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Interactional Dynamics During Residential Robbery: Victims' Accounts and Reflections

By

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A research project submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of MA by Coursework and Research Report in the field of Clinical Psychology

in the Faculty of Humanities at the University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg.

2021

Supervisor: Prof. Gillian Eagle

Declaration

I declare that this research report unless specifically indicated otherwise is my own, unaided work. It has not been submitted before for any other degree or examination at this or any other university.



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Caroline Quinn

18 January 2022

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Abstract

Several studies highlight the importance of documenting interactional elements of violent crime. While a range of studies focus on perpetrators' accounts of what transpired during the commission of robberies and other forms of violent crime, there has been a notable oversight in establishing victims' narratives surrounding such events. This study had a broad over-arching focus on establishing what appeared to either escalate or deescalate violence during a residential robbery from the survivors/victims' perspective. In addition to this focus, it was further aimed to establish the cognitive appraisals that victims/ survivors reported as salient during the incident, as well as their reported motivations for behaviours they exhibited. Moreover, the study aimed to highlight any socio-demographic features that the victims perceived to be significant in their interaction with perpetrators. An exploratory approach to the research study was undertaken whereby semi-structured interviews were conducted with eight adult South African participants. The data was processed and presented by means of a thematic analysis and contextualized from a primarily realist paradigm. Five superordinate themes were identified across participants' accounts, including: (1) *Comprehending the Nature of the Interpersonal Interaction, (2) Negotiation of Dominance and Submission, (3) Cognitive Processing and Evaluation during the Event, (4) Awareness of Demographic and Socio-Cultural Aspects of the Interchange, and (5) Advice & Post Hoc Observations.* These main themes were elaborated through subthemes that aimed to capture nuances across participants' narratives. The findings suggested that although positioned in a subjugated role participants attempted to moderate or affect the interaction between themselves and the perpetrators. This was mainly achieved by verbally and behaviorally demonstrating compliance in order to mitigate further risk. In addition, participants described more complex ways of responding to perpetrators which appeared to be based on idiosyncratic evaluations of their particular situation. Participants were aware of limited agency but appear to have negotiated some means of retaining or displaying agency within situational constraints. Across all eight participants' accounts, it was evident that participants acted in accordance with an assessment of their situation and responded in a manner that was perceived to result in ensuring the greatest likelihood of survival. References to race, gender, age and socioeconomic status did not feature as strongly in participants' accounts as anticipated.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

South Africa has been described as one of the most dangerous and violent countries across the globe according to the Global Peace Index (2019). Housebreaking has been recorded as the most prevalent crime in South Africa affecting 5,3% of households across the country (Statistics South Africa, 2020). It is interesting to note that out of all the various types of crimes they may be exposed to, robberies are one of the most feared crimes by individuals living in South Africa (Bowman, Kramer et al., 2018; Statistics South Africa, 2017). This has been attributed to a robbery's inherent potential to escalate into further violence of varying type and severity (Bowman, Kramer et al., 2018). Much research to date has focused on the broad factors which place society at risk for violent crime. In addition, considerable attention has been devoted to the personal and psychological factors which predispose individuals to act violently. However, less attention has been placed on the interactional aspects of violence between victim and perpetrator that unfold during a crime (Block, 1981; Block & Skogan, 1986; Bowman et al., 2015; Bowman, Whitehead & Raymond, 2018; Simon, 1991). It is noted that interactional interchanges and moments play a vital role in determining the level of violence that transpires during robberies as well as the outcome for survivors of such crime (Block, 1981). It can be hypothesised that the immense fear South Africans face around robberies involves uncertainty as to what will happen during such interpersonally driven crime as well as a feeling of helplessness in such situations. What interactions take place during a robbery and what appears to contribute to instances in which there is more or less violence are important questions that have been largely overlooked in the relevant literature.

In light of this, the present study aimed to explore interactional dynamics during crime from a victim/survivor's perspective. The terms victim and survivor will be used interchangeably throughout this report, highlighting how an individual was targeted and threatened by a perpetrator but with a reminder that the individual(s) do/es not carry the identity of victimhood permanently but at some point, becomes a survivor of a traumatic ordeal (Karmen, 2015). For the purpose of this study, the crime of residential robbery was the main focus. (For ethical reasons and because these forms of crime entail very specific kinds of motivations and impacts, incidents in which robbery was accompanied by sexual assault and/or loss of life were not included in this particular study).

1.1 Study Aims

The study was conducted in order to analyse victims/survivors' recollections and reflections concerning interactional dynamics between themselves and the perpetrator/s during a residential robbery, with a particular focus on their perceptions concerning what appeared to escalate or de-escalate levels of violence. The study thus aimed to shed light on the unfolding of dynamic interactions between parties during the crime, including exploring the survivors' thoughts and attributions during the crime, the behaviours they and the perpetrator/s exhibited, and how they perceived that this influenced the interaction between themselves and the perpetrator(s). In examining survivors' accounts of the robbery this study aimed to:

1) Explore what core interactional patterns survivors identified as salient during the robbery.
2) Identify themes related to what victims perceived to contribute to *escalation of* violence during the crime.
3) Identify themes related to what victims perceived to contribute to *de-escalation of* violence during the crime.
4) Establish survivors' rationale for why certain behaviours/ incidences appeared to either escalate or de-escalate violence.
5) Identify any socio-political or contextual features that presented as prominent in victims' accounts.

1.2 Rationale

The literature to date surrounding violent crime has mainly focused on factors that can place either an individual and/or a society at risk for violent crime. Additionally, much research has focused on the aftermath of violent crime and its lasting effect on victims and society. These findings are undoubtedly valuable on a theoretical and practical level, both for understanding violence and implementing actions to avoid risks of exposure to potentially violent crimes and for assisting victims in the aftermath of crime. However, it is noteworthy that some vital aspects of violent interactions and their actual execution have been largely absent from research into violent crime. The circumstances surrounding and pertaining to acts of violence during interactions between a victim/s and a perpetrator/s has been largely overlooked in existing research (Bowman, Kramer et al., 2018; Bowman et al., 2015; Bowman, Whitehead & Raymond, 2018). And, to date, a substantial amount of data in this

area of research has been predominantly gleaned from criminal justice records. (Bowman, Kramer et al., 2018; Bowman et al., 2015; Bowman, Whitehead & Raymond, 2018).

Several studies have sought to get an understanding of the interpersonal dynamics that transpire during a violent crime, yet utilise data from various sources other than survivors' accounts. A study conducted by Ganpat et al. (2013) examined Dutch court files to ascertain the extent to which the actors' behaviour resulted in lethal and non-lethal outcomes. Their findings centred around the significance of whether the victim was under the influence of alcohol as well as whether a third party was present. It was postulated that by consuming alcohol the victim may be more likely to respond offensively as well as less capable of defending themselves. It was further postulated that a third party present de-escalated violence and acted as a deterrent. Ganpat et al. (2013) emphasised the strenuous task of accurately reconstructing the events that transpired by using this method of data. Another study conducted by Guerette and Santana (2010) analysed data from the National Crime Victims Survey of the United States to examine the impact of victims' self-protective behaviour on the outcome of the crime (rape and robbery), finding that in the data examined victim resistance was beneficial in relation to both crimes. Similar to the study conducted by Ganpat et al. (2013) the presence of a third-party/ bystander was significant in that it reduced the chances of the completion of the crime (Guerette & Santana, 2010). The use of CCTV footage was used in a study conducted by Liebst et al. (2019) in order to examine the sequential interaction between perpetrators and victims during commercial robberies that took place in the Netherlands. Liebst et al found that victim compliance reduced aggression from the perpetrators. A notable limitation in these studies is the absence of how socio-political factors may have influenced the interaction between the survivors and perpetrators. These factors were mentioned in a study that drew on data from the National Incident-Based Reporting System and the United States Census Bureau to examine the effects of location and time of day on victim injury during robberies. It was reported that males had a greater chance of injury during a robbery in comparison to females and that ethnicity/ victims' race had no significance in relation to the odds of injury (Tillyer & Tillyer, 2014). Tillyer and Tillyer (2014) note a limitation in their study around not being able to determine whether the victim's behaviour influenced what took place during the incident.

McCluskey's (2013) study, focusing on the use of physical coercion in commercial and street robberies in the United States by analysing police reports noted that the odds of experiencing physical coercion reduced by more than half if victims were African-American and female. A notable limitation is an insight from the survivors' accounts which could

illuminate this finding. Resistance was found to increase perpetrators physical coercion yet McClusky (2013) notes that details concerning the characteristics pertaining to resistance were absent from reports, and as such cloud analysis of the differences in the outcome of robberies that involve resistance.

A detailed understanding of the sequential unfolding of events during a crime, in this instance from a survivor's perspective, should enable a more accurate and holistic understanding of violence and the processes which account for its occurrence (Block, 1981; Bowman et al., 2015; Bowman, Kramer et al., 2018; Bowman, Whitehead & Raymond, 2018; Indermaur, 1996), even if this is retrospectively reconstructed. Furthermore, accounts from the survivor's perspective allow for insight into socio-political or contextual factors that they perceive to have influenced their interaction with the perpetrator(s). Two implications arise from research focusing on this subject matter. The first is one of theoretical purpose - identifying some of the agitating and mitigating factors which influence violence in the here and now may provide new theoretical insights into the processes of violence (Bowman et al., 2015; Falsetti & Resick, 1995; Indermaur, 1996; Simon, 1991). Violence can therefore be better understood on a practical level as opposed to at a more distant conceptual level (Bowman et al., 2015; Simon, 1991). Secondly, this type of research has potentially valuable use in applied contexts (Bowman et al., 2015; Falsetti & Resick, 1995; Indermaur, 1996; Simon, 1991) in that it may facilitate psycho-education around violence de-escalation (albeit recognising that each interaction will be to some extent unique).

Research of this nature appreciates that human behaviour does not occur in a vacuum and acknowledges that 'victims' of such situations possess subjectivity and agency (Bowman et al., 2015; Kenney, 2004; Prus, 1996; Simon, 1991). It is implied in the vast majority of research into violent crime that the role of the 'victim' in these circumstances is purely passive (Kenney, 2004). This study aimed to draw attention to the human agency a 'target of crime' may possess, which is often overlooked (Bowman et al., 2015; Kenney, 2004). Thus, in conducting research into interactional dynamics during crime it was hoped to give some prominence to the victim as an actor rather than focusing purely on the perpetrator as exercising control. The study attempted to explore to what degree if at all, victims perceived they were able to exert influence over the situation (Bowman et al., 2015; Guerette & Santana, 2010). Researchers have explored and documented perpetrators' accounts of violence during the commission of various kinds of crimes, however minimal focus has been

given to the accounts of victims (Guerette & Santana, 2010; Indermaur, 1996; Lindegaard et al., 2015).

Therefore, this study aimed to counterbalance the unequal weight given to perpetrators' accounts by giving victims a voice, while aiming to deepen appreciation of some of the vital interactional elements inherent in interpersonal violence (Bowman et al., 2015; Bowman, Whitehead & Raymond, 2018; Simon, 1991). As indicated, the study hoped to highlight what forms of agency, albeit perhaps limited, victims were able to exercise in interacting with perpetrators. In this respect, the study sought to foreground what resourcefulness survivors may have demonstrated during the robbery amongst other aspects.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

2.1 Violent Crime in South Africa

Situated in the top 20 most dangerous countries across the globe South Africa has become notorious for its high levels of violent crime (BusinessTech, 2019; Global Peace Index, 2019). Additionally, *The World Population Review* (2019) ranked the ten countries with the highest crime rates, placing South Africa in the third position. Individuals living in high-risk countries such as South Africa tend to frequently have crime at the forefront of their minds. The high rates of violent crime in South Africa are perhaps understandable when considering the broad risk factors for violent crime at a societal level and the current context in which South Africa is situated (Bhorat et al., 2017). Due to its multifaceted nature, research on interpersonal violence has predominantly categorized types of violence and typified the relations among those involved (stranger versus familial) (Elderton, 2015). However, given the complexity of this phenomenon different forms of interpersonal violence and its consequences implicate and extend to different contexts and across the lifespan of all those involved (perpetrators and victims) (Hamby & Grych, 2013).

Violence, as defined in the *World Report on Violence and Health* (2002) entails: "The intentional use of physical force or power, threatened or actual, against oneself, another person, or against a group or community, that either result in or has a high likelihood of resulting in injury, death, psychological harm, maldevelopment or deprivation" (Krug et al., p.5). As mentioned in the introductory chapter, for the purpose of this study, violent crime will be explored in the form of residential robbery as this type of crime entails the use of force and necessarily involves some interaction between perpetrator and victim. Robbery refers to the threat of or use of violence by a perpetrator to forcefully and illegally obtain another's property (McCluskey, 2013). Statistics South Africa (2020) reported that 1,2 million incidents of housebreakings took place over the course of 2019-2020 indicating that household possessions are a desirable target of theft and robbery. The second most common crime reported was home robberies with approximately 415,000 households targeted in the past five years (Business Insider South Africa, 2020; Statistics South Africa, 2020). The difference between these crimes entails residents of home robberies being present while housebreaking takes place (Business Insider South Africa, 2020). As mentioned previously, robbery is particularly feared by citizens precisely because it involves interpersonal contact and outcomes may be unpredictable. South Africa's high crime rates are more clearly

contextualized when taking into account the societal risk factors for violent crime and the unique position in which South Africa is situated (Bhorat et al., 2017), as further elaborated below.

2.2 Macro-Level Risk Factors for Violent Crime and Robbery in Particular

South Africa is still suffering from the devastating effects of Apartheid, most evident in societal and economic spheres (Bhorat et al., 2017). Three main risk factors have been identified at the macro-level (referring to the broader context of society) which have been firmly established as significant in their relation to violent crime. These factors include high levels of income inequality, high levels of unemployment, and poor social solidarity in the wider community (Bhorat et al., 2017; Bowman, Whitehead & Raymond, 2018; Coccia, 2018; Fajnzylber et al., 2002). All three factors are evident within South African society in the aftermath of the country's past of blatant and insidious oppression, violence and discrimination (Bhorat et al., 2017). Moreover, hegemonic masculinity has also been identified as a strong macro factor for the commission of property crime in particular (Bowman et al., 2015). The nature of property crime, particularly robbery, enables male perpetrators to enact a desired display of masculinity by subjugating the targets of crime and claiming ownership of their possessions (Bowman et al., 2015). The use of violence to exert what is believed to portray a masculine identity is a risk factor for the commission of a violent crime, alongside socialisation regarding the normative use of violence in many instances (Centre for the Study of Violence and Reconciliation [CSVR], 2008). In other words, the acceptable use of violence as a means to accomplish a desired goal or respond to interpersonal conflicts, as perhaps commonly observed in socialisation environments, increases the propensity of offenders to resort to violence during the commission of a crime (CSVR, 2008). These macro-level factors have been termed "distal" or "upstream" factors and the bulk of literature examining risks for violent crime in society have focused on these kinds of broad elements (Bhorat et al., 2017; Bowman et al., 2015; Bowman, Whitehead & Raymond, 2018).

Economic factors, such as awareness of wealth inequalities and difficulties in finding paid employment, have been confirmed to be among offenders' motives for committing a crime (Leoschut & Bonora, 2007). Wright and Decker (1997) documented that offenders reported the driving motive for committing a robbery was the urgent need for money and that violence was used when necessary to ensure successful completion of the robbery and gaining of resources. In addition to the quick attainment of goods and cash, offenders have reported

committing robberies out of boredom, as well as experiencing exhilaration from committing such an offence (Taylor, 2017). Thus, both instrumental and more expressive motivations appear to be present. However, it is possible that the need for stimulation also relates to unemployment and the fact that offenders are often alienated from the working majority, lack social connections through work, feel overly passive in the world, and have scarce opportunities to acquire resources (Bruce, 2007). Although these macro factors cannot be directly related to interactional dynamics in violent crime events, the motivations of perpetrators may influence how such interactions play out during actual events. For instance, perpetrators have reported using excessive violence during a robbery with co-operative victims due to the sense of control they have over the victims and the resulting omnipotent feelings, feelings which are otherwise absent in their lives (Matthews, 2013).

2.3 Micro Level Risk Factors

In addition to consideration of macro factors, there has been attention to the micro-level risk factors for violence, focusing more on the individual (such as on developmental history and personality, for example) and aspects occurring in close proximity to crime, otherwise known as "proximal" or "downstream" factors (Bowman et al., 2015; Bowman, Whitehead & Raymond, 2018). These proximal factors include dimensions such as access to weapons, perpetrator'(s') degree of intoxication (Bowman, Whitehead & Raymond, 2018), as well as group dynamics when a crime is committed by a group of individuals (CSVR, 2007). In the last-mentioned instance, the more dominant members of the group are likely to dictate whether or not and to what degree violence is enacted during the commission of a crime (CSVR, 2007). Concerning personal or individual features researchers have drawn attention to particular psychological aspects of offenders in an attempt to better understand a particular person's motivation towards violence. For example, persons diagnosed with antisocial personality disorder may be viewed as predisposed to act more violently (Bergstrøm et al., 2018) and there is also evidence that growing up in a context in which one was either witness to, or directly subject to forms of violence, such as physical abuse, may also predispose individuals towards becoming violent (King, 2012), as will be further elaborated below.

Researchers have identified a certain bias in cognition common among violent offenders whereby they more often interpret ambiguous social situations to be threatening, negative or harmful, in comparison to the general population. This inclination to attribute hostile intent towards others has been referred to as hostile attribution bias (HAB) (Dodge et al., 1990; Karadenizova & Dahle, 2017; Wegrzyn et al., 2017) and has been fairly widely documented.

It is interesting to note the overlap among individuals inclined to adopt a HAB and other psychological characteristics identified to be common among violent offenders. Individuals who score high on psychopathy, a characteristic that has been linked to violence perpetration (Bergstrøm, et al., 2018) tend to have a stronger inclination to HAB than individuals who score lower on measures of psychopathy (Kuin et al., 2017). Furthermore, low self-control in an individual has been established as a risk factor for crime and violence as it is argued that such individuals tend to be less easily able to inhibit their aggressive urges (King, 2012; Nofziger, 2009). The interplay of the various above-mentioned factors, such as access to weapons, intoxication, and socialised norms regarding the use of violence, may increase the likelihood of a perpetrator responding violently in a moment of increased tension set off by situational components during the crime (CSVR, 2008).

2.4 Situational/ Interactional Risk Factors

In an attempt to better understand the risks for violent crime researchers have placed great importance on the above mentioned distal and proximal factors. However, less attention has been devoted to the actual situation/event itself in which acts of violence unfold sequentially during a crime (Block, 1981; Block & Skogan, 1986; Bowman et al., 2015; Bowman, Whitehead & Raymond, 2018; Simon, 1991). The studies which have examined the situational and interactional aspects of violence during a robbery have mainly concerned victim resistance and whether this increases violence from the offender or appears to buffer against it (Block, 1981; Block & Skogan, 1986; Guerette & Santana, 2010; Lindegaard et al., 2018; Tark & Kleck, 2004).

However crucial methodological issues which have direct implications for the credibility of these findings have been repeatedly noted (Block & Skogan, 1986; Lindegaard et al., 2015; Tark & Kleck, 2004). Consequently, these studies have produced mixed findings in respect to victim resistance and its effect on the level of violence observed during a robbery. Tark and Kleck (2004) outline two main issues in the existing literature which complicate and cloud findings on victim resistance, the first being differences in conceptualising victim resistance, and the second being the grouping of forms of resistance under broad categories such as physical and non-physical (Guerette & Santana, 2010; Tark & Kleck, 2004). Employment of these broad typologies overlooks potentially important nuances in actions subsumed under one or another category, rendering conclusions to be drawn from such studies less robust (Tark & Kleck, 2004).

In addition, research into resistance has tended to neglect to account for the sequence of events/actions which took place during the incident which can impact the conclusions drawn from findings (Block & Skogan, 1986; Lindegaard et al., 2018; McCluskey, 2013; Ruback & Thompson, 2001; Tark & Kleck, 2004). Significantly, for example, most of the existing studies on victim resistance have generally been unclear in accounting for whether victim resistance (and specific types) took place before or after the perpetrator acted violently (Lindegaard et al., 2018; McCluskey, 2013; Tark & Kleck, 2004). Therefore, the conclusions do not reflect an accurate account of the apparent impact of victims' resistance on offender aggression (Block & Skogan, 1986; McCluskey, 2013; Tark & Kleck, 2004).

When Tark and Cleck (2004) accounted for a wide variety of behaviours reflecting victim resistance, as well as paying attention to the timeline of events, they found that victim resistance, in all forms, was generally beneficial for the victim. Guerette and Santana's (2010) findings regarding victims' resistance were similar. They maintain that once the sequence of events was accounted for, and differentiation was made between victims' self-protective and overtly resistant behaviours, resistant behaviours posed a limited risk for escalating perpetrator violence. It is worth noting that both studies obtained data from the United States' National Crime Victimization Survey (NCVS). However, these two studies caution against broad generalisations regarding these findings as both sets of authors state that under different circumstances victim resistance could produce different consequences to those found in the particular studies they conducted (Guerette & Santana, 2010; Tark & Cleck, 2004). It is possible, for example, that particular contextual factors, such as some of those referred to earlier in relation to South Africa, might shape how victim resistance is differently perceived and responded to. It is evident that more studies taking into account the sequence of events during a violent crime and differentiating between types of victim behaviour need to be conducted to form more solid ground from which to draw conclusions about this aspect of victim-perpetrator interaction.

2.5 Perpetrators' Accounts of Violence

In determining what causes a robbery to turn violent researchers have given unequal weight to perpetrators' accounts, while victims' perceptions of events have been largely neglected in comparison (Guerette & Santana, 2010; Lindegaard et al., 2015; Simon, 1991). It is, however, valuable to gain an insight into the perpetrators' motivations to gain a subjective understanding of the event from the perpetrators' perspective, although related findings should be interpreted with a fair amount of caution which will be discussed shortly.

According to perpetrator accounts, violence is mainly used for instrumental reasons, these being the successful completion of a crime and ensuring the subsequent escape from the crime scene (Indermaur, 1996; Wright & Decker, 1997). Perpetrators account for their use of violence as arising from necessity when victims resist or fail to cooperate, or when they obstruct the perpetrators' exit from the crime (Indermaur, 1996; Wright & Decker, 1997). Additionally, offenders' detail that use of violence during the *initiation* of a crime is more likely when they assume that their target is likely to resist, and violence enacted *during* a crime is due to victims' nonconformity to expectations in the process of the unfolding of the event (Indermaur, 1996; Lindegaard et al., 2015). It has repeatedly been found that the offender's possession of a weapon (most notably a gun) during a crime reduces the risk of further violence significantly (Block, 1981; Block & Skogan, 1986; Bowman et al., 2018; Indermaur, 1996; Liebst et al., 2019; Lindegaard, et al., 2018; McCluskey, 2013). This has been ascribed to the offender's ability to establish significant threat at the outset which reduces victim resistance and subsequently increases cooperation (Block & Skogan, 1986; Indermaur, 1996; Liebst et al., 2019; Lindegaard, et al., 2018; McCluskey, 2013; Wright & Decker, 1997).

Although perpetrator accounts are valuable, it must be noted that certain factors may influence accounts of offender self-reports, which means that they need to be treated with some caution (Indermaur, 1996; Liebst et al., 2019; Lindegaard et al., 2015; Lindegaard et al., 2018). Among these factors are included: memory distortions, possible misinterpretations of the event due to cognitive biases, possibly HAB, as well as misrepresenting events for the sake of impression management (Indermaur, 1996; Liebst et al., 2019; Lindegaard et al., 2015; Lindegaard et al., 2018). Thus, perpetrators may suggest that their motivations for actions were more straightforward than was actually the case during the event. Their accounts appear to suggest that if victims cooperate and perhaps even facilitate the achievement of their objectives then they are unlikely to engage in violence. It is interesting to note that they articulate at least two major objectives, the first being to achieve their goals in relation to the commission of the crime and the second being to exit without being detained. It is also evident that perpetrators' accounts tend to exclude any reference to expressive needs or possible psychological motivations, perhaps because they are less consciously aware of such motivations or choose not to share these with researchers. The reference to the *expressive* use of violence denotes situations in which violence is enacted to fulfil an emotional rather than an instrumental need, for instance gaining satisfaction from inflicting pain or as a means to act on feelings of anger or hatred (Bruce, 2010).

2.6 Interactional Dynamics and Violence

Researchers have consistently pointed out that violent crime involves an *interaction* between a perpetrator and a "target" of crime (Bowman, Kramer et al., 2018; Bowman, Whitehead & Raymond, 2018; Guerette & Santana, 2010; Indermaur, 1996; Simon, 1991). Appreciating the reciprocal interaction between these parties is of vital importance not only in gaining a more comprehensive understanding of violence but to also gauge the severity of the outcome for the victim (Block, 1981; Bowman et al., 2015; Bowman, Kramer et al., 2018; Bowman, Whitehead & Raymond, 2018; Indermaur, 1996;). The phenomenon of violent crime is complex and understanding thereof requires not only a broad overview but also a close analysis of processes while in action (Bowman et al., 2015; Bowman, Kramer et al., 2018; Bowman, Whitehead & Raymond, 2018; Lindegaard et al., 2015). Collin's (2009) research analyses these processes by focusing on situational dynamics which distinguishes potentially violent situations from those which actually result in the enactment of violence. Collins indicates that individuals who come into engagement with one another have an inherent desire to fall into a synchronous rhythm with each other in terms of physical mannerisms and emotional mood. However, when this engagement consists of mutually opposing purposes this goes against this inherent drive and creates tension or fear, coined *confrontational tension/ fear (ct/f)* (Collins, 2009). For violence to ensue this barrier created by *ct/f* must be overcome which happens when the situation leaves one side at a disadvantage, enabling the side with the upper hand to enforce emotional dominance over the other, a prerequisite for physical dominance (Collins, 2009). For example, when this model of interaction is applied to armed robbery Collins proposes that despite being armed, perpetrators will wait for an instance when the victim is off guard before moving into the interaction, as their main intent is to upset the victim's rhythms, so as to enforce their own control of the situation (Collins, 2009). Collins (2009) reports that a victim of a robbery who resists has a one in three chance of facing injury due to *forward panic*, related to the prolonged period of confrontation and the sudden disadvantage of being on the side that appears to have lost control of how the situation is being regulated. This is said to result in *hot rush*- whereby the advantaged party releases the built-up tension in subjecting the vulnerable party to violence that exceeds a level that would be designed purely to establish dominance (Collins, 2009).

While Collin's (2009) study on the micro-sociology of violence provides useful insights into the dynamics of violent interactions, there is overall an underwhelming representation of

investigations into the victims' behaviours, attributions and cognitions during the actual event as being significant to what transpires. This lack of emphasis on the perspectives of victims indirectly negates the importance of the interactional component of violence (Simon, 1991). The lack of thorough investigation into the 'targets'' part in violent interactions does disservice both to theoretical and applied knowledge of violence in action (Bowman et al., 2015; Falsetti & Resick, 1995; Indermaur, 1996; Simon, 1991).

The importance of balancing the scales by focusing on victims' accounts of events is clearly demonstrated in Indermaur's (1996) study. From the few accounts obtained from victims, Indemaur observed that there was a striking discord between their accounts and those of perpetrators concerning the same event. Numerous victims mentioned that the perpetrator seemed to get a thrill out of acting violently in contrast to only one perpetrator confessing to this kind of motivation, (one out of a total of 88 participants who were offenders), while the other 87 offender participants stated that violence was only used out of necessity, and for instrumental needs (Indermaur, 1996). Interestingly, something in the interaction conveyed to victims that there was an emotional valence to perpetrators' behaviour over and above goal achievement, indicating the perception of expressive violence in addition to using violence instrumentally (Bruce, 2010). Whether perpetrators were really unaware of such motivations or chose not to acknowledge them is not possible to establish. However, it is important to view victims as joint actors in the interchange who have awareness and make attributions about what is taking place.

2.7 Victim's Appraisals and Responses to Potentially Threatening Events

In reviewing material on violent crime, it appears that researchers have been interested in certain aspects of victims' behaviour such as victim resistance and/or self-protective behaviour during a crime. While some theorists have drawn attention to the importance of the interactional component of violence, to date there has been very little to no examination of the possible mechanisms that shape a victim of crime's behaviour in relation to the perpetrator as an interactive process over time during the incident. In many respects, the thought processes and judgements (cognitive appraisals) that victims are aware of on a moment-by-moment basis *during* the event itself have been overlooked. These cognitive appraisals can account, at least to a significant extent, for the specific actions undertaken by victims, (Bandura, 1989; Prus, 1996) and subsequently may impact the perpetrators' reactions and whether (and at what level) they respond violently (Simon, 1991). Indermaur (1996) mentioned that across victims' reports of their experiences, the majority felt panic and

varying levels of distress. Moreover, their thoughts were mainly centred on ensuring that they remained alive (Indermaur, 1996). Indermaur (1996) notes that once the crime had been in progress for some time victims started to contemplate plans for escape and ways in which to avoid violence. Thus, in one of the few studies undertaken into victims' experiences of what took place during a violent crime it was evident that there were shifts over time, that individuals were aware of both cognitive and affective responses, and that they were engaged in an assessment of what was unfolding, and what behavioural options might be available to them.

Appraisals and attributions that arise in victims in these situations should not only provide a rich understanding of their perspective of events and some rationale for their behaviours but may account for any sense of control they may have and their ability to influence the course of events (Bandura, 1989; Bowman et al., 2015). Lazarus and Folkman's Transactional Model of Stress (1984) and more recent models of cognitive appraisals are useful to draw on in conceptualising the cognitive processes that an individual engages in when encountering a highly stressful situation. According to the Transactional Model of Stress when engaged in a situation, an individual ascertains whether the situation is benign or has the potential to inflict harm (primary appraisals), in the case of the latter, affective and behavioural responses are determined by the coping mechanisms and avenues for responding that the person has at their disposal (secondary appraisals) (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984).

Biopsychosocial Approaches to Stress Responses

More recent models such as the biopsychosocial model of challenge and threat expanded on the Transactional model by focusing on coping resources and situational demands in differentiating whether a potentially harmful/stressful situation was appraised as a challenge or a threat (Crum, et al., 2017; Jamieson, Hangen et al., 2018). If situational demands exceeded the person's perception of their coping resources, then the situation was appraised as a threat and alternatively, if the person evaluated that those available resources outweighed the demands of a situation then it was appraised as a challenge (Crum et al., 2017; Jaimeson, Crum et al., 2018; Jaimeson, Hangen et al., 2018). This biopsychosocial model of threat mapped differences in physiological responses of appraising a situation as a threat or challenge, whereby threat involved blood centring in the core of the body as opposed to experiencing a situation as a challenge which resulted in more blood flowing to peripheral sites, including the brain (Jaimeson, Hangen et al., 2018). Challenge type responses enable one to swiftly mobilize into action as well as to return to physiological homeostasis relatively soon after experiencing this stress. While decision making was negatively impacted in the

short term when experiencing threat, challenge appraisals were associated with positive behavioural outcomes (Jaimeson, Hangen et al., 2018). This model emphasises how psychological processes inform physiological and cognitive responses as well as accounting for the wide array of components that constitute resources and demands, which inevitably vary and are dependent on each unique situation (Jaimeson, Crum et al., 2018; Jaimeson, Hangen et al., 2018). For instance, in the case of a robbery, the situational demands of perceived uncertainty and danger would involve a balance between resources such as physical ability and familiarity with the situation in determining the type as well as the intensity of stress response (Jaimeson, Crum et al., 2018; Jaimeson, Hangen et al., 2018).

Literature on human survival strategies, when faced with threat, emphasises the importance of a holistic model, including evolving cognitive and learning systems as well as the physiological correlates in the fear response (Mobbs et al., 2015). Similar to all mammals, human beings have innate reflexes that are utilised when encountering unforeseen danger such as passive (freezing) and active (flight or fight) defences (Mobbs et al., 2015; Shields et al., 2016). An important factor influencing which defensive strategy is used centres around perceived controllability of the situation, whereby controllable situations generally involve more active defences while less controllability often results in a freezing response (Mobbs et al., 2015). Furthermore, when faced with a threat, the Behavioural Inhibition System (BIS) is activated, resulting in anxious arousal, hypervigilance, and avoidance motivation (Jonas et al., 2014). This system is responsible for heightened attention to new information in addition to attempting to distance and distract oneself from conscious thoughts related to the threatening scenario (Jonas et al., 2014). Literature on the Survival Optimization System (SOS) echoes observations concerning the use of attempts to distance or distract oneself from thoughts pertaining to the threat, as well as engaging in reappraisal in order to alter the way the threatening situation is thought about (Mobbs et al., 2015). This speaks to attempts to regulate one's emotional reaction to the threatening stimulus as a coping mechanism, which will be discussed in more detail.

Humans 'capacity for higher-order thinking allows for survival mechanisms such as envisioning and predicting possible scenarios that may transpire while experiencing a threatening circumstance (Mobbs et al., 2015). These possible scenarios include potential escape routes, certain actions that may mitigate or exacerbate danger, and predicting the actions of those producing the threat in question to be prepared for defensive manoeuvres that have been deliberated as a result of envisioning possible scenarios (Mobbs et al., 2015.

However, Shields et al. (2016) draw attention to the lack of literature clarifying the precise mechanisms by which acute stress affects higher-order cognitions (i.e., executive functions). Shields et al.'s (2016) study revealed that stress negatively impacted working memory, cognitive flexibility and cognition inhibition; however, stress had a positive effect on response inhibition. It was emphasised that the impairment in executive functions serve as a survival mechanism so that attention was solely focused on the threatening situation as opposed to cognitive resources being expended on executive functions that would not be crucial for survival (Shields et al., 2016). It was further postulated that stress enhances executive motor control (response inhibition) which coincides with a survival strategy to optimally engage in a fight or flight response if necessary (Shields et al., 2016).

Coping Behaviours during Stressful Encounters

It is important to emphasise that theories of cognitive appraisals encapsulate emotional states as well as coping behaviours used to manage a stressful situation (Yih et al., 2019). Two main coping strategies have been identified by Lazarus and Folkman (1984) which are still salient in more recent literature. These include problem-focused coping (PFC) and emotion-focused coping (EFC) (Biggs et al., 2017; Folkman & Moskowitz, 2004). It has been documented that PFC deals more with the situation at hand, such as contemplating actions to be taken and generally involves situations that are perceived to be moderately controllable (Delahaij & Van Dam, 2017; Folkman & Moskowitz, 2004; Lazarus & Folman, 1984). EFC is typically deployed in situations that individuals appraise as highly distressing and in which they have little to no control (Delahaij & Van Dam, 2017; Folkman & Moskowitz, 2004; Lazarus & Folkman, 1984). Due to the low impact/ control an individual can exert in these latter kinds of situations, coping mechanisms involve attempts to adjust thoughts and feelings resulting from the stressful situation (Bippus & Young, 2012; Lazarus & Folkman, 1984). This is done by means of shifting attention away from the situation through distraction, reappraising the situation, or accepting or resigning oneself to it (Segerstrom & O'Connor, 2012). In other words, PFC involves attempts to implement strategies to alter the external environment while EFC is used to regulate internal response to the situation (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984). However, situations are dynamic, and individuals are often able to flexibly apply different coping strategies that appear to be most appropriate and effective to the evolving situation at hand (Biggs, et al., 2017; Folkman & Moskowitz, 2004).

Moreover, numerous factors have been identified which influence individuals' responses to stress, such as habitual coping styles, (including cognitive restructuring, problem-solving, support seeking, distraction, and escape/avoidance) (Allen & Leary, 2010; Skinner et al.,

2003), as well as individuals' perception of their capabilities in handling stressful situations (i.e., *coping self-efficacy*) (Delahaij & Van Dam, 2017). Delahaij and Van Dam's (2017) study indicated that individuals' coping self-efficacy significantly impacted their affective and subsequent behavioural responses. While undergoing acute stress individuals with higher coping self-efficacy were more inclined to experience challenge-related emotions as opposed to those who displayed lower coping self-efficacy who experienced more threat-related emotions (Delahaij & Van Dam, 2017).

In addition to the above-mentioned formulations of stress responses, the stress mindset theory is useful in reviewing individual factors that influence the way a person responds to a stressful situation. As opposed to theory concerning evaluations of threat and challenge, the stress mindset theory addresses how individuals experience and approach stress as a phenomenon in and of itself (Crum et al., 2017; Jaimeson, Crum et al., 2018). This theory differentiates between two viewpoints that individuals may hold more generally regarding the nature of stress: *stress-is-enhancing-mindset* and *stress-is-debilitating-mindset*, where the former involves an outlook that stress can be beneficial and result in positive outcomes, generally resulting in motivation to engage with and attempt to overcome stressful situations (Crum et al., 2017; Crum et al., 2013). The latter involves a general belief that the experience and outcomes of stress are necessarily aversive and individuals who habitually adopt this mindset are more inclined to engage in passive and avoidant type behaviours (Crum et al., 2017; Crum et al., 2013). However, it is important to note that individuals can simultaneously hold both mindsets in certain circumstances and as such, the *enhancing* and *debilitating* constructs are best conceptualised as operating on a continuum, rather than understood as strictly dichotomous mindsets (Crum et al., 2013; Kilby & Sherman, 2016).

Moreover, adopting a *stress-is-enhancing* mindset when involved in a challenging or threatening situation is beneficial not because it is able to mitigate negative emotions caused by the stressful situation, but the coping resources used from this frame of mind have shown to be adaptive in the long term (Crum et al., 2017).

Interactional Aspects

In exploring the cognitive appraisals victims of crime engage in it seems important to recognise the joint *interaction* between victim and perpetrator as well as the subjectivity and degree of agency an individual may possess, even when they are the target of victimization (Bowman et al., 2018; Kenney, 2004; Simon, 1991). As Prus (1996) insightfully outlines, human behaviour does not occur in a vacuum but is contextually based in the inter-subjective space and certain actions are not simply automatically enacted but involve underlying

mechanisms. These mechanisms include cognitive appraisals and evaluations which are informed by inter-subjective space (Prus, 1996). In other words, Prus (1996) emphasises how ascribing human behaviour to overly broad factors can be simplistic and potentially inaccurate. One must acknowledge the interactional element between humans and the internal cognitive processes that take place during this interaction which allow individuals to assess, evaluate and predict based on the circumstances of the dynamic interaction, and which inform the particular course of action an individual chooses to take (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984; Prus, 1996). In addition, each party's subjectivity and identity is shaped by contextual and demographic aspects, such as gender, facility with language, and ownership of or familiarity with the space within which the interaction takes place, such that actors also bring awareness of complexity associated with these dynamics into their interactions. Neuroimaging research has shown that individuals are more sensitive to transgressions of those who they perceive to be 'the out group' as opposed to people with whom they identify with- 'the in group' (Molenberghs et al., 2016). While it is not possible to do justice to these added socially located elements that may shape interactions in violent crime in this review of the literature, it is acknowledged that these dimensions may emerge as salient in the research data.

2.8 Human Agency and Experiences of Traumatic Events

A prominent and common response set across victims of violent crime includes feelings of helplessness, powerlessness and a sense of loss of control (Janoff-Bulman & Frieze, 1983; Killias, 1990; McCann & Pearlman, 1990; Norris & Kaniasty, 1991; Winkel & Denkers, 1995). As is almost emblematic of victimization the targeted individual experiences a diminished sense of agency (Benight & Bandura, 2004; Janoff-Bulman & Frieze, 1983). The concept of human agency is explored more generally before applying this understanding to the context of survivors of violent crime.

Schlosser (2015) broadly outlines two implications that arise from the concept of agency, the first being that there is an entity and the second that this entity is able to perform an action or exert behaviour. Furthermore, the definition of agency refers to purposeful action which is informed by an individual's psychic processes as well as their external environment (Bandura, 1989; Emirbayer & Mische, 1998; Prus, 1996; Schlosser, 2015). Moreover, a complex and more complete conceptualisation of agency includes the *temporal* element of subjectivity as well as one's "situatedness" within a given context (Emirbayer & Mische, 1998; Prus, 1996). One, therefore, needs to understand agency in terms of an individual interacting with and fluidly interpreting their environment, moment to moment (Emirbayer &

Mische, 1998; Prus, 1996). Bandura (1989) highlights how agency, the ability to direct one's cognition, will and behaviour, is a uniquely human characteristic. Ryan and Deci (2017) identified three psychological needs including *autonomy, competence* and *relatedness*, emphasising their importance in fostering healthy development as an individual engages with their situated context. Accordingly, in the literature pertaining to self-determination theory, when an individual is coerced into certain behaviours by external forces or individuals this is in direct contrast to feeling volitional control over their sense of self - this sense of volition and behaving in accordance with one's desires or goals is pivotal in the concept of autonomy (Ryan & Deci, 2017). While the related concept of *competence* refers to the psychological need to feel a sense of proficiency and mastery, relatedness refers to a feeling of social integration and belonging (Ryan & Deci, 2017). It is reiterated that individuals do not act independently of or out of automatic reactivity to the environment, but through the interchange of environmental inputs and mental mechanisms/ processes, and the social environment can either foster or impinge upon the three basic psychological needs mentioned (Bandura, 1989; Emirbayer & Mische, 1998; Prus, 1996; Ryan & Deci, 2017). The mechanisms that shape agency centre both on past experiences and particular appraisal of the present situation, as well as from desired outcomes for the future (Emirbayer & Mische, 1998; Prus, 1996). It is evident, for example, that both victims and perpetrators in situations of violent crime wish to escape unscathed from the situation and this is part of their future orientation.

The Chordal Triad of Agency

The understanding of agency as carrying past experiential aspects as well as being shaped by present centred assessments and future goals is informatively elaborated by Emirbayer and Mische (1998) in their conceptualisation of the "The Chordal Triad of Agency". In categorizing agency into three elements, they clearly demonstrate the inherent temporal underpinnings of the concept (Emirbayer & Mische, 1998). "The iterational element" is informed by the past and consists of familiar and repeated ways of thinking and behaving which are consistently utilised (Emirbayer & Mische, 1998, p. 971). Secondly, "the projective element" is informed by the future and actors act in accordance with certain predictions and goals they have envisioned (Emirbayer & Mische, 1998, p. 971). Lastly, there is "the practical-evaluative element", which pertains to the present and the course of action an individual chooses to take while a situation presents itself and continuously unfolds (Emirbayer & Mische, 1998, p. 971).

Trauma and Challenges to Core Assumptions Related to Agency

It has been suggested that the experience of being victimized and confronted with severe threat tends to dismantle three intertwined assumptions individuals hold of themselves, and their relation to the world (Janoff-Bulman & Frieze, 1983). It is interesting to note that the fundamental notion that all three assumptions rest upon is that of *human agency*. The violation of agency in situations of exposure to traumatic stressors causes an individual to contend with unsettling evaluations of their internal and external world (Benight & Bandura, 2004; Janoff-Bulman & Frieze, 1983; Norris & Kaniasty, 1991). The degree to which these assumptions disintegrate is of course unique to each individual but is linked to the degree of subsequent traumatization they experience (Janoff-Bulman & Frieze, 1983).

The core assumptions that it is understood that most people hold include: "1) the belief in personal invulnerability; 2) the perception of the world as meaningful and comprehensible; 3) the view of ourselves in a positive light" (Janoff-Bulman & Frieze, 1983, p.3). Challenges to the first assumption related to experiences of extreme threat tend to entail a sense of *loss of control* and the individual's perception of their ability to control outcomes and to be able to rely on their capabilities is brought into question (Benight & Bandura, 2004; Janoff-Bulman & Frieze,1983; Killias, 1990; Ruback & Thompson, 2001). This may occur both during and subsequent to facing threatening events.

In regard to the second assumption, Janoff-Bulman and Frieze (1983) outline how individuals gain a sense of autonomy and comfort in believing that events in the world follow an understandable order. Individuals, therefore, have ascribed rationales for sequences of events and how they are expected to unfold (Janoff-Bulman & Frieze, 1983; Prus, 1996). This enables them to feel as though they have an accurate grasp of reality, an ability to understand it and to formulate predictions based on these rationales (Janoff-Bulman & Frieze, 1983). Inherent in this belief is that individuals are able to exert influence over life occurrences based on acting in accord with shared assumptions, conventions and 'rules' and therefore when events do not follow conventions, for example about interactional behaviour, the element of control is again brought into question (Janoff-Bulman & Frieze, 1983; Prus, 1996).

The last assumption highlights how in post-trauma exposure, particularly trauma that involves a personal violation of some kind, individuals shift their self-perception to a more negative focus (Janoff-Bulman & Frieze, 1983; Norris & Kaniasty, 1991), comprehending that they may not always be treated with respect and that their human rights are not sacrosanct. Feelings of impotence may start to dominate how the victim views him/herself

(Janoff-Bulman & Frieze, 1983): the victimized individual feels powerless and that the event has directly attacked their sense of autonomy (Bard and Sangrey cited in Janoff-Bulman & Frieze, 1983). As autonomy relates to one's capability to act in accordance with ensuring personal safety as well as engage in goal-driven behaviour in the pursuit of self-actualization and wellbeing, interpersonal violence directly threatens the individual's sense of autonomy (Ciurria, 2018). Ciurria (2018) outlines the main ways in which intimate partner violence (IPV), for example, diminishes the victim's sense of autonomy. Despite the study specifically pertaining to IPV, these findings are still useful and applicable to victims/survivors of violent crime. As such interpersonal violence violates autonomy by subjugating the target into a position where their sense of safety is jeopardized and forcing the victim to forego their basic human rights and needs in favour of the oppressor's demands or goals (Ciurria, 2018). Such feelings may arise both during and post-event exposure and may be more or less enduring depending upon a range of factors.

It can be seen how each of the three assumptions put forward by Janoff-Bulman may relate to aspects of "The Chordal Triad of Agency". The challenge to the sense of invulnerability present during the event can extend into the future and may lead to the development of enduring stress-related responses which can severely impact the affected individuals' emotional wellbeing (Gale & Coupe, 2005; Ruback & Thompson, 2001). The reduction in sense of personal agency and value will clearly affect their present and future, and victims may continue to present as overwhelmed, fearful and unsure in their behaviours as they lose the confidence to trust in their own capabilities (Benight & Bandura, 2004; Ruback & Thompson, 2001). Although research on alterations to basic assumptions as a consequence of trauma exposure has tended to focus on longer-term effects, it is possible that this formulation may have relevance for understanding victims' appraisals and thoughts during a violent criminally motivated attack and that there is an interpersonal element to how agency or lack of agency may be experienced. From victims' self-reports it is evident that the origins of schema alterations in relation to agency often occurred in relation to experiences during the actual commission of the crime and subsequently may become over generalised (Kenney, 2004).

Much research has focused on attending to the aftermath of violent crime and the post-event distress and cognitions the individual experiences. However, very little research has attempted to gauge aspects of agency and possibly autonomy that a survivor possessed and displayed during the event and what this looked like during the incident. Kenney (2004) addresses the issue of conceptualizing a victim of a crime as powerless in the wake of the

event. This common standpoint on victimization may be seen as skewed and assumptions about total powerlessness rob the survivor of the opportunity to redefine the meaning of the event and acknowledge a more positive view of themselves. It is possible that by re-evaluating the interactional dynamic that took place during a criminal attack the victim is able to acquire a greater sense of autonomy and empowerment (Simon, 1991). While it is not the aim of the study to reframe aspects of victim/survivor's behaviour in interaction in a positive direction in terms of functionality or agency, it is the intention of the study to explore what role or part the victim played in the interaction as reflected through their own evaluative accounts and that this may hopefully translate into consolidating a greater sense of personal agency.

2.9 Brief Summary

It is evident that investigation into the causes of commission of violent crime has been a broad area of study encapsulating appreciation of broad societal risks as well as the more personal motivations and influences leading to its occurrence. There has also been considerable research that examines the more prolonged psychological consequences faced by victims of violence and violent crime, such as vulnerability to trauma-related responses. It is also evident that a significant amount of literature has documented, from the perpetrators' perspective, their accounts of what factors led them towards violence while interacting with victims. However, it is somewhat surprising that victims/ survivors' accounts of experiences during violent crime-related incidents have been largely overlooked resulting in only one side of the interaction being accounted for. It is apparent that in addition to considering victim resistance (or lack thereof), it may be useful to understand victims' appraisals through an event and how their thoughts and behaviours are shaped by and shape interactions with perpetrators. Literature suggests that victim/survivor actions are informed by threat appraisal and coping style, as well as by moment-to-moment situational factors. The present study aimed to examine the interchange during a violent residential robbery from the survivors' perspective, employing the research methods and design outlined in the following chapter.

Chapter 3: Research Design and Method

3.1 Research Questions

To better understand the interactional dynamics relating to potential and enacted violence during a house robbery from the victim's point of view this study aimed to address the following questions as narrated in victims' accounts of what transpired:

1) What kinds of interactional dynamics were victims aware of during the commission of the crime?
2) During the crime what were the thoughts, evaluations, appraisals and attributions that the victim was aware of?
3) What were the behaviours that victims displayed during the commission of the crime and what motivated these behaviours?
4) What interactional features appeared to a) escalate and/or b) de-escalate violence?
5) What kinds of identity related and contextual features did victims perceive to influence how the interaction unfolded?

3.2 Research Design

In order to answer these questions by gaining an in-depth understanding of the event from the victim's perspective an exploratory qualitative design was adopted. Qualitative analysis prioritises the participant's experience and the meaning individuals ascribe to circumstances (Braun & Clarke, 2013). Embracing human subjectivity with a focus on understanding individuals' interpretations and behaviours which are embedded in a social context is fundamental to a qualitative approach (Braun & Clarke, 2013). This study attempted to generate a thorough and detailed account of the experience of victims of crime and the meaning and interpretations they ascribed to an incident in which they were involved, most particularly with regard to interactional dynamics and perceptions of what escalated or de-escalated risk of, or actual, violence. In addition, the study was interested in investigating aspects of personal agency and victims' perceived influence on interactions with the perpetrator/s. The study was of an exploratory nature due to the fact that this area of research has been relatively undeveloped (Stebbins, 2001). An exploratory approach is undertaken when little is known about the phenomenon under study, but it is believed that there are

potential insights to gain from investigating the particular area of focus (Stebbins, 2001). Two components inherent in this approach mentioned by Stebbins (2001, p.5) include "flexibility" and "open-mindedness", which are also fundamental tenets of qualitative research more generally.

3.3 Theoretical Framework

In line with the research focus and aims the study was located within a realist paradigm as understood and elaborated below. The accounts produced by participants were utilised as accurate reflections of how they perceived the incident, recognising that accounts would be mediated by the interview context and by processes related to the reconstruction of a past event. The underlying philosophy of the realist paradigm is that there is not necessarily "objective understanding" of the world and therefore subjective accounts of experience are taken as valid and valuable in their own right (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Maxwell, 2012). It is recognised that participants' accounts are inevitably shaped by their own particular world view and interpretation of events. A realist view should therefore not be equated with a positivist view in that it is not claimed that representations of events are accurate factual records of events. A realist theoretical approach to research is underpinned by the conception that the data derived is nevertheless a valid and sufficient account of reality as elaborated by those who give the account (Willig, 2008). Linked to this appreciation is the fact that the approach undertaken in obtaining and analysing data needs to reflect the participants' accounts as they have described them as accurately as possible (Willig, 2008). Moreover, a realist ontology entails the notion that certain features in the world influence and impact each other and examining the sequential unfolding by means of which these influences appear to occur is important (Maxwell, 2012; Willig, 2008). This framework directly addresses the study's goal of examining accounts of the unfolding of events that took place and aiming to determine influencing factors as perceived by the participants.

3.4 Recruitment and Participants

In line with the initial intention to interview six to ten participants, eight participants were included in the study. This number provided a diverse enough range to identify meaningful patterns across participants' experiences while enabling a thorough and detailed analysis of each participant's experience. Participants were all over the age of 18 years and were comfortable to be interviewed in English, given that this was the language in which the interviewer is sufficiently proficient to conduct the interviews and the analysis. Beyond this,

there were no restrictions on participation based on demographic characteristics. However, there were inclusion and exclusion criteria that were related to the nature of the events that participants have experienced (see Appendix B). In order to take part in the research, study participants were identified as individuals who had been the victim of a residential robbery that occurred at least eight weeks prior to participation in the study (to reduce the likelihood of re-traumatization) and took place over the duration of at least 15 minutes or more (in order for sufficient data about interactional elements of the crime to be elaborated).

Potential participants were accessed through the researcher's social networks (as elaborated below), and in certain instances via snowball sampling. Potential participants were sourced via word of mouth through friends and family members who had been appraised of the objectives of the research study. Personal friends or family members of the interviewer were excluded as it would not be appropriate to engage in a dual relationship with such individuals. Individuals who indicated a willingness to be approached to consider taking part in the study were sent the participation information sheet (Appendix B) via email such that they could give due consideration as to whether they wished to participate. It was emphasised that participation was completely voluntary and that individuals were entitled to withdraw themselves from participation at any time, up until the point at which the study was submitted for examination.

Table 1 below provides a profile of the eight participants. This information serves to give a contextual backdrop in relation to salient participant demographics and the significant situational particulars of each participant's experience. Pseudonyms have been ascribed to each participant to ensure confidentiality is maintained.

Table 1

Participant Demographics

Participant	Gender	Race	Age	Year Of Robbery	No. of Perpetrators	Armed	Others Present
Allison	Female	White	20s	2012	3	Yes	1
Dominic	Male	White	30s	2017	4	Yes	1
Grace	Female	White	40s	2012	3	Yes	2
Liam	Male	White	50s	2016	3	No	0
Luke	Male	White	50s	2018	2	No	2
Michael	Male	White	20s	2012	3	Yes	2
Paula	Female	White	50s	2020	3	Yes	1
Vivian	Female	White	50s	2018	2	No	2

Figure 1. Participant Demographic Table

3.5 Data Collection

Interview Generated Data

The data was collected through semi-structured interviews that took place between the researcher and each participant individually. The interview guide questions (see Appendix A) were formulated in conjunction with the research supervisor and were guided by existing research (as outlined in the literature review) and the research aims. The interviews were initiated with a relatively open-ended question but thereafter were guided by a set of pre-determined questions (Appendix A) or "prompts" that were flexibly applied. This approach allowed the participants to freely express themselves and cover other relevant areas of focus that exceeded the scope of the questions. The open-ended question was phrased as follows: "*Can you tell me what happened in detail from the start of the robbery to the end thinking carefully about the interaction between you and the attacker or attackers. I would like to understand from your perspective how you processed what was happening, what kinds of observations you were making, and how you behaved in response to what was taking place. I am particularly interested in anything you have to share in relation to your thoughts about what might have either increased or decreased violence or risk of violence from the perpetrator(s) in the situation*". Examples of areas that were probed during the interviews included the elaboration of relations of dominance and submission and included questions such as whether participants were aware of how the perpetrators wanted them to behave and how they engaged in relation to this awareness. Furthermore, victims' attributions about perpetrators' motivations for their actions were probed, such as what they thought the perpetrators wanted to achieve at specific times (See Appendix A for further details).

3.5.1 Procedure

Ethical clearance to conduct the study was initially obtained from the relevant university committee (elaborated below). Subsequent to this, the recruitment process of participants ensued. Individuals who approached the researcher expressing an interest in partaking in the study were sent the Participation Information Sheet (Appendix B) and consent form (Appendix C). The Participation Information (PIS) sheet stipulated the purpose of the study as well as outlining inclusion and exclusion criteria for participation as well as the participant's rights (elaborated in the ethics section below). After the researcher received these signed documents, participants were then contacted to set up an interview at a mutually convenient day and time. Due to the Covid-19 pandemic restrictions, all the interviews took place online via Zoom and in one case via WhatsApp video call. Stipulations around the

conditions of online interviews were communicated via the participation information sheet, and consent to be audio recorded was obtained by participants prior to commencement of the interviews. It was made clear that the audio recordings would be retained and transcribed for the purpose of this study and that recordings would be captured on a digital device and saved on a password-protected computer.

3.6 Data Analysis

The data collected through semi-structured interviews were analysed using a thematic analysis (TA) approach. In line with the study aims a thematic analysis was considered most appropriate for its flexibility and ability to provide detailed and thorough findings to do justice to participants' accounts. "TA is a method for systematically identifying, organizing and offering insight into patterns of meaning (themes) across a data set. Through focusing on meaning *across* a data set, TA allows the researcher to see and make sense of collective or shared *meanings* and experiences" (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 57).

The fundamental notion of drawing meaningful themes fitted well with the study aims and purpose. Braun and Clark's (2006) six steps to conducting a thematic analysis were followed:

3.6.1 Familiarisation with the data

I transcribed the audio interview recordings and then began familiarising myself with the data (Braun & Clarke, 2006). This included reading the content of the transcriptions from a dynamic and analytic perspective and taking down initial notes as I brainstormed ideas and questions that arose from engaging with the data (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

3.6.2 Generating initial codes

I then began the process of coding data into different categories by use of the ATLAS.ti programme. This consisted of rereading the transcripts thoroughly and coding the data across transcripts into a list of exhaustive labels which encapsulated aspects of the data which seemed significant to the focus of the research (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Braun & Clarke, 2012).

3.6.3 Searching for Themes

Initial codes that mapped onto the same concept were grouped together under broader categories and served as the basis of conceptualising themes. Themes were formulated in conjunction with my supervisor and were established from an inductive or "bottom-up" approach (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Braun & Clarke, 2012). In other words, the themes were derived from the data itself, in line with the framework of using the data to represent participants' reality of experience (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Braun & Clarke, 2012). Themes

were established based on a reading of the overt characteristics of the data (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

3.6.4 Reviewing Potential Themes

The data generated from the interviews was rich and required some sifting in identifying core themes. Considering the focus of the study the delineation of themes was carefully considered in order to ensure that each theme clearly captured a particular area of focus intending to address the initial research questions. This process involved organizing subthemes under relevant main themes so that each theme centred around a specific set of subject matter while including important nuances represented by subthemes.

3.6.5 Defining and naming themes

The themes were defined and named, in conjunction with my supervisor. A descriptive approach was undertaken whereby I selected data (quotes from participants) which served to best articulate the focus of each theme and relevant subthemes (Braun & Clarke, 2006). In the main, the accounts given by participants were analysed in relation to the content of their accounts and their explicit understanding of events, as opposed to looking for deeper implicit meanings within the data (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Care was taken to ensure that the extracts selected provided representation across all eight participants.

3.6.6 Producing the report

Themes were presented in a considered order so that each theme followed coherently from the last, and where applicable, expanded on the previous theme. An integrative approach to presenting the findings and discussion was undertaken in order to best capture the interwoven nature of the data and themes.

3.7 Ensuring Research Quality

In order to address the issue of quality checks throughout the research process, certain constructs were utilized that were suitable to the nature of qualitative designs (Shenton, 2004). These included the following: credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability (Shenton, 2004; Yardley, 2000). In terms of credibility, care was taken to ensure verbatim quotes were presented and where necessary contextual information surrounding participant reports were given. During the interviews, I rephrased certain questions and probed participant answers to ensure they understood the questions correctly and I understood their accounts as they intended. The interviews were conducted in such a manner to build rapport with participants, as well as encourage participants to feel free to express themselves openly. Inferences around transferability should be approached with

caution given the subjective accounts of participants and distinctions in their experiences. Despite this, transferability was aimed at where possible by the similarity of questions posed to participants and the analysis of responses as a collective. The description of the participant group allows for some consideration of what kind of population generated the findings such that limitations in transferability to other populations can be considered. Dependability was addressed in attempting to provide a thorough account of the research design and process. Furthermore, the reflexive process, presented below, was considered and presented in such a way to accurately report on my subjective experiences with the aim of illustrating the ways in which my particulars may have impacted this research process. Conversely, my identity as a researcher may have inhibited or even precluded participants from disclosing such views. Confirmability was persistently aimed at throughout the data collection and analysis whereby my supervisor and I co-analysed the data and discussed similarities and differences in notes. Consistent reflection on aspects of reflexivity was aimed for. I noted my impressions after each interview and discussed some of my own feelings about what had transpired with my supervisor where this seemed relevant. Quotations are also employed to lend credibility to the interpretations placed upon the data.

3.7.1 Reflexivity

Reflexivity is related to the notion that the researcher is not an objective observer who collects and analyses data (Braun & Clarke, 2013). Rather reflexivity in research takes into account the idiosyncratic features of the particular researcher and how these may influence the research processes at different and vital stages (Braun & Clarke, 2013; Marecek, 2003). My identity as a white woman appeared to have influenced how certain topics were approached by different participants. For instance, female participants spoke about the threat of sexual violence in a way that suggested that I might be able to relate to this threat due to my identity as a woman. It is also evident that all of the participants were white (in terms of South African racial classifications) and this lack of diversity in the group was likely a consequence of recruitment via my extended social networks. Two participants made racialised statements about the perpetrators when speaking in a post hoc manner about the events and crime in South Africa. It was perceived that these participants felt more comfortable expressing intergroup prejudicial views as I was of the same race. Although it is not possible to discern the exact origin of these views individuals who have experienced a traumatic event are frequently prone to adopt more prejudicial and stereotypical thinking, that may re/emerge or develop as a result of the traumatic incident (Eagle, et al., 2013). This was

evident whereby one participant mentioned that she is aware that the robbery negatively altered her views on black individuals and that she is working towards an understanding that not all black people are the perpetrators she experienced. It is significant to mention that building rapport with participants was of high importance and as such the way in which questions were approached and issues were probed were informed by unique dynamics with each participant. While the above outlines the broader reflexive issues significant to mention; these issues are addressed in more depth in chapter 5 as these observations are better contextualised subsequent to the presentation of the findings.

3.8 Ethical Considerations

The population of participants who were the focus of this study fell in the category of vulnerable participants as they were past victims of violence, thus placing the study under the category of "high risk". Ethical clearance was obtained by the Human Research Ethics Committee (non-medical), under protocol number H20/05/33, before data collection. Care was taken in the recruitment of participants such that they should put themselves forward to participate they would have sound knowledge of the research study and its purpose. It was emphasised that participation was completely voluntary and that individuals were entitled to withdraw themselves from participation at any time up until the point where the study had been submitted for examination. In order to minimize harm, the participant information sheet (Appendix B) outlined several exclusion criteria with the explanation that certain features might be associated with an increased risk of distress. Additional exclusionary measures pertaining to interpersonal trauma were not included so that eligible participants were not arbitrarily excluded. Participants who had experienced a robbery recently, within the previous eight-week period, were not included due to the likelihood that Acute Traumatic Stress related responses might still be present and the higher risk of re-traumatization than for individuals who had had more time to accommodate to the experience. Any person diagnosed with Posttraumatic Stress Disorder, Major Depression or a related condition, either in association with the traumatic event or experiencing these or associated mental health conditions at the time of the interviews, were also asked to self-exclude, given concerns about possible vulnerability. In addition, potential participants were asked to self-exclude if the robbery was accompanied by sexual assault or loss of life since it is known that these forms of trauma generally have more severe and longer-term effects.

At the beginning of each interview, participants were reminded that they did not have to answer any questions that they were uncomfortable talking about. Given the sensitive nature

of the interview content, certain precautions and supports were put in place to minimize the possibility of re-traumatization as well as to manage this if it should arise. As the interviewer, I paid close attention to the emotional state of the interviewee and if I perceived that the interview was becoming overly stressful, I checked whether the participant was willing and comfortable to continue. A protocol was followed whereby if it was apparent that a participant appeared to be experiencing some form of re-traumatization during the interview- the interview would be stopped and I would aim to contain the participant at the time. At the end of each interview, I debriefed with participants and where appropriate discussed with them whether they wish to receive further formal counselling via Lifeline. As mentioned above, a debriefing took place at the end of every interview to assess the impact of the interview, explore whether the participant would want counselling and give the participant an opportunity /to discuss any related matters. I made follow up contact with participants telephonically within ten days of the interview having taken place, to check on their wellbeing and to ensure no subsequent distress has arisen as a consequence of taking part in the research interviews. No such distress was reported and no referrals for counselling were therefore necessary. It appeared that most participants experienced some sort of relief at the end of the interviews after speaking about their experience in detail, for the most part, a way in which they had not done previously.

Transcriptions were anonymised by removing all personally identifying information and pseudonyms were used to refer to participants. The aims of the research study and the manner in which the information obtained would be written up and disseminated was made clear in the PIS.

Chapter 4: Findings and Discussion

This chapter presents the most salient themes and subthemes that were generated from the interviews and which were relevant to the research aims. The prominent findings are integrated and combined with elaborated analysis and discussion, including how the material generated within this study articulates with existing research findings. The themes have been structured, to some extent, in accordance with the sequential unfolding of events, as participants almost automatically presented a narrative account of how their experiences of the attacks unfolded over time (prompted by the initial interview question). Thus, the first theme that emerged as prominent concerns the participants' initial reactions in realizing that they were being robbed and the establishment of a context in which to appreciate the relationship between themselves and the perpetrators. The second and most prominent theme to emerge concerned how participants negotiated dominance and submission during the robberies that took place in their homes, and how they perceived that this impacted the nature of the interaction in terms of levels of aggression or violence. This theme encompasses several sub-themes all demonstrating different, often inter-related facets of interaction, all relevant to the negotiation of dominance and the deployment of threat or aggression. The third major theme concerns survivors' cognitive processing and evaluations during the events as they were unfolding, including their assessment of what aspects of agency they felt they could appropriately exercise within the context, as well as observations they were aware of pertaining to the dynamics among the perpetrators and between, they and the perpetrators. The fourth theme engages with reflections about the possible influence of identity-related and demographic features on the dynamics that were reported to have emerged. Finally, the fifth theme captures participants' post hoc observations regarding the events, including their conscious reflections on how to advise victims who might find themselves in similar situations. Although several other themes emerged in using the Atlas TI thematic sorting system, for example, references to traumatic stress-related symptoms and trauma impact, the report focuses on the most prominent themes to emerge that pertained to the research questions posed. This is in part because of the need to keep the research report focused and of reasonable length.

Each of the five themes, and where relevant the sub-themes they encompass, are presented and elaborated in turn, using quotations from interviews to illustrate the arguments being put forward and drawing comparisons with existing literature where relevant.

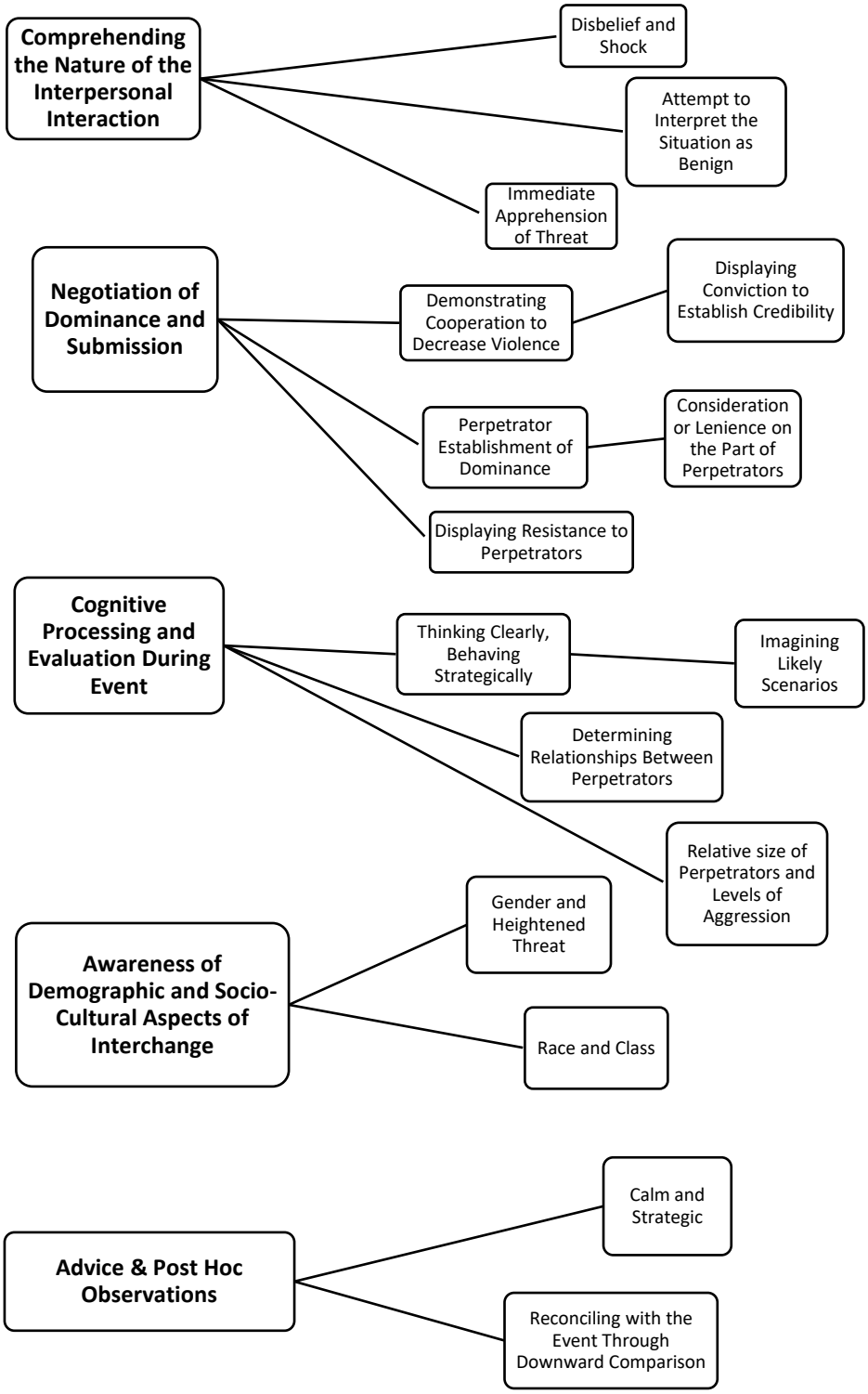


Figure 2. Themes and Subthemes Map

4.1. Comprehending the Nature of the Interpersonal Interaction

This theme seemed pertinent to each participant and highlights the nuances and similarities across the participants' reactions once they had realized that they were becoming the victims of a robbery. It was evident that whether this took some time to appreciate or was apprehended fairly quickly, there was a point at which it was established that the motivations

of the people who had come into their space were malevolent. In that sense the interviewees were compelled to become aware that they were in the presence of perpetrators of a violation against them and were therefore cast in the role of victim, however, they then acclimated to this. It was evident that across participants, their initial cognitive appraisals involved an appreciation of encountering a stressor characterised by threat once they realized the nature of the interaction taking place (Crum, et al., 2017; Jamieson, Hangen et al., 2018).

4.1.1 Disbelief and Shock

Perhaps unsurprisingly, four out of eight participants described experiencing an initial reaction of shock when they became aware of the presence of other people in their personal environment.

> *Luke: So it's obviously quite a surreal experience because it's ultimately the last thing you'd expect to experience, so I looked around and briefly tried to find out or see what was going on and noticed another person standing on the other side of the couch, looking at all of us and he had, both of them had clothes wrapped around their faces and they had stuff in their hands, they had a weapon or something in their hands and they gestured to us to be quiet, just be quiet, and I sort of felt quite frozen because it was so absolutely, surreal.*

It is interesting to note that three participants used the word *surreal* to describe the experience, two of whom described the situation to be surreal in the moment they encountered the perpetrators. The use of this term speaks to the shock and confusion experienced by participants in their immediate cognitive processing of what was taking place. In the quotation just cited Luke uses the term *surreal* twice and elaborates on his attempt to make sense of the context in which he found himself. It was evident that he felt highly disoriented in the moment. It is also apparent that victims are at a disadvantage in that they have no preparation for the encounter whereas perpetrators come into the context with intent (Collins, 2009). The already severe threat of harm seems to be intensified by the suddenness and unexpected exposure to the crime, as well as the novelty/ uniqueness of the situation - *the last thing you'd expect to experience*. Further quotations from other participants highlight the sense of disorientation, disbelief and paralysis in the moment.

> *Paula: …and I get up and I can see what is happening and it is surreal. I just go totally numb and I'm watching my front door being pushed open and my husband shouting.*

> *Grace: It's so surreal that there could be someone in my bedroom and they are now showing me a gun, it just, it mind boggles, you know.*
>
> *Vivian: Ya it's crazy and we just kind of like sat and stared at them bemused, as they kind of like motioned for us to be quiet and giggling and so I think we all, we were just stunned.*

The above four quotations indicate the dissociative kinds of responses experienced by participants when initially encountering the perpetrators. Luke describes himself as feeling *frozen* while trying to make sense of what is happening, Paula uses the term *numb*, and Vivian says they were *stunned*, echoed in Grace's initial reaction, as she describes the situation to *mind boggle*. Not only do participants indicate that they felt cognitively impaired in the moment but also in several instances they felt physically unable to react. These dissociative types of responses are characteristic of *peritraumatic dissociation*, referring to a sense of fragmented cognitive processing or warped experience of reality while experiencing a highly threatening situation (Bovin & Marx, 2011; Bovin et al., 2014). Literature reiterates that *peritraumatic dissociation* is a common response while experiencing a traumatic event (Bovin et al., 2014); Sierra & Berrios, 1998). Moreover, it has been postulated that this dissociative response serves an adaptive function for individuals undergoing life-threatening scenarios in that it serves to de-intensify emotional responses to the situation by preventing full conscious comprehension or awareness of the magnitude of danger presented (Bovin & Marx, 2011; Sierra & Berrios, 1998). Research has established that females are at an increased risk of developing Post Traumatic Stress Disorder compared to men (Irish et al., 2011). Interestingly peritraumatic dissociation has been documented as a significant contributing factor accounting for these gender differences as women generally experience a greater level of peritraumatic dissociation than men (McDonald et al., 2013; Irish et al., 2011). However, these gender differences did not appear as salient in participants accounts.

Two participants who mentioned in the interviews that they had experienced previous crime-related incidents seemed to experience the situation as just as unique as those without any history of exposure. Thus, it did not seem that previous experience of victimization prepared them in any way for this new circumstance, perhaps due to the new level of threat they perceived and being threatened in their own homes, places usually associated with safety and privacy. This observation is consistent with literature postulating that rather than personality traits and/ or a general way of appraising situations; individuals tend to appraise and respond to a situation based on the situation-specific variables (Gaab, 2005).

> *Luke: My life has been threatened many times, but this was particularly, because I wasn't on my own and because, it's in a different scenario it's in your house, it was different. It was very different.*

It seemed that the four participants who described initial disbelief recalled this period of the robbery in a fairly vivid manner and were aware that their disorientation placed them at a disadvantage in relation to their attackers.

4.1.2. Attempt to Interpret the Situation as Benign

It seems that alongside the shock of the unexpected home intrusion, the disbelief about the nature of the interaction led some participants to initially make benign interpretations about what was taking place in regard to their appraisals of the intentions of the perpetrators. This interpretive impulse was present in Grace, Vivian, and Luke's narratives. It seemed that on an emotional level their immediate reaction was shock and confusion, while their immediate cognitive appraisals were of a benign nature, which further illustrates participants' initial confusion.

> *Grace: I remember waking up seeing these men in my room and my initial thought was like, I didn't even think it was an invasion at the time, you know what I mean. I thought, who are these people, do I know them? (laughs) Like it sounds bizarre, but like friendly, like who are you? You know, it's two in the morning, yeah (laughs nervously) and then obviously when the guns came out, obviously, ya, seeing that, I realized something was in progress, ya.*

Grace's account demonstrates her initial appraisal of the situation as centring around trying to figure out whether she knew the perpetrators and perhaps attempting to find an element of familiarity in a moment of ambiguity (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984). It seems the moment weapons were displayed she was immediately alerted to the fact that a more hazardous situation was at play. Grace's nervous laughter indicates her puzzlement at her own response and her reference to her interpretation of strangers being in her room in the early hours of the morning confirms her sense that her reality contact felt impaired at this point. The below accounts depict the same tendency to default to *the most polite* form of initially interpreting the situation.

> *Luke: So, when I first saw them, they immediately appeared intoxicated, and interestingly enough I thought about it today for some reason, that my thoughts weren't, like, immediately, like, Jesus, I'm gonna kill you. But, like, dude are you*

> *lost, can I help you? There was a very large amount of, like, imagining that there's some kind of other scenario other than somebody is coming to, to maybe do us harm, you know, or rather tie us up and hurt us or whatever, so it's interesting.*

Luke's account illustrates that similar to Grace, he initially entertained various possibilities about the presence of the intruders, all of which excluded threat or malice. It is not possible to discern whether this is a form of denial as a coping mechanism but what seems to be evident is the cognitive dissonance experienced by these participants due to the 'out of the ordinary' experience. Perhaps they implicitly wanted the encounter to be benign, but it is also likely that prior interpretations of engaging with people who are in one's home and an impulse towards hospitality came to the fore. Luke's description suggests that like Grace, in retrospect, he is surprised at his own initial attributions. Vivian also reported defaulting to appraisals which fitted her *social norm* and responding accordingly.

> *Vivian: Because we all went to the most polite form of, you know, the situation, like a social norm. And Alex had even paused Mr Bean* (a film they were watching at the time), *you know, to be polite, because there was conversation now, we've got to stop the movie, you know.*

Describing their behaviour in the interaction with the perpetrators as socially normative illustrates the expectancy (or wish) of participants that a day-to-day event was taking place, their prior, lived experience informing what was to be expected. For Vivian, for example, one does not exclude guests by continuing to watch the movie you were busy viewing when they come in. Her reference to *the most polite form of, you know, the situation, like a social norm,* suggests that perhaps her middle-class values also informed her interpretation of events. These more benign appraisals in line with what participants would perceive to be socially normative more generally reflect their social cognitive schemas, otherwise referred to as *person perception*. It has been well documented that when faced with an ambiguous social interaction, individuals tend to ascribe their own understanding and expectations of what will transpire based on their own generalised experiences of interacting with others (Baldwin, 1992). In contrast to either those participants who reported a period of initial incomprehension or those who observed a pull towards misinterpretation of events as allowing for an affable interaction, three participants recalled an almost instantaneous appreciation of being under threat from the other.

4.1.3. Immediate Apprehension of Threat

Two participants described realizing it was a robbery relatively quickly and one participant said they immediately knew. Interestingly one of these participants, Michael, also initially momentarily drew upon a more benign appraisal that the situation might be a dream (again perhaps a kind of defensive wish-oriented interpretation, or representing his internalised relational cognitive schemas) when initially confronted by the perpetrators:

> *Michael: …and I just felt something hard and cold hitting me on the leg. At first I opened my eyes and I thought, okay no, this must still be a dream.*

and

> *Michael: But actually when they pulled me out of my bed the weird thing is that I instantly clicked, I instantly, was like, as my eyes opened the second time I was like, oh fuck, okay, we are being robbed, it looks like we are being robbed and then after that it was almost that adrenaline or like just, fear that kind of, overtakes you.*

In Michael's account his momentary thinking *okay no, this must still be a dream* is very quickly followed by a cognitive and physiological apprehension that he is being robbed. At that point, he seemed to move into the position of being under threat and refers to being overtaken by *adrenaline* or *fear*. This kind of adrenaline-driven response described by Michael is also evident in the reports of Liam and Dominic, which prompted these two participants to respond relatively instantaneously and automatically with physical action as soon as they comprehended there was a threat.

> *Liam: This night I woke up and there were torches, alright, three of them with torches and gloves. And I just knew, when they kicked the door down, so I shot out of bed tried to stop them from kicking the door down, but, they kicked it down.*

> *Dominic: I see this guy shining a torch into my face with the gun pointing to the window knocking on the window shouting to wake up. I didn't immediately realize, like what is going on. Because you still have to process like what's going on and the moment it sank in, like listen this is a robbery, I like jumped out of bed speeded out of bed without thinking what I was doing, literally out of reaction jumped out of the bed, ran into the living room.*

Although the above two accounts differ in the time it took for each participant to become aware of the nature of the interaction (and in Dominic's case it appeared he also had a brief

period of difficult sense-making), it is noteworthy that Liam and Dominic both had some forewarning before the perpetrators entered their homes by witnessing the flashlights and subsequently they very quickly acted (*shot out of bed, speeded out of bed*) in attempting to prevent the perpetrators from entering their homes. Their threat appraisal seems to have become activated very quickly and produced an action-oriented response to attempt to ward off the threat before it could escalate. As they went on to describe in their interviews their attempts to repel the threat proved unsuccessful to the extent that they were subjected to a more prolonged home invasion and robbery.

As is commonly described in descriptions of trauma-related responses to threat, it appeared that participants were aware of initial responses that seemed to map onto notions of freeze, flight and fight (Gaab, 2005; Mobbs et al., 2015; Shields et al., 2016). As will be discussed further in a subsequent section, it is also noteworthy that three interviewees who described adopting active behavioural responses to the threat were male participants, although it is evident that some male participants experienced initial disorientation. It also seems that the situation is as important in examining these varied responses, the last two quotations illustrating that there was some opportunity to attempt to physically respond due to situational constituents. This reiterates research emphasising the importance of situational variables as opposed to purely psychological factors in accounting for the variations in individual's responses when faced with stress/ threat situations (Gaab, 2005).

In addition to highlighting how individuals reflected upon their own psychological processes in attempting to initially comprehend and negotiate a situation of potential threat, the observations also highlight how a particular kind of interaction between the perpetrators and victims was set up at the outset that entailed preplanning and intentional action on the part of the attackers and surprise and uneasy or fearful accommodation on the part of victims. The perpetrators have the advantage of being oriented to a reality to which the victims need to adjust without choice. In these initial dynamics, one sees the initiation of the kind of interpersonal dynamics that are elaborated in theme two.

4.2. Negotiation of Dominance and Submission

This theme focuses on the ways in which participants engaged in negotiating submission and dominance in response to the perpetrators and the situation at hand. Their descriptions of how they negotiated this dynamic appeared to be informed by both primary and secondary appraisals (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984) in an ongoing manner, i.e., participants seem to have constantly evaluated what the stressful situation was demanding of them (primary appraisal)

and what resources they had at their disposal to deal with this (secondary appraisal). As with each participant's initial appraisal of the situation, participants shared commonalities and reported differences in terms of their appraisals. A central element of their threat appraisal concerned their comprehension of the motivations, intentions and behaviours of the perpetrators and how they could best respond to them. It was generally apparent that the perpetrators were perceived to hold greater power in relation to determining outcomes but that participants were vigilant about expectations to play certain roles related to their victimization. A large portion of the data centred around the interviewee's discussion of the relations of dominance and submission during the encounter, even if they did not explicitly use this terminology.

This theme presents as a more differentiated theme than some of the other themes, encompassing several subthemes which are divided broadly along the lines of material relating to 'cooperation' and 'resistance'. The sub-themes detail the various ways in which participants responded and the implications thereof in terms of violence/aggression escalation or de-escalation as inferred by the victims. It was evident that individual, interpersonal, situation-specific and contextual features all played a role in how dominance and submission were negotiated under the varied circumstances.

4.2.1 Demonstrating Cooperation to Decrease Violence

As outlined in the literature review it is important to distinguish between types of victim behaviours classified as 'cooperation'. The first portion of the discussion will focus on how victims used verbal means to negotiate their positioning, attempting to facilitate the smooth execution of the perceived intent of the robbers as well as attempting to negotiate with the perpetrators, and in the process displaying varying levels of compliance and submission to them.

> *Michael: But you obviously are very, you are very submissive to them, but at the same time I also remember, like, actually trying to speak and actually if they asked something reply to them, and like, do you need help with that? Must I help you? Like asking them to help with things.*

In Michael's case, he describes trying to demonstrate compliance by verbally offering assistance to the perpetrators and as such almost aiding in facilitating the robbery. He reported that this was done in an attempt to speed up the whole ordeal so that it would be over with sooner. This was also reported in Dominic and Paula's case whereby it was hoped that by instrumentally assisting the perpetrators in obtaining valuables they would achieve

their objective more quickly and it would be made clear that rather than opposing them they were cooperating to the point of facilitation to decrease the likelihood of violence/ aggression.

> *Dominic: And the fact that we didn't show any aggressiveness put their minds at ease, that we are not a threat to them and that's exactly what I wanted to portray, I wanted it to come through that, listen, I told them 'I am not armed', I told them, my words were 'we are no threat to you, so whatever you want you can come in and take what you want'.*

As depicted in the literature (Guerette & Santana, 2010; Tark & Kleck, 2004) it is useful to differentiate between verbal and behavioural instances of either cooperation or resistance. Paula's depiction below demonstrates a seemingly instinctive behavioural response designed to show deference while witnessing aggression towards her husband who was reportedly perceived to be resisting.

> *Paula: I think the first thing was when he was strangling Brad and he pointed to me, I immediately shut up and I dropped to the floor.*

This is further indicated below where she describes displaying submission through non-verbal behaviours as well using verbal means to demonstrate compliance and facilitation of the robbery.

> *Paula: Well because I was slightly submissive, I kept looking down and I kept saying 'take what you want, just to say what you want and I will give it to you' and whatever they ask for I said, 'it's there, it's there, it's there' and they were taking it and then they weren't aggressive towards me.*

Displaying cooperation through verbal means by trying to negotiate with the perpetrators was also employed.

> *Michael: For the first little bit before they tied us up they were getting agitated. They were like 'you lying', they were saying, like, 'there must be a safe', they were so sure that there must be a safe. And I remember like my dad even saying, like, we have, like a petty cash box which we did, and it's there.*

and

> *Michael: …and we were like, we promise you there is no safe, there is no safe. We were all promising and everyone was shouting and they were, like, okay 'shh shh'.*

Michael's perceives that the perpetrator's become visibly 'agitated' when it seemed there was a possibility that the victims were lying, as this was viewed as non-compliance. In this situation, by offering alternative valuables and repeatedly trying to convey their truthfulness regarding the safe the victims seemed to de-escalate potential aggression by convincing the perpetrators that they were in fact telling the truth. This is consistent with research examining perpetrator's accounts in which it is suggested that violence is used in response to non-conformity by victims or perceiving that the victims are acting in a manner to prevent instrumental goals (Indermaur, 1996; Lindegaard et al., 2015; Wright & Decker, 1997). Interestingly this also speaks to the literature on the micro-sociology of violence, it appears that by demonstrating compliance the participants were aware of acting in such a manner as to not be perceived as a threat to the perpetrators (Collins, 2009). In a sense, it seemed that most participants readily synchronised their behaviours and intentions to align with the perpetrators' goals in an attempt to prevent any further violence or aggression from the perpetrators to enforce their agenda (Collins, 2009).

4.2.1.1. Victims Negotiating Extent of Submission

Allison reported similarly being required to almost assist with information, however, she approached the situation differently, apparently aiming to retain some sense of agency, and wanting not to feel as though she had completely capitulated to the perpetrators.

> *Allison: I'm just thinking to myself, you have now asked me. I don't know, I don't know where this thing is. You immediately put a gun to my head and assuming that I'm lying and then he threatened me, 'if you're lying I'll kill you'. And I thought to myself why in fuck's truth, that's aggression you are now trying to dominate me as a woman, as another human being you are doing that, because there is no reason for me to lie about something that's fucking stupid.*

and

> *Allison: Calm, collected when I had a gun to my head: "I don't know where it is" (matter of fact tone). I didn't start **crying** but also that's like an empowering thing as well because I thought to myself, I will not cry in front of these men.*

Allison's account illustrates internal anger in this moment of the interaction in which she felt she was being subjugated for gratuitous reasons rather than for assumed instrumental goals of the robbery. The extent of Allison's aggression in the moment is not fully expressed but rather channelled in what seems like a cognitive balancing act between displaying

outward compliance while internally retaining a sense of agency. She does this by answering the perpetrator honestly with little emotion while picking up a sense that in displaying more affect she would be indulging the perpetrator's desire for a more demonstrable form of surrender. Alison refuses to submit to what she perceives to be excessive use of threat in part aimed at humiliating her as a woman in the face of male aggression. Nevertheless, she responds in a verbal manner designed to be convincing to the perpetrators and to de-escalate tension in the moment. As was the case in Michael's scenario it seemed the perpetrator was convinced of her truthfulness and this de-escalated the threat of increased violence.

> *Researcher: What happened then when you said 'you don't know'?*
>
> *Allison: He pulled the gun away. He just pulled the gun away, well, cause I didn't say anything.*

Dominic appeared to have engaged in a similar kind of mental balancing act, also displaying compliance yet retaining some sense of agency by the meaning he attributes to his actions and the sense that he, therefore, acted somewhat on his own terms.

> *Dominic: The big guy, he says, 'take off your ring, I want that'. So my wedding ring was on my finger and I thought, also, 'I'm not gonna give this to you'. So I took the ring and I put it down on the ground, subconsciously I did not give my wedding ring away.*

Similar to Allison, Dominic complies with the perpetrator's immediate demand by physically putting the ring on the ground. He makes a conscious decision to put the ring on the ground as opposed to giving it directly to the perpetrator and cognitively ascribes meaning to this. In this way, he is able to act in accordance with his own thought *I'm not gonna give this to you.*

As seen in the scenarios reported, the perpetrators seem to have become more at ease and less inclined to violence when the victims display that they are themselves calm and willing to comply. However, it was also evident that negotiations were fragile and that at points at which compliance seemed partial to the perpetrators or cooperation was not quick enough, they could easily move towards re-establishing their dominance by aggressive threats or actions.

> *Dominic: I told him, 'Listen I will open up for you but please, just let us go' and he looked at me, and he picked up his gun and he showed it to me and he says you know what this is, 'I don't play around I've got 15 shots in here, I'm not kidding'.*

> *And I told him 'I fully understand' and 'I know what you are doing, I know you are serious I will open up for you, alright', and so I did.*

The above quote illustrates that when Dominic tries to bargain or determine the terms of compliance, this delays the immediacy with which he cooperates and perhaps signifies that he is assuming too much power in trying to negotiate with the 'lead perpetrator'. Dominic notes that he had seemed to aggravate the perpetrator, prompting him to reinforce his presence as the dominant party by overtly and verbally threatening violence by means of his weapon.

From interviewees' descriptions of events, it seemed that de-escalation of aggression was achieved to some extent through victim compliance (communicated verbally or enacted) and from victims displaying a degree of calmness and responsiveness to perpetrators' instructions. As already mentioned, participants seemed to implicitly and explicitly appreciate an understanding that if they were experienced as seeking to obstruct perpetrators' instrumental goals in the commission of the crime, further aggression or violence might well be deployed (Indermaur, 1996; Lindegaard et al., 2015; Wright & Decker, 1997). Although it is apparent that there was a degree of personal negotiation in relation to just how far or in what manner to accede to perpetrator demands, it was generally evident that victims appreciated the need to submit for strategic reasons.

4.2.1.2 Displaying Conviction to Establish Credibility

In addition to describing how they felt they had contributed to diminishing the threat of violence by cooperating and remaining calm, it was interesting to note that two participants both consciously raised their voices in order to convince the perpetrators of the veracity of their accounts. In these instances, they almost seemed to become forceful themselves in their goal of attempting to assist the perpetrators, perhaps feeling that their response needed to match the intensity of the situation.

> *Paula: They couldn't find the car keys and they were pacing, and they were saying "the car, the car" and then I took control and I said, "listen to me!" And then they actually stopped, and I said, "The yellow seahorse" (slowly articulating the words) and then the guy found the keys, so I think if they hadn't found it, you know…*

Paula describes that by raising her voice and telling the perpetrators to 'listen' to her, she felt in control of the situation in that moment as the perpetrators had paid attention to her instruction. Her emphasis was designed to reduce the agitation she was perceiving in the attackers as they felt thwarted in achieving their objectives. Paula insinuates that if she had

not decided to become more assertive at this point something worse could have happened (*so I think if they hadn't found it, you know…)*. She felt that she was able to briefly take control by getting the perpetrators to take her instruction seriously and assisting them in a practical manner. Paula seems to have gauged that raising her voice at this point in the encounter posed a lesser risk than remaining quiet and it is evident in her retrospective account that she felt pleased that she had engaged in this way. There is something rather paradoxical here in the recognition that in assuming momentary control Paula would ultimately return the kind of control to the perpetrators that they desired.

This notion of raising one's voice to assert control over the situation as part of a strategy that is/was in keeping with displaying compliance through assisting the perpetrators is also highlighted in this quotation from the interview with Michael:

> *Michael: Honestly it was like a scared tone but it was almost like trying to answer their force back with your own force, so that you're not, so like if they are shouting at me 'where is the stuff', and then my father is like- 'in the cupboard'- that was when I remember I shouted ikhabethe! and the guy like looked at me like what the fuck is that?*
> *1*

Michael conveyed that in response to the shouting from the perpetrators which conveyed anger and agitation on their part he also raised his voice to attempt to convey the location of what they were looking for in a convincing manner. It is almost as if both Paula and Michael comprehend that the perpetrators' feelings of frustration at not having full agency in the moment (being unfamiliar with the location of possessions) requires them to escalate their own forcefulness of communication to introduce some calm. They have to be assertive in order to regulate the interchange and return power to the attackers.

It is interesting to note that several participants mentioned awareness of moments in which the attackers appeared to treat them in more considerate or humane ways, sometimes producing confusion in the role changes that took place.

4.2.2. Consideration or Lenience on the Part of Perpetrators

As just discussed in the previous section, it was evident that there were ways in which the interviewees, as victims, attempted to invite the attackers to relate to them with more sympathy or conscience, in part by attempting to humanize themselves and by not becoming completely abject and objectified as victims in the interchange, if this seemed possible. Whether this

[1] (Translated from isiZulu 'ikhabethe' refers to cupboard)

produced a reciprocal response in the perpetrators, or whether this related to more personal perpetrator attributes or between-perpetrator dynamics, it seemed that there were several instances in which perpetrators displayed consideration, such as in responding when participants requested that their bondage be loosened to alleviate pain.

While most participants were left with predominant feelings of anger and cognitively separated themselves from the perpetrators in failing to understand "how one human can do this to another", participants described moments where the perpetrators humanized themselves, either in displaying apparent discomfort at their actions or in being sympathetic to victims.

> *Liam: …and then after about 5 minutes, my hands started going numb because they had tied it so tight. So, I said to them, 'hey guys, my hands are going numb' and immediately came and untied them.*

and

> *Liam: I was kind of comfortable, that because they had untied my hands because they tied it so bad that my arms were going numb. So if they didn't care they would have just left it, you know what I mean*

Liam attributed the action of instantly coming to untie his hands when he expressed discomfort as the perpetrators having and displaying a level of concern for him. This highlights the possibility that perpetrators may humanize their victims in some instances. Liam seems aware that the perpetrators did not necessarily need to respond to his distress and that other responses could have been forthcoming. It seems plausible to infer that in the moment Liam expressed physical discomfort he humanized himself to the perpetrators in some sense, to which they responded in kind:

> *Liam: …as I say the turning point in the whole thing, was when they untied my hands, that's when I relaxed and I think they were relaxed because I was relaxed.*

The notion, already mentioned, that through the victims' demeanour of remaining calm the perpetrators' heightened emotions seem to de-escalate, is further reinforced in Liam's description of this moment. In addition, Liam refers to their response as demonstrating *care* and their actions in this moment alleviated some anxiety in him about the perpetrators' propensity for cruelty or indifference. He suggests that in acting in the way they did they communicated that the interaction was not predicated on more sadistic motivations and that some greater mutuality becomes established, reducing interactional tension. Although it was apparent that the attackers were still in charge, to the extent that they had the power to alleviate discomfort or not, they had allowed that he could make a request and influence their behaviour.

Several other participants also referred to aspects of the interaction during the robbery as signalling consideration, and, by association, less likelihood of increased aggression.

> *Michael: The guy who was in the bedroom with us was almost nice, like, he like, he was calling my mom, like, mama, and was like, not hard on us. Like he was, like my dad was like, 'my hands are going numb, can you come and loosen this?' and he tried and he came and loosened it.*

Michael echoed Liam's sentiments that the perpetrator who assisted did not necessarily have to be attentive to his father's distress. Michael describes this perpetrator as *almost nice* and he suggests that he was grateful in a sense that in this moment there was a level of responsivity to the victim's request and display of a more humane side in the interaction. However, it seems evident that this created some cognitive dissonance for him as evidenced in his choice of words as ***almost*** *nice*. This cognitive dissonance is reflected in the literature examining the effect of acute stress on higher-order cognitions, particularly in regards to cognitive flexibility (Shields et al., 2016). This is seen in Michael's difficulty to assimilate the juxtaposing impressions he experienced of the perpetrator. In some instances, perpetrators were reported to have demonstrated care or even nurturance that was unsolicited.

> *Allison: Then they were all like, ah now we are leaving. It's bizarre, but anyway they then tied us up more, but the oke that ran the show he took me. I think he took me and he put something around my face very gently and he was like can you breathe? And I was like ya I'm fine. He then did my arms and he was like, cool are you fine? I was like I'm fine. He then covered me. It's gonna sound so terrible, but (sighs), like he put the blanket over me enough so that I could breathe. I mean the all nice guys were sleeping at four in the morning but I mean he's second best for now.*

> *Grace: I noticed in the early hours in the morning he put the duvet over my feet. It's like one of those bizarre things that I remember.*

In Allison's description, the perpetrator conveys a sense of concern for her wellbeing by enquiring about her level of comfort before he leaves, as well as placing a blanket over her. Both she and Grace refer to what they are describing as sounding *bizarre*, indicating that it is very difficult to hold a picture of a violating actor together with that of a nurturing one. Can a perpetrator really demonstrate kindness? The cognitive dissonance this element of the interaction sets up for the victims seems to stem from confusion surrounding a situation that is threatening, in which the very people imposing the threat and exercising domination show a

level of concern for the victims they are targeting. It seems for Allison her mixed evaluation of the perpetrator's actions evokes some sense of guilt and even slight embarrassment during the interview. She seems to be aware that perpetrators can only be constructed as 'all bad' and that her appreciation of his actions sounds almost crazy. Dominic also conveys the strange juxtaposition of *armed criminals* behaving *gently*.

> *Dominic: He actually helped us gently, like a real gentleman, almost, in order to stand up. Although they were all armed criminals, at that point he helped my wife very gently.*

Dominic also displays a level of appreciation for the one perpetrator who treated his wife with consideration, however, cognitive dissonance seems to be displayed in his describing the perpetrator's behaviour in that moment as *gentleman* like, yet emphasizing that they were simultaneously *armed criminals*. While he cannot deny the meaning of the action, he also cannot easily put the two representations of the person together. It seemed, nevertheless, that as was the case for Liam, this interaction presented something that was reassuring and familiar in a very threatening and unfamiliar circumstance. Thus, although attentive actions contributed to cognitive dissonance in victims, they also generally lessened anxiety in relation to the likelihood of increased violence to come. Interestingly these descriptions from the victims of perpetrators humanizing themselves during the interaction have also been reported by offenders of crime (Hochstetler et al., 2010). Perpetrators have reported to not only use the least amount of violence possible but have described instances in which they were reassuring to victims, as well as being cognizant of their safety during and while exiting the crime. It is hypothesised that these accounts by perpetrators reflect motives to commit a crime that is purely functional or instrumental or out of need, as well as perhaps a psychological need for offenders to differentiate themselves from perpetrators who they perceive to be violent by nature (Hochstetler et al., 2010). While several instances of consideration (largely in response to female and older victims) were described, interviewees also spoke at some length about how perpetrator ascendancy was established.

4.2.3. Perpetrator Establishment of Dominance

This section briefly discusses the ways in which perpetrators reinforced dominance both from an overt physical perspective as well as in more indirect forms.

> *Dominic: And the reason why they kicked was also the same with the gun shooting, was to dominate you, to overpower you, to tell you, 'Listen you are not gonna fight me, you are not gonna win over me, I am in control of you now'.*
>
> *Allison: The problem was they kept cocking the gun in front of us, especially in front my mom. So if we breathed a word we got shot.*

The above two quotations highlight the use of weapons to reinforce dominance throughout the interaction. Dominic's accounts depict his attribution that the shooting of the gun as well as his being kicked by a perpetrator was designed to display power and to remind the victims who were *in control* of the situation. Dominic also appreciates these actions as ways to prevent any resistance from the victim as he gives an interpretative voice to the perpetrator's behaviour: '*listen you are not gonna fight me, you are not gonna win over me'*. This understanding of displays of dominance as designed to cow the victim is echoed in Allison's report. The cocking of the gun was intended to convey the threat of the use of violence and to ensure passivity in the victim and she and her mother both appreciate this. This is in line with literature that documents that by displaying the possession of a firearm, perpetrators are more readily able to establish situational dominance (Block & Skogan, 1986; Indermaur, 1996; Liebst et al., 2019; Lindegaard, et al., 2018; McCluskey, 2013; Wright & Decker, 1997.

It is interesting to note that a less overt somewhat indirect performance of dominance was exemplified in the extended time that perpetrators spent in some victims' homes and the way they engaged with their possessions. Four out of eight participants reported that the robbery lasted for more than two hours (two of these participants, Michael and Grace, were involved in the same robbery). This fact of taking considerable time to execute their crime seemed to signal something about the perpetrators making themselves at home and the possibility of more expressive motivations on their part. In all four cases, the perpetrators' behaviour in this regard was understood to convey their sense of having the upper hand, and demonstrate this in their occupancy of space that would be understood to belong to the other party.

> *Allison: Yep, they cooked our food, they smoked our cigarettes, they had some of our booze. They went through everything! And they went through everything. And because no one knew what was happening they could spend the entire time doing it.*
>
> *Grace: Ya, like because it was taking so long like I keep thinking what happens if you get bored now after you've been through everything. I think that's when I was starting to wonder like, what are you going to do, you know.*

Allison's report clearly indicates this sense of the perpetrators making themselves comfortable in the victim's home alongside a lack of concern for getting caught. She emphasizes the different consumables that the robbers used in her home. The extended time that perpetrators spent in several victims' houses coincide with them going *through everything*', as indicated by both Grace and Allison, and seems to signal an invasion of privacy as part of dominance. Nothing is left un-scrutinized or untouched and the inspection is done at leisure. In Grace's case, these actions became viewed as sinister in signalling the power of the perpetrators and her sense that they might look for more excitement through inducing tension in interaction or becoming more violent. In this instance, one wonders if her fear was of sexual violence as the consumption of other goods might translate into the need to take more from her. Other participants described that perpetrators handled more intimate possessions, such as photographs, and from their perspective violated privacy norms and conveyed disrespect.

> *Michael: Why our house? Why did you take so long? Why were you looking at files and pictures and random shit?*
>
> *Allison: They opened the boxes. It was my mom's wedding photos. It was of me when I was little. You can hear them laughing, throwing it on the bed, like at us.*

In Michael's and Allison's incidents the perpetrators had gone through their personal belongings which were not of any monetary value. In Allison's case, the perpetrators laughed at the pictures, serving to reinforce an emotional dominance in this moment, as well as intruding further into the participants' personal space. It is not entirely clear whether the perpetrators were fully aware of how transgressive their actions were, but from the victim accounts, it seems there was some intentional denigration taking place and symbolisation of a different kind of power from that associated purely with threats of physical harm.

In summary, in the majority of the interviews (six out of eight), it was apparent that victims were acutely aware of the power that perpetrators held over them, whether this was exercised overtly through threats and use of weapons or through more derisory, casual and proprietorial behaviour. Although there were instances in which participants raised their voices to be convincing or made requests of perpetrators for lenience of various kinds, it was evident that their behaviour communicated compliance with perpetrator demands and recognition of their authority in the situation.

In the cases of Luke and Vivian, however, there appeared to be circumstantial factors that produced a reaction of resistance as opposed to compliance.

4.2.4. Displaying Resistance to Perpetrators

Unlike the other eight participants specific situational determinants, alongside individual factors, led Vivian and Luke to actively resist the perpetrators. Within this section of the discussion, the focus will remain on how resistance contributed to the negotiation of dominance and submission and how this played out in the interactive dynamic of the escalation or de-escalation of violence.

> *Vivian: … I think it was almost a mistake the guy made, the guy that was closest to us, he jumped on top of me.*

and

> *Vivian: Like touching my boobs and my neck you know, and in a way I'm actually kind of glad that he did that, because as gross as what it was, it galvanized, it broke the thing apart. Because like the Afrikaans has got a saying 'jy skrik jou moer'. I lost it, because I just thought like, what's up buddy, like, No. People often say that you don't know how you going to react in situations until it happens to you.*

and

> *Vivian: …but I mean freaking out and just pushed him off and he flew across the room and landed on the coffee table and broke the coffee table (laughs).*

The above quotations highlight how retrospectively Vivian describes the trigger for her resistance or impulse to fight back as a *mistake the guy made.* She goes on to say that she was *kind of glad* in a sense that this happened as it enabled her to get angry which led to her asserting dominance in the form of physically resisting the perpetrators. Vivian further describes this moment in the interaction as a breaking point, where an escalation of violence took place involving a physical intrusion on her body. It seems that her revulsion in this moment produced an immediate counter-aggressive response (*I lost it)* that in this instance enabled her to escape any further form of subjugation that might have been imposed by the perpetrators. Vivian described feeling *stunned* initially, and as previously discussed reverting to the most *polite form* of engagement when first appraising the situation. However, it is evident that as soon as one of the perpetrators threatened sexual assault, Vivian immediately and seemingly instinctively retaliated in response. Vivian seemed to appreciate that her actions had not been well thought through and were somewhat surprising even to herself (*you don't know how you going to react in situations*), but she also seems to take some pleasure in the fact that she was able to exercise agency by physically repelling her attacker. Perhaps linked to Vivian's resistance and/or something about the nature of engagement by the perpetrators in this home

robbery, Luke (Vivian's partner) also displayed physical resistance and appreciated that perpetrator dominance was not inevitable if he acted in particular ways. In this instance, Luke suggests that he was aware of thinking strategically as events unfolded.

> *Luke: After I had interacted with this guy and I pushed him back, the guy to my left disappeared, and while this guy was lying there, I thought to myself I'm going to try and get to get a weapon, because obviously by now we know it's a home invasion and they're going to try and get the better of us.*

Luke's words depict his awareness during the interaction that he needed to physically defend himself as opposed to submitting in this negotiation of dominance and submission, as he states that he thought *they're going to try and get the better of us*. Luke suggests that in this situation his perception was that by submitting rather than physically resisting there could have been a greater risk for violence. He was ultimately able to gain control and compel the perpetrators to leave his premises. This is in line with literature that suggests that resistance does not necessarily increase violence but may at times be beneficial (Guerette & Santana, 2010; Tark & Kleck, 2004). Moreover, Luke's account is also reflected by perpetrators who report fleeing the crime scene when interactions are such as to be perceived as having surpassed their control (Hochstetler et al., 2010).

> *Luke: But then I turned away from him and shouted at him to leave the house, to just get out of here, at which point I chased them out of the house.*

It is not the purview of this research report to evaluate the nature of the responses that participants demonstrated, but rather to attempt to capture their impressions of interactions between them and the perpetrators and how this appeared to contribute to levels of aggression or violence. It is important to recognize that whether participants resisted or submitted it seemed their reaction to the situation was designed to ensure the optimal outcome in terms of the least possible harm done to them, based on the particular context, and the dynamics and interactions unique to each survivor.

In relation to dominance and submission overall, it appeared that the perpetrators took up certain roles in the interaction which in the main meant that victims felt constrained to take up the reciprocal role of victim. The interviewees were aware of feeling compelled to demonstrate a degree of subjugation whether by facilitating actions that ran counter to their own interests (offering up possessions, for example) or asking permission to engage in certain ways. In the main, the participants felt that their engagement in these behaviours had reduced the necessity

for perpetrators to reinscribe dominance by escalating violence. It was also evident that the participants had engaged in an ongoing evaluation of how the situation was unfolding moment to moment and in certain instances had exercised some agency in communicating with the perpetrators, for example in asking for ties to be loosened or attempting to de-objectify themselves. In only two instances (in the same incident) did participants resist the attempt to assume control on the part of the perpetrators. This appeared to be in response to a boundary violation with regard to potential sexual assault and it should be noted that resistance took place early in the course of events, perhaps before the attackers had had the opportunity to fully establish their authority. In this scenario, the participants' resistance changed the dynamic of the situation, whereby one perpetrator ran away and the other was physically dominated by Luke and then had to escape. What is evident from all of the interviews is that while participants struggled with being placed in a subjugated position, they remained acutely aware of interpersonal dynamics and felt that they had exercised some degree of agency in engaging with their attackers.

4.3 Cognitive Processing and Evaluation During Event

This section presents the participants' reports about their cognitive functioning (and thought patterns) during the robbery. These unfolding cognitive evaluations and appraisals include their assessment of the level of threat perpetrators posed as well as their sense of the dynamics among the perpetrators themselves.

4.3.1. Thinking Clearly, Behaving Strategically

Despite feelings of initial fear and disbelief it is interesting to note that seven out of the eight participants directly expressed capability to think clearly and strategically after some time had elapsed during their interaction with the perpetrators'. The extended period of time over which the robbery occurred enabled individuals to engage in more complex thought processes entailing ongoing reappraisals of the threat posed and accordingly adapting their coping strategies to the unfolding situational constituents (Crum et al., 2013; Biggs, et al., 2017; Folkman & Moskowitz, 2004; Kilby & Sherman, 2016). The depictions of events cited below illustrate how participants were able to engage in problem-focused coping strategies at certain points during the incident.

> *Allison: but now I'm kind of like sitting in a ball because I thought that was the best, if they were gonna hurt me or if they gonna try and, a ball is easier, if I open*

like this they can go for anything. If I'm in a ball it makes it, that's when I started realizing, that's when I started to think now, like that.

Allison's indicates a precise moment she recalls whereby her cognitive processing started to shift to a more analytic and strategic style: *that's when I started to think now, like that.* This is further demonstrated below:

Allison: I thought to myself if I can say it loud enough, loud enough for it to bounce off the walls to go to them. Because I can't move my head because it actually quite hurts. But I said it loud enough for them to hear it, but not loud enough for them to be like 'oh no you're making too much noise', you see, it's amazing[2]

Allison's account suggests a possibility that her appraisals shifted over the course of the interaction alternating between a threat and challenge-response. By adopting a problem-focused coping response she behaved in accordance with the environmental restraints and yet attempted to moderate the situation. (Delahaij & Van Dam, 2017; Folkman & Moskowitz, 2004). Both Luke and Vivian expressed an ability to seemingly instantaneously and simultaneously think, plan and act strategically, enabled by their heightened clarity of thought and attunement to the situation they had been placed in.

Dominic: I actually put the panic button into one of my socks, so that they don't see it, I hid the panic button so that they can't realize, 'oh wait there is maybe an armed reaction we have to get out of here', which also co-appears with them being a little bit more calm

and

Researcher: What was going through your head after you pushed him?

Vivian: It was like I've got to get out of here, I push him, Luke shouts at him and then shouts Thomas's (tenant living on the property) *name. My thought is, get out here, get help and then get back to Luke and help him. So it's very rational and I was relieved in a way, as well, to understand that that is how my brain will work*

Interestingly, both Allison and Dominic, acted in a thought-out manner that intentionally demonstrated compliance externally, while aiming to protect themselves in certain ways. Their appraisals in that moment led them to the understanding that demonstrating what would appear to be non-compliance could potentially result in a greater likelihood of violence from the perpetrators. Vivian's account, similar to Allison's, depicts how she was able to think in a

[2] Allison is referring to her response of thanking the perpetrators when they announced they would not rape her or her mother

calculated manner that had to be hastily adjusted in accordance with the situation in which she found herself. There is evidence of constant assessment of what kinds of resistance or self-protection was possible with the least risk to self and others. These coping strategies indicate evidence of analytic evaluations and re-evaluations of situational features, allowing victims to ascertain the options available to them and subsequently to evaluate the cost-benefit ratio of specific behaviours (Mobbs et al., 2015). Research looking at the impact of stress on cognition has yielded mixed results (Sandi, 2013) yet the responses described by the above accounts are indicative of enhanced response inhibition under acute stress and after the initial shock the ability to generally think quite rationally (Shields et al., 2016).

It is also worth mentioning how both Vivian and Allison express relief in their ability to think in this manner while experiencing a highly threatening situation. Their words seem to endorse the finding that gaining some sort of mastery is enormously helpful to actors when positioned in a subjugated role, such as victims of interpersonally inflicted crime.

In addition to participants expressing a sense of surprise that they had the ability to think clearly and rationally during a highly threatening scenario, certain participants expressed confoundment at the rate and magnitude of their thought processes during the robbery.

> *Allison: Ya, it's still consistent, it's that consistent. It was like a cog just going, always just consistently, there was no time for quiet in my mind, consistently spitting out. Because you know Sherlock Holmes says, in a problem situation think about the most impossible thing that can happen as a solution. As soon as you've figured that out every other possibility is still probable, everything else is still probable, so I thought exactly that.*

> *Luke: Okay well I've exhausted in a brief moment all of those options. These people potentially are going to do us harm or do something because they are aggressive and quiet, you know, their demeanour is quite aggressive and they tried to dominate us into submission.*

and

> *Luke: While I'm scuffling with this guy, but now obviously the magnitude of thought that goes through your mind in a very short period of time is frightening, because you tried to assess just what you're up against constantly.*

Although Luke and Allison's home invasion differed significantly in terms of the time over which the robbery took place, it appears that the speed of their thinking and their ability to consider extensive alternatives at this rate surprised them both. What appeared common to both participants was a commitment to not fully submit to the perpetrators, in conjunction with a

focused will to survive the ordeal. This manner of managing the event seemed to be determined by both personal factors, such as an aspect of personality functioning, and situational factors.

As demonstrated in Allison's commentary cited earlier, three participants described relying primarily on their sense of hearing, which, as opposed to their other senses, was the sense that was not impeded by their physical bondage.

> *Michael: But I remember that was my main thought, was, because I can't listen to these guys. I just need to listen to, if they start, like I don't know putting something in the gun, or ya.*
>
> *Allison: They were not speaking in English so I couldn't, but I was, I was trying to listen to the best of my ability to pick up on the conversation*
>
> *Grace: So I had to probably use what I had, the only thing I had was to listen to them, know not to upset them, and ya.*

It appeared that participants' heightened focus around listening to what the perpetrators were doing and attempting to gain an understanding of their likely subsequent actions represented an attempt to gain predictive control (Mobbs et al., 2015). Due to participants' subjugation and feelings of powerlessness it appears that they put considerable effort into adopting a vigilant coping strategy to deal with the highly threatening situation. Being in a situation in which they were unable to exert control, or had minimal opportunity to do so, by adopting vigilant coping mechanisms participants attempted to at least mentally prepare for what might unfold even if unable to actively prevent perpetrator behaviours. This is consistent with literature documenting how one's attention to novel information as well as hypervigilance increases under stressful situations (Jonas et al., 2014). Furthermore, the employment of vigilant attention resonates with existing literature emphasising the importance of having some sense of control, even in situations like home invasions, in order for victims not to feel panicked or robbed of all sense of agency and selfhood (Bandura, 2018; Emirbayer & Mische, 1998, p,971; Kenney, 2004; Simon, 1991). Grace's account suggests that she felt very close to complete powerlessness but managed to employ the minimal resources she had left at her disposal, she emphasises that her listening capacity was all she *had.*

4.3.2 Imagining likely Scenarios

Although there were similar and different cognitive processes employed by participants which, as mentioned, largely pertained to the idiosyncratic nature of the enforced situation

they were in position in, four participants expressed a strong common thought at various stages of the robbery - how will this end?

> *Liam: That they weren't going to kill me, that's what I thought, but in the meantime you're not sure, hey, you're not sure how it is going to end.*
>
> *Grace: There is nothing else and it was that, okay, and I think the fear was so much there in the beginning, because they took so long you're now just thinking, it is that acceptance. Like this is what's happening? And your mind will spin as to how it ends and knowing you have no control of that, you know.*

Both Liam and Grace expressed on numerous occasions during the interview that they had entertained thoughts of how the event would end. As theory illustrates, exposure to a highly stressful situation can allow for strategic reappraisals which can improve coping strategies as well as one's emotions (Biggs, et al., 2017; Sakakibara & Endo, 2016). However, having time to reflect on ongoing adverse scenarios, especially situations categorized by threat appraisals strongly increases the likelihood for individuals to engage in catastrophic thinking and rumination, which can translate into feelings of hopelessness (Sakakibara & Endo, 2016). This seems to be further exacerbated by the element of ambiguity, which is described to have been present in participants experiences.

> *Grace: Ya, like, because it was taking so long, like I keep thinking 'what happens if you get bored now after you've been through everything'. I think that's when I was starting to wonder, like, what are you going to do, you know.*
>
> *Michael: I was just waiting them for them to like try and touch my mom (chuckles nervously) or something like that. Those are like the thoughts that, that are actually in your mind while it happens. People don't just get robbed, they get robbed and raped and ya, or murdered. Like I was always thinking, like, they can't just be trying to rob us.*
>
> *Allison: You see this is, this is the thought processing that I went through. Ya, here on occasion, I was like fuck is there maybe a God, like I might die. Because eventually you get a bit existential you know.*

In all three accounts (Grace, Michael and Allison) the home invasion extended over a period of two hours. This extended time frame led participants to contemplate the potential risk of someone being sexually assaulted or killed. As Allison describes - *eventually you get a bit existential*. Entertaining the possibility of further violence that would be very hard to

endure required the use of emotion-focused coping in addition to some of the problem-focused coping described previously:

> *Grace: …scared, wondering what is gonna happen, yeah wondering and don't, thinking I can't allow myself to think that, you know what I mean, it is just yeah those are the thoughts at the time.*

> *Grace: Maybe not controlling the situation, but I was controlling my own emotions or how I react, not becoming hysterical. I knew, I was consciously aware of controlling how I portrayed myself, my fear.*

> *Allison: Again, its acceptance. I can't see any way out of this room, any way out, now I'm bound, so now what? I can't cry or get aggressive. Why? There's no control I have here, none. But what I can do is keep my calm, hope they'll leave and think about fucking how I'm gonna get out of here when they do. That was the only thing that, like, because that's the thing, if you start to dwell into bad thoughts, I mean, well cause then you fucked. Because if I had been in hystericals with my mother, we would still be lying there.*

In both Allison and Grace's accounts, they appear to have adopted a meta-consciousness of their cognitive processes or a kind of observer state to themselves. It appeared that they intuitively knew it would be detrimental for them to ponder on how the robbery might end. They seemed to employ the coping strategies of distancing and selective attention, both seen as part of emotion-focused coping (Bippus & Young, 2012; Lazarus & Folkman, 1984; Segerstrom & O'Connor, 2012). In selectively attempting to focus their attention on controlling their emotions they strategically employed what they perceived to be the best manner of coping during the harrowing experience. Interestingly Grace intuitively knew to manage how she presented her emotions in terms of controlling the amount of fear she portrayed as if she appreciated that this might evoke some complementary sadism in the perpetrators. Allison mentions this too:

> *Allison: …and the more fearful I'm going to get, that is going to show, and then I'm fucked.*

Although not overtly stated by either participant, in line with the literature, they seemed to appreciate that it is fear perceived in the victim that oftentimes leads to violence; rather than what would be expected, such as the demonstration of anger in the target of violence (Collins, 2007). The conscious effort to control emotional displays seemed to reflect a further form of complex self-mastery (Alberts et al., 2012).

4.4 Determining Relationships Between Perpetrators

In line with the theme of awareness of constant gaging of aspects of the situation and interaction between self and perpetrators in order to exercise a modicum of control, participants also discussed their awareness of dynamics between the perpetrators. As victims of armed robbery, participants were able to clearly pick up on the dynamics between perpetrators and the analysis of the data highlighted some clear commonalities across participant observations. The most notable of these commonalities across participants' experiences involved the scenario of engagement with three perpetrators and similarities in the roles each of the three perpetrators played. Six out of the eight participants explicitly stated that they could clearly tell which perpetrator(s) was/were in charge. Interestingly, there also appeared to be a distinct member who seemed more passive in each scenario and a perpetrator who stood out to be the most aggressive of the three. The below quotes illustrate participants' awareness of these common and somewhat distinct roles of the perpetrators.

> *Allison: For me. I think, ya, I could clearly see some sort of dynamic between the three of them. Specifically one being the leader, one being just more aggressive, and then the other one was like a fly on the wall, like I didn't hear much speak like.*
>
> *Grace: I knew who was in control, because I could see the dynamics, right in the beginning and that's when I thought he was not armed, the one they left in the room for whatever reason.*
>
> *Vivian: The one who was in our faces, one would think he was the leader, but the other guy was by far more violent, he, well look I don't know, I'm just surmising because he is the one who stabbed Alex, he's the one that came to the room and was trying to get the hunting knife, whereas the other guy didn't, the moment Luke started fighting with him he was like 'I'm out of here', you know, so.*
>
> *Liam: So anyway, I just sat there and I kept on talking. When I said I had no money and he looked in the fridge he said to me, 'you must come work for me', which I found quite funny but obviously the owner or the leader of the gang, because he was the one that was talking the most.*

The above quotations by four of the interviewees highlight that they could clearly ascertain who the leader was of the home invasion. In the instance where Grace speaks about Alex getting stabbed, this injury was in the context of her and Luke's resistance, while Alex was seen as a potential threat due to his height and was stabbed with a fork. Interestingly,

however, a commonality emerged in participants descriptions whereby the most violent of the perpetrators was not necessarily the leader, as indicated in Allison and Vivian's accounts. Generally, participants picked up on who the leader was by who spoke the most, as indicated in Liam's and Dominic's observations of dynamics (*because he was the one that was talking the most*). Two participants further expressed noting a battle for dominance between the perpetrator who they deemed to be the most aggressive and the *leader.* This is indicated in Dominic and Allison's depictions below:

> *Dominic: I could see he was the one organizing things but I could see there was a bit of a battle between him and the strong guy who was taking control, you know.*
>
> *Allison: …because after he said stop, he stopped, which means and I knew then 'you must be running the show somehow'.*

Allison described how the *one running the show* was able to immediately put a stop to one of the perpetrators acting aggressively towards her mother. This is consistent with literature stipulating that the leader(s) in a group of offenders have jurisdiction over the extent of violence that transpires (CSVR, 2007). It is significant to mention that when discussing the perpetrators and their threat of violence seven of the eight participants described their physical size:

4.5 Relative Size of Perpetrators and Levels of Aggression

> *Paula: …and the taller guy was the more aggressive one and he kept hitting Brad on his shoulder.*
>
> *Allison: …one very aggressive one, he was smaller, he was very aggressive, he had pixie kind of type of features.*
>
> *Allison: When he started stepping over, that tall oke that run the show that said 'stop'.*
>
> *Dominic: He was the large guy, the big guy, obviously the strong one of the group, the muscle was needed.*

The size of the perpetrator did not necessarily equate to who was identified as the most aggressive. However, there was clear evidence of assessment of both the capacity for aggression and the physical power or strength of perpetrators. Dominic suggests that there was only one perpetrator who appeared physically strong, yet it was not necessarily this man that was *the one organizing things*.

Paula describes how both physical size and the role played by the perpetrator who interacted with her most closely contributed to her sense of unease:

> *Paula: Yes. The smaller one took me, and he seemed to come across like the friendly young one and he would say loudly 'don't make me stab you' and then in my ear he would say 'I'm not going to hurt you, just give us what we want'. Sorry for my swearing but it was almost like a mind fuck.*

Paula expresses distress at the confusion caused in engaging with this perpetrator whose behaviour appeared to interchange rapidly and without warning as he performed the role of attacker and yet attempted to assure her that he had no malintent. Although victims were often relieved when it was apparent that the person in charge appeared motivated to minimize violence, they were also concerned about tensions between perpetrators and about having to engage in somewhat different ways with each person. In addition, they were not sure whether to believe what they were being told. The seeming passivity and lack of conviction of the more passive perpetrator left to watch the victims in Grace's account represented a more distressing threat due to the ambiguity of his role and demeanour, leading her to fear that out of the three perpetrators the seemingly more passive one was capable of inflicting sexual violence.

> *Grace: I think it's weird because I wasn't as, I wasn't as scared of him as the others, maybe because he was not armed. But I just I didn't know what he would do. It's like the other two, I felt if they were going to do something they would shoot and kill us, it's like that feeling, okay. The guy in the room it was like he was one that I thought, would you think now are you going to rape me? Like at the time I was thinking of sexual violence at that stage, but only with him, whereas the others I didn't think that at all. I didn't feel that from them...*

Grace's depiction implies more comfort in having more certainty about the potential and form of violence from the two more active perpetrators as opposed to feeling unsure about the seemingly more passive perpetrator's propensity for violence. This may speak to the need for some sort of predictability in a highly threatening, unexpected and ambiguous situation. It may even be the case that there is greater comfort in having certainty about experiencing violence, as opposed to not being able to detect the nature and the extent of the threat. It is important to recognise the threat of sexual violence mentioned by some of the women and men participants and that this represented a strong area of fear for women victims, as will be explored further in the following theme when discussing the role of gender, race and class in participants' experience.

What is evident in relation to the position of victims and their cognitive appraisals during the event is that they retained a capacity to observe, reason and monitor what was happening. They had all put considerable effort into assessing the apparent motivations and relational style of perpetrators. They aimed to gauge what kinds of protections they could attempt to engage in without being likely to escalate violence and also to attempt to prepare for what might unfold going forward. Although, it is not possible to know whether in fact, the interviewees had been accurate in their perceptions, what is evident was that they felt some sense of agency, albeit limited, in using cognitive capacities to problem solve in both behavioural and emotional ways. They suggest that thinking managed to help them to stay calm and that this in turn perhaps reduced escalation of affect or tension with and among the perpetrators, reducing the likelihood of increased violence.

4.4 Awareness of Demographic and Socio-Cultural Aspects of the Interchange

In considering the interactional dynamics between the perpetrators and victims it is important to consider the demographic characteristics of gender, race and class as these factors have been shown to be salient when discussing any social interchange. Across the participants' narratives, the most significant demographic feature which was perceived to influence the nature of the interaction appeared to be gender. A common awareness, which was explicitly and implicitly expressed by all four female participants, was that their gender appeared to place them in a position of heightened danger.

4.4.1 Gender and Heightened Threat

The increased feeling of vulnerability expressed by the female interviewees appeared to centre around two interwoven facets of their gender and included the imminent threat of sexual violence as well as feeling as though they were the *weaker sex* in the interaction (perhaps both physically and psychologically):

> *Vivian: Gender, the fact, yes, the fact that my window curtains were open, the fact that I got undressed there, the fact that he jumped on me and not Alex, and started touching me, ya I definitely think so, women are seen as the weaker sex.*

> *Allison: I mean you now have two women tied on a bed. Anything you can do to now assert your dominance, you will.*

The explicit and implicit fear of sexual assault expressed by Vivian and Allison echoes literature on women's unique experience of crime, such as Ferraro's "shadow hypothesis"

which speaks to the lingering and core threat of sexual violence women face when engaged in any violent interchange (Jacobsen, 2021; Riggs & Cook, 2015). This is further emphasised in Paula's account, situated in the context of the interview when she discusses how she was separated from her husband, at which point she felt the unspoken threat of sexual violence to be prominent.

> *Researcher: What kind of response do you think he was trying to get out of you?*
>
> *Paula: Well, if I try to hit him or fight back, because I remain neutral the whole time. So I think provoking me to responding to fighting back would have given him that reason.*

In this instance the 'reason' Paula was clearly referring to was the provocation to sexual assault. This anxiety about the core threat of sexual violence is demonstrated more explicitly by Grace and Allison in the quotes below.

> *Grace: But ya, I think it was only the other one that I felt the threat of, would there be any sexual violence, before I'm shot and killed (chuckles nervously).*
>
> *Allison: If I get raped what am I gonna do, what am I gonna do if they all wanna rape me, then what am I gonna do?*

As is evident in the nervous laughter of Grace and the word repetition in Allison's commentary, both women still seemed to feel some apprehension in recalling their fear of sexual assault and having to manage this potentiality during the robbery. It is worth noting that for ethical reasons one of the exclusion criteria was the co-occurrence of sexual assault or loss of life during the robbery. However, it is apparent that even when a sexual assault did not take place there seems to be awareness on the part of victims, and perhaps on the part of the perpetrators, that the threat of this form of harm contributes to added dominance between male perpetrators and female victims. The sense of increased subjugation due to the threat of rape is well covered by Allison.

> *Allison: So they also explained to us that we were not gonna rape you because we're not cowards, and the one degrading thing you can imagine as a woman is to say thank you to them. So we had to thank them because they were not gonna rape us. It was fucking ludicrous really.*

The sense of humiliation felt by Allison seems to centre around an inherent message by the perpetrators that due to their position as men they had the power to inflict sexual violence,

yet they were being somewhat virtuous and merciful by announcing that they were choosing not to enforce this power. This is also reflected in the literature examining perpetrators' accounts in which many report that violence towards women beyond what is deemed necessary would be unacceptable, in an attempt to morally differentiate themselves from perpetrators who are perceived to enact gratuitous or expressive violence (Hochstetler et al., 2010). It is evident that with hindsight Allison feels angry about this deployment of the threat of sexual assault, even in the negative. There is a probably not uncommon, perverse dynamic, in which victims are expected to be reassured or grateful that the added violence (or gratification) of sexual assault is not a dimension of the robbery and to take comfort from the fact that these are 'good perpetrators.

All four male participants also referred to awareness of the significance of women's sexual vulnerability, whereby Dominic and Michael were concerned about the threat of sexual violence towards their wives and mothers, respectively. Although Liam was alone during the interaction, he expressed that the nature of the dynamic would have differed if he were a woman and mentioned that the perpetrators enquired about the whereabouts of his *girlfriend.* Lastly, while Luke was discussing the robbery, more so in a post hoc fashion, he repeatedly spoke about the potential threat of his partner being raped. This highlights that in line with the four female participants, the lingering threat or "shadow" of sexual assault was also present, albeit to varying degrees, for the male participants.

Although not always explicitly stated by all of the women participants, it is evident that beyond coping with the fear of sexual violence, being treated as inferior due to their gender increased feelings of helplessness and victimisation in the interaction, as they felt they had less influence or impact in altering the dynamic than male victims (especially when both men and women were subject to the same event). This is highlighted in Grace's depiction below - where she observes that the perpetrators only directed communication to her husband.

> *Grace: Yes, they seemed to direct it at him.*
>
> *Researcher: Why do you think that was?*
>
> *Grace: I don't know, I guess I think me thinking it's just no respect for the women, maybe don't respect a female, this is it, it's a dominant thing.*

This feeling of lack of importance and diminished agency seemed to resonate with broader social stereotypes of gender relations in that perpetrators appeared to view male partners as

more likely to hold knowledge and to be involved in decision making than women. Interestingly none of the male victims referred explicitly to the gendered nature of exchanges (beyond awareness of potential sexual assault), perhaps precisely because they felt treated as more agentic in the interaction.

4.4.2 Race and Class

While most participants were explicitly questioned around their perception of how race and class influenced the dynamics of the interaction only three participants expressed an awareness that these aspects appeared to play a role during the interchange. Interestingly these three participants (two in the same situation) felt the perpetrators to be *foreign* due to their accents and not necessarily due to a racial difference. This specific implication that the perpetrators were not South African appeared to stand out as significantly unsettling to these participants.

> *Grace: …there was three of them, two of them it felt like they were, sorry to say, but like foreign. I remember thinking, very much, very much that they were Mozambiquan.*

Somewhat similarly to Grace, Liam had bought up the idea that the perpetrators were not South African, on numerous occasions and without being directly asked. This seems to further emphasise how striking this feature was. This is consistent with research that postulates that individuals have a heightened sensitivity to a threat from individuals with whom they do not identify (i.e., more aware of threats from members of the out-group) (Molenberghs et al., 2016).

> *Researcher: … And when you spoke to them in vernacular was there like a strategy there?*
>
> *Michael: It was in a way to see, because I could tell, like, I have a good sense of people who are South African and who aren't. Especially when it comes to black people and I kept thinking in my head these guys aren't South African and that made it more intense.*

Michael's words highlight how he was consciously aware of cues about racial and ethnic differences during the interaction. He thought that the perpetrators would understand Zulu based on an assumption about their ethnic background and it appears that he spoke to the men in Zulu to attempt to find familiarity in what was felt to be unchartered territory:

Michael: …maybe that was also kind of like a hope that if they hear me speaking in Zulu, they would like reply in Zulu and be like more chilled with us.

Michael seems to hope that being able to communicate in what he imagined was the first language of the perpetrators would humanise him in some way and might allow him to connect in a manner that would diminish the violence that might be meted out to a more objectified victim. However, when he realised that they seem not to understand Zulu and were more alien to him (and perhaps he to them), he became more anxious about whether there was any common ground or space for negotiation (*that made it more intense*).

As with some of the previous discussions of relations of dominance and submission, it seemed that race and class were perceived as salient largely with regard to whether differences in identity between perpetrators and victims were likely to diminish or eradicate perpetrators' humanization as opposed to the objectification of victims. In the main, it was felt that greater objectification would lead to greater license for the enactment of violence in these situations.

Although race and class are vital features in dictating social interactions, particularly within contemporary South Africa with the legacy of Apartheid and very large wealth disparities, across all eight participants' accounts the issue of gender was the most prominent demographic feature that was considered to have played a part in interactions. It was somewhat surprising that participants did not have more to say about how features of racialised and classed identity may have had bearing on the interactions and expressions of violence, given that literature suggests that violence is, for example, related to perceptions of relative deprivation and given common inferences that black people in positions of power may wish to exaggerate inversion of previous power relations. However, despite explicit questioning about whether social identity characteristics appeared to shape interactions very few interviewees had perceived this as highly significant in the incidents in which they were involved. They seemed to perceive more immediate dynamics, related, for example, to who exercised authority in the interaction, to carry greater weight in affecting outcomes than more distal markers, such as class identity.

4.5 Advice & Post Hoc Observations

Towards the end of each interview, participants were asked what sort of advice they would offer to another person in a similar circumstance. The material discussed under this final theme consists of participants' post hoc or retrospective observations on the events. Their

reflections were expressed from a considered perspective in that participants drew on their own experiences to provide advice about what they believed would result in the best possible outcome in the circumstance of a residential robbery. Despite participants' differing experiences of residential robbery, common observations emerged that are discussed under several sub-themes.

4.5.1 Calm and Strategic

Six out of eight participants explicitly expressed that remaining calm is one of the most important factors when faced with a home invasion. The other two participants, Michael and Paula, spoke about having received similar advice from others in regards to remaining calm in these scenarios in which they are the target of crime. This is reflected in literature establishing that individuals turn to others for advice when navigating unique and uncertain circumstances (Mobbs et al.,2015). Liam and Grace both drew on their own experiences to highlight how remaining calm was perceived to significantly influence the outcome of the interaction in the optimal direction given the circumstances.

> *Grace: If I had to give advice thinking purely why it ended well, it has to be, completely remain calm.*

> *Liam: I think every situation is different hey, I think just stay calm.*

Participants expanded on the advice to remain calm and stressed the importance of maintaining a more level-headed stance as opposed to responding from behaviour predominantly motivated by emotionality.

> *Vivian: but the, then during is definitely, is stay calm, assess what is happening, try not to give into panic because it's so easy.*

> *Dominic: … the best advice I can give someone is just stay calm, don't go into all haywire emotions and think all hell breaks loose, and go crazy, don't grab a knife and try to stab the guy because he's got a bigger knife than you.*

> *Luke: … you can't just get angry, you going to have to calm yourself down, think about this or let your instinctive computer take over and hopefully respond in the right way.*

The above three quotes all emphasise the idea that attuning oneself to the situation strategically and responding in a considered manner is most beneficial. There appears to be a sentiment that responding out of anger or panic could lead one to encounter more violence

and that impulsivity and intense emotional expression may be dangerous to one as a victim in this kind of situation, in keeping with some of the observations put forward by Collins (2009). Luke's speaks to this whereby he suggests that once one has assessed the situation in a strategic sense, one can respond from a more informed position.

> *Luke: So, you don't know how you are going to respond, and you hope what you are doing is the right thing. I mean I could have, maybe I told everybody to be quiet and submit because I wanted no one to get hurt, thinking that that, that might have been the better thing to do, but very quickly in my head I computed that that's the worst thing I could have done.*

This idea of first assessing the level of threat and then responding based on this information was also put forward by Vivian and Dominic:

> *Vivian: My best advice would be, take stock of what's happening, look at the threat and assess it.*

> *Dominic: If you can resist them, in a safe manner, do so.*

The above quotes suggest that one's response, even if it is resistance, may be appropriate after one has taken into account the level of risk that would be entailed in this course of action. This way of thinking is consistent with literature suggesting that the outcome of victim resistance would vary depending on particular circumstances (Guerette & Santana, 2010; Tark & Cleck, 2004). Paula's suggests that, in contrast to Luke's situation, submitting was the best option in her instance; yet there is an acknowledgement that one can never be completely sure of the outcome when responding in these highly threatening interactions.

> *Paula: … I submitted and I am very aware it doesn't always work, but that is like anything in life, it is the gamble or the calculated risk of getting a better outcome.*

Michael and Allison were more of the opinion that compliance would be the best course of action as an absolute stance to adopt. Interestingly Allison mentioned on numerous occasions how she was compliant throughout the interaction seeming to emphasize how important this was to ensure that the least amount of violence transpired.

> *Allison: I think in order to decrease violence the more compliant you are the better.*

and

Allison: Be compliant and think before you do anything, use your time wisely.

This emphasis on compliance is further illustrated by Michael as he immediately spoke about making an effort to show cooperation when asked about the advice he would offer to others. In fact, Michael suggests that one has to almost 'over-act' the role of someone who is deferring to the authority of the attackers.

> *Michael: …be so obedient and so, like over the top in complying with whatever they say.*

Paula, similarly, indicated awareness that allowing oneself to be clearly subjugated was necessary in the service of harm reduction:

> *Paula: … I think submission is a big thing, let your pride, your ego, whether it is right or wrong, at that moment, it is about surviving. And you must do everything in that moment to survive and ultimately get out of the situation physically unharmed.*

It was evident that participants' advice appeared to centre around an overarching aim - getting out of the robbery having incurred as little injury as possible.

4.5.2 Reconciling with the Event Through Downward Comparison

In their retrospective observations on their robbery experiences, a number of participants used 'downward comparison' in indicating that they felt fortunate that they had been spared violence and threat beyond what had transpired. Interestingly four participants used the word *lucky* when speaking about their experience in a post hoc manner. As the following quotes illustrate there was a strong sense that given the imminent danger and the uncertainty of how events might unfold during the robberies, the situation could have potentially been more violent or lethal.

> *Liam: So yeah, I was very lucky I think in a way, they weren't violent, they were there to take what they wanted, and they were very particular.*

> *Luke: I felt I had to respond and, well there you go, we were lucky in the sense, you know. I wasn't shot in the stomach and Vivian wasn't raped and killed, or whatever else could have happened, potentially, so…*

> *Vivian: I reacted instinctively, and I was lucky that they didn't have weapons because they could have shot me.*

> *Allison: It's unbelievable. To come out, the one thing that made me laugh I've been sitting for four hours with three men unwelcomed in my house and I came out unscathed as a woman. At the age of 16, not raped, not sexually assaulted, nothing. I physically couldn't stop laughing.*
> *Dominic: … I got home free with my life without anything worse than just a cut on my back.*

The sentiment expressed around feeling fortunate that more grave outcomes did not occur echoes literature postulating that individuals frequently engage in downward counterfactual thinking after experiencing traumatic stress (Blix, et al., 2016; Wrede & Giolla, 2021). In other words, participants feel that things could have been worse (downward trajectory). Literature suggests that this defensive strategy may be prominent when individuals compare their situation to that of others who faced more heinous outcomes (Blix, et al., 2016), in this instance robberies that may have been accompanied by loss of life or sexual assault. From their words, it is evident that many participants entertained the possibility of added violence at the time and in looking back on the events, and that there was some relief associated with having come out of the experience non-injured. Liam goes so far as to observe that the perpetrators were not violent, apparently distinguishing between the use of physical force as opposed to threats to ensure compliance. Vivian makes her comparative assessment against 'other' victims, based on reports of other crimes in her area, quite explicit:

> *Vivian: So, ya, just also when we heard that story it made us realize we got away we were lucky, so, ya. (Sounds despondent).*

However, it is significant to note that although participants expressed a sense of feeling relieved or even grateful that no loss of life or sexual assault occurred, seemingly contrasting feelings of anger and grief were also expressed during the interviews, as will have been evident in previous material. This perhaps speaks to a level of cognitive dissonance, in that while participants appreciate that the interaction could have turned more violent, they nevertheless feel aggrieved at being subjugated and compelled to undergo this traumatic experience. Although there is some comfort in recognising or asserting that the perpetrators could have been more physically aggressive and damaging and were not, this does not compensate for the greater feeling of distress at having been victimised in the first instance. It is also important to note that in this area of the discussion the interviewees attributed their survival largely to the motivations and conduct of the attackers (*they were very particular*), or to fate or chance (*It's unbelievable*), as opposed to linking the reduced violence (against what

was hypothetically possible) to their own actions and agency. It is evident that alongside the discussion of what kinds of thinking, behaviour and interaction may have reduced violence during the event, participants also felt that they had limited control over outcomes. It is important to note in regards to inferences drawn from victim resistance that the perpetrators were unarmed in the incident involving the two survivors who actively resisted (Luke and Vivian). One is aware that in this section of the discussion interviewees were positioning themselves in a particular way as retrospective observers to their own experiences who might be able to advise others and that they moved to the presentation of themselves as fortunate possibly in part to minimise their sense of carrying damage. However, the references to limited personal agency remain noteworthy.

In summary, participants were able to draw on their experience which appeared to significantly shape the advice they would give to another. However, participants also expressed an awareness that things could have turned out differently and that they could have perhaps responded differently. Despite acknowledging that there may have been alternative courses of action and possible outcomes, all eight participants indicated that by adapting to the various situational components of the interaction and remaining calm they had responded in a manner that at the time appeared to ensure the best chances of survival.

> *Grace: Ya (mmh) I know, and it gratefully worked out well, you know what I mean, you can't, and I've had that time and I can't go back to those sort of thinking. If something had happened, how would I react? Would I blame myself? Did I do the right thing? Because I had to have done the right thing, we all had to have done the right thing, because it ended in a way that we're, still alive, basically, bottom line, you know what I mean.*

Chapter 5: Conclusion

This chapter presents an overview of the main findings presented in the study. Process observations that emerged during the interviews and data analysis are also discussed in this summary, including reflexive issues related to subjective interpretations of these observations. Lastly, the limitations of the study are outlined and recommendations for future areas of study are proposed.

5.1 Summary of Main Findings

This study was conducted in an attempt to contribute to building a larger body of research on victim/ survivors' accounts of their experiences and observations concerning interpersonal dynamics during their experience of crime. It is noteworthy that most participants (six out of eight) readily volunteered to participate in the study and of these initial six, two invited the two further participants, who were also comfortable to be interviewed. This willingness to volunteer to take part in the study appeared to reflect an inherent acknowledgement that it may be cathartic to speak through their experience. This was overtly expressed by four of the participants and speaks not only to the theoretical importance of gaining survivors accounts but also of the desire of participants to give voice to their experiences.

In line with the research aims, it was apparent that participants were able to reflect upon their experiences of victimization and to identify interactional dynamics in the exchange from their perspective, in how relations of dominance and submission were set up and sustained and what roles and forms of agency different parties in the situation appeared to display and exercise. All participants were able to retrospectively identify and express their thought processes during different stages of the interaction. These ranged from more benign appraisals when initially encountering the perpetrators to participants immediately being aware that they were the targets of a robber. These varied responses appeared to have more to do with situational variables than individuals' personal styles of engaging with the environment. Certain participants expressed feeling surprised at the speed and complexity of their thought processes while experiencing the robbery.

This study further established the ways in which participants negotiated and responded to dynamics of submission and dominance inherent in this type of crime. This study's findings support literature that places emphasis on the interaction between victims and perpetrators when studying violence and violent crime. The participants' accounts demonstrate that,

although placed in a subjugated position they were able to take some sort of action in attempting to influence the interpersonal dynamic with the perpetrators with what resources they had available. Two participants (both of whom experienced the same incident) actively resisted, while the other six participants were expressively compliant. Interestingly all eight participants describe responding somewhat instinctively while also engaging in continuous evaluations of how to respond in a manner that they felt would increase the likelihood of survival with the least amount of harm. Their responses included dominantly cooperative and submissive communications but there was evidence of some attempt to negotiate with perpetrators at points or expansion of their repertoire of behaviour as conditions unfolded and further observations took place. This finding has at least two implications. It resonates with previous literature that has proposed that resisting perpetrators does not necessarily increase the likelihood of violence and may in fact ameliorate harm, recognizing that interactions and outcomes are heavily influenced by each unique situation. Furthermore, the findings highlight how victims of crime, to varying degrees and within limits, are able to exercise some level of agency and potential to influence the course of events.

The findings of this study indicate that all the participants were able to exercise some degree of agency during the crime, be this in modulating their own reactions and/or in interacting with perpetrators. The exercising of agency mostly consisted of verbally engaging with the perpetrators in order to humanize themselves as victims, express compliance, and portray dependability in an attempt to placate and calm the perpetrators. Interestingly two participants described moderating how they cooperated so as to retain some sense of agency and not feel fully subjugated. However, it is important to acknowledge that exercising some sort of agency may not always be possible and the outcomes of such encounters cannot necessarily be attributed to the responses of the survivors. Whereas in previous research victims have been unable to validate perpetrators' accounts of how events took place, in this instance, it was impossible to corroborate victims' inferences about interactions with perpetrators. Nevertheless, the validity of participant observations holds in relation to drawing upon their own lived experiences and many of their inferences about perpetrator responses to their communications appeared plausible and were substantiated by examples.

This study also aimed at establishing whether and to what degree participants perceived demographic variables to have influenced the dynamic between themselves and the perpetrators. Somewhat surprisingly participants did not generally explicitly bring in content that suggested that they considered race or class to be highly significant during the interaction. However, race did appear to be significant in certain instances even if implicit

and even though it was not outright acknowledged by participants. Race served as a mediator in which certain assumptions were made, for example with regard to language. In attempting to use language that might signal an awareness of race differences and a need to join in this regard, race was perhaps performed as a negotiated act to ensure survival through bargaining through linguistic knowing. Both the male and female participants placed some emphasis on gender. The direct threat of sexual violence was a prominent concern for female participants, whereas the male participants were concerned about this threat when female loved ones were present. It emerged that three participants were concerned about the unfamiliarity of the perpetrators' nationality as opposed to being preoccupied with race per se. It is interesting that across all participants what seemed to have stood out as significant was the size of the perpetrators which they appeared to remember vividly and seemed to be related to an evaluation of the degree of threat perpetrators posed for both women and men.

Gaining an understanding from the perspective of survivors/victims of violent crime has provided rich insights into the interactive dynamics present in home robberies indicating that victims play a role in the interchange even when placed in a subjugated position. The findings provide evidence that when placed in such a position, individuals are not merely passive receptors of perpetrator instruction and direction.

5.2 Process Observations in Conducting the Research Study

In probing participants around the notion of their agency during the robberies some participants expressed not feeling as though they were able to exercise agency or that viewing their responses as a way of exercising agency was a different perspective than they had previously adopted. This centered around a potential reflexive issue whereby I could sense in certain instances that participants felt unsure of themselves and how they handled the interaction. The framing of their behaviour as carrying aspects of agency seemed to provide some reassurance for them while speaking about a highly sensitive experience. My role as a student psychologist was seen to put me in a position of some authority in understanding the course of events and behavioural motivations than participants themselves and thus participants seemed to perceive me as having validated their actions even when I did not explicitly convey this.

It was observed across all eight participants that speaking about the incident in detail bought up difficult emotions, however, all participants appeared to try to suppress these emotions so as to be able to continue the interview. This suggested strong motivation across

participants to speak through their experience and while it is not uncommon for painful emotions to surface while speaking about a traumatic event it appeared that participants did not necessarily anticipate that these emotions would arise. Regardless it was observed that the majority of participants spoke about the incident at length without much probing, with certain participants volunteering information around the aftermath effects. As far as possible I aimed to contain participants as they spoke and took care to debrief people at the end of interviews. In the debriefing, I offered some psychoeducation around trauma responses where this seemed appropriate and useful. I also sought to convey respect for their experiences and observations and to remain non-judgmental in response to the interviewees' contributions. While it was easy to be supportive of participants when their ways of thinking appeared to align with my own value system, in some instances it was necessary for me to remain neutral and engaged when interviewees expressed ideas that ran counter to my own values.

As a whole conducting this research and speaking with participants about their experience of surviving a residential robbery had a notable impact on me. In discussing this impact, it seems significant to mention that I myself had never experienced an incident similar to a residential robbery, or a crime of this magnitude or nature. Although the study at the outset aimed to address any elements of agency the participants were able to exercise during the interaction, I found myself to be moved in regards to how each participant responded to this traumatic experience. Regardless of the degree of agency, each participant felt they were able to utilize I was struck by how each participant responded in a manner that seemed to be the best course of action given each of their unique scenarios. In this regard, I was intrigued by the ability of each participant to respond and think through their actions while experiencing what I could only imagine being a terrifying ordeal. Another prominent factor that I had to remain aware of while conducting this study was the risk of vicarious traumatization. I noted throughout the process that this was never a clearly noticeable concern while speaking with and analyzing the participants accounts of events.

However, I became aware that during the process of the study I gradually found myself becoming significantly more vigilant around the prospects of experiencing a robbery or carjacking and noticed I had increased behaviours I perceived to be preventative measures to experiencing these crimes. This was reflected on in terms of the amount of trauma and subsequent feeling of unsafety participants may have been left with; as merely hearing about these experiences altered my behaviours. Although I found myself feeling a certain level of despair while speaking with participants as this experience appeared to notably adjust their sense of safety in general, to varying degrees, I was mainly struck by the resilience each

participant displayed not only during the incident but in their healing process subsequent to the robbery. It is important to note that the psychological framework I adopted was psychodynamic which inevitably influenced the way the data was presented and processed psychologically speaking.

5.2 Limitations

The following limitations of the study are noted and should be considered when taking into account the merits of findings as well as directions for future research.

i. A significant limitation of the study is the homogeneity of the sample in terms of race, as all participants were white. The transferability of findings is restricted in this respect as the narratives established only reflect those of white South Africans. In addition, the exploration of demographic variables and how this was perceived to have influenced the interchange is restricted by the lack of diversity in the sample as well as the researcher's personal identity

   Although the findings constitute compelling insights in relation to the research aims, it is important to gain a more representative view from a broader spectrum of the South African population to test and enrich existing findings.

ii. The recruitment method contributed to limitations in the study. Approaching potential participants via the researcher's broader social network resulted in only white individuals putting themselves forward, and individuals of a similarly middle-class background to the extent that they owned property of various kinds. This may have affected the way in which participants disclosed information as well as the researchers approach to participants in that there was some sense of social resonance and familiarity in terms of race and class positioning. For example, it is possible that data was interpreted in such a manner as to represent the participants in an overly positive light.

iii. The sample size of eight participants indicates the need for some caution in the transferability of the conclusions that can be drawn, more especially because some participants were involved in the same incident and may have shaped each other's views of what took place. Although the sample size was appropriate to obtain rich and thorough data, as well as adhering to pragmatic limitations of a mini-dissertation, the sample size poses some issues in drawing more general and conclusive assumptions from the findings.

iv. As indicated earlier, it is important to acknowledge that participants' assumptions and reasoning could not be tested against the perceptions of the perpetrators as to what had transpired in the same situation, including how survivors' communications were received. It is also the case that post-event interviews involve retrospective constructions of events that may be shaped by subsequent experiences and by the context within which recollection is taking place. However, the examples offered by participants did appear to ground many of their observations in what appeared to be reasonably accurate reconstructions of events.

v. The exclusion of participants who experienced a robbery involving loss of life or rape has implications in regards to gaining a better understanding of factors that escalate violence but was necessary for ethical reasons in this instance.

5.3 Recommendations for Future Research

The following recommendations are proposed in line with the limitations discussed as well as the broader research topic.

i. A more diversified and larger sample would help validate the transferability of the findings and in exploring whether differences in social identity positioning might contribute to different kinds of interactions between perpetrators and victims in house robberies in terms of a more representative and broader sample. For example, recruiting participants in collaboration with local Victim Support agencies.

ii. Expanding on the above (i.), it is further proposed that an alternative method of recruiting participants is exercised that allows for greater social distance between the researcher and participants.

iii. While this study has emphasised the importance of accounting for survivors/victims' accounts of events which warrants further research it seems useful to additionally establish perpetrators accounts pertaining specifically to the interactional dynamics during the crime and their understanding of what increased or decreased violence. Similarly, an investigation into their cognitive appraisals at different stages of the crime as well as their perception of demographic variables and how this may have influenced the dynamic between them and the targets of crime could prove useful.

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Appendix A: Interview Guide

Interview Guide

The participant will be informed of the structure of the interview which will start with a broad question and will be followed up by subsequent open-ended questions. The participant will be reminded that they do not have to answer any questions which they are uncomfortable to talk about. Moreover, the participant will be informed that the interview can be stopped at any point should the participant feel discomfort or distress.

Broad overview question at the opening of interview:

Can you tell me what happened in detail from the start of the robbery to the end thinking carefully about the interaction between you and the attacker or attackers. I would like to understand from your perspective how you processed what was happening, what kinds of observations you were making, and how you behaved in response to what was taking place. I am particularly interested in anything you have to share in relation to your thoughts about what might have either increased or decreased violence or risk of violence from the perpetrator(s) in the situation.

Depending upon what arises from this initial invitation to speak the following areas will be probed during the interview through associated questions.

1. **Issues related to dominance and submission and demonstration of this dynamic**
   Did you have a sense of what how they wanted you to behave? Were you aware of needing to show that you acknowledged that they were in charge? What sorts of cues did you pick up in relation to who was dominant and how they showed this? How did you respond to this?

2. **Issues related to perpetrators achieving instrumental goals**
   What did you feel the perpetrator/s most wanted to achieve and how did they go about this? What was your role in assisting or limiting them in achieving their objectives?

3. **Issues related to perpetrators achieving psychological goals.**
   Did you feel that there were particular kind of psychological dynamics playing out between you and the perpetrator/s? What did you observe about the person/s emotional state and how did you engage with this?

4. **Issues related to degree of agency victim or survivor felt they had**

   What kinds of control did you feel you had, if any in the situation? How did you try to exercise any control? Were you able to be active in any way that you think affected the outcome? How did you assess what was possible in the situation?

5. **Issues related to social location and contextual cues**

   Do you think there was anything to do with language, race, age, gender or aspects of each of your identity and position in society that affected what happened between you and the perpetrator/s? Please tell me more about this? Was there anything about the place and time where and when the event happened that you think shaped how things unfolded between you and the perpetrator/s?

6. **Testing limits and meta-observations**

   *If someone else were in the same situation that you were in what sort of advice would you give to them? Are there certain things that you would encourage them to do? Are there certain things that you would advise them to not do? There is a lot of debate about whether victims should resist actively or not - do you have any thoughts about that? Did you notice anything about how things changed over time or how one set of interactions between you and the perpetrator/s linked to others? How did you feel the perpetrator/s viewed you as a person? How did you think about the perpetrator/s as a person or people? Do you think this influenced or shaped what happened in the situation***?**

7. **Personal or situational resources**

   What kinds of resources did you draw upon to manage in the situation? How did you manage to stay alert and thinking if at all? How did you manage to act in keeping with instructions? What enabled you to assess or judge how to behave and interact if you were aware of this?

In closing the interview, a debriefing will take place. Questions surrounding how the participant experienced the interview, including what sort of emotional state they are in post the discussion will be posed. If there appears to be research related distress a discussion as to whether further support in the form of counselling might be helpful would be initiated. The close of the interview will also entail checking if the participant would like to ask any questions or provide any feedback.

Appendix B: Participant Information Sheet

Interactional Dynamics During Residential Robbery: Victims' Accounts and Reflections

Dear Sir / Madam,

My name is Caroline Quinn and I am a Masters student in Clinical Psychology at the University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg. As part of my studies, I am required to undertake a research project. The supervisor of my project is Professor Gill Eagle. Given high levels of crime in South Africa I am invested in exploring victims' accounts of what happened during a contact crime. The research project aims to understand the observations and accounts of victims of a robbery that took place in their home concerning what kinds of interactions took place between them and the perpetrator/s. I am particularly interested in understanding people's perceptions concerning what appeared to increase or decrease levels of violence during the robbery and to understand this from the perspective of victims rather than perpetrators.

As part of this project, I would like to invite you to take part in a single interview with me at an agreed upon time and date that will be suitable to you. It is anticipated that interviews will take approximately 60 minutes but not more than 90 minutes. If it is possible to conduct in-person interviews these will take place at a private venue such as your residence or workplace if you so wish, or at my office on the Wits campus. Alternatively, if this is more feasible because of movement restrictions related to the COVID-19 pandemic and if you would prefer this in any event, interviews will take place online via the Zoom platform which can be downloaded for free. In this instance interviews will be conducted from my place of

residence which will ensure privacy and confidentiality and it would be requested that you also find a private space to take part in the interview. I will use a meeting ID and password and the 'locking' function on the Zoom platform in order to ensure privacy for our conversation. If you would like to propose an alternative manner for conducting a virtual interview, such as WhatsApp, I would also be happy to discuss this.

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With your permission, I would like to record the interview using a digital device. Only audio recordings of the interview will be conducted and used for research purposes. The recording will be kept in a password protected folder on a password protected computer for safe keeping and to protect your confidentiality. Transcriptions of the audio recordings will be produced by me using an electronic programme to assist this process if available. I will take care to remove all personally identifying information and your real name will be replaced with a pseudonym (alternative name). While I will know your identity through the data collection process the transcripts and research findings will not be traceable back to you as an individual. Only I will have access to the audio recordings which will be erased once the research study has been examined. My supervisor and I will have access to the anonymized transcripts during the course of the study. The salient findings from the anonymised transcripts will be presented in the form of a research report and may possibly also be published and/presented in academic forums.

Given the sensitive nature of this topic certain criteria are important to note in relation to participation. Individuals who participate are required to be over 18 years of age and

comfortable to be interviewed in English. It is important that you only put yourself forward for participation if you experienced the robbery at least eight weeks ago or before this as if you experienced the event very recently there is a greater risk that you may experience anxiety or distress in taking part in the interview. For similar reasons I would also request that if you have been diagnosed with any psychiatric disorder associated with the robbery, such as Posttraumatic Stress or Major Depression, or at the present time experiencing these or associated mental health conditions (related or unrelated to the robbery), you also do not put yourself forward to take part in the research study. In addition, I would also ask that you exclude yourself from participation if the robbery was accompanied by sexual assault or loss of life since it is known that these forms of trauma generally have more severe and longer-term effects.

The interview will involve talking about aspects of the crime experience in some depth and answering questions about this experience related to your thoughts and responses during the

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event, your reflections about what may have increased or decreased levels of violence and what you understood was happening between you and the perpetrator/s during the robbery.

You have the right not to answer any questions with which you are uncomfortable. If you experience any distress or discomfort at any point during the interview we will stop and decide together whether to resume, schedule, or whether it would be better to withdraw your participation. At the end of the interview a debriefing will take place to check in with you how you feel after having taken part in the interview as well as to give you an opportunity to ask any questions or give feedback. I will make follow up contact either via telephone or email (depending on your preference) to check on your wellbeing within ten days of the interview having taken place. If you experience distress as a consequence of taking part in this research study. I have arranged for support in the form of free counseling at Lifeline

Johannesburg and we can discuss whether you would like a referral for more formal counselling via this route. The organization offers both telephonic and face-to face counselling (the latter available when restrictions are not in place) and has several counsellors who specialize in trauma containment. The Lifeline Connect Counselling Services Manager at the Norwood branch is available as the contact person for such referrals and whose details will be provided where necessary.

There will be no personal costs to you if you participate in this project other than making your time available to take part in the interview. You will not receive any direct benefits from participation and there are no disadvantages or penalties if you choose not to participate. Participation in the study is completely voluntary and individuals are entitled to withdraw

themselves from participation at any time up until the point where the study is submitted for examination. After receiving and reading this information sheet, if you meet the criteria for participation and would be interested and willing to take part in the study, I will send you a

consent form via email to fill in so that we have a clear agreement on the use of audio recording. If you choose to give your permission for this, the transcripts may be kept for use in future research. In this case the anonymised transcripts will be retained by the Psychology Department Violence Research Focus Group for possible use in future projects, with the

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provision that any future researcher/s would have to obtain independent ethical approval to utilise the data.

If you do not consent to this aspect the recordings and transcripts will be erased within two years of receipt of final examiners' reports for my master's research report.
If they would like this, participants will receive a summary of the findings by email after completion of the study write-up. If you have any questions about this research, please feel free to contact me. My contact details are provided below. If you have any concerns or complaints regarding the ethical procedures of this study, you are welcome to contact the University Human Research Ethics Committee (Non-Medical), telephone +27(0) 11 717 1408, email hrec-medical.researchoffice@wits.ac.za

Yours sincerely,

Caroline Quinn

Contact Details for Relevant Persons:

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Supervisor:

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Appendix C: Informed Consent Form

Interactional Dynamics During Residential Robbery:

Victims' Accounts and Reflections

Caroline Quinn

I, …….., agree to participate in this research project. The details and requirements of the research study have been explained to me and I understand what my participation will involve. I agree to the following:

(Please circle the relevant options below).

I agree that I meet the inclusion criteria to participate in the study	YES NO
I agree that the criteria that exclude participation do not pertain to me	YES NO
I agree that the information I provide may be used anonymously after this project has ended, for academic purposes by other researchers, subject to their own ethics clearance being obtained.	YES NO

…… (signature)

…… (name of participant)

…… (date)

…… (signature)

…… (name of person seeking consent)

…… (date)

Appendix D: Ethics Clearance Certificate

UNIVERSITY OF THE WITWATERSRAND, JOHANNESBURG

Research Office

HUMAN RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE (NON-MEDICAL)
R14/49 Quinn

CLEARANCE CERTIFICATE	**PROTOCOL NUMBER: H20/05/33**
PROJECT TITLE	Interactional Dynamics During Residential Robbery: Victims' Accounts and Reflections
INVESTIGATOR(S)	Miss C Quinn
SCHOOL/DEPARTMENT	Human and Community Development/
DATE CONSIDERED	22 May 2020
DECISION OF THE COMMITTEE	Approved Risk Level: High
EXPIRY DATE	23 June 2023

DATE 24 June 2020 **CHAIRPERSON** _____
(Professor J Knight)

cc: Supervisor : Professor G Eagle

DECLARATION OF INVESTIGATOR(S)

To be completed in duplicate and **ONE COPY** returned to the Secretary at Room 10004, 10th Floor, Senate House, University. Unreported changes to the application may invalidate the clearance given by the HREC (Non-Medical)

I/We fully understand the conditions under which I am/we are authorized to carry out the abovementioned research and I/we guarantee to ensure compliance with these conditions. Should any departure to be contemplated from the research procedure as approved I/we undertake to resubmit the protocol to the Committee. **I agree to completion of a yearly progress report.**

_____ _____/_____/_____
Signature **Date**

PLEASE QUOTE THE PROTOCOL NUMBER ON ALL ENQUIRIES