

**Discourses of violent crime in South Africa:
constructing crime, criminals and victims.**

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DECLARATION

I declare that this dissertation is my own unaided work. All citations, references and borrowed ideas have been duly acknowledged. It is being submitted for the degree of Masters of Social Science in the Faculty of Humanities, Development and Social Science, University of KwaZulu-Natal, Durban, South Africa. None of the present work has been submitted previously for any degree or examination in any other University.

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Abstract

Talk of violent crime in South Africa abounds, with criminal violence as a topic of discussion on many social platforms - from the President's State of the Nation address to conversations between people on the street. This study aims to explore the discourses that South Africans use in their accounts of violent crime, what presentation of violent crime is constructed through the use of these discourses, and the effects of such constructions. Using Wetherell and Potter's (1992) approach to discourse analysis, the transcripts from in-depth, semi-structured interviews with fifteen participants were analysed to identify and examine the discourses that participants drew on to construct an account of violent crime. Seven central themes were identified in the transcripts. These pertained to the causes of violent crime, the effects of violent crime, prevention and deterrence, victims, responsibility, perpetrators and categorisation of 'good' and 'bad' criminals. In the study each of the themes is examined in turn to explore the discourses that are drawn on in the construction of each theme and the presentation of violent crime that is constructed through the use of these discourses. Analysis of the discourses shows that the construction of crime, criminals and victims is complex and that this is often done in such a way as to manage the threat of violent crime. It also shows that race 'colours' the way we see, understand and construct violent crime. Yet this is not only about the identification of others as particular kinds of people but also about self-identifying, as people actively construct their own identity when constructing violent crime. The way in which we construct violent crime therefore has important implications for the way in which we experience others as well as ourselves. It also has important implications for the interventions that are used and proposed for managing violent crime. An understanding of these discourses and constructions of violent crime will allow us to more effectively evaluate the assumptions on which these interventions are based and thus improve the interventions themselves.

Table of Contents

Cover Page	i
Declaration	ii
Acknowledgements	iii
Abstract	iv
Table of Contents	v
1. INTRODUCTION	1
2. LITERATURE REVIEW	4
2.1 Defining and conceptualising violence	4
2.2 Popular theories of violence	11
2.3 Government policies for tackling crime	17
2.4 Policing the problem	20
2.5 ‘What the stats tell us’: trends in contact crimes	22
2.6 Media constructions of violent crime	27
2.7 Victimisation	37
2.8 Crime discourse as ideology	39
2.9 Conclusion	41
3. METHODOLOGY	43
3.1 Section 1 – Methodological framework	43
3.1.1 Social Constructionism	43
3.1.2 Discourse Analysis	45
3.1.3 Interviewing	47
3.2 Section 2 – Research Process	49
3.2.1 Overview of the research procedure	50
3.2.2 Research Participants	50
3.2.3 Data Collection	54
3.2.4 Data Analysis: Discourse Analysis	56
3.2.5 Validation of the Research Findings	57
3.2.6 Ethics	58
3.2.7 Reflexivity	60

3.2.8 Limitations of the Study and the Methodology	64
3.2.9 Conclusion	65
4. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION	66
4.1 Introduction	66
4.2 Discussion of the Conceptual Clusters	67
4.2.1 <i>'the causes of violent crime'</i>	67
4.2.2 <i>'the effects of violent crime'</i>	79
4.2.3 <i>'prevention and deterrence'</i>	90
4.2.4 <i>'the victims of violent crime'</i>	105
4.2.5 <i>'responsibility'</i>	113
4.2.6 <i>'the perpetrators of violent crime'</i>	123
4.2.7 <i>'the good versus the bad criminal'</i>	137
4.3 Reflection	143
5. CONCLUSION	145
6. FINAL REFLECTION	154
7. RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH	158
8. REFERENCES	159
9. APPENDICES	171
9.2 Appendix 1 – Interview Schedule	171
9.2 Appendix 2 – Letter of Informed Consent	171.

1. INTRODUCTION

Much has been written about violent crime in South Africa and there is a great deal of research which takes criminal violence as its topic. These studies usually tend to seek the causes of violence crime and how to prevent it, or the effects of criminal violence on the victims and society, or they examine the historical trajectory of violence and crime in South Africa. This study is an attempt to go beyond such studies and conventional research methodology and conceptualisations of violent crime, to examine instead how the discourses that people use to construct violent crime influences the way in which violent crime is understood and experienced by South Africans.

The social constructionist framework I employ in this study informs both the ontological and epistemological aspects of the study. According to social constructionism, an individual's 'reality' is not an objective element but a social, inter-subjective element that is constructed using the cultural resources or claims about reality that an individual is exposed to (Brownstein, 2000). As Burr posits, "social constructionism insists that we take a critical stance towards our taken-for-granted ways of understanding the world" (Burr, 1995, p 3). As such, I do not attempt to seek a determinate definition of violence but rather to explore how violent crime is currently experienced, understood and spoken about in South Africa at the moment. As Brownstein (2000) asserts, this understanding is constructed using the cultural resources that an individual is exposed to.

Social constructionism holds that people do not discover knowledge about the world so much as they construct it, and that this construction takes place within a conceptual framework through which the world is described and explained (Schwandt, 2001). In this study I seek to explore how discourses of criminal violence are used as part of the conceptual framework that people use to construct their understanding of criminal violence and the effects of this. Potter and Wetherell (1987) contend that people actively participate in the process of construction, putting together a version of an event, object or person out of the linguistic resources available to them. These linguistic resources and the way in which they are used in conversation serve particular functions for the speaker (Potter and Wetherell, 1987). In accordance with this argument I seek to examine the possible motivations that people may have for using particular discourses in specific ways, and the type of presentation of criminal violence that they achieve through the use of these discourses.

In keeping with this theoretical framework, I acknowledge that there are many resources that people draw on in their understanding of criminal violence, and that they choose the discourses that they use in constructing these understandings. (Burr, 1995). Social constructionism highlights the importance of language in constructing reality (Terre Blanche & Durrheim, 1999) and as such I have chosen to use discourse analysis as a methodology that will allow me to analyse the role of language in shaping people's experience of violent crime. My motivation for using discourse analysis as opposed to other methods of social constructionist analysis is that, as Terre Blanche explains, discourse analysis allows the researcher to show "how certain discourses are deployed to achieve particular effects in specific contexts" (Terre Blanche, 1999, p 154). As such, it will allow me to show what effects are attained through the use of particular discourses of criminal violence in specific contexts. The particular method of discourse analysis that I will use is the approach set out by Wetherell and Potter in their book *Mapping the Language of Racism* (Wetherell and Potter, 1992). Wetherell and Potter's approach to discourse analysis emphasises analysing discourse through its *use* and *practice* in different contexts. Doing this allows them to identify how the same discourses 'perform different jobs' in different contexts, and how the same discourse can be utilised for different ends (Wetherell and Potter, 1992). Following such an approach permits me to do the same with my data, which I believe allows for a better analysis of the discourses of criminal violence, as the way in which these discourses are used is important for the 'meaning' that they have for the user. The data that I used to examine the discourses that people use when talking about violent crime consist of transcripts from fifteen in-depth, semi-structured interviews in which I asked people to talk about violent crime.

Social constructionists also emphasise the cultural and historical specificity of any social phenomenon (Burr, 1995). Within this study I consider the social and historical context in which people are using these discourses and how these contexts influence and give meaning to the discourses that people use. I also consider criminal violence in South Africa within its historical and social context. Du Toit (2001) states that South Africa has a culture of violence that can be traced back to the apartheid regime, which encouraged the use of violence by both the state and those opposed to the regime. I also consider that current fears of victimization may have more to do with the more even distribution of criminal violence among socio-economic groups now than occurred during apartheid (Callebert, 2007).

There seems to be a pervasive attitude amongst South Africans that crime levels are rising and that crime is “out of control” as anyone, no matter how careful they are, can fall victim to crime (Mattes, 2006). Based on this assumption, criminal violence and risk of victimization is perceived by many to be the most pressing issue in South Africa at the moment (Callebert, 2007). Many people talk about how they fear becoming a victim of violent crime. If we consider also, that perceptions of quality of life are directly related to perceptions of safety and how much control we have over our safety, general anxiety over criminal violence has important implications for the quality of life that South Africans consider themselves to have in this country. For this reason it is important to explore discursive constructions of violent crime. However, as analysis of the data in this study shows, people’s constructions of violent crime are not merely or strictly about violent crime itself, but rather that people draw on many perceptions about life in South Africa in their construction of violent crime. These constructions also concern how we identify ourselves, other people and membership to social groups.

Despite extensive literature and research into violence and crime in South Africa there are few studies that explore discursive constructions of violent crime and the implications of such constructions for how we understand criminal violence. This study therefore addresses a ‘gap’ in the literature and research into violent crime. The results from this study will add to knowledge and research about violent crime in South Africa. Also, it is my hope that by providing us with an understanding of how we construct violent crime and the consequences that this has for our ability to be able to lower the rate of crime, that it will also provide some practical and realistic suggestions for how we should be approaching the issue of violent crime in order to be able to lower the rate of criminal violence.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Defining and conceptualising violence

Violent crime is an important issue for many South Africans, but it is not usually apparent what specific things people are referring to when they talk about violent crime or violence more broadly. While people may admit to having different views about what does and does not constitute violence, there is an assumption that we all know what violence is, and that we are all talking about the same thing when we refer to violence, unless specifically stating otherwise. Yet if you question people about what they think violence is it quickly becomes apparent that people have different conceptions of the term and the phenomenon. These differences in the lay definitions of violence are echoed within the social sciences, as a review of professional literature concerning violence shows that there exist many different definitions of violence. Different definitions are drawn on by different authors, depending on the view of violence that the author has taken, the types of violence she is concerned with, the way she has chosen to categorise forms of violence, and the discipline, paradigm or epistemological stance guiding the author's examination. It is important to consider these different definitions of violence as each one stresses particular characteristics and foregrounds certain elements of the phenomenon. In doing so, each definition also 'loses' or fails to emphasise other features and characteristics of the phenomenon. Common-sense definitions of phenomena often originate from professional literature that becomes popularised in some way, and as such it is valuable to consider these different definitions and the impact of using a particular definition on the way in which violence is understood. I briefly consider different definitions of violence used within the social sciences and the impacts of using such definitions.

The World Health Organisation approaches the topic of violence from a public health framework and defines violence as "the intentional use of physical force or power, threatened or actual, against oneself, another person, or against a group or community, that either results in or has a high likelihood of resulting in injury, death, psychological harm, maldevelopment or deprivation" (World Health Organisation, 2002, p. 4). Taking a similar public health approach the Peace Pledge Union (2000) defines violence as "the exercise of physical force

so as to inflict injury or damage to persons or property, action or conduct characterised by this” (p. 12). Each of these definitions emphasise the use of physical force, intention and effects on the victim. However, these definitions do not consider acts of violence in which non-physical force is used, or acts in which it is difficult to measure the impact on victims.

Neal (1976), who researches violence within the discipline of psychology, analyses violence from the paradigms of behaviourism and evolutionary psychology. He defines violence as “acts of destructiveness, directed toward other members of the same species” (p. 2).

Kieselhorst (1974), whose psychological examination of violence is focused on determining and measuring the incidences of, and extent of violence in South Africa says that violence, “is generally defined as the cognisant and intentional imposition of bodily pain, injury or the obliteration of life and possessions” (p. 10). These definitions both place stress on the intentionality of violence. Neal (1976) focuses on identifying who the victim is while Kieselhorst (1974) stresses the effects on the victim. In so doing, using these definitions it would be difficult to label particular acts as violence if the victim is not easily identifiable or the effects on the victim are not easily measurable.

Brownstein (2000), who specifically examines the social construction of violent crime, states that violence, “refers to something that involves social activity; the threat, attempt or use of physical force; and the intent of gaining dominance over another or others” In doing so Brownstein (2000) focuses on intention and the need for some kind of social activity to produce an act of violence. (p. 6). Keane (2004) who conducts a philosophical enquiry into the nature of violence within democracies states that violence should refer to “the exercise of physical force against someone who is thereby interrupted or disturbed or interfered with rudely or roughly or desecrated, dishonoured, profaned or defiled” (Keane, 2004, p. 34). Keane’s (2004) definition therefore foregrounds the use of physical force and effects on the victim. These definitions too would make it difficult to consider acts in which direct force is not used or acts in which it is difficult to quantify the effects on the victim, as acts of violence.

Abbinck (2000), compiled a book on the cross-cultural meanings of violence, considering the issue from an anthropological perspective. He defines the topic of enquiry by stating, “the conception of inter-personal violence... is based on the following four, minimally defining elements: the contested use of damaging physical force against other humans, with possibly

fatal consequences and with purposeful humiliation of other humans” (2000, p. xi). He narrows the topic of investigation by stating that the authors in his book only consider interpersonal forms of violence. He also stresses the effects on the victim and the use of physical force and emphasises how the use of such force is often contested. As with the definitions above however, it would be difficult to use this definition to label acts in which it is difficult to measure the effects on the victim, physical force was not used and furthermore, acts in which the use of force is not contested, as acts of violence.

Bradby (1996), also working within the discipline of psychology states that most definitions of violence are constrained by their focus on the use of force and the interpersonal nature of violence. She argues for a more inclusive definition of violence, “which includes a notion of the power which is defined as the ability to exert physical force on others, and also the ability to appropriate people’s symbols and information as well as their territory and economic reserves”(p. 5). For her, the exercise of any of these types of power may constitute a form of violence. In defining violence in this way, Bradby’s (1996) definition is able to identify many more phenomena as acts of violence. Definitions such as these however run the risk of being so inclusive as to become vague and ineffective.

From each of these examples we can see that authors define violence differently, depending on their epistemological stance, methods of enquiry and the specific purpose of their research. However, there are also many points of similarity between these definitions, and most of the definitions draw on common ideas about violence. Most of the definitions explain violence in a relational sense in that violence occurs between two or more individuals, groups or institutions. These definitions also refer to some kind of force exerted by one party on another and typify this force as a violation of the victim. The force is characterised as a violation not only because of the harm that it inflicts on the victim but also because of the intentionality of the use of force and the desire to do damage. Degenaar, (1990) describes how most definitions of violence carry both descriptive functions in that they describe what violence is, and normative functions in that they describe an action that is in some way wrong, immoral or extreme and ought not to happen. He also says that “violence discourse usually shifts on a semantic scale between the concepts of violence and violation, so that the question of legitimacy is always highly relevant” (Degenaar, 1990, p. 74). The context is therefore important in providing us with clues as to the correct use of the term violence, particularly in contested or controversial cases (Degenaar, 1990).

One of the important ways in which these definitions differ is with regard to how narrow or broad a scope distinguishes acts of violence. Definitions such as that employed by Neal (1976), have a very limited scope while definitions like Bradby's (1996), have a much more inclusive scope. This narrow or broad scope determines what kind of acts can be recognised as violence. In defining violence, some authors have proposed that violence is often divided into three different forms or levels of violence – interpersonal or direct, institutional and structural (MacGregor and Rubio, 1994). Direct or interpersonal violence is defined as violence in which an aggressor can be identified, institutional violence is characterised as violence embedded in the views and practices of institutions, while structural violence is that which occurs as a result of the philosophies and laws of societies which prevent some individuals from reaching their true potential (MacGregor and Rubio, 1994). Some authors, like Abbink, restrict the use of the term to refer to interpersonal acts while other authors, such as Braby, include phenomena that would often be recognised as institutional or structural violence. Jackson (2004) defines violence in a narrow and a broad sense. In its narrow sense he says that it refers to “the deliberate utilization of physical and/or psychological force or power as a means of causing injury or harm to human beings otherwise entitled to respect. It is often, but not necessarily, associated with aggression, and could also be described as unjust force” (p. 4). In its wider sense he calls it structural violence or institutionalised violence and says that this refers to “the injury and harm – physical and psychological – that results from exploitative or unjust social, political and economic systems” (p. 4).

Criminal violence can be thought of and defined according to any of these three forms or levels of violence. It may be difficult to identify who the victim and particularly the perpetrator is in some acts of violence, and this is particularly the case with structural violence. However, it is important to identify structural violence, as violence that is embodied in the structure of society impinges on all facets of people's lives (McKendrick and Hoffman, 1990). Also, “structural circumstances affect the attitudes, values, and behaviours of social institutions, communities, groups and individuals” (McKendrick and Hoffman, 1990, p.472 and 473).

Often when we use the term violence we think of direct or physical violence. But Galtung (1969, in Coady 2008), who is recognised as being the theorist to first articulate the concept of structural violence, describes how violence can have many, often subtle faces. He states

that structural violence is “present when human beings are influenced so that their actual somatic and mental realisations are below their potential realisations” (Galtung, 1969 in Coady 2008). For Davies (1976), structural violence is linked to the uneven distribution of resources and power. For him, structural violence occurs whenever resources and power are not equally distributed and belong to a limited group who use them not for the good of all, but for their own gain and the control of those without such resources (Davies, 1976). Structural violence may be political, repressive, economic and exploitative, it occurs when the social order directly or indirectly causes human suffering and death (Davies, 1976).

For Jackson (2004), both physical and structural violence occur in a number of modes and types. With relation to the implicated parties, violence can occur endogenously or exogenously, between individuals, groups and nations (Jackson, 2004). This gives a typology which includes: interpersonal violence (such as domestic violence), inter-group violence (such as within a political party), intra-group violence (such as feuds between families), intra-national violence (such as genocide or civil-war) and international violence (such as international war) (Jackson, 2004). Violence can also be defined in terms of the social realm in which it occurs or the motivations for violence such as political, ideological, religious, economic, racial, ethnic, sexual, gender-based, psychological, emotional or spiritual (Jackson, 2004). The term violence can be used to refer to acts as diverse as domestic abuse, child abuse, sexual abuse, criminality, piracy, war, terrorism, political dominance, revolution, resistance, crusades, holy wars, imperialism, colonialism, apartheid, ethnic cleansing and genocide (Jackson, 2004).

Degenaar (1990) explains how the definition of violence that is used depends upon the context in which it is used. I argue, in agreement with authors such as Jackson (2004), that not only are definitions of violence dependent on the contexts in which they are used, but that they are in fact products of the context in which they are used, as all definitions of violence are socially constructed. Jackson (2004) asserts that there is a growing recognition among scholars and researchers that all forms of violence are social constructions and cultural expressions, “that they involve not just individual actions devoid of context or cultural content, but are intimately tied to language, identity, ritual and symbols” (p. 12). He places importance on discourses, values and meanings in constructing concepts of violence (Jackson, 2004).

The way in which violence is constructed and understood in society has a number of important consequences. “According to Foucault, a productive relationship exists between knowledge and power at any particular time, with the result that an apparently objective phenomenon, such as violence is in fact fabricated in historically contingent ways as an outcome of this relationship” (Butchart et al, 2000, p.31). This means that powerful groups in a particular society will be able to define what constitutes violence.

Because violence is a social construct, three levels of reality influence and guide the distinction societies make between justifiable, reprehensible and illegal violence – the legal level of reality (the legal system of a society will determine what constitutes legitimate and illegitimate violence), the social level of reality (the social contexts within which violence occurs) and the individual level of reality (the meaning that a particular act of violence has for the victim and the perpetrator (Hoffman and McKendrick, 1990). For this reason incidents of violence regarded as legitimate in one society or in one cultural group in society may be judged to be illegitimate or objectionable in another (Hoffman and McKendrick, 1990).

McClintock (1963) tells us that “public opinion and public discussion on violence especially through the mass media will be both influenced by, and will have an influence upon, the processual stages at which legal labelling [of violence] occurs”. The way in which violence is defined therefore impacts directly on how violence is approached and contended with, both at a private and public level. However, the way in which violence is defined determines not only what is considered as violence but also what is not seen as violence. Incidents of violence are sometimes public but are often ‘hidden’ (McKendrick and Hoffman, 1990). This is particularly important in consideration of how ‘cultures of violence’ are created.

Psychology as a ‘science’ strives to provide definitions for phenomena that do not rely on lay or common sense definitions of that phenomena, but often scientific definitions and common sense definitions are similar, if not the same. How do we know that the common sense definition evolved from the scientific definition and not the other way around, and that scientific definitions are not just common sense definitions dressed up in psychological jargon? Yet even in asking such a question, an assumption is made that a linear relationship of influence exists between scientific and common sense definitions of phenomena. But I do not believe that the relationship is that simple. In line with a social constructionist argument, I

maintain that definitions do not float freely of that which they define, that the phenomena and definition operate independently of each other, or that a definition merely describes a phenomenon. Rather, I judge that the way in which we *describe* a phenomenon, shapes how we ‘see’, understand and experience it. And definitions themselves are social constructions that are culturally and historically bound.

So what does this mean for researching violent crime? Firstly, that how we define it is going to influence how we see it. If violent crime is commonly understood in terms of interpersonal violence - as described earlier - then this will encourage us to see certain instances of violence as violent crime, while not considering other instances of violence as violent crime. We also need to be aware that the common sense understanding of violent crime is often in terms of interpersonal violence too. We need to be careful then not to adopt common sense understandings of criminals or why violent crime occurs. As Gilligan (2000) warns, sentiments such as “he stabbed that old lady because he is evil” or “he raped that child because he is sick” or “hijackers kill people because they have no respect for human life” are value judgements. They are not explanations and do not get us any closer towards understanding the acts or the people that commit them. Interpersonal definitions of violent crime also often go hand-in-hand with rational, self-interest explanations of why violent crime occurs, which argue that people are motivated to commit violent crime, as it allows them to achieve some rational gain, and that to reduce violent crime we need to make the punishment outweigh the gain. Such an explanation encourages us to put all our resources into punishing acts of violent crime, rather than trying to prevent them from happening.

This study therefore adopts an approach advocated by Degenaar (1990) and Manganyi and du Toit (1990) and starts from the premise that violence is a complex, multifaceted and disputed concept which has to be explored at various levels and in diverse contexts.

2.2 Popular theories of violence

There are a number of theories originating in psychological and sociological theory that have become common, lay explanations for why violence and violent crime occur. Three of these are particularly pertinent to South Africa and I have called them the ‘race’ theory, the ‘sociological’ theory and the ‘pop psychology’ theory. I will discuss each of them and how they are used to explain violence and violent crime in turn.

The first theory to gain prominence in South Africa was the ‘race’ theory. The premise of this theory rests on a notion of ‘native savagery’. Deriving both from evolutionary psychology and Freudian psychoanalysis, this theory is used to argue that ‘non-white’ people have not yet reached the same levels of civilisation and modernity that European and Western societies have. As they have not yet achieved these advanced states of civilisation, they have not internalised the restrictions on violence that have been inculcated and advanced in more modern societies. ‘Non-white’ people are therefore driven by base instincts for survival and asserting dominance and an external restriction needs to be imposed to prevent them from engaging in violence. Such restrictions are provided by ‘white’ laws and rules. Advocates of this theory would argue that these restrictions need to be imposed on ‘non-whites’ because, if left to their own devices, the ‘natives’ will resort back to violence and anarchy. Theories such as this one were used to legitimate the policy and practices of apartheid in South Africa. While this theory is both racist and archaic, some South Africans still draw on a version of this theory when making the argument that crime has increased since the rule of black government, or that a black government will not be able to solve the problem of high rates of crime and violence in South Africa.

The ‘sociological’ theory used to explain violence and violent crime is premised on the idea that historical and current social factors in a particular context can explain why people are violent. To understand why violent crime occurs in South Africa it is therefore necessary to examine the historical and current social context of South Africa.

To think about criminal violence in South Africa within its historical context, it is necessary to consider the historical trajectories of violence in South Africa. Du Toit (2001), in examining the issue of violence in post-apartheid South Africa, states that South Africa has a “culture of violence”. He asserts that this culture of violence can be traced back to the harsh

policies of the apartheid system and its consequences, however, I argue – in agreement with authors such as Butchart (2000) and Burger (2007) - that this can be traced back even further to the period of colonialism. As Butchart et al state, since the 1600's violence had been methodically utilized both as a method of colonial expansion and as a weapon of African resistance (Butchart et al, 2000).

South Africa became a republic in 1961 and, until 1994, was ruled by a white minority government that implemented a policy of apartheid, in an effort to ensure that the white minority continued to govern and hold economic, legal and social power in the country. During apartheid, violence was employed by the state against people of colour, and black Africans specifically. In response to the increasing use of state violence within the apartheid regime, opposition movements began employing more violent means of resistance in an attempt to force the white government to abandon apartheid. The state responded over the years with increased militarization (Hoffman and McKendrick, 1990). Both the apartheid state and opposition movements employed ideologies which legitimated their use of violence as necessary reactions (Hoffman and McKendrick, 1990). The African National Congress presented its strategy of the 'armed struggle' as a 'people's war', legitimising it as a last-resort response to state oppression (Hoffman and McKendrick, 1990). The occurrence of politically motivated attacks against the apartheid state and those seen as its members, continued to multiply and intensify, particularly after the Sharpeville Massacre in 1960, and these attacks were predominantly deemed to be legitimate and justifiable by the majority of South Africans who saw no alternative. (Butchart et al, 2000). In the same way, and as it had for many years, the state persisted to claim a legitimate and lawful right to use violent repression (Butchart et al, 2000). In addition to the violence employed by the state in enforcing apartheid laws, and that used in opposition of the policy of apartheid, dispute over the norms and methods between advocates of the same anti-apartheid principles would often erupt in violence (Hoffman and McKendrick, 1990).

As Butchart *et al* (2000) assert, “the apartheid state thus operated in the first instance through overt political violence – conventional and counter-insurgency warfare, forced removals, assassinations, “disappearances”, detention and torture – as well as through myriad forms of structural violence” (pp. 37). Structural violence deliberately excluded black people from many areas of economic, political, educational and social life and prevented them from enacting their full capabilities and realising their full potential under the apartheid regime. As

Chikane (1986) posits, “to be born into an apartheid society is to be born on a battlefield” (p. 337) – a situation which encourages violence as a survival tactic in the midst of apartheid and security and emergency laws, beyond the fight for survival for a great many in the face of poverty, hunger, inadequate housing, divided families and a deficient education system. Beyond these forms of structural violence, the apartheid state also inflicted psychological violence on South African’s of colour by creating and using a multitude of scientific, medical, religious and common-sense discourses to justify the inequalities in the regime. Steve Biko recognised the destructive power of these discourses on the psyche’s of black people and how this demoralisation worked in the interests of the apartheid state. To counter this, his Fanon-inspired Black Consciousness sought to expand the meaning of violence to include sociological and ideological aspects, which it acknowledged as devastating the authenticity of black people and undermining their pride and dignity (Butchart et al, 2000).

Proponents of the ‘sociological’ theory would say that the above discussion shows how there are strong indications that South Africa’s current high violence levels can be traced back to the apartheid era (Marsh, 1999). The ways in which violence and disorder were systematically used, have made violence such a normal reaction to situations of conflict or difficulty that it has become etched into the structures of South African society (Shubane, 2001, p. 198). As Shaw (2002) posits, “thus, the burden of the past weighs heavy” (p. 59). They would also argue that while political violence is no longer seen to be a major problem in South African society, criminal violence is now seen to constitute our main problem, and question whether perhaps criminal violence is not a problem of a new form of violence, but rather the new expression of an old problem of violence in South Africa.

It is not only this culture and legacy of violence that South Africa inherited from the apartheid era. Shubane, (2001) argues that in order for states to enforce laws regarding the prohibition of criminal behaviour they need to develop the capacity to enforce these laws. He states that this capacity is produced by striking a balance between coercion and persuasion. He explains that “in both authoritarian and newly democratising societies, the fine balance between the coercion and persuasion couplet collapses, leading to a loss of state capacity” (Shubane, 2001, p.196). As shifts to democracy have typically transpired in developing countries where the capacity of the state was already commonly dwindling, this increases the effects of attrition (Shubane, 2001). This means that transitional states usually start the process of change with an eroded capacity and a legacy in which compliance with state laws

and rules has not been internalised by many of its citizens (Shubane, 2001). If we consider this in terms of Foucault's descriptions of sovereign power (power imposed on people by a group in authority, which is wielded coercively through the threat of or use of violence) and disciplinary power (the internalisation of bodies of knowledge that dictate the actions of individuals through ideas of right and wrong, moral and immoral, legal and illegal and healthy and abnormal), we can see how states that are moving from authoritarian regimes to democratic ones are in a kind of limbo between sovereign power and disciplinary power (Butchart, Hamber, Seedat and Terre Blanche, 1998; Shubane, 2001). The country's citizens are no longer being coercively controlled through the use of state power but neither have they fully accepted and internalised disciplinary power (Shubane, 2001). If we think of South Africa as occupying this no-man's-land between state control and 'self-control' it is easy to see why crime and violence might result, particularly in a country where crime was, and is still used as a means of survival by many people (Butchart et al, 1998).

For proponents of the 'sociological' theory, other than the historical, there are political, social, ideological, economic and environmental factors that contribute to violence and crime in South Africa. For them, South Africa's 'culture of violence' is not merely about our violent history but also the way in which violence is used to solve problems and accomplish goals in contemporary South Africa. Hoffman and McKendrick (1990) have also pointed out that there are many ways in which violence is embedded in our society and used legitimately and often in ways that are not even identified as violence, such as in national defence (war), sport and child rearing practises (Hoffman and McKendrick, 1990). For Jackson (2004) cultures of violence are not only established through the tangible and observable incidents and behaviour of people in a society but also through other aspects of a society (Jackson, 2004). He says that violence is embedded in many facets of daily life, from the reality of war or crime, to politics, religion, entertainment, metaphor, ritual, history, myths, legends and commemorative holidays. "It is not surprising then, that if our politics, religion, entertainment and cultures are all infused with violence, that our very language would be similarly characterised by the unconscious acceptance of violence" (Jackson, 2004, p.2). From the political metaphors of wars on crime to our everyday language of 'fire fighters' and 'character assassinations', we speak the language of violence virtually every day (I recognise that I can only make this claim with regard to English and cannot make the same suppositions of the other ten official languages in South Africa). In this way our language can reify and discursively construct cultures of violence (Jackson, 2004).

Added to this we still have huge social inequalities in our society. Gil (1986) “sees violence in human relations as rooted in institutionalised inequalities of statuses, rights, and power between the sexes, and among individuals, ages, classes, races and peoples”. While we have a new, democratic government that is supposedly built on the ideals enshrined in the constitution and the philosophy of equality, in some ways the lines that divided our society remain firmly entrenched. Steinberg (2001) notes that in the 1980’s township youths erected barricades and threw stones at white policemen, today, many of these former apartheid policemen are employed in the private sector patrolling middle class neighbourhoods. “In a sense, the fault-lines of the 1980’s have been displaced, rather than erased” (Steinberg, 2001, p. 5). This is particularly evident when we consider that there are many rural and informal settlements which still do not have even a single state institution, let alone a police station (Steinberg, 2001).

The political transition also created considerable material expectations, many of which were (and still are) essentially beyond the immediate distribution capability of the new government and this has generated frustrated expectations (Department of Correctional Services, 2005). The extremely elevated, and frequently unrealised, hopes and expectations associated with transition have contributed to the validation of crime (Department for Safety and Security, 1996). As Shaw (2002) argues, “no amount of political rhetoric about building a new democratic society (except perhaps in the initial stage of collective enthusiasm) matches the economic reality of unequal access to the new opportunities for wealth” (p. 60). The historic marginalisation of young people in South Africa, combined with the protracted growth in the job market, has contributed to the establishment of a huge group of ‘at-risk’ youth (Department of Correctional Services, 2005). Altbeker (2007) argues that violence and criminality itself shapes the environment in which this ‘at-risk’ group make decisions about how to behave. Altering the state’s value system and healing the injuries of our history will be arduous if young black men, who grow up in surroundings conducive to criminality, are not given some claim and investment in the country’s future (Shaw, 2002). Proponents of the sociological theory suggest that factors such as these impact on an individual’s decision to engage in criminal activity and make individuals more likely to make the decision to engage in criminal activity. So while crime in South Africa may be driven by the constraints of poverty and the need to earn a living, there are many other historical and current social factors that impact on an individual’s decision to engage in violent crime (Steinberg, 2001).

Another theory that has commonly been used to explain violent crime in South Africa is a 'pop psychology' theory of abuse and abusers. This theory derives from psychoanalytic notions about the effects of trauma, violence and abuse on victims. This theory explains that people who have experienced trauma, violence and abuse as victims, are more likely to become the perpetrators of similar actions in the future. South Africa experiences high rates of crime, violence and intra-familial abuse. As such, employing this theory it is easy to imagine how many of the thousands of victims of such incidents could become perpetrators, effectively not only perpetuating violence but also continually increasing the number of people that engage in violence.

However, for many advocates of this theory, it is not only these obvious and easily identified forms of violence that may produce perpetrators but also far subtler and insidious forms of violence. As discussed above, Hoffman and McKendrick (1990) have detailed the many ways in which violence is embedded in our society and used legitimately and often in ways that are not even identified as violence. They note that violence used in child rearing practices is particularly influential as the family is the principal human environment for most individuals and as such can facilitate the dissemination and continuation of forms of violence, both within and outside of the family (Hoffman and McKendrick, 1990). Similarly, the influence of violence doled out in the shape of aggressive discipline and punishment encountered in the classroom, small-scale societies, or in other similar social structures, such as institutions of care, or punitive institutions like detention centres or prisons, propagates the use of violence as a method of conflict-resolution from one generation to the next (Hoffman and McKendrick, 1990, p. 30). "This describes the violence in – and of – everyday life" (Butchart et al, 2000, p. 45). McKendrick and Hoffman (1990) argue that people learn to be violent, they learn violence through being victims and by observing violent behaviour and attitudes that are not penalised or are positively affirmed. The daily incidence of observable violence has inured many South Africans to it, so that they accept it as an ordinary, normal and legitimate solution to conflict (McKendrick and Hoffman, 1990). This is particularly worrying when we consider that research has shown that the use of violence incites counter-violence (McKendrick and Hoffman, 1990).

In South Africa we find that all three of these theories are commonly drawn on to explain why crime and violence occur. However, the 'sociological' theory is particularly common

and continually perpetuated in post-apartheid South Africa. This is the theory drawn on by many South African citizens and the official approach adopted by the government. While there is no definitive explanation of why this theory particularly has become so widespread, it is possible that this is such a popular theory as it can be used to redirect blame elsewhere. The government can use it to redirect blame on the apartheid regime, saying that it is the legacy of our history of violence that is to blame for crime and violence today. On the other hand, anyone associated with the previous regime can use it to redirect blame on the government saying that it is not supplying people with basic needs, which causes people to resort to crime. This theory is also popular because it directly refutes the racist ‘native savagery’ theory which is an extremely, politically important task. The detrimental effect of using such a theory to explain why violent crime occurs is that it makes it very difficult to discuss non-socioeconomic factors that may impact on levels of criminal violence in South Africa without being ‘pigeon-holed’ as racist.

2.4 Government policies for tackling crime

The post-1994 democratic government has applied an approach to safety and security which is markedly different from that employed by the apartheid government. As Shubane (2000) points out, there were very few police stations that existed in ‘non-white’ areas and Bantustans, eighty percent of policing facilities were concentrated in the suburbs. Those that did exist in ‘non-white’ areas were more concerned with monitoring anti-apartheid resistance movements and preventing the actions of resistance movements - such as meetings, rallies and marches - than with the safety of the members of the community in which they were situated (Steinberg, 2008). This echoed the broader philosophy of safety and security which - while it attended to crime matters in which white people were victims - was far more concerned with the “swart gevaar” (black threat) and “rooi gevaar” (communist threat). As Altbeker posits, criminality was seen as a menace which was inseparable from the fundamental culture of resistance (Altbeker, 2007).

When the African National Congress won the government with a two thirds majority vote in 1994 it inherited considerable social problems, one of these being high levels of crime. It is not possible to do an exact comparison of levels of crime during and after apartheid as many of the statistics that are currently available regarding levels of crime were not produced

during apartheid. Even if we were to compare those statistics that are available, we would not arrive at an accurate comparison of crime then and now because of the under-reporting of crime that occurred during the apartheid era. The majority of the country's population were regarded and treated as second class citizens by those in power, leading to a general mistrust of the law enforcement agencies, and as a result people were reluctant to report incidents of crime to the police. As Dixon (2004) posits, "the overriding priority given to defending the regime and underwriting the security of the white minority skewed police resources and left the black majority with little or no reason to report crime to an organisation they neither trusted nor believed would do anything to help them" (p. xx).

To tackle the high levels of crime in the country the new government needed a national policy to inform crime prevention policy and efforts. The National Crime Prevention Strategy (NCPS) was launched in May 1996 as a holistic approach to lowering crime levels (Newham, 2005). It was an initiative by the government to shift away from a policy of 'crime control', towards a philosophy of 'crime prevention' (Marsh, 1999). Based on global research and experience, the NCPS comprised a policy that promoted a developmental approach to crime prevention (Newham, 2005). This necessitated that crime be viewed as a wider social challenge rather than solely a security one (Newham, 2005). The 'crime prevention' approach advocated by the NCPS is based on an understanding that the police and criminal justice system cannot deal with many of the economic, social and environmental causes of crime such as dramatic inequality, high levels of unemployment and poverty, unstable families, high rates of alcohol abuse, inadequate education and cultures of interpersonal and group violence (Newham, 2005). Another way in which this approach differed from those that had previously been employed is that NCPS advocates that prevention endeavours need to take cognizance of fear of crime as well as of actual crime levels (Newham, 2005).

A year after being launched the National Crime Prevention Strategy was evaluated and suggestions concerning the more effective implementation of the NCPS lead to the drafting of the White Paper on Safety and Security that was launched in September 1998 (Newham, 2005). It provided more pertinent and clear directions for police policy with regard to dealing with crime (Newham, 2005). However, as Burger (2007) argues, both the NCPS and the White Paper on Safety and Security are good examples of excellent policy statements which in practice are largely ignored. The NCPS faced a number of key challenges in its

implementation such as a lack of government funding and an assumption that inter-departmental co-operation would spontaneously arise from the strategy (Rauch, 2002).

Beyond these strategic problems, by the end of 1998, public concern over crime was escalating and the demands on government to be seen to be managing the situation were intensifying (Newham, 2005). Ramphele (1991) argues that democratically elected governments have greater trouble dealing with crime and lawlessness because they are expected to be more responsive to populist pressure and criticism (Ramphele, 1991). The public frequently assumes that the departments that should be doing something about crime dwell in the criminal justice system (Newham, 2005). The issue of escalating crime levels has become something of a “political football” with opposition political parties using crime as the main agenda in their campaigns (Shaw, 2002; Newham, 2005). The propensity of political parties to use the subject to gain votes has resulted in the generation of single-factor causes and solutions to crime and violence (Newham, 2005). By 2000, the general vision of the NCPS had dissolved as the state reacted to the pressure from a crime beleaguered populace by declaring ‘war on crime’ (Newham, 2005). This resulted in government’s fundamental focus and resources being directed to the criminal justice system and the police (Newham, 2005). Essential long-term interventions were neglected and preference was given to short-term deliverables (Newham, 2005). The effect of this was that aspects of the NCPS which were seen as ‘soft’ developmental approaches to crime were either substantially overlooked or were adapted to suit the hard-hitting enforcement programme (Rauch, 2002). From 2000, the government has concentrated most of its power and resources on improving the criminal justice system and increasing law enforcement (Newham, 2005).

Brantingham and Faust (1976) developed a typology of crime prevention that distinguishes between primary, secondary and tertiary approaches. The primary approach focuses on changing the environmental factors that may lead to crime such as installing car tracking devices, burglar proofing properties, improving street lighting, installing closed circuit television and urban renewal. Secondary approaches concern implementing programmes aimed at groups identified as at risk of becoming either offenders or victims. Tertiary approaches concern rehabilitating those who have already been convicted of a crime to prevent re-engagement in crime. In South Africa, our high walls, barbed wire, private security companies and gated communities are evidence that we are doing a lot by way of the

primary approach. However, Brantingham and Faust (1976) emphasise that all three approaches need to be implemented to successfully lower rates of crime.

The common response of many countries to address crime problems and public alarm over perceived rising levels of crime is to increase spending on the institutions of criminal justice (Newham, 2005). Evidence of this in South Africa is the implementation of stricter bail laws in March 2008, new sentencing legislation which radically increased the time that those convicted of serious criminality would spend in prison, and what has commonly become known as Police General Bheki Cele's 'shoot to kill' policy (Altbeker, 2007). Shortly after being appointed as South Africa's national police commissioner, Bheki Cele told MP's that legislation should be amended so that police officers would not be held independently accountable for killing suspects perpetrating acts of violence (Newham, 2005). This was done to strengthen the hand of the police in dealing with violent criminals (Newham, 2005). However, comparative studies show that even the best resourced and proficient criminal justice systems fail to solve most crimes and catch most offenders (Newham, 2005). Criminal justice systems are necessary, however they are not enough to deal with the underlying features that contribute to crime in any given society (Newham, 2005). As Labuschagne points out, "there is no doubt that a properly functioning [criminal justice] system will help, but the real solution lies in the hands of our citizens. Crime, it must be remembered, is primarily a social problem" (Labuschagne quoted in Marsh, 1999, p. 188).

2.5 Policing the problem

The post-1994 government's approach to safety and security has meant that policing has undergone many changes too, key among these were a stress on community policing, demilitarising the police, changing the unique culture of the police, enhancing trust between the police and communities, and promoting police legitimacy (Shubane, 2001; Altbeker, 2005; Burger, 2007). In the National Crime Prevention Strategy there is also recognition that rather than being a police problem, crime is a social and economic problem in need of non-police interventions (Burger, 2007). While policing had become pluralised (shared among police, private security, car guards, neighbourhood watches and CCTV) conventional policing continues to be pivotal to the contemporary state (Faull, 2009). Conventional policing has, of recently, been characterised by a return to militarised police ranks and a

commanding, rather than managing of police as a force against criminals instead of a service for citizens (Goldstone, 2010). It is likely that this was instigated as a reaction to continued public pressure on the police to solve the crime problem in South Africa as this conversion to militarised ranks, which while reminiscent of policing during apartheid, has been couched in the popular public rhetoric of ‘showing criminals no mercy’. President Jacob Zuma made this apparent when ringing in the change by announcing that the “time for nursing criminals is over” (Goldstone, 2010).

Policing during apartheid was characterised by a law and order dogma, justified by the ‘native savagery’ theory of why violence occurs. Policing since the end of apartheid had, until very recently, embodied a more liberal approach to policing and crime prevention and a recognition that the causes of crime needed to be addressed to prevent crime. President Zuma’s recent decision to revert back to militarised ranks within the police seems indicative of a return to a law and order ideology of policing. This is significant as previously, this law and order ideology was associated with apartheid and was explained by government to be perpetuated only by white racists who still drew on some version of the ‘savage native’ theory to justify such an approach to policing. However, in responding to criticism from the public over the way in which it deals with crime, the black government is advocating a return to law and order policing, showing that such an ideology is not only perpetrated by white racists.

The government’s current focus on law enforcement in the ‘war on crime’ has meant that police are seen as responsible for crime prevention and the term ‘crime prevention’ has become synonymous with policing (Newham, 2005). Police Commissioner, Mr Nathi Mthethwa, said in a statement following the release of the 2009 crime statistics that government has focused attention on revamping the Criminal Justice System (Department of Police, 2009). Similarly, in his last State of the Nation address President Jacob Zuma said that the government aimed to increase the number of police officers by ten percent in the next three years (Presidency, 2010). But, studies do not support the widespread belief that having a larger police force or shorter response times considerably lessens crime and often leads only to a diffusion of crime, rather than a reduction in crime (Emmett, 2000). Steinberg (2005), argues that the public’s perception of the police and policing is unrealistic as there are certain things that the police can do, while many of the things that are needed for crime prevention the police cannot do. In fact, other than serving as a deterrence, there is very little that the

police can do in terms of crime prevention as the police typically can only respond to a crime that has already been committed (Steinberg, 2005). This is especially true in the case of violence that occurs in the home or between people that know each other (Shaw, 2002). The National Institute of Justice report proposes that crime prevention is a result of a range of institutional forces, a large number of which are unofficial (Sherman, 1996). Families, schools, religious organisations, communities and labour markets all exercise informal social pressures to conform to the law that are not based on threat of punishment (Sherman, 1996). This once again emphasises that a focus on the criminal justice system and policing alone are not adequate to reduce levels of crime.

2.6 ‘What the stats tell us’: trends in contact crimes

At this point an attempt can be made to judge, from statistical information, the present situation in South Africa, with regard to crimes of violence. In this section I consider the ‘actual’ crime situation by examining the latest statistics on crime that were released by the police in 2009. As my focus in this study is on violent crime I will be concentrating on those statistics that are provided for what has been termed contact crime as it is this form of crime that is generally associated with violence. Contact crimes, which are defined as crimes against the person, include murder, attempted murder, all sexual crimes, assault with intent to inflict grievous bodily harm, robbery with aggravating circumstances (which includes car and truck hijackings, robbery of business premises, robbery at residential premises and robbery of cash-in-transit) and common robbery (Lebone, 2009). These statistics were released by the police and were compiled in the safety and security chapter of the South African Survey 2008/2009 (Lebone, 2009).

Table 1 shows the national crime figures of contact crime for the financial year 1994/95 and 2008/09, the percentage change in the number of reported cases, and whether there has been an increase or a decrease in the number of reported cases.

Table 1			
National crime figures 1994/95 and 2008/09 (actual numbers)			
Type of Crime	1994/95	2008/09	Change
Murder	25 965	18 148	-30.1%
Attempted Murder	30 815	18 298	-40.6%
All Sexual Crimes	48 760	70 514	44.6%
Assault GBH	215 671	203 777	-5.5%
Common Assault	200 248	192 838	-3.7%
Aggravated Robbery	84 785	121 392	43.2%
Common Robbery	32 659	59 232	81.4%

Table 2 shows the national crime figures of contact crime reported for the financial year 2007/08 and 2008/09, the percentage change in the number of reported cases and whether there has been an increase or a decrease in the number of reported cases.

Table 2			
National crime figures 2007/08 and 2008/09 (actual numbers)			
Type of crime	2007/08	2008/09	Change
Murder	18 487	18 148	-1.8%
Attempted Murder	18 795	18 298	-2.6%
All Sexual Crimes	42 953	70 514	64.2%
Assault GBH	210 104	203 777	-3.0%
Common Assault	198 049	192 838	-2.6%
Aggravated Robbery	118 312	121 392	2.6%
Common Robbery	64 985	59 232	-8.9%

In these figures we can see that the categories of all sexual crimes, aggravated robbery and common robbery have seen increased rates since 1994, while the categories of murder, attempted murder, assault with intent to inflict grievous bodily harm and common assault have shown decreases since 1994. We see these trends continued when we compare the rates between the 2007/08 and 2008/09 financial year, with the exception of the category of common robbery, which decreased in this period.

There are four areas that have seen decreases over the last year, these include murder and attempted murder, common assault and assault with intent to do grievous bodily harm, attacks on automatic teller machines and street robberies and common robberies (Lebone, 2009). Murder has been decreasing steadily since 1994. The rate has decreased by 44.2% since 1994 and by 3.4% between 2008 and 2009 (Lebone, 2009).

However, the rate of aggravated robbery has increased by 14.1% since 1994 and by 0.8% between 2008 and 2009 (Lebone, 2009). The actual numbers of aggravated robbery increased by 43.2% since 1994 and 2.6% between 2008 and 2009 (Lebone, 2009). Sexual crimes is an area in which there has been a big increase in the number of recorded incidents. The rate has increased by 15.4% since 1994 and by 8.8% between 2008 and 2009 (Lebone, 2009).

However, the South African Police Service notes that there have been changes in the definitions of sexual crime (Lebone, 2009). This category used to be called rape and indecent assault until the amendment of the Sexual Offences and Related Matters Act in 2007 (Lebone, 2009). Under the new Sexual Offences Act a number of new categories of crime have been included as sexual offences (Lebone, 2009). Also, this category may have seen an increase in reporting rates due to increased publicity around sexual crimes, increased sympathy for victims, and better legal services made available for victims in recent years. As a result, comparisons with earlier information regarding sexual crimes may not be valid. The percentage of the total number of serious crimes increased by 0.7% from 1994 but the percentage rate per 100 000 of the population decreased by 18.5% since 1994 (Lebone, 2009).

We can also look at the trends in the rates of contact crime by examining the statistics collected by the National Victims of Crime Survey (NVCS) (National Victims of Crime Survey, 2003). The NVCS was developed for a number of reasons, among these to complement the statistics compiled by the South African Police Service, to reflect those crimes that are not reported to the police, to capture not only victimisation rates but also the victims' experiences of victimisation, as well as the public's perceptions of crime (National Victims of Crime Survey, 2003). The NVCS was carried out in South Africa in 1998, 2003 and 2007 (Pharoah, 2008). Together, the three surveys provide an indication of both changing victimisation levels and perceptions of crime and the criminal justice system over the last decade (Pharoah, 2008). Key trends suggested by the data include a stabilisation in the rates

of most types of crime with overall crime down by 12% since 1998 and 4% since 2003 (Pharoah, 2008).

Like the South African Police Service's statistics, the NCVS documented notable decreases in housebreaking but increases in robbery and car theft, with housebreaking remaining the most common crime (Pharoah, 2008). Reporting rates have generally increased, in some cases exponentially, perhaps suggesting greater confidence in the police (Pharoah, 2008). Despite the apparent stabilisation of victimisation levels, the majority of South Africans feel that crime has increased since 1998 (Pharoah, 2008). Feelings of safety now are lower than in 1998, and are influenced by factors such as race, gender, and where in South Africa one lives (Pharoah, 2008). South Africans are most worried about murder, burglary and assault, with burglary and assault believed to be amongst the most common types of crimes (Pharoah, 2008). While South Africans believe that crime is primarily committed by people living in their area, there is a growing perception that crime is also committed by outsiders (Pharoah, 2008). Despite an upward trend in the number of people taking measures to protect themselves from crime, the majority of South Africans have not taken steps to protect themselves (Pharoah, 2008). South Africans increasingly feel that government should prioritise spending on prisons and courts to address crime and have become more punitive in their attitudes towards crime and criminals (Pharoah, 2008).

Because of their violent and interpersonal nature, government views the categories of all sexual crimes, robbery with aggravating circumstances, and common robbery crimes as disproportionately accountable for residents' sense of and fear of crime, and has prioritised them (Faull, 2009). Author and crime analyst Antoinette Louw agrees with this statement, saying that it is likely that a small percentage of violent crime is having a big impact on perceptions (Louw, 2007). Anxiety about crime is concentrated on violent crime because it is much more emotionally traumatic than simple property crime. In some instances it can evoke a response of Post Traumatic Stress Disorder in the victim through the actual or threatened use of harm or killing (American Psychiatric Association, 1994; National Institute of Mental Health, 2008). However, according to a statement made by the Police Minister, Mr Nathi Mthethwa, after the release of the 2009 crime statistics, contact crime currently only accounts for 32.7% of all crime (Department of Police, 2009). And while contact crimes have decreased, the trend that perpetrators and victims were known to each other has increased (National Victims of Crime Survey, 2003).

These statistics provide us with a view of how many contact crimes have occurred during the 2007/2008 financial year, whether particular categories of contact crime have seen increases or decreases, as well as the public's perceptions about crime. We can also take a five or ten year view of the statistics for each category to determine trends and whether these categories are increasing or decreasing over the long-term. However, at this point I must caution against solely relying on statistics such as these to give us a complete and comprehensive view of the violent crime situation in South Africa. The collecting of data and production of statistics depends on our methods of recording and analysing data. Selosse (1974) further highlights that we must be cognisant of a number of factors which may have a significant effect on the statistical recording of violent crime, such as modification to police practice, the flexible nature of police charges, the diverse ways in which crimes may be identified and grouped together, and differences in the perception of public attitudes which influence social responses to crime (p. 18). Of course we should also keep in mind that many people might not report their experience of crime to the police for various reasons leading to under-reporting (NVCS, 2003). Also, political pressure to reduce crime levels may impact on police recording practice (NCVS, 2003).

Once again, following a social constructionist line of argument we need to consider that these statistics are constructed and that their construction depends on how violent crime is defined. The very idea that we can rely on statistics to provide us with an accurate, truthful and unbiased account of the violent crime situation is itself a socially constructed idea which relies on discourses which legitimise and privilege particular types of research and forms of information over others (for example statistics gathered by police may be considered to provide a more accurate presentation of violent crime in South Africa than an in-depth case study might). We also need to consider that although statistics are commonly thought to present unbiased views of a phenomenon, data is collected by particular parties who have particular interests in the presentation of such data. As criminologist Dr Irma Labuschagne (quoted in Marsh, 1999) amusingly cautions us "crime statistics are a lot like the Bible: you can use them in whichever way you want to" (p. 179).

Bearing such concerns in mind, if we use the statistics released by the police in 2009 and those compiled by the NCVS, we can see that certain categories of violent crime, while still high, are decreasing. However, even when the signs are positive and the stats show that crime

(or certain categories of crime are decreasing), South Africans still do not feel any safer (Du Plessis and Louw, 2005). Government insistence that the stats are improving, instead of reassuring the public, has fuelled scepticism about government honesty (Altbeker, 2007). While statistics show that there has been an overall decrease in the rates of violent crime, The National Victims of Crime Survey carried out in 2007 shows that perceptions of crime are getting worse and that perceptions of not being safe are prevalent amongst South Africans (National Victims of Crime Survey, 2007). In spite of the statistical decline in overall violent crime, South Africans commonly feel that the violence utilised by many is gratuitous and citizens feel ever more vulnerable and defenceless (Faull, 2009). This is evidenced not only by measures such as the National Crime Victimization Survey, but also if we were to examine the number of private security operations that are currently employed. There has been a percentage increase of 10.4% in the number of registered security businesses between 1997 and 2007 (Lebone, 2009). The number of active security businesses in 2007 was 4898 (Lebone, 2009). This shows that people feel the need to take extra and private security measures to avoid becoming a victim of crime and that they feel that the government and the police cannot protect them from crime.

2.6 Media constructions of violent crime

Consistent with a social constructionist framework there are many factors that will influence an individual's perceptions of criminal violence, such as past experience of victimisation, particular cultural understandings of criminal violence, or particular ideologies that an individual adopts. However, given the proliferation of the media - in that many people are exposed to the media in a variety of forms and contexts on a daily basis – media presentations will come to have an influence not only on the ways in which an individual comes to perceive criminal violence but also the way in which they experience their own victimization, should they become a victim of violent crime. This influence happens both in the absence of other factors (such as past experiences of victimisation) or in conjunction with other factors that impact on an individual's perceptions of criminal violence. In this section I consider the influence that the media, and particularly the news media, may have on South Africans' constructions of violent crime.

The form of violence that the media tends to use to define criminal violence is usually that of direct or interpersonal violence, as the definition of criminal violence that the media commonly employs is one which explains criminal violence as an act in which one person illegitimately attempts to gain power over another (Brownstein, 2000). Such a definition of criminal violence excludes institutional and structural forms of violence in that it emphasises the individual, thereby excluding violence that is committed by institutions or social structures. It also emphasises the illegitimacy of violence, thereby excluding violence that may be committed legitimately, such as by the state.

The way in which violence and criminal violence are defined is inherently dependent on the context in which such a definition is made (Stanko, 2005). Considering that the media's main purpose is to make a profit, they will therefore employ a definition of criminal violence that will allow them to achieve this motive (Jewkes, 2004). As Jewkes (2004) posits, the definition of criminal violence that is used by the media is one that makes it easy to report, will catch and hold the attention of readers, and is one that is easily understood by readers. Defining criminal violence in terms of interpersonal violence allows for this.

This account of criminal violence presented by the media becomes one way in which to think about, understand and explain violent crime. Using the concept of a dominant ideology found in Marxist theory, we can consider the way in which definitions made from positions of greater social power, may become more accepted and applied than definitions made from positions of less power or powerlessness. This is because those definitions made from positions of greater social power have more resources to draw on to promote such definitions (Jewkes, 2004). The media's definition of criminal violence may be widely accepted and applied by individuals because it is made from a position of power, because the media are so widespread and permeating. By providing us with a certain definition of criminal violence, made from this position of power, the media provides us with a framework through which to understand criminal violence (Brownstein, 2000).

Jewkes claims that the media present a "version of reality" rather than reality itself (Jewkes, 2004). This version is determined by a number of factors that can be thought of as the resources that a journalist can draw on when presenting a story (Jones, 2005). The most important factors are the production processes of news production, the structural determinants

of newsmaking and the assumptions that the media make about their audience (Jewkes, 2004).

As many of the media are private enterprises, they have to make a profit in order to continue operating. The ways in which the media present stories of criminal violence will therefore be largely determined by practical and financial reasons that have a direct bearing on this money-making motive (Jewkes, 2004). In order to be able to 'sell themselves' the media draw on their assumptions of their audience in order to present stories that are newsworthy or that they believe their audience will be interested in, motivating them to 'consume' that media (Kleinmann, Pfeiffer and Windzio, 2005).

With regard to the structural determinants of newsmaking, Jewkes refers to newsvalues (Jewkes, 2004). These newsvalues are determined by the assumptions that the media make about their audience (Jewkes, 2004). These newsvalues are used to assess not only how newsworthy a story is but also the way in which stories will be presented (Jewkes, 2004). Jewkes (2004) lists a number of newsvalues that are used to determine how newsworthy a story is. Those that are particularly pertinent when considering why the media present the stories about criminal violence that they do, and in the way that they do, are violence, simplification and conservative ideology, and political diversion. If we consider that one of these newsvalues is violence, this means that all stories about criminal violence are already potentially newsworthy (Jewkes, 2004). This potentially newsworthy story is then assessed using the other newsvalues to determine the newsworthiness of a story about criminal violence and how that story will be presented (Jewkes, 2004). A newsvalue that is particularly important is simplification because it creates a 'formula' for reporting on criminal violence – that contains an innocent victim and perpetrator that is distinctly different from the audience (Jewkes, 2004). This also has a bearing on the conservative ideology and political diversion newsvalue.

There are several studies that have been conducted that examine the media's influence on public perceptions of crime. I have outlined two such studies here. The first of these is a study that was conducted by Lowry et al (2006). This was a longitudinal analysis of network television in America that sought to examine the extent of the influence of network television's portrayal of crime on the American public's perceptions of crime. Lowry et al noticed that in 1994 there was a sharp increase in the number of Americans who thought that

crime was the most important problem facing their country. However, when they compared this to actual increases in the rate of crime, they found that there was only a slight increase in the rate of crime and that the rise in the perception of the threat of crime as the most important problem was disproportionate to actual increases in the rate of crime, but was in line with increases in the amount of crime stories being presented on network television news. Based upon data collected from 1978 through 1998 of crime rates and the amount of airtime devoted to stories of crime on network television news they determine that the “big scare” of the threat of crime as the most important problem facing America was more a network television scare than a scare based on actual levels of crime. As Hoffman and McKendrick (1990) point out an increase in certain forms of crime cannot be assumed purely because of its increased exposure in the media.

Another study that examines the effects of media presentations on public perceptions of crime is detailed in Du Plessis’s (2003) article describing a study that was part of an international news study conducted in 10 countries, one of them South Africa. In this study, the way in which crime as a topic was dealt with in selected news media was explored and focus groups were used to establish how people perceive crime reporting. The results of this study indicated that the focus group participants felt it necessary to do surveillance of their environment and expected the media to fulfil this surveillance function on their behalf. With regard to crime reporting, this function of surveillance was interpreted by the media as needing to present stories which had some kind of practical application to its audience and the media selected in this study responded to this surveillance expectation by focusing on crime events in the same or surrounding communities. This study therefore suggests that the media are looked to as a source of information and surveillance on the world and as such media audiences view the news reports that are presented by the media as accurate depictions of situations in their environment and as suggestions of practical application to cope with the environment.

The current fear of victimisation present in South Africa can be thought of in terms of the moral panic model created by Cohen (Cohen, 2002 in Jewkes, 2004). A moral panic is a response to people who are perceived to threaten the integrity and welfare of a community or society (Jewkes, 2004). This response is mainly fuelled by media reactions to these people as they are fostered by heavily publicised reports of sudden increases in particular sorts of criminal violence (Best, 1999; Jewkes, 2004) As Tonry (2004) explains, this response is

disproportionate to the extent of the threat that these people actually pose. Using the model of a moral panic to understand this issue is not to suggest that criminal violence does not occur and that fear of victimisation is determined solely by media hype, but rather that its effect is to provide the public with a particular, exaggerated framework for understanding criminal violence (Jewkes, 2004). The moral panic model as traditionally conceived by Cohen has five defining features (Jewkes, 2004). Some of these features can be used to explain why the moral panic model can be used to think about this issue.

The first defining feature is that of making the ordinary extraordinary (Jewkes, 2004). Through the use of the newsvalues described above and by using exaggeration, the media might present what otherwise would have been a very ordinary event as indicative of a frightening wave of criminal violence (Jewkes, 2004). Similarly, Best (1999) refers to the use of melodrama in crime reporting to make a story more newsworthy. Melodrama is used to make stories seem more interesting but the effect of this is that it alters the audience's view of the nature of crime (Best, 1999). Best also describes how the situation can be reversed, how the extraordinary can become the ordinary, that particularly unusual incidents of criminal violence can become seen as instances of a wide-spread problem (Best, 1999).

By defining moral boundaries and creating consensus (another defining feature of the moral panic model) the media appeal to an 'imagined community' (Jewkes, 2004). This draws people together in a sense of communal outrage, making it difficult for the public to critically examine what is being presented to them. This is because doing so may be seen as 'going against' the good and moral community, particularly if members wish to view themselves as part of this community (Jewkes, 2004). It also serves to further reinforce the stigmatisation of the perpetrators in the same way that the newsvalue of simplification does. It makes it difficult to think about a particular story from a different angle or ideological position (for example what is it that caused the perpetrator to act in this way or commit this crime? Are we at all responsible for the economic and social factors that led to this act of criminal violence?). However, rather than being a case of unidirectional manipulation by the media, we readily accept such simplified presentations because by accepting them we do not have to look at the situation from other angles or ideological positions that may make us uncomfortable (such as are we responsible for the situations that led to this act of criminal violence?) (Jewkes, 2004). We are therefore not conspired against by the media but rather conspire with the media (Jewkes, 2004).

Another defining feature is the idea that moral panics occur during times of rapid social change (Jewkes, 2004). This is helpful because it explains how the media cannot generate fear from naught, but that they use existing anxieties and direct these in certain directions and focus them upon certain things. It can be argued that many anxieties exist because of massive social change that has taken place since 1994 in South Africa and that the media make use of these anxieties.

There are many reasons why the media may direct anxieties specifically towards criminal violence rather than towards other social problems that may also be important to their audience. Firstly, there are high rates of crime in South Africa so many of the anxieties already have to do with crime, it is not difficult then for the media to focus these anxieties not on crime in general but violent crime specifically. It is also easy to simplify stories of criminal violence, making them easy to report on (Jewkes, 2004). Thirdly, if reporting on criminal violence makes it seem random so that everyone is at risk, as Best (1999) claims, then the audience may feel that all stories of criminal violence are important to them as they could just as easily have been the victim in the story, or may just as easily be the victim in the next story. Lastly, anxieties related to massive social change (such as that in South Africa after 1994) may make certain sections of the population feel unsafe (Garland in Tonry, 2004). Anxieties about not feeling safe (in a number of different ways) can be very easily turned into anxieties about criminal violence, as threats to personal safety that random acts of criminal violence impose on individuals' lives, can be very easily and simply presented, and therefore very easily and simply understood by the audience (Jewkes, 2004).

I think that the moral panics model provides a useful way of conceptualising the issue as it examines how we are persuaded into collectively prioritising certain issues while our attention is drawn away from other issues (Cohen in Jewkes, 2004). It also allows us to see how increased levels of fear and intolerance create a situation in which people are not willing to consider accounts that offer different interpretations of criminal violence, especially those that may be seen to be suggesting that the problem is not as simple or as serious as it looks (Tonry, 2004). It also explains why other accounts of criminal violence, such as those presented in this review, may be met with criticism and resistance from the public.

I am not suggesting that the media in South Africa are purposefully conspiring to create a moral panic around criminal violence but that this is an unfortunate consequence of the way in which they report on criminal violence in order to attain another goal, that of getting an audience to 'consume' their news. Reporting on criminal violence in the way that the media do, however, affects the form in which information is presented to the public and therefore has implications both for individuals and at a societal level (Dowler, Fleming, and Muzzatti, 2006). Two major and immediate implications are that levels of fear among the public increase and a particular group of individuals become stigmatised (Jewkes, 2004). By increasing levels of fear and stigmatising certain groups, levels of intolerance are likely to increase, justifying calls for tougher ways to deal with perpetrators (Jewkes, 2004). These effects are documented in the deviancy amplification spiral theorised by Wilkins (1964) and outlined in Jewkes (2004). The deviancy amplification spiral describes a process whereby small occurrences of deviant behaviour are overblown in the mass media (Jewkes, 2004). The exaggeration promotes copycat acts, thus creating a mutually-reinforcing ring of deviance (Jewkes, 2004).

One of the big problems and effects of this kind of thinking about criminal violence is that it is not solving the problem as criminal violence does still occur to a large extent (Louw, 2006). Tonry explains that punishment policies in the US do not have a great impact on the level of crime there (Tonry, 2004). I think that the same can be said of South Africa as our punishments for criminal violence are also becoming increasingly punitive but this has not seemed to have any great impact on the levels of criminal violence as they are still high. Not only is it providing us with a way of thinking about criminal violence that is not helpful, but it may be preventing us from thinking about it in ways that are helpful. Another major effect of this type of presentation of criminal violence is that, as Best suggests, when our attention is drawn to particular aspects of criminal violence we overlook other aspects of it which may make us unable to accurately see the 'bigger picture' (Best, 1999). Similarly, by focusing on criminal violence, other forms of social problems that should also receive our attention may be missed or ignored.

Another important implication of this type of presentation of criminal violence is the criminalization of certain members of society, and explanations of criminal violence that position it as the result of individual pathology. Jewkes explains that because the dominant class in society holds the power to influence and control social institutions, including the

media, it is often the least powerful classes in society that are criminalized (Jewkes, 2004). In South Africa, access to social resources, particularly economic resources, is still very different among racial groups, with the white minority still having much greater access to these resources, and is therefore in many respects, still the most powerful social group in the country. As class is so intertwined with race in South Africa, this criminalization of certain people in the media's presentation of criminal violence often occurs along race lines. The consequence of this is the assumption that certain racial groups pose a much greater threat.

This is not to suggest that the media are the only or even the most important resource that we draw on in our understanding of criminal violence. In contrast with a Marxist view which sees people's ideas and understandings of the world as imposed on them by institutions and the material, economic arrangement of society, I acknowledge that this is not a simple, direct relationship. Powerful and dominating institutions and ideologies provide people with discourses that will have a major impact on the way in which people construct their understanding of things, particularly as they often have 'claims to truth' that are seldom questioned or criticized. However different and dissenting discourses are available to people and focusing on the fact that people *construct* their understandings, people choose (whether consciously or not) the discourses that they use in their understanding of things. In a similar vein, it would be naive to assume that the influence of media presentations on the public's perception of violent crime is unidirectional. As Marsh (1999) points out, "public perceptions of crime are affected by media reports and media reports are affected by public perceptions" (p. 58). Because the media present stories of violent crime in ways that will encourage an audience to 'consume' that media, by choosing not to consume that media the public has the power to change the way in which the media presents these stories.

Social constructionists highlight the part that language plays in creating and shaping objects in the world, and argue that language shapes perceptions of reality. This construction of reality is possible because language possesses meaning that we share with others to recognize, identify and comprehend objects (Terre Blanche & Durrheim, 1999). Because discourses contain shared meaning they are used when people "talk about any phenomenon." (Burman & Parker, 1993, p.1). Therefore, when we talk about criminal violence, we employ available discourses to do so. Focusing on this aspect of language as possessing *shared* meaning, I argue that another of the major sources that people draw on in their understanding of things may be what they hear from others in the course of their everyday lives. Therefore

in the course of their everyday lives, people may draw on discourses that others employ in conversations that may or may not directly concern violent crime.

Along with the moral panic model offered by Cohen (Cohen in Jewkes, 2004), Best also provides us with a useful way of understanding how perceptions of criminal violence in South Africa may be problematic. Best (1999) describes the way in which violence is often perceived as being random and explains that “when we use the expression “random violence”, we characterise the problem in particular terms: violence is patternless (it can happen to anyone); it is pointless (it happens for no reason at all); and it is becoming increasingly common” (Best, 1999, p. 10). He explains how each of these perceptions of violence is erroneous and that even a brief assessment of the most basic and common criminological data calls all three assumptions into question and shows that most violence is not patternless; nor is it pointless; nor is it rising in the uncontrollable way we envisage (Best, 1999). He states that “there are thousands of social-scientific studies, enough to fill a small library, proving that violence is patterned” (Best, 1999, p. 11). The fear of random violence means that we do not anticipate that violence is purposeful, we say that violence is senseless, that it lacks any rational motivation (Best, 1999). To label violence pointless is to discount the circumstances in which it transpires, and the meanings most violence has for the perpetrators, and, often, their victims (Best, 1999). Examining homicide rates in the USA from 1960 to 1990 he notes that while there might have been an increase in homicide rates over the 1980’s, these increases follow specific patterns and that the data do not reveal the firm, worldwide escalation in homicide risks implied in warnings about random violence and societal deterioration (Best, 1999). Similar studies that have been conducted in South Africa show that murder rates have decreased and that the risk of becoming a murder victim also follows specific patterns with young, black men being more at risk than any other social group (Shaw, 2002). As Best states, “the evidence reveals that claims of society-wide deterioration are exaggerated and overly simplistic” (Best, 1999, p. 21).

When the public perceive of criminal violence as being random several of its features are overlooked (Best, 1999). Firstly, this view does not take into account the fact that in many instances of criminal violence the perpetrator is known to the victim (Best, 1999). Secondly, it ignores the historical context of criminal violence. Another important consequence of viewing crime as random is that it provides us with an unhelpful way of viewing criminal violence, because by viewing it as patternless and senseless, it suggests that there is no point

in trying to understand what causes criminal violence (Best, 1999). As Best (1999) states, “describing crime in terms of random violence has implications for how we think about crime, about criminals and prospective criminal justice policies” (p. 27).

Best also explains how moral panics and perceptions of violence as random reinforce one another (Best, 1999). He states that particular moral panics habitually appeal to the idea of randomness and the general feeling of dread is heightened by particular fears cultivated by moral panics. Moral panics in turn heighten this sense of generalised trepidation (Best, 1999). The criminologist Jerome H. Skolnick (1994) makes a similar observation when he comments on the extreme media coverage given a few violent crimes: “The message seemed to be that random violence is everywhere and you are no longer safe – not in your suburban home, commuter train, or automobile – and the police and the courts cannot or will not help you... It is random violent crime, like a shooting in a fast-food restaurant, that is driving fear.” (pp. 34, 35). While he was talking about America this applies equally to South Africa. When crime is perceived as being random, widespread fear affects all, even those who have not been directly affected as victims.

The Police General, Nathi Mthethwa, even though admitting that most contact crimes take place among acquaintances, still describes crime in South Africa as having a “uniquely random” character (Lebone, 2009). But, if characterising crime as random violence is a misrepresentation of the crime problem, why is the term so popular? As Best (1999) argues, “the answer lies both in its rhetorical power – we fear random violence – and in how talking about random violence circumvents other, potentially awkward issues” (Best, 1999, p. 24). By implying that senseless violence is a universal, patternless hazard to the entire society as a whole, cautions about random violence avoid the possibly awkward or embarrassing matters of race and class (Best, 1999). Also, pointless crime need not be thought of as an act of frustration, rebellion, or some other understandable response to the barriers of class (Best, 1999).

2.7 Victimisation

The proliferation of gates, high walls, barbed and razor wire, burglar proofing, streets sealed off by boom gates, private security companies and security guards, are constant reminders of many South Africans' fear of victimisation (Spinks, 2001; Shaw, 2002). Evidence from National Crime Victimization surveys conducted in South Africa show that the type of crime most people are likely to fear are those related to being assaulted or robbed by a stranger (Shaw, 2002). What this means is that, as Best (1999) argues, much of what people fear about violent crime has to do with the perception that it is random and that strangers pose the biggest threat. However, research has shown time and again that people are far more likely to be victimised by someone that they know rather than by a stranger (Burger, 2010; Jaberg, 2010). This is borne out in the crime statistics released by the police in 2009 relating to contact crime (Lebone, 2009). Also, as Best discusses, violent crime is often not patternless as is suggested by the concept of random violence. Whether we examine victimisation rates for rape, robbery or assault, or whether we look at murderers, robbers, rapists or other violent criminals, the basic patterns are the same, males are both more likely to be victimised (with the exception of sexual crimes) and more likely to perpetrate violent crimes, adolescents and young adults are both more likely to be victimised and offend, and whites are less likely to be victimised or perpetrate violent crime (Best, 1999).

Dr. De Kock of the Crime Research Division of the Crime Information Management Centre, says that one of the findings of research is that blacks are disproportionately victimised, but rather than strictly being an issue of race, this trend appears to be becoming more of a class and lifestyle issue, where a greater degree of mobility increases your chances of being victimised (Marsh, 1999). Shaw posits that more recently there has been some convergence between white and black fears of crime and speculates that this may be due to the fairly quick growth of the black middle class as research has shown that over half of the country's middle-income groups feel at threat of crime (Shaw, 2002). The addition of the voice of the black middle class has meant that crime has continued to grow as a political issue for the government, rather than fade into the background as the democracy has matured (Shaw, 2002). National survey results show that very affluent South Africans report the lowest levels of anxiety about crime and insecurity, those in the middle-income group have the highest and most extreme levels of fear of crime – ranging between 53 and 60 percent against a national average of 47 percent (Shaw, 2002).

Further, Shaw (2002) isolates three important factors that apply to a considerable percentage of incidents of violent crime in South Africa, firstly, in a large number of incidents of interpersonal violence, both the victims and offenders are under the influence of alcohol, second, in a significant amount of instances, the victims and perpetrators of violent crimes are known to each other and third, firearms have drastically heightened the impact of violent crime in the country (Shaw, 2002). As discussed above, in their presentation of violent crime, the media will often overlook such factors and misrepresent certain aspects of violent crime. For example, by focusing on incidents where the victim and perpetrator are from different race groups or on incidents that have political undertones, they reinforce the view that whites are victims and blacks are perpetrators (Shaw, 2002). This is true of both international and local media, even though local media purport to be critically race conscious and should therefore be aware of the effects of such reporting (Shaw, 2002).

Taking the historical context of South Africa into account allows us to see that fear of victimisation may have more to do with the more even distribution of criminal violence among socio-economic groups now than occurred during apartheid (Spinks, 2001; Callebert, 2007). “Growing evidence suggests crime is the prime threat to confidence in the new order and the factor most likely to prompt continued emigration among a sector of the society whose mobility is high and commitment to majority rule conditional” (Shaw, 2002, p. 94). However, Marsh (1999) states that it wasn’t until the early 1990’s, when crime started to spill out of the townships and homelands, that most white South Africans became concerned about, or even identified crime as a problem. It also makes us more aware of the fact that even though criminal violence is more evenly distributed now, definite patterns in the risk of victimisation that were established historically under apartheid still exist today, in that it is the poor and marginalized that are generally most at risk of victimisation (Spinks, 2001; Callebert, 2007). Silber and Geffen (2009) also argue this point by dispelling what has become known as the ‘Huntley Thesis’ (the argument that whites are disproportionately affected by crime perpetrated by blacks, based on Brandon Huntley’s appeal for refugee status in Canada because he is a white South African). Shaw also emphasises that the costs of crime are higher for the poor because they have less resources to soften the effects (Shaw, 2002). Shaw, (2002) posits that as the causes and solutions to crime are complex, extreme focus on tough policing approaches can aggravate the situation by making the socially disadvantaged the main focus of the police, rises in crime which are perceived to originate

from such groups intensifies fear of these groups, resulting in potential political responses. Not only are the tangible costs of crime higher in terms of victimisation, but the psychological costs are also higher as the poor are not only more likely to be victimised, but they are also more likely to be thought of as criminals.

2.8 Crime discourse as ideology

In South Africa crime has surfaced as a key political matter with powerful ideological and emotional connotations (Emmett, 2000). But as Steinberg (2001) argues, crime, and the fear of crime, is as old as South Africa itself... and our preoccupation with crime is testimony to how this country was stitched together with violence, to how we worry that malevolence is our most abiding pedigree” (Steinberg, 2001, p. 2).

The apartheid regime characterised economic, political and socio-cultural stratification of South African society based on gross, entrenched, legal inequality and promoted manifestations of structural violence (Hoffman and McKendrick, 1990). Structural violence is still prevalent in South Africa. It is no longer predominantly present in the enforcement of laws without the consent of the ruled, as occurred under apartheid, but rather in the social system which deprives people of choices in a systematic way. Economic structures can force poverty on people and poverty causes people to live an inhumane life (Degenaar, 1990). Structural violence is therefore primarily present in poverty and the ways in which poverty robs people of choices. The ideology that is used to maintain the unequal social relations that establish and maintain structural violence may have changed, but the power to disseminate such ideologies has not. Power is still allocated along class lines and the power to disseminate ideologies therefore still lies with the ruling class. This is significant particularly in light of the fact that it is members of the ruling class that own much of the media in South Africa. It is therefore members of this class that have the power to propagate their ideology through the media and it is thus this ideology that is dominantly presented in the media. Occupying positions of power in South Africa in terms of having money, being well educated and being skilfully employed, affords the views of this class legitimacy that may be deprived individuals that do not possess these material and social attributes. To talk about public pressure on the government to respond to crime in particular ways is therefore to talk about

the pressure that comes from a very specific group within the public. This need not necessarily result in negative consequences. However, the results may be harmful if the view of violence that is propagated by this group is one that makes us unable to consider the issue in a constructive way, or if such a view suggests unhelpful, impractical or adverse ways to deal with the issue of violent crime.

Jackson (2004) argues that elite groups in society have a key role to play in constructing violence for which the individual is implicated and involved. In particular, he draws attention to the peculiar role of the state as the author and source of particular kinds of legitimate violence – war, legal punishment and forms of social control (Jackson, 2004). He contends that we need to know more about the ways in which elites construct discourses of violence, the ways in which anxiety, fear and intolerance are created, how the discourses of anger and risk are used to validate certain policies and the strategies by which violence against certain types of individuals is justified and normalised (Jackson, 2004).

As discussed above, when violent crime is understood as random violence, or in ways that constitute a moral panic, it becomes very difficult to critically examine the situation or think about practical ways to deal with the situation. In his book *Thinking about Crime: Sense and Sensibility in the American Penal System*, Tonry (2004) presents a historical and contextual account of the development of America's current penal system. While it concerns America specifically, it allows us to see how increased levels of fear and intolerance create a situation in which people are not willing to consider accounts that offer different interpretations of criminal violence, especially those that may be seen to be suggesting that the problem is not as simple or as serious as it looks. As Steinberg (2001) predicted, South Africa will see “a swelling battery of draconian laws, and growing political tolerance for police brutality, while the brick-and-mortar of real policing slowly rots in the recesses” (p. 10).

McKendrick and Hoffman (1990) argue that one of the core reasons why societal and personal violence thrives in South Africa is because many forms of violence are not recognised. This failure to recognise violence results from the prevalence of violence in society which desensitises people to its presence, the secrecy that surrounds some settings in which violence occurs, (such as violence in the home or violent acts carried out by the state) and the way in which violence is defined, which prevents some phenomena from being recognised as violence. In drawing our attention to some things, claims about violent crime

lead us to ignore others and we may see less than the whole. Each instance in which we focus on some new problem of violent crime, we risk losing sight of its larger context (Best, 1999). In declaring war on crime, the government, society and individuals can take on the hero's character, devoting ourselves to shielding the innocent, righting wrongs and beating criminality, immorality and wickedness (Best, 1999). Declarations of war on crime personify crime as an adversary preying on society, rather than the product of complex, current and historical, social arrangements (Best, 1999).

2.8 Conclusion

Violent crime is considered by many South Africans to be one of the biggest problems facing the country at present. In this study I aim to explore the discourses that people use in their understanding of - and talk about - violent crime. This literature review has therefore provided an overview of issues and factors that might contribute to, influence or impact on discourses of violent crime. Beginning by considering the different ways in which violence is defined, what aspects each definition emphasises and what aspects are overlooked using particular definitions, we find that violent crime is often defined in terms of direct or interpersonal violence. This means that acts in which it is difficult to identify a victim or a perpetrator, or acts in which it is difficult to measure the effects on the victim, are often overlooked and not labelled as violent crime. Through this discussion we see that this has important implications for what people think about and say about violent crime.

Three common lay theories – the 'race theory', the 'sociological theory' and the 'pop psychology' theory- were considered and how these are drawn on and inform discourses of violent crime, particularly with regard to what causes violent crime. Through an exploration of the government's policy and approach for dealing with violent crime we see that citizens' discourses of violent crime are influenced by this policy (whether these discourses are in agreement with or reaction to this policy) but that government policy is also steered by public discourse and criticism of the government.

An examination of statistics related to contact crime shows that even though most categories of contact crime are decreasing or at least stabilising, that South Africans still do not feel any safer and that the public's perception of ever-worsening crime continues to hold. Information

found in the 2003 National Victims of Crime Survey shows that the type of crimes that people are most afraid of are robbery and aggravated robbery. This shows that people have a perception that they are most at risk from strangers, whereas the statistics reveal that most violent crimes occur between people that know each other.

The influence of the media and particularly the news media in their presentation of articles concerning violent crime is considered. We see that the news media often presents us with exaggerated, erroneous or unhelpful ways of thinking about violent crime and this is shown particularly in the way in which the media can instigate a moral panic and in the way in which the media encourages us to think about violent crime as random violence. By exploring the issue of victimisation we can appreciate that most violent crime is not in fact random, but that criminal violence occurs according to particular patterns, and that characteristics of victims change their level of vulnerability to violent crime. We see that the influence of the media is not a unidirectional influence but that as audiences' perceptions of crime are influenced by the media, so the audience also has the power to change the way in which the media presents violent crime.

The ideological implications of discourses of violent crime are considered lastly. This is reflected on in terms of what ideologies inform popular discourses of violent crime, how ideologies determine who is enabled to talk legitimately about violent crime and what ideologies are being supported through the use of popular discourses.

In presenting the arguments above it was not my intention in this review to present a relativist argument on violent crime. Violent crime is clearly a serious social problem. It is most obviously and importantly a problem for the victims and the families and friends of the victims. It is a problem for the police service that confronts it on a daily basis and for the government that is looked to for providing resources and policies for coping with it and preventing it. It is also a problem for disciplines like psychology, that are looked to for providing explanations of why it occurs and to tell us how to prevent it from happening. However, it is also a problem if we do not recognise that the ways in which we define, talk about, and understand violent crime has important consequences for our ability to be able to attend to the issue of violent crime and how we approach it. This study will thus specifically explore the ways in which South Africans understand and talk about violent crime, and how this shapes their experience of their social world.

1. METHODOLOGY

Section 1 – Methodological Framework

This chapter is divided into two sections. The first section discusses the ontological approach informing the study by reflecting on social constructionism as a paradigm and how it was used to frame the study. The ontological orientation guides the epistemological and methodological aspects of the project, and these are considered by discussing the particular techniques used for data analysis and collection in the study: discourse analysis and interviewing respectively.

3.1.1 Social Constructionism

Social constructionism holds that people do not discover knowledge about the world so much as they construct it, and that this construction takes place within a conceptual framework through which the world is described and explained (Schwandt, 2000). In this study I seek to explore discourses of criminal violence and how these are used as part of the conceptual framework that people use to construct their understanding of criminal violence and the effects of this. Potter and Wetherell (1987) contend that people actively participate in the process of construction, putting together a version of an event, object or person out of the linguistic resources (that is, the discourses, concepts, ideas, visions, labels) available to them. These linguistic resources and the way in which they are used in conversation serve particular functions for the speaker (Potter and Wetherell, 1987). In accordance with this argument I seek to examine the discourses that people draw on when talking about criminal violence, the possible motivations that they may have for using particular discourses in specific ways, and the type of presentation of criminal violence that they achieve through the use of these discourses. To do this I will be placing the language that people use to talk about violent crime centre-stage for analysis using discourse analysis.

Social constructionism represents an approach to research in psychology, and the social sciences more broadly, in which the emphasis has shifted from trying to discover the content of the individual mind to trying to understand how the content of the individual mind is

“socially constructed through the daily interactions between people in the course of social life” (Burr, 1995, p.4) This shift in emphasis came about as a result of what has become known as the linguistic or discursive turn in methodology (Henning, 2004). The linguistic turn represented a radical change in the ontological and epistemological inquiries of social and psychological research. (Henning, 2004). Social constructionism as a form of inquiry, seeks to problematise the nature of research and what is accepted as truth and knowledge, to replace questions of how things work with questions of what things mean, and explores how the socially created ideas and objects that make up our world are established and maintained (Henning, 2004). As Burr (1995) argues, discourses do not belong to individuals and are not located inside their heads. They are a social resource available to everyone of a common language and culture, they are shared when people speak to each other (Burr, 1995). This understanding of discourse is echoed by Gee who describes discourse as a way of “being together in the world” (Gee, 1997, p. xv). Moscovici (1984a) argued that one of the principal undertakings of modern-day social science should be to study ‘the thinking society’ (Moscovici 1984a as cited in Billig, et al 1988). This means that we need to consider the social context of thought and how society provides the basis for thinking (Billig et al., 1988).

Following the argument made by various authors writing within a social constructionist paradigm, I argue that language is not a direct expression of thought and does not simply describe objects and events as we experience them, but rather that the way in which we experience them and how we come to understand objects and events, is dependent upon the concepts and categories that are inherent in the language that we use (Potter and Wetherell, 1987; Parker, 1992; Willig 1999; Edwards, 1997; Moscovici, 1984). At the same time, there is recognition that these concepts and categories are fluid and subject to change, depending on the time and context in which they are used. As Gee (1997) reminds us, discourses cannot have discrete boundaries, they are always changing and moving through history. Social constructionism is therefore not concerned with issues of truth or accuracy with regard to these concepts and categories. Social constructionists “maintain that we can have no confidence that the categories embodied in our language bear any relationship to the real world, and indeed that it probably makes no sense to try to make a distinction between the nature of the world as it really is and our constructions of it, since we can never step outside of our language system and see the world in some hypothetically pure state” (Burr, 2002, p. 126) This is not to suggest that violent crime does not exist without or beyond our constructions of it, or that there are no incidents in the ‘real world’ in which violent crime

occurs or that these incidents do not have very real and serious consequences for both the victims and the perpetrators. What I am suggesting however, is that the way that we understand violent crime, and indeed victims and perpetrators, is dependent upon the language that we use to describe them and the way in which we construct these categories. Like Potter and Wetherell (1987) I maintain that language is not merely a way of expressing ourselves, but is a form of social action. In these ways, language plays a central role in the way we construct the world and how we understand and experience it.

3.1.2 Discourse Analysis

Having provided an argument for the importance of studying language in its own right, this section addresses the question of how this might be done. One of the ways in which we can study language and how it shapes and constructs our understanding of the world, is to look at language as structured into a number of discourses, where the meaning of any of these discourses depends on the context in which it is used. Discourse analysis allows us to examine discourses in this way. There is no one definitive definition of discourse and authors define it differently according to their ontological approach and the kinds of analysis that they conduct. Wetherell and Potter define discourse in a broad sense, as all types of verbal interactions and written texts (1987, pp. 7) and in more specific, functional terms as “meanings, conversations, narratives, explanations, accounts and anecdotes” (1992, pp. 2 and 3). Because they focus on the use of discourse and discourse as social action they prefer to use the term interpretive repertoire which focuses on the use of discourse and the effects achieved through the use of discourse.

There are many different forms of discourse analysis but as Dixon speculates, “as a meta-theory, discourse analysis posits that truth (including the truth ‘discovered’ by social scientists) is textually produced and delimited; that facts are not found but *made*” (Dixon, 1997 in Levett et al., 1997). Edwards and Potter (1992) argue that rather than seeing discourses as articulations of a speaker’s essential cognitive states, that they be investigated in the context in which they were used, as positioned and circumstantial constructions whose very nature makes sense, to both the speaker and the analyst, with regard to the social action those accounts achieve. Wetherell and Potter emphasise this aspect of what social action

those accounts achieve and maintain that research and writing about discourse should focus on how accounts are constructed and bring about effects for the speaker or writer (Burr, 1995). They describe how discourse analysis “focuses on the constructed and constructive nature of language and on the functions and consequences of language use” (Wetherell and Potter, 1989). Rather than being concerned with issues of truth or legitimacy, their approach to discourse analysis treats all accounts as constructions and focuses on what is done with those constructions (Hepburn, 2003).

Henning argues that using a discursive approach to research allows the researcher to “argue beyond the ‘obvious’ towards the language and forms of meaning that lie below the surface” (Henning, 2004, p. ix) Examining the discourses of criminal violence meant that I was concerned with the “broad patterns of talk” or the “systems of statements” that are set up in the text, rather than the text itself (Terre Blanche, 1999, pp 156). Wetherell and Potter (1992) prefer to work with the concept of interpretive repertoires to conduct discourse analysis rather than discourses. Interpretive repertoires are “broadly discernible clusters of terms, descriptions and figures of speech often assembled around metaphors or vivid images” (Wetherell and Potter, 1992, p. 90). The notion of interpretive repertoire is tied to an understanding of discourse as social action (van den Berg, 2003). The use of the concept of interpretive repertoires differs from the use of the concept of discourses in that it places much more emphasis on the *use* of discourse, rather than just the identification of it. They prefer this approach because it allows them to study the ways in which the same interpretive repertoires are employed in different ways in different contexts and the effects of this (Wetherell and Potter, 1992). Wetherell and Potter’s (1992) method of discourse analysis is based upon the study of the interpretive repertoires – which for them represent the principal entities of analysis - that appear in a particular discourse (Wetherell and Potter 1992).

As the medium through which the discourses or interpretive repertoires are employed, obtaining or generating a text for analysis is therefore the first step in conducting discourse analysis. The discussion now turns to a consideration of interviewing as a method for obtaining a text for analysis.

3.1.3 Interviewing

In this section I first describe how the interviews were conducted and why this method of data collection provides appropriate data for discourse analysis. I then go on to describe how the ontological approach of social constructionism informed the way in which the interviews were conducted and how interviews are thought of within this approach as a way of making meaning.

I conducted semi-structured, in-depth interviews with fifteen participants. This means that I interviewed people individually and I had an interview schedule containing topics that I wanted to cover in the interview (see Appendix 1) but that this was used as a guide, rather than a strict schedule to which the interviews had to adhere. This allowed participants to elaborate on certain issues and allowed me to reflect certain issues back to participants that they had brought up earlier in the interview, to gain more clarity or an elaboration of these issues. This also permitted that the interview be led by the participant at certain times when they initiated a topic that I had not specifically asked about but that was interesting for, or pertinent to the topic in some way. Burgess (1982), citing Webb and Webb (1932) talks about interview discourse as “conversation with a purpose” (p. 164). My aim in conducting the interviews in this way is that they would be more like conversations with the participants about the topic, rather than being strictly question and answer sessions. This kind of interviewing usually provides large ‘chunks’ of talk from the interviewee on a specific topic. Once these interviews are transcribed, we can then examine these ‘chunks’ of talk to identify the discourses that the participant uses in constructing particular views about the topic, how these discourses are constructed and the effects that are achieved through the use of these discourses. As such, semi-structured, in-depth interviews provide an appropriate method of data collection for a study such as this one.

Some of the key research questions framing this study include:

1. What discourses do participants use to talk about violent crime?
2. How do participants use these discourses to talk about violent crime?
3. What presentations or understandings of criminal violence does the use of particular discourses in particular ways create?
4. How do participants position themselves and others in relation to these discourses?

5. What are the social and psychological consequences of these understandings and positions?

“Research interviews are but one of many types of interviews – all of which assume that the individual’s perspective is an important part of the fabric of society and of our joint knowledge of social processes and of the human condition” (Henning, 2004, p. 50). However, when informed by a social constructionist approach, it is not simply the information, views and opinions that the participant presents in the interview that are considered to be the source of data. Data is considered to be a production of what the participant brings to the interview, what the researcher brings to the interview, and the process of construction that occurs between the interviewer and interviewee during the interview. Henning (2004) describes how the interview itself is a site for knowledge making and a discursive event. Gubrium and Holstein (2003) take this idea further when they describe how interviewing has taken on postmodern sensibilities, “with a communicative format constructed as much within the interview as it stems from predesignated research interests” (p. 3). This acknowledges both that interview talk is collaboratively produced between the interviewer and interviewee but also that there is often a negotiation or even tension between the ‘external’ research agenda and the ‘locally’ produced interview talk (Rapley, 2001).

I approached both the processes of conducting the interviews and analysing the transcripts from the point of view that I was not just ‘tapping into’ or ‘mining’ something that lies dormant within the interviewee (Kvale, 1996). Rather, I viewed the interviewee as actively constructing both a ‘reality’ and a version of themselves – for the interviewer and for themselves – during the interview. With regard to this idea that the interviewee constructs a version of themselves during the interview, Jorgenson (1991) talks about how participants “fashion” an identity for the interviewer. Bergman (2003, in Henning 2004) further develops this idea by talking about how interviewees are usually keen to manage the impression that is being made of them, that they want to be seen in a positive light, as ‘good people’. This is something that Wetherell and Potter (1992), in their research presented in *Mapping the Language of Racism*, focus on, as they explain how their interviewees would often try to present themselves as not being racist (as dominant public discourse at that time, in that place, dictated that racism was a ‘bad’ thing) by phrasing their objections to things like Maori language being taught in schools in the discourses of practicality, pragmatism or educational policy. This is particularly important in the context of my research as I believe that

participants were engaged in a similar process of trying to portray themselves in a positive light, particularly when it came to issues of race. Henning (2004) talks about how the interviewee is someone who does not give information but is someone who accounts for her information. This means that while she is formulating each and every response she *accounts* for her position in society, and specifically her position and experience with regard to the research topic.

Henning (2004) and Kvale (1996) both highlight how the data collected in an interview depends not only on the 'reality' that the participant constructs during the interview but also on the researcher. Henning (2004) talks about how the researcher who interviews the participant is not simply a conduit or scaffold for the interviewee's flow of information but are co-constructors of the meaning (the data), whether they intend to be or not. Kvale (1996) describes this by referring to "Inter Views" which highlight how both the participant and interviewer are situated within the process of knowledge construction (p. 14). The interviewer therefore needs to have a comprehensive and analytic self-awareness (Gillham, 2000). Raply (2001) argues that more attention needs to be paid to the researcher as central in the process of talk.

3.2 Section 2 – Research Process

In this section of the chapter I provide a comprehensive description of the research procedure, the participants, the methodology employed to collect and analyse the data, ethical issues, limitations of the study and methodology as well as a personal reflection on the research process. At this point I would like to again clarify what this study is intended to do and what I am not trying to accomplish in this study. Burr states that "social constructionism insists that we take a critical stance towards our taken-for-granted ways of understanding the world" (Burr, 1995, p 3). As such I am not trying to derive a definitive definition for violent crime or establish the boundaries of what constitutes violent crime and what does not. As we see in the analysis, while many of the participants talk about the same kinds of incidents as examples of violent crime, there is also variation among the participants as to what constitutes violent crime and what does not. I am similarly not trying to measure levels of victimisation or determine the extent of victimisation. Discourse analysis is interpretive and

explanatory however I am also not trying to explain why violent crime happens or explain what causes people to engage in violent crime. What I *have* tried to do in this study is identify, describe and explore the discourses that people use when speaking about violent crime and how these discourses construct particular understandings about violent crime, criminals and victims and what the consequences of such understandings are.

3.2.1 Overview of the research procedure

I began this project by conducting a literature review to firstly determine what research had been done in the area of violent crime in South Africa, and what research still needed to be done, in other words identifying a gap in the literature and research. Once having decided on a particular topic and approach for the study, the literature review allowed me to contextualise the study by positioning it within and in relation to other research. After having received approval of my research proposal and ethical clearance from the School of Psychology and the Faculty of Humanities I began to access participants. I arranged a date and time to interview those participants that had agreed to take part in the study and interviewed each of the participants. The interviews were audio recorded and then transcribed to generate interview transcripts. I conducted analysis on these interview transcripts and proceeded to write up the results in this report.

3.2.2 Research Participants

Fifteen people were interviewed for the project. As discussed in the literature review, fear of crime is often higher in multiracial societies (that is, societies composed of members that can be described as belonging to ‘different’ racial groups) and for members of the middle class within these societies (Spinks, 2001; Callebert, 2007). If fear of crime is higher in multiracial societies and for members of the middle class, then it seems likely that fear of crime and fear of becoming a victim are influenced by factors such as race and class¹. An emphasis on direct or interpersonal forms of violence (as identified in the literature review) also operates to

¹ I have used ‘class’ in this project to refer to socio-economic status. I realise however that this is a simplification of the concept of class which denotes more than merely socio-economic indicators. This is particularly significant in South Africa where historically race determined class, and since the “elite transition” (Bond, 2000) ideas of class are still intricately interwoven with ideas of race.

identify members of the middle class as the law-abiding and innocent victims of violent crime. For this reason I chose to use socio-economic class as one of the criteria for selecting participants for the study. I used markers such as where they lived, owning a house or a car or having parents that owned a house or a car, being employed in a skilled or 'white-collar' job or currently studying at university, to identify participants as members of the middle class. While not all of these markers applied to all of the participants, for example some of the participants lived in townships or did not own a car, some or most of these markers applied to all participants. The other criterion that I used was that each of the participants has some level of tertiary education. Given the emphasis on the importance of formal, institutional education in South Africa currently, as educated individuals, the views expressed by these individuals with regard to violent crime, have certain privileges over the views expressed by people with less or no formal education. These privileges operate by 'allowing' educated people to enter into public discussions about violent crime as they are 'entitled' or encouraged to express their views of the reality of violent crime, as these views are perceived as being informed and knowledgeable and therefore legitimate.

I wanted to access people's opinions, perceptions and understandings about violent crime and as such it was not necessary that the participants had experienced a direct incident of violent crime as everyone has a view or perception about criminal violence. Having decided on socio-economic class and tertiary education as criterion for inclusion in the study, I wanted to interview people of both genders, younger and older people, and people from each of the different race groups (as identified by apartheid classification of people according to race). While this study was not framed to be a comparative one, I felt that these were factors that might influence the kinds of discourses that participants used to construct their understandings of violent crime, so by interviewing participants of all races, young and old, men and women I hoped to gain a wider range of views.

The type of sampling used was a combination of purposive, convenience and snowball sampling. This was a form of purposive sampling in that I looked for participants who would fit the criteria and factors discussed above. It was a form of convenience sampling in that many of the participants were people that I was acquainted with. Some of the participants were identified by other participants as people who might like to take part in the study and as such these participants were sampled using snowball sampling.

While it is beyond the scope of this report to provide a detailed biographical sketch of each of the participants, in the table below I have listed the participants and identified some basic demographic details of the participants that I think may be pertinent to their constructions of violent crime. In the interviews some of the participants refer to other participants that they are acquainted with or have some kind of relationship with. I have also identified these relationships so that the reader has a clear understanding of who the participants are referring to and in what context.

	Pseudonym	Gender	Race	Age Group	Relationships with other participants
1	Kurt	Male	coloured	Early Twenties	Friends with Myles
2	Chris	Male	white	Mid Twenties	
3	Myles	Male	coloured	Early Twenties	Otto's son and friends with Kurt.
4	Emily	Female	white	Early Twenties	
5	Brad	Male	indian	Early Forties	
6	Palesa	Female	black	Early Twenties	
7	Dave	Male	white	Early Fifties	
8	Sumeshan	Male	indian	Mid Thirties	
9	Mandla	Male	black	Late Twenties	Mike's work colleague
10	Mike	Male	black	Late Twenties	Mandla's work colleague
11	Laura	Female	white	Mid Twenties	Jason's Girlfriend
12	Jason	Male	white	Mid Twenties	Laura's Boyfriend
13	Otto	Male	coloured	Late Forties	Myles's Father
14	Candice	Female	indian	Early Forties	Tanya's Work Colleague
15	Tanya	Female	coloured	Early Thirties	Candice's Work Colleague

Table showing participants and demographic details of participants

I would like to point out that I have purposefully used the apartheid era classifications of race as based on physical attributes, most notably skin colour, which distinguishes whites (formerly Europeans) from indians (South Africans of Indian descent), coloureds (supposedly ‘mixed race’) and blacks or africans (supposedly ethnic Africans). However, I recognise these as categories socially constructed around the idea that people of different skin colour are essentially different. As Jansen states, “these were political categories, of course, not firm classes of people” (Jansen, 2009, pp. 281).²The reason for using the apartheid era classifications of race was twofold. Firstly because the categories of race that were established and used to identify people during the apartheid era are still very much in use today and are used both to identify other people as particular kinds of people, but also to self identify. Secondly I have used these racial classifications as the participants used them to self identify.

The names of participants are pseudonyms that were used to ensure the confidentiality of the participants. I asked the participants to choose a pseudonym and for most of the participants I have used the pseudonym that they chose for themselves. Some of the participants decided not to use a pseudonym and some of them chose pseudonyms that were very similar to, or shortened versions of their actual names. These participants expressed that they did not mind if they were identifiable in the research and allowed me to use these names. However, I felt uncomfortable about the possibility that these participants may be identifiable, especially considering that I am acquainted with a number of them outside of the parameters of the study. In addition to this, the participants could not know in advance how discourse analysis would read into their words. For this reason, and because I had promised my participants confidentiality and anonymity, it was important to me to do what I could to ensure that the participants could not be identified in this report. I therefore later decided to choose pseudonyms for those participants that chose to use their own names or pseudonyms that were similar to, or shortened versions of their actual names.

² I purposefully chose not to use capital letters when discussing racial categories as an indication of the socially constructed nature of racial categories. This is also an attempt to problematise these racial categories as I recognise that to refer unproblematically to ‘blacks’, ‘whites’, ‘coloureds’ and ‘indians’ perpetuates racial categories of apartheid and entrenches racial prejudice.

3.2.3 Data Collection

As discussed in the section under interviewing, this section might more accurately be labelled as data making, as the researcher is engaged in a constant process of making meaning and during the interview, the interviewer and interviewee are engaged in both a singular and combined process of constructing data. However for the purposes of explaining the process of 'getting' the data that I used for analysis, I will use the conventional label of data collection.

Data was collected by means of semi-structured, in-depth interviewing. I accessed participants by approaching a number of people that I am acquainted with. One of the participants was a family member of one of my friends and was approached by my friend. A number of participants were approached by other participants who had already taken part in the study. After explaining the study to them and what their participation in it would be I asked these people if they would like to participate as interviewees. Those that agreed to participate I contacted again to arrange a time and place for the interview. The interviews took place in different locations which were determined by practical issues such as convenience and suitability for the purpose of the interview, ranging from a room in the psychology department, to the participant's house or place of work. Although some of the participants did not speak English as a first language they were all fluent in English and all of the interviews were conducted in English. I acknowledged both at the time of conducting the interviews and during analysis that these two factors, of where the interview was conducted and whether English was a first language for the participant, might have constrained what the participant told me as these factors might have restricted what the participants could, or would tell me. The open nature of semi-structured interviewing allowed for the participants to talk as much or as little as they wanted to about the topic and issues pertaining to the topic, and to introduce any themes that they thought were pertinent to the interview. Such flexibility meant that the interviews ranged from twenty minutes to two hours and twenty minutes, depending on how much each of the participants wanted to say about violent crime. Each participant was interviewed only once. The interviews were audio recorded while they were being conducted.

Most of the interviews were included for analysis however, there were three interviews that were conducted right at the beginning of the data collection phase which were not used as the voice recorder had not worked properly and these interviews could thus not be transcribed. One of these participants agreed to be interviewed again and his second interview was included for analysis. In addition to the three interviews that were lost because of recording failure I decided not to use the one participant's interview for analysis. This is because during the course of the interview I found out that this participant did not fit the criteria that I was using for participation in the study. This participant had no tertiary education and held an unskilled, blue collar job. Other things that this participant told me during the interview made me think that he could not be included as he did not fit the middle class criteria but could rather be considered to be working class.

The recorded interviews were then transcribed to produce transcripts for analysis. While this was a very labour intensive process I transcribed all the interviews myself. One of the first steps in the analysis of transcripts using Wetherell and Potter's (1992) approach to discourse analysis is for the researcher to become very familiar with the transcripts. Transcribing the interviews myself meant that I spent many hours producing the transcripts as a whole and concentrating on each small segment of each interview as I was typing it, and in the process became very familiar with the interviews. Because I conducted the interviews myself I was also aware of the non-verbal communication that occurred in the interviews and how this might have impacted on the spoken communication in the recordings. I felt that transcription was therefore an important process for me to undertake myself. I transcribed the interviews verbatim and did not edit them or 'clean them up'. This is because discourse analysis looks to the times in interviews when people stutter, backtrack, pause, repeat themselves, use colloquialisms and so on, as this helps to provide context and meaning to the content of the transcript.

3.2.4 Data Analysis: Discourse Analysis

Social constructionism draws on many different methods of inquiry and analysis to explore the ways in which we construct our understanding of the world (Terre Blanche, 1999). My motivation for using discourse analysis as opposed to other methods of social constructionist analysis is that, as Terre Blanche explains, discourse analysis allows the researcher to show “how certain discourses are deployed to achieve particular effects in specific contexts” (Terre Blanche, 1999, pp 154) and as such, allowed me to show how the discourses of criminal violence were used to accomplish certain effects within the context of my data. The specific method of discourse analysis that I used is the approach set out by Wetherell and Potter in their book *Mapping the Language of Racism* (Wetherell and Potter, 1992). The reason for using their approach to discourse analysis as my methodology is that they state that they analyse discourse through its use and practice in different contexts (Wetherell and Potter, 1992). Doing this allows them to identify how the same discourses ‘perform different jobs’ in different contexts and how the same discourse can be utilised for different ends (Wetherell and Potter, 1992). Following such an approach permits me to do the same with my data, which I believe allows for a better analysis of the discourses of criminal violence.

As stated above, Wetherell and Potter (1989) prefer to use interpretive repertoires to conduct discourse analysis as interpretive repertoires have an action or goal orientation, and this allows them to focus on the functions of the interaction. They state that there are three concepts or ideas about language that are central to their approach to discourse analysis (Wetherell and Potter, 1989). The first of these is the function or role of language which may be either explicit or implicit (Wetherell and Potter, 1988). Secondly, is the variation in the ways in which language is used, as examination of this variation can expose its function (Wetherell and Potter, 1989). Lastly the concept of construction is important as it emphasizes the view of social constructionism, that language is used to construct people’s knowledge and understandings of the world (Wetherell and Potter, 1989). Each of these concepts is vital in conducting discourse analysis using interpretive repertoires (Wetherell and Potter, 1989).

Although they state that there is no specific method of analysis in their approach to discourse analysis they do present steps explaining how to identify interpretive repertoires, and I used these to identify the interpretive repertoires in my data (Wetherell and Potter, 1992). The first step involved coding the data according to different themes or conceptual clusters.

(Wetherell and Potter, 1992). These comprised of recurring ideas and concepts in the data (Wetherell and Potter, 1992). This first step is done to make analysis of the data easier (Wetherell and Potter, 1992). After this I read and re-read the data to make myself very familiar with it to facilitate the third step, which involved identifying the dominant interpretive repertoires (Wetherell and Potter, 1992). Lastly, patterns or relations between interpretive repertoires were identified (Wetherell and Potter, 1992).

Using the identified interpretive repertoires and the patterns and relations between them, as well as their variability in use, I sought to infer the underlying conceptual structures that not only shape the way that criminal violence is talked about and represented by South Africans, but also how they both create and reflect the way in which criminal violence is experienced as a threat by South Africans. This analysis therefore involved trying to document how it is that the ways in which people speak about violent crime can become a legitimating ideological discourse, in that they become identified as ‘truths’ that legitimate certain ways of talking about and understanding criminal violence.

3.2.5 Validation of the research findings

The nature of this study and particularly the methodology adopted for analysis have meant that I have used myself as a tool of analysis in interpreting the data. Because there are no hard and fast rules of validity and reliability that hold for qualitative research, there were no set methods that I could use to validate my findings and ensure that my analysis and conclusions would not be ‘skewed’ by my own perceptions and bias. What I have done in an effort to prevent this from happening as much as I could was to do three things, firstly to ask a colleague and fellow masters student to read through my results and conclusions and to read through the interview transcripts and to tell me if she thought that the conclusions that I had come to were erroneous or not supported by the discourses that appear in the transcripts. Her questions and probing forced me to consider some of the conclusions that I had come to and why I had come to such conclusions. I trust that she has compelled me to stay true to the data and fully ‘grounded’ in the transcripts and what they reveal about the discourses of South Africans when speaking about violent crime. However, at the same time I acknowledge that my interpretations of the data are themselves social constructions and that, as Harre’ and Stearns (1995) argue, psychology is itself a discursive practice.

A further way in which I have tried to prevent my own bias from distorting the results of the study was to be constantly aware that certain parties reading this report would have access to all of the transcripts from the interviews and were the results that I claim not supported by the data in the transcripts, this would soon be discovered by these parties. With this in mind I consistently went back to the transcripts after having written each section of the analysis, to ensure that the results that I claim do originate from the data and are supported by the data.

Thirdly, I tried to become aware of my own biases and prejudices before embarking on analysis and to remain constantly aware of these throughout the investigation. During analysis, as it became increasingly clear that race is an important factor in how people think about violent crime, violent criminals and themselves in relation to violent crime, I questioned what my racial biases were. As much as I would like to think of myself as an enthusiastic member of the ‘new’ South Africa, with all the associated connotations of race as a non-issue, I recognised that this is recklessly optimistic and naïve and to deny that I am a recipient of certain advantages because I am white. I also realised that the only way to avoid having such racial biases distort my analysis of the data was to confront them head on. I believe that Pieter-Dirk Uys describes this process best for me when he compares the procedure of overcoming one’s subliminal racism to that of a recovering alcoholic when he says that he starts each day by admitting, “Yes, I am one. I am a racist and therefore I will not be racist.” (Uys, 2009)

3.2.6 Ethics

I gave each participant a copy of the letter of informed consent (see Appendix 2) before interviewing them. This letter explained the purposes of the study and the nature of the research and the interview. In this letter, and verbally through talking to participants before the study, I explained to them that their participation in the research was voluntary and that they were free to withdraw from the study at any time should they have wished to do so. The letter of informed consent also informed the participants that their privacy would be protected and that the interview content would be handled in a sensitive and confidential way.

I recognize that violent crime may be an uncomfortable topic, particularly for people who may have experienced it themselves or who have family members or close friends that have

experienced it. To try and avoid causing participants distress I made it clear to them both verbally and in the letter of informed consent that the interview would focus on the topic of violent crime, so that those participants for whom talking about violent crime may be too upsetting could withdraw from the study before the interview began. I also informed participants that if the interview made them upset or distressed that I could arrange an appointment for them with the Student Counselling Centre or the Centre for Applied Psychology should they wish to make use of such a service, and that I would provide any necessary resources, such as transport, to ensure that they could attend the appointment. I gave each participant a copy of the letter of informed consent which contained the phone numbers for the Student Counselling Centre and the Centre for Applied Psychology so that they could arrange an appointment with either of these centres should they wish to do so at a later date, as well as my phone number, should they wish for me to make an appointment for them at a later date.

Beyond these conventional ethical considerations I was also concerned about the ethical implications of the interview process itself. Often, after having conducted an interview with a participant and reflecting on it, I felt uncomfortable about the process of interviewing as I felt like I was exploiting the participants in some way. Henning (2004) considers the ethical implications of interviews by discussing what she has termed interview convention and the discourse of personal interviewing. She says that the speaker might feel bound by the convention of the interviewee agreement and the confidentiality to talk and to do so freely. I felt that this might have been the case with my participants.

Although I tried to make it clear to them that they were able to withdraw from the interview at any time none of them chose to do this. I can only surmise as to why this is, the interview process might have been cathartic for the participants or they might have been seeking affirmation from me. Some of them spoke to me of very personal and grim experiences that they had had, for example one of the participants disclosed that she was raped and another talks of how one of his friends died as a result of being stabbed. I think that this came about both because of the “convention of the interview agreement” (Henning, 2004) but also because we live in what has been termed an interview society (Atkinson and Silverman, 1997 in Henning, 2004) in which interviews permeate, mediate and help us to make sense of our lives. Interviews are used for hiring and promotion, counselling and therapy, education and news reports and in the increasingly popular ‘chat’ shows on TV (Atkinson and Silverman,

1997 in Henning, 2004). In the latter especially, we have been encouraged to talk openly and freely about our experiences, thoughts and feelings and are led to believe that this is normal, healthy and necessary, particularly for self-improvement. I think that all of these might have encouraged participants to engage in the interviews and in the way they did, as Gubrium and Holstein (2003) posit, we are “willing and able to provide all sorts of information to strangers about the most intimate details of our lives” (p. 22). Whether this created a positive environment in which the participants were able to talk through difficult and emotional experiences which they might not have been able to talk about outside of this interview I can only surmise. What I do know is that I felt uncomfortable in these moments as I was not sure whether these were stories that they wanted to talk about or whether they felt compelled to do so.

Another issue that has concerned me is that while I told participants before the interview that I was interested in what people said and understood about violent crime, they would not have been aware of how the method of analysis would interpret their words. If they had had an understanding of the method of analysis and the possible ways in which their words might be interpreted would they still have agreed to be interviewed?

3.2.7 Reflexivity

As the researcher is one of the primary research tools in a study such as this one, it is necessary for the researcher to practice reflexivity throughout the research process.

As Lalor, Begley and Devan (2006) state, in the literature, much consideration has been given to the impact of emotionally difficult or sensitive issues on the participants engaging in research, but little attention has been paid to the impact on the researcher. As I described above, before commencing with the process of interviewing participants I thought about the possible emotional impact that these interviews might have on them and tried to put measures in place to ensure that the process of the interview would cause participants as little emotional discomfort or distress as possible. I also prepared for the eventuality that participants might be upset by the interview and was ready to arrange an appointment with a

counsellor for the participants. However, I did not consider what kind of emotional impact the process of interviewing would have on me.

I realised that it was possible that my participants might recount instances of violent crime that they were victims of, or that friends or family members were victims of. However, because I was not looking to interview people who had necessarily been victims of violent crime and because I actually expected that people that had personal experiences of violent crime would not agree to be interviewed, I did not think that this posed much of a risk. I was surprised then when some of my participants spoke of personal victimisation or the victimisation of family or friends. These accounts surprised me because many of them came from participants that I know outside of the parameters of the study and yet they had never mentioned these instances before. While the horrible nature of these incidents upset me, what concerned and upset me even more was that I had found out about these instances not in the context of our relationship outside of the study, but that they had told me about these in the context of the interview. This suggests that these were incidents that they might not have told me about if it had not been for the interview, and that the disclosure of these incidents may have been a direct result of the interview.

I had to question why these participants had only chosen to relate these incidents to me in the context of the interview and not outside of it. Is it possible that the participants felt that these were stories that they could not, or were not 'allowed' to tell outside of the context of the interview because of the dynamics that govern social interactions and social 'niceties'? Referring back to the idea of the conventions of interviews that Henning (2004) talks about, I questioned if the reason that participants recounted these stories to me in the interviews was because they felt in some way that this was what they had to do. This is not to deny the interviewees agency in what they chose to tell and not tell, how they chose to tell it, when they chose to tell it and so on, as these are all choices that the interviewee makes during the course of the interview. However, I also acknowledge that these choices are made within the particular context of the interview in which I lead the topic and which was influenced by the participants' perceptions of what interviews are and what to do in an interview. Although none of the participants became very emotional during the interview and none of them accepted the offer for a counselling service, I felt uncomfortable about the idea that participants might have felt that they 'had' to tell me about these incidents and that I had in some way forced them to relive these horrible experiences by talking about them.

What also troubled me was that the participants did not seem upset about these incidents. They were walking around with these experiences ‘inside’ them and were just carrying on with their lives. I started to worry that they had not dealt with or grieved these incidents properly and I started to feel responsible for these participants and their emotional well being. This was particularly distressing because none of them took up the offer of counselling. I therefore had no way to ‘help’ them deal with these incidents. I found myself starting to become anxious and unhappy during the interview and transcription processes for these reasons. What helped me to deal with these feelings was to discuss them with a colleague who was experiencing similar feelings during the process of her research and with my supervisor, and this allowed for a kind of debriefing. In addition, we discussed possible ways of dealing with secondary traumatisation or what Herman (1992) has referred to as vicarious victimisation, which occurs when people working with trauma victims experience similar symptoms of post-trauma as the victims. My colleague also reminded me it was also possible that the interview provided an opening or platform on which the participants could articulate these experiences and ‘work through’ them by talking about them, and as such might have provided a cathartic encounter for some of the participants. And although it was not my primary motivation for entering a course of personal therapy, these therapy sessions allowed me a space in which to acknowledge and deal with these feelings. Each of these aspects made the processes of interviewing and transcription easier, however, the emotional difficulties that I was experiencing at the time remained unresolved.

The nature of semi-structured, in-depth interviewing is such that the relationship between the interviewer and the interviewee is an important part of the process of the interview, as all information obtained through such a process of data collection is mediated by this relationship. I am aware that the quality of this relationship, the setting of the interviews, the topic of discussion and importantly, my personal characteristics as a researcher and a person would have ‘set the scene’ for what participants were willing to tell me in the interviews and what they would not. While there are a multitude of my personal characteristics that might have influenced what people decided to tell me in the interviews, I feel that three in particular were significant: my gender, my status as a researcher and a ‘good girl’ and the race that participants identified me as.

I tried to keep the setting and ‘atmosphere’ of the interviews informal and casual to persuade participants to speak freely without feeling that they needed to be asked specific questions before raising a particular topic. I also did this to encourage a conversation with them in which they felt that they could express themselves without fear of judgement or reproach. I feel that my status as a researcher affected the ‘atmosphere’ of the interviews in that it formed an important part of the framework for what participants felt that they could and couldn’t tell me and whether they had to justify what they told me. While I tried to present myself as an objective and open-minded person during the interview, the participants were aware that I would be analysing the interviews and what they said in the interviews. I think that this encouraged participants to present themselves in the best possible light and that the effect of this was particularly to censor or at least ‘dilute’ blatantly racist, sexist and classist opinions when participants were speaking.

Phillips and Jorgensen (1991) state that participants construct identities for the researcher during the interview. I believe that participants also saw me as a ‘good girl’ that did not engage in any kinds of ‘bad’ or criminal activity or corruption myself, and that I held a negative opinion about these kinds of things. This was revealed in moments such as one in which the participant spoke about sitting outside a bar at night and he and his friends having what I’m sure was a joint. However, just before saying this he stopped, paused, and then said just having cigarettes. Another moment which revealed this was when a participant started saying that he has a friend that hijacks cars and quickly ‘corrected’ this to say that his friend *used* to hijack cars. While some participants did speak of past illegal transgressions, they were quick to describe how these were in the past and that they no longer engaged in such activities. I feel that participants might have censored speaking about certain activities or knowing people that engage in ‘bad’ or illegal activities because they saw me as a ‘good girl’.

I think that my gender influenced the way in which participants spoke about sexual crimes. Some of the male participants seemed uncomfortable or embarrassed when talking about rape. Because these participants were always speaking about female rape, I think that the participant’s unease stemmed from the gender dynamics in the interview and their belief that I could be a victim of this crime while they could not. Because I never asked them about rape specifically, when they spoke about it I believe that they may have felt that they were in some way inflicting something unpleasant on me by talking about a violent crime in which I could be the victim but they could not. However, when interviewing female participants, I think

that it was my gender that made it easier for them to talk about how they fear that they might be a victim of rape or how they were a victim a rape.

With regard to the race that participants identified me as, I am sure that all participants identified me as white, as I identify myself. When I interviewed participants that identified themselves as either indian, black or coloured, participants often used race as a point of difference between myself and themselves and would either use this to explain why we had different experiences, or as an explanation for why they thought or felt the way they did, by saying things like “as an indian” or “as a black man”. I think that my race also influenced the way in which participants felt they could speak about many different aspects that were discussed in the interviews but particularly who they thought were the perpetrators of violent crime. Even though they admitted that it made them sound racist, I think that it ‘allowed’ white and indian participants to speak about black and coloured people as the perpetrators as this did not implicate me as a potential perpetrator. I think that participants would not have spoken about black and coloured people as perpetrators, or would have been a lot more reluctant to speak about it, if they had identified me as black or coloured.

I have tried to remain aware throughout the process of analysis that these three characteristics, among others, would have influenced the kind of information that I was able to gather from participants during interviews because it would have influenced what participants thought that they could tell me and what they couldn’t tell me.

3.2.8 Limitations of the study and the methodology

The nature of this study and particularly the methodology adopted for analysis has meant that I have used myself as a tool of analysis in interpreting the data. Because there are no hard and fast rules of validity and reliability that hold for qualitative research, there were no set methods that I could use to validate my findings and ensure that my analysis and conclusions would not be ‘skewed’ by my own perceptions and bias. I did three things to try and prevent this from happening and I discuss each of them in detail above. In conjunction with these three methods, qualitative research in general, and interpretive studies in particular, appreciate the role of the researcher in the research process and interpreting the data. Such studies do not try to eliminate the influence of the researcher in the research process but

instead acknowledge it. In doing so they also emphasise that it is important for the researcher to elucidate her positions, presuppositions, bias and subjectivity so that the reader is aware of how these may have impacted on the research process and interpretations of the data. I also discuss these above.

Another limitation may be that the interviews constituted a contrived social setting rather than a 'natural' one with 'natural' talk. It could be argued that it would have been better to get these discourses through participant observation as this would have captured 'real' talk within a 'natural' setting, or through focus groups which would have allowed me to capture the social and shared nature of discourse and how discourse constructs objects. However, following a social constructionist approach I argue that there is no 'true' or 'real' talk as all talk is dependent upon the context in which it is constructed and the particular linguistic resources that are available to the speaker in that context. Conceptualising the data generated through interviews as a co-constructed project between the participant and the researcher allowed me to consider how I contributed to the data that was obtained. Using Wetherell and Potter's (1992) approach to discourse analysis also meant that I considered how the participants were constructing their talk in particular ways to present themselves as a particular kind of person. I was also concerned that the sensitive nature of violent crime might make participants reluctant to talk about it in a group of people and I thought that focus groups might therefore have been an inappropriate method of data collection for this study.

3.2.9 Conclusion

This chapter considered the methodology that was employed in this study by discussing social constructionism as a framework for the study, interviewing as a method for collecting the data, and discourse analysis as it was used to analyse the transcripts. In this chapter I also described how the data was collected and the motivations driving specific decisions regarding the collection and analysis of the data and the type of data collected. Having provided the reader with an explanation of the methodological considerations of the study, in the following chapter I present a detailed and thorough account of the findings and analysis of the data.

4. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

4.1 Introduction

Having conducted analysis according to the methods outlined above I found seven central conceptual clusters that occurred frequently in the data, namely: *'the causes of violent crime'*; *'the effects of violent crime'*; *'prevention and deterrence'*; *'the victims of violent crime'*; *'responsibility'*; *'the perpetrators of violent crime'* and *'the good versus the bad criminal'*. These conceptual clusters can be thought of as dominant topics, content domains or networks of concepts that were used by participants when speaking about violent crime. I have discussed each conceptual cluster independently. Each conceptual cluster has several related concepts that 'feed into' or contribute to this particular content domain, these concepts being constructed through the use of particular interpretive repertoires, either individually or in conjunction with others. I consider each of these interpretive repertoires in turn and how they contribute individually and in combination to the particular conceptual cluster and the way in which it constructs crime, criminals or victims. For ease of reference and to organise the discussion I have termed the overarching or dominant topics conceptual clusters and the related concepts or ideas that contribute to and construct the themes interpretive repertoires, in line with Wetherell and Potter's (1992) use of interpretive repertoires in *Mapping the language of racism*. However I have often used the terms discourse and interpretive repertoire interchangeably.

In this discussion I draw attention to Wetherell and Potter's three important concepts of language - function, variation and construction and show how these concepts are played out in each of the interpretive repertoires. I do this by discussing how they are used and the reason for the use of each (function), how each interpretive repertoire can be used in different contexts or differently within the same context (variation). I also consider how each interpretive repertoire is constructed within the interviews and how they work to construct a particular idea about violent crime that participants express in the interviews (construction).

I then consider the relations between the individual repertoires and the pattern in which they are used together to create certain images of violent crime. Wetherell and Potter's three main concepts of language are once again focused on as I consider the function of using certain interpretive repertoires together and how others are not used together. Secondly I look at the

way in which contrasting repertoires can be used within a single interview or how repertoires can be used to create a sense of discrepancy or variation within one interview. Lastly I consider the use of these interpretive repertoires together to construct a particular understanding of criminal violence.

In discussion of the results of the analysis, the reader will find that I have often not made a distinction between crime and violent crime and that much of the discussion relates to crime in general rather than violent crime specifically. While I had asked participants about violent crime specifically, in their discursive responses they often did not draw a boundary between violent crime and crime in general. These discursive responses show that for the participants, the imagined criminal *is* violent and the concept of crime is one that necessarily carries a risk of violence. In order to examine this construction of crime and criminals I have not made a distinction between crime in general and violent crime in the analysis.

4.2 Discussion of the Conceptual Clusters

4.2.1 'the causes of violent crime'

The first conceptual cluster that I will discuss is that of '*the causes of violent crime*'. There are six aspects that participants speak about that contribute to this content domain.

Participants express each of these aspects as one of the causes of violent crime. These six aspects are poverty; unemployment; lack of education; corruption; human nature and apartheid.

Poverty was considerably the aspect most participants express as being a cause of violent crime. This aspect was spoken about by all the participants and many of them expressed this as the most important or foremost factor that causes violent crime. It was also often expressed a number of times in a single interview, as a response to the direct question that I posed to participants of "What are the causes of violent crime?" and at other points in the interview to explain or justify other things that the participant was talking about. Participants make a direct link between poverty and crime and state that people often commit crime because they are poor, such as in the following excerpts:

there is definitely a connection between poverty and violent crime. People in poorer areas commit violent crimes or sometimes the situation gets very difficult (Kurt)

Ya, big correlation between poverty and crime ya because you know like, people that are in poverty will take more to crime than anything, it's been proven, well I read it's been proven (Myles)

Constructing crime as being caused by poverty has three major implications. Firstly, it serves to make crime understandable as there is an explanation for why people commit crime. This is especially evident when Kurt says “or sometimes the situation gets very difficult”, implying that it is understandable that poor people commit crime because they battle to make a living legitimately. A particularly interesting point in Myles’ quote above regards his comment “it’s been proven”. Here he draws on a ‘scientific’ discourse to legitimise his claims of the link between poverty and crime, to justify this idea as ‘fact’ rather than opinion. Secondly, it shifts blame away from the people committing the crime to the social conditions that push people to commit crime. Thirdly, it provides some kind of justification for committing crime and makes it allowable in a moral sense. While it may seem that these implications provide a justification for committing crime, their effect as justification is negated in a number of ways; by the way in which people use this aspect in the interview, the context in which this aspect appears or the way in which they construct both poverty and/or crime. Some participants expressed the idea that it is easier to make a living through committing crime rather than working for money, such as in the following excerpts:

some people instead of using some opportunities that they can get to better their lives just choose crime over that (Palesa)

like this guy, he commits crime and then he makes his money and everyone was talking about how much they make and so on and some of the people were saying they, like they make this much money and he was saying that he wouldn't work for that kind of money... some of them, they find it's, ya, it's not that, it's easier for them to commit crimes and get that easy money (Mandla)

it has just become easier to take what you want rather than to just go about the right routes to getting it (Laura)

This negates the justification of committing crime because of poverty as this implies that people living in poverty have the choice of working, even if it is at a very difficult job and for very little money, but that many people make the choice to commit crime because it is an easier way to make money than by working. Palesa implies that not only do people have a choice to work rather than commit crime but that they have opportunities that may lead to legitimate ways of making a living - such as education or government programmes that aid the poor - but that these people do not capitalise on these opportunities.

Some participants constructed poverty as self-induced, in other words that people are poor because of their own lack of initiative, ability or hard work, for example when Kurt talks about people in townships blaming foreign nationals for taking their jobs when they are not making enough of an effort to get a job:

before that foreign person came, none of you all decided to open up a shop in that area, he opened up a shop (Mhmm) then, now that he has a shop there and you have nothing, or maybe now you have the money to open up a shop you angry because he took your place there... But to be honest I think it's because even though maybe some of those people... too lazy sorry to find a job (Kurt)

When constructed in this way, poor people are portrayed as being poor for a reason, and that they therefore are not morally 'allowed' to commit crime because it is their own fault that they are poor. Some participants, while not necessarily constructing poverty as self-induced, spoke about poor people as being made to understand why it is that some people have more money than they do, such as in the following excerpt:

they're kind of made aware that what the tourists have and what they have are two different things and two different things in terms of a hierarchical, if you understand what I mean (Chris)

and that it is okay for some people to have more money than they do, or that poorer communities do not understand wealth in the way that more affluent communities do, as in the following excerpt:

But I don't think it's necessarily in terms of what you've got, what you've got, I think it's how you perceive what you have umm, because I, wealth is a relative thing... I think the issue is that how they, how wealth is understood, material possessions are understood (Chris)

While this does not necessarily suggest that some people are poor through some fault of their own, it does provide legitimating reasons for why some people are poor and because there is a legitimate reason for why they are poor, they are not morally 'allowed' to commit crime. Some participants also expressed poverty in terms of relative deprivation, such as in the following excerpt:

the two most important things that come to my mind, values umm, and sort of their, the proximity of the different communities to modern consumer culture... consumer society that generates wants, umm, you know and you know, because people want, want, want, want, want and they can't satisfy it (Chris)

Using this idea of relative deprivation, these participants construct poor people as committing crime not because they are poor and because of need but because they see what other people have and want what they have. The effect of creating some kind of justification for committing crime because of poverty is therefore negated when any of these discourses listed are used when constructing poverty as a cause of crime. Almost all of the respondents who constructed poverty as a cause for violent crime used one of these negating discourses. This negation of poverty as a justification for violent crime occurring probably happens because it allows the participants to identify a cause of violent crime but not to have to take ownership in any way for that cause. By doing this they are directing the cause of poverty back to the poor, effectively allowing them to say that poverty causes violent crime, the poor cause their own poverty and therefore the poor cause violent crime. They can do this without having to question if there are any other reasons for violent crime occurring or what causes the poverty that causes violent crime.

A second aspect that most participants spoke about when constructing the theme of '*the causes of violent crime*' was unemployment. This aspect often accompanied the discourse of poverty and at times was used interchangeably with the discourse of poverty, thereby also encompassing the same three implications of constructing crime as caused by poverty, i.e.

making crime understandable, shifting blame away from the individual to social conditions, and providing a justification for crime or making it allowable. The discourse of unemployment often accompanied the discourse of poverty and some of the repertoires that were used to negate the justifiability of poverty as a cause of crime also refer to unemployment, for example, people's lack of initiative, ability or hard work. However, unemployment was seldom constructed as being the result of the unemployed individuals' own fault or choices. Rather this was constructed as something beyond their control because there are just not enough jobs for everyone in South Africa, or as being the fault of the government for not supplying enough jobs for everyone to be employed. Because it is constructed in this way the implication is that people that commit crime because they are unemployed cannot be held responsible or blamed for committing crime. We see this in the following excerpts:

the poor are becoming criminals and they, they faced with this problem because of unemployment (Otto)

it's just that there's not enough work so you can't blame the people for doing that there (Sumeshan)

These excerpts also show us how the link that participants make between unemployment and crime - that unemployed people will commit crime - is often constructed as inevitable, as these respondents take it for granted that the poor will commit crime, and make no mention of other ways in which the poor might make a living.

So while the use of poverty as a justified reason for committing crime is often negated this is usually not the case with unemployment, as this is constructed as a justified and legitimate reason for committing crime. A further difference in the way these two aspects are spoken about is that, while discourses like relative deprivation may position crime committed because of poverty as something motivated by want or greed rather than need, people that are unemployed are constructed as being desperate and needing to commit crime in order to survive. These repertoires that at first may appear to be one and the same or very similar are used to construct people that commit crime very differently. This is ironic as it seems logical to assume that those that are unemployed are the poorest and that unemployment causes poverty. I surmise that the reason for this difference in the way in which these two

interpretive repertoires construct people, is that these two repertoires implicate different parties that can be blamed. While the discourse of unemployment accuses the government of being to blame for not providing enough jobs, where blame should be placed for poverty is not as clear. While the government is often blamed for poverty in this discourse, their position as *the* party to blame is not as definitive. I believe that in order to avoid any implication that they are to blame for poverty, participants look for ways to negate poverty as a legitimate cause for violent crime by constructing poor people as being to blame for their poverty.

A third aspect that was also given as a cause for violent crime and that was often used in conjunction with the discourses of poverty and unemployment was lack of education, in that people who did not have adequate education could not find jobs later in life. This was sometimes constructed as the fault of the individual lacking education because they had not worked hard enough at school or had chosen not to continue studying at a tertiary level. However, this was most often constructed as a consequence of poverty and unemployment in that unemployed and poor parents cannot afford to send their children to school, and as a fault of the government for not providing people with adequate education. The following excerpt illustrates this:

to be able to get a legitimate job you have to be able to pay to study and obviously people are poor, I mean buying a loaf of bread is more important than paying to go get an education (Laura)

In this way people that commit crime because of a lack of education are constructed in the same way that people that commit crime because of unemployment, and because their reasons for committing crime are logical and motivated by factors beyond their control, they are justifiable.

A fourth aspect that participants constructed as being a cause of violent crime is corruption. This corruption was constructed as something that occurs in many different institutions such as the police, government and business, and at many different levels, from the chief of police to the individual officer, from the president to the municipal ward counsellor, from the C.E.O. to the secretary, as we see in the following excerpts:

accepting bribes and stuff like that so you know ya, partly it is the law enforcers themselves that are involved (Myles)

in this and these communities there are RDP houses... the houses are being built for the poor but if someone can pay him off and give him a certain amount of money that person will have a priority or be first in line to get a house (Mandla)

our government's [amused] pretty corrupt, no one wants to come out and say it... just actually wants to come out and say it but it is corrupt (Laura)

In addition to this participants also spoke about people being corrupt in their own individual capacity and that while people working in formal institutions need to be monitored to ensure that they do not engage in corruption, we need to monitor or 'police' ourselves to avoid engaging in corruption ourselves, or creating an environment in which corruption can occur. This is shown in the following excerpt:

we do it to a lesser degree, we also do it, 'cause if you need a job or you need some, okay let's go in for a license, if you don't get your license maybe you can get a backdoor license (Mhmm) so that's also corruption, at the end of the day it's corruption so it's for us to know what's right (Brad)

Most participants spoke about corruption as a cause but seldom actually explained how corruption leads to violent crime. This interpretive repertoire of corruption as a cause for violent crime drew on the assumption that corruption would in fact lead to violent crime, and that there are many people engaged in corruption in South Africa. Participants constructed corruption as something that anyone in a position of power can be tempted with and that anyone can get away with because those that are corrupt are seldom brought to book. Because it is constructed in this way, the implication is that people need to be responsible for their own behaviour and to consciously make the 'right' choice not to engage in corruption. While the link between the police being corrupt and violent crime is an easy and logical one to make, it is less apparent how the corruption of other people leads to violent crime and this is seldom explained by participants. Participants might be drawing on a common-sense idea that when some moral boundaries collapse, they are all weakened and as such, any crime incurs the probability of violent crime. I think that this is important because it suggests that corruption is possibly being used as an all-encompassing cause for the problems in South

Africa without the participants having to think specifically about who is corrupt and what corruption does. This allows participants to lay the blame for violent crime elsewhere and also claim the moral high-ground, because corruption is constructed as a morally 'wrong' decision. This is particularly the case when participants speak of some people as being more prone to being corrupt, such as in the following excerpt:

you know you can't generalise but I think given the opportunity it's easy to be corrupt given the opportunity, if your leanings are towards there or if you kind of on the border line (Dave)

A fifth aspect that participants constructed as being a cause for violent crime I have labelled as human nature. This discourse included three separate elements: examples from the animal kingdom, the break-down of the family and psychological problems. This first element was used to construct an explanation for why violent crime occurs by either drawing parallels to, or looking for differences between human nature and animal nature, and human behaviour and animal behaviour. There were only two participants that made use of this discourse. The one participant drew a parallel between human behaviour and animal behaviour by using examples of 'fighting' between lions and buffalo and the way in which sharks kill seals:

you've seen when a buffalo gets hold of a lion and it'll toss it in the air and it'll... kill it and trample it and when the lion's dead it'll continue trampling it... and the entire herd will get involved and now this thing is dead (Mhmm) but in that case the reason for that kill is hatred, they hate each other. (Otto)

"the whale shark grabs that ah defenceless seal and the seal is dead but it'll keep on throwing that seal up and down, some people say that it's to break it's bones (Mhmm) but if you watch carefully, that thing's bones are broken and it'll continue playing with that seal as if it's enjoying it" (Otto)

When constructed in this way, human violence and killing is naturalised and made to seem normal because animals engage in similar kinds of behaviours and people are also animals. This also makes violence seem inevitable as it is part of human nature. In contrast, the other participant that used examples from the animal kingdom did so to construct human violence as unnatural, abnormal and not inherent or inevitable. She uses an example from the animal kingdom to make human violence incomprehensible:

I mean there's no other race in the animal kingdom that will kill it's, it's own kind, I mean if you look at lions and stuff, they'll battle over territory and stuff but they, once they know [the fight is over] they walk away, they just walk away (Mmm) but humans, they just, they're self-destructive (Laura)

While the participants used the human nature discourse and examples from the animal kingdom to construct different versions of human violence, what they both do, by drawing on examples from the animal kingdom, is construct criminals as animals, as savage and uncivilised.

The second element, the break-down of the family was used by some participants to explain why violent crime occurs and particularly why violent crime is increasing, such as in the following excerpts:

they haven't had a very good support system, like a good family life, those are typically the people I think (Okay) that I'd imagine, maybe have joined gangs to help them survive like socially (Emily)

like growing up for example right. If, if a little boy swears at someone and kicks someone, if he's not reprimanded, he's never gonna know that that's wrong and that's gonna become a lifestyle for him (Jason)

at the early age when you are growing up, actually your parents need to be teaching you the right way (Mhmm) of living (Mike)

This break-down of the family referred to both how the 'physical structure' of the family is breaking-down but also breaking-down in their duty of teaching children about morals and acceptable behaviour. This idea - that the family is breaking down - was something that was taken for granted by the participants that used this discourse as they never actually explained exactly what the break-down of the family entails or why families are breaking down. The idea that there is some kind of 'proper' arrangement for families was also taken for granted because the respondents all expressed the idea that the way families are, is not how they are supposed to be. This discourse constructs parents and families as being the cause of violent crime because they are supposed to be the site where children are taught not to engage in

illegal or immoral activities and the site where children receive emotional support which would serve as a buffer against negative, outside influences which might encourage children to participate in crime. The implication of constructing the break-down of the family as being a cause for violent crime is that criminals are constructed as immoral, or people that engage in crime because they are lacking or 'defective' in some way, or as people that made the wrong choices in life, rather than as people that commit crime out of necessity.

The last element of this aspect of human nature is that of psychological problems. A few participants spoke about people committing crime because of psychological problems or because they are 'sick in the head':

Then there's also psychological reasons, you get people who serial kill (Mhmm) and I mean they not from, they not from poor, a poor situation, they have a mental illness, it's an illness that they have (Kurt)

some people are psychologically born ah, damaged (Otto)

I hope that someone finds a cure for those sick people (Emily)

The idea that some people commit acts of violent crime because they are psychologically abnormal or suffer from a psychological illness originates from the field of psychology. The entertainment industry picked up on this idea and the concept of the perpetrator having suffered some kind of developmental trauma or being ill with a clinical, mental illness has become a favourite explanation behind some of the most heinous villains in popular media. While this discourse may provide a logical reason for why people engage in crime it serves to construct criminals as abnormal and unpredictable because we can predict the behaviour of normal, healthy people but we cannot necessarily predict the behaviour of people that are 'sick in the head'. This also serves to construct crime as something caused by problems within individual criminals and plays down the influence of social factors. This discourse of the 'madman' is also at odds with the discourse of the rational criminal who commits crime because they are poor or unemployed.

The last aspect that participants constructed as being a cause for violent crime was apartheid. This interpretive repertoire was usually used in conjunction with other discourses about who

victims are, who the perpetrators are, why levels of crime are so high in South Africa and how crime can be so violent in South Africa. This repertoire was used by white, black and coloured participants. How this repertoire is used in constructing victims and perpetrators follows in the discussion of each of these interpretive repertoires.

When using this discourse as a cause for violent crime, participants constructed this specifically as anger resulting from apartheid that causes violent crime. This was usually constructed in one of two ways. One way of constructing this was to state that crimes are violent, particularly when they are perpetrated by black criminals and the victims are white because of residual anger resulting from apartheid:

the effect of the apartheid umm, the anger that, that that generated at a collective sort of level (Mhmm) I think that's still kind of like umm, runs through a lot of violent crime umm, today (Chris)

maybe apartheid's got something to do with it, you never know maybe, maybe resentment, maybe. See I, I think it's just anger (Jason)

and then violent crime, where, let's say black on white, where this guy will break into your house and find you, a black guy, you a white woman, he'll rape you, he'll stab you, he'll kill you and he'll kill you again and again and again (Mhmm) maybe 'cause he hates white people. Now that's hatred now, (Ya) he might not do that ah, so easily if he breaks into a black woman's house (Otto)

Even though Otto then says in the next line "and vice versa" he adds this almost as an afterthought, or as a disclaimer against any claim that he is constructing only black perpetrators and only white victims.

The other way in which this interpretive repertoire was used, was in conjunction with the relative deprivation discourse, changing the relative deprivation discourse to make it not only about some people having more than others but specifically about white people having more than other races, even after more than a decade of black governance. By constructing apartheid and more specifically anger resulting from apartheid as a cause of violent crime, the implication is that crime, and particularly violent crime, occurs not only because people need or want material things that they do not have, but it is also motivated by racial factors and

particularly the anger of black people towards white people. While I will discuss the implications of this discourse for how participants construct criminals and victims, the most striking effect of this is that coloureds, indians and specifically black people are positioned as criminals, while white people are positioned as victims. However, beyond this construction of apartheid being a cause for violent crime, apartheid has had another implication for the way in which participants understand and construct violent crime. By creating a social situation in which people were identified and understood on the basis of race, apartheid provided an explanation for social situations by giving us a way of being able to understand them in terms of race. We see Kurt draw on this understanding in the following excerpt:

a black guy, a security guard and it was a black guy, was murdered by young coloured boys who were still in school most of them (Mhmm) and he was murdered because they were drunk and they decided they want to hit this black guy for nothing (Kurt)

Kurt used the discourse of apartheid as a cause of violent crime but used an example in which coloured participants killed a black security guard. While this example positions a black person as the victim and coloured people as the perpetrators - constructing different victims and perpetrators to the victims and perpetrators that were usually constructed by participants using this discourse - Kurt uses the apartheid 'philosophy' of different races to make sense of what he describes as a crime with incomprehensible motives, by understanding it as motivated, at least in part, by race.

4.2.2 *'the effects of violent crime'*

The second conceptual cluster that I will discuss is *'the effects of violent crime'*. There are four aspects that participants speak about that contribute to this conceptual cluster.

Participants express each of these as an effect of violent crime. These four aspects are effects on the country's image; effects on the victim, effects on potential victims and effects on identification.

One of the aspects that many participants spoke about as an effect of violent crime is the effects on the country's image. This discourse was used to talk about how the international community perceives our country, for example in the following excerpt:

it's like you not proud to be a South African because of, of this, people think South Africa's big trouble. Tourists come here, they feel not, they just land in, in South Africa, from the airport to the hotel room they hit, hijacked or robbed, it's not a good image
(Candice)

Many of the participants used this repertoire and considering the social climate in which the interviews took place – at a time when South Africa had less than a year to prepare itself to host the soccer World Cup, and messages concerning the international sporting event abounded in advertising, news reporting, special interest programmes and everyday conversations – this is hardly surprising. This interpretive repertoire was used to construct violent crime as a negative influence on the way in which the international community perceives South Africa. It was used to evoke images of international tourists that want to visit South Africa but are too afraid to do so because they fear becoming a victim of violent crime, such as in the following excerpt where Kurt paraphrases what he imagines foreigners to be thinking about South Africa:

oh my word there's crime in the movie, there's crime in the news, South Africa's just got crime, wild animals, they've got beautiful bush for us to look at, beautiful mountains to explore because we don't have this in our country. They won't come and explore (Kurt)

And when Tanya talks about what international soccer fans have been asking in soccer magazines:

the world soccer, people are [inaudible] people are already saying that ‘oh, we going to South Africa, should we be worried?’ (Tanya)

Within this repertoire this fear was deemed to be warranted because South Africa has such high levels of criminal violence, and the assumption is that foreigners often fall prey to such crime because they have not developed the knowledge and skills necessary to avoid incidents of violent crime that South Africans have developed. Participants using this discourse then ‘proved’ this discourse by relating incidents in which foreign tourists had been the victims, such as in the following excerpt:

A typical example is the Confederations Cup we had now recently. Two, two football teams had their hotel rooms broken into and things stolen (Kurt)

However, most of the incidents that participants used as examples referred to acts that are commonly defined as petty crime, such as victims having their possessions stolen from their hotel rooms or from the airport, or having been pick-pocketed. This interpretive repertoire was used to lessen the value of South Africa’s positive attributes such as it’s wildlife and beautiful landscapes, as foreign tourists miss out on experiencing the good things that South Africa has to offer because they are scared off by violent crime. This repertoire was used not only with regard to tourism but also business. When this discourse was used in connection with business it was to portray an image of South Africa that would hold promising opportunities for foreign investment, but that foreign companies realise the threat – which is once again deemed to be very warranted - of investing in South Africa because they risk becoming victims of crime. We see this in the following excerpts:

Something like that affects us economically because now people don’t, no one wants to, foreign investors do not want to invest in a country that this is going to happen because they going to think... ‘it censors me doing that if it is so high risk’ (Kurt)

it’s affecting us, our economy, umm, businesses are, don’t wanna come to South Africa, they know they getting robbed every month they not gonna come in here (Tanya)

While these actually constitute two very different kinds of risk - the loss of personal possessions and personal injury in the case of tourists and the loss of company held goods or assets in the case of foreign companies - these are described as though they are one and the same. The consequence of constructing violent crime as having an effect on the country's image in this way is that violent crime is portrayed as robbing not only individual citizens of possessions and physical, mental and emotional integrity, but that it also robs the country of capital that it could be making from tourism and foreign investment. By robbing South Africa of the capital that it could be making from tourism and foreign investment, violent crime also has an effect on the economic and material conditions of all South African citizens.

The second aspect that participants constructed as an effect of violent crime was effects on the victim. This repertoire was used to depict the impact of an incident of violent crime on the direct victim of that crime and the family and friends of that victim:

people don't know the impact, impact it has on the victim's family when these things happen because it can really hurt you for years and years and years you know, just to think how your loved one went, in so much of pain and brutally (Candice)

While this is undoubtedly so for many people who are direct victims of an incident of violent crime, what is striking about this discourse is the way in which the victim is constructed. Sometimes the victim was constructed as completely innocent, someone who happened to be in the wrong place at the wrong time or as a random victim. At other times the victim was constructed as someone who instigated the incident in some way or who has a relationship with the perpetrator, and that relationship is either the reason for that incident taking place or the reason why that particular person was the victim. Victims were usually constructed as innocent and random when participants were talking about crime in general. However, when they were recalling incidents that had happened to themselves or people that they knew, or particular kinds of violent crime, they often recounted some explanation for that particular person being the victim, or some kind of relationship between the victim and the perpetrator. We see this in the following excerpt in which the participants speak about victims in general being innocent and random, and later describe a particular incident of violent crime where they give a reason or explanation as to why that person was the victim:

Monique: ... do you think that there's anything about people that makes them more likely to be victims?

Wrong place, wrong time, (Mmm) I think that's the big thing but, I don't know, also if you look vulnerable, like where we were there was no one else around us (Jason)

In this excerpt Jason first states that being in the wrong place at the wrong time makes people victims, implying that victims are random and that you cannot predict where or when the next crime will happen. However, he then talks about an incident in which he and his girlfriend were mugged and says that they were victims because they made themselves vulnerable by going to the beach where there were no other people around. This provides a reason for why they became victims and also implies that they were partly to blame for becoming victims because their actions made them vulnerable. He does not construct himself and his girlfriend as innocent victims when doing this. We also see this discrepancy between the way victims in general are constructed and the way Tanya constructs herself as the victim when she says:

anyone can be a victim, the biggest to the smallest person, you can be a rugby player, you can be a ballerina, you can be a victim but you know you learn that, that you don't have to put yourself in certain circumstances, like I was saying, if you know an area is rough don't go there, you know and I learnt the hard way

In this excerpt Tanya constructs victims in general as innocent and random but constructs herself as partly to blame for having become a victim because she went to a "rough" area.

Myles makes this distinction between the innocent and blameworthy victim, and the random and known victim, with regard to gender. For him, women are innocent and random victims, but men instigate their victimhood through their actions:

victims are mainly women but you do, yes you do get guys being stabbed and violent crime yes but violent crime towards men is I'd say is built up stuff, if someone's got a grudge with someone, that's when males will fight (Mhmm) but in terms of being robbed or like a hijacking it would be women but in terms of someone being shot, guys don't get shot for nothing, that guy did something to this guy to make him shoot him

Palesa talks about how she might become a victim because a criminal might arbitrarily pick her as a victim one day:

but you never know, there's probably someone watching you or you know so it's just kind of like, just me living my daily life until one day this guy decides 'okay, it's her today' kind of thing

But how women and children become the “head of the household’s” victim by virtue of their relationship to him:

you'll find that maybe the head of the household is a man who's probably been retrenched or lost his job or something... and this family will also be putting strain on him to try find another job kind of thing so I think they end up taking it out on their families who essentially are the wives and the children

What these excerpts indicate is that there is no single and straightforward way in which participants construct the relationship between victims and perpetrators and the relationship between victims and blame. Participants have very specific reasons for constructing these relationships in the way that they do and these reasons are usually dependent on the way in which the participant constructs victims. These constructions of the victim as innocent or instigator, and unknown or known to the perpetrator, have implications for the way in which people will construct the effects on the victim. These will also affect whether participants deem the victim to be worthy of sympathy or not, and whether the participant will relate to the victim or not. It also has implications for who can be blamed for an incident of violent crime. I discuss these implications and how they can lead to a victim-blaming discourse under the theme of *'the victims of violent crime'*.

A third aspect that participants constructed as an effect of violent crime was effects on potential victims. Participants used this interpretive repertoire to talk about the ways in which violent crime affects people beyond the immediate and direct effects of having been a victim of violent crime. People used this discourse to talk about themselves, in other words, to talk about the kind of effects that violent crime has had on them even if they have not been direct victims of violent crime, nor have family or friends that have been direct victims of violent crime. Participants constructed this discourse by making reference to the ways in which violent crime lessens their quality of life because of the things that they have to do to avoid becoming a victim or to keep themselves safe. One of the ways in which participants

expressed this was to talk about the ways in which they make the physical spaces that they spend time in impenetrable to dangerous outsiders (locking doors and windows, having burglar alarms, only spending recreational time in shopping centres) as having to live in a cage, such as in the following excerpts:

it's unfair to expect people to live the way they do because of other people's selfishness, umm, it's not a, it's not a way to live, I mean we, we live behind two sets of burglar guards and we haven't been outside for two weeks now, that's just, it's unfair (Laura) everyone's lifestyle revolves around it, people are too scared to go outside, you can't go to things like you used to anymore, so our lifestyles have been resorted to shopping centres and staying at home (Jason)

Participants also expressed these ways of protecting yourself and avoiding becoming a victim as lessening the quality of their life, by talking about having to change themselves, or their image. They spoke about having to portray themselves as someone who is not an easy target for crime and someone that people would not want to 'mess with'. Participants articulated this negatively as they spoke about it as limiting the ways in which you express yourself, or having to portray yourself as a particular kind of person, rather than being able to express the 'real' you. Kurt articulates this in the following excerpt:

You know you, you, you can never really express yourself, express you for you, for truly who you are you can never... because of the people I sit with, a self awareness precaution you automatically take is that, you let them know that, I'm not someone that you gonna, you can easily take advantage of so if you are thinking of anything like that just know that I'm not. The crappy part is that you have to keep that up always, you will always be keeping up an appearance (Mhmm) no matter who you are, you'll, you must always

And Myles when he says:

what's my precautions? Myself... I'm going to walk in with a certain face, with a certain posture, with a certain thing to say 'I'm not causing anything but I'm not afraid to fight'... another precaution is the like clothes I wear... But I don't really, I do have those clothes because I like them and sometimes ya, in terms like to look, like you know, if I know I'm going somewhere or I'm gonna be in someplace where things could get out of hand, dress the part

Another way in which participants spoke about violent crime as lessening the quality of their lives was by saying that the violent crime situation made them fearful or anxious of becoming a victim. In addition, they spoke of needing to always be cautious to avoid becoming a victim, as Emily does when she says:

you don't realise how much anxiety you have being back here and scared that something's going to happen to you, something's going to happen to your family... I think people are a lot less independent because of it (Emily)

Participants constructed these ways of protecting yourself and avoiding becoming a victim as unfair and abnormal, as they stated that people should not have to live their lives in this way or lessen the quality of their lives in these ways.

The use of this interpretive repertoire depends upon people identifying themselves as potential victims of violent crime. This is because all of the effects that people speak about when using this discourse relate to things that they do to protect themselves from violent crime, or effects that violent crime has on them because they see themselves as potential victims. The effect of constructing the effects on potential victims in this way - as lessening the quality of their lives - is important because most of the participants identified themselves as potential victims. I make no claims about the generalisability of these results to the population of South Africa as a whole. However, if this does reflect the population and most South Africans identify themselves as potential victims, then most people see violent crime as lessening the quality of their life, even if they are never direct victims of an incident of violent crime.

A repertoire that provided a noteworthy contradiction to the repertoire of the effect on potential victims of lessening the quality of their lives, was the discourse of living life anyway, in spite of violent crime. Participants used this discourse to state that they will not restrict their lives, or restrict their life to such a degree as deemed necessary to protect yourself from becoming a victim. They used this discourse to express that they will still do things that they enjoy doing, even if these things put them at risk for becoming a victim. Participants also used this

discourse to state that they would not live their lives in fear or anxiety of becoming a victim. This provides a significant contradiction because all of the participants that used this repertoire are participants that identified themselves as potential victims. One participant used this discourse even when she stated in no uncertain terms that she would become a victim:

there's nothing that I do differently everyday but you never know, there's probably someone watching you or you know so it's just kind of like, just me living my daily life until one day this guy decides 'okay, it's her today' kind of thing (Palesa)

There could be a number of reasons why participants used this discourse. This discourse may have developed as a coping mechanism as it is difficult to feel fearful and anxious all the time. The use of this discourse might illustrate that people may have a tendency to overestimate their potential to become a victim as they downplay this risk if it means restricting their lives in certain ways. However, it may also demonstrate a fatalism about crime and people becoming perpetrators, and an acceptance about the inevitability of victimhood. Whichever of these reasons may be behind participants' use of this particular repertoire, what it points to is a tension that participants experience between taking preventative measures and completely giving up their rights to a 'normal' life.

A final aspect that participants constructed as an effect of violent crime was the effects on identification. This interpretive repertoire expressed the ways in which participants described themselves as victims and how violent crime changed the ways in which they perceived others, and how they thought others perceived them. I have called this the effects on identification repertoire because participants used this discourse in one of three ways, to describe how they identified themselves as potential victims, how they identified others as strangers and dangerous people, and how they think others identify them as either potential victims or potential perpetrators.

The first of the elements concerned the way participants identified themselves as potential victims. When identifying themselves as potential victims participants spoke about who potential victims are, or what characteristics make someone more likely to become a victim. Of the characteristics that they listed, the participant would then pinpoint those characteristics that they think they possess and talk about these as indicators that they are potential victims.

Some of these characteristics - such as owning material possessions - were the same across many interviews but some characteristics applied only to particular participants. For example, Palesa spoke of how being a woman made her a potential victim:

everybody knows that when a woman is being taken hostage or whatever they normally rape, it's probably the first thing that comes to mind like 'am I gonna be raped?'

And Chris talks about how his sexuality makes him a potential victim:

I also kind of feel sometimes at risk in terms of my sexuality... you know, you, you read about sort of these gay bashing incidents and you know sometimes you, you find yourself in situations which are, are, you know are somehow similar and it, it does go through your mind and you do kind of feel a little bit at risk (Chris)

Another characteristic that applied to particular participants was race. As mentioned above, while some of the black and coloured participants spoke about how being black and coloured made them less likely to be victims of violent crime, some of the participants spoke about how being white or indian made them more likely to be victims, such as in the following excerpt:

Monique: Do you think there are other characteristics that might make you more likely to be a victim?

Chris: because I'm white, I think that certainly does play into it. (Chris)

As well as in Jason's response:

Monique: ...who do you think are the victims of violent crime?

Jason: Black and white, definitely black and white, white people aren't the only victims but I think, I think most of the, the crimes are black on white, I don't know if it's because of a racism issue or because of easy targets because white people are the minority or if they just submit so easily but black and white definitely are both victims, but I'd say majority white people

The second element of this interpretive repertoire concerned the way participants identified others, particularly how they identified strangers and who they identified as dangerous. Participants used this repertoire to construct the image that violent crime has negatively

changed the way in which they perceive of strangers and people in general because violent crime has made them suspicious of everyone. This repertoire feeds into the discourse of lessening the potential victim's quality of life because this identification of strangers as dangerous, and the need to be suspicious of everyone, is lamented by participants who used this discourse. These participants expressed this as a negative situation and make reference to a former utopian situation in which it was not necessary to be suspicious of strangers. The implications of this discourse for the people that participants identify as being the perpetrators will be discussed under the theme of *'the perpetrators of violent crime'*.

A final element of the changes in identification concerned the way others identify you. Participants used this repertoire to speak about the ways in which other people might identify them as potential perpetrators of crime, such as in the following excerpt:

the way maybe a white person will see you, maybe something has happened, like negatively in their life... like maybe someone in their family has been killed by a black person and so on and that's, sort of like you can sense that negative feeling towards you when you go up to some certain individual... Maybe they know someone that has, that has experienced crime or even they themselves... and that maybe they take it out on every... black person that they see (Mandla)

It is clear from this excerpt and from the interviews of other participants that used this repertoire that they are identified by others as potential criminals because they are black. And it is not only white people that have been former victims of crime that identify them as potential criminals but others do so too. This is shown in the following excerpt in which Otto talks about why he thinks that the policy of police being able to shoot perpetrators, commonly referred to as the 'shoot to kill' policy, should not be used because innocent people might be harmed:

It scares me because ah, if somebody is ah, is, is mistakenly taken as a criminal they, they in trouble. (Mhmm) Like you know Myles, ah, he might be walking along and you know for a fact his outward appearance he might look like a criminal, he dresses quite ah, zany sometimes and ah, I've got three sons and what happens if one of them are taken as a criminal (Mhmm) and they shot (Otto)

In this excerpt it is not just that his son is black but three factors together serve to make him someone that might be mistaken for a criminal, the fact that he is young and black and a man. Otto also talks about the way his son dresses as another factor that might be used to identify him as a potential criminal. Given that his son (Myles) places so much emphasis on the way he dresses, and constructs the way he dresses as one of the ways in which he projects himself as someone that cannot be 'messed with' and will not be a potential victim, it seems that the way he dresses makes him identifiable to others not only as someone who will not be a potential victim, but rather a potential perpetrator.

These three elements of the effects on identification repertoire construct particular people as potential victims and particular people as potential perpetrators. This is done along race lines with white and indian people being constructed as potential victims, and black and coloured people being constructed as potential perpetrators. This has negative consequences for both the people identified as potential victims and those identified as potential perpetrators. For those who self-identify as potential victims, taking up residence in the position of potential victim means that one will have to live with the fear and anxiety of being a potential victim. They also have to implement measures and restrict their lives to keep themselves safe, measures and restrictions which we have already seen have been constructed as lessening the quality of the potential victim's life. For those identified by others as potential perpetrators there is the emotional impact of being identified as a potential criminal by others, which is at odds with the way participants identify themselves, which Mandla describes when he says "you can sense that negative feeling towards you". But it also has implications for physical harm if you are identified by others as a potential criminal, especially if those others are people that have been legally sanctioned to use violence against you, like the police, as Otto describes above.

4.2.3 *'prevention and deterrence'*

Participants used the conceptual cluster of *'prevention and deterrence'* to discuss issues relating to how they feel they can protect themselves from violent crime, how violent crime should be prevented and deterring people from committing violent crime. Almost all of the participants interviewed conveyed that they believed that people are responsible for protecting themselves from violent crime, for preventing violent crime from happening, and that they personally need to protect themselves from violent crime. Participants spoke about this need to personally protect themselves from criminal violence and to prevent violent crime from happening because the police and the government cannot be relied upon to keep people safe and prevent violent crime from happening, such as in the following excerpts:

when there are these crimes that are being committed, people most times think about calling the police as a last resort where they can't sort it out (Palesa)

Monique: And what do you think about the police force in South Africa, do you think that they are operating efficiently with regards to dealing with violent crime?

Sumeshan: I don't think.

So in my, the way I see it there's, nothing has been put in place to make, for me to be sure that the crime, like the violent crime is decreasing (Mandla)

When using this repertoire participants construct the government and the police as inept, inefficient, unconcerned and corrupt. Constructing the government and the police in these ways allows the participants to talk about the ways in which the government and police are at fault and how they can be blamed for the problem of violent crime in South Africa. Doing so allows participants to lay the blame for violent crime somewhere else, but also construct themselves as proactive and fighting against a war of crime, despite terrible odds and no help from the government and police. In a sense it allows them to claim the moral high ground.

Under the theme of *'responsibility'* I discuss the way in which participants talk about needing to protect themselves and how compiling a host of things to avoid doing, constructs a discourse of victim blaming. While I will not discuss this theme at this point I would like to point out that the theme of *'prevention and deterrence'* reinforces this victim blaming

discourse, because if people are responsible for their own safety then they only have themselves to blame when they become victims of violent crime. I would also like to highlight that the repertoire of ‘anyone can be a victim’ and the repertoire of ‘being in the wrong place at the wrong time’ which I discuss under the ‘*victims of violent crime*’ theme, contradicts the ‘*prevention and deterrence*’ theme. When victims are constructed as anyone, or people who were unlucky enough to be in the wrong place at the wrong time, the implication is that people cannot protect themselves from being a victim and that someone can be a victim regardless of the measures that they take to protect themselves. The reason for the contradiction found in these two interpretive repertoires is that participants use them in different contexts and to achieve different ends. As discussed above, participants use this interpretive repertoire to construct the government and police as ineffective and unconcerned and to construct themselves as proactive soldiers against crime. However, when participants use the discourses of ‘anyone can be a victim’ and ‘being in the wrong place at the wrong time’, they are positioning themselves as victims, entitled to the sympathy that victimhood garners.

This discourse of people needing to be responsible for protecting themselves from violent crime is both reinforced by, and reinforces, a discourse of fatalism about violent crime. Many participants expressed the idea that violent crime is not going to get better any time soon or that it is just going to get worse, such as in the following excerpts:

it’s growing worse but you can see that there are changes like in South Africa like from previously and now, (Mhmm) you can see that now, there’s definitely a change (Mike)

It’s escalating yes, it’s escalating like, I wouldn’t say at an exponential rate but it’s escalating for sure... so it is going to get worse (Myles)

This repertoire of the need to protect yourself from violent crime supports the discourse of fatalism because the discourse of needing to protect yourself from violent crime constructs the government and police as inept and unconcerned. This inefficiency and lack of concern relates not only to protecting people from violent crime but also dealing with crime in such a way so as to lower the incidence rate. When poverty, unemployment and lack of education are constructed as causes of violent crime, this also reinforces the discourse of fatalism. This is because poverty, unemployment and lack of education are such huge problems in South

Africa that even if we had the resources to deal with them they would not be dealt with overnight, but would require a long period of time. Mandela expresses this when he says:

for jobs to be created and to get the right people to be trained for that kind of job and to put through people, I mean put the youngsters through an education system where they can go through high school, tertiary, where they can find jobs and be trained for the jobs, it's gonna take a very long time. It's sad but it's not gonna stop now I don't think (Mhmm) ya, it's not gonna stop now (Mandla)

This discourse of fatalism in turn strengthens the repertoire of needing to be responsible for protecting yourself from violent crime because if the rate of violent crime is only going to get higher, then it becomes even more important and more necessary for people to protect themselves from violent crime. The assumption is that if the rate of violent crime is going to increase then there will always be victims, and it becomes the responsibility of the individual to ensure that they are not the victim.

Corruption was an aspect that many participants constructing the '*prevention and deterrence*' theme spoke about. As discussed above, corruption was also used by participants when constructing the causes of violent crime and listed it as one of the major causes of violent crime. Participants spoke about this aspect of corruption in a very similar way when constructing the '*prevention and deterrence*' theme as participants constructed this as a reason for why violent crime is not being prevented or cannot be prevented and why people are not being deterred from committing violent crime. This is illustrated in the following excerpt:

the police themselves, not only do they perpetuate it, they help perpetuate it in certain degrees you know, just letting it go and accepting bribes and stuff like that so you know ya, partly it is the law enforcers themselves that are involved in all this you know perpetuating of crime, violent crime (Myles)

In this excerpt we can see that participants construct corruption as something that not only hinders the prevention of violent crime and the deterrence of people committing violent crime, but in fact aids and encourages people to commit violent crime.

Participants spoke about three different groups of people – the government, the police and the ordinary citizen – and how their being corrupt encourages people to commit violent crime or fails to prevent violent crime from happening. With regard to the government, participants spoke about the government leading by example and people thinking that if members of government could get away with being corrupt then so could they. This is clearly shown in the following excerpts:

Well first of all stop corruption at all levels because if you don't set the example there's no point in trying to tell other people do what you yourself wouldn't do (Mhmm). So first of all you've got to have a corrupt free administration and then it's got to flow through, permeate through to the other phases, the other echelons. (Dave)
it stems from the head, if the head is rotten the whole body's gonna be rotten. And you see it happening because of government, people seeing, citizens are seeing the government work that so citizen's are trying to work that (Brad)

Participants also spoke about the police as failing to prevent violent crime from happening and from bringing violent criminals to justice because they are corrupt. In the following excerpt Mandla talks about how there are certain members of the police force that people know can be paid to get rid of case dockets:

I mean the people in the township they know which policemen to go to when they need something to be done and when they need a docket to be lost or anything of that nature... so they know that if we go to this guy and pay him off he will lose the docket and so on (Mandla)

We also see this construction when Myles recounts an incident in which a man stabbed someone during a fight, but despite the victim having laid a charge and there having been witnesses to the incident, the perpetrator was not prosecuted because of corrupt police:

his uncle works for the SAPS (Mhmm) and the uncle made a plan to just render the docket useless all of a sudden or it turned up missing you know. So you know I know policemen that are involved far in certain, they do accept bribes, they do a number of things. (Myles)

Constructing corruption within the government and police in this way allows the participants to lay the blame for failures in prevention and deterrence of violent crime at the feet of the members of government and the police. However some participants constructed corruption within the police in an understanding and sympathetic manner and constructed this as something that could happen to anyone in the police's position, or that the police are only human and make mistakes like the rest of us, such as in the following excerpt:

but the thing is, like this policemen, they're also human beings as well, they've also got a potential to be criminals and so on but they're also part of that same community... it doesn't mean that now like they are away from society or they are different from society... if I'm a policeman and my next door neighbour is a criminal I mean you grew up together and at a certain stage I became a policeman but the guy next door [inaudible] to become a criminal, I don't think like on a later stage I would arrest the guy, I will still communicate with him I mean he's my neighbour, I grew up with the guy and so on
(Mandla)

Participants who constructed corruption within the police in this way were people who spoke about various members of the police that they knew personally, were friends with, or police officers who were members of their community. I believe that the difference in the way these participants constructed corruption within the police - as something that is understandable or that anyone might do - occurred because they did not want to 'demonise' these police officers that they knew, liked, and in some instances were friends with. They instead wanted to find some reason for redeeming them.

Although most participants spoke about corruption using a top-down approach, in other words that corruption begins in the upper levels of power and spreads downwards, some participants spoke about the corruption of the average citizen as a reason for violent crime not being prevented or people not being deterred from committing violent crime. The corruption of the ordinary citizen was constructed as ways in which people engage in illegal activities themselves that involved corruption in some way, or ways in which they allow other people to be corrupt by creating an environment in which corruption is tolerated. This illustrated in the following excerpt:

People like normal citizens also because for me, I feel if there's no market for something it won't happen. (Mhmm) Like an example is that stolen stuff, if there's no market for stolen stuff there wouldn't be stolen stuff (Brad)

These participants constructed corruption as something that we have to guard against ourselves and 'police' ourselves to make sure that we are not corrupt and creating an environment in which corruption is tolerated. While this discourse of the corruption of the ordinary citizen may seem to suggest that the participants were shouldering some of the responsibility for violent crime occurring, the participants that spoke about the corruption of the average citizen as a reason for violent crime all spoke about incidents in which other people were corrupt. In this way other people are still to blame for violent crime, if not the government and the police, then other South African citizens.

Prisons and their role in preventing criminal violence and deterring people from committing violent crime was something that was spoken about by most participants constructing the theme of *'prevention and deterrence'*. All of the participants who spoke about prisons within this interpretive repertoire discussed them as institutions that should be operating in the interests of prevention and particularly deterrence, but did not. There were two very different ways in which participants explained why jails do not act in the interests of prevention and deterrence. The first of these was to construct jail as not harsh enough to make people fear going to jail or to teach them a lesson if they do go to jail. This discourse is illustrated in the following excerpts:

in prison there's DSTV, they get three meals a day, they get access to gyms, they can get degrees... and I feel like they being treated so well that most of them when they get out they do the same thing that they did so they can get back in (Palesa)

it's a holiday. Us poor taxpayers are grafting our butts off and are, are paying for them to live... the prisoners get like three course meals, meals, three meals a day, they get a swimming pool to use, they get DSTV (Tanya)

For the participants who used this repertoire to explain why prisons do not act in the interests of prevention and deterrence the solution is to make prisons strict, hard and more unpleasant places to have to spend time in. The use of this repertoire leads to the conclusion that were jails more inhospitable places to spend time in, that this would be a major motivating factor

preventing and deterring people from engaging in violent crime. The assumption within this discourse is that were prisons harsher, everyone would be afraid to be sent to prison and that this fear would override any of the causes of violent crime. Within this discourse criminals are constructed as rational agents who make a choice of committing crime or not committing crime based on the risk of going to jail.

Other participants drew on a very different explanation for why jails do not prevent or deter people from engaging in criminal violence. These participants disputed that jails were not harsh enough and instead acknowledged that they were very brutal, difficult and dangerous places. These participants explained that the reasons prisons did not prevent or deter people from committing violent crime is that they do not take away the causes of violent crime. For these participants, making jails stricter and more inhospitable is not a simple solution to the problem and in fact will not make any kind of difference until you deal with the factors that cause people to commit violent crime. These participants speak about how people that commit violent crimes are aware that jails are severe and dangerous but that their lives are such a battle for survival. For these people, life outside of jail may be just as, if not even more, hazardous, gruelling and vicious, so it doesn't make all that much difference whether they are caught and put in jail, or not caught and left to live their difficult lives. The following excerpts illustrate this construction of prisons and why they do not prevent violent crime or deter people from engaging in it:

cause definitely sure in jail you don't live a, a like, good life there, it's hard, instead of changing your ways you will go back and do crime (Mike)

so if you come, if you survive the jail and come back and do the very same thing what can we do to you? (Mike)

like the way people talk about jail it is harsh but still these people they don't really care if they go to jail or not (Mandla)

no way of making money, he's got no food and he cannot go live on hand outs for the rest of his life and you find that this person is like, his life is stuffed, that's where it stops hey (Mandla)

In opposition to the repertoire of making jails harsher as a deterrent, this discourse does not assume that everyone would be equally scared of going to jail, but rather that because life outside of jail is so difficult for some people the prospect of going to jail is not necessarily a frightening one for these people. Within this repertoire, the decision for potential criminals is not based on the risk of going to jail but rather about how to make a living and survive in conditions of poverty and unemployment. This discourse of harsher jails not deterring people from committing violent crime unless you do something about the causes, was used by participants who spoke about having known criminals living in their community and becoming friendly and familiar with the criminals in the community - a point which I discuss next. Because these participants are familiar and friendly with people in the community that may be criminals, it is possible that they have had conversations with these people about their time in prison and that their knowledge about what prison is like comes from people who have spent time in jail. These are participants who also live in townships and as such are more likely to live among people who are either unemployed or living in desperate financial situations, as opposed to those participants that live in suburbs or more affluent areas. While both these participants and those that live in more affluent areas may identify poverty as a reason for violent crime, it is possible that those participants that live in townships experience this poverty in a more personal and tangible way than those that live in the suburbs and more affluent areas because they live close to poor people. This may be why they use a discourse that emphasises the need to deal with the causes of violent crime, rather than making jails harsher.

As discussed above participants constructing the theme of *'prevention and deterrence'* spoke about having to personally protect themselves from violent crime because the government and police cannot be relied upon to keep them safe. In order to keep themselves safe, participants described a host of things to do to avoid becoming a victim and other things that should not be done to avoid becoming a victim. Most of these things revolved around being vigilant and constantly aware of your surroundings, not going to places that are unsafe, not displaying your material possessions and not making yourself vulnerable. I consider these ways of avoiding becoming a victim in detail under the theme of *'responsibility'*. While participants may have mentioned diverse places as being unsafe, or had distinctive strategies for being vigilant, or different ideas about what kind of material possessions could not be displayed, these approaches for avoiding becoming a victim were similar and mentioned by most participants.

What did differ greatly between participants were their perceptions of where criminals come from, and ways of dealing with those criminals to avoid becoming a victim. Participants spoke about where criminals come from in one of two ways, they either identified criminals as coming from places outside of and different from where they live and not being members of their community, or as living in the same place or a similar place and being members of their community. These repertoires constructed criminals as either unknown in the case of the repertoire of criminals living in other areas and not being part of their community, or as being known in the case of the repertoire of criminals living in the same areas and being members of the same community. The use of these discourses occurred along racial lines with white and indian participants using the discourse of the criminal living in different areas. While white and indian participants never actually specified where they thought criminals come from, we can infer that they come from areas different to the ones that these participants live in, when we examine other aspects of violent crime that they spoke about. For example, participants said that the poor committed violent crime and that those with material possessions were the victims. This implies that criminals came from places in which the poor lived and went to commit crime in more affluent areas. Considering that most of the white and indian participants live in the suburbs, this means that they were constructing criminals as coming from places other than the suburbs and places that were poorer. We can also infer this from the way in which participants spoke about feeling safer in places in which there were more white people or in which people had more money. Because these people are constructed as being safe, the implication again is that criminals come from areas that are not white or areas in which people do not have money.

In contrast to this repertoire of criminals coming from other areas, black and coloured participants used the repertoire of the criminal living in the same areas, such as in the following excerpts:

we as my own people who stay there, we don't, we don't help it because of the way we carry on, the crimes we commit in our area (Kurt)

people that like perpetrate, the perpetrators of these crimes are from the township... the perpetrators of the crimes, of the violent crimes are usually from the townships (Mandla)

in townships [inaudible] there are guys who never went to school (Mhmm) so if that's the case, so the only thing that can make them survive is to commit crime so that they can earn a living (Mmm) you know. So most of the time those are perpetrators of crime (Mike)

The use of these repertoires informed the ways in which participants spoke about dealing with these criminals to avoid becoming a victim. For white and indian participants who constructed criminals as coming from different areas and being unknown, their understanding about how to deal with these criminals revolved around staying away from strangers, keeping strangers out of their home, and only going to places where the other people in that area - while not necessarily known personally by the participant - were people that they identified as being similar to them, and therefore safe. This is evident in the following excerpts:

We've got security gates, our house is double storey so on the upstairs we can lock ourselves completely in, every single door has got a security gate and we've got an alarm system... when you get home at night you know it's quickly lock the car doors, sprint to the front door, lock the front door. (Emily)

you see a guy that's strange in your house you don't open your gate (Sumeshan)

I think, and, and this is not any like kind of indication of racism or anything like that but I think generally in places where, you know, there's a lot more white people and you know, I just feel a lot more at ease in terms of safety umm, you know a place where it's predominantly white umm, you know I wouldn't feel at ease in Umlazi carrying a laptop and my cell phone as I would do in the Pavilion (Mhmm) umm, or in a white suburb or something like that (Chris)

The points of similarity used by participants using this discourse to mark people as the same as themselves were usually race and economic status, we see this in Chris's comment above.

For black and coloured participants who constructed criminals as living in the same areas that they do and being members of the same community, their understanding about how to deal with these criminals was to get to know the criminals and be known by them, to be polite and friendly towards the criminals and make it obvious to these individuals that they did not think themselves better than the criminals. This is illustrated in the following excerpts:

it's in the township but I do feel safe where I live... it's like a community and everyone knows everyone, everyone knows who's a criminal and who's not a criminal... so I feel safe 'cause people know me around that area, people know me like in their township (Mandla)

if you grow up in township for an example, you know most of the people are living there (Mmm) so you don't feel like scared where you grew up (Mike)

The participants that make use of this discourse explain that criminals do not prey on those that they know or are friendly with, or live in the areas that they live. Living among these criminals and getting to know them therefore becomes a strategy for keeping safe and avoiding becoming a victim. This is reinforced when these participants spoke about feeling unsafe and vulnerable when passing through areas of a township in which they did not know the people that lived there, and in turn were not known by these people, such as in the following excerpts:

there are certain areas that maybe I wouldn't feel as safe to go into like certain townships I wouldn't feel as safe to go into 'cause you don't know everyone (Mhmm) and like you don't know the people around that area, those people around that area they don't know you (Mandla)

there are other sections where you haven't been there, umm, definitely sure, there you'll be scared to walk on those areas 'cause, 'cause you know that you know, you know nobody there (Mhmm) you know, so for you it's, it's very easy to be a victim (Mike)

These two discourses represent different ways of managing a potential threat that criminals may pose, one strategy is to keep the potential criminal away and the other is to keep him close. This explains why there is also such a marked difference between participants when they speak about whether they feel safe in their homes or not. While there were some exceptions, white and indian participants usually said that they did not feel safe in their homes and that they feared criminals breaking into their homes. In contrast, black and coloured respondents said that they did feel safe in their homes, and while they sometimes had the same kinds of security measures protecting their home from burglary, fear of burglary and break-in was not a major concern to these participants, like it was to white and indian

participants. It might seem ironic that those participants that identify criminals as living in the same areas that they do feel safest in their homes while those participants that identify criminals as living in other areas feel least safe in their homes. However, when we consider that one the strategies of those who identify criminals as coming from other areas is to keep strangers away and out of their home, this strategy is severely compromised should someone manage to break into their home. And for those who identify criminals as members of the same community, they have equated living among and knowing the criminals as a strategy for keeping safe. The fact that they live among the criminals therefore makes it unlikely that criminals will break into their home.

The reason for the use of these two different discourses occurring along race lines has to do with who participants identify as criminals and which race groups participants identify criminals belonging to. This is a point that I discuss under the theme of *'the perpetrators of violent crime'* but what I do want to note here is that all participants, regardless of the race they identified themselves as, identified black and coloured men as criminals. This is a point that I discuss in detail under the theme of *'the perpetrators of violent crime'*.

Whether participants used the 'keep criminals away' or the 'keep criminals close' repertoire, the assumption within the use of both of these is that it is strangers that pose a threat as it is strangers, rather than people that you know, that will commit a violent crime against you. What this discourse does not allow or make room for is those violent crimes that are committed by somebody known to the victim. Only two of the participants spoke about instances in which violent crimes occurred precisely because of the intimate relationship between the perpetrator and the victim:

you find that maybe the head of the household is a man who's probably been retrenched or lost his job or something so if he doesn't have an income to provide for his family essentially he will take it out on his family (Palesa)

recently we had like three or four men that wanted their wives murdered, or murdered them, because they had, they want, they were having an affair and they wanted to get rid of the wife. So, hmm [amused] and then there was another one, this ah, a young indian couple, she was like in a love triangle, she and her husband murdered her lover (Candice)

Statistics and research show us that the majority of violent crimes are committed by someone that the victim knows (Burger, 2010; Jaberg, 2010). There seems to be a discrepancy then between who participants perceive as the people that pose a threat, and those that may in fact pose more of a threat but are not identified as such. I believe that this discrepancy comes from the ways in which South Africans define and understand violent crime. While participants might define acts in which someone is assaulted, raped or murdered by an acquaintance, friend, family member or partner as a violent crime, these are seldom the types of violent crimes that immediately occur to participants when asked about violent crime. This may be because of a perception that violent crimes are committed because the perpetrator wants some kind of material gain. This is evident when we consider that poverty and unemployment are the two factors that most participants cite as causes of violent crime and that most participants speak about not displaying material possessions as a way of preventing becoming a victim.

A final factor that many participants discussed under the *'prevention and deterrence'* theme was that of race. The consensus amongst participants that spoke about race when discussing *'prevention and deterrence'* was that white and Indian - but particularly white people - are more at risk of becoming victims of violent crime and that black and coloured people were less likely to become victims. This was the same for all participants, regardless of the race that they identified themselves as. Participants did this by talking about how they felt more vulnerable as whites or indians, for example in the following excerpts:

Monique: Do you think there are other characteristics that might make you more likely to be a victim?

Chris: [Inaudible] because I'm white, I think that certainly does play into it.

or by talking about how being black or coloured made them less vulnerable to being victims of crime, such as when Otto talks about how being a black man makes him less likely to be a victim:

I'm black, never mind I am classified as a coloured, I'm black and my outward appearance might be as an african and most of the crimes are perpetrated by young, black africans, it's sad, my brothers, (Mhmm) but that's the truth and then you'll find that because I am of the same appearance and colour and that (Otto)

The black and coloured participants also expressed this by referring to how being white made people more likely to be victims, such as in the following excerpts:

your average white boy, your average victim, you know what I mean because also the victims are also these young white kids walking around in like Musgrave (Myles)

I think in most cases the white people are the, like the targets of these people, like I would think so as well, I would think so, like in most cases (Mandla)

The reason for white people being more likely to be victims was explained in three different ways, one was in terms of white people having more material possessions. While participants did not state explicitly that they thought that white people had more material possessions, we can infer this from the numerous points in the interviews in which white people were associated with wealth and black people were associated with poverty and a lack of basic necessities. We can also infer this from the way in which participants spoke about criminals committing crime in suburbs, like Mandla does in the following excerpt:

Monique: And then on the other side, who do you think are the victims of violent crime?

Mandla: Mmm, it's people who have what these people are looking for, it's people with cars, it's people with money and so on and you'll find that in most cases like it's not the people in the township, beside the fact that they are known, those people are known in the township so they will go into a suburban area or into an urban area

Secondly, this was explained in terms of white people being easier targets, for example:

for most guys the white people are the easier targets for them (Mandla)

And thirdly, in terms of black people feeling that it is more legitimate to steal from white people, rather than from black people, as Mandla explains when talking about how perpetrators will steal a car with a Blue Bulls or Sharks sticker on it but not one with a Kaiser Chiefs or Orlando Pirates sticker on it:

I don't know if it's racist or it's just, they feel that they, it belongs to them and so on but it happens like that as well, but I've heard of situations like black people they wouldn't steal cars if they know for sure that it belongs to a black person (Mandla)

What is interesting about this is that many of the participants that used these kinds of repertoires, when asked directly who the victims of violent crime are, said that anyone can be a victim. I think that the reason for this is that to identify white and indian people as more likely to become victims of violent crime, and black and coloured people as less likely to become victims represents a racialised rationalisation of how violent crime occurs. If they were to use this discourse as well as the discourse that black people are more likely to be criminals - a point that I discuss in detail under the theme of '*the perpetrators of violent crime*' - participants may feel that they are being racist. To avoid presenting themselves as such they try to negate any appearance of racism by saying that anyone can be a victim, or that anybody can be a perpetrator.

As South Africans we have been made so aware of and sensitive to issues of race that I feel that we have become scared to even mention race for fear of being thought of as racist. One participant expressed that he did not care about being thought of as racist as he strongly identified with the 'white as victim' discourse and as such felt that it justified his racism. All of the other participants made some kind of reparation for using repertoires that they thought might have made them seem racist, trying to negate this by allowing that anyone can be a victim and that anybody can be a perpetrator. What is particularly remarkable about this is that this same strategy was used by almost all of the participants, regardless of the race that they identified themselves as. As it is likely that these participants have lived very different lives because of their different race, but also because of other factors like having lived in different areas, going to different schools, working in different environments and so on, it is noteworthy that these participants used the same repertoires about race when speaking about victims and perpetrators, and that they used the same strategies to try and counteract any presentation of racism. I think that this may point to a pertinent point about social constructionsim, that the discourses that we are exposed to provide a framework for the ways in which we understand and interpret the world. I do not have sufficient data in this study to claim that these participants are all exposed to the same or similar kinds of discourses about crime and race. However, there are certain discourses about crime and race that 'dominate' (in a number of different ways, for example by appealing to crime statistics as confirmation)

discussion about crime and race, both in everyday, casual conversations, as well as in more formal contexts and media. It is possible that all of the participants have been exposed to these discourses, possibly as a result of all being middle-class, and included them in their ‘interpretive toolboxes’.

4.2.4 *‘the victims of violent crime’*

Participants that used this conceptual cluster spoke about people that they think are most often the victims of violent crime or the kinds of people that are most likely to be victims of violent crime. When I asked the participants who they thought were the victims of violent crime, some of them stated immediately who they thought the victims were or characteristics that make people more likely to be victims. However, many of them started off by saying that anyone can be a victim of violent crime. It was usually only when I probed further or asked them further questions about this that they spoke about the kinds of people that are more likely to be victims or characteristics that make people more vulnerable to becoming a victim. As discussed above, participants spoke about how a person’s race makes them either more likely, of less likely to be a victim of violent crime. By extension then, participants were identifying white people as the people most likely to be victims. In the same way in which they wanted to counteract presentations of racism when speaking about prevention, I believe that this is why they started these discussions by saying that anyone can be a victim. However, when asked for details they usually discussed a number of factors or characteristics that made people more likely to be victims, or the kinds of people that were more likely to be victims. In this section I examine each of these.

The first aspect that participants usually spoke about as a factor that makes people more likely to be victims of violent crime was having more than other people or possessing something that other people don’t have. This usually referred to material possessions, particularly cars, jewellery and cell phones as illustrated in the following excerpts:

you've got material things (Mhmm) more especially, there's, it's another example, if you've got car, maybe you've got material things like cell phones and stuff and then you are a victim, definitely 'cause they will be looking for your material things (Mike)

the people that are very rich that ah, get burgled and get held up and stuff, it's because of their, because of what they have... Mountain Rise... it's top, all rich people there... it's where the people know that they can, they will get something if they get into one of those houses (Candice)

but some respondents also used this idea to refer to non-tangible, social goods like status, position, or being physically attractive, as exemplified in the these excerpts:

Monique: Do you think that there are specific characteristics or factors that make some people more at risk of becoming victims than others?

Dave: Well yes, I would imagine the more prominent you are, the more likely you are

there's a lot of jealousy going on... it's that kind of thing as 'oh, this guy maybe is good looking'... if you are good looking or you are dressed well you know that girls will be attracted to you, they don't like that (Kurt)

When this repertoire referred to materials possessions, the reasoning used to substantiate why having these possessions made you more likely to be a victim was that criminals would be able to steal these possessions and then sell them to make money. This interpretive repertoire confirms, and is confirmed by the repertoires of poverty and unemployment as causes of violent crime, and the discourse of making jails harsher to prevent violent crime, as these discourses also portray criminals as rational agents who are motivated by economic gain, rather than by emotion. However, when this discourse was used to refer to social goods, the reasoning behind why possessing these is more likely to make you a victim is very different. The reasoning given for this is that people will be jealous of you if you possess things like a high social status, a position of authority, or good looks, and that they will therefore be motivated to commit some kind of crime against you because of this jealousy. In contrast to the discourse of material gain, this discourse portrays criminals as people who are often motivated by emotion or something other than material gain. While participants did not use this discourse to refer to race, it also serves to confirm that criminals may be motivated to

commit acts of violent crime for reasons other than economic gain and also that sometimes crime - particularly violent crime - is committed for reasons that have nothing to do with economic gain.

A further aspect that participants spoke about as making people more vulnerable to being victims of violent crime concerned ways in which people were foolish about crime. This usually related to ways in which people were naïve about violent crime in some way, did silly things or went to unsafe places, such as in the following excerpts:

if you walking with a cell phone on your hand, showing it, obviously you are going to be at risk, where your handbag is in the car, front seat, you at risk. There's things that you can prevent (Sumeshan)

we were silly I guess to go down to the beach by ourselves... we didn't have any type of protection on us like pepper spray or tazers or anything... and I guess people also just need to be aware and not make themselves sitting ducks. (Laura)

if you look vulnerable, like where we were there was no one else around us, (Mhmm)
luckily it was just the one guy but up against him we were vulnerable (Jason)

Each of these described ways in which people put themselves at risk or made themselves more vulnerable to becoming victims. By describing ways in which people made themselves more vulnerable, or put themselves at risk, the participants were engaging in a victim blaming discourse. In this discourse they describe victims as having become victims because of something they either did to jeopardise their safety or failed to do to ensure their safety. I describe this process of victim-blaming, its effects, and participants' motivation for using it under the theme of *'responsibility'*. What I would like to point out here though is that this provides another contradiction to the idea that anyone can be a victim of violent crime, as it describes victims as people whose behaviour differs in some way from the behaviour of non-victims.

When speaking about the kind of people that are more likely to be victims of violent crime many participants mentioned that women are more likely to be victims. Participants described women as more likely to be victims of violent crime because they are victims of sexual crimes, as in these quotes:

in terms of like the stereotypical kinds of victims that we have umm, gender umm, you know a woman is more at risk of being raped than a guy you know, even though guys can be raped (Chris)

victims of violent crime are women most times. Alright like say maybe an incident where like rape, obviously a man rapes a women (Myles)

women and children, young children like females, they are victims in terms of umm, sexual stuff like rape (Mike)

and because they are less likely and less able to fight back and defend themselves in a crime situation, as shown in the following excerpts:

Victims are women most of the times ya and like cell phone theft, like holding someone up at knife point, give me your phone, a woman they just give, they give it (Myles)

women are powerless at times, they are powerless in terms of physical... those guys that are committing crimes, they know that females are, are like are powerless like in terms of defending themselves (Mike)

Women were both identified by male participants and self-identified as more vulnerable because of their gender. Some of the women participants also expressed that they felt that being a woman meant that were they to be involved in a crime, they ran a greater risk of being a victim of violence as there was always the potential risk of rape, as Palesa identifies when she says:

everybody knows that when a woman is being taken hostage or whatever they normally rape, it's probably the first thing that comes to mind like 'am I gonna be raped?' (Palesa)

This self-identification as more vulnerable should mean that women feel more at risk of becoming victims of violent crime, and this does appear to be the case when female participants describe ways in which they restrict aspects of their life or engage in behaviour to avoid becoming a victim that male participants do not discuss, for example:

if everyone goes up to bed I won't sit downstairs and watch TV I'll go upstairs (Emily)

it's the places you go and to a certain extent for a female what you wear and like your jewellery and stuff like that (Laura)

if for example I want to take my mom's car out I have to state specifically where I'm going because obviously she knows I could be hijacked, I could be raped, I could be killed kind of thing ya, so it does restrict my life (Palesa)

However, in the same way in which the male participants describe that you can't let fear of becoming a victim rule your life and that you have to live your life despite this risk, female participants expressed the same idea. As discussed above, this may be a coping mechanism to help them deal with what would otherwise become an overwhelming fear of risk.

While this was only discussed by two of the participants, the discourse of being unable to defend themselves from attack was also used by these participants to describe children as more vulnerable and more likely to be victims of violent crime. However the source of risk was different for these two participants as one described the source of risk coming from a stranger that had broken into the parents' home:

a child was battered to death, a six year old what could he do, he couldn't do anything to you, whatever you wanted you could just take (Candice)

while the other participant described this risk as coming from the children's father:

Most issues are coming around women and children I feel because... the head of the household is a man who's probably been retrenched or lost his job or something... he will take it out on his family... they end up taking it out on their families who essentially are the wives and the children (Palesa)

In both instances however, children, like women, are positioned as occupying positions of greater vulnerability with regard to becoming victims of violent crime.

A further aspect that participants spoke about when talking about the kinds of people that are more likely to be victims of violent crime related to race. All participants, regardless of the

race that they identified themselves as, spoke about white people as being more likely to be victims of violent crime and some of the Indian participants described how Indian people were also more likely to be victims of violent crime. There were a number of reasons that participants gave for why white people are more likely to be victims of violent crime. The first of these concerned economic status, and participants explained that criminals thought that white people had more money and more material possessions, which made them more lucrative targets for criminals, such as in the following excerpt:

another contributing factor is that they tend to think that white people have more than the black people, than a black person would (Mandla)

Another reason that was given is that white people are 'softer' targets as they will give up their material possessions more readily, and are less likely to put up a fight to prevent their material possessions from being stolen. This is illustrated in the following excerpts:

I think most of the, the crimes are black on white, I don't know if it's because of a racism issue or because of easy targets because white people are the minority or if they just submit so easily (Jason)

Mandla: ...for most guys the white people are the easier targets for them, ya.

Monquie: Okay, easier targets in what way?

Mandla: Like in, I don't think in most cases they would give them like a hassle to fight back... most of them they think that white people are the easier targets and so on, maybe the Indians as well (Mandla)

Another explanation that was given for white people being more likely to be targets is that they are described as being naïve about crime. The reasoning behind this seems to be that white people, and particularly rich, white people, have not been exposed to as much crime as black people because of where they live and the kind of lifestyles they live. Because they have not experienced as much crime as black people have they have not had to develop the same kind of 'street smarts' that black people have had to, and therefore are not as vigilant about crime as black people are. This can be seen in the following excerpt:

the victims are also these young white kids walking around in like Musgrave with their girlfriends they'll [inaudible] because wearing slops, wearing shorts, you wearing t-shirts,

your girlfriend's got a skimpy dress and she's got like this little bag and stuff like that.
(Myles)

Of course, if this is the reasoning behind the repertoire that white people are naïve about crime then it contradicts the idea that white people are more likely to be victims of violent crime. This is because the very reason that they are naïve about crime is that they have not been exposed to it as much as black people have. I believe that the idea that white people are more likely to be victims has become such a 'common sense' discourse that the participants that use the discourse of the naivety of white people have not thought to question why they believe this to be true, and therefore this contradiction has not even occurred to them.

Along with these ideas of it being easier and more lucrative for criminals to choose white people as the targets of their criminal activity, participants also described reasons in which race was the motivating factor rather than some other factor that was a result of someone's race. Participants spoke about this in one of two ways, they either spoke about how criminals thought that stealing from white people is justified because white people own the things that they do as a result of apartheid, such as in this excerpt:

it's like they are taking back what in their minds belongs to them (Mandla)

Or participants explained that black people are motivated to commit crimes against white people because of the anger that was generated during apartheid. This is spoken about as an anger that black people still have, as they still do not have access to the advantages that whites enjoyed during apartheid, for example in the following extracts:

think it's about people being angry that they don't have those resources now and one reason that people are angry that they don't have those resources now is that the black government is in power now (Mandla)

that anger that exists within many black people umm, I would imagine it would have a part to play umm, in violent crime, in any violent crime that might be sort of inflicted against me or my family. (Chris)

These two discourses reflect how apartheid 'created' white victims of crime and black perpetrators of crime.

Apart from the contradiction noted above in which the naivety of white people about crime is as a result of not having been exposed to much crime, I noticed another discrepancy between the idea that white people were more likely to become victims of crime and other things that participants said in their interviews. Participants drew on many examples and incidents of violent crime to explain, illustrate or verify things that they were saying in their interviews. While this was done by most participants, the white and indian participants usually provided examples that they had heard about from other people or that they had read about or seen in the media. While these participants often used examples that were 'close-to-home' in that they were about people that usually belonged to the same community as the participants, these were not usually people that the participants knew personally. In contrast to this, the black and coloured participants provided many examples of incidents of violent crime that had happened to family members, friends or people that they knew personally. While this does not necessarily mean that there are more black and coloured victims of violent crime than there are white and indian victims, the black and coloured participants provided many more examples of incidents of violent crime in which they knew the victim personally. The incidents that the black and coloured participants recounted also often contained more violence, or more extreme forms of violence than those recounted by the white and indian participants. While I do not claim that this can be generalised to the whole country and that black and coloured people are victims of greater numbers of, and more extreme incidents of violent crime, this was the case in this study, and within the scope of this study this refutes the idea that white people are more likely to be victims of violent crime. Research also shows that the category of people most at risk of becoming murder victims are young, black men (Best, 1999; National Victims of Crime Survey, 2003).

4.2.5 *'Responsibility'*

This conceptual cluster concerned whose responsibility it was to protect people from violent crime and whose responsibility it was to prevent violent crime from happening. Participants discussed responsibility both with regard to institutions and with regard to individuals. I will discuss each of these in turn.

Respondents used the conceptual cluster of responsibility with regard to institutions, to talk about the kinds of institutions that they believe have a responsibility to protect people from violent crime and prevent violent crime. They discussed the types of things that they think these institutions should be doing, whether they are in fact doing these things, and possible reasons for not doing these things. The four institutions that participants discussed most commonly were the police, the government, the justice system and the media.

Most of the participants spoke about the government as being the institution that held the most responsibility for preventing violent crime and protecting people from violent crime. This was because the government was constructed as the most powerful public institution and one with the authority to control the functioning of the others. Even when participants spoke about the police, justice system and the media, they often referred back to the government and explained problems within those institutions as a failure of government to establish and manage these institutions appropriately. This is evident in the following excerpts:

I don't think they're doing it at all because you find there's newspapers that are displaying like gruesome murders almost on a daily basis but you always hear about the crimes but not what's being done to prevent the crimes (Mhmm) and the ongoing issues with the commissioner being involved in drugs. And now there's somebody else who's not really a police person who's a commissioner now you know. It puts people on a certain uncertainty about what really government feels about protecting society and justices that people should have (Palesa)

You've got to have a competent force that is well trained and not merely based on affinity to party lines etcetera and you've got to have good training (Dave)

The responsibility of the government with regard to violent crime was constructed very broadly, from sweeping generalisations about crime to very specific aspects. The area of responsibility that most participants spoke about concerned the causes of violent crime.

While some participants spoke about how citizens need to help in dealing with the causes of violent crime, most participants spoke about how this was the government's responsibility. The specific causes that were discussed with regard to this interpretive repertoire were poverty, unemployment and lack of education. All the participants felt that the government was failing to deal with these causes of violent crime. Participants constructed this failure differently. For some, this failure was inevitable because these are such huge and deeply entrenched problems in South Africa that it would be impossible for the government to be able to solve them quickly. This is illustrated in the following excerpt:

It's something that ought to be controlled but it's difficult to eliminate, it could lead to some diminishing of the phenomenon but it cannot be eliminated because the conditions are what they are. People find themselves in need of just filling tummies and fending for themselves and their family (Dave)

Other participants expressed that the government was dealing with these problems but constructed this failure as being a result of the government not doing enough, as in these extracts:

it's just basic things and the government is failing on that (Okay) minus the problems of housing and all the big issues, just basic things that they failing on, just to protect society (Palesa)

government need to be providing umm, necessary services to, to the community so that it can give them like better life (Mike)

Some participants had a much more damning construction of why the government was not solving these problems. For these participants the government was not even trying to solve these problems. These participants expressed that any pledges by the government to solve poverty and unemployment were just hollow words and empty promises, and that the

government had no interest in solving these problems because the people in government are corrupt and only care about their own well being. This is illustrated in the following excerpt:

you see these officials like from the government and so on... they tend to forget the people who are like who are poor and so on, black people in the township, they buy themselves these fancy cars... 'cause they thought like if a black government is in power they would have someone looking out for them as well but they found that no one is looking out, like everyone is looking out for themselves (Mandla)

While participants may have constructed this failure differently, they all expressed the government as failing to deal with the causes of violent crime.

What was conspicuous by its absence during discussion about the responsibility of the government to deal with the causes of violent crime was talk about apartheid. Some of the participants listed apartheid as one of the causes of violent crime, however none of the participants spoke directly about the government dealing with apartheid and its effects when using this discourse. While discussion about dealing with poverty, unemployment and lack of education may be a way of discussing dealing with the effects of apartheid, only one of the participants spoke about anything specifically race related, such as Black Economic Empowerment programmes or Employment Equity policies. I can only speculate as to why participants did not discuss apartheid or specifically race-related issues when using this discourse, but once again it might have been to avoid any appearance of being racist. With claims in the media and other public forums of Employment Equity policies and Black Economic Empowerment programmes being forms of reverse racism, participants might have avoided any discussion about specifically race-related issues for this reason.

The police force is another institution that most participants mentioned as having a responsibility to protect people from violent crime and preventing violent crime from happening. The police were constructed as having a responsibility to create physically safer environments by creating environments in which it is difficult for people to commit crime. This requires the police to have a visible presence in public areas to deter criminals from engaging in crime. This also necessitates the police using the authority and power given to them by the government, along with the policies and laws set by government, to make arrests, or at least stop criminals from committing crime when they catch them doing so. The

participants also constructed the police as failing in these responsibilities. Some participants constructed this failure as a result of the individual police officers who they felt were too corrupt, lazy, unconcerned or inefficient to carry out the duties required of this responsibility, as we see in the following excerpts:

we seeing these things on like things like Special Assignment and Third Degree where all exposing like, even if you don't have your drivers license or you driving under the influence you'll always just have to give the police officer like twenty rand or a fifty rand and you can get off (Mhmm) and go home. (Palesa)

I think it's mainly about corruption. Training? Once you get that first set of training I don't think you go again for training, maybe training as well but mainly corruption (Okay) because I come from Chatsworth and you know, I mean Chatsworth police they don't do anything. (Sumeshan)

there are policemen outside and policewomen who are actually crime committers (Ya) who are working with criminals down there... who are supposed to be protecting the community but at the same time they are perpetrators of, (Mhmm) of crime (Mike)

These characteristics were sometimes explained to extend to senior officers or station commissioners, the failure in this responsibility therefore being a result of improper management. However, some participants related this failure of the police in their responsibility back to the government. For these participants the police fail in their responsibility not because of their own individual shortcomings but because they fail to receive the proper resources, support, training and management from the government. Once again many participants constructed this as the government not prioritising crime prevention. However some participants constructed this as government officials themselves being too corrupt, lazy, inefficient or unconcerned to provide the police with the necessary resources and support to enable them to carry out their responsibility of crime prevention. We see this in the following excerpt:

make sure that you appoint competent people with integrity, ready to make a sacrifice to the country required because it does require sacrifice and ready to be in the service of the population rather than exploiting the population as a lot of these people will (Dave)

However this was constructed by participants, all of the respondents constructed the police as failing in their responsibility to prevent crime and protect the public.

The justice system was another institution that many participants spoke about as having a responsibility to prevent crime and protect people. The participants constructed the responsibility of the justice system as making sure that criminals are removed from society and punished for their crimes and that victims are given some degree of protection or compensation. Participants spoke of the justice system as failing in this responsibility as in these extracts:

I feel that these people are getting off too lightly and it says 'you know what, just do as you please' (Brad)

our justice system is so slack, that is what allows people to just do what they like and what they please and stuff like that ya... I think the laws favour criminals these days, well in South Africa (Myles)

Unlike with the police, the failing of the justice system in its responsibility was always related to the government. This was usually constructed as the government not providing the justice system with the necessary resources to carry out this responsibility, such as not having enough courts, judges or administration staff, or not training judges properly, such as in the following excerpt:

Monique: And do you think that that problem is umm, is that about policies within the justice system or is it that there, those policies are there but umm, reasons like a, umm, a lack of resources they, they aren't being implemented properly?

Mike: Maybe it can be that they are not implemented properly or else it can be that we lacking skills in terms of people who, who carry out umm, justice system in an effective way

However, sometimes this was constructed as government not providing the justice system with laws that deal strictly enough with criminals or laws that make it too difficult to convict criminals. These participants also expressed that the law provides criminals with too many 'loopholes' to escape conviction. This is illustrated in the following extracts:

a lot of people get away with that, cases get thrown out of court for lack of evidence, I know like, Tanya has told me that this person has committed murder but ah, his case gets remanded and remanded and remanded because of lack of evidence so, that's why ah, I think people can, people know that they can get away with it (Candice)

just say we heard you say you murdered somebody and we got you on tape to say that you murdered. Because I didn't get permission to tape you then it's not right, you can't use that evidence, (Ya) that sounds crappy to me (Brad)

Whether this was constructed as a lack of resources or as a problem with criminal law itself, the implication is that the justice system fails in its responsibility to remove criminals from society and punish them appropriately. However, by allowing these criminals to 'escape' conviction it is also failing in its responsibility to provide the victims with protection and some kind of compensation, even if this compensation is simply that the perpetrator is convicted for the crime.

Another institution that some of the participants discussed as having a responsibility to prevent violent crime and protect people is the media. These participants spoke about how the media has a responsibility to inform us about the crime situation in South Africa so that we can 'arm' ourselves with knowledge. Below I discuss how the failure of each of these institutions in their responsibility to prevent crime and protect people provides justification for the discourse of 'the responsibility of the individual' discourse. Participants used 'the responsibility of the individual' discourse to talk about how we need to protect ourselves from crime and prevent crime from happening. Participants who spoke about the responsibility of the media to inform us about crime explained that the media needed to provide us with details about the kinds of crime that are happening, how many are occurring, in which areas, and how they are being carried out. For these participants, knowing such details will make them better equipped to protect themselves because they will have a better idea of how to avoid becoming a victim, such as in these excerpts:

Umlazi is the capital, murder capital of the country you know, if I've seen that in the paper I won't go to Umlazi (Tanya)

I want to know everything that goes on so I know how to protect myself and how to take stands against, to, to prevent myself becoming victim of that (Laura)

This responsibility was felt to apply to national media but particularly to local media. These participants believe that the media has failed in its responsibility to provide us with this kind of information to help us to protect ourselves by not reporting all incidents of violent crime, and only focussing on high profile or unusual incidents. This is illustrated in the following extract:

I work for a newspaper company and I see what stories are edited out of community newspapers (Mmm) and it's, it's not fair how the media and whoever controls the media eventually umm, cuts out things that they don't want you to know... I don't think that the media shows the full story and that they should get more coverage of what really goes on in communities and expose them (Laura)

In addition, participants also express that they do not think that the crime statistics that the media provide us with, or reports of the drop in incidents rates, are accurate or true:

their stats were all wrong, I mean it's like, it's a joke, when we, when we talk amongst ourselves we say "hey did you see what was on TV, the crimes are down, the house breaking's down, the murder's down" [inaudible] that's crap (Candice)

I would think that the statistics are wrong 'cause you find that in some areas, like in some areas or some parts of communities there, there's no proper like way of communicating, of finding out if these crimes have happened, like there are some criminal activities that happen and you find that no one ever finds out about them and they are not recorded and so I would think that it is increasing rather than decreasing (Mandla)

The reasons that participants give for these incorrect statistics are usually that crime is underreported or that the government is purposefully concealing the severity of the problem to project a good image of South Africa.

By not providing us with a true reflection of the crime situation in South Africa, these participants explain that the media have failed in their responsibility to provide us with the necessary information to be able to fulfil our responsibility of protecting ourselves.

The failure of these institutions to prevent violent crime from happening was used by participants as a validation for two other discourses that participants frequently used in the

interviews: a discourse of ‘fatalism about violent crime’ and the discourse of ‘the responsibility of the individual’. The implication of the failure of these institutions with regard to violent crime was that not only was the incidence rate of violent crime not going to drop any time in the near future, it was in fact going to do the opposite, it was going to increase and continue to increase. In this way violent crime became an inevitable part of the future that the participants predicted for South Africa. We see this in the following extracts:

if something doesn't happen about violent crime this, this, this country will self-destruct
'cause it's on a, it's on, it's on a collision course with itself (Laura)

I feel a very bleak future and that's why I'd hate to be married, hate to have kids grow up here 'cause what's, 'cause looking at how it's progressing, how crime is progressing... I don't see it becoming better (Brad)

This repertoire of ‘fatalism about violent crime’ supported the discourse of ‘the responsibility of the individual’, because this provides the rationalisation that if people could not rely on these institutions that were supposed to protect them from violent crime, the onus falls on the individual to avoid becoming a victim. Participants used the discourse of ‘the responsibility of the individual’ to talk about the ways in which people need to protect themselves from violent crime and prevent violent crime from happening. This responsibility is two-fold, firstly, to protect yourself from becoming a victim. Secondly, to try and prevent, or at least lower, the rate of violent crime beyond that which threatens you as an individual, to try and lower the rate of crime in your neighbourhood, your workplace, your community and even in the country as a whole.

The first of these - being responsible for your own protection and avoiding becoming a victim - was constructed by making reference to a host of activities and behaviours that people should do to keep themselves safe, and activities and behaviours that people should not engage in to avoid becoming a victim, in a sense by creating a list of crime do's and don't's. The kinds of activities and behaviours that a person should engage in to keep themselves safe included always being vigilant of your surroundings, only going to safe places, making sure that you always lock doors and windows when you are in your car, home or office, and projecting yourself in public as someone that cannot be ‘messed with’. The kinds of activities and behaviours that people should not engage in to avoid becoming a victim

included displaying your wealth or possessions, going to unsafe places and particularly “town”, going to public places by yourself, walking around at night by yourself, not respecting people, getting lost, doing things that might make you seem stupid or naïve in public, projecting yourself as a soft target and so on.

What is ironic about these lists of crime do's and don't's is that they are contradictory to ideas that all of the participants express at other points in the interview, the idea that anyone can be a victim and that it doesn't matter how hard you try to protect yourself, that you still have the potential to be a victim. The reason for this contradiction seems to be that to concede to the idea that anyone can be a victim and that you still have the potential to be a victim, regardless of the precautions that you take, would lead to extremely high levels of anxiety. It would also lead to a feeling of helplessness because it creates a kind of 'lottery' of victims in which the next person to become a victim cannot be predicted, as victims are 'picked' at random. By creating this list of do's and don't's, participants can evaluate incidents of violent crime and victims according to this list. They can then determine whether the victim engaged in any of the kinds of activities and behaviours which might have put them at risk for becoming a victim. If it is deemed that the victim engaged in any kinds of activities or behaviours that put him or her at risk then this can be considered to be the reason why they became a victim. The participant can therefore avoid becoming a victim in the future by not engaging in any of these. These lists of crime do's and don't's provide not only practical suggestions of how to keep safe but also, importantly, offer participants psychological protection against the anxiety of being a potential victim. While this allows participants to manage the levels of fear and anxiety about becoming a victim it has the unfortunate consequence of setting up an 'innocent versus guilty victim' scenario. When this occurs and the actions of victims are evaluated according to the list of do's and don'ts. If the victim's actions are judged to have been the wrong kind of actions to have engaged in, the victim can then be perceived to be complicit in their victimisation or a blameworthy victim. In the same way in which research and literature on rape records how rape victims are often subjected to a form of victim-blaming (Russell, 1984; Human Rights Watch, 2001), the same may occur with victims of violent crime. The very dangerous implication of this is that it shifts blame away from the actual perpetrator and onto the victim, and the victim is made to feel accountable for their victimisation.

The second responsibility of individuals that participants discussed, was to prevent violent crime from happening, not just within their individual homes but within a broader community or even South Africa in general. This was also constructed as a response to the failure of the institutions that had the responsibility of protecting people and preventing crime. Participants expressed that in order to do this people had to create an environment in which it is difficult for people to commit crime and one in which crime is not tolerated. This required individuals to engage in activities at an individual level, such as reporting incidents of crime that they have witnessed or refusing to buy stolen goods. Many participants also stated that people had to 'police' themselves and not engage in any forms of corruption or criminal activity themselves, such as paying police officers to 'lose' dockets or not paying traffic fines. This is because doing so creates an environment in which crime and corruption is allowed to flourish because it becomes normal and something that everyone does. Participants also spoke about how if crime was not being dealt with adequately at the top - at the level of the government and police - that a bottom-up approach would need to be implemented in which people in their own individual capacity could lower the rate of violent crime.

4.2.6 *'The Perpetrators of Violent Crime'*

Participants constructing this conceptual cluster spoke about the kinds of people that commit violent crime or those that are most likely to commit violent crime. When talking about who commits violent crime and who is most likely to, participants spoke about this explicitly, by stating certain characteristics that they think perpetrators share. But they often spoke about this implicitly too when talking about things such as the causes of violent crime, safe and unsafe places and precautions that they take to avoid becoming a victim. In this section I discuss those characteristics that participants mentioned most frequently, as well as those that have important implications for the way we 'see' others and the way we 'see' ourselves. I also consider when these characteristics are stated openly and when they can be inferred through talk about other aspects of violent crime, why this happens at particular points of the interview, and the effects of this.

The three types of people that most of the participants listed as the people most likely to commit violent crime were the poor, the unemployed and the uneducated. We see this in the follow excerpts:

because some people that are poor and people who don't have jobs they resort to crime
(Palesa)

a greater percentage of those criminals wouldn't do crime if there was not a need, if they were given a job, employment (Otto)

I almost think poverty is a gateway to stealing which is a gateway to other sorts of crimes but I think poverty needs to be tackled and probably to me, my biggest thing, I would imagine the two biggest things would be education (Emily)

For the participants, people that are poor, unemployed and uneducated are those that are most likely to commit violent crime as they state that it is poverty, unemployment and a lack of education that are the causes of violent crime and it is therefore a logical conclusion for participants that it is these types of people that are most likely to commit violent crime. Participants expressed this explicitly and in direct response to questions about who is most likely to commit violent crime. Participants were able to state this so explicitly because the

rationalisation behind this is that people are motivated by economic means to commit violent crime. Under the next theme, *'the good versus the bad criminal'* I discuss how participants feel that some perpetrators of crime are justified in committing crime because they are 'good' criminals in some sense, either in their motivations, the nature of their crime or the way in which they commit crime. Because poverty, unemployment and lack of education were all problems that participants felt that the government should be solving, they constructed people that committed crime because they are poor, unemployed or uneducated as exonerated, because the inference is that these criminals are not responsible for their circumstances and are just trying to survive and make a living. Poverty, unemployment and a lack of education are spoken of as characteristics that people experience, rather than characteristics that people possess. These extracts illustrate this:

I think poverty like is one of it as well, like ya, I would think poverty would be one of the things, unemployment, if people are unemployed like they've got no means to survive... a lot of guys it's financial issues and so on so they couldn't continue with their studies
(Mandla)

People find themselves in need of just filling tummies and fending for themselves and their family (Dave)

When participants spoke of poor, unemployed or uneducated people as the people most likely to commit violent crime they were therefore able to say this explicitly. This was because they were talking about 'good' criminals, and the participants were therefore not making reference to any sensitive or distasteful biases that might have cast them (the participant) in an unfavourable light.

The idea that it is the poor, unemployed and uneducated that commit violent crime is also discussed by participants as 'common sense' and normal. When talking about something that is common sense and normal people feel that it is not necessary to explain or defend what they say because the assumption is that everyone knows and agrees with that knowledge because it is common sense. This is another reason why participants could explicitly state that it is the poor, unemployed and uneducated that are most likely to commit violent crime.

However, these characteristics could be used in the construction of the ‘bad’ criminal when they were accompanied by references to laziness, lack of ambition, lack of creativity or choice. This is because laziness, lack of ambition and lack of creativity were spoken of as reasons for people’s poverty, unemployment or lack of education. When participants spoke of how people were poor, unemployed or uneducated because they were lazy, lacked ambition or lacked creativity, the allegation is that it is their own fault that they are so, rather than being victims of circumstance. When participants spoke of people who are poor, unemployed or uneducated in this way, they are no longer the ‘good’ criminal but become the ‘bad’ criminal, as the implication is that they have control over whether they are poor, unemployed or uneducated. We see evidence of how participants use these characteristics to depict people as having control over poverty, unemployment and lack of education in the following excerpts:

my whole family went without a, any income for a year but we didn’t go out and kill, we didn’t go out and rob... every individual has an op, has, has, has freedom of choice and it’s their, up to them to say ‘I’m a strong person, I will go out and I will clean people’s gardens to get a couple of cents so I can eat tonight’, it’s up to the individual because choosing crime is the easy way out (Tanya)

before that foreign person came, none of you all decided to open up a shop in that area, he opened up a shop (Mhmm) then, now that he has a shop there and you have nothing, or maybe now you have the money to open up a shop you angry because he took your place there... But to be honest I think it’s because even though maybe some of those people... too lazy sorry to find a job (Kurt)

Similarly, when participants spoke of criminals as having made a choice to commit crime, they are being depicted as ‘bad’ criminals because the inference is that there are other ways to survive and make a living, but that criminals opted to commit crime instead, therefore making the wrong or immoral choice. When criminals are depicted as having made a choice to commit crime, even when they are poor, unemployed or uneducated, the implication is that they are ‘bad’ because they have control over whether they commit crime or not. Palesa expresses this when she says:

Some people instead of using some opportunities that they can get to better their lives just choose crime over that (Palesa)

Participants listed other characteristics that they spoke of as characteristics that perpetrators or potential perpetrators possess. The two most commonly listed were greed and corruption. The following excerpts show how participants spoke of perpetrators having these characteristics:

I think it's about greed, they, they've been given so much and all they can think of is taking more and I think that's how it all, it all happens, is take, take, take. (Jason)

in government, ah, they can be like other perpetrators, it's just that with government they, they actually, it's not that they go there and do this like themselves but they have like ways of like doing things behind the scenes (Mike)

In opposition to people that committed crime because they are poor, unemployed or uneducated, participants spoke of these characteristics of perpetrators as characteristics that made them 'bad' criminals. While the rationalisation behind these characteristics is also that perpetrators are motivated by economic means, unlike the construction of people who have no control over their circumstances and commit crime to survive or make a living, these characteristics are ones that, once again, hinge upon choice. The assumption that participants make about these characteristics is that people have a choice to be greedy or corrupt and that people that make the choice to be either greedy or corrupt have made the wrong or immoral choice. The following excerpts show us this:

we talking about big scale things whereby jewellery stores, and I don't think that's, that's just greed and that's not on at all (Brad)

there are guys who are, let's say umm, who are powerful in terms of money and stuff, okay. In order for them to continue their business or whatever, they will be using people who are vulnerable, for example those ones that never went to school... they'll be using them in order to do whatever they wanna do (Mike)

Also, greed and corruption are constructed as personal, internal, or personality faults of the individual, rather than as being a result of external circumstances or faults within the environment. Greed and corruption were spoken about as characteristics that people possess rather than characteristics that people experience. Constructed in this way, the implication is

that people can control whether they are greedy or corrupt. When people commit crime because they are greedy or corrupt then, they are constructed as the 'bad' criminal.

Similarly to the characteristics of poverty, unemployment and lack of education, participants were able to state these characteristics explicitly because of this construction of greedy and corrupt perpetrators as 'bad' criminals. By constructing greedy and corrupt perpetrators as 'bad' criminals, participants are drawing on a discourse of moral consensus. This discourse operates on the assumption that there is a commonly known and agreed upon knowledge of what constitutes morally correct actions and morally incorrect actions. By drawing on this discourse participants are able to construct greedy and corrupt perpetrators as 'bad' criminals without having to explain why they are bad criminals, because this body of commonly known and agreed upon knowledge about morality dictates that greedy and corrupt people engage in morally incorrect actions. Participants are therefore able to state these characteristics explicitly as they are making reference to commonly agreed upon ideas about morality, and to state them explicitly would not cast the participant in a negative light.

Poverty, unemployment, lack of education, greed and corruption were all listed by participants as characteristics that perpetrators either experience or possess. Participants could list these characteristics explicitly because as explained above, to do so would not place the participant at risk of presenting themselves in an unfavourable light. Below I discuss race as a characteristic that participants 'worked' much harder to defend and justify when speaking about it explicitly, and often spoke of it implicitly to avoid a negative presentation of themselves.

With regard to gender, with a few exceptions, participants always spoke of perpetrators as men or as 'he'. This was done both explicitly:

it would seem like I'm being biased if I say it's men (Mhmm) but I've never myself seen a woman perpetrator you know just on a rampage and going and killing everybody (Palesa)

they mainly boys (Candice)

And implicitly:

And those guys that are under poverty, for them a solution to each and every problem that are having is to end up doing crime (Mike)

Participants never explained why they thought that perpetrators were always men and this was because they were drawing on a discourse of men as perpetrators of violent crime. Because this discourse of men as perpetrators is presented as common sense, participants did not feel the need to explain this. The one time that a participant did describe why it was men that committed violent crime, was when Palesa spoke about men beating their wives and children because they feel responsible for earning an income for the family, and when they cannot find a job they become frustrated and make their wives and children the objects of this frustration:

maybe the head of the household is a man who's probably been retrenched or lost his job or something... he will take it out on his family (Palesa)

Another characteristic that most participants spoke about when talking about who the perpetrators of violent crime are, or the people that are most likely to commit violent crime, was race. While participants often stated that anyone, of any race, could become a perpetrator of violent crime, and while there were a few instances in which participants spoke of incidents of violent crime in which the perpetrator was white or indian, black and coloured men were almost always identified as the people who commit violent crime, and as most likely to commit violent crime. This held for all participants, regardless of the race that they identified themselves as. This was done both explicitly and implicitly.

When this was done explicitly it was usually in direct response to the questions of “who are the perpetrators of violent crime?” and “who is most likely to be the perpetrator of violent crime?” in the interview, such as in the following excerpt:

not all black people are the bad guys (Laura)

All of the respondents that explicitly identified black and coloured men as those most likely to be violent criminals thought that this made them sound racist, and tried in some way to negate an image of being racist by making disclaimers or providing some kind of reason for why they identified these particular people, such as in these extracts:

the perpetrators as well, they expected to, I mean in, in the cultures that they come from which is majority the black culture, it's a horrible thing to say but it is (Laura)

[clears throat] colour, I would think mainly blacks, majority, like if you give the full reasons, maybe with ah, the population, there more blacks that's why it looks like more blacks, but in proportion it'll [inaudible] as a racist since there's so many more blacks than coloureds and indians and (Ya) whites, you know (Candice)

I'm going to sound like such a racist umm, a lot of the times black men I would say but then, I mean I've certainly read instances of you know other races ... can obviously change but I think in South Africa it's predominantly sort of black men. (Chris)

Even black and coloured participants, when making this claim so explicitly felt the need to justify it, as Myles, who identifies himself as a coloured male, does in the following quote:

don't think I'm being oppressive and what I've said about coloured people I don't have love for my community, yes I do, it's just that my examples of violent crime was what I can see around me, that's what I've said to you so it's nothing, I'm not biased or racist towards my own people or whatever ya. If I knew something about anybody else or racial group outside of that I would have said it (Myles)

The one exception was a white, male participant that identified very strongly with the position of white victim and therefore felt justified in making claims about black and coloured men as perpetrators. We see this in the following excerpt:

Now, I think, to be as unracist as possible, no I can't really do that, I, black people straight (Jason)

This identification of black and coloured men as the perpetrators and potential perpetrators of violent crime occurred more frequently in the interviews implicitly, and this held both for participants that made this identification explicitly, as well as for those who did not. This implicit identification occurred when participants spoke about other aspects of violent crime. For example, when asked about which areas they felt safe in, both white and black participants referred to areas in which there are large numbers of white people. For example Chris, a white man says:

I think generally in places where, you know, there's a lot more white people... in a white suburb or something like that (Chris)

And less safe in areas that are thought of as being black or close to townships:

driving down Spine road from work (Mhmm) umm, you know there's, that's, that's always on my mind (Chris)

I wouldn't waltz through West street or something like that with my laptop (Chris)

And Kurt, a coloured man, talks about feeling safer in a wealthy 'white suburb' than in Wentworth:

If I went to a different area like maybe Durban North, I would, I would feel, I would be less vigilant. I know that there's not so many things I must watch out for (Mhmm) as, when I'm in my own area (Kurt)

And how "town" is perceived of as an unsafe area:

Like I know when I go into a place like town which everyone's like 'I'm so scared', most of the people, coloured people I sit with on campus never go to town. No one goes, they never go to town, it's like 'town, are you mad?' or it's like a big thing when they, when she says to them 'Kurt can take, Kurt can take a taxi to town by himself'

While Kurt does not actually state that he thinks that black people are more dangerous or that black people are more likely to be the perpetrators of violent crime, when I asked him which areas he felt less safe in he spoke about "town". He used "town" to describe central Durban. We can see in his comments about "town" that the reason that he feels that "town" is less safe than other areas is because of the kind of people in "town", namely young, black men and women.

And Myles, a coloured male says:

I know where's not safe so obviously I go to safer places like you know I, I kinda go to clubs that are kinda upmarket and you know I won't go drink in a shebeen... if I go to the movies in the Pavilion or Gateway I'm, I'm not gonna get stabbed

In these excerpts participants did not state explicitly that they thought that black men are the perpetrators of violent crime. However, by asserting that they felt more safe in areas in which there are large numbers of white people, and less safe in areas where there are large numbers of black people, these participants were identifying black men as dangerous as potential perpetrators of violent crime, and white men as safe as non-perpetrators.

This comment by Myles above also relates to another way in which participants identified black and coloured men as potential perpetrators by referring to economic status and wealth, as in this extract:

but you don't see someone with a BMW saying 'I need a better BMW, I'm gonna rob that guy and take his' (Laura)

In the interviews participants often associated white people with wealth and affluence and black people with poverty and lacking basic commodities. The following excerpt shows this association:

Monique: ...you were saying that umm, there were a lot of factors that, that make umm, the majority of criminals or, or the majority of criminals are black people for a number of, of different factors

Laura: Ya, lack of education and poverty

I am not asserting that participants think that all white people are wealthy and all black people are poor, or that only black people can be poor and wealth is the reserve of whites. The association is not as simple as white equals wealth and black equals poverty. However, there are numerous points in the interviews in which participants associate white with wealth and black with poverty and it is important to acknowledge these because this has implications for who participants are both absolving and incriminating when they say things like: "people with money never commit crime". If participants understand that those with money are white, the inference is that white people do not commit violent crime.

This repudiation of white men as the perpetrators of violent crime also occurred when participants spoke about the ways in which white men are only involved in very narrow, or isolated kinds of crime or violence, as in these excerpts:

I don't think there's many white people that are doing violent crimes apart from the odd bar fight, I don't think there's any violent crimes that are done by white people (Jason)

Monique: And then people that are not poor, are not black or coloured and don't need to commit crime because of things that they don't have and (ya) they need to get, do you think those kinds of people ever become violent criminals?

Myles: Nah, I don't think they become violent criminals. They can commit crime yes, anybody can commit crime but I don't think that they become hectic, like you know your jail drunk felons or you know stuff like that.

By absolving white men of being the perpetrators of violent crime in this way, the consequence is that perpetrators are necessarily non-white.

Participants also spoke about criminals coming from the townships, such as when Mike talks about feeling vulnerable to crime when walking through sections of the township to get to his home:

when I have to go home I have to pass through some areas that I know that they are not that good in terms of, ah, okay, let me put it this way, they, most of the people within that area are crime committers

and in the following excerpt:

it's people from the townships who go out into certain areas and like maybe into urban areas and to towns and so on and commit these crimes (Mandla)

When participants spoke of how criminals come from the townships, this was also a way of constructing black and coloured men as potential perpetrators of violent crime, because the vast majority of the people living in townships are either black or coloured. If criminals are

described as coming from townships, the implication is therefore that they are likely to be black or coloured.

Another way in which participants spoke implicitly about black and coloured men as perpetrators and potential perpetrators of violent crime was in response to what I have called the “shoot-to-kill” question. I asked participants what they thought of the policy that Bheki Cele had just implemented prior to the time of the interviews, making it easier for police officers to shoot people that they thought were in the process of committing a crime. Some participants stated that they thought that it was a good policy as the country needed to adopt stricter methods for dealing with crime, and that this policy would lower the rate of crime. With the exception of these participants however, most participants stated that they did not agree with the implementation of this policy and that it would lead to negative consequences. While participants differed with regard to the reasons why it would not be a good idea to implement this policy and what the negative consequences would be, almost all of them stated that it would result in innocent people being killed. However, the way in which participants spoke about innocent people dying differed and this difference sometimes occurred along racial lines. When some of the black and coloured participants spoke about innocent people dying as a result of this policy they spoke about family members, friends and themselves personally as being at risk of being shot because they might look suspicious to the police. We see this in the following excerpts:

It scares me because ah... I've got three sons and what happens if one of them are taken as a criminal (Mhmm) and they shot (Otto)

if you see me and I look suspicious and you shoot me where's my protection (Mhmm)
where's my right to, you know, defend myself in court and all those things (Palesa)

In contrast, when white and indian people spoke about this policy they spoke of how it would lead to the death of *other* innocent people who looked suspicious to the police, as in Candice's quote below:

my daughter is studying law and when I watched it on the TV... she said that 'now you were saying, you giving the police freedom to kill, they can abuse that freedom to kill 'cause they will be killing innocent people'

What these excerpts show us is that black and coloured participants think that they, or their family or friends might be at risk of being killed because police might think that they look suspicious. This aspect alone does not necessarily mean that black and coloured participants think that it is their race that makes them look suspicious, it might be because they are men, or young, wearing a particular type of clothing, are in a crime-ridden area and so on. However, white participants, even those who were young men, always spoke of other people being at risk of being killed and never spoke of feeling at risk themselves. When we compare the differences in the responses of white and black participants to the 'shoot to kill question' I think it points to race as being the difference in the participants' opinions. The black and coloured participants thought that their race made them suspicious to other people, especially the police, while the white participants believed that they did not look suspicious to the police or others because they are not black. This was another way in which black and coloured men were implicitly constructed as the perpetrators of violent crime in the participants' interviews.

Speaking about apartheid as one of the causes of violent crime was another way in which participants implicitly constructed black and coloured men as the perpetrators of violent crime. As discussed above, when participants spoke of apartheid as a cause of violent crime they constructed it as a cause in one of two ways, either as residual anger from apartheid, or as relative deprivation. When this was constructed as residual anger and resentment, participants spoke of how black people still harboured anger and resentment towards white people because of the cruel and oppressive policies that were imposed on them by a white government and white citizens during apartheid. Constructed in this way, this is not a general anger and resentment between races but the anger and resentment of black people directed at white people. When this is explained as a cause of violent crime then the implication is that the perpetrators are black and the victims are white. When this is constructed as relative deprivation it is constructed as poor black people being angry about not having access to the advantages enjoyed by white people, even under a black government. When constructed in this way it is again not about general anger between races or between people of different socio-economic classes but specifically the anger of black people directed at white people. When this is explained as a cause of violent crime the implication is that perpetrators are black and victims are white. In this way these discourses concluded that apartheid 'created' black perpetrators and white victims. This was yet another way in which black and coloured men were implicitly constructed as the perpetrators of violent crime.

By talking about places that they felt safe and did not feel safe, wealth and poverty, white people only being involved in certain types of crime and violence, apartheid as a cause of violent crime and whether the “shoot-to-kill” policy put them in danger, participants implicitly constructed black and coloured men as perpetrators of violent crime. This seemed to happen implicitly for one of two reasons, either the participant did not have a disclaimer or way of negating that they were not being racist by making use of these discourses, or else participants were not aware that they were constructing black and coloured men as perpetrators by using these discourses. Discourses are powerful when their use and their effects are ‘invisible’. This may happen when discourses are presented as fact or common sense and particularly if people are consistently exposed to the same discourses. It is possible that the participants have been exposed to these discourses so often that they become common sense, so that participants are not even aware that they are using them and that by using them they are not only reproducing them but are constructing black and coloured men as the perpetrators of violent crime.

What is particularly noteworthy about this is that most of the participants, regardless of the race that they identified themselves as, identified black and coloured men as the perpetrators of violent crime, whether explicitly or implicitly. While some of the participants spoke of past illegal transgressions that they may have been involved in, none of them identified themselves as being a criminal now or ever having been one in the past. Because of the particular characteristics of perpetrators and potential perpetrators that participants spoke about, some of the participants could distance themselves from perpetrators and potential perpetrators by virtue of not possessing or experiencing these characteristics. This was the case for the female and white and indian participants. However, for the black and coloured male participants, being black or coloured and male meant that they could be grouped in a category of people that are identified as potential perpetrators. I was interested to see if the black and coloured male participants used other characteristics to distance themselves from people that can be identified as potential perpetrators. I found that some of these participants did this by referring to education and choosing to work. Participants would use education as a point of difference between themselves and perpetrators by talking about how they chose to get an education while potential criminals did not. We see this in the following excerpt:

some of them maybe you went to school with in high school and maybe they dropped out of high school and started to commit these crimes but you continued with your studying and then on the way, they took their path, you took your path (Mandla)

I suppose even laziness, lazy to, lazy to finish school and then you'll, you'll tell your dad how this school isn't for me or school isn't my thing (Kurt)

Participants would also speak about how they had chosen to get a job while perpetrators had chosen to commit crime as another way of distancing themselves from potential criminals. Participants used this point of difference particularly when they were talking about people that they had grown up with that had become criminals or people that lived in the same areas as them that were now criminals, such as in the following excerpts:

I remember like on one weekend we were sitting with some of the guys in the township and they were talking, like this guy, he commits crime and then he makes his money and everyone was talking about how much they make and so on and some of the people were saying they, like they make this much money and he was saying that he wouldn't work for that kind of money... the guys, some of them, they find it's, ya, it's not that, it's easier for them to commit crimes and get that easy money (Mandla)

Another way in which participants distanced themselves from potential perpetrators was to refer to poverty as a cause of violent crime, the implication being that because they were employed and could support themselves they did not need to commit crime. This is illustrated in the following excerpt in which Mike talks about feeling vulnerable to crime when having to walk through certain areas of a township:

So in areas like that and then, and then it's where, more especially you'll find that there's a lack of education, there is poverty in those areas, you know, so definitely sure, those areas are, they are, they are the high risk areas whenever you walk in there 'cause you know the situation there is, it's not very good (Mike)

Myles also uses poverty to distance himself from potential perpetrators and moreover by referring to upbringing and how potential perpetrators may have been raised differently and had a different family life growing up to the kind he did:

Monique: Alright, so you have said that it's mostly males and mostly black men and coloured men. (ya) What is it that makes you as a coloured man, or what differentiates you from another coloured man that does commit violent crime?

Myles: It's sheerly the upbringing, it's hundred percent the upbringing and also your, I dunno can I say like your, your parents... the main thing for me is finance, the income of the parents, how many parents, if there is a parent. (Mhmm) A parent for two things, for guidance and things like a bond between mother, father and child and the finance

With all of these, participants indicated how the causes of violent crime did not apply to them and as such they were not potential perpetrators.

4.2.7 *'The good versus the bad criminal'*

Participants constructed the conceptual cluster of the good versus the bad criminal by talking about how they perceived some criminals as justified in their committing crime, either because of their motivations for committing crime, the nature of their crime or the way in which they carry out the crime. They would judge criminals based on these criteria and if they believed that the criminal or their crime was rationalised, defended or excused according to any of these criteria they were considered a 'good' criminal, if not, they were a 'bad' criminal. These criteria were set up in a series of paired and challenging oppositions, in which one part of the pair represented the 'good' criminals, and the other part of the pair represented the 'bad' criminals. I must point out that, rather than being judgements about competency, these were value judgements about the moral character of the criminal and his crime. Because they were used as paired and challenging oppositions in which criminals were either one or the other, I have discussed these as a series of challenging oppositions, namely: need versus greed, premeditated versus opportunistic, individual versus gang or syndicate and petty versus violent.

The first of these criteria, the criminals' motivations for committing crime, referred to the reasons why someone committed crime and what their goal or objective for committing crime was. Whether a criminal's motivation for committing a crime was constructed as good or bad depended on whether the criminal was deemed to have been committing the crime because of need or because of greed. According to this criterion, those criminals who commit crime because they are poor, unemployed or uneducated were usually exonerated, as this was constructed as being a morally validated reason for committing crime, and because these were usually circumstances which the criminals were seen to have no control over. We see this when Mike says:

those guys that are under poverty, for them a solution to each and every problem that are having is to end up doing crime so that they can actually overcome whatever situation they are faced with so, for them they have no choice but to commit crime

In this extract we see that because these criminals had a morally validated reason for committing crime and because they are thought to not have any control over their circumstances they are constructed as 'good' criminals. This lack of control over their circumstances is important because it reinforces the idea that these criminals either have no choice about whether they commit crime, or equally terrible alternative choices, in order to survive and make a living.

However, when participants constructed criminals as being poor, unemployed or uneducated through some fault of their own such as lack of ambition, lack of creativity or laziness, they are perceived to have control over their circumstances and can be blamed for their circumstances. While being poor, unemployed and uneducated might still be a morally validated reason for committing crime, this element of control over their circumstances changes the construction of these criminals. When participants understand criminals to be in control of their circumstances, the implication is that they have the ability to change them and therefore do not need to resort to crime. If these criminals do engage in crime then it is through choice and not through necessity. People that are understood to have a choice are deemed as having made the wrong choice morally if they resort to crime. When participants speak about how criminals are poor, unemployed or uneducated because of their own faults, they are therefore constructing a 'bad' criminal. This is illustrated in the following excerpts:

some people instead of using some opportunities that they can get to better their lives just choose to do crime over that (Palesa)

before that foreign person came, none of you all decided to open up a shop in that area, he opened up a shop (Mhmm) then, now that he has a shop there and you have nothing, or maybe now you have the money to open up a shop you angry because he took your place there... too lazy sorry to find a job (Kurt)

When participants speak about greed being criminals' motivation for committing crime they are constructing the 'bad' criminal. Many participants spoke about how some people commit crime because they are either greedy or corrupt. Both greed and corruption carry the implication of choice, in that people do not need to be greedy or corrupt but choose to be. Not only are greed and corruption damning in terms of choice but they also carry the added moral indictment of the criminal having wanted more than was necessary. The implication with greed and corruption is that there is recognition of people having legitimately attained some level that was sufficient to satisfy need, but then these people wanted more, and that their motivation for committing crime was this excessive want for more. This is particularly pejorative in the case of corruption. While someone's actions might be wrong morally or ethically if they are greedy, accusing someone of corruption suggests that their actions are also illegal and often involve taking something away from others that are rightly and legally entitled to it. When participants use greed or corruption to explain a criminal's motivations for committing crime they are therefore constructing a 'bad' criminal. We see this in the following excerpt:

it's just become so easy, people are just become greedier and greedier, umm, ya, it's just become easier to be more vio, more, I don't know become more violent but it has just become easier to take what you want rather than to just go about the right routes to getting it. (Laura)

The nature of the crime was judged according to the challenged, opposing oppositions of premeditated versus opportunistic, and individual versus gang or syndicate, and criminals were constructed as 'good' or 'bad' accordingly. When participants spoke of criminals as engaging in opportunistic crime they were constructing them as 'good' criminals. This is

because opportunistic crime carries connotations of being haphazard and coincidental rather than organised and professional. Even if someone uses opportunistic crime to survive, the suggestion is that it satisfies immediate needs. In contrast, premeditated crime carries connotations of being organised and professional and something that someone can not only make a living from, but a lucrative living. This criterion also involves consideration of how much of a choice the criminal had in committing the crime. For someone engaging in an opportunistic crime we expect that they only made that decision once, in the heat of the moment. On the other hand, we expect someone engaging in a premeditated crime to have had to prepare for it, and therefore had to make many decisions surrounding the crime, each originating from the original decision to commit the crime. Participants also speak of those criminals that engage in premeditated crime as using more violence than those that engage in opportunistic crime. In this way the person engaging in opportunistic crime is constructed as the 'good' criminal while the person engaging in premeditated crime is constructed as the 'bad' criminal. We see this construction at work when Brad says:

the organised crime, that's more violent... the lay man most probably would want something to eat and actually not want to harm people (Mhmm) just to get something to eat but the organised ones and those are those with the intention, they will come with guns and weapons

When participants spoke of criminals as committing crime as part of a gang or syndicate they were constructing the 'bad' criminal. This is because a gang and particularly a syndicate would necessarily need to be organised in order to commit crime, this means that the type of crime that they engage in is mostly premeditated crime. Also, like premeditated crime, gangs and syndicates carry connotations of operating for a profit and that they are usually how their members make a living. The inference about criminals who commit crime as part of a gang or syndicate is therefore that these criminals constantly make the decision to engage in crime, and that they are being greedy because they are engaged in crime to make a profit rather than just to satisfy immediate needs. We see this in the following excerpt:

They professional, they know what they doing, it's strategy, they've planned it, they know where they going, what they doing and how are they doing it. They actually premeditate it, it's like they suss the place out and the, how things operate before they even target those areas. (Brad)

On the other hand, criminals who engage in crime as individuals rather than in groups are more likely to be constructed as the ‘good’ criminal. This is because the opportunistic criminal is always spoken of as an individual as it would be difficult for one person to run a big and very profitable crime operation. Also, participants depict someone that commits crime to satisfy immediate needs as more likely to be engaging in crime alone, rather than as part of a gang or syndicate. In this way the criminal that commits crime as an individual, rather than as a member of a gang or syndicate is constructed as the ‘good’ criminal.

With regard to the criterion of the way in which the crime is carried out, the challenging opposition that was usually used by participants to judge them as either a ‘good’ or a ‘bad’ criminal, was whether they had committed petty or violent crime. While I asked people in the interviews specifically about violent crime they often spoke about what they regarded to be petty crime. They spoke about petty crime both as a way of defining violent crime (by explaining how it is different to petty crime) and in recalling incidents of crime, or speaking about other aspects of crime. The distinction that participants usually drew between petty crime and violent crime was that petty crime involved incidents of crime that were not serious, or in which people did not get hurt in any way. Participants constructed criminals that engaged in petty crime as ‘good’ criminals and those that engaged in violent crime as ‘bad’ criminals. We see this in the following excerpts:

Well I draw the margin... petty theft like stealing this, stealing chocolates or... There’s a difference for me between, there’s violent crime and there’s like just, like you know being naughty or whatever. (Myles)

Petty ones are people, the lay man most probably would want something to eat and actually not want to harm people (Mhmm) just to get something to eat (Brad)

violent crime to me is anything where a person has been injured or, mentally or physically ‘cause I mean mental injury, injury is as bad as physical, you know, umm, I think all people who do anything to hurt anybody must be killed, [amused] honestly, (Okay) ya, seriously (Tanya)

Once again this construction of the petty criminal as the ‘good’ criminal and the violent criminal as the ‘bad’ criminal seemed to hinge on choice. The criminals were constructed as having a choice of whether to use violence to commit a crime or to commit the crime without using violence. Those that chose to use violence were constructed as having made the wrong choice morally and ethically, and it is this wrong choice that makes them the ‘bad’ criminal. This is illustrated in these extracts:

I personally think it’s totally unnecessary, if you’re gonna be a criminal ah, is there a real, is there a real need for, for violating that person that you are dealing with? (Otto)

I feel like if someone wants something from you, they don’t have to kill you... people shouldn’t, they shouldn’t go to the extreme of killing a person, I mean there’s lots of cases I’ve heard of where it, it was uncalled for (Candice)

Whereas those criminals that committed crime without using violence were constructed as having made the right choice morally and ethically, and were therefore not as bad as those that used violence to commit crime. In this way those criminals that committed crime without using violence were constructed as the ‘good’ criminal.

4.3 Reflection

One of the things that I was really worried about while conducting analysis of the transcripts and writing up my findings and conclusions, was that the results that I have presented represent a racist account of the discourses of violent crime in South Africa. While none of these findings may represent blatantly racist ideas, in as much as I have noted, examined, elaborated upon and tried to find a reason for the similarities and differences that occur across race groups, I think that this may serve to reinforce, if not racist, then racial thinking in South Africa, what Jonathan Jansen has called “the commonsense of racial essences” (Jansen, 2009, p.129). This is a regrettable consequence of the way that I have analysed and interpreted these interviews, however, I still feel that the conclusions that I have drawn from this analysis are important ones and ones that I might not have been able to come to had I done this analysis differently. As Jansen (2009) and Burdin (2010) have noted, many, if not most, aspects of life in South Africa continue to be coloured by race. Issues of race influence the way we think about, understand, and talk about politics, culture, education and so on and through this analysis I have found that race certainly influences the way that South Africans think about and talk about violent crime. It influences what we consider to be the causes and the effects of violent crime, it influences how we feel that crime and criminals should be dealt with, and possibly most importantly, it influences how we see others and how we see ourselves.

My reasoning is in line with authors like Haney Lopez (1994), who state that race is a socially constructed phenomenon but that its status as a socially constructed object does not mean that it does not have very real effects in the world. As Hepburn (2003) writes, “words are the primary way in which we perform actions, and these actions may have profound consequences” (Hepburn, 2003, p. 166). While I feel that the argument of authors such as Zack (1995), for the dissolution of concepts and categories of race proposes an ideal future setting, I feel that it is premature at this point, because the ways in which we differ and the effects that these have on our lives still often occur along race lines. Also, as a way of organising and categorising our ways of seeing and understanding the world, race is an aspect that needs to be brought out into the light, rather than swept aside. So while the results of this study may contribute to a further entrenchment of racial ways of describing and understanding violent crime or an essentialist understanding of race, I am not sure how to

avoid this negative consequence while at the same time bringing race to the forefront for examination. As Parker notes, “Once an object has been elaborated in discourse it is difficult *not* to refer to it as if it were real” (Parker, 1992, p. 5). I think that it is important to determine how race is constructed as a real and common-sense way of classifying people before we can begin to argue against such categorisations of people. I also hope to show that race as deployed by the participants is not a social fact, but an interpretive framework arising from the history of the way the concept of race was used to explain social phenomena in South Africa.

Furthermore, I do not attempt to generalise these results beyond this study and reject any suggestion that because the results of this study may refer to all blacks or all whites that participated in this study, that the results hold true for all black South Africans or all white South Africans. Henning refers to interviewees as “a theoretical ‘population’ in that they are spokespersons for the topic of inquiry... they are not representative of a population and the findings from the interviews cannot be generalised to a population” (Henning, 2004, p. 71). I do not attempt to speak for all black South Africans when referring to the black participants in my study or all white South Africans when referring to my white participants and likewise for my coloured and indian participants. To do so would include making claims that, given the scope of this study I do not have the grounds to make, but would also contribute to a homogenisation of groups of people that are in many ways very different.

2. CONCLUSION

As analysis of the data has shown, the discursive construction of violent crime, criminals and victims is complex. There is no single way in which this is done, and participants construct these categories in different ways, at different points of the interviews, for different reasons. As Wetherell and Potter state “clearly, the meaning of these categories, their function and thus their social and psychological significance is established within their discursive context. Indeed, the meaning and the definition of these categories will change as the discursive context changes” (Wetherell and Potter, 1992, pp. 77). The scope and length of this report does not afford opportunity for a full discussion of all of the findings, but in this chapter I briefly discuss the findings and consider what I believe to be the most important findings, their significance, and the value of these findings in aiding an understanding of the consequences of these constructions, and the use of these repertoires.

The construction of the causes of violent crime is a suitable point on which to begin this discussion as it highlights some of the important ways in which the discourses that participants used operate. The three factors that most participants utilised as causes of violent crime were poverty, unemployment and lack of education. Constructing these three factors as causes of violent crime is in a sense ‘fashionable’ in South Africa at the moment, as these factors are given as the cause of many of South Africa’s problems on many different social platforms. Because these three factors are constructed as the cause of South Africa’s problems on so many different social platforms, legitimacy is provided for the discourse of poverty, unemployment and lack of education as the main causes of violent crime. These accounts of the causes of violent crime show us how these discourses operate in a self-confirming way when participants talk about things that ‘prove’ that their constructions of violent crime are true and accurate. Participants spoke of how there are many poor, uneducated and unemployed people in South Africa and then spoke of the high incidence of violent crime to confirm that poverty, unemployment and lack of education are causes of violent crime. It may be that there are a lot of poor, unemployed and uneducated people in South Africa and that South Africa has a high rate of violent crime, but this does not ‘prove’ that these cause violent crime, and indeed there are many examples of other African countries with high levels of poverty and low levels of violent crime.

While it may seem that constructing poverty, unemployment and lack of education as causes of violent crime provides a justification for committing violent crime, this was negated in a number of different ways. This was negated when participants used discourses that construct people as poor, unemployed or uneducated through some fault of their own or through personal choice. Additionally, this was negated when participants explain how these factors (and particularly poverty) are justified in some sense. This also shows how the blame for violent crime shifted at different points of the interviews. At times the government was held accountable, at times society was held accountable, at other times the perpetrators themselves were held accountable. Using these three factors to construct the causes of violent crime also meant that the participants could lay the blame for violent crime elsewhere, and did not have to accept any responsibility for it. This shows another important way in which participants used the interpretive repertoires - to try and construct themselves in a positive and favourable light.

An important consequence of constructing these as causes of violent crime is that it leads to a fatalistic view of violent crime. These are such huge problems in South Africa, they are so difficult to fix and will take such a long time to fix, that explaining these as the causes of violent crime produces an understanding of violent crime as a problem that we simply cannot tackle. Another crucial effect of constructing poverty, unemployment and lack of education as the causes of violent crime is that particular groups of people - the poor, the unemployed and the uneducated - become criminalised.

While spoken about less often than the factors of poverty, unemployment and lack of education, three other factors that participants commonly constructed as causes of violent crime were corruption, human nature and apartheid. When using corruption as a cause of violent crime, the participants were constructing the 'bad' criminal, as someone who has made the wrong choice to engage in crime. Human nature was used by participants to construct 'psychological' explanations of violent crime by explaining either that violence is innate, that an unsuitable upbringing is the cause of violent crime, or that people that engage in violent crime are psychologically 'sick'. These explanations are the product of a tendency for psychological theories to be appropriated by the general public as explanations for social phenomena. The result of 'lay' explanations for violent crime being sought in 'psychological' reasons, is a predisposition for people to look for a 'psychological' problem in those that engage in violent crime, or to perceive them as abnormal, unhealthy or maladjusted. This

downplays the social factors that may impact on such phenomena. Participants further explained how apartheid 'created' black criminals and white victims by constructing apartheid as a cause of violent crime.

With regard to the effects of violent crime, participants constructed this in four ways – as effects on the country's image, effects on the victim, effects on the potential victim and effects on identification. Participants constructed violent crime as an issue that has a negative effect on the country's image as it scares off foreign tourists and prevents foreign investment in the economy. By scaring away tourism and foreign investment, violent crime consequently affects the economic and material conditions of South Africans. Participants used the discourse of the effects of violent crime on the victim to talk about the effects that an incident of violent crime had on the direct victim, and the family and friends of the direct victim. What was striking in the use of this discourse is the way in which the participants constructed the victim as innocent or blameworthy, and random or chosen. Participants had specific criteria for judging victims as innocent or blameworthy and random or chosen but this usually revolved around the victim putting themselves at risk in some way, and therefore being to blame for their victimisation. Victim blaming involves describing the victim of a crime as wholly or partly responsible for their victimisation (Summers and Feldman, 1984). Blaming the victim allowed participants that used these discourses to feel safer. The reasoning behind victim blaming is that if the potential victim avoids the behaviour of past victims, then they themselves will remain safe (Janoff-Bulman, Timko and Carli, 1985, Maes, 1994). In this way, victim blaming allowed the participants that used these discourses to feel less vulnerable to becoming a victim of violent crime. The discourse of the effects on the potential victim was used by participants to construct how violent crime lessens the quality of life for people living in South Africa, even if they are never a direct victim of an incident of violent crime. Participants used the interpretive repertoire of the effects on identification to talk about the consequences of violent crime on the way they identify others, the way they believe others identify them, and the way they identify themselves. The implications of these consequences for the participants' subjectivity is discussed below.

Prevention and deterrence was a conceptual cluster that participants used to talk about the ways in which they feel violent crime can or should be prevented, or people should be deterred from committing acts of criminal violence. Participants spoke specifically about prisons and how they should be playing a role in prevention and deterrence but do not. This

was constructed differently by participants, with some participants claiming that the reason that they failed in this role is because they are not harsh enough. Other participants claim that prisons cannot lower the rate of violent crime unless the causes are addressed. Participants also spoke about how corruption, both at high levels of power and among the average citizen, worked against efforts at prevention and deterrence, as corruption creates an environment in which violent crime can thrive. Under this conceptual cluster, participants spoke of how there is a need for individuals to protect themselves from violent crime, as those tasked with the responsibility of doing so have failed in this responsibility. To protect themselves, participants constructed a list of crime do's and don'ts, which specified the kinds of actions and behaviour that people should engage in to protect themselves and the kinds of actions and behaviour that people should not engage in to avoid becoming a victim. Race was also implicated as a factor in prevention in that some participants state that being black made them less likely to be victims while other participants maintained that being white or indian made them more likely to be victims.

With regard to victims, as already discussed, race was implicated as a factor in who was most likely to become a victim of violent crime, with participants constructing white and indian people as more likely to become victims, and black and coloured people as less likely to become victims. Women were constructed as more likely to become victims than men because they are at risk of sexual crimes and because women cannot defend themselves and are less likely to fight back when in a crime situation. Children were similarly constructed as more likely to become victims because of an inability to defend themselves. Participants constructed people that have more material or social goods than others as being more likely to become victims, as well as those who are naive or foolish about crime in some way.

An important finding is that many of the repertoires that participants used in their construction of violent crime, criminals and victims were used to manage their fear of being a potential victim. Because most participants stated that anyone could be a victim, they used other repertoires to talk about how particular people were more at risk than others. This lead participants to often talk about how and why some people had become victims of particular incidents of violent crime through their behaviour, or characteristics that they possess. Even when discussing incidents in which they personally had been a victim, participants would explain why they became a victim by referring to something about themselves or something that they had done. Doing so provided participants not only with practical solutions about

how to keep safe but also psychological protection against the anxiety of being a potential victim. The unfortunate result of this is that it leads to a victim-blaming discourse in which people are constructed as somehow to blame for their victimisation.

It was also elucidated in the analysis that participants expect strangers to be more dangerous and expect risk to come from strangers rather than from people that they know. However, research has shown that victims of violent crime more commonly have some kind of connection to, or relationship with, the perpetrator (Best, 1999; Louw, 2007; Spinks, 2001). This 'stranger danger' fear is therefore a misrepresentation of the relationship between the perpetrator and the victim. We then have to question why participants construct strangers as being more dangerous than people that they know. I think that this was another instance in which participants constructed criminals and violent crime in such a way so as to manage the extent of risk that they feel vulnerable to. You can live your life in such a way as to stay away from strangers, but there will be some people that we enter into relationships with, either voluntarily or as a result of our circumstances. If participants felt that they needed to be cautious and suspicious of not only strangers but also everyone that they know, this would produce an overwhelming sense of risk.

I also infer that strangers are identified as being more dangerous than people that the participants knows because of the way violent crime is defined and what is recognised as violent crime and what is not. As discussed in the literature review chapter, violence is defined by some authors as occurring at three levels, the direct or interpersonal level, the institutional level and the structural level. It is often only those incidents that occur at the interpersonal or direct level that are identified as violent crime. I think that this occurs for a number of reasons, but most importantly because popular definitions of violent crime are those in which there is an identifiable perpetrator. In addition, because the media, in their presentations of violent crime, focus on those incidents which constitute direct or interpersonal forms of violence (James, 2007).

With regard to the conceptual cluster of responsibility, participants spoke about the four institutions that they felt had a responsibility to protect people from violent crime and prevent violent crime from happening: the government, the police, the justice system and the media. The participants constructed each of these institutions as failing in this responsibility in different ways. This construction of the failure of these institutions in their responsibility

reinforced discourses of the individual needing to protect themselves from violent crime and preventing violent crime, and the discourse of fatalism.

Under the conceptual cluster of perpetrators, participants discussed who they thought violent criminals are or who is most likely to become a violent criminal, thereby positioning certain groups of people as potential criminals. The ways in which participants did this was sometimes explicit by stating who they thought violent criminals were, or who was most likely to become a violent criminal. But they also often did this implicitly by constructing potential criminals through their use of other discourses concerning the causes of violent crime, safe and unsafe places, and precautionary measures that they took to avoid becoming a victim. Participants would sometimes construct perpetrators implicitly when they felt that to do so would cast them (the participant) in a negative light - for instance as a racist - but often participants were not even aware of who they were implicitly constructing as perpetrators when using these discourses. As discussed above, participants often constructed the poor, unemployed and uneducated as those most likely to engage in violent crime. They often did this explicitly as they were drawing on popular discourses of who perpetrators are, but also because they could negate responsibility for poverty, unemployment and lack of education in a number of ways. Participants also drew on a common-sense discourse of men as perpetrators of violent crime and men were almost always constructed as the perpetrators of violent crime, both implicitly and explicitly. Perpetrators of violent crime were also often constructed by participants as greedy or corrupt. Participants could explicitly speak about perpetrators as greedy or corrupt by drawing on a discourse of commonly-agreed upon morality in which greed and corruption is judged to be wrong.

Black and coloured men were also most often constructed as the perpetrators and potential perpetrators of violent crime. This was often constructed implicitly as most participants realised that to state that it is black and coloured men that are most likely to be violent criminals would have made them sound racist and they wanted to repudiate any claims of racism. An interesting finding was that even those participants that identified themselves as black and coloured men also constructed black and coloured men as the perpetrators and potential perpetrators of violent crime. To distance themselves from potential perpetrators and to distinguish ways in which they did not fall into the category of potential perpetrators, these participants would describe ways in which they were different from potential perpetrators, referring specifically to having an education and continuing with their

education, having a job and working, not being poor and having a sound upbringing. In this way they explained how the causes of violent crime did not apply to them.

While participants constructed particular groups of people as those most likely to engage in violent crime, they also had very particular ways of constructing violent criminals as either 'good' or 'bad' criminals. Criminals were judged as either 'good' or 'bad' criminals according to their motivation for committing crime, the nature of their crime and the way in which they carried out their crime. Each of these were judged by making reference to a binary pair of challenged oppositions in which one side of the pair represented the 'good' criminal and the other represented the 'bad' criminal. The criminals' motivation for committing crime was judged according to the challenging opposition of need versus greed, the nature of the crime was judged according to whether it was premeditated or opportunistic and whether the criminal acted as an individual or as part of a gang or syndicate. The way in which the crime was carried out was judged according to the challenging opposition of whether the crime was petty or violent. All of these criteria hinged on whether the criminals' actions could be morally justified and also the degree of choice that they are perceived to have had in engaging in crime. This shows us that participants did not construct criminals as a homogenous group but that they have very specific criteria for categorising criminals. The importance of this is that, as Foucault (1972) argued, the way in which people construct the category of criminal will influence how that society feels that criminals should be dealt with. Severe punishments will not be deemed to be too extreme for those criminals that are constructed as 'bad' criminals. We see participants expressing this sentiment when they say that jails need to be stricter and harsher and that the death penalty should be reinstated.

One of the most important findings of this study and one that is present in many different parts of the analysis is that in contemporary South Africa, race 'colours' the way we construct, see and understand violent crime, criminals and victims. Race is used to understand situations and incidents which might otherwise be incomprehensible, but it is not only these situations that are influenced by race. Race is used as an organising principle, is part of the conceptual framework through which the participants make sense of violent crime. In this way race is essentialised and reified through the discourses that the participants use to talk about violent crime.

Keeping with a poststructuralist and social constructionist view of subjectivity, I argue that selfhood is relational and that the self is developed in dynamic relation to ideas and practices and in history and social relations, in other words, that there is a discursive construction of subjectivity. As part of the conceptual framework that participants use to talk about violent crime, race has important implications for the way we see ourselves and the way we see other people. However, this is not merely about a simple ‘us’/‘them’ or ‘self’/‘other’ or ‘subjectivity’/‘subjectification’ binary opposition. As Burr posits, subject positions or ‘who we are’ is constantly changing depending on the changing course of positions we negotiate in social encounters (Burr, 1995, pp. 146). This can be seen in the analysis of the transcripts as the participants construct different accounts of perpetrators, victims and violent crime in the interviews depending on the context of those constructions and the kind of ‘work’ that is being performed through the use of different repertoires at different points in the interviews. This is why at some points of the interviews participants felt that they could legitimately use race as an organising factor and way to understand violent crime, and at other points in the interview they had to justify or negate using race as part of their conceptual framework. This was because they felt that to do so at these points in the interviews would have made them appear racist, and most of the participants wanted to repudiate or pre-empt accusations of racism, as they recognised that they were simultaneously constructing themselves in the process of constructing others, and violent crime, in the interviews.

Race has become an important part of our identity and subjectivity in that it functions as one of the ways in which we come to understand ourselves. As Foucault (1972) and other authors (Billig, 2001; Burr, 1995) recognise, how people make sense of themselves and how we make sense of them are both infused with historically and culturally specific discourses. Because of the legacy of racial classification that we have inherited from the apartheid era, race has become an important part of our identity and subjectivity. This is because, as Wetherell and Potter state, “a sense of identity and subjectivity is constructed from the interpretive resources – the stories and narratives of identity – which are available, in circulation, in our culture” (Wetherell and Potter, 1992, pp. 78). “The person can only be a meaningful entity, both to himself and herself and to others, by being ‘read’ in terms of the discourses available in that society” (Burr, 1995, pp. 142).

Celia Kitzinger (1989 in Hepburn, 2003) posits that identities are not the private property of individuals, instead they are social constructions that can be advanced with the leading social

order. Althusser develops a similar concept of identity or subjectivity when he says that ideology “interpellates” or “hails” individuals as subjects and makes us listen as a certain type of person. He explains that when we recognise ourselves as hailed in the ideology, we have already become that person. In the analysis of the transcripts, I have shown how various interpretive repertoires were used to construct criminals as black and coloured, and victims as white and indian, but in most instances white. If we consider this as functioning in the same way as an ideology, (to use the words of Althusser), or as a leading social order, (to use the words of Kitzinger), we can see that when the participants construct criminals and victims in this way they are positioning themselves in particular ways within the discourse. When participants position themselves in line with this discourse it has important implications for their subjectivity. If white and indian participants see themselves as ‘hailed’ as the victim within this discourse, the implication for their subjectivity is that they need to be fearful of and protect themselves from violent crime. If black and coloured participants see themselves as ‘hailed’ as the perpetrator within this discourse, the implication for their subjectivity is that other people will identify them as the perpetrator. Black and coloured participants both accepted and resisted this positioning in this discourse. They accept this positioning when they too talk about how perpetrators of violent crime are usually black or coloured. However, they resist this positioning when they look for ways to distance themselves from perpetrators and show how they are not perpetrators. Rather than resisting this positioning by resisting the discourse and questioning why black equals criminal and white equals victim, or explaining that this discourse is flawed for positioning them as perpetrators on the basis of race, they resist this positioning within the discourse by explaining how they are different to other black and coloured perpetrators.

Davies and Harre’ (1990) see the person as having some room for manoeuvre and choices within these discourses and discursive practices. If we take the same view, the big question therefore is: why, when there are a multitude of other discourses available to us that we can use to construct our identity and subjectivity, do we still choose to use race as one of the major ways of constructing our identity and understanding others?

3. FINAL REFLECTION

Race has become such a common-sense and taken-for-granted way of categorising people and explaining social issues in South Africa, that people are not even aware most of the time that they are using race as an organising and explanatory principle. Potter and Wetherell (1987) explain that positioning might not necessarily be intentional (although sometimes it is). Individuals could consequently become caught up in the subject positions inherent in their talk, even though they did not necessarily intend to position others in specific ways (Potter and Wetherell, 1987 in Burr 1995). “But Davies and Harre’ make the important point that we would do well to recognise and develop an awareness of the potential implications of the narratives/discourses we adopt in our dealings with others. As well as being less likely to position others in ways we did not intend, we may also gain for ourselves a useful strategy in our own struggles with personal identity and change” (Davies and Harre,’ 1990 in Burr, 1995, pp. 147).

The conventional ways of understanding race offered by traditional psychology and traditional social psychology allow us to identify overt and blatant racism, but often do not allow us to pick up subtle forms of racism that can be identified through discourse analysis. As various authors have pointed out, psychology has also been used to promote racist policies and has in many ways been a racist practice in the past (Louw & Foster 1991; Cooper, Nicholas, Seedat & Statman, 1990; Bulhan 1981). While it is necessary then to employ an approach to psychology and research that allows us to discover subtle forms of racism, it is also necessary, as Harre’ and Stearns (1995) point out, to have a psychology of psychology, that allows us to take a step outside of the discipline to see its workings. It is important for us to recognise when we are being racist as we cannot stop being racist if we are not even aware of our own racism. Although Burman provides a critique of discourse analysis and deconstruction she does concede that, “in highlighting the multiplicity of positions afforded by competing discourses and their contradictory effect, it enables us to envisage ways of disrupting the dominant discourse and to construct positions of resistance” (Burman, 1990, p. 209). Because race as an organising principle has such important implications for the way we see ourselves and other people in relation to violent crime, it is important that we are aware of the ways in which race is an organising principle in this regard, and what the effects of this are.

Following social constructionism, what we say is not merely a reflection of how we see the world, rather it creates frameworks through which we see the world. So what are the effects and implications of seeing violent crime through the lens of race? As has already been discussed, this has important implications for how we construct others and ourselves in relation to violent crime. These constructions will inform whether we feel ourselves to be at threat from others and whether we believe others will see us as potential criminals or potential victims, and will guide our actions accordingly. As such, racialised discourses have social effects. When we view violent crime through the framework of race, our insecurities and anxiety about violent crime are bound up with conceptions of race. Who we construct as criminals is informed by the colour of the group that commits violent crime, the colour that we are determines whether we see ourselves as potential victims and whether we should feel at threat, and our identification of another as safe or dangerous becomes based on what colour we identify them as. The anxiety attached to being a potential victim of violent crime then also becomes attached to race, and reinforces racial categories by investing them with these deep anxieties. Similarly, ways of perceiving people of a particular race as a particular type of person is also reinforced because if we can identify who the dangerous people are then we can avoid them. It is possible that this is one of the reasons why people tend to perpetuate discourses that emphasise the importance of race and identifying the race of others. This has become a kind of safety and prevention strategy in the minds of South Africans, even if the safety that it offers is psychological, rather than physical. The racialisation of the discourses of violent crime also becomes a self-supporting dialectic in that people understand violent crime in terms of race, this understanding influences the way in which they perceive incidents of violent crime, and when these incidents are perceived in terms of race, they provide justification and 'evidence' for the racialisation of discourses of violent crime.

Beyond these effects on identity and identification, viewing violent crime through the framework of race also influences what we can and cannot see about criminal violence as it legitimates certain discourses and negates or disregards others. It also influences how we see other constructions of violent crime. For example, constructing poverty, unemployment and lack of education as causes of violent crime not only criminalises poor, unemployed and uneducated people but criminalises poor, unemployed and uneducated black and coloured people. Constructing having more material possessions than others as making people vulnerable to becoming victims, when viewed through the lens of race, positions wealthy, white people as potential victims.

There is yet another important implication of viewing violent crime through the framework of race, and this impacts on whether we feel violent crime can be effectively dealt with. Using race as a way of organising and understanding social reality is something that we have inherited from the apartheid era and one which is still widely and deeply entrenched in the thinking of South Africans. When conceptualisations of violent crime are bound up with conceptualisations of race, an understanding of violent crime is constructed in which crime is such a deeply embedded problem in South Africa that we simply cannot tackle it. Rather than suggesting ways in which we might be able to deal with violent crime, this construction is one which supports a fatalistic view of violent crime as something that we cannot do anything about, and something that is only going to get worse. Making discursive links to race when talking about violent crime is one of the obstacles that prevent us from engaging with the issue of violent crime in such a way as to reduce it. In addition, reducing the problem of violent crime to a race debate does not provide us with any appropriate ideas or suggestions of how to fix the problem. This is why former president Thabo Mbeki was so strongly criticised when he argued that the crime problem was in fact a problem of ‘white whiners’ looking for an excuse to slate black governance. People perceived this as a denial of violent crime as a problem in South Africa.

There is another significant way in which the discourses that the participants use to talk about violent crime present us with a view of violent crime as something that we cannot tackle. Constructing criminals as either ‘good’ or ‘bad’ criminals, and then categorising most criminals that engage in violent crime as ‘bad’ criminals, leads to a conceptualisation of violent crime in which punitive measures (such as long and harsh jail sentences and the death penalty) are endorsed, not only for dealing with existing criminal violence, but also for preventing violent crime from occurring. However, various authors such as Gilligan (2000), Best (1999) and Tonry (2004) have shown that harsher punitive measures do not lower crime rates and that countries that have stricter punitive measures (such as the death sentence) often have higher rates of violent crime than countries that do not. Conceptualising violent crime as being dealt with by severe punitive measures creates a discursive construction of dealing with crime which may not allow us to deal with violent crime effectively.

Participants seem to be discursively stuck between two extreme poles of how to deal with violent crime. On the one hand, constructions of the ‘bad’ criminal advocate severe and violent punishment of criminals as a ‘quick-fix’ for the problem of violent crime. On the

other hand, constructions of poverty, unemployment, lack of education and other social problems as causes of violent crime leads to a long-term despair of socio-economic problems and how they incapacitate us and prevent us from dealing with the problem. Both of these extremes constitute constructions which either prevent us from dealing with violent crime, or advocate solutions which may not lower the rate of violent crime. Perhaps an effective solution to violent crime is somewhere between these two extreme constructions. However, participants do not at present articulate a middle ground between them. While everyone seems to have an opinion on what causes violent crime, people seldom make practical suggestions on how to 'fix' the problem of violent crime in South Africa.

It is also significant that so much attention is afforded to the issue of violent crime when there are so many problems facing South Africa at present. Huge numbers of South Africans are faced with problems of unemployment, poverty, insufficient housing, inadequate education, poor health care and a lack of basic services. However, with their economic power, the middle class are largely shielded from such problems. Given the influence that the middle class have over the media and public debate, it is possible that this has become such an important issue in South Africa because it is a threat to the middle class.

4. RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

As I have shown in the analysis, neither constructions of the 'bad' criminal which advocate severe punitive punishments, nor constructions of socio-economic problems as the causes of violent crime which suggest that we cannot do anything about violent crime, suggest ways in which we can effectively deal with violent crime. It might be useful for future analysis to explore what kinds of discourses lie between these two extremes, whether they lead to conceptualisations of crime that suggest effective ways of dealing with violent crime and why these discourses are not being articulated at present.

This analysis has also shown that constructions of crime, criminals and victims draw on many other ideas and understandings of society that are used as part of these constructions. One that was particularly important in the context of this study was race. This study shows how race was profoundly implicated in these constructions, and as such what participants said about violent crime, criminals and victims concerned not only these three categories, but discourses of other aspects of life in South Africa. If we consider how fundamental race is as a way of understanding crime, criminals and victims, it is important to consider which other areas of South African life have race implicated as part of their constructions such as education, politics, health, and so on. My recommendation for further research therefore is that similar studies of the discourses used to construct understandings of other aspects of life in South Africa are conducted, to explore how race is implicated in these constructions and the consequences of this. I feel that it is also important for further research to be conducted which explores the solutions to violence that are marginalised in the 'bad' criminal/social cause dichotomy.

Furthermore, because there is such a profound misunderstanding of the relationship between perpetrators and victims and because the concept of 'stranger danger' continues to hold, additional research needs to be conducted into this phenomenon. Comprehensive analysis of this phenomenon may suggest ways that we can make the public aware of who represents the most risk, so that people can take effective preventative strategies against becoming a victim.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX 1

Interview Schedule:

- 1) What are your general thoughts, feelings or ideas about violent crime?
- 2) Is violent crime a big problem? How big a problem is violent crime? Is the problem of violent crime getting better or worse?
- 3) Who are the perpetrators of violent crime? Who is most likely to commit violent crime?
- 4) Who are the victims of violent crime?
- 5) Who is to blame for the problem?
- 6) What factors contribute to the problem?
- 7) What can be done about the problem?
- 8) Who is at risk or what kinds of things put people at risk of becoming a victim? Do you feel that you are at risk? How do you feel yourself to be at risk? How big of a risk does violent crime pose to you?
- 9) Does the risk of becoming a victim impact on your life in any way? How does it impact on your life? Do you take any precautionary measures to avoid becoming a victim of violent crime? What are these measures? How do these measures reduce your risk of becoming a victim?

APPENDIX 2

Letter of Informed Consent:

Topic: Discourses of criminal violence in South Africa.

Researcher: Monique James

Contact numbers:

Phone No. :031 903 2922

Cell. No. :083 944 1940

e-mail :moniquejames@mweb.co.za

Supervisor: Anthony Collins :031-260 3261

Institution: University of KwaZulu-Natal

I would like to thank you for taking part in this research project. In this research project I wish to explore what South African's think and understand about violent crime. To do this I will be interviewing you (and a number of other people) and will be asking you to tell me what you think about violent crime in South Africa. I would like us to talk for about one hour. Before you agree to this, there are a few things that I would like to bring to your attention about your participation in this research.

1. Your participation in this research is voluntary.
2. You may choose to withdraw at any time without any negative consequences.
3. I would like to tape-record the session for research purposes ONLY.
4. Your participation will be anonymous and you will remain anonymous in any writing, presentation and publication from this work. You will also be given a pseudonym in the recording of this interview as well as the transcription developed from your interview.
5. What you tell me will be treated with respect and confidentiality. Only my supervisor – Anthony Collins - and I will have access to this (raw) material.

6. Should participation in this interview cause you distress or you feel upset after the interview and would like to speak to a counsellor, I can arrange an appointment on your behalf with a member of the Centre for Student Counselling or the Centre for Applied Psychology. Alternatively you can contact them personally:

- The Centre for Student Counselling: 031 260 2668

- The Centre for Applied Psychology: 031 260 7613

7. Only if you understand and agree to the above points, can you sign and then take part in this study.

PARTICIPANT’S INFORMED CONSENT

I, _____ volunteer to participate in this research to be conducted at _____. I understand that this means that I will be interviewed on one occasion for about one hour. I also understand that this session will be tape-recorded for research purposes although I will be anonymous.

Signature of participant

Signature of researcher

Date

Date

