burglar guarding etc.) and how this appeal to citizens enforced, on a daily basis, thoughts about crime and vulnerability to victimisation. Lee (2001) expanded on the above by suggesting that it is the very process of discussing government anti-crime measures that reinforces the assertion that being fearful is a national state of being, proposing that Fear of Crime is an "elite-constructed and publicly-maintained exaggeration of the reality of public anxieties" (Lee, 2001, p.470).

Although at times quite cynical about the motivations behind, political discussions around crime and related interventions, this thesis is one that revolves around the notion that Fear of Crime is a 'learned' phenomenon that would not be so widespread if it were not for such political discourse (McConville and Shepard, 1992 and Taylor, 1990 cited in Farrall et al, 2007). The suggestion is

that crime and Fear of Crime may become part of political rhetoric and that public perceptions may be deliberately manipulated to serve political ends rather than being tied to a reality at the 'people level'.

The South African government has proven this theory through its highly contradictory behaviour in both reassuring the public of its power to deal with crime and yet denying the severity of the crime situation. As Altbeker (2007) critically observes:

Instead of actively using public fear to its own advantage, it has done the opposite, pooh-poohing dismay as irrational and perhaps even racist in origin. 'Don't panic' is its endlessly repeated message, expressed, generally in a tone of benign, resigned wisdom (p.12).

Opposing political parties however have used the government's apparent lack of concern to initiate political debate upon debate to ensure that their voice is not suppressed by the majority party and in so doing, constantly remind a highly disturbed population that their fears are not unfounded. It is apparent that both legitimate concern and political rhetoric play a role in shaping Fear of Crime amongst South African citizens.

*The connectedness of anxieties about crime and other anxieties* is the final area of analysis and has seen researchers diverging from the sociological and criminological to locate the Fear of Crime investigation within the minds and psyches of the population experiencing, or prone to experience, such fear. Supporting their assumptions with the basic tenets of psychoanalysis, authors writing from this perspective have described the universal manner in which anxiety

arises and the unique manner in which particular anxieties are individually experienced, and thus defended against. The position is that one's choice of conscious meaning making or unconscious protection of oneself from uncomfortable feelings is determined by one's unique early developmental process and personality structure (for example, one's ego strength or early mothering). Hollway and Jefferson (1997) argue for such a perspective, theorising the unconscious displacement of intolerable anxieties and the projection of these feelings on to "knowable" or acceptable constructs, such as Fear of Crime (Farrall et al, 2007). The ease with which crime may act as a channel or account into which one's 'unnameable' anxieties are deposited has been linked to the concept of 'othering' and the manner in which 'fear' can be operationalised (Scheingold, 1995; Hollway and Jefferson, 1997; Lupton, 1999). In terms of othering "criminals" become a safe and politically correct vestibule for one's deep seated fear of the unknown or of that which is different from oneself. Thus what may once have led to racism or prejudice based on ethnicity or religion can now safely be applied to those who break the law (Scheingold, 1995). Secondly, in terms of the operationalisation of the concept of Fear of Crime, one might consider that crime is something that can be 'fought' or acted against with the intention of diminishing or eradicating the source of the anxiety in a tangible, clear and simple manner, in a way that unconscious, unnameable anxiety cannot be vanquished. People may spend years in psychotherapy and experience cathartic moments that allow for deeper understanding, but this is a draining and difficult process, whereas "padlocking gates, securing cars with steering locks and so on promote control" (Farrall et al, 2007, p. 19) and thus offer people immediate relief and agency over their fear of being victimised. What is being argued here in a sense is that neurotic anxiety stemming from intrapsychic conflict may be displaced

onto tangible, external objects of fear and that the containment of risk from crime may become a symbolic replacement for understanding and working through the real source of anxiety.

It is apparent then that theoretical perspectives put forward to understand and theorise the mechanisms of Fear of Crime fall across a broader spectrum ranging from direct exposure to indirect cues, and from environmental and political forces to intrapsychic ones. All these perspectives appear to have some validity, based both upon empirical research findings and theoretical argument, but some links may be more easily researched than others, the purely 'psychological' or displacement theories perhaps being some of the most difficult to verify.

Despite Farrall et al (2007) and other researchers' distinctions between the various theories one cannot fail to see the manner in which the five themes overlap and perhaps should even be amalgamated to form a holistic understanding of Fear of Crime. When one applies this framework to a South African context one is able to identify the interrelatedness of many of the above mentioned variables in influencing the manner in which the South African public experiences Fear of Crime.

#### *The South African Context*

According to recent research South Africa's crime rate is on the decrease (Louw, 2006). This is substantiated by statistics on crime that suggest that although the frequency of crime remains high, in comparison to international standards, there continues to be a decrease in the incidence figures from 2005 to 2006 (National Victim of Crime Survey, South African Police Service

statistics for 2005). However, despite this decrease crime levels remain very high in South Africa (Louw, 2006).

Despite more recent reports in the media (such as The Star, The Weekender and the Sunday Times) to the contrary, the public acknowledges reports of this trend towards some decrease in crime, but their perception of safety and lack of vulnerability to violent crime and armed robbery does not correspond with this shift (Louw, 2006).

Perceptions of Personal Safety can be measured in various ways. One measure which is used internationally asks survey respondents to indicate how safe they feel when walking alone in their residential area during the day and after dark.

In a 2003 survey conducted locally, using this broad question to assess the level of Fear of Crime, Mistry produced the following findings:

85% of South Africans said they feel safe walking alone in their area during the day, while only 23% felt safe walking alone at night. However, significantly less South Africans felt safe walking in their area at night than those surveyed in other developing countries. The ICVS found that on average, 60% of those surveyed in African countries, 56% in Latin American countries and 55% in Asian countries said they felt safe walking in their areas after dark. In South Africa only 23% said the same. Of more concern than the international comparisons, is that South Africans are much more fearful now than they were five years ago. During the day, the public felt generally as safe in 2003 as they did in 1998, if the “very safe” and “fairly safe” categories are added together. However,

significantly more felt only fairly safe in 2003 as opposed to very safe in 1998. The tendency towards feeling less safe becomes a clear trend when the night-time results are considered. South Africans felt significantly less safe when walking alone after dark in 2003 than they did five years ago. In fact, more than double the number of people in 2003 than in 1998 felt very unsafe walking in their area after dark (58% in 2003 as opposed to 25% in 1998) (p 2).

These statistics and trends have been supported by more recent surveys (du Plessis and Louw, 2005; Louw 2006). Thus it seems that even if South Africans acknowledge some reduction in crime overall as evidenced in statistics, this has not ameliorated their subjective sense of fear of victimisation in their own environment. As suggested in the previous section the basis of this fear may lie in multiple directions.

The reasons for the incongruency between actual crime statistics and Fear of Crime have been fodder for many media debates as indicated in many newspaper story headlines ( for e.g. “Break-ins at home feared most”, 2007, p6.; Benjamin, “Crime: Perceptions versus reality”, (2007), p 2.; Geldenhuys, “Fear of Crime is rising all in the mind”, (2007), p.4)

It appears that the most popular of the various hypotheses offered is that of the heightened awareness and fear of a particular kind of crime, i.e. house break-ins. People still feel personally vulnerable to intruders and potential violence in their homes even if other aspects of crime appear to be diminishing. This fear may not be evidently misplaced. The very statistics that reveal a decline in murder rates show that over the same period of time the incidence of violent

robbery (hijacking, cash in transit heists and armed robbery) has been on the increase (Louw, 2006). People's anxiety is further exacerbated by the knowledge that only 1% of reported house break-ins make their way to trial and by the prolific media coverage (radio, television and newspaper) of mall robberies and fatal cash in transit heists (Benjamin, 2007). Thus South Africans perceive themselves to be at risk in their homes and in everyday environments in part because of limitations in the apprehension and punishing of criminals. The low prosecution rates suggest that many criminals continue to engage in such activity and are perceived as 'still out there' in society. "When considering the important role that the home and the neighbourhood play in supporting and nurturing the family, school and community- key institutions that shape society – the implications are significant" (Louw, 2006, p.253).

In thinking about the increase in house robbery in the context of South Africa's political past, debate around the socioeconomic and racial origins of this crime has been unavoidable. "A common theme in social discourse is that crime is inevitable in a society characterised by extreme inequalities" (Moller, 2005). For the predominantly, white middle class, the upsurge in violent crime, most particularly robbery, is seen as corresponding directly with the country's transition period starting in 1994 (Altbeker, 2007; Moller, 2005).

Moller (2005) suggested:

As a result of the deep divides in South Africa, white South Africans, who were protected from the political violence and petty crime that beleaguered township dwellers under apartheid, see themselves as the main targets of crime in the new era. Racial segregation in the late 1980s and early 1990s largely insulated whites from crime rates that had been high in neighbouring black townships (p.5).

Although trends in data profiling populations most at risk of falling victim to crime, reportedly not accurate enough to offer actual statistics, suggest that this remains a misconception, they do suggest that the most likely crime white, middle class South Africans are victims of is robbery (Altbeker, 2007). As Altbeker observes: "...the spatial distribution of murder and robbery, shows there is proportionately far more robbery in the suburbs than there is murder, and that a suburbanite's risk of being robbed is much closer to the risk faced by people in our urban ghettos" (p. 63).

In this statement Altbeker turns attention to the role of socioeconomic status and the manner in which it is replacing race as the defining factor in robbery victim profiling. Originally it was thought that unemployment was the breeding ground of criminality, but studies have shown that with the increase in development an increase in property crime may follow (Moller, 2005). "Thus, the development efforts of the new government may have created new opportunities for crime while at the same time increasing the inequalities in society that encourage crime" (Louw, 1997 as cited in Moller, 2005). That is, as South Africa has moved forward in its attempts to correct the racially defined discrimination of the past, it has not necessarily dealt with the socioeconomic inequalities that were previously part and parcel of this. When Altbeker describes 'suburbanites', he is thus no longer referring to a purely white population, but rather to the middle classes across all racial groups. Armed robbery in South Africa is thus no longer directed at victims on the basis of race, but rather on the basis of perceived wealth (Moller, 2005). In terms of the poor, their lack of financial security translates directly into a lack of physical security and in terms of the more affluent; their physical wealth makes them more enticing targets.

Altbeker does suggest that as time goes on the perceived link (by white South Africans) between the changes in country's political history and the increase in crime rates will become more tenuous, as the younger generation does not have memory of a time when they did not perceive themselves to be at risk of being a victim of crime (Altbeker, 2007). This, however, does not reduce the role of the considerable news coverage of crime in South Africa, with the incidents reported often emphasising the brutality, sadism and violence of attacks.

There is also considerable exposure to anecdotal accounts of criminal events, for example, of the hijacking or armed robbery of family, friends, acquaintances and work colleagues, both near and distant. There appears to be a preoccupation with crime and an anxiety about personal safety that affects many South Africans. This study is concerned with better understanding the relationship between this fear for personal safety and aspects of people's personal resilience and exposure to such indirect traumatisation.

### **2.2.2. Internal Processes**

As discussed previously some psychologically or more clinically orientated theories about Fear of Crime have linked it to displacement or projection of anxiety based in other sources. The correlate of this is also accepted i.e., that some people manage anxiety provoking stimuli better than others for a variety of reasons. With respect to personal resilience one would seek to explore the structure of the inner world and the manner in which intrapsychically a person experiences and processes trauma, given its potentially destructive nature.

Erikson described trauma as:

Something alien breaks in on you, smashing through whatever barriers your mind has set up as a line of defence. It invades you, possesses you, takes you over, becomes a dominating feature of your interior landscape, and in the process threatens to drain you and leave you empty (As cited in Rogers, Leydesdorff and Dawson, 1999, p.2).

Thus trauma by its very nature “overwhelms” the senses and incites a reaction from the victim. It is the varying manners in which people internalise and deal with the same traumatic event that modulates the nature of this reaction. Below the researcher introduces and explores some of the various theoretical stances that have informed the perceptions of the structure and activity of the human psyche, and thus following from this, the manner in which trauma has come to be academically understood as intrapsychically negotiated.

### *Freud and Ego Strength*

The following offers a very simple introduction to the notion of the ‘ego’ and the role it plays in psychic welfare as outlined by Freud. Freud introduced the topographical and the structural models to describe the structure of the mind. The former model is representative of his initial suggestion that the mind was like an iceberg with conscious and pre-conscious aspects the mere visible tip while the submerged lower level of the unconscious was hidden but very important and the desired focus of psychoanalytic work. Building on this notion Freud developed the structural model that introduced the id, ego and superego: aspects of the mind which produce intrapsychic conflict in interaction. The ego must mediate between the id, the superego and the conditions of reality and the success of this mediation is determined by the ego strength of the individual (Fonagy & Target, 2003). Anxiety alerts the ego to its task of intervening to reduce

intrapsychic conflict, tension and/or anxiety and so it implements the use of defences (projection, repression, denial, reaction formation, intellectualization, rationalization and sublimation amongst others) to maintain an optimal level of balance (Fonagy & Target, 2003). If the intensity of the urge is too great or the strength of the ego too weak the ego must succumb to compromise formation, which in turn is hypothesised to result in the formation of a symptom-neurotic behaviour. This symptom both reveals and obscures the psychic conflict and may in fact be viewed as an emotional disorder (Fonagy & Target, 2003).

Those with little ego strength may feel torn between competing demands, while those with an overly strong ego can become too unyielding and rigid. Ego strength helps us to maintain emotional stability and cope with internal and external stress (Fonagy & Target, 2003). Many psychoanalytic writers following in the wake of Freud have elaborated, refined and redefined the nature and the function of the ego. The works of some important theorists who have contributed to this expanded knowledge are discussed in the following sections.

#### *From Freud's ego to Kohut's self*

Psychoanalysis as a canon of ideas may be seen to have its roots in Freudian theory, as much of the work that followed his used his theories or aspects of these as the starting point or inspiration to give rise to different groups of thought. A basic trajectory has been suggested that much ego psychology gave rise to object relations formulations from which self psychology was born (Ashbach and Schermer, 1994; St Clair, 1996). The fact that ego psychology and self psychology theories share the same terminology and understandings about the structure of the mind, despite their obvious disagreement about the hierarchy and impetuses behind its

development and working, suggests that their divisions and chronology are not necessarily clear cut.

Freud's notion of the ego evolved over time and the inherent meaning of the construct "shifted partially from the subjective 'I' of experience to a regulatory system and structure which had both conscious and unconscious components" (Ashbach and Schermer, 1994, p. 73). This 'shift' in meaning was subtle in nature and so led to "some confusion over the psychoanalytic terms of ego and self" (Gedo and Goldberg, 1972 cited in Ashbach and Schermer, 1994, p. 73). This 'confusion' led to further extension of and deviations from Freud's original theory with Federn (1926 – 1952) and Anna Freud's (1936, 1965) elaborations of the self-object ego boundary, and developmental lines and defence mechanisms, respectively. Hartman (1964) later re-engaged with Freud's *Inhibitions, Symptoms and Anxiety* (1926) and established a branch of psychoanalytic thinking that became known as Ego Psychology. Ego Psychology posits the existence of autonomous ego functions. These are described as mental functions whose origins are conflict free or at least independent of the feuding id and superego. Thus ego capacities and characteristics became the subject of study in their own right rather than the study of the ego remaining embedded in the three part structural model. Mahler (1979), Spitz (1959, 1965) and Erikson (1950, 1959) each extrapolated on Hartman's claims with their exploration of early development, culture, identity and the life cycle (Ashbach and Schermer, 1994). Whatever the criticisms levelled at Ego Psychology by classical analysts this branch of analysis has grown and developed over time, particularly in the USA.

Jacobson (1982) and Kernberg (1975, 1979) bridged the ego psychology and object relations paradigmatic divide (St. Clair, 1996). The former worked on distinguishing the semantic and theoretical difference between the notion of self as the person and self as a self 'depiction' or an intrapsychic structure that represents the ego from which it is not only developed, but in which it is embedded. Kernberg's work on ego strength attempted to synthesise Freudian drive theory with the capacity of the mind to manage both synthetic and autonomous functioning (St. Clair, 1996).

Kohut's self psychology can be seen to have links to Hartman's idea of a conflict free intrapsychic space as this pertains to the former's theories around development. However, Kohut's 'system' of development, 'the self', is seen as differing from ego psychology's autonomous ego in its understanding of the influence of the ego's "empathic contracts" with its self objects, taken from the object relations school of thought. Thus the combined contributions of the three schools of thought (ego psychology, object relations and self psychology) take a particular shape in the eclectic formation of Kohut's idea of the self.

Kohut's theorisation posits that a 'basic' self is forged, through the relatedness with 'objects' (others) in the environment, into a cohesive self. The 'basic' self, initially containing both an object (the internalised image of an 'idealised' parent) and a subject ('the grandiose self'), matures, with the latter cultivated to form an 'intact, cohesive personality that can view the former (idealised parent/object) as separate from the self, although introjecting aspects of the idealised object to form the super ego (St Claire, 1996).

The greatest challenge to Kohut's self or generally to any intrapsychic constellation, including the ego, is posed by exposure to 'trauma'. Trauma, as a phenomenon, has engaged different understandings that have mirrored, complemented and resonated with the different perspectives of the structure of the internal world, that have developed in psychoanalytic literature over time.

### *Psychoanalytic Formulations of Trauma Impact*

Trauma is an area of psychology, in which the lines between various formulations and theorisations, across different schools of thought, including psychoanalysis, converge and diverge in interesting ways. Despite the different directions researchers and theorists have used to approach the topic, the commonly understood character of traumatic events is that they are overwhelming in their effect on the mind and invoke primitive internal processing. Thus despite considerable theoretical changes in formulating traumatic stress responses over the years, it seems that Freud's original claim (1920), that beyond a certain enormity all traumatic events demand a powerful affective correlate, continues to be confirmed (McCann and Pearlman, 1990).

Whether the researcher believes that responses to trauma are largely consciously constructed (Cognitive theories), or constructed through the relationship of self and object (Object relations), or unconsciously constructed through the invocation of instincts and drives (Ego or drive psychology) there is a common appreciation that traumatic experience is characterised by a 'piercing' of the body and mind, in turn triggering a protective internal response.

Caroline Garland (1998), in a chapter summarising a body of psychoanalytic theory relating to trauma, discusses Freud's references to ego strength and the mind in exploring the nature and mechanism of trauma:

Freud (1920) used the word metaphorically to emphasise how the mind too can be pierced and wounded by events, giving graphic force to his description of the way in which the mind can be thought of as being enveloped by a kind of skin, or protective shield. He described it as being the outcome of the development in the brain (and therefore the mind) of a highly selective sensitivity to external stimuli. This selectivity is crucial: shutting out excessive amounts and kinds of stimulation is even more important, in terms of maintaining a workable equilibrium, than is the capacity to receive or let in stimuli (p. 9).

A person's ego is therefore at risk from the traumatic stimuli, but not all traumas manage to infiltrate the mind and have such a damaging effect. The ego can in fact be made selectively permeable through the engagement of previously established defences. These defences are learned in infancy and reinforced through life experience with the primary aim of protecting the individual from their deepest anxieties (both internal and external). A traumatic event for an individual is thus one that bypasses or overwhelms this 'filtering process' and floods the mind with stimuli beyond its natural or willing comprehension.

Garland departs slightly from Freud in her own theorisation of trauma, supplementing his thinking with the introduction of the role of Kleinian concepts of good and bad objects:

It (Freud's theory) describes the breakdown in the smooth running of the machinery of the mind, but not the collapsed meaning: the failure of belief in protection afforded by good objects and from that point onwards the longer-term consequences for the entire personality (Garland, 1998, p.11).

The suggestion is thus that the effect of trauma is not limited to the disruption and devastation of the ego and cognitive capacities, but also extends to the shattering of the individual's previously held assumptions, including their introjections of good and bad 'objects'. The person is forced to face the fact that their belief in the world as a good, fair and safe place is not definitive. If the ego is strong and well defended the effect of the trauma will still be overwhelming, but the internal good object will be potent enough to assimilate this blow and allow for the reparation and reintegration of a positive world view over time. Conversely it can thus be assumed that if the ego is weak and the individual had previously felt at constant risk from internal superior bad objects, their world view would have always been anxiety ridden and any belief in good objects would have been fragile at best. A trauma would thus easily shatter the unguarded mind of such a person; the intense negative affects making the reparation of a benign world view more difficult in the absence of compelling good objects.

Writers in the trauma field agree that indirect traumatisation is also possible, i.e., being affected by the exposure of those one is attached to, or identifies with, to traumatic events (McCann & Pearlman, 1990; Lewis, 1999; Hesse, 2002; Sabin-Farrell & Turpin, 2003). In the case of indirect traumatisation the affect that is aroused may not be limited to the impact of a single event, but could be related to prolonged or recurrent exposure, and the degree of proximity in

relation to or identification with the victim. Thus it is suggested that both via direct and indirect exposure there may be instances in which the nature of the traumatic material is such that defences against anxiety are compromised and individuals will experience strong affect, primarily fear and anxiety. Although Fear of Crime may represent an anxiety response that is of considerably less magnitude than that stemming from direct traumatisation, it bears a strong relationship to indirect traumatisation, as suggested previously, and has similar characteristics in that it relates to fear of attack and violation.

*Constructivist Self Development Theory: Self-capacities and ego resources*

A relatively recent perspective on traumatic stress: combining both Self Psychology and Constructivist theory principles has been proposed by two American authors McCann and Pearlmann (1992):

The framework, constructivist self-development theory (CSDT), blends object relations, self-psychology, and social cognition theories. It is founded upon a constructivist view of trauma in which the individual's unique history shapes his or her experience of traumatic events and defines the adaptation to trauma (p.189).

McCann and Pearlman's (1990) CSDT attempts to account for the internal structures that might influence varying reactions to the same events. Constructivist Self Development Theory is extrapolated from and imbedded in Self Psychology. CSDT suggests that individuals have certain capacities that generally allow them to regulate the influx of stimuli they are exposed to daily, including distressing stimuli, and to assimilate this into their existing world view without too great a degree of disruption.

McCann and Pearlman (1992) suggest:

Constructivist Self Development Theory extends the interactionist tradition and, in addition, emphasises the importance of the individual as an active agent in creating and construing his or her reality, a view that is basic to any constructivist theory (p. 193).

The internal capacities that McCann and Pearlman argue are significant in responding to and managing anxiety-provoking or traumatic stimuli include: ego capacities, self capacities and cognitive schema sets. Their theory posits that the effect of continuous exposure to trauma related material (verbal stories and images) may be lasting cognitive changes, to the point that thoughts, perceptions and interpretations are perhaps permanently negatively altered (McCann & Pearlman, 1990). Exposure to traumatic material, even if this is indirect or secondary, therefore may have the ability to transform cognitive schemas and memory systems (Rae Jenkins & Baird, 2002).

The self capacities described by CSDT as important in managing exposure to traumatic stimuli (and that are relevant to this study) are the ability to tolerate strong affect, to be alone without being lonely and to soothe and calm oneself (McCann and Pearlman, 1990). These attributes or Self Capacities are also generally recognised as important in the Self Psychology literature in general.

The ability to tolerate strong affect speaks of an individual's capacity to readily symbolise, convey and accommodate experiences of overt negative (or even particularly intense positive) feelings. When this is poorly developed the individual struggles to engage with strong emotions

in themselves and/or in others and so resorts to various means of evasion of such and often instead experiencing a sense of being overwhelmed, fearful or antagonistic (McCann and Pearlman, 1990).

The ability to be alone without being lonely is apparent in individuals who enjoy their own company and are able to engage in “solitary pursuits”. When this is not present in individuals they become highly anxious at the possibility of being alone and so avoid this at all costs. Such people’s experience of being unaccompanied is one of a lack of identity and a deep desire to make contact with friends and family in an attempt to free themselves from their perceived isolation (McCann and Pearlman, 1990). Thus this capacity reflects the degree of centeredness, autonomy or self sufficiency in an individual.

The ability to soothe and calm oneself refers to an individual’s capacity to ease their own distress. This is an active process and involves the individual participating in behaviour or pastimes they know to be uniquely comforting to them, including internal ‘self talk’. When an individual is lacking in this ability he/she will tend to rely on others for this comfort and will often fixate on the negative to an extent that their distress is increased by their own volition, even if inadvertently (McCann and Pearlman, 1990). Individuals who are unable to ‘self soothe’ may become highly dependent on other persons or things (such as addictive substances) to manage and regulate their affect states. In the absence of such external support they may become highly anxious and distressed.

The theories concerning the roles of ego strength and self capacities in managing traumatic stimuli are complimentary. Both suggest that there are inherent internal processes that determine the way in which stimuli are internalised and that this process of internalisation can lead to both negative and positive affects in the individual and alter their perceptions about their world. When one considers this in light of some incongruence in the South African public's increased Fear of Crime, despite their acknowledgement that the crime rate is decreasing, one might wonder if it is more internal processes such as the compromising of the ego and self capacities through direct and indirect trauma exposure that may affect their Perceptions of Personal Safety. It was one purpose of this study to ascertain whether such a relationship between ego strength or more accurately Self Capacities, and Perceptions of Personal Safety, might exist.

### **2.2.3. Indirect Exposure to Crime**

In the descriptions of Fear of Crime and Self Capacities the researcher has referred to the notion of trauma and the proposed threat it poses to one's sense of personal safety and internal processing. The notion of trauma as being intrusive suggests immediacy in the relationship between the victim and the phenomenon, i.e. the trauma is directly experienced by the individual. Despite most of the volumes of theory around trauma dealing with direct victimisation, more recently it has been found that an indirect effect can be elicited in those who are party to another's trauma (Lewis, 1999). Although the experience of the trauma is filtered through the direct victim it appears to invoke a similar (albeit at times more muted) response in the internal world of the secondary 'target'. It is the intention of this section to place the notion of indirect traumatisation in the context of previous trauma theory and then to explore the manner in which it has been suggested the experience of trauma (most particularly of the crime induced variety) is able to reach beyond the confines of the direct victim.

## *Trauma*

From “Traumatizien”, the Greek word meaning ‘to wound’, psychological trauma differs from stress or crises although inevitably it can result in or exacerbate both. “A trauma is sudden, horrifying and unexpected. During a trauma the person believes that they or others around them will be seriously injured or killed. The person feels fear, and is helpless and out of control” (Lewis, 1999, p. 6). Thus trauma or traumatic stress is of a different magnitude to more common life stress and is associated with extreme anxiety and a particular response set.

The clinical manifestation of psychological trauma involves multiple symptoms that are clustered and described by the American Psychiatric Association into three main categories. These include “The persistent Re-experiencing of the trauma, Avoidant behaviours aimed at avoiding all associations related to the trauma and Hyperarousal symptoms manifesting from the lingering experience of vulnerability and experience of annihilation” (American Psychoanalytic Association, 1994, p. 209). Physicians have come to describe the symptoms of trauma survivors in terms of these three categories and to use them to discern if a particular traumatic response fits the criteria of a disorder, i.e. Post Traumatic Stress Disorder or Acute Stress Disorder (determined primarily according to duration, severity and persistence of the symptoms). The three symptoms groups are also described under slightly different headings, by different theorists, for example, Herman described the three response elements as “Intrusion”, “Constriction” and “Hyperarousal” (Herman, 1992, p.35), but there is generally consensus as to the meaning and thematic structure behind the labels.

The experience of being traumatised can be invoked by a single event or can be the result of a history of repetitive or enduring events in which the person experiences a real or perceived threat to themselves or another (DePrince and Freyd, 2002). The nature of the event is one that was originally believed to be uncommon: “outside of the range of usual human experience” (as first listed in the American Psychiatric Association Diagnostic Manual in 1980) (Herman, 1992, p. 33). With time and research this conceptualisation has been proven to be too narrow and exclusive in defining a traumatic event. Thus the theorisation of what range of stimuli might form the trigger for the traumatic response has been extended to events beyond the previously held incidents (sexual and domestic violence and military trauma) and so includes any experience that might “confront human beings with the extremities of helplessness and terror, and evoke the responses of catastrophe” (Herman, 1992, p. 33).

Due to the development of theory and research that suggests each person will have their own unique experience of trauma and that triggers cannot be assessed against a generalised severity scale, the realm of what is considered traumatic has thus been extended by some to include verbal assaults, the breakdown of a relationship, and, as will be further discussed the anecdotal revisiting of another’s traumatic experience. Such formulations place considerable weight on the subjective experience of an event as annihilating or threatening. Even though such dimensions might not be recognised within the formal psychiatric classification, the idea is that trauma theory might have relevance for understanding broader categories of events.

Herman (1992) suggests that when one explores psychological trauma one comes “face to face with human vulnerability in the natural world and with the capacity for evil in human nature”, to

study trauma thus “means bearing witness to horrible events” (Herman, 1992, p. 7). She explores the different effects of traumatic events perceived to stem from ‘acts of god’ to those of human origin. She also explores how being a human ‘witness’ to a victim’s devastated response to another human’s action results in the witness being caught between the two, thus making it “morally impossible to remain neutral” and forcing the “bystander” to “take sides” (Herman, 1992, p.7). Bearing ‘witness’ describes the manner in which the experience of trauma is not limited to the ‘victim’, but rather ripples through the lives of those they share their experience with whether physically, as a literal bystander or witness, or vicariously, through secondary transmission or communication.

In conclusion therefore, Herman describes how the ‘witness’ is affected by others’ distress and by the perpetration of such an act, due to their membership within the same species group. The mechanisms of empathy for and identification with the other (perpetrator or victim), in conjunction with the ‘piercing’ character of trauma itself, are held responsible for the impact and reaction such an event has on a ‘witness’.

### *Indirect Traumatization*

Lewis (1999) describes indirect traumatization as follows:

A victim of trauma is often mistakenly thought to only include the person who was directly affected by the incident. Although this is the case in many instances of trauma, the traumatic experience may also affect witnesses and many other people who have contact with the direct victim. This is called indirect or secondary traumatization. Any

contact with the trauma – through witnessing or hearing about the event can have a damaging effect (p.6).

Ever growing research in the field of traumatic stress points to the fact that the effects of a traumatic event extend beyond its direct victims. People can be traumatised “without actually being harmed or threatened with harm” (Figley, 1995, p.4). Secondary or vicarious traumatisation are terms used by researchers and clinicians in the field to describe their observation that negative emotional affect was experienced by those who were continually exposed to the experiences of trauma survivors, such as emergency workers and trauma counsellors (Figley, 1995). For the purposes of this study the terms secondary and indirect traumatisation will be used interchangeably, although it is recognised that the former term is usually employed with reference to members of the psychological, medical and emergency services.

Figley defines secondary traumatic stress as “...the natural, consequent behaviours and emotions resulting from knowledge about a traumatising event experienced by a significant other. It is the stress resulting from helping or wanting to help a traumatised or suffering person” (Figley, 1995, p.10).

The symptoms of secondary trauma are thought to be parallel to those of direct trauma (i.e. taking the form of symptoms of Posttraumatic Stress Disorder) and thus include intrusive imagery related to the traumatic event of another, avoidance of similar or reminding stimuli (places, people, experiences etc.) and hyper arousal or a sense of being overly alert. The

experience of indirect exposure to trauma is thus similar to that of direct trauma except that it is through another's experience of the event that the secondary trauma occurs and so it is possible to experience secondary traumatisation at the lower intensity of a trauma response rather than necessarily a diagnosable disorder (Figley, 1995).

Ludick (2007) offered:

Most of the published work on vicarious, secondary or indirect trauma relates to health and mental health workers (Jordan, 2001; Sexton, 1999; Steed and Downing, 1998). There are, however, many other less obvious populations at risk that have largely been overlooked in the conceptual anthology of vicarious reactions (p. 17).

These might include, for example journalists and prosecutors as well as ordinary citizens in contexts of high levels of violence, such as countries experiencing civil war. In these cases vicarious traumatisation is seen to be the result of cumulative exposure to traumatic materials or images (Ludick, 2007). That is people could be vicariously affected by the high or intense influx of overwhelming and continued exposure to traumatic images or material (Linley & Joseph, 2004).

Commenting on a study conducted by Kishur in 1984, into New York victims of crime and their support systems, Figley describes the rippling effect of trauma in a familial system, social network or community: suggesting that the "infection" may start with one member's personal direct experience of trauma, but this spreads within the system due to the connections shared between the members (Figley, 1995).

One of the 'connections', through which the experiences of the trauma is transmitted is through the psychological mechanism of empathy (Figley, 1995; Linley & Joseph, 2004). It is through engaging with another's traumatic material that others are affected because they put themselves in the other's position and thus experience the victim's emotions and feelings in parallel. The relationship between the individual and the victim has been found to be a predictor of the severity of the secondary trauma symptoms experienced (Kilpatrick and Resnick, 1993). That is the closer the tie to the direct victim, the greater the potential for indirect traumatisation.

Friedland (1999) explored the concept of indirect traumatisation in a local study; discussing the theorisation that trauma can be experienced vicariously through a significant other's first hand ordeal. He proposes that the concept of a significant other can be extended to include a person (familiar or a stranger) with whom one identifies or to whom one is perhaps overtly empathic (Friedland, 1999). To make this point Friedland refers to a 1994 study by Burgers in which the researcher was able to track the experience of police officers in learning of injury to or the death of colleagues (whom they did not know personally) from other divisions in the police force (Friedland, 1999). In this example the traumatisation of the police officers, in learning of the news was accounted for by their identification with the victim through their sharing of the same profession. Thus for these officers 'placing themselves in the victim's shoes' did not require a stretch of the imagination.

Friedland (1999) suggested that one should also include the degree of identification with the victim in relation to assessing the 'closeness' of the individual's tie to the victim, rather than

limiting this to formal relational ties. When one relates this to the potential role played by the media or anecdotal stories in 'infecting a system' with experiences of trauma or crime it is possible that similarities of age, gender, race or situational connection could result in greater identification with the victim, whose stories are being reported. These identifying variables could therefore create closer ties to the victim and therefore produce more powerful effects on the individual, as they provide greater tangibility to the possibility of personally becoming a victim.

Winkel and Vrij (1990) took up a similar issue in their work, exploring the notion of what they coined 'stimulus similarity', in relation to the effects of the media's presentation of crimes on their readers. They posited (in a quantitative study) that should the reader of a newspaper identify with descriptive details of the victim (age, race, gender, sex, and locality of residence or trauma) they would internalise this resemblance as personal risk to themselves and thus could potentially experience the secondary affects of the trauma (Winkel and Vrij, 1990).

The affects of exposure to traumatic stimuli can also be intensified by the lack of expectation of becoming traumatized or a lack of support for the person's experience. Whereas previous studies looked at 'expected' respondents or cues (care workers and 'linking' factors such as identification, empathy and proximity) other studies have observed that the responses of lawyers (Levin & Greisberg, 2003), journalists (Pyeovich, Newman & Daleiden, 2003), researchers (Goldenberg, 2002) and claims workers (Ludick, 2006) may also be indicative of distress. Because of the distance between the direct trauma victim and the person who, for professional reasons, is indirectly exposed to their traumatic stimuli the experience of vicarious trauma is

ultimately unexpected. The presumed buffering provided by the professional relationship between the direct and indirect victim means that generally such populations do not automatically have access to a supportive network (e.g. supervision, counselling) (Levin & Greisberg, 2003; Ludick, 2006). This lack of support added to the emotionality linked to the manner in which the trauma survivor delivers the information or the horror of material conveyed (Goldenberg, 2002; Pyevich, Newman & Daleiden, 2003) is reported to intensify the experience of indirect traumatisation.

If one takes up the range of research findings articulated above (including the role of empathy, identification and poor preparation or support for continual exposure) and considers the frequent news coverage of crime and the constantly, circulating conveyor belt of anecdotal experiences of victims of crime in South Africa, one might anticipate the manner in which secondary trauma might infiltrate and effect the country's population.

### **2.3. Summary**

It was hoped that this study would explore the manner in which proximity (close familial ties, near and far anecdotal communication and the role of the media) to a traumatic event might be related to an individual's perception of personal safety. In addition, there was an interest in looking at the possible role played by 'internal' factors. While there are many other aspects of psychoanalytic thinking that could have formed the subject of investigation, the research project foregrounds the role of 'self capacities' (as operationalised in the three dimensions outlined earlier). This is because this dimension has been specifically tied to trauma impact and recovery in McCann and Pearlman's work, but also because the research was aimed at a non-clinical population. Self capacities are understood to be important in how individuals in general lead

their daily lives and thus might have some relevance in relation to indirect trauma exposure and individuals' sense of alarm, vulnerability and/or safety in the world.

## **CHAPTER 3: RESEARCH METHOD**

### **3.1. Rationale and Aim**

In spite of recent police statistics suggesting that violent crime has decreased by 6% a year since the end of 2002, public perception is that high profile crime is increasing (Benjamin, 2007). This perception has been attributed to the apparent increase of robberies since 1994 and the lack of public faith in South African Police Services (*The Star*, 2007). People who live and work in Johannesburg are exposed to statistics, stories (media or personal), debates about and experiences of crime, almost on a daily basis. This means that they live in a climate of perpetual, albeit, largely indirect traumatisation (Friedland, 1999; Glanz, 1995). It thus seems relevant to explore the manner in which people assimilate these traumatic stimuli they are exposed to and further to question in what way this may affect their perceptions of personal safety.

The aim of this study can be summarised as follows:

To explore the manner in which young, middle class adults, living in Johannesburg perceive the safety of the environment in which they live. The aim of the project is more specifically to determine whether proximity to trauma stimuli relates to Perceptions of Personal Safety as well as to establish whether three selected aspects of self-capacity appear to bear any relationship to perceptions of personal safety.

### **3.2. Research Questions**

In light of the aim mentioned above, three more specific research questions were posed:

Is there a relationship between Perceptions of Personal Safety and proximity to traumatic events?

Is there a relationship between one or more of the three aspects of Self Capacity and Perceptions of Personal Safety?

If a relationship between the variables is evident does it appear that Self Capacities or proximity of exposure to traumatic events is more strongly related to Perceptions of Personal Safety?

### **3.3. Design**

The researcher sought to be able to draw conclusions about the existence of possible relationships between internal processing and proximity to trauma and perceptions of personal safety, as measured by 4 self report measures; described in the next section. The research conducted was exploratory in nature, although it was hoped that by using a longitudinal design there would be a degree of control of variations in the self-report responses across situations and individuals. The longitudinal design involved the keeping of records of assessments of the variables of interest by participants at regular intervals over a 9 month period. A longitudinal design was selected in order to allow for assessment of the impact of different levels of exposure to traumatic stimuli by each individual over time as well as to allow for some possible variation in felt strength of Self Capacities. It was thus hoped that the participants would act as their own controls (in terms of individual and personal differences in respect of a range of possible factors), and that the extended data collection, made possible by the four time intervals, might capture shifts in experience of the kind that McCann and Pearlman describe as attributable to continuous exposure to indirect trauma materials (verbal stories and images) (McCann & Pearlman, 1990). In this case rather than changes to schemas more generally the issue of sense of personal safety was the focus of interest. Although employing a quantitative design the study hoped to tap into

experiential dimensions of Fear of Crime in individuals and to attempt to explore factors related to different levels of fear over time. The quantitative dimension is thus complemented by some exploration of the anecdotal accounts of what traumatic stimuli came to mind in answering the questionnaire on exposure on each of the four occasions.

### **3.4. Sample and Recruitment of Participants**

A relatively homogeneous sample of 14, white, middle class adults, living and working in Johannesburg was recruited through word of mouth and snowball sampling. This choice of sampling was due to the extended commitment required by participants for completion of the questionnaires over the nine month period. Participants were thus recruited with some sense of indirect connection to the researcher and the project. Initially potential participants were identified via personal acquaintanceship and word of mouth publicity. Five participants were recruited through this method and then through personal invitation and snowballing techniques this number rose to 25. While 25 participants agreed to take part in the longitudinal study at the outset, 11 participants dropped out of the study over the 9 month period it was conducted (see Design). Given that the research entailed a longitudinal design it was anticipated that there would be some attrition so a larger sample than initially perceived necessary (considering the exploratory nature of the research) was recruited at the outset. However, the 'drop outs' were somewhat higher than expected. It appeared that some participants found the process too demanding to continue.

The subjects ranged in age from 21 years and 1 month to 28 years and three months. The mean age was 24 years and 6 months. All of the participants were young, employed adults, in their twenties. In terms of breakdown across sex, 9 out of the participants were women and 5 were

men. The manner of recruitment clearly could not ensure optimal generalisability, but as this was an exploratory research study, this was viewed as acceptable.

### **3.5. Data Collection**

The data was collected by means of 3 self-report “pencil and paper” instruments (although they were available to the participants via email/electronic copy, participants opted through convenience for hand delivery and collection) administered on 4 occasions: at the outset of the study and then at three monthly intervals over the following nine months. Thus each individual responded to the same set of instruments on 4 different occasions over a 9 month period. The instruments utilised in the study are described below.

### **3.6. Instruments (See Appendix C)**

#### **3.6.1. Perceived Personal Safety:**

Measuring Fear of Crime or alternately Perceived Personal Safety produced considerable debate with respect to the definition and assessment of the variable. This being said it appears that the bulk of work on measuring Fear of Crime employs survey instruments of a very similar and standard composition (e.g. National Victims of Crime Survey) (Moser and Kalton, 1971; Ferraro and LaGrange, 1987; Ferraro, 1995; Farall and Ditton, 1999 as cited in Louw, 2006). Phrasing of the sentences has been analysed and the criticisms of various wordings identified in the literature were taken into account in formulating the set of questions designed to assess what in this study is termed Perceptions of Personal Safety. Some of these critiques led to the omission of the actual topic of crime and the dropping of questions about activities that people appeared not to identify with, e.g. walking after dark (Ferraro and LaGrange, 1987). Further modifications included the mixing of real and speculatively oriented questions (‘do you’ vs. ‘would you’) and

limiting the time frame about which questions were posed to a period that fell within easy memory (Farrall and Ditton, 1999). Although employed to assess 'Fear of Crime' the assessment measures are generally titled as measures of 'Personal Safety', hence the choice of this terminology to refer to the sets of scores relating to this variable in the study.

Based on existing instruments the participants were asked to give a rating between 1 and 4 (1 = very safe and 4 = very unsafe) for each of five questions aimed at establishing their Perceptions of Personal Safety, as they pertained to Fear of Crime. These included:

How safe did you feel walking and/or driving alone in your neighbourhood at night?

How often did this influence your plans or prevent you from doing the things you like to do in and around your area?

How worried were you that you would experience being a victim of crime outside of your neighbourhood?

How worried were you that you would experience being a victim of crime in your neighbourhood?

How worried were you that you would experience being a victim of crime in your own home?

They were asked to rate their responses to each of the questions with reference to the present and the previous week.

### **3.6.2. Self Capacities:**

Despite literature searches and attempts to locate such, no pre-validated instrument designed to assess Self Capacities could be located and although the use of an 'Ego Scale' was considered this idea was discarded due to the use of overly technical language and psychoanalytic

terminology. Internal processing was thus operationalised according to the characteristics identified as central to self regulation in Constructivist Self Development Theory (McCann and Pearlman, 1990). Three questions were designed to gauge the respondent's Self Capacities that were perceived as relevant to this study. Each of the three questions was designed to assess a particular attribute of Self Capacity and thus potentially stand alone as to constitute a composite measure. The three questions were designed to assess: The ability to tolerate strong affect; to be alone without being lonely; and to soothe and calm oneself. After consultations between a small team of academics/clinicians the questions designed to measure each attribute were worded as follows:

How difficult have you found it to be on your own without the company of others?

How difficult or uncomfortable has it been for you to experience intense feelings (anger, sadness, happiness, fear)?

When you have been upset, how easy has it been for you to comfort yourself without the help of others?

The questions were posed with the intention of allowing for a 'lay' person response in respect of the capacities and were therefore designed to be accessible and jargon free. Participants were required to rate their perception of their ability to perform each of the above three functions according to a 4 point scale (1 = easy 2 = somewhat difficult 3 = difficult 4 = very difficult) with respect to each capacity over the previous week.

### **3.6.3. Proximity to and intensity of indirect traumatisatio:**

This section of the instrument required the participant to answer a question about their experiences of direct and indirect exposure to traumatic stimuli over the previous week, with respect to proximity to the event and the intensity of their response (evident in their subjective evaluation of strength of feelings related to and preoccupation with the event). Upon the first administration of the questionnaire, participant's were briefed on the layout of the questionnaire, the levels of intensity and the focus of the questioning being related to 'trauma' as a result of criminal exposure specifically. The format of this assessment dimension was that of a grid with proximity running horizontally and intensity (1 = mild 2 = moderate 3 = high 4 = very high) running vertically. The horizontal proximity section was divided into the following headings: Media, Anecdotal Far, Anecdotal Near and Direct, where Direct related to indirect exposure as a result of someone in your immediate family or close circle of friends falling victim to crime, Anecdotal Near described incidences of crime reported to one as having affected friends and acquaintances, Anecdotal Far described incidences reported to the participant by familiar persons about victims who they did not personally know and finally Media described exposure to reporting of crime from newspaper, television and radio sources.

A further section required the participant to briefly describe the nature of the most intense experience of those indicated in the grid. It was hoped that this information would offer a simple qualitative description of the types of trauma stimuli the subjects had been exposed to and that this would augment the findings by offering the opportunity to map trends and to better appreciate the nature of each individual's experience.

### **3.7. Procedure**

Once ethical clearance from the appropriate committee of the University of the Witwatersrand had been granted, a brief conversation was conducted with each of the participants individually. This included an informal discussion of the topic (rationale, but not aim or research question) and explanation of both the research and ethical procedures. During this time it was ensured that no member had been exposed to any form of direct trauma within the previous year (so as to exclude the potential impact of direct or prior traumatisation as a factor) and contact details were exchanged. The participants were then given written documentation (outlining the information given verbally) and consent forms to peruse at their own leisure. The consent forms confirmed the following principles among others:

participation was on a voluntary basis with no coercion from the researcher

confidentiality would be ensured

the participants had been informed of the nature and scope of the study

the participants had been informed that they could withdraw from the study at any time if they so chose, with no repercussions

(See Appendix A and B respectively)

Once participation was consented to, a composite questionnaire was administered in the presence of the researcher on the first occasion (during the first two weeks of December 2007) so that the researcher had an opportunity to clarify any issues. The same questionnaires were then delivered to the participants on three further occasions, at three monthly intervals (March 2008, June 2008, September 2008), over the next nine months. The questionnaire pack took approximately half an

hour to complete and the participants were generally given them at the beginning of the month and asked to return them as soon as possible (at the latest by the end of the same month).

### **3.8. Analysis**

To facilitate the statistical processes and to protect confidentiality of the subjects, each subject was provided with a number (prefixed by a number representing their sex i.e. 1 for male and 2 for female and then their own personal number, 2.2 thus for example representing the second participant of the female group) and all their response sheets bore that number. A separate list of names and numbers was compiled and stored in a safe place by the researcher in case any later analysis was required.

The three variables of Perception of Personal Safety/Fear of Crime, strength of Self Capacity (disaggregated into the 3 separate attributes as well as the composite score) and level of Exposure to Indirect Trauma were quantified for each of the participants at each point in time. The scores across time were then captured on an excel spreadsheet. This provided the data set for the study, i.e. there were 64 instances of data, 14 subjects x 4 times, that formed the data set.

The scales provided the following data for each subject:

four scores for Perceptions of Personal Safety as measured by Section A of the Fear of Crime questionnaire over the four dates,

four descriptive values for each of the three questions related to Self Capacities as well as composite scores over the four dates,

an indicator of the most intense experiences of Exposure to Crime over the four dates, as a measure of Intensity of Exposure. (This was determined by noting the highest value assigned by

the participant, according to the 4 point Intensity scale, for that particular week, and this was then recorded as their most intense experience of Exposure in the spreadsheet)

four indicators of the proximity (Direct, Anecdotal Near, Anecdotal Far or Media) of the four most severe experiences of direct/Indirect Exposure to crime over the four dates, as a measure of 'Proximity' of Exposure. (This was determined by noting the 'Proximity' of the event to which the participants' assigned their highest Intensity score, as mentioned in the point above, and this was then recorded as their Proximity score in the spreadsheet)

qualitative descriptions of the four most severe experiences of Indirect Exposure to crime reported over the four dates,

Data obtained from the study was subjected to a series of statistical analyses. These are outlined below:

Cronbach's Alpha Co-efficients were calculated for each of the measurements used in the study as a measure of reliability. Cronbach's Alpha is a numerical coefficient of reliability, indicating the accuracy, stability and consistency of the measure (Howell, 1999). The computation of alpha is based on the reliability of a test relative to other tests with the same number of items, measuring the same construct of interest (Hatcher, 1994). For the purposes of this study where the instruments were not based on previously tested instruments, the validity was based on internal validity calculations rather than comparisons with previously established tests.

The data in this study has the structure of a repeated measures Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) or that each subject is measured several times. However these repeats do not operate as a control for an experimental condition, but are merely an opportunity to obtain several measures and to

potentially allow for cumulative effects of exposure. As the analysis has this repeated structure the analyses cannot treat each measure as independent and as such must estimate correlation between the observations from the same individual. In this sense the data has the form of the Hierarchical Linear Model (HLM) with observations nested within subjects (Bryk & Raudenbush, 1992). Both repeated measures ANOVA and HLM are, for the most part, special cases of the Mixed General Linear Model (de Leeuw, 2004) and as such the bulk of the analysis was performed using Mixed Procedure in SAS V9.1.2 (SAS is a registered trademark of the SAS Corporation), with subject as a random effect. In general this allowed for the correlations between the variables in the study to be made while accounting for the correlations between the scores for the same subject. Similarly differences between the levels of a categorical independent variable (IV) can be assessed, often accounting for the subject effect.

Basic, content analysis was employed to categorise and analyse the trends in relation to the nature of each individual's experience of exposure to accounts of crime as described, in the short descriptive section of the Indirect Exposure instrument.

## **CHAPTER 4: RESULTS**

As mentioned in the previous chapter the data was analysed in respect of the reliability of the measures and then secondly the nature and strength of the correlations between the three constructs was calculated. In addition, the final section offers a brief analysis of the descriptive material allowing for some degree of qualitative analysis to complement the quantitative findings. The presentation of the results thus firstly addresses the validity of the instruments used and then is organised according to the order of the questions posed in the study, followed by some secondary analysis.

### **4.1. Reliability of Measures**

Cronbach Coefficient Alpha was determined for each of the scales and measures utilised in the data collection. The Alpha Coefficients are as follows:

#### **4.1.1. Fear of Crime/ Perception of Personal Safety**

The Alpha Coefficient for the Fear of Crime/Perception of Personal Safety construct was between 0.77 and 0.91, this suggests that the instrument had good validity for the purposes of this study and could be viewed as a reliable measure.

#### **4.1.2. Self Capacities**

The Alpha Coefficient for the Self Capacities set of questions indicates that the instrument does not have acceptable validity as a composite instrument. For the purposes of this study, however, the questions were not used together as a single scale, but rather each question was employed to measure a different aspect of Self Capacity. Given that a single question was used to assess each dimension and that it was anticipated that each subject's score would vary somewhat over time construct validity could not be easily established.

#### **4.1.3. Indirect Exposure to Crime**

The Alpha Coefficient for the quantitative aspects of the questions was 0.86, suggesting the measure was valid as an assessment tool for the purposes of this study.

### **4.2. The Relationship Between Indirect Exposure to Traumatism and Perceptions of Personal Safety**

*Question 1: Is there a relationship between Perceptions of Personal Safety and proximity to traumatic events?*

#### **4.2.1. The Relationship Between Proximity of Indirect Exposure to Traumatism and Perceptions of Personal Safety**

Mixed Procedures in SAS allowed for the analysis of variance of the interval scores, whilst allowing for a random intercept for each subject (due to the longitudinal nature of the research study) in the assessment of the nature of the relationship between Proximity to Indirect Exposure of Traumatism and Perceptions of Personal Safety. The Mixed Model results suggest that there is no significant relationship between the 4 levels of proximity ( $F_{(4,38)}=1.17$ ,  $p=0.339$ ) and thus in this sample Proximity to Indirect Exposure to Traumatism does not bear a significant relationship to Perceptions of Personal Safety.

#### **4.2.2. The Relationship Between Intensity of Indirect Exposure and Perceptions of Personal Safety**

During the course of the study and in coding the data it became apparent that the intensity of exposure might be as important as the proximity of exposure thus calculations were also conducted to assess whether there was a significant relationship between intensity and Perceptions of Personal Safety.

Mixed Model Analysis allowed for the regression of the interval scores, whilst allowing for the longitudinal nature of the research study, to establish the nature of the relationship between Intensity of Indirect Exposure to Traumatization and Perceptions of Personal Safety. The Mixed Model Regression results indicate that there was no significant relationship between Intensity of Indirect Exposure to Traumatization ( $\beta= 0.064$ ,  $t(41)=1.193$ ,  $p=0.239$ ) and Perceptions of Personal Safety within this sample.

### **4.3. The Relationship Between Self Capacities and Perceptions of Personal Safety**

*Question 2: Is there a relationship between one or more of the three aspects of Self Capacities and Perceptions of Personal Safety?*

Mixed Model Analysis allowed for the regression of the interval scores for each of the three questions pertaining to the aspects of Self Capacities (To tolerate strong affect, To be alone without being lonely, To soothe and calm oneself) to determine the relationship between the scores for each question and Perceptions of Personal Safety. The Mixed Model Regression results for each of the questions over the four time periods suggest that there is no significant relationship between each of the aspects of Self Capacity and Perceptions of Personal Safety for the purposes of this study: To tolerate strong affect ( $\beta= 0.091$ ,  $t(27)=0.911$ ,  $p=0.307$ ), To be alone without being lonely ( $\beta=-0.074$ ,  $t(26)=-0.981$ ,  $p=0.335$ ), To soothe and calm oneself ( $\beta=0.076$ ,  $t(27)=0.724$ ,  $p=0.475$ ).

## **4.4. Secondary Statistical Findings**

### **4.4.1 Relationship between Intensity of and Proximity to Indirect Exposure to Traumatization**

Mixed Procedures allowed for the assessment of the nature of the relationship between the Intensity of Indirect Traumatization and the Proximity to Indirect Exposure to Traumatization.

The Mixed Procedures results suggest that there is no significant relationship between the Intensity of Indirect Traumatization ( $F_{(3,35)}= 0.436$ ,  $p=0.728$ ) and the Proximity to Indirect Exposure to Traumatization for the purposes of this study.

#### **4.4.2 Relationships between Sex of Participants and Perceptions of Safety, Self Capacities and Intensity of Indirect Exposure to Traumatization**

Mixed Procedures allowed for the analysis of variance (ANOVA) in the assessment of the nature of the relationships between the Sex of the Participants and their Perceptions of Safety, Self Capacities and Intensity of Indirect Exposure to Traumatization. The Mixed Procedures results suggest that there is no significant relationship between the Sex of the Participants and their Perceptions of Safety ( $F_{(1,42)}=0.014$ ,  $p=0.906$ ), Self Capacities ( $F_{(1,28)}=0.02$ ,  $p=0.882$ ) and Intensity of Indirect Exposure to Traumatization ( $F_{(1,42)}=2.27$ ,  $p=0.139$ ).

**(A tabulated version of the above results can be found in Appendix D)**

#### **4.5. Qualitative Analysis of Indirect Exposure**

Basic, content analysis of the events noted as the most 'severe' in the qualitative section of the Proximity to Indirect Exposure to Traumatization questionnaire was conducted and the results were tabulated to illustrate the frequency of each crime reported (Table 1):

**Table 1: Tabulation of the frequency of Proximity of Indirect Exposure as determined by Intensity of Event**

Type	Direct	Anecdotal Near	Anecdotal Far	Media	Total
Armed Robbery (House)	2	4	4	2	12
Armed Hijacking	3	4	1		8
Armed Mugging/Assault	4	1	3	1	9
Robbery (property)	5	2			7
Smash & Grab	7	1			8
Murder	1	2			3
Rape			1	1	2
Xenophobia	2			3	5
Other	1	3		3	7
Total	24	14	9	7	

The results show that the proximity that gained the most coverage in this sample was that which included the participants' closest friends and family and that as the proximity became more removed so the reporting of such events decreased (Direct = 24, Anecdotal Near = 14, Anecdotal Far = 9, Media = 7). Although there was no significant statistical relationship between Proximity of Indirect Exposure and Perceptions of Personal Safety the frequencies of accounts indicate that the closer the event to the subject the more preoccupied they were with it, indicated by their reporting of such events as significant to their consciousness in the preceding week.

## **CHAPTER 5:DISCUSSION**

### **5.1. Introduction**

This chapter is divided into four sections. The first part will discuss the validity of the measures used in this study. Section two will address the results reported in Chapter 4 in light of each of the 3 specific research questions. The third section will include other noteworthy observations that arose from the study and the fourth section will offer a brief description of the ‘qualitative’ findings gathered from the Indirect Exposure questionnaires.

### **5.2. Validity of the instruments used**

The Cronbach’s Alpha Coefficients for the instruments used to measure the three variables of interest in this study (Fear of Crime/Perceptions of Personal Safety, the three separate Self Capacity questions and the composite score, and the Indirect Exposure to Crime) indicated that the questionnaires for Fear of Crime/Perceptions of Personal Safety and Indirect Exposure to Crime were valid. The three questions on Self Capacity were not found to have adequate internal validity as a ‘scale’. For the purposes of this study, however, the questions were not used together as a single scale, but rather each question was employed to measure a different aspect of Self Capacity. Given that a single question was used to assess each dimension and that it was anticipated that each subject’s score would vary somewhat over time, construct validity could not be easily established. In retrospect a longer questionnaire, that involved the repetition of questions relating to the three aspects of Self Capacity, may have allowed for a more thorough investigation of the measure’s validity.

The overall profile of the participants’ responses to the questionnaires, generally showed quite low scores (i.e. the respondents generally reported a low strength of feeling in relation to ‘Fear of

Crime', each of the Self Capacities and Proximity and Severity of Exposure). Their profiles also varied very little over time, suggesting a consistency of response style and sentiment in the individuals in the sample. It appeared that in general, for example, the sample did not entertain a high sense of risk to their personal safety and that whatever their original level of concern this appeared not to vary much over the four month period. Thus one could perhaps conclude that the basic stance that a person adopts with regards to their sense of personal safety is somewhat invariable and consistent. Similarly whatever level of self capacity an individual reported at time one, this seemed to remain reasonably consistent over time. Without wanting to overstate this conclusion it might be suggested that anxiety about safety and the sense of one's capacity to manage difficult emotion is more temperamentally than situationally based. While there was greater variation in the accounts of exposure it also appeared that there was less variation over time even in this respect than might have been anticipated.

### **5.3. Discussion of findings with regard to the research questions articulated**

#### **5.3.1. Perceptions of Personal Safety and Proximity to Traumatic Events**

Question 1:

Is there a relationship between Perceptions of Personal Safety and Proximity to Traumatic Events?

The findings of the present study indicate that although some trends were noted in the data (most particularly in the qualitative findings) that might suggest the presence of a relationship between the two variables, the relationship was not statistically significant and thus could not be confirmed in this sample.

This result is inconsistent with previous research in the area and with common sense attributions (Skogan and Maxfield, 1981; Tyler, 1980, 1984; Covington and Taylor, 1991; La Grange et al., 1992; Ferraro, 1995; Hough 1995 as cited in Hale, 1996 and Farrall et al 2007). Previous studies have found that exposure to communication of others' experiences of crime (friends, acquaintances or people with similar identifying characteristics) results in people imagining themselves as falling victim to the same fate and thus experiencing themselves as less invincible and no longer as safe in their environments as they felt prior to such exposure. The extent to which this is experienced is generally shown to be proportional to the closeness of their relationship with (or proximity to) the direct victim (Kilpatrick and Resnick, 1993). The non-significance is in all probability due to the size of the sample although some other features of the study are also considered in the discussion.

Figley (1995) wrote about indirect traumatisation in terms of "significant others" who are "traumatised by concern" and thus suggested that this indirect traumatisation occurred due to the person's empathy for the victim. Following on from this he then concluded that the nature (closeness) of the particular type of relationship with the significant other may be important in explaining the extent to which individuals will experience indirect traumatisation and thus perceive themselves to be no longer safe in their world (Figley, 1995).

The fact that the findings in this study were not indicative of a significant relationship between proximity to crime and Perceptions of Personal Safety might be explained in terms of the complexity of the experience of 'proximity'. That is, one could think of proximity both in terms of geographical closeness to the participant as well as in terms of their relational position to

another and perhaps this might influence how identification could come to play a role in the notion of empathy. That is, rather than viewing empathy as being limited to those who share intimate bonds with one, one might argue that human beings may feel fearful that their personal safety is at risk when they share familiar identifying characteristics with victims of crime, even if these victims are strangers (Billig, 1976; Louw-Potgieter, 1991; Burgers, 1994 as cited in Friedland, 1999). For example, if a person from one's street or who attends the same sporting club is victimised this might lead to increased fear of personal criminal victimisation even if the person is relatively unknown to one. Thus it is possible that ambiguities in terms of how participants experienced the 'Proximity' of crime contributed to a lack of clarity in the findings. A further speculation as to why, despite the validity of the measures, there was not a significant relationship between Proximity of Indirect Exposure and Perceptions of Personal Safety could be that the more violent or threatening the crime the more of an impact it makes on the individual who is hearing about it second hand. The participants may therefore have been swayed by the severity of a crime, related to the use of violent force and threatening weapons, and may have been more influenced by such considerations than by identifiable links to the victim. It is thus apparent that features other than proximity alone may have influenced Personal Safety scores. For this reason it is interesting to examine the further dimension of 'Intensity' which, although not the primary feature of interest in the Exposure measure, appeared important to consider and will be discussed further later.

In the case of this sample the qualitative section allowed the participants to articulate what it was about the Indirect Exposure to the crime that affected them, i.e. why they chose a particular criminal event as the exemplar of the story they "felt most affected by" (as indicated by

selections on the table). In many cases the most “severe” experiences were those that involved close family, could be linked to the participant at the level of personal identification, or were graphically violent. In some instances key events reported involved a combination of two or all of these features. Thus there was a suggestion that several different features of the events people reported being exposed to and affected by influenced their ‘intensity’ scores and may have been differently related to Perceptions of Personal Safety. Some of the material reported is presented here to illustrate these features.

Example 1:

“My friend was driving out of varsity when she stopped at a robot. She was sending a sms on her cell phone when a man approached the driver’s window with a knife and demanded her phone. She was unharmed, but the event was very traumatic. It is the same road I use to travel home after varsity.”

Participant 2\_2 (3<sup>rd</sup> Round Questionnaire: DIRECT, ‘4’as rated by the participant on the Intensity scale)

In this instance the participant seems to be reacting not only to the experience of someone close to her relationally i.e., a personal friend, but also appears to feel threatened by the identifications she has made with her friend over and above their friendship. Participant 2\_2 appears distressed by the notion that it could have been she who was victimised given the shared route she takes to and from university.

Example 2:

“Violent robbery where father was killed, mother in ICU and child was critical in our neighbourhood.” (Participant 12\_1, 2<sup>nd</sup> round questionnaire: MEDIA, ‘4’ as rated by the participant on the Intensity scale).

In this example participant 12\_1, an unmarried, young man, is struck not only by the brutality and fatality of a robbery he has heard about from a media source, but also by the geographical proximity of the violent crime to his personal living space.

Example 3:

“The violent hijacking of a friend’s cousin.” (Participant 14\_1, 1<sup>st</sup> round questionnaire: ANNECDOTAL FAR, ‘4’ as rated by the participant on the Intensity scale)

Despite not going in to overt detail about the incident Participant 14\_1 seems to have identified that it is the “violent” nature of the hijacking rather than his relationship to the victim that has led to his recalling and being affected by this crime.

The predominant themes concerning identification, geographical proximity, extreme violence, or combinations of these, extracted from the qualitative section of the assessments suggest that the ambiguity around the notion of proximity and the manner which this translated into intensity of response was difficult for the participants to separate out and contributed perhaps to self reports involving combinations of or a blurring of the above mentioned constructs. One could only disaggregate such aspects by using a more elaborated measure with a bigger sample.

Given concerns about the possible role of what could be called the severity or Intensity of Exposure and the fact that this had also been quantified as part of the data analysis process it was decided to also check the level of relationship between Intensity and Perceptions of Personal Safety. Again as will be evident from the results chapter, the correlations were not of sufficient magnitude to reach significance. Yet again, this was probably due to the sample size – a bigger sample allowing for significance to be detected with smaller effect sizes. The somewhat complex relationship between Proximity and Intensity and processes of identification and vicarious traumatisation due to specific trauma content is also likely to have influenced this correlational analysis.

A further important point to consider was that the participants' Perceptions of Personal Safety generally (statistically) appeared to remain relatively stable over time, despite the duration (9 months) of the study. This further suggests that although the instrument offered data that was suggestive of a relationship between the variables in the direction that was anticipated it was not sensitive enough to highlight this significantly with this relatively small sample. However this finding suggests that the participant's themselves answered the questionnaires consistently and with a level of authentic commitment to the research. It is possible that Fear of Crime or perceptions of lack of Personal Safety is relatively stable in individuals, irrespective of exposure, and may be related perhaps to other more stable personality features, such as neuroticism or its lack as suggested previously. However, given the emphasis on Exposure in at least three of the theoretical areas of study devoted to understanding Fear of Crime (Hale 1996, Ferraro 2007) it was reasonable to anticipate a relationship and somewhat surprising that the results were non-significant. Possible reasons for this have been presented, however.

### **5.3.2. Findings related to Perceptions of Personal Safety and Self Capacities**

Question 2:

Is there a relationship between one or more of the three aspects of Self Capacity and Perceptions of Personal Safety?

The findings of the present study indicate that a relationship could not be confirmed between Personal Safety and Self Capacities for the three separate questions. The literature suggests that even with valid measures significant findings concerning the role of personality or more internal or intrinsic person related features can be difficult to establish in stress related research due to the influence of other mediating variables (Walklate, 1998). In this instance these mediating variables might include ontological security (Walklate, 1998) and even more specifically in the South African context, the age of this particular sample. Their chronological age (early to late twenties) places the participants within the category of those that “grew up in a climate of fear” and thus are accustomed to it (Altbeker, 2007, p.67) and suggests that emotional regulation in respect of anxiety related to criminal victimisation might be affected by a kind of general resilience or minimization. With this possibility in mind one might consider that the sample under scrutiny is not only at an age of independence with relatively little responsibility (husband/ wife/ children/ mortgages etc), but also that their continued presence in South Africa, despite the large number of similarly aged individuals emigrating to other countries, shows a level of agency that excludes entertaining high levels of anxiety around crime or emotional disregulation in response to context. This is borne out by the fact that their Perceptions of Personal Safety scores generally fell in the mid-range. Thus while they appeared alert to the risk of crime they were generally reporting moderate levels of fear rather than scores of 4, which would have indicated

the presence of more extreme levels of anxiety. In this case affect regulation may be employed constantly in a rather consistent manner.

To extend the discussion of the findings in relation to Self Capacities, what is being suggested is that there may be some homogeneity in the previous life experience and developmental identity of the participants that contributed to considerable uniformity in their responses to the questions designed to operationalise the constructs of affect regulation and ability to self soothe. However, this reasoning is rather speculative and the main difficulty again lies with the small sample size. The intended strength of the longitudinal design, i.e., to map how changes in Self Capacities over time might contribute to increased or reduced Perceptions of Personal Safety, was compromised by the uniformity of individuals' scores across time. While one might have anticipated some regularity within an individual, one would also have expected to see some variation over time within a range. However, if such variation was minimal a much larger sample would have been required to detect the impact of more nuanced levels of change in self-reported Self Capacities. As discussed previously there were possibly some problems in assessing these capacities via the questions as they were constructed and despite their apparent face validity they should perhaps have been pilot tested at the outset and also expanded in terms of a greater number of questions or items.

A further consideration, concerning the question relating to 'being alone' was whether this might reflect sex/gender differences as opposed to any across sample difference, men being assumed to be less dependent. However, as will become apparent from discussion in the next section this did not appear to be the case.

## **5.4. Further Observations**

### **5.4.1. Proximity to and Intensity of Indirect Exposure to crime.**

Some relationship between the Proximity of the Indirect Exposure to crime and the Intensity of experience reported appeared to be in evidence in examining the 'qualitative' section of the Exposure to Crime instrument. The closer the level of reported exposure the more severe/intense the person reported their response to be in terms of preoccupation and emotional effect.

One was clearly able to see that the kinds of crime exposure most often reported (registered as having the greatest severity of impact for members of the sample) included events that involved the participants' closest friends and family and that as the relational proximity of victims became more removed so the number of the stories reported and sense of severity of the event decreased. In terms of the number of events coded overall the relationship was as follows: Direct = 24, Anecdotal Near = 14, Anecdotal Far = 9, Media = 7. There was therefore a clear relationship between these aspects of people's experience. Again this makes intrinsic sense; the closer the event in terms of proximity (distance/relationally near) the more severe it was experienced as being. While there were anomalies to this pattern, as for example when a 'distance far' incident involved horrifying violence and therefore evoked an intense response, this finding is generally in keeping with Figley's (1995) argument that the closer the affected person's relationship with the self the greater the impact.

### **5.4.2. Differences between Sexes**

A secondary analysis conducted showed no significant differences between the two sexes, i.e. between the 9 women and 5 men's scores across any of the measures. Although not equally weighted in terms of percentage population of the sample it was found that sex/gender did not

appear to influence the results in a particular direction, but rather that there was some consistency in the male and female participants' Perceptions of Personal Safety (as well as other dimensions studied). This analysis was undertaken, despite the small sample, because there is some suggestion in the literature of sex differences in levels of Fear of Crime and also to establish whether this demographic variable might have played a role in the Self Capacity findings. The latter did not appear to be the case.

This was interesting when compared to the qualitative analysis of the Exposure to Crime questionnaire, as it appeared that the male candidates were more guarded in their written responses, sharing only a few words (generally a repeating of the label inserted in the quantitative section of the same questionnaire) and providing no further articulation of their feelings around the event, despite prior instruction to do this. Two examples of this kind of response are provided:

“Work colleague arrested for drugs” (Participant 14\_1, 3<sup>rd</sup> round questionnaire, DIRECT)

“Friends held at gunpoint and robbed” (Participant 13\_1, 1<sup>st</sup> round questionnaire, ANECDOTAL NEAR)

The female respondents' responses were generally more detailed. This element of the data will be discussed in somewhat more detail in section 5.5 that follows.

#### **5.4.3. Levels of exposure**

The researcher was struck by the high levels/ incidence of crime the sample reported having been exposed to in the 9 month research period. Although this may well be due to the nature of the sampling technique implemented in the study (word of mouth and snowball) this observation

was across the board for all the participants with the sample of 14 reporting exposure to 54 crimes over 4 intervals during this period, even if some of this was indirect and distant. Another rather disturbing aspect of this information is that particularly violent and threatening crimes were reported within relatively close proximity (with all the meanings this implied) to the participants. For example, it was noteworthy that only 4 participants ever handed in a questionnaire that showed “nothing to report” for the previous week throughout the duration of the study. Thus although the study was clearly designed to access such experiences, it is of concern that participants almost uniformly reported knowledge of criminal incidents either in their immediate environment or social circle or through anecdotal accounts. It appears that at the level of 3 monthly monitoring by means of self report there is evidence that this South African population had experienced relatively high levels of exposure to crime. In respect of theorisation of Fear of Crime as stemming from accounts of actual crimes, (Indirect Exposure) it is apparent that Fear of Crime in this group may well be affected by this contextual element given the regularity and commonality of exposure although the statistical analyses were not able to demonstrate such a relationship.

#### **5.5. A Brief Qualitatively and Quantitatively Coded Content Analysis**

When categorising and totalling the data given in the qualitative section of the Exposure to Crime questionnaire (See Table 1), it became apparent that the “story” participant’s reported themselves to have been “most affected by” in that particular week, was related to a variety of crimes. Over the 9 months these ranged from Armed Robbery (home, store, restaurant etc.), Hijacking, Muggings, Assaults, Rape, Xenophobia, and Murder; to unarmed crimes such as Smash and Grabs, Burglary, Theft (not witnessed) and a few other incidents.

Of the 4 sources of communication of the traumatic events (Proximity) the most frequently reported incidents were those that had affected and/or were reported by close sources (Direct = 24 of 54 descriptions offered over the 9 month period). The trend followed that the further from them their source of communication the less frequently they reported being exposed to incidences from such sources (Media = 7). It appeared that the events that were relationally close came to mind more readily when the respondents thought about their exposure to crime in the previous week, as might be anticipated. It Proximity generally appeared to outweigh 'severity' in accounts. For example, Smash and Grabs (8) were reported more frequently than Rape (2 neither of which had affected close friends or family) and Xenophobia (5 of which 3 were from Media sources), due to the proximity of the Smash and Grabs to the participants (7 of the 8 incidents reported). This suggests that the participant's responses (around Smash and Grabs) were directed by identification and empathy born of close relationships, but that when these were overshadowed (in the participants' minds) by stories from more distant sources of exposure, it was generally due to the shocking nature of the event described. For example of the 5 Xenophobia attacks reported, 3 were from Media sources and included references to shocking photographs and gruesome descriptions. The remaining 2 incidents describing Xenophobia were given precedence (in the participants' minds) due to their proximity to the victims and not the 'severity' or gruesome detail of their ordeals.

"Xenophobic attacks on foreigners, affected both my maid and gardener who are both Zimbabweans." (Participant 5\_2, 3<sup>rd</sup> round questionnaire, DIRECT)

Of the 54 incidences of crime described, Armed House Robbery was reported the most frequently (12 times), with stories being obtained from all 4 sources of Proximity (Direct = 2, Anecdotal Near = 4, Anecdotal Far = 4 and Media =2). The least frequently reported crime was that of Rape (twice) and this was reported only from the 2 more distant sources in terms of proximity (Anecdotal Far = 1 and Media = 1).

When placed within the context of the profile of the entire data set it seemed that the crime of Armed Robbery affected the participants similarly in terms of the kinds of intensity scores allocated generally (3s and 4s), regardless of the proximity to the source of communication. Participants brief written elaborations suggested that this was due to the nature of the crime: victims within their homes, or other places previously presumed to be safe, facing armed assailants (who were startled or quite ruthless), losing material possessions, and in some cases even losing loved ones. Thus the imagined violation of such crime seemed to affect most participants quite strongly. Some illustrations of such incident descriptions are provided below:

“A colleague of my mother’s had an armed robbery at her house. Her mother and husband were present the robbers got a fright when they realised people were in the house. They shot the husband and the bullet also went through my mother’s friend’s (who was pregnant) hand. The husband died.” (Participant 1\_2, 2<sup>nd</sup> round questionnaire, ANECDOTAL NEAR, ‘4’ as rated by the participant on the Intensity scale)

“Good friend, who immigrated to UK a few years ago, came home to get married. She spent less than a week in the country and one of the evenings they went for dinner, were held at gun point

and robbed of all their belongings.” (Participant 8\_2, 3<sup>rd</sup> round questionnaire, DIRECT, ‘4’ as rated by the participant on the Intensity scale)

“Friend being held up in her house and being robbed and threatened.” (Participant 12\_1, 4<sup>th</sup> round questionnaire, ANECDOTAL FAR, ‘4’ as rated by the participant on the Intensity scale)

In the case of the 2 incidents of Rape described, the severity of the crime rather than identification through personal connection seemed to contribute to the subjects’ concern with the incidents. For example,

“Schalk Burger’s sister raped at Tygerberg Hospital.” (Participant 5\_2, 2<sup>nd</sup> round questionnaire, MEDIA, ‘4’ as rated by the participant on the Intensity scale)

In examining the brief descriptive accounts it appeared that identification with the victim and the context, evidence of physical injury or loss of life, and the shattering of assumptions in terms of places of safety, all contributed to what participants viewed as ‘severe’ types of exposure and therefore warranted elevated intensity scores. The following are selected examples of descriptions of crime that suggested this:

“My friend was on her way to dinner one night in Norwood, she stopped at a robot. Her black handbag was on the floor of her passenger’s seat. A man approached her passenger side, smashed her window with a sparkplug and held up a gun, she just looked down and held her hands up. He took her handbag and left. Luckily her cell phone was between her legs and her purse was under her seat so not much was taken and she was not harmed. Once again it’s scary

because crime is getting closer to my circle of people I love. It has made me more aware when driving at night and I put my handbag in my boot.” (Participant 7\_2, 4<sup>th</sup> round questionnaire, DIRECT, ‘4’ as rated by the participant on the Intensity scale)

“My cousins were attacked in their home – at night by 3 armed men and 1 unarmed. It affected me because I am very close to them and it scared me because they are strong men in their early 20s and they couldn’t do anything to stop it. It scared me because it would mean that I have no chance as I am weaker than them.” (9\_2, 1<sup>st</sup> round questionnaire, DIRECT, ‘4’ as rated by the participant on the Intensity scale)

It was interesting to note that the majority of the reports of ‘other’ crimes such as “governmental corruption” (14\_2), “racist slurs” (11\_1) and “bullying and intimidation at schools” (10\_1) were made by the male participants and that although these were rated as their most ‘severe’ incidences of exposure to crime they were never elaborated upon so that their responses could be better understood. The gender differences in terms of elaboration were intriguing and may even suggest that women’s greater engagement with such reports makes them more vulnerable to fears, but this is a highly speculative link that would need to be systematically explored as would the possible consequences of apparent disengagement on the part of the young men.

## **CHAPTER 6: CONCLUSION**

This final chapter will include the consideration of the limitations of the study and an outline of recommendations for future research as well as brief concluding comments.

### **6.1. Limitations of the Study**

In considering the limitations of the study, three areas of difficulty came to the fore. The areas of concern are the sample (size and age), the longitudinal design and the sensitivity of the measures.

#### **6.1.1. Concern about the Sample:**

As mentioned in Chapter 5 the results of the study suggested relationships may be present between the variables, but that these were not of sufficient magnitude to be statistically significant. Had the sample been larger in number the scores gained from both the mixed procedures and the correlation analyses may have been significant. A larger sample (as intended with the initial number of 25) therefore may have produced indications of a more conclusive and significant relationship between the variables of Self Capacities and Exposure to Crime and Perceptions of Personal Safety, given the trends visible in the data. However, the 64 sets of data provided an acceptable data set for statistical analysis and it proved difficult to prevent some attrition of the sample over time given the longitudinal design and thus the commitment required by the individual participants.

The sample consisted of a relatively homogenous group of young adults (20-30 years) living and working in Johannesburg. As proposed earlier, in Chapter 5, the age of the subjects may have shaped the data in particular ways due to their developmental stage in life (less family and

property responsibilities, resilience to the “climate of crime”). Their Fear of Crime scores as a group may have influenced the outcomes of the research and the generalisability of the findings is also constrained to this kind of sample. As mentioned previously the sampling method may have added to the lack of variation within the result set. This method was chosen as it was felt that it would elicit a greater commitment from the participants and this would allow for the completion of this explorative study. In retrospect this provided the study with its own set of complications, but at the time it was felt that because the study was designed to explore differences or trends within individuals and the group across time, the sample would serve as an appropriate one for the study.

#### **6.1.2. Longitudinal design**

The intention of implementing an extended study with questionnaires given at continuous intervals was to attempt to establish if there were changes in Perceptions of Personal Safety over time and whether these might be related to exposure over time and possible alterations in felt Self Capacities. Even taking account of the substantial drop out in this study (25-14) the statistics suggested that the 9 month period may not to have been long enough to establish significant changes over time or possible causal relationships between the variables.

Repeated measures analyses also tend to assume a once off initial intervention that is monitored and tracked over the span of a particular study. This study asked people to reflect on personal (different) experiences of trauma and to rate their reaction to each of these at that given moment in time. Thus new stimuli were constantly being introduced into the equation. The design therefore offered a wide variety of interesting themes to be further and more narrowly explored, but was in some respects unable to offer the kind of statistically significant data that might have

conclusively proved more influential relationships. The ‘real life’ basis of the study was a strength, but created some difficulties in the statistical analysis of the longitudinal data, which again might be solved by access to greater resources in order to collect a bigger data set.

### **6.1.3. Sensitivity of the measures**

The production of minor trends and patterns alluding to the presence of relationships between the variables rather than more conclusive results may be solely due to the small sample size, but may also be due to the measures utilised in this study not being quite sensitive enough to establish changes and relationships at a level of statistical significance. Although attempts were made to find more established measures for some of the variables of interest and construct validity of two of the questionnaires was deemed statistically suitable for this type of an experimental study, more refined measures may have been able to establish more prominent relationships between the variables in detecting greater nuances of variation.

## **6.2. Recommendations for Future Research**

Despite the lack of many statistically significant relationships, this study has brought to light an array of different themes that could encourage a wealth of future research. If one were to focus on the complexity of the design of this study one might solve the concerns around sampling and/or the repetitive introduction of new material in the ‘longitudinal’ design in future studies. That is, one might either consider discarding the notion of ‘change over time’ and opt for a larger sample (at least 150 participants) to whom one could administer a ‘once-off’ battery of more sensitive questionnaires or one might opt for a longitudinal study that asked participants to reflect on one (mutual/personal) event of indirect trauma and then monitor the participant’s Perceptions of Personal Safety and Self Capacities at different intervals over time, taking note of other traumas that may occur in the interim. In the case of the former cross sectional study the

increased sample size would offer the benefit of greater sensitivity and statistical power. The latter kind of study would allow the researcher to continue with the investigation of change ‘over time’, and would hopefully be able to clarify the effect of the single trauma, rather than having to predict and account for multiple and changing inputs.

Other studies that could arise from the present findings might include a comparison of Perceptions of Personal Safety between participants living in South Africa and those who have left the country and are living abroad. In this instance, if one could establish homogeneity between the two groups one might be able establish differences between the ‘resiliencies’ of the two populations. It would also be interesting to compare different populations in South Africa in terms of, for example, age, geographical location and class. Although national surveys of Fear of Crime have been conducted and trends observed, these studies tend not to examine more psychological aspects associated with such trends. The sex difference in ways of accounting of events also suggested an interesting trend for a more focused investigation.

### **6.3. Concluding Comments**

Whilst working on this study this researcher has had much food for thought. Despite the aforementioned limitations of design, the study has offered interesting material that warrants further investigation and has contributed to the beginnings of a more systematic or scientific investigation of a notion that is commonly held, i.e., that South Africans in general are living in a low level condition of indirect traumatisation and are obliged to deal with this. The large number of crimes reported in this study confirms the perception that South Africans live in a ‘Climate of Crime’, but it further stands to spark interest as to how young adults are able to continue their lives in such an environment without apparently being majorly affected internally

or behaviourally as operationalised in the variables of interest in this study. Hopefully other researchers will also take up the challenge to continue to systematically explore such questions.

## **CHAPTER 7:APPENDIX**

### **7.1. Appendix A:**

#### **7.1.1. Letter of invitation for participation**

December 2007

Dear Potential Participant

Invitation to participate in research.

My name is Alice von Klemperer and I am currently studying towards a Masters Degree in Clinical Psychology at the University of the Witwatersrand, under the supervision of Prof. Gillian Eagle. I am conducting research into the aspects of Indirect Exposure to criminal violence and perceptions of personal safety. I am interested in people's reflections about how exposure to reports of crime appears to affect their sense of safety and some of the ways they manage this. Please note that participation in this study is entirely voluntary and there will be no penalty for non-participation.

The following points are of importance and will help you decide whether to participate in the study or not:

Participating is entirely voluntary and would involve completing a set of brief questionnaires, combined these should take no more than half an hour of your time, on four occasions over the next nine months. After an initial meeting these would be emailed or posted to you and would hopefully be returned a week later.

Your confidentiality will be respected and all results will be recorded and displayed according to a numerical coding system. My supervisor and I will be the only people who will see your questionnaire responses.

You may choose to withdraw from this study at any stage, with no repercussions.

While it is not anticipated that completing these questionnaires will be distressing in any way, completing the questionnaires may make you think more about issues around personal safety. I will be available to talk to you about these issues if you wish. If it emerges from your questionnaire responses or through your contact with me that you appear to be in distress or at risk, I will suggest potential sources of help and support to you. No one else will be advised of this information and you will be free to accept or reject my suggestions.

Once the study has been completed and written up you will be welcome to have access to the general findings of the study which I can email or post you a summary of.

If you are interested in participating in the study please fill in and sign the attached consent form. If you require further information or have any questions please don't hesitate to contact me on:

Email: [alvonklempere@hotmai.com](mailto:alvonklempere@hotmai.com)

Tel: 0845176841

Yours Sincerely

Alice von Klemperer

## 7.2. Appendix B: Consent Form

I, \_\_\_\_\_

(Please print your name in full)

Hereby consent to participate in Alice von Klemperer's research study. I understand that this will involve my completing a set of questionnaires and that my confidentiality will be protected. I further understand that I can withdraw from the study at any stage without any repercussions.

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

### 7.3. Appendix C: Questionnaire

Part 1.

Please answer the following questions with respect to your experiences over the last week.

How safe did you feel walking and/or driving alone in your neighbourhood at night?

1 very safe	2 somewhat safe	3 somewhat unsafe	4 very unsafe
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How often did this influence your plans or prevent you from doing the things you like to do in and around your area?

1 never	2 rarely	3 sometimes	4 often
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How worried were you that you would experience being a victim of crime outside of your neighbourhood?

1 not worried	2 somewhat worried	3 moderately worried	4 very worried
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How worried were you that you would experience being a victim of crime in your neighbourhood?

1 not worried	2 somewhat worried	3 moderately worried	4 very worried
------------------	-----------------------	-------------------------	-------------------

How worried were you that you would experience being a victim of crime in your own home?

1 not worried	2 somewhat worried	3 moderately worried	4 very worried
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Part 2.

Please cross or tick the box that is most appropriate for your experience of the following over the last week:

(1 = easy 2 = somewhat difficult 3 = difficult 4 = very difficult)

How difficult have you found it to be on your own without the company of others?

1	2	3	4
---	---	---	---

How difficult or uncomfortable has it been for you to experience intense feelings (anger, sadness, happiness, fear)?

1	2	3	4
---	---	---	---

When you have been upset, how easy has it been for you to comfort yourself without the help of others?

1	2	3	4
---	---	---	---

Part 3.

Please tick the following boxes with respect to the extent of your response to the various stories you may have heard over the last week from their corresponding sources. In terms of intensity of response please consider the strength of the feelings these stories evoked in you and how they preoccupied your thoughts.

(1 = mild      2 = moderate      3 = high      4 = very high)

MEDIA (TV, radio, newspaper, online etc)		ANECDOTAL FAR (stories from friends about people you don't know personally)		ANECDOTAL NEAR (stories from friends about people you do know personally)		DIRECT (members of your family and/or close social circle's experiences as told by them)	
Example	Rate	Example	Rate	Example	Rate	Example	Rate
4.	5.	6.	7.	8.	7.9.	7.10.	7.11.
7.12.	7.13.	7.14.	7.15.	7.16.	7.17.	7.18.	7.19.
7.20.	7.21.	7.22.	7.23.	7.24.	7.25.	7.26.	7.27.
7.28.	7.29.	7.30.	7.31.	7.32.	7.33.	7.34.	7.35.
7.36.	7.37.	7.38.	7.39.	7.40.	7.41.	7.42.	7.43.

Please give a brief description of the story you felt most effected by (as indicated by your selections on the table):

#### 7.44. APPENDIX D: Additional Tables

PSafety	Perceptions of Personal Safety
ProxIET	Proximity to Indirect Exposure to Traumatization
IntenIET	Intensity of Indirect Exposure to Traumatization
Sex	Sex of the Participant
SelfCap	Self Capacity (with numerical numbers assigned to each question)

**Table D.1**  
*Full Results for the Mixed Model ANOVA Procedures*

Dv	Iv	Num df	Den df	F	Significance
PSafety	ProximIET	3	35	.436	.728
PSafety	Sex	1	42	.01	.906
IntenIET	Sex	1	42	2.27	.139
Self Capacity	Sex	1	28	.02	.882

**Table D.2**  
*Full Results for the Mixed Model Regression Analysis Procedures*

Dv	Iv	$\beta$	Std Err	df	tValue	Significance
<b>PSafety</b>	IntenIET	.064	.053	41	1.194	.239
<b>PSafety</b>	Self Cap1	.091	.01	27	0.911	.370
<b>PSafety</b>	Self Cap2	-.074	.076	26	-.981	.335
<b>PSafety</b>	Self Cap3	.076	.105	27	.724	.475

## CHAPTER 8:

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